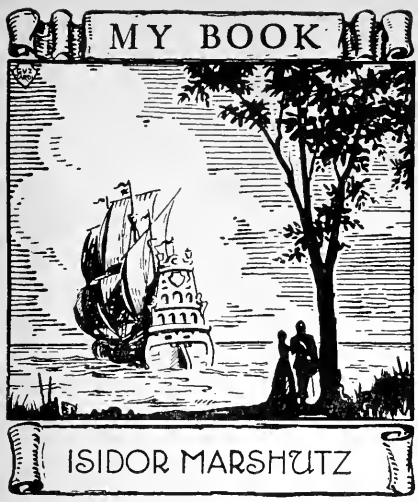
THE MERRY TALES *of* HANS SACHS

Translated by

WILLIAM LEIGHTON


MY BOOK
ISIDOR MARSHUTZ

Unserer lieben Tante Bertie

zur Erinnerung

an Nürnberg

August 1921

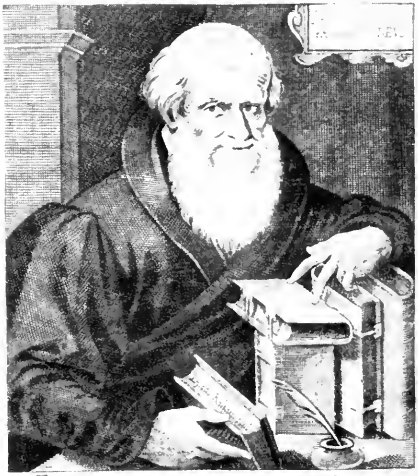
Fritz u. Leo

MERRY TALES

By HANS SACHS

Eygentliche Contrafactur

Deß Hinreichen vnd weitberühmbten Hansen Sachssens / Fürnemmen Teutschen Poetens / Seines Alters ein vnd achtzig Jahr.



Ex Satore DEUS laetor, magnumq; Poëtam
Fecit me hunc: Satis mira patrare DEUS!
Non DEUS accepit personam ex gentibus ullam,
Sanctis cum Satur Verba benigna facit.

Also war ich Hans Sachs gestalt
Gleich ein vnd achtzig Jahr alt
Zehen Wochen darvmm Fast
Durch von dem schmertzlichen new Last
Durch die Allmechtig Gottes Macht
Ward gefordert auß dem Jammerthal

Vnd von den lieben Engeln bloß
Getragen in Abrahams Schoß
Ich nun im Frid schlaffen thuon
Mein Leib / Verlang Jesus Christ
Im sechs vnd neuntzigsten Jahr
Der neunzehende Jenner war.

In verlegung Lucas Kilians Kupfferstechers. Im Jahr 1623.

PORTRAIT OF HANS SACHS.

From a 17th century wood-cut.

MERRY TALES

AND

Three Shrovetide Plays

By HANS SACHS

Now first done into English Verse by
WILLIAM LEIGHTON

LONDON
DAVID NUTT
AT THE SIGN OF THE PHŒNIX, LONG ACRE
1910

By the same Author.

"ROMAN SONNETS" and "FLORENTINE SONNETS," with numerous photogravures, published by Giulio Giannini & Son, 19–20, Piazza Pitti, Florence, Italy.

"THE HISTORY OF OLIVER AND ARTHUR," the translation of an old medieval romance, with antique woodcuts, published in the "RIVERSIDE SERIES" of Houghton Mifflin & Co., Boston, Mass., U.S.A.

Butler & Tanner The Selwood Printing Works Frome and London

To my Sister,

MRS. ELIZA BARRETT

WHO HAS GIVEN MOST VALUABLE HELP IN THE PREPARATION OF THIS BOOK, IT IS AFFECTIONATELY DEDICATED.

"Here Hans Sachs, the cobbler poet,
Laureate of the gentle craft,
Wisest of the twelve wise masters,
In huge folios sang and laughed."

LONGFELLOW.

Contents

SHROVETIDE PLAYS

Forewords

THOUGH the most famous of the Meistersingers, the great popularity that Hans Sachs enjoyed was due, not so much to the elaborate production of meister songs under the two hundred and thirty formulated rules that governed such compositions, as to the more familiar versification in which he appealed directly to the hearts of his neighbours and countrymen.

Therefore his simple tales have been selected for translation in this volume, though doubtless their author considered them the lighter and less artistic of his work. He was a most prolific writer ; the number of his pieces of verse being more than six thousand with over half a million of lines.

He was born on November 5, 1494, and died on January 20, 1576 ; thus completing a life of a little more than eighty-one years. His father, Jörg Sachs, was a tailor, a burgher of Nuremberg, in moderate circumstances, but of sufficiently liberal mind to give his son, until he was sixteen years old, the advantage of one of the four Latin schools of Nuremberg, which were then at their highest standard of excellence. There he learned the four elements of knowledge, according to the estimation of

that time, grammar, rhetoric, languages and music —something else, perhaps, as Hans Sachs says, in one of his poems, that he learned grammar, rhetoric, logic, music, arithmetic, astronomy, poetry, philosophy, Greek and Latin, geography, natural history, and the love of the poet's art. In another poem he says that he knew neither Greek nor Latin.

After leaving school in 1509 he spent two years in learning the trade of shoemaking; but during these two years he also studied diligently the meistersinger's art.

Then for five years he wandered through Germany. How much of this time he devoted to shoemaking, and how much to poetry, is uncertain. He remained for some time at the court of Kaiser Maximilian, and, while there, seems to have come to the decision to devote his life to the development of German poetry. At Munich, in 1514, he composed his first meistersong; but a love-song of his exists which was written in 1513. At Munich he helped conduct a school of meistersingers, and later, at Frankfort, established such a school. Returning to Nuremberg in 1516 he settled down to his life-work, shoes and poetry—or rather poetry and shoes; for undoubtedly poetry always maintained the greater preponderance in his mind.

In 1519 he married Kunigunde Kreuzerin; and, of this marriage, seven children, two sons and five daughters, were born.

Soon came the excitement of Luther's teachings. Hans Sachs was an exceedingly earnest man, and had an acute and well-trained mind. He studied the new doctrine most diligently; and, when satis-

fied that it was founded upon the elements of truth, became an ardent disciple of the great reformer. Therefore, he wrote vigorously and profusely on the subject ; and it was chiefly by his influence that Nuremberg was brought, at an early day, to adopt the Reformation. His intense interest in this subject will account for the ill opinion of priests which he exhibits in many of his pieces.

Although his mind was pervaded with religious feeling, as his voluminous writings on religious and ecclesiastical subjects fully show, he had no abject veneration for forms, permitting himself to present religious personages very freely in his characterizations with absolutely no halo of sanctity about them ; nor did he hesitate to make them the actors in humorous scenes. In doing this he evidently had no thought that he was thereby, in any way, degrading their sacred dignity.

When the excitement of Lutherism had somewhat died away, Hans Sachs withdrew himself from publicity, and devoted himself to his family and his trade, though his pen was never idle.

That he possessed great literary ability there can be no question. He was undoubtedly the most notable German poet during the first half of the sixteenth century, and he was always able to hold the hearts and heads of his countrymen. He cannot be considered apart from his time, in which the tastes of the people, their manners of thought, and range of information, were very different from those of the present day ; and it was to all these that his writings were intended to appeal. What we, with our present habits of thought, may find somewhat

coarse, may not have been coarse in Nuremberg three hundred and fifty years ago. What we believe, in the realms of morals and religion, is not what Nuremberg then believed. Let us therefore be liberal in our opinions, nor set down as vulgar or in bad taste, all that does not fit into our strict grooves.

Hans Sachs was a humorist, though his humour does not always exhibit itself so much in his words as in the grotesque situations which he describes. He is less a humorist of details than of amusing situations. These he does not always work up to their highest climax, but allows something to his readers' imaginations, that they, like himself, may chuckle over the fun, and picture out additional particulars. As an artist he does not take especial pains to elaborate, but, with his broad brush of humour, so paints the positions which he imagines, as always to amuse lovers of humour. He produces absurdities under cover of which he is able to say many things which, in that age of strict opinions, would doubtless have given offence to constituted authority, and perhaps menaced his liberty, if set down in more serious words.

As Voltaire had an audacity of wit which protected him, so Hans Sachs had an audacity of humour that saved him from the peril of his jests.

Though absolutely ignorant of all the rules of dramatic art, Hans Sachs had wonderful dramatic inspirations, which made his plays successful by the mere force of his simple lines of characterization. He was a natural dramatist, producing a great number of plays which were highly satisfactory to his

neighbours and countrymen, especially the Shrovetide Plays, which were frequently humorous little glimpses of peasant life.

There are no considerations of time or place in these little dramas, no stage illusions. Considerable lapses of time occur without any intimation to reader or audience except what may be gathered from the words of the actors ; and all the characters are presented in one place where often, under the circumstances of the story, they could not possibly be ; locations and times of events being changed indiscriminately throughout the one-act play in a very puzzling manner.

Then it must be remembered that there were no professional actors in the time of these dramas ; but they were done by volunteer performers. Perhaps in the more serious plays meistersingers took the parts, but certainly not in the Shrovetide Plays.

In the age of Hans Sachs was the beginning of the German drama, and he was reputed the most successful of these early dramatists. In Germany, as elsewhere, the popular drama grew out of Church plays representing Bible events ; into which plays bits of lighter and generally grotesque action were gradually introduced for the amusement of the people ; and these bits of grotesquerie came at length to be acted separately, as in the Shrovetide Plays.

Besides being a humorist, Hans Sachs is always a moralist. Every one of his tales is pointed by a moral which is always wise and generally exceedingly practical.

His tales are also remarkably free from the coarse

immorality of the stories of gallantry abundant in the literature of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Among the translations of this volume are three tales from the *Decameron* of Boccaccio, viz. "The Abbot in Wildbad," "The Cook and the Crane," and "The Monk Zweifel and his Relics"; and these will be found free from immoralities. Not one of the pieces of this collection is a tale of gallantry, though four of them relate matrimonial disagreements. The simple plots of his tales are generally amusing incidents or circumstances which point a moral. His familiar way of presenting Bible-characters most probably grew out of the very frequent representations of Bible-events, common in his time.

A very large part of his verse was devoted to religious subjects; and these pieces often exhibit, of course, the opinions and feelings of the time in which they were produced, much of which the world has now absolutely outgrown.

There succeeded to the time of Hans Sachs an era of ultra sentimentality in which his writings could have no place; and this is, perhaps, an important reason why the world knows less of him than it otherwise would have done.

Until he was more than fifty years old his works breathe a spirit of tranquillity and content indicating a fortunate life. But soon after this came heavy trials. He lost his seven children; and, in 1560, his wife. In 1562 Nuremberg was visited by an epidemic which swept away nearly ten thousand people.

In 1561 he married the seventeen-years-old

Barbara Harcherin. Several cheerful poems, written soon after this time, have been considered evidence that this marriage was a happy one. It has been said that, toward the end of his life, his mind was much weakened, but there is little evidence of this in his writings, other than that he produced less literary work after his seventieth year.

Hans Sachs was a popular poet. He wrote and thought as a man of the people. His Pegasus, perhaps, never soared over the loftiest heights of Olympus ; but he did not wish it to do so ; he did what was better : he employed his poetic genius to help, instruct, make easier and more cheerful, the lives of his neighbours ; and, by guiding his muse in this way, he fully deserved his immortality.

William Leighton.

SAINT PETER AND THE GOATS

[October 8, 1557]

UPON a time, in that blest age
When Christ on Earth made pilgrimage,
He, with St. Peter, came where lay
A little village near their way;
Pausing at cross-roads, in cool shade,
St. Peter to his Master said:

"O my good Lord! 'tis strange to me,
Thy constant mildness still to see;
Thou art omnipotent in might,
Yet dost permit the good and right
To be oppressed by cruel fact
Of wrong, while yet thou dost not act.
As once was said by prophet's tongue,
'The right is overcome by wrong;'
The godless still despoil the good
With secret fraud and hardihood;
No help there often seems to be
For ill-used, downcrushed piety;
Justice is but an empty word;
No voice from Heaven is ever heard;
As fishes in the sea have done,
The larger eats the smaller one;
The bad o'ercomes the good, and so
In evil way the world doth go.

Thou see'st all this, and keepest still,
As if thou hadst no Godlike will,
Or if the woes of Earth to thee
Called for no potent sovereignty;
If thou art so indifferent
Wherefore wert thou to Earth thus sent?
If thou canst hinder evil, why
Are all Earth's evils thus passed by?
Oh, were I Lord for one short year
All wickedness should disappear!
For I would use my Supreme Will
Eternal justice to fulfil;
Would check all rapine, greed and fraud;
And peace and goodness would reward."
The Lord replied, "O Peter, say!
Think'st thou, thou could'st the Master play?
Could'st order everything so well,
Justice on Earth would always dwell?"

St. Peter said, "Yes: on the Earth
A better life should have its birth;
Not constant strife, as now I see,
But sweet good will and harmony."
The Lord replied, "That this may be,
For one day take thou sovereignty;
For one day thou shalt be the Lord,
The evil punish; good reward;
Create, reform, be stern, or kind;
Rule Earth according to thy mind;
Deal curses, blessings, wind, or rain;
Nothing thou will'st shall be in vain;
Pardon, protect, torment; in short,
I give thee power, nor curb thee aught."

Therewith, into St. Peter's hand,
He gave the staff of his command.

Peter rejoiced; to him it seemed
From ills the world would be redeemed.

Beside them now a woman came,
Meagre and withered, old and lame;
She drove her goats to pasture here,
Saying to them, "I do not fear
To trust the keeping of the Lord;
He will protect you while abroad
You wander; He will bring you home
Though far, perchance, your feet may roam;
No evil can befall my flock
From fierce wild beasts, or tempest's shock.
I cannot be your guide to-day,
For I must labour for the pay
To bring my little children food.
Go where the meadow grass is good;
God will protect and guide your way;
I must be gone, nor longer stay."
So speaking, home the woman went;
The goats their way to pasture bent.

To Peter then the Lord thus spoke;
"Surely this woman's prayer awoke
Thy pity! and she trusts in thee:
Thou art the Lord; her piety
Calls for thy help; so, with good care,
See that her goats in safety fare;
Tend them so carefully all day
That they will have no harm, nor stray,

Nor fall from precipice, nor be
Stolen by force or trickery;
Guard them from bear's or wolf's attack;
And in the evening bring them back."

At the Lord's charge, St. Peter took
His Master's staff for shepherd's crook,
And drove the goats where pastures green,
With flowers bedecked, could now be seen.
The goats were young, of frisky will,
They scampered off, and climbed each hill;
Ran here and there; and where they went
St. Peter ran, with good intent,
To save them from impending ill;
They clambered craggy heights until
St. Peter, shouting, puffing, tried
To turn them back from every side;
It was a task to shout and race;
The perspiration down his face
In the hot sunshine dripping fell—
No words he said will this tale tell—
Through the long day the old saint toiled;
Dejected, weak, and badly soiled,
He brought the goats all back at night.

The Lord smiled at the sorry sight
Of the good saint, and mildly said,
"I see thy goats were safely led;
Wilt thou, dear friend, another day
Hold in thy hand my staff of sway?"

St. Peter answered, "Master mine,
Thy staff of power I here resign;

Take back thy sceptre ; 'tis not fit
My hand should dare to handle it ;
Henceforth thy office greatly fill ;
Employ on Earth thy heavenly will ;
For I have learned I have no might
Even to guide a goat aright
Without enormous toil to me,
Danger and much anxiety.
Pardon my folly that would dare
My human weakness to compare
With thy supreme omnipotence.
I do acknowledge my offence ;
Under thy will I bow my head ;
By thy good words I will be led."

The Lord replied, " Good saint, rejoice
That thou may'st have thy wiser choice :
Live thou in peace ; of power beware ;
It brings anxiety and care ;
Trust ever to my stronger hand
The world's omnipotent command."

MORAL

This fable is a lesson old,
But not in vain to be retold ;
For man hath oft audacity
To question God's supremacy
Of wisdom. If it sometimes seems
That there are faults in life's great schemes,
Then let us ask ourselves if we
Have minds to probe infinity :
How dare we question God's great plan,
Too vast for feeble mind of man !

Why evil is, why wrong doth go
Unpunished, we may never know;
Our reach of mind can seldom show,
In trifling things, results exact
Though well we measure every fact.
If in our vain imagining
We judge a fact, an unwise thing,
That we, its faults could surely mend
And bring it to a better end,
We like St. Peter, rashly seek
With human hands, absurdly weak,
To wield a sceptre whose great might
Is hidden from our purblind sight:
We see the near, not the remote,
And oft lack wit to guide a goat.
For all things there are reasons, though
What these may be, we do not know.

So, in things temporal, we must,
Contented, yield submissive trust:
God hath ordained each ruler's sway,
And we obedience must pay;
Because 'tis God's election, we
Must never vain complainers be.
O'er rulers God holds his great hand:
They only rule by his command;
So, in their grace, our hearts may rest,
And thus their rule be wisely blest.
That Peace may crown the Christian acts
Of all our rulers, hopes Hans Sachs.

THE CRAFTY MAID

[April 21, 1559]

THIS tale begins, " Upon a time "—
A form oft used in prose and rhyme—
There was a man on whom was played
A trick by a deceitful maid.
He often entertained, for he
Loved friendly hospitality.
In Valley Joachim his house
Was known, not great, but generous.
Somewhat eccentric was his fame,
But much respected his good name.
He had a cook-maid, smart and sly,
Who loved good things, nor would deny
Herself ; for she was bold in fact,
And skilful to conceal each act :
She had such ingenuity
To cover faults so skilfully
Her master thought that she was true,
Nor questioned aught that she would do.

Upon a Sunday was invited
A famous doctor ; much delighted
His host would dine this Leipzig guest
In honour with his very best ;
So bade his maid two fowls prepare,
And spread the table with good fare.

The maid, with care and proper haste
The fowls upon the spit soon placed,
And, her good master's praise to earn,
Basted and cooked them to a turn,
But when their pleasant flavour rose,
Tickling this glutton's dainty nose,
She picked a bit from here and there,
Delighted with the luscious fare ;
At length her appetite was such
She plucked a leg, enjoyed it much ;
Then pulled the fowl from off the spit,
And greedily devoured it.
No longer did she hesitate,
But took the other ; half she ate,
And hid the rest.
Then her quick mind
Sought some sly subterfuge to find,
Some fairy tale, how she would say
That a strange cat had stolen away
The roasted fowls ; but that same cat
Had served before. Then, while she sat,
A new scheme came : some wine she took
Till, like a turkey's comb did look
Her ruddy face.

The door-bell rang :
Swiftly to meet the guest she sprang ;
It was the Leipzig doctor ; he
Greeted the house most cordially ;
Peeped in the kitchen, and then said,
" Where is the host, my pretty maid ? "
" Quite near, dear sir, he waits for you,"
The maid replied, " and watches, too ;

Behind the door I saw him stand,
A carving-knife was in his hand:
Beware, dear sir! for I have fears
He means to cut off both your ears;
Such thing he did eight days ago—
Alas, that I must tell you so!—
A gentleman from Ulm, quite fine,
Master invited here to dine;
Despite entreaties, prayers, and cries—
My master every prayer denies—
He cut his ears close to his head:
O Lord, how that poor creature bled!
It is a habit of your host;
He cuts the one he loveth most."

The guest was frightened. "Oh!" said he,
"My ears are very dear to me;
I will not wait such treachery."
Then down the stairs ran clumsily,
Stumbling with terror, quite unmanned.

The host, with carving-knife in hand
To carve the fowls, came forth, and said,
"Who is the one that now hath fled?"
The cook replied most cunningly,
"I think he was your guest, but he
Hath snatched the fowls, and run away
Although I tried to make him stay;
I was too shocked to follow after
As fast he fled with crazy laughter:
Indeed, indeed, it is too bad!
I think your guest is surely mad."

Her master thought her words were true;
So down the stairs he quickly flew,
Intent upon an instant quest
To stay this most audacious guest.
Loudly he cried, "Give one to me!
The other keep!" He meant that he
Would yield a fowl.
The guest looked back,
And saw his host upon his track;
He saw the knife that still he bore,
And ran more swiftly than before.
Again the host cried, "Stay, dear guest,
And keep the one that you like best,
But I must have the other."
Fear
Urged on the guest; he thought one ear
His host would have if he were caught,
Though he were left the other. Naught
His speed relaxed. "Alas!" he thought,
"How mad he is!"—"I will keep both!
You shall have none!" he cried, full loath
To lose an ear.

At this the host
Turned back, and yielded up the roast,
As he supposed. When he came in
His house he tried in vain to win
Some reason why his guest should take
By theft what was prepared to make
His dinner, with all else most fit;
But he could find no cause for it.
The wily maid, with her replies,
Increased his wonder and surprise,

Till he, at last, could only think
His guest was overcome by drink,
And, in that state, had made this raid,
And such a stupid joke had played.

The guest, escaped, indignant, thought
Of his lost ears had he been caught,
And so resolved no chance should make
Him e'er again such peril take.

The crafty maid had fooled them well;
And none her artifice could tell.
Each man believed the other mad,
Or else so drunk, it was as bad.

Moral

Beware deceit! Look for its trace
In subtle lines on guilty face;
Observe with watchful, careful eye
That thus each fraud you may defy;
Trust not too blindly; measure well
Strange-seeming things. What others tell
Duly consider; nor deem true
A thing because 'tis told to you:
Lying is common; so one must
Meet all strange tales with some distrust
There is in truth an equipoise
That seldom shows in crafty lies.
If you discover maid or man
Who once deceives, the safest plan
Is, on that one, to shut the door,
And risk such treachery no more.

There is a saying, "Where you see
Nor hide, nor hair, no fur can be."
Truth only dwells in honest minds
With honest faces, too, one finds.
Beauty may smooth fraud's subtle trace,
But truth shines brightly in each face.
Be doubtful of uncommon acts
Where tricks may hide, suggests Hans Sachs.

THE MILLER AND THE STUDENT

[April 8, 1559]

THE Schönmuhl stood by a fair stream,
So picturesque that all would deem
The mill well named; and all men knew
The miller was quite well-to-do.
He had a son whose youth was thought
Full of such promise that he ought
To have good schooling; so he went
To school, and learned each rudiment
Of knowledge that they taught him there,
And still he seemed to promise fair.
A priest, the miller's cousin, thought
His bright young kinsman should be taught
In higher school, that his quick brain
Might have such training he would gain,
If he should prosper greatly there,
At length a learned professor's chair.

To Ingolstadt the boy was sent,
Where very willingly he went,
And, working busily, became
A student of industrious fame.
He wrote his father constantly
For money, many books to buy;
These he collated with great care:
Good standard works, all written fair.

He made a study of the Law,
And would become a lawyer, for
He deemed, with careful study, he
Might thereby win prosperity.
Unto the miller, his expense
Grew constantly of more offence
Until three years had passed when he,
His patience gone, sent hastily,
Bidding his son come home again,
That he, in person, might explain
What he had learned, and reason why
He asked of money such supply.

So home the son, obedient, came,
Quite ready to explain the same.
The father said, " My son, to thee
Money hath passed continually :
Thy books and progress thou must show,
That, what thou dost, I then may know;
And if the money I have sent,
Hath been, indeed, all wisely spent."

The student brought a bulky book,
And bade his father in it look ;
It was a codex of the Law;
The miller there two writings saw :
The one was large, the other small ;
He looked, and said, " What dost thou call
This book ? What are two writings for ? "

His son explained : " One is the Law ;
The other shows its every flaw,
A commentary, as you see ;

This last is smaller, as must be,
Around the larger code to go."

The miller, puzzled by such flow
Of words, cried out, "Why speak'st thou so?
Nothing of Latin do I know!
Tell me in plainest, native tongue—
I will not have such lingo flung
Into my face!"
The son replied,
"I meant no disrespect, nor tried
To puzzle thee. The larger writ
Is truth as age hath sanctioned it,
As the old kaisers have ordained,
As the world's wise men have proclaimed.
The smaller writ is lawyers' art,
Explaining, here and there, a part;
It is opinions of each age;
The words of counsellors most sage;
It tells how truth hath been explained
By minds to law and wisdom trained;
How the old law hath faults obscure
Which modern practice now may cure;
It shows, around the law, a way:
These useful things, the Comments say."
The miller, vexed at what was said,
To it at once no answer made;
But said, "My son, heed what I say:
Thou hast been asked to dine to-day
With the good priest, our cousin; go,
Tell him all this; for he will know
How, in good Latin, to converse,
And all this matter to rehearse;

So, from thy words, he soon may find
The bent and progress of thy mind;
And he will after tell to me
If these learned books will profit thee."

Unto the priest the student went;
With friendly words the visit spent.
The miller took the book in hand;
The notes upon its margins scanned;
It seemed unto his upright mind
That these were fraud of darkest kind;
That they, around Truth's honest face,
Had spun a web of foul disgrace.
He marked them off with careful line,
The truth, from fraud, to thus define;
Then, with his hatchet, chopped away,
Till on the ground the Comments lay.
When home at eve the son did fare
The Comments fluttered everywhere,
Scattered profusely all around;
He picked some up from off the ground,
And saw his precious book despoiled
Of all on which he long had toiled.
Much horrified, he wildly cried,
"Why, father, hast thou thus destroyed
This book on which much toil was spent,
So striking me, the while I went,
At thy behest, away? O say,
Why hast thou found so cruel way
Of punishment?"

"Nay; not a bit!"
Replied the miller; "it is fit

That truth should stand; and trickery
Should from its borders stricken be:
Of the good truth I cut no part;
I chopped away the thievish art;
Now may'st thou win, with truth, success,
And my good act thou wilt confess."

The student answered, "Father mine,
Ambition then I must resign;
My fortune will be mean and small,
If, by the truth, I live at all:
If I must use no artifice,
Trick, or delay, it comes to this:
That my opponents will suppress
My truth with artful craftiness;
They will evasions always find,
The eyes of honest Truth to bind;
My Truth will be a poor, blind thing,
Falling to earth with broken wing;
The arts of Law bring wealth and fame,
House, servants, lands, an honoured name;
Skilled in these arts, they rich will grow
While I in poverty must go."

The miller's anger strongly burned;
Upon his son his ire he turned:
"Say! would'st thou serve thy God, or Devil?
Choose now between the good and evil!
We village folk the truth esteem;
Nor try to make a falsehood seem
The face of Truth. Each cause we try
In open court beneath the sky;

Here 'neath the lindens do we sit
To hear each case, and judge of it ;
Here seek we but the truth to find,
And banish falsehood from each mind.
But little time we need to show
Where justice, in pure stream, should flow.
Thy city courts, with all their wit,
Often in Falsehood's darkness sit,
And weary out day after day,
Striving to push pure Truth away.
This is no good or Christian use ;
But of all justice foul abuse.
Therefore, no pfennig more from me
Shall help such shameless falsity.
Support thyself by thy own hands
As I have done, or till thy lands ;
For this thou hast my ready aid ;
Or, if thou wilt, engage in trade.
Forsake the Law : its burning flax
May scorch thy soul ! "

So saith Hans Sachs.

AT THE CALL OF THE DRUM

[May 9, 1559]

A CAPTAIN asked me, could I say
Why, at the beat of drum, alway
Old soldiers at its summons come,
Drawn by the music of a drum?
"In an old book I sometime read
Is this surprising tale," I said;
"It happened many years ago,
At least the story telleth so:"

A landsknecht wandered through the land,
Begging his bread from every hand;
He met St. Peter who asked alms
For the true Church with outspread palms;
Our pious soldier gave him o'er
Three pfennigs, all his present store
When Peter found he was so kind,
Though poor so piously inclined,
A recompense came in his mind:
He gave the soldier two small dice
With this most wonderful advice:
Whatever thy desire may be,
Throw up the dice, 'twill come to thee.

Joyful his way the soldier took,
And sat at night beside a brook

Where a great oak tree widely spread
A verdant roof-tree overhead;
But hunger gnawed with cruel tooth;
He said, "I must have food forsooth!"
Then, thinking of St. Peter's dice,
He gladly took the saint's advice,
Threw them in air, and loudly said,
"Give me, good Saint, meat, wine and bread!"
Lo! quick upon the grass was spread
A fine repast on which he fed.
While this good fortune came to pass
He saw one riding on an ass,
Who begged that he would kindly buy
The ass. The soldier made reply
"Whence had you him?"

The peasant said,
"From one who, on his journey, led
This hateful beast; last night he came,
Asking, in holy Church's name
For shelter; this I gave; alas,
St. Peter left this wicked ass!
Whene'er I strike him, lo! he brings
A landsknecht, who at once upsprings,
And follows me. I like it not;
Nor have I ever since forgot
The cursed Bavarian war, and how
Those soldiers stole my horse and cow;
From which misfortune still you see
I am condemned to poverty."

Our landsknecht thought, "Perchance to me
This wondrous ass a prize may be."

He said, "St. Peter gave me, too,
A gift which I will give to you
For your strange ass—these lucky dice:
Whate'er you wish, though great its price,
These dice, when thrown in air, will bring;
Who hath these dice, hath everything."
Exchange was made: the landsknecht beat
The ass; around, with trampling feet,
Came thronging soldiers; in a trice
With these he took again the dice
From the dazed peasant, who, in fright,
Forgot to use their charm aright.

For no reproaches then did stay
The plunderer; but took his way
To Sweden, where its mighty king
Had late proclaimed this special thing:
That who, for him, would set in state
A royal dinner, food and plate
And all things fitting, without aid
Of fire or fuel, should be made
His heir, and have his daughter's hand,
The fairest lady of the land.

Our landsknecht knew his dice would bring
This fortune, a most easy thing.
So, with a gallant, charm-born band
And ass and dice, to Sweden's land
He came; tossed up the dice, and made
His wish: upon twelve tables laid
Appeared at once a goodly show,
Meats, game and fish in many a row,
And gold and silver's brilliant glow,
With richest wines whose plenteous flow

Filled with bright colour every glass;
Such sparkle nothing could surpass.

