

# GEORG EBERS

MARGERY (GRED): A TALE  
OF OLD NUREMBERG.

VOLUME 06

Georg Ebers

**Margery (Gred): A Tale Of  
Old Nuremberg. Volume 06**

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# Georg Ebers

## Margery (Gred): A Tale Of Old Nuremberg – Volume 06

### CHAPTER VI

Shall I now set forth how that Ann and I found Herdegen in his hiding- place, a simple little beekeeper's but in the most covert part of the Lorenzer wald, a spot whither no horseman might pass; how that even in his poor peasant's weed my brother was yet a goodly man, and clasped his sweetheart in his arms as ardently as in that first day on his homecoming from Italy—and how that the dear, hunted fellow, beholding me in mourning dress, took his sister to his heart as soon as his plighted love had left the place free? Yea, for the dead had been dear to him likewise, and his love for me had never failed.

When we presently gave ourselves up in peace to the joy of being all together once more, I weened that his eye was more steadfast, and his voice graver and calmer than of old; and whensoever he spoke to me it was in a soft and heartfelt tone, which gave me comforting assurance that he grieved for my grief. And how sweetly and gravely did he beguile Ann to make the most of this sad meeting, wherein welcome and God-speed so closely touched. In the house once more I rejoiced in the lofty flight which lifted this youth's whole spirit above all things common or base; and his sweetheart's eyes rested on him in sheer delight as he talked with my uncle, or with the magistrate who had come forth with us to the Forest. And albeit it was in truth his duty to the Emperor his master, to fulfil his behest, nevertheless he gave us his promise that he would put off the announcement of the sentence till we should return to the town next day, and prolong our time together and with Cousin Maud as much as in him lay.

My aunt's eyes shone with sheer joy when they fell on her darling with Herdegen at her side, and she could say to herself no doubt that these two, who, as she conceived, were made for each other, would hardly have come together again but for her help. Or ever we set forth on the morrow, she called Herdegen to her once more to speak with him privily, and bid him bear in mind that if ever in his wanderings he should meet another youth—and he knew who—he might tell him that at home in the Lorenzerwald a mother's heart was yet beating, which could never rest till his presence had gladdened it once more.

My uncle rode with us into the town. It was at the gate that the magistrate told Herdegen what his fate should be: that he must leave Nuremberg on the morrow at the same hour; and to my dying day I shall ever remember with gladness and regret the meal we then sat down to with our nearest and dearest.

Cousin Maud called it her darling's condemnation supper. She had watched the cooking of every dish in the kitchen, and chosen the finest wine out of the cellar. Yet the victual might have been oatmeal porridge, and the noble liquor the smallest beer, and it would have been no matter to our great, albeit melancholy gladness. And indeed, no man could have gazed at the pair now come together again after so many perils, and not have felt his heart uplifted. Ah! and how dear to me were those twain! They had learnt that life was as nothing to either of them without the other, and their hearts meseemed were henceforth as closely knit as two streams which flow together to make one river, and whose waters no power on earth can ever sunder. They sat with us, but behind great posies of flowers, as it were in an isle of bliss; yet were they in our midst, and showed how glad it made them to have so many loving hearts about them. Notwithstanding her joy and trouble Ann forgot not her duty as "watchman," and threatened Uncle Christian when he would take more than he should

of the good liquor. He, however, declared that this day was under the special favor of the Saints, and that no evil could in any wise befall him. My Forest-uncle and Master Pernhart had been found in discourse together, and the matter of which they spoke was my Cousin Gotz. And how it gladdened the father to speak of his far-off son! More especially when Pernhart's lips overflowed with praise of the youth to whom his only child owed her early death.

Most marvellous of all was the Magister. Herdegen's return to his beloved robbed Master Peter of his last hope; nevertheless his eyes had never rested on her with fonder rapture. Verily his faithful heart was warmed as it were by the happiness which surrounded her as with a glory, and indeed it was not without some doubts that I saw the worthy man, who was wont to be so sober, raise his glass again and again to drink to Ann, whether she marked him or not, and drain his glass each time in her honor. My Uncle Christian likewise filled his cup right diligently, and seeing him quaff it with such lusty good will I feared lest he should keep us all night at table, when the time was short for Ann and my brother to have any privy speech together. But that good man forgot not, even over the wine-jar, what might pleasure other folks; and albeit it was hard for him to quit a merry drinking-bout he was the first to move away. We were alone by sundown. The Magister had been carried to bed and woke not till noon on the morrow.

