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MARGERY

By Georg Ebers

Volume 4.

CHAPTER XV.

We reached the forest lodge that evening with red faces and half-frozen hands and feet. The ride through the deep snow and the bitter December wind had been a hard one; but the woods in their glittering winter shroud, the sharp, refreshing breath of the pure air, and a thousand trifling matters--from the white hats that crowned every stock and stone to the tiny crystals of snow that fell on the green velvet of my fur-lined bodice--were a joy to me, albeit my heart was heavy with care. The evening star had risen or ever we reached the house; and out here, under God's open heavens, among the giants of the forest and its sturdy, weather-beaten folk, it scarce seemed that it could be true that I should see my bright, young Ann sharing the sorry life of the Magister, an alien from all this world's joys. Those who dwelt out here in these wilds must, methought, feel this as I felt it; and so in truth it proved. After I had taken my place at the hearth by my aunt's side, and she had mingled some spiced wine for us with her own feeble hands, she bid me speak. When she heard what it was that had brought me forth to the forest so late before Christmas, which we ever spent with our grand-uncle Im Huff she at first did but laugh at our Magister's suit; but as soon as I told her that it was Ann's earnest purpose to wed with him, she swore that she would never suffer such a deed of mad folly.

Master Peter had many times been her guest at the lodge; and she, though so small and feeble herself, loved to see tall and stalwart men, so that she had given him the name of "the little dry Bookworm," hardly accounting him a man at all. When she heard of his newly-gained wealth, she said: "If instead of being the richer by these thousands he could but be the same number of years younger, lift a hundredweight more, and see a hundred miles further out into the world, I would not mind his seeking his happiness with that lovely child!"

As for my uncle, he did but hum a burly bass to the tune of the "Little wee wife." But, being called away, he turned to me before closing the door behind him, and asked me very keenly, as though he had been restraining his impatience for some space: "And how about your brother? How is it that this matter has come about? Was not Herdegen pledged to marry Ann?"

Thereupon I told my aunt all I knew, and gave her Herdegen's letter to read, which I had taken care to bring with me; and even as she read it her countenance grew dark and fearful to look upon; she set her teeth like a raging hound, and hit her little hand on the table that stood by her couch so that the cups and phials standing thereon danced and clattered. Nay, she forgot her weakness, and made as though she would spring up, but the pain was more than she could bear and she fell back on her pillows with a groan.

She had never loved my grand-uncle Im Hoff, and, as soon as she had recovered herself, she vowed she would bring his craft to nought and likewise would let her nephew, now in Paris, know her opinion of his knavish unfaith to a sacred pledge.

I then went on to tell her how hard and altogether insufferable Ann's life had become, and at length took courage to inform her who the man was whom she now called step-father. To this she at first said not a word, but cast down her eyes as though somewhat confused; but presently she asked wherefore and how it was that she had not heard of this marriage long since, and when I told her that folks for the most part had feared to speak the name of Master Ulman Pernhart in her presence, she again suddenly started up and cried in my face that in truth she forbade any mention of that villain and caitiff who had taken foul advantage of her son's youth and innocence to turn his heart from his parents and bring him to destruction.

And this led me, for the first time in my life, to break through the reverence I owed to the venerable lady, who so well deserved to be in all ways respected and spared; for I made so bold as to point out to her her cruel injustice, and to plead Master Ulman's cause with earnest zeal. For some time she was speechless with wrath and amazement, inasmuch as she was not wont to be thus reproved; but then she paid me back in the like coin; one word struck forth the next, and my rising wrath hastened me on so that at last I told her plainly, that Master Pernhart had turned her son Gotz out of doors to hinder him from a breach of that obedience he owed to his parents. Furthermore I informed her of all that the coppersmith's mother had told me of the attempt to carry away Gertrude, and what the end of that had been. Indeed, so soon as the foreman had betrayed the lovers' plot, Master Ulman had locked his daughter into her chamber; and when her lover, after waiting for her in vain at the altar with the hireling priest, came at last to seek her, her father told him that unless he--Gotz--ceased his suit, he should exert his authority as her father to compel Gertrude to marry the foreman and go with him to Augsburg, or give her the choice of taking the veil. And this he confirmed by a solemn oath; and when Gotz, like one in a frenzy, strove to make good his claim to see his sweetheart, and hear from her own lips whether she were minded to yield to her father's yoke, they came to blows, even on the stairs leading to Gertrude's chamber, and there was a fierce battle, which might have had a bloody end but that old dame Magdalen herself came between them to part them. And then Master Ulman had sworn to Gotz that he would keep his daughter locked up as a captive unless the youth pledged himself to cease from seeing Gertrude till he

had won his parents' consent. Thereupon Gotz went forth into a strange land; but he did not forget his well-beloved, and from time to time a letter would reach her assuring her of his faithfulness.

At the end of three years after his departing he at last wrote to the coppersmith that he had found a post which would allow of his marrying and setting up house and he straightly besought Master Ulman no longer to keep apart two who could never be sundered. Nor did Pernhart delay to answer him, hard as he found it to use the pen, inasmuch as there was no more to say than that Gertrude was sleeping under the sod with her lover's ring on her finger and the last violets he had ever given her under her head, as she had desired.

Thus ended the tale of poor Gertrude; but before I had half told it my wrath had cooled. For my aunt sat in silence, listening to me with devout attention. Nor were my eyes dry, nor even those of that strong-willed dame, and when, at the end, I said: "Well, Aunt?" she woke, as it were, from a dream, and cried out: "And yet those craftsmen folk robbed me of my son, my only child!"

And she sobbed aloud and hid her face in her hands, while I knelt by her side, and threw my arms about her, and kissed her thin fingers which covered her eyes, and said softly, as if by inspiration: "But the craftsman loved his child; yea, and she was a sweet and lovely maid, the fairest in all the town, and her father's pride. And what was it that snatched her so early away but that she pined for your son? Gotz may soon be recalled to his mother's arms; but the coppersmith may never see his child--fair Gertrude, the folks called her--never see her more. And he might have been rejoiced in her presence to this day if...."

She broke in with words and gestures of warning, and when I nevertheless would not cease from entreating her no longer to harden her heart, but to bid her son come home to her, who was her most precious treasure, she commanded me to quit her chamber. Such a command I must obey, whether I would or no; nay, while I stood a moment at the door she signed to me to go; but, as I turned away, she cried after me: "Go and leave me, Margery. But you are a good child, I will tell you that!"

At supper, which I alone shared with my uncle and the chaplain, I told my uncle that I had spoken to his wife of Master Pernhart, and when he heard that I had even spoken a good word for him, he looked at me as though I had done a right bold deed; yet I could see that he was highly pleased thereat, and the priest, who had sat silent--as he ever did, gave me a glance of heartfelt thanks and added a few words of praise. It was long after supper, and my uncle had had his night-draught of wine when my aunt sent the house-keeper to fetch me to her. Kindly and sweetly, as though she set down my past wrath to a good intent, she bid me sit down by her and then desired that I would repeat to her once more, in every detail, all I could tell her as touching Gotz and Gertrude. While I did her bidding to the best of my powers she spoke never a word; but when I ended she raised her head and said, as it were in a dream: "But Gotz! Did he not forsake father and mother to follow after a fair face?"

Then again I prayed her right earnestly to yield to the emotions of her mother's heart. But seeing her fixed gaze into the empty air, and the set pout of her nether lip, I could not doubt that she would never speak the word that would bid him home.

I felt a chill down my back, and was about to rise and leave, but she held me back and once more spoke of Herdegen and that matter. When she had heard all the tale, she looked troubled: "I know my Ann," quoth she. "When she has once given her promise to the Bookworm all the twelve Apostles would not make her break it, and then she will be doomed to misery, and her fate and your brother's are both sealed."

She then went on to ask when the Magister was to return home, and as I told her he was expected on the morrow great trouble came upon her.

It was past midnight or ever I left her, and as it fell I slept but ill and late, insomuch that I was compelled to make good haste, and as it fell that I went to the window I saw the snow whirling in the wind, and behold, in the shed, a great wood-sleigh was being made ready, doubtless for some sick man to be carried to the convent.

I found my aunt in the hall, whither she scarce ever was carried down before noon-day; and instead of her every-day garb--a loose morning-gown--she was apparelled in strange and shapeless raiment, so muffled in kerchiefs and cloaks as to seem no whit like any living woman, much less herself, insomuch that her small thin person was like nothing else than a huge, shapeless, many-coated onion. Her little face peeped out of the veils and kerchiefs that wrapped her head, like a half-moon out of thick clouds; but her bright eyes shone kindly on me as she cried: "Come, haste to your breakfast, lie-a-bed! I thought to find you fitted and ready, and you are keeping the men waiting as though it were an every-day matter that we should travel together."