There dined the king, his household too,
Ladies and nobles. No one knew
Of such a feast before. But still,
In arrogance of royal will,
The king denied his edict, and
Refused to give his daughter's hand.
Then our bold landsknecht, in hot haste
On the charmed ass the lady placed,
And brought her willingly away,
Beating the ass with rapid play
Of feet and fists.

Nor then did fail
His charm: as, in an ancient tale,
From dragon teeth came forth armed men,
So fared it in our story then;
Nor did these warriors fail to hold
Obedience to their master bold,
Nor seek to slay him as of old
In tale by Grecian legend told;
But each seemed trained his place to fill,
A champion invincible.
When thus he had a troop so great
Our landsknecht might the onset wait
Of the king's men, again he threw
His dice in air, and round him drew
A fortress wall, so vast a thing
As quite dismayed the Swedish king,
Who thought, "I must perforce give way
To this enchanter's powerful sway,

And yield my daughter to his hand
Lest with his mighty warrior band,
He take, with her, my life and land."
The landsknecht made a great feast then,
Carousing all his charm-born men,
A wedding feast superbly fine;
From mighty flagons poured the wine;
They ate and drank in merriment;
Gaily the wedding time was spent;
But the charmed ass was so much fed
That the sick beast was put to bed,
And though, to cure him, doctors tried,
It was in vain; the poor ass died.
Our soldier sorrowed for the brute,
Whose charm had brought him such rich fruit;
And bade them tan the skin most fit
To make a mighty drum of it.
Whene'er that drum was beat, behold!
Forth rushed each landsknecht as of old.

This is the reason why a drum
Bids every soldier instant come;
The charm of that dead ass still lives;
To every drum its power it gives;
To every soldier's heart it flies,
And quickly splendid visions rise,
Of wealth and fame, the mighty sum—
Yes; these arise at beat of drum—
Though unfulfilled perchance may be
The drum's prophetic imagery.

The captain said "'Tis truth, I know:
In Hungary, long years ago,

What thou suggestest came to pass,
My shining hopes were broken glass:
We fought to save our Fatherland,
A faithful, brave, devoted band;
But Fortune smiled not; tyrant might
Put all our dearest dreams to flight."

That Heaven protect, from such attacks,
Our noblest wishes prays Hans Sachs.

SAINT PETER'S MISTAKE

[January 1, 1557]

DISBANDED soldiers, roaming o'er
The country, begged from door to door;
There was no war; as poor were they,
As villainous; they made their way
To Heaven's bright gate, and, knocking there,
Begged for some help in their despair.

Saint Peter, from the heavenly gate,
Looked forth; he saw their wretched state,
And quickly to the Lord he said,
"Here are nine soldiers begging bread;
O let them in; their need is sore!
Here they will never hunger more."

The Lord said, "Peter, let them wait."

When these rough soldiers at the gate
Must tarry, their hot wrath to vent
They cried out, "Master! Sakrament!"

Saint Peter did not comprehend;
He thought they would themselves commend
To Heaven. He knew not that they swore;
Such oaths he never heard before;

In pity he would let them in;
And said, "Dear Lord, they do not sin;
I think most pious they have been."

The Lord said, "Peter, thou dost know
Naught of such comrades; they bring woe,
Tumult and trouble where they go:
Too narrow Heaven would instant grow
If, through its gate, such scum should flow."

But Peter begged, his suit to win,
"I pray thee, Master, let them in!"

The Lord replied, "If they come here
Much trouble will be thine, I fear;
But look to it; thou wilt be fain
To have these wretches out again."

So Peter brought—permission given—
The noisy rascals into Heaven.
When they were in they all began
Money to beg from every man;
This given, their dice they soon took out,
And gamed with many a noisy shout;
While quarrelling about their throws,
They came from words to angry blows;
Their rage increased; their swords they drew,
And at each other fiercely flew;
They ran, and struggled, cursed and swore,
Hunted each other o'er and o'er,
Brawling all over Heaven's high floor.

Saint Peter heard the tumult's roar,
And forward ran with frightened face,

Crying, " Is Heaven your fighting place ?
Go ! let the gallows end your race ! "

The brawlers heeded not his words,
But beat Saint Peter with their swords.

The Saint could only run away,
And, to his Master, groaning say,
" O Lord, what an unlucky day ! "

The Lord replied " Why trouble me ?
Have I not said, this day, to thee,
They are outside ; there let them be ? "

" Dear Lord," Saint Peter said, " this thing
My folly on my head did bring :
A lesson it shall prove to me.
O my dear Lord, pray set us free !
And never more shall landsknecht be
Let into Heaven ; I promise thee."

Answered the Lord, " Without the gate,
Let there at once an angel wait,
And loudly beat upon a drum."

When this quick, martial call had come
The brawlers stayed no moment more,
But rushed through Heaven's wide-open door,
Believing, as their trade had taught,
Summons to war they now had caught.

Saint Peter, with resounding bang,
That through the halls of Heaven loud rang,

Closed the great portal that in vain
Landsknecht would strive to pass again.

That they accept this joke, now asks,
Of gracious readers, their Hans Sachs.

THE COTTON HORSE

[May 24, 1559]

IT chanced upon a Michaelmas
That a poor carter had to pass
Through Schwabach with his horse that drew
A keg of wine. A certain Jew,
Watchful for bargains, thought to buy
The horse unless its price was high;
For it was handsome, smooth and fat,
But old and lazy, though of that
The Jew knew not; or, if he knew,
Thought that the horse for him might do.
The carter stopped; the Jew with care
Looked at the nag, limbs, teeth and hair.
"The beast is old," at length he cried.

This fact the carter quick denied:
"At Furth, his mother, hath the priest,
And she draws well—'tis said at least—
And feeds not much"—He meant, in fine,
That the priest's mother well drew wine
Out of her tankard—"He is strong,
And goes most pleasantly along.
If ready money you will pay
Twelve thalers is the price."

"Nay, nay!"
The Jew replied. "Ten will I give;
No pfennig more, as I do live!"

"No!" said the carter; "not for ten"—
And drove his horse along again.

The Jew looked after, and would fain
Have bought the horse; but it was plain
The carter put his price too high;
It was too much; he must not buy.

On jogged the carter, horse and load,
And came where worn-out was the road;
Down went the horse and cart o'erthrown;
The carter saw, with many a groan,
The broken keg, the wine all spilled,
And his good horse, as he thought, killed.
"Oh, the poor beast! How round his nose
My wine, in wasted streamlets, flows!"
The carter cried.
The horse, athirst,
Drank up the wine; but, at the worst,
Was only stunned, and senseless lay
As if all life had passed away.

The man bewailed his luck; thought he,
"My horse is dead, and it may be
That wolves will eat him; so 'tis best
I flay him, and must leave the rest
To hungry wolves." Then off he took
The skin, with many a piteous look

At his dead beast ; but legs and head
He left upon the horse unflayed.

Bearing upon his back the skin,
He sought the nearest village-inn ;
Told all his grievous history
To curious guests, whose sympathy
Bade him in wine drown every care,
And drink defiance to despair.
And so he did two hours or more,
When loud he heard, before the door,
The well-known whinny of the beast
Whose skin, two hours ago, he fleeced.

He thought it was a ghost ; his hair
Rose up ; he could but wildly stare
Upon the guests assembled there ;
But soon the fact was made quite plain,
It was his horse alive again.
The wine all drunk, the nag at length
Had found again his sense and strength ;
And then had come in hope to find
His master who had proved unkind.
That master now most joyfully
Came out, his hideless horse to see ;
Innkeeper, guests and servants too,
This horse without a skin would view.

In the warm stable, it was there
Washed clean with every tender care ;
And then the skin that once it wore,
They placed as it had been before ;
When well around the skin did go
They sewed it in a seam below.

Next evening when the waning light
Made things look dim to every sight
The carter led his horse before
The greedy Jew's half-opened door.
The Jew came out, and cried, "I'll pay,
If you will sell your horse to-day,
Eleven thalers for the trade.
The bargain struck, the money paid,
The carter hastened quick away,
Having, indeed, no more to say.

The Jew at once sprang on his steed,
To try its paces and its speed;
But its sore back could not, indeed,
Bear any weight. It snorted, kicked,
And when the spur its body pricked,
Reared wildly up; then sought to throw
The rider to the earth below;
But well the Jew stuck to his seat,
Determined he would not be beat.
Off went the horse with frantic pace,
O'erturning, in its frenzied race,
Shops, booths and people; for a fair
Was held upon that evening there:
It smashed the glass and pots and things,
Ever more crazy with the stings
Of its torn flesh and body flayed—
Later the Jew nine gulden paid
For all the damage it had made.

Naught would the pain and fright abate;
The horse dashed to the city gate

Where the old gateward sought to stay
This panic-stricken run-away
By closing gate, and waving there
His shining steel-cap in the air ;
The pain-crazed horse upon him ran,
And overturned the rash old man,
Whose legs flew upward toward the sky,
As horse and Jew went leaping by.
At length against a cart they struck,
And fell ; the Jew, by rare good luck,
Came safely off. While lying there,
Spent by its race of wild despair,
They searched the horse with utmost care.
Finding the cause of its dismay,
They cut the skin again away ;
With cotton oil the wounds they smeared,
When soon a miracle appeared :
Fine cotton on the body grew,
And clothed its back and sides anew ;
Which proved a fortune to the Jew,
Who took his beast the country through,
And showed to all this wondrous thing ;
While many pfennigs did it bring
From all who saw a sight so new,
A cotton horse. And thus the Jew
Much profit from his bargain drew.

Moral

From this strange tale we all may know,
Howe'er misfortune seems to show,
Often there chances, in the end,
Good luck, the evil to amend :

Therefore let no one quite despair,
But wait for Fortune to repair
Mischance. Whatever hurts our backs
May yet be cured: so says Hans Sachs

SLUGGARDS' LAND

[1530]

THERE is a realm called Sluggards' Land,
That lazy people understand,
Behind our Christmas three miles lies.
If one would risk the enterprise
Of going thither he must dare
Most monstrous things ere he get there:
Through millet pap, a mountain mass,
Full three miles thick, must slowly pass,
Eating his way like worm or slug,
Or any dark, earth-eating bug;
When this vast barrier hath been passed
He is in Sluggards' Land at last.

Here in abundance he may take
All that he will; for, built of cake
Are all the houses, and the doors
Of honey-cake, while steps and floors
Are fine mosaic work, inlaid,
And of the best of candies made;
The blinds are gingerbread, the beams
Roast pork—it all delicious seems.
On hedges sausages are hung;
From golden fountains high are flung,
In much profusion, dainty wines;
The best of oysters grow on vines;

From fir-trees sandwiches are taken,
And, out of birches, eggs are shaken;
Noodles are mushrooms, and grapes grow
Upon the hedges as you go;
Rolls grow on willows, and below,
Brooks full of milk are seen to flow,
As fall the rolls, they slowly swim
Adown the stream, and come to him
Who rolls would eat. In every lake,
The finest fishes, one can take;
Boiled, roasted, salted, stuffed, or fried,
Along the shore they slowly glide,
So one, with ease, can take them up,
And on their daintiness may sup.
Roast fowl and geese and pigeons fly
So low that any passer-by
May catch them; if too idle he,
Into his mouth, most pleasantly
They come. Pigs, roasted, run about,
Each with green parsley in his snout,
And, in his back, a knife with which
To cut a slice quite fresh and rich.
Cheeses of different kinds abound,
Scattered like stones upon the ground;
Peanuts are growing on the trees,
And drop with every gentle breeze.
If one desires fine figs, or cherries,
Plums, peaches, apples, or blackberries,
He only has to shake the trees.

In this fair land there is, in truth,
A fountain of eternal youth,

Where old men may renew their prime,
As fresh as in their younger time.
And there are pastimes where they play
At shooting: when one's shot doth stray
From target furthermost away
He wins; as he who cometh last
In racing doth; for not the fast,
But slowest wins; here speed is cursed;
And all our customs are reversed.
Hunting is done with mice and cats,
Sometimes with bugs, or fleas, or rats.

Whoever indolently sleeps,
A custom of this country keeps;
Who gambles everything away,
To him they give a two-fold pay;
And he who will not pay his debts,
Tribute from every neighbour gets;
Here drunkenness is always paid;
And he, of whom 'tis often said,
"He is a fool!" walking the streets,
Gets money from each one he meets;
For a great lie a prize they give;
But if one seems to wisely live,
At him the people laugh and hoot,
And if he hath some wit, to boot,
Throw stones at him. Who with his hand
Would work, is banished Sluggards' Land,
With all who honour modesty,
Morality, or industry.
He who is useless wins much fame,
And hath, throughout the land, high name.

Whoever is in everything
Most indolent, they make a king;
Who is most dirty, coarse and rude,
This people, in their turpitude,
Create a prince; a knight is he
Most famous for debauchery;
Who eateth most, and most doth sleep,
The title of a count must keep;
Who is a dolt, and hath no shame,
Is thence a nobleman by name.
Thus may you know the chosen band
Who are the chiefs in Sluggards' Land.

MORAL

This fable is a tale of old,
To careless children often told,
To show how bad the world would be
Were honour lost, and modesty;
Were people greedy, indolent,
Or only on low pleasures bent.
Here is set forth an allegory
Showing, in its quaint marvel-story,
How love of ease and sweets may lead
To utter worthlessness and greed;
How the indulgences of sense,
Or idle dreams of indolence,
Can only end in foul offence;
That happiness can never be
Without a life of industry:
So let the olden fable stand,
This picture of the Sluggards' Land.

THE TAILOR'S BANNER

[July 21, 1563]

IN Strasburg was a tailor who
Was a fine workman, all men knew;
Of customers he had the best,
Noble and clerical; the rest
Rich burghers; for fine clothes he made,
In which all loved to be arrayed.
Now, as the story goes, one day
He drank too much; then down he lay
So deadly sick he thought of death,
And feared each gasp was his last breath.
They gave him drugs that crazed his brain
Until, in visions quite insane,
He saw the Devil, black and grim,
Flashing his dreadful eyes at him;
Shaggy and smoking spectral blue,
This frightful figure filled his view,
And waved o'er him a flag so weird,
The trembling tailor greatly feared.

The flag was made of pieces stolen:
Fustian, and stuff of Arles, and woollen,
Silks, taffeta and camel's hair;
Velvets and broidered cloths were there;
Their colours, green, rose, yellow, blue,
Lilac and reds of every hue,

The wretched tailor saw each sin,
A stolen piece, sewed nicely in ;
Full thirty yards the flag unrolled,
And some curst spot in every fold ;
All sins of theft of his career,
In this broad flag were blazoned clear.

The tailor, shaking with affright,
Shrunk down from this amazing sight ;
Cried loudly ; tore his hair, and wrung
His hands ; his face he madly flung
Against the wall ; then, reason lost,
A madman, on his bed he tossed.
The nun, who prayed beside his bed,
With other watchers, thought him dead ;
And, sprinkling holy water, cried,
" God help him ! How the poor man died ! "

At this the Devil ran away ;
At word of God he could not stay ;
As soon as thus the fiend had fled
The sick man raised himself in bed,
And, to his servants, gravely said
The Devil had appeared to him,
Threatened, with aspect fiercely grim,
To seize him, and had shown a flag
In which was sewn each bit and tag
Of cloth that he had stolen ; so
His heart grew penitent in woe.
Quoth he, " This brought me such a fright,
I thought that I was dead to-night ;
Still in my heart the terrors swell,
Therefore I beg, if I get well,

And once again cut garments fine,
You then will stay me with the sign
Of flag, that I reminded be
Of these dread hours of misery;
For I, indeed, would be most loath
To lose my soul for bits of cloth."

The tailor soon was well again,
And when he cut they told him plain,
"Think of the flag!" So carefully
He did with constant honesty;
And, for a month, full thanks he gave
That they had helped his soul to save.
Then came a day, a lady brought
Fine cloth of gold most richly wrought;
When his companions saw how fair
The stuff, they cried, "The flag, beware!"

"Ah!" said the tailor, "much do I
Think of that flag with frequent sigh;
But in its fabric I could see
No cloth of gold; hence it must be
My duty now to set therein
The golden piece I here can win;
See how it glitters to the sight!
And I would have my banner bright."

Then forth his shears he boldly drew,
Cut a great piece, which then he threw
Unto the mouse. "Good luck!" he cried;
Nor after, to himself denied
His former custom. So his fear
Seemed all at once to disappear;

Now no remorse our tailor knew,
But, from each cloth, a piece he threw
Unto the mouse.

At length one day
The tailor on his death-bed lay;
Fate cut his thread; he passed away;
But though Fate bade his scissors fail,
Death did not cut him from our tale:
We find him knocking at the gate
Of Heaven, where he must, trembling, wait.

Saint Peter asked, "Who summons me
By knocking here so clamorously?"
"I am a tailor," answered he.

Saint Peter said, "For many a year
No tailors' souls have ventured here;
At Rödersdorf they stop alway;
With the shoemakers there they stay."

Then spoke the tailor, "Let me in,
I pray, Saint Peter, I have been
Bitten with cold while waiting, so
That no step further can I go;
My teeth are rattling; every bone
Is frozen almost into stone!
O take compassion! If I could
Be warmed two hours within, I would
Go out again. I freeze, alas!"

The kind St. Peter let him pass,
Squeezing himself exceeding thin
That, through the crack, he could slip in;

The great tile stove he crept behind,
Fearing the saint might change his mind.

While the chilled tailor at the stove
To warm himself intently strove,
From Viltshoven the news was brought,
His home in Heaven a priest now sought—
A marvel of a priest, for he
Had real and honest piety.
At once the Lord—that honour due
Might thus be paid—now Earthward flew
To meet this miracle, a man
Who now had reached life's outmost span
With not a blot upon his name,
A priest of pure and spotless fame;
And all the host of Heaven flew down
To glorify the priest's renown.

When these were gone our tailor dared
To leave the stove; at Heaven he stared;
Then to the Master's throne drew near,
And sat on it without a fear;
This—for a tailor—was too free;
But ours lacked not audacity.
Down through the air's transparent blue
He looked: the round Earth met his view;
Like an ant-hill, he saw the strife
And comedy of human life;
He saw where a poor woman hung
The wash for her six children young
Upon a hedge; one piece was stolen
By a rich woman; then was swollen
The tailor's anger, and he hurled
The Lord's great footstool on the world;

Nor did its aim, its purpose, lack,
He hit the robber on the back;
The stool was heavy, and its crash
Came down with such tremendous dash,
She was a cripple from that day,
A humpbacked sufferer alway.

When back to Heaven its bright host flew
The tailor hid himself anew:
Frightened and awed, he crept again
Behind the stove. The Lord in vain
Looked for his stool; St. Peter sought,
But found it not; at last he thought
Of the hid tailor, who was brought
Before the throne. Trembling in fear
He told his tale, which made it clear
He had presumed, in wrath, to throw
The Lord's great footstool down below.
The Seraphim were much amazed;
The Cherubim all blankly gazed;
And big-eyed angels, flitting by,
Whispered, with puckered lips, "O My!"
The tailor pleaded innocence,
For pity caused his great offence.

The Lord then made him this reply:
"O tailor! tailor! Shame! If I
Had thrown my footstool down on thee
For every act of robbery,
For every piece thrown to the mouse,
No tile were left upon thy house;
Yea! had my vengeance thus been shown,
A crippled back thou long had'st known,
And broken bones, a hump or so,

And, on thy heart, a load of woe.
If I am merciful to thee,
Thou constant robber, thou should'st be
Thankful, nor, in thy neighbour, see
Sins that thine own, if they were told,
Would hers exceed a thousand-fold."

MORAL.

From gloom of sickness oft appears
A dreadful vision of our fears:
We swear to leave our sinful ways,
And better live throughout our days;
But Health laughs at such vows, and says
"These are the pranks Disease still plays:
Let us cut pieces out of all
The world brings to us, great and small;
Throw to the mouse the pretty things
And every gaud that fortune brings."

Look not for motes in others' eyes;
We may have beams. If we are wise
We will our neighbours' virtues see,
Not peep to find iniquity.

Who throws a stool against offence
Should have a perfect innocence;
But if he have, his hand should stay,
Leaving such punishment alway
To Him who hath the world's great sway.
Look not for faults in others' acts;
Cure your own vices—saith Hans Sachs.

THE MONK ZWEIFEL AND HIS RELICS

[August 12, 1558]

THERE is a pretty city lies
In Welschland, on a little rise,
Amid good meadows stretching wide
Their pastures green on every side;
And cattle graze on broad fields fair,
And many swine are feeding there.
Good St. Antonius' monks appear
In this fair Cortal every year;
They come to gather tribute due,
And holy offices renew.

Hither was brother Zweifel sent,
Lapse of this custom to prevent;
A crafty man and eloquent;
And all the peasants, where he went,
With open mouths attention lent
To what each hearer thought to be
A miracle of piety.
For each one heard with faith so great
None doubted aught he would relate.
They were a simple peasantry;
No doubts within their minds could be.
He brought a servant, a dull fool,
And made this dolt his willing tool.

On Sunday, from the pulpit, he
Bade all the people faithfully
Bring him their offerings of wine,
Grain, money, sausages ; in fine,
Of all they had an ample part,
To show their piety of heart :
To St. Antonius, prince of Heaven,
These pious alms all freely given.

Then he declared, with unction fraught,
A precious relic he had brought,
How Gabriel from fluttering wing,
A feather dropped, which he would bring
That they upon this holy thing
Might gaze, and peace and comfort know,
And joy that, from such source, must flow
He bade each one show worshipping
By bringing Heaven good offering.

Two younger monks, of waggish mind,
To mock the preacher were inclined ;
When he, at dinner, ate his fill
They thus indulged their frolic will :
While Zweifel's servant at the inn
Sat by the fire, his ease to win,
And many lustful speeches said
To the plump, buxom kitchen-maid,
The preacher's sack they opened wide,
And found the feather packed inside,
A parrot's feather, glossy green,
Well wrapped soft silken folds between ;
This they purloined with many a grin,
And in its place they put, within

The silk, coarse charcoal, thus to vex
The monk, and all his plans perplex,
That they might hear what he would say,
And how his trick he now could play.

When rang again the service bell
Monk Zweifel in their pitfall fell;
He found the silken parcel well,
Nor looked within; but took his way
Where he again must preach and pray.
Here were assembled every one:
At length, the shrewd monk's sermon done—
In which he told when at the birth
Of Christ the angels sought the Earth
From Gabriel's bright wing had flown
The feather which would now be shown—
He brought the parcel forth; each fold
Of silk he piously unrolled,
Crying, "Ah! now, good people, kneel!
Light all the candles! Let each feel
A deep devotion when his eyes
Shall see this relic!"
Blank surprise
Filled the monk's face with strange dismay
When in the silk no feather lay;
Nothing but bits of coal was there,
At which he gazed with stupid stare.
His speech had failed him, and he stood
Like a stiff image carved in wood.

At length his wits came back; he raised
His eyes to Heaven: "The Lord be praised!"

He cried aloud ; " for He hath done,
In the full sight of every one,
This marvel : 'tis His holy will !
And His commands we must fulfil !—
I was mistaken, by my soul !
And have brought here these lumps of coal
Which once the good St. Lawrence broiled
When his sweet life the heathen spoiled.
In Rome he died, the sainted one !
Behold the coals with which was done
The martyrdom of a pure saint,
Who meekly died without complaint !
An abbot in Jerusalem,
God's chosen servant, gave me them.
Now mark of Providence the way !
This is the holy saint's own day ;
I had forgotten ; but my hand
Was guided by supreme command.
Whoe'er these holy coals shall smear,
Of burning need no more have fear ;
They will bring safety for a year.
Come ! come, dear children ! O come here ! "

To shrewd Monk Zweifel thronged in haste
The young and old, and each one placed
A kreutzer in his open hand ;
This was the subtle monk's command.
With coal he marked them every one
Until his pious task was done :
Each woman, in devotion, knelt
Till, on her veil, his cross she felt.
So, for their money, coal he gave ;
They thought the coal each life would save ;

Black coal he changed for silver white
Till kreutzers filled his pockets quite.
All that he babbled they believed;
And, for each coin, his cross received.

MORAL

Alas, that of the Church are told
Such tales of fraud in days of old,
When priests and monks then only sought
The peoples' purses when they ought
To have given help, and truly taught
Lessons of love to cheer and bless
The world with greater happiness!
But this, our tale, was long ago;
Perhaps 'tis better now. We know
With wiser times some frauds have ceased;
Pray God, man's kindness hath increased!
If people still believe a thing
By force of sheer imagining
It proves a proverb, much believed,
That people love to be deceived;
They have been so since time began,
And may be so while liveth man.
If, since the olden time, 'tis true
That this is changed, and in this new
And better age we wiser grow
Let us thank God that this is so!
And may He grant to all our acts
A larger wisdom, prays Hans Sachs![1]

[1] This tale is taken from the *Decameron* of Boccaccio. Tenth novel—sixth day.

THE FRIAR AND THE FOWL

[July 13, 1558]

AT Frankfort was a friary
Of Carmelites, who claimed to be
Of pious life; but we shall see
Not every one had piety.

One holy Easter morn to bless
With his religion's holiness
The viands of the festival,
A youthful friar went forth to call
Where the rich burghers had prepared
Abundant feasts: so forth he fared
Accompanied by a little boy
Such as these Carmelites employ.
This friar, with hypocritic mien,
Came where a sumptuous feast was seen:
On a great table were outspread
Game, fowls, birds, wine, with cakes and bread;
Sweets, omelets, tidbits, were there;
So rich the feast, its odours rare
Filled with their fragrance all the air.

The friar sniffed this; his piety—
If he had any—seemed to be
Left in his cell: most greedily
He gloated o'er the rich supply;
Unto himself, quoth he, "If I

Had some of this within my cell
In private I would feast me well."
His boy had turned his back; he knew
No one beheld what he would do:
Alas, poor friar, temptation's power
O'ercame him in this evil hour!
His prayers forgot, he snatched a fowl,
And hid the fat roast in his cowl;
Over his face his hand he drew,
Its greedy look to quick subdue,
And seem to be a pious saint
Without an earthly thought or taint.
Then sign of cross he slowly made,
His blessing on the viands laid;
Sprinkled some drops of holy water,
Solemn as any priest at altar.
Of eggs they gave his boy but two;
With downcast eyes the twain withdrew.

But soon our friar let saintship slip
Thinking of what he hid, with lip
Like hungry dog's, that grips a bone
Which, while he runs, he thinks his own.
Oft to himself our white friar said,
"With jug of wine, and convent bread,
And this fat roast, within my cell
After the matins I'll feast well.
But first, beneath my bed I'll store
My fowl. When matinsong is o'er
I'll feast as ne'er I did before.
How fat and plump! how sweet its savour!
Ne'er did I smell a richer flavour!"

At last the matinsong had ceased ;
Our friar quick hastened to his feast ;
But ere he carved the luscious bird,
Outside a sudden step was heard ;
Before one mouthful he had taken,
With noisy rap his door was shaken :
A brother called to be let in—
Our friar was almost caught in sin—
Once more he thrust the stolen fowl,
With trembling hand, within his cowl ;
Opened the door—
" The prior commands
Thou shalt, with prayerful words and hands,
Do service at the altar, where,
Over the relics, after prayer
Thou wilt indulgences proclaim
For holy Easter in his name ;
And thou shalt hold for kisses, too,
The picture of the Lamb to true
Adorers, who with gifts may there
Endow the Church ; aid thou with prayer ;
Remain in church till later mass,
And all the time devoutly pass.
He bids me see thee now away ;
No moment longer may'st thou stay."

Our friar was vexed, but must obey,
And hasten to the church, to pray ;
Still in his cowl—unhappy priest—
Bearing the fowl, and barred its feast.
Within the church, his place he took
Beside the relics with sad look—
" What devil's luck," he inly said,

" That I am starved who should be fed ! "
Cursing his luck, but not his sin.
Through open doors gaunt dogs came in
As though, from far, they scented keen
The fowl the friar still kept unseen :
He saw them all their noses bring
Up to the altar in a ring.
His hair stood up in deadly fear—
Oh, what a shocking thought was here !
His public shame these dogs would bring ;
It was, indeed, a dreadful thing ;
He tried to drive them off ; cried, " Shoo ! "
They only snarled and growled anew,
And crowded nearer, nearer still,
And showed their teeth with wicked will,
And yet more vicious grew. Thought he,
" No purgatory pain could be
As bad as this." " Oh, drive away
The filthy dogs, some one, I pray ! "
He cried ; but still the dogs would stay
In spite of all.
Now rang the bell
For mass : this summons pleased him well ;
" For now," thought he, " another priest
Will take the office ; I, released,
May then escape unto my feast "—
But now remembered, ere he went
'Twas his to serve : the one now sent
Was a lay brother.
Round him growled
The dreadful dogs, and sniffed and howled ;
Snuffing more near the hidden feast
They pressed upon the shrinking priest,

Whose panic thus was much increased;
More people came, within whose eyes
The friar beheld a strange surprise.
Now the lay-brother on him drew
The sacred chasuble, but knew
Not why, behind the friar's white cowl,
It bulged so with the hidden fowl;
He grasped beneath the surplice dress,
Pulled out the fowl that thus did press
It out.

In his perplexity
And consternation, suddenly
It flashed upon the friar's vexed mind,
A dog had snapped: he kicked behind;
With teeth set firm he kicked full sore—
He kicked as ne'er he kicked before;
Hit the unlucky brother's chin;
Upset him with tremendous din:
Heels over head the brother went;
The people roared in merriment;
Some thought it was an Easter play,
Though an indecorous display
Thus at the altar.

But, alas!
The prior refused to let it pass;
And laid severe imprisonment
On our unlucky friar, who went
On bread and water many a day
Until his sin was purged away.