The plighted couple sat once more in the oriel where they had so often sat in happier days, and seeing them talking and fondling in the gathering dusk, meseemed for a while that that glad winter season had come again in which they had rejoiced in the springtide of their love.

Thus the hours passed, and I was in the very act of enquiry whether it were not time to light the lamps, when we heard voices on the stairs, and Cousin Maud came in saying that Sir Franz had made his way into the house, and that he declared that his weal or woe, nay and his life lay in Herdegen's hand, so that she had not the heart to refuse to suffer him to come in. Hereupon my brother started up in a rage, but the chamber door was opened, and with the maid, who brought the lamp in, the Bohemian crossed the threshold. We maids would fain have quitted them; but the knight besought us to remain, saying, as his eyes humbly sued to mine, that rather should I tarry and speak a good word for him. Then, when Herdegen called upon him to speak, but did not hold forth his hand, Sir Franz besought him to suffer him to be his comrade in his pilgrimage. Howbeit so doleful a fellow was by no means pleasing in my brother's eyes, and so he right plainly gave him to understand; then the Bohemian called to mind their former friendship, and entreated him to put himself in his place and not to forget that he, as a man sound of limb, would have avenged the scorn put on him by Rochow in fair fight instead of with a dagger-thrust. They were condemned to a like penance and, if Herdegen would not suffer him and give him his company, this would be the death-blow to his blighted honor.

Hereupon I appealed to my brother right earnestly, beseeching him not to reject his former friend if it were only for love of me. And inasmuch as on that day his whole soul was filled with love, his hardness was softened, and how gladly and thankfully my heart beat when I beheld him give his hand to the man who had endured so much woe for my sake.

Presently, while they were yet speaking of their departing, again there were voices without; and albeit I could scarce believe my ears I mistook not, and knew the tones for Ursula's. Ann likewise heard and knew them, and she quitted the chamber saying: "None shall trouble me in such an hour, least of all shall Ursula!" The angelus had long since been tolled, and somehap of grave import must have brought us so rare a guest at so late an hour. My cousin, who would fain have hindered her from coming in, held her by the arm; and her efforts to shake off the old lady's grasp were all in vain till she caught sight of Herdegen. Then at length she freed herself and, albeit she was gasping for breath, her voice was one of sheer triumph as she cried: "I had to come, and here I am!"

"Aye, but if you come as a Mar-joy I will show you the way out, my word for that!" my cousin panted; but the maid heeded her not, but went straight toward Herdegen and said: "I felt I must see you once more ere you depart—I must! Old Jorg attended me, and when I am gone forth again Dame

Maud will speak my 'eulogium'. Only look at her! But it is all one to me. Find me a place, Herdegen, where I may speak with you and Ann Spiesz alone. I have a message for you."

Hereupon my cousin broke in with a scornful laugh, such as I could never have looked to hear from her, with her kind and single heart; and my brother told Ursula shortly and plainly that with her he had no more to do. To this she made answer that it would be a sin to doubt that, inasmuch as he was now a pious pilgrim and honorably betrothed, nevertheless she craved to see Ann. That, too, was denied her, and she did but shrug her shoulders; then she turned to the Bohemian, who had gone towards her, and asked him with icy politeness to remove from her presence, inasmuch as he was an offence to her. Hereupon I saw the last drop of red blood fade away from the young Knight's sickly cheek, and it went to my heart to see him uplift his hands and implore her right humbly: "You know, Ursula, all that hath befallen me for your sake, and how hard a lot awaits me. Three times have I been plighted to you, my promised bride, and as many times cast off...."

