

GEORG EBERS

MARGERY (GRED): A TALE
OF OLD NUREMBERG.
COMPLETE

Georg Ebers

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Old Nuremberg. Complete**

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TRANSLATOR'S NOTE:

In translating what is supposed to be a transcript into modern German of the language of Nuremberg in the fifteenth century, I have made no attempt to imitate English phraseology of the same date. The difficulty would in fact be insuperable to the writer and the annoyance to the reader almost equally great.

I have merely endeavored to avoid essentially modern words and forms of speech.

INTRODUCTION:

“PIETRO GIUSTINIANI, merchant, of Venice.” This was the signature affixed to his receipt by the little antiquary in the city of St. Mark, from whom I purchased a few stitched sheets of manuscript. What a name and title!

As I remarked on the splendor of his ancestry he slapped his pocket, and exclaimed, half in pride and half in lamentation:

“Yes, they had plenty of money; but what has become of it?”

“And have you no record of their deeds?” I asked the little man, who himself wore a moustache with stiff military points to it.

“Their deeds!” he echoed scornfully. “I wish they had been less zealous in their pursuit of fame and had managed their money matters better!—Poor child!”

And he pointed to little Marietta who was playing among the old books, and with whom I had already struck up a friendship. She this day displayed some strange appendage in the lobes of her ears, which on closer examination I found to be a twist of thread.

The child’s pretty dark head was lying confidentially against my arm and as, with my fingers, I felt this singular ornament, I heard, from behind the little desk at the end of the counter, her mother’s shrill voice in complaining accents: “Aye, Sir, it is a shame in a family which has given three saints to the Church—Saint Nicholas, Saint Anna, and Saint Eufemia, all three Giustinianis as you know—in a family whose sons have more than once worn a cardinal’s hat—that a mother, Sir, should be compelled to let her own child—But you are fond of the little one, Sir, as every one is hereabout. Heh, Marietta! What would you say if the gentleman were to give you a pair of ear-rings, now; real gold ear-rings I mean? Thread for ear-rings, Sir, in the ears of a Giustiniani! It is absurd, preposterous, monstrous; and a right-thinking gentleman like you, Sir, will never deny that.”

How could I neglect such a hint; and when I had gratified the antiquary’s wife, I could reflect with some pride that I might esteem myself a benefactor to a family which boasted of its descent from the Emperor Justinian, which had been called the ‘Fabia gens’ of Venice, and, in its day had given to the Republic great generals, far-seeing statesmen, and admirable scholars.

When, at length, I had to quit the city and took leave of the curiosity-dealer, he pressed my hand with heartfelt regret; and though the Signora Giustiniani, as she pocketed a tolerably thick bundle of paper money, looked at me with that kindly pity which a good woman is always ready to bestow on the inexperienced, especially when they are young, that, no doubt, was because the manuscript I had acquired bore such a dilapidated appearance. The margins of the thick old Nuremberg paper were eaten into by mice and insects, in many places black patches like tinder dropped away from the yellow pages; indeed, many passages of the once clear writing had so utterly faded that I scarcely hoped to see them made legible again by the chemist’s art. However, the contents of the document were so interesting and remarkable, so unique in relation to the time when it was written, that they irresistibly riveted my attention, and in studying them I turned half the night into day. There were nine separate parts. All, except the very last one, were in the same hand, and they seemed to have formed a single book before they were torn asunder. The cover and title-page were lost, but at the head of the first page these words were written in large letters: “The Book of my Life.” Then followed a long passage in crude verse, very much to this effect.

“What we behold with waking Eye
Can, to our judgment, never lie,
And what through Sense and Sight we gain.
Becometh part of Soul and Brain.
Look round the World in which you dwell

Nor, Snail-like, live within your Shell;
And if you see His World aright
The Lord shall grant you double Sight.
For, though your Mind and Soul be small,
If you but open them to all
The great wide World, they will expand
Those glorious Things to understand.
When Heart and Brain are great with Love
Man is most like the Lord above.
Look up to Him with patient Eye
Not on your own Infirmity.
In pious Trust yourself forget
For others only toil and fret,
Since all we do for fellow Men
With right good Will, shall be our Gain.
What if the Folk should call you Fool
Care not, but act by Virtue's Rule,
Contempt and Curses let them fling,
God's Blessing shields you from their Sting.
Grey is my Head but young my Heart;
In Nuremberg, ere I depart,
Children and Grandchildren, for you
I write this Book, and it is true."

MARGERY SCHOPPER.

Below the verses the text of the narrative began with these words: "In the yere of our Lord M/CCCC/lx/VI dyd I begynne to wrte in thys lytel Boke thys storie of my lyf, as I haue lyued it."

It was in her sixty-second year that the writer had first begun to note down her reminiscences. This becomes clear as we go on, but it may be gathered from the first lines on the second page which begins thus:

"I, Margery Schopper, was borne in the yere of our Lord M/CCCC/IV on a Twesday after 'Palmarum' Sondag, at foure houris after mydnyght.

Myn uncle Kristan Pfinzing was god sib to me in my chrystening. My fader, God assoyle his soul, was Franz Schopper, iclyped the Singer.

He dyed on a Monday after 'Laetare'—[The fourth Sunday in Lent.]— Sondag M/CCCC/IV. And he hadde to wyf Kristine Peheym whyche was my moder. Also she bare to hym my brethren Herdegen and Kunz Schopper.

My moder dyed in the vigil of Seint Kateryn M/CCCC/V. Thus was I refte of my moder whyle yet a babe; also the Lord broughte sorwe upon me in that of hys grace He callyd my fader out of thys worlde before that ever I sawe the lyght of dai."

These few lines, which I read in the little antiquary's shop, betrayed me to my ruin; for, in my delight at finding the daily journal of a German housewife of the beginning of the fifteenth century my heart overflowed; forgetting all prudence I laughed aloud, exclaiming "splendid," "wonderful," "what a treasure!" But it would have been beyond all human power to stand speechless, for, as I read on, I found things which far exceeded my fondest expectations. The writer of these pages had not been content, like the other chroniclers of her time and of her native town—such as Ulman Stromer, Andres Tucher and their fellows—to register notable facts without any connection, the family affairs, items of expenditure and mercantile measures of her day; she had plainly and candidly recorded everything

that had happened to her from her childhood to the close of her life. This Margery had inherited some of her father's artistic gifts; he is mentioned in Ulman Stromer's famous chronicle, where he is spoken of as "the Singer." It was to her mother, however, that she owed her bold spirit, for she was a Behaim, cousin to the famous traveller Behaim of Schwarzbach, whose mother is known to have been one of the Schopper family, daughter to Herdegen Schopper.

In the course of a week I had not merely read the manuscript, but had copied a great deal of what seemed to me best worth preservation, including the verses. I subsequently had good reason to be glad that I had taken so much pains, though travelling about at the time; for a cruel disaster befel the trunk in which the manuscript was packed, with other books and a few treasures, and which I had sent home by sea. The ship conveying them was stranded at the mouth of the Elbe and my precious manuscript perished miserably in the wreck.

The nine stitched sheets, of which the last was written by the hand of Margery Schopper's younger brother, had found their way to Venice—as was recorded on the last page—in the possession of Margery's great-grandson, who represented the great mercantile house of Im Hoff on the Fondaco, and who ultimately died in the City of St. Mark. When that famous firm was broken up the papers were separated from their cover and had finally fallen into the hands of the curiosity dealer of whom I bought them. And after surviving travels on land, risk of fire, the ravages of worms and the ruthlessness of man for four centuries, they finally fell a prey to the destructive fury of the waves; but my memory served me well as to the contents, and at my bidding was at once ready to aid me in restoring the narrative I had read. The copied portions were a valuable aid, and imagination was able to fill the gaps; and though it failed, no doubt, to reproduce Margery Schopper's memoirs phrase for phrase and word for word, I have on the whole succeeded in transcribing with considerable exactitude all that she herself had thought worthy to be rescued from oblivion. Moreover I have avoided the repetition of the mode of talk in the fifteenth century, when German was barely commencing to be used as a written language, since scholars, writers, and men of letters always chose the Latin tongue for any great or elegant intellectual work. The narrator's expressions would only be intelligible to a select few, and, I should have done my Margery injustice, had I left the ideas and descriptions, whose meaning I thoroughly understood, in the clumsy form she had given them. The language of her day is a mirror whose uneven surface might easily reflect the fairest picture in blurred or distorted outlines to modern eyes. Much, indeed which most attracted me in her descriptions will have lost its peculiar charm in mine; as to whether I have always supplemented her correctly, that must remain an open question.

I have endeavored to throw myself into the mind and spirit of my Margery and repeat her tale with occasional amplification, in a familiar style, yet with such a choice of words as seems suitable to the date of her narrative. Thus I have perpetuated all that she strove to record for her descendants out of her warm heart and eager brain; though often in mere outline and broken sentences, still, in the language of her time and of her native province.

BOOK 1

CHAPTER I

I, MARGERY SCHOPPER, was born in the year of our Lord 1404, on the Tuesday after Palm Sunday. My uncle Christan Pfinzing of the Burg, a widower whose wife had been a Schopper, held me at the font. My father, God have his soul, was Franz Schopper, known as Franz the Singer. He died in the night of the Monday after Laetare Sunday in 1404, and his wife my mother, God rest her, whose name was Christine, was born a Behaim; she had brought him my two brothers Herdegen and Kunz, and she died on the eve of Saint Catharine's day 1404; so that I lost my mother while I was but a babe, and God dealt hardly with me also in taking my father to Himself in His mercy, before I ever saw the light.

Instead of a loving father, such as other children have, I had only a grave in the churchyard, and the good report of him given by such as had known him; and by their account he must have been a right merry and lovable soul, and a good man of business both in his own affairs and in those pertaining to the city. He was called "the Singer" because, even when he was a member of the town-council, he could sing sweetly and worthily to the lute. This art he learned in Lombardy, where he had been living at Padua to study the law there; and they say that among those outlandish folk his music brought him a rich reward in the love of the Italian ladies and damsels. He was a well-favored man, of goodly stature and pleasing to look upon, as my brother Herdegen his oldest son bears witness, since it is commonly said that he is the living image of his blessed father; and I, who am now an old woman, may freely confess that I have seldom seen a man whose blue eyes shone more brightly beneath his brow, or whose golden hair curled thicker over his neck and shoulders than my brother's in the high day of his happy youth.

He was born at Eastertide, and the Almighty blessed him with a happy temper such as he bestows only on a Sunday-child. He, too, was skilled in the art of singing, and as my other brother, my playmate Kunz, had also a liking for music and song, there was ever a piping and playing in our orphaned and motherless house, as if it were a nest of mirthful grasshoppers, and more childlike gladness and happy merriment reigned there than in many another house that rejoices in the presence of father and mother. And I have ever been truly thankful to the Almighty that it was so; for as I have often seen, the life of children who lack a mother's love is like a day when the sun is hidden by storm-clouds. But the merciful God, who laid his hand on our mother's heart, filled that of another woman with a treasure of love towards me and my brothers.

Our cousin Maud, a childless widow, took upon herself to care for us. As a maid, and before she had married her departed husband, she had been in love with my father, and then had looked up to my mother as a saint from Heaven, so she could have no greater joy than to tell us tales about our parents; and when she did so her eyes would be full of tears, and as every word came straight from her heart it found its way straight to ours; and as we three sat round, listening to her, besides her own two eyes there were soon six more wet enough to need a handkerchief.

Her gait was heavy and awkward, and her face seemed as though it had been hewn out of coarse wood, so that it was a proper face to frighten children; even when she was young they said that her appearance was too like a man and devoid of charms, and for that reason my father never heeded her love for him; but her eyes were like open windows, and out of them looked everything that was good and kind and loving and true, like angels within. For the sake of those eyes you forgot all else; all that was rough in her, and her wide nose with the deep dent just in the middle, and such hair on her lip as many a young stripling might envy her.

And Sebald Kresz knew very well what he was about when he took to wife Maud Im Hoff when he was between sixty and seventy years of age; and she had nothing to look forward to in life as she stood at the altar with him, but to play the part of nurse to a sickly perverse old man. But to Maud it seemed as fair a lot to take care of a fellow-creature as it is to many another to be nursed and cherished; and it was the reward of her faithful care that she could keep the old man from the clutch of Death for full ten years longer. After his decease she was left a well-to-do widow; but instead of taking thought for herself she at once entered on a life of fresh care, for she undertook the duty of filling the place of mother to us three orphans.

As I grew up she would often instruct me in her kind voice, which was as deep as the bass pipe of an organ, that she had set three aims before her in bringing us up, namely: to make us good and Godfearing; to teach us to agree among ourselves so that each should be ready to give everything up to the others; and to make our young days as happy as possible. How far she succeeded in the first I leave to others to judge; but a more united family than we ever were I should like any man to show me, and because it was evident from a hundred small tokens how closely we clung together folks used to speak of us as “the three links,” especially as the arms borne by the Schoppers display three rings linked to form a chain.

As for myself, I was the youngest and smallest of the three links, and yet I was the middle one; for if ever it fell that Herdegen and Kunz had done one thing or another which led them to disagree and avoid or defy each other, they always came together again by seeking me and through my means. But though I thus sometimes acted as peacemaker it is no credit to me, since I did not bring them together out of any virtue or praiseworthy intent, but simply because I could not bear to stand alone, or with only one ring linked to me.

Alas! how far behind me lies the bright, happy youth of which I now write! I have reached the top of life's hill, nay, I have long since overstepped the ridge; and, as I look back and think of all I have seen and known, it is not to the end that I may get wisdom for myself whereby to do better as I live longer. My old bones are stiff and set; it would be vain now to try to bend them. No, I write this little book for my own pleasure, and to be of use and comfort to my children and grandchildren. May they avoid the rocks on which I have bruised my feet, and where I have walked firmly on may they take example by an old woman's brave spirit, though I have learned in a thousand ways that no man gains profit by any experience other than his own.

So I will begin at the beginning.

I could find much to tell of my happy childhood, for then everything seems new; but it profits not to tell of what every one has known in his own life, and what more can a Nuremberg child have to say of her early growth and school life than ever another. The blades in one field and the trees in one wood share the same lot without any favour. It is true that in many ways I was unlike other children; for my cousin Maud would often say that I would not abide rule as beseems a maid, and Herdegen's lament that I was not born a boy still sounds in my ears when I call to mind our wild games. Any one who knows the window on the first floor, at the back of our house, from which I would jump into the courtyard to do as my brothers did, would be fairly frightened, and think it a wonder that I came out of it with whole bones; but yet I was not always minded to riot with the boys, and from my tenderest years I was a very thoughtful little maid. But there were things; in my young life very apt to sharpen my wits.

We Schoppers are nearly allied with every worshipful family in the town, or of a rank to sit in the council and bear a coat of arms; these being, in fact, in Nuremberg, the class answering to the families of the Signoria in Venice, whose names are enrolled in the Libro d'Oro. What the Barberighi, the Foscari, the Grimaldi, the Giustiniani and the like, are there, the families of Stromer, Behaim, Im Hoff, Tucher, Kresz, Baumgartner, Pfinzing, Pukheimer, Holzschuher, and so forth, are with us; and the Schoppers certainly do not rank lowest on the list. We who hold ourselves entitled to bear arms, to ride in tournaments, and take office in the Church, and who have a right to call ourselves nobles

and patricians, are all more or less kith and kin. Wherever in Nuremberg there was a fine house we could find there an uncle and aunt, cousins and kinsmen, or at least godparents, and good friends of our deceased parents. Wherever one of them might chance to meet us, even if it were in the street, he would say: "Poor little orphans! God be good to the fatherless!" and tears would sparkle in the eyes of many a kindhearted woman. Even the gentlemen of the Council—for most of the elders of our friends were members of it—would stroke my fair hair and look at me as pitifully as though I were some poor sinner for whom there could be no mercy in the eyes of the judges of a court of justice.

Why was it that men deemed me so unfortunate when I knew no sorrow and my heart was as gay as a singing bird? I could not ask cousin Maud, for she was sorely troubled if I had but a finger-ache, and how could I tell her that I was such a miserable creature in the eyes of other folks? But I presently found out for myself why and wherefore they pitied me; for seven who called me fatherless, seventy would speak of me as motherless when they addressed me with pity. Our misfortune was that we had no mother. But was there not Cousin Maud, and was not she as good as any mother? To be sure she was only a cousin, and she must lack something of what a real mother feels.

And though I was but a heedless, foolish child I kept my eyes open and began to look about me. I took no one into the secret but my brothers, and though my elder brother chid me, and bid me only be thankful to our cousin for all her goodness, I nevertheless began to watch and learn.

There were a number of children at the Stromers' house—the Golden Rose was its name—and they were still happy in having their mother. She was a very cheerful young woman, as plump as a cherry, and pink and white like blood on snow; and she never fixed her gaze on me as others did, but would frolic with me or scold me sharply when I did any wrong. At the Muffels, on the contrary, the mistress was dead, and the master had not long after brought home another mother to his little ones, a stepmother, Susan, who was my maid, was wont to call her; and such a mother was no more a real mother than our good cousin—I knew that much from the fairy tales to which I was ever ready to hearken. But I saw this very stepmother wash and dress little Elsie, her husband's youngest babe and not her own, and lull her till she fell asleep; and she did it right tenderly, and quite as she ought. And then, when the child was asleep she kissed it, too, on its brow and cheeks.

And yet Mistress Stromer, of the Golden-Rose House, did differently; for when she took little Clare that was her own babe out of the water, and laid it on warm clouts on the swaddling board, she buried her face in the sweet, soft flesh, and kissed the whole of its little body all over, before and behind, from head to foot, as if it were all one sweet, rosy mouth; and they both laughed with hearty, loving merriment, as the mother pressed her lips against the babe's white, clean skin and trumpeted till the room rang, or clasped it, wrapped in napkins to her warm breast, as if she could hug it to death. And she broke into a loud, strange laugh, and cried as she fondled it: "My treasure, my darling, my God-sent jewel! My own, my own—I could eat thee!"

No, Mistress Muffel never behaved so to Elsie, her husband's babe. Notwithstanding I knew right well that Cousin Maud had been just as fond of me as Dame Stromer of her own babes, and so far our cousin was no way different from a real mother. And I said as much to myself, when I laid me down to sleep in my little white bed at night, and my cousin came and folded her hands as I folded mine and, after we had said the prayers for the Angelus together, as we did every evening, she laid her head by the side of mine, and pressed my baby face to her own big face. I liked this well enough, and I whispered in her ear: "Tell me, Cousin Maud, are you not my real, true mother?"

And she hastily replied, "In my heart I am, most truly; and you are a very lucky maid, my Margery, for instead of only one mother you have two: me, here below, to care for you and foster you, and the other up among the angels above, looking down on you and beseeching the all-gracious Virgin who is so nigh to her, to keep your little heart pure, and to preserve you from all ill; nay, perhaps she herself is wearing a glory and a heavenly crown. Look at her face." And Cousin Maud held up the lamp so that the light fell on a large picture. My eyes beheld the lovely portrait in front of me, and meseemed it looked at me with a deep gaze and stretched out loving arms to me. I sat

up in my bed; the feelings which filled my little heart overflowed my lips, and I said in a whisper: “Oh, Cousin Maud! Surely my mammy might kiss me for once, and fondle me as Mistress Stromer does her little Clare.”

Cousin Maud set the lamp on the table, and without a word she lifted me out of bed and held me up quite close to the face of the picture; and I understood. My lips softly touched the red lips on the canvas; and, as I was all the happier, I fancied that my mother in Heaven must be glad too.

Then my cousin sighed: “Well, well!” and murmured other words to herself; she laid me in the bed again, tucked the coverlet tightly round me as I loved to have it, gave me another kiss, waited till I had settled my head on the pillow, and whispered: “Now go to sleep and dream of your sainted mother.”

She quitted the room; but she had left the lamp, and as soon as I was alone I looked once more at the picture, which showed me my mother in right goodly array. She had a rose on her breast, her golden fillet looked like the crown of the Queen of Heaven, and in her robe of rich, stiff brocade she was like some great Saint. But what seemed to me more heavenly than all the rest was her rose and white young face, and the sweet mouth which I had touched with my lips. Oh if I had but once had the happiness of kissing that mouth in life! A sudden feeling glowed in my heart, and an inward voice told me that a thousand kisses from Cousin Maud would never be worth one single kiss from that lovely young mother, and that I had indeed lost almost as much as my pitying friends had said. And I could not help sorrowing, weeping for a long time; I felt as though I had lost just what was best and dearest, and for the first time I saw that my good cousin was right ugly as other folks said, and my silly little head conceived that a real mother must be fair to look upon, and that however kind any one else might be she could never be so gracious and lovable.