MORAL.

Out of this tale we find, 'tis true
That friars are men—like me or you—

Though somewhat hidden this may be
By specious show of sanctity.
What oft the cowl hath hidden so,
I cannot, and I must not, show:
Of flesh and blood all friars are made,
With human faults, I am afraid;
What wonder then they sometimes fail
To show the saint, and prove them frail!
If, with the tonsure, cut away
Were ill desires, then saints were they;
And all the tales of scandal told
Of monkish mischief, frolics bold,
Pleasures of sense, so manifold,
Had been untold, and never lax
Of virtue, friars; so saith Hans Sachs.

THE DOCTOR'S NOSE

[August 14, 1559]

IN Bayern dwelt, so tells this tale,
An abbot, rich and learned and hale,
Who, like a lord, in abbey grand,
Governed a broad and tranquil land.
In his great train a Fool he had,
Who talked much nonsense good and bad.
Like other jesters he would poke
Some silly jest, or thrust his joke,
With saucy wit, on any folk:
Whoever to the abbey came,
He counted as his wit's fair game;
Whate'er was said, or seen, the same
He deemed fit theme for raillery;
But still his saucy wit would be
A frequent cause of laughter, so
He had much licence in the flow
Of nonsense. Such a Fool is one
Who serves up truth disguised as fun.
Unto the abbey came one day
A famous doctor; much display
Of hospitality was made,
And gracious words the abbot said
To greet this guest, who had a nose
Monstrous and red as any rose.

The Fool thought this a source of jest;
Therefore, the doctor he addressed,
Nodding to him, with hands upraised,
"Thou hast a nose: the Lord be praised!"

The abbot frowned in angry way,
As if unto the Fool to say,
"Do not, upon my honoured guest,
Put any gibe or foolish jest."

Then laughed the Fool. His master cried,
"Peace, Fool!"
The jester then replied,
"Nay, master; I laugh not at thee,
But at the monstrous nose I see;
It is a wonderful red nose;
How, like a beacon fire, it glows!
I never saw, nor far, nor near,
So grand a nose, this many a year."

The doctor's blush his rage confessed
At such a rude, audacious jest.
The abbot, in indignant ire,
Bade the rash jester quick retire;
And, to his servants, loud did call
To thrust the culprit from the hall.

There the vain Fool absurdly thought,
"I told the angry doctor naught
But truth: his nose is big and red:
It is no lie that I have said:
It seems he cannot bear the truth;
But wait; and I, indeed, forsooth,
Will put the thing the other way
In the next words that I shall say."

Into the hall he slipped to tell
Phrases that he had pondered well;
Before the doctor's nose, so red,
He bowed him low, and humbly said,
"Dear sir, pray pardon my offence,
And, in thy kindness, tell me whence
Thou hast obtained the little nose
That, on thy face, so sweetly grows
Like smiling infant's, soft and fair;
Surely an angel placed it there."

These words the guest once more displeased;
He blushed again, and loudly sneezed
To hide vexation and his nose;
The abbot, horrified, arose,
And cried—in anger's fierce display—
Unto his servants, "On him lay
Your staves, and beat this wicked jest
Out of the Fool!"
"My honoured guest,
Forget his insults, which, to me,
Are far more grievous than to thee."
This said he that his guest might see
The Fool's vile jests and mockery
Were insults to his host; and he
Might thus regain serenity.

Whipped from the hall, the jester cried,
"Nor truth, nor lies, do well betide;
I have no luck in what I say,
So I must try another way."
Again into the hall he went;
Again before the doctor bent;

"Good sir," he said, "I will not speak
Another word about thy beak;
Or if the thing be small, or great,
Or red, or blue, I will not state;
Nor will, by me, be ever shown
If it be stolen, or thine own,
Of if thou did'st inherit it;
To me it matters not a bit.
And so, I pray you, ask my lord
To pardon any foolish word."
But this was viler than before;
They dragged him out, and whipped him more.

Moral

The moral that doth here apply
Is speak not truth, nor a great lie;
But fashion so your words to suit
Your hearers, that, for you, the fruit
Will be a smile, and not a blow;
Then shall they think your wit doth grow.
Who chatters thoughtlessly must know
He often changes friend to foe.

Whoever seeks his words to mend,
And bring his speech to better end,
Oft finds, like our poor Fool, that he,
From bad to worse, most wofully
Hath made his case, and earned no praise
By choosing more ingenious ways.

Speak not too much is wisest part;
For silence is a golden art.

The social way to greatly please
Is not by truths, but falsities—
Nice little falsities that seem,
Like golden truths, to brightly gleam.

If one must babble, babble so
That, like a brook, your murmurs go ;
But let your talk, while forth it flows,
Hit no one ever on the nose—
But some may say, " Your moral grows
So much like babble it should close ;
If this be so, *vobiscum pax,*
For I am done ! So says Hans Sachs.

THE MAGPIE AND THE EEL

[August 4, 1558]

IN Meissen happened on a time
The story of this simple rhyme:
A fine, fat eel one day was caught,
And to a noble's castle brought.
This high-born Epicurean sought
For dainty things. Well pleased was he,
Extending hospitality
To friends who came to sup or dine
With him on tidbits and choice wine.
So he was greatly charmed to feel
He had this marvel of an eel
To make a feast that would not fail
His choice companions to regale.
For safety, in a box he stored
His prize till it might grace his board;
But first he showed his wife how fine
The eel on which they were to dine
When he returned from woodland ways
With princely friends in a few days.

When he, according to his wont,
With noble friends had gone to hunt,
His young wife, tempted, came to feel
Insatiate craving for the eel,
Which yet she did not dare to steal;

Her courage was not quite enough ;
For her good spouse was sometimes rough ;
And well she knew he would not choose
His feast upon the eel to lose.
She had a gossip much more bold,
The steward's wife, to whom she told
Her longing ; and that comrade bade
Her lady let her heart be glad,
For she would find an easy way
To make excuse, and they could say
An otter ate the eel, or that
A beaver found the eel was fat :
So did these women thus agree
To cook the eel to nicety ;
Then ate the dainty greedily,
Enjoying the delicious dish,
For which the lady had such wish.

From hunting, to his castle, came
Its lord, his bags well filled with game.
" When boots and spurs were laid aside
He stood by the hall-window wide,
In which his pet, a magpie, swung,
Her cage upon an antler hung.
" Well, magpie," quoth the castle-lord,
" What news, my bird, while I abroad
Have been a-hunting ? "
This the bird
Answered at once, " Oh, have you heard
How mistress made a merry meal,
Enjoying much the big fat eel,
She and the steward's wife ? The two
Have made a fairy tale for you."

He doubted this; but when he knew
The eel was gone he thought it true.
Then to his wife he said, "My dear,
Where is the eel that I left here?"

She said, "Indeed I do not know
How, from the box, thy eel could go:
An otter, or a beaver, may
Perchance have stolen it away."

"Thou wast the otter, and 'tis true
The steward's wife was beaver, too;
These are the water-beasts that took
My eel. Thou hast a guilty look!"
Her lord exclaimed in waking ire,
Her falsehood rousing anger's fire.

The wife, with temper, tossed her head,
And, full of scorn, indignant, said,
"How dar'st thou say such thing? O fie!
Thou know'st the charge is stupid lie."

Now, angered more, he slapped her cheek:
"Thou huzzy! thou so dar'st to speak!"
She, white with rage, caught in her clutch
His beard, and pulled; it hurt him much;
He seized her hair; then, blow on blow,
They fought, and bruised each other so
She loudly screamed, he roughly swore,
As now they rolled upon the floor
Until the servants came, and they,
In shocking plight, were pulled away.

Again a-hunting rode the lord;
And, while her husband was abroad,
The wife and gossip met once more,
And talked the dreadful story o'er:
"Who told of us?" the lady cried;
"When I the fault at once denied
He said that it was you and I."

Quoth then the gossip, "'Twas the pie;
None other could have been the spy:
She ever blabs to him each thing,
Stories of every happening."
"Oh!" cried the lady, "none but she
Our feasting on the eel could see;
She is the traitor, and must pay
Treason's full price without delay."

The gossip held the magpie's head;
The lady plucked it while she said,—
As, one by one, she pulled and tore
Each feather that the magpie wore
Out of its head till it was bare—
"So! will you blab of eels? I swear
You shall remember me, you spy,
With a bald head, until you die!
Now blab again of eels!"
At last
Into her cage the bird was cast
With head quite bald; and, drooping there,
Was heard to mutter, and to swear
Never to blab. But when her eye
A priest, or bald man, chanced to spy,

In hoarse, rough voice, was heard her cry,
"Oh, you and I are pretty pair!
I lost my feathers, you your hair,
By blabbing; so two fools are we:
You babbled of an eel, like me.
A blabber by his head one knows,
For a bald head a babbler shows."

Moral

Tell not all things that you may see,
Is this tale's wise morality;
Blabbing may end in painful woe:
The magpie lost her feathers though
She merely gave an answer true;
Such luck may chance to me, or you.
Truth is a medicine so strong
It often does not good, but wrong;
It is not safe to give it pure,
For it may kill instead of cure;
And one may pinch his hand before
He quite can close an open door.
Of married folk, remember this,
Though they may quarrel, they will kiss
And make it up, while he who takes
The part of either, often makes
An enemy of both, and so
Presents a very foolish show.
Who chops for others finds his axe
May cut himself, remarks Hans Sachs.

THE GOWN AND THE PIGSKIN

[May 26, 1545]

I

A FARMER had a wife both young and fair
Who had a gown of colour fine
Of which most proud was she ;
Slender she was of shape, of body rare,
Like anvil-stock each curving line :
He loved her dotingly.
She said, " Dear husband, my love, know
If cruel Death should come for thee,
In my fine gown I would thee sew."
The farmer doubtingly
Would test her love, what it would be.
Into the wood he hied ;
To Heinz, his man, he cried,
" With berries stain me well
Like blood, to tell
A great tree fell,
My life to quell ;
Upon the wagon carefully
With green twigs cover me.

II

" Carry me home and say, a tree killed me :
So may I know my wife's true will,
If she her gown will give."
His man obeyed his wish most faithfully :
To the farm drove him, lying still
Like one that did not live.
The servant wept with eyes quite red ;
The wife said, " Wherefore weepest thou ? "
He answered, " For my master dead,
Struck dead by cruel bough."
She said, " Thy words are foolish now ;
Art thou tree-stricken, too ? "
Then while her husband she did view
The servant said, " Go, mistress, go,
And bring thy gown in which to sew
His body, for thou well dost know
That thou hast promised so."
She said, " Oh no ! a pigskin rough
For him, indeed, is well enough."

III

She had him roughly sewn in this coarse skin ;
But head and feet it did not cover,
The pigskin was too short.
She said, " My husband, thou look'st queer within
This grave-cloth, but I have no other ! "
He started with a snort,
And cried, " If queer this pigskin look,
Thou false and shameless thing !
It is because thy word I took ;
Is this the gown that thou would'st bring ?
Thy love hath had a lessening."

She laughed, and then confessed,
" I knew thou did'st but jest,
And art not dead,
But mocking me," she said ;
" No blood upon my gown be shed
Until thy life is really fled."
And so her art deceived ;
While he, poor fool, believed.

THE MILLER AND THE ROGUES

[July 2, 1556]

NOT long ago, in Saxony,
A miller, of simplicity
Quite primitive, dwelt with his wife
By a cool stream; and all his life
Worked at his mill with industry,
Thus saving silver patiently;
Which, changed to gold, a precious store,
He hid beneath the mill-house floor.

Throughout the neighbourhood was told
How oft the miller changed for gold
His silver pieces, so that he
Exceeding rich was thought to be.
His wealth was known to certain thieves,
Of whom there were, as one believes,
Too many there. These sought to play
A thievish trick in cunning way;
For lonely dwelt the ancient pair,
Nor any servants, living there,
Could help the miller, or would view
The wicked trick they sought to do.
So thirteen rascals laid a train,
The treasure of the mill to gain:
By night a chosen stealthy four,
A cask of beer in darkness bore,

And placed it in a cellar deep
Behind the mill, while, in their sleep
Miller and wife serenely dreamed
That all was peaceful as it seemed ;
And, in the mill-pond, this same four
Put carp and many fishes more,
Lively and fresh ; then stole away
Unseen.

Next morn commenced the play :
Early appeared twelve austere men,
Bare-headed and bare-footed then ;
Modest in mien, they came abroad,
And, at their head, their gracious Lord :
Ecclesiastical they seemed,
And none who saw them would have deemed
Them aught but good. Into the mill
They came, and cried aloud, " Good will
And peace be in this house." The Lord
Spake to the miller : " From abroad
We come to thee : I and my band
Of dear Apostles bless thy land
And thee : give us to eat and rest ;
So shall thy home and mill be blest.
For food I will repay thee well,
And blessings on thy house shall dwell."

The miller, in perplexity—
For scant of intellect was he,
And foolish in credulity—
Cried, " I have nothing fit for thee,
O Master ! nothing good to eat."

Replied the rogue, " Thy words are meet ;
But what thou know'st not I will show :

Go, Peter, to the pond below;
In my great name, cast in the net,
And bring the fish that thou shalt get."
Outspoke the miller to the Lord,
"O Master, take my honest word,
There are no fish in pond of mine;
If there were fish, they should be thine;
But only frogs—alas the day!—
Live in my pond: 'tis as I say."

The rogue replied, "Go, Peter, go!
Thy fishing will this matter show;
Go with him, miller; thou shalt know
That what I speak must surely be,
And what high guests are now with thee."

So went the miller; Peter threw
Into the pool his net, and drew
The carp and other fish. Amazed
At this strange thing, the miller gazed;
Miraculous the fishing seemed
Beyond all things he ever dreamed.
Into the house he took the fish,
And bade his wife prepare the dish,
Set out the table with white bread,
That their strange guests might thus be fed.

Then spoke the rogue, "O miller mine,
Bring forth the beer; I ask not wine."

"Dear Lord," the miller said, "no beer,
These forty years, have I drunk here;
My empty cellar, Lord, is bare,
Save cabbages and turnips there."

" Ah ! " said the rogue, " thy touch and sight
Make all thy faith ; go, faithless wight ;
Go to thy cellar ; bring the beer
That thou shalt find, and have no fear."

Dazed went the miller—as in dream,
Impossible did all this seem—
He found the cask ; the beer he drew ;
Well feasted now the jocund crew ;
The miller gazed with joy to view
The Lord, his guest, Apostles, too.
He poured the beer, and served the food,
With wonder, and he deemed it good
That, with such high and heavenly guest,
His lowly fortune had been blessed.

The feast was ended. When at last
The guests had finished their repast
The rogue gave thanks. The table clear,
He bade the miller be of cheer—
" Bring forth thy treasure, that I may
Treble its value this glad day ;
My blessing on it will bring forth
A full increase of all its worth."

Out ran the miller, and brought back
To the dear Lord, a heavy pack,
Three hundred gulden in a sack ;
These on the table out he threw
Before the thirteen's greedy view.

Then, to the wife, the rogue, quoth he,
" Hast thou not savings ? for to thee,
As to thy husband, I would bless
Thy store with an increase no less."

Glad was the woman at his word ;
Her faith was full in her dear Lord ;
Quickly she ran behind the mill,
Dug up a jar, with happy will
To treble all her little wealth
That she had won by crafty stealth
Behind the miller's back ; and this,
With greedy eyes, she poured with his ;
Full eighty gulden was her store,
And now the Lord would make it more.

The rogue anear the table drew,
As he a miracle would do,
Trebling the gold. With thievish wit
Peter spread out his mantle fit ;
The rogue swept all the gold in it.
Then ran they forth, that rascal crew,
And vanished from the miller's view.
Benumbed he stood with horror dazed,
And all his faculties amazed,
Like piper who, in one wild blast,
Hath blown away his breath at last.
When speech returned he loudly cried,
" Bring back our gold ! "
The knaves replied,
" Patiently wait for our return :
A great increase your gold will earn,
O pious ones ! as you will learn."

Silent and sad the victims stood,
While fled the thievish brotherhood ;
Miller and wife, in strange amaze,
Could only stand and blankly gaze ;

Loss, with derision, was their lot,
Misfortune ne'er to be forgot.
They thought their God had been their guest,
But found he was a thief confessed.

MORAL

This story teaches that howe'er
Marvels may show, 'tis safe, with care,
To disbelieve uncommon things;
For easy faith hath cruel stings.
Hold what thou hast with steady hand,
Nor let thy greed thy sense command;
So house and purse thy own shall be,
Nor knaves can take thy own from thee.
Keep in thy mind this proverb still,
"Blind Faith rides swiftly into ill;"
Also that Wisdom oft hath said,
"Who trusts not will not be betrayed."
Let no sly rogues your care relax
By artful tricks—so saith Hans Sachs.

MARRIAGE-MAKING

[September 10, 1556]

LIST to this tale, and ponder well
The incident that it doth tell:
When on the earth still walked the Lord,
With Peter journeying abroad,
They came, upon a certain day,
Where doubtful seemed to them the way:
There branched two roads; a ridge was nigh
On which there stood a pear-tree high;
Under this tree, and in its shade,
A youth his idle limbs had laid;
Too indolent to work was he,
And slumbered there most lazily.
The Lord, with mildness, asked his way;
The peasant still supinely lay;
But raised one foot, as he would show
Which was the proper way to go;
Then pulled some twigs above his head,
But nothing to the Lord he said;
Pointed one foot, and nothing more;
Then fell asleep with farm-horse snore.
The passers journeyed on their way,
But found that they had gone astray;
Near a farm-house they stopped again,
And saw a farm-maid reaping grain.

The Lord said, " Peter, do you go
And ask the way to Jericho."

The maid aside her sickle threw,
And cried, " I'll show the way to you ;
Somewhat astray your steps have been,
But soon the road you can regain."
When she had led their steps aright
She turned, with smile as sunshine bright,
Ran quickly to her field again,
And briskly reaped the yellow grain.

Quoth then Saint Peter, " Master dear,
Show thou thy gracious kindness here ;
Upon this maid thy blessing lay,
Her graceful kindness to repay :
Give her a husband full of thrift,
The burdens of her life to lift,
A willing worker, that they may
With life's abundance crown each day."

The Lord then answered, " Peter, know
The knave our way who would not show
Is the fit husband I shall give
With this good, thrifty maid, to live."

" Master," said Peter, " why bestow
This curse, this uttermost of woe,
On a good maid ? More pity show
Than match her to a mate so slow."

The Lord replied, " 'Tis my command—
O blind, who cannot understand !—

The sluggard must espouse the maid,
That each shall then the other aid :
She may his sluggishness amend,
And he, to her, more meekness lend ;
So they through life will swim or wade,
Each by the other better made."

Moral

A moral in this tale is given,
That marriages are made in Heaven,
Unequal as they sometimes seem ;
They are mistakes, we rashly deem ;
But who can look within two hearts,
Arrange and measure all their parts ?
How pride with indolence combine ?
Mildness with energy entwine ?
Who deems a marriage a mistake,
Himself an error then may make.
Often an inspiration guides
Two human hearts ; and all besides,
Wealth, wisdom, prudence, pride and thought,
Are cast aside as things of naught.
No one can fathom his own mind,
Nor secret souls of others find.
Marriage is one of Nature's facts ;
And Nature's good—so says Hans Sachs.

THE COOK AND THE CRANE

[September 1, 1540]

AT Florence lived a knight, and he
Was skilled in sport and falconry :
One day he struck a crane, and took
The precious quarry to his cook,
Bidding him roast, and dish it up,
That he and chosen friends might sup.
The cook prepared the bird with care,
Adding rich spices, sweet and rare,
Until the roast's delicious flavour
Filled house and street with tempting savour.

Then came a damsel, and her nose
Sniffed up the sweetness that arose ;
Upon the lustful cook she smiled ;
Her tempting charms his sense beguiled ;
She begged a morsel of the roast
From him who vowed he loved her most ;
The cook demurred ; she tossed her head ;
" 'Twould be my death ; " her lover said.
" My lord would hang me on a tree
If I despoiled his roast for thee."
But charms prevailed ; a leg she took
From the enamoured, trembling cook.
He, in much haste and sore affright,
Repaired the fault as best he might ;

And served the crane. His master's eye
Was quick the cook's rash fault to spy.

"Bring in the cook! O villain, say!
Where is the other leg?" No way
At first the silent culprit found,
But cast his eyes upon the ground;
Then came a thought:
"My lord," cried he,
"What would you have? The crane, you see,
Has but one leg."
The angry knight
At this was out of patience quite;
He cried, "Thou knave of stupid brain,
Think'st thou I never saw a crane?"
The cook made oath his words were true;
And swore that he could prove them, too.

With sputtered oaths, his master cried,
"Do that to-morrow, or be tied
Fast by the neck on nearest tree,
A warning unto knaves like thee."

No sleep that night the poor cook had;
He feared his case was very bad.
Laughed the gay morn o'er glade and lake,
Where they were wont the cranes to take;
Here they beheld, quite near at hand,
Twelve cranes in shallow water stand
Each on one leg before their view.
"See!" quoth the cook; "behold it true,
Each hath one leg: where are there two?"

The knight ran forward, cried "Halloo!"
Each crane let down a leg, and flew.
"Ho-ho!" exclaimed the boastful knight,
"Good master cook, who now is right?"

"My lord," the cook replied, "had you
Shouted last night your loud halloo,
The roasted bird had instant shown
His second leg, and off had flown;
Therefore 'tis true, as you may see,
The fault was yours, and not in me."

Loud laughed the knight—"O saucy knave!
Thy wit to-day thy neck shall save."

So when the darkest fears are rife
A joke may sometimes save a life.
Whether the dish be cranes or larks,
Wit is the sauce, say I, Hans Sachs.[1]

[1] This tale is taken from the *Decameron* of Boccaccio. Fourth novel—sixth day.

THE SWABIAN AND THE RAKE

[June 5, 1545]

I

IN Gershofen the peasants met,
And swore to stand with one consent
Against a feud that foes had set
On foot; for thus the story went
Their bitter enemies would bring
Burning and pillage. At the ring
Of an alarm bell, they agreed
Its hasty warning quick to heed,
And all rush forth with utmost speed,
With hooks, pickaxes, pitchforks, hoes—
Whatever weapon came to hand—
And in the churchyard make their stand,
To do brave battle with their foes:
These they would quickly overthrow;
Prone in the dust, would lay them low
With many a valiant deed and blow.

II

One peasant swaggered over all,
And armed himself with knife and spear
And axe, and loudly swore to fall
Three-fold on all that should appear.

These weapons bore he for a year ;
Where'er he was, he kept them near.
One day, to mow the grass he went,
And placed his weapons carefully.
As through the marsh he mowed, loud sent
Came the deep boom of bumble-bee
That, in a wooden vessel caught,
From side to side buzzed noisily
While it from trap an exit sought :
Loudly it buzzed, " bum, bum, bum, bum "—
The sound was like a muffled drum :
The rustic thought the foe had come.

III

" A drum ! the enemy is here ! "
Trembling he cried, amazed with fear—
Again began the bumble-bee,
" Bum, bum, bum, bum," more angrily ;
The braggart turned his head to see ;
A rake, in his perplexity,
Turned up beneath his heavy tread,
And hit our hero on the head—
" Oh ! I surrender ! spare ! O spare ! "
He cried, nor did the dastard dare,
Bewildered thus, to look around ;
But sank, weak-kneed, upon the ground.
So, many a man, who fierce appears,
Dissolves his courage in his fears
When Fancy's horrid head uprears,
Or at the mock of danger's sound.

GODFATHER DEATH

[November 20, 1547]

FOR his new child, a man would find
A good godfather. To his mind
Not any suited; but before
His long and anxious search was o'er
He met the Lord before his door:
The Gracious One, when told the quest,
Offered himself. The man thought best
This offer quickly to refuse:
"I must not, Lord, thy service use;
Thou giv'st not equal gifts," he cried;
"One rich, one poor, to one denied
The gifts thou bring'st to all beside;
My neighbours, friends, and all men know
Unequal justice thou dost show."

Soon after, Death the peasant met;
Quoth he, "My friend, dost thou seek yet
For a godfather? Why not me?
I offer now myself to thee."

Replied the peasant, "For the sake
Of my dear child, thee, will I take.
Thou hast a reputation ill;
But thou hast power the place to fill,
And thou dost bear an equal hand
To rich and poor throughout the land."

To Death the sponsorship was given ;
He held the child in its baptism,
And would his son a doctor make,
With promise he much wealth should take ;
He made him skilful in the art
Of healing ; and, for his own part,
Agreed that when the sick must die
He would be seen the pillow by ;
But if trained skill the case could meet
He would be standing by the feet :
So where Death took his silent stand
Became a token shrewdly planned ;
And the wise doctor thus could tell
If his sick patient would get well.
Unto the godson would, alone,
The fateful messenger be shown.

A rich man in the village lay
So ill, they feared that he must pay
The debt of Nature. To him came
Our doctor, who would win much fame
By such a cure ; he looked around,
And Death, beside the feet, he found.
" He will get well ; " he instant cried ;
" I answer for him if be tried
My remedies ; and, for a fee,
Twelve gulden shall be paid to me."
Well grew the patient, and the name
Of the wise doctor won much fame,
And all employed him. When he came
To a sick-bed the sign he sought
Which his Godfather Death soon brought ;
Then he gave sentence. As he said,

The patient soon was well, or dead.
This brought him wealth ; and all men knew
The word he said was always true.

But when ten years had passed away
The doctor on a sick-bed lay ;
As, groaning there, he looked around,
Godfather Death again he found :
Hope, for the moment frighted, fled,
For Death was standing by his head.

Quoth Death, " My godson, come with me ;
Thy course is run, as thou may'st see."

The doctor said, " I will not stay
Thee long ; but, ere I go away,
Let me, I pray thee, say a prayer,
For future welfare to prepare ;
This done, then I will gladly go."

Quoth Death, " Well, godson, be it so."

The doctor then began to pray,
Of the Lord's prayer one word to say ;
But then he paused, nor did intend
His prayer should ever have an end.
Often came Death to see him there,
And asked, " Hast thou yet done thy prayer ? "

" Nay ! " said the doctor, " such an end,
I pray the Lord will never send."

At length Death made a cunning plan ;
In wasted form of a sick man

He laid him down before the door,
And called the doctor: "O, before
I die, a Pater Noster tell,
And save my wicked soul from Hell!"
The doctor's prayer was quickly said;
Then Death unmasked his grinning head;
With fleshless hand he clutched him fast,
His helpless victim now at last.
"Full six long years thou'st cheated me,"
He cried; "I now take charge of thee;
Thy ended prayer hath loosed my hand,
So come at once at my command."

The doctor could no more delay
Godfather Death; but passed away
With his grim master, hand in hand,
To find Death's vast and unknown land.

There is a proverb, Hans Sachs saith,
"No human skill can baffle Death."

THE COALMAN AND THE SPÜLWECKEN

[June 12, 1557]

THE village Nerrat lieth near
Old Nuremberg, and once lived here
A charcoal burner, who one day
Into the city took his way;
The hour was late when he came there,
But on the next day was a fair.
At early morn his coal he sold,
And pocketed the price in gold;
Then, through the market idly strolled
Where fine, white wheaten cakes he found;
And they were spiced, and weighed a pound.
Beside the barrow down he sate,
And seven of these spülwecken ate.
While doing this he pondered well
About the cakes: "I must not tell
My wife; for she would angry be,
And say seven cakes meant gluttony."
Then, when the day was somewhat spent,
He yoked his team, and homeward went;
But soon a sudden storm arose,
And the cold rain his marrow froze;
This rain came down as thick and fast
As from a giant pitcher cast.

So quickly he unyoked his pair,
And left each ox to pasture there.
Dripping with wet, and cold was he
When he had found a hollow tree,
In which he squeezed himself, and drew
The feed-sacks closely round him, too.

Then he felt sick: the cold and rain
And the spülwecken gave him pain:
He felt they caused his malady,
Swelling within him monstrously:
They swelled and swelled until he grew
Tight in the tree. He scarcely knew
How passed the hours.
At length the rain
Was over, but he sought in vain
Out of the tree to come again;
He wrenched and twisted, tried to rise,
But was now swollen to such size
That he was prisoned in the tree,
Utterly helpless to get free.
Thought he, "While I stay here thus swollen,
My oxen and my wagon stolen
By thieves may be: then, by my life!
How I would fear to meet my wife!
She would so fall upon poor me
That most unhappy I would be;
Nor would that woman ever let
Me this most dreadful chance forget."

Then came a peasant driving by,
With load of wood; when he came nigh
The coalman shouted, "Come to me!
I am shut up in this cursed tree!"

The peasant stopped with frightened stare,
Saw the black coalman shouting there.
Thought him the Devil in his lair,
And whipped his oxen faster on,
In haste to be the sooner gone.
Now felt the coalman great alarm,
Nor could his growing terrors calm;
While still so very sick was he
He shook and shuddered in his tree.
Again he tried to struggle free—
In vain! no hope there seemed to be.

Then a wood-chopper came along,
Cheering his way with jolly song;
The wretched coalman made him hear,
Promised, for help, a quart of beer
If he would chop that dreadful tree,
And cut a way to liberty;
So did the man; and thus at last
His vile imprisonment was past.
He found his oxen still near by,
Yoked them, with many a groan and sigh,
And turned them homeward. Then he crept
Into his wagon where he slept;
A troubled sleep the old man had,
With mingled pains and visions bad.

But scarce a mile the oxen made
Before two wags their progress stayed;
Turned them around at a cross-way—
Oxen and wagon in which lay

The sleeping man—and drove the wain
Backward to Nuremberg again.
So in the evening very late,
When up at last the coalman sate,
He saw, his blinking eyes before,
The well-known city tavern door
From which some hours ago he came;
He knew its bottle-sign and name.
Here he remained until next day,
Telling his tale and, in rash play,
Gambling his hard-earned coins away.
When these were gone our coalman rose,
Distracted with his many woes,
And took an oath, midst groans and aches,
Never again to eat spiced cakes:
All his misfortunes seemed to be
Sprung from that source of misery.

