



Summer · Legends ·

• RUDOLPH · BAUMBACH ·

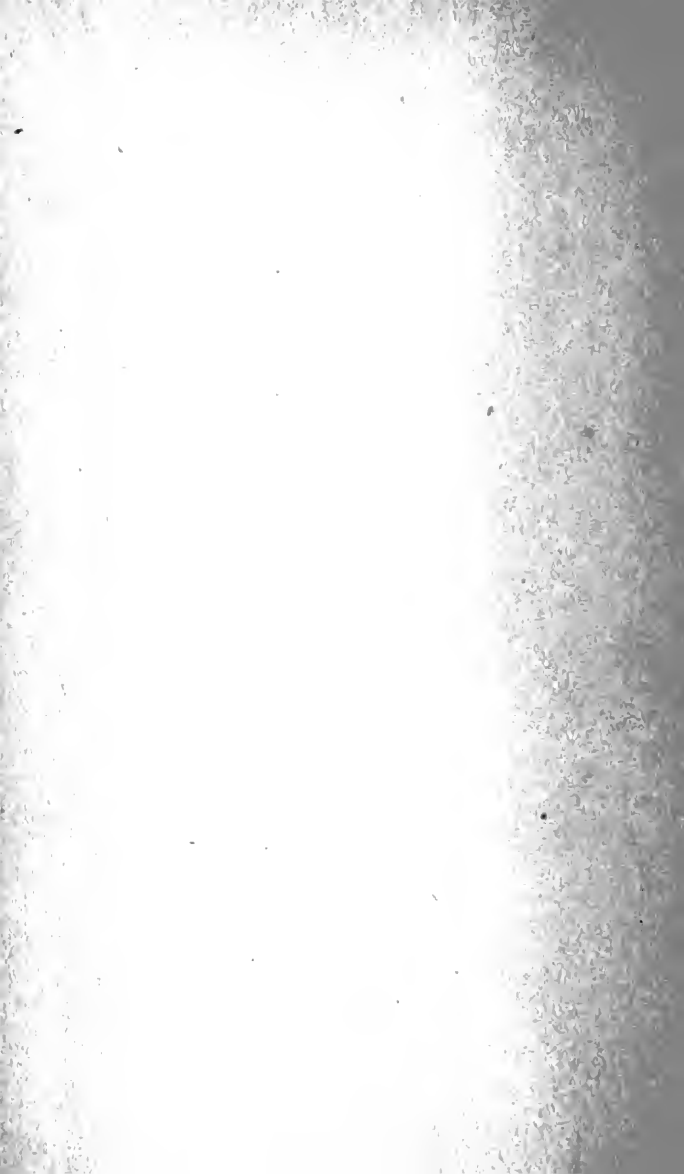


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SUMMER LEGENDS

BY

RUDOLPH BAUMBACH.

TRANSLATED BY

HELEN B. DOLE.



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THOMAS Y. CROWELL & CO.,

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TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE.



RUDOLPH BAUMBACH is a poet. He was born in Thuringia, and now lives in Leipsic, where he is a favorite both as a writer and in society. Most of his works have been written in verse, which is spontaneous, full of melody, and as witty as Heine, but perfectly free from bitterness. He draws his inspiration largely from the Alps. His "Zlatorog," an Alpine story, has reached the twenty-second edition, and the "Lieder eines fahrenden Gesellen" and "Frau Holde" are each in the thirteenth edition.

The present collection of short stories has been taken from two little volumes in prose, entitled, "Sommer-Märchen" and "Erzählungen und Märchen," which have been very popular in Germany. More than eleven editions of the first volume have been sold, and six of the second. They have also been published with handsome illustrations by Paul Mohn. The stories are remarkable for their grace and simplicity of style. They are full of originality and wit, with occasional touches of keen satire, showing knowledge of the world as well as a familiarity with every bird and flower

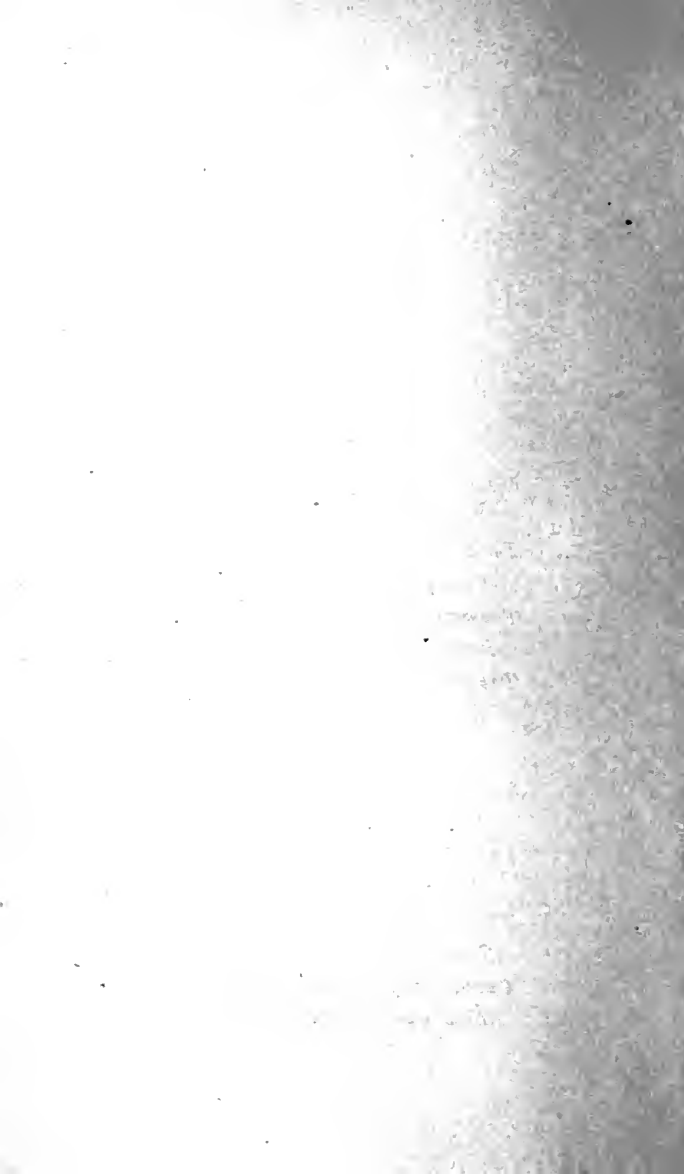
and creature in forest, field, and mountain. The stories are more for young people than children, yet the "Easter Rabbit" will be enjoyed by the little ones, while the fun in the "Ass's Spring" will appeal to children of a larger growth. They are not altogether fairy-tales, though all border on the marvellous, and sprites, elves, and other mysterious folk from Wonderland play a conspicuous part.

HELEN B. DOLE.

BOSTON, April 18, 1888.

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PROLOGUE.



*My gallant courser swift and good
Through story-land conveys me ;
The mystic lady of the wood
With runic staff delays me ;
The water-nissie sings her lays
Beside the fairy fountain ;
The golden-antlered white stag plays
In sunlight on the mountain.*

*Deep down in caverns I behold
Brown kobolds evil scheming ;
I see their hoards of hidden gold
Like coals of red fire gleaming.
The speech of birds and beasts I know,
The lore of trees and flowers ;
I use all magic herbs that grow —
Their good and evil powers.*

*To join his midnight gallop wild
The Huntsman oft invites me ;
Upon the moonlit meadows mild
The Elfin dance delights me ;
The gray-haired witch upon her fire
A cheering draught can brew me ;
The crested dragon calms his ire,
And fawning grovels to me.*

*My courser starts, and whinnies clear ;
He spurns the Earth's dominions ;
Upon his shoulders broad appear
Two spreading snow-white pinions.
Swift as the storm, away we fly
Through measureless expanses —
Ah no ! at home in bed I lie
And dream my pleasant fancies.*

RANUNCULUS, THE MEADOW SPRITE.



ONCE upon a time there was a young schoolmaster who, in spite of his youth, was so wise and learned that when the seven wise men of Greece, during a visit to the upper world, held a disputation with him, they stood like dunces before him.

This same schoolmaster started out into the fields, one spring morning, to hear the grass grow; for he knew all about that too. And as he wandered through the bright green meadows, and saw the variegated marvels of the air flying around the star-flowers, and heard the crickets in the grass, the birds in the branches, and the frogs in the meadow brook, singing their wedding songs, then he thought of his native village, which he had left years before, to go to college, and he thought, too, of the little black-eyed lassie who had given him a

gingerbread heart, as a farewell present, and shed bitter tears over it; and a strange feeling came over him.

On the following day the schoolmaster tied up his bundle, took his knotted staff in his hand, and started forth, with joy and happiness in his heart, out of the city, into the green world.

Three days after, he caught a glimpse, through the blossoming fruit-trees, of the blue slate-covered roof of his own village church tower, and the wind brought the mellow sound of bells to his ears.

“I wonder if she will know me,” he said to himself. “Hardly; and I, too, shall have difficulty to find, in the eighteen-year-old girl, the little Greta of former days. But her eyes, her big black eyes, they must betray her to me. And if I see her sitting by her door, on the stone bench, I will step up to her side, and—and the rest will come of itself.”

The schoolmaster threw his hat into the air, and shouted so loud that he was frightened at his own voice. He looked shyly about him to see if anybody had witnessed his unruliness; but, except a field mouse, which made a hasty retreat

into her hole, there was no living creature in sight.

With loud-beating heart, the learned man took his way into the village. The bells were no longer heard; but, instead, came the merry sounds of fiddles and flutes. A wedding procession was passing through the narrow village street.

The bridegroom, a splendid young peasant, looked happy and proud,—as though he would ask the dear Lord, “How much would you take for the world?” The bride, adorned with a glittering crown, cast her eyes modestly on the ground. Once only she raised her lids; and her eyes, her big black eyes, betrayed to the school-master who it was that was walking under the bridal wreath. And the poor man turned him about and went back, unrecognized, by the way he had come.

It was midday. Green-gold shone the fields; and wherever there was running water, there the sun scattered thousands and thousands of glistening sparkles. The creatures rejoiced in the sunlight; but to-day it was painful to the school-master, and he shaded his eyes with his hand. Thus he strode along.

A traveller joined him, who must have already gone a long distance; for he looked like a wandering cloud of dust.

“Good friend,” said the stranger to the schoolmaster, “the sunlight blinds your eyes, does it not?”

The schoolmaster assented.

“See!” continued the other, “there is no better help for it than a pair of gray spectacles such as I wear. Try them once!” And with these words he took the spectacles off his nose, and handed them to the schoolmaster.

The latter consented, and put on the dull-colored glasses. They really did his hot eyes good. The sun lost its bright glare; the meadow, with its red and yellow flowers, the trees and bushes, and the roof of heaven, — everything was gray. And so it seemed quite right to the schoolmaster.

“Are you willing to sell them?” he asked of the strange traveller.

“They are in good hands,” was the reply, “and I always carry several pairs of such spectacles with me. Keep them to remember me by, Herr Magister.”

“Ah, do you know me? And may I ask — ”

“Who I am?” interrupted the stranger, finishing out the question. “My name is Grumbler. Farewell!”

With these words he struck into a bypath, and soon was out of sight. The schoolmaster pressed the gray glasses firmly on his nose, and went his way.

Years had fled since this took place; the schoolmaster had become a crusty old bachelor, and had forgotten how to find pleasure in the world. He still went out into the fields; but the green of the trees and the marvellous coloring of the flowers no longer existed for him. He pulled up the plants by their roots, carried them home, and pressed and dried them; then he laid the flower-mummies on gray blotting-paper, wrote a Latin name beneath: and this was his only pleasure, if pleasure it could be called.

One day, during one of his expeditions, the schoolmaster came to an out-of-the-way valley; through it flowed a brook, which turned a mill; and as he was thirsty, he asked the old woman, who was sunning herself before the door, if she would give him a drink. The old woman said yes, invited the guest to sit down, and went

into the house. Soon after, a young girl brought some bread and milk, and placed them on a stone table before the guest. Then the schoolmaster wondered whether the maiden were ugly; but he could not quite make out through his gray spectacles; and he could not take off the spectacles, because he thought the sunlight would hurt his eyes. In silence he ate what was set before him; and as the miller's daughter would take no pay, he pressed her hand and went away. But she looked after the melancholy man till he disappeared behind the bushes.

The meadow valley in which the mill stood must have fostered many kinds of strange plants; for, three days after his first visit, the learned schoolmaster came again and had a talk at the mill. And he came more and more often, and was soon a welcome guest.

He brought sugar, coffee, snuff, and other judicious gifts, to the old grandmother, and entertained the miller with edifying conversation; but to his fair-haired little daughter he said never a word, but contented himself with looking at the beautiful girl, from time to time, through his gray spectacles. Then the miller would nudge the grandmother gently with his

elbow, and the old woman would nod her white head.

One day, when the schoolmaster had left the mill and was going along the edge of the meadow, he noticed a mole, caught in a snare, kicking and struggling to escape death on the gallows. The good-hearted man stepped up to him, set the prisoner free, and put him on the ground. Then mole and schoolmaster each went his way.

As the learned man was sitting in his study, on the evening of the same day, it happened that a bat came flying in at the open window. That was not at all strange; but that on the bat rode a little man, no bigger than your finger, and that this little man got down and made a low bow before the schoolmaster, — this, indeed, appeared very extraordinary.

“What do you want here?” he asked the little creature, not very graciously. “Go to some story-teller, and don’t disturb the work of sensible people!”

But the little man did not allow himself to be confused. He came nearer, sat down on the box of writing-sand, and said:—

“Do not send me away from you! I have

kind intentions towards you, for you helped me out of serious trouble to-day; I was the mole that you released from the snare."

"So! And who are you, in reality?" asked the scholar, inspecting the little fellow through his glasses. He had a dainty, trim figure; and if the spectacles had not been gray, the schoolmaster could have seen that the little man wore a green coat and a golden-yellow cap.

"I am the meadow sprite, Ranunculus," said the dwarf. "My servants care for the grass and the flowers; some wash them with dew, others comb them with sunbeams, and still others carry food to the roots. The last-named I wished to watch at their work this morning, and, that they might not recognize me, I took the form of a mole. By this means I fell into the snare from which your hand set me free. And now I am here to thank you, and to do you some service in return."

"What can you mean?" said the schoolmaster.

"You are a learned man," continued Ranunculus. "You are familiar with the flowers and plants in the meadow and on the mountain, in the woods and fields; but there is one flower you do not know."

“What is that?” asked the schoolmaster, excitedly.

“It is the flower called heart’s-joy.”

“No, I do not know it.”

“But I do,” said Ranunculus, “and I will tell you where to find it. If you follow along the mill brook,—which you are familiar with,—to its source, you will come to a rock. There you will find a cave, which the people call the goblin’s cavern, and, in front of the entrance, blooms the flower heart’s-joy, but only on Trinity Sunday, at the hour of sunrise; and whoever is on the spot then can pluck the blossom. Do you understand all that I have said?”

“Perfectly.”

“Then good luck to you!” said the little man; and he mounted his winged steed, and flew out at the open window.

The schoolmaster rubbed his forehead, in amazement, and shook his head. Then he buried himself in a folio volume bound in pig-skin.

A couple of days after this occurrence, at the hour of twilight, the miller’s pretty daughter sat before the meadow mill, and the grandmother by her side. The spinning-wheels

hummed; and the old woman was telling the story of Lady Perchta, who sends the swiftest spinners knots of flax which afterwards change to yellow gold, and about other marvels of the sort. She related, too, about the sleeping man who sits in the goblin's cave. Once in a hundred years he becomes visible; and if a maiden kisses him then three times, he is released, and as a reward, the maiden will be given a sweetheart. The old woman went on telling stories; and the pretty maiden listened, and spun the fairy tales further, like the threads of flax which she twisted in her white fingers. The stars rose in the sky; and as it was the time of year when the elder-tree was in bloom, sweet weariness came over the maiden's eyes. She sought her chamber, and went to rest.

In the night she dreamed that there came to her a little man wearing a green coat and a golden-yellow cap. And the little being looked very friendly, and said to the maiden:—

“Thou lucky child! For thee, and none other, the sweetheart in the goblin's cavern is destined. To-morrow is the day when the sleeping man becomes visible. At sunrise he will sit, slumbering, at the entrance of the

cave; and if thou art not afraid, and wilt kiss him heartily three times on the mouth, the spell will be broken, and the sweetheart won. But take great care, while working his release, not to speak a word, or even to utter a sound; for, otherwise, the sleeping man will sink three thousand fathoms deep into the earth, and will have to wait another hundred years for his ransom."

Thus spoke the sprite, and vanished. But the maiden awoke and rubbed her eyes. A sweet odor, as from new-mown hay, filled the chamber, and the gray morning light peeped in through the cracks of the shutters. Then the damsel, full of courage, arose from her couch, and dressed herself. Quietly she left the house, and, tucking up her petticoats, hastened through the dewy grass to the goblin's cavern.

In the boughs the wood birds were already stirring, and, still half-asleep, were beginning to tune up their songs. The white mist sank to the earth, and spread out in streaks over the meadow; and the tips of the fir-trees took on a golden tinge. There stood the miller's lovely daughter at the entrance of the cavern; and truly, just as the little drawf had predicted,

there sat the sleeping man on a moss-covered stone. The maiden almost uttered a loud cry; for the sleeping man looked so exactly like the schoolmaster, even to wearing a pair of gray glasses on his nose.

Fortunately the damsel bethought herself of the little man's warning; and silently, but with a loud-beating heart, she drew near the sleeper to perform the benignant task of setting him free — and it did not seem to her nearly as frightful as she had imagined beforehand.

Gently she bent over the slumberer, and kissed him on the mouth; the man stirred, as if he would awaken.

The maiden kissed him a second time; the man opened his weary eyelids, and looked at the damsel dreamily through his gray spectacles.

But she remained resolute, and pressed the third kiss on his lips.

Then the man, fully awake, jumped up from his seat in such haste that the glasses fell from his nose and broke into a thousand pieces on the stony ground. And he saw again, for the first time in many years, the verdure of spring gleaming in the sunlight, the bright flowers, the blue sky, and, in the midst of all this glory,

a maiden as beautiful as a May rose and slender as a lily. And he took her in his arms, and gave her the three kisses back again, and countless others followed these.

But on a bright yellow marigold sat the meadow sprite *Ranunculus*, kicking his little legs for joy. Then he jumped down, making the flower shake violently, and went about his momentous affairs. He had kept his word: the schoolmaster had found his heart's-joy, and the miller's pretty daughter her sweetheart.

THE LEGEND OF THE DAISY.



GOOD children, as you know, when they die, go to heaven and become angels. But if you have the least idea that there they do nothing the livelong day but fly about and play hide and seek behind the clouds, you are very much mistaken.

Angel children, like the boys and girls upon earth, are obliged to go to school, and on week-days they have to sit three hours in the morning and two in the afternoon in the angel school. There they write with golden pencils on silver slates, and instead of A-B-C-books they have books of fairy tales with colored pictures. They do not study geography, for why should they in heaven learn about the earth? and they know nothing about the multiplication table in eternity. The teacher of the angel school is Dr. Faust. He was a professor on earth; and on account of a certain story, which cannot be repeated here,

he has to keep school three thousand years longer in heaven before the long vacation begins for him. The little angels have Wednesday and Saturday afternoons for a half-holiday; then Dr. Faust takes them to play on the Milky Way. But Sundays they are allowed to play in the great meadow in front of the Heavenly Gate, and they look forward to this all through the week. The meadow is not green, but blue, and there grow thousands and thousands of silver and golden flowers. They shine in the night, and we people on earth call them stars. When the angels gambol before the Heavenly Gate, Dr. Faust is not with them, for he has so much trouble during the week that he must rest on Sunday. Then the holy Peter, who guards the Gate of Heaven, takes the oversight of them. He sees that they are very orderly in their play, and that none of them runs or flies away; but if it happen that one gets too far from the gate, then he whistles with his golden key: that means "Come back!"

Once, it was so very hot in heaven that Saint Peter fell asleep. As soon as the angels noticed it, they swarmed out hither and thither and were scattered over the whole meadow. The most enterprising started on a voyage of discovery, and

finally came to the place where the world is shut off by a high fence. At first they sought for a crack somewhere to peep through; but when they found there was not a chink, they climbed and flew up on the fence and looked over.

Over there on the other side was Hades, and before the gate of Hades was just such another throng of little imps roving about. They were black as coals, and had horns on their heads and long tails behind. One of them by accident looked up and saw the angels, and immediately besought them eagerly to let them into heaven for a little while:— they would be very proper and well-behaved.

This touched the angels; and as the little black fellows pleased them, they decided that they might grant the poor imps this innocent pleasure. One of them knew where Jacob's ladder was kept. They dragged it out of the lumber-room (Saint Peter was fortunately still asleep), lifted it over the fence, and let it down into Hades. The long-tailed imps climbed up the rounds like monkeys, the angels gave them their hands, and so the little scapegraces came into the heavenly meadow.

At first they behaved themselves very well. They went about properly, carrying their tails

like trains in their arms, just as Satan's grandmother, who lays great stress upon good manners, had taught them. But it did not last long; they became lawless, turned summersaults and hand-springs, and screamed like veritable devil-urchins. They teased the beautiful moon, who was looking peacefully out of one of the heavenly windows; they ran out their tongues and made long noses at her, and finally they began to pull up the flowers growing in the meadow and to throw them down on the earth.

Now the angels were sorry and repented bitterly of having let unclean guests into heaven. They besought and threatened; but the imps would not stop, and grew wilder and wilder.

Then the angels, in their anxiety, wakened Saint Peter, and confessed penitently what they had done. He threw his hands together over his head, when he became aware of the mischief that was going on. "March in!" he thundered; and the little ones stole back with drooping wings through the gate into heaven. Then Saint Peter called a couple of strong angels to him. They caught the little imps up together and carried them back where they belonged.

The little angels did not escape punishment.

For three Sundays, one after another, they could not go to the Heavenly Gate; and when they went out to walk, they had to take off their wings and lay aside their halos, and it is a great disgrace for an angel to have to go without wings and halo.

But some good came of the affair, after all. The flowers which the imps tore up and threw down on the earth took root and multiplied year after year. To be sure, the star-flowers lost much of their heavenly beauty, but they are still lovely to see, with their golden-yellow disks and crown of silver-white rays. And because they are of heavenly origin they possess a wonderful virtue. If a maid with doubt in her heart pulls off the white petals of the starry blossom one by one, and at the same time repeats a certain saying, she will know very truly by the last leaflet what she longs to find out.

THE CLOVER LEAF.



THE town was as silent as the grave, for all who were not compelled by sickness or infirmity to stay at home had gone out to the park, where the shooting-club were trying to shoot down, piece by piece, from the pole the two-headed eagle, the emblem of the holy Roman Empire. In the cottages, decked with wreaths of evergreen and trimmed with bright-colored banners, sat the townspeople drinking beer and foaming ale. Red-cheeked maidens with white aprons and bare arms stood behind the sausage ovens, fanning away the smoke rising from the coals. All kinds of itinerant people dressed in gay-colored tatters were practising their arts here, — knife-throwers, fire-eaters, and acrobats with hoarse voices, vaunting their skill, and a bear was performing his clumsy dance to the sound of a Polish bagpipe.

From the club-house, out of whose gable windows fluttered the banners which the Emperor Henry

had presented to the club, sounded the ceaseless cracking of the heavy arquebuses, and the eagle on the pole had already lost his sceptre and imperial ball, as well as a claw and a wing. The men who on week-days wielded hammer and plane, axe and awl, managed the firearms as skilfully as the tools of their handicraft, and looked very magnificent in their shooting-jackets. But while shooting they did not forget to drink, and the great bumper, which was decorated with wild beasts in embossed work, circulated freely.

Among the women who were present at the clubhouse watching the skill of the men, was a slender young maiden not less conspicuous for her beauty than for her costume. She was dressed in the usual style of the country people; but her dark gown was of fine Brabant cloth, the buttons on her waist were of solid silver, and her black silk cap, from beneath which hung down her long yellow braids, had a gold ornament, which would have been cheap at two crowns. The city damsels noticed with displeasure how the young fellows assiduously crowded about the table where the maiden sat, and turned up their little noses at the country mouse and the want of taste in the young men. However, it contributed somewhat to their

peace of mind that all the endeavors of the city young men to get next the maiden were in vain. She was sitting between the king's forester, a man of sunburnt face and iron-gray beard, and a wild-looking huntsman's lad. The neighboring seats were also occupied, and, indeed, with none but huntsmen, so the beautiful girl might be considered well protected. The old man next her was her father, but the young hunter on the other side of her was her father's assistant. He had made the best shots of the day, and the city fellows envied him no less his good luck in the match than his seat next the beautiful Margaret. But she did not seem to be greatly edified by the nearness of the young fellow; she answered his questions in monosyllables only, and when he attempted to sit nearer, she gathered the folds of her dress together as though she were afraid of being touched by the wild youth.

Now the voice of the herald sounded through the enclosure: "Forester Henner, make ready!" The maiden's father rose from his seat, to take his turn in shooting at the bird, and the young hunter followed at the old man's heels.

Already there was nothing left of the noble eagle but his tail. But whoever should shoot this

down from the pole would be king of the tournament.

The forester took aim, and shot. The people saw how the tail trembled and bent forward, but it did not fall to the ground. The cry of joy which some had already raised, ceased suddenly, and the forester planted his gunstock angrily on the ground.

Now came Witsch's turn, for such was the young hunter's name. He raised his gun and moved his lips in a whisper. Then happened something very extraordinary. The eagle's tail, as though it afterwards thought better of it, detached itself from the pole and fell to the ground, like an over-ripe apple from a tree. The hunter's gun went off too late; the bullet whistled through empty air.

Malicious laughter arose, and everybody was pleased at the young fellow's bad luck, for the sunburned Witsch was one whom nobody had confidence in nor wished well. But he did not seem to take the accident much to heart; indeed, his voice was the first to salute old Henner as king of the tournament. The forester's face beamed with joy, as the chain with the medal was hung around his neck, and he was proclaimed king. He bowed his thanks on all sides like a veritable king, and then they took him into their

midst and showed him to the crowd. The drummers and buglers marched ahead, and then came the color-bearer, who, according to an ancient custom, went dancing along with wonderful agility. These were followed by the king of the festival, accompanied by the heralds; behind him marched the prize-winners, and foremost among them was Witsch; then the scorers, with the pieces of the shattered bird; and last of all the other members of the club. The procession moved in a circle around the park, and then turned back into the club-house, where the king's supper was to end the festival.

As soon as they reached there, the king of the tournament went up to his assistant, seized him by the hand, and said distinctly and loud enough to be heard by everybody: "Witsch, I am both glad and sorry for what has happened. This honor has escaped you, but you are still the better marksman of us two. Yes, dear friends," and he turned to the others, "there is not one among you who can outdo him."

There was a murmur of dissatisfaction in the circle of the marksmen. Then the brown country youth cast his eyes over the assembled crowd and screwed up his mouth. He looked up where, high

in the air, the chimney swallows were darting hither and thither.

“Who among you,” he asked, “will venture to bring down two swallows with one bullet?”

The huntsmen were silent.

But Witsch raised his gun, took aim for a moment, fired, and two mangled swallows fell to the ground.

“Did you see that?” called out the old Henner. “No, nobody can equal that.”

The men were silent, and many looked askance at the uncanny huntsman, who stood there, as though the shot were an every-day occurrence. But the forester took him by the arm, led him to the table, and bade him sit by his daughter.

Those who had not the privilege to drink at the club table did so in a cottage in the park; and at the little tables, highly decorated with wet circles, the master-shot of the huntsman Witsch was discussed on all sides.

“Did you hear what he whispered before he shot at the tail on the pole?” asked the herald, who was resting from his work behind the tankard.

“‘Skill brings not
The lucky shot.’

That is how the saying ran. I stood near by. I

heard it. That is a benediction he didn't learn in church. It would have been an easy thing for him to shoot down the bird himself and become king of the festival, but the sly fox lets the old man have the honor and wins the daughter."

"And what do you think of the shot at the swallows?" one of the scorers asked the herald.

The old man shook his gray head. He had been a soldier, and knew a thing or two about such matters. He began to tell about charmed bullets, enchantments, and the fernseed which makes things invisible. He also told dreadful stories of the Wild Huntsman, who rides through the clouds at night, and all kinds of ghost stories, so that his listeners became more and more excited.

A tempest was gathering over the head of the young hunter Witsch. The sorcerer, the magic shooter, ought to be tried for his life, thought a troubled master-tailor. But the others were more inclined to the opinion of a boisterous journeyman-smith, who proposed to brand Witsch on the back, so that he might remember the tournament all the rest of his life.

Night was falling; the club-house became empty. But the old Henner still sat drinking with his comrades, and paid no attention to his daughter, who repeatedly pulled at his jacket to remind him that it

was time to go. One can more easily entice a fox from his hole than a forester from his beer.

Hunting and shooting adventures were here, too, the subjects of conversation, and the most incredible stories were served up in the most classic huntsman's slang. But not the least wonderful was the little anecdote of the three marksmen and the clover leaf. The story ran thus:—

Three wandering hunters once stopped at a forest tavern and disposed themselves comfortably. As soon as they had partaken abundantly of food and drink, they called the host to them and asked him if he would like to see something, the like of which nobody had ever seen before. This gratified the host, and he offered them free drinks. Then one of them picked a clover leaf, the second brought a ladder and fastened the clover leaf to the gable of the house, while the third measured off a hundred paces and called his companions to follow. Then the first one began and shot off the first leaf, the second hit the second, and the third the third. The host was amazed, and gave each of the fellows another drink and was glad when they went away.

“If that is true,” said old Henner, “the fellows shot with charmed bullets.”

And so thought the others.

The sunburned Witsch, however, only laughed and said it was child's play; he would agree to do the same thing.

"But if somebody else should load the gun?" asked one of the men, distrustfully.

"Whoever will may load the gun," boldly replied Witsch; "but he must be honest about it."

"If you are successful," exclaimed the old Henner, half intoxicated, "then, young man, I will give you whatever you may ask of me, as a prize."

"Father!" admonished the maiden, in dismay.

"Whatever you may ask of me," repeated the forester.

"Well, then," said Witsch slowly, "I will shoot the little leaves of a clover from the stem, a hundred paces off, with three bullets and three shots, and you promise to give me as a prize whatever I may ask of you. Is it a bargain?"

"Don't do it, father! don't do it!" cried the maiden, in genuine terror.

"Thou little fool!" said the father, laughing; and the woodsmen joined in the laughter. No one had the least doubt what the hunter would demand as his reward, and they took poor Margaret's anguish for a maiden's modesty.

“It is a bargain!” cried the forester, reaching out his hand, “my word —”

“Wait!” interrupted an old huntsman. “Supposing the little affair is not successful, what shall the shooter pay as a forfeit?”

“Whatever you say,” answered Witsch.

Margaret had risen from her seat; she was as pale as death.

“Then he shall go,” she said, “as far as his feet can carry him, and never come into my sight again.”

Witsch bit his lips.

“All right, miss,” said he, gritting his teeth; “so shall it be. Your hand, forester! I give you my word of honor.”

The agreement was sealed.

While the old man was reprimanding his daughter in a trembling voice, the sunburned Witsch took a hasty departure and went on his way. Outside the club-house a crowd of sturdy, boisterous fellows were hiding, but the one for whom they lay in wait escaped them. He probably carried fernseed with him.

* * *

In a clearing of the wood at the foot of the Thorstein mountain lay the keeper's lodge, where

old Henner dwelt. Sad at heart, he sat before the door on the stone seat, and the spotted blood-hound who was lying down not far away looked up from time to time at his master. He would have gladly expressed his sympathy by a dumb caress, but he thought it wiser not to come too near the ill-humored man. The old man was displeased with himself, but still he would not admit it. He would have given his little finger if he could have taken back the agreement he had made with his assistant, for it was clear to him now that his child had an unconquerable aversion to Witsch, and although he tried to console himself with the thought that dislike is often changed to affection in the marriage state, still, in the bottom of his heart he wished that Witsch might not succeed in the clover trial.