And so I fell asleep; and in my dreams the picture came towards me out of the frame and took me in her arms as Madonna takes her Holy Child, and looked at me with a gaze as if all the love on earth had met in those eyes. I threw my arms round her neck and waited for her to fondle and play with me like Mistress Stromer with her little Clare; but she gently and sadly shook her head with the golden crownlet, and went up to Cousin Maud and set me in her lap.

“I have never forgot that dream, and often in my prayers have I lifted up my heart to my sainted mother, and cried to her as to the blessed Virgin and Saint Margaret, my name-saint; and how often she has heard me and rescued me in need and jeopardy! As to my cousin, she was ever dearer to me from that night; for had not my own mother given me to her, and when folks looked at me pitifully and bewailed my lot, I could laugh in my heart and think: ‘If only you knew! Your children have only one mother, but we have two; and our own real mother is prettier than any one’s, while the other, for all that she is so ugly, is the best.’”

It was the compassion of folks that first led me to such thoughts, and as I grew older I began to deem that their pity had done little good to my young soul. Friends are ever at hand to comfort every job; but few are they who come to share his heaviness, all the more so because all men take pleasure in comparing their own fair lot with the evil lot of others. Compassion—and I am the last to deny it—is a noble and right healing grace; but those who are so ready to extend it should be cautious how they do so, especially in the case of a child, for a child is like a sapling which needs light, and those who darken the sun that shines on it sin against it, and hinder its growth. Instead of bewailing it, make it glad; that is the comfort that befits it.

I felt I had discovered a great and important secret and I was eager to make our sainted mother known to my brothers; but they had found her already without any aid from their little sister. I told first one and then the other all that stirred within me, and when I spoke to Herdegen, the elder, I saw at once that it was nothing new to him. Kunz, the younger, I found in the swing; he flew so high that I thought he would fling himself out, and I cried to him to stop a minute; but, as he clutched the rope tighter and pulled himself together to stand firm on the board, he cried: “Leave me now, Margery; I want to go up, up; up to Heaven—up to where mother is!”

That was enough for me; and from that hour we often spoke together of our sainted mother, and Cousin Maud took care that we should likewise keep our father in mind. She had his portrait—as she had had my mother’s—brought from the great dining-room, where it had hung, into the large children’s room where she slept with me. And this picture, too, left its mark on my after-life; for when I had the measles, and Master Paul Rieter, the town physician and our doctor, came to see me, he stayed a long time, as though he could not bear to depart, standing in front of the portrait; and when he turned to me again, his face was quite red with sorrowful feeling—for he had been a favorite friend of my father, at Padua—and he exclaimed: “What a fortunate child art thou, little Margery!”

I must have looked at him puzzled enough, for no one had ever esteemed me fortunate, unless it were Cousin Maud or the Waldstromers in the forest; and Master Paul must have observed my amazement, for he went on. “Yea, a happy child art thou; for so are all babes, maids or boys, who come into the world after their father’s death.” As I gazed into his face, no less astonished than before, he laid the gold knob of his cane against his nose and said: “Remember, little simpleton, the good God would not be what he is, would not be a man of honor—God forgive the words—if he did not take a babe whom He had robbed of its father before it had seen the light or had one proof of his love under His own special care. Mark what I say, child. Is it a small thing to be the ward of a guardian who is not only Almighty but true above all truth?” And those words have followed me through all my life till this very hour.

CHAPTER II

Thus passed our childhood, as I have already said, in very great happiness; and by the time that my brothers had left the leading strings far behind them, and were studying their 'Donatus', Cousin Maud was teaching me to read and write, and that with much mirth and the most frolicsome ways. For instance, she would stamp four copies of each letter out of sweet honey-cakes, and when I knew them well she gave me these tiny little A. B. C. cakes, and one I ate myself, and gave the others to my brothers, or Susan, or my cousin. Often I put them in my satchel to carry them into the woods with me, and give them to my Cousin Gotz's favorite hound or his cross-beak; for he himself did not care for sweets. I shall have many things to tell of him and the forest; even when I was very small it was my greatest joy to be told that we were going to the woods, for there dwelt the dearest and most faithful of all our kinsmen: my uncle Waldstromer and his family. The stately hunting-lodge in which he dwelt as head forester of the Lorenzerwald in the service of the Emperor and of our town, had greater joys for me than any other, since not only were there the woods with all their delights and wonders, but also, besides many hounds, a number of strange beasts, and other pastimes such as a town child knows little of.

But what I most loved was the only son of my uncle and aunt Waldstromer, for whose dog I kept my cake letters; for though Cousin Gotz was older than I by eleven years, he nevertheless did not scorn me, but whenever I asked him to show me this or that, or teach me some light woodland craft, he would leave his elders to please me.

When I was six years old I went to the forest one day in a scarlet velvet hood, and after that he ever called me his little "Red riding-hood," and I liked to be called so; and of all the boys and lads I ever met among my brothers' friends or others I deemed none could compare with Gotz; my guileless heart was so wholly his that I always mentioned his name in my little prayers.

Till I was nine we had gone out into the forest three or four times in each year to pass some weeks; but after this I was sent to school, and as Cousin Maud took it much to heart, because she knew that my father had set great store by good learning, we paid such visits more rarely; and indeed, the strict mistress who ruled my teaching would never have allowed me to break through my learning for pastime's sake.

Sister Margaret, commonly called the Carthusian nun, was the name of the singular woman who was chosen to be my teacher. She was at once the most pious and learned soul living; she was Prioress of a Carthusian nunnery and had written ten large choirbooks, besides others. Though the rule of her order forbade discourse, she was permitted to teach.

Oh, how I trembled when Cousin Maud first took me to the convent.

As a rule my tongue was never still, unless it were when Herdegen sang to me, or thought aloud, telling me his dreams of what he would do when he had risen to be chancellor, or captain-in chief of the Imperial army, and had found a count's or a prince's daughter to carry home to his grand castle. Besides, the wild wood was a second home to me, and now I was shut up in a convent where the silence about me crushed me like a too tight bodice. The walls of the vast antechamber, where I was left to wait, were covered with various texts in Latin, and several times repeated were these words under a skull.

"Bitter as it is to live a Carthusian, it is right sweet to die one."

There was a crucifix in a shrine, and so much bright red blood flowed from the Crown of Thorns and the Wounds that the Sacred Body was half covered with it, and I was sore afraid at the sight—oh I can find no words for it! And all the while one nun after another glided through the chamber in silence, and with bowed head, her arms folded, and never so much as lifting an eye to look at me.

It was in May; the day was fine and pleasant, but I began to shiver, and I felt as if the Spring had bloomed and gone, and I had suddenly forgotten how to laugh and be glad. Presently a cat stole

in, leapt on to the bench where I sat, and arched her back to rub up against me; but I drew away, albeit I commonly laved to play with animals; for it glared at me strangely with its green eyes, and I had a sudden fear that it would turn into a werewolf and do me a hurt.

At length the door opened, and a woman in nun's weeds came in with my cousin; she was the taller by a head. I had never seen so tall a woman, but the nun was very thin, too, and her shoulders scarce broader than my own. Ere long, indeed, she stooped a good deal, and as time went on I saw her ever with her back bent and her head bowed. They said she had some hurt of the back-bone, and that she had taken this bent shape from writing, which she always did at night.

At first I dared not look up in her face, for my cousin had told me that with her I must be very diligent, that idleness never escaped her keen eyes; and Gotz Waldstromer knew the meaning of the Latin motto with which she began all her writings: "Beware lest Satan find thee idle!" These words flashed through my mind at this moment; I felt her eye fixed upon me, and I started as she laid her cold, thin fingers on my brow and firmly, but not ungently, made me lift my drooping head. I raised my eyes, and how glad I was when in her pale, thin face I saw nothing but true, sweet good will.

She asked me in a low, clear voice, though hardly above a whisper, how old I was, what was my name, and what I had learnt already. She spoke in brief sentences, not a word too little or too many; and she ever set me my tasks in the same manner; for though, by a dispensation, she might speak, she ever bore in mind that at the Last Day we shall be called to account for every word we utter.

At last she spoke of my sainted parents, but she only said: "Thy father and mother behold thee ever; therefore be diligent in school that they may rejoice in thee.—To-morrow and every morning at seven." Then she kissed me gently on my head, bowed to my cousin without a word, and turned her back upon us. But afterwards, as I walked on in the open air glad to be moving, and saw the blue sky and the green meadows once more, and heard the birds sing and the children at play, I felt as it were a load lifted from my breast; but I likewise felt the tall, silent nun's kiss, and as if she had given me something which did me honor.

Next morning I went to school for the first time; and whereas it is commonly the part of a child's godparents only to send it parcels of sweetmeats when it goes to school, I had many from various kinsfolks and other of our friends, because they pitied me as a hapless orphan.

I thought more of my riches, and how to dispense them, than of school and tasks; and as my cousin would only put one parcel into my little satchel I stuffed another—quite a little one, sent me by rich mistress Grosz, with a better kind of sweets—into the wallet which hung from my girdle.

On the way I looked about at the folks to see if they observed how I had got on, and my little heart beat fast as I met my cousin Gotz in front of Master Pernhart's brass-smithy. He had come from the forest to live in the town, that he might learn book-keeping under the tax-gatherers. We greeted each other merrily, and he pulled my plait of hair and went on his way, while I felt as if this meeting had brought me good luck indeed.

In school of course I had to forget such follies at once; for among Sister Margaret's sixteen scholars I was far below most of them, not, indeed in stature, for I was well-grown for my years, but in age and learning and this I was to discover before the first hour was past.

Fifteen of us were of the great city families, and this day, being the first day of the school-term, we were all neatly clad in fine woollen stuffs of Florence or of Flanders make, and colored knitted hose. We all had fine lace ruffs round the cuffs of our tight sleeves and the square cut fronts of our bodices; each little maid wore a silken ribbon to tie her plaits, and almost all had gold rings in her ears and a gold pin at her breast or in her girdle. Only one was in a simple garb, unlike the others, and she, notwithstanding her weed was clean and fitting, was arrayed in poor, grey home spun. As I looked on her I could not but mind me of Cinderella; and when I looked in her face, and then at her feet to see whether they were as neat and as little as in the tale, I saw that she had small ankles and sweet little shoes; and as for her face, I deemed I had never seen one so lovely and at the same time so strange to me. Yea, she seemed to have come from another world than this that I and the others

lived in; for we were light or brown haired, with blue or grey eyes, and healthy red and white faces; while Cinderella had a low forehead and with big dark eyes strange, long, fine silky lashes; and heavy plaits of black hair hung down her back.

Ursula Tetzl was accounted by the lads the comeliest maiden of us all; and I knew full well that the flower she wore in her bodice had been given to her by my brother Herdegen early that morning, because he had chosen her for his “Lady,” and said she was the fairest; but as I looked at her beside this stranger I deemed that she was of poorer stuff.

Moreover Cinderella was a stranger to me, and all the others I knew well, but I had to take patience for a whole hour ere I could ask who this fair Cinderella was, for Sister Margaret kept her eye on us, and so long as I was taught by her, no one at any time made so bold as to speak during lessons or venture on any pastime.

At last, in a few minutes for rest, I asked Ursula Tetzl, who had come to the convent school for a year past. She put out her red nether-lip with a look of scorn and said the new scholar had been thrust among us but did not belong to the like of us. Sister Margaret, though of a noble house herself, had forgot what was due to us and our families, and had taken in this grey hat out of pity. Her father was a simple clerk in the Chancery office and was accountant to the convent for some small wage. His name was Veit Spiesz, and she had heard her father say that the scribe was the son of a simple lute-player and could hardly earn enough to live. He had formerly served in a merchant’s house at Venice. There he had wed an Italian woman, and all his children, which were many, had, like her, hair and eyes as black as the devil. For the sake of a “God repay thee!” this maid, named Ann, had been brought to mix with us daughters of noble houses. “But we will harry her out,” said Ursula, “you will see!”

This shocked me sorely, and I said that would be cruel and I would have no part in such a matter; but Ursula laughed and said I was yet but a green thing, and turned away to the window-shelf where all the new-comers had laid out their sweetmeats at the behest of the eldest or first of the class; for, by old custom, all the sweetmeats brought by the novices on the first day were in common.

All the party crowded round the heap of sweetmeats, which waxed greater and greater, and I was standing among the others when I saw that the scribe’s daughter Ann, Cinderella, was standing lonely and hanging her head by the tiled stove at the end of the room. I forthwith hastened to her, pressed the little packet which Mistress Grosz had given me into her hand—for I had it still hidden in my poke—and, whispered to her: “I had two of them, little Ann; make haste and pour them on the heap.”

She gave me a questioning look with her great eyes, and when she saw that I meant it truly she nodded, and there was something in her tearful look which I never can forget; and I mind, too, that when I passed the little packet into her hand it seemed that I, and not she, had received the favor.

She gave the sweetmeats she had taken from me to the eldest, and spoke not a word, and did not seem to mark that they all mocked at the smallness of the packet. But soon enough their scorn was turned to glee and praises; for out of Cinderella’s parcel such fine sweetmeats fell on to the heap as never another one had brought with her, and among them was a little phial of attar of roses from the Levant.

At first Ann had cast an anxious look at me, then she seemed as though she cared not; but when the oil of roses came to light she took it firmly in her hand to give to me. But Ursula cried out: “Nay. Whatsoever the new-comers bring is for all to share in common!” Notwithstanding, Ann laid her hand on mine, which already held the phial, and said boldly: “I give this to Margery, and I renounce all the rest.”

And there was not one to say her nay, or hinder her; and when she refused to eat with them, each one strove to press upon her so much as fell to her share.

When Sister Margaret came back into the room she looked to find us in good order and holding our peace; and while we awaited her Ann whispered to me, as though to put herself right in my eyes: "I had a packet of sweetmeats; but there are four little ones at home."

Cousin Maud was waiting at the convent gate to take me home. As I was setting forth at good speed, hand in hand with my new friend, she looked at the little maid's plain garb from top to toe, and not kindly. And she made me leave hold, but yet as though it were by chance, for she came between us to put my hood straight. Then she busied herself with my neckkerchief and whispered in my ear: "Who is that?"

So I replied: "Little Ann;" and when she went on to ask who her father might be, I told her she was a scrivener's daughter, and was about to speak of her with hearty good will, when my cousin stopped me by saying to Ann: "God save you child; Margery and I must hurry." And she strove to get me on and away; but I struggled to be free from her, and cried out with the wilful pride which at that time I was wont to show when I thought folks would hinder that which seemed good and right in my eyes: "Little Ann shall come with us."

But the little maid had her pride likewise, and said firmly: "Be dutiful, Margery; I can go alone." At this Cousin Maud looked at her more closely, and thereupon her eyes had the soft light of good will which I loved so well, and she herself began to question Ann about her kinsfolk. The little maid answered readily but modestly, and when my Cousin understood that her father was a certain writer in the Chancery of whom she had heard a good report, she was softer and more gentle, so that when I took hold again of Ann's little hand she let it pass, and presently, at parting, kissed her on the brow and bid her carry a greeting to her worthy father.

Now, when I was alone with Cousin Maud and gave her to understand that I loved the scribe's little daughter and wished for no dearer friend, she answered gravely; "Little maids can hold no conversation with any but those whose mothers meet in each other's houses. Take patience till I can speak to Sister Margaret." So when my Cousin went out in the afternoon I tarried in the most anxious expectation; but she came home with famous good tidings, and thenceforward Ann was a friend to whom I clung almost as closely as to my brothers. And which of us was the chief gainer it would be hard to say, for whereas I found in her a trusted companion to whom I might impart every thing which was scarce worthy of my brothers' or my Cousin's ears, and foremost of all things my childish good-will for my Cousin Gotz and love of the Forest, to her the place in my heart and in our house were as a haven of peace when she craved rest after the heavy duties which, for all she was so young, she had already taken upon herself.

CHAPTER III

True it is that the class I learnt in at the convent was under the strictest rule, and that my teacher was a Carthusian nun; and yet I take pleasure in calling to mind the years when my spirit enjoyed the benefit of schooling with friendly companions and by the side of my best friend. Nay, even in the midst of the silent dwelling of the speechless Sisters, right merry laughter might be heard during the hours of rest, and in spite of the thick walls of the class-room it reached the nuns' ears. Albeit at first I was stricken with awe, and shy in their presence, I soon became familiar with their strange manner of life, and there was many an one whom I learnt truly to love: with some, too, we could talk and jest right merrily, for they, to be sure, had good ears, and we, were not slow in learning the language of their eyes and fingers.

As concerning the rule of silence no one, to my knowledge, ever broke it in the presence of us little ones, save only Sister Renata, and she was dismissed from the convent; yet, as I waxed older, I could see that the nuns were as fain to hear any tidings of the outer life that might find a way into the cloister as though there was nothing they held more dear than the world which they had withdrawn from by their own free choice.

For my part, I have ever been, and remain to the end, one of those least fitted for the Carthusian habit, notwithstanding that Sister Margaret would paint the beatitudes and the purifying power of her Order in fair and tempting colors. In the hours given up to sacred teaching, when she would shed out upon us the overflowing wealth and abundant grace of her loving spirit—insomuch that she won not less than four souls of our small number to the sisterhood—she was wont and glad to speak of this matter, and would say that there was a heavenly spirit living and moving in every human breast. That it told us, with the clear and holy voice of angels, what was divine and true, but that the noise of the world and our own vain imaginings sounded louder and would not suffer us to hear. But that they who took upon them the Carthusian rule and hearkened to it speechless, in a silent home, lending no ear to distant outer voices, but only to those within, would ere long learn to mark the heavenly voice with the inward ear and know its warning. That voice would declare to them the glory and the will of the Most High God, and reveal the things that are hidden in such wise as that even here below he should take part in the joys of paradise.

But, for all that I never was a Carthusian nun, and that my tongue was ever apt to run too freely, I conceive that I have found the Heavenly Spirit in the depths of my own soul and heard its voice; but in truth this has befallen me most clearly, and with most joy, when my heart has been most filled with that worldly love which the Carthusian Sisters shut out with a hundred doors. And again, when I have been moved by that love towards my neighbor which is called Charity, and wearied myself out for him, sparing nothing that was my own, I have felt those divine emotions plainly enough in my breast.

The Sister bid us to question her at all times without fear, and I was ever the foremost of us all to plague her with communings. Of a certainty she could not at all times satisfy my soul, which thirsted for knowledge, though she never failed to calm it; for I stood firm in the faith, and all she could tell me of God's revelation to man I accepted gladly, without doubt or cavil. She had taught us that faith and knowledge are things apart, and I felt that there could be no more peace for my soul if I suffered knowledge to meddle with faith.

Led by her, I saw the Saviour as love incarnate; and that the love which He brought into the world was still and ever a living thing working after His will, I strove to confess with my thinking mind. But I beheld even the Archbishops and Bishops go forth to battle, and shed the blood of their fellow men with vengeful rage; I saw Pope excommunicate Pope—for the great Schism only came to an end while I was yet at school; peaceful cities in their sore need bound themselves by treaties, under our eyes, for defence against Christian knights and lords. The robber bands of the great nobles plundered merchants on the Emperor's highway, though they were of the same creed, while the citizens strove to

seize the strongholds of the knights. We heard of many more letters of defiance than of peacemaking and friendship. Even the burgesses of our good Christian town—could not the love taught by the Redeemer prevail even among them? And as with the great so with the simple; for was it love alone that reigned among us maidens in a Christian school? Nay, verily; for never shall I forget how that Ursula Tetzl, and in fellowship with her a good half of the others, pursued my sweet, sage Ann, the most diligent and best of us all, to drive her out of our midst; but in vain, thanks to Sister Margaret's upright justice. Nay, the shrewish plotters were fain at last to see the scrivener's daughter uplifted to be our head, and this compelled them to bend their pride before her.