When home at last, his story told,
Of the spülwecken, storm, lost gold,
His good wife scolded with some cause;
She loudly cried—with little pause—
"Thou art an idle, worthless man,
More greedy for sweet dainties than
Willing to work; and gambling so
Will bring us both to want, I know!
Spülwecken! and art living still!
Seven cakes an ox would surely kill;
But no dumb beast so dull would be
To eat so much, I warrant thee!
Go, look your oxen in the eyes,
And learn to be thyself as wise!"

Moral

There's danger in too many cakes :
Eat only those your good wife bakes ;
So will you not have pains and aches ;
And gamble not : it is a tax
That ruin brings ; so says Hans Sachs.

THE SHAMELESS HIGHWAYMAN

[October 11, 1549]

IN France a noble of renown
Cared not, for morals, half a crown,
But robbed the country up and down.
He had a castle in a wood,
In which three sturdy robbers stood,
Of wondrous skill and hardihood;
Whene'er a tradesman rode that way
They did not mind what he might say,
However much he said them, "nay,"
They took his goods; they made him pay.

Two tradesmen to the castle came,
Had been subjected to this game,
And much complained of such rude shame;
The thieves were castle-knaves they knew,
Had watched them well, and followed, too:
And vowed their story to be true.
Then did the noble calmly say,
"When you were robbed upon your way
Wore you the clothes I see to-day?
Or did they make your dress their prey?"

"No, not our clothes; all else beside
They took." The noble then replied,
"'Twas not my men; I say, with pride,
Whoe'er they rob they strip him, too.

Of every garment good or new;
They had not left your clothes on you."
So spoke he shameless, recklessly
Admitting that in robbery
He thus employed his knaves, and he
The partner in their crimes must be.

THE STAFF OF CYDIAS

[July 24, 1551]

THERE is a Greek tale that doth tell
How long ago, as now, was fraud;
How men loved gold so passing well
They bartered honour for reward:
To his friend, Cydias, was brought
Gold of Archetimus, great store,
That safe with him it might remain;
But when its owner asked return,
Cydias gave it not again,
Denying it. In much concern
Archetimus for justice sought,
And summoned Cydias before
A court, unto the gods to take
An oath, he did not have this sin.
Then did the skilful rascal make
A hollow staff, and put within
The gold, that he both gods and men
Might cheat. On the third day he came
To Jove's great temple, leaning then
Upon his staff, to play his game
In subtle cunning as he thought;
And like one ill his steps he bore;

Then to Archetimus he gave
The staff containing all his gold;
With look serene, and aspect grave,
He gave the staff to him to hold;
Then both his hands he held on high,
Clearly his words his oath define:
"All of the gold that I was given
By my Archetimus to store
I gave him back." This oath to Heaven
And all the gods he duly swore.
Again he swore, "I cannot lie:
The only gold I have is mine."
With this ingenious, sly fraud
Against his friend and the wise gods
He thought to win a rich reward,
And dared the risk against all odds;
For avarice his bosom ruled;
But the great gods, that dwell on high,
May not by petty men be fooled,
Nor impious perjury pass by.
Archetimus made no reply;
A moment stood without a sign;

Then, angry at deceit so vile,
Such sacrilege and oaths untrue,
He hurled the staff he held the while
Upon the marble floor: it flew,
And broke against the altar stair—
Uprose a cry of loud surprise;
Out rolled, profuse, the yellow gold;
And so the perjury was shown.
Thus do the gods men's deeds unfold;
And so Archetimus his own

Once more regained, while published there,
Was crime made plain to all men's eyes ;
While Cydias lost gold and name,
Honour and fame with honest men,
Which brought him to a death of shame.
In this old tale is told again
That honesty alone may win
Honour and true felicity ;
That shame and death are price of sin ;
And no man gains by perfidy.
So let us all contented fare,
Nor covet what our fate denies.

A PREROGATIVE OF THE NOBILITY

[July 3, 1562]

AT Frankfort, in the days of old,
There was condemned a robber bold,
A slender, tall and gallant youth,
And very beautiful, in truth.
His ornamental dress was fine,
Embroidered with a rich design;
No prouder figure could be seen,
Yet he a highwayman had been,
Skilful in all a robber's art,
With courage, too, to play his part;
And Augsburg offered, so 'twas said,
A thousand gulden for his head.

But youth and beauty have such charm
That all would shield his head from harm,
And women wept, and fain would spare
A youth that showed so bravely fair;
But yet in vain: the law at last
Held the offender sure and fast.
The guard who to his doom now bore
This robber, halting at the door
Of a great inn, called for a cup
Of wine; the doomed man drank it up,
And bowed his thanks. Some nobles here—
Proud knights—beheld how, free from fear,

The gallant boy his head held high,
And grieved that one so brave must die.

These foreign knights were on their way—
A high, important embassy—
To settle most important things,
Questions of state between two kings.
They felt compassion for the lad,
Thinking his fault was not so bad
To merit death : so forth they fared,
To ask the robber might be spared.

A city councillor replied,
" Your asking may not be denied,
Fair knights : we owe you such good will
That we are all your servants still.
Perhaps you know not all the facts,
How monstrous were this robber's acts."

" He bears himself with courage high,
And we are loath that he should die,"
Answered the knight. " We deem he could,
With his high heart and courage good,
Fight for his city, do brave deeds ;
Such soldiers oft a city needs :
Therefore we think it may be true,
The life we ask would well serve you."

" Know you," the councillor then said,
" Why we would take this brigand's head ? "

" Nay," said the knight, " we only see
His air of proud nobility."

"Nobility he cannot claim,
Nor record but of robber fame;
He is a peasant born and bred,"
The councillor, astonished, said:
"He hath a troop of peasantry
As reckless and as bold as he,
With whose rough help and daring aid
Our merchants are his victims made;
Many he captured, and hath sold
Their freedom back again for gold.
He will a constant menace be
While he remains at liberty;
But, by his death, the band he led
Would find themselves without a head
As well as he; and so this pest
No more our city would molest;
Yet, if you still insist, must we
Set this wild fire-brand once more free."

"Nay," said the knight, "if this be true
We do not ask his life from you—
A peasant! Ah, we thought that he
Of noble lineage must be!
A peasant, waging war like this,
Entitled to no pity is.
How such a wretch should dare presume
To ape a noble, and assume
His dignity, is past belief—
And he a low and common thief!
Unto our class alone belongs
The right divine to do such wrongs:
We, who are high and titled knights,
Stand firmly by our ancient rights;

But let the sword of justice slay
The low-born who usurp our sway.
Tradesmen to us alone should pay
Their ransoms. For this peasant we
Ask no delay of penalty."

MORAL

Joyful should careful tradesmen be
That highways now are safe and free
In Bayern, Swabia, Saxony,
Franconia. No robbery
By peasant knaves can happen now;
And if old customs still allow
Nobles to plunder, tradesmen feel
These have prescriptive right to steal,
The right divine of higher place,
Heredity of noble race.

Merchants to Frankfort now may go,
Or Leipzig seek, nor danger know
By mountain pass, or valley low:
No base-born thief will snatch their gold,
As in those ruffian times of old.
So should we bless our better days,
And thankful be for modern ways,
When only nobles, in these lands,
Dip in our purses high-born hands:
That this of modern progress smacks,
And better times, suggests Hans Sachs.

FATE GIVES THE TORTOISE WINGS

[April 4, 1536]

A POET of high fame,
Great Æschylus,
To Sicily once came ;
And, seated thus,
Enwreathed with flowers and vine,
With grand head bare,
Begged of the Muses nine
To crown him there.

An eagle, soaring high,
A tortoise bore
Through pure Sicilian sky :
While circling o'er
In lofty flight it sought
A pebble bright,
The poet's bald head, thought
A boulder white :

The eagle cast from air
The tortoise down ;
It brought to poet there
Immortal crown.
This tale Valerius tells :
From it we know,
When Destiny compels,
Death strikes his blow.

THE THREE TASKS

[December 29, 1557]

ONCE in Franconia lived a wit
Most humorous—no doubt of it—
Full of queer jests and quips was he,
And crafty tricks, all jestingly
Meant for good sport. He always found
A welcome from his neighbours round
For all the merriment he made.
He was a peasant, and his trade
Vine-dressing. With his merry fun
He had invention ; and no one
Could catch him up by any craft ;
He 'scaped each trick, and loudly laughed.

Upon the land there came one year
A famine, widespread and severe ;
Therefore the warden notice gave—
From want his peasantry to save—
That the vine-dressers and the poor
Should henceforth drink of wine no more,
Nor spend in selfish revelry
What should support each family.
Who dared this edict disobey,
Three gulden for such fault must pay.

Alas ! our dresser of the vine
Was over-fond of drinking wine ;
More fond of it than to obey ;
In spite of all his friends could say
He drank so much, one day, that he
Grew tipsy as he well could be.
This fault came to the warden's ear,
Who bade the guilty man appear,
And asked him, in most serious way,
If he the edict thought child's play ;
To this the man had naught to say.
The warden said, " Thou go'st not free ;
But must three gulden pay to me."

Then the vine-dresser plainly said,
" I have no gulden : by my head
I swear it ! Therefore milder make
The sentence I for this must take."

The warden said, " Who cannot pay,
Three weeks within the tower must stay."

The guilty man, with downcast eye,
Unto the warden made reply :
" Then must my wife and children die ;
This punishment is theirs : while I
Within your dungeon will be fed,
They perish for the want of bread."

The warden, puzzled, scarcely knew
How to decide ; he deemed it true
Such discipline would punish, too,
The culprit's guiltless family ;
So sought to find some remedy.

At length, resolved, he said, " Mark me !
If thou would'st 'scape all penalty,
Three tasks I set : to-morrow here
Walking one half thou must appear,
And riding half, and bring with thee
Thy dearest friend, worst enemy.
Perform these aptly, and thou wilt
Be wholly pardoned for thy guilt."

Then the vine-dresser homeward ran,
Contriving in his brain a plan :
In his cow-stall he took the life
Of a large calf, with bloody knife ;
Into an old sack forcibly
He crammed it, and most thoroughly
With the calf's blood, the sack, besmeared ;
Then, to his wife, with it, appeared :
Dejected was his face ; " O wife ! "
He cried, " See ! I have taken life
In anger when we were alone—
The body in this sack is sewn—
My life is lost if this be known !
Help me, dear wife, the thing to hide ;
Beneath the stairs let it abide ;
Help me to bury it ere night
Deep, deep, beneath all human sight—
The children, servants, are afield—
And so thou thus my crime may'st shield."

The woman, greatly terrified,
With his request at once complied ;
The sack was buried 'neath the stair ;
Then said the man, " What's buried there

Never reveal, or justice may
This deed most fearfully repay."

She swore, " As long as life may last
Thy secret's buried in the past ! "

As soon as daylight came our man,
In the pursuance of his plan,
Took horse and wife and dog, and rode
To the high castle where abode
The warden. As its gate he passed,
One foot was in the stirrup fast,
The other on the ground, while he
Walking and riding seemed to be.
The warden cried out laughingly,
" So is thy first task done, I see ;
But where is thy worst enemy ? "

" Here ! " cried the wag, with a quick blow
On his wife's head, which made her go
Spinning around like whirling top,
At length flat on the ground to stop.

The woman, mad with anger, drew
A knife and, at her husband flew,
Crying, " Thou murderer, beware !
Thou art a felon ! that I swear !
Hear me, O warden, yesterday
He did, in truth, a neighbour, slay,
And buried him beneath our stair ;
Send out your men, and find him there."

Replied her husband, " 'Tis a lie ! "

The warden bade his servants hie,
The house to search, and bring to light
Whether the man or wife were right.
These soon returned with the slain calf,
Which brought about a common laugh.
The warden's laughter soon gave place
To a dark frown upon his face:

"O wretched woman!" did he cry,
"To kill thy husband with a lie!
How could thy temper swear away
Thy husband's life? If thou should'st say
Thou thought'st it truth, such words no less
Proclaim thy utter faithlessness:
For a slapped face to do such ill
Shows that thou hast a wicked will."

Said the vine-dresser, "Ever she,
In my own house, disputes with me:
If I reproach her angrily
She calls me fool and ass, and throws
Things at me. If upon her nose
I hit her, like a fury grows
Her temper. No contentment I
Can have at home; but forth must fly,
Or sugar her with flattery."

The warden cried, "O shame on thee,
Thou great rag-baby! Beat her well
With a stout cudgel; that will tell
Her who is master."
Said the man,
"I often beat her all I can;

But this hath been of no avail ;
She always fights, and will not quail :
She clutches madly at my hair,
And drags me round ; nor would she spare
To break my bones ; when I get free
I hurl a platter furiously
At her ; she wildly throws at me
The kettle : so the play goes on,
And neither side hath ever won.
When she hits me, she laughs in glee ;
When I hit her the laugh's with me ;
So go our acts and interludes ;
And so plays she beatitudes.
O, tell me, warden ! is not she
Indeed my greatest enemy ? "

" Aye ! " quoth the warden, satisfied.
" Thou hast, I fully grant, complied
With two of my demands. I ask,
How hast thou done the other task ?
Pray tell me if thy best friend be,
As I commanded, here with thee."

" Yea," said the man, " he comes with me ; "
Then struck he thrice and heavily
Upon his dog, that howled and ran,
With pleading eyes, around the man ;
His master called : with movement fleet
The dog came bounding to his feet,
And licked his hands most joyfully.
" Here," the vine-dresser said, " is he :
Kind fortune ne'er to me can send,
Than my good dog, a better friend."

Moral

Make not your wife your enemy;
For she a faithful friend may be;
But if, by chance, she prove a shrew,
And scold and harshly rail at you,
Try not wife-beating; if you do
Your house will be a scene of strife,
And void of comfort all your life.

Dogs oft are faithful e'en to those
Who meet their love with cruel blows.
In choice of wife or dog, of these
A man decides as he may please:
The wife may live to charm his life;
A dog is safer than a wife,
For if he prove a faithless friend
His fault may have a speedy end;
For dog there is a certain cure;
A wife, perforce, one must endure.
"Shall I then marry?" some one asks—
"It is a problem," saith Hans Sachs.

WHY PEASANTS REFUSE TO SHELTER LANDSKNECHTS; OR, THAT DREADFUL CALF

[April 5, 1559]

MY friend, a priest, once questioned me
If I could tell whence it could be
That all the simple peasantry
Deny their hospitality
To any straggling soldiery;
Therefore this peasant's tale is told;
Simple it is; nor is it old.

The little village of this tale,
Gertshoven, lieth in a vale
Of Swabia, where once befell
What this strange story now shall tell.

Upon a cold, drear winter day
A landsknecht wandered on his way,
Ragged and poor; with famine pressed
He hugged his rags about his breast;
At length, beneath a gallows tree,
He came where hung most dismally
A thief in chains—a horrid sight—
The ravens watched with black eyes bright,
And thought perchance, "Here cometh one
That we shall peck ere all be done."

The soldier saw upon the thief
Good hose, and thought how much relief
To his cold limbs such hose might give ;
" These I must have if I would live,"
He cried, and sought to draw away
The hose that at the feet would stay
Frozen so fast that all his strength
Failed to withdraw them ; then at length
He ceased to pull ; but fiercely swore
To have the hose the hanged thief wore :
So, from his belt, his sword he drew,
And roughly hacked both legs in two ;
Then, picking up the hose and feet,
Shivering made a quick retreat.

It was both dark and late that day
When Gertshoven before him lay,
Though its small lights in twinkling play
Shed little cheer on his cold way.
Thither he came chilled, footsore, weak,
Food and a night's warm rest to seek ;
From house to house he begged his way,
But none would let this straggler stay
Until at last a good man gave
Him shelter, his poor life to save.
This farmer kindly gave him food,
Housed him although his home was rude,
And brought him hay on which to rest ;
Most joyful was the wand'rer's breast
As in an outer room he lay
Warmly at rest upon the hay.

Now on this night a calf was born ;
They put the creature, weak, forlorn,

In the same room with their new guest,
There, through the night, to warmly rest,
Because they feared the new-born thing
Might not survive the frost's cold sting.
At early morn the soldier rose,
Pulled from dead feet the wished-for hose,
And put them on ; at break of day
Again the landsknecht was away ;
Within the room, on his retreat,
Were left the calf and two dead feet.

Betimes the farmer's lusty maid
Was up, and, for her work, arrayed ;
With torch, a bit of burning wood,
Within the outer room she stood—
Where was the soldier ?—Gone was he ;
In a dark corner she could see
The calf ; and now her frightened eyes
Saw the dead feet with shocked surprise ;
Then through her brain the dread thought ran,
The calf had eaten up the man.
Instant her screams were loudly heard :
" Death ! death ! foul murder ! " with each word
A louder scream as fast she fled.

The farmer, leaping out of bed,
Cried, " What is this ? "
" Woe ! woe ! " she said ;
" Thy soldier guest is surely dead ;
His feet are left upon the floor,
And the calf bleats for some one more—
All eaten but his feet ! " she cried,
" And the calf bleats for more beside ! "

She had no doubt the calf had crept
Upon the landsknecht while he slept,
And had devoured the hapless man
All but his feet. Now forth she ran
Loud shouting, all the village o'er,
" Murder ! foul murder ! "

At her roar
The farmer seized his big boar-spear,
Put on his armour in great fear,
And was about the calf to seek,
When his good wife was heard to speak :
" Oh, my dear husband, think of me !—
Me and the children ! After thee,
We shall be eaten ! Oh, I pray,
Go not to death ; but with us stay ! "

The farmer stopped quite willingly ;
" Yes, wife, 'tis best I stay with thee,"
He said. Then bade his servants call
The warden of the town and all
The people. This, in haste, was done ;
The town was wakened, every one.

The warden came, perspiring so
His clothes were wet. To meet the foe,
He bade them ring the great church bell :
Out poured the townsmen all pell-mell,
With helms and spears and swords and bows,
Ready to meet a host of foes.
When to the churchyard all had come
The warden bade to beat the drum ;
Then did he tell, midst many an " Oh ! "
The tale, most terrible, of woe :

" Here hath a dragon come ! " cried he,
" A thing too horrible to see ;
Sometimes a calf it seems to be ;
It comes, our people all, to eat ;
It eats up all except the feet ;
'Tis in the farmer's outroom still—
A monster crouched !—but soon we will
Attack this fierce, man-eating thing.
Now all your weapons quickly bring
To the assault : this dragon must
Be made by us to bite the dust !—
Slay it at once ; for if it grow
From calf to cow, what blood must flow ! "

The peasants, trembling in great fear,
Unto the farmer's house drew near ;
They looked, in terror, at the door,
And every face death's pallor wore.
" Forward ! " the warden cried. No one
Advanced a step ; for there was none
Who did not fear the calf might be
Ready to eat each enemy.

Then spoke a peasant, very old,
" We must not be, my friends, too bold :
I now advise that we retire,
And slay this dreadful calf with fire.
Each must contribute, that we pay
The farmer for his house and hay ;
Then light a flame that will consume
This calf-fiend in a fiery tomb."

" Yes ! " screamed the peasants ; " that is best ! "
And put it to an instant test,

While, round the house, that coward rout
Watched lest the calf should venture out—
If it had shown its head, indeed,
They all had fled with utmost speed—
But the poor calf could not arise ;
It lay, with feebly bleating cries,
While, over it, the flames arose,
And ended soon its early woes.
This house-consuming did not tame
The conflagration ; but it came,
Worse than a dragon, eating fast
The village houses as it passed.
The silly villagers all thought
That this ill-luck the landsknecht brought ;
Therefore, the superstition rose,
That, to the peasants, he brings woes ;
That an ill-fate about him creeps,
Haunting the house wherein he sleeps.
That no such wolf may dog his tracks
Whene'er he comes, so hopes Hans Sachs.

THE QUACK DOCTOR

[December 8, 1557]

AT Kraftshof, on a festival,
A greedy peasant ate up all
The tripe and eggs that he could see,
From whence arose his malady;
Such pains he scarcely could endure;
His wife gave him, for simple cure,
Much turnip juice with whey; but so
Sicker each hour he seemed to grow.
A vagrant quack was passing by,
Who stopped, his practice to apply,
Boasting of his consummate skill,
That was but blue smoke, good to kill,
Which oft he did with purge and pill.

The quack took charge of the sick man:
With pompous mien he thus began,
"Thy stomach, friend, is clogged; I give
A purganz [1] as restorative;
This will scratch off thy evil stuff,
And soon will make thee clean enough."

"Nay!" said the peasant, "O, for shame!
How can I eat a pure cat? [1] Name

[1] "Purganz" is German for a purgative; pur **katz** is a pure cat. An awkward pun is intended from some similarity of sound.—*Translator.*

Some other cure less hard than that :
I could not eat one half a cat."

" Ay ! " quoth the doctor, " trust to me !
A little draught prepared for thee
Will prove a perfect remedy."

The peasant said, " Yes ; that will be
A better dose : full many a draught
Of beer I've taken, drank and laughed ;
If this will cure me, bring it quick ;
For, doctor, I am very sick."

The quack did not consider long ;
He made a syrup very strong ;
But still the patient grew more sore,
And worse than he had been before ;
In torment now he loudly swore
At the pig-quack with noisy roar.

The doctor said " These drugs are vain ;
But, if thou wilt endure the pain,
I can restore thy stomach quite,
And wash and cleanse it pure and white,
Else art thou soon but a dead man ;
But I will cure thee if I can :
There is some danger in the thing,
Yet my great skill will safety bring."

The peasant said, " If I should die
My crops were lost, my wheat and rye ;
I must not be a dead man now ;
Save me, I beg, if you know how ! "

Then came his wife, to beg he would
Have his sick stomach now made good:
The woman said, her case to win,
"All of the crops I'll gather in."

The doctor preparation made;
The peasant, tied, on trough he laid,
Then drew his knife; the peasant thought
To shave his chin the doctor sought;
And cried aloud, "Most willingly
I give you leave to barber me;
But pray be quick."
The doctor then
Quickly cut out the stomach. When
The patient felt the knife, surprise
Almost choked up his sudden cries:
"Help! help! this man will murder me!"

But the quack doctor quietly
Turned the man's stomach in his hand,
Brushed it with straw, and scoured with sand;
Then washed it well, and hung to dry,
Now clean and white, on hedge near by;
Then to his patient turned, whose cries
Filled house and street with shocking noise.

A raven at the stomach flew,
And bore it quickly out of view;
Out came the doctor soon, to try
If the cleansed stomach yet were dry;
But it was gone, he knew not where;
He stamped and raved in his despair;
Then saw a pig come snuffing by;
He caught that pig, and suddenly

Cut out its stomach, clapped it in
The peasant, sewed up well the skin,
And dressed most skilfully the wound;
Soon was his patient cured and sound.

Pleased was the peasant; and he ate
With appetite more fresh and great—
Ate like a pig, such greed had he,
Nor ever satisfied could be.
He paid the doctor a good fee.

A saying from this peasant grew—
And oft one hears it said anew—
When any one doth eat too much,
And his great appetite is such
There's ne'er for him a dish too big,
"He hath the stomach of a pig."

Moral

The lesson of this tale should be
Beware the wiles of quackery—
But hold! This peasant's sturdy life,
That thus defied both quack and knife,
Was an exception; for we know
Nature sometimes builds people so.

Behold the quack! his boastful ways!
And all the sounding words he says!
But he is ignorant as vain;
Who useth him must not complain
If his bold lies should come to naught
When his vile drugs much harm have wrought.

The quack hath power, in his deceit,
The many ignorant to cheat ;
So all should know his boasting ways
And doubt of everything he says.
Choose men of learning and trained skill,
And trust to them and God's high will :
Above all things beware of quacks
If you would live ! so saith Hans Sachs.

This moral seems somewhat to fail
As a deduction from the tale,
Which rather tells of a quack's skill,
And how he doth not always kill,
But cures instead, which sometimes, too,
Our well-trained doctors fail to do.
But Sachs would doubtless signify
What reckless things a quack may try.

Translator.

THE FOUNTAIN OF YOUTH

[November 5, 1557]

SIXTY-TWO years!—Yes: I am old;
The weight of years is manifold!
While they are pressing hard on me
My thoughts go back, in memory,
To the good days of early prime;
Then comes regret for ended time.
As on my bed I restless lay,
I wished for something that might stay
Old age; some ointment to restore
Those gifts of youth I have no more.
While in such meditation deep,
My thoughts soon fading into sleep,
I dreamed that I was wide-awake,
And heard the murmur fountains make:
Before me was a basin bright,
Its marble gleaming in my sight,
Wherein the water's pleasant flow
Through twelve great pipes appeared to go,
And in the fount strange marvels show:
Whatever burdens age had brought,
Though eighty years their harms had wrought,
Who in that fountain bathed an hour
Renewed his youth by its sweet power:
Heat, mind, and force came back to him,
His buoyant heart, each lusty limb.

Nations and races of the Earth
Came for young life's renewing birth
In multitudes. Knight, monk, and priest,
Tradesman and peasant, to this feast
Of youth came now to be released
From weight of years. No one so high
Or low, but he this cure would try.
Crowded were paths and roads that led
Out of all lands to Fountain Head
Of Youth. On wagons, carts, sleds, came
The wretched, crippled, blind and lame;
Some upon wheelbarrows came there,
Or backs of friends—all to repair
Mischiefs of time. Bent, crooked, bald,
Toothless and wrinkled, many crawled;
Misshapen, blear-eyed, stumbled they,
Coughing and wheezing on their way;
There were such pantings, groans and sighs
As in a hospital arise.

Twelve men, upon the fountain's rim,
Helped up each one whose feeble limb
Had not the strength to climb within,
There to be strong and young again;
For when an hour had passed away
Within the midst of healing play
Of magic waters, with light limb
They gaily leaped the fountain's brim,
Beautiful, rosy-tinted, fresh,
With rounded shapes and healthy flesh;
With cheerful minds, and free from fears,
As if they had but twenty years.

When thus, 'in health, they sprang away,
New patients in their places lay.

Then, in my dreaming sleep, 'thought I,
" Thy two and 'sixty years now try :
Why let this chance of youth pass by ?
Thy deafened ears, thy wrinkled face,
Why not these signs of 'age erase ?
What hinders thee, in simple truth,
From bathing in the Fount of Youth ?
Why not cast off the ills of age ?
Begin anew life's pilgrimage ? "

Then I put off my clothes, it seemed—
Though this, indeed, I also dreamed—
And climbed the marble basin's brim,
Intent, when o'er its magic rim,
Enfeebled limbs and mind to free
From age and its infirmity.
When I was stepping in, alas,
My dream and sleep at once did pass !

Then loud I laughed : " What would'st thou win ?
Like an old snake would'st cast thy skin ?
No use : it sticks to thee like sin !
Wear thy old hide ; it fits thee well ;
Or if it fit not, do not tell.
There grows no herb the plants among
Hath any power to make thee young ;
Nor is there any spring that slacks
The faults of age—alas, Hans Sachs ! "

THE RED CHASUBLE

[December 13, 1557]

TO Prague upon a market day
A priest had come a weary way
To buy a chasuble. To pay
For this his church had saved; and so
He had twelve gulden now to show
For this long saving. Here he came
To a fine silk-shop of much fame
Kept by a merchant named Hans Bock,
Who placed before the priest his stock
Of sacred vestments. Of all these
A velvet robe was found to please
The priest, its colours red and gold,
With sacred grace in every fold;
The price twelve gulden. "I will buy
This chasuble if I may try
It on," the priest said. "Certainly,"
Cried Bock.

The priest put off his coat,
Which had his purse; and this did note
A thief, who, when above his head
The priest drew on the vestment, fled,
First having snatched the purse. The priest,
Though from the vestment not released,

Beheld the theft, and loud did roar,
" Thief, leave my purse ! " Through the shop door
Swift ran the thief ; upon his track
The priest pursued, still on his back
Flapping the chasuble, half on,
Half off. When thus the priest had gone,
Hans Bock was in bewilderment,
Beholding how his vestment went
Flying away. He had seen nought
Of the purse-thief, and therefore thought
The priest a thief ; in which belief
He followed, crying out " Stop thief ! "
" Stop thief ! " the tangled priest cried out ;
And the real robber joined the shout,
" Stop thief !

The people, much amazed,
Upon these shouters blankly gazed,
Thinking they surely all were crazed ;
Because the three made the same shout
None knew what it was all about,
But from the chase each one drew back,
Giving the runners all the track.
It was, indeed, a startling sight
To see the priest's distracted flight,
Thus rushing on, with arms and head
Enveloped in the mantle red,
Loud panting in mixed rage and grief,
And shouting, though half-choked, " Stop thief ! "
The priest was fat, and tangled so,
Both arms and head, he could not go
As fast as Bock, who pulled at length
The chasuble with all his strength :

The stuff gave way, and thus set free,
The priest could better run and see;
He hurried forward with fresh shout,
"Stop thief! stop thief!" but soon found out
That he had lost the robber's track
While Bock was pulling at his back.

The merchant, as his rage increased,
Hurled a great boulder at the priest,
Which struck the poor man on the head,
And stretched him on the pavement dead.
This ending made a tragedy
Out of a whimsicality;
For often fortune changeth things
Till, out of laughter, danger springs;
And life is fashioned in such way
That death may end a comic play.

Hans Bock declared his conduct just,
Though he meant not to kill the priest;
But, being robbed, had surely right
For his own goods to strongly fight—
His goods thus stolen in his sight—
For not the slightest doubt had he
Of the priest's guilt of robbery.
As no one for the priest appeared,
The merchant thought that he was cleared;
But, for another thievish act,
They took the robber in the fact,
And hung him on a gallows-tree;
Yet, ere he died, he told that he
Had robbed the priest, and been pursued,
A chase that many folk had viewed,

Thus clearing our poor priest's fair fame,
But saving only his good name.