On Midsummer day, which, according to an old custom, is kept as a holiday by the huntsmen, the forester's assistant was to prove his skill, and Midsummer day was not far distant. The poor little Margaret went about pale as the wood-nymph who sometimes meets the shepherds and charcoal-burners on moonlight nights, and the father hardly had the heart to look into her eyes, red with weeping.

Now Margaret had a goat named Whitecoat, and in all the mountains round there was no goat that could equal her in intelligence. Whitecoat saw very clearly that her mistress was troubled in heart, and when she was led to the meadow, she no longer leaped gayly about Margaret as was her wont, but went sadly along behind her with drooping ears.

Midsummer eve had come. The keeper's lodge was trimmed with wreaths of evergreen and garlands of leaves for the reception of the guests; but the inmates went about as though there had been a death in the house.

Margaret had milked her goat, and now was sitting on the milking-stool, with her hands folded in her lap, and weeping bitterly.

"Oh, Whitecoat," she said sorrowfully, "why should I be so wretched?"

It seemed as though the goat had only been waiting for her to speak to her, for to the maiden's astonishment she opened her rosy mouth and said:—

• "Thou speakest at a propitious hour. In the sacred Midsummer night, when everything is set free and transformed, we animals have the power of speech, and I may answer thee. Tell me what

troubles thee, and perhaps I can help thee: I am no ordinary goat."

"What are you, then?" asked the damsel.

"Are you perhaps an enchanted princess?"

"No," answered Whitecoat; "I am something better than that. I am descended in a direct line from one of the goats who in ancient times used to draw the carriage of the old man who sleeps yonder in the Thornstein. But thou knowest nothing about that. However, believe me, I am more than other, ordinary goats, and I am willing to help thee, if it is in my power."

"Oh, good Whitecoat, if you only could!"

And so Margaret related her trouble.

The goat listened attentively. When the maiden had finished, she said:—

"Thou must never belong to the sunburnt Witsch. He is in league with the devil, and I know why. To-morrow it will be three years since I watched him in the forest. It was about the hour of noon, over on yonder meadow. There he stood and spread out a white cloth before him, and just as the sun's disk reached the zenith, he shot at it and three drops of blood fell on the cloth. He took it up and hid it in his bosom. Since that time he has never missed a shot, and

to-morrow he will hit the little clover leaves, too, even if he stand a hundred miles away from the mark."

"You see, it is impossible to help me," said Margaret, with a groan.

"Perhaps not," returned Whitecoat. "It would not be the first time that sorcery has come to nought. Lead me to-morrow before sunrise to the meadow, and perhaps I may find a way to help you."

"Where is the girl hiding?" at this moment called out the scolding voice of old Henner, putting his head through the window of the stable. "Gone to sleep while milking! — Come out, Margaret, and get my supper ready."

The maiden jumped up from the milking-stool, where she had fallen asleep, stroked good Whitecoat's head, and went to her father.

The dream — for such it must have been — kept going round and round in the maiden's head. Before daybreak she led the goat to the meadow, and when she brought her back later to the lodge, Whitecoat sprang gayly along like a young kid, and Margaret looked peaceful, or rather almost happy, so that her father shook his gray head in surprise.

The invited guests came, and among them was the forester's assistant Witsch. He looked about insolently and seemed sure of his success. Margaret welcomed him just the same as she did the other guests, but she avoided him as much as possible.

When the guests were all present, old Henner stepped into their circle and renewed the promise which he had given to his assistant at the tournament, and the latter announced that he was ready at a moment's notice to prove his skill.

The forester looked anxiously at his daughter and said:—

“Get a clover leaf at once, and fasten it with wax to the barn door.”

A clover leaf was already at hand, and Margaret fastened it to the door with trembling fingers.

The young hunter measured his distance. A hundred paces had been stipulated, but the arrogant fellow doubled the number of his own free will. The clover leaf could hardly be seen from this great distance. One of the huntsmen loaded the gun before the eyes of the others and handed it to the marksman. He raised the gun and fired, apparently without taking aim; he let the other two shots follow just as quickly.

“Now go and see!” he cried, sure of his success, and looked with wild joy towards the beautiful Margaret, who stood in the distance, with quick-beating heart.

The witnesses hastened to the barn door, while Witsch went towards the maiden.

Then they called out to him:—

“Witsch, you have lost; one little leaf still remains on the stem.”

“Impossible!” cried the huntsman, rushing towards the door. But it was no illusion. The three bullets had pierced the wood one after another, but on the stem of the clover still hung one uninjured leaf.

The huntsman’s black eyes shot fire. Then he raised his fist towards heaven and uttered such a horrible curse that it made the cold shivers run down the men’s backs, and then without a word he strode off into the wild forest.

But the beautiful Margaret had hastened to her goat, and laughing and weeping embraced the neck of her rescuer.

The wise Whitecoat had led the maiden that morning to a place where she found a four-leaved clover, and no magic could make a marksman hit four leaflets with three shots.

The uncanny Witsch never let himself be seen again in the neighborhood; it was as if the earth had swallowed him up. Afterward, the forest people say they have seen him in the company of the wild huntsman, but the matter remains quite uncertain.

The marks of the three bullets can still be seen in the barn door, and a descendant of the wise goat Whitecoat was shown to me when I heard the wonderful tale related on the spot, and so the story must indeed be true.

THE ADDER-QUEEN.

THERE was once a young shepherd who possessed two things besides the homely clothes which he wore on his back,—his fife, and his Mechthild, a plump, brown little maid with lips as red as cherries. The fife he had carved out himself; the maid he had found in the forest, where her father burned charcoal. They were both agreed that some time they would become man and wife. The old charcoal-burner had nothing against it either, and they might have been married right away if they had had anything besides their love; but love alone, be it ever so warm, will not cook the supper nor heat the children's broth. "So, let us wait," thought they, and hoped for better times. One day the beautiful Mechthild was sitting not far from the charcoal kiln, where her father was busy stirring the fire, and near her stood her lover, while the sheep were wandering about in the wood, guarded

by the dog. Over the maiden's head an old mountain-ash spread its boughs, from which hung bunches of scarlet berries. She had plucked a number of them, and was now engaged in stringing the single berries on a long thread. This made a splendid coral necklace. Wendelin, as the young shepherd was called, watched the maid as she moved her little fingers busily, and then he looked on her rosy cheeks, her smooth brow and all her charms one after another, and thought to himself, "How lovely she is!"

Now the string of jewels was finished. Mechthild twined it around the tightly twisted braids of her dark-brown hair, and smiled at her lover like a happy child. But he looked suddenly sorrowful. "Ah, Mechthild," he sighed, "why am I so poor? Why can I not place a gold ring on thy finger or put a garnet necklace around thy neck?"

"It is no worse now than it has been," said the maid, consolingly. "But are the red berries not beautiful?"

The shepherd did not seem to have heard her words. He was looking at the smoke which arose from the charcoal kiln and floated away in blue clouds over the tops of the fir-trees. "Why will

good luck never visit me?" said he sadly. "There are so many treasures lying concealed and bewitched in the mountains; but fortune only laughs at stupid people; and when they are about to seize the gold exultingly, it sinks miles deep into the earth. I have been into the forest at every hour of the night, but no blue flames light up for me, no pale lady beckons to me, and no dwarf leads me to the treasure in the hollow stone."

"Wendelin," said the maiden, earnestly, "don't go about digging and searching for magic treasures! No good will come of it." And she continued playfully, "You can more easily win great riches through the golden-horned stag, on which Lady Holle rides through the forest. Every year the magic deer sheds his antlers. Seek for them, my Wendelin! Those of this year must still be lying somewhere in the wood."

The charcoal-burner had come along and heard the last words. "Oho," he said, "so you would like to find the golden antlers? You ask for a great deal. Wouldn't a handful of golden flaxseed husks do as well? Or how would you like the little crown belonging to the Adder-Queen, who lives under the red stone by the water? If there is anything I wish for, it is the fernseed,

which makes one invisible. Oh, what fun I would have! What a face the big landlord of the *Bear* would make up, if every evening I could make his best beer-barrel lighter and fish the biggest sausage out of the kettle without his seeing me!"

They went on talking in the same strain. Much was said about the magic pervading the forest, and the shepherd became more and more thoughtful. He usually played a tune on his fife to his sweetheart before he left her; but to-day he never gave it a thought when the time came for his departure. With head bent down he went after the flock, which the dog kept together by his barking.

The sun had almost finished his course, and a ruddy glow lay on the mountains when the shepherd came out of the woods with the sheep. Before him lay a green field, through the midst of which ran a broad, shallow brook, and on the further side of the water, like a gigantic gravestone, stood a single rock of a reddish color. Bramble-bushes and golden-yellow broom grew luxuriantly about it, and to the crevices clung moss and wild thyme. Here, then, was where the Adder-Princess was said to dwell.

After the sheep had satisfied their thirst, the shepherd drove them through the brook, for the town where he and the flock belonged lay on the other side of the mountain. He intended to pass by the red stone as usual, but he stood chained to the spot, for it seemed to him as if something stirred in the bushes.

“If it should be the Adder-Queen!” thought he; and as he had once heard that snakes loved to hear violin and flute playing, he drew his fife out of his shepherd’s pouch, and began to play a gentle melody.

But lo and behold! There, out of the broom, arose the head of a great white snake, forking her tongue and wearing a shining crown.

The youth was so frightened that he stopped playing his fife, and in a twinkling the Adder had vanished.

What the charcoal-burner had said was true then. The shepherd timidly retreated, and drove the flock in a wide circuit around the stone to the town.

The Adder-Queen, or, rather, her golden crown, lay on his mind day and night. But how should he contrive to get possession of the ornament? The old village blacksmith was a wise man, and

knew a great deal besides how to eat his bread; perhaps something might be learned about it from him. So he betook himself one evening to the blacksmith's, after the master and his apprentices had left off working; for a pretence, asked some advice in regard to a sick sheep, and after beating about the bush for some time, finally brought the conversation round to the Adder-Queen. He had come to the right person. The old blacksmith knew quite enough about the ways to get possession of the little crown, and was not at all loth to show his knowledge.

“Whoever would rob the Adder-Queen of her crown,” he explained, “has nothing more to do than to spread a white cloth on the ground before the hole where she lives. Immediately the snake will come out, lay the jewel on the cloth, and disappear again. Now is the time to seize it quickly, and with all possible speed to strive to reach water. For as soon as the Adder-Queen notices that she has been robbed, she will start after the fugitive, hissing frightfully; and if he cannot get across water, he is a dead man. But if he is fortunate enough to reach the farther shore, the serpent can do him no harm, and the crown is his.”

This was the blacksmith's story, and the shepherd drank in every word.

Some days later the beautiful daughter of the charcoal-burner was sitting in front of their cottage. All of a sudden her lover came running with all his might, threw a little sparkling coronet into her lap, and dropped lifeless on the ground.

Mechthild gave a scream. Her father came to her, and a glance at the jewel told him what had happened. "He has stolen the little crown from the Adder-Queen," said he. Then he lifted the swooning youth, bore him into the hut, and tried to bring him back to consciousness.

His efforts were successful, but the whole night long he lay tossing in delirium on the couch of leaves: not till morning did rest come to him.

In the course of the day he recovered entirely and was able to talk. Anxiety and care retreated from the charcoal-burner's cottage, and joy entered in. There lay the hard-won serpent's jewel before the lovers, who sat together hand in hand, making plans for the future. Of course they could not keep the little crown; it must go to the goldsmith's in the town: but in its place the bridal wreath would soon adorn the beautiful •

Mechthild's head; and after the wedding festivities were over, Wendelin would take his young wife to a pleasant little house, and they would kindle a fire on their own hearth. Oh, blissful time! Oh, blissful time!

On the following morning Wendelin returned to the village. He wisely avoided the red stone.

The Adder-Queen's crown had twelve points, each tipped with a blood-red stone. As soon as her lover was gone, Mechthild took it out of the chest, where she had hidden it away, and placed it on her head. It was indeed a very different ornament from the red berries of the mountain-ash. If she only could see how becoming the jewels were; but there was no looking-glass in the charcoal-burner's cottage. Whenever Mechthild wished to look at her nut-brown face, she ran to the well-spring, which bubbled up out of the mould of the forest, not far from the charcoal-kiln; and hither she turned her footsteps now. She bent over the clear water, and was charmed with her sparkling ornament. "You like me, don't you?" she said to a fat frog sitting on the edge of the spring. And the frog said, "Gloog!" jumped into the water, and dived under to tell the lady-frog at the bottom what

a wonderful sight he had beheld. A gray-green lizard rustled through the leaves; she raised her head and looked curiously at the bejewelled maid. Then she slipped away into her underground chamber, and told her sisters about the beautiful damsel with the crown in her hair. And the blue titmice came fluttering inquisitively by, and the golden-crested wrens bristled their tufts with envy, when they saw the glistening jewels on the maiden's head. The squirrel peeped out curiously from behind the trunk of a pine-tree, and a weasel frisked about over the wood-plants to take a look at the crowned maiden.

Tramp, tramp, now sounded in her ears; perhaps it was a red deer, attracted by the glitter of her crown. But no; stags and does do not tread the earth with hoofs that are shod: it is the sound of horses. Bright dresses could be seen between the branches of the trees, and the merry sound of people's voices came through the air. She sprang away from the brim of the well, and was about to hasten to the house, but the riders had already drawn up in front of the charcoal-burner's cottage. There were gentlemen in rich hunting-costume and ladies in

long, flowing riding-dresses, slender young falconers, and sunburned huntsmen with long beards.

The maiden dropped a low courtesy. The stately gentleman on the roan horse was the count who owned the land, and the beautiful lady by his side was his young wife.

Mechthild replied respectfully to the question concerning the nearest way to the meadow, through which the water flowed. Then the countess caught sight of the crown on the maiden's head, and cried out in the greatest surprise, "Tell me, my dear girl, how you came by such jewelry as that."

The maiden, in her embarrassment, made no reply; but the charcoal-burner, who had come along in the meantime, answered shrewdly, "It is an old heir-loom, most gracious lady; something my great-grandfather brought home from the war in Italy. If it pleases you, pray take it."

The countess had the crown brought to her, and the maids of honor, who accompanied her, looked curiously at the precious ornament.

"I must have the little crown," said the lady, casting a tender glance toward the count.

He smiled and unfastened a heavy purse from

his belt. "Take that for the crown," said he to the charcoal-burner; "it is gold. You foolish people have probably never known what a treasure your cottage concealed."

The maids of honor fastened the crown with two silver pins to their lady's velvet hood; then the riders spurred on their horses, waved a farewell to the charcoal-burner and his daughter, and galloped off through the woods.

The hunters had soon left the forest behind, and before them lay the broad meadow valley and the red stone.

The lazily-flowing brook formed here and there pools and little eddies, much frequented by ducks, herons, and other water-fowl. The hawkers gave the falcons over to the ladies, and all eyes were directed towards the reeds surrounding the water.

And now up flew a silver heron, noisily flapping his wings. The countess quickly took the hood from the falcon's head, and let him loose. Screaming, the falcon flew aloft, till he hovered over the heron. Then he swooped down, cleverly avoided the threatening bill, and seized the bird with his talons. For some time there was a fierce struggle in the air; then both circled round and round, and the vanquished heron fell with flapping wings on the meadow near the red stone.

The countess was the first to reach the spot where he fell. Her cheeks glowing with excitement, she sprang out of the saddle to release the heron from the falcon's talons, and to place the silver ring, which bore her name, on his foot. Then she gave a sudden cry and fell on the ground.

Her terrified companions hastened to her side. The count took his young wife in his arms, and anxiously inquired what had happened. She cried out with pain and pointed to her foot. The count bent down, and saw that her silk stocking was stained with a drop of blood.

"You have scratched yourself with a thorn," he said, laughing; "that is nothing." But the lady moaned slightly, her temples began to beat violently, and her face grew as pale as death.

The terror-stricken count gave orders for two huntsmen to go for doctors. He himself wrapped his wife in his mantle, took her in front of him on his saddle, and, followed by the others, galloped at full speed toward the nearest village. There he had a couch prepared for the sufferer, and anxiously waited for the doctors to come.

Her malady grew worse from hour to hour. The old smith, whose advice was asked, looked at the wound and shook his head, and said that it

was no thorn-prick, but rather the bite of a poisonous serpent. The same opinion was given later by the doctors. They spoke Latin together, shrugged their shoulders, and used salves and potions as their art prescribed. But they did no good. The sufferer grew weaker and weaker, and when the evening star hung over the forest, she lay unconscious on her bed of pain. Death stood without before the door.

In the meantime Wendelin, the shepherd, was driving his flock home to the village. Mechthild had told him how the countess had purchased the serpent's crown, and then they counted the pieces of gold and took counsel about the spending of the money. Now the shepherd was cheerfully wending his way along in front of his flock and playing a little tune on his fife.

Then suddenly his breath failed him, and his hair stood on end. Out of the bushes before him came the Adder-Queen, and raised her crownless head, forking her tongue at him.

"Stand still, or you shall die!" hissed the snake. And the poor youth stood still, and clung to his crook with trembling hands.

"Listen, young man, to what I tell you," said the serpent. "The lady who wore my crown is

sick unto death; I stung her in the foot. But I guard the plant whose juice will make her well. Follow me, and I will show you the healing herb."

The snake glided through the grass, and the shepherd followed her with beating heart. The adder stopped near the red stone. She broke off an herb and handed it to the shepherd. It was a delicate little plant, and resembled the forked tongue of a serpent.

"Now hasten," said the adder, "as fast as you can to the village where the sick lady lies; and if you let one drop of the sap of the plant fall on her wound, she will be cured. But as a reward demand the crown, and bring it back to me. Swear that you will."

The trembling shepherd swore as the Adder-Queen desired, then hastened to the village, and asked to be taken to the sufferer.

The countess was still living, but her breathing was faint. On her right sat the count, with his face buried in his hands; on her left sat a priest murmuring prayers.

"Try your skill," said the count to the shepherd. "If you succeed in healing her, I will make you rich."

Then the shepherd raised his eyes to Heaven in

a hasty prayer and let one drop of the sap of the herb fall on the wound. The sufferer at once opened her eyes and took a long breath. Then she lifted her beautiful head from the pillows and looked confidently at her husband. And from that hour the fever left her, and with the dawn the countess' cheeks again took on their rosy color, and all her suffering had passed away.

She gave the crown gladly to the shepherd who had healed her, and he, true to his oath, carried it without delay to the red stone by the water, where the Adder-Queen received it.

The count kept his word too. He presented the shepherd with a stately mansion, in which Mechthild soon made her entrance as bride.

Whether the Adder-Queen still dwells under the red stone by the water, and whether she still wears her little crown, that I cannot tell. But the manor which the count gave to the shepherd, is still standing, and is called *Schlangehof*, or the Serpent's Court.

THE BLACKSMITH'S BRIDE.



IN the midst of the forest was a black-green lake surrounded by very ancient giant fir-trees. The brooklets which came leaping down from every height like wanton kids, grew more and more quiet as they approached the pond, and finally flowed silently into the dark water. And when they came into sight again at the outlet of the lake, united in a stately stream, it was as if they had seen something uncanny, for they ran swiftly over gravel and stones, and only when they had left a good bit of their course behind them, did the waters again begin to murmur and to babble, and the white-breasted water-thrush, whose nest was on the bank, overheard strange things.

Now there lived in one of the villages which lay scattered among the forest mountains a young fisherman who earned his livelihood with net and hook. The bright-colored trout in the brooks crowded about the bait that he threw to them, and

when he drew his net through the waters of the forest lake, huge pike and big bream with long whiskers floundered in the meshes, so that he had some difficulty in bringing his haul to land.

One day he was sitting on the shore of the lake, watching his hook. It seemed to him that just beneath the smooth surface he saw a woman's face of rare beauty. He was frightened, and jumped up from his seat. Just then there was a rustling in the bushes, and when he turned around he looked into the mild eyes of a maiden carrying a scythe over her shoulders.

"Are you busy, Heini?" asked the pretty maid; and the fisherman told her what he was doing.

"Heini," continued the maiden, "let me give you some advice; it is kindly meant. Let the fish be in the lake. The people tell dreadful stories about — about —"

"About the water-sprite," interrupted the youth.

"Be still! for Heaven's sake, be still!" said the maiden, timidly. "Listen to me, Heini, and keep away from these quiet waters. You will find fish enough somewhere else. It would be a pity if you should some day find your cottage afloat on the water."

“Gertrude,” said the fisherman, angrily, “why must you worry so about that?”

The maiden turned aside. “Yes, I should feel badly, very badly, for I love you like a sister. You have known that for a long time.”

“Like a sister,” sighed the youth, and then they were silent.

A fish leaped up out of the water, and Heini seized his rod as if in a dream.

“Good by,” said the maiden.

“Good by, Gertrude. Where are you going?”

“To the blacksmith’s. The scythe — You know it is haying-time now. The blacksmith has to mend the scythe.”

“Go, then!” said the fisherman, roughly, and turned his face towards the lake.

Once more the maiden called out in a gentle voice, “Good by, Heini; do as I have asked you.”

But the youth gave her no answer. The maiden turned away, and went on into the woods.

Silent and sullen, the fisherman looked after his jerking rod, and as he cut open the throat of a big pike that he had caught, his eyes shone with an uncanny light.

The young fellow sat a long time by the pond.

The mountain-tops took on a rosy hue, and the trees cast long shadows on the mirror-like surface of the water. A magpie fluttered along, laughed in her way, and said:—

“‘ Blaek and white is the suit I wear;
Black the smith, but the maiden fair.
When the smith his love embraeced,
Her lily-white brow with soot was defaced.’”

With a loud laugh the magpie flew off into the dark forest, and the fisherman hastily gathered up his belongings and left the lake with a heavy heart.

* * *

Weeks and weeks had passed away. Heini was again sitting by the pond in the forest, but he was not fishing. He was leaning his head on his hands and gazing into the water. The poor fellow looked utterly wretched; the color had faded from his cheeks, and his eyes were dull and sad. And as he thus gazed down into the depths of the water, he thought that he again saw the form of a lovely woman, beckoning to him with her white hand.

“Yes, it would be much better for me if I were laid away down below there,” he groaned. “Oh, if it were only all ended!”

A low chuckling startled him. He looked around; but this time it was no rosy-cheeked maiden, but an old, toothless woman, who stood behind him. On her arm hung a basket full of scarlet toad-stools.

“Oh, it is you, is it, Mother Bridget?”

“Yes, my little son; it is. I heard your sighs away off in the forest there. I know, too, why you groan like a tree cleft to the heart. I’ve been in the church to-day and heard how the minister has published the banns of your fair-haired sweetheart and Hans, the forest blacksmith. I saw the maiden’s bridal linen, too, and the gay bedstead, with its two flaming red hearts.”

“Hold your tongue, woman!” growled the fisherman.

“Oho! not so hasty, my son! Choke it down.

Slender maidens, young and sweet,

’Neath the moon you still may meet.

If there isn’t one, there’s another.”

The youth covered his eyes with his hand and motioned the woman away. But the old woman did not go.

“You are my sweetheart, my own little son,” she said flatteringly. “You have brought me many a supper of fish, and I have not forgotten

the otter skin you gave me for a warm hood. I will help you, my precious lad, I will help you."

The youth suddenly jumped up. "Mother Bridget," he said, trembling, "people say—"

"That I am a witch. No, I am not able to anoint the tongs so that they will carry me out at the chimney and through the air; but I know a thing or two, my son; I know a thing or two that few people besides myself know about, and if you wish, I will serve you with my art."

"Can you brew a love-potion, Mother Bridget?" asked Heini, in a whisper.

"No, but I know another little trick. And if you do as I tell you, she will never become his wife, for all their exchanging of rings and getting blessed by the priest. Whenever he, glowing with love, wishes to take his maiden to his heart, she shall turn away from him; and whenever she eagerly longs to twine her arms about his neck, he shall push her away. Then at last, if he leaves her or she grows tired of him, she will still be yours. That I can do, and I will teach you the spell."

"Tell me how," said Heini, in an undertone; and the old woman began to whisper in his ear.

“Buy a steel padlock of the locksmith, and pay whatever price he asks without haggling, saying, ‘In Gottes Namen.’

“Then on the day of the wedding go to the church,—pay close attention, my son,—and when the priest unites the pair at the altar, clap the lock together, saying in a low voice, ‘in Teufels Namen.’ Then throw the padlock into the lake, and what I have predicted will come true. Have you understood me?”

“I have understood,” answered the fisherman, and a cold shiver ran down his back.

* * *

The bells were pealing from the tower, and happy people in gay holiday attire were making their way through the arched doorway of the church. The young blacksmith is to wed the beautiful Gertrude. Indeed, she is beautiful, and her yellow hair shines in the sunlight falling aslant through the window, even brighter than her bridal wreath of tinsel and glass beads. Now the choir-master takes his seat on the organ-bench; his wrinkled face beams with joy as he thinks of the wedding millet-broth, which,

according to an old custom, must be so stiff that the spoon will stand up in it; and of the leg of lamb, which comes after the broth. He draws out all the stops, the mighty tones of the organ peal through the church, and the wooden angels over the chancel blowing trumpets puff out their cheeks even more than usual. Then everything is still; the minister raises his voice and addresses the couple, kneeling before the altar. He has never before been so impressive as to-day. The women feel after their handkerchiefs, and here and there is heard a muffled choking and sobbing.

Now the minister took the wedding-ring from the plate, which stood on the altar. Then the bride raised her eyes, but quickly dropped them again, for she saw the fisherman Heini leaning against a pillar. He looked deathly pale; he held his right hand in his jacket pocket, and his lips moved slightly. The bride no longer heard what the minister said, neither did she hear the congratulations of the relatives and friends who surrounded them after the service was over. She passed out of the church by the side of her spouse like one who walks in a dream.

The wedding procession started toward the

bride's house, which was decorated with garlands of leaves, and on the gable stood a little fir-tree trimmed with floating ribbons. The musicians took a good draught to strengthen themselves for their approaching duties, and soon the merry sound of violins and flutes broke through the Sunday stillness.

In the meantime there was one who was hastening with swift steps towards the forest. In his heart he carried bitter pain; in his pocket, a fastened lock. He turned his steps to the forest lake. There he sat on the shore the whole day long, holding the lock hesitatingly in his hand. The little gray water-wagtails tripped along on the sand at his feet, and looked up wonderingly at the pale youth. The fishes jumped up out of the water, and their scaly coats shone like silver in the sunlight. The blue-green dragon-flies danced over the waves and dipped into the water. But he paid no attention to the little creatures. The sun was going down behind the ridges of the blue mountains, the shadows were growing longer, and still the fisherman sat brooding by the pond.

In the distance there sounded something like

violins, and the sound came nearer and nearer. The youth listened and gave a groan. It is the smith leading home his bride, and the wedding guests and the musicians are escorting them.

Heini shut his teeth together and drew out the padlock. An owl flew past, and as he flew his voice rang out:—

“Do it, do it, do it!” the owl seemed to say, and the padlock made a wide arch as it fell into the pond. Filled with terror, Heini fled into the woods.

* * *

The magic spell which the old woman had taught the fisherman had its effect. Instead of the expected joy, bitter discontent entered the home of the forest blacksmith. The newly married couple avoided each other timidly; yet if they were separated, they were consumed with a longing for each other: their love was blighted, and yet their love could not die. The beautiful Gertrude wasted away to a shadow, and the sturdy young blacksmith, too, began to look weak and sickly. “Somebody has bewitched them,” whispered the women in the village; and many fearful things were hinted at in the spinning-room.

The fisherman, too, seemed to be suffering from some strange malady. He wandered idly through the woods and over the fields, and avoided human beings. If the people from the village met him, they looked after him compassionately and tapped their foreheads significantly: they took the unfortunate fellow to be crazy. He was not really crazy; but bitter remorse tormented him, as he thought with a shudder of the mischief of which he had been the cause.

Finally he sought old Bridget's hut, and begged her on his knees to break the charm.

The old woman giggled. "You have a soft heart, my little son; but I will help you; I will break the charm. Procure the padlock for me. Give it a good blow with the hammer, saying, 'In Gottes Namen,' and it will break the steel padlock, and so render the charm worthless. Bring me the padlock, my treasure."

The youth struck his forehead and rushed out of the hut; and the old woman chuckled maliciously behind his back.

"Procure the padlock" kept sounding in his ears, as he again wandered restlessly through the woods; "procure the padlock." And he turned his steps towards the lake, which he had carefully

avoided since he had committed that dark deed.

The evening breeze blew across the dark-green pond, and the moonlight quivered on the gently stirring waters. By the shore, on a moss-covered stone, sat the form of a woman clad in white garments. She had long, waving, yellow hair, and wore a crown of rushes and water-lilies.

“Hast thou at last come once more to my lake, thou dear child of man?” said the nixie to the fisherman; “long, long have I been waiting for thee; but I knew that thou wouldst return to me again. Come, descend to my pleasure garden, and in my arms forget those who torment thee and have taken the color out of thy rosy cheeks; forget the earth and the heavens and the sunlight.” She bent towards the panting youth and twined her shining arms about his neck. “See,” she continued, “I wear the pledge that thou gavest me;” and with these words she lifted the steel padlock, which hung from a coral necklace on her breast. “Thou art mine.”

The fisherman seized the padlock hastily. “Give it back, give it back!” he cried; but the nixie, laughing, shook her head and wound her arms more tightly about his neck. “Come!” she whispered in his ear.

“Give me the padlock!” cried the fisherman, beseechingly; “give me the padlock, and let me go away with it for but a little while. I swear to you that I will come back to the lake this very night, and I will stay with you always. Only give me the padlock!”

The water-sprite unfastened the padlock from her necklace, saying: “Very well; I will give the pledge back to thee, but only in exchange for another. Give me one of the brown ringlets that play about thy brow.”

Heini took out his knife and cut off a lock of his hair, and handed it to the water-sprite. She hid it in her dress, and gave the padlock back to the fisherman. “Forget not what thou hast promised me. I hold the curl, and hold thee by the curl. And here, take my veil. When thou returnest from thy errand, gird the veil about thy loins and step down fearlessly into the water. Down below there I will tarry for thee, my sweet beloved; down below there await thee more pleasures than there are needles in the fir forest, or drops of water in the lake. Come back quickly.”

Thus spoke the water-nymph, kissed the youth on the mouth, and stepped down into the dark

water. But before she disappeared, she turned her face once more towards her beloved, and said warningly: "Forget not the veil, or thou wilt be lost, and even I could not save thee from death; forget not the veil!"

With these words she disappeared beneath the water; but the fisherman hurried away with the padlock.

* * *

By the forge in the smithy sadly sat the young blacksmith staring at the glowing coals. The door creaked, and in walked Heini, the fisherman. The smith greeted the belated guest with a hostile look, and asked sharply what he wanted.

"I have a favor to ask of you," said the fisherman; "let me take your heaviest hammer for a moment."

The other looked distrustfully at his rival. What can the crazy fellow want with a hammer? Will he try to get possession of the woman he loves by one fell blow? But he is enough of a man to meet an attack; so he handed the hammer to the fisherman and seized an iron bar to ward off the blow if it came.

The fisherman stepped up to the anvil, and

the blacksmith saw with astonishment that he laid a padlock on it.

“In Gottes Namen!” cried Heini, and lifted the hammer. It fell with a crash, and the splinters of the steel padlock flew all about the shop.

And then Heini took out of his jacket a delicate tissue and threw it on the glowing coals in the forge. A flame leaped up and in a twinkling died down again. Then he gave his hand to the blacksmith, and said in a low voice, “Farewell, and be happy!” With these words he rushed out of the door and disappeared in the darkness of the night.

The smith shook his head as he watched the crazy youth, and he stood still wrapt in thought, when two white arms were thrown about his neck, and two warm lips were lifted up to his. Laughing and weeping, his young wife clung about his neck and stammered words of love; and he lifted her with his strong arms and bore her into the house.