"Aye, aye! She is bent on the journey," my uncle said with a groan, as he cast a loving glance at his frail wife and raised his folded hands to Heaven. "Well, chaplain, miracles happen even in our days!" And his Reverence, silent as he was, this time had an answer ready, saying with hearty feeling: "The loving heart of a brave woman has at all times been able to work miracles."

"Amen," said my uncle, pressing his lips on the top of his wife's muffled head.

Howbeit I remembered our talk yesternight, and the sleigh I had seen being harnessed; indeed, the look alone which the unwonted traveller cast on me was enough to tell me what my sickly aunt purposed to do for the sake of Ann. Then something came upon me, I know not what; with a passion all unlike that of yesterdayeve, I fell on my knees and kissed her as a child whose mother has made it a Christmas gift of what it most loves and wishes to have, while my lips were pressed to her eyes, brow, and cheeks, wherever the wrappings covered them not, and she cried out:

"Leave me, leave me, crazy child! You are choking me. What great matter

is it after all? One woman will ride through the snow to Nuremberg for the sake of a chat with another, and who turns his head to look at her? Now, foolish wench, let me be. What a to-do for nothing at all!"

How I ate my porridge in the winking of an eye, and then sprang into the sleigh, I scarce could tell, and in truth I marked little of our departing; mine eyes were over full of tears. Packed right close to my aunt, whereas she filled three-fourths of the seat, I flew with her over the snow; nor did we need any great following on horseback to bear us company, inasmuch as my uncle rode on in front, and the Buchenauers and Steinbachers and other highway robbers who made the roads unsafe about Nuremberg, all lived in peace with uncle Waldstromer for the sake of the shooting.

When we got into the town, and I bid the rider take us to the Schopperhof, my aunt said: "No, to Ulman Pernhart's house, the coppersmith."

At this the faithful old serving-man, who had heard many rumors of his banished young master's dealings with the craftsman's fair daughter, and who was devoted to Gotz, muttered the name of his protecting saint and looked about him as though some giant cutthroat were ready to rush out of the brush wood and fall upon the sleigh; nor, indeed, could I altogether refrain my wonder. Howbeit, I recovered myself at once, and pointed out to her that it scarce beseemed her to enter a stranger's house for the first time in such attire. Moreover, Akusch had been sent in front to announce her coming to cousin Maud. I could send for Ann; as, indeed, it beseemed her, the younger, to wait upon my aunt.

But she held to her will to go to Master Ulman's dwelling; yet, whereas the kerchiefs and wraps were a discomfort to her, she agreed to lay them aside at our house first.

Cousin Maud pressed her almost by force to take rest and meat and drink; but she refused everything; though all was in readiness and steaming hot; till, as fate would have it, as she was being carried down and out again, the Magister came in from his journey to Nordlingen. In his high fur boots and the heavy wrapping he had cast about his head to screen him from the wintry blast, he had not to be sure, the appearance of a suitor for a fair young maiden; and the glance cast at him by my aunt, half in mockery and half in wrath, eyeing him from head to foot, would have said plainly enough to other men than Master Peter--who, for his part made her a right humble and well-turned speech--"Wait awhile, young fellow! I am here now! And if you find a flea in your ear, you have me to thank for it!"

Apparelled now as befitted a lady of her degree, in a furred cloak and hood, she was borne off in Cousin Maud's well-curtained litter. I had sent Akusch to Ann with a note, but he had not found her within, and awaited me in the street; thus it fell that no one at the Pernharts was aware of what was coming upon them.

When presently the bearers set down the litter, Aunt Jacoba looked at the

fine house before which we stood, and enquired what this might mean, whereas it was seven years since she had been in the city, and the master's new dwelling was not at that time built. Also she was greatly amazed to find a craftsman in so great a house. But better things were to come: as I was about to knock at the door it opened, and five gentlemen of the Council, all men of the first rank among the Elders of the city, appeared on the threshold, and Master Pernhart in their midst. They shook hands with him as with one of themselves, and he towered above them all; nay, if he had not stood there as he had come from the forge, in his leathern apron, with his smith's cap in his hand, any one might have conceived him to be the chief of them all.

Now these gentlemen had come to Master Pernhart to announce to him that he had been chosen one of the eight wardens of the guilds who at that time formed part of the worshipful town council of forty-two. Veit Gundling, the old master-brewer, had lately departed this life, and the electors had been of one mind in choosing the coppersmith to fill his place, and he was likewise approved by the guilds. They had come to him forthwith, albeit their choice would not be declared till Saint Walpurgis day, inasmuch as it was deemed well to have the matter settled before the close of the old year.

Thus it came to pass that my aunt was witness while they took leave, and he returned thanks in a few heartfelt words. These, to be sure, were cut short by her coming, by reason that she was well-known to these five noble gentlemen, who all, as in duty bound, assured her of their surprise and pleasure in greeting her once more, here in the town.

That the feeble and suffering lady had come to Pernhart's dwelling not merely to order a copper-lid or a preserving pan was easy to be understood, but she cut short all inquisition, and the litter was forthwith carried in through the widely-opened door.

The master received her in the hall.

He had till now never seen her but from a distance, yet had he heard enough about her to form a clear image of her. With her it was the same. She saw this man, to whom she owed such bitter grudge, for the first time here, under his own roof, and it was right strange to behold the two eyeing each other so keenly; he with a slight bow, almost timidly, and cap in hand; she unabashed, but with an expression as though she well knew that nothing pleasant lay before her.

The master spoke first, bidding her welcome to his dwelling, in accents of truth but with all due respect, and never speaking of it, as is the wont of his class, as "humble" or "poor," and as he was about to help her out of the litter I could see her face brighten, and this assured me that she would let bygones be bygones, as they say, and declare to Master Pernhart in plain words to what intent and purpose she had knocked at his door. By the time she was in the best chamber, the last sour curl had disappeared from her mouth; and indeed all was snug and seemly therein; Dame Giovanna being well-skilled in giving things a neat appearance, well pleasing to the eye.

Pernhart meanwhile had said but little, and his face was still dark, almost solemn of aspect. The master's mother again, to whom Gertrude had been all-in-all, and who had done what she could to speed her marriage, could read the other woman's heart, and understood how great had been the sacrifice she had taken upon herself. There was no trace of the old grudge in her speech, and it sounded not ill when, as she put my aunt's cushions straight, she said she could not envy her, forasmuch as she the elder was thus permitted to be of service to the younger. When Pernhart presently quitted the chamber, perchance to don more seemly attire the two old women sat in eager talk; and if the lady were thin and sickly and the craftsman's mother stout and sturdy, yet were there many points of resemblance between them. Both, for certain, loved to rule, and as I watched them, seeing each shoot out her nether lip if the other spoke a word to cross her, I found it right good sport; but at the same time I was amazed to hear how truly old Dame Pernhart understood and spoke of Ann. I had indeed hitherto seen many a thing in my friend with other eyes, and yet I could not accuse the good woman of injustice, or deny that the coppersmith's step-daughter, from knowing me and from keeping company with us, had grown up with manners and desires unlike those of ever another clerk's or even a craftsman's daughter.

Albeit she strove to hide her deep discomfort, the old woman said, she could by no means succeed. A household was a body, and any member of it who could not be content with its ways was ill at ease with the rest, and made it hard for them to do it such service and pleasure as they would fain do. Ann fulfilled her every duty, down to the very least of them, by reason that she had a steadfast spirit and great dominion over herself; but she got small thanks, and by her own fault, inasmuch as she did it joylessly. To look for bright cheer from her was to seek grapes on a birch-tree; and whereas the grandmother had till lately hoped to find in this gentle maid one who might fill the place of her who was no more, she could now only wish that she might find some other home.

To all this my aunt agreed, and presently, when Pernhart came in, clad in his holiday garb--a goodly man and well fitted for his new dignity, Aunt Jacoba bid me go look out for Ann. I saw that she desired my absence that she might deal alone with the mother and son, so I hastily departed and stayed in the upper chambers with the children till I caught sight of Ann and her mother coming towards the house. I ran down to meet them and behold! as we all three went into the guest chamber, Pernhart was in the act of bending over my aunt's hand to press it to his lips, and tears were sparkling in his eyes as well as in those of the women; nay, they were so greatly moved that no one heard the door open, and the old woman believed herself to be alone with her son as she cried to my aunt: "Oh wherefor did not Heaven vouchsafe to guide you to us some years since!"

My aunt only nodded her head in silence, and Dame Magdalen doubtless took this for assent; but I read more than this in her face, and something as follows: "We have hurt each other deeply, and I am thankful that all is past and forgiven; yet, much as I may now esteem you, in the matter you had so set your heart on I would no more have yielded to-day than I did at that time."

CHAPTER XVI.

Ann looked right sweetly as she told my aunt that she felt put to shame by the great loving-kindness which had brought the feeble lady out through the forest in the bitter winter weather for her sake, and she kissed the thin, small hand with deep feeling; and even the elder woman unbent and freely gave vent before her favorite to the full warmth of her heart, which she was not wont to display. She had told the Pernharts what were the fears which had brought her into the town, so the chamber was presently cleared, and the master called away Mistress Giovanna after that my aunt had expressed her admiration of her rare charms.