All this and much more I would say to the good Sister; nay, and I made so bold as to ask her whether Christ's behest that we should love our enemy were not too high for attainment by the spirit of man. This made her grave and thoughtful; yet she found no lack of comforting words, and said that the Lord had only showed the way and the end. That men had turned sadly from both; but that many a stream wandered through divers windings from the path to its goal, the sea, before it reached it; and that mankind was wondrous like the stream, for, albeit they even now rend each other in bloody fights, the day will come when foe shall offer to foe the palm of peace, and when there shall be but one fold on earth and one Shepherd.

But my anxious questioning, albeit I was but a child, had without doubt troubled her pure and truthful spirit. It was in Passion week, of the fifth year of my school-life—and ever through those years she had become more bent and her voice had sunk lower, so that many a time we found it hard to hear her—that it fell that she could no longer quit her cell; and she sent me a bidding to go to her bedside, and with me only two of us all: to wit my Ann, and Elsa Ebner, a right good child and a diligent bee in her work.

And it befell that as Sister Margaret on her deathbed bid us farewell for ever, with many a God speed and much good council for the rest likewise, her heart waxed soft and she went on to speak of the love each Christian soul oweth to his neighbor and eke to his enemy. She fixed her eye in especial on me, and confessed with her pale lips that she herself had oftentimes found it hard to love evil-minded adversaries and those whose ways had been contrary to hers, as the law of the Saviour bid her. To those young ones among us who had made their minds up to take the veil she had, ere this, more especially shown what was needful; for their way lay plain before them, to walk as followers of Christ how bitter soever it might be to their human nature; but we were bound to live in the world, and she could but counsel us to flee from hate as the soul's worst foe and the most cunning of all the devils. But an if it should befall that our heart could not be subdued after a brave struggle to love such or such an one, then ought we to strive at least to respect all that was good and praiseworthy in him, inasmuch as we should ever find something worthy of honor even in the most froward and least pleasing to ourselves. And these words I have ever kept in mind, and many times have they given me pause, when the hot blood of the Schoppers has bid me stoop and pick up a stone to fling at my neighbor.

No longer than three days after she had thus bidden us to her side, Sister Margaret entered into her rest; she had been our strait but gentle teacher, and her learning was as far above that of most women of her time as the heavens are high; and as her mortal body lay, no longer bent, but at full length in the coffin, the saintly lady, who before she took the vows had been a Countess of Lupfen, belonged, meseemed, to a race taller than ours by a head. A calm, queenlike dignity was on her noble thin face; and, this corpse being the first, as it fell, that I had ever looked on, it so worked on my mind that death, of which I had heretofore been in terror, took the image in my young soul of a great Master to whom we must indeed bow, but who is not our foe.

I never could earn such praise as Ann, who was by good right at our head; notwithstanding I ever stood high. And the vouchers I carried home were enough to content Cousin Maud, for her great wish that her foster-children should out-do others was amply fulfilled by Herdegen, the eldest. He was indeed filled with sleeping learning, as it were, and I often conceived that he needed only fitting instruction and a fair start to wake it up. For even he did not attain his learning without pains, and

they who deem that it flew into his mouth agape are sorely mistaken. Many a time have I sat by his side while he pored over his books, and I could see how he set to work in right earnest when once he had cast away sports and pastime. Thus with three mighty blows he would smite the nail home, which a weaker hand could not do with twenty. For whole weeks he might be idle and about divers matters which had no concern with schooling; and then, of a sudden, set to work; and it would so wholly possess his soul that he would not have seen a stone drop close at his feet.

My second brother, Kunz, was not at all on this wise. Not that he was soft-witted; far from it. His head was as clear as ever another's for all matters of daily life; but he found it hard to learn scholarship, and what Herdegen could master in one hour, it took him a whole livelong day to get. Notwithstanding he was not one of the dunces, for he strove hard with all diligence, and rather would he have lost a night's sleep than have left what he deemed a duty only half done. Thus there were sore half-hours for him in school-time; but he was not therefor to be pitied, for he had a right merry soul and was easily content, and loved many things. Good temper and a high spirit looked out of his great blue eyes; aye, and when he had played some prank which was like to bring him into trouble he had a look in his eyes—a look that might have melted a stone to pity, much more good Cousin Maud.

But this did not altogether profit him, for after that Herdegen had discovered one day how easily Kunz got off chastisement he would pray him to take upon himself many a misdeed which the elder had done; and Kunz, who was soft-hearted, was fain rather to suffer the penalty than to see it laid on his well-beloved brother. Add to this that Kunz was a well-favored, slender youth; but as compared with Herdegen's splendid looks and stalwart frame he looked no more than common. For this cause he had no ill-wishers while our eldest's uncommon beauty in all respects, and his hasty temper, ever ready to boil over for good or evil, brought upon him much ill-will and misliking.

When Cousin Maud beheld how little good Kunz got out of his learning, in spite of his zeal, she was minded to get him a private governor to teach him; and this she did by the advice of a learned doctor of Church-law, Albrecht Fleischmann, the vicar and provost of Saint Sebald's and member of the Imperial council, because we Schoppers were of the parish of Saint Sebald's, to which church Albrecht and Friedrich Schopper, God rest their souls, had attached a rich prebendary endowment.

His Reverence the prebendary Fleischmann, having attended the Council at Costnitz, whither he was sent by the town elders with divers errands to the Emperor Sigismund, who was engaged in a disputation with John Huss the Bohemian schismatic, brought to my cousin's knowledge a governor whose name was Peter Pihringer, a native of Nuremberg. He it was who brought the Greek tongue, which was not yet taught in the Latin schools of our city, not in our house alone, but likewise into others; he was not indeed at all like the high-souled men and heroes of whom his Plutarch wrote; nay, he was a right pitiable little man, who had learnt nothing of life, though all the more out of books. He had journeyed long in Italy, from one great humanistic doctor to another, and while he had sat at their feet, feeding his soul with learning, his money had melted away in his hands—all that he had inherited from his father, a worthy tavern-keeper and master baker. Much of his substance he had lent to false friends never to see it more, and it would scarce be believed how many times knavish rogues had beguiled this learned man of his goods. At length he came home to Nuremberg, a needy traveller, entering the city by the same gate as that by which Huss had that same day departed, having tarried in Nuremberg on his way to Costnitz and won over divers of our learned scholars to his doctrine. Now, after Magister Peter had written a very learned homily against the said Hans Huss, full of much Greek—of which, indeed, it was reported that it had brought a smile to the dauntless Bohemian's lips in the midst of his sorrow—he found a patron in Doctor Fleischmann, who was well pleased with this tractate, and he thenceforth made a living by teaching divers matters. But he sped but ill, dwelling alone, inasmuch as he would forget to eat and drink and mislay or lose his hardly won wage. Once the town watch had to see him home because, instead of a book, he was carrying a ham which a gossip had given him; and another day he was seen speeding down the streets with his nightcap on, to the great mirth of the lads and lasses.

Notwithstanding he showed himself no whit unworthy of the high praise wherewith his Reverence the Prebendary had commended him, inasmuch as he was not only a right learned, but likewise a faithful and longsuffering teacher. But his wisdom profited Herdegen and Ann and me rather than Kunz, though it was for his sake that he had come to us; and as, touching this strange man's person, my cousin told me later that when she saw him for the first time she took such a horror of his wretched looks that she was ready to bid him depart and desire the Reverend doctor to send us another governor. But out of pity she would nevertheless give him a trial, and considering that I should ere long be fully grown, and that a young maid's heart is a strange thing, she deemed that a younger teacher might lead it into peril.

At the time when Master Pihringer came to dwell with us, Herdegen was already high enough to pass into the upper school, for he was first in his 'ordo'; but our guardian, the old knight Hans Im Hoff, of whom I shall have much to tell, held that he was yet too young for the risks of a free scholar's life in a high school away from home, and he kept him two years more in Nuremberg at the school of the Brethren of the Holy Ghost, albeit the teaching there was not of the best. At any rate Master Pihringer avowed that in all matters of learning we were out of all measure behind the Italians; and how rough and barbarous was the Latin spoken by the reverend Fathers and taught by them in the schools, I myself had later the means of judging.

Their way of imparting that tongue was in truth a strange thing; for to fix the quantity of the syllables in the learners' mind, they were made to sing verses in chorus, while one of them, on whose head Father Hieronymus would set a paper cap to mark his office, beat the measure with a wooden sword; but what pranks of mischief the unruly rout would be playing all the time Kunz could describe better than I can.

The great and famous works of the Roman chroniclers and poets, which our Master had come to know well in Italy—having besides fine copies of them—were never heard of in the Fathers' school, by reason, that those writers had all been mere blind heathen; but, verily, the common school catechisms which were given to the lads for their instruction, contained such foolish and ill-conceived matters, that any sage heathen would have been ashamed of them. The highest exercise consisted of disputations on all manner of subtle and captious questions, and the Latin verses which the scholars hammered out under the rule of Father Jodocus were so vile as to rouse Magister Peter to great and righteous wrath. Each morning, before the day's tasks began, the fine old hymn *Salve Regina* was chanted, and this was much better done in the Brothers' school than in ever another, for those Monks gave especial heed to the practice of good music. My Herdegen profited much thereby, and he was the foremost of all the singing scholars. He likewise gladly and of his own free will took part in the exercises of the Alumni, of whom twelve, called the *Pueri*, had to sing at holy mass, and at burials and festivals, as well as in the streets before the houses of the great city families and other worthy citizens. The money they thus earned served to help maintain the poorer scholars, and to be sure, my brother was ready to forego his share; nay, and a great part of his own pocket-money went to those twelve, for among them were comrades he truly loved.

There was something lordly in my elder brother, and his fellows were ever subject to his will. Even at the shooting matches in sport he was ever chosen captain, and the singing *pueri* soon would do his every behest. Cousin Maud would give them free commons on many a Sunday and holy-day, and when they had well filled their hungry young crops at our table for the coming week of lean fare, they went out with us into the garden, and it presently rang with mirthful songs, Herdegen beating the measure, while we young maids joined in with a will.

For the most part we three: Ann, Elsa Ebner, and I—were the only maids with the lads, but Ursula Tetzl was sometimes with us, for she was ever fain to be where Herdegen was. And he had been diligent enough in waiting upon her ere ever I went to school. There was a giving and taking of flowers and nosegays, for he had chosen her for his Lady, and she called him her knight; and if I saw him with a red knot on his cap I knew right well it was to wear her color; and I liked all this

child's-play myself right well, inasmuch as I likewise had my chosen color: green, as pertaining to my cousin in the forest.

But when I went to the convent-school all this was at an end, and I had no choice but to forego my childish love matters, not only for my tasks' sake, but forasmuch as I discerned that Gotz had a graver love matter on hand, and that such an one as moved his parents to great sorrow.

The wench to whom he plighted his love was the daughter of a common craftsman, Pernhart the coppersmith, and when this came to my ears it angered me greatly; nay, and cost me bitter tears, as I told it to Ann. But ere long we were playing with our dollies again right happily.

I took this matter to heart nevertheless, more than many another of my years might have done; and when we went again to the Forest Lodge and I missed Gotz from his place, and once, as it fell, heard my aunt lamenting to Cousin Maud bitterly indeed of the sorrows brought upon her by her only son—for he was fully bent on taking the working wench to wife in holy wedlock—in my heart I took my aunt's part. And I deemed it a shameful and grievous thing that so fine a young gentleman could abase himself to bring heaviness on the best of parents for the sake of a lowborn maid.

After this, one Sunday, it fell by chance that I went to mass with Ann to the church of St. Laurence, instead of St. Sebald's to which we belonged. Having said my prayer, looking about me I beheld Gotz, and saw how, as he leaned against a pillar, he held his gaze fixed on one certain spot. My eyes followed his, and at once I saw whither they were drawn, for I saw a young maid of the citizen class in goodly, nay—in rich array, and she was herself of such rare and wonderful beauty that I myself could not take my eyes off her. And I remembered that I had met the wench erewhile on the feast-day of St. John, and that uncle Christian Pfinzing, my worshipful godfather, had pointed her out to Cousin Maud, and had said that she was the fairest maid in Nuremberg whom they called, and rightly, Fair Gertrude.

Now the longer I gazed at her the fairer I deemed her, and when Ann discovered to me, what I had at once divined, that this sweet maid was the daughter of Pernhart the coppersmith, my child's heart was glad, for if my cousin was without dispute the finest figure of a man in the whole assembly Fair Gertrude was the sweetest maid, I thought, in the whole wide world.

If it had been possible that she could be of yet greater beauty it would but have added to my joy. And henceforth I would go as often as I might to St. Laurence's, and past the coppersmith's house to behold Fair Gertrude; and my heart beat high with gladness when she one day saw me pass and graciously bowed to my silent greeting, and looked in my face with friendly inquiry.

After this when Gotz came to our house I welcomed him gladly as heretofore; and one day, when I made bold to whisper in his ear that I had seen his fair Gertrude, and for certain no saint in heaven could have a sweeter face than hers, he thanked me with a bright look and it was from the bottom of his soul that he said: "If you could but know her faithful heart of gold!"

For all this Gotz was dearer to me than of old, and it uplifted me in my own conceit that he should put such trust in a foolish young thing as I was. But in later days it made me sad to see his frank and noble face grow ever more sorrowful, nay, and full of gloom; and I knew full well what pained him, for a child can often see much more than its elders deem. Matters had come to a sharp quarrel betwixt the son and the parents, and I knew my cousin well, and his iron will which was a by-word with us. And my aunt in the Forest was of the same temper; albeit her body was sickly, she was one of those women who will not bear to be withstood, and my heart hung heavy with fear when I conceived of the outcome of this matter.

Hence it was a boon indeed to me that I had my Ann for a friend, and could pour out to her all that filled my young soul with fears. How our cheeks would burn when many a time we spoke of the love which was the bond between Gotz and his fair Gertrude. To us, indeed, it was as yet a mystery, but that it was sweet and full of joy we deemed a certainty. We would have been fain to cry out to the Emperor and the world to take arms against the ruthless parents who were minded to tread so holy a blossom in the dust; but since this was not in our power we had dreams of essaying

to touch the heart of my forest aunt, for she had but that one son and no daughter to make her glad, and I had ever been her favorite.

Thus passed many weeks, and one morning, when I came forth from school, I found Gotz with Cousin Maud who had been speaking with him, and her eyes were wet with tears; and I heard him cry out:

“It is in my mother’s power to drive me to misery and ruin; but no power in heaven or on earth can drive me to break the oath and forswear the faith I have sworn!”

And his cheeks were red, and I had never seen him look so great and tall.

Then, when he saw me, he held out both hands to me in his frank, loving way, and I took them with all my heart. At this he looked into my eyes which were full of tears, and he drew me hastily to him and kissed me on my brow for the first time in all his life, with strange passion; and without another word he ran out of the house-door into the street. My cousin gazed after him, shaking her head sadly and wiping her eyes; but when I asked her what was wrong with my cousin she would give me no tidings of the matter.

The next day we should have gone out to the forest, but we remained at home; Aunt Jacoba would see no one. Her son had turned his back on his parents’ dwelling, and had gone out as a stranger among strangers. And this was the first sore grief sent by Heaven on my young heart.

CHAPTER IV

Many of the fairest memories of my childhood are linked with the house where Ann's parents dwelt. It was indeed but a simple home and not to be named with ours—the Schopperhof—for greatness or for riches; but it was a snug nest, and in divers ways so unlike ever another that it was full of pleasures for a child.

Master Spiesz, Ann's father, had been bidden from Venice, where he had been in the service of the Mendel's merchant house, to become head clerk in Nuremberg, first in the Chamber of Taxes, and then in the Chancery, a respectable post of much trust. His father was, as Ursula Tetzl had said in the school, a luteplayer; but he had long been held the head and chief of teachers of the noble art of music, and was so greatly respected by the clergy and laity that he was made master and leader of the church choir, and even in the houses of the city nobles his teaching of the lute and of singing was deemed the best. He was a right well-disposed and cheerful old man, of a rare good heart and temper, and of wondrous good devices. When the worshipful town council bid his son Veit Spiesz come back to Nuremberg, the old man must need fit up a proper house for him, since he himself was content with a small chamber, and the scribe was by this time married to the fair Giovanna, the daughter of one of the Sensali or brokers of the German Fondaco, and must have a home and hearth of his own.

[Sensali—Agents who conducted all matters of business between the German and Venetian merchants. Not even the smallest affair was settled without their intervention, on account of the duties demanded by the Republic. The Fondaco was the name of the great exchange established by the Republic itself for the German trade.]

The musician, who had as a student dwelt in Venice, hit on the fancy that he would give his daughter-in-law a home in Nuremberg like her father's house, which stood on one of the canals in Venice; so he found a house with windows looking to the river, and which he therefore deemed fit to ease her homesickness. And verily the Venetian lady was pleased with the placing of her house, and yet more with the old man's loving care for her; although the house was over tall, and so narrow that there were but two windows on each floor. Thus there was no manner of going to and fro in the Spiesz's house, but only up and down. Notwithstanding, the Venetian lady loved it, and I have heard her say that there was no spot so sweet in all Nuremberg as the window seat on the second story of her house. There stood her spinning-wheel and sewing-box; and a bright Venice mirror, which, in jest, she would call "Dame Inquisitive," showed her all that passed on the river and the Fleisch-brucke, for her house was not far from those which stood facing the Franciscan Friars. There she ruled in peace and good order, in love and all sweetness, and her children thrived even as the flowers did under her hand: roses, auriculas, pinks and pansies; and whosoever went past the house in a boat could hear mirth within and the voice of song. For the Spiesz children had a fine ear for music, both from their grandsire and their mother, and sweet, clear, bell-like voices. My Ann was the queen of them all, and her nightingale's throat drew even Herdegen to her with great power.

Only one of the scribe's children, little Mario, was shut out from the world of sound, for he was a deaf-mute born; and when Ann tarried under our roof, rarely indeed and for but a short while, her stay was brief for his sake; for she tended him with such care and love as though she had been his own mother. Albeit she thereby was put to much pains, these were as nothing to the heartfelt joys which the love and good speed of this child brought her; for notwithstanding he was thus born to sorrow, by his sister's faithful care he grew a happy and thankful creature. Ofttimes my Cousin Maud was witness to her teaching of her little brother, and all Ann did for the child seemed to her so pious and so wonderful, that it broke down the last bar that stood in the way of our close fellowship. And Ann's well-favored mother likewise won my cousin's good graces, albeit she was swift to mark that

the Italian lady could fall in but ill with German ways, and in especial with those of Nuremberg, and was ever ready to let Ann bear the burthen of the household.

All our closest friends, and foremost of these my worshipful godfather Uncle Christian Pfinzing, ere long truly loved my little Ann; and of all our fellows I knew of only one who was ill-disposed towards her, and that was Ursula Tetzl, who marked, with ill-cloaked wrath, that my brother Herdegen cared less and less for her, and did Ann many a little courtesy wherewith he had formerly favored her. She could not dissemble her anger, and when my eldest brother waited on Ann on her name day with the 'pueri' to give her a 'serenata' on the water, whereas, a year ago, he had done Ursula the like honor, she fell upon my friend in our garden with such fierce and cruel words that my cousin had to come betwixt them, and then to temper my great wrath by saying that Ursula was a motherless child, whose hasty ways had never been bridled by a loving hand.

As I mind me now of those days I do so with heartfelt thankfulness and joy. To be sure it but ill-pleased our grand-uncle and guardian, the knight Im Hoff, that Cousin Maud should suffer me, the daughter of a noble house, to mix with the low born race of a simple scrivener; but in sooth Ann was more like by far to get harm in our house, among my brethren and their fellows, than I in the peaceful home by the river, where none but seemly speech was ever heard and sweet singing, nor ever seen but labor and good order and content.

Right glad was I to tarry there; but yet how good it was when Ann got leave to come to us for the whole of Sunday from noon till eventide; when we would first sit and chatter and play alone together, and talk over all we had done in school; thereafter we had my brothers with us, and would go out to take the air under the care of my cousin or of Magister Peter, or abide at home to sing or have merry pastime.