The red glow died away in the smithy, and a shivering man, who had been crouching breathless beneath the low window, rose and walked noiselessly away into the gloomy forest.

Good luck and happiness entered the blacksmith's home, and a troop of rosy-cheeked boys and girls came to bless it.

The fisherman Heini disappeared that night, and no earthly eye ever saw him again. But the brook which flows out of the lake knows a new and dreadful tale of a dead youth, who lies at the bottom of the lake in a crystal coffin, and a beautiful water-sprite sits at his head and weeps.

THE EASTER RABBIT.

THERE was once a wealthy count who had a beautiful wife and a little curly-haired, blue-eyed daughter, whose name was Trudchen. Besides many other estates the count possessed an old hunting-castle in the midst of the forest, and the forest abounded in stags, does, and other game.

As soon as the oak-trees began to be green, the count came with wife and child, servant and maid, to the forest castle and indulged in the jocund chase till late in the autumn. Then came numerous guests from the country round, and every day was full of gayety and pleasure.

One day there was to be a great hunt. In the courtyard stood the saddled horses, stamping their feet impatiently, the dogs coupled together were tugging at the leash and could hardly be held, and the falcons flapped their wings.

In the open doorway of the entrance-hall, which

was decorated with gigantic antlers and boars' heads, stood Trudchen by the side of her maid, delighting in the beautiful horses and the spotted hounds.

Now the count with his huntsmen stepped out into the courtyard, and Trudchen's mother followed; she wore a long riding-dress of green velvet, and waving ostrich plumes in her hat. She kissed Trudchen and mounted her white horse. The count lifted up his little daughter, caressed her, and said: "We are going to ride in the forest, where the spotted fawns leap about, and if I see the Easter rabbit I will give him my Trudchen's love, and tell him that next year he must lay a nest full of bright-colored eggs for you." And the child laughed, and kissed her father's bearded face with her little rosy mouth. Then he swung himself upon his raven-black horse, and the train rode out at the castle gate. "Frau Ursula, take good care of the little one!" called the count to the maid, as he rode away, and he waved his hand once more. Then he passed out of sight.

In the afternoon of the same day, Trudchen was playing in the garden. Frau Ursula had twice in succession told her the story of the ancient Easter hare and her seven little ones, and now the good

woman was quietly sleeping on the stone bench under the linden, where the bees were humming about.

The little girl had caught a lady-bug and began to count the dots on her wings; but before she had finished, the lady-bug flew away. Trudchen ran after her until she lost sight of her. Then she saw a brown butterfly with great eyes in its wings resting on a bluebell. Trudchen was just going to seize it cautiously, when all of a sudden it was gone, and on the other side of the garden wall.

Of course Trudchen could not follow him over there; but what was the gate in the wall for? The little girl stood on tip-toe and pressed down the latch, and then she was in the oak forest.

“So here is where the Easter hare dwells with her seven little ones,” thought Trudchen. She hunted all about, but the little hares must live deeper in the woods. So the little girl ran on as chance led her.

She had already gone quite a little distance, and was thinking whether it would not be better to turn round, when a black and white spotted magpie flew along and stood in her way.

“Where did you get that shining chain around your neck?” said the magpie, and looked spite-

fully at Trudchen, with his head on one side. "Give the chain to me, or I will peck you with my bill."

The poor child was frightened, and with trembling hands she unfastened the gold chain, took it off her neck, and threw it to the magpie. He seized the ornament with his bill and flew away with it.

Now the little girl was tired of the woods. "Oh dear, my little necklace!" she sobbed; "how they will scold me at home if I go back without my chain." Trudchen turned round and ran, as she thought, back the same way that she had come; but she only got deeper into the forest.

"To-whoo! to-whoo!" sounded out of an old hollow tree; and when Trudchen looked up in affright, she saw an owl glaring at her with great, fiery eyes, and cracking his crooked bill. "To-whoo!" said the owl, "where did you get that beautiful veil on your head? Give the veil to me, or I will scratch you with my claws."

Trudchen trembled like an aspen leaf. She threw down the veil and ran as fast as she could. But the owl took the veil and put it over his face.

Again the child wandered aimlessly about the

forest. Twisted roots like brown snakes crossed her path, and the briars tore Trudchen's dress with their thorny claws. There was a rustling in the top of a tree, and a red squirrel skipped down on the trunk.

"That will do me no harm," thought the little one; but there she was mistaken; the squirrel was not one whit better than the magpie or the owl.

"Ah! what a beautiful little hood you have," it said; "it would make a soft, warm nest for my young ones. Give the hood to me, or I will bite you with my sharp teeth."

Then the little girl gave away her hood, and continued her wandering, weeping bitterly. Her feet could hardly carry her another step, but her distress impelled her on.

Now the woods grew light, and Trudchen came to a sunny meadow. Bluebells and red pinks grew in the grass, and gay butterflies danced in the air. But Trudchen never thought of catching the butterflies, or gathering the flowers. She sat down on the grass, and wept and sobbed enough to melt the heart of a stone.

Then there came out of the woods an old man with a long gray beard. He wore on his head

a broad-brimmed hat with a wide band, and he carried a white staff in his hand. Behind him flew two ravens.

There was a rushing sound in the tops of the oaks, and trees, bushes, and flowers all bowed down.

The man came straight to Trudchen, stood still in front of her, and asked in a gentle voice, "Why are you weeping, my child?"

Trudchen felt confidence in the old man, and told him who she was, and what the wicked creatures had done to her.

"Never mind, Trudchen," said the old man, kindly. "I will send you home." He beckoned to the ravens. They flew on his shoulder, and listened attentively to the words which the old man spoke to them. Then they spread their wings and flew away as swift as arrows.

It was not long before they came back again; but they brought something with them. It was a stork.

When the stork saw the old man with the broad hat, he bowed so low that the end of his red bill touched the ground, and then he stood meekly like a slave, awaiting his master's command.

And the old man said: "Beloved and trusted Master Adebar, you see here a lost child. Do you know where her home is?"

The stork looked closely at the child, then he clapped his bill together with joy, and said: "Yes, to be sure, Herr Wode, I know the child, for I brought her myself to the count's castle four years ago."

"Very well," said the man; "then carry her there once more."

The stork moved his neck thoughtfully to and fro. "That would be a hard piece of work," he replied.

"It must be," said the old man. "Have you not often carried twins and even triplets in your bill? Quickly to work, or we are friends no more."

"Certainly; if it is your command, I must obey," replied the stork, submissively, and seized the child around the waist with his bill.

"But my little chain, my veil, and my hood," bewailed Trudchen.

"My ravens shall take them away from the wicked creatures and bring them back to you," said the old man, comfortingly. "Master Stork, fulfil your task faithfully."

The man nodded kindly to Trudchen, and in a moment she felt herself lifted up, and the stork bore her through the air.

Oh, they went like the wind! Trudchen looked down and saw the forest far below her like a bed of curly parsley. Then sight and hearing left her.

When Trudchen came back to consciousness, and opened her eyes, she was lying in the grass in the castle garden, and Frau Ursula was standing before her, chiding her:—

“Child, child, lying here asleep in the damp grass! If you catch cold, it will be again, ‘Old Ursula doesn’t take any care at all of the child’—and I haven’t taken my eyes off from you. And there is your beautiful gold necklace lying in the middle of the path, and there lies your hood, and your veil is hanging by a thorn on the rose-bush. Get up and come into the house with me; it is growing cold in the garden. Oh, dear Heaven, what anxiety you put upon me!”

And Trudchen got up and let her scold on, without opening her mouth.

How fortunate that Frau Ursula did not know all that had taken place! That would have made a fine commotion.

THE GOLDEN TREE.



THE room in which our story begins was very plain and bare. Against the white-washed walls, whose only adornment was a pair of landscapes yellow with age, stood two small beds, a bookcase, and a clothes-press, on the top of which rested a terrestrial globe. A long table, covered with ink-stains, occupied the middle of the room, and two boys about twelve years of age were sitting by it on hard wooden stools.

The light-haired boy was puzzling over a difficult passage in Cornelius Nepos, and he sighed as he turned the leaves of the heavy lexicon; the boy with brown hair was trying to extract the cubic root of a number with nine figures. The Latin student was named Hans, the mathematician Heinz.

From time to time the boys raised their heads and looked longingly towards the open

window, where the flies buzzed in and out. In the garden, the golden sunshine lay on the trees and bushes, and the branch of a blossoming elder-bush looked scornfully into the two young fellows' study. The poor youths had still an hour to sit and bear the heat before they could go out-doors, and the minutes crept along like the snails on the gooseberry-bushes in the garden. Any escape from work before the time was not to be thought of, for in the next room, at his desk, sat Dr. Schlagen, who had charge of the boys' education and morals, and the door stood open, so that the Doctor could at any time assure himself of the presence of his charges, and overlook whatever they were doing.

"Hannibal could not have done anything more prudent than to cross the Alps," snarled Hans; and "nine times eighty-one are seven hundred and twenty-nine," muttered Heinz, in a dull voice. Then both looked up from their work, looked at one another and yawned.

Suddenly they heard a loud buzzing. A rose-bug which must have alighted on the elderberry-bush, had strayed into the room. Three times it flew around the boys' heads, in a circle, and then it fell plump into the inkstand.

“It really served him right,” said Heinz; “why didn’t he stay where he was well off? But to be drowned in ink—that is too wretched a death! Wait a minute, my friend, I will save you.”

He was going to help the struggling bug with his penholder, but Hans accomplished the rescue more quickly with his finger. And then the boys dried the poor little rascal gently with the blotting-paper, and watched him make his toilet with his forelegs.

“He has a red spot on his breast, and black horns,” said Hans, as he wiped his ink-stained fingers on his hair. “It is the king of the rose-bugs. He dwells in a castle built of jasmine flowers and shingled with rose-leaves. Crickets and locusts are his musicians, and the glowworms are his torch-bearers.”

“Oh, nonsense!” said Heinz.

“And whoever meets the king of the rose-bugs,” continued Hans, “is a lucky fellow. Take heed, Heinz, something is going to happen—an adventure or something extraordinary, and besides, to-day is May-day, so there is a special reason for expecting wonders. See how he beckons to us with his feelers, and lifts his wings. Now he is going to be changed before us into an

elf wearing a king's mantle and a golden helmet on his head."

"He is going to fly away," said Heinz, laughing. "Buzz—there he goes."

The boys went to the window and looked after the bug. The bright little jewel made a wide circle as he flew through the air and disappeared the other side of the garden wall. Just at this moment a hemming was heard in the next room, and the two scholars hurried back to their books.

"There is our wonder," whispered Hans to his companion, and pointed to the inkstand.

Out of the inkstand rose a green shoot that grew while they were looking at it, and mounted to the ceiling.

"We are dreaming," said Heinz, rubbing his eyes.

"No; it is a fairy tale," said Hans, exultingly; "a living fairy tale, and we are in it."

And the shoot grew larger and put forth branches and twigs with leaves and blossoms. The top of the room disappeared, the walls vanished, and the astonished boys found themselves in the midst of a dim wood.

"Come along!" cried Hans, pulling the reluctant Heinz away with him. "Now comes the adventure."

The blossoming shrubs separated of themselves and made a path for the boys. The broken sunlight looked through the latticed roof of the trees and painted a thousand golden spots on the moss, and out of the moss grew star-flowers of glowing colors, and green curling tendrils twined about their mossy stems. Above in the branches fluttered singing birds with bright feathers, and stags, roebucks, and other game leaped gayly about among the bushes.

Now the woods grew light, and something like firelight shone between the trunks of the trees, and Hans whispered to his companion, "Now it is coming!"

They came to a meadow in the wood, in the midst of which stood a single tree. But it was no ordinary tree; it was the magic tree of which Hans had so often heard,—the tree with golden leaves. The boys stood still in amazement.

Out from behind the trunk stepped a dwarf no larger than a child of three years, but not with the large head and flat feet that dwarfs usually have, but slender and graceful. He wore a green cloak and a golden helmet, and the two boys knew who he was.

The dwarf advanced two steps and made a low

bow. "The enchanted princess is waiting for her deliverer," he said; "which of you will undertake the hazardous task?"

"I," said Hans, in a joyful voice. And the dwarf immediately led out a little milk-white steed, champing a golden bit.

"Don't do it, Hans!" said Heinz, in distress; but Hans was already seated in the saddle. The magic horse rose, neighing, into the air, then he threw back his head and ran with flying mane into the woods. A bright rose-bug flew along ahead as guide. Once only Hans turned his head and looked at his comrade standing beneath the golden tree; then both tree and friend were lost from sight.

That was a merry ride. Hans sat as safe and sure in the saddle as though he had been on his accustomed wooden stool instead of the horse's back. When he thought how only an hour ago he had been groaning over Cornelius Nepos and trembling before Doctor Schlagen, he had to laugh. The little schoolboy in a short jacket had become a stately huntsman with waistcoat and mantle, sword and golden spear. So away he flew through the magic forest.

Now his little steed neighed gladly. The woods

grew light. A leap or two more, and horse and rider stopped before a shining castle. Gay banners waved from the towers, horns and trumpets were sounding, and on the balcony stood the princess waving a white handkerchief. She looked exactly like the neighbor's little Helen, with whom Hans the Knight used to play when he was a little boy, and still at school, only she was larger and a thousand times more beautiful.

Hans sprang from the saddle, and with clinking spurs hastened up the marble steps. In the open doorway stood a man, probably the marshal of the princess' household, who had a very familiar look to our Hans.

And the house-marshal reached out his hand, seized Hans the Knight by the ear, and cried:—

“The scoundrel has gone to sleep. Just wait till I—” That broke the spell. Hans was sitting once more by the ink-stained table; before him lay Cornelius Nepos and the Latin lexicon; opposite him sat Heinz, writing with a squeaking pen; and near him stood Doctor Schlagen, looking sternly through his spectacles at the dreamer.

When the hour at last struck for their release, and the two boys were eating their evening meal

out in the garden under the elder-tree, Hans told his friend what he had dreamed.

“That is strange,” said Heinz, when Hans had finished; “very strange. For I had the same dream myself, only the ending was different; no magic castle came into my dream —”

“Tell me about it!” urged Hans.

“As far as the golden tree, my dream was exactly like yours. You mounted the white horse and rode away to release the princess. But I —”

“Well?” said Hans, impatiently.

“I remained behind, shook the tree, and filled all my pockets with the golden leaves. Then the stupid old doctor woke me up, and then the splendid dream was over.”

“Heinz,” said Hans, solemnly, seizing his friend by the hand, “if two people have the very same dream, then it will surely come true. The dream was a prophecy. Remember what I say.”

Then the boys ate the rest of their supper and went to play ball.

Was the dream of the boys ever fulfilled? Yes. Hans became a poet, and drove his steed through the green forest of fairyland. But Heinz, who shook the golden tree in the dream, became his publisher.

THE MAGIC BOW.



ONCE there was a little boy whose name was Frieder, and who had neither father nor mother. He was as handsome as a picture, and when he was playing in front of the house in the street, people would stop and ask, "Whose little one is that?" Then the surly old woman who brought him up on thin broth and plentiful scoldings would answer, "He is nobody's child; and it would be the best thing for him if the dear Lord would take him to himself in his heavenly kingdom." But Frieder had no longing for the heavenly kingdom; it pleased him very well down below here, and he grew up like the red-headed thistles behind his foster-mother's house. Playfellows he had none. When the other boys in the village built mills and sailed their little canoes in the brook, or romped in the hay, Frieder would sit on the hillside and whistle the songs of the birds.

He was busying himself in this way one day, when old Klaus, who was a bird-catcher by profession, met him. He took a fancy to the pretty lad, and struck a friendship with him. From that time the two were often seen sitting sociably together in front of the bird-catcher's cottage like two old soldiers. Klaus not only could tell strange stories of the forest, but he knew how to play the fiddle, and instructed Frieder in the art, after giving him an old patched-up violin as a birthday present. The pupil did his teacher credit, for before the end of the month he could play several famous old melodies. The old bird-catcher was deeply impressed by this, and said prophetically, "Frieder, believe me; if God spares my life, I shall sometime see you the first violinist in the church."

When Frieder was fifteen years old, the neighbors came together and took counsel about him. It was time, they said, that he should learn something practical to help him through the world; and when they asked him what he would like to become, he answered, "A musician." Then the people threw up their hands in holy horror. But a stout man stepped out of the crowd, grasped the lad's hand, and said in a dignified manner,

“I will see if I can make something practical out of him.” And all those who stood about in the circle thought Frieder very fortunate to have found such a master.

He was a person of no little consequence. He cut the peasants' hair and beards, cupped them, and pulled out their poor teeth, and often their sound ones too. He was the barber of the place, and the people called him nothing less than “Herr Doktor.”

On the same day Frieder went to the house of him who was now his employer, and in the evening began to make himself useful by bringing his master's beer from the ale-house. By degrees he learned to make the lather, to hone the razors, and to do everything else belonging to the art. His master was pleased with him; but the violin-playing in which Frieder had indulged so eagerly when he had nothing else to do, was objectionable to him, for, in the barber's opinion, it belonged to the unprofitable arts.

Two long years passed by. Then came the day when Frieder was to put his skill to the test. If he succeeded in satisfying his master, then he could go out into the world as a travelling journeyman and seek his fortune. He was to prove

his skill by shaving his master's beard, and that was no joke.

The important day had come. The barber seated himself in his chair, with the white towel around his neck, and leaned his head back. Frieder soaped his double chin, stropped the razor, and fell to work.

Suddenly the sounds of violins and flutes were heard in front of the house: a bear-leader had come along. As soon as the young barber heard the music his hand slipped, and on the master's cheek appeared a bloody cut, reaching from his ear to his nose.

Alas for poor Frieder! The chair in which the barber was sitting fell backwards on the floor. The bleeding man jumped up in a rage and gave his apprentice a rousing box on the ear. Then he tore open the door, pointed into the blue air, and screamed, "Go to the cuckoo!"

Then Frieder packed up his things, took his violin under his arm, and went to the cuckoo. The cuckoo dwelt in the woods, in an oak-tree, and happened to be at home when Frieder called on him. He heard the fellow's account patiently to the end, but then he flapped his wings, and said:—

“Young friend, if I should help all who are sent to me, I should have a great deal to do. The times are hard, and I must be glad that I have provided for my own children tolerably well. The oldest I have boarded out in a water-wagtail’s family; the second one, neighbor red-tail has taken into his house; the third child, a little maid, is nursed by an old beam-bird; and the two smallest ones are taken care of by a wren. I have to bestir myself from morning till night in order to get enough to live on decently. For fourteen days I have lived on hairy caterpillars, and such food would not suit your digestion. No; I cannot help you, however sorry I may be for you.”

Then Frieder hung his head sorrowfully, said farewell to the cuckoo, and went away. But he had not gone far when the cuckoo called after him: “Wait, Frieder! I have a good idea. Perhaps I can help you after all. Come with me.” He spoke these words, stretched his wings, and flew along in front of Frieder to show him the way.

Frieder had difficulty in following his guide, for the underbrush was thick in the woods, and the briars were very abundant. At last it grew

light between the trees, and there was a glimpse of water.

"This is the place," said the cuckoo, as he lighted on an alder. Before the youth lay a dark-green pond, fed by a foaming waterfall. Reeds and iris grew on the shore, and white water-lilies with broad leaves floated on the surface.

"Now pay attention," said the wise bird. "When the sun goes down and makes the spray of the waterfall gleam in seven colors, then Neck comes up from the bottom of the pond where he has a crystal castle, and sits down on the shore. Then have no fear, but speak to him. You will find out the rest."

Then Frieder thanked the cuckoo, who flew away swiftly into the woods.

When the seven colors of the rainbow appeared in the waterfall, sure enough Neck came up out of the water. He had on a little red coat and a white collar. His hair was green, and hung down like a tangled mane over his shoulders. He sat down on a stone, which rose above the mirror-like pond, let his feet hang in the water, and began to comb his hair with his ten fingers. This was a difficult task, for the

snarls were full of eel-grass, duckweed, and little snail-shells, and as Neck tried to smooth out his hair he made up painful faces.

“This is the right time to speak to the water-sprite,” thought Frieder. He took courage, stepped out from the alder-bushes, which had kept him from sight, took off his hat, and said, “Good evening, Herr Neck!”

At the sound of his voice, Neck plumped into the water like a startled frog, and disappeared. But before long he thrust his head out again, and said in an unfriendly voice, “What do you want?”

“With your permission, Herr Neck,” began Frieder, “I am an experienced barber, and you would confer a great honor upon me if you would allow me to comb your hair.”

“Indeed!” said Neck, delighted, and he rose out of the water. “You have come at just the right time. What a trouble and torment my hair has been to me since the Loreley, my cousin, was mean enough to leave me! What have I not done for that thankless creature! And one morning she went away, and my golden comb is gone, too, and now she sits, as I hear, on a rock in the Rhine, and is having

some trouble with a skipper in a little skiff. The golden comb will soon be sung away."

With these words, Neck sat down on a stone. Frieder took out his shaving-case, tied a white apron around the water-sprite's neck, and combed and oiled his hair, till it was as smooth as silk; then he parted his hair evenly from his brow to the nape of his neck, took off the apron, and made a bow, as his master had taught him. Neck stood up and looked at himself with satisfaction in the mirror of the pond. "What do I owe you?" he asked.

Frieder had the customary answer, "Whatever you please," on his lips, but it occurred to him just in time that he must seize the opportunity and strike while the iron was hot. So he cleared his throat and told Neck his history.

"So you would like to be a musician?" asked Neck, when Frieder had finished speaking. "Just take your fiddle in your hand and let me hear something of your skill."

Then the youth took his violin, tuned the strings, and played his best piece, "When the Grandfather married the Grandmother," and when he had ended with a graceful flourish, he looked expectantly at Neck.

Neck grinned, and said, "Now hear me." Then he put his hand down into the reeds and brought out a violin and bow, straightened himself up, and began to play.

Poor Frieder had never heard anything like it before. At first it sounded like the evening breeze playing among the rushes, then it sounded like the roar of a waterfall, and at last, like gently flowing water. The birds in the trees were silent, the bees stopped humming, and the fishes raised their heads out of the pond to listen to the sweet sounds. But great tears shone in the young fellow's eyes.

"Herr Neck," he said, stretching out his hands, as the water-sprite laid down his bow, "Herr Neck, teach me how to play!"

"That would not do," answered Neck. "It would not do on account of my growing daughters, the nixies. Besides, it isn't necessary. If you will give me your comb, you shall have a violin that hasn't its equal."

"I will give you my whole shaving-case, if you want it," cried Frieder, and handed it to the water-sprite.

Neck snatched the proffered case quickly, and disappeared beneath the water.

“Hold on, hold on!” the youth called after him, but his call was in vain. He waited an hour; he waited two; but nothing more was heard of Neck.

Poor Frieder sighed deeply, for it was plain to him that the false water-sprite had deceived him, and with a heavy heart he turned to go he knew not where. Then he saw lying at his feet, on the edge of the pond, Neck’s fiddlestick. He bent down, and as he took it in his hand, he felt a twitching from the tips of his fingers to his shoulder-blade, and it urged him to try the bow.

He was going to play “What shall I, poor fellow, do?” but it seemed as if an unseen power guided his hand; sweet, silvery tones burst from his violin, such as Frieder had never heard in his life but once, and that was just before, when Neck was playing to him. The birds came flying along and sat listening in the bushes, the fishes leaped up out of the water, and stags and roebucks came out of the forest, and looked with wise eyes at the player. Frieder could not tell how it happened. Whatever passed through his soul and whatever he felt in his heart, found its way to his hand, and

through his hand to his playing, and was expressed in sweet tones.

But Neck came up out of the pond and nodded approvingly. Then he disappeared and was never seen again.

Frieder went out of the forest playing, and he visited all the kingdoms of the earth and played before kings and emperors. Yellow gold rained into his hat, and he would have become exceeding rich, if he had not been a true musician. But true musicians never become rich.

He left his shaving-case behind him. Therefore, he let his hair grow like strong Samson of old. Other musicians have followed his example, and from that time to the present day have worn long, disorderly hair.

THE BEECH-TREE.



THERE stood in the forest an ancient beech-tree. The top of the tree had been shattered by the lightning, her side was hollow, and great mushrooms grew out of the bark. She was the oldest of all beeches, and the mother of a numerous family; but she had seen all her children, as soon as they had grown strong, fall beneath the stroke of the axe, and she had only one daughter left. She was a young beech, with smooth bark and a heaven-aspiring crown, and she was just eighty years old. This is considered the prime of life among the forest trees.

Every spring the old beech still put forth leaves and green shoots, but she felt that life was on the decline with her, for it was only with difficulty that she held herself upright. And because she felt that she must die, her love for her beautiful giant daughter was redoubled.

Spring was drawing near. The glistening

white snow still lay on the branches of the trees, but the warm sap began to spring up from the roots, and the soft air blew and helped to melt the snow. The crackling ice-cakes floated down the rivers and brooks, the willows pushed their silver catkins out of their cases, and the white bell-flowers broke through the vanishing carpet of snow that covered the forest floor.

Then the old beech said to her child: "Tonight the warm south wind will come with a rush. It will lay me on the bed of leaves that I have been hoarding up all these years, and I shall return to the mother earth, from whose bosom I came forth. But before I go home, I will bequeath you a legacy that the gentle lord of the forest bestowed upon me one day a long time ago, when he was resting from his blessed labors in my shadow. You will be able to understand the words and deeds of men and to sympathize in their joys and sorrows. This is the highest good that can fall to our lot. But be prepared to see more of pain than happiness."

Thus spoke the old beech-tree, and gave her daughter her blessing.

In the night the south wind came rushing from the desert. It buried the ships in the billows of the sea, rolled gigantic snowballs down from the mountains, and destroyed men's cottages as it passed by. It went roaring through the forest and broke down everything that was old and decayed, or whatever dared to resist its power. It stretched the old beech on the ground, and shook her sturdy daughter, but she wisely bent and bowed her head, and the mighty wind passed over. For three days the daughter wept tears of sparkling dew over her mother. Then the sun came and dried her tears.

And now on every side began such a budding and sprouting that the beech had no time to mourn. Her buds swelled and burst, and one morning a hundred thousand little tender green leaves trembled in the warm sunshine. What a delight it was!

Golden yellow primroses came up out of the ground. They did not even take time to push aside the dry leaves, but pierced right through them and lifted themselves up once more into the sunlight. Purple peas joined the primroses, and the fragrant woodroof unrolled its tender querl of leaves. What exuberance of life!

And in the midst of all this blooming life stood the young beech like a queen. A finch had built his nest in her crest and the woodpecker with his red cap came to visit her. Once the cuckoo came too, and even the distinguished squirrel, with his bushy tail over his head, found his way there now and then, although the beech with her bright spring foliage could not serve him with acorns. But she had not yet seen a human being this spring, and they were the guests she most wished to see, because she possessed the gift of understanding their sayings and doings.

Human beings were soon to come. One morning a slender young maiden, with long brown braids of hair, came tripping along through the forest and went straight up to the beech-tree. But there was not the least probability that she had come on account of the beech. She looked at the tree that lay mouldering on the ground, and said, "This is the place." Then she put down her basket, which was filled with lilies-of-the-valley, and leaned against the beech, without even glancing at the green splendor above. The tree held her breath to listen to what the maiden might say, but the beautiful girl kept an obstinate silence.

Then from the opposite direction came a

stately youth. He wore a little round hat with a curling feather, like a huntsman's. Cautiously he crept along, so cautiously that the dry leaves never once rustled beneath his footsteps. But although he stepped so gently, the maiden's sharp ears perceived his coming. She turned her head toward him, and the beech-tree thought to herself, "Now she will run away." But the maiden did not run away; she rather sprang toward the youth and threw her arms around his brown neck.

"My Hans!" — "My Eva!" they cried at the same time. Then they kissed each other to their hearts' content, called each other again by name, and embraced each other anew, and the beech-tree found it very tiresome. Afterwards they sat down under the tree and talked of their love. It was the old, old story, but it was new to the beech, and she listened as a child listens to a fairy tale. But something still more strange happened to surprise her.

The youth rose from the ground, took out his knife, and began to cut into the bark on the trunk. Indeed it caused her some pain, but the tree held as still as a wall.

"What is it going to be?" asked the maiden.

"A heart, with your name and mine," replied Hans, and went on cutting.

When the work was done, they both looked at it with satisfaction, and the beech was as pleased as one whom the king has honored with a golden chain. "Human beings are capital people!" she thought.

Then the youth began to sing. The beech had long known the songs of the finches and black-birds by heart; now she was going to hear something quite different from the songs of the birds. The song ran thus:—

Behind the forest cover
I strode the wild path over,—
The air was cool and clear.
I left the young fawn browsing,
Nor stags nor red roes rousing,
I sought a different kind of deer.

My search was soon rewarded;
I' the shade a beech accorded
I found my love alone.
She threw her arms around me
And with caresses crowned me—
My rival's heart was turned to stone.

Upon the beech-tree hoary,
A symbol of our story,
A single heart I grave.
And there our hearts united
Shall tell of true love plighted
As long as forest trees shall wave.

“Listen, Hans!” said the maiden, when the youth had ended. “Your song reminds me of something. I know—the people say that in the autumn you go secretly after game in the forest. Let hunting alone! The forester has a grudge against you anyway—you know why. And if he should meet you as a poacher in the forest, then—oh, my Hans, if they should bring you home shot through the heart—”

The young fellow bent down over the maiden, who leaned caressingly against his shoulder, and kissed her mouth. “The people tell many things. Don’t believe all that people say, my dear heart’s love!” Then he threw his arm around her waist, and went away singing with her into the woods.

When the pair had disappeared behind the trees, a man in hunting-dress, with a rifle on his back and a huntsman’s knife at his side, leaped out of the bushes. His face was pale and distorted. He walked up to the beech and looked at the heart which Hans had cut in the bark. He laughed wildly, and took out his knife to erase the names; but he changed his mind, and thrust the blade back into its sheath. He shook his fist threateningly in the direction which the lovers had taken, and grinding his

teeth, said: "If I meet you once more poaching in the forest, then you will have heard the cuckoo's call for the last time."

With these words he went into the woods, and the tree shook her head with displeasure.

* * *

In the course of the summer the beech saw many human beings,—poor women, who gathered leaves or dry branches; children, picking berries; forest-folk, and travellers. But the most welcome guests to her shady roof were the youth and the maiden with the brown braids. They came once a week, spoke of their love, and embraced each other; and the beech grew more and more fond of them every day.

One morning before sunrise, when the forest mountain still had on its gray hood of mist, Hans came alone. He carried a rifle by a leather strap, and walked carefully through the underbrush—as carefully as though he wished to surprise his sweetheart. But this time his coming was not to meet the beautiful Eva, but the stag, which had his haunt here. At the foot of the beech-tree the youth stopped and stood as motionless as though he were a tree himself. The cool

morning breeze came and blew the mist down in streaks. The birds awoke and flew away after water. There was a stirring in the underbrush of the forest, and Hans lifted his gun.

There came a shot out of the thicket. Hans dropped his rifle, leaped up, and then fell on the ground.

Out of the forest, with hasty bounds, came a man, carrying a smoking gun in his left hand. The beech knew him well.

The forester bent over the fallen man. "It is all over with him," he said. Then he loaded his rifle and disappeared in the thicket.

The sun rose and shone on the pale face of a dead man. The tree bent down her branches mournfully, and wept shining tears. The robin-redbreast flew along and put flowers on the dead youth's face, till his glassy eyes were entirely covered over.

In the afternoon the wood-cutters came along the path and found the corpse.

"He was shot while poaching," they said. Then they lifted him up and carried him down into the valley.

An old man lingered by the tree. He took his knife and cut a cross in the bark. He put

it directly over the heart. Then he took off his hat and said a prayer.

There was a rustling in the top of the beech; the tree also was praying after her fashion.

For many summers in succession the murdered youth's sweetheart came on the day of his death to the beech-tree, knelt down, and wept and prayed; and every time she looked paler and more languid. Finally she came no more.