As I too was now preparing to retire, which methought but seemly Aunt Jacoba beckoned me to stay. Ann likewise understood what had brought her sickly friend to her, and she whispered to me that albeit she was deeply thankful for the abundant goodness my aunt had ever shown her, yet could she never swerve from her well-considered purpose. To this I was only able to reply that on one point at least she must change her mind, for that I knew for certain that old grand-dame Pernhart loved her truly. At this she cried out gladly and thankfully: "Oh, Margery! if only that were true!"

So soon as we three were left together, my aunt went to the heart of the matter at once, saying frankly to what end she had come hither, that she knew all that Ann had suffered through Herdegen, and how well she had taken it, and that she had now set her mind on wedding with the Magister.

And whereas Ann here broke in with a resolute "And that I will!" my aunt put it to her that she must be off with one or ever she took on the other lover. Herdegen had come before Master Peter, and the first question therefor was as to how matters stood with him.

At this Ann humbly besought her to ask nothing concerning him; if my aunt loved her she would forbear from touching on the scarce-healed wound. So much as this she said, though with pain and grief; but her friend was not to be moved, but cried: "And do I not thank Master Ulsenius when he thrusts his probe to the heart of my evil, when he cuts or burns it? Have you not gladly approved his saying that the leech should never despair so long as the sick man's heart still throbs? Well then, your trouble with Herdegen is sick and sore and lies right deep. . . ."

But Ann broke in again, crying: "No, no, noble lady, the heart of that matter has ceased to beat. It is dead and gone for ever!"

"Is it so?" said my aunt coolly. "Still, look it close in the face. Old Im Hoff--I have read the letter--commands your lover to give you up and do his bidding. Yet, child, does he take good care not to write this to you. Finding it over hard to say it himself, he leaves the task to Margery. And as for that letter; a Lenten jest I called it yestereve;

and so it is verily! Read it once more. Why, it is as dripping with love as a garment drips when it is fished out of a pool! While he is trying to shut the door on you he clasps you to his heart. Peradventure his love never glowed so hotly, and he was never so strongly drawn to you as when he wrote this paltry stuff to burst the sacred bands which bind you together. Are you so dull as not to feel this?"

"Nay, I see it right well," cried Ann eagerly, "I knew it when I first read the letter. But that is the very point! Must not a lover who can barter away his love for filthy lucre be base indeed? If when he ceased to be true he had likewise ceased to love, if the fickle Fortunatus had wearied of his sweetheart--then I could far more easily forgive."

"And do you tell me that your heart ever throbbed with true love for him?" asked her friend in amazement, and looking keenly into her eyes as though she expected her to say No. And when Ann cried: "How can you even ask such a question?" My aunt went on: "Then you did love him? And Margery tells me that you and she have made some strange compact to make other folks happy. Two young maids who dare to think they can play at being God Almighty! And the Magister, I conceive, was to be the first to whom you proposed to be a willing sacrifice, let it cost you what it may? That is how matters stand?"

Ann was not now so ready to nod assent, and my aunt murmured something I could not hear, as she was wont to do when something rubbed her against the grain; then she said with emphasis: "But child, my poor child, love, and wounded pride, and heart-ache have turned your heart and good sense. I am an old woman, and I thank God can see more clearly. It is real, true love, pleasing to the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, aye and to the merciful Virgin and all the saints who protect you, which has bound you and Herdegen together from your infancy. He, though faithless and a sinner, still bears his love in his heart and you have not been able to root yours up and cast it out. He has done his worst, and in doing it--remember his letter--in doing it, I say, has poisoned his own young life already. In that Babel called Paris he does but reel from one pleasure to another. But how long can that last? Do you not see, as I see, that the day must come when, sickened and loathing all this folly he will deem himself the most wretched soul on earth, and look about him for the firm shore as a sailor does who is tossed about in a leaking ship at sea? Then will he call to mind the past, his childhood and youth, his pure love and yours. Then you yourself, you, Ann, will be the island haven for which he will long. Then--aye, child, it is so, you will be the only creature that may help him; and if you really crave to create happiness--if your love is as true as--not so long ago--you declared it to be, on your knees before me and with scalding tears, he, and not Master Peter must be the first on whom you should carry out your day-dreams--for I know not what other name to give to such vain imaginings."

At this Ann sobbed aloud and wrung her hands, crying: "But he cast me off, sold me for gold and silver. Can I, whom he has flung into the dust, seek to go after him? Would it beseem an honest and shamefaced maid if I called him back to me? He is happy--and he will still be happy for many long, long years amid his reckless companions; if the time

should ever come of which you speak, most worshipful lady, even then he will care no more for Ann, bloomless and faded, than for the threadbare bravery in which he once arrayed himself. As for me and my love, warmly as it will ever glow in my breast, so long as I live and breathe, he will never need it in the life of pleasure in which he suns himself. It is no vain imagining that I have made my goal, and if I am to bring joy to the wretched I must seek others than he."

"Right well," said my aunt, "if so be that your love is no worthier nor better than his."

And from the unhappy maid's bosom the words were gasped out: "It is verily and indeed true and worthy and deep; never was truer love . . ."

"Never?" replied my aunt, looking at her enquiringly. "Have you not read of the love of which the Scripture speaketh? Love which is able and ready to endure all things."

And the words of the Apostle came into my mind which the Carthusian sister had graven on our memories, burning them in, as it were, as being those which above all others should live in every Christian woman's heart; and whereas I had hitherto held back as beseemed me, I now came forward and said them with all the devout fervor of my young heart, as follows: "Charity suffereth long and is kind; Charity envieth not; Charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up; seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things."

While I spoke Ann, panting for breath, fixed her eyes on the ground, but my aunt rehearsed the words after me in a clear voice: "beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth and endureth all things." And she added right earnestly; therefore do thou believe and hope and endure yet longer, my poor child, and tell me in all truth: Does it seem to you a lesser deed to lead back the sinner into the way of righteousness and bliss in this world and the next, than to give alms to the beggar?"

Ann shook her head, and my aunt went on: "And if there is any one--let me repeat it--who by faithful love may ever rescue Herdegen, albeit he is half lost, it is you. Come, come," and she signed to her, and Ann did her bidding and fell on her knees by her, as she had done erewhile in the forest-lodge. The elder lady kissed her hair and eyes, and said further: "Cling fast to your love, my darling. You have nothing else than love, and without it life is shallow indeed, is sheer emptiness. You will never find it in the Magister's arms, and that your heart is of a certainty, not set on marrying a well-to-do man at any cost . . ."

But she did not end her speech, inasmuch as Ann imploringly raised her great eyes in mild reproach, as though to defend herself from some hurt. So my aunt comforted her with a few kind words, and then went on to admonish her as follows: "Verily it is not love you lack, but patient trust. I have heard from Margery here what bitter disappointments you have suffered. And it is hard indeed to the stricken heart to look for a new spring for the withered harvest of joy. But look you at my good

husband. He ceases not from sowing acorns, albeit he knows that it will never be vouchsafed to him to see them grown to fine trees, or to earn any profit from them. Do you likewise learn to possess your soul in patience; and do not forget that, if Herdegen is lost, the question will be put to you: 'Did you hold out a hand to him while it was yet time to save him, or did you withdraw from him your love and favor in faint-hearted impatience at the very first blow?'"

The last words fell in solemn earnest from my aunt's lips, and struck Ann to the heart; she confessed that she had many times said the same things to her self, but then maiden pride had swelled up in her and had forbidden her to lend an ear to the warning voice; and nevertheless none had spoken so often or so loudly in her soul, so that her heart's deepest yearning responded to what her friend had said.

"Then do its bidding," said my aunt eagerly, and I said the same; and Ann, being not merely overruled but likewise convinced, yielded and confessed that, even as Master Peter's wife, she could never have slain the old love, and declared herself ready to renounce her pride and wrath.

Thus had my aunt's faithful love preserved her from sin, and gladly did I consent to her brave spirit when she said to Ann: "You must save yourself for that skittle-witted wight in Paris, child; for none other than he can make you rightly happy, nor can he be happy with any other woman than my true and faithful darling!"

Ann covered my aunt's hands with kisses, and the words flowed heartily and glaaay from her lips as she cried: "Yes, yes, yes! It is so! And if he beat me and scorned me, if he fell so deep that no man would leap in after him, I, I, would never let him sink."

And then Ann threw herself on my neck and said: "Oh, how light is my heart once more. Ah, Margery! now, when I long to pray, I know well enough what for."