With this late explanation came
Bock's condemnation, who, in fact,
Was judged too hasty in his act
When the real robber plainly told
How he had filched the purse of gold,
And how the priest was fully right
In making such a hasty flight.
Killing a priest is no slight thing,
But heavy punishment will bring,
As Bock found out when he must lay
Twelve thousand groschen down as pay
For his rash act. His shop was sold
To furnish forth the needed gold;
This broke him, and he wandered, old
And ragged through the streets; and so
His thriving state was brought thus low;
His cup of misery was full
Because of the red chasuble.

Moral

This story teaches we should act
In careful knowledge of each fact,
Not jump to quick conclusions, so
That anger may to passion grow,
And, in its blindness, bid us do
Such deeds as we may deeply rue.
"Look ere you leap" is always true
Advice although it may be old,
So can again be safely told;

Thus one may save himself from sin,
And the sure path of safety win.

There ever lurks in human fate
A subtle demon that doth wait
Some moment when the eager soul
Hath lost calm wisdom's firm control,
Snatching a chance from luckless time,
To plunge it into heedless crime,
Leading along a darksome track
From which there is no journey back.
Be not misled by seeming facts,
But reason wisely, saith Hans Sachs.

THE DEVIL CREATED GOATS

[September 24, 1556]

AFTER the Lord his creatures made,
"These all are good," the Maker said;
But now the wolf I make, to be
A restless hunting-dog for me,
To guard me in the forests where
Each savage beast hath its wild lair.
But as the pious priests declare,
He yet had made no goats; and so
The Devil would not now forego
His chance to be creator too,
But made a creature strange and new,
To be his own peculiar care,
And called it goat, and made it wear
A bushy tail for beauty worn;
But this long tail caught in each thorn
Entangled often and held fast
Until the Devil came at last
To find that nothing would avail
But biting off his creature's tail;
That, in his ire, the fiend did so,
The stumps upon the goats now show.

Upon a day, as forth the Lord
Walked in his garden-world abroad,

He saw the goats gnaw tree by tree,
And do fair plants sad injury,
Disturbing stock of noble deer,
And causing mischief everywhere ;
This made so much his kind heart fret
That on the goats his wolves he set.

Then came the Devil hastily,
" Why rend my goats, O Lord ? " cried he.

The Lord replied, " It is that you
Created them to evil do."

" How could I make them other ? " said
The fiend : " within my heart and head
Is naught but evil. Like to me
I made my creatures, as you see.
You must repay this injury."

Replied the Lord, " When oak-trees show
No leaves you shall have all I owe."

When verdure failed, as months went round,
And withered oak leaves strewed the ground,
The Devil came, with purpose set,
To claim the double of the debt.
" Not yet the time, nor leaves all dead,"
With calm, mild words, the Lord then said.
" In far Constantinople, know
There is an oak whose leaves now grow."
The fiend, with much profanity,
Made six months' search to find that tree ;
When he came back the month was May ;
The oaks were putting on array

Of fresh young leaves; and so deemed he
Naught of that debt he e'er would see.
Enraged, he changed the eyes of all
His herd of goats, both great and small;
And gave them eyes so fiendish none
Could ever doubt they were his own:
Thus devil-eyes, with wicked glare,
Shine in each goat's malicious stare,
Making their vicious natures known
So plainly that to all is shown
That goats are creatures of the Devil,
His special emblems of all evil;
And when to witches he appears,
Of a black goat the shape he wears;
While that gross vice, lasciviousness,
Is always pictured in the dress
Of goatish form.

This lesson note:
He comes to grief who plays the goat.
Shun all indecent, goatish acts:
Live clean and pure—so says Hans Sachs.

BARRED OUT

[1557]

IN showing how the human will
May pass beyond demoniac ill
This tale must not be thought profane
Because the Devil and his train
Of imps appear, and it must tell
First of a council held in Hell,
Where its great master took the chair,
Assuming power with lordly air,
And thus his purpose did declare:

"There wander in the German land
Full many a wild and reckless band
Of vagrants called the landsknechte,
Homeless and lawless soldiery,
Disbanded troopers, roving free
In desperate debauchery;
Such dreadful tales are told of these
That I would have my demons seize
A few for samples; it may be,
They are a proper folk for me.
I hear, to fast they are not fain,
And holy days for them are vain;
They swill much wine, feast full, and swear,
Making a mock of church and prayer;

They do not care for wrong or right ;
For pay, or plunder, fiercely fight
Under a leader who their pillage
Permits whene'er they capture village ;
Their ribald acts and jests, I hear,
Are far too foul for any ear
That hath pretence of decency.

" O Belzebock, I trust to thee
To find if this, as told to me,
Be true. So shalt thou do my will,
And to this mission lend thy skill ;
For thou art apt in act and word ;
Nor art thou easily deterred.
Seek, on the Earth, some hostel where
These soldiers commonly repair
To feast and drink and game and swear ;
Thy search will cause thee no delay ;
They will be heard a mile away.
Go, make thyself unseen and small,
Hiding between the stove and wall ;
Watch carefully this rascal rout ;
And, when thou canst, pull some one out,
Muffle his cries, and guard him well,
And bring a landsknecht here to Hell ;
Or if a pair thou bring'st to me
There will be large reward for thee :
Above thy comrades thou shalt be
A prince of power with lordly style,
The rank of craft and cunning guile."

Well pleased was Belzebock, and bent
His knee in homage ere he went.

He put on him a coat whose cape
Made quite unseen his impish shape,
And so, invisible, to win
His quest, sought on the Earth an inn.
No need to tell his journey there,
His bat-like flight through dusky air;
While still his goal was far he knew
His path was right as on he flew,
For, at a tavern, rang wild din
Where noisy feasters sat within,
Gorging themselves with wine and food,
Shouting wild jests in language rude.

Our imp behind the stove now hied;
'Twas hot; a mortal had been fried;
But not for heat our demon cared;
In hotter place he oft had fared.
Such horrid tales he heard, his jaws
Chattered in terror, and his claws
Seemed harmless unto beasts like these,
Whose mouthings made his marrow freeze:
How they had killed, stormed, ravaged, burned,
Men, women, babes—their language turned
Even this devil sick—they vowed
Their ship of sin the world had plowed,
Doing such vile deeds everywhere
As did, indeed, the demon scare.
His hair stood up on end, and he
Thought to escape them secretly;
But suddenly remembering
What penalty his flight might bring
If he in horror stole away,
In Hell would be the fiend to pay;

So he still watched while that wild rout
Passed jugs and glasses quick about,
And drank, as drinks a horse when he,
After long travel, thirstily
Dips deep his nose. High held in glee,
Their glasses clashed in revelry ;
They drank up wine so greedily
Much of it fell upon the floor,
Unnoticed in the wild uproar.

Then thought the demon, " Ho ! if I
One drunker than the rest could spy,
Him would I enter, and the sot
Must do my will "—but he forgot
Each drinker to his comrades cried,
" God bless it to thee ! " This denied
The demon entrance ; for about
The blessings flew among the rout
So thickly that the imp, amazed,
Upon the revel blankly gazed ;
And, like a fool, crouched idly there,
A victim to his own despair.

A soldier had, upon that day,
Killed an old fowl, and hung his prey
Behind the stove ; now loud he cried
Unto his host, who stood beside,
" Cook that poor devil quick for me ;
And cook him well, for tough is he ;
Behind the stove the thing lies hid ;
So do this quickly as I bid :
Strip him, and cook him ; serve him up,
And make a dish that we may sup."

When now the host reached out his hand,
Obedient to his guest's command,
To find the fowl, the demon thought
That it was he the host now sought;
That he would strip and roast him too,
A dish for that voracious crew;
Trembling, he knew not what to do,
But go: then from the stove he drew
A tile, and quickly upward flew
Out through the chimney in dismay;
Down a dark path he winged his way,
Nor paused until, at last, pell-mell
He hammered at the gate of Hell;
And when was opened that grim door
He fell exhausted on the floor.

Quoth Lucifer, "Thou bring'st no one?"

Belzebock answered, "Master, none!
I barely have myself got free
From dreadful fiends far worse than we;
Folk call them pious landsknechte,
But this, indeed, is irony,
For such a crew these wretches be
That thou, and all thy imps with thee,
Would yield them up Hell's wide domain,
If they an entrance here should gain!
Their clothes are strange, and hacked, and torn,
Strange as they are, more strangely worn;
Many have one leg stripped and bare,
On other, dirty rags they wear;
Like pigeons, feather-legged, they show
Their filthy tatters hanging low;
Their ugly faces are moustached,

With many sword-cuts hacked and slashed ;
As dissolute of mien are they
As creatures of another clay
Than earth : they are such hideous things
As into dreams a nightmare brings.
They swore so frightfully that I
Was forced to stop my ears, or fly ;
They fought, and smashed each other so,
Shrieking and howling with each blow,
That my dark corner seemed to me
Scarcely a refuge safe to be ;
So dreadful were that landsknecht crew,
They were too bad for Hell, I knew.
I could not seize one ; for a charm
Protected them from demon harm,
And held me back. Through chimney I
Could scarcely win my way, and fly."

" Ho ! " quoth his master, " had you caught
But one, and here your captive brought,
I could have tamed him."
" Oft," replied
The demon Belzebock, " I tried,
But tried in vain, to enter in,
By demon craft, a landsknecht's skin :
They had a trick of blessing ; so
Blessing on blessing did they throw
From one to other that no skill
Of mine could win them to my will.
While, like a fool, behind the stove,
To catch my chance I vainly strove,
One cried to seize and cook me—how
They found me out I know not now—

I was so frightened then my brain
Was dazed, nor did my craft remain:
I saw, in my imagining,
Myself stripped, strangled, skinned—the thing
Was fearful! How that beastly crew
Would gnaw my bones! Away I flew.
O master, much indeed I fear
The day thou bring'st such mad wolves here!
Hell is too narrow far to hold
Us and such comrades. I have told
Thee truly—master; keep away
These awful miscreants, I pray,
Or Hell's not safe a single day!"

His lord replied, "I will not say
Thou art not right; nor will I strive
Such outcasts to our realms to drive.
They have so grim a Hell of sin
That we might blush to dwell therein;
There let them be. We will content
Ourselves with others' punishment;
With gamblers, pirates, traitors, thieves,
Each one that wickedly deceives,
Pimps, murderers, adulterers,
Foot-pads, spies, burglars, plunderers;
With godless monks, and nuns, and priests,
Gluttons who live the lives of beasts,
Jews, heathen, heretics, and Turks,
Whoever harm to others works;
But at a landsknecht draw the line;
No subject he of me or mine."
At which conclusion he shut out,
With brazen gates, that rabble rout

Of fierce companions ; for in Hell
The demons feared with them to dwell.

The weight of crime so great can be
That it may have this penalty :
None will abide it, as we see
In this wild tale of infamy ;
Nor Satan's imps, upon their backs
Will bear all sins—so saith Hans Sachs.

THE FÜNSINGERS

[February 19, 1558]

THERE is a simple peasantry
At Fünsing: whose simplicity
Goes far; for they are ignorant,
Doltish, uncouth, and oft as scant
Of sense, their actions to command,
As if they lived in Sluggards' Land.

One of these peasants, on his way
Through the great woods, found there one day
A cross-bow, that a forester
Had left, still bent. This villager
Took up the bow quite carefully,
And knew not what the thing could be.
At length a cross he thought it, so
He kissed and hugged the bent cross-bow,
Crying, "O lovely cross, to me
Perchance the Queen of Heaven sent thee!"
While he said this it whizzed so close,
Its bolt shot off one half his nose;
He quickly cast the bow away;
Holding his nose, cried, "Lackaday!
O wicked, wicked cross, lie here!—
Here in the woods for many a year!
I will not touch thee; for indeed
How my poor wounded nose doth bleed!

It never more will be, I fear,
The handsome nose that I brought here."

When acorns hung upon the trees
Some peasants sought the woods for these,
To bear them home as food for pigs;
They climbed the trees, and beat the twigs
With poles; but an unlucky chance
Broke from a tree its highest branch;
Down, down, a Fünsinger was whirled,
As from a sling a stone is hurled.
In his descent he struck a tree,
Which caught his head so fixedly
His body pulled itself away
Till, headless, on the ground it lay.
The head, high up upon the tree,
Still hung, so hid that none could see.

When now the peasants home would go
They found the body there below;
This body without head they knew
Was Leonard Topf's. Around they drew;
Each questioned other; and they said,
"Where hath our Leonard left his head?
Who knows if, when these woods he sought,
Our Leonard's head with him he brought?"

Then said Heinz Tolp, "He came with me;
I am not certain now that he
Had on his head; 'tis very queer!
He left his head at home I fear;
But his good wife must know full well;
And she about his head can tell."

But when the stupid wife they found,
She fixed her eyes upon the ground:
"I don't remember," then she said,
"When last I saw my good man's head.
On Saturday I washed him; then
He surely had his head on; when
He took it off I cannot tell;
He must have hid it very well."

So foolish men and women were,
No stupider than Fünsinger
Could e'er be found, or high, or low;
No matter where the searcher go.

Strange were the garments that they wore,
Of woollen stuff, four yards or more;
Through a great hole the head they placed,
Buckled the cloth about the waist:
So hung the stuff in many a fold,
Uncouthly round the body rolled.

A Fünsinger, with load of rye,
Drove to the city. Passing by
A shop where clothes a tailor made,
He stopped to watch him at his trade;
He wondered much, and tarried late
To see the garments small and great,
The snipping shears, goose, needles, thread,
"Oh, these are wondrous things!" he said.
When afterward a crab he caught,
"Ho-ho!" he said, "this creature ought
To be a tailor: I can see
The tools he bears so curiously,

His shears, his needles and his thread ;
Oh, he has been a tailor bred ! "

Rejoiced he hastened home with it,
And told his neighbours he had hit
Upon a tailor ; bade them bring
To him their cloth ; whatever thing
They wished would now be made for them,
Well cut and sewed with proper hem.
They brought the cloth, and, on it, set
The crab, who crawled, and crawled, but yet
Cut out no cloth, though oft it fell
Beneath the table. Watching well
Their tailor as he sideways crawled,
And o'er the cloth uncouthly sprawled,
The peasants stood with stupid grin,
In wonder when he would begin.

Then cried Heinz Tapgrutz, " Comrades, see !
We watch, perhaps, too curiously,
For he is bashful. Let us go !
We stop his work by watching so."

They followed this advice, and went ;
But first a burning candle lent
That their new tailor well might see
To cut their cloth more carefully.
The crab the candle overturned,
And so that night the house was burned ;
The crab, however, crept away ;
They found it in a hole next day.

These peasants sat in council grave,
And this most awful judgment, gave :

Because the crab had arson done,
They there decided, every one,
It should in a deep well be thrown,
And thus its shocking crime atone;
But as they held it still in fear,
They filled the well with earth, that there
It must remain, nor e'er get free
To do them future injury.

And thus it came, on marriage day
A Fünsinger a load of clay
Into the well must dump, that so
It should into a mountain grow;
Nor ever more that crab, so feared,
To any Fünsinger appeared.

If, in that village, some one cries
"Here's crabs for sale!" at him there flies
Each Fünsinger; and it is well
If he escape of crabs to tell.
Of Fünsingers is such report
That people name one oft, in sport,
A Fünsinger if he should say
A foolish thing, or if he play
The fool, or dolt, in any way.
But Fünsingers may sometimes stray;
And often here we see such tracks
As mark them well—so saith Hans Sachs.

THE LAPPENHAUSEN PEASANTS

[February 22, 1558]

NEAR Rapperswyl in Switzerland
A well-known little town doth stand,
Called Lappenhausen : every child
Knows stupid ones are Lappish styled.
These simple people came one day
To the determination they
Would build themselves a grand town-hall,
In which all matters, great and small,
Should be considered with due care ;
Nor wind, nor rain, should vex them there :
No longer 'neath the Linden trees
Summer would scorch, or Winter freeze,
Their councils.
Quickly as they could,
Both young and old went to the wood,
And felled great trees that long had stood
The forest kings. When these were down
Four peasants brought each piece to town ;
On rollers pushed, the logs were borne,
And slowly made their progress on.
At last it chanced one log, slipped free,
Shot down the mountain rapidly ;
When this the startled peasants saw,
At first they lifted hands in awe ;

Then cried, " Adown the mountain side
This heavy log can swiftly glide ;
It runs alone ; it needs no help ;
Each log can safely guide itself."
Then toilfully they upward bore
The logs they had brought down before ;
" Because," they said, " these logs well know
How down the mountain they should go."
So folly made them toil anew,
A double labour thus to do.

Then, in their village centre, they
Built up their house in simple way,
Like a farm stable, windowless,
Too dark for proper usefulness.
Said the wise mayor, " Bring in the light
In sacks, and fill the house up quite."
This pleased the peasants ; each would say,
" In meal-sacks let us bring in day ! "
So they ran out where sunlight shone,
Filled sacks with daylight, every one,
Tied them securely, brought them in,
Shook out the day ; then out again
Ran for more light : so all the day
They laboured in this foolish way.
Oft as they ran they struck each other,
And tumbled over with much pother ;
In the dark house ran round and round
Until, at last, their way they found ;
But when their thousand sacks of light
Were swallowed in continuous night
They found their labour was in vain,
And darkness held its constant reign :

So they concluded that they must
In torchlight put their future trust.
By torchlight were all judgments made
In questions both of law and trade.

Then Lappenhausen built a mill,
And worked at it with such good will
Soon all was ready but the stone—
The nether stone it lacked alone:
So all the villagers were met,
Out of the rock this stone to get:
While into shape they hammered it,
The question rose how they should bring
Into the vale the weighty thing.
They said, "It will roll down, although
Perchance so swiftly it will go
It will be lost, will roll astray,
Thus rushing in unguided way."

To save themselves this loss, they thought
That in its centre some one ought
To put his head, so he would go
Down with the stone, and therefore know
Where it would stop. For this they chose
The mayor who, in much pride, arose,
And gave them many thanks that he
So honoured by their choice should be;
Then put his head within the hole,
With the big stone to downward roll.
As the mill-stone went bounding on
The mayor's wise head was quickly gone;
He oft had lost his wits before,
But head or wit he had no more.

Like thunder-bolt the mill-stone flew,
And pierced the town-house through and through :
It made a window in each wall,
Through which the daylight now could fall ;
And all the house was clear and bright,
Filled with a flood of golden light.
The peasants cried, " This clever stone
Doth for our mayor's lost head atone
By showing us an easy way
To fill our town-house with bright day :
Wiser it is than we, although
Our labour wrought, with many a blow,
The senseless rock, and made it know
The wisdom that it now doth show."

These people would a fog-ship make,
A trip upon fog-clouds to take :
For two long years, with careful art,
They fashioned it, in every part,
Of gray goose feathers and of straw
Until they thought it had no flaw.

They took it up the mountain side,
Upon the morning fogs to ride ;
Placed it on rollers for the start,
Into the fog to swiftly dart ;
Then climbed within, and loudly cried,
" Push from the land, on fogs to glide ! "
A smith the fog-ship onward sent ;
Down the rough mountain side it went ;
The voyagers suffered many harms
Of broken heads and legs, and arms ;
So great disaster of this came,
They never more would fog-ship name.

So folly leads to useless toil,
Danger and death ; and doth beguile
Such simple ones as we may style
Lappisch. Though patient labour brings
To the world's toilers useful things,
Yet when blind Folly takes the helm
Fate seldom fails to overwhelm.
That we be not such foolish jacks
To launch fog-ships, hopes your Hans Sachs.

THE MAN WHO FLED HIS SCOLDING WIFE FROM HEAVEN TO HELL

[May 14, 1559]

THIS tale is of a simple man
Whose lines of life in sorrow ran
Because he had a bitter wife
Whose cruel harshness spoiled his life.
She made him suffer every day
By scolding and unkind display
Of contradiction and fierce strife
That cut his heart as with a knife;
Nor did she spare to deal him blows,
And heap upon him grievous woes.
Indeed, such torture was he in
He often wished that from his skin
He could escape, and so be free
From all his daily misery.

One asks, perhaps, "Why did not he
Assert by strength supremacy?"
The reason is most plainly shown,
Her will was stronger than his own:
The wife was master, and her sway
Was ever in such cruel way
He had no rest by day or night,

Nor had he energy to fight
For even his most certain right.
His mild and sweet simplicity
Was brought to dull stupidity
Beneath this grievous tyranny.

He worked with constant industry
At a hard trade, yet he must be
Her slave and household drudge when he,
Returning to his home, was free
From his trade labour; and must scour,
And wash, and sweep, for many an hour;
For no housemaid would ever stay
With her, but always fled away
Before her torrent of abuse;
And, of such flight, it was her use
To put the blame on him, and say
He spoiled the housemaids when alway
He sought to calm her angry rage,
And her wild temper to assuage:
So from the servant she would turn
On him her passion, which would burn
To a white heat. When he would try
Her quarrelling to modify,
She bade him hold his tongue, nor say
One word her angry storm to stay;
Then he must hurry from the house,
Or else be silent as a mouse,
While on his head her rage would pour
A flood of words with stunning roar;
His arrows 'gainst her never hit,
But to her shafts he must submit,
For she had a most bitter wit,

And in her wordy war had skill,
Waging it with such cruel will
He scarce could say a single word
Ere, from her lips, were loudly heard
Such epithets that, in affright,
He would escape into the night.

For forty years this misery
Continued, and no hope had he
Of any peace ; and oft he prayed
For death, that thus might be allayed
His Purgatory of Distress,
And he might have some quietness.
At length Death came, but took the wife,
Who yielded up her stormy life :
From fever's burning grasp she passed
Into death's icy halls at last,
When broken was her iron will,
And her loquacious lips were still.

Her husband, simple man, was glad ;
How could he think this death was sad ?
It was the rescue of his soul
From misery's severe control :
So, from his suffering released,
Most willingly he paid the priest,
With lavish offering, to free
Her sinful soul from Purgatory.
And this more noble seemed to be,
Because she left a cruel will
Beyond her death to plague him still,
In which this vicious woman gave
Another blow e'en from her grave,

Depriving him of half that he
Had earned by patient industry;
Yet he forgave her this, for she
Had left to him his liberty.

Now see the irony of Fate,
How Fortune's cruel chances wait!
Scarce was he freed from his bad wife
When he was also freed from life:
Few were his happy days of rest
From troubles that had long oppressed,
When death's doom-angel came to bring
Him up to Heaven on dusky wing.

And now, at the celestial gate,
We see the poor soul humbly wait
While good St. Peter goes away
To find a place where he may stay;
For Heaven seemed overfull that day.
Returning soon, St. Peter cried,
"Come quickly in, and, by the side
Of your dear wife, sit down and rest
In happiness among the blest."

"Beside my wife! and is she here?"
The startled soul cried out. "I fear
That this must be some strange mistake
Of her, or me, which you now make—
My wife in Heaven while I have thought
She was in Hell! her life was naught
But evil!"
"'Twas your offering
That into Heaven your wife did bring,"
St. Peter said.

"Alas! alas,
That this sad thing has come to pass!"
The husband cried. "What tempted me
To pay her soul from Purgatory!
My wife in Heaven! On Earth her strife
Made dismal wreck of all my life,
And now she closes Heaven to me,
For there's no Heaven where she may be!
The Devil must have managed so
That into Heaven my wife should go.
I think the good Lord did not know
That she had brought me so much woe:
For forty years she caused me pain;
I dare not risk the chance again;
To be with her eternally
Would be to me eternity
Of torment and of misery.
St. Peter, thanks for your good will;
I stay outside your gateway still;
I know my old wife far too well,
And much prefer to live in Hell."

St. Peter said, "My friend, Oh no!
Indeed, indeed, you must not go!
In Hell is only pain and woe,
Such torment as you ne'er did know;
In Heaven, dear soul, you now will find
Your old wife altered in her mind;
And she to you will be most kind;
Passion and wrath are washed away;
Once more, good friend, I bid you stay."

But the poor husband answered, "Nay!

I dare not trust her; and believe
She doth your goodness much deceive;
I know her ways of old so well
That I will journey down to Hell,
Contented there in peace to dwell
If you, dear Saint, will keep her fast,
Nor ever let her venture past
The door of which you keep the key,
To make my Hell too hot for me."

Moral

Though jestingly this tale is told
It hath a moral true and old;
Sirach hath written, not in vain,
"A scold doth bring her husband pain,
And surely merits this reproof,
Her tongue is worse than leaking roof;
Disfigured is a comely face
On which each harshness leaves its trace;
Better a pit with scorpions rife,
Lions' or dragons' cruel strife,
Than palace with a scolding wife."
And the wise Solomon doth tell,
A bad wife is a torment fell,
Worse than the punishments of Hell;
While a good wife, submissive, true,
Is an enjoyment always new;
Unto her husband a bright crown
Better than wisdom or renown,
A treasure rich and manifold,
Of value more than store of gold.

That matrimony bring sweet peace,
Pleasures of life in large increase,
And joy that true love never lacks,
Is friendly wish of your Hans Sachs.

HEINZ IN NUREMBERG

[June 3, 1559]

NOT far from Nuremberg there lies,
Where the Franconian mountains rise,
A little town, where lived of old
A peasant who had earned much gold
By patient industry. He died,
And left his farm and goods beside
Unto a son, whose youth was green,
A rustic boy of just eighteen,
Who nothing of the world had seen.
His name was Heinz. Crude, ignorant,
His thoughts were most extravagant:
He wished to sell his property;
No more a peasant he would be,
But, in old Nuremberg's great town,
Become a burgher of renown.
His relatives, with much regret,
Heard his wild plans; they bade him yet
In his safe home for some time stay;
Nor in crude youth seek doubtful way
In city life, which would beguile
Him of the wealth his father's toil
Had left.

But boastful Heinz replied,
Full of self-confidence and pride,

"I rest not here another day,
For, with my wealth, I surely may
Maintain myself in better way
Than if in this poor town I stay;
I need not work; I know that well;
But, in the city, buy and sell,
And learn how city men contrive
Without hard work to greatly thrive."

Then said a friend, "My Heinz, beware!
Thou hast no friends to help thee there,
No handicraft, no shop, no trade,
By which a living can be made;
Be then content; forget, we pray,
The foolish thoughts that bid thee stray."
"Never!" replied the foolish one;
"What I have settled shall be done."

Then said they, "If this thing must be,
Take but twelve gulden first with thee;
So shalt thou put the thing to test,
And learn the way to venture best;
If these good gulden should be lost
Thou can'st afford to pay such cost;
If good success shall come to thee
Return to us, and joyfully
We will afford thee earnest help,
In city life to place thyself;
But if thou lov'st not city strife
Come back, and live a peasant's life."

Now Heinz himself a burgher deemed;
Dressed in fine clothes, as so beseemed

A burgher's state, he cast aside
His peasant costume, and, with pride,
In his new hat a feather stuck;
Then in the city sought his luck.
At a fine inn he supped that day;
Drew all his money forth to pay
His bill. Indeed he thought that then
He was a gallant citizen.

Two vagabonds at table there,
Two thirsty rogues, with shameless stare,
Beheld this bird from country nest,
And planned for him a thievish jest:
Assuming, both, a gallant air,
With flattery, this roguish pair
To Heinz spoke often as if he
A lord, or nobleman might be.
At length one said, "O noble youth,
If, silent, thou can'st guard the truth,
Our teachings soon can show a way,
By our good trade, to gild each day."

Heinz was well pleased, and bade them tell
What secret served their lives so well.

One answered, "Wonderful have been
The lovely things that we have seen
On Venus Mountain, where have birth
More arts and tricks than on our Earth
Were ever found."
"What arts are these?"
Asked Heinz.
Their simple gull to please

And stultify, they filled his cup,
And pledged him while he drank it up;
Then spoke the rogue, "A wondrous cap,
Of whose enchanted power mayhap
Thou ne'er hast heard, with us we brought,
A prize that often has been sought:
Who wears this cap becomes unseen;
Wearing this cap, I oft have been
Where bankers handle gold, and I
Took of their store my own supply."

Heinz heard, believed this crafty tale;
Thought he, "Could I myself avail
Of this charmed cap, what gold might I
Pick up, and none the trick espy!"
He asked, "Have you this cap near by?"

"That have we;" said the rogues. "With it
We gather gold where we see fit."
Quoth Heinz, "Sell me the cap. Behold:
Here are ten gulden, all my gold;
And you shall have a supper, too,
The best that I can get for you!"
Then from this stupid Heinz his gold
They took, and gave the cap, and told
Him, "Here's thy prize!"—so poor a thing
Would not, in any market, bring
Ten pfennigs.
Heinz now called the host,
Ordered a supper, boiled and roast;
"Your choicest wines, too, bring to me,
And I will pay for all the three."

The two ate heartily, and drank
The wine with laughter, song, and prank;
Then, laughing still, they went away,
Bidding their new friend stealthily
Put on the cap, and end the play.
The silly Heinz on dizzy head
Pulled the charmed cap: "Ha-ha!" he said,
"Now they are gone I will not stay
To have the host call for his pay."

Just then the landlord came, said he,
"You pay seven thalers for the three."

Amazed sat Heinz in silence there;
Then tried escape; but, by the hair,
The host soon caught him, dragged him round,
And dashed him down upon the ground,
While he and servants beat him well
With all their fists as thus he fell;
Then roughly searched to find some pay,
And tore his pockets both away.
Finding no money, angrily
Cried out the host, "How can you be
So insolent in cheating me?
Oh, you audacious, crafty knave!
The best I had to you I gave;
I set before you, in each dish,
Roasted and boiled meat, fowl and fish;
The choicest wines were served you three,
And not a pfennig paid to me.
Though to my guests I am most meek,
I can be rough to such a sneak."
Then called the host for empty sack;
Pulled it most rudely on Heinz' back;

Pushed him within like lifeless thing,
And tied the sack with hempen string;
Threatening still, he left him there,
A helpless victim to despair.