"To spare you the like fate a fourth time; all good things being in threes!" she put in, mocking him. "Verily you have cured me of any desire ever to be your Dame, Sir Knight. And since meseems this day our speech is free and truthful, I am fain to confess that such a wish was ever far enough from me, and even when we stood betrothed. A strange thing is love! 'Here's to fair Margery!' one day, on every noble gentleman's lips; and on the morrow: 'Here's to sweet Ursula!' In some folks it grows inwardly, as it were a polypus, and of such, woe is me, am I. My love, if you would know the truth, my lord Baron von Welemisl, love such I have known I gave once for all to that man Herdegen Schopper; it has been his from the time when, in my short little skirts, I learnt to write; and so it has ever been, till the hour when worthy Dame Henneleinlein, the noble Junker's new cousin—it is enough to make one die of laughing!—when that illustrious lady whispered the truth in my ear that her intending kinsman had thrown me over, and, with me, old Im Hoff's wealth, for the sake of a scrivener's wench. And to think that as a boy he was wont to bring me posies, and wear my colors! Nay, and since that time he has shot many a fiery glance at me. Only lately he wrote to his uncle from Paris that he was minded to make me his wife. Ah, you may open your eyes wide, most respected every-one's-cousin Maud, and you likewise, prim and spotless Mistress Margery! Cross yourselves in the name of all the Saints! A dead wolf cannot bite, and as for my love for that man, I may boldly declare that it is dead and buried. But mark me," and she clapped her hand to her heaving bosom, "mark me, somewhat else hath made entrance here, with drums and trumpets and high jubilee: Hate! —I hate you, Herdegen, as I hate death, pestilence, and hell; and I hate you twice as much since your skill with the rapier brought the combat with the Brandenburger, into which I entrapped you, to so perverse an end."

Hereupon Cousin Maud, wild with rage herself, gripped her again by the arm to draw her forth from the chamber, but Ursula went on in a milder tone:

"Only a few moments longer, I pray you; for by the Blessed Virgin and all the Saints I swear that I would not have come hither at so late an hour but to deliver my message to Herdegen."

My cousin released her, and she drew forth a written paper and again enquired for Ann; howbeit my brother said that he did not purpose to call her in, and desired that she would give him the paper, if indeed it concerned him. To this she answered that he would presently know that much, inasmuch as it was her intent to read it to the company, only she would fain have had his fair mistress among the hearers. Howbeit she had a good loud voice, she thanked the Saints, and the doors in the Schoppers' house were scarce thicker than in other folks' houses. The letter in her hand had been given to her to deliver to Herdegen by the newlymade vicar of his Highness the Elector and Archbishop of Treves, who was lodged with the Tetzels. He had not been able to find him, no more than the Emperor's men-at-arms; so he had bidden her take good heed that she gave it into Junker Schopper's own hand. But verily she would do yet more, and spare him the pains of reading it.

Hereupon my brother, in great ire, bid her no longer keep that which was not her own; yet she refused, and whereas Herdegen seized her hand to wrench away the paper she shrieked out to the

Bohemian: "Give him his due, for a knave who offends maidens; that outcast for whom I scorned and misprized you! Help, help, if you are no churl!"

My brother nevertheless had already snatched the letter from her, and the Bohemian, who had laid his hand on his dagger, thought better of it as his eye met my look of warning.

It was a fearful moment of terror, and Ursula, whose hair had fallen loose, while her flashing blue eyes, full of hate, shot lightnings on one and another, stood clinging to the heavy dresser whereon our silver and glass vessels were displayed, and cried out as loudly as she could shout: "The letter is from his lady-love in Padua, the Marchesa Bianca Zorzi. That cunning swordsman's blade made her a widow, and now she bids him return to her embrace. The fond and ardent lady is in Venice, and her intent is to revel there in love and pleasure with her husband's murderer. And he—though he may have sworn a thousand vows to the scrivener's hussy—he will do the Italian Circe's bidding, and if he may escape her snares he will fall into those of another. Oh! I know him; and I feel in my soul that his fate will be to dally with one and another in delights and raptures, till the Saints fulfil my heart's chiefest desire, and he comes to despair and anguish and want, and the scrivener's wench breaks her heart under my very eyes with pining and sheer shame. Away, away, Herdegen Schopper! Go forth to joy and to misery! Go-with your pale black-haired mate. Revel and wallow, till you, who have trampled on this heart's true love, are brought low—as loathsome in the eyes of men as a leper and a beggar."

And she shook the dresser so that the precious glass cup which the German merchants of the Fondaco at Venice had given to my father at his departing, fell to the floor and was broken to pieces with a loud crash.

We had hearkened to her ravings as though spellbound and frozen; and when we at last took heart to put an end to her wild talk, lo, she was gone, and flying down the stairs with long strides.