My aunt's dim eyes had rarely shone so brightly as at this hour, and her voice sounded clearer and firmer than it was wont when she once more addressed us and said: "And now the old woman will finish up by telling you a little tale for your guidance. You knew Riklein, the spinster, whom folks called the night-spinster; and was not she a right loving and cheerful soul? Yet had she known no small meed of sorrows. She died but lately on Saint Damasius' day last past, and the tale I have to tell concerns her. They called her the night-spinster, by reason that she oftentimes would sit at her wheel till late into the night to earn money which she was paid at the rate of three farthings the spool. But it was not out of greed that the old body was so keen to get money.

"In her youth she had been one of the neatest maids far and wide, and had set her heart on a charcoal burner who was a sorry knave indeed, a sheep-stealer and a rogue, who came to a bad end on the rack. But for all that Riklein never ceased to love him truly and, albeit he was dead and gone, she did not give over toiling diligently while she lived yet for him. The priest had told her that, inasmuch as her lover had taken

the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper on the scaffold, the Kingdom of Heaven was not closed to him, yet would it need many a prayer and many a mass to deliver him from the fires of purgatory. So Riklein, span and span, day and night, and stored up all she earned, and when she lay on her death-bed, not long ago, and the priest gave her the Holy Sacrament, she took out her hoard from beneath her mattress and showed it to him, asking whether that might be enough to pay to open the way for Andres to the joys of Heaven? And when the chaplain said that it would be, she turned away her face and fell asleep. So do you spin your yarn, child, and let the flax on your distaff be glad assurance; and, if ever your heart sinks within you, remember old Riklein!"

"And the Farmer's daughter in 'Poor Heinrich,'" I said, "who gladly gave her young blood to save her plighted lord from leprosy."

Thus had my aunt gained her end; but when she strove to carry Ann away from her home and kindred, and keep her in the forest as her own child--to which Master Pernhart and his mother gave their consent--she failed in the attempt. Ann was steadfast in her desire to remain with her mother and the children, and more especially with her deaf and dumb brother, Mario. If my aunt should at any time need her she had but to command her, and she would gladly go to her, this very day if she desired it; howbeit duly to work out her spinning--and by this she meant that she bore Riklein in mind--she must ever do her part for her own folk, with a clear conscience.

Thus it was fixed that Ann should go to the Forest lodge to stay till Christmas and the New Year were past, only she craved a few hours delay that she might remove all doubt from the Magister's mind. I offered to take upon myself this painful task; but she altogether rejected this, and how rightly she judged was presently proved by her cast-off suitor's demeanor; inasmuch as he was ever after her faithful servant and called her his gracious work-fellow. When she had told him of her decision he swore, well-nigh with violence, to become a monk, and to make over his inheritance to a convent, but Ann, with much eloquence, besought him to do no such thing, and laid before him the grace of living to make others happy; she won him over to join our little league and whereas he confessed that he was in no wise fit for the life, she promised that she would seek out the poor and needy and claim the aid only of his learning and his purse. And some time after she made him a gift of an alms-bag on which she had wrought the words, "Ann, to her worthy work-fellow."

Here I am bound to tell that, not to my aunt alone, but to me likewise did the good work which the old organist had pointed out to my friend, seem a vain imagining when it had led her to accept a lover whom she loved not. But when it became a part of her life, stripped of all bigotry or overmuch zeal, and when the old musician had led us to know many poor folks, it worked right well and we were able to help many an one, not alone with money and food, but likewise with good counsel and nursing in sore need. Whenever we might apply to the Magister, his door and purse alike were open to us, and peradventure he went more often to visit and succor the needy than he might otherwise have done, inasmuch as he thereby found the chance of speech with his gracious "work-fellow,"

of winning her praises and kissing her hand, which Ann was ever fain to grant when he had shown special zeal.

We were doubtless a strange fellowship of four: Ann and I, the organist and Master Peter, and, albeit we were not much experienced in the ways of the world, I dare boldly say that we did more good and dried more tears than many a wealthy Abbey.

At the New Year I followed Ann to the forest, and helped to grace the hunter's board "with smart wenchens;" and when she and I came home together after Twelfth day, she found that the forward apprentice had quitted her step-father's house. Not only had my aunt told old Dame Magdalen of his ill-behaving, but his father at Augsburg was dead, and so Pemhart could send him home to the dwelling he had inherited without disgracing him. Yet, after this, he made so bold as to sue for Ann in a right fairly written letter, to which she said him nay in a reply no less fairly written.

CHAPTER XVII.

A thoughtful brain could never cease to marvel at the wonders which happen at every step and turn, were it not that due reflection proves that strange events are no less necessary and frequent links in the mingled chain of our life's experience than commonplace and every-day things; wherefor sheer wonder at matters new to our experience we leave for the most part to children and fools. And nevertheless the question many a time arose in my mind: how a woman whose heart was so truly in the right place as my aunt's could cast off her only son for the cause of an ill-match, and notwithstanding strive with might and main to remove all hindrances in the way of another such ill-match.

This indeed brought to my mind other, no less miracles. Thus, after Ann's home-coming, when I would go to see her at Pernhart's house, I often found her sitting with the old dame, who would tell her many things, and those right secret matters. Once, when I found Ann with the old woman from whom she had formerly been so alien, they were sitting together in the window-bay with their arms about each other, and looking in each other's face with loving but tearful eyes. My entrance disturbed them; Dame Magdalen had been telling her new favorite many matters concerning her son's youthful days, and it was plain to see that she rejoiced in these memories of the best days of her life, when her two fine lads had ever been at the head of their school. Her eldest, indeed, had done so well that the Lord Bishop of Bamberg, in his own person, had pressingly desired her late departed husband to make him a priest. Then the father had apprenticed Ulman to himself, and dedicated the elder, who else should have inherited the dwelling-house and smithy, to the service of the Church, whereupon he had ere long risen to great dignity.

None, to be sure, listened so well as Ann, open-eared to all these tales, and it did old Dame Magdalen good to see the maid bestir herself

contentedly about the house-keeping; but her changed mind proceeded from yet another cause. My aunt had done a noble deed of pure human kindness, of real and true Christian charity, and the bright beam of that love which could drag her feeble body out into the winter's cold and to her foe's dwelling, cast its light on both these miracles at once. This it was which had led the high-born dame to cast aside all the vanities and foolishness in which she had grown up, to the end that she might protect a young and oppressed creature whom she truly cared for from an ill fate. Yea, and that sunbeam had cast its light far and wide in the coppersmith's home, and illumined Ann likewise, so that she now saw the old mother of the household in a new light.

When the very noblest and most worshipful deems it worthy to make a great sacrifice out of pure love for a fellow-creature, that one is, as it were, ennobled by it; it opens ways which before were closed; and such a way was that to old Dame Magdalen's heart, who now, on a sudden, bethought her that she found in Ann all she had lost in her well-beloved grandchild Gertrude.

Never had Ann and I been closer friends than we were that winter, and to many matters which bound us, another was now added--a sweet secret, concerning me this time, which, strange to tell, drew us even more near together.

The weeks before Lent presently came upon us; Ann, however, would take part in no pleasures, albeit she was now a welcome guest, since her step-father was a member of the worshipful council. Only once did she yield to my beseeching and go with me to a dance at a noble house; but whereas I perceived that it disturbed her cheerful peace of mind, although she was treated with hearty respect, I troubled her no more, and for her sake withdrew myself in some measure from such merry-makings.

After Easter, when the spring-tide was already blossoming, my soul likewise went forth to seek joy and gladness, and now will I tell of the new marvel which found fulfilment in my heart.

A grand dance was to be given in honor of certain ambassadors from the Emperor Sigismund, who had come to treat with his Highness the Elector and the Town Council as to the Assembly of the States to be held in the summer at Ratisbon, at the desire of Theodoric, Archbishop of Cologne. The illustrious chief of this Embassy, Duke Rumpold of Glogau in Silesia, had been received as guest in a house whither, that very spring, the eldest son had come home from Padua and Paris, where he had taken the dignity of Doctor of Ecclesiastical and Civil Laws with great honors, and he it was who first moved my young heart to true love.

As a child I had paid small heed to Hans Haller, as a lad so much older that he overlooked little Margery, and by no means took her fancy like Cousin Gotz; thus he came upon me as one new and strange.

He had dwelt five years in other lands and the first time ever I looked into his truthful eyes methought that the maid he should choose to wife was born in a lucky hour.

But every mother and daughter of patrician rank doubtless thought the same; and that he should ever uplift me, giddy, hasty Margery, to his side, was more than I dared look for. Yet, covertly, I could not but hope; inasmuch as at our first meeting again he had seemed well-pleased and amazed at my being so well-favored, and a few days later, when many young folks were gathered together at the Hallers' house, he spoke a great while and right kindly with me in especial. Nor was it as though I were some unripe child, such as these young gentlemen are wont to esteem us maids under twenty--nay, but as though I were his equal.

And thus he had brought to light all that lay hid in my soul. I had answered him on all points freely and gladly; yet, meanwhile, I had been on my guard not to let slip any heedless speech, deeming it a precious favor to stand well in the opinion of so noble and learned a gentleman.