After the Ave Maria, the old organist, Adam Heyden, Ann's grand uncle, would come to seek her, and many sweet memories dwell in my mind of that worthy and gifted man, which I might set down were it not that I am Ann's debtor for so many things that made my childhood happy. It was she, for a certainty, who first taught me truly to play; for whereas my dolls, and men-at-arms and shop games, albeit they were small, were in all points like the true great ones, she had but a staff of wood wrapped round with a kerchief which she rocked in her arms for a babe; and when she played a shop game with the little ones, she marked stones and leaves to be their wares and their money, and so found far greater pastime than we when we played with figs and almonds and cloves out of little wooden chests and linen-cloth sacks, and weighed them with brass weights on little scales with a tongue and string. It was she who brought imagination to bear on my pastimes, and many a time has she borne my fancy far enough from the Pegnitz, over seas and rivers to groves of palm and golden fairy lands.

Our fellowship with my brethren was grateful to her as it was to me; but meseems it was a different thing in those early years from what it was in later days. While I write a certain summer day from that long past time comes back to my mind strangely clear. We had played long enough in our chamber, and we found it too hot in the loft under the roof, where we had climbed on to the beams, which were great, so we went down into the garden. Herdegen had quitted us in haste after noon, and we found none but Kunz, who was shaping arrows for his cross-bow. But he ere long threw away his knife and came to be with us, and as he was well-disposed to Ann as being my friend, he did his best to make himself pleasing, or at least noteworthy in her sight. He stood on his head and then climbed to the top of the tallest fruit-tree and flung down pears, but they smote her head so that she cried out; then he turned a wheel on his hands and feet, and a little more and his shoe would hit her in the face; and when he marked that he was but troubling us, he went away sorrowful, but only to hide behind a bush, and as we went past, to rush out on a sudden and put us in fear by wild shouting.

My eldest brother well-nigh affrighted us more when he presently joined us, for his hair was all unkempt and his looks wild. He was now of an age when men-children deem maids to be weak and unfit for true sport, but nevertheless strive their utmost to be marked and chosen by them. Hence Ursula's good graces, which she had shown right openly, had for a long while greatly pleased him, but

by this time he was weary of her and began to conceive that good little Ann, with her nightingale's voice, was more to his liking.

After hastily greeting us, he forthwith made us privy to an evil matter. One of his fellowship, Laurence Abenberger, the son of an apothecary, who was diligent in school, and of a wondrous pious spirit, gave up all his spare time to all manner of magic arts, and albeit he was but seventeen years of age, he had already cast nativities for many folks and for us maids, and had told us of divers ill-omens for the future. This Abenberger, a little fellow of no note, had found in some ancient papers a recipe for discovering treasure, and had told the secret to Herdegen and some other few. To begin, they went at his bidding to the graveyard with him, and there, at the full moon, they poured hot lead into the left eye-hole of a skull and made it into arrow-heads. Yesternight they had journeyed forth as far as Sinterspuhel, and there, at midnight, had stood at the cross-roads and shot with these same arrow-heads to the four quarters, to the end that they might dig for treasure wheresoever the shafts might fall. But they found no treasure, but a newly-buried body, and on this had taken to their heels in all haste. Herdegen only had tarried behind with Abenberger, and when he saw that there were deep wounds on the head of the dead man his intent was to carry the tidings to the justices in council; nevertheless he would delay a while, because Abenberger had besought him to keep silence and not to bring him to an evil end. But as he had gone past the school of arms he had learnt that an apprentice was missing, and that it was feared lest he had been waylaid by pillagers, or had fallen into evil hands; so he now deemed it his plain duty to keep no longer silence concerning the finding of the body, and desired to be advised by me and Ann. While I, for my part, shortly and clearly declared that information must at once be laid before his worship the Mayor, a strange trembling fell on Ann, and notwithstanding she could not say me nay, she was in such fear that grave mischief might overtake Herdegen by reason of his thoughtless deed, that tears ran in streams down her cheeks, and it cost me great pains or ever I could comfort her, so brave and reasonable as she commonly was. But Herdegen was greatly pleased by her too great terrors; and albeit he laughed at her, he called her his faithful, fearful little hare, and stuck the pink he wore in his jerkin into her hair. At this she was soon herself again; she counselled him forthwith to do that it was his duty to do; and when thereafter the authorities had made inquisition, it came to light that our lads had in truth come upon the body of the slain apprentice. And though Herdegen did his best to keep silence as touching Abenberger's evildoings, they nevertheless came out through other ways, and the poor wight was dismissed from the school.

By the end of two years after this, matters had changed in our household.

The twelve 'pueri' had been our guests at dinner, and were in the garden singing merry rounds well known to us, and I joined in, with Ann and Ursula Tetzl. Now, while Herdegen beat the time, his ear was intent on Ann's singing, as though there were revelation on her lips; and his well-beloved companion, Heinrich Trardorf, who erewhile had, with due modesty, preferred me, Margery, seemed likewise well affected to her singing; and when we ceased he fell into eager talk with her, for he had bewailed to her that, albeit he loved me well, as being the son of simple folk he might never lift up his eyes so high.

Herdegen's eyes rested on the twain with some little wrath; then he hastily got up! He snatched the last of Cousin Maud's precious roses from her favorite bush and gave them to Ursula, and then waited on her as though she were the only maid there present. But ere long her father came to fetch her, and so soon as she had departed, beaming, with her roses, Herdegen hastily came to me and, without deeming Ann worthy to be looked at even, bid me good even. I held his hand and called to her to come to me, to help me hinder him from departing, inasmuch as one of the pueri was about to play the lute for the rest to dance. She came forward as an honest maid should, looked up at him with her great eyes, and besought him full sweetly to tarry with us.

He pointed with his hand to Trardorf and answered roughly: "I care not to go halves!" And he turned to go to the gate.

Ann took him by the hand, and without a word of his ways with Ursula, not in chiding but as in deep grief, she said: "If you depart, you do me a hurt. I have no pleasure but when you are by, and what do I care for Heinrich?"

This was all he needed; his eye again met hers with bright looks, and from that hour of our childhood she knew no will but his.

From that hour likewise Ann held off from all other lads, and when he was by it seemed as though she had no eyes nor ears save for him and me alone. To Kunz she paid little heed; yet he never failed to wait on her and watch to do her service, as though she were the daughter of some great lord, and he no more than her page.

Ann freely owned to me that she held Herdegen to be the noblest youth on earth, nor could I marvel, when I was myself of the same mind. What should I know, when I was still but fourteen and fifteen years old, of love and its dangers? I had felt such love for Gotz as Ann for my elder brother, and as I had then been glad that my dear Cousin had won the love of so fair a maid as Gertrude, I likewise believed that Ann would some day be glad if Herdegen should plight his troth to a fair damsel of high degree. Hence I did all that in me lay to bring them together whenever it might be, and in truth this befell often enough without my aid; for not music alone was a bond between them, nor yet that Herdegen and I taught her to ride on a horse, on the sandy way behind our horse-stalls—the Greek lessons for which Magister Peter had come into the household were a plea on which they passed many an hour together.

I was slow to learn that tongue; but Ann's head was not less apt than my brother's, and he was eager and diligent to keep her good speed at the like mark with his own, as she was so quick to apprehend. Thus both were at last forward enough to put Greek into German, and then Magister Peter was bidden to lend them his aid. Now, the change in the worthy man, after eating for four years at our table, was such that many an one would have said it was a miracle. At his first coming to us he himself said he weened he was a doomed son of ill-luck, and he scarce dared look man or woman in the face; and what a good figure he made now, notwithstanding the divers pranks played on his simplicity by my brothers and their fellows, nay, and some whiles by me.

Many an one before this has marked that the god Amor is the best schoolmaster; and when our Magister had learnt to stoop less, nay almost to hold himself straight, when as now, he wore his good new coat with wide hanging sleeves, tight-fitting hose, a well-stiffened, snow-white collar, and even a smart black feather in his beretta, when he not alone smoothed his hair but anointed it, all this, in its beginnings, was by reason of his great and true love for my Ann, while she was yet but a child.

My cautious Cousin Maud had, it is true, done the blind god of Love good service; for many a time she would, with her own hand, set some matter straight which the Magister had put on all askew, and on divers occasions would give him a piece of fine cloth, and with it the cost of the tailor's work, in bright new coin wrapped in colored paper. She brought him to order and to keep his hours, and when grave speech availed not she could laugh at him with friendly mockery, such as hurts no man, inasmuch as it is the outcome of a good heart. Thus it was, that, by the time when Herdegen was to go to the high school at Erfurt, Magister Peter was not strangely unlike other learned men of his standing; and when it fell that he had to discourse of the great masters of learning in Italy, or of the glorious Greek writers, I have seen his eye light up like that of a youth.

Our guardian kept watch over my brothers' speed in learning. The old knight Im Hoff was a somewhat stern man and shy of his kind, but scarce another had such great wealth, or was so highly respected in our town. He was our grand-uncle, as old Adam Heyden was Ann's, and two men less alike it would be hard to find.

When we were bid to pay our devoir to my guardian it was seldom done but with much complaining and churlishness; whereas it was ever a festival to be suffered to go with Ann to the organist's house. He dwelt in a fine lodging high up in the tower above the city, and he could look down from his windows, as God Almighty looks down on the earth from the bright heavens, over

Nuremberg, and the fortress on the hill, the wide ring of forest which guards it on the north and east and south, the meadows and villages stretching between the woods, and the walls and turrets of our good city, and the windings of the river Pegnitz. He loved to boast that he was the first to bid the sun welcome and the last to bid it good-night; and perchance it was to the light, of which he had so goodly a share, that his spirit owed its ever gay good-cheer. He was ever ready with a jest and some little gift for us children; and, albeit these were of little money's worth, they brought us much joy. And indeed there was never another man in Nuremberg who had given away so many tokens and made so many glad hearts and faces thereby as Adam Heyden. True, indeed, after a short but blessed wedded life he had been left a widower and childless, and had no care to save for his heirs; and yet Gottfried Spiesz, Ann's grandfather, was in the right when he said that he had more children than ever another in Nuremberg, inasmuch as that he was like a father to every lad and maid in the town.

When he walked down the street all the little ones were as glad though they had met Christ the Lord or Saint Nicholas; and as they hung on to his long gown with the left hand, with the right they crammed their mouths with the apples or cakes whereof his pockets seemed never to be empty.

But Master Adam had his weak side, and there were many to blame him for that he was over fond of good liquor. Albeit he did his drinking after a manner of his own, in no unseemly wise. To wit, on certain year-days he would tarry alone in his tower, and his lamp might be seen gleaming till midnight. There he would sit alone, with his wine jar and cup, and he would drink the first and second and third in silence, to the good speed of Elsa, his late departed wife. After that he began to sing in a low voice, and before each fresh cup as he raised it he cried aloud "Prosit, Adam!" and when it was empty: "I Heartily thank you, Heyden!"

Thus would he go on till he had drunk out divers jugs, and the tower seemed to be spinning round him. Then to his bed, where he would dream of his Elsa and the good old days, the folks he had loved, his youthful courtships, and all the fine and wondrous things which his lonely drinking bout had brought to his inward eye. Next morning he was faithfully at his duty. Common evenings, which were of no mark to him, he spent with the Spiesz folks in the little house by the river, or else in the Gentlemen's tavern in the Frohnwage; for albeit none met there but such as belonged to the noble families of the town, and learned men, and artists of mark, Adam Heyden the organist was held as their equal and a right welcome guest.

And now as touching our grand-uncle and guardian the Knight Sir Sebald Im Hoff.

Many an one will understand how that my fear of him grew greater after that I one evening by mishap chanced to go into his bed chamber, and there saw a black coffin wherein he was wont to sleep each night, as it were in a bed. It was easy to see in the man himself that some deep sorrow or heavy sin gnawed at his heart, and nevertheless he was one of the stateliest old gentlemen I have met in a long life. His face seemed as though cast in metal, and was of wondrous fine mould, but deadly and unchangeably pale. His snowy hair fell in long locks over his collar of sable fur, and his short beard, cut in a point, was likewise of a silver whiteness. When he stood up he was much taller than common, and he walked with princelike dignity. For many years he had ceased to go to other folks' houses, nevertheless many others sought him out. In every family of rank, excepting in his own, the Im Hoff family, wherever there was a manchild or a maid growing up they were brought to him; but of them all there were but two who dare come nigh him without fear. These were my brother Herdegen and Ursula Tetzl; and throughout my young days she was the one soul whom mine altogether shut out.

Notwithstanding I must for justice sake confess that she grew up to be a well-favored damsel. Besides this, she was the only offspring of a rich and noble house. She went from school a year before Ann and I did, and after that her father, a haughty and eke a surly man, who had long since lost his wife, her mother, prided himself on giving her such attires as might have beseemed the daughter of a Count or a Prince-Elector. And the brocades and fine furs and costly chains and clasps she wore graced her lofty, round shape exceeding well, and she lorded it so haughtily in them that the worshipful town-council were moved to put forth an order against over much splendor in women's weed.

She was, verily and indeed, the last damsel I could have wished to see brought home as mistress of the “Schopperhof,” and nevertheless I knew full well, before my brother went away to the high school, that our grand uncle was counting on giving her and him to each other in marriage. Master Tetzels likewise would point to them when they stood side by side, so high and goodly, as though they were a pair; and this old man, whose face was as grey and cold and hueless as all about his daughter was bright and gay, would demean himself with utter humbleness and homage to the lad who scarce showed the first down on his lip and chin, by reason that he looked upon him, who was his granduncle’s heir, as his own son-in-law.

It was, to be sure, known to many that rich old Im Hoff was minded to leave great endowments to the Holy Church, and meseemed that it was praiseworthy and wise that he should do all that in him lay to gain the prayers of the Blessed Virgin and the dear Saints; for the evil deed which had turned him from a dashing knight into a lonely penitent might well weigh in torment on his poor soul. I will here shortly rehearse all I myself knew of that matter.

In his young days my grand uncle had carried his head high indeed, and deemed so greatly of his scutcheon and his knightly forbears that he scorned all civic dignities as but a small matter. Then, whereas in the middle of the past century all towns were forbid by imperial law to hold tournaments, he went to Court, and had been dubbed knight by the Emperor Charles, and won fame and honor by many a shrewd lance-thrust. His more than common manly beauty gained him favor with the ladies, and since he preferred what was noble and knightly to all other graces he would wed no daughter of Nuremberg but the penniless child of Baron von Frauentrift. But my grand-uncle had made an evil choice; his wife was high-tempered and filled full of conceits. When princes and great lords came into our city, they were ever ready to find lodging in the great and wealthy house of the Im Hoffes; but then she would suffer them to pay court to her, and grant them greater freedom than becomes the decent honor of a Nuremberg citizen’s hearth. Once, then, when my lord the duke of Bavaria lay at their house with a numerous fellowship, a fine young count, who had courted my grand uncle’s wife while she was yet a maid, fanned his jealousy to a flame; and, one evening, at a late hour, while his wife was yet not come home from seeing some friends, as it fell he heard a noise and whispering of voices, beneath their lodging, in the courtyard wherein all these folks’ chests and bales were bestowed. He rushed forth, beside himself; and whereas he shouted out to the courtyard and got no reply, he thrust right and left at haphazard with his naked sword among the chests whence he had heard the voices, and a pitiful cry warned him that he had struck home. Then there came the wailing of a woman; and when the squires and yeomen came forth with torches and lanterns, he could see that he had slain Ludwig Tetzels, Ursula’s uncle, a young unwedded man. He had stolen into the courtyard to hold a tryst with the fair daughter of the master-weigher in the Im Hoffes’ house of trade, and the loving pair, in their fear of the master, had not answered his call, but had crept behind the baggage. Thus, by ill guidance, had my grand-uncle become a murderer, and the judges broke their staff over him; albeit, since he freely confessed the deed of death, and had done it with no evil intent, they were content to make him pay a fine in money. But some said that they likewise commanded the hangman to nail up a gallows-cord behind his house door; others, rather, that he had taken upon himself the penance of ever wearing such a cord about his neck day and night.

As touching the Tetzels themselves, they made no claim for blood; and for this he was so thankful to them, all his life through, that he gave them his word that he would name Ursula in his testament; whereas he ever hated the Im Hoffes to the end, after that they, on whom he had brought so much vexation by his wilful and haughty temper, took counsel after the judgment as to whether it behooved them not to strip him of their good old name and thrust him forth from their kinship. Four only, as against three, spoke in his favor, and this his haughty spirit could so ill endure that never an Im Hoff dared cross his threshold, though one and another often strove to win back his favor.

He had little comfort from his wife in his grief, for when he was found guilty of manslaughter she quitted him to return to the Emperor's court at Prague, and there she died after a wild hunt which she had followed in King Wenzel's train, while she was not yet past her youth.

CHAPTER V

Three years were past since Herdegen had first gone to the High School, and we had never seen him but for a few weeks at the end of the first year, when he was on his way from Erfurt to Padua. In the letters he wrote from thence there was ever a greeting for Mistress Anna, and often there would be a few words in Greek for her and me; yet, as he knew full well that she alone could crack such nuts, he bid me to the feast only as the fox bid the stork. While he was with us he ever demeaned himself both to me and to her as a true and loving brother, when he was not at the school of arms proving to the amazement of the knights and nobles his wondrous skill in the handling of the sword, which he had got in the High School. And during this same brief while he at divers times had speech of Ursula, but he showed plainly enough that he had lost all delight in her.

He had found but half of what he sought at Erfurt, but deemed that he was ripe to go to Padua; for there, alone, he thought—and Magister Peter said likewise—could he find the true grist for his mill. And when he told us of what he hoped to gain at that place we could but account his judgment good, and wish him good speed and that he might come home from that famous Italian school a luminary of learning. When, at his departing, I saw that Ann was in no better heart than I was, but looked right doleful, I thought it was by reason of the sickness which for some while past had now and again fallen on her good father. Kunz likewise had quitted school, and he could not complain that learning weighed too heavily on his light heart and merry spirit. He was now serving his apprenticeship in our grand uncle's business, and whereas the traffic was mainly with Venice he was to learn the Italian tongue with all diligence. Our Magister, who was well-skilled in it, taught him therein, and was, as heretofore, well content to be with us. Cousin Maud would never suffer him to depart, for it had grown to be a habit with her to care for him; albeit many an one can less easily suffer the presence of a man who needs help, than of one who is himself of use and service.

Master Peter himself, under pretence of exercising himself in the Italian tongue, would often wait upon Dame Giovanna. We on our part would remember the fable of the Sack and the Ass and laugh; while Ann slipped off to her garret chamber when the Magister was coming; and she could never fail to know of it, for no son of man ever smote so feebly as he with the knocker on the door plate.

Thus the years in which we grew from children into maidens ran past in sheer peace and gladness. Cousin Maud allowed us to have every pastime and delight; and if at times her face was less content, it was only by reason that I craved to wear a longer kirtle than she deemed fitting for my tender years, or that I proved myself over-rash in riding in the riding school or the open country.

My close friendship with Ann brought me to mark and enjoy many other and better things; and in this I differed from the maidens of some noble families, who, to this day, sit in stalls of their own in church, apart from such as have no scutcheon of arms. But indeed Ann was an honored guest in many a lordly house wherein our school and playmates dwelt.

In summer days we would sometimes go forth to the farm belonging to us Schoppers outside the town, or else to Jorg Stromer our worthy cousin at the mill where paper is made; and at holy Whitsuntide we would ride forth to the farm at Laub, which his sister Dame Anna Borchtlin had by inheritance of her father. Nevertheless, and for all that there was to see and learn at the paper-mill, and much as I relished the good fresh butter and the black home-bread and the lard cakes with which Dame Borchtlin made cheer for us, my heart best loved the green forest where dwelt our uncle Conrad Waldstromer, father to my cousin Gotz, who still was far abroad.

Now, since I shall have much to tell of this well-beloved kinsman and of his kith and kin, I will here take leave to make mention that all the Stromers were descended from a certain knight, Conrad von Reichenbach, who erewhile had come from his castle of Kammerstein, hard by Schwabach, as far forth as Nuremberg. There had he married a daughter of the Waldstromers, and the children and

grandchildren, issue of this marriage, were all named Stromer or Waldstromer. And the style Wald—or wood—Stromer is to be set down to the fact that this branch had, from a long past time, heretofore held the dignity of Rangers of the great forest which is the pride of Nuremberg to this very day. But at the end of the last century the municipality had bought the offices and dignities which were theirs by inheritance, both from Waldstromer and eke from Koler the second ranger; albeit the worshipful council entrusted none others than a Waldstromer or a Koler with the care of its woods; and in my young days our Uncle Conrad Waldstromer was chief Forester, and a right bold hunter.

