

GEORG EBERS

MARGERY (GRED): A TALE
OF OLD NUREMBERG.

VOLUME 02

Georg Ebers

**Margery (Gred): A Tale Of
Old Nuremberg. Volume 02**

«Public Domain»

Ebers G.

Margery (Gred): A Tale Of Old Nuremberg. Volume 02 / G. Ebers —
«Public Domain»,

Содержание

CHAPTER VI	5
CHAPTER VII	9
Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.	11

Georg Ebers

Margery (Gred): A Tale Of Old Nuremberg – Volume 02

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.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

Текст предоставлен ООО «ЛитРес».

Прочитайте эту книгу целиком, [купив полную легальную версию](#) на ЛитРес.

Безопасно оплатить книгу можно банковской картой Visa, MasterCard, Maestro, со счета мобильного телефона, с платежного терминала, в салоне МТС или Связной, через PayPal, WebMoney, Яндекс.Деньги, QIWI Кошелек, бонусными картами или другим удобным Вам способом.