Heinz strained and twisted painfully,
But not a moment's ease had he;
To all the saints he called in vain,
And moaned in anguish of his pain.
Through his crazed brain the thought oft passed,
The sack would in the pond be cast;
Then came a cramp of keener pain
To banish thought and fear again.
Thus passed a long and dreadful night
In cramps, sore anguish, and affright.

At morn the housemaid's step went by;
He called to her with husky cry;
She stopped, and quietly came back,
And seemed to bend above the sack.
"I die with pain! O set me free!"
He cried, to gain her sympathy.

She whispered, "That I dare not do,
Though I would fain give help to you;
My master would so punish me
That I would share your misery."

But for a respite brief, he prayed;
"I will go back again," he said;
At length she yielded, set him free;
But still so cramped of limb was he,
Nor hand nor foot could stir; but she,

With her strong arms, soon helped him rise,
When came a loud, alarming noise—
"It is my master! Oh, go back!
I shall be killed! Creep in the sack!"
The maid exclaimed.
"I will stay free;"
Said Heinz.
"Alas! you promised me!"
The maid implored: "and here! Oh, see!
Here is a twelver."
Then within
The sack the culprit crept again,
And the maid tied him up quite fast;
Into the kitchen then she passed,
But soon returned with oven-rake,
Resolved her twelver to retake;
With lusty strength the rake she plied,
And beat poor Heinz on every side,
Crying "Give back my twelver!—give!
Or, by my faith! you shall not live."
So quickly Heinz, through a small rent,
Back to her hand the twelver sent;
Then the maid laughed, and ran away,
While in the sack bruised Heinz still lay.
Now came the host; Heinz heard him say,
"I come to wish you a good day!
How have you slept?" Then he unbound
The sack, pulled out poor Heinz, and found
His state so miserable, he
At once his prisoner set free;
But said "Let this a warning be,
Never, until your dying day,
Sit down at inn if you can't pay."

Then Heinz, all sore with cramp and blow,
Would to his native village go,
But was, indeed, in such sad plight
He could not reach it ere the night;
So he was forced to sadly creep
Beneath a bush, and try to sleep;
But oft he thought, "What vile deceit
A stranger in the world doth meet!
O Nuremberg, in but one day
Thou stol'st my money all away,
And put me in such cruel pain,
I ne'er will tread thy streets again!
In Schnepfenrent, my village dear,
How dare I, in such state, appear?—
My clothes in tatters, money gone,
My face so bruised, my look forlorn,
My limping step, no feather now,
Not even cap upon my brow!
The gossips all will laugh and say:
'Mark how our Heinz hath spent his day!'
But all my pride is gone, and I
Will be a peasant till I die:
My father's calling I will take;
No more excursions will I make,
Lest some more cruel luck betide,
And I lose more than gold and pride."

MORAL

By the misfortunes that befel
Our Heinz, we learn this lesson well—
A lesson that befits us all—
"Pride ever goes before a fall."

Though trite, this lesson is so true
'Tis safe to study it anew.
Audacity, if lacking wit,
Should never seek, in pride, to sit
In higher place than is its own,
As, in this tale, is clearly shown.
Never let modesty relax
Its simple virtue,—saith Hans Sachs.

WITCHFINDING

[January 10, 1556]

AT Langenau a man, Klaus Ott,
In his crude superstition, thought
That witches plagued him in each chance
Which happened: if his horse should prance
Unluckily, or cow's milk failed,
It was some wicked witch assailed.
As ignorant as stupid, he
Thought each mishap was witchery;
And often pondered, in dull brain,
How, on these witches, he might gain
Revenge. If he the hags but knew
He then could give them all their due
Of punishment, and make them rue
The evil tricks they dared to do.

Before his gate, late in the day
A wizard chanced to pass that way—
A wizard full of trick and prank,
A roguish, vagrant mountebank,
Inclined an impish trick to try
Though little profit came thereby;
He lingered at the peasant's gate
With many a story to relate,
How he on Venus' mount had been,
And all the wonders he had seen;

How of black arts he was the master,
And knew a witch and how to cast her
Helpless beneath his art. He made
The trembling peasant sore afraid
With a blue vapour that he bore
Within a magic bag he wore.

Then spoke Klaus Ott, "Much vexed am I
With witchcraft's wicked devilry,
Which I would punish if I might;
I think of it by day and night."

"'Tis easy," quoth the wizard wight;
"For I can show the troop to you
So plainly that your eyes may view
Their ugly faces—all the crew
That dare unholy acts to do."

"Could I their wicked faces see
I soon could spoil their enmity,
And punish all their devilry.
A gulden shall thy payment be
If thou wilt show the hags to me."

"Gladly I'll teach the trick to you,"
The wizard said; "but it is true
This is no child's play; if you make
A blunder I no blame will take."

"If there is danger," cried bold Ott,
"The danger mine; thou shar'st it not.
Begin at once, and plainly tell
What I must do; I'll learn it well."

The wizard said, " Take with you two
Good neighbours who will stand by you
At midnight to the forest go
Where a huge oak doth broadly grow
Beside the cross-roads. Mind my words!
The three of you must carry swords;
There, armed with these, dig circle deep
Around the oak, your guard to keep—
A circle thirty fathoms wide;
Dig deep, or perils may betide.
Kindle a fire beneath the tree;
Within the circle it must be.
When this protecting guard is done,
Around the tree, in circles, run;
Run round three times, then quickly throw
A calf's heart in the flames' hot glow,
And shout this charm:
" O multibus,
Venite et on stultibus
Portare multum drubbibus
On capites cum clubibus!

" When this weird charm hath thrice been spoken,
Out of the forest, by its token,
Witches will round your circle run,
So you may see them every one.
Then speak again the mighty spell
That all witch-tempests soon will quell;
But if, alarmed, but one mistake
In words or acts you speak, or make,
The witches through your ring will break
Down on your helpless heads below,
The Devil his hot coals will throw;

All wicked spirits, loosed from charm,
Will rush at once to do you harm;
Or if you step without the ring
The fiends will do some dreadful thing,
And sudden death upon you bring.
This I explain; so leave or do
The charm that I have shown to you.
My part is finished; so adieu!"

"Hold!" quoth the peasant; "I will do it;
And risk the harm although I rue it.
I once three witches met by night,
Nor suffered by their wicked might
Although I had no charm to stay
Their spells, or keep their ill away.
But tell me, master, when to try
This charm against their devilry."

"This very night," the wizard cried,
"If ever, must the charm be tried."

Klaus Ott went off two friends to seek,
And their assistance to bespeak.
The wizard worked his cunning out,
To bring the peasants' shame about:
He found nine horse-boys; what to do,
He taught them; promised pfennigs, too;
Like witches they must run and shout,
And toss their petticoats about;
Each, with two cudgels, beat the three
They found beneath the witch-charmed tree,

Obedient to signals he
Should make. He climbed the tree, and where
He could see all, he perched him there
With hod of coals.
Then presently
Came the three victims to the tree,
And made the circle faithfully
With naked swords; in midst of it
Kindled a fire that weirdly lit
The tree and forest round. On high
The full moon, ghostlike, climbed the sky.
Now the three peasants ran three times
Around the fire, and spoke the rhymes
The wizard taught, forgetting half;
Threw in the fire the heart of calf;
And spoke the charm again. Now out
From forest rushed, with hooting shout,
The stable-boys; around, around,
They ran, and yelled with hideous sound,
Tossed up their skirts; their arms they threw
As if with demon wings they flew.
Upon their knees the peasants fell;
They thought the fiends had come from Hell.
To say the charm again they tried,
But palsied lips all sound denied.
Now, from the tree, the wizard poured
His coals, and like a demon roared.
Upon his face each peasant prone
Could only tremble, shriek, and groan;
They thought the fiend had surely thrown
His net, and they were now his own.
Then through the circle dashed the crew,
And, up and down, the cudgels flew;

On head and rib and side and back,
Came down the blows with sounding thwack ;
With whirling sound the cudgels went,
And hit them, as they rose or bent,
On nose, on hip, on leg, on rump,
Resounding with each noisy thump ;
Nor, till their sticks were broken, they,
The stable-rascals, ran away ;
Scattered among the woods they flew,
Lost to the peasants' frightened view.

Then, from the circle crept the three—
The circle that they thought would be
Safe from the fiends' foul devilry.
All black and blue and bruised were they ;
So hurt they scarce could creep away ;
Not one of them could stand, but all
On hands and knees were forced to crawl.
But oaths they swore, amidst their pain,
Ne'er of that night they would complain.
But nothing did their oaths avail :
The stable-boys soon blabbed the tale,
Each circumstance of time and name,
And all the story of their shame.

Moral

Magic is but a cunning show
By knaves contrived for others' woe ;
And superstition is a cloud
That holds in awe the common crowd.
Wise men know this, and sometimes use
Their knowledge others to abuse.

All forms of sorcery must be
Blue smoke and cunning knavery.
Beware its fraudful charms and thwacks:
Guard well thyself!—so saith Hans Sachs.

WHY THE MILLER SOLD HIS ASS

[July 1, 1562]

AT Bamberg was a village mill—
Indeed, it stands in Bamberg still—
Miller and wife loved wine too well;
What thence befel this tale will tell.
She was a woman fat and big,
Who ate and drank like greedy pig:
Of these, the neighbours often said
They never sober went to bed;
Both day and night so drunk were they,
That their good business fell away;
The mill, for want of proper care,
Fell in a state of disrepair;
The peasants and the baker, too,
Grumbled, and knew not what to do,
Except another mill to find,
Where they their spelt and rye might grind.
Though property our miller pair
Had from their parents, want of care
And drunkenness had wasted it,
Until their relatives thought fit
To interfere, advice to give:
"Unthrifty, wasteful, do you live;
And carelessly, from day to day
You throw your property away.

Such life is so indecent that
Much better creature is your cat.
Therefore, reform before too late;
And win again your former state."
Their faithful friends such warnings gave,
In hope the reckless pair to save;
But nothing cared, or heeded, these;
They ate and drank themselves to please.

At length, before a magistrate
Was brought their gross, indecent state
Of waste and foul debauchery;
Unto a judge, quite properly,
They both were summoned to appear,
That he their case might justly hear.
Their sentence was to drink no wine;
They must their drunkenness resign;
Drink only beer. In their surprise
They glanced from corners of their eyes
Upon each other. Much distressed,
The miller thus the judge addressed:

"Whene'er a pig, or ass, I sell,
I ever bind the bargain well
With wine. Since when, O judge, I pray,
Hath this good custom passed away?
My neighbours all expect it; I,
Than give it up, would rather die.
It would be said, 'He is a swine,
Who with a bargain gives no wine.'"

Then laughed the judge, "I grant 'tis well,
Whene'er a pig or ass you sell,

To drink some wine. The custom's old,
So from it you I will not hold ;
But otherwise if wine you take
I will a heavy sentence make."

Now, to the miller pair, the days
Seemed sunk in dull and dismal ways :
They drank some beer, but liked it not ·
'Twas not like wine ; they ne'er forgot
The lightness, joyousness, wine brings,
What gladness to the heart it sings.
When the grape harvest duly came,
Unto our pair it was the same ;
Though juice of grapes might richly flow
They might not its dear flavour know.

One night the miller's wife, in bed,
Unto her sleepless husband said,
" A happy thought comes in my head :
I have a goodly plan, I think,
By which once more our wine to drink."

" Speak ! " quoth the miller, " but I deem
That thy fine plan is but a dream."
" No dream," she said, " 'twill come to pass ;
Sell me, dear husband, thy old ass ;
Then there will purchase-money be,
And wine to drink for thee and me ! "

A moment dumb the miller lay,
While strange amazement took away
His power of thought, and speech beside ;
Then " Blessing on thee, wife ! " he cried ;

"Thou hast, indeed, surpassing wit;
My stupid head ne'er thought of it."

Quickly was finished now the trade;
The ass transferred; the money paid;
The wine was fetched; the woman made
Fine cakes. Then drank they wine, and ate
The cakes—this miller and his mate!—
And never, since they tasted wine,
Seemed any drink so rare and fine;
Till, fuddled, but still happy, they
Staggered at length to bed, and lay
In drunken sleep through half next day.
Then they arose, and soon were fain
That she should sell the ass again
Back to her husband; so, in fine,
They each day traded and had wine.

They found this life so excellent
That they were happy and content;
But sunk in sottishness so low,
No thought of better life to know;
And they grew poorer day by day,
As passed their drunken lives away;
So poor, they were by all forgot;
And no one heeded their base lot.

Moral

This moral tale doth well express
The common fate of drunkenness;
Where wit doth only heighten sin,
And help the drunken sot to win

His low desires ; nor, as it ought,
Lift up his life to higher thought.
Though friends advise, and neighbours aid,
Within one's self reform is made.
The wise King Solomon hath told :
" Who loves wine too much wins no gold."
He only wealth and honour wins
Who lives a prudent life. The sins
Of greedy gluttony and drink
Are sure the soul of man to sink.
Who hath such vices manhood lacks ;
From Nuremberg so says Hans Sachs.

THE ORIGIN OF MONKEYS

[August 4, 1562]

"WHENCE are the monkeys? Doctor, tell
Their origin, and how so well
They mimic man; wherefore each ape
Wears, in burlesque, the human shape.
Have they their own distinctive plan?
Or own they cousinship with man?"

The doctor lit his pipe; quoth he,
"Creation is a mystery;
But, if thou wilt, I'll tell to thee
A tale a gypsy told to me."

When our dear Lord, in former day,
Journeyed, with Peter, on his way,
Teaching his wisdom kind and good—
Alas, so long misunderstood!—
They asked for shelter through the night,
Of a good-hearted blacksmith wight,
Who took them in with welcome free.
While there, a beggar wretchedly
Sought shelter, too; grey-haired was he,
A cripple who on crutches went
In garb of rags, with body bent,
Oppressed by age and misery,
Begging for alms most piteously.

The gentle Peter kindly cried,
" Let me not, Master, be denied !
Have mercy on this wretched one ;
Do as thou oft before hast done :
Heal him of age and each sad ill !—
Heal him, dear Lord, by thy sweet will !
Heal him, that he may earn his bread,
And bear thy blessing on his head ! "

Compassion in his tender heart,
Our Lord complied to use his art :
" Dear smith," he said, " pray lend to me
Thy forge, that I, in charity,
May heal this poor diseased old man,
Whose life seems else so near its span ;
Him will I forge again to youth,
And fill his heart with holy truth."

St. Peter then the bellows blew,
As if he were a blacksmith, too ;
Our Lord now pushed within the fire
The old man where the flames aspire ;
The beggar, his old face serene,
Praised God with calm, unaltered mien.
" See," quoth St. Peter, " how he glows !
The beggar reddens like a rose."
Then bore they him to water trough,
Most carefully to cool him off ;
As thus they cooled him, blessings said
Our Lord upon the beggar's head—
No more a beggar, old and lame,
But beautiful in youth he came,

And bent him at his Master's feet :
" Dear Lord, dear Lord, Thy mercy sweet
Hath cured me. I thy word will do
Through life, that now begins anew."
The smith had watched, that he might scan
How thus to forge anew a man ;
Then bade them all to supper, where
His family came also there,
His wife, his son, his sister-in-law ;
All these, with lively wonder, saw
The lusty youth, whose beauty bright
Filled all their eyes with glad delight.
The blacksmith's sister, humpbacked, grim,
Sat by the youth, and questioned him
If in the forge he suffered pain ;
He truly answered her again,
" Nay ; in the forge no pain had I,
But rested there as happily
And cool as when the dew-drops bless
At eve a hot day's sultriness."
His beauty charmed the woman's sight,
And of his words she thought all night.

At morn our Lord the blacksmith blessed
For all his kindness to his guest,
And so departed, that his word
Through all the country should be heard.
Much thought the smith, " This trick to do
Is easy ; I might do it too,
And take my sister's ills away,
Make her a maiden young and gay."
So, to his sister-in-law, he cried,
" Would'st thou be young ? once more a bride ?

Believe me when I truly say,
I watched most carefully the way
He wrought the man the flames among,
And made the aged beggar young :
Wilt thou the forging also try ? "

Out spoke the woman, " That will I !
For if the youth no pain hath felt,
But as on dewy grass he knelt,
So might I too, and cast away
This cruel shape ; like blooming May
Be young, and dance, and sing all day."

Then blew the smith his forge until
The flames leaped up. With kindly will,
Into the fire his sister threw,
That he might make her once more new.
She twisted horribly, and screamed,
In dreadful agony she seemed ;
The stupid smith cried, " Sit thou still !
I yet must blow the fire until
Thou hast been heated properly ;
Why scream while thus I fashion thee ?
The beggar had serenity—
Now ! " cried the smith, with lusty shout,
" Now is the time ! " and pulled her out ;
In water-trough he plunged her quick,
Thinking he well had done the trick.

Her piercing cries made such a din
That they were heard the house within :
The wife and son's wife in alarm
Ran out, and saw the dreadful harm

Of their kinswoman : this harsh sight,
Her frightful screams, her woful plight,
Her blackened face, in anguish twisted
By pain that could not be resisted,
Like monkey's—this was all so dread
They fell upon the ground like dead
In awestruck swoon.
On that same night
Of wonder, death, and strange affright,
Two weird, misshapen children came,
Features and figures, both the same,
Of monkeys. All their infancy
Was shocking. When they came to be
Older, wild chattering, they fled
Into the woods ; and there they bred
The monkey race.

His pipe was out ;
The doctor lighted it. " No doubt,"
He said, " that gypsies lie. To me
This tale was told ; I tell it thee.
The tale is queer, and droll as well ;
But startling tales these gypsies tell."

MORAL

Two lessons, both of them well known,
But useful, in this tale are shown :

Though nature clouds with mystery
The wonder of maternity,
Yet calm serenity, we know,
The best of all results doth show ;

And happiness of mind will tend,
Perfection to the child to lend;
While fright may startle Nature so,
A prodigy will sometimes show.

The other moral which it brings,
Is try no superhuman things.
He who would do, must understand
The work to which he puts his hand;
Nor think, from superficial view,
He can accomplish something new.
Long years of toil the artist spends
Till practice to his pencil lends
Marvellous power; because you see,
Upon his canvas easily
A picture grow, think not your will
Can give your untrained hand such skill.
And Oh! think not the power of Heaven,
For purposes divinely given,
May rashly be employed by you
Actions miraculous to do.
Leave unto God His God-like acts:
Work well as men—so saith Hans Sachs.

THE ASS AND THE CRABS

[February 4, 1563]

THERE was an ass, of frisky ways,
Drew sacks of meal, on busy days,
From an old mill; but when the mill,
From lack of grist to grind, stood still,
The miller turned the ass to graze
In his good meadow, where always
This sprightly ass would frisk and play,
Enjoying thus its holiday.
A stream ran by the meadow's side,
In which a fishing-boat was tied;
The frisky ass, in frolic gay,
Leaped in this little boat one day,
And foolishly began to play;
It jumped about until away,
With broken rope, the loosened boat
Adown the stream commenced to float,
While this rough sailor did but bray:
"Hee-haw" was all that it could say;
It might have tried its words to vary
But for its small vocabulary.
While frolicking and dancing still
The shaken boat began to fill—
Still stamped this giddy ass until

The boat upset, and it fell out.
Although a lusty beast and stout,
Not having learned to swim, it sank
Close to the meadow's bushy bank.
The reason why this came to pass
Was that the beast was such an ass.
Though drowned, the body caught and hung,
The branches of some trees among,
The little boat went drifting on ;
But where it went, what port it won,
This tale tells not.
The miller sought
His ass at eve, but found it not ;
He searched the bushes carefully ;
Ne'er of the water side thought he ;
He cursed and shouted noisily ;
He cursed till he was out of breath ;
He almost cursed himself to death.
At last he gave up search till morn,
For it was plain the ass was gone ;
And he concluded with belief
It had been caught by some sly thief.

To a wise woman, then went he,
To learn where his lost ass could be.
She said, " Seek it, *on earth*, no more,
But ere a fortnight shall be o'er
Thou shalt behold it." Much perplexed,
The miller went away quite vexed.

It was not many days before
The miller, walking near the shore,

Through bushes plainly there could see
His ass's tail upon a tree :
There wagged the tail close to the stream ;
The miller cried, " It is a dream ! "
But, coming nearer, seized the thing,
And pulled in hope his ass to bring
Upon the bank ; so it befel ;
The ass came up ; but strange to tell,
The body seemed to move, and rise,
And fall. The miller strained his eyes ;
Cried in a transport of surprise,
" Alive ! alive !—It cannot be !
My poor, dead ass, that here I see,
Must have been drowned ! " But yet once more
It moved as it had done before ;
Then, from the open mouth, there fell
A crab ; it pleased the miller well
When, after this, came eight crabs more,
Each dropping slowly on the shore.

The miller thought, " My ass can fish,
And it will bring me many a dish
Of roasted crabs, so that I may,
With wife and children, feast each day ;
More useful will my ass now be,
A much more helpful beast to me,
Dead than alive. Though it is true,
My sacks of meal it ever drew,
Yet much it cost, both oats and hay ;
Now nothing for its feed, I pay."
Then the drowned carcass he pushed back,
And put the crabs within his sack.
But, while he was in this employ,

There came Heinz Fischer rowing by,
Who cried, "Seitz Müller, can it be
That thou would'st steal my crabs from me?
To the fishward I summon thee!"

Seitz Müller said, "The crabs are mine
By lawful right, and none of thine.
Thy boat, my good grey ass hath drowned;
And, in my ass, these crabs I found;
So listen now to what I say,
Thou for my ass must quickly pay:
Thy leaky boat did surely slay
As good an ass as lives to-day."

Said Heinz, "O Seitz, thy words are craze;
But well I know thy crafty ways;
I never told thy ass to float,
With clumsy feet, within my boat;
I knew it not until I found
My boat upon the shore aground.
So, for this damage, pay me well,
Or I the warden surely tell;
And I must have the crabs—I swear
Thou shalt not cheat me everywhere!
All that thou say'st is idle shift:
Thy ass broke my good boat adrift;
So thou must for its fault atone;
Nor claim the crabs to be thy own;
The carcass of the ass is thine,
But the good crabs are surely mine."

So wrangled they an hour or more;
Then, to the ward their quarrel bore,

Still screaming, with both oath and shout,
Like those who have their teeth pulled out.
The warden tried to reconcile
The noisy men, but failed, the while
They both more angry seemed to grow,
And came at last from word to blow,
Till he declared that they must go
Before a Court of Justice, where
The law would try their quarrel there.

What was the end, this tale tells not,
Nor how much justice each one got;
But costs they paid, three-fold at least
The value of the boat and beast.
And so to both was fully served
The punishment they well deserved.

MORAL

Fools are there in the world these days
As there have doubtless been always—
Fools who will idly quarrel o'er
Some petty thing that costs them more
Than any worth the trifle bore,
Unprized if won. Perhaps they find
Enjoyment, of a certain kind,
In litigation; it is fit,
If this is so, to pay for it.
If you with neighbour disagree
Try not the law; the end will be
Trouble and loss: take wise advice
Of your good friends, and be not nice
In claiming points of little weight;
But settle with opponent straight.

If you must lose ass, boat, or crabs,
Or if your neighbour, boastful, blabs,
Think not too much of these knicknacks,
But hold your purse—so saith Hans Sachs.

THE PORK THIEF

[May 26, 1563]

IN our Bavaria there lies
A rural village of small size,
Named Erbelting ; and here of old
A peasant dwelt, of whom is told,
And of a neighbour, how befel
The strange event our tale will tell.
This peasant had broad fertile lands,
Which he had tilled with careful hands ;
Barley and rye and spelt he grew,
And cabbages and turnips, too ;
He was a man of village fame,
Well known to all ; Heinz Mayer his name ;
A man of much prosperity.
He had a thrifty wife, and she
Was as industrious as he ;
For she had hogs and cows and sheep,
Her charge most carefully to keep ;
Which brought her lard and milk and cheese ;
At Landshut market she sold these,
And constant profit thereby made
With thrifty economic trade.

Quite near Heinz Mayer dwelt humbly one
Who sought each honest work to shun.

Lazy was he, though stalwart, too ;
So poor that he had much ado
To feed himself and wife and child ;
And often their reproaches mild
Disturbed him when no food had they ;
But laziness still held its sway
Over his life. He borrowed all
He could ; but debts, both great and small,
Paid not. He often made his own
Something before its loss was known
Unto his neighbour. He would harry
All booty that his strength could carry.

Heinz Mayer accosted him one day,
" Oh, neighbour Ulle Popp, I pray,
Use your strong hands, as you should do,
In work, and wealth will come to you ;
Your honest industry could win,
With lesser labour, more than sin
And knavish tricks can bring you in."
Well meant was this advice and true ;
But Ulle Popp, in anger, grew
To be his neighbour's enemy ;
With secret hate and malice he
Sought constantly to do him ill,
Contriving with a wicked will ;
For envy, in his jaundiced eyes,
Saw too much luck, his neighbour's prize.

At Shrovetide Mayer, as usual, killed
Fat hogs, and many a sausage filled ;
Upon a beam half hogs he hung ;
To give them air, aloft they swung.

The neighbour, seeing this, quoth he
Unto himself, "Heinz Mayer, to me
You gave advice that I should work:
I see a way to get my pork
Without much labour; I will fish
For it, and so get me a dish
Unless there is no luck for me."

In the dark night, all noiselessly
He climbed on Mayer's high roof with care,
And saw, through dormer window, there,
Hung on a beam not far below,
The sides of porkers in a row;
Each half a pig he deemed would be
More than a hundred pounds. Then he
Fished, with a rope and hook, to try
If he his wants could thus supply.
After much fishing his sharp hook
Caught in a side: firm stand he took—
As firm as he, on sloping roof,
Could get—then put to sturdy proof
His strength. First round his shoulders flung
The rope, on which the pork was hung,
In case his hand should slip, and so
The side fall noisily below,
Scaring the house; for such alarm
Would bring himself to grievous harm.
Then pulled he with his lusty might;
Up came the pork before his sight;
Just as he seemed his prize to win,
His foot slipped down; he tumbled in
Through dormer window; downward fell,
The side of pork and he, as well.

The rope, entangled round his neck,
Brought his great fall to sudden check ;
On one side of the beam he fell,
And on the other, strange to tell,
Fell the half hog. He strove to loose
The rope that held him in its noose :
The more he struggled, still more fast
Tightened the loop that, at the last
Strangled his breath. This accident
Much racket through the farmhouse sent—
Heinz Mayer cried out, " What noise is that ? "

His wife replied, " It is the cat ;
She doubtless jumped for pork, and fell—
Cats make such racket—all is well !
Go thou to sleep ; the doors are fast ;
No thief can come." And so at last
They slept that sweet and quiet rest
That cheers the healthy and the blest.
And Ulle Popp—if he slept well,
This tale must not attempt to tell.

When Mayer arose at break of day
He saw, with infinite dismay,
His neighbour and his porker hung,
Upon one rope securely strung.
" 'Tis plain," quoth he, " what Popp was at ;
And that last night he was the cat."

The women folk and servants cried,
" This miracle can't be denied :
Although a thing beyond belief,
The side of pork has hung the thief."

Out of this grew a by-word, so :
" In Mayer's great house, not long ago,
There was a ham so bold in might
It hung a thief at dead of night ;
By his own rope the thief it hung ;
And, by his side, serenely swung."

MORAL

By this true tale we all may see
A life of honest industry
Brings wealth and fair prosperity :
Merchant, or peasant, if he be,
Or citizen, it is the same,
An honest life makes honoured name ;
And peace and honour both will lend
Their pleasant comfort to the end.

But some there are who oft display
Envy of all who, on life's way,
Seem to be favoured more than they ;
And Ignorance will then array
Itself, if poor, against the rich ;
And Envy, its own mind, bewitch,
Turning all friendly deeds to ill,
Seeking blind malice to fulfil.
The idler thinks that luck's the thing
Riches or poverty to bring,
Forgetting it is idleness
Brings wretchedness and sore distress.
When lazy rascal would contrive
Some scheme by which he hopes to thrive,
And win his honest neighbour's pelf,
It often chances he, himself,

Falls in the pit he dug by stealth
To steal his richer neighbour's wealth.
Who seeks, by wrong, himself to boost,
Finds " evil oft comes home to roost."
More toil and trouble stealing asks,
Than honest work—so says Hans Sachs.

THE ICICLE

[February 20, 1536]

I

IN Venice once there chanced to be
A merchant who, beyond the sea,
Made trading voyages frequently.
Four years had fled;
His voyage was ended well
When he came home quite suddenly
Where he was much surprised to see
A boy in two years' infancy
With fair white head.
He said, "Whose boy, pray tell?"
His wife said, "Listen, dear, to me;
One night, though it was late,
Thinking most tenderly of thee,
An icicle I ate;
From which there came, to my annoy,
This white-haired boy—
A miracle so great!

II

"That from cold icicle there came
This boy, is now, alas, my shame!"
The husband understood the same,
Her base deceit
And broken marriage vow;

But no distrust did he unfold ;
Yet, when the boy was twelve years old,
Unto his wife, he calmly told :
" I think it meet
To take your young boy now,
That he may learn from me my trade,
And be to commerce used."
It did not please the wife, he made
This plan which she refused ;
He said, " The boy shall be contented ; "
So she consented
Although she felt abused.

III

He sold the pretty boy away
Unto a merchant Turk one day.
The sobbing wife cried out, " I pray
You tell me when
I shall behold my love ! "
He said, " As we were wending on
Over the desert, the hot sun,
Upon your white-haired darling shone ;
He melted then
As icicles dissolve."
She knew that, for her falsehood, she
Must thus, alas ! atone,
And swallowed sobs of misery
As dog gulps down a bone.
Whoever journeys must beware
That his wife's fare
Leaves icicles alone.