And presently, when it was time for departing, he held my hand and pressed it; and, as he wrapped me in my cloak, he said in a low voice that, whereas he had thought it hard to make himself at home once more in our little native town, now, if I would, I might make Nuremberg as dear--nay, dearer to him than ever it had been of yore; and the hot blood boiled in my veins as I looked up at him beseechingly and bid him never mock me thus.

But he answered with all his heart that it was sacred earnest and that, if I would make home sweet to him and himself one of the happiest of mankind, I must be his, inasmuch as in all the lands of the earth he had seen nought so dear to him as the child whom he had found grown to be so sweet a maid, and, quoth he, if I loved him never so little, would I not give him some little token.

I looked into his eyes, and my heart was so full that no word could I say but his Christian name "Hans," whereas hitherto I had ever called him Master Hailer. And meseemed that all the bells in the town together were ringing a merry peal; and he understood at once the intent of my brief answer, and murmured right loving words in mine ear. Then did he walk home with me and Cousin Maud; and meseemed the honored mothers among our friends, who were wont so to bewail my loneliness as a motherless maid, had never looked upon me with so little kindness as that evening which love had made so blessed.

By next morning the tidings were in every mouth that a new couple had plighted their troth, and that the Hallers' three chevronells were to be quartered with the three links of the Schoppers.

Ann was the first to be told of my happiness, and whereas she had hitherto been steadfastly set on eschewing the great dances of the upper class so long as she was unwed, this time she did our will, for that she had no mind to spoil my pleasure by her absence.

Thus had Love taken up his abode with me likewise; and meseemed it was like a fair, still, blooming morning in the Forest. A pure, perfect, and peaceful gladness had opened in my soul, a way of seeing which lent

sweetness and glory to all things far and wide, and joyful thanksgiving for that all things were so good.

As I looked back on that morning when Ann had flown to Herdegen's breast, and as I called to mind the turmoil of passion of which I had read in many a poem and love-tale, I weened that I had dreamed of somewhat else as the first blossoming of love in my heart, that I had looked to feel a fierce and glowing flame, a burning anguish, a wild and stormy fever. And yet, as it had come upon me, methought it was better; albeit the sun of my love had not risen in scarlet fire, it was not therefore small nor cool; the image of my dear mother was ever-present with me; and methought that the love I felt was as pure and fair as though it had come upon me from her heavenly home.

And how loving and hearty was the welcome given me by my lover's parents, when they received me in their noble dwelling, and called me their dear daughter, and showed me all the treasures contained in the home of the Hallers'. In this fine house, with its broad fair gardens--a truly lordly dwelling, for which many a prince would have been fain to exchange his castle and hunting demesne--I was to rule as wife and mistress at the right hand of my Hans' mother, whose kind and dignified countenance pleased me well indeed, and by whose friendly lips I, an orphan, was so glad to be called "Child" and daughter. Nor were his worshipful father and his younger brethren one whit less dear to me. I was to become a member--nay, as the eldest son's wife, the female head--of one of the highest families in the town, of one whose sons would have a hand in its government so long as there should be a town-council in Nuremberg.

My lover had indeed been elected to sit in the minor council soon after his homecoming, being no longer a boy, but near on thirty years of age. And his manners befitted his years; dignified and modest, albeit cheerful and full of a young man's open-minded ardor for everything that was above the vulgar. With him, for certain, if with any man, might I grow to be all I desired to become; and could I but learn to rule my fiery temper, I might hope to follow in the ways of his mother, whom he held above all other women. The great dance, of which I have already made mention, and whither Ann had agreed to come with us, was the first I should go to with my well-beloved Hans. The worshipful Council had taken care to display all their best bravery in honor of the Emperor's envoys; they had indeed allied themselves with the constable of the Castle, the Prince Elector, to do all in their power to have the Assembly held at Nuremberg, rather than at Ratisbon, and to that end it was needful to win the good graces of the Ambassadors.

All the patricians and youth of the good city were gathered at the town-hall, and the beginning of the feast was pure enjoyment. The guests were indeed amazed at the richness of our great hall and civic treasure, as likewise at the brave apparel and great show of jewels worn by the gentlemen and ladies.

There were six envoys, and at their head was Duke Rumpold of Glogau; but among the knights in attendance on him I need only name that very Baron Franz von Welemisl who had been so sorely hurt out in the forest garden

for my sake, and a Junker of Altmark, by name Henning von Beust, son of one of the rebellious houses who strove against the customs, laws, and rights over the marches, as claimed by our Lord Constable the Elector.

Baron Franz was now become chamberlain to the emperor and, albeit cured indeed of his wounds, was plagued by a bad cough. Still he could boast of the same noble and knightly presence as of old, and his pale face, paler than ever I had known it, under his straight black hair, with the feeble tones of his soft voice, went right to many a maiden's heart; also his rich black dress, sparkling with fine gems, beseeemed him well.

Presently, when he saw that Hans and I were plighted lovers, he feigned as though his heart were stricken to death; but I soon perceived that he could take comfort, and that he had bestowed the love he had once professed for me, with compound increase on Ursula Tetzl. She was ready enough to let him make love to her, and I wished the swarthy courtier all good speed with the damsel.

A dancing-hall is in all lands a stew full of fish, as it were, for gentlemen from court, and Junker Henning von Beust had no sooner come in than he began to angle; and whereas Sir Franz's bait was melancholy and mourning, the Junker strove to win hearts by sheer mirth and bold manners.

My lover himself had commended him to my favor by reason that the gentleman was lodging under his parents' roof; and he and I and Ann had found much pleasure these two days past in his light and openhearted friendliness. Nought more merry indeed might be seen than this red-haired young nobleman, in parti-colored attire, with pointed scallops round the neck and arm-holes, which fluttered as he moved and many little bells twinkling merrily. Light and life beamed forth out of this gladsome youth's blue eyes. He had never sat at a school-desk; while our boys had been poring over their books, he had been riding with his father at a hunt or a fray, or had lurked in ambush by the highway for the laden wagons of those very "pepper sacks"--[A nickname for grocery merchants]--whose good wine and fair daughters he was so far from scorning in their own town-hall.

He had already fallen in love with Ann at the Hallerhof, and never quit her side although, after I had overheard certain sharp words by which Ursula Tetzl strove to lower the maid in his opinion, I told him plainly of what rank and birth she was.

For this he cared not one whit; nay, it increased his pleasure in making much of her and trying to spoil her shrewish foe's sport. It seemed as though he could never have enough of dancing with Ann, and so soon as the town pipers struck up, with cornets, trumpets, horns, and haut-boys, fiddles, sack-buts and rebecks, the rattle of drums and the groaning of bagpipes, while the Swiss fifes squeaked shrilly above the clatter of the kettle-drums, methought the music itself flung him in the air and brought him low again. With his free and mirthful ways he carried all before him, and when presently it was plain to all that he could outdo our nimblest dancers, and was a master of each kind of dance which was held

in favor at every court, whether of Brandenburg, of Saxony, of Bohemia, or at our own Emperor Sigismund's Hungarian court, he was ere long entreated to show us some new figures of the dance; nor was he loth to do so.

Nay, he presently went to such lengths that our Franconian and Nuremberg nobles could but turn away their faces, inasmuch as he began so wild and unseemly a dance as was overmuch even for me, despite my youth and sheer delight in the quick measure.

My Hans, the young councillor, took pleasure in leading me forth in the Polish dance, or with due dignity in the Swabian figure, but he held back, as was fitting, from the mad whirl of the gipsy dance and of the "Dove dance;" and he, and I likewise, courteously withstood his bidding to join in the Dance of the Dead as it was in use in Brandenburg, Hungary, and Schleswig: one has to be for dead, and as he lieth another shall come to wake him with a kiss. On this Junker von Beust, who was, as the march--men say, the dance-corpse, entrapped Ann in a strange adventure. Ann kissed not his cheek, but in the air near by it, and the bold knave, who had no mind to forego so sweet a boon, declared to her after the dance was over that she was his debtor, and that he would give her no peace till she should pay him his due.

Ann courteously prayed him that he would be a merciful creditor and remit the payment of that she had indeed omitted, though truly out of no ill-will. And whereas he would by no means consent, the dispute was taken up by others present and Jorg Loffelholz devised the fancy of holding a Court of Love to decide the case.

This met with noisy approval, and albeit I and my dear Hans, and some others with us, made protest, the damsels were presently seated in a circle and Jorg Loffelholz, who was chosen to preside, asked of each to pronounce sentence. Thus it came to the turn of Ursula Tetzl and she, looking round on Junker Henning or ever she spoke, said, with a proud curl of her red lips, that she could give no opinion, inasmuch as she only knew what beseemed young maids of noble birth.