Herdegen, who had turned pale, struggled to command himself. Cousin Maud, who had lost her breath with dismay, burst into loud weeping; the wild maid's curse had fallen heavy on her soul. I alone kept my senses, so far as to go to the window and look out at her. I saw her walking along, hanging her head; the serving man carried the lantern before her, and the Bohemian was speaking close in her ear.

When I came back into the chamber Cousin Maud had her arm round Herdegen, and was saying to him, with many tears, that the curse of the wicked had no power over a pious and faithful Christian; yet he quitted her in haste to seek Ann, who doubtless would have stayed in the next chamber, and perchance needed his succor. Howbeit the door was opened, and we could scarce believe our eyes when she came in with that same roguish smile which she was wont to wear when, in playing hide-and-seek, she had stolen home past the seeker, and she cried: "Thank the Virgin that the air is clear once more! You may laugh, but in truth I fled up to the very garret for sheer dread of Mistress Tetzl. Did she come to fetch her bridegroom?"

Herdegen could not refrain from smiling at this question, and we likewise did the same; even Cousin Maud, who till this moment had sat on the couch like one crushed, with her feet stretched out before her, made a face and cried: "To fetch him! Ursula who has caught the Bohemian! She is a monster! Were ever such doings seen in our good town?—And her mother was so wise, so worthy a woman! And the hussy is but nineteen!—Merciful Father, what will she be at forty or fifty, when most women only begin to be wicked!" And thus she went on for some while.

Ere long we forgot Ursula and all the hateful to-do, and passed the precious hours in much content, till after midnight, when the Pernharts sent to fetch Ann home. Herdegen and I would walk with her. After a grievous yet hopeful leave-taking I came home again, leaning on his arm, through the cool autumn night.

When I now admonished Herdegen as we walked, as to the fair Marchesa and her letter, he declared to me that in those evil weeks he had spent in bitter yearning as a serving man in the bee-keeper's hut, he had learned to know his own mind. Neither the Marchesa, whom he scorned from the bottom of his heart, inasmuch as, with all her beauty, she was full of craft and lies, no, nor event

Dame Venus herself could now turn him aside from the love and duty he had sworn to Ann. He would, indeed, take ship from Genoa rather than from Venice, were it not for shame of such fears of his own weakness, and that he longed once more to set eyes on our brother Kunz whom he had not seen for so long a space.

I found it hard to see clear in this matter. Yet could I not deem it wise to deny him the first chance of proving himself true and honest; likewise meseemed that our younger brother's presence would be a safe guard against temptation. Under the eye of our parent's pictures I bid him good night for the few hours till he should depart, and when I pointed up to them he understood me, and clasped me fondly in his arms saying: "Never fear, little mother Margery!"

We were with Herdegen again or ever it was morning. While we had been sleeping he had written a loving letter to my grand-uncle, who had yesterday forbidden him his presence, to bear witness to his duty and thankfulness.

The cocks still were crowing in the yards, and the country-folk were coming into town with asses and waggons, when I mounted my horse to ride forth with my brother. He was busied in the courtyard with the new serving-man he had hired, by reason that Epplein, who for safety's sake had not been suffered to go with him into hiding, had vanished as it were from the face of the earth. Nay, and we knew for what cause and reason, for Dame Henneleinlein had counselled the King's men to seize him, to the end that he might be put on the rack to give tidings of where his master lay hid. If they had caught him his stout limbs would have fared ill indeed; but the light-hearted varlet was a favorite with the serving men and wenchies of the court-folk, jolly at the wine cup and all manner of sport, and thus they had bestowed him away. And so, while we were living from day to day in great fear, an old charcoal wife would come in from the forest twice or thrice in every week and bring charcoal to the kitchen wench to sell, and albeit she was ever sent away, yet would she come again and ask many questions.

While we were yet tarrying for Herdegen to be ready the old wife came by with her cart, and when she had asked of some needful matters she pulled off her kerchief with a loud laugh, and lo, in her woman's weed, there stood Epplein and none other. Hereupon was much rejoicing and, in a few minutes, the crafty fellow was turned again into a sturdy riding man, albeit beardless.

Epplein's return helped Cousin Maud over the grief of leave-taking. Yet, when at last we must depart, it went hard with her. At the gate we were met by the Pernharts with Ann and Uncle Christian. My lord the chief magistrate likewise was there, to bear witness to Herdegen's departing; also Heinrich Trardorf, his best beloved schoolmate, who had ever been his faithful friend.