LO! THE KING DRINKS!

[July 13, 1558]

THERE is, upon the banks of Rhine,
A custom of a quaint design:
On Three Kings' eve is joyful call
Of every one to festival.
They first elect, in frolic sport,
A Fest King and his mimic court,
Marshal and steward, doctor, cook,
Captain—all sworn upon a book—
Chaplain and huntsmen, chamberlain,
Carver and waiters. All must feign
Their offices in merry rule,
Or feel the stroke of the Court-Fool.
By lot is given each several part
Which must be played with cunning art.

The King is chief of jesters; he,
Grand master of the revelry.
High over all, they give him place;
Upon the ceiling he must trace
A cross, the emblem of his sway,
There to remain for many a day.
Then they all wish him happy reign;
And each his office must maintain,
And serve him as is served a king,
Nor slight his rank in anything.

Who fails to do his proper part,
Or fills his place with scanty art,
Or wrongly names one of the court,
The Fool belabours, in gay sport,
With leathern mace.
When the King drinks,
Each, to the others, nods and winks;
All loudly cry, "Lo! the King drinks!"
Throughout the hall rings gaily out
This greeting, in one common shout,
"Lo! the King drinks!" When this cry rings
If any fail, on him it brings,
As penalty, a quart of wine,
For such offence the royal fine.
So laughter fills the joyous court,
A half-night spent in merry sport.

Amid these laughers was a priest,
Who, of the drinkers, drank not least;
Indeed, so many times he drank
That oft his head in slumber sank,
The tipsy sleep that wine bestows
When its high wave all sense o'erflows;
When he should shout he oft would snore,
And paid the King's tax o'er and o'er.
His housekeeper was with him there—
For, with the men, did oft repair
Women and children to this feast—
To her confessed our drowsy priest,
And begged of this good-natured dame
That she would spare him so much shame,
And nudge to wakefulness his blinks,
When he should cry, "Lo! the King drinks!"

And so she did with such success
That his drink-fines were somewhat less.
At length the festival was o'er,
The King a commoner once more;
And every grand official high,
Cobbler or tailor, with a sigh,
At two o'clock went home to bed
With reeling feet and dizzy head.
So went our priest in safety led
By his kind servant dame; and she
Was very near as full as he.

But scarce in bed did three hours pass
When the bell rang for early mass;
Dazed and bewildered still was he
When he came to his sacristy;
Dozing, he at the altar stood,
And read the mass as best he could:
He felt strange visions vaguely go
Through his dim brain in drowsy flow;
But when in silent mass he bent,
His priestly office from him went;
All present duties were ignored;
Soundly he slept, and snored, and snored.

Now rose within his sleeping brain
The Three Kings' festival again:
He dreamed its pleasures o'er and o'er;
He drank great draughts of wine once more;
He heard the noisy tumult ring;
He heard the feasters cheer their King.

His snoring scared the sacristan,
Who round the altar quickly ran,

And pulled his surplice with good will;
He half awoke; in dreamland still
He gained his feet; he dreamed his dame
Had nudged him that the moment came
To cheer the King; so loudly he
Sent forth his shout of revelry:
"Lo! the King drinks! lo! the King drinks!
Lo! the King drinks! lo! the King drinks!"
Four times the dreaming priest cried out,
And the church echoed back each shout,
Waking its solemn silences
With dreams of drunken ribaldries.

Then he awoke, and rubbed his eyes
In mingled shame and dull surprise;
Stood like a fifer, whose false play
Hath led the dancers' feet astray.
Soon he took heart, and slowly spoke,
"Good people, this is but a joke;
It is not serious; so forget
What you have heard; nor ever let
The words I late have spoken be
Treasured in any memory."

The men and women laughed, and thought
How it had chanced. The priest then sought
His house and bed, that sleep again
Might clear from drunkenness his brain.
But when the bishop heard of this
He took away the benefice,
That so this careless priest might be
Taught into more sobriety.

Moral

Out of this tale a priest may take
A moral: for religion's sake
He should preserve his good repute
Beyond all question or dispute:
Who sets himself in place to be
The people's teacher is not free
To ever touch debauchery;
So would he soil his saintly place,
And all good teaching thus efface.
If in his life he liveth well,
It shows more good than he can tell:
Such life a sermon is, more true
Than any preaching he can do.
What oft religion sadly lacks
Is noble life—so saith Hans Sachs.

CONRAD DOUBT AND THE PRIEST'S PEAS

[August 18, 1563]

AT Sommerhausen lived a priest
Who did not scruple in the least
At any trick, or small, or great,
As this our tale will now relate:
He had a habit when he preached,
And to an end his sermon reached,
To say, "My children, you I tell,
Who follow all my teachings well,
Will, without doubt, be saved, and be
The heirs of Heaven's eternity."
Then from the pulpit he descended
When all his blessings so were ended,
And took, with solemn face, his way
To do each office of the day.

There was a peasant, Conrad Doubt,
Who was a simple, clownish lout,
So foolish in simplicity
He thought the priest's "doubt" meant that he
Was shut from Heaven, and so must be
In danger of eternal fire;
And knew not why he had such ire
Poured on his head. This grieved him so

That he resolved at length to go
And ask the priest his faults to show.

He said, " I pray you, father, tell
Why under ban I ever dwell :
What have I done so very evil
That you should give me to the Devil
On every Sunday, when you say,
At sermon end, in solemn way,
' All, without Doubt, are saved ? ' Then all
Look at me when my name you call.
Thus do your sermons always end,
And thus poor me you always send
Into the fire. Pray let me know
For what ill deeds you treat me so ! "
The priest at once resolved that he
Would profit by simplicity
So dull ; then said, " O Conrad, pay
Attention to the words I say :
Each peasant gives a peck of peas
To me ; for which I give to these
My blessing ; it is only you,
Who give no peas as others do,
Who get no blessing."
Conrad Doubt
Thought that the secret now was out ;
So home he went, and brought the peas,
Hoping the crafty priest to please.

The priest, who laughed in secret, said,
" There will be blessings on your head ;
And, Conrad, you are like the rest ;
Henceforth you always shall be blest."

When Sunday came good Conrad Doubt
Most gladly heard the sermon out ;
Heard the smug priest serenely tell,
" Who follows all my teachings well
Will thus be saved, and ever blest,
And Conrad Doubt among the rest."

But the priest's joke soon came to light ;
For he related it one night,
In public house amid much laughter ;
From which, of course, it came soon after
To Conrad's ears, who felt its shame,
And thought the priest was much to blame.
His indignation grew, and grew,
Until he deemed that he must do
Something to pay for all the shame
The priest had put upon his name.
At length this simple peasant hit
Upon a plan that had some wit :
He to confession boldly came,
And told the priest, as if in shame,
He had a sin he must relate,
That he, within the fast-time, ate
Some eggs.
The priest, on mischief bent,
Thought this a chance most excellent
To do another trick, so cried,
" O, heretic ! you have denied
Your Lord, like Peter ; and defied
The Church. You are the Devil's own ;
And now must reap what you have sown :
Both flesh and blood the eggs contained,
So you your precious soul have stained."

" But they were boiled ; no flesh had they,
Nor blood ! " quoth Conrad ; " wherefore say
That I my soul have thrown away ? "

The priest replied, " In Rome alone
Can you your grievous sin atone."

" Alas ! " cried Conrad, " penance set !
Some penance that will save me yet ! "

Then said the priest, " Give instant heed !
Your sin I may forgive, indeed,
If, in my garden, you will sow
Me peas in many a careful row."

Conrad replied, " That will I do
With many grateful thanks to you ;
To-morrow early I will there
Sow you the peas with utmost care."
Then, smiling cunningly, the priest
His simulated sin released.

Next morn was Conrad up, to seize
An early hour to boil the peas
In a great kettle ; and the while
He smiled to match the priest's sly smile.
" Ho-ho ! " unto himself he thought :
" Boiled eggs ! —boiled peas ! 'tis naught for naught."
Then to the garden came he where
He found the priest already there,
Who mildly looked while Conrad's hand
Sowed well the peas upon the land.

Still cunning was the priestly smile
As simple Conrad toiled the while.
"Ah!" thought the priest, "simplicity
Will prove a precious thing to me."

But Conrad thought, "Dear priest, no smile
Of your mild face can me beguile;
Before two months will come and go,
You may not then be smiling so."

Then Easter came with joyful play,
And soon it was the month of May;
Elsewhere pea-vines were up and green,
But not a pea-vine could be seen
In the priest's garden. Days went on,
And peas were blooming, but not one
In the priest's plot.
He was in doubt
How this strange thing had come about;
At last decided that wherein
He fooled the peasant was the sin
That made his garden fail to yield
A single pea in all the field.
It was for him a solemn thought:
He had not acted as he ought;
And, lo! his garden thus became
A silent token of his shame.

So for the peasant now he sent,
His mind on restitution bent:
"What proper payment should I yield
For the pea-sowing of my field?"
He asked the simple man, who smiled,
And answered him in accents mild:

"Nine crowns undoubtedly would do."
The priest was startled, but he drew
The money forth, and Conrad paid;
Then, to the peasant, slowly said,
"Because God lays a ban on me
I pay you this; for it may be
I erred, to make your penance yield
Your peas and work to sow my field:
So may the good Lord once more please
To let my garden yield me peas."
The money pocketed, the man—
This simple peasant—thus began:
"Listen, my father, while I tell
How all this barrenness befel:
I learned your artifice, how you
Mocked me with words that were not true;
Then much I pondered in my mind
How I could pay you back in kind:
I think the good Lord in me wrought,
And gave to me the simple thought
To boil the peas that, in your field,
I sowed for you; for they might yield,
Though they were boiled, abundantly
If life in boiled eggs still could be:
If flesh and blood were yet in these,
Why not some life in well boiled peas?
This simple reasoning is mine;
I paid you, father, in your coin."

The priest replied, "True piety
Doth not admit of roguery;
Your trick was fair and just to me:

Summa summarum ! which, my lad,
Means some good things are sometimes bad."

No further answer Conrad made ;
His peas and work had now been paid
So well that he was quite content
As homeward joyfully he went ;
While the priest's Latin—strange to say—
Seemed to explain all faults away.

MORAL

Whoever seeks with tricks to fool
More simple men, should heed the rule
That roguery provokes the same,
And men are only fools in name.
A mocker wields a two-edged sword
Which cuts both ways. A mocking word,
Or laugh of biting raillery,
May waken even apathy,
Or stir a fool's brain with its sting
Till, out of folly, wit may spring.
Though one at ninepins sometimes wins,
He must in turn set up the pins ;
Or, if another win a game,
Must not his luck misfortune name :
It is but fair, in the same way
That we have won, our debts to pay.
Who then objects to pay such tax
Should never play—so says Hans Sachs.

THE BOTTOMLESS SACK

[October 5, 1563]

OF a poor peasant, tells this tale:
He found his crops and fortunes fail,
And cried, "Fate seeks to punish me
With debts and loss and poverty:
My wheat and grain are spoiled by blight,
Lentils and turnips fail me quite;
Peas, cabbages have not done half;
Drowned in the well my finest calf;
My horses stolen—woe betide!—
My two fat pigs both now have died;
Taxes are due; have been demanded,
And I am wholly empty-handed;
My debts have grown to such amount
As I dare not to even count;
For debts I twice in jail have lain,
And they will drag me there again.
I think if now the very Devil
Would bring me cash for any evil,
Though I became his certain prey,
And lost my soul this very day,
I would accept."
As this he said
Up rose the Devil's horny head:
Quoth he, "I hear thy woful cries,
And come to bring thee full supplies:

Aye ! I will help thee ; give but sign
That afterward thou wilt be mine."

" Yes ; that shall be," the man replied,
" If thou wilt help me now to tide
Over conditions ill and sad.
Goodness hath failed : I seek the bad !
An easy bargain thou canst make,
My disappointed soul to take."

The Devil cried, " Thou speakest well :
For how much money wilt thou sell
Thy soul for all eternity ? "
The peasant answered, " When for me
Thou shalt this mealsack even fill
With gold, take then thy utmost will
Upon my soul when I am dead."

" That will I do," the Devil said :
" No human blame will come with it ;
Do thou, upon thy roof-tree, sit
With thy good sack ; I come to-night—
My doings may not bear the light—
And I will bring the promised gold,
All that thy chosen sack will hold ;
But, in the village, tell no one
What will this night be darkly done,
For fear the castle-lord may take
Thy gold. I warn thee for thy sake."
Thereon the Devil went away
To seek the gold that he must pay.

The peasant pondered, with intent
Some cunning trick to now invent,

To keep the gold and cheat the Devil;
Nor thought it wrong, although uncivil,
To treat the Prince of Darkness so.
He did not like to Hell to go,
Nor thus his precious soul to lose;
But so much gold could not refuse.
At length, a plan his mind conceived,
By which the fiend, as he believed,
Would leave the precious gold behind,
And yet would fail his soul to bind:
He would unstitch the sack below,
So through, the golden coins would flow;
And hang the sack then nicely so,
In dormer window, that the gold
Would thus be in his chamber rolled;
Then could the Devil never fill
The sack, nor have his wicked will
On his poor soul. This thing to do,
He fixed the sack the window through;
Then by the thin moon's silver ray
Seated himself, his part to play,
Upon the roof, supporting there
His endless purse with utmost care.
The fiend to Frankfort went in haste,
Where an old Jew his gold had placed
In a big kettle buried deep
In earth, his hoard to safely keep;
This he dug up, at swiftest rate
Hurried where high our peasant sate,
Perched on the roof, and poured his store
Into the sack; then sought for more
Where a rich peasant's wife had got
All her life's savings in a pot;

He gathered up her hoard, and flew
Quick through the air, and poured that, too.
Into the sack, which then he shook,
And glanced within with angry look;
He thought, of course, that it should be
Full to the brim.
Enraged was he,
And screamed aloud, as he were mad,
To find the sack no bottom had;
He wildly cried, "How dar'st thou draw
Through demon's mouth a thievish straw?
Could all the treasures of the world
In thy cursed sack, be instant hurled
They would not fill it." Then he howled;
And so upon the peasant scowled
That the poor man was terrified,
And on his roof-tree nearly died.
Still roared the Devil horribly,
And, on the man, sprang furiously;
With his sharp claws he scratched his face;
And dragged him fiercely round the place;
Clutched by the hair, he wildly swung,
And from the roof his victim flung;
In smoke of sulph'rous smell and hue,
Then vanished from the peasant's view.

Out of this weird, infernal strife
The peasant came much lamed for life;
But, hobbling in, his gold he hid
In his oat-chest, and locked the lid;
"Safe now," he thought, "I will grow fat;
Lame! lame, indeed! but what of that!

I now am rich ; my troubles o'er
Will give anxieties no more :
My debts I now can fully pay,
And spend my life in pleasant way
With wine to drink and table fine—
How many luxuries are mine !
I need not sit behind the door,
As I so oft have done before ;
But walk erect, and boldly say,
To friends and neighbours all, ' Good Day ! ' "

Smoothly he found his life now glide
In happiness until Shrovetide,
When, on the day of this glad feast,
He sought betimes the village priest,
And made confession, clean and bold,
Of everything this tale hath told.

The priest considered well the thing,
And thought this shrewd device might bring
Much profit to the Church. He said,
" Peasant, thou hast been strangely led
Through perils that, upon thy head,
Threatened damnation. Give to me
This sack, and I will give to thee
Thy absolution clean and free."

The peasant was displeased, and said,
" My life hath passed through perils dread
For this fine sack, and for its sake
I suffered ; now my prize you take."

" This sack may be," the priest replied,
" A treasury : from far and wide

The Church can gather into it
The world's vast wealth, as seemeth fit,
When, unto every one, we say
'Fill up our sack! It is the way
To make salvation safe and sure!
Of every sin it is the cure!'
Its value now is naught to thee;
Unto the Church it yet may be
Emblem and source of sovereignty."

The peasant said, "Take then the sack;
And may the Church no treasure lack!"

How long the Church that sack retained,
Who knows? It may not have disdained
To keep it long—Aye; some will say
That the Church hath it to this day;
But who will fail to answer "Nay!"
Or hint Church-scandal, which would be,
By public voice, profanity.
But cities, nations, have it, too;
Perhaps that sack is made anew
For public good—Or myths or facts,
Let wise men say; but not Hans Sachs.

THE BAGPIPER'S THALER

[February 10, 1573]

HANS APPEL was a merchant, known
Full well in Mayence, and no one
More trusted. He, one day, would go
To Frankfort, there some goods to show,
And purchase others at a Fair.
When it was known he would go there
His neighbours came to bid him get
Some goods not in his shop as yet.
So many were the orders, he
Bade each write down most carefully
What he should buy. He did not dare
To trust his memory at the Fair,
So each to him a paper brought;
But, with the paper, no one thought
To bring the merchant money, save
A simple shepherd, who would have
Hans Appel from the city bring
A sweet-toned bagpipe, for which thing,
A thaler unto Hans he brought,
To purchase that for which he sought.

When Appel's boat had come to land
He carefully his business planned;
Laid all his papers in a row,
When came a breeze, with sudden blow,

And the good merchant saw, with pain,
His papers scattered in the Main;
One paper only there did stay,
On which the shepherd's thaler lay.

So Hans the bagpipe only bought,
Nor of the rest remembered aught,
For he the papers ne'er had read
Ere they, before the wind, had fled,
And drowned them in the ruffled Main,
Whence he could find not one again.

MORAL

What one would have, though it be writ,
Yet pay at once the price of it:
Good money is a talisman
That hath a power the world to span.
It fails sometimes, as well we know;
But this our story doth not show.
No promise is as good as gold,
Though such a statement oft is told.
The shepherd's thaler, in this tale,
Was the one thing that did not fail;
A thaler is a thing to stay
When written words are blown away;
It hath a power, that promise lacks,
To save from loss—so saith Hans Sachs.

THE ABBOT IN WILDBAD

(*In the style of Georg Schiller*)

[January 20, 1536]

I

BAVARIA hath an abbey named
Rauschofen, and most widely famed;
Whose abbot ate and drank till he
Grew very fat by constant greed;
Great as a big tile-stove indeed;
So huge was his obesity
His breast appeared too full to grow
To hold more food: this misery
So filled his heart with wretched woe
That he drank beer most constantly;
This failed; he could no more endure;
His doctor said, Wildbad might cure
If he would journey slowly there
Under two monks' especial care.

II

But as he went through forests dim
A sudden ambush captured him;
Its chief, a witty noble, cried,
"Why through my country do you go?"
"To Wildbad," quoth the abbot, "lo!
I am a man of God, and ride

Hither because I cannot eat ;
I trust I may not be denied ! "
Then laughed the noble : " This great feat,
I well can do for you ; confide
In me, my honoured guest, and be
Cured of this dreadful malady :
In three days you shall love your meat.
And find you easily can eat.

III

In a great chamber was confined
The startled abbot, and his mind
Was much disturbed ; he begged in vain—
Three peas they gave, a scanty store
For a long day ; he wept for more,
And felt his huge flesh melt in pain.
On the fourth day a rich repast
Was served ; his appetite again
Came like a wolf's ; and, cured at last,
He begged his host would kindly deign
Receipt of eighty gulden. " Yea ! "
Replied the noble, " if you say
No quicker cure hath Wildbad known
Than this fine dry-bath of my own."

This tale is taken from the *Decameron* of Boccaccio—Second novel. Tenth day.

Shrovetide Plays

THE TRAVELLING SCHOLAR FROM PARADISE

[October 8, 1550]

THE PERSONS.

THE TRAVELLING SCHOLAR.
THE FARMER.
THE FARMER'S WIFE.

WIFE

MY breath is burdened with my sighs,
While thoughts of by-gone days arise
When my first husband lived. Ah me,
He loved me dearly, tenderly,
As I loved him! He was most kind,
Honest in thought, and calm in mind:
With him the gladness of my life
Died out though I became a wife
Again, and try, through weary days,
To love my man. Alas, always
Remembrance comes to mar my plan!
He is not like my first good man:
This one is parsimonious, stern,
Anxious more money still to earn;
He would be rich; for mirth cares not—
Alas, how weary is my lot,
Thinking of him now lost to me!
Would I could show my memory

To him, who made me laugh and sing!
Oh, I would give him everything!
[*The* TRAVELLING SCHOLAR *comes.*]

SCHOLAR

Dear mother, pray may I come in?
I would thy commendation win,
Thy charitable hand and alms;
I have much skill and many charms
From books, and Venus' mountain know,
Where I have Cupids seen, and so
Can tell of marvels. Now I go
Throughout the land, and to and fro;
A traveller upon my way
From Paris, here I may not stay—

WIFE

Dear sir! dear sir! what dost thou say?
From Paradise thou cam'st? I pray,
Dear sir, thou wilt to me declare
If thou didst see my husband there?
He died—O God, why was it so!—
To my sore grief, a year ago.
He was so honest, gentle, wise,
I hope that he found Paradise.

SCHOLAR

There were so many fair souls there!—
Tell me, what garments did he wear
When he passed to eternity?
And this may stir my memory.

WIFE

Easy it is to tell thee this—
I hope that he is now in bliss!—
He wore a blue hat, and his dress
A winding sheet, no more, nor less:
The winding sheet was not so bad;
I wish he had been better clad.

SCHOLAR

Oh, my good dame, yes: that blue hat!
How well do I remember that!
No trowsers, shirt, nor shoes, he had;
Just in his grave-cloth; it was sad:
Howe'er he might that blue hat cock,
And wrap his sheet, it was a mock.
When others ate he could not join—
He had no heller, not a coin—
He looked at them with longing face,
And lingered much about the place;
Unless an alms some good soul gives
The Lord alone knows how he lives!
Good dame, it grieves me much to say
He is in such a wretched way.

WIFE

Dear husband! What hard fate he hath,
Not e'en a pfennig for a bath!
How pitiful! What grief to me
He in such poverty should be!
Tell me, dear sir, more thanks to earn,
Dost thou to Paradise return?

SCHOLAR

To-morrow I set forth, and fare
For fourteen days, to bring me there.

WIFE

Wilt thou a bundle from me bear,
For my dear husband, with all care?

SCHOLAR

Gladly will I; but do not waste
My time; I am in utmost haste.

WIFE

Dear sir, have patience: I will be
But a short time while hurriedly
I gather up such things as he
May use in his necessity.

[The WIFE *goes out.*]

SCHOLAR

She is a simple soul, and kind—
Too good to cheat—but I must find
Money and clothing, which I need;
Then I will go away with speed
Before her husband comes; for he
May lack his wife's simplicity;
So would he spoil the thing for me;
Therefore I go while yet I can
Become the heir of this dead man.

[*The* WIFE *brings in a bundle.*]

WIFE

Good messenger, I beg of thee,
Take these twelve gulden now from me—
This money so long hid away,
My little all, for a dark day—
Take it, dear sir, to him, I pray.

With this my hoard I gladly part
To the true husband of my heart ;
The bundle, too, I pray thee, take
To my dear husband for his sake :
Therein are blue cloth, hose and shoes ;
The cloth he surely there can use
For coat and trowsers : and, with these,
Pocket and pocket-knife will please.
Tell him, the next time I will try
To send him a more full supply ;
For I will save up all I can,
Thinking of him, my dear, good man.
Now go at once, that sooner he
May be relieved from poverty.
[*The* TRAVELLING SCHOLAR *takes up the bundle.*]

SCHOLAR

How will thy husband gaily think,
When, on a feast-day, he will drink
With friends his quart, how dear is she
Who sends this cheer and revelry !

WIFE

How long, dear messenger, I pray,
Will be the time thou art away ?

SCHOLAR

It may be long : it cannot be
That I shall come quite speedily.

WIFE

Alas ! if very long away
His money will be spent : no play,

Nor food, nor drink, nor bath! Alas,
That this too soon may come to pass!
This groschen is my last; take it;
I have no more of coin, nor wit.
When threshing time is o'er I can
Steal some odd coins from my good man,
And bury them, as once before,
Just at inside of stable door;
There they are safe—my gulden fair
I kept for months in safety there—
Accept this thaler for thy pay:
Say greetings to my good man, pray!

[*The* TRAVELLING SCHOLAR *goes out.*]

WIFE (*singing*)

Peasant maiden, Love is bright;
He may come to thee, to-night.
Peasant maiden, Love is sweet;
He may kneel before thy feet.
Peasant wife, put Love away;
He cares not for thee to-day.

FARMER

Dame, thou art merry: pray thee tell
What is it pleaseth thee so well?

WIFE

Dear husband, O rejoice with me!
I tell my happiness to thee:

FARMER

Who hit this fool-calf in the eye? [1]

[1] A common inquiry among the peasantry, in the time of this drama, when one appeared unaccountably excited.

WIFE

It is a marvel! Passing by,
A scholar stopped and spoke with me:
From Paradise quite recently
He wandered hither; and he told
Of my first husband, poor and old:
He only has his old blue hat
And winding sheet. Oh, think of that!
He hath no money, coat, nor shoes;
No hose, nor anything to use
Save hat and sheet—no, nothing save
What he took with him to the grave.

FARMER

Wilt thou not send him something fit?

WIFE

Dear husband, yes; I thought of it:
I sent our blue cloth, shirt and hose,
And breeches. He doth need the clothes.
I sent a gulden, too, that he
Might not without a groschen be.

FARMER

Thou hast done well. But which way went
The man by whom thy gifts were sent?

WIFE

He went by the Low Road, and bore
The bundle on his back. He wore
Around his neck a yellow net.

FARMER

Yes, wife; and I will find him yet;

Thou hast done well to give the stuff;
But, of the money, not enough—
Not near enough; it will not last.
Have my horse saddled to go fast,
And I will ride the Low Road o'er,
And give the man ten gulden more.

WIFE

Before all things do I thank thee,
That thou art now so good to me
And my old husband. Tenderly
I will deserve this love. Indeed
All of my savings, in thy need,
I'll give——

FARMER

Cease babbling now to me!
Have my horse saddled instantly,
Or, in the fen-land, he will be
Forever lost to me and thee.

[*The* WIFE *goes* ***out.***]

FARMER.

Ach Gott, how weak a wife have I!
That she is fair none will deny;
She cooks a sausage, cleans a dish,
But, in her mind, is a stock-fish:
Half fool! yes; more a fool than any
Fools of our parish, who are many.
She sends her husband, dead a year,
Money and clothes, and hath no fear
The scholar hath deceived her. Ah!
To catch the rogue will I ride far;

Then I will beat the rascal well,
So each big bruise will surely tell
That Paradise he hath not found;
Then, while he grovels on the ground,
Money and clothes will I retake,
And bear them home. For safety's sake
My wife must feel my fists; if she
Have black eyes, to remember me
And her own folly, it may be
A lesson. Through her foolishness
My fortune must grow less and less.
Alas, that I, to please my eyes,
Married this useless, comely prize!
I shall repent me all my days:
If she had shrewd though drunken ways,
So were she better, and might be
More of a helpmate unto me.

[*The* WIFE *comes in.*]

WIFE

The horse is ready: mount! away!
And God go with thee through the day!

[*The* FARMER *and his* WIFE *go out; the* TRAVELLING SCHOLAR *comes in with his pack.*]

SCHOLAR

How Fortune bids my star arise!
Puts in my hand unlooked-for prize!
Now I can live the winter through—
And there are other women, too,
Foolish as this, who will as well
Believe each tale that I may tell—

Others, like this, not over-wise,
Who will send me to Paradise—
Odd-bobs! Here comes one riding fast;
Behind the hedge my pack I cast;
I doubt not this good man would take
Bundle and coin for his wife's sake;
He may not promptly be deceived;
Nor his wife's Paradise believed.
He cannot ride across the moor;
The fen-land swamp would bog him sore—
Ah! he dismounts. I put away
My net; and wait what he may say.
Leaning on my poor stick, who can
Suspect I am no peasant man?

[The FARMER *comes in with spurs on.*]

FARMER

Good luck, my man! In this wild waste
Hast seen one running in hot haste,
With yellow neck-net? On his back
A bundle blue, like peddler's pack?

SCHOLAR

Oh, yes; I saw him passing here;
He crossed the moor like hunted deer;
Across the moor, and to the wood;
A moment, resting there, he stood;
Through these scrub bushes went his track;
He had a bundle on his back;
Weary he seemed as on he ran;
You quickly may o'ertake the man.

FARMER

Upon my oath, it must be he!
Good fellow, hold my horse for me;
Through this soft moss I needs must run,
To catch this crafty, thievish one;
Then will I beat him black and blue—
A beating that he long shall rue,
If he live long, which much I doubt.
Hold fast the horse till I come out.

SCHOLAR.

I wait a priest, and so shall stay
Until he soon may pass this way;
I gladly hold your horse's rein
If you will soon be back again.

FARMER

Earn thus a kreuzer. I am strong:
Catching this thief will not take long.

SCHOLAR

Go swiftly on, the moor across;
And have no fear about your horse.

[*The* FARMER *goes out.*]

Welcome is this fine horse to me:
Fair Fortune smiles most graciously,
And brings good luck still in my way;
This is, indeed, my lucky day!
The simple wife gave clothes and gold;
Her husband gives his horse—to hold;
Which I will do: I need not walk;
The man is kind, for all his talk:

He sees I am a lazy man,
And so he helps me all he can.
The bog is dangerous and deep,
And the safe pathway hard to keep;
Unless he choose his footsteps nice
He will be first in Paradise;
For should he here a misstep make
It were the last that he would take.
Now I will strap my pack across
The back of this convenient horse;
I care not here to make long stay;
But speedily will ride away.
This husband will have searched in vain,
And soon, perchance, be back again;
He might be in such surly mood,
My acts would be misunderstood;
So, laden with my good supplies,
I spur away to Paradise.
While he still seeks his horse to win,
I eat my roast fowl at an inn.