"She must be dead," said the beech; and so she was.

* * *

Years had passed, and the beech had grown to a mighty tree. Her bark was covered with brownish moss; vines of woodbine climbed up the trunk, and both heart and cross were covered over with green.

One day there came a man, who added a third mark to the other two; and the beech knew what it signified. The tree was marked to be cut down.

Farewell, thou verdant, delectable forest!

It was not long before the wood-cutters came, and their axes cut the beech-tree to the heart. A sullen-looking man in hunting-dress, with gray beard and hair, directed the wood-cutters.

The beech knew the man right well, and the man seemed to recognize the tree. He went up to her and tore the moss and ivy-tresses away from her trunk, so that the cross and heart became visible.

"Here it was," he said in an undertone; and his limbs shook with horror.

"Back, forester, back!" screamed the woodcutters. "The tree will fall."

The forester staggered back, but it was too late. The beech fell with a crash to the ground, and buried him under her boughs.

When they took him out, he was dead. The beech had shattered his head.

And the men stood around in a circle and prayed.

THE WATER OF FORGETFULNESS.



IN the round tower-room adorned with hunting equipments, antlers, and stuffed wild birds, sat a youth on a wooden stool, twisting a bow-string out of marten-sinews and singing a gay hunting song. His dress indicated that he was a huntsman; his short hair that he was a servant in the castle. His name was Heinz.

From the ceiling above the young fellow's head hung a swinging hoop, and in the hoop sat a gray falcon, with his wings tied and the hood over his eyes. From time to time the huntsman would stop his work and set the hoop which was gradually coming to a halt in quick motion again. This was to prevent the falcon from going to sleep, for it was a young bird and was to be trained for hunting: the breaking-in of a properly trained falcon begins with making him submissive through hunger and sleeplessness.

Heinz had been the count's falconer, and the

old master had kept the youth busy all the time. But now better days had come to him. The count hunted no longer, for he had been lying silent and still, a whole year, in a stone coffin decorated with coats-of-arms; and his widow, Frau Adelheid, sat the whole day long with the chaplain and gave no thought to hunting affairs.

To-day the mistress of the castle must have been tired of praying, for she came out of her apartments and wandered through the rooms of the fortress. The young fellow's song made a pleasing contrast to the monotonous, nasal chanting of the chaplain; she followed the voice, and entered the falconer's room in the tower.

Heinz looked amazed when he saw the proud lady in her mourning veil and gray dress coming in. He rose and made a low, respectful bow. Frau Adelheid's brilliant eyes scanned the falconer's slender form, and she smiled graciously, and her smile seemed to the youth like May sunshine. The lady asked many questions about falconry and the chase; and when she took her departure, she gave the huntsman such a strange look that the bold lad turned his head on one side like a little fourteen-year-old girl.

A few days afterwards it chanced that Frau

Adelheid rode into the green forest on a milk-white palfrey. She wore no gray clothes, however, but a dress of green velvet, and instead of the widow's veil, a sable-skin hat with curling feathers. Behind her rode Heinz, the young falconer, with the falcon on his wrist; and his blue eyes shone with delight.

They had already ridden some distance, and the castle-tower had long before disappeared behind the widespreading branches of the beeches. Then Frau Adelheid turned her head and said, "Ride by my side, Heinz." And Heinz did as the lady commanded him. The path was narrow, and the countess' riding-dress brushed against the falconer's knee. Thus they rode along. The trees rustled softly, the chaffinches sang, and occasionally little forest creatures scampered across the path. Now and then there was a crackling of breaking branches, as some deer hastened into the woods, or a startled bird flew up with fluttering wings, and then deep silence lay over the forest again. And the lady of the castle turned her head a second time to the huntsman, and said, with a smile on her lips:—

"Now let me see, Heinz, whether you are a well-trained huntsman.

“ ‘Dear huntsman, tell me aright
What mounts higher than falcon and kite?’ ”

Without stopping to think, Heinz replied :—

“ High mounts the hawk, and high mounts the kite,
But the eagle takes a loftier flight.”

And Frau Adelheid asked again :—

“ Dear huntsman, tell me true,
What mounts higher than the eagle too? ”

The falconer thought a moment or two, then he answered :—

“ Still higher than all the birds that fly
Mounts the bright sun-ball in the sky.”

The countess nodded with satisfaction, and asked for the third time :—

“ Declare it to me, beloved one,
What mounts still higher than the light of the sun? ”

Now the falconer's skill was at an end. He looked up to the tops of the trees, as if help might come to him from there, and then he looked down at the pommel of his saddle ; but he had nothing to say.

Then Frau Adelheid reined in her palfrey, bent towards the huntsman, and said in a low voice :—

“The sun mounts high in the heavens above;
But higher still mounts secret love.”

She spoke these words, and threw her white arms about the lad's neck, and kissed his dark cheeks.

Two nutcrackers, with blue wings, fluttered out of the hazel bushes and flew screaming into the woods to tell what they had seen; and the next morning the sparrows, which had their nests under the castle roof, twittered one to another:—

“Tweet, tweet,
The lady's love for the hunter's sweet.”

Indeed, it was a fine time for falconer Heinz. He let his hair grow till it hung in yellow ringlets down over his shoulders, and he wore silver spurs and a heron's feather in his hat, and he built castles in the air, each one more glowing than the last.

To be sure he owned no castles, but he was invested with a splendid forest lodge with antlers on the gable, and field and meadow land, and there he lived now as forester, and when his gracious lady came riding out to him, he would stand in the doorway and wave his hat to greet her, then lift Frau Adelheid down from the

saddle, and entertain her with bread, milk, and honey.

Thus the summer passed away, and the autumn, and half the winter, and it came to be Shrove-tide. Then there was a great deal of visiting in the neighborhood, and the count's castle looked like an inn. But forester Heinz sat lonely in the huntsman's house, and only occasionally did the report of the merry doings at the castle come to his ears. Finally came news that was not altogether pleasing to poor Heinz. Frau Adelheid was to be married again, so the story went; and it fell on the young fellow's ear like a funeral bell.

Then Heinz closed the door of his house and went on the way to the castle, muttering between his teeth all sorts of things that sounded not like prayers.

When he came to the foot of the mountain, where the winding road leads up to the castle, he heard the sound of hoofs, and a laugh as clear as silver, that cut his heart like a two-edged knife; and down the path came the lady of the castle on her white palfrey, and near her a handsome gentleman, richly dressed, bestrode a sleek black horse, and gazed with sparkling eyes at the beautiful woman by his side.

Then it seemed to the young forester as though his heart would burst; but he controlled himself. He sat down on a stone, like a beggar, and as the pair drew near to him, he sang:—

“The sun mounts high in the heavens above;
But higher still mounts secret love.”

The haughty knight reined in his steed, pointed with his whip at the huntsman, and asked his companion, “What does that mean? Who is the man?”

The color left the countess’ cheeks, but she quickly recovered herself, and said:—

“A crazy huntsman. Come, let us hurry past him. It frightens me to be near him.”

But the knight had opened his purse, and he threw a gold piece to the man by the wayside. Then Heinz cried aloud, and threw himself face downwards on the ground. But the riders spurred on their horses and rode hastily away.

The sound of the hoofs had long died away before the unfortunate youth rose from the ground. He wiped the dust and dirt from his face, pulled his hat down over his eyes, and strode away into the forest. He hurried on aimlessly till night-fall. Then he threw himself down under a tree,

wrapped his cloak about him, and sleep came over the exhausted man.

Poor Heinz slept all night long without a dream, till the chill of dawn awoke him. But immediately his whole sorrow stood again before him and grinned at him like an evil spirit.

“Oh, if I could forget,” he cried; “if I could only forget! There is a fountain, and if one drinks of its waters all the past vanishes from his memory. Who will show me the way to that spring?”

“Here!” called a voice near at hand. “The water that causes forgetfulness I am very familiar with, and I will gladly tell you all that I know about it.”

Heinz looked up and saw before him a youth in dark, tattered garments; his toes peeped inquisitively out of his shoes. He represented himself to be a travelling scholar, and went on to say:—

“The water which makes one forget is called Lethe, and has its source in Greece. You will have to take a journey there and inquire the particulars on the spot. But if you wish to have it more conveniently, come with me to the tavern of the Purple Grape. It is not far from here.

There the hostess will give you a taste of the water of forgetfulness, provided that your purse is longer than mine."

These were the scholar's words. Heinz arose and followed him to the forest inn. There they drank together all one day and half the night; and when, towards midnight, they lay peaceably on the bench, Heinz had forgotten everything that troubled and oppressed him. But with the morning light the tormenting recollection returned, and he had a headache besides. Then he paid his own bill and his companion's, took a hasty farewell of the travelling scholar, and went on further.

"Oh, who could forget!" he said as he went along, and beat his forehead with his fist. "I must find the fountain, or I shall be really insane."

By the wayside stood an old half-dead willow, and in the willow sat a raven, who turned his head toward the lonely wanderer and looked at him with curiosity.

"Thou wise bird," said the forester to the raven, "thou knowest everything that happens on the earth; tell me, where does the water of forgetfulness flow?"

"I, too, should like to know that," said the raven, "in order to drink of it myself. I knew a

nest with seven fat, nut-fed dormice, and when I went yesterday to see what the dear little creatures were doing, the marten had taken the nest away from me and not a piece of it was left. And now, no matter where I go, I can think of nothing but my loss. Indeed, who can tell about the water of forgetfulness! But do you know something, dear fellow? Just go to the old woman of the forest, who is wiser than other people and perhaps knows the fountain of forgetfulness." Thereupon the raven told the huntsman the way to the old woman of the forest. Heinz thanked him, and went on.

The old woman was at home. She sat in front of her cottage, spinning, and nodding her white head. By her side a gray cat, with grass-green eyes, sat licking her paws and purring.

Heinz stepped up to the old woman, greeted her respectfully, and made known his errand.

"I know everything about the fountain of forgetfulness," said the old woman of the forest, "and will not withhold a drink of its waters from you, poor boy. But no work, no pay: if you wish to have a glass of the precious drink, you must first perform three tasks for me. Will you do it?"

"If I can."

“I do not expect impossibilities of you. To begin with, you shall cut down the wood behind my house. That is the first labor.”

The young fellow consented. The old woman gave him an axe and led him to the place. Heinz stretched himself and swung the axe, and every time he struck a blow he imagined that he hit his rival, and the trees fell crashing beneath his mighty strokes, and the crashing did him good. Thus evening came on, and Heinz looked about for food, for he was very hungry. He did not have long to wait, for out of the house came a woman's figure, who placed a basket with food and drink beside the weary wood-cutter.

As Heinz raised his eyes, he saw before him a wonderfully lovely face, framed in yellow hair, on which gleamed the last rays of the setting sun. It was the old forest woman's daughter. She looked at the sad young fellow with gentle eyes, and remained standing before him awhile. But as he said nothing, she went away again. Heinz ate and drank. Then he gathered together fir boughs and wood moss for a bed, laid himself down, and slept a dreamless sleep. But when he awoke in the morning, his sorrow awoke again too.

Then he seized the axe and attacked the trees, so

that the forest, for a mile around, resounded with his mighty blows. And when at evening the beautiful maiden came with his supper, Heinz did not look as sad as the day before; and because he felt that he must say something, he said, "Fine weather to-day." Whereupon the maiden answered, "Yes, very fine weather," and then nodded and went home.

Thus seven days passed away, each one like the other, and on the seventh day the last tree was cut down. The old forest woman came out, praised Heinz for his industry, and said, "Now comes the second task."

Then Heinz had to dig up the roots of the trees, break up the soil, plant corn, and sow seed. This took him seven weeks. But every evening, after his day's work was done, the old woman's daughter brought him his supper and sat near by on the trunk of a tree, and listened to Heinz as he told her about the outside world, and when he finished she gave him her white hand and said, "Good night, dear Heinz." Then she went home, but Heinz looked about for a resting place and immediately fell asleep.

When the seven weeks were gone, the old woman came and looked at his work, praised the

youth for his industry, and said: "Now comes the third task. Now with the wood you have felled you must build me a house with seven rooms, and when you have finished that too, then you shall have a glass of the water of forgetfulness, and can go wherever you please."

Then Heinz became a carpenter, and with axe and saw he built a splendid house. To be sure, the work went on slowly at first, because Heinz worked without help; but that was not distasteful to him, for he enjoyed the green forest, and would have liked to live always near the old woman. Indeed, he sometimes thought still of his former sorrow, but only as one who has had a bad dream, and in the morning is glad that he has awakened from it. Every evening the forest woman's daughter came out to him, and they sang together, sometimes gay hunting songs, sometimes songs which told of parting, of unrequited love and joyful meetings.

Thus seven months passed by. Then the house was finished from threshold to roof-tree. Heinz had placed a young fir-tree on the gable, and the maiden had made wreaths of fir-twigs and red berries from the mountain-ash, and trimmed the walls with them. The old woman came on her

crutch, with the cat on her shoulder, to inspect the completed work. She looked very solemn, and in her hand she carried a goblet carved out of wood, and filled with the water of forgetfulness.

“You have performed the three tasks which I have imposed upon you,” she said, “and now comes the reward. Take this goblet, and when you have emptied it to the last drop, then the past will be blotted out of your memory.”

The forester hesitated as he reached out his hand towards the goblet.

“Drink,” said the old woman, “and forget everything.”

“Everything?”

“Yes, everything — your former sorrow, myself, and —”

“And me, too,” said the beautiful maiden, and she held her hand before her eyes to keep back the rising tears.

Then the youth seized the goblet and with his strong hand flung it on the ground, so that the sparkling drops of the water rained down on the grass, and he cried, “Mother, I will stay with you!”

And before he knew what had happened to him, the maiden lay on his breast and sobbed for joy.

And a rustling went through the trees, and the yellow corn all around nodded in the wind, the birds sang in the branches, and the old woman's gray cat went purring round and round the happy pair.

Now I could without much difficulty change the old woman into a beautiful fairy, her daughter to a princess, and the newly built house to a shining royal castle; but let us rather keep to the truth, and let everything be as it was.

But something wonderful really did happen. Wherever a drop of the water of forgetfulness fell on the ground, there sprang up a little flower with eyes of heavenly blue. The flower has since spread over the whole land, and for those who do not know its name this story was not written.

THEODELINDA
AND THE WATER-SPRITE.

ON the edge of the forest, where the flowers grow that do not thrive in the deeper shade, where the brown field-mice dwell and the green lizards, where the wren dodges through the bushes and beetles in golden coats of mail tumble about the wild roses, there stood, like sentinels, two primeval pine-trees, which seemed to grow from the same root. At the foot of the twin trees was a seat formed of stones and moss, and on the seat sat a lady who only differed from the majority of her sisters in that her form showed hollows, where one was usually accustomed to find roundness. She wore a sky-blue dress and a broad-brimmed straw hat, which shaded a yellowish face, framed by two bread-colored curls. In her right hand she held a dainty pencil, in her left a little red book, on the cover of which, in gold letters, was inscribed these words: "The Blossoms of Theodelinda's Mind."

Theodelinda was a poetess, and the latest blossom of her mind ran thus : —

In cool moss by the wood
A lovely rose-bush stood.
There came a lad one day
And broke a rose away.

The rose, in sorrow, said,
“He will my petals shed;
Yet sweet it is to die,
If on his breast I lie.”

The verses were written down, and the poetess' watery blue eyes looked longingly into the distance, but the lad of whom she was thinking would not come; the lad was at that moment sitting with two boisterous companions, drinking, in the forest tavern of the White Stag, and never dreamed of breaking the little rose.

Theodelinda sighed, and picked a daisy which was growing in the grass at her feet. “He loves me,” she murmured, as her sharp fingers pulled off the white petals, — “he loves me with all his heart — passionately — beyond measure — desperately — a little — not at all.” Alas, poor Theodelinda!

“That is absurd child’s play,” she said, and threw the mutilated flower contemptuously on the ground. Then she tucked up her dress and walked away into the woods, probably to pluck one or two more of the blossoms of her mind in its sacred dim shade.

If Theodelinda had not been a city girl, but a peasant child of the mountains, she would have been much more careful when she undertook to go through the woods; and, above all things, would have put in her shoe a little branch of the shrub which renders harmless all magic charms. Then what came to pass would hardly have happened to her. But what could a poor city lass know about the secrets of the forest?

Where the mightiest fir-trees, with long gray beards of moss stand, in the shade grows a plant called “err-wort.” Nobody except the woodpecker, who knows all magic plants, has ever seen it, but many a one who has stepped on it unawares, and not had the counter-charm with him, must have felt its effect.

While the poetess was trying to add “love” and “dove” “heart” and “part” to the blossoms of her thought, she went gradually deeper and

deeper into the forest. The approaching twilight and a longing in the region of the stomach, which ordinary mortals call hunger, first warned the pleasure-seeker that it was time to return home. She turned to go back by the way she had come, but it seemed to her as though the forest were endless, for she went around in a circle, and the err-wort, on which she had stepped unawares, was to blame for it. Oh, misery! oh, misery! It grew darker and darker all the time. The shadowy creatures of the night glided across the path, and the hooting of the robber owls was heard. Theodelinda was in despair.

Suddenly she found herself before a little house, out of whose window shone a faint light. With thankful heart she knocked on the door; it opened, and she went in.

In the hut were three trim little women, no larger than half-grown girls, busy baking cakes on the hearth. They were little forest folk. They are usually invisible, but whoever steps on the err-wort is able to see the little forest folk, and many other things besides.

They received the wanderer with kindness and attention, pushed a stool up to the fire for her, and entertained her with bread and milk.

Theodelinda felt confidence in them, and was soon quite at her ease in their company, for they promised when the morning came to show her the right way.

“This is for once a real adventure, such as only a poet can meet with,” thought Theodelinda; and she experienced the feeling of gentle horror, mingled with satisfaction, of a child listening to a ghost story. But it was going to be still better.

Suddenly there was a tapping on the window, and a man’s voice was heard to say:—

“Open the door, ye sisters dear!

The moon shines on the waters clear.

It led me through the forest way.

Open the door, good sisters, pray!”

“There he is again,” said one of the little women; “the fiend, the nuisance! his mother, the old nixie, sends him here. She wants him to marry, so that the thoughtless fellow may become orderly and domestic, and so she thinks that one of us ought to count it an honor to become her daughter-in-law. But I would rather be a spinster than leave my green forest and become his wife.”

“And so would I!” “And so would I!” said the

other two little women. But Theodelinda said not a word.

“We must let him in,” continued the first one; “that can do no harm. He is a very dangerous fellow, and we dare not arouse his anger.” And, with a sigh, she unbolted the door.

The water-sprite came in. He had a pretty face and a slender form. To be sure, he had green hair, but Miss Theodelinda thought it was very becoming to him.

The guest looked somewhat disturbed when he discovered what a visitor the little folk had, but, like a well-bred person, he did not allow his displeasure to be noticed, and made himself as charming as only a water-sprite knows how to be.

Theodelinda was very talkative; she told about balls and the theatre, and the water-sprite listened patiently. Then he had to tell something about himself, and he did it graciously.

Indeed, he was a fine man, and probably much better than his reputation. And besides, he had a crystal castle in the lake, which was not to be despised, and the old mother nixie was surely a very fine woman. Thus thought Theodelinda; and in her mind she was already rocking on the

waves like Melusina, and floating through the air in a feathery robe.

She longed to make an impression on the water-sprite. Therefore, after a few preliminary remarks, she took the little red book out of her bosom and began to read her poetry.

For some time the water-sprite listened and murmured words of appreciation. But suddenly he jumped up and exclaimed: "Gracious goodness! I had almost forgotten that I was invited by the wild huntsman and Lady Holle to a card party. I beg you to excuse me." Having spoken these words, he rushed out of the house.

Theodelinda looked out, surprised, at the door through which he had fled. But the little forest people clapped their hands and cried joyfully: "You have done well; you have done well! You must have a present as a reward."

And one of the little women went to a chest, took a skein of blue yarn out of it, and handed it to the poetess with these words: "Take good care of it; there is a blessing with it."

Theodelinda did not know what to make of it all.

Vexed at the behavior of the water-sprite, and tired from the day's exertion, she begged her to

show her to a sleeping-place. The little women heaped up a bed of leaves for her. Then she lay down and fell asleep.

When she awoke, she was lying on the edge of the wood, under the twin pines. The cool morning wind was blowing through the tops of the trees and playing with Theodelinda's bread-colored locks.

"So I have been dreaming," she said to herself, "and slept all night in the woods." She felt in the place where she was accustomed to put away her red book, but the book was gone. She jumped up in alarm, and then a great skein of blue yarn rolled out of her lap on the ground. So it wasn't a dream, after all.

She hunted for her red book, but it had disappeared forever. Chilly, and out of sorts, she tried to reach home as soon as possible, to recover from her adventure in the forest. It ended in a hard cold.

While Theodelinda was shut up in her room on account of her indisposition, she wrote her poetry from memory in a new book. The little forest women had taken the old one away from her, while she slept, in order to use the blossoms of Theodelinda's mind as effectual weapons

against the water-sprite's obtrusiveness. Indeed, that put an end to his visits, and soon after he married the daughter of a nixie of good family.

But the blue skein of yarn which the little forest folk had given the poetess as a present, was no ordinary skein; unwind as much of it as you pleased, you would never come to the end.

And Miss Theodelinda knit stocking after stocking, and made verses at the same time; and when she went along the street, the people said, "Here comes the blue-stockings."

THE ASS'S SPRING.



IN a green valley, shut in by steep heights, a cool, abundant spring, called the Ass's Well, has its source. The spring is inclosed, and covered over with a canopy, on the top of which turns a tin ass as weather vane.

Every morning in summer there stand by the edge of the well, pale young ladies from the city, who, under the care of anxious mothers and protecting aunts, drink the cold water from handsome mugs. City gentlemen, too, visit the spring, and indeed not only the sickly ones, but also healthy youths with brown faces, and bold-twisted mustaches. A warrior, gray with age, who for thirty years had come and gone with the swallows; a poetical, incomprehensible young lady, with long, straw-colored curls; a mysterious widow in deep mourning; a prestigiator, who is especially sought after in rainy weather, and who makes money vanish and guesses drawn cards;— all these

characters are to be found at the ass's well, and therefore there is no lack of what belongs to a so-called "summer resort." But wait! we had almost forgotten the most important feature, the landlady of the *Golden Goose*. She rules with unlimited power, cooks well, and treats high and low with an honest brusqueness which to the city people is as refreshing as May dew.

There is great difference of opinion about the origin of the name the well bears. Some say that a thirsty ass disclosed the spring by pawing with his hoofs. Others claim that the well is so called because its waters, like ass's milk, are beneficial to feeble constitutions. But both opinions are at fault. This will become clear as daylight to all who read this story to the end.

Many, many years ago, when the mightiest tree in the forest was still a germ sleeping in a brown acorn, nothing was known of the healing power of the future Ass's Well. The visitors who came to its brink were the beasts of the forest or grazing cattle, and deer; wood-cutters, huntsmen and charcoal-burners; and men praised the cool water, and the beasts did the same after their own fashion.

One day two stood by the well,—one on this

side, the other on that. He was an ass, and she was a goose, both in the first bloom of youth. They greeted each other silently, and quenched their thirst. Then the ass drew near to the goose, and asked bashfully, "Young lady, may I accompany you?"

She nodded, and would gladly have blushed, but this she was unable to do, and they went together through the meadow and talked about the weather. They had gone quite a distance, when the ass stood still and asked, "Young lady, whither does your way lead?"

The goose looked sadly at her companion askance, and said quietly, "How do I know? Oh, I am the most unfortunate creature under the sun!" And as the ass questioned her further, and urged her to pour out her heart, she related the story of her life.

"I am called Alheid," said the goose, "and am of good family. My ancestor was one of the sacred geese that saved the capital. You know the story, young gentleman?"

The ass said hesitatingly, "Ye-es." He had really never heard of the story, but he did not wish to grieve the goose.

"Another of my maternal ancestors," continued

- Alheid, "was on friendly terms with Saint Martin. She is said, according to the sad legend, to have given her life for him. But I will not dwell on the history of my ancestors, but tell you about myself. I came to the light of the world, together with eleven brothers and sisters, and, indeed, on a farm, where my mother as a brooding goose lived a life appropriate to her station. I was my mother's pet, for in our family the youngest child is always the most talented."

"Just as it is in ours," remarked the ass.

"I will pass over the years of my childhood," continued the goose, "the happy plays in the village pond and in the lake of the castle garden, where, in the company of the young swans, I acquired that elegance of motion for which I have been so often admired. I had long before shed the yellow down of youth and had blossomed into the prime of life. Then, one day there appeared on the farm a man, who had a very hooked nose; his temples were adorned on the right and on the left with two shiny black curls, and over his shoulder hung a pack. The farmer's wife and the maids flocked around him, and looked with longing eyes at the bright-colored ribbons and cloths which he took out of his bag. To make

a long story short, I was caught, and with my feet and wings bound I was given over to the stranger, who took me in exchange for a blue handkerchief decorated with red roses. Now came melancholy days. I was shut up in a narrow coop, and given balls of barley flour to fatten me. With horror I noticed that my circumference increased from day to day, and even my grief over my wretched plight was unable to arrest the evil."

Here the ass cast a look at his companion's figure, and swore that he never had seen a more elegant goose. With a look of thankfulness at the ass, Alheid continued:—

"Last night — I shudder to think of it — I heard woful cries of agony, which evidently came from the throat of one of my fellow-prisoners. I saw two eyes shine in the moonlight, and heard the death-rattle. A fox or a polecat must have broken into the coop. Fear lent me strength. I forced myself through the bars of my prison and escaped. I was saved. My wings bore me to this valley; and now I shall try to prolong my life as a wild goose, until winter comes, when I shall, perhaps, find a modest position as snow goose."

Alheid sighed deeply, and then was silent.

“My fate,” said the ass, “is similar to yours, Miss Alheid. Look at the black cross which decorates my shoulder; that will tell you all. I am of the race of the sacred ass of Jerusalem, and Baldwin is my name. My pedigree goes back to Noah’s ark. Balaam’s ass, and the ass with whose jawbone Samson slew two thousand Philistines are my ancestors. The one of my ancestors who died like a philosopher between two bundles of hay, I will only mention incidently; nor will I dwell on the worthiest of my high-aspiring forefathers, who founded the collateral branch of mules. My parents were convent people, and bore pious monks on their errands of charity. My older brothers and sisters became lay brethren; but the fathers sold me to the convent miller, and I, a sacred ass, saw myself compelled by rough men to carry contemptible meal sacks. For a long time I suffered in silent submission. But one night, when the cruelty of a rough miller’s boy drove me to desperation, I burst my fetters, and came to this peaceful forest valley, where I found you by the cool well, most charming Alheid. Here I think I shall remain for the present, and lead the contemplative life of a wild ass.”

So the ass and the goose both remained in the meadow valley. They dwelt apart from each other, as it became them, but they saw each other and talked together daily, and at last one could no longer live without the other. They were happy and sad at the same time; happy, because they loved and found love in return; sad, because they saw that they could never belong to one another.

“Oh! why was I born a goose!” bewailed Alheid; and Baldwin, the ass, sighed, “If I were a bird!” and he knew, too, what kind of a bird he would be.

Thus weeks passed by. The ass grew perceptibly thin, although there was no lack of nourishing food in the meadow valley; and the goose lost the red color from her bill, and her eyes became dull.

Now, there lived in the forest, in a hollow stone, an owl, who was the most clever female anywhere about, and the beasts often went to her for advice. The ass told her his distress, and when the owl had heard his story, she said: “That I cannot help. But wait till Midsummer. Then the wise Wish-Lady comes to the well in the meadow valley to bathe. Confide to her

your trouble. Perhaps she will help you, and change your form; she is a powerful magician."

Then the ass went away half consoled. On Midsummer eve, when Alheid, the goose, had sought her resting-place, he concealed himself near the spring to wait for the Wish-Lady.

She did not keep him waiting long. She came flying along in her dress of swan's feathers, threw aside the downy garment, and bathed her white limbs in the cool spring. The ass waited with an ass's patience until she came out of the water; and when she had sat down on a stone and was combing her hair, then Baldwin stepped up to her, beat his fore-hoof three times as a greeting, and begged the Wish-Lady, piteously, to change him to a gander.

The enchantress shook her head. "That is a strange wish," she thought, "but I can fulfil it and I will."

And she whispered in the ear of the ass, who listened attentively: "Early to-morrow morning, at sunrise, pick seven goose-berry blossoms¹ and eat them silently, then plunge your head in the well, and you will be changed to a fine gander. And now go your way, and leave me alone."

¹ In the German *gänse-blume* (literally goose-flower), the ox-eyed daisy.

The ass thanked her heartily, and went away. He never closed his eyes all night, and as soon as the mountain-tops began to grow red, he was up on his feet and away to look for the seven goose-berry blossoms. Then he hurried to the spring, and plunged his head in, and when he drew it out again, to his delight, he saw in the mirror of the water the picture of a handsome gander with a beautifully curved neck.

As fast as he could go, he hurried to the thicket where the goose had taken up her abode. "Alheid, my beloved Alheid!" he cried, "where art thou?"

"Here, my dearest, sounded from the thicket, and a pretty little she-ass came dancing out of the bushes.

The lovers looked at each other, dumb with amazement.

"Oh, what an ass I am!" sighed the gander.

"Oh, what a goose I am!" groaned the ass.

Then a hot torrent of tears poured from their eyes; and in the midst of her weeping Alheid told how she had followed the advice of the owl, and sought the Wish-Lady, who had granted her request, and changed her to a jenny. Hereupon the gander, between heavy sobs, gave his experi-

ence, and the Midsummer sun never shone on two more wretched creatures than our two lovers.

Time heals all things. Calm endurance took the place of uncontrollable anguish. One hope was left to the pair. Perhaps the Wish-Lady, on her next visit to the spring, would restore one of the lovers to the original form. But before that a whole year must pass. Patience, then, patience! So Baldwin and Alheid again lived together like brother and sister.

After much distress and danger, which the winter brought to the two anchorites, spring appeared in the land; the sun mounted higher and higher, and at last Midsummer eve had come.

With beating hearts the lovers this time went together to the well, and stated their case to the Wish-Lady.

“This is a bad affair,” said the enchantress. “I cannot change either of you back again, however willing I may be to grant you the favor. But I will make you a proposition. How would it do if you became human beings? Out of an ass and a goose it would not be difficult to make a youth and a maiden: that I can do. Would that please you?”

“Yes,” cried Baldwin and Alheid with one voice.

The Wish-Lady murmured a charm, and told them both to plunge their heads in the well. They obeyed, and when they took them out again Baldwin had become a sturdy young man with an extremely good-natured face, and opposite him stood a charming little woman with a prettily arched, rosy mouth, and languishing eyes.

And they fell down at the Wish-Lady's feet and gratefully kissed her hands, and then they kissed each others' lips and whispered words of love in each others' ears. But the Wish-Lady, noticing that her presence was superfluous, wrapped herself in her dress of feathers and flew away.

The two young people remained in the meadow valley. Baldwin built a house, and in it they passed a happy life; and each year a little child was given them, sometimes a boy and sometimes a girl.

In the neighboring villages nobody suspected that Baldwin had been an ass, and Alheid a goose, for they were as sensible as other human beings. They did not make a great noise about the history of their transformation, as it would have prejudiced them in the eyes of the

people. But when they were about to die they intrusted it as a secret to their eldest son, and it was he who named the house "The Golden Goose," and the spring "The Ass's Well," as they are still called at the present day.

How the healing power of the waters was discovered, and how life gradually came to the remote forest valley, are very fully described in a book which the landlady sells to the guests who use the waters.

The Wish-Lady has for a long time stayed away, probably because it is too noisy for her in the valley. But even at the present time it happens that almost every year some young pair is seen at the spring, who seem as well adapted to each other as the heroes of our story.

THE TALKATIVE HOUSE-KEY.



THIS is what happens when one spends his whole summer spinning yarns and meddles with kobolds, nixies, and beasts that talk.