On this the Junker answered with such high and grave dignity as I should not have looked for in so scatter-brained a wight: "The best patent of nobility, fair lady, is that of the maid to whom God Almighty has vouchsafed the gentlest soul and sweetest grace; and in all this assembly I have found none more richly endowed with both than the damsel against whom I in jest have made complaint. Wherefor I pray the presiding judge of this Court of Love to ask you once more for your verdict."

Ursula found this ill to brook; nevertheless her high spirit was ready to meet it. She laughed loudly, and with seeming lightness, as she hastily answered him: "Then you haughty lords of the marches allow not that it is in the Emperor's power to grant letters of nobility, but ascribe it to Heaven alone! A bold opinion. Howbeit, I care not for politics, and will pronounce my sentence. If it had been Margery Schopper, who had refused the kiss, or Elsa Ebner, or any one of us whose ancestors bore arms by grace of the Emperor, and not of the God of the Brandenburgs,

I would have condemned her to give you, in lieu of one kiss, two, in the presence of witnesses; but inasmuch as it is Mistress Ann Spiesz who has dared to withhold from a noble gentleman, a guest of the town, what we highborn damsels would readily have paid I grant her of our mercy, grace and leave to kiss the hand of Junker Henning von Beust, in token of penitence." The words were spoken clearly and steadfastly; all were silent, and I will confess that as Ursula gave her answer to the Junker with beaming eyes and quivering lips, never had I seen her more fair. It could plainly be seen by her heaving bosom how gladly she gave free vent to her old cherished grudge; and that she had in truth wounded the maid she hated to the very soul, Ann showed by her deathly paleness. Yet found she not a word in reply; and while Ursula was speaking, meseemed in the fullness of my wrath and grief as though a cloud were rising before my eyes. But so soon as she ceased and my eyes met the triumphant look in hers, my mind suddenly grew clear again, and never heeding the multitude that stood about us, I went a step forward, and cried: "We all thank you, Junker; you have taken the worthier part; the only part, Ursula," and I looked her sternly in the face, "the only part which I would have a friend of mine take, or any true heart."

The Junker bowed, and with a reproachful glance at Ursula he said: "Would to God I might never have a harder choice to make!" Whereupon he turned his back on her and went up to Ann; but Ursula again laughed loudly and called after him in defiance: "Oh! may heaven ever keep your wits clear when you have to choose, and especially when you have to discern on the high-road betwixt what is your own and what belongs to other folks."

The blood mounted to the Junker's face, and, as with a hasty gesture he smoothed back the fierce hair on his lip, methought he might seem the same as when he rose in his saddle to rush down on our merchants' wains; for indeed it was the Beusts, with the Alvenslebens, their near kinsfolks, who had fallen upon the train of waggons belonging to the Muffels and the Tetzels, near Juterbock, not a year ago.

But, hotly as his blood boiled, the Junker refrained himself, inasmuch as knightly courtesy forbade him to repay Ursula in the like coin; and as it fell Cousin Maud was enabled to aid him in this praiseworthy selfrule. She came forward with long strides, and her eyes flashed wrathful threats, till meseemed they were more fiery than the jewels in the tall plumes she wore on her head. She thrust aside the young men and maid who made up the Court of Love as a swift ship cuts through the small fry in the water. Without let or pause she pushed on, and as soon as she caught sight of Ann she seized her by the arm, stroked her hair and cheeks, and flung a few sharp words at Ursula:

"I will talk to you presently!" Then she bid me remain behind with Hans and withdrew, carrying Ann with her, while Junker Henning followed praying to be forgiven for all the discomfort she had suffered by reason of him. This Ann gladly granted, and besought us and him alike to come with her no further.

When he came back to us Ursula, who was aggrieved by the looks of displeasure she met on all sides, cried out: "Back already, Sir Junker?"

If you had so lightly yielded your rights to kiss of mine, you may be certain that I would have appealed to any one who would do my behest to call you to account for such scorn!"

She eyed the young nobleman with a bold gaze, never weening that this challenge was all he waited for. He tossed his curly head, and cried with sparkling eyes: "Then, mistress, I would have you to know that I would take no kiss from you, even if you were to offer it. I have spoken --now call forth your champions."

He was silent a moment, and then, glancing round at the bystanders with defiant looks, he went on: "If any gentleman here present sets a higher price than I, the high-born Henning Beust, heir and Lord of Busta and Schadstett, on a kiss from the lips which have wronged my fair lady with spiteful speech, let him now stoop and pick up my glove. There it lies!"

And he flung it on the ground, while Ursula turned pale. Her eyes turned from one to another of the young gentlemen who paid her court and they were many--and the longer silence reigned the faster came her breath and the hotter waxed her ire. But on a sudden she was calm; her eyes had lighted on Sir Franz von Welemisl, and all might read what she demanded of him. The Bohemian understood her; he picked up the glove and muttered to the Junker with a shrug: "Mistress Ursula commands me!"

A look of pain passed over the brave youth's merry face, for that heretofore the young knight and he had been in good fellowship, and he hastily answered: "Nay, Sir Knight; I would have crossed swords with you readily enough or ever you had felt the prick of Swabian steel; but now you are not yet fully yourself again, and to fight with a friend who is sick is against the rule of my country."

The words were spoken from a kind and honest heart, and I saw in Sir Franz's face that he knew their intent was true; but as he put forth his hand to grasp the Junker's, Ursula tossed her head in high disdain. Sir Franz hastily changed his mien, and cried: "Then you will do well to act against the rule of your country, and fight the champion of the lady you have offended."

Here the dispute had an end, forasmuch as that my lord the duke, leader of the embassy, hearing the Brandenburger's fierce voice, came in haste from the supper-board to restore peace; and as he led away the Junker it was plain to all that he was taking him sharply to task. It was, in truth, a criminal misdeed in one of the Imperial envoy to cast down his glove at a dance, where he was the guest of a peaceful city; and that the duke imposed no severe penance for it the Junker might thank the worshipful members of the council who were present; they were indeed disposed to let well alone, inasmuch as they had it at heart to send the whole party home again well-pleased with Nuremberg.

The music was soon sounding merrily again in the solemn town-hall, and of all the young folks who danced so gleefully, and laughed and chattered Ursula was the last to let it be seen how this grand revel had been troubled by her fault. Her eyes were bright with glad contentment, and

she was so free with Sir Franz that it might have seemed that they would quit the town hall a plighted couple.

The festival was drawing to an end, and when I had danced the last dance, and was looking about me, I beheld to my amazement Ursula Tetzl in eager speech with Junker Henning. On our way home the young gentleman informed me that she had given him to understand that, during the meeting of the Imperial Assembly, he might look to be waited on by a noble youth who would pick up his glove in duty to her, and prove to him that there were other than sick champions glad to draw the sword for her.

The Brandenburger would fain have known with whom he would have to deal; but I held my peace, albeit I felt certain that Ursula had set her hopes on none other than my brother Herdegen.

On the morrow the whole of the Ambassadors' fellowship rode away, back to the emperor's court; I, for my part made my way to the Pernharts, where I found Ann amazed rather than wroth or distressed by Ursula's base attack. Also she was to have some amends; my dear godfather, Uncle Christian, with certain other gentlemen of the council, had notified old Tetzl that he was required to crave pardon of Ann and her stepfather for his daughter's haughty and reckless speech.

The proud and surly old man would have to submit to this penance without cavil, by reason that Pernhart had, since Saint Walpurgis' day, been a member of the council, and he and his family had part and share in the patrician festival. For, albeit craftsmen and petty merchants were excluded, the worshipful councillors chosen by the guilds enjoyed the same rights as those born to that high rank.

It was by mishap only that the coppersmith had not been at the town-hall yestereve, and on a later day, when he and his wife appeared there, they were among the finest of the elder couples. Ann did not, indeed, go with them; but it was neither vexation nor sorrow that kept her at home. My great gladness as it were warmed her likewise, and we were looking for Herdegen's speedy home-coming.

She looked forward to this with such firm hope as filled me with fears, when I minded me of my brother's letters, in which he never had aught to tell of but vain pleasures and pastimes.

My betrothal to Hans Haller was after his own heart; he wrote of him as of a man whose gifts and birth were worthy of me; and went on to say that he would follow his example, and, whereas he had renounced love in seeking a bride, he would take counsel of his head, and not of his heart, and quarter our ancient coat of arms with one no less noble.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Though Ann's hopeful mood distressed me, these same hopes in my world-

wise Aunt Jacoba raised my spirit; but again, when I heard my grand-uncle speak of Herdegen as his duteous son, it fell as low as before. The old man had shown much contentment at my plighting to Hans, and had given me a precious set of rubies as a wedding gift; yet could I scarce take pleasure in them, inasmuch as he told me then and there that he had the like in store for the noble damsel whom Herdegen should wed.

Cousin Maud was in great wrath, when she knew that we had it in our minds even yet to bring Ann and Herdegen together; howbeit this did not hinder her from being as kind to Ann as she was ever wont to be, and giving her pleasure with gifts great and small whenever she might. She had her own thoughts touching my brother's faithlessness. She deemed it a triumph of noble blood over the yearnings of his heart; and the more she loved to think well of her darling the more comfort she found in this interpretation.