We had left the walls and moat of the town far behind us, when we heard swift horses at our heels, and Sir Franz, with two serving-men, joined the fellowship. My brother had soon found a place at Ann's side, and we went forward at an easy pace; and if they were minded to kiss, bending from their saddles, they need fear no witness, for the autumn mist was so thick that it hid every one from his nearest neighbor.

Thus we went forth as far as Lichtenhof, and while we there made halt to take a last leave, meseemed that Heaven was fain to send us a friendly promise. The mist parted on a sudden as at the signal of a magician, and before us lay the city with its walls, and towers, and shining roofs, overtopped by the noble citadel. Thus we parted in better cheer than we had deemed we might, and the lovers might yet for a long space signal to each other by the waving of hat and of kerchief.

## CHAPTER VII

Herdegen's departing marks my life's way with another mile-stone. All fears about him were over, and a great peace fell upon me.

I had learnt by experience that it was within my power to be mistress of any heart's griefs, and I could tell myself that dull sufferance of woe would have ill-pleased him whose judgment I most cared for. To remember him was what I best loved, and I earnestly desired to guide my steps as would have been his wish and will. In some degree I was able to do so, and Ann was my great helper.

My eyes and ears were opened again to what should befall in the world in which my lover had lived; all the more so as matters now came about in the land and on its borders which deeply concerned my own dear home and threatened it with great peril.

After the Diet was broken up, the Elector Frederick of Brandenburg was forced to take patience till the princes, lords, and mounted men-at-arms sent forth by the townships, five or six from each, could muster at his bidding to pursue the Hussites in Bohemia. One year was thus idly spent; albeit the Bohemian rebels meanwhile could every day use their weapons, and instead of waiting to be attacked marched forward to attack. Certain troops of the heretics had already crossed the borders, and our good town had to strengthen its walls and dig its moat deeper to make ready for storm and siege. Or ever the Diet had met, many hands had already been at work on these buildings; and in these days every man soul in Nuremberg, from the boys even to the grey-haired men, wielded the spade or the trowel. Every serving-man in every household, whether artisan or patrician—and ours with the rest—was bound to toil at digging, and our fine young masters found themselves compelled to work in sun or rain, or to order the others; and it hurt them no more than it did the Magister, whose feebleness and clumsiness did the works less benefit than the labor did to his frail body.

Wheresoever three men might be seen in talk, for sure it was of state-matters, and mostly of the Hussites. At first it would be of the King's message of peace; of the resistance made by the Elector Palatine, Ludwig, in the matter of receiving the ecclesiastical Elector of Mainz as Vicar-general of the Empire; of the same reverend Elector's loss of dignity at Boppard, and of the delay and mischief that must follow. Then it was noised abroad that the Margrave Frederick of Meissen, who now held the lands of the late departed Elector Albrecht of Saxony in fief from the King, and whose country was a strong bulwark against the Bohemians, was about to put an end to the abomination of heresy. Howbeit, neither he nor Duke Albrecht of Austria did aught to any good end against the foe; and matters went ill enough in all the Empire.

The Electors assembled at Bingen made great complaints of the King tarrying so far away, and with reason; and when he presently bid them to a Diet at Vienna they would not obey. The message of peace was laughed to scorn; and how much blood was shed to feed the soil of the realm in many and many a fight!

And what fate befell the army whereon so great hopes had been set? The courage and skill of the leader were all in vain; the vast multitude of which he was captain was made up of over many parts, all unlike, and each with its own chief; and the fury of the heretics scattered them abroad. Likewise among our peaceful citizens there was no small complaining, and with good cause, that a King should rule the Empire whose Realm of Hungary, with the perils that beset it from the Ottoman Turks, the Bohemians, and other foes, so filled his thoughts that he had neither time, nor mind, nor money to bestow due care on his German States. His treasury was ever empty; and what sums had the luckless war with Venice alone swallowed up! He had not even found the money needful to go to Rome to be crowned Emperor. He had failed to bring the contentious Princes of the Empire under one hat, so to speak; and whereas his father, Charles IV., had been called the Arch-stepfather of the German Empire, Sigismund, albeit a large-hearted, shrewd, and unresting soul, deserved a scarce better name,

inasmuch as that he, like the former sovereign, when he fell heir to his Bohemian fatherland, knew not how to deal even with that as a true father should.

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