Whensoever he crossed our threshold meseemed as though the fresh and wholesome breath of pine-woods was in the air; and when he gave me his hand it hurt mine, so firm and strong and loving withal was his grip, and that his heart was the same all men might see. His thick, red-gold hair and beard, streaked with snowy white, his light, flax-blue eyes and his green forester's garb, with high tan boots and a cap of otter fur garnished with the feather of some bird he had slain—all this gave him a strange, gladsome, and gaudy look. And as the stalwart man stepped forth with his hanger and hunting-knife at his girdle, followed by his hounds and badger-dogs, other children might have been affrighted, but to me, betimes, there was no dearer sight than this of the terrible-looking forester, who was besides Cousin Gotz's father.

Well, on the second Sunday after Whitsunday, when the apple blossoms were all shed, my uncle came in to town to bid me and Cousin Maud to the forest lodge once more; for he ever dwelt there from one Springtide till the next, albeit he was under a bond to the Council to keep a house in the city. I was nigh upon seventeen years old; Ann was past seventeen already, and I would have expressed my joy as freely as heretofore but that somewhat lay at my heart, and that was concerning my Ann. She was not as she was wont to be; she was apt to suffer pains in her head, and the blood had fled from her fresh cheeks. Nay, at her worst she was all pale, and the sight of her thus cut me to the heart, so I gladly agreed when Cousin Maud said that the little house by the river was doing her a mischief, and the grievous care of her deaf-mute brother and the other little ones, and that she lacked fresh air. And indeed her own parents did not fail to mark it; but they lacked the means to obey the leech's orders and to give Ann the good chance of a change to fresh forest air.

When my uncle had given his bidding, I made so bold as to beseech him with coaxing words that he would bid her go with me. And if any should deem that it was but a light matter to ask of a good-hearted old man that he should harbor a fair young maid for a while, in a large and wealthy house, he will be mistaken, inasmuch as my uncle was wont, at all times and in all places, to have regard first to his wife's goodwill and pleasure.

This lady was a Behaim, of the same noble race as my mother, whom God keep; and what great pride she set on her ancient and noble blood she had plainly proven in the matter of her son's love-match. This matter had in truth no less heavily stricken his father's soul, but he had held his peace, inasmuch as he could never bring himself to play the lord over his wife; albeit he was in other matters a strict and thorough man; nay a right stern master, who ruled the host of foresters and hewers, warders and beaters, bee-keepers and woodmen who were under him with prudence and straitness. And yet my aunt Jacoba was a feeble, sickly woman, who rarely went forth to drink in God's fresh air in the lordly forest, having lost the use of her feet, so that she must be borne from her couch to her bed.

My uncle knew her full well, and he knew that she had a good and pitiful heart and was minded to do good to her kind; nevertheless he said his power over her would not stretch to the point of making her take a scrivener's child into her noble house, and entertaining her as an equal. Thus he withstood my fondest prayers, till he granted so much as that Ann should come and speak for herself or ever he should leave the house.

When she had hastily greeted my cousin and me, and Cousin Maud had told her who my uncle was, she went up to him in her decent way, made him a curtesy, and held out her hand, no whit abashed, while her great eyes looked up at him lovingly, inasmuch as she had heard all that was good of him from me.

Thereupon I saw in the old forester's face that he was "on the scent" of my Ann—to use his own words—so I took heart again and said: "Well, little uncle?"

"Well," said he slowly and doubtingly. But he presently uplifted Ann's chin, gazed her in the face, and said: "To be sure, to be sure! Peaches get their red cheeks better where we dwell than here among stone walls." And he pulled down his belt and went on quickly, as though he weened that he might have to rue his hasty words: "Margery is to be our welcome guest out in the forest; and if she should bring thee with her, child, thou'lt be welcome."

Nor need I here set down how gladly the bidding was received; and Ann's parents were more than content to let her go. Thenceforth had Cousin Maud, and our house maids, and Beata the tailor-wife, enough on their hands; for they deemed it a pleasure to take care to outfit Ann as well as me, since there were many noble guests at the forest lodge, especially about St. Hubert's day, when there was ever a grand hunt.

Dame Giovanna, Ann's mother, was in truth at all times choicely clad, and she ever kept Ann in more seemly and richer habit than others of her standing; yet she was greatly content with the summer holiday raiment which Cousin Maud had made for us. Likewise, for each of us, a green riding habit, fit for the forest, was made of good Florence cloth; and if ever two young maids rode out with glad and thankful hearts into the fair, sunny world, we were those maids when, on Saint Margaret's day in the morning—[The 13th July, old style.]—we bid adieu and, mounted on our saddles, followed Balzer, the old forester, whom my uncle had sent with four men at arms on horseback to attend us, and two beasts of burthen to carry Susan and the "woman's gear."

As we rode forth at this early hour, across the fields, and saw the lark mount singing, we likewise lifted up our voices, and did not stop singing till we entered the wood. Then in the dewy silence our minds were turned to devotion and a Sabbath mood, and we spoke not of what was in our minds; only once—and it seems as I could hear her now—these simple words rose from Ann's heart to her lips: "I am so thankful!"

And I was thankful at that hour, with my whole heart; and as the great hills of the Alps cover their heads with pure snow as they get nearer to heaven, so should every good man or woman, when in some happy hour he feels God's mercy nigh him, deck his heart with pure and joyful thanksgiving.

At last we drew up on a plot shut in by tall trees, in front of a bee-keeper's hut, and while we were there, refreshing on some new milk and the store Cousin Maud had put into our saddle bags, we heard the barking of hounds and a noise of hoofs, and ere long Uncle Conrad was giving us a welcome.

He was right glad to let us wait upon him and fell to with a will; but he made us set forth again sooner than was our pleasure, and as we fared farther the old forest rang with many a merry jest and much laughter. To Ann it seemed that my uncle was but now opening her eyes and ears to the mystery of the forest, which Gotz had shown me long years ago. How many a bird's pipe did he teach her to know which till now she had never marked! And each had its special significance, for my uncle named them all by their names and described them; whereas his son could copy them so as to deceive the ear, twittering, singing, whistling and calling, each after his kind. To the end that Ann and my uncle should learn to come together closely I put no word into his teaching.

Not till we came to the skirts of the clearing, where the forest lodge came in sight against the screen of trees, was my uncle silent; then, while he lifted me from the saddle, he asked me in a low tone if I had already warned Ann of my aunt's strange demeanor. This I could tell him I had indeed done; nevertheless I saw by his face that he was not easy till he could lead Ann to his wife, and had learnt that the maid had found such favor in her eyes as, in truth, nor he nor I were so bold as to hope. But with what sweet dignity did the clerk's daughter kiss the somewhat stern lady's hand—as I had bidden her, and how modestly, though with due self-respect, did she go through Dame Jacoba's inquisition. For my part I should have lost patience all too soon, if I had thus been questioned touching matters concerning myself alone; but Ann kept calm till the end, and at the same time she spoke as openly as though the inquisitor had been her own mother. This, in truth, somewhat moved me to fear;

for, albeit I likewise cling to the truth, meseemed it showed it a lack of prudence and foresight to discover so freely and frankly all that was poor or lacking in her home; inasmuch as there was much, even there, which could not be better or more seemly in the richest man's dwelling. In truth, to my knowledge there was not the smallest thing in the little house by the river of which a virtuous damsel need feel ashamed. But at night, in our bed-chamber, Ann confessed to me that she had taken it as a favor of fortune that she should be allowed, at once, to lay bare to the great lady who had been so unwilling to open her doors to her, exactly what she was and to whom she belonged.

“To be deemed unworthy of heed by my lady hostess,” said she, “would have been hard to bear; but whereas she truly cared to question me, a simple maid, and I have nothing hid, all is clear and plain betwixt us.”

My aunt doubtless thought in like manner; for she was a truthful woman, and Ann's honest, firm, and withal gentle way had won her heart. And yet, since she was strait in her opinions, and must deem it unseemly in me and my kinsfolk to receive a maid of lower birth as one of ourselves, she stoutly avowed that Ann's worthy father, as being chief clerk in the Chancery, might claim to be accounted one of the Council. Never, as she said to my uncle, would she have suffered a workingman's daughter to cross her threshold, whereas she had a large place, not alone at her table but in her heart, for this gentle daughter of a worthy member of the worshipful Council.

And such speech was good to my ears and to my uncle Conrad's; but the best of all was that already, by the end of a week or two, Ann seemed likely to supplant me wholly in the love my aunt had erewhile shown to me; Ann thenceforth was diligent in waiting on the sick lady, and such loving duty won her more and more of my uncle's love, who found his weakly, suffering wife much on his hands, and that in the plainest sense of the words, since, whenever he might be at home, she would allow no other creature to lift her from one spot to another.

Now, whereas Uncle Conrad had taught Ann to mark the divers voices of the forest, so did she open my eyes to the many virtues of my aunt, which, heretofore, I had been wont to veil from my own sight out of wrath at her hardness to my cousin Gotz.

Ann, in her compassion and thankfulness, had truly learnt to love her, and she now led me to perceive that she was in many ways a right wise and good woman. Her low, sheltered couch in the peaceful chimney-corner was, as it were, the centre of a wide net, and she herself the spider-wife who had spun it, for in truth her good counsel stretched forth over the whole range of forest, and over all her husband's rough henchmen. She knew the name of every child in the furthest warders' huts, and never did she suffer one of the forest folks to die unholpen. She was, indeed, forced to see with other eyes and give with other hands than her own, and notwithstanding this she ever gave help where it was most needed, since she chose her messengers well and lent an ear to all who sought her.

She soon found work for us, making us do many a Samaritan-task; and many a time have we marvelled to mark the skill with which she wove her web, and the wisdom coupled with her open-handed bounty.

No one else could have found a place in the great books which she filled with her records; but to her they were so clear that the craft of the most cunning was put to shame when she looked into them. Never a soul, whether master or man, said her nay in the lightest thing, to my knowledge, and this was a plea for the one fault which had hitherto set me against her.

Everything here was new to Ann; and what could be more delightful, what could give me greater joy than to be able to show all that was noteworthy and pleasant, and to me well-known, to a well-beloved friend, and to tell her the use and end of each thing. In this two men were ever ready to help me: Uncle Conrad and the young Baron von Kalenbach, a Swabian who had come to be my uncle's disciple and to learn forestry.

This same young Baron was a slender stripling, well-grown and not ill-favored; but it seemed as though his lips were locked, and if a man was fain to hear the sound of his voice and get from him a “yea” or “nay” there was no way but by asking him a plain question. His eye, on the other hand, was

full of speech, and by the time I had been no more than three weeks at the Lodge it told me, as often as it might, that he was deeply in love with me; nay, he told the reverend chaplain in so many words that his first desire was that he might take me home as his wife to Swabia, where he had rich estates.

Never would I have said him yea, albeit I liked him well; nor did I hide it from him; nay indeed, now and again I may have lent him courage, though truly with no evil intent, since I was not ill pleased with the tale his eyes told me. And I was but a young thing then, and wist not as yet that a maid who gives hope to a suitor though she has no mind to hear him, is guilty of a sin grievous enough to bring forth much sorrow and heart-ache. It was not till I had had a lesson which came upon me all too soon, that I took heed in such matters; and the time was at hand when men folks thought more about me than I deemed convenient.

As I have gone so far as to put this down on paper, I, an old woman now, will put aside bashfulness and freely confess that both Ann and I were at that time well-favored and good to look upon.

I was of the greater height and stouter build, while she was more slender and supple; and for gentle sweetness I have never seen her like. I was rose and white, and my golden hair was no whit less fine than Ursula Tetzels; but whoso would care to know what we were to look upon in our youth, let him gaze on our portraits, before which each one of you has stood many a time. But I will leave speaking of such foolish things and come now to the point.

Though for most days common wear was good enough at the Forest Lodge, we sometimes had occasion to wear our bravery, for now and again we went forth to hunt with my uncle or with the Junker, on foot or on horseback, or hawking with a falcon on the wrist. There was no lack of these noble birds, and the bravest of them all, a falcon from Iceland beyond seas, had been brought thence by Seyfried Kubbeling of Brunswick. That same strange man, who was my right good friend, had ere now taught me to handle a falcon, and I could help my uncle to teach my friend the art.

I went out shooting but seldom, by reason that Ann loved it not ever after she had hit one of the best hounds in the pack with her arrow; and my uncle must have been well affected to her to forgive such a shot, inasmuch as the dogs were only less near his heart than his closest kin. They had to make up to him for much that he lacked, and when he stood in their midst he saw round him, yelping and barking on four legs, well nigh all that he had thought most noteworthy from his childhood up. They bore names, indeed, of no more than one or two syllables, but each had its sense. They were for the most part the beginning of some word which reminded him of a thing he cared to remember. First he had, in sport, named some of them after the metrical feet of Latin verse, which had been but ill friends of his in his school days, and in his kennel there was a Troch, Iamb, Spond and Dact, whose full names were Trochee, Iambus, Spondee and Dactyl. Now Spond was the greatest and heaviest of the wolfhounds; Anap, rightly Anapaest, was a slender and swift greyhound; and whereas he found this pastime of names good sport he carried it further. Thus it came to pass that the witless creatures who shared his loneliness were reminders of many pleasant things. One of a pair of fleet bloodhounds which were ever leashed together was named Nich, and the other Syn, in memory that he had been betrothed on the festival of Saint Nicodemus and wedded on Saint Synesius' day. A noble hound called Salve, or as we should say Welcome, spoke to him of the birth of his first born, and every dog in like manner had a name of some signification; thus Ann took it not at all amiss that he should call a fine young setter after her name. There had long been a Gred, short for Margaret.

Nevertheless we spent much more time in seeing the sick to whom my aunt sent us on her errands, than we did in shooting or heron-hawking. She ever packed the little basket we were to carry with her own hands, and there was never a physic which she did not mingle, nor a garment she had not made choice of, nor a victual she had not judged fit for each one it was sent to.

Thus many a time our souls ached to see want and pain lying in darksome chambers on wretched straw, though we earned thanks and true joy when we saw that healing and ease followed in our steps. And whatever seemed to me the most praiseworthy grace in my Aunt Jacoba, was, that albeit she

could never hear the hearty thanksgiving of those she had comforted and healed, she nevertheless, to the end of her days, ceased not from caring for the poor folks in the forest like a very mother.

My Ann was never made for such work, inasmuch as she could never endure to see blood or wounds; yet was it in this tending of the sick that I had reason to mark and understand how strong was the spirit of this frail, slender flower.

Since a certain army surgeon, by name Haberlein, had departed this life, there was no leech at the Forest lodge, but my aunt and the chaplain, a man of few words but well trained in good works and a right pious servant of the Lord, were disciples of Galen, and the leech from Nuremberg came forth once a week, on each Tuesday; and since the death of Doctor Paul Rieter, of whom I have made mention, it was his successor Master Ulsenius. His duty it was to attend on the sick mistress, and on any other sick folks if they needed it; and then it was our part to wait on the leech, and my aunt would diligently instruct us in the right way to use healing drugs, or bandages.

The first time we were bidden to a woman who gathered berries, who had been stung in the toe by an adder; and when I set to work to wash the wound, as my aunt had taught me, Ann turned as white as a linen cloth. And whereas I saw that she was nigh swooning I would not have her help; but she gave her help nevertheless, though she held her breath and half turned away her face. And thus she ever did with sores; but she ever paid the penalty of the violence she did herself. As it fell Master Ulsenius came to the Forest one day when my aunt's waiting-woman had fared forth on a pilgrimage to Vierzelmheiligen, and my uncle likewise being out of the way, the leech called us to him to lend him a helping hand. Then I came to know that a fall unawares with her horse had been the beginning of my aunt's long sickness. She had at that time done her backbone a mischief, and some few months later a wound had broken forth which was part of her hurt.

Now when all was made ready Aunt Jacoba begged of Ann that she should hold the sore closed while Master Ulsenius made the linen bands wet. I remembered my friend's weakness and came close to her, to take her place unmarked; but she whispered: "Nay, leave me," in a commanding voice, so that I saw full well she meant it in earnest, and withdrew without a word. And then I beheld a noble sight; for though she was pale she did as she was bidden, nor did she turn her eyes off the wound. But her bosom rose and fell fast, as if some danger threatened her, and her nostrils quivered, and I was minded to hold out my arms to save her from falling. But she stood firm till all was done, and none but I was aware of her having defied the base foe with such true valor.

Thenceforth she ever did me good service without shrinking; and whensoever thereafter I had some hateful duty to do which meseemed I might never bring myself to fulfil, I would remember Ann holding my aunt's wound. And out of all this grew the good saying, "They who will, can"—which the children are wont to call my motto.

CHAPTER VI

Summer wore away; the oats in the forest were garnered and the vintage had begun in the vine-lands. It was a right glorious sunny day; and if you ask me at which time of the year forest life is the sweeter, whether in Springtide or in Autumn, I could scarce say.

Aye, it is fair indeed in the woods when Spring comes gaily in. Spring is the very Saviour, as it were, of all the numberless folk, great and small, which grow green and blossom there, wherefore the forest holds festival for his birthday and cradle feast as is but fitting! The fir-tree lights up brighter tips to its boughs, as children do with tapers at Christmastide. Then comes the largesse. It lasts much more than one evening, and the gifts bestowed on all are without number, and bright and various indeed to behold. As a father's tinkling bell brings the children together, so the snowdrop bells call forth all the other flowers. First and foremost comes the primrose, and cowslips—Heaven's keys as we call them—open the gates to all the other children of the Spring. "Come forth, come forth!" the returning birds shout from out the bushes, and silver-grey catkins sprout on every twig. Beech leaves burst off their sharp, brown sheaths and open to the light, as soft as taffety and as green as emeralds.

The other trees follow the example, and so teach their boughs to make a leafy shade against the sun as it mounts higher. Every creature that loves its kind finds a voice under the blossoming May, and the dumb forest is full of the call and answer of thankful and gladsome loving things which have met together, and of sweet tunefulness and songs of bridal joy.

Round nests have come into being in a thousand secret places—in the tree-tops, in the thick greenwood of the bushes, in the reeds of the marsh; ere long young living things are twittering there, the father and mother-birds call each other, singing to be of good cheer, and taking joy in caring for their young. At that season of love, of growth, of unfolding life, meseems, as I walk through the woods, that the loving-kindness of the Most High is more than ever nigh unto me; for the forest is as a church, a glorious cathedral at highest festival, all filled with light and song, and decked in every nook and corner with gay fresh flowers and leafy garlands.

Then all is suddenly hushed. It is summer.

But in Autumn the forest is a banqueting-hall where men must say farewell, but with good cheer, in hope of a happy meeting. All that has lived is hastening to the grave. Nevertheless on some fair days everything wears as it were the face of a friend who holds forth a hand at parting. The wide vaults of the woods are finely bedecked with red and yellow splendor, and albeit the voices of birds are few, albeit the cry of the jay, and the song of the nightingale, and the pipe of the bull-finch must be mute, the greenwood is not more dumb than in the Spring; the hunter's horn rings through the trees and away far over their tops, with the baying of the hounds, the clapping of the drivers, and the huntsmen shouting the view halloo. Every bright, strong, healthful child of man, then feels himself lord of all that creeps or flies, and his soul is ready to soar from his breast. How pure is the air, how spicy is the scent from the fallen leaves on such an autumn day! In Spring, truly, white and rose-red, blue and yellow chequer the green turf; but now gold and crimson are bright in the tree tops, and on the service trees. The distance is clearer than before, and fine silver threads wave in the air as if to catch us, and keep us in the woods whose beauty is so fast fading.

The sunny autumn air was right full of these threads when on St. Maurice's day—[September 22nd]—Ann and I went forth to our duty of fetching in the birds which had been caught in the springes set for them.

When birds are early to flock and flee
Hard and cold will winter be,

saith the woodman's saw; and they had gathered early this year—thrushes and field-fares; many a time the take was so plentiful that our little wallets could scarce hold them, and among them it was a pity to see many a merry, tuneful red-breast.

The springes were set at short spaces apart on either side of two forest paths. I went down one and Ann down the other. They met again nigh to the road leading to the town. Balzer set the snares, and we prided ourselves on which should carry home the greater booty; and when we had done our task as we sat on a grassy seat which the Junker had made for me, we told the tale of birds and thought it right good sport. Nor did we need a squire, inasmuch as Spond, the great hound, would ever follow us.