A sedate man who restrains his fancy judiciously could never have met with the adventure which I experienced the other day, and will relate as follows:—

I had returned to the city from my summer vacation, and had already spent two or three days wandering about the streets in search of a dwelling-place suited to my needs. For urgent reasons I did not make the most splendid quarter the province of my research, but that part of the city in whose narrow alleys the so-called poor people fight the battle of existence. Why the street in which I at last found what I was looking for was called Heaven's Gate I have not been able to discover. Towards the east it ran into Butcher Street, where bloody calves and pale pigs hung

from iron hooks, and towards the west the Gate led into the so-called Jews' Square, which was no paradise either.

My attention was drawn to a little pasteboard card fastened to an arched door which was painted green. "Furnished room in the fourth story, to let to a single gentleman," it said. I looked at the house. It had been freshly painted; and behind the windows could be seen white curtains and red pinks. The door was decorated with two brass lions' heads, which looked as amiable as two serene poodles; and above the door the metal number of the house—9—the number of the muses,—greeted my eyes. I rang the bell.

An elderly woman, neatly attired, opened the door, asked courteously what I wished, and when I had told her my errand, took me up four dark and rather steep flights of stairs to inspect the room which was to let. Having reached the top, she opened the door and let me step into the room. It was what I needed,—a small room, clean and airy, and high above the dampness and noise of the street, with an outlook on a maze of roofs, over which wandered a variety of cats with their elegant gait; above, the gleaming chimney swallows sailed through the blue air, and in the distance was the reticulated spire of the cathedral.

The rent was soon agreed upon, and through our mutual representations I learned that my present landlady herself was no less than the owner of the house, and the wife of a shoemaker, who worked on the first floor. I took my luggage from the hotel, and an hour later I was on the point of settling myself comfortably in my new quarters. My effects were soon unpacked and disposed of. The one table which the room contained was appropriated as a writing-desk and placed near the window. The inkstand was freshly filled, and everything was in order.

“Now, Lady Muse, you may pay me a visit as soon as you wish!” I cried out. Then the door opened; but it was not the muse who entered, but the lady of the house.

“I had almost forgotten it,” she said, laughing, and held the latch-key towards me. She wiped it carefully on her apron, although it was of polished steel, looked at it almost tenderly, and handed it to me. “If it could talk!” she added, and then I was alone with the latch-key.

It was a strong old fellow. But no! that is not the proper expression; it had rather the appearance of a worthy patriarch; its ward was carefully hollowed out, and the handle was so

large that one could put his whole hand through it. I allotted the key its place on a nail, and sat down to write, to inform those persons who took an interest in me of my present place of abode.

A week later I was, so to speak, in the traces; my day's work was laid out. The morning I spent at the city library, the larger part of the rest of the day in my watch-tower at No. 9 Heaven's Gate. I should have liked to pass my evenings at the *Green Hedgehog*, where, according to the report of several reliable gentlemen, whose acquaintance I had made, an excellent native wine was on draught; but the cruelly low state of my finances confined me to my tea-urn, which my landlady filled with water every evening, and kept very bright and clean.

The first of the next month brought me a modest income; and, as soon as it grew dark, I took the house-key with me, and with a look of disdain at the tea-urn left the house to seek the *Green Hedgehog*. The wine was really not bad, and the conversation as good as it can be only in a circle of young men who are trying to forget in a strong drink the burden and care of the day, and the rebuke of the night before.

I came home in high spirits, and rather late, and considering my cheerful frame of mind, nobody would think it strange that while I was undressing I sang the old student's song:

“At my lodgings I've studied the whole forenoon.”

Then all of a sudden it seemed to me as if a deep bass voice joined in my song, and when I looked around in alarm, I saw to my greatest amazement that my house-key was swinging on its nail like a pendulum, and I distinctly heard it humming, “I'll not stir an inch from this place till the watchman cries *twelve* in my face.—*Juvivallerala!*”

I stood still in astonishment. Nothing like it had ever happened to me before.

“House-key, old fellow,” I cried, “what is the matter with you?”

“I have no objection,” answered the house-key, “to your familiarity, although you are only a lodger, and not the owner of the house; but if you address me so, then you must allow me the same privilege.”

“Willingly; but tell me first of all—”

“How I came to have the power of speech? That I will tell you by and by, for I hope we shall be together a long time yet. So in the

mean time accept the fact as it is and do not rack your brains unnecessarily about it. In the next place, accept my thanks for having taken me with you to the tavern. You cannot believe how much good it does an old house-key, who has not crossed his own threshold for a whole year, to breathe once more the air of an inn."

Here the key began to swing like a pendulum again, and hummed at the same time, "Straight from the tavern I am coming."

I could not yet become accustomed to the miracle, and for the sake of saying something, I said, "You seem to be well versed in drinking-songs."

"So I think," answered the key. "Shall I perhaps sing you a 'Gaudeamus igitur,' or, 'The professor gives no lecture to-day'?"

"Let it be till another time. Singing might wake up the neighbors."

"Very well," continued the talkative house-key, "then we will chat together. You are not sleepy yet? Shall I tell you to whom I am indebted for all my merry drinking-songs? Oh, those were fine times!"

The house-key paused as if he were rummaging in the bottom of his memory.

“I propose,” he then continued, “that you lie down and put out the light. I can tell the story better in the dark.”

And I did as he wished.

“I have never seen a handsomer youth,” began the narrator, “than the one I am now going to tell you about. Everybody liked him, and so did I, although through him I have often been placed in a very awkward position. At that time he was a boy of about ten years, and looked roguishly out of a pair of large brown eyes. I was in the service of his parents, but had not yet come in contact with the merry Willie. So I was all the more delighted when the little fellow took me down one day from the nail, put me in his pocket and carried me out-doors. When we reached the city park he took me out and showed me to some boys who were his play-fellows. The oldest one turned me over and over, looked into my mouth, and pronounced me fit to be used. For what purpose I learned soon enough. The boy took a file out of his pocket and began to rasp me, so that sight and hearing left me. When he had made a deep wound in me, he poured a black powder inside me and placed a wad of paper on top.”

“Aha!” said I, interrupting the narrator, “so you became a key-pistol.”

“Yes, a key-pistol. I, the house-key of house No. 9 Heaven’s Gate. But,—

His days indeed are wisely spent,
Who with his station is content ;

and I determined to do honor to mine. Without trembling I awaited the burning slow-match, and—crack!—flew the charge out of my mouth, so that the sparrows in the park flew off, seized with sudden fright.

“The crowd of boys too fled in alarm, but the cause of their sudden fright was not myself, but a man, who wore a blue coat with brass buttons, and on his white belt a sword. Unnoticed he had emerged from behind the elder-bushes, and with the cry, ‘I’ve got you, you rascals!’ he made a dash at the boys. To be sure, he didn’t get near them, for they had already reached a place of safety, but I, the innocent one, was seized and taken away.

“‘Farewell, No. 9 Heaven’s Gate,’ I sighed ; and in my mind I already saw myself amongst old iron, in the company of bent nails and rusty stove-doors. But it was to be otherwise. As soon as

Willie's father missed me, he began to search for me everywhere, and the one who alone could give information of my whereabouts judiciously held his peace; so the anxious man, fearing that I might have been taken for criminal purposes, immediately went to the police, to report the case.

“The joy which I felt when the police officer, with a mild smile, asked my master if I were the missing key, and the face Willie's father made when he learned how I had come into the hands of the police, I am unable to describe in words. I was returned to my rightful owner, and carried home in his coat pocket, after he had paid a dollar as a fine for forbidden shooting within the city limits. The unpleasant scene between father and son, which concluded the adventure, I will pass over in silence. The wound which the boys gave me, when they made a key-pistol out of me, was healed by a locksmith. If you examine me carefully to-morrow, you will detect, an inch above my handle, a reddish scar. I am not ashamed of it.”

The house-key paused a moment, as if to get his breath, and then continued:—

“My friend Willie now seemed to avoid me

studiously. At first, after the occurrence I have just told you of, he looked at me slyly, and then he ceased to look at me at all. Thus passed several years. Willie had become a handsome, slender youth, and his mother told him so every day. He already had a tobacco-pipe with bright-colored tassels, and he filled it from his father's tobacco pouch when his father's back was turned. Sometimes he came home late in the evening with a heated brain, and then his father would scold, and his mother had great difficulty in defending her son.

“One evening Willie stayed out excessively late, and his father stormed worse than ever. ‘I’ll let the young scapegrace see how he gets into the house,’ said he, finally, in great anger, and he locked the front door himself, laid me under his pillow, and went to sleep. But his mother was awake. She cautiously drew me out from beneath the bolster, and tied me up carefully in a handkerchief. Then she placed herself by the window to wait, and when about midnight Willie came creeping along, she dropped me down on the street. Her son seized me, and after fumbling about some time for the key-hole, opened the door, and when he had given me back to his anxious mother,

groped his way along to his chamber. How his father was pacified the next morning I do not remember.

“Again some time passed by, and then came a festal day. The father himself gave me over to his son,— who was now called a student and wore a red cap,— and made a long speech, which he ended by saying that Willie must always show himself worthy of me. The son thanked him with emotion and received me with beaming eyes. I once heard that the king bestows golden keys upon people of high rank, and that this is a great honor; but I can hardly believe that one of them ever experienced so great joy at this distinction as my Willie felt when he put me in his pocket.

“The day when the key was given over was followed by the merriest night which I ever spent, and it will live in my memory till I have crumbled away to rust. He who was now my owner carried me to the rooms of the club of which he was to become a member. Ah, then there was a high old time! Gay carousers with bright-colored caps and belts, waiting-maids with white aprons and black eyes, full mugs and drinking-horns, shining rapiers, merry songs, jollity and noise till morning light.”

“I know all about that, house-key. I know all about that.”

“The merriest of them all was my Willie. He was so delighted at having possession of me that he gave his companions a keg of the best beer; and the knowledge that, as owner of a house-key, he was admitted to the circle of free and independent men, made him very bold towards the brown-haired Toni. When Willie reached Heaven’s Gate the sun was already up, and the door of house No. 9 had just been unfastened. The first time that I was at Willie’s disposal he had no need of me.

“Now began the merriest time of my life. Many similar evenings followed this first one like the beads of a rosary. In the mean time there were drives, torchlight processions, drinking-parties, and many merry college tricks; and I was always present, for the advice of the philosopher,

The crafty tippler his house-key takes
At early morn when he awakes,

was wisely followed by my master. Moreover, that as academical house-key I did not let the time pass unemployed I have already given you proof.

“Under the circumstances, my share in the events of my master’s life was a passive one. Oh, if I had never left the roll of a spectator! That unfortunate moment when I became active in the course of events was the cause of everlasting separation from my Willie. I will be brief, for the pain of recollection forbids me any flowers of speech. Besides, it is late in the night, and you will want to go to sleep.

“My friend Willie had gone with his companions to a village, and there the young men were having a good time over their glasses, laughing, shouting, and singing. But not far from the table where the students were drinking, a crowd of journey-men mechanics, rough, but strong men, had sat down.

“I do not know whether it is now as it was then. At that time, whenever students and mechanics, whom we collegians called ‘snags,’ met, they began to banter each other. But this time it soon grew into a quarrel, and it was my master who, by singing the song, ‘God bless you, brother bristler,’ commenced hostilities. At first, insulting words passed back and forth; later on, beer mugs, and other things that happened to be at hand; and when these missiles gave out, they seized sticks

and the legs of chairs. How the unlucky thought of using me as a weapon came into my owner's head, I do not know; I only know that I did great mischief in the young fellow's hand. But let us draw the curtain over this unprofitable scene.

“After that day I found myself once more in the hands of justice, and had a fine Latin name given to me, which has escaped my memory.”

“Probably it was *corpus delicti*, was it not?”

“Quite right!” cried the house-key with delight. “As *corpus delicti* I was put with the reports, but my poor young friend sat in a narrow room, whose doors were bolted outside and the windows furnished with iron gratings. People call it a prison.”

“I know all about that, too, house-key.

“So much the better, as it will save me from going into details. But give me your attention a few minutes longer. I am almost at the end. The affair in which we were concerned turned out very badly. Willie was expelled; and when he had paid his fine, left the city. To be sure, I went back to my home; but my merry life was all over. Sad at heart, I spent my days on a nail in a dark corner; and what I learned from time to time about my darling from his parents' con-

versation did not help to lessen my sadness. Trouble gnawed at the hearts of the two old people and rust gnawed at mine. It was a lucky day for me that a change soon took place in my circumstances. Willie's parents sold the house — it was said, to pay their son's debts — and I passed into other hands, — hands which cleaned away the rust from me, and by repeated oilings restored my lost virtues.

“I have never heard a word about Willie's parents; but himself I have seen once since then, and this meeting I will tell you about to-morrow. For the present, good night.”

“Good night, house-key!”

On the following morning, when I awoke somewhat later than usual, my house-key was hanging silently on its nail, and to my faint-hearted “good morning” gave no reply. “Probably,” I thought, “he speaks only at midnight; or, still more probably, it was all a dream.” The last supposition seemed to me more and more likely, in proportion as sleep left my limbs. “How can one dream such foolish stuff!” I said to myself; “the home-made wine and the gay conversation of last evening were to blame for it.” I dressed myself and went to my daily

work, which, like yesterday, I crowned with a visit to the *Green Hedgehog*.

“Now we shall soon see whether I was dreaming or not,” I said, as I returned to my room towards midnight. “How are you, old house-key?”

“Thank you for the kind inquiry; very well,” sounded the answer. “I am always feeling well when I have breathed the fragrance of wine.”

So it was a fact, and no dream. I opened the window and put my head out. A falling star made a bright arch in the sky, and across from the cathedral sounded the striking of bells. I pulled my ear. No, I was not dreaming. I really possessed a talking house-key.

“May I talk with you again a little while?” he asked courteously.

“Nothing would please me better,” I replied, politely put out the light, and stretched myself at full length on my bed.

“About two years after the event I last described,” began the key, “I was in the service of a man who had this very room which you now occupy, and who, like you, lived by writing. He was not very old then, but his thin hair

was already turning gray, and gray was also the color of his wrinkled face. It seemed to be his favorite color, for he usually wore gray clothes too, and even gray spectacles; gray dust lay on his books, and gray ink flowed from his pen on grayish paper.

“This man possessed the faculty of seeing the imperfections of anything at the first glance. When he took me for the first time in his hand he immediately spied the scar which I carry as a remembrance of the time when I served as a key-pistol. ‘Patched!’ he said, with a spiteful laugh, and pushed me away from him. When the morning sun looked in at the window to greet him, he spoke of sun-spots; when the moon rose in the evening above the gabled roof, he would say, ‘She has neither air nor water’; and if he went out into the park in May-time, he did not see the young leaves and the white blossoms, but only the caterpillars on them.

“There was a good reason for the gray man’s bitter manners. He had made a compact with Gallus, the ink-devil, who all day long sat in a great dust-covered inkstand and came out at night to squat on the paper-weight and help his master write. But the suggestions of a

wicked ink-devil are not as sweet as honey. The gray man was a so-called critic. Do you know what that is?"

"I know what it is; go on, house-key, go on!"

"My owner seldom made use of me. The crabbed man never went into gay company, therefore he often visited the theatre, and then he took me with him, so I am under some obligation to him for enlarging my knowledge. To be sure, he seldom remained long, but usually left the house soon after the first act, which in no way prevented him from criticising the rest.

"One evening he took me—as it seemed to me, with an uncanny laugh—from the nail, examined my mouth, put me in his pocket, and went out of the house. By the direction which we took, and the length of the way, I concluded that the gray man was going to a theatre in the suburbs; and so he was. He went in and took a seat. They were tuning the instruments in the orchestra; the doors of the boxes slammed; a humming sound gave reason to conclude that the house was filling up; the music began; the curtain rose, and the play commenced. I could only follow it intelligently with my ears, for my seat was in

my master's dark coat pocket, and the opera glass, which repelled all my attempts to get nearer with haughty silence, was often the object of my envy. To-day the play was to be a play for me in the true sense of the word, for my master took me out of my dark dungeon and allowed me a look at the audience and the stage.

“Saint Florian! what did I see! On the front of the stage, near the lights, stood a slender young man, in picturesque costume, and with very red cheeks and coal-black, artificial curls. It was Willie, my own never-to-be-forgotten Willie. Now he ran both hands through his hair, rolled his eyes like two fire-wheels, and cried: ‘Wretches! wretches! false, hypocritical crocodiles! Your eyes are water—your hearts brass! Kisses on your lips—swords in your bosoms!’

“Then the gray man put me to his lower lip, and drew from me the shrillest sound, which went to the bottom of my soul. And as if the whistle which shrieked through the house had been a preconcerted sign, there arose all at once such a fiendish uproar as I never heard before. There was whistling, hissing, stamping of feet, thumping of canes, laughing, and screaming, till the

walls and ceiling shook. I saw my old friend stagger and beat his forehead with his doubled fist. Then the curtain fell. It was the last time that I ever saw my poor Willie. And I have never been able to learn what became of him. Good night."

"Good night, old fellow."

Man can accustom himself to anything, even to a talking key. On the following evening it seemed quite natural to expect a little gossip from the house-key before going to sleep, and my friend did not keep me waiting long.

"Do you know," he began, "that this afternoon, instead of remaining at your work, you spent two hours looking out the window?"

"Was it really two hours, house-key? Well, you see, I was tired of working; besides, the closeness of the room and the fresh air outside—"

"And the little seamstress in the attic room across the way," interrupted the house-key; "well, well, don't be angry. I am not going to preach you a sermon. You are old enough to know what to do and what not to do. But the sight of the neat, flaxen-haired person, plying her needle so industriously, brought to my mind an old story, which I would like to tell you."

“Let me hear it,” I implored, and the house-key began:—

“Years ago there lived in this house a seamstress, who was not unlike your opposite neighbor. She was a very young thing, and as pretty as a picture; besides, she was as busy as a bee, and merry as a crested lark in May. And she sang like a lark while at her work, and lovely songs, such as, for example, ‘Enjoy life while the light is still burning,’ ‘Three knights came riding through the gate,’ and ‘Early in the morn a little maid arose.’ Altogether, it was rather noisy in the house at that time, for, besides little Lizzie, there were half a dozen other seamstresses, fair-haired and dark, good and bad. They were employed by a large woman with false curls and a well-oiled tongue that went all day like a mill-clapper.

“The poor things had to work busily, for their employer kept a sharp watch over their fingers. But she did not treat the young people altogether badly, and what at first struck me as strange was the strictness with which she watched over the young girls’ conduct. Indeed, evil tongues were of the opinion that this happened more from jealousy than from motherly anxiety, and at last I almost came to think so too.

“At that time, just as now, there was a shoemaker’s shop on the ground floor; and I soon found out that the brown-haired foreman had his eye on little Lizzie. In spite of all madam’s watchfulness, it occasionally happened that the two young people met on the steps. At such times the shoemaker usually said: ‘Fine weather to-day, little miss’; and Lizzie would reply, ‘Yes, very fine weather’; and then she would slip quickly past him like a shrew-mouse. My place was then on a nail out in the hall, and thus it happened that I could overlook the doorsteps. One morning—it was Lizzie’s birthday—I saw the shoemaker creep up the stairs in the early dawn, before anybody was awake, and lay something gently on the floor before the young girl’s door. People in love are wont to leave flowers at such a time. But the foreman’s gift was not of that kind, but a pair of dainty, high-heeled shoes of polished leather, of which a princess might have been proud. Fortunately, the little maiden discovered them in safety before anybody else had seen them. How delighted she was! The shoes fitted perfectly, and the shoemaker had never taken her measure.”

Here the house-key paused, and I concluded that he had reached a change in affairs.

“A short time after,” the key went on to say, “the stout woman who employed the seamstresses received a visit from a young man of distinguished bearing, who ordered a large quantity of fine linen. The visit was repeated a day or two later, and then oftener, and I soon knew that the young count, for such he was, came to the house on account of little Lizzie. Probably he had made her acquaintance sometime when she was out for a walk, for I noticed particularly that she already knew him, I discovered too, to my disappointment, that she was not indifferent to him; and what disturbed me most was the fact that the madam this time seemed to be blind.

“But the shoemaker on the ground floor was not blind. Whenever the count entered the house, the poor fellow would hammer away as fiercely at his boot-sole as if he had his favored rival under his hand.

“The last day of the year had come. On New Year’s eve the seamstresses were regularly invited to take punch with their employer; and so they were this time. In the course of the afternoon the count had been there, and had spoken in a low voice with little Lizzie in the hall, and I had heard their conversation.

“The evening came, and soon the company were sitting around the big bowl of fragrant drink, and consuming great mountains of cake. I, too, was there, and was a person of no small importance. The maidens were going to pour lead, and one of them thought that the melted metal ought to be dropped through a church key, to make the charm effective. For want of a church key they had selected me, and I think, myself, without boasting, that I am about as good as a church key. What do you think?”

“You are the most dignified key I have ever met,” I replied.

“Thank you,” said the key, somewhat affected. “But let me go on.

“The lead was brought; it was lead from a church window. They melted it in an iron spoon, and then one after another poured the hot metal through my ring into a bowl filled with water. This caused much fun and laughter. Little Lizzie, too, who had sat the whole evening silent and absorbed, took the spoon and poured the lead. ‘A shoemaker’s chair!’ cried one of the maidens, laughing. ‘No, a count’s crown!’ said a second, making up a scornful face.

“Whereupon another play was begun, in which

I was also used. They fastened me to a thread and suspended me in an empty glass. Then some one would ask a question, and if I struck against the glass once, they understood the answer to be yes, and if more than once, no.

“Thus the time passed till midnight. The bells were striking twelve from the tower; the company wished one another a Happy New Year, and then each of the young girls went to her room. In the midst of breaking up no attention was paid to me, and nobody saw that little Lizzie seized me, and hid me in her pocket.

“When she reached her room she took a ball of yarn from her work-basket and tied the end of it, with trembling fingers, to my handle. Her heart was beating loudly.

“‘Wait,’ she said softly to herself; ‘I will first ask Fate whether I ought to do it or not.’ She placed a glass on the table and suspended me in it by the thread. ‘Yes or no?’ she asked with quivering voice.

“If I had possessed the gift of human speech then, I should surely have made use of it to give her some good advice; but I had to see in silence what danger the poor child was in. ‘No,’ thought I, ‘she must be warned.’ I made

myself as heavy as I possibly could, and — crack — crack! — the thread had given way, and the glass was broken to pieces.

“The maiden grew deathly pale, and shook from head to foot. Trembling, she gathered up the fragments; then she knelt down and prayed a long, long time.

“After that she was calm. She put out the light and went to bed. After a while footsteps were heard in front of the house, and a low whistle. Lizzie did not move, but buried her little head in her pillow. But I saw, sitting at the sleeping maiden’s head the whole night long, a little angel, who had two wings and carried a lily in his hand.”

“That sounds improbable, house-key.”

“Improbable?” returned the house-key, grieved. “Is it not far more improbable that a house-key should tell you a story?”

Nothing could be said against that, and I thought it advisable to keep silent.

“It only remains now for me to tell you,” my friend continued, “that the old woman who lets this room to you is none other than the little Lizzie of that time, and that her husband, the old, white-haired shoemaker, is the same one

who placed a pair of high-heeled shoes in front of the little seamstress' door.

"And to-morrow," the key went on to say, "when we return from the *Green Hedgehog* I will tell you how I came by the ability to express myself in human speech. That is the most wonderful story of all."

"To-morrow, dear house-key," I said, with a sigh, "we shall hardly visit the *Green Hedgehog*; but I will listen with pleasure to your gossip, over a cup of tea."

"Over a cup of tea?" asked the house-key, drawling his words. "No, my friend, that would not do. Know that I only talk when I have spent the evening at the tavern."

"Then I must wait patiently till the first of next month," I replied, disheartened.

The house-key muttered something I could not understand, in his beard. A happy thought came to me.

"Do you know what, old friend!" I said; "I will, of course with your permission, put the stories you have told me on paper, and send the manuscript to a man who prints such things. Perhaps, next month, we can have one or two evenings more at the *Green Hedgehog*."

"Do it," said the house-key.

THE FORGOTTEN BELL.



MANY, many years ago there was a pious hermit. He had turned his back on the world, and had built a hermitage in a green meadow, which lay in the midst of the forest; and the peasants of the neighboring villages and farms had helped him diligently in the building and furnishing of his hut. Next the hermit's dwelling stood a chapel with a doleful Madonna; and above it, under a little roof, hung a small bell, which the solitary man was accustomed to ring at certain hours, and this was his most important work of the day; the rest of the time he spent in prayer and pious reflection. His thirst he quenched at a cool fountain, which sprang up out of the black-wood earth, not far from the hermitage; but he satisfied his hunger with the fruit of the forest and the food which the faithful peasant women brought to him.

In this way the pious man lived for a long

succession of years. Then he laid himself down on his bed of straw, wrapped himself up closely in his cowl, and died. Many tears were shed at his burial, and the sobbing women said, "Such a hermit as he was we shall never have again." And in this respect they were quite right.

It happened that soon after the hermit's decease another came, who established himself in the deserted hermitage; and he pleased the women quite well, for he was young in years and had a pair of eyes as black as coals. But the new hermit was an eyesore to the men; why, it was never exactly known. In short, the peasants collected together one day, seized the recluse, and conducted him to the highway. And the hermit turned his back to the thankless fellows, and was seen no more in that region.

From that time the hermitage stood desolate, and only occasionally did a roving huntsman, or a maiden with her jug, turn their footsteps towards the deserted house to draw refreshment from the well near by. Brown wood-moss grew luxuriantly on the thatched roof of the hermitage, and brambles and clematis grew round the door and windows. In the deceased hermit's

straw bed the field-mice were rearing their young, and in the chapel the red-tail had built her nest. The forest, with its creatures, was gradually taking possession again of the ground which man had taken away from it.

Spring was about to make her appearance, and the earth was getting ready for the Easter festival. With damp wings the thawing wind came flying across the sea, shook the trees and threw the fir-cones and dead branches on the ground. The springs and brooks murmured louder, and ran more swiftly on their winding way. The tips of the snowdrops and anemones peeped stealthily up out of the ground in the woods, and the showy laurel put on its red silk gown. Then came the hoopoo bird with his bright-colored crest and announced the coming of the cuckoo. And the briars shook off their last dry leaves and stood with their buds swollen with sap, waiting patiently for the awakening call of Spring.

The little bell in the ruined forest chapel saw with sorrow how everything was preparing for the feast of the Resurrection. In former years, when the sound of the bells trembled through the air at the happy Easter-tide, she, too, had

lifted her voice and sung in the chorus of the proud sisters in the church towers. But that time was long ago. Since the old hermit was buried, no hand had pulled the rope at Easter-tide; silent and forgotten hung the bell beneath her little roof, and for a bell nothing is harder than to be obliged to keep silent at the feast of the Resurrection.

Passion week had come. On Wednesday the hare came bounding out of the forest. He stopped in front of the chapel, stood on his hind legs, and called up to the bell, "If you have anything to be done in the city, tell me, for I am on my way there. I have been appointed Easter hare, and have my paws full, and so much business to attend to that I don't know which end my head is on." The sorrowful bell kept silent, and the hare ran on.

The next night there was a mighty roaring in the air. The roes crouched down in the underbrush, for they thought it was the night huntsman passing through the forest. But it was not the forest fiend, but the bells, on their way to Rome to obtain the blessing of the Pope.

The bell from the convent on the mountain came over to the forest chapel, and stopped for a moment.

"How is it, sister," she asked the forgotten bell, "that you are not going, too?"

"Ah, I would gladly go," lamented the little bell. "But I have been idle the whole year long, therefore I dare not go with you. Still, if you will do me a favor, say a good word to the holy father in Rome for me. Perhaps he will send some one to ring me on Easter Sunday. It is so melancholy to have to be silent when all of you are singing. Will you do me the kindness?"

The convent bell mumbled something like "*non possumus.*" Then she arose, like a great, clumsy bird, from the ground, and flew after the others. And the forgotten bell remained sadly behind.

"Be thankful that human beings leave you in peace," said the forest owl to the bell. "The stupid beasts in the woods understand nothing about your ringing, and it disturbs me in my meditation. But you are not entirely forsaken, for I am going to build my nest near you. And you will gain much by it, for I am a man from whom you can learn a great deal." Thus spoke the owl, and puffed himself up. But the bell gave him no answer.

Easter morning dawned. Twilight still lingered over the village, and the mist stretched over

the mountain slope. A cool wind blew through the branches of the trees, stirred the white May lilies, and rustled through the dry reeds, so that it sounded like the low tones of a harp. Then the mountain tops grew red, and the firs creaked and shook their branches, as if they were just awaking from sleep. The sun rose and scattered gold over the tips of the fir-trees, and the wood birds flapped their wings, raised their voices, and sang their Easter songs. But the forgotten bell hung sad and silent under the roof in the chapel.

At the same hour a young man was walking along the highway which led through the forest. He wore a huntsman's leather jacket and a gray hawk's feather in his hat. By his left side hung a broad hunting-knife, with a handle of a stag's horn; but instead of fire-arms, he carried a heavily packed knapsack of badger's skin. This and a cane of buckthorn with iron mountings, which he swung in his right hand, led one to suppose that the huntsman was not after game, but was making a journey; and so it was.

At the place where a path which led to a mill struck off from the road, the young fellow stopped, and seemed undecided whether to keep on the road or to take the meadow path. But he did not

linger long. He cast a gloomy look in the direction of the mill, threw his head back haughtily, and gave a hunting-cry that made the fir-woods resound. Then as he went along, he sang:—

“Farewell, green jocund forest home!
 Thee must I leave behind me,
 Throughout the weary world to roam
 Till Fortune’s favors find me.
 As hunter lad
 My joy I’ve had
 The noble stag in chasing;
 But now my way
 Leads to the fray
 Where death I shall be facing.

“A gray hawk sat upon the height,
 Enchained by evil magic;
 In sadness pined he day and night,
 His mood was grim and tragic.
 He would exchange
 For freedom’s range
 The forests’ wide dominions;
 On high, on high,
 Thou wild bird, fly,
 And spread thy noble pinions.”

But the last words stuck in the young man’s throat, and the half-suppressed sigh at the end ill accorded with the huntsman’s joyous manner.

Suddenly the youth left the broad road, and went diagonally through the forest, straight to the deserted hermitage. By the spring, which had its source near the house he stopped, bent down, and filled a wooden cup with the cool water. He drank it slowly, and sprinkled the last drops on the moss. "Well," he said, "now it is all over."

The water was clear and cold, but it could not cool the hot blood of the one who drank it. The young huntsman sat down on the threshold of the hermitage and covered his face with both hands.

The summer before, after a long absence, he had returned to the country, and entered the service of the old forester. He had seen something of the world; in the emperor's hunting-train, he had chased the chamois and the steinboc in the high mountains; he had followed his master to the merry hunting-boxes and to the splendid residence in the capital; and everywhere he had carried with him his love for the miller's fair-haired daughter in his native valley. He had come back with a generous sum of money and many sweet hopes, but they had melted away to nothing, and now he was on the point of leaving the country and enlisting as a soldier.

It was near the hermitage in the forest where he had found his sweetheart for the first time after their separation. She had come to draw water; and when the hunter recognized the beautiful, slender form, as she bent over the well, his joy was so great that he leaped from his hiding-place with a wild shout, and threw his arms around the frightened maiden. But she had pushed him roughly away from her, so that he fell backwards, and then she turned her back and went away.

Later on, the huntsman had tried once more to approach the miller's daughter. It was at the time of the harvest festival, when young and old march in bands to the dancing-ground. There the huntsman had waylaid the beautiful girl, and had come to meet her with a friendly greeting and a bouquet of clove pinks. But when she saw the youth coming towards her, she had turned around and gone back to the mill, and the hunter, in his anger, had thrown the bunch of pinks into the mill brook. The coy maid had fished the flowers out of the water near the dam, dried them, and laid them away in her chest, but he knew nothing about that.