Among those few who had known of his betrothal to Ann was the bee-master's widow, Dame Henneleinlein; and she had cradled herself so gladly in the hope of being ere long kin to a noble family, that its wrecking filled her heart with bitter rage, and in all the houses whither she carried her honey she never failed to speak slander of Herdegen.

All this would never have troubled me, if only I might have rejoiced in the presence of my dear love; but alas! no more than three weeks after our betrothal he was sent, as squire to Master Erhart Schurstab, away to court, where they were to lay before the Emperor Sigismund in the name of Nuremberg the various hindrances in the way of our trafficking with Venice, whereas since the late war his Majesty had been mightily ill-disposed towards that great and famous city.

There was no remedy but patience; my lover wrote to me often, and his loving letters would have filled me with joy, if it had not been that in each one there was ever some sad tidings of Junker Henning, whom I yet held in high esteem. This young lord, who was in attendance on his Majesty--who never held his court for more than a few days at the same place--or ever he left Vienna to go to Ratisbon, had made a close friendship with my plighted master, and had been serviceable to him in all things wherein he might; and Hans had said of him that he was one in whom there was no guile, with the open heart and bright temper of a child. Such an one, indeed, was his; yet, in the midst of the gayest mirth, his grief of heart would so mightily come upon him that he fell into a sudden gloom; and out of the fulness of his sorrow he confessed to Hans that he could never cease to think of Ann. Whereupon my dear love conceived that it must be his woeful duty to tell his friend that the lady of his choice had no free heart to give him. Yet to the Junker's question whether she were plighted to another, and whether he were minded to wed her, Hans was forced in truth to say nay. This gave the lovesick youth new courage, and at length he went so far as that Hans enquired of me whether Ann might not after all be willing to give up Herdegen, who well deserved it at her hands, and to take pity on so brave and true-hearted a lover as the Junker.

To this I could make no answer other than: "Never--never;" inasmuch as,

having shown Ann this letter, and, moreover, loudly sung the praise of her suitor, she asked me right sadly whether I was weary of confirming her in her love for my brother; and when I eagerly denied this, she cried: "And you know me well! And you must know that nothing on earth--nor you, nor Mistress Jacoba, nor all Nuremberg, could turn my heart from my love!"

This did I forthwith write to Hans; but that letter never reached him, and thus was he delivered from the grievous duty of robbing the Junker of his last hope.

Alas, my Hans! How sorely I did long for thee every hour! And yet shall I ever remember the month of June in that year with thankfulness.

Day after day did we maidens sit in the Hallers' garden, for Hans' worthy mother had soon taken Ann into her heart, and it became a fear to me ere long lest her rare beauty should turn the head of his younger brother Paulus, a likely lad of nineteen. As the summer waxed hot we went into the forest at the bidding of my uncle and aunt, who took great joy in seeing their favorite in right good heart and wondrous beauty, Mistress Giovanna having provided her with seemly and brave apparel. Nor was there any lack of good fellowship; many young noblemen bore us company, and whereas the town was full of illustrious guests, many of them found their way out to the forest.

This was by reason that the Prince Electors and the other rulers of the Empire, and foremost of them all our High Constable, had, indeed, declared that the great Assembly should be held at Nuremberg and not at Ratisbon; and when they were all gathered in our good town, the Emperor Sigismund, after he had waited for five days at Ratisbon, was fain at last, whether or no, to follow them hither. Then had his Chamberlains been sent before him, and among them again came Duke Rumpold von Glogau and Junker Henning von Beust, while his Majesty kept my Hans still about his person. Now, when the Emperor's forerunners had fulfilled their duties, they likewise were bidden to the forest-lodge; and with them came the lord of Eberstein, and an Italian Conte, Fazio di Puppi, both well skilled in song and the lute. Yet was my brother Herdegen still absent, albeit we had looked for him at Whitsuntide.

Cousin Maud bided at home, where there was much to be done in preparing fitting cheer for the noble fellowship who were to be lodged in the Schopperhof; nay, the old house was to be decked outside with a festal dress, in obedience to the behest of the town-council that every citizen should do his utmost so to cleanse and adorn his house, that it should please the eyes of his Majesty the Emperor.

Towards evening on Saint Liborius' day,--[July 23rd.]--my lord the Duke came forth on horseback to the forest lodge, and as I write, I can see the beaming countenance of Junker Henning as he greeted Ann; she, however, took his devoted demeanor coolly and courteously, yet could she not hinder him from coming between her and the other gentlemen in an over-marked way. The company was a large one for us two maidens, and there was none other with us save Elsa Ebner, our best-beloved

schoolmate, and on her young Master Jorg Loffelholz had cast his eyes.

Not long after dinner Akusch came to me with the tidings that Herdegen had ridden into Nuremberg yestereve. My grand-uncle, to whom he had sent word of his coming, had gone forth to meet him on the way, and, with him Jost Tetzl and his daughter Ursula. My brother had alighted at the Im Hoff's house, and had waited on Cousin Maud this morning early. In the afternoon it was his intent to come out to the forest with my uncle's leave, to see me.

When I repeated all this to Aunt Jacoba, she was mightily disturbed and bid me stand by Ann, and in all points obey the counsel she might find it good to give her. She desired I would fetch my friend to her July 23rd. forthwith, and then made a plan for all the young folks to go forth to the fair garden of a certain bee-keeper, one Martein, where flowers grew in great abundance, and where we might wind the wreaths which Uncle Christian would need to grace the Empress' chambers withal. Thither, quoth she, would she send Herdegen on his coming; for she knew full well that the tidings brought by Akusch could not remain hid.

Whereas Ann turned a little paler, my aunt shook her head in displeasure, and admonished her to remain calm; albeit she had charges to bring against that wild youth, yet, for the present, she must keep them to herself. Least of all was she to let him suppose that his faithlessness had caused her any bitter heart-ache; if she desired that matters end rightly she must command herself to receive the home-comer no more than kindly, and to demean her as though his denying of her had touched her but lightly; nay, as though it were a pleasure to her vanity to be courted by the Brandenburg Junker and other noble gentlemen. If she could but seem to rate him as less than either of them, she would have won a great part of the victory.

Such subtlety had no charm for Ann; howbeit, my aunt gave no place to her doubting, and once more her urgent eloquence prevailed on the sorrowing maid to govern the yearning of her soul; and when I promised my friend to support her, she gave the wise lady, who had shown her such plain proofs of her devoted friendship, her word that she would in every point obey her.

Many a time have we seen, in the churches of Nuremberg, certain acting of plays wherein right honest and worthy persons have appeared as Judas Iscariot, or even as the very Devil himself; and at Venice likewise have I seen such plays, called there Boinbaria, wherein men and women, innocent of all guilt, were made to stand for Calumny, Cruelty, and Craft; and that so cunningly that a man might swear that they were reprobate Knaves full ripe for the gallows. From this it may be seen that men are fit and able to seem other than they are by nature; nay, such feigning is a pleasure to most folks, as we plainly see from the delight taken by great and small alike in mummary at Carnival tide. Howbeit, they can scarce have their heart in such sport; and for my part, meseemeth that to play such a part as my aunt had set before Ann is one of the hardest that can be laid upon a pure-hearted and truthful maid. At the time I wist not clearly what was the end of such rash trifling;

but now, when I know men better, meseems it was well conceived, and could not fail of its intent, albeit the course of events made it plain to my understanding how little the thoughts and plans of the wisest can avail when Heaven rules otherwise.

The gentlemen in the hall were more than ready to agree to our bidding; yet none but I could guess what made Ann's lip to quiver from time to time, while her gay spirit charmed the young men who bore us company through the woods to the beekeeper's garden.

I and Elsa cut the flowers helped by Jorg Loffelholz, while Ann sat under a shady lime-tree hard by an arbor of honeysuckle, and showed the others, who lay on the grass about her; how to wind a garland. Each one was ready to be taught by lips so sweet, and in guiding of fingers and words of praise or blame, there was right merry laughing and chatter and pastime.

Junker Henning lay at her feet, and near him my Hans' brother Paulus, and young Master Holzschuher. The Knight von Eberstein had fetched him a stool out from the beekeeper's house, and twisted and tied with great zeal; the Italian Conte, Fagio di Puppi, struck the mandoline, which he called "the lady of his heart" from whom he never parted even on the longest journey.