[*The* TRAVELLING STUDENT *rides off with his pack. The Wife comes in.*]

WIFE

It is a lonesome time to-day!
Oh wherefore doth my husband stay!
I fear that he has lost his way
In bogs, so my old husband may
Suffer in want from long delay—
I hear the evening pipe's loud blast;
And home the pigs are running fast.

[*The* WIFE *goes out, and the* FARMER *comes in and looks around.*]

FARMER

Odds-bobs! Where is my horse? Not here?
What a wise man am I! 'Tis clear:
The rascal that deceived my wife
Has now my horse. Upon my life,
He has our money, clothes and horse,
And I am left with triple loss!
To trust that lying rogue, am I
The biggest fool beneath the sky!
Here comes my wife, and looks for me;
I dare not tell this history:
I threatened her with beating sore;
Now I deserve that beating more;
She lost the clothes—small loss indeed—
But I have lost my good grey steed.
She to no stratagems was schooled,
While I suspected, yet was fooled.
When I have thought a fool was she,
I wise, it seems two fools are we.

[*The* WIFE *comes in.*]

WIFE

On foot? Then thy good horse is sold.
Found'st thou the man? and gav'st the gold?

FARMER

He said the way was very long,
And he was weary, and not strong:
So I gave up my horse that he
In Paradise might sooner be:
Thus will thy husband have our help
And my good horse to ride, himself.

Say, wife, have I in this done right ?
I sought to help thy man's sad plight.

WIFE

Indeed thou hast. My husband, dear,
I have not rightly known, I fear,
Thy faithful heart. I do not jest :
If thou wert dead, indeed my best
I then would do to send to thee
In Paradise, that thou might'st be
Contented there : I would resign
Goose, calf and pig, clothes, all our coin,
Whatever useful thing was mine,
That thou should'st know my faithful heart,
How with my treasures I would part,
That thus thou mightest have the best,
Happy in Paradise to rest.

FARMER

I trust that here I long may stay,
Nor need such help ; but, wife, I pray,
Of what has happened, nothing say.

WIFE

Through all the village it is known.

FARMER

Who hath the news so quickly sown ?

WIFE

When thou wert gone, most gratefully
I told our friends how good to me
Thou art, of Paradise, and how
My dear old husband is there now ;

How, by a messenger most wise,
I sent him things to Paradise.
It seemed that people laughed at me,
And took the matter merrily.

FARMER

The Devil take their pleasantry,
That dares to make a scoff of thee!—
Scoff of my wife! Dear God, I pray
For patience!—Hasten, wife, away,
And bring a bowl of milk to me.

WIFE

Yes, husband; follow presently.

[*The* WIFE *goes out.*]

FARMER

Why do I thus complain? My fate
Hath given me a fool for mate;
But yet a faithful fool. 'Tis true
That lack of sense is nothing new;
But she is silly past belief,
And, for this fault, is no relief:
I constantly must hold her rein,
And her simplicity restrain;
Must bear with her, for e'en to-day
My foot from stirrup slipped away:
Who doth the shuttlecock let fall
Should not another clumsy call.
Better it is I proved a fool,
So cannot make a cruel rule,
For, in her heart, she is so kind,
My own to softness is inclined.

Who falls a victim to deceit
Should not find fault when others meet
The like misfortune; but forgive,
That all in peacefulness may live:
Kind charity for faulty acts
Redeems our own, remarks Hans Sachs.

THE HORSE THIEF

[December 27, 1553]

THE PERSONS.

GANGEL DÖTSCH, STEFFEL LÖLL, LINDEL FRITZ } *Farmers.*
UL VON FRISING, *The Horse Thief.*

SCENE—FÜNSING

[*The Three* FARMERS *come in.*]

DÖTSCH

WE elders have been chosen—we,
As wiser than the rest—to be
Judges for the community,
How best to hang our thief, who lies
Waiting in jail. No one denies
He should be hung. He brought us loss,
And stole from me my good grey horse.

LÖLL

Why counsel long ? He is a thief ;
There is none questions that belief :
Hang him at once, nor feed him more ;
In jail he eats of food great store.

FRITZ

Odds-bobs ! friend Löll, thou tak'st the word
Out of my mouth ; delay's absurd.

He is not worth three kreuzers; why
Waste food on such as he? say I.

DÖTSCH

If you think so, what do you say
To Monday next for hanging day?

LÖLL

Oh, neighbours, think you of my rye;
Close to the gallows it doth lie;
If now we hang him all my grain
Will thus be spoiled; the thing is plain;
They will so crowd upon my field
To see the hanging, it will yield
No crop to me; for, trampled flat,
It so is ruined. Think of that!

FRITZ

Our neighbour, Steffel Löll, is wise;
I have a field that also lies
On the left side—it came to me
By an inheritance—so we
Will lose our crops; for, doubt it not,
They all will trample round the spot,
Excited, as they all will be,
To see the horse-thief on the tree.

DÖTSCH

Yes, neighbours; now we all must say
That not at once be hanging-day;
After the reaping time is past
The hanging-day will come at last.

LÖLL

That will be best ; I think we may
Decide on these three weeks' delay.

FRITZ

But think of this ! For three weeks more
We still must feed him from our store ;
These thieves are very hungry, so
What he will eat no man doth know !—
Odds-bobs ! my friends, his keeper says
He cost ten kreuzers in eight days.

DÖTSCH

Why should we fill his basket ? Why
Simply fat up a thief to die ?
Cut down his food till he be thin ;
To keep him fat is sure a sin ;
Besides it were a lighter thing
To give a thin thief his last swing.

LÖLL

Neighbours, attend ! It comes to me—
Here in my head—a remedy,
By which our thief no cost will be,
If we can do it skilfully :
Set the thief free ; but make him swear,
Within four weeks he will repair
Back to the jail on hanging-day ;
And do this thing without delay.
So will he find himself in food ;
While, unto us, is understood
We reap the grain the gallows round,
That all in readiness be found :

No grain to trample, fields all mown;
Thus will the hanging be well shown.

FRITZ

This is, for all, the wisest plan;
Our Steffel is a prudent man:
We save our crops; we save our food;
We win the horse-thief's gratitude,
For he may in the sunshine stay.
My Gangel Dötsch, what dost thou say?

DÖTSCH

First ask the thief if this will be
Agreeable to him; if he
Will take this oath. If he agree,
Then let him run. In meantime we
Can harvest all conveniently.
Löll, wilt thou go and bring the man,
That we may let him know our plan?
Look that he doth not steal away;
For stealing is to him but play.

[STEFFEL LÖLL *goes out.*]

FRITZ

Look now, my Gangel, good advice
Hath Steffel given; the man is wise.

DÖTSCH

From Steffel I looked not for it;
Nor thought the man had so much wit.

FRITZ

My Gangel Dötsch, this should'st thou know,
He hath more wit than he doth show;

Is crafty ; and the world hath seen ;
Wider abroad he oft hath been
Than any Fünsinger. 'Twas he
Advised the church should plastered be
With loam. If Munich were his town
He had won wealth and high renown,
A solid burgher ; and his wit
Had made him in the senate sit.

[STEFFEL LÖLL *brings in the thief fastened with a rope, by which he is led.*]

DÖTSCH

Now, Ul of Frising, listen well,
While I the village orders, tell ;
We have decided to delay
Thy hanging four weeks from to-day ;
In the meantime thou shalt go free,
And take what pleasure suiteth thee,
Where'er it be, but must not stay
Longer than these four weeks away,
And come back on thy hanging-day.

LÖLL

And thou must swear an oath, to be
Held fast to what we now agree.
While thou dost think of it aside,
Thy oath and answer we abide.

[*The three* FARMERS *go out.*]

UL VON FRISING

Now, by the saint of thieves, I swear
I never dreamed that anywhere
There were such fools ! But Fünsing sure
Is full of asses—asses pure !—

Asses whose folly never sleeps,
But still its candle lighted keeps!
Caught in the act, why should they stay
My hanging?—wherefore thus delay?
Twice have they sentenced me, and now
They set me free on my own vow—
An oath—what is it? made to break,
As mine will be for my neck's sake.
An old-time proverb says, "To swear
Is easier beyond compare
Than digging turnips." It will be
Hard finding oath too big for me.
If I come back at their set day,
Hang me for thief and fool they may.
I will this town's acquaintance drop
Rather than fill a raven's crop—
Pshaw! I will come on some dark night,
And when again there cometh light
These three wise men will miss some things
That, in the night, have taken wings.
So easy on these fools to play
A trick, one's wit is thrown away.

[*The three* FARMERS *come in.*]

DÖTSCH

Say, Ul of Frising; shall it be
That thou wilt swear, and then go free?

UL VON FRISING

Dear men of Fünsing, fortunate
Is your wise town in men so great
Of wisdom. I, submissive, bow
Before this sentence, and will now

Make my full oath to do your will,
And all your wise commands fulfil.
When you have reaped your crop of grain
I will be duly back again
So promptly there will no delay
By me postpone my hanging-day:
But now, indeed, I must confess,
That, if you send me moneyless
Into the world, I then must steal;
So to your justice I appeal:
If, for such crime, they hang me high,
My oath to you I must deny.
How then my conduct would you scan?
"Surely he is no honest man."
Or if, for weeks, about I go
Begging my bread, this thing would show
No credit to you: men would say,
"They cannot find, till hanging-day,
Food for their thieves." Fünsing would be
A name for scorn and raillery.

FRITZ

Neighbours, 'tis true. Can we afford
To have the country's scornful word?
So should we be for ever shamed;
And a mean man, Fünsinger named.
There is, indeed, a better plan:
Let us take care of this good man:
Let each of us a kreuzer give;
On thirty kreuzers he can live;
I will collect it, and will lend
The half a gulden to our friend:

There is the sum. Two fingers raise;
Swear thou wilt come in thirty days,
That we may hang thee from the tree,
Example to all thieves like thee.

[Ul von Frising *holds up two fingers, and swears.*]

Ul von Frising

So! I will do it. Oath and word
I freely give as you have heard;
And take my red cap; it is small,
But is my pledge, and is my all.
Whenever this red cap you see,
Proof of my sworn fidelity,
Know I will come, without a doubt,
Upon the day my time is out.
Yes; I, poor wretch, as best I may,
Will come upon my hanging-day.

Dötsch

And, Ul, consider well that we
Will have no foolish trick from thee:
If, after reaping, thou should'st stay—
Were it, indeed, for but one day—
Thy ears cropped to thy head will be
Before we hang thee on the tree,
In punishment for perjury:
All this we tell thee openly.

Ul von Frising

Ah, spare yourselves anxiety!
Think you my cap I now should leave
As pledge, if I would thus deceive

Your honest faith? Oh, trust in me!
I swear it by my honesty!

DÖTSCH

Go quickly, friend! We are agreed;
And all good luck attend thy need;
But come thou back with equal speed.

[UL VON FRISING *goes quickly off.*]

FRITZ

The cap is worth nine kreuzers, so
This thief most honest faith did show,
Leaving his cap. The pledge with me
Shall stay. I keep it carefully;
And if I should this red cap wear,
The thief, at least, will little care;
When he comes back, for it I'll trade
Unless too great a price is made.

DÖTSCH

We must, to all the village, tell
How we arranged this thing so well;
The people will be pleased to know
That the affair we managed so;
No wisdom surely could have won
Better result than ours has done.

[*The three* FARMERS *go off.*]

[UL VON FRISING *comes on wearing a blue coat.*]

UL VON FRISING

The Fünsingers had many a fear
That I should never re-appear;
Yet here I am for spoil and fun.
Their reaping yet is hardly done,

But I have so much honesty
I do not feel that I am free.
Last night I stole our Lindel's goat
And Steffel's beautiful new coat—
No one would doubt that it is mine,
The fit is so exact and fine—
I picked up sundry other things,
Each one of which, at Munich, brings
A price: so there I soon must go,
Its lucky market favours so.
The Fünsingers still have my cap—
Oh, I could steal it! but mayhap
My luck would turn; for I should feel it
Scarcely an honest act to steal it:
I pledged the thing; and I might make
A blunder, that red cap to take:
Perhaps I might no more be free,
But have the irons eating me—
After the reaping I may stay,
From Fünsing, many months away,
And let the farmers wait for me.
I still must pilfer—it may be
That there will come quite suddenly
At last a dark, unlucky day,
When I for many thefts must pay—
Pooh! Let me put such folly down!
Though I must die, I cannot drown!
I know that I am ravens' food,
And from all other deaths made good:
A proverb says, "The gallows-tree
From other deaths doth guarantee."

[UL VON FRISING *goes out, and* LINDEL FRITZ *and* GANGEL DÖTSCH *come in.*]

FRITZ

The reaping done, 'tis hanging-day,
And Ul, the thief, is still away;
If one day longer he remain
He gets not back his cap again;
Whate'er he say, his fault is plain.

DÖTSCH

Here cometh Steffel Löll this way;
He may, perhaps, have news to say;
He was in Munich yesterday;
Ask him what word he brings, I pray.
[STEFFEL LÖLL *comes in.*]
What news, my Löll? Come, pay it down
Didst see our horse-thief in the town?

LÖLL

Yes; late at evening he was there.

FRITZ

When to his hanging doth he fare?
On yesterday his time was out;
What is the lazy man about?

LÖLL

Lindel, he is a busy man;
One gets a word in as one can;
For to him many traders ran.

DÖTSCH

What had this horse-thief then to sell?

LÖLL

More—oh, much more—than I can tell!
Some odds and ends, house-furnishings,
This good blue coat and other things.
He had for sale an old gray goat;
I would have bought it, but this coat
Took all my coin. It seemed to me,
His goat was like one owned by thee,
Shaggy like thine, and with one horn;
No liker pair were ever born.

FRITZ

Odds-Bodkins! Then that goat was mine;
For mine is lost; and each like sign
Is proof to any honest sight.
Listen, good friends! All is not right!
This thief hath come to us by night.
My Steffel Löll, why didst thou fail
To have him put in city jail?

LÖLL

If they had hanged him, then, I pray,
Had we not lost our hanging-day?

FRITZ

I swear that thou didst share with him
The goat and coat! Look not so grim!
Thou hast no look of innocence,
To cover up thy vile offence.

LÖLL

Thou liest in thy throat, thou knave!
It was twelve kreuzers that I gave.

DÖTSCH

The coat is dirty, full of beer
And feathers. Why not sweep it clear?
[*The coat is swept.*]

LÖLL

The coat fits well; I have another
As like to this as any brother;
Now I shall dress so fine each day
That I the nobleman can play.
[*Still brushing the coat and examining it very closely.*]
Body and brains! How can it be!
He sold my own old coat to me!
It is, indeed, beyond belief,
Buying one's own coat from a thief!

DÖTSCH

My Steffel, how didst find this thing?

LÖLL

See! by this worn and tagless string.
How the thief mocked me! By a price
So low he made his art entice
Me into thoughtless, foolish trust,
Filling my eyes with blinding dust
So that I had no sense to know
It was my coat that he did show.
But on this thief a trick I played
That made me better of the trade.

DÖTSCH

Pray how could such a trick be made?

LÖLL

When none was looking then at me
I thrust a pair of gloves—you see—
In the coat pocket. Hurriedly
The people pressed around us, so
There was no one to see or know:
Thence I escaped with gloves of twice
The value of the coat's low price.

FRITZ

Here one thief from another steals.

LÖLL

Not steals! When one with rascal deals,
From any loss himself he shields.

FRITZ

I find no truer word than steals.

LÖLL

There was a pitchfork once made way
From my house into thine; one day
I found it there. "Steal and give back;"
My mouth did not the proverb lack;
And dost thou now forget the smack
I gave thee then, my Lindel Fritz?
But there are proverbs worse than this.

FRITZ

Why speak of such an ancient thing
That chanced a year ago? To bring
Such slander up is false and vile,
And doth so much thy tongue defile

That I will beat thy wicked face,
And drive such liar from the place.

LÖLL

Strike, fool! and find thy master then,
Thou pest of true and honest men!
[GANGEL DÖTSCH *goes between them.*]

DÖTSCH

Hey! would you fight, you foolish ones?
Batter your flesh? and break your bones?
What would you gain? the surgeon first,
And then the bailiff—which is worst?
Bite off your words, both one and other,
And cease at once this senseless pother.

FRITZ

That he should dare to call me thief!
It is a thing beyond belief!
Can any one believe his lie,
That he is honester than I?

DÖTSCH

I do believe that either one
Is good as other; and all done;
Fitting companions are you two:
What either doth, you both may do.

LÖLL

My Gangel, strong is thine own lot
In honesty! Hast thou forgot?——

DÖTSCH

Cry not dishonesty at me!
A foolish clamour that would be:
Thou think'st upon the iron chain
That from thy wagon had been ta'en;
Did I not pay thee for it, fool?
Shut up thy mouth, and let it cool!
When we have long been reconciled,
To raise the question now is wild;
Thou temptest me thy face to beat,
Make thee a calf that cannot bleat.

LÖLL

Strike, my dear Gangel! I fear not
Thy wrath, nor have that chain forgot.

FRITZ

Ho, for a fight!—The green is clear!
For blood and wounds let no one fear!
Ho! some shall skip the green plot o'er
As if they heard a lion roar!

[*The three* FARMERS *draw their swords, and drive each other around and off, fighting furiously.* UL VON FRISING *comes in.*]

Ul von Frising

Like a thieves' quarrel this appears:
They pulled each others' beards and ears;
They cut and hacked in angry fight;
And each now lies in bloody plight—
Lies while the grinning surgeon sews
The gaping wounds of many blows:
Our Lindel Fritz hath a great crack
Extending down one half his back;
Dötsch's great head is slashed and split;
A cap of plasters covers it;
And his jaws chatter so, his teeth
Like dice are rattling underneath;
And Löll is bleeding while they seek
To stop the veins in face and cheek;
His nose and teeth are chopped away;
He will not speak for many a day.
After the quarrel, on the ground
Once more my red cap I have found,
Lost in the battle, it would seem;
So I my pledge again redeem:
For I, in proper time, am here
To keep my oath, it would appear;
But for my deeds I need not fear:
I am as honest as the rest,
Who all are robbers self-confessed.
"As is the stable, so the cow;"
We prove the proverb truly now.
Therefore I risk these Fünsing men:
Where all are thieves, what reason then
For hanging any one for theft?
If this were done who would be left?

The thing is simple: let it pass,
And drink together, glass to glass,
In Fünsing village, where, indeed,
Of gallows-tree there is no need;
But, like with like, we bear life's cracks
Like honest men.

So says Han Sachs.

THE HOT IRON

[November 16, 1551]

THE PERSONS.

HUSBAND.
WIFE.
GODMOTHER.

WIFE

FOUR years ago at marriage vow
My husband was more dear than now.
How has the love that then I knew
Burned out?—The love, that once was true,
Quite gone!—It is a mystery.
My old godmother comes to me—
Yes, she is old; and hence should know
What changes through the heart may go;
So I will question her; and she
May set my bosom's trouble free.

[*The* GODMOTHER *comes in.*]

GODMOTHER

What trouble, child, oppresseth thee?

WIFE

My dear godmother, list to me:
I fear my husband is not true,
But that he seeks a love more new—
Seeks other women. Can this be?

GODMOTHER

Oh, child, you think too seriously!

WIFE

Then teach me how the truth to see!

GODMOTHER

I cannot tell, child; calm thy fears—
But hold! There is a test that clears
All doubt, and the plain truth appears—
What is this test? Yes; many years
Ago, when one accused another,
That they might settle all the pother,
He, so accused of an offence,
Could well approve his innocence
By moving, with bare hand, a bar
Of heated iron. If his star
Of purity preserved his hand
From any harm, then he would stand
Absolved of crime. If he were burned
Then was his fault at once thus learned.
Therefore propose this trial; he
Dare not refuse the proof to thee.

WIFE

Yes; this will do; for I can cry
And sob and sigh most artfully
When I am bent on anything:
To proof I will my husband bring.

GODMOTHER

Do this: talk not too much; for so
Thou may'st thy purpose overthrow.

To put a fool's-cap on his head
There needs but little to be said.
Here comes thy husband, I will go;
Now is the chance thy wit to show.

[*The* GODMOTHER *goes out, and the* HUSBAND *comes in. The* WIFE *seats herself resting her head upon her hand.*]

HUSBAND

Why sittest thou, my dear, so sad?

WIFE

Because my heart in grief is clad,
And none but thou canst cure my pain.
Dear husband, bid me smile again!
Take from my heart doubt's cruel chain!

HUSBAND

Whatever doubts oppress thy heart—
If I can cure—shall now depart.

WIFE

This is my trouble: much I fear
I am not unto thee so dear,
But that thy fancies rove away,
And oft to other women stray.

HUSBAND

Is this thy confidence in me?
What roving thought didst thou e'er see?

WIFE

Nay: naught I've seen; but this I know,
Thou art not kind as long ago

In our first year. I look in vain
For loving looks and words. 'Tis plain
Thou hast them not; and therefore I
Find that my love must surely die.
Canst thou this falseness now deny?

HUSBAND

Dear wife, have patience. Not alone
For love is life. Thy heart hath grown
Forgetful of the labours, cares,
Whose mention to thee my love spares;
These cloud my merriment and joy,
And often cause me much annoy.
Think not my faithless love would flit
From thee, my dear—think not of it.

WIFE

I cannot think that thou art true.
Thou must, to clear suspicion, do
Something to fire my heart anew.

HUSBAND [*raising two fingers.*]

I swear that I am faithful! Though
Women sometimes, as thou dost know,
Have lured me, never did I show
That I on wanton path would go.

WIFE

It will not do. My heart grows big—
To swear is easier than to dig
Up turnips.

HUSBAND

What, my dear, will prove
That thou alone hast all my love?

WIFE

The heated iron test will be
The only certain proof to me.

HUSBAND

Yes ; I am willing, wife, to show
My truth can bear the iron's glow.
Let thy godmother bring the bar,
And witness pure and faithful are
My marriage vows. Thy test I dare ;
And thou shalt soon my faith declare.

[*The* WIFE *goes out.*]

Unless my wife had fault, would she
In this distempered state now be ?
Suspicion is a fiend that lives
In guilty hearts. This thought now gives
Me serious doubts where ne'er before
The shadow of a doubt I bore.
She doubts me. Why ? Because her heart
Hath borne itself a double part.
I never doubted her. In sooth
I would have wagered on her truth.
Now not a groschen would I lay
On any word that she may say.
I will deceive her, and will try
If she will dare the truth deny.
As to the test and her demand,
An easy trick will save my hand :
I will in secret use a slip
Of wood to save me from the grip
Of the hot iron : in my sleeve
This hidden guard I now will leave ;

And so, by careful management,
Safely accomplish the event.
After this proof of honesty
My wife can have no doubt of me.

[*The* WIFE *and the* GODMOTHER *come in, the latter carrying the red hot iron.*]

GODMOTHER

I wish thee luck! The iron glows:
Now make the circle. This test shows
When, from the circle, clear and free,
Thou lift'st the iron carefully,
Proving thy faith and honesty.
If thou, unburned, canst do this thing,
It proves thy truth past questioning.

HUSBAND

See this: I thus the circle make;
And now the glowing iron take;
Here, from the circle, on this chair,
I move the heated iron where
It is so far without the line
It well hath proved its mystic sign.

[*The* HUSBAND *takes the iron in his hand, protected skilfully by the slip of wood, and carries it out of the circle.*]

Here is my hand: no mark to show
That it hath felt the burning glow,
See, wife, that thou henceforth may know
That I am innocent! Oh, see
The proof I ne'er was false to thee!

WIFE

Thy hand! thy hand! Show it to me!

HUSBAND

Look, wife, and own my constancy!
Look and have faith in chastity!

WIFE

Thy hand is smooth, unburned; I must
Give back the cow[1] and my full trust.

HUSBAND

If thou art satisfied, unsay
Thy foul suspicion—cast away
Such thoughts, and doubt not from this day.

WIFE

Yes: it is true; and thou art free
Of every doubt; thy faith to me
Is proved: Thou hast no falsity.

HUSBAND

Oh, this is well! My innocence
Is shown to be no vain pretence.
Now, wife, a proof must come from thee:
If thou art true we now will see;
If thou, unburned, canst carry fire
Thou art beyond all ill-desire.
Godmother, give thy help to show
How purity doth sweetly glow
In my good wife. The iron place
Where it will heat. No sign or trace

[1] Idiom for taking back an accusation.

Of broken vow must linger now,
To smear the truth upon the brow
Of my sweet wife. When glowing hot
My wife will take it from the spot,
And move it from the circle, so
Her perfect innocence will show.

GODMOTHER

Why should you question one so true?
To even doubt much harm may do.

HUSBAND

Godmother, she hath questioned me!

WIFE

Dear husband, from simplicity
Came all my words and doubts of thee.

HUSBAND

Godmother, heat the iron; I
Would fain simplicity now try.

[*The* GODMOTHER *takes out the iron.*]

WIFE

Dear husband, act no cruel part!
Thou know'st I love thee in my heart.

HUSBAND

Thy doubt assayed my fault to brand;
Thy truth gives safety to thy hand.

WIFE

Oh, husband, think thy wife is true!
Trust me; nor any hardness do!

Should such a virtuous one as I
Bear the hot iron? Fie! Oh, fie!

HUSBAND

If thou art blameless, what is fire?
It harms thee not. It is not dire
That thou, unburned, should prove thee true,
And thine own test go safely through.
Be silent then, nor beg of me
To shun this test of chastity.

[*The* GODMOTHER *brings in the hot iron, and places it in the circle on the chair.*]

GODMOTHER

God-daughter, by this certain test
Thy purity will be confessed.

HUSBAND

Yes, wife; the pure are safe from harm.

WIFE

Oh, husband, pity my alarm!—
I have offence—I love but thee;
But with the chaplain, I was free
In secret. Oh, forgive me, pray!
He hath been gone this many a day.

HUSBAND

The Devil take the chaplain!—well;
He was a priest, and threatened Hell.
I give you up the priest. Now take
The iron for thy honour's sake.

WIFE

There were two others—husband dear,
Oh, be thou kind!—The fire I fear—
Oh, still forgive! I am to blame,
But, husband, spare!

HUSBAND

Two more!—For shame,
Thou wanton! It is plain to see
What weakened so thy love for me
When thou could'st count thy lovers three.
O shame, that thou should'st seem to be
A creature of fair purity!

WIFE

Dear husband, I have saved by thrift
Four gulden. These are thine. Then lift
From me this trial—and forgive
Me four more men—all, as I live!

HUSBAND

Oh, shame! Oh, shame!—"four more," you say!
Shut up thy sack! No more, I pray!
Dost thou not blush that any ear,
E'en thy godmother's, this should hear?
That wife, behind her husband's back,
So much of modesty should lack?
That thus to sin thou should'st incline
Seems half to make the sinning mine.

WIFE

I ne'er will sin again, by Heaven!
Oh, husband, they were only seven!

HUSBAND

Be silent! Seven! How cursed my lot!
Take up the bar while it is hot—
Aye! take it up! Thy tender hand
Must bear its burn. 'Tis my command.
So shall I see—upon my life!
How purely virtuous is my wife:
Some fiend hath made thy lips deny
Thy truth. The test will prove the lie.

WIFE

Godmother, lift the bar for me.

GODMOTHER

That would not help; and I should be
Burned in my hand most certainly:
I have not lived in chastity.

HUSBAND

Oh, women! Oh, inconstancy!
Mock angels of such cunning guile
That men believe their falsest smile!
Wife, I command thee, take the fire,
And prove thyself in words a liar,
Or burn. Else will I end this strife
By putting out thy worthless life.

WIFE

Hot is the bar—it hisses so!—
But I must feel this worst of woe;
I must submit to do this thing
Howe'er I dread the iron's sting.

[*The* WIFE *takes up the hot iron; but drops it, with a loud scream.*]

Oh, woe! Oh, woe! My hand! my hand!
Burned to the bone with cruel brand!

HUSBAND

Thy deep-scorched hand doth save thee now
From my good cudgel; but I vow
To beat thy tender body black
If any duty thou dost lack.
Though love be not thy rule of life
Then fear shall make a faithful wife.

WIFE

To my strong brothers I'll complain.

GODMOTHER

God-daughter, silent still remain,
For thou hast tried a losing game;
Although I counselled thee the same
I knew not what behind thee lay,
The faults thou hast confessed to-day.
Take liquorice;[1] for thou hast lost;
And draw good strings,[1] to pay the cost,
Lest in the night St. Stockmann bring
Full punishment for thy transgressing.
By sweetness win your husband's smile:
Thus handsome wives their men beguile.

[*The* WIFE *goes out.*]

HUSBAND

My wife thought me a foolish sheep,
And posed as saint. But I must keep

[1] Idiomatic expressions.

My mastership. She thought to show
That she could domineer although
She had a muddy past. She dared
To put me to a test prepared
By her and her godmother. So
I win, and she must bide the blow.

GODMOTHER

Godson, on thee it rests to make
This quarrel good or evil take :
Forgive the past, and yours will be
For life domestic sovereignty.
Who is there that ne'er goes amiss ?
Come, let us pour the wine on this !

HUSBAND

Well ! I forgive. She broke the pot ;
I broke the pitcher—'tis the lot
Of human life—if I said not
Perhaps I something then forgot.
Yet thou must be security
For my wife's honest faith to me ;
And no more plots. If such there be,
Or any lapse of modesty,
My cudgel breaks the distaff. See ;
It is my sign of sovereignty !

GODMOTHER

Thanks, godson ; and good luck to thee !
I trust thy life will happy be.
Let thy forgiveness plainly show,
So happiness may sooner grow.

Begin with love thy life anew,
And love will make each promise true
Think never more of iron test;
In faithful love let hope now rest.

Hot iron much of kindness lacks;
Try not such test; so says Hans Sachs.