Then perversity came over the huntsman. "If you go to the left, I will go to the right," he

thought; and lest she might imagine that he took the matter to heart, he joined a company of gay fellows, drank, sang, and carried on so madly that the wild youth was in everybody's mouth for seven miles around.

That went on through the whole winter. Then one evening a bright light, which took the form of a sword, was seen in the sky, and shortly after the news came that in the spring there would be war in Italy. It was not long before the beating of drums was heard in the land, and the roads swarmed with travelling people, who were all going to join the imperial army. Then the huntsman gave notice that he was going to leave the forester's service, gave his drinking-companions a generous parting cup, and followed the rest, to forget on the field his sorrow and distress. And he had already really come as far as the hermitage in the forest. He was now sitting on the door-stone, sadly hanging his head.

A soft, distant rustling in the underbrush fell on the young fellow's sharp ear. The huntsman was awake in him, and his sharp eye looked about for the cause of the sound. But it was no shifting game that was coming through the bushes. Between the trunks of the fir-trees gleaned some-

thing light, like a woman's garments, and the hunter slipped noiselessly, but with loud-beating heart, behind the wall of the house, for through the forest came walking her whom he would fain forget, but could not forget.

The maiden came slowly nearer. Now and then she bent down to add a flower to the nosegay which she carried in her hand, and each time her long flaxen braids would fall forward and touch the ground. When she reached the well, she filled a little earthen jug with the water and placed the nosegay in it. Then she went into the chapel, placed the flowers before the image of the Virgin, and knelt down on the moss-covered step.

In a low voice she repeated the angel's greeting, and then began to pour out her heart to the queen of heaven. It was a prayer full of self-accusation and repentance. "I have driven him from me," she bemoaned, "driven him out into danger and death, and yet I love him so! more dearly than the light of my eyes! Still there is time to change everything by a word of reconciliation, if I knew that he still loved me. Easter is the time of miracles. Give me, oh, heaven, a sign, if he still thinks of me lovingly and faithfully, and I will run after him to the

end of the world, and bring him back. Give me a sign!"

Then above her softly sounded the bell. It was only a single tone, but it rang through the heart of the grieved maiden like a joyful song of jubilee. She lifted her eyes and looked up questioningly at the Madonna. Then the bell sounded for the second time, and louder and more joyful, and when the maiden turned, there stood in the entrance of the chapel the young huntsman, stretching out his arms to his beloved. And this time she did not run away. She threw her arms about the wild hunter's sun-burned neck, and stammered words of love.

The titmice, and the golden-crested wrens which lived in the branches of the fir-trees, fluttered along, and the wood-mouse put his head out at the door of his house, and everything looked curiously at the pair in the chapel.

The two remained in each others' embrace for a long time. Then the huntsman grasped the rope of the bell and called up to it: "Bell, you have brought us together; now tell our joy to the forest!" And the little bell under the chapel roof began to gleam with joy in the warm sunshine, and swung tirelessly to and fro and let her clear voice sound through the forest.

From the towers in the surrounding villages came the sounds of famous church bells. They had returned the night before from their visit to Rome, and had seen many wonderful sights. But not one of them sang her Easter song so joyfully as the little forgotten bell in the forest.

THE WATER OF YOUTH.



IT was Midsummer day and the heat of noon lay on the cornfields. Occasionally a fresh breeze blew down from the forest mountain; then the stalks would bend low, and the poppies on the border of the field would scatter their delicate petals. Crickets and grasshoppers made music in the grain, and from the hawthorn bushes on the boundary line came now and then the low call of the yellow-hammer.

Through the cornfield, which stretched from the valley to the mountain, along a narrow path a young peasant woman of slender, vigorous form, was walking. She wore the full gown customary in the country, and a red kerchief on her head to protect her from the sun's rays; a basket hung on her left arm, and in her right hand she carried a stone jug.

As soon as the gold-hammer in the hawthorn bush saw her, he flew to the topmost bough and

greeted her with the cry, "Little girl, little girl, how are you!" But the bird was mistaken; the fair-haired Greta was no maiden, but a young wife, and she was now on her way to her husband, who was cutting wood over in the forest.

When the beautiful woman reached the edge of the woods she stopped to listen, and soon she heard the blows of an axe, towards which she was to turn her steps. It was not long before she caught sight of her husband, who was felling a fir-tree with mighty strokes, and she called to him in a joyful voice.

"Stand still, where you are!" he shouted back; "the tree is going to fall." And the fir-tree gave a deep groan, bent forward, and fell to the ground with a crash.

Then Greta came along, and the sun-burned wood-cutter took his young wife in his arms and kissed her fondly. Then they sat down on the trunk of a tree and took out the lunch that she had brought in the basket. Then Hans laid down his bread, seized his axe, saying, "I have forgotten something," and went to the stump of the tree he had just felled, and cut three crosses in the wood.

"Why do you do that, Hans?" asked his wife.

“That is for the sake of the little old women of the forest,” the husband explained. “The poor little creatures have a wicked enemy, the wild huntsman. He lies in wait for them day and night, and hunts them with his dogs. But if the persecuted little women can escape to such a tree trunk, then the wild huntsman can do them no harm, on account of the three crosses.”

The young wife opened her eyes wide. “Have you ever seen one of these little forest folk?” she asked, with curiosity.

“No; they seldom let themselves be seen. But this is Midsummer day, and then they are visible.” And suddenly he called out in a clear voice into the forest, “Little forest woman, come forth!”

He had only done it to tease his wife. But on holy Midsummer day one should not make sport of such things in the forest.

Suddenly there stood before the young people a little woman about an ell high, of dainty form and beautiful face. She wore a long white dress, and a bunch of mistletoe in her yellow hair.

Hans and Greta were very much startled. They rose quickly from their seat, and Greta made a courtesy as well as she knew how.

“You called me at just the right time,” said the little creature, and pointed with her forefinger at the sun, which stood exactly over her head; “and one good turn”—here she pointed to the stump with the three marks—“deserves another. Gold and silver have I none to give you, but I know something better. Come with me; no harm will happen to you; and take your jug with you; you will be able to use it.”

Having spoken these words, she went on. Hans shouldered his axe, Greta took up her stone jug, and both followed the little woman. But she walked exactly like a duck, and Greta pulled her husband's arm, pointed to the little waddling woman, and was going to whisper something in his ear, but Hans laid his finger on his mouth. Nothing hurts the little creatures more than to have their gait made fun of. They have feet like a goose, and that is why they wear long, flowing skirts.

After a short time, the three came to an open place in the woods. Primeval trees stood in a circle around a meadow, in the grass grew lilies and bluebells, and great butterflies sat on them, opening and shutting their wings. And Hans, who thought he knew the whole forest, could

not remember that he had ever been in this place before. On the border of the meadow stood a little house. The walls were covered with bark, and the roof was shingled with scales of fir cones, and each scale was fastened down with a rose-thorn. Here was the little woman's home.

She led her guests behind the house, and pointed to a well whose waters flowed noiselessly out of the black earth. Juicy colt's-foot and *fleur-de-lis* grew on its brink, and over the surface danced golden-green dragon-flies.

"That is the well of youth," said the little woman. "A bath in its waters makes an old man a boy and an old woman a young girl again. But if one drinks the water, it prevents him from growing old, and grants him the freshness of youth till death. Fill your jug and carry it home. But use the precious water sparingly: one drop every Sunday is sufficient to keep you young. And one thing more: if ever you, Hans, cast your eye on any other woman, or you, Greta, on any other man, the water will lose its power. Remember that. Now fill your jug, and farewell!"

The little creature spoke these words, pre-

vented the lucky pair from thanking her, and went into her house. But Greta filled the jug with the water of youth, and then hurried away, as fast as she could go, to her own cottage.

When they reached home, Hans put the water in a bottle, and sealed it with fir-resin. "For the present," he said, "we have no use for the water of youth, and we can save it; the time will come soon enough when we shall need it." And then they put the bottle in the cupboard, where they kept their treasures,—a pair of old coins, a string of garnet beads from which hung a golden penny, and two silver spoons. "But, Greta, now be sure and take care that the water does not lose its strength!"

And what care they took! If the young forester passed by the garden, and exchanged a greeting with Greta, as he was accustomed to do, then Greta did not look up from her vegetable bed. And when Hans sat in the *White Stag* in the evening, and the pretty Lizzie brought him the wine, he made up a face like a cat when it thunders; and at last he gave up going to the inn, and stayed at home with his wife. So the water must surely keep its magic power.

Thus passed a year of love and happiness to

the young pair; for instead of two there were three of them. In the cradle a little round boy was kicking and screaming, till the father's heart leaped for joy. "Now," he thought, "the time has come for opening the bottle. What do you think, Greta? A drop of the water of youth will do you good."

His wife agreed with him, and Hans went to the room where the magic drink was kept. With his hands trembling for joy, he broke the seal, and—oh dear! oh dear! the bottle slipped from his grasp, and the drink of youth flowed over the floor. A little more and Hans would have fallen on the floor, too, for he was so frightened at the misfortune. What should he do? On no account should his wife know what had happened; she might die from fright. Perhaps he would tell her later what he had done; perhaps, too, he might find the well of youth again,—which, to be sure, he had sought for hitherto in vain,—and repair the loss. He hastily filled a new bottle, which was exactly like the first, with well-water; and well-water it was too that he gave to his wife.

"Ah, how that revives and strengthens me!" said Greta. "Take a drop too, dear Hans."

And Hans obeyed, and praised the virtue of the wonderful drink; and from that time on they each took a drop when the bells were ringing for church. And Greta bloomed like a rose; as for Hans, every vein in his body swelled with health and strength. But he put off the confession of his deed from day to day; for he secretly hoped to find the well of youth again at last. But roam through the woods as much as he would, the meadow where the little old woman lived he could not find.

Thus two years more passed by. A little girl had come to join the little boy, and Greta's round chin had grown double. She did not notice it herself, for looking-glasses were not known in those days. Hans saw it, to be sure, but he took care not to speak of it, and his love for his portly wife redoubled.

Then came a misfortune; at least, Dame Greta considered it so. One day, when she was cleaning house, little Peter, her eldest, got into the cupboard, where the bottle of the supposed water of youth stood, clumsily upset it, so that it broke and spilled the contents.

"Oh, merciful heavens!" bewailed the mother. "It is lucky, though, that Hans is not at home!"

With trembling hands she gathered up the pieces from the floor, and replaced the bottle with another, which she filled with ordinary water. — “The deception will surely be found out, for now it is all over with the eternal youth. Oh dear, oh dear!” — But she determined, above all, not to let her husband notice anything unusual.

Again some time passed by, and the two people lived together the same as on the day that the priest joined their hands together. Each carefully avoided letting the other notice that youth was past, and every Sunday they conscientiously took the magic drop.

One morning, when the husband was combing his hair, it happened that he came across a gray hair. And he thought, “Now the time has come for me to tell my wife the truth.” With a heavy heart he began: “Greta, it seems to me that our water of youth has lost its power. See! I have found a gray hair. I am growing old.”

Greta was startled; but she recovered herself, and, with a forced laugh, cried: “A gray hair! I was no more than ten years old when I had a gray lock in my hair. Such a thing often happens. You have just been cleaning a badger; perhaps you got some of the fat in your hair;

badger's fat is known to turn the hair gray. No, dear Hans, the water still has its old power, or," — here she gave him an anxious look — "or do you think that I am growing old too?"

Then Hans laughed outright. "You — old? You are as blooming as a peony!" And then he threw his arms around her big waist and gave her a kiss. But when he was by himself he said with secret delight, "Thank the Lord! She doesn't notice that we are growing old. So I must have done right."

And his wife thought the same thing.

On the evening of the same day the young people of the village danced to the fiddle of a travelling musician, and no merrier couple turned about the linden-tree than Hans and Greta. The peasant women, to be sure, made sarcastic remarks about them, but the two happy people heard none of their ridicule.

In the following autumn it happened, as Hans was eating a Martinmas goose with his family, Dame Greta broke out one of her teeth. Then there was a great lament, for she had been proud of her white teeth. And when the husband and wife were alone together, Greta said in an unsteady voice, "Such a misfortune would not have happened if the water —"

Then Hans began to scold. "You expect the water to help everything? Doesn't it often happen, that a child, in cracking a nut, breaks out a tooth? What have you against the delicious water? Are you not as fresh and healthy as a young head of lettuce? Or have you cast your eyes on another, that you mistrust the water's virtue?"

Then his wife laughed, wiped the tears from her cheeks, and kissed her old man till he nearly lost his breath. In the afternoon they sat together on the stone seat in front of the house, and sang duets about true love, and the passers-by said, "The silly old people!" but the happy pair did not hear them.

Thus passed many years. The house had become too small for the children; they had married and gone away, and had children of their own. The two old people were alone again, and were as much in love with each other as on the day of their wedding; and every Sunday, when the bells were ringing for church, they each took one drop out of the bottle.

Midsummer day was drawing near again. The evening before, Hans and Greta were sitting in front of the house, looking up towards

the hill where the Midsummer bonfire was blazing; and from the distance sounded the merry shouts of the young men and maidens, as they poked the fire and jumped through the flames in couples. Then the wife said, "Dear Hans, I should like to go into the forest once more. If you are willing, we will start early to-morrow morning. But you must waken me, for, at the time when the elderberries bloom, young women are apt to sleep long after daylight."

Hans was agreed. The next morning he woke his wife and they went together to the woods. They walked along arm in arm, like two lovers, and each carefully guarded the steps of the other.

When Hans stepped cautiously over the root of a tree, his wife would say, "Oh, Hans, you jump like a young kid!" And when Greta timidly crossed a little hole, her husband would laugh, and cry, "Hold up your skirts, Greta! hop!" Then they found an old fir-tree, and in its shadow feasted on what Greta had brought with her.

"Here it was," said Hans, "that the little old woman once appeared to us, and over yonder must

lie the meadow with the well of youth. But I have never been able to find meadow or well again."

"And, thank the Lord, that has not been necessary," hastily interrupted Greta, "for our bottle is still far from empty."

"To be sure, to be sure," assented Hans. "But I should be very much pleased if we could see the good little woman once again and thank her for our good fortune. Come, let us go and look. Perhaps I may be as lucky to-day as before."

Then they rose and went into the deep forest, and behold! after a quarter of an hour, before their eyes shone the sunny forest meadow! Lilies and harebells bloomed in the grass, bright butterflies flew hither and thither, and on the edge of the woods still stood the little house just as years before. With beating hearts they went round the house, and sure enough, there was the well of youth too, with the golden-green dragonflies hovering over it.

Hans and Greta stepped up to the brink of the well. Taking each other by the hand, they bent over the water—and out of the clear mirror of the spring, two gray heads, with kindly, wrinkled faces, looked back at them.

Then hot tears rushed to their eyes, and stam-

mering and sobbing they confessed their guilt, and it was some time before it became clear to them that each had deceived the other, and for long years had cheated one another for love's sake.

"Then you knew that we were both growing old?" cried Hans, with delight.

"To be sure, to be sure," said his wife, laughing in the midst of her tears.

"And so did I," exulted the old Hans; and he tried to leap for joy. Then he took Greta's head in his hands and kissed her just as he had done when she promised to be his wife.

And, as if she had grown up out of the ground, the little forest woman stood before the two old people.

"Be welcome!" she said. "You have not been to see me for a long time. But, but," continued the little woman, shaking her finger at them, "you have not taken good care of the water of youth. Wrinkles and gray hairs, indeed! Now," she continued, consolingly, "those are easily remedied, and you have come at a propitious hour. Quick! Jump into the well—it is not deep—and plunge your gray heads under, then you will see a miracle. The bath will give you the

strength of youth and beauty again. But be quick, before the sun goes down!"

Hans and Greta looked at each other inquiringly. "Will you?" asked the husband in an unsteady voice.

"Never!" quickly answered Greta. "Oh, if you only knew how happy I am, that at last I may dare to be old. And then it would not do, on account of our children and grandchildren. No, dear little woman; a thousand thanks for your kindness, but we will remain as we are. Is it not so, Hans?"

"Yes," replied Hans; "we will remain old. Hurrah! If you knew, Greta, how becoming your gray hair is!"

"As you like," said the little creature, a bit hurt. "Nothing is compulsory here." Thus she spoke, and went into her house and closed the door behind her.

But the two old people kissed each other again. Then they went arm in arm on their homeward way through the forest, and the mid-summer sun poured a golden gleam about their gray heads.

THE FOUR EVANGELISTS.



HIS name was Gustavus Adolphus, and he was the son of the clock-maker Lacknail, who led a modest life in a little town. Gustavus Adolphus wished to become a clergyman, and had begun very early to devote his services to the church: he rang the bells on Sunday; at first the little ones, and then afterwards, when he became strong enough, the large ones; and when the congregation found edification in singing, he blew the organ with holy zeal, till the perspiration rolled down over his forehead. Then, too, he buried the dead bodies of pet birds and rabbits under the cabbage-heads in his parents' vegetable garden, and preached such touching discourses over them that tears came into the eyes of the listening washerwomen, who were working by the brook which flowed past.

At school, he was frankly none of the best. He was thick-headed, and learned but slowly how to

read, write, and reckon; but the catechism he had at his tongue's end, and he knew a little trick, too; that is, he could repeat "Our Father," as rapidly backwards as forwards, and none of his school-mates could emulate him in that. Besides, Gustavus Adolphus was no devotee, nor hypocrite, but he was a good-natured, honest fellow, whom everybody could endure.

Whenever the boy spoke in the presence of his parents of wishing to become a clergyman, his father would knit his brows, not because he was opposed to the calling as such, but because in consideration of his modest income he feared the expense of such an education. But his mother smiled with delight at the thought of seeing her son one day in the pulpit, and when the principal of the town school once told her plainly that Gustavus Adolphus was of too limited capacity to be able to study, she went away indignant, and would not believe it.

But the matter had one difficulty. Gustavus Adolphus had what is called a stammering tongue, and could not pronounce certain letters well; for example, R and S gave him great trouble. One day he read in his reading-book of the celebrated orator Demosthenes, who had to contend with a

similar impediment, and he at once determined to imitate him. Like him, he no longer cut his hair, but went every day to the roaring mill-dam and declaimed in a loud voice, "John the silly soap-suds stirrer."

Indeed, his indefatigable perseverance would have surely made him a pulpit orator, if Providence had not frustrated his plans. His mother, who till now had taken his part, laid her down and died. His father spoke the word of command, and Gustavus Adolphus entered his father's workshop as a clock-maker's apprentice. There the poor young fellow had to sit, with shaded eyes, and was obliged to clean and oil the clocks of his fellow-townsmen; and, in his opinion, there was no more unfortunate creature to be found on God's earth than Gustavus Adolphus Lacknail.

Time heals all things. He learned to become resigned; and when the winding of the clock in the church tower was intrusted to him, he was half reconciled to his fate.

The years passed away one after another. Gustavus Adolphus had served his time and went out as a journeyman. But he did not go beyond the next town, and returned home as soon as the required term had expired. For a year or two he

worked on as his father's assistant; then his father departed this life, and he was master in the business, and the business prospered.

Soon after, the place of sexton in the town church was vacated. To the astonishment of all the inhabitants Gustavus Adolphus sought the position, and obtained it, too. Evil tongues said that a contemptible love of gain lead the wealthy man to this step; but when it became known that the new church sexton had made over his salary to the poor-house, then the slanderers were silent, and Gustavus Adolphus' reputation grew like the crescent moon. The pastor brought it about that Mr. Lacknail received the title of "assistant." This sounded better than "sexton."

Henceforth Gustavus Adolphus was never seen in public except in a long black coat, which he wore buttoned up to the neck; above the collar, however, appeared a modest white cravat, and above this a round, smoothly shaven face, about whose mouth constantly played a kindly smile.

Gustavus Adolphus was reconciled to his fate. The dreams of his boyhood years were not fulfilled, to be sure; he was not the first person in the church, but unquestionably the second; for the organist, to whom this rank properly be-

longed, took his drams secretly, and on this account did not stand well in the community.

That the new assistant, soon after entering his office, should wed a Christian maiden seemed sensible to the people; but when, after a year and a day, he stood beaming with joy by the baptismal font, over which was held a little screaming Lacknail, then they all shook their heads, and the pastor as well, for the happy father, disregarding all the customary baptismal names, had chosen the name of Matthew for his first-born. Gustavus paid no heed to the people's talk, and took great delight in the little Matthew's growth.

Again joy entered the house of Mr. Lacknail; a second son was born to him; and when the pastor asked by what name the child should be baptized, the father said, proudly smiling, "Mark." Then it was evident what Mr. Lacknail was striving after; and he did not deny it; he had no other intention than to surround himself with the four evangelists.

Really, Heaven seemed to favor the honest man's intention, for after a year and a half a struggling Luke joined Matthew and Mark; and, moreover, a year later Mr. Lacknail dared to hope that he should shortly reach the goal of his desires.

But who would have thought the expected child capable of such wickedness! It came, came in good time; but it came into the world a maiden.

Then was Gustavus Adolphus very much grieved. At first he was angry with Providence, and would not even look at the child,—it bore the name of Elizabeth,—but then he scolded himself severely for his ingratitude, behaved henceforth towards the little one as it became a father and a servant of the church, and placed his hopes on the next child. But this was still worse than the last—that is, it stayed away entirely. One year passed after another; Matthew, Mark, and Luke grew to sturdy lads, and the coming of the fourth evangelist, John, was still looked forward to.

Then a consuming malady came to the little town, and among others Mrs. Lacknail fell a victim to it. When the year of mourning was over, the widower thought seriously of marrying again, that he might possibly yet possess a John; but the children dissuaded him from his intention, and Gustavus Adolphus remained a widower.

The young Lacknails prospered. Matthew was already studying, and what else but theology; Mark went to the seminary; Luke worked in his father's workshop; and Elizabeth kept the

house. She was a beautiful, slender maiden, with a fresh, round face, and thick, blonde braids; and when Lacknail, now advancing in life, looked at her, he smiled, and laughed to himself. He had a design for his daughter, but he did not say what it was.

At that time the handsomest young man in the town and country round was head-waiter in the inn of the *Wild Man*. His name was "Jean," but they pronounced it "Zhang." To the affability which graces the brotherhood of waiters he united the polite manners of a diplomatist; he wore his blonde beard like the captain of a ship, and his curly hair was parted evenly from his forehead to the nape of his neck. Besides, he always wore snow-white linen, very conspicuous cuffs, and shirt-studs of aluminium as large as a dollar. Indeed, he was a splendid young man. Then, too, it was rumored about in the town that he rejoiced in a pretty little property, and that he intended sometime to purchase the *Wild Man*. So it really was not to be wondered at that the hearts of the townspeople's daughters beat more loudly when the handsome Jean greeted them as he passed by.

Just as skilful as the young man was in going

about with plates and glasses, just so unskilful he had been for some time in handling his watch. Hardly a week passed that his chronometer did not need the help of Mr. Lacknail; sometimes the crystal was cracked, sometimes the spring was broken. Then Jean always took care to give the patient with his own hands to the physician, and when discharged well, to take it promptly away again; and in coming and going it seldom failed to happen that the kitchen door opened a little, and in the crack appeared a pretty maiden's head, which nodded sweetly, and then disappeared.

On fine Sundays, when the afternoon service was over, Mr. Lacknail was wont to take a walk with his daughter to the so-called huntsman's house, where the people of the town amused themselves by playing ninepins. Mr. Lacknail never played, for he did not think it consistent with his position; but he was not averse to a good drink of beer, especially if it was seasoned with sensible conversation, and this seasoning for some weeks had been supplied by Jean, the head-waiter. What a cultivated young man he was, and what a knowledge he had of the world! And moreover, he was a proper, steady man, and

went regularly to church on Sundays, and carried a gilt-edged singing-book in his hand.

The fair-haired Elizabeth grew happier each day, and sang at her work like a sky-lark. But her father became more and more silent and thoughtful.

And it happened one Sunday about noon, that the handsome Jean turned his steps towards Mr. Lacknail's house. He was dressed in black and had a red pink in his buttonhole, which looked from a distance like a badge. On his curly head he wore a hat that shone like a mirror, on his hands straw-colored gloves, and over his left arm hung a dove-colored overcoat lined with brown silk. And the people who saw him passing, put their heads together and said: "Now he is going to propose to Elizabeth. What a lucky girl she is!"

The people were not mistaken. Jean found the father, who had already laid aside his official robe, and was smoking his pipe in a comfortable dressing-gown, alone in the sitting-room. The young man expressed his desire in appropriate language. He spoke of his love for Elizabeth, and then dexterously turned the conversation to the state of his finances. He had already taken

a little package of papers from his breast pocket, when Mr. Lacknail said in a serious, almost melancholy voice: "Sit down, young man; I have something to tell you." And Jean sat down in confusion on the edge of a chair.

Mr. Lacknail began talking. He expatiated on the dreams of his youth, and his disappointed hopes,—things which are sufficiently well known to us. Then he went on to say:—

"You know, dear Mr. Zhang, that it was my dearest wish to call a fourth son mine; I should have had him baptized John. Heaven was not willing; it gave me a daughter instead of the longed-for son. She is a dear, good child, the joy of my old age, and to see her happy is my daily prayer. But I made an oath, an oath which now, since I have made your acquaintance, dear Zhang, I almost regret, for it separates you and my Elizabeth forever. I have sworn this, that my daughter shall only marry a man who is named John, and therefore she can never become the wife of a Zhang." Having spoken thus, Mr. Lacknail hung his head sorrowfully.

But Jean jumped up from his seat like a shuttlecock. "And is the name the only hindrance?" he asked.

“The only one; I swear it to you.”

Jean stood as though he were transfigured. Then he took a paper out of his breast pocket, unfolded it, and laid it before the old man. “Read, Mr. Lacknail,” he said, triumphantly.

The latter took the paper in surprise and read, “Sponsor for John Obermüller —”

He read no further. The paper fell from his hands, and his voice failed him. “And this John Obermüller?” he asked, finally, in a trembling voice.

“I am he!” said the happy waiter, exultingly. “Jean and John are exactly the same.”

“O thou benignant Heaven!” cried Mr. Lacknail, folding his hands. “You have at last sent me a John. But, dear John, what unchristian tongue has so distorted the beautiful name of the evangelist?”

“That is French,” explained the suitor; “but I promise you solemnly that in future I will always be called John instead, if I attain the object of my desires.”

“Give me your hand on it, John,” said Mr. Lacknail. Then he opened the door and called, “Elizabeth, come in here!” And a few moments later the two were in each other’s embrace, and the third was wiping his eyes.

The happiness of the betrothed, the joy of the father when he went to church with his four evangelists to attend the wedding, and what followed — all that the reader must picture to himself; my pen is not equal to it.

At the present time Mr. John Obermüller is the proprietor of the inn of the *Wild Man*, and the plump wife Elizabeth stands faithfully by his side. They already have two big boys; the larger one is called Peter, the little one James, and it is said in the town that the couple have resolved to present the grandfather by degrees with the twelve apostles.

THE DISAPPOINTED DWARF.



WHERE the mountains, even in summer, wear caps of snow, where the hare in winter puts on a white coat, and the crows have yellow bills, there grows a beautiful tree called the Siberian pine, and out of its wood the people on the mountains carve animals, both wild and domestic, and sell them to the city people for hard cash.

Such a tree, and assuredly a primeval one, stood, and probably still stands to-day, on a lonely slope, where, in summer, thousands and thousands of Alpine roses bloom. From its branches hung long, gray beards of moss, and its mighty roots grasped weather-beaten boulders, between which the narrow entrance to a cave could be seen. The cave was inhabited, too, but it was neither a badger nor a bear that dwelt there, but a gnome, a timid dwarf.

He had seen better days. In the good old

times, which even mountain spirits look back to with regret, he wore a golden crown, and the name of Laurin, the king of the dwarfs, was known in Germany and in Italy. The whole range of mountains, with their underground marvels, was his, and in the upper world he had laid out a pleasure garden for his enjoyment, where the most glorious roses shed their perfume, and from the roses hung little golden bells, which rang sweetly in the wind. But his underground treasures and his beautiful garden did not satisfy the dwarf. He yearned for a woman's love, and, violent as he was, he stole away the beautiful Similde von Steier, to make her queen of the dwarfs; and that was his ruin.

Mourning and weeping sat the stolen beauty in the magic castle of the mountain, and all the jewels which the dwarf laid at her feet could not turn her thoughts. But it grew still worse. One day when King Laurin visited his pleasure garden, there arose from the crushed roses the huge forms of giants in armor, and Dietleib, poor Similde's betrothed, and his master, the mighty Dietrich of Berne, fell upon him with their swords till he lost sight and hearing. They set free the stolen Similde and took the dwarf away with them

prisoner, and compelled him to serve as jester at the court of Lombardy for the amusement of his captors. All this happened many hundred years ago, and stands written in detail in an ancient book. Later, when everything was topsy-turvy in Italy, Laurin was released, and ever after he dwelt in the wilderness, a solitary, embittered, mountain dwarf.

Usually, whenever he slipped out of his cavern, and sat sunning himself under the Siberian pine-tree, he wore his magic cap which made him invisible, but sometimes he took it off, and thus it happened that the people on the mountain knew him very well. Shepherds, root-diggers, huntsmen, and other honest people had often seen him, as he sat on the mountain-side, and gazed listlessly into the blue distance. He appeared there like a little man about an ell high, with wrinkled face and long, gray beard, and because he generally stayed under the pine-tree, the people, who knew nothing of his splendid past, called him "Zirbel."

People tell of kindly gnomes who make presents to poor people of fir cones or the branches of trees, which afterwards change to gold. The sullen Zirbel did nothing of that sort, but, on the other hand, he never played tricks on anybody,

but let the people who passed to and fro in his wilderness go their way unmolested. And thus many years passed by. .

One day Zirbel was lying, as he often did, under his tree, sunning himself in the morning sunlight, and gazing up at the circle of white, snow-covered mountains, and the gold cloud-boats gliding along slowly in the sky.

Two mortals came climbing up the mountain, and the dwarf quickly put on his magic cap. It was an old peasant with a young, rosy-cheeked maiden,— father and daughter. Both were heavily laden, but they walked easily up the mountain under their burdens.

Above the old pine-tree, where there is a hollow place in the mountain, the old man stopped and said, "Lisi, we will stay here"; and then he began to fashion a house. He piled up stones, and out of branches and large pieces of bark, which he broke off from the fallen, decaying trunks, he built a hut, large enough to shelter a man from wind and rain. In the mean while the maiden was not idle, but filled a basket with flowers; these she thought of selling in the *Blue Steinboc* down below.

The *Blue Steinboc*—this was the name of an

Alpine inn, which stood about three miles distant from the pine-tree — was full of summer visitors, who were enjoying the mountain air and water, caught trout, and feasted on venison which was really only mutton. They wore jaunty feathers in their hats, and gave many bright silver pieces for edelweiss and little twigs of the sweet-scented rue. The flowers they put in their red pocket-books, and afterwards, at home, told of the dangers they experienced in gathering them.

The dwarf regarded the beautiful maiden with satisfaction, and for the first time in many years a friendly grin passed over his face.

When the sun reached the zenith the old man had finished his work. He called the maiden, and they two ate the dinner she had brought with her. Then the beautiful girl departed and went with her basket down into the valley, while her father stayed behind and went about his work. He was a pitch-burner by trade, and had built his hut on the mountain in order to gather the pitch oozing from the evergreen trees.

The next day the fair-haired Lisi came back again to bring food to her father and to gather flowers. But Zirbel had stirred the earth-fires during the night; thousands and thousands of

flowers had sprung up, and now stars and bells fresh with dew adorned the green pasture in such abundance that the maiden was able to reap a rich harvest. The dwarf followed closely on her footsteps, unseen, and took delight in her diligence, often coming so near her that he might have brushed her flaxen hair with his hand; but this he did not do lest he should frighten the charming child. When Lisi went away again, he stood on a rock a long time, looking after her; then he crept contented into his crevice and waited with delight for the next morning.