This day I was certain I had the greater number of birds in my wallet, and I walked in good heart toward the end of the path.

Methought already I had heard the noise of hoofs on the highway, and now the hound sniffed the air, so, being inquisitive, I moved my feet somewhat faster till I caught sight of a horseman, who sprang from his saddle, and leaving his steed, hurried toward the clearing whither Ann must presently come from her side. Thereupon I forced my way through the underwood which hindered me from seeing, and when I presently saw Ann coming and had opened my lips to call, something, meseemed, took me by the throat, and I was fain to stand still as though I had taken root there, and could only lend eye and ear, gasping for breath, to what was doing yonder by the highroad. And verily I knew not whether to rejoice from the bottom of my heart, or to lament and be wroth, and fly forth to put an end to it all.

Nevertheless I stirred not a limb, and my tongue was spell-bound. The heart in my bosom and the veins in my head beat as though hammers were smiting within; mine eyes were dazed, albeit they could see as well as ever they did, and I espied first, on one side of the clearing, the horseman, who was none other than Herdegen, my well-beloved elder brother, and on the other side thereof Ann carrying her wallet in her hand, and numbering the birds she had taken from the snares, with a contented smile.

But ere I had time to hail the returned traveller a voice rang through the wood—it was my brother's voice, and yet, meseemed it was not; it spoke but one word "Ann!" And in the long drawn cry there was a ring of heart's delight and lovesick longing such as I had never heard save from the nightingale lover when in the still May nights he courts his beloved. This cry pierced to my heart, even mine; and it brought the color to Ann's face, which had long ceased to be pale. Like a doe which comes forth from a thicket and finds her young grazing in the glade, she lifted her head and looked with brightest eyes away to the high road whence the call had come. Then, though they were yet far asunder, his eyes met hers, and hers met his, and they uplifted their arms, as though some invisible power had moved them both, and flew to meet each other. There was no doubt nor pause; and I plainly perceived that they were borne along as flowers are in a raging torrent; albeit she, or ever she reached him; was overcome by maiden shamefacedness, and her arms fell and her head was bent. But the little bird had ventured too far into the springe, and the fowler was not the man to let it escape; before Ann could foresee such a deed he had both his arms round her, and she did not hinder him, nay, for she could not. So she clung to him and let him lift up her head and kiss her eyes and then her mouth, and that not once, no, but many a time and again, and so long that I, a sixteen-year-old maid, was in truth affrighted.

There stood I; my knees quaked, and I weened that this which was doing was a thing that beseemed not a pious maid, and that must ill-please the heart of a virtuous daughter's mother; yea, it was a grief to me that it should have been done, and that I knew that of my Ann which she would fain hide from the light. Nevertheless I could not but find a joy in it, and meseemed it was a cruel act to fetch her away so soon from such sweet bliss.

When presently their lips were free, and at last he spoke a few words to her, methought it was now time for me to greet my brother. I called up all my strength and while I walked toward them

my spirit's sense came back to me, for indeed it had altogether left me, and a voice within asked: "What shall come of this?"

He put forth his arm to hold her to him again, and forasmuch as I was abashed to think of coming in to their secret, before I stepped forth, from the thicket, I hailed Herdegen by name. And soon I was in his arms; but although that he kissed me lovingly, meseemed that something strange was on his lips which pleased me not, and I yet remember that I put my kerchief to my mouth to wipe that from it.

And then we walked homeward. Herdegen led his horse by the bridle, and Ann went between him and me and gazed up into his face with shining eyes, for in these two years he had grown in stature and in manhood. She listened wide-eared to all his tidings, but once, when his horse grew restive, so that he turned away from us women-kind she kissed my cheek, but in great haste, as though she would not have him see it. We were gladly welcomed at the forest lodge. How truly my uncle and aunt rejoiced at my brother's home-coming could be seen in their eyes, though the mother, who had banished her own son, was cut to the heart by the sight of such another well-grown youth.

The evening before guests had come to the lodge his excellency the Lord Justice Wigelois von Wolfstein, and Master Besserer of Ulm. Now we had to make ready in all haste for dinner, and never had Ann made such careful and diligent use of our little mirror. As it fell, we could be alone together for a few minutes only, and had no chance of speaking to each other privily. This was likewise the case at table, and then, as my uncle had prepared for a hunt in the afternoon, in honor of his guests, and as the supper afterwards lasted until midnight, the not over-strong thread of my good patience was not seldom in danger of giving way. But many things were going forward which gave me matter for thought, and increased the distress I already felt. Ann threw herself into the sport with all her heart, and on the way back fell behind with Herdegen in such wise that they did not reach home till long after the door closed on the last of us.

At supper she nodded to me many times with much contentment; except for that I might have been buried for aught she noted, for she hearkened only to Herdegen's tales as though they were a revelation from above. For his part, he now and again stole a hasty, fiery glance at her; otherwise he of set purpose made a show of having little to do with her. He often lay back as though he were weary; and yet, when their Excellencies questioned him of any matter, he was ever ready with a swift and discreet answer. He had lost nothing of his wonderfully clear and shrewd wit; nevertheless, I was not so much at my ease with him as of old time. When my uncle said in jest that the wise owl from Padua seemed to wear a motley of gay feathers, his intent was plain as soon as one looked at my brother; and in the fine clothes he had chosen to wear at supper the noble lad was less to my mind than in the hunting weed which he had journeyed in, inasmuch as the too great length of the sleeves of his mantle was in his way when eating, and the over-long points to his shoes hindered him in walking.

When, presently, my Aunt Jacoba left the hall that the men might the better enjoy the heady wine and freer speech, we maidens were bound to follow her duteously; but Herdegen signed to me to come apart with him, and now I hoped he would open his heart to me and treat me as he had been wont, as my true and dear brother, whose heart had ever been on the tip of his tongue. Far from it; he spoke nought but flattery, as "how fair I had grown," and then desired news of Cousin Maud, and Kunz, and our grand-uncle, and at last of Ursula Tetzl, which made me wroth.

I answered him shortly, and asked him whether he had no more than that to say to me. He gazed down at the ground and said to himself: "To be sure, to be sure." But in a minute he went back to his first manner, and when I bid him good-night in anger he put his arm round me and turned me about as if to dance.

I got myself free and went away, up to our chamber, hanging my head. There I found my old Sue, taking off Ann's fine gown; and whereas Ann nodded to me right sweetly and, as I thought, with a secret air, I guessed that it was the waiting-woman who stayed her speech and I sent my nurse away.

Now I should sooner have looked for the skies to fall than for Ann, my heart's closest friend, to keep the secret of what had befallen that very morning; and yet she kept silence.

We were commonly wont to chirp like a pair of crickets while we braided our hair and got into our beds; but this night there was not a sound in the chamber. Commonly we laid us down with a simple "Good night, Margery," "Sleep well, Ann," after we had said our prayers before the image of the Blessed Virgin; but this night my friend held me close in her arms, and as I was about to get into bed she ran to me again and kissed me with much warmth. Whether I was so loving to her I cannot, at this day, tell; but I remember well that I remained dumb, and my heart seemed to ache with sorrow and pain. I thought myself defrauded, and my true love scorned. Was it possible? Did my Ann trust me no longer, or had she never trusted me?

Nay more. Was she at all such as I had believed, if she could carry on an underhand and forbidden love-making with Herdegen behind my back; and this, Merciful Virgin, peradventure, for years past!

The taper had burnt out. We lay side by side striving to sleep, while distress of mind and a wounded heart brought the tears into my eyes.

Then I heard a strange noise from her bed, and was aware that Ann likewise was weeping, more bitterly and deeply every minute. This pierced the very depths of my soul. Yet I tried to harden my heart till I heard her voice saying: "Margery!"

That was an end of our silence, and I answered: "Ann."

Then she sobbed out: "As we came home from the hunt he made me promise never to reveal it, but it is bursting my heart. Oh! Margery, Margery, I ought to hide and bury it in my soul; so he bid me, and nevertheless...."

I sat up on the pillow as if new life had come to me, and cried: "Oh Ann, you can tell me nothing that I know not already, for I saw him dismount and how he embraced you."

And then, before I was aware of her, she leaped up and was kneeling on her knees by the head of my bed, and her lips were kissing mine, and her cheeks were against my face and her tears running down my cheeks and neck and bosom while she confessed all. In our peaceful little chamber there was a wild outpouring of vows of love and words of fear, of plans for the future, and long tales of how it all had come to pass.

I had with mine own eyes seen it in the bud and, unwittingly indeed, had fostered its growth. How then could I be dismayed when now I beheld the flower?

Their meeting this morning had been as the striking of flint and steel, and if sparks had come of it how could they help it? And I took Ann's word when she said that she would have flown into the arms of her beloved, if father and mother and a hundred more had been standing round to warn her.

All she said that night was full of perfect and joyful assurance, and it took hold of my young soul; and albeit I could not blind myself, but saw that great and sore hindrances stood in the way of my brother's choice, I vowed to myself that I would smooth their path so far as in me lay.

All was now forgotten that I had taken amiss that evening in the returned wanderer; and when I gave Ann a last kiss that night how well I loved her again!

CHAPTER VII

The cocks had already crowed before I fell asleep, and when I awoke Ann was sitting in front of the mirror, plaiting her hair. I knew full well what had led her to quit her bed so early, and, as she met her lover at breakfast, her form and face meseemed had gained in beauty, so that I could not take my eyes off from her. My aunt and his Excellency marked the wonderful change which had taken effect in her that night, and the gentleman thenceforth waited closely on Ann and sued for her favor like a young man, in spite of his grey hair, while worthy Master Besserer followed his ensample.

At the first favorable chance I drew Herdegen apart. Ann had already told him that I had been witness to their first meeting again; this indeed pleased him ill, and when I asked him as to how he purposed to demean himself henceforth towards his betrothed, he answered that matters had not gone so far with them; and that until he had taken his Doctor's hood we must keep the secret I had by chance discovered closely hidden from all the good people of Nuremberg; that much water would flow into the sea or ere he could bid me wag my tongue, if our grand-uncle should continue to bear the weight of his years so bravely. For the present he was one of the happiest of men on earth, and if I loved him I must help him to enjoy his heart's desire, and often see the lovely violet which had bloomed so sweetly for him here in the deep heart of the forest.

His bright young spirit smiled upon my soul once more as it had done long ago. Only his unloving mention of our grand-uncle, who had been as a second father to him, struck to my heart, and this I said to him; adding likewise, that it must be a point of honor with him to give and take rings with Ann, even though it should be in secret.

This he was ready and glad to do; I gave him the gold ring, with a hearty good will, which Cousin Maud had given me for my confirmation, and he put it on his sweetheart's finger that very day, albeit her silver ring was too small for his little finger. So he bid her wear it, and solemnly promised to keep his troth, even without a ring, till the next home-coming; and Ann put her trust in her lover as surely as in rock and iron.

Many were the guests who came to the forest that fair autumn tide; there was no end of hunting and sport of all kinds, and Ann was ever ready and well content to share her lover's fearless delight in the chase; when she came home from the forest the joy of her heart shone more clearly than ever in her eyes; and seeing her then and thus, no man could doubt that she was at the crown and top of human happiness. Albeit, up on that height meseemed a keen wind was blowing, which she did battle with so hardly that through many a still night I could hear her sighs. Withal she showed a strange selfishness such as I had never before marked in her, which, however, only concerned her lover, with constant unrest when apart from others whom she loved; and all this grieved me, though indeed I could not remedy it.

Strangest of all, as it seemed to me, was it that these twain who erewhile had never spent an hour together without singing, would now pass day after day without a song. But then I remembered how that the maiden nightingale likewise pipes her sweetest only so long as her bosom is full of pining love; but so soon as she has given her heart wholly to her mate, her song grows shorter and less tender.

Not that this pair had as yet gone so far as this; and once, when I gave them warning that they should not forget how to sing, they marvelled at their own neglect, and as thereupon they began to sing it sounded sweeter and stronger than in former days.

Among the youths who at that time enjoyed the hospitality of the Waldstromers, Herdegen's friend, Franz von Welemisl, held the foremost place. He was the son of a Bohemian baron, and his mother, who was dead, had been of one of the noblest families of Hungary. And whereas his name was somewhat hard to the German tongue, we one and all called him simply Ritter Franz or Sir Franz. He was a well made and well favored youth in face and limb, who had found such pleasure in my brother's company at Erfurt that he had gone with him to Padua. His father's sudden death had taken

him home from college sooner than Herdegen, and he was now in mourning weed. He ever held his head a little bowed, and whereas Herdegen, with his brave, splendid manners and his long golden locks, put some folks in mind of the sun, a poet might have likened his friend to the moon, inasmuch as he had the same gentle mien and pale countenance, which seemed all the more colorless for his thick, sheeny black hair which framed it, with out a wave or a curl. His voice had a sorrowful note, and it went to my heart to see how loving was his devotion to my brother. He, for his part, was well pleased to find in the young knight the companionship he had erewhile had in the pueri.

After the young Bohemian's father had departed this life, the Emperor himself had dubbed his sorrowing son Knight, and nevertheless he was devoid alike of pride and scornfulness. When, with his sad black eyes, he looked into mine, humbly and as though craving comfort, I might easily have lulled my soul with the glad thought that I likewise had opened the door to Love; but then I cared not if I saw him, and I thought of him but coldly, and this gave the lie to such hopes; what I felt was no more than the compassion due to a young man who was alone in the world, without parents or brethren or near kin.

One morning I went to seek Herdegen in the armory and there found him stripped of his jerkin, with sleeves turned up; and with him was the Bohemian, striving with an iron file to remove from my brother's arm a gold bracelet which was not merely fastened but soldered round his arm. So soon as he saw that I had at once descried the band, though he attempted to hide it with his sleeve, he sought to put off my questioning, at first with a jest and then with wrathful impatience flung on his jerkin and turned his back on me. Forthwith I examined Ritter Franz, and he was led to confess to me that a fair Italian Marchesa had prevailed on Herdegen to have this armlet riveted on to his arm in token of his ever true service.

On learning this I was moved to great dread both for my brother's sake and for Ann's; and when I presently upbraided him for his breach of faith he threw his arms round me with his wonted outrageous humor and boisterous spirit, and said: What more would I have, since that I had seen with my own eyes that he was trying to be quit of that bond? To get at the Marchesa he would need to cross a score of rivers and streams; and even in our virtuous town of Nuremberg it was the rule that a man might be on with a new love when he had left the third bridge behind him.

I liked not this fashion of speech, and when he saw that I was ill-pleased and grieved, instead of falling in with his merry mood, he took up a more earnest vein and said: "Never mind, Margery. Only one tall tree of love grows in my breast, and the name of it is Ann; the little flowers that may have come up round it when I was far away have but a short and starved life, and in no case can they do the great tree a mischief."

Then with all my heart I besought him that, as he had now bound up the life and happiness of the sweetest and most loving maid on earth with his own, he would ever keep his faith and be to her a true man. Seeing, however, that he was but little moved by this counsel, the hot blood of the Schoppers mounted to my head and thereupon I railed at his sayings and doings as sinful and cruel, and he likewise flared out and bid me beware how I spoke ill of my own father; for that like as he, Herdegen, had carried the image of Ann in his heart, so had father carried that of our dear mother beyond the Alps, and nevertheless at Padua he had played the lute under the balcony of many a blackeyed dame, and won the name of "the Singer" there. A living fire, quoth he, waxed not the colder because more than one warmed herself thereat; all the matter was only to keep the place of honor for the right owner, and of that Ann was ever certain.

Sir Franz was witness to these words, and when presently Herdegen had quitted the room, he strove to appease and to comfort me, saying that his greatly gifted friend, who was full of every great and good quality, had but this one weakness: namely, that he could not make a manful stand against the temptations that came of his beauty and his gifts. He, Franz himself was of different mould.

And he went on to confess that he loved me, and that, if I would but consent to be his, he would ever cherish and serve me, with more humility and faithfulness even than his well-beloved Lord and King, who had dubbed him knight while he was yet so young.

And his speech sounded so warm and true, so full of deep and tender desires, that at any other time I might have yielded. But at that hour I was minded to trust no man; for, if Herdegen's love were not the truth, whereas it had grown up with him and was given to one above me in so many ways, what man's mind could I dare to build on? Yea, and I was too full of care for the happiness of my brother and of my friend to be ready to think of my own; so I could only speak him fair, but say him nay. Hardly had I said the words when a strange change came over him; his calm, sad face suddenly put on a furious aspect, and in his eyes, which hitherto had ever been gentle, there was a fire which affrighted me. Nay and even his voice, as he spoke, had a sharp ring in it, as though the bells had cracked which erewhile had tolled so sweet a peal. And all he had to say was a furious charge against me who had, said he, led him on by eye and speech, only to play a cruel trick upon him, with words of dreadful purpose against the silent knave who had come between him and me to defraud him; and by this he meant the Swabian, Junker von Kalenbach.

I was about to upbraid him for his rude and discourteous manners when we heard, outside, a loud outcry, and Ann ran in to fetch me. All in the Lodge who had legs came running together; all the hounds barked and howled as though the Wild Huntsman were riding by, and mingling therewith lo! a strange, outlandish piping and drumming.

A bear-leader, such as I had before now seen at the town-fair, had made his way to the Lodge, and the swarthy master, with his two companions, as it might be his brothers, were like all the men of their tribe. A thick growth of hair covered the mouth below an eaglenose, and on their shaggy heads they wore soft red bonnets. One was followed by a tall camel, slowly marching along with an ape perched on his hump; the other led a brown bear with a muzzle on his snout.

The master's wife, and a dark-faced young wench, were walking by the side of a little wagon having two wheels, to which an over-worked mule was harnessed. A youth, of may-be twelve years of age, blew upon a pipe for the bear to dance, and inasmuch as he had no clothes but a ragged little coat, and a sharp east wind was blowing, he quaked with cold and shivered as he piped. Notwithstanding he was a fine lad, well-grown, and with a countenance of outlandish but well nigh perfect beauty. He had come, for certain, from some distant land; yet was he not of the same race as the others.

When we had seen enough of the show, my uncle commanded that meat should be brought for the wanderers; and when pease-pottage and other messes had been given them, they fetched, from under the wagon-tilt, a swarthy babe, which, meseemed was a sweet little maid albeit she was so dark-colored.

Ann and I gazed at these folks while they ate, and it seemed strange to us to see that the well-favored lad put away from him with horror the bacon which the old bear-leader set before him; and for this the man dealt him a rude blow.

After their meal the master went on his way; and when we likewise had eaten our dinner, my dear godfather and uncle, Christian Pfinzing, came from the town, bringing a troop of mercenaries to the camp where they were to be trained that they might fight against the Hussites. He, like the other guests, made friends with the strangers, and in his merry fashion he bid the older bear leader tell our fortunes by our hands, while the young ones should dance.

The man then read the future for each of us; my fortune was sheer folly, whereof no single word ever came true. He promised my brother a Count's coronet and a wife from a race of princes; and when Ann heard it, and held up her finger at Herdegen for shame, he whispered in her ear that she was of the race of the Sovereign Queen of all queens—of Venus, ruler of the universe. All this she heard gladly; yet could no one persuade her to let her hand be read.

At last it was the woman's turn to dance; before she began she had smoothed her hair and tied it with small gold pieces; and indeed she was a well grown maid and slender, well-favored in face and

shape, with a right devilish flame in her black eyes. It was a strange but truly a pleasing thing to see her; first she laid a dozen of eggs in a circle on the grass, and then she beat her tambourine to the piping of the lad and the drumming of one of the men who had remained with her, and rattled it over her head with wanton lightness till the bells in the hoop rang out, while she turned and bent her supple body in a mad, swift whirl, bowing and rising again. Her falcon eyes never gazed at the ground, but were ever fixed upwards or on the bystanders, and nevertheless her slender bare feet never went nigh the eggs in the wildest spinning of her dance.

The gentlemen, and we likewise, clapped our hands; then, while she stayed to take breath, she snatched Herdegen's hat from his head—and she had long had her eye on him—and gathered all the eggs into it with much bowing and bending to the measure of the music. When she had put all the eggs into the hat she offered it to my brother kneeling on one knee, and she touched the rim of her tambourine with her lips. The froward fellow put his fingers to his lips, as the little children do to blow a kiss, and when his eyes fell on that wench's, meseemed that this was not the first time they had met.