The morning came and the lovely Lisi came too; but with her came another, a dark lad in hunting-dress; and when Zirbel saw him, he made up a face as though he had bitten a green crab-apple.

The young huntsman had his arm around the lovely girl's waist, and in this way they came up to the old man, who was sitting before his hut, and the old man seemed to approve of their familiarity, for when they kissed each other he laughed; but everything turned green and yellow before the dwarf's eyes. Then the young people sat down on the trunk of a tree and sang songs of true love, and the father hummed softly with

them, and then they began to bill and coo again like two pigeons.

These were terrible hours for poor Zirbel, and he would have liked to come between the pair with thunder and lightning, but he restrained himself. At last the lovers took their departure and went away together, while the father stood on the mountain-side and gazed after them.

Then suddenly there stood before him, as though sprung up out of the ground, Zirbel, the dwarf. The old man was indeed frightened, but he collected himself, and took off his hat with a bow and a scrape.

“Do you know me?” asked the dwarf.

“You are none other than Herr Zirbel,” replied the pitch-burner. “Pardon me if I do not call you by your right name.”

“Zirbel; yes; that is what they call me. And what is your name?”

“Peter.”

“Well, Master Peter, you have a beautiful daughter —”

“Have you seen her?” interrupted the father with delight. “Beautiful she is, and good she is, too; but,” he continued with a sigh, “poor, — poorer than a church mouse; and her lover, the

hunter, has nothing but his strong limbs.—
O Herr Zirbel! Don't you know some buried
treasure or a gold mine or something else? That
would be very convenient for the dowry."

The dwarf nodded his head emphatically.
"Come with me, Master Peter, if you are not
afraid; I will show you something that will
make your mouth water."

Peter did not have to be asked a second time.
He threw his bag over his shoulder, and with
joyful expectation followed Zirbel, who went on
ahead.

At the foot of the old tree the dwarf stopped.
"The way is in through there," he said, point-
ing to the entrance of the cavern. "Come after
me, Master Peter!" Having said this he slipped
like a marmot into the den, and the pitch-burner
crept in behind him. At first the entrance was
very narrow, and Peter gave his head a hard bump
twice; but soon the hole grew wider, and after
a short time they reached a high, roomy cave,
and it was light here, too, for blue flames flick-
ered on every side.

"Now just look about you!" commanded the
dwarf; and the old man did as he was told, but
it was some time before his eyes became accus-

tomed to the glittering splendor. A network of threads of gold covered the walls, and from the ceiling hung points of silver, wonderfully formed, like stalactites. On the floor of the cave stood a large copper kettle, filled to the brim with heavy pieces of silver. Oh, how Peter opened his eyes at this!

But the dwarf began to speak, saying, "All the treasures that you see hoarded here shall be your daughter's wedding portion — on one condition."

"Let me hear it, Herr Zirbel!" cried the father, wild with delight.

"Your daughter," said the dwarf impressively, "must give up the huntsman and —"

"Herr Zirbel, that cannot be."

"It must be. I will give the huntsman as much silver as he can carry to compensate him, — such a young fellow will easily console himself with another pretty girl, — and I will provide another husband for your daughter. To be plain, Master Peter, I myself will be your son-in-law. Have you any objection to that?"

The pitch-burner was greatly frightened, but he composed himself; with rich men and gnomes it is not well to quarrel. "Herr Zirbel," he

said, "I, for my part, have nothing against you; you are a man in the prime of life, and are able to take care of a wife; but—maidens see with different eyes from old graybeards. Do you understand me?"

But Zirbel went on talking to the old man, and at the same time scooped up silver pieces out of the kettle, letting them fall back again like rain, till poor Peter's head was all in a whirl. Suddenly a bright thought came to him. He appeared as if he were going to give his consent, and said artfully:—

"Well, Herr Zirbel, I will take you to my daughter. You shall see her at home, at her work; and then, if you still wish to make her your wife, I will, as her father, say 'yes and amen,' and bring the maiden to you whenever you please. For the huntsman you must give me as much silver as I can carry away on my back. But if you, of your own free will, back out of the undertaking, then the money shall be mine. Here is my bag—if you are agreed, allow me to fill it immediately with your silver."

Zirbel was highly delighted with this proposition. He shoved the silver pieces into the bag with his own hands, and on the top he laid a

sparkling bracelet as a bridal gift. Then they crept out into the daylight again, and Peter shouldered the precious burden. The dwarf took his future father-in-law by the arm and walked along beside him.

After they had been gone a good half hour, they came into the vicinity of the summer resort, the *Blue Steinbock*. They passed guide-posts and rustic seats bearing such names as Elsa's Rest, Olga's Seat, Adele's Hill, and other inscriptions, and suddenly they saw the bright garments of a woman gleaming through the trees.

"I will make myself invisible," said Zirbel, putting on his magic cap. Then both stepped nearer.

The woman's back was turned towards the wanderers. She was sitting on a camp-stool, and had a frame before her, such as Zirbel had never seen before. With curiosity he approached the lady with his companion, and looked at what she was doing. On a frame stood a tablet, which she had painted over, green on the lower part, and blue on the upper part; in the background was something like a white nightcap; in the foreground a rose-colored beast with horns and a bell at the neck.

“What is she doing?” asked Zirbel.

“She is painting,” replied Peter. “She paints the mountains, the trees, animals, and people. Just look at it closely, Herr Zirbel. That white thing is the mountain yonder with its snow, and the red beast is a cow.”

Zirbel examined the painting, and shook his big head thoughtfully; then he said:—

“Master Peter, tell me, pray,
Does Lisi too paint pictures gay?”

And Peter replied:—

“Pictures all the day paints she,
Greener far than celery.”

Then the dwarf muttered something in his beard that Peter did not understand, and drew his companion away with him.

It was not long before they met a second lady; she was sitting on a moss-covered rock, and gazing with glassy eyes up at the blue sky. In her left hand she had a book, on which was written in golden letters, “Poetry,” and in her right hand she held a pencil, with which she occasionally wrote something in the book. After a while she arose and read in a loud voice:—

“Ah, if I were a birdling free,
 Ah, if I soared on tiny wing,
 Beloved, in my bill I'd bring
 A sweet forget-me-not to thee.”

“What is the poor thing trying to do?” asked the dwarf compassionately.

“She is making poetry,” explained Peter. “She is a poetess; that is, she makes rhymes, writes them in her book, and reads them aloud.”

Then Zirbel whispered anxiously:—

“Master Peter, truly tell,
 Does lovely Lisi rhyme as well?”

And Peter replied:—

“When she is tired of painting, 'tis true
 She scribbles rhymes and reads them too.”

“Oh dear!” said Zirbel, with a deep sigh. “Come, let us go along.” And they went on.

The sun went down to the edge of the mountains, the birds stopped singing, and through the forest sounded the bells of the home-returning cattle. Through the fir-trees appeared the shingled roof of the *Blue Steinbock*, and from all sides the hungry guests were hurrying towards the hospitable abode. All of a sudden, as Peter and

his invisible companion came within a few steps of the house, there sounded through the evening stillness such a clangorous jangling and drumming that Zirbel started in affright.

“Don’t be afraid,” said the old man, assuringly. “If you get up on the stone seat and look in at the window, you will see where the noise comes from.”

The dwarf got up on the bench, and looked into the lighted hall. “I see two women,” he said softly, “who are pounding around with their hands on a chest. Oh, it is horrible to see, and still more horrible to hear! Tell me, Peter, what it means.”

“What does it mean?” replied the pitch-burner. “They are playing the piano-forte, as it is called.”

Then said Zirbel, in a trembling voice:—

“Master Peter, tell me in short,
Does Lisi play the piano-forte?”

And Peter answered:—

“If she can’t paint or rhyme, she’ll play
On her piano the livelong day.”

The dwarf groaned like a falling tree, and became silent.

“Herr Zirbel,” suggested Peter after a while, in a suppressed voice, “Herr Zirbel, we ought to be going.”

No answer.

The old man felt about in the place where the voice of the invisible dwarf had last come from, but his hand only grasped the air.

He called louder, “Herr Zirbel, where are you? It will soon be night, and we have still far to go.”

Then there came a gust of wind from the mountain, and these words fell on Peter’s ear:—

“Master Peter, the bag is thine,

But you may keep your daughter fine.”

The crafty Peter would have leaped for joy, if the heavy bag of silver had not prevented him. He waved his hat gratefully in the direction from which the words had sounded, then he started along, and hurried as fast as he could towards the valley.

The story is ended, for you can easily imagine what happened further. The beautiful Lisi kept her huntsman, and if they are not dead —

But the dwarf Zirbel was unmarried, and remained so to his dying day.

THE EGYPTIAN FIRE-EATER.



“NEXT Easter he must go to N — to school. — Fact. — It is high time; he is eleven years old, and here he is running wild with the street-boys. — That’s what I say.”

He, that is, I, hung my head, and I felt more like crying than laughing. I had passed eleven sunny boyhood years in the little country town, I stood in high esteem among my playmates, and would rather be the first in the ranks of my birth-place than second in the metropolis.

Through the gray mist, which surrounded my near future like a thick fog, gleamed only one light, but a bright, attractive light; that was the theatre, the splendor of which I had already learned to know. The white priests in the “Magic Flute,” Sarastro’s lions, the fire-spitting serpents, and the gay, merry Papageno, — such things could not be seen at home; and when my parents promised me occasional visits to the theatre, as a re-

ward for diligence in study and exemplary conduct, I left the Eden of my childhood, half consoled.

Young trees, transplanted at the proper time, soon take root. After a tearful farewell to my friends and a slight attack of home-sickness, I was quite content. I was received into the second class at the gymnasium, and drank eagerly of the fountain of knowledge; a certain Frau Eberlein, with whom I found board and lodging, cared for my bodily welfare.

She was a widow, and kept a little store, in which, with the assistance of a shop-girl, she served customers, who called from morning to night. She dealt principally in groceries and vegetables, but besides these, every conceivable thing was found piled up in her shop: knitting-yarn, sheets of pictures, slate-pencils, cheese, pen-knives, balls of twine, herring, soap, buttons, writing-paper, glue, hair-pins, cigar-holders, oranges, fly-poison, brushes, varnish, gingerbread, tin soldiers, corks, tallow candles, tobacco-pouches, thimbles, gum-balls, and torpedoes. Besides, she prepared by means of essences, peach brandy, maraschino, ros solis, and other liqueurs, as well as an excellent ink, in the manufacture of which I used to help her. She rejoiced in considerable prosperity, lived well, and did not let me want for anything.

My passion for the theatre was a source of great anxiety to good Frau Eberlein. She did not have a very good opinion of the art in general, but the comedy she despised from the bottom of her heart. Therefore she made my visiting the theatre as difficult as possible, and it was only after long discussions, and after the shop-girl had added her voice, that she would hand over the necessary amount for purchasing a ticket. The shop-girl was an oldish person, as thin as a giraffe which had fasted for a long time, and was very well read. She subscribed regularly to a popular periodical with the motto, "Culture is freedom," and Frau Eberlein was influenced somewhat by her judgment. This kind-hearted woman was friendly towards me, and as often as her employer asked, "Is the play a proper one for young people?" she would answer, "Yes," and Frau Eberlein would have to let me go.

Those were glorious evenings. Long before it was time for the play to begin, I was in my seat in the gallery, looking down from my dizzy height, into the house, still unlighted. Now a servant comes and lights the lamps in the orchestra. The parquet and the upper seats fill, but the reserved seats and the boxes are still empty. Now it sud-

denly grows light; the chandelier comes down from an opening in the ceiling. The musicians appear and tune their instruments. It makes a horrible discord, but still it is beautiful. The doors slam; handsomely dressed ladies, in white cloaks, gay officers, and civilians in stiff black and white evening dress take their seats in the boxes. The conductor mounts his elevated seat and now it begins. The overture is terribly long, but it comes to an end. Ting-aling-aling,—the curtain rises. Ah!—

I soon decided in my own mind that it should be my destiny, sometime, to delight the audience from the stage, but I was still undecided whether I would devote myself to the drama or the opera, for it seemed to me an equally desirable lot to shoot charmed bullets in “*Der Freischütz*” or, hidden behind elderberry bushes, to shoot at tyrannical Geslers in “*William Tell*.” In the mean time I learned Tell’s monologue, “Along this narrow path the man must come,” by heart, and practised the aria, “Through the forest, through the meadows.”

Providence seemed to favor my plan, for it led me into an acquaintance with a certain Lipp, who, on account of his connections, was in a position to pave my way to the stage.

Lipp was a tall, slender youth, about sixteen years old, with terribly large feet and hands. He usually wore a very faded, light-blue coat, the sleeves of which hardly came below his elbows, and a red vest. He had a rather stooping gait, and a beaming smile continually played about his mouth. Besides, the poor fellow was always hungry, and it was this peculiarity which brought about our acquaintance.

On afternoons when there was no school, and I went out on the green to play ball with my companions or fly my kite, Frau Eberlein used to put something to eat in my pocket. Lipp soon spied it out, and he knew how to get a part, or even the whole of my luncheon for himself. He would pick up a pebble off the ground, slip it from one hand to the other several times, then place one fist above the other, saying:—

“This hand, or that?

Burned is the tail of the cat.

Which do you choose?

Upper or under will lose!”

If I said “upper,” the stone was always in the lower hand, and *vice versa*. And Lipp would take my apple from me with a smile, and devour it as if he were half famished.

Why did I allow it? In the first place, because Lipp was beyond me in years and in strength, and in the second place, because he was the son of a very important personage. His father was nothing less than the door-keeper of the theatre; a splendid man with a shining red nose and coal-black beard reaching to his waist. The wise reader now knows how young Lipp came by a light blue coat and red vest.

My new friend from his earliest years had been constantly on the stage. He played the gamin in folk-scenes and the monster in burlesques. Besides, he was an adept at thunder and lightning; by means of cracking a whip and the close imitation of the neighing of horses, he announced the approaching stage-coach; he lighted the moon in "Der Freischütz"; and with a kettle and pair of tongs gave forewarning of the witches' hour. When I opened my heart to Lipp and confided to him that I wanted to go on the stage, he reached out his broad hand to me with emotion and said, "And so do I." Hereupon we swore eternal friendship, and Lipp promised as soon as possible to procure me an opportunity for putting my dramatic qualifications to the test. From that hour his manner changed towards me. Before,

he had treated me with some condescension, but now his behavior towards me was more like that of a colleague. Moreover, the game of chance for my lunch came to an end, for from that time forth I shared it with him like a brother.

The fine fellow kept his promise to make a way for me to go on the stage. A few evenings later ("Der Freischütz" was being played) I stood with a beating heart behind the scenes, and friend Lipp stood by my side. In my hand I held a string, with which I set the wings of the owl in the wolf's glen in rhythmic motion. My companion performed the wild chase. By turns he whistled through his fingers, cracked a whip, and imitated the yelping of the hounds. It was awfully fine.

"You did your part splendidly," said Lipp to me at the end of the scene; "next time you must go out on the stage."

I swam in a sea of delight. A short time after, "Preciosa" was given, and Lipp told me that I could play the gypsy boy. They put a white frock on me and wound red bands crosswise about my legs. Then a chorister took me by the hand and led me up and down the back of the stage two or three times. That was my first appearance.

It was also my last. The affair became known. In school I received a severe reprimand, and in addition, as a consequence of the airy gypsy costume, a cold with a cough, which kept me in bed for a day or two.

“It serves you right,” said Frau Eberlein. “He who will not hear must feel. This comes from playing in the theatre. If your blessed grandmother knew that you had been with play-actors she would turn in her grave.”

Crushed and humiliated, I swallowed the various teas which my nurse steeped for me one after another. But with each cup I had to listen to an instructive story about the depravity of actors. In order to lead me back from the way of the transgressors to the path of virtue, Frau Eberlein painted with glowing colors; one story in particular, in which occurred three bottles of punch-essence never paid for, made a deep impression on me. But Frau Eberlein’s anecdotes failed to make me change my resolves.

Soon after, something very serious happened. Lipp’s father, the door-keeper of the theatre, after drinking heavily, fell down lifeless by the card table in the *White Horse*; and my friend, in consequence of this misfortune, came under the con-

trol of a cold-hearted guardian, who had as little comprehension of the dramatic art as Frau Eberlein. Lipp was given over to a house-painter, who, invested with extended authority, took the unfortunate fellow as an apprentice.

Lipp was inconsolable at the change in his lot. The smile disappeared from his face, and I too felt melancholy when I saw him going along the street in his paint-bespattered clothes, the picture of despair.

One day I met the poor fellow outside the city gate, where the last houses stand, painting a garden fence with an arsenic-green color. "My good friend," he said, with a melancholy smile, "I cannot give you my hand, for there is paint on it; but we are just the same as ever." Then he spoke of his disappointed hopes. "But," he continued, "because they are deferred, they are not put off forever, and these clouds" (by this he referred to his present apprenticeship as painter) "will pass away. The time will come — I say no more about it; but the time will come." Here Lipp stopped speaking and dipped his brush in the paint pot, for his master was coming around the corner of the house.

One day Lipp disappeared. The authorities

did everything in their power to find him, but in vain; and since, at that time, the river, on which the city stood, had overflowed its banks, it was decided that Lipp had perished. The only person who did not share in this opinion was myself. I had a firm conviction that he had gone out into the wide world to seek his fortune, and that some day he would turn up again as a celebrated artist and a successful man. But year after year passed by and nothing was heard of Lipp.

I had entered upon my fifteenth year, was reading Virgil and Xenophon, and could enumerate the causes which brought the Roman empire to ruin. But in the midst of my classical studies, I did not lose sight of the real aim of my life, the dramatic art; and as the stage had been closed to me since my first appearance, I studied in my own room the rôles in which I hoped to shine later. Then I had already tried my skill as a dramatic author, and in my writing-desk lay concealed a finished tragedy. It was entitled "Pharaoh." In it occurred the seven plagues of Egypt and the miracles of Moses; but Pharaoh's destruction in the Red Sea formed the finale from which I promised myself the most brilliant success.

Therefore I went about dressed as a regular artist. My schoolmates imitated the University students,—wore gay-colored caps, dark golden-red bands, and carried canes adorned with tassels; but I wore over my wild hair a pointed Calabrian hat, around my neck a loose silk handkerchief fastened together in an artistic knot, and in unpleasant weather a cloak, the red-lined corner of which I threw picturesquely over my left shoulder.

In this attire I went about in my native town, where I was accustomed to spend my summer vacations. The boys on the street made sport of me by their words and actions, but I thought, "What does the moon care when the dog bays at her!" and holding my head high, I walked past the scoffers.

Every year, in the month of August, a fair was held in the little town. On the common, tents and arbors were put up, where beer and sausages were furnished. Further entertainment was provided in the way of rope-dancers, jugglers, a Punch-and-Judy show, fortune-tellers, monstrosities, wax figures, and tragedies.

As a spoiled city youth, I considered it decidedly beneath my dignity to take part in the

people's merrymaking; but I couldn't get out of it, and so I went with my parents and brothers and sisters to the opening of the festival out in the park, and walked more proudly than ever under my Calabrian hat.

The sights were inspected one after another, and in the evening we all sat together in the front row of a booth, the proprietor of which promised to exhibit the most extraordinary thing that had ever been seen.

The spectacle was divided into three parts. In the first a little horse with a large head was brought out, which answered any questions asked him by nodding, shaking, and beating his hoofs. In the second part two trained hares performed their tricks. With their forelegs they beat the drum, fired off pistols, and in the "Battle with the Hounds," they put to flight a whining terrier.

The proprietor had kept the best of all,—that is, the Egyptian fire-eater, called "Phosphorus,"—for the last part. The curtain went up for the third time, and on the stage, in fantastic scarlet dress, with a burning torch in his left hand, there stood a tall—ah! a form only too well known to me. It was Lipp, who had been looked upon as dead.

I saw how the unfortunate fellow with a smile put a lump of burning pitch in his mouth, and then everything began to swim around me, I pulled my hat down over my eyes, made my way through the crowd howling their applause, and staggered home exhausted.

During the rest of the festival I kept myself in strict seclusion. I announced that I was not well, and this was really no untruth, for I was very miserable. "That is because he is growing," said my anxious mother; and I assented, and swallowed submissively the family remedies which she brought to me.

At last the fair was over, and the Egyptian fire-eater had left the town. But the poor fellow did not go far. In the city where he exhibited his skill he was recognized and arrested, because he had avoided service in the army. To be sure, he was set free again after a few weeks as unqualified; but in the mean time his employer with the performing hares had gone nobody knew where, and Lipp was left solely dependent on his art, which he practised for some time in the neighboring towns and villages.

The end of his artistic career is sad and melancholy. He fell a victim to his calling.

As an ambitious man he enlarged his artistic capabilities; he ate not only pitch but also pieces of broken glass, and an indigestible lamp-chimney was the cause of his destruction.

When I returned to the city I burned my tragedy of "Pharoah," and sold my cloak and Calabrian hat to an old-clothes dealer. I was thoroughly disgusted with the career of an artist, and whenever afterwards I was inclined to relapse, Frau Eberlein would call out to me, "Do you, too, want to die from a lamp-chimney?" Then I would bend my head and bury my nose in my Greek grammar.

THE WITCHING-STONE.



GAY banners were waving from the tower of the count's castle, and from the surrounding villages re-echoed the sound of merry bells. Joy had come to be a guest within the castle walls, and both bond and free in that domain rejoiced in its coming.

The young countess had given birth to an heir. The little lord was healthy and finely formed, made the walls resound with his strong voice, and vigorously kicked his feet, till his father's eyes shone with delight.

The day after his birth, when the child was taken to be baptized, the count dipped deeply into his treasure chest; all the servants received holiday clothes, and the poor in the land loudly praised their master's generosity. Then it became quiet in the castle. The boy lay peacefully in his nurse's arms, and his mother, Frau Gotelind, looked from her couch with a proud,

blissful smile at the thriving child. She was a delicate lady, and her strength came back slowly; but it came, thanks to careful nursing and the appetizing broths made for her by old Crescenz.

She was a wise-woman, and well skilled in caring for the sick. Therefore the count had called her to the castle and intrusted to her the nursing of his wife. But the servants shook their heads thoughtfully when the old woman came in, for what people said of her was not good. Huntsmen and messengers had often met her in the moonlit wood, looking for herbs, and it was rumored that she could conjure up storms and dry the cows' milk. Therefore the men-servants and maids timidly avoided her, but scrupulously followed the orders which she gave.

Frau Crescenz was sitting in the kitchen, paring vegetables. Near her stood her daughter Ortrun, whom she had brought with her to the castle, that she might help her in her work. The daughter was a tall, well-developed woman, with raven-black hair, but her forehead was low, and her nose as flat as a negro's. She had killed and plucked a chicken to make some strengthening broth for the countess, and was just cleaning it.

“Look, mother,” she cried suddenly; “see what is in the chicken’s crop; he had swallowed a stone.”

“Let me see,” said old Crescenz, with curiosity, and Ortrun handed what she had found to her mother. It was a white, sparkling stone, shaped like a bean.

“Oh, you lucky child!” cried the mother; “that is a jewel more precious than a carbuncle or a diamond.” Then she looked anxiously about her, fearing lest a third person might have been watching them, but, besides the two women, there was nobody in the kitchen.

“Dearest daughter,” continued the old woman, — and her eyes shone like cats’ eyes, — “the stone will bring you good luck. Keep your mouth shut and tell no human being anything about the chicken’s stone. Conceal it well in your waist and guard it as the apple of your eye. The magic which the jewel contains will soon appear. And go to your room and put on your holiday gown; to-day you shall carry to the count his morning drink.”

* * *

Where the deadly, nightshade grows, there flowers of noble birth must fade away.

The countess had long since recovered, but she went about sadly, with downcast eyes. Her husband's love had gone out in a night like a candle burnt to the end, and she knew, too, who had caused the sudden change. The dark Ortrun, who, by her husband's command, had been made her stewardess, had captivated the count. She carried her head high, and gave commands boldly in the house, as though she were the mistress. Frau Gotelind sat silent and grieving in her chamber by the side of her little son's cradle, and at night her pillow was wet with tears. But when the nurse gently reproved her, saying, "My lady, you will harm the child if you look at him with sorrowful eyes," then the unhappy woman would compel herself to smile, and would sing in a low voice to the little one the old cradle song of the white and the black sheep. Thus passed a year of sorrow to the countess. But the boy thrived, and became a beautiful, sturdy child.

One day his nurse was sitting with the little one in the castle garden, the boy was playing in the grass with a small wooden horse, and his mother was standing on the balcony and delighting in the sight of him. Suddenly the child rose and

stood for the first time on his feet, and made an unaided attempt to step forward. Just then the stewardess Ortrun came along, and the boy bent toward her, and seeking a support, grasped a fold of her dress with his little hand. The maid gave the child a push with her foot, so that he fell on his back with a scream, and went on her way scolding.

When the mother saw how the bold woman maltreated her child, her heart was convulsed with bitter anguish; but she was silent. She hastened down into the garden to her son, and soothed him with caresses. Then she sent the nurse under a pretext into the house, took the little one up, and, unnoticed, left the garden and the castle.

The countess and child were not missed till just as darkness was coming on. The count was much alarmed and sent out servants with torches to look for them in every direction. He himself mounted a horse and rode at random about the country. But master and servants returned without having found the lost ones.

The search was kept up for two or three days longer; then the count put on mourning, and hung a black flag from the tower.

It was supposed that the countess and her child had become the prey of some wild beast in the forest. The maid Ortrun and her wicked mother carried their heads higher than ever, and the old woman said to the young one: "It is a good thing that she has gone off with her brat of her own free will; otherwise—" But she said no more.

A short time after Ortrun took possession of the state-chamber of the vanished countess, and it was as good as decided that at the end of the year of mourning the count would make the stewardess his wife. But when the year was over, and the count wished to be married, the priest refused to unite the pair, because it was not proved that the countess was dead. So the count had the name of her who had disappeared posted up on the doors of three churches. Then after another year, if no news came about her, she might be considered as dead, according to the laws of the country, and the widower might take another wife. The second year too was drawing to an end, and nobody had heard anything from the lost wife.

* * *

But the countess was not dead, and her little

son too was still alive. When, overcome by excessive grief, she had secretly left the castle, she had wandered off into the wild forest, not knowing where she was going. She walked the whole night long, carrying the sleeping child in her arms. Occasionally the eyes of a wolf shone out of the darkness of the firs, but it did the poor mother no harm. Towards morning, when the chilly wind blew through the trees, her tender feet, unused to travelling, would carry her no farther. She sank down on the wood moss and wept bitterly; now for the first time she realized that she had doomed herself and her child to destruction.

Then there suddenly stood before the desperate mother a very old man, whose snow-white beard from his face fell down like a waterfall. In his right hand he carried a staff; in his left a bundle of herbs.

The old man was a pious hermit, who had turned his back on the turmoil of the world and dwelt in the wilderness. He gave mother and child some food, and led them to his hermitage. The countess felt confidence in the hermit and told him who she was and why she had taken flight. And the old man comforted her and said, "Stay with me, and share with me my poverty."

So the countess and her child remained with the hermit. By means of a wall of wicker-work he divided his hut into two rooms, and prepared a couch of wood moss and soft fur for his guests. For food he gave them goat's milk and whatever the woods afforded of berries, roots, and wild fruits. The life in the green forest agreed with the boy; he grew, and his limbs became strong and supple. The countess' delicate frame, too, became stronger; but her heart was still filled with a secret grief, for she could not forget her husband, and thought of him day and night. Thus passed nearly two years.

* * *

One morning the little one was jumping about in the forest and playing with a hazel switch, when the hoarse cry of a raven fell on his ear; and when he went toward the sound, he saw on the ground a flock of the black birds, who were attacking one of the number with their bills. When the boy ran toward them, the ravens flew away; but the one whom they had treated so badly could not lift himself into the air, but hopped painfully about on the ground, so that it was easy for the child to catch the bird. As he held his prisoner in his hand, he saw an arrow sticking in one of his wings.

He removed it and carried the raven home. The hermit, who was skilled in the art of healing, put a salve on the wound, and the little one cared for the sick bird very faithfully; and child and raven became great friends.

After some days the bird was well again, and when he felt that his power to fly had been restored, he flapped his wings with a croak, flew out at the door, and alighted on a bough not far from the hut. The boy did not wish to lose the raven, and ran after him to catch him; but just as he thought he was going to seize the fugitive, he escaped from him, and the play continued till it grew dark, and the raven disappeared in the shadow of the trees. Now the child wanted to turn back home, but he had long since lost the hermit's hut from sight, and did not know which way to turn. And he sat down under a tree and cried and called his mother, and he was hungry too.

Suddenly the raven appeared again. He carried a piece of bread in his bill, and dropped it in front of the child. Then the little one was half comforted, ate, and fell asleep.

The next morning he was awakened by the croaking of his companion; he arose and followed

the bird who flew before him, for he hoped he would lead him back to the hermitage. But the wise raven had a very different design. After some hours of wearisome wandering, the forest began to grow light, and before the boy lay a shining castle, from the tower of which waved a gay banner. It was the castle in which he had been born, but he did not know it.

The raven had disappeared, but the tired little fellow went up to the castle and sat down under a linden-tree near the gateway. The keeper with spear and helmet stepped up to him, and asked who he was, where he had come from, and what he wanted ; but he could get no information. The servants gathered about the child, but they could learn nothing from him except that he came out of the forest, was hungry, and wished that he was with his mother again. Then out of compassion they gave him food and drink, and went about their work. The servants had plenty to do, for on the next day the count was to be married to the swarthy Ortrun.

The little one sat under the linden-tree and ate the food which had been brought to him. Then he heard the sound of wings. He looked up and saw the raven hovering above his head ;

he carried something that glistened in his bill, and now he let it fall into his lap. It was a fine gold chain from which hung a white, sparkling stone shaped like a bean. The boy examined the shining ornament with curiosity, and finally hid it in his dress. When the raven saw this he croaked with delight, and flew up to the pinnacle of the tower.

* * *

In the women's apartments there was a great commotion. The count's bride was behaving as though she had lost her mind, and at the same time old Crescenz was scolding at the top of her voice. Ortrun had been taking a bath, and when she went to dress herself again, the magical chicken-stone had disappeared.

"Help me, mother!" cried Ortrun, in the greatest distress; "help me, so that at the last moment everything will not go to pieces."

"Help me!" said the old woman mockingly. "Did I not tell you to guard the stone as the apple of your eye? I decoyed the bird to the lime-pole for you; keeping him was your affair, you silly, heedless girl!"

The daughter stamped her foot. "You shall help me!" she snarled. "Make use of your arts

and brew me a love-potion! What is the good of your being a witch?"

The mother's eyes shone green. She gave a leap, fastened her fingers in her daughter's black hair, and threw her on the floor. "A witch, am I, you wicked vixen? That is the thanks I get for giving you a love-charm!"

She stopped abruptly, for in the open doorway stood the count. He looked as pale as death.

"Woman, what do you say about love-charms?" he cried.

The women both trembled like aspen-leaves. The count, moreover, threatened them with his sword, and swore he would strike them to the ground unless they confessed. Then they threw themselves on the floor before him, begging for mercy, and acknowledged what they had done.

And the count looked with loathing and horror at the woman who had ensnared him with magic art, and the charming form of the wife whom he had betrayed arose before him. He groaned aloud like a wounded stag, turned, and went out.

The two women collected together as many of the jewels and splendid garments as they could carry, wrapt themselves in their cloaks, and fled from the castle like two gray spectres.

* * *

At the very moment when the charm over the count was broken, bitter repentance and a yearning for what he had lost filled his heart. In order to banish his tormenting thoughts, he ordered his horse saddled, and took his hunting-gear to hunt in the forest. As he rode out at the gate, his eyes fell on the lost boy sitting under the linden-tree, and he felt a stab in his heart, for he thought of his little son who would be about the same age as the strange child if the wolves had not torn him to pieces. He drew up his horse, and looked at the child, and an irresistible power compelled him to jump from his saddle and caress the boy. And the boy threw his arms about the count's neck and besought him in a tender, childish voice:—

“Take me back to my mother!”