It was now a warm and windless autumn day, and after dinner my aunt was carried out into the courtyard. When the dancing was at an end, she, as was her wont, questioned the men and the elder woman as to all she desired to know; and, learning from them that the men were likewise tinkers, she bid Ann hie to the kitchen and command that the house-keeper should bring together all broken pots and pans. But now, near by the wagon, was a noise heard of furious barking, and the pitiful cry of a child.

The Junker, who had set forth early in the day to scour the woods, had but now come home; the hounds with him had scented strangers, and had rushed on the brown babe, which was playing in the sand behind the wagon, making cakes and pasties. The dogs were indeed called off in all haste, but one of them, a spiteful badger-hound, had bitten deep into the little one's shoulder.

I ran forthwith to the spot, and picked up the babe in my arms, seeing its red blood flow; but the elder woman rushed at me, beside her wits with rage, to snatch it from me; and whereas she was doubtless its mother or grand-dame, I might have yielded up the child, but that Ritter Franz came to me in haste to bid me, from my Aunt Jacoba, carry it to her.

Who better than she knew the whole art and secret of healing the wounds of a hound's making? And so I told the old dame, to comfort her, albeit she struggled furiously to get the babe from me. Nay and she might have done so if the little thing had not clung round my neck with its right arm that had no hurt, as lovingly as though it had been mine own and no kin to the shrieking old woman.

But ere long a clear and strange light was cast on the matter; for when we had loosened the child's little shirt, and my aunt had duly washed the blood from the wounds, under the dark hue of its skin behold it was tender white, and so it was plain that here was a stolen child, needing to be rescued.

Then the house-stewardess, the widow of a forester whose husband had been slain by poachers, and who labored bravely to bring up her five orphan children, with my aunt's help—this woman, I say, now remembered that when she had made her pilgrimage, but lately, to Vierzehnheiligen, the Knight von Hirschhorn, treasurer to the Lord Bishop of Bamberg at Schesslitz, not far from the place of pilgrimage, had lost a babe, stolen away by vagabond knaves. Then Aunt Jacoba bethought herself that restitution and benevolence might be made one; and, quoth she, this matter might greatly profit the housekeeper and her little ones, inasmuch as that the sorrowing father had promised a ransom of thirty Hungarian ducats to him who should bring back his little daughter living; and forthwith the whole tribe of the bear-leaders were to be bound. The old beldame gave our men a hard job, for she tried to make off to the forest, and called aloud: "Hind—Hind!" which was the young wench's name, with outlandish words which doubtless were to warn her to flee; but the serving men gained their end and made the wild hag fast.

Ann was pale and in pain with her head aching, but she helped my aunt to tend the child; and I was glad, inasmuch as I conceived that I knew where to find Herdegen and the young dancing wench, and I cared only to save his poor betrayed sweetheart from shame and sorrow. I crept away, unmarked,

through the garden of herbs behind the lodge, to a moss but which my banished cousin had built up for me, in a covert spot between two mighty beech-trees, while I was yet but a school maid.

Verily my imagination was not belied, for whereas I passed round the pine-grove I heard my brother cry out: "Ah—wild cat!" and the hussy's loathsome laugh. And thereupon they both came forth, only in the doorway he held her back to kiss her. At this she showed her white teeth, and meseemed she would fain bite him; she thrust him away and laughed as she said: "To-night; not too much at once." Howbeit he snatched her to him, and thereupon I called him by name and went forward.

He let her go soon enough then, but he stamped with his foot for sheer rage. This, indeed, moved me not; with a calm demeanor I bid the wench follow me, and to that faithless knave I cried: "Fie!" in a tone of scorn which must have made his ears burn a good while. Before we entered the garden I bid him go round about the house and come upon the others from the right hand; she was to come with me and round by the left side.

I now saw that there were shreds of moss and dry leaves in the young woman's hair and bid her brush them out. This she did with a mocking smile, and said in scorn: "Your lover?"

"Nay," said I, "far from it. But yet one whom I would fain shield from evil." She shrugged her shoulders; I only said: "Come on."

As we went round to the front of the house the elder woman was being led away with her hands bound, and no sooner did the young one descry her than she picked up her skirts and with one wild rush tried to be off and away. I called Spond, my trusty guard, and bid him stay her; and the noble hound dogged her steps till the men could catch her and lead her to my aunt. The lady questioned her closely, deeming that so young and comely a creature might be less stubborn than the old hag who had grown grey in sins; but Hind stood dumb and made as though she knew not our language. As to Herdegen, he meanwhile had greeted Ann with great courtesy; nevertheless he had kept close to the dancing wench, and took upon himself to tie her bonds and lead her to the dungeon cell. He sped well, inasmuch as he got away with her alone, as he desired; for Sir Franz delayed me again, and such a suit as he now pleaded can but seldom have found a match, for I was bent only on following my brother, to rescue him from the vagabond woman's snares; and while the knight held me fast by the hand, and swore he loved me, I was only striving to be free, and gazing after Herdegen and Hind, heeding him not. At length he hurt my hand, which I could not get away from him; and whereas he was beginning to look wildly and to seem crazed, I besought him to leave me free henceforth and try his fortune elsewhere. But still he would never have set me free so hastily if an evil star had not brought the Swabian Junker to the spot.

Sir Franz, without a word of greeting or warning, went up to him and upbraided him for having caused a mischief to a helpless babe through his heedless conduct. But if Sir Franz knew not already that he, to whom he spoke as roughly as though he were a forward serving man, was in truth son and heir of a right noble house, he learnt it now. His last words were: "And for the future have your savage hounds in better governance!" Whereupon the other coolly answered: "And you, your tongue."

On this the other shrugged his shoulders and replied in scorn that to be sure his tongue was for use and not for silence like some folks'. And I marvelled where the Swabian, who was so slow of speech, found the words for retort and answer, till at length it was too much for him and he laid his hand on his hanger as a second and a sharper tongue.

CHAPTER VIII

The dancing-wench was locked into the cell with the rest of the wanderers, and as I looked in through the window at the fine young creature, squatting in a corner, I had pity on her, and for my part I would fain have sent her forth and away never to see her more.

I could nowhere find Herdegen; I had no mind for Uncle Christian's jests; and when, at last, I betook me to my own chamber, meseemed that some horrible doom was in the air, from which there was no escape. And matters were no better when Ann, who of late had been free from her bad headache, came up to bed, to hide her increasing pain among the pillows. So I sat dumb and thoughtful by her side, till Aunt Jacoba sent for me to lay cold water on the arm of the little kidnapped maid. The child had been well washed, and lay clean and fresh between the sheets, and the swarthy dirty little changeling was now a sweet, fair-haired darling. I tended it gladly; all the more when I thought of the joy it would bring to its father and mother; notwithstanding the evil nightmare would not be cast off, not even when the clatter of wine cups and Uncle Christian's big laugh fell on my ear.

Seldom had I so keenly missed Herdegen's mirthful voice. The housekeeper told me that he had gone on horseback into the town at about the hour of Ave Maria. My grand-uncle had bidden him to go to him. The vagabond knaves had already been put to the torture in my brother's presence, but they had confessed nothing of their guilt; inasmuch, indeed, as in our dungeon there were none other instruments of torture than the rack, the thumbscrew, and scourges needful for the Bamberg torture, and a Pomeranian cap, made to crush the head somewhat; but in Nuremberg there was a store, less mild and of more active effect.

The air was hot and heavy, the sun had set behind black clouds, yellow and dim, like a blind eye. A strange languor came over me, though I was wont to be so brisk, and with it a long train of dismal and hideous images. First I saw the Junker and Sir Franz, who had fallen out about me, a foolish maid; then it was my Ann, pining with grief, paler than ever with a nun's veil on her; or standing by the Pegnitz, on the very spot where, erewhile, in the sweet Springtide, a forsaken maid had cast herself in.

The first lightning rent the sky and the storm came up in haste, bursting above our heads, and as the thunder roared closer and closer after the flash I was more and more frightened. Moreover the sick child wept piteously and waxed restless with fever and pain. By this time all was still in the dining-hall; but when my aunt bid me let the housekeeper take my place by the little one's bed and go to my rest, I would not; for indeed I could in no wise have slept.

They let me have my way, and soon after midnight, seized with fresh dread anent Herdegen, I was at the open window to let the rough wind fan my hot head, when suddenly the hounds set up a furious barking, as though the Forest lodge were beset on all sides by robbers. And at the same time I saw, by the glare of the lightning, that the old lime-tree in the midst of my aunt's herb garden was lying on the earth. This cut me to the heart, inasmuch as this tree was dear to my uncle, having been planted by his grandfather; and there was never a spot where his ailing wife was so fain to be in the hot summer days as under its shadow. Aye, and all my young life's happiness, meseemed, was like that tree-torn up by the roots, and I gazed spellbound at the blasted lime-tree till I was affrighted by a new horror; on the furthest rim of the sky, on the side where the town lay, I beheld a line of light which waxed broader and brighter till it was rose and blood-red.

A wild uproar came up from the kennels and foresters' huts, and I heard a medley of many voices; and whereas the distant flare began to soar more brightly heavenward I believed those who were saying below that all Nuremberg was in flames.

Even Aunt Jacoba had quitted her bed, and every soul under that roof looked forth at the fire and gave an opinion as to whether it were waxing or waning. And, thanks be to the Blessed Virgin, the latter were in the right; some few granaries, or stores of goods it might be, had been burnt out,

and I, among other fainting hearts, was beginning to breathe more easily, when the watchman's cry was heard once more and what next befell showed that my fears had not been groundless.

It was the vigil of Saint Simon and Saint Jude's day—[October 28th]—in the year of our Lord 1420, and never shall I forget it. The great things which befell that night are they not written in the Chronicles of the town, and still fresh in many minds? but peradventure in none are they more deeply printed than in mine; and while I move my pen I can, as it were, see the great hall of the hunting lodge with my very eyes. Many folks are astir, and all in scant attire and full of eager thirst for tidings. The alarm of fire has brought them from their pillows in all haste, and they press close and gaze through the door, which stands wide open, at the light spot in the sky. Not one dares go forth in the wild wind, and many a one draws his garment or cloak or coverlet closer round him; the gale sweeps in with such fury that the pitch torches against the wall are well nigh blown out, and the red and yellow glare casts a weird light in the hall.

Then the watchman's call is silent, and the growling and wailing of the forest folk comes nigher and nigher.

Presently a man totters across the threshold, upheld with sore difficulty by the gate-keeper Endres inasmuch as his own knees quake; and he who comes home thus, as he might be drunken or grievously hurt, is none other than my brother Herdegen. The torchlight falls on his face, and whereas my eyes descry him I cry aloud, and my soul has no thought of him but sheer pity and true love.

I haste to take Endres' place while Epplein, his faithful serving-man, whom he had not taken with him as is his wont, holds him up on the other hand.

But touch him where we may he feels a hurt; and while Uncle Conrad and the rest press him with questions, he can only point to his head and lips, which are too weak for thinking or speaking.

Alas! that poor fellow, meseems, bears but little likeness to my noble Herdegen, on whose arm the Italian Marchesa riveted her golden fetter. His face is swollen and bloodshot in one part, and cruelly torn in others. Where are the lovelocks that graced him so well? His left arm is helpless, his rich attire hangs about him in rags. He might be a battered, wretched beggar picked up in the high-road, and I rejoice truly to think that Ann is within the shelter of her bed and escapes the sight.

My aunt, who had long ere this been carried down to the hall, felt all his limbs and joints, and found that no bones were broken, while my uncle questioned him; and he told us in broken words that his horse had taken fright in the forest at a flash of lightning, had thrown him, and then dragged him through the brushwood; it was his man's nag which, as it fell, he had taken out that evening, and it was roaming now about the woods.

He had scarce ended his tale, when one of the warders of the dungeon and the gate-keeper rushed in with the tidings that one of the prisoners, and that the young wench, had escaped, although the door of the keep was locked and the window barred. She was clearly a witch, and only one thing was possible; namely that she had flown through the barred window, after the manner of witches on a broomstick, or in the shape of a bird, a bat, or an owl; nay, this was as good as certain, inasmuch as that the watchman had seen a wraith in the woods at about the hour of midnight, and the same face had appeared to the kennel-keeper. Both swore they had crossed themselves thereat, and said many paternosters. The other captives bore witness to the same, declaring that the wench had never been one of them, but had joined herself unawares to their company last midsummer eve, without saying whence, or whither she would go. She had flown off some hours since in the form of a monstrous vampire, but had fallen upon them first with tooth and nail; and albeit they were an evil-disposed crew their tale seemed truthful, whereas they were covered with many scratches which were not caused by the torture.

At these tidings my brother lost all heart, and fell back in the arm-chair as pale as ashes. I was presently left alone with him; but he answered nothing to my questions, and meseemed he slept. As day dawned I was chilled with the cold, so, inasmuch I could do nothing to help him, I went down

stairs. There I found our gentlemen taking leave, for one was off to the city to make inquisition as to the fire, and the other would fain seek his warm bed.

Hot elecampane wine had been served to give them comfort, when again we heard horses' hoofs and the watchman's call. Everybody came out in haste, only Uncle Christian Pfinzing did not move, for, so long as the wine jug was not empty, it would have needed more than this to stir him. He was a mighty fat man, with a short brick-red neck, cropped grey hair, and a round, well-favored countenance, with shrewd little eyes which stood out from his head.

We young Schoppers loved this jolly, warm-hearted uncle, who was childless, with all our hearts; but I clung to him most of all, since he was my dear godfather; likewise had he for many years shown an especial and truly fatherly care for Ann.

Well, Uncle Christian had peacefully gone on drinking the fiery liquor, waiting for the others; but when they came to tell him what tidings the horseman had brought, the cup fell from his hand, clattering down on the paved floor and spilling the wine; and at the same time his kind, faithful head dropped to one side, and for a few minutes his senses had left him. Albeit we were able ere long to bring him back to life again, I found, to my great distress, that his tongue seemed to have waxed heavy. Howbeit, by the help of the Blessed Virgin, he afterwards was so far recovered that when he sat over his cups his loud voice and deep laugh could be heard ringing through the room.

The tidings delivered by the messenger and which brought on this sickness—of which the leech Ulsenius had ere this warned him—might have shaken the heart of a sterner man; for my Uncle Christian lodged in the Imperial Fort as its warder, and his duty it was to guard it. Near it, likewise, on the same hill-crag, stood the old castle belonging to the High Constable, or Burgrave Friedrich. Now the Burgrave had come to high words with Duke Ludwig the Bearded, of Bayern-Ingolstadt, so that the Duke's High Steward, the noble Christoph von Laymingen, who dwelt at Lauf, had made so bold, with his lord at his back, as to break the peace with Friedrich, although he had lately become a powerful prince as Elector of the Mark of Brandenburg.

The said Christoph von Laymingen, so the horsemen told us, had ridden forth to Nuremberg this dark night and had seized the castle—not indeed the Imperial castle, which stood unharmed, but the stronghold of the old Zollern family which had stood by its side—and bad burnt it to the ground. This, indeed, was no mighty offence in the eyes of the town-council, inasmuch as it bore no great friendship to his Lordship the Constable and Elector, and had had many quarrels with him—nay, long after this the council was able to gain possession of the land and ruins by purchases—till, uncle Christian bitterly rued having sent his men-at-arms, whose duty it was to defend the castle, out into the country, though it were for so good a purpose as fighting against the Hussites.

It might have brought him into bad favor with the Elector; however, it did him no further mischief. One thing was certainly proven beyond doubt: that knavish treason had been at work in this matter; at Nuremberg, under the torture, it came out that the bear-master had been a spy and tell-tale bribed by Laymingen to discover whither Pfinzing and his men had removed.

And lest any one should conceive that here was an end to the woes that had fallen on the forest lodge in that short time from midnight to daybreak, I must record one more; for the new day, which dawned with no hue of rose, grey and dismal over the tawny woods, brought us fresh sorrow and evil.

Behind the moss-hut, wherein I had found my Herdegen with the dancing hussy, the Swabian Junker and Ritter Franz had fought, without any heed of the law and order of such combat—fought for life or death, and for my sake. And as though in this cruel time I were doomed to go through all that should worst wound my poor heart, I must need go forth to see the stricken limetree at that very moment when the Junker had dealt his enemy a deadly stroke and came rushing away with his hair all abroad like a mad man. It was indeed a merciful chance that my Uncle Conrad and the chaplain likewise had come forth to the garden, so that I might go with them to see the wounded knight.

The youth was lying on the wet grass, now much paler than ever, and his lips trembling with pain. A faded leaf had fallen on his brow and was strange to behold against his ashen skin; but I bent

me down and took it off. By him was lying the uprooted limetree, from which that leaf had fallen, and whereas the rain was dropping from it fast, meseemed it was weeping.

And my heart was knit as it never had been before, to this young knight who had shed his blood in my behalf; but while I gazed down right lovingly into his face the Swabian came close up to him with ruthless eyes, and from those of the wounded man there shot at me a glance so full of hate and malice that I shuddered before it. This was an end, then, to all pity and tenderness. And yet, as I looked on his cold, set face, as pale and white as dull chalk, I could not forbear tears; for it is ever pitiful to see when death overtakes one who is not ripe for dying, as we bewail the green corn which is smitten by the hail, and hold festival when the reaper cuts the golden ears.

Thus were there three sick and wounded in the forest-lodge, besides my aunt; for Uncle Christian must have some few days of rest and nursing. Howbeit there was no lack of us to tend them; Ann was recovered to-day and Cousin Maud had come in all haste so soon as she knew of what had befallen Herdegen; for, of us all, he held the largest room in her heart; and even when he was at school, albeit he had money and to spare of his own, she had given him so freely of hers that he was no whit behind the sons of wealthy Counts.

Biding the time till my cousin should come—and she could not until the evening—it was my part to stay with my brother; but whereas Ann would fain have helped me, this Aunt Jacoba conceived to be in no way fitting for a young maid; much less then would she grant my earnest desire that I might devote me to the care of Sir Franz; though she had it less in mind to consider its fitness, than to conceive that it would be of small benefit to the wounded man, at the height of his fever, to know that the maid for whose love he had vainly sued was at his side.

Thus I was forbidden to see Ann in my brother's chamber; nevertheless I had much on my heart and I could guess that she likewise was eager to speak with me; but when at last I was alone with her in our bed chamber, she had matter for speech of which I had not dreamed. When I asked her what message she might desire me to give Herdegen from her, she besought me as I loved her not to name her at all in his presence. This, indeed, amazed me not a little, inasmuch as I weened not that she knew of all the grief I had suffered yestereve. But this was not so; I learnt now that she had marked everything, and had heard the men's light talk about the dashing youth whom the dark-eyed hussy had been so swift to choose from among them all. I, indeed, tried to make the best of the matter, but she gave me to understand that, if her lover had not done himself a mischief, it had been her intent to question him that very day as to whether he was in earnest with his love-pledges, or would rather that she should give him back his ring and his word. All this she spoke without a tear or a sigh, with steadfast purpose; and already I began, for my part, to doubt of the truth of her love; and I told her this plainly. Thereupon she clasped me to her, and while the tears gathered and sparkled in her great eyes, expounded to me all the matter; and in truth it was all I should myself have said in her place. She, of simple birth, would enter the circle of her betters on sufferance, and her new friends would, of a certainty, not do her more honor than her own husband. On his manner of treating her therefore would depend what measure of respect she might look for as his wife. And so long as their promise to marry was a secret, she would have him show, whether to her alone or before all the world, that he held her consent as of no less worth than that of the wealthiest and highest born heiress.

All this she spoke in hot haste while her cheeks glowed red. I saw the blue veins swell on her pure brow, and can never forget the image of her as she raised her tearful eyes to Heaven and pressing her hands on her panting bosom cried: "To go forth with him to want or death is as nothing! But never will I be led into shame, not even by him."

When presently I left her, after speaking many loving words to her, and holding her long in my arms, she was ready to forgive him; but she held to this: "Not a word, not a glance, not a kiss, until Herdegen had vowed that yesterday's offence should be the first and last she should ever suffer."

How clearly she had apprehended the matter!

Albeit she little knew how deeply her beloved had sinned against the truth he owed her. They say that Love is blind, and so he may be at first. But when once his trust is shaken the bandage falls, and the purblind boy is turned into a many-eyed, sharp-sighted Argus.

CHAPTER IX

Every one was ready to nurse the little maid who called herself “little Katie.” But as to Herdegen, I was compelled for the time to say nothing to him of what Ann required of him, for he lay sick of a fever. He was faithfully tended by Epplein, the son of a good servant of our father’s who had lost his life in waiting on his master when stricken with the plague. Epplein had indeed grown up in our household, among the horses; even as a lad he had by turns helped Herdegen in his sports, and rendered him good service, and had ever shown him a warmer love than that of a hireling.

It fell out one day that my brother’s best horse came to harm by this youth’s fault, and when Herdegen, for many days, would vouchsafe no word to him the lad took it so bitterly to heart that he stole away from the house, and whereas no one could find him, we feared for a long time that he had done himself a mischief. Nevertheless he was alive and of good heart. He had passed the months in a various life; first as a crier to a wandering quack, and afterwards, inasmuch as he was a nimble and likely lad, he had waited on the guests at one of the best frequented inns at Wurzburg. It came then to pass that his eminence Cardinal Branda, Nuncio from his Holiness the Pope, took up his quarters there, and he carried the lad away with him as his body-servant to Italy, and treated him well till the restless wight suddenly fell into a languor of home-sickness, and ran away from this good master, as erewhile he had run away from our house. Perchance some love-matter drove him to fly. Certain it is that in his wandering among strangers he had come to be a mighty handy, wide-awake fellow, with much that was good in him, inasmuch as with all his subtlety he had kept his true Nuremberger’s heart.

When he had journeyed safely home again he one day stole unmarked into our courtyard, where his old mother lived in an out-building on the charity of the Schoppers; he went up to her and stood before her, albeit she knew him not, and laid the gold pieces he had saved one by one on the work-table before her. The little old woman scarce knew where she was for sheer amazement, nor wist she who he was till he broke out into his old loud laugh at the sight of her dismay. Verily, as she afterwards said, that laugh brought more gladness to her heart and had rung sweeter in her ears than the gold pieces.

Then Susan had called us down to the courtyard, and when a smart young stripling came forth to meet us, clad in half Italian and half German guise, none knew who he might be till he looked Herdegen straight in the face, and my brother cried out: “It is our Epplein!” Then the tears flowed fast down his cheeks, but Herdegen clasped him to him and kissed him right heartily on both cheeks.

All this did I bring to mind as I saw this said Epplein carefully and sorrowfully laying a wet cloth, at my aunt’s bidding, on his master’s head where it was so sorely cut; and methought how well it would have been if Herdegen were still so ready to follow the prompting of his heart.

Understanding anon that I was not needed by this bed, where Epplein kept faithful watch and ward, and that Sir Franz’s chamber was closed to me, I went down stairs again, for I had heard a rumor that the swarthy lad—who had yesterday played on the pipe—was to be put to the torture. This I would fain have hindered, whereas by many tokens I was certain that the said comely youth was not one of the vagabond crew, but, like little Katie, might well be a child knavishly kidnapped from some noble house. Whereas I reached the hall, Balzer, the keeper, was about bringing the lad in. Outside indeed it was dim and wet, but within it was no less comfortable, for a mighty fire was blazing in the wide chimney-place. My aunt was warming her thereat, and Ann likewise was of the company, with Uncle Conrad, Jost Tetzl, my godfather Christian Pfinzing, and the several guests.

I joined myself to them and in an under tone told them what I had noted, saying that, more by token the youth must have a good conscience; for, whereas he had not been cast into the cell but had been locked into a stable to take charge of the camels and the ape, he had nevertheless not tried to escape, although it would have been easy.

To this opinion some inclined; and seeing that the boy spoke but a few words of German, but knew more of Italian, I addressed him in that tongue; and then it came to light that he was verily and indeed a stolen child. The vagabonds had bartered for him in Italy, giving a fair girl whom they had with them in exchange; likewise he said he was of princely birth, but had fallen into slavery some two years since, when a fine galley governed by his father, an Emir or prince of Egypt, had fought with another coming from Genoa in Italy.

When I had presently interpreted these words to the others, Jost Tetzels, Ursula's father, declared them to be sheer lies and knavery; even Uncle Conrad deemed them of little worth; and for this reason: that if the lad had indeed been the son of some grand Emir of Egypt the bear-leader would for certain have made profit of him by requiring his ransom.

But when I told the lad of this he fixed his great eyes very modestly on me, and in truth there was no small dignity in his mien and voice as he asked me:

“Could I then bring poverty on my parents, who were ever good to me, to bestow wealth on that evil brood? Never should those knavish rogues have learnt from me what I have gladly revealed to thee who are full of goodness and beauty!”

This speech went to my heart; and if it were not truth then is there no truth in all the world! But when again I had interpreted his words, and Tetzels still would but shrug his shoulders, this vexed me so greatly that it was as much as I could do to refrain myself, and hold my peace.

I had seen from the first, in Uncle Christian's eyes, that he was of the same mind with me; yet could I not guess what purpose he had in his head, although to judge by her face it was something passing strange, when he muttered some behest to Ann with his poor fettered tongue. Then, when she told me what my godfather required of me, I was not in any haste to obey, for, indeed, maidenly bashfulness and pity hindered me. Yet, whereas the brave old man nodded to spur me on, with his heavy head, still covered with a cold wet cloth, I called up all my daring, and before the lad was aware I dealt him a slap on the cheek.

It was not a hard blow, but the lad seemed as much amazed as though the earth had opened at his feet. His dark face turned ashen-grey and his great eyes looked at me in tearful enquiry, but so grievously that I already rued my unseemly deed.

Soon, however, I had cause to be glad; the youth's demeanor won his cause. Uncle Christian had only desired to prove him. He knew men well, and he knew that youths of various birth take a blow in the face in various ways; now, the Emir's son had demeaned him as one of his rank, and had stood the ordeal! So my aunt Jacoba told him, for she had at once seen through Uncle Christian's purpose, and presently Jost Tetzels himself, though ill-pleased and sullen, confessed his error. Then, when they had promised the youth that he should be spared all further ill-usage, he opened the lining of his garment and showed us a gem which his mother had privily hung about his neck, and which was a lump or tablet of precious sky-blue turkis-stone, as large as a great plum, whereon was some charm inscribed in strange, outlandish signs which the Jewish Rabbi Hillel, when he saw it, declared to be Arabic letters.

The bear-leader had called the lad Beppo; but his real name was a long one and hard to utter, out of which my forest uncle picked up two syllables for a name he could speak with ease, calling him Akusch.

With Cousin Maud's assent the black youth was attached to my service as Squire, inasmuch as it was I who at first had “dubbed him knight;” and when I gave him to understand this he could not contain himself for joy, and from that hour he ever proved my most ready servant, ever alert and thankful; and the little benevolence it was in my power to shew the poor lad bore fruit more than a thousand fold in after times, to me and mine.

After noon that same day Ann confessed to me that she had it in her mind to quit the lodge that very evening, journeying home with Master Ulsenius; and when she withstood all my entreaties she told Cousin Maud likewise that she had indeed already left her own kin too long without her succor.

Aunt Jacoba was in her chimney corner, and how she took this sudden purpose on Ann's part, may be imagined.

It was so gloomy a day that there was scarce a change when dusk fell. Grey wreaths of cloud hung over the tree-tops, and fine rain dripped with a soft, steady patter, as though it would never cease; nor was there another sound, inasmuch as neither horn, nor watchman's cry, nor bell might break the silence, for the sake of the wounded men; nay, even the hounds, meseemed, understood that the daily course of life was out of gear.

Ann had gone to pack her little baggage with Susan's help, but she had bid me remain with the child. It was going on finely; it would play with the doll my Aunt had given it in happy pastime, and now I did the little one's bidding and was right glad to be her play fellow for a while. Time slipped on as I sat there making merry with little Katie, doing the dolly's leather breeches and jerkin off and on, blowing on the child's little shoulder when it smarted or giving her a sweetmeat to comfort her, and still Ann came not, albeit she had promised to join me so soon as her baggage was ready.

Hereupon a sudden fear seized me, and as soon as the housekeeper came up I went to seek Ann in our chamber. There stood all her chattel, so neat as only she could make them; and I learnt from Susan that Ann had gone down, some time since, into Aunt Jacoba's chamber.

I was minded to seek her there, and went by the ante-chamber where the sick lady's writing-table and books stood, and which led to the sitting chamber. I trod lightly by reason that the knight's chamber was beneath; thus no one heard me; but I could see beyond the dark ante-chamber into the further one, where wax lights were burning in a double candlestick, and lo! Ann was on her knees by the sick lady's couch, like to the linden-tree which the storm had overthrown yesternight; and she hid her face in my aunt's lap and sobbed so violently that her slender body shook as though in a fever. And Aunt Jacoba had laid her two hands on Ann's head, as it were in blessing. And I saw first one large tear, and then many more, run down the face of this very woman who had cast out her own fair son. Often had I marked on her little finger a certain ring in which a little white thing was set; yet was this no splinter of the bone of a Saint, but the first tooth her banished son had shed. And, when she deemed that no man saw her, she would press her hand to her lips and kiss the little tooth with fervent love. And now, whereas love had waked up again in her heart, that son had his part and share in it; for albeit none dared make mention of him in her presence she ever loved him as the apple of her eye.

I was no listener, yet could I not shut mine ears; I heard how the frail old lady exhorted the love-sick maid, and bid her trust in God, and in Herdegen's faithfulness. Also I heard her speak well indeed of my brother's spirit and will as noble and upright; and she promised Ann to uphold her to the best of her power.

She bid her favorite farewell with a fond kiss, and many comforting words; and as she did so I minded me of a wondrously fair maiden, the daughter of Pernhart the coppersmith, known to young and old in the town as fair Gertrude, who, each time I had beheld her of late, meseemed had grown even sadder and paler, and whom I now knew that I should never see more, inasmuch as that only yestereve Uncle Christian had told us, with tears in his eyes, that this sweet maid had died of pining, and had been buried only a day or two since with much pomp. Now my aunt had heard these tidings, and she had shaken her head in silence and folded her hands, as it were in prayer, fixing her eyes on the ground.

Cousin Gotz and Herdegen—fair Gertrude and my Ann; what made them so unlike that my aunt should bring herself to mete their bonds of love with so various a measure?

I quitted the room when Ann came forth, and outside the door I clasped her in my arms; and in the last hour we spent together at the forest lodge she bid me greet her heart's beloved from her, and gave me for him the last October rose-bud, which my uncle had plucked for her at parting. Yet she held to her demands.

She left us after supper, escorted by Master Ulsemus. She had come hither one sunny morn with the song of the larks, and now she departed in darkness and gloom.

CHAPTER X

“By Saint Bacchus—if there be such a saint in the calendar, there is stuff in the lad, my boy!” cried burly Uncle Christian Pfinzing, and he thumped the table with his fists so that all the vessels rang. His tongue was still somewhat heavy, but he had mended much in the three weeks since Ann had departed, and it was hard enough by this time to get him away from the wine-jug.

It was in the refectory of the forest lodge that he had thus delivered himself to my Uncle Conrad and Jost Tetzl, Ursula’s father; and it was of my brother Herdegen that he spoke.

Herdegen was healed of his bruises and his light limbs had never been more nimble than now; still he bore his left arm in a sling, for there it was, said he, that the horse’s hoof had hit him. Whither the horse had fled none had ever heard; nor did any man enquire, inasmuch as it was only Epplein’s nag, and my granduncle had given him a better one.

My silly brain, from the first, had been puzzled to think wherefor my brother should have taken that nag to ride to see his guardian, who thought more than other men of a good horse. And in truth I was not far from guessing rightly, so I will forthwith set down whither indeed my dear brother’s horse had vanished, and by what chance and hap he had fallen into so evil a plight.

He had aforetime met the young wench on his way from Padua to Nuremberg, not far from Dachau and had then and there begun his tricks with her, giving her to wit that she might find him again at the forest lodge in the Lorenzer wall. Now when matters took so ill a turn, he pledged himself to get her safe away from the dungeon cell. To this end he feigned that he would ride into the town, after possessing himself of the key of the black hole and after stowing a suit of his man’s apparel and a loaf of bread into his saddle-poke. Then he wandered about the wood for some time, and as soon as it fell dark he stole back to the house again on foot. He had made a bold and well-devised plan, and yet he might have come to a foul end; for, albeit the hounds, who knew him well, let him pass into the cell, within he was so fiercely set upon that it needed all his strength and swiftness to withstand it. The froward wretches had plotted to fall upon him and to escape with the wench from their prison, even if it were over his dead body.

One of the bear-leaders had made shift to strip the cords from his hands, and when my brother entered into the dark place where the prisoners lay, they flew at him to fell him. But even on the threshold Herdegen saw through their purpose, and had no sooner shut the door than he drew his hunting knife. Then the old beldame gripped him by the throat and clawed him tooth and nail; one of the ruffians beat him with a stave torn from the bedstead till he weened he had broken or bruised all his limbs, while the other, whose hands were yet bound, pressed between him and the door. In truth he would have come to a bad end, but that the younger woman saved him at the risk of her own life. The man who had rid himself of his bonds had raised the heavy earthen pitcher to break Herdegen’s head withal, when the brave wench clutched the wretch by the arm and hung on to him till Herdegen stuck him with his knife. Thus the ringleader fell, and my brother pulled up his deliverer and dragged her to the door. As he opened it the old woman and the other prisoner put forth their last strength to force their way out, but with his strong arm he thrust them back and locked the door upon them.

Thus he led the young woman, who had come off better than he had feared in the fray, forth to freedom, to keep his word to her.

Out in the wood, in spite of thunder and lightning, he made her to put on Epplein’s weed and mount the nag. Thereafter he led her horse to the brook, which floweth through the woods down to the meadow-land, and bid her ride along in the water so far as she might, to put the hounds off the scent. The bread in the saddle-bag would feed her for a few days, and now it lay with her to escape pursuit. And this good deed of my brother’s had smitten the lost creature to the heart; when he was about to help her to mount he dropped down on the wet ground from loss of blood, but as he opened his eyes again, behold, his head was resting on her lap and she kissed his brow. Despite her own

peril she had not left him in such evil plight, but had done all she could to bring him to his senses; nay, she had gathered leaves by the glare of the lightning to staunch the blood which flowed freely from the worst of his wounds. Nor was she to be moved to go on her way till he showed her that in truth he could walk.

Thus it befel that I long after thought of her with kindness; and indeed, she was not wholly vile; and every human soul hath in it somewhat good which spurs forth to love, inasmuch as it is love which can cast light on all, and that full brightly; and what is bright is good; and that light dieth not till the last spark is dead.

As to Herdegen, verily I have never understood how he could find it in his heart to peril his life for the sake of keeping his word to a vagabond hussy while, at the same time, he was breaking troth with the fairest and sweetest maid on earth. Yet I count it to him chiefly for good that he could risk life and honor to hinder those who fell upon him so foully from escaping the arm of justice; and it is this upholding of the law which truly does more to lift men above us women-folk than any other thing.

Well, by that evening when Uncle Christian thus pledged my brother, Herdegen was quite himself again in mind and body. At first it had seemed as though a wall had been raised up between us; but after that I had told him that I had concealed from Ann all that I had seen by ill-hap at the moss-hut, he was as kind and trusting as of old, and he showed himself more ready to give Ann the pledge she required than I had looked to find him, stiff-necked as he ever was. And he hearkened unmoved when I told him what Ann had said: "That she was ready to follow him to death, but not to shame."

"That," quoth he, "she need never fear from any true man, and with all his wildness he might yet call himself that." Then he stretched himself at full length on his chair, and threw his arms in the air, and cried:

"Oh, Margery. If you could but slip for one half-hour into your mad brother's skin. In your own, which is so purely white, you can never, till the day of doom, understand what I am. If ever I have seemed weary it is but to keep up a mannerly appearance; verily I could break forth ten times a day and shoot skywards like a rocket for sheer joy in life. When that mood comes over me there is no holding me, and I should dare swear that the whole fair earth had been made and created for my sole and free use, with all that therein is—and above all other creatures the dear, sweet daughters of Eve!—and I can tell you, Margery, the women agree with me. I have only to open my arms and they flutter into them, and not to close them tight—that, Margery, is too much to look for; yet is there but one true bliss, and but one Ann, and the best of all joys is to clasp her to my heart and kiss her lips. I will keep faith with her; I will have nought to say to the rest. But how shall I keep them away from me? Can I wish that those rascals had put my eyes out, had crippled my limbs, had thrashed me to a scare-crow, to the end that the maids should turn their backs on me? Nay, and even no rain-torrent could cool the hot blood of the Schoppers; no oak staff nor stone pitcher could kill the wild cravings within. There is nothing for it but to cast my body among thorns like Saint Francis. But what would even that profit me? You see yourself how well this skin heals of the worst wounds!"

Hereupon I earnestly admonished him of his devoir to that lady who was so truly his, and with whom he had exchanged rings. But he cried: "Do you believe that I did not tell myself, every hour of the day, that she was a thousand-fold more worth than all the rest put together? Never could I deem any maid so sweet as she has been ever since we were children together; nay, and if I lost her I should utterly perish, for it is from her that I, a half-ruined wretch, get all that yet is best in me!"

And many a time did I hear him utter the like; and when I saw his large blue eyes flash as he spoke, while he pushed the golden curls back from his brow, verily he was so goodly a youth to look upon that it was easy to view that the daughters of Eve might be ready to cast themselves into his arms.

This evening, as it fell, Aunt Jacoba was not with her guests, but unwillingly, inasmuch as we were to depart homewards next morning, and the gentlemen sat late over their farewell cups. It had become Cousin Maud's care to hinder Uncle Christian from drinking more freely than he ought; but this evening he had made the task a hard one; nay, when she steadfastly forbade him a third cup he

got it by craft and in spite of her, nor could she persuade him to forego the dangerous joy. When he had cried, as has been told, that “there was stuff” in my brother, it was by reason of his having perceived that Herdegen had already filled his cup for the fourteenth time, and when the youth had drunk it off the old man sang out in high glee:

“Der Eppela Gaila von Dramaus
Reit’ allezeit zu vierzeht aus!”

[An old popular rhyme in Nuremberg. “Eppela (Apollonius) Gaila of Dramaus—or Drameysr—could always go as far as fourteen cups.” Apollonius von Gailingen was a brigand chief who brought much damage and vexation on the town. Drameysel, in popular form Dramaus, was his stronghold near Muggendorf in Swiss Franconia.]

“Now, if the boy can drink three times the mystic seven, he will do what I could do at his age.”

And presently Herdegen did indeed drink his one and twenty cups, and when at last he paced the whole length of the great dining hall on one seam of the flooring the old man was greatly pleased, and rewarded him with the gift of a noble tankard which he himself had won of yore at a drinking bout. All this made good sport for us, save only for Jost Tetzl, who was himself a right moderate man; indeed, in aftertimes, when at Venice I saw how that wealthy and noble gentlemen drank but sparingly of the juice of the grape, I marvelled wherefor we Germans are ever proud of a man who is able to drink deep, and apt to look askance at such as fear to see the bottom of the cup. And if I had an answer ready, that likewise I owed to my uncle Christian; inasmuch as that very eve, when I would fain have warned Herdegen against the good liquor, my uncle put in his word and said it was every man’s duty to follow in the ways of Saint George the dragon-killer, and to quell and kill every fiend; be it what it might. “Now in the wine cup, quoth he, there lurks a dragon named drunkenness, and it beseemeth German valor and strength not merely to vanquish it, but even to make it do good service: The fiend of the grape, like the serpent killed by the saint, has two wide pinions, and the true German drinker must make use of them to soar up to the seventh heaven.”

And as concerns my Herdegen, I must confess that when he had well drunk his spirits were higher, his mind clearer, and his song more glad; and this is not so save in those dragon-slayers who have been blessed with a fine temper and a strong brain inherited from their parents.

Every evening had there been the like mirthful doings over their wine; but Sir Franz had been ever absent. He was even now forced to remain in his chamber, albeit Master Ulsenius had declared that his life was out of danger. The damage done to his lungs he must to be sure carry to his grave, nor could he be able to follow us for some weeks yet. He was not to think of making the journey to his own home in Bohemia during this winter season, and at this farewell drinking bout we held council as to whose roof he might find lodging under. He, for his part, would soonest have found shelter with us; but Cousin Maud refused it, and with good reason, inasmuch as I had freely told her that never in this world would I hearken to his suit.

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