“Where is your mother?” asked the count.

“There!” said the boy, pointing with his finger toward the fir forest.

Then the raven came, and croaking, circled round the father and his son. And the boy cried:—

“There is the bird that led me here; he knows the way to my mother.” And the raven

screamed "Krah!" and flew toward the forest; then sat down and turned his wise head towards those he had left behind him.

Then the count said: "We will try to find your mother," lifted the child on his horse, and rode into the fir woods. And the raven flew ahead of them.

* * *

In the hermit's hut there was great distress. All one night and all one day Frau Gotelind and the hermit had searched in the forest for the lost child, and at evening they both returned from different directions without him. The poor mother wrung her hands in despair, and the old hermit tried in vain to speak some comforting words.

Then they heard the croaking of a raven and the sound of hoofs, and Frau Gotelind hastened out of the hut in anxious expectation. A stately knight came leaping along, holding on the saddle in front of him the lost child.

"Mother!" cried the boy, still at a distance, stretching out his little arms. Frau Gotelind was about to hurry towards him, but she trembled so that she was obliged to hold on to the door-post, for the rider was well known to her.

The count reined in his snorting steed, sprang down, and set the child on the ground. Then he turned his eyes towards the trembling lady, and with a loud cry threw himself down at her feet. She flung her arms about her husband's neck, and clung to him laughing and crying.

The sun had gone to rest, and the bright moon was wandering through the fir forest. By the hearth-fire in the hermitage sat the count and his wife, as happy as a bride and groom who have just been united.

Then the boy, who had been a long time with the raven, came running to his mother, and laid the little chain, from which hung the white stone, in her lap.

"Where did you get this ornament?" asked the mother.

"The raven gave it to me when I was sitting in front of the castle, under the tree."

The hermit looked at the stone, took it in his hand, examined it closely, and said: —

"It is the Alectorius stone, of whose power old wise people tell wonderful things. It grows in a cock's crop, and fastens the man with magic power to the woman who wears the jewel concealed about her person. Believe me, my daughter, this stone has been the cause of your sorrow."

Then the count seized the chain, threw it on the floor, and raised his foot in order to crush the Alectorius stone. But the raven was too quick for him, snatched the chain with his bill, and flew out of the window with it. Whether he carried the ornament to his nest to enjoy its brilliancy, or whether he tried the stone's magic power on some coy raven damsel, the one who relates this tale has never been able to find out.

THE CHRISTMAS ROSE.



SCHNEEWITCHEN, wrapped in white sheets, was asleep in her glassy coffin, and the cold, wicked step-mother ruled in the land. She is terrible in her fury, but when she has her good days, and lets her diamond crown shine benignantly in the sun, then mortals may venture to approach her ice-palace unmolested. She has innumerable castles, but the most beautiful one stands on the Hochgebirg, and there she prefers to hold her court. The primeval mountains stand like venerable court-marshalls, with stiff necks and powdered wigs, around the throne, on which the queen sits, and the nixies of the mountain lakes, like trembling waiting-maids, hold the crystal mirror before their exacting mistress. She looks at her snow-white face and says: "I am the most beautiful in all the land," and not one among the people of the court dares to dissent.

Others think and speak otherwise. The blue titmice, and the golden pheasants who, hungry and cold, hop through the snow-covered branches of the fir-trees, chirping low, tell about the king's son, who will waken the sleeping Schueewitchen with a kiss; the rude raven croaks disrespectfully about the wicked queen, and the gypsy tribe of sparrows give vent to their discontent in loud abuse. The little brown wren who creeps through the dry bushes like a mouse, sings a mocking song about the severe mistress. He has made a discovery in the forest path. On yonder slope, where the mid-day sun eats up the snow, there is already a sign of life. Last night the Christmas rose broke through the sparkling covering, and with bended head greets the rising sun.

Do you know the Christmas rose? In flat countries it never grows, but among the mountains it is known to every child. In some places it is the snow-rose, in others hellebore, and it is called the Christmas rose because it blooms about Yule-tide. Its open calyx, which is about as large as the hundred-leafed rose, is snow-white, sometimes overspread with a delicate red, like a mountain snow-field at sunset;

and one unacquainted with the blossom's native soil would take it for the child of some far-off zone, so wonderfully beautiful it is. But the snow-rose has beside a virtue of its own, and whoever would know its origin must pay attention.

In a fruitful Alpine valley, through which a river fed with the milk of the glaciers rolled its foaming waters, there stood on a hill in ancient times a castle with a tower and encircling walls. Farther down on the river pious monks had built a cloister, and between the castle and the monastery lay a farm. To-day the castle lies in ruins, the monastery still stands, and the farm has grown in the course of time to a market town.

It was near Christmas-time, many, many years ago, and it was even more lonely and silent in the valley than usual, for all who could carry sword and lance had gone with the count, to whom the castle and land belonged, across the mountains to Italy.

The farmer too, as one of the count's people, had been obliged to leave his home; and although he was always ready for battle, yet this time his going away was very hard, for he had to leave behind him a blooming young wife and a little three-year-old girl.

The Christmas festival was at hand. In the hall of the farmhouse the hearth-fire was crackling, and busy maids in linen aprons were mixing and kneading the dough for the holiday sweetcakes. Frau Walpurga, the mistress of the household, was not present. She was sitting with her heart heavy with anxiety by the bed of her child who was restlessly tossing about her little head burning with fever. On the opposite side of the sick-bed stood a monk with a shining bald crown and gray beard. It was Father Celestin from the monastery, a pious man, experienced in the art of healing. He scrutinized the sick child, shook his head, and began to mix a drink from the medicines he had brought with him.

Heavy footsteps were heard outside in the hall, and an old man, wearing a mantle of coarse material, entered the sick-room; in his left hand he held a broad-brimmed hat, and in his right, a lamb carved out of wood. The man was the shepherd of the farm. He looked darkly at the monk, then stepped up to the little bed, and held the lamb before the child. He had made two coal-black eyes for it with pine soot, and with the juice of berries, a red mouth; but the

child did not notice the plaything. The mother sighed, and the shepherd left the room as quietly as he could. The monk gave the healing drink to the child, spoke some words of comfort, and went out. Mother and child were alone.

The physician's remedy seemed to do good to the feverish little girl. She fell into a deep sleep, and slept all day. But as the sun was going down, the child grew restless again; her forehead burned like fire, and she spoke incoherent words. All of a sudden the little one lifted herself from her pillow and said: "See, mother, see the beautiful lady and all the little children, and the lady gives me roses, white roses!" Then she fell back again, and closed her eyes. But Frau Walpurga knelt down, sobbing softly.—"The child has seen the angels of heaven; she must die."

The mother did not long give way to her distress. She hastened to the door, and called the servants to send a messenger for Father Celestin. But both men-servants and maids had all gone to the monastery church to hear the Christmas service. Only one old lame woman had been left behind to tend the hearth-fire. Frau Walpurga commanded her to put out the fire, and stay by the child. She wrapped her cloak about

her, left the house, and went in all haste to the monastery.

The sun had already set: only the mountain tops still gleamed a ruddy gold; in the valley the twilight had spread her gray garment of mist over the snow-fields. No living creature was to be seen, except two rooks flying towards the forest, slowly flapping their wings. In the far distance a light flickered through the mist; it came from the lighted windows of the monastery church; and the mother, with her heart full of anguish, hastened over the creaking snow in the direction of the light.

Suddenly her feet stopped, and her breath failed her. Out of the forest came a long procession of misty forms, led by a beautiful, tall, serious lady, in a broad, full cloak, and behind her tripped a crowd of little children with pale faces, clad in white.

The trembling mother concealed herself behind the trunk of a tree, and let the procession pass by. At the very end came a child who could hardly follow the others, for she was constantly stepping on her dress, which dragged on the ground. Then Frau Walpurga forgot her distress, and overcame her dread. She stepped

toward the child, and tucked up her little frock so that she could keep pace with the other children.

And the beautiful pale lady turned her face toward the helper, smiled at her, and pointed with her forefinger to the ground at her feet.

At this moment the sound of monastery bells trembled through the air, the procession disappeared like mist scattered by the wind, and Frau Walpurga stood in the twilight alone on the snow-covered plain.

With timid steps she approached the spot to which the woman had pointed, and her heart leaped for joy. Out of the ice-covered earth was growing a bush, bearing green leaves and white roses.

“Those are the roses my child saw in her dream!” exclaimed Frau Walpurga; then she plucked three of the blossoms, and hurried as fast as she could go back to the farmhouse.

Besides the maid she found the old shepherd by the sick-bed. He had little regard for the skill of the monks, and therefore he himself had made a drink out of goat’s gall and juniper berries, and had given it to the little sick girl.

Frau Walpurga stepped up to the bed, laid

the three roses on the spread, and watched the child with anxious expectation. She seized the flowers with her little, trembling hands, held them to her face, and sneezed loud and strong.

“God bless her!” cried mother, shepherd, and maid. Then the child asked for a drink, turned her head on one side, and fell asleep.

“Now the fever is broken,” said the shepherd. “My drink and the sneeze have saved the child. But where did you get those roses, Frau?”

Frau Walpurga quietly told the old man what had happened to her.

“That was none other than Frau Berchta with the cricket folk,” explained the shepherd. “She wanders about every evening from Christmas till Twelfth Night, and my father has seen them too. Formerly she dwelt up in the Frauenstein, but when the monks built their house of stone she departed, and only shows herself during the twelve nights after Christmas, and blesses the land. It was lucky for you, Frau Walpurga, that you helped the cricket. Frau Berchta is a gentle lady, and rewards every service that has been rendered her.” And then the old shepherd told what he knew about Frau Berchta, and

he would have talked on till the cocks crowed, if Frau Walpurga had not brought him out of the sick-room with friendly words.

Once more she was sitting alone by her child's bed. The little one held the three roses in her closed hand, and she breathed peacefully and easily. Only once she murmured in her sleep, when the sound of the organ and the monks' song of praise, *Gloria in Excelsis*, were heard from the monastery. And the mother knelt down and was long at prayer.

When Father Celestin came the next day to see the sick child she was sitting up in bed, playing with the lamb which the shepherd had carved for her.

"Frau Walpurga," said the delighted physician, "the fever has disappeared. But it was a costly drink that I prepared for the child. I hope you will show your gratitude to the monastery."

But Frau Walpurga drew the monk aside and told him confidentially what had befallen her on Christmas Eve.

The Father knit his brow. "You were dreaming," he said, "or else the snow blinded your eyes. Take good care that none of your idle talk comes to the ears of our abbot; it might cost you a heavy

penance." But when Frau Walpurga showed him the marvellous roses, the like of which the botanical doctor had never seen before, he grew thoughtful, and he finally said:—

"Woman, you have been highly favored. You have with your bodily eyes beheld the Queen of Heaven and the blessed angels in her company. Our Dear Lady it was who gave you the three roses, the mother of our Lord, and not the dreadful sorceress, whose name no Christian may bring to his lips. Be assured of that, woman. And now listen to me further. The Madonna above the side-altar in our church is in need of a new robe as well as a crown. Show your gratitude to the mother of God, and provide her with new apparel. Will you promise me that?"

And Frau Walpurga, frightened by the monk's warning, said, "Yes, it shall be as you wish."

Thereupon she had a side of bacon, two fat geese, a pot of lard, and a bottle of red wine placed in a basket, and ordered a maid to take it and follow after Father Celestin to the monastery. And Father Celestin, with a smirk, blessed mother and child, servants and house, and went away, followed by the panting maid. But the old shepherd muttered to himself, "There again, one carries

away the thanks which belong to another"; and by "another" he meant himself.

Frau Walpurga thought the same, but she said nothing. She gave the shepherd a handsome present; and the Madonna in the monastery received a silver crown and a new robe, on which lace and spangles were not used sparingly.

But the flower which grew up in the footprints of the heavenly queen — or was it, after all, Frau Berchta? — bore seeds and multiplied in the land, and according to trustworthy witnesses has in later times worked many a miracle.

THE MATCH-MAKERS.



THE sun, after a short course, was about to go to rest. It tried to gild the spires and the snow-covered gable roofs, and as it was not remarkably successful in this to-day, it sank hastily behind a gray cloud. Stars here and there peeped out at their windows, but the mist, rolling up from the mountains, spoiled their view, so they closed their windows again and went to sleep. Besides, their glimmer this evening was superfluous, for in an hour thousands and thousands of lights, kindled by happy mortals, would shine through the December night. Christmas, the merry time, had come, and a multitude of visible angels, bringing joy, were crowding the streets and alleys of the old city.

Beings of flesh and bone, and cheeks rosy with the frost, were also hurrying through the streets. Most of them carried some carefully

wrapped object, which later, when it lay beneath the brightly lighted fir-tree, would be greeted with a cry of joy. Everything was in haste to-night. No groups of gossiping servants hindered the stream of passers-by, and if two people happened to recognize one another, they hurried past with a hasty greeting. Little by little it became more quiet on the street, the shop doors were closed, and the windows in the dwelling-houses grew bright. Here and there the muffled shouts of the children came forth from the houses, and the watchmen with echoing footsteps paced the pavements.

Through the door of an old patrician house entered a tall man, wearing a broad-brimmed hat and a long cloak. A white poodle followed him. Having reached the second story, the man opened a door, the plate of which bore the name of a celebrated artist, and after a few moments he entered a comfortable room, illuminated by soft lamp-light. A huge gray cat rose from her cushion, which lay near the stove, and with a low purr greeted her master as he entered. Then she showed the same politeness to the poodle, and laid herself down again. Poodle and pussy had known each other

for many years, and lived together, not like "cats and dogs," but like two excellent chums who have been together at school.

The man took off his hat and cloak, and went to the window. In the opposite house flickered the lights of a Christmas tree, and the shadows of the children and grown-people stood out on the lowered shades. The man looked at the lighted window for a long time, then turned away, brushed his hand across his eyes, and said softly to himself, "I am alone."

The poodle, as if he would have liked to contradict this, approached him, and rubbed his cold nose against his hand; but his master paid no attention to the caress. "I am alone," he repeated. Then he sat down in his easy-chair, and fixed his eyes on the floor.

No bright pictures were they which passed before the lonely man's mind:—a melancholy childhood, a youth full of cruel privations, wearisome struggling and disenchantments of every sort. Honor and wealth had at last fallen to his share, but in the time of need he had forgotten how to enjoy himself. Youth was past; in his dark hair the frost of early autumn already shimmered, — and he was alone.

Then, as he sat thus brooding over the past, he suddenly heard close to him the words: "Old friend, shall we chat together? The master is asleep."

"I am willing," came the answer. "You begin."

"That is my poodle and my cat," said the man to himself, "and I am dreaming. To be sure, on Christmas eve, animals have the power of speech; I used often to hear that when I was young. If only I do not wake up before I learn what the two have to say to one another!"

"Friend Pussy," the poodle began, "do you know that for some time the master has not quite pleased me? He has neglected me. I will forgive him for not having me sheared in the summer, but it hurts me deeply that he almost never claims my services."

"Yes," replied the cat, "he is no longer as he used to be. Just think, yesterday he even forgot to give me my breakfast. At last I shall have to return to my former life of catching mice. That would be hard."

"Do you know, my dear," said the poodle, "what would be the best thing for us and

for him? If we had a woman in the house who would look after our rights and keep things in order."

"Oh!" exclaimed the cat, "that is a doubtful suggestion. The wife would probably look on the friends of her husband's youth with disapproval. We have both seen our best days. Suppose the young woman should show us the door, what then, brother?"

"But I know one who would not do that," replied the poodle, "and you know her too."

The cat pointed with her fore-paw to a little picture on the wall. It was a woman's head with large, dark, childlike eyes. "Do you mean that one there?"

"Yes," said the poodle. "She would be the woman for us. She is friendly toward me, that I know; and she doesn't dislike you, for I have seen with my own eyes how lately, when you creep around her window, looking for sparrows, she sets out a cup of milk for you. And our master —"

"She likes him too," said the cat, filling out the sentence. "That I know; for when she is sitting by the window, sewing, and the master passes along on the street, she turns her pretty

white neck after him, and blushes. And when people blush — ”

“I know what that means,” interrupted the poodle. “We are both agreed, and that is the main point. She must be our mistress.”

“But the master?” asked the cat, doubtfully.

“That will be all right,” said the poodle, confidently. “But hush! He is moving; he is waking up.”

The sleeper leaped from his chair, and looked suspiciously at his companions. But they lay, to all appearance lost in sweet dreams, curled up like snail-shells on their cushions, and never stirred. And with his hands behind his back, the man strode up and down the room, like one who is striving to settle some weighty question.

Let us leave the solitary man, with his poodle and cat, and mount the stairs as far as they go, — and they reach to the roof, under which, in narrow chambers, poor, worried people rest from their day’s labor. In one of these little rooms, — the cleanest and neatest of all, — sat two women, one old, the other young. Before them on a table stood two smoking

cups and a cake cut in pieces. The maiden had a delicate, pale face, and two large dark eyes, which looked out into the world sometimes merry and sometimes sad. The young girl was a seamstress; the old woman a laundress by trade, and the younger one's aunt. She had come from her damp home in the suburbs to receive the presents which her niece intended for her: two or three pounds of sugar and coffee and a knitted hood of soft gray wool, which the old woman stroked from time to time caressingly with her wrinkled hand. The cake on the table grew perceptibly smaller, for the aunt ate as though she had fasted for three days; and when she could take no more, she, after some resistance, allowed the seamstress to wrap the rest in paper to take away with her.

"Child," said the old woman, as she was getting ready to go home, "you would be wise to go to sleep early this evening, for in the holy Christmas night all sorts of strange things happen, — and you are so entirely alone! Don't you feel at all afraid?"

The maiden shook her head with a laugh. "What sort of strange things, auntie?"

“Did you ever pass by a church at twelve o’clock on Christmas eve?” asked the laundress. “No? Oh, if I should tell you! But I will not make you timid. A maiden can learn, too, on Christmas eve, who will be her husband; but that is a dangerous story.”

The little one pricked up her ears. “What must one do to find out that?” she asked.

“Child,” said the old woman, warningly, “you will not try it?”

“No, I am not so inquisitive; but I should like to know how one must go to work to find it out.”

The aunt sat down again and began to display her wisdom. “If a maiden sits all sole alone in her room on Christmas eve, and lays the table for two, her future husband will appear to her. But he has no flesh and blood; it is an apparition, and vanishes when the cock crows. Therefore the maid would do well to have a cock near her in a bag. And if the uncanny guest should cause her to be afraid, she would only have to pinch the cock; then he would cry out, and the ghost would disappear. Many say it is the Evil One who assumes the form of the lover. I do not really

believe that, but it is a dangerous game, at any rate. I went through terrible suffering when I tried the trick."

"Really?" asked the maiden, with curiosity. "Did you try the magic yourself? And did somebody come to you?"

"No," said the old woman; "nobody came, and so I knew that I should be an old maid; and that I really am. But it troubles me sorely to think I have told you all this. Truly, you will not try it? Well now, my child, thank you very much for the Christmas gifts, and hold the light for me, for it's as dark as pitch outside, and the stairs are so steep."

The seamstress accompanied the old woman with the lamp, and then went back to her silent room. The hot drink had made her little face glow, and as she busied herself in a matronly way, putting the plates and dishes in their places, she would have been a charming sight for anybody's eyes; but there was no one who could refresh himself with a look at the young blossom.

What her aunt had been telling her went round and round in her head. At first she

laughed at the Christmas magic, then she grew thoughtful, and finally — it was surely only a harmless joke — she brought out a white cloth, spread it on the table, and laid it for two. There, now he can come. To be sure, she had no cock, but she wore a little cross around her neck, and every sort of ghost must vanish before the cross. She sat down, folded her little hands in her lap, and called up to mind the men whom she knew, — the curly-haired shopkeeper in the grocery shop, who always weighed out the sugar and coffee for her so generously; the sergeant, who occasionally met her and greeted her so respectfully; and the writer in the house opposite, who played on his flute every evening “If I were a bird,” — but none of these was the right one. At last she came to one more, but he was a serious, fine gentleman, who could hardly remember the poor seamstress in the garret.

Two years before, when her mother was still living, he met her for the first time on the stairs, had stopped and looked at her with the most gentle eyes. On the following day he had spoken to her, and asked her to sit for him as a model for a picture. At first she had

objected, for she had heard horrible stories about painters and models; but the gentleman had spoken so courteously to her! And so she went, accompanied by her mother, to his studio. Afterward she had seen the finished picture too. It represented an old man with a harp, and by his side sat a young girl, and the young girl was the little seamstress—her very self. When the picture had gone out into the world, the painter had placed a large bank-note in her work-basket. She had really not wished to take it, but as her mother then lay on her death-bed she did not dare to return the gift, and the money went just far enough to bury her mother and to get a little cast-iron cross for her grave. She had never spoken to the painter since that time, but she saw the serious man every day, and she had formed a friendship with his two companions, — a poodle and a pussy-cat, — and was kind to the animals whenever she had an opportunity.

The lamp blazed up and started her out of her dreams. She saw the two plates before her, and she smiled, and then gave a sigh. “You are a thoroughly silly creature,” she

said softly, and rose to put away the dishes again.

Then there came a knock at the door. Heaven help us, if the Christmas magic is really no fairy tale! And the door opened, and the apparition which appeared in the doorway was like the painter to a dot. The poor little girl sank trembling into her chair, and hid her face in her hands.

“Good evening,” said the ghost in a deep voice; and then he came nearer, sat down by the seamstress, and took her hand. Ghosts usually have ice-cold hands, but the one which grasped the trembling maiden’s was full of warm life.

And then the ghost began to speak. He spoke of the lonely, joyless existence he led, and then many other things about love and fidelity, and the maiden listened with a beating heart. If he were no ghost after all! With trembling hands she felt for the little cross she wore in her waist. Before the cross all magic is destroyed. She drew it forth and held it before the ghost.

But he smiled, seized the cross, and said: “Poor child, you do not believe my words. I swear to you on the cross which I hold in my

hands that I am true and honest in my intentions toward you. Will you be my wife?"

Then the little one's soul rejoiced like a lark. No, it was no apparition to vanish into mist at the crowing of a cock; it was one of Adam's sons, with flesh and bone. His mouth, which her lips sought, was warm, and his heart beat violently against her breast.

O blessed, merry Christmas!

Then there was a scratching at the door, and when it was opened the poodle came in with a bound, and behind him was seen the cat. They came to bring their congratulations. The poodle jumped up, now on his master and then on the maiden, whining for joy. The cat arched her back, and purred like a spinning-wheel. That the two people had found each other was the work of the wise creatures. They were proud of it, but said nothing about it, for true merit is rewarded in silence.

A HAPPY MARRIAGE.

A CONVENTION of magicians was to be held in Africa, and guests came to the festival from all quarters of the globe in aerial conveyances. Among others, an aged fairy had left her castle, and undertaken the journey. Her dragon-coach in the course of years had become somewhat decayed, and as it was coming down a steep cloud-mountain the axle-tree broke. The coach immediately began to fall, and whirled, together with the struggling dragons, down to the solid earth. A fairy can endure more than mortals, but still she was very much alarmed at the accident, and the fact that she landed directly in the midst of a populous town considerably increased her anxiety.

The city was none other than Simpel, and the people who surrounded the shattered coach were Simpletons. How they opened their eyes! Emperors and kings had often been entertained

within their walls, but a fairy who journeyed through the air with a team of dragons they had never yet beheld. However, they conducted themselves like brave Christian people. The coach they dragged to the blacksmith's shop, they put the dragons in the stable, and filled the crib with pitch wreaths and brimstone matches. But the burgomaster invited the fairy in appropriate language to come to his humble dwelling and take a lunch to recover herself from the fright she had undergone.

The fairy accepted the gallant man's invitation, refreshed herself with food and drink, and later the burgomaster took her to see the sights of the city. Then, indeed, she saw many things that she had to shake her head over, and what she learned about the customs and doings of the people made her very thoughtful. When she returned to her host's house again, she took her magic book in her hand, and soon knew all that she wanted to know. "The worthy people must be helped," she said to herself, and asked the burgomaster to grant her an interview.

At first she praised the city, and then began cautiously to draw his attention to the existing poverty and crime; and when the consul, shrug-

ging his shoulders, admitted that things were really not altogether as they ought to be, the fairy said: "Gracious, burgomaster! A fiend has established himself in your city, and for hundreds of years has darkened the minds of the citizens, and—pardon me—yours as well. But I know how to exorcise spirits, and will free your city from the plague if you will accompany me to the court-house."

So they went together to the windowless court-house, which was lighted with miserable oil lamps. There the fairy opened her book and began the exorcism. She had been whispering her magic words for a good while, when all of a sudden the door of the large oaken cupboard, in which the city seal, the chronicle, and the most important documents were kept, opened with a great creaking, and bluish smoke began to pour out from the inside. The burgomaster fortified himself behind a chair, and awaited the appearance of the spirit with fear and trembling. But the fairy continued her exorcism, the cloud became condensed, and finally the spirit assumed bodily form. It did not excite fear and dread, but rather pity, for it appeared like a young woman with low brow and delicate features. And the maiden, or

whatever it was, immediately began to weep and sob, as if her heart would break.

“There is your city ghost,” said the fairy. “Now try your best to get rid of her. But do the little creature no harm. You must promise me that.”

The burgomaster had found his courage again. He looked at the pitiful form, and then asked her sternly, “Who are you?”

But the maid could give no answer, for she was sobbing so. Then the fairy bent towards the burgomaster and whispered a word in his ear, and the honorable gentleman fell back alarmed into a chair. “Horrible!” he groaned, and buried his face in his hands. Thus he sat for a long time.

“Make an end of it, good burgomaster,” said the fairy after a while, “and send her away.”

“Yes, she must go,” said the disquieted official. “She shall go unharmed from here, but she must swear that she will never come back again.”

She did so. Then the burgomaster gave the exile a pass, and furnished it with a seal and an illegible signature, and when the vesper bell sounded the evil spirit had already left the city far behind her.

* * *

Sadly went the banished spirit along the country road. She journeyed all night long, and when the awakening birds became noisy, and the mountain-tops began to grow rosy, she came to a village. She dimly remembered having once lived among the peasants, and that she did not have a bad time then. Therefore she made up her mind to try her luck in the village.

By a gurgling well stood a handsome peasant woman with red arms, pouring water into the milk that she was going to carry to the city. The woman was Country Simplicity. The pilgrim timidly approached her, and asked in a shy voice, "Possibly you are in want of a maid?"

"A maid I certainly am in need of," replied the peasant woman, and looked the stranger critically in the eye. "Oho, it's you, is it?" she exclaimed, and burst into a loud laugh. "I know you; I have often seen you in the city. No, my good girl, there is no room for you in the village. Go on further!" And Country Simplicity turned her back on the poor creature, and went on with her work.

The maid continued her way. She went from house to house, but she was welcome nowhere; they turned her rudely or scornfully from the

door, and the dogs barked after her. The same thing happened to her in the next town, and she had begun to look about for a corner where she could stay at night, when she happened on an old gloomy house, whose door stood carelessly open. She went in, and found in an arched room on the ground floor an old woman busily writing by the light of a lamp. Dusty books and gilded parchments lay about everywhere, and spiders had spun their webs in every corner. The woman who was writing was Knowledge.

“Do you need a maid?” asked the outlaw in a low voice.

Knowledge pushed her horn spectacles upon her forehead, and inspected the stranger; nodded her gray head with satisfaction, and said: “There is something about you that pleases me. You can remain.” And the stranger remained.

It was not a difficult position to be in the service of Knowledge, and the mistress grew daily more fond of the industrious, quiet maid. Occasionally, when she was in a particularly good humor, she would read a passage from her manuscript to the servant, and ask, “What do you think of that?” Then the maid would answer and give her opinion as well as she could, and

the dame would nod an assent, and write down the maid's words on the edge as a gloss. It was a fortunate union.

But one day a man came to the house who had orders from the king to write down the names of all the people in the city, — men, women, and children, — for the king wished to know how many subjects he had. So the maid was brought out to the official.

“Have you a certificate or anything in writing to show where you belong?” he asked; and the maid produced her passport that the burgomaster of Simpel had given her. The man looked at it with astonishment, then handed the paper to the mistress of the house, and asked with a laugh, “Do you know whom you have taken into your house?”

Knowledge took the passport, read it, and let the paper fall from her hands. “Oh my goodness!” she groaned in an undertone. Then she implored the officer not to say anything about it, paid the trembling maid the wages due her, gave her some cast-off garments besides, and bolted the door behind the departing bird of misfortune.

With hanging head the poor thing crept out of the city; and when, after a hard journey, she reached a wood, she decided to live in it and become a hermit.

She had spent several days in the wilderness, when one morning, while gathering berries, she came to a garden fence. Strange trees and flowers grew in it, and birds of shining plumage sang in the branches. An old woman was taking a walk along the path strewn with golden sand. She was none other than the fairy who had driven the unfortunate creature into banishment; and as soon as the maid recognized her enemy, she fell on the ground with a loud scream.

The fairy came to the fainting girl, lifted her up, and gave her some strengthening balsam. Then she led her, trembling, into her castle, and quieted her with friendly words. "You may stay here," she said, "for a few days, and rest yourself. In the mean time, I hope that just the right thing will be found for you. I am to blame for your misfortune, and it is right that I should help you out of it."

Hereupon the fairy shut herself up in her study, and called up the spirits that served her, to hold counsel with them.

On the third day the fairy sent for the little stranger. She looked very friendly, and said: "My child, I have something good in store for you. In a short time your sadness will be changed to joy." She rang for her waiting-maids, and ordered them to dress her charge in costly garments. The waiting-maids did their best, and when, after an hour, the stranger in her adornment appeared again before her patron, the fairy nodded her head in approval. "Come, and follow me!" she said, and conducted the little one into the courtyard. There stood a dainty, milk-white ass, provided with wings, and a woman's saddle. "Mount!" commanded the fairy, and helped the maiden into the saddle. Then she whispered something in the ass's ear, and the ass gave a joyful bray, lifted his wings, and rose like a falcon into the air. "Hold on fast!" cried the fairy, and waved her handkerchief. The winged ass had soon mounted so high with his burden that he looked no bigger than a lark above the cornfields. But the fairy, smiling, rubbed her hands with satisfaction.

The magic ass understood flying. He shot straight ahead like a dove striving to reach her

own dove-cote, and when he saw his goal lying beneath him, he sank very slowly down, that his rider might come gently to the ground.

The ass stopped before a magnificent castle; the coat of arms above the door showed a golden turkey on a red field. Gaily clad servants rushed forward to assist the extraordinary rider from the saddle. At the foot of the broad marble steps stood a dignified man, gorgeously dressed, who was the lord of the castle.

Graciously he took off his hat adorned with ostrich feathers before the stranger, and led her into the interior of the palace. Oh, what magnificence!

When they reached the drawing-room the lord dropped politely on one knee before the lady, and said: "Be welcome, charming fairy child! Know that I am immortal, and only an immortal can become my wife. Therefore fate has led you to me. I am Pride." He rose and stood in all his magnificence before the stupefied girl. "And who art thou, my adorable angel?" asked Pride. "What is thy name?"

The stranger lifted her face, and tears were shining in her watery blue eyes. "Ah," she sighed, "I dare not deceive you. Immortal I

am indeed; but if you should hear my name you would drive me from you. I am — ”

“ Why do you hesitate, heavenly fairy? Speak! Who are you? ”

“ I am Stupidity,” stammered the lady, and held her hand before her eyes.

The lord of the castle laughed till the arches rang. “ And do you think I believe that? ” he cried. “ Never! But you shall be called whatever you please. I will nevermore let you leave my side, and the wedding shall be this very day. Are you willing? ”

Then Stupidity with a beaming face fell on Pride’s decorated breast, and whispered, blissfully smiling, “ Yes.”

Above them the ceiling of the drawing-room opened, and in a rosy cloud appeared the good fairy and blessed the union of the happy pair.









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