When Elsa and I had flowers enough, we sat down with the others, and it was pleasant there to rest in the shade of the lime-tree, whose leaves fluttered in a soft air, while bees and butterflies hovered above the flowers in the warm sunshine. The birds sang no more; they had finished nesting long ago; but we, with our young hearts overfull of love, were in the right mind for song, and when Puppi had charmed us with a sweet Italian lay, and I had decked his lute with a rose as a guerdon, my lord of Eberstein took example from him, and they then besought Ann and me to do our part; but Junker Henning was the more eager. Whereupon Ann smiled on him so graciously that I was in pain for him, and she signed to me, and, I taking the lower part as was our wont, we gave Prince Wizlav's "Song to Dame Love." It rang out right loud and clear from our throats over the gentlemen's heads as they sat at our feet, and through the garden close:

"Earth is set free and flowers
In all the meads are springing,
The balmy noontide hours
Are sweet with odors rare;
The hills for joy are leaping.
The happy birds are singing,
And now, while winds are sleeping,
Soar through the sunny air.

Now hearts begin to kindle
And burn with love's sweet anguish
As tapers blaze and dwindle.
Love, our lady! lend thine ear!
Would'st thou but spoil our pleasure?

Ah, leave us not to languish!
Who vows to thee his treasure,
Haughty lady, must beware."

We had sung so much as this when the sound of hoofs, of which we had already been aware on the soft soil of the woods, gave us pause. Then, behold! Ann turned pale and pressed her hands, full of the roses she had chosen for her garland, tightly to her bosom, as though in pain. Junker Henning, who, while she sang, had gazed at her devoutly, nay, in rapture, marked this gesture and leaped to his feet to succour her; but she commanded herself with wonderful readiness, and laughed as she showed him her finger, from which two drops of blood had fallen on her white gown. And while the garden-gate was opening, she held out her hand to the young man, saying in haste: "Pricked,--a thorn!--would you please to take it out for me, Junker?"

He seized her hand and held it long in his own, as some jewel or marvel, before he remembered that he was required to take out the thorn. The other gentle men, and among them my brother-in-law Paulus, had likewise sprung forward to lend their aid; he, indeed, had snatched his lace neck-tie off and dipped it in the fountain.

Meanwhile the new-comers had joined the circle: First, Duke Rumpold, then Jost Tetzl, and lastly Herdegen with Ursula.

I flew to meet him, and when he held me in his arms and kissed me, and wished me joy of my betrothal right heartily, I forgot all old grievances and only rejoiced at having him home once more; till Ursula greeted me, and Herdegen came in sight of Ann. She had remained sitting under the lime-tree, on a saddle cushion of blue velvet, as on a throne; and in truth meseemed she might have been a queen, as she graciously accepted the service of the gentlemen who had been so moved by her pricked finger. The Junker wrapped it with care in a green leaf which, as his lady grandmother had taught him, had a healing gift; Paulus held forth the laced kerchief, and the Italian was striking wailing tones from his lute.

All this to-do, at any other time would, for a certainty, have made sport for me, but now laughing was far from me, and I had no eyes but for Ann in her little court, and for my brother.

At first she feigned as though she saw him not; and whereas the Junker still held her hand, she hit his fingers with a pink, albeit she was never apt to use such unseemly freedom.

Then she first marked my lord the duke, and rose to greet him with a courteous reverence, and not till she had bowed coldly and curtly to Tetzl and his daughter did she seem to be aware that Herdegen was of the company. At that moment I minded me of the morning when Love had thrown her into his arms, and it was with pain and wonder that I marked her further demeanor. In truth it outdid all I could have dreamed of: she held out her hand with an inviting smile, bid him welcome home and to the forest, reproved him for staying so long away from me, his dear little sister, and our good cousin, and then turned her back upon him to desire

the Junker to place her cushions aright. Therewith she gave this young gentleman her hand to support her to her seat, and asked him whether, in his country, they did not do service and devoir to the divine Dame Musica? And whereas he replied that verily they did, that in his own land he had heard many a sweet ditty sung by noble ladies to the harp and lute, that the children would ever sing at their sports, and that he, too, had oftentimes uplifted his voice in singing of madrigals, she besought him that he would make proof of some ballad or song. The rest of the company joining in her entreaties she left him no peace till he gave way to her desire, and after that he had protested that his singing was no better than the twitter of a starling or a bullfinch, and his ditty only such as he remembered from his boyhood's time, he sang the song "It rained on the bridge and I was wet" in a voice neither loud nor fine, but purely, and with great modesty.

Ann highly lauded this simple and right childish ditty, and said that she felt certain that she, by her teaching, could make a fine singer of the Junker.

The others were of the same opinion, and Herdegen, meanwhile, who was standing somewhat apart, with Ursula, looked on, marvelling greatly as though he could not believe what his ear heard and his eye beheld.

Then, inasmuch as my lord duke desired to hear more music made, we were ready enough to obey and uplifted our voices, while he leaned on an easy couch, listening diligently, and gave us the guerdon of his gracious praise.

Still, as heretofore, many were obedient to Ann's lightest sign, but never till now had I seen her proud of her power and so eager to use it. Now and again she would turn to Herdegen with some light word and a free demeanor, yet he, it was plain, would not vouchsafe to take his seat before her with the rest.

Nay, meseemed that he and Ursula had no part with us; inasmuch as that she was arrayed in velvet and rich brocade, and a bower, as it were, of yellow and purple ostrich plumes curled above her riding-hat.

Herdegen likewise was in brave array, after the fashion of the French, and a bunch of tall feathers stood up above his head, being held in a silken fillet that bound his hair. His cross-belt was set with gems and hung with little bells, tinkling as he moved and jarring with our song; and in this hot summer-tide it could not have been for his easement that he wore the tagged lappets, which fell, a hand-breadth deep, from his shoulders over the sleeves of his velvet tunic.

The more gleefully we sang and the more it was made plain that we, to all seeming, were only to obey the wishes of Ann and of his highness the duke, the less could my brother refrain himself to hide his ill-pleasure; and when presently the Junker besought Ann that she would sing "Tanderadei," which she very readily did, Herdegen could bear no more; he asked the Italian to lend him his mandoline, and struck the strings as though merely for his own good pleasure. Whereupon Ann turned to him and

courteously entreated him for a song, and he asking her which song she would have, she hastily replied: "Your old ditties are already known to me, Junker Schopper; and, to judge by your seeming, you now take no pleasure save in French music. Let us then hear somewhat of the latest Paris fashion."

To this he replied, however: "Here, in my own land, I would like better to sing in my own tongue, by your gracious leave, fair mistress."

Then bowing to Ursula and to me, without even casting a glance at Ann, he went on to say: "And seeing that methinks you love madrigals, I will sing a Franconian ditty after the Junker's Brandenburg ballad."

He boldly struck the strings, and the little birds, which by this time had gone to rest in the linden-tree, again uplifted their little heads, and all that had ears and soul, near and far, Ann not the least, hearkened as he began with his clear voice and noble skill.

"To all this goodly company
I sing as best I may,
A madrigal of ladies fair
And damsels soote and gay.
Through many countries great and small
I roam, and ladies fair I see
Many! but fairest of them all
The maidens of my own countree.
The maidens of Franconia
I ever love to meet,
They dwell in fond remembrance
A vision ever sweet.
Of maids they are the crown and pear!
And if I might but spin them
I would make the spindle whirl!"

My lord duke clapped hearty praise of the singer, and we all did the same; all save Junker Henning, who had not failed to mark that Herdegen had striven to out-do his modest warble, and likewise the ardent eyes he turned on the lady of his choice. Hence he moved not. Ann clapped her hands but lightly, sat looking into her lap, and for some time could say not a word; indeed, if she had trusted herself to speak the game would of a certainty have been lost.

The knight of Eberstein it was, who ere long, albeit unwittingly, came to her aid; he challenged Ursula to give us a song in thanks to Junker Herdegen's praise of the maids of Franconia.

The damsel thought to do somewhat fine by making choice, instead of a German song, of a French lay by the Sieur de Machault "J'aim la flour," which was well known to all of us by reason that she had learnt it from old Veit Spiesz, Ann's grandfather; and she had no need to fear to uplift her voice, inasmuch as it was strong and as clear as a bell. But she sang over-loud and with a mode of speech which made Herdegen smile, and I can see her now as she stood upright in her fine yellow and purple garb,

singing the light-tripping ditty,

"J'aim la flour
De valour
Sans falour
Et l'aour
Nuit et jour."

with all her might, as though stirring them to battle. The folly of so wrong-headed a fashion of singing such words was plain to Ann, in whose very blood, as it were, lay all that was most choice in musical feeling, and Herdegen's smile brought her a calmer mind again. When, presently, Ursula, believing that she had done somewhat marvellous, boldly turned upon Ann and besought her to sing--as though there had never been a breach between the twain--Ann refused, as not caring but yet firm in her mind. Then the Duke, who was even yet a fine singer and bore in mind how Ursula had demeaned herself towards Ann at the great dance, desired to have the lute and sang the song as follows:

"Behold a lady sweet and fair
In simple dress,
But right well clothed upon is she
With seemliness.
By her do flowers seem less bright,
And she is such a glorious sight
As, on May morns, the golden sun which lights up hill and lea--
But froward maids delight us not, with all their bravery."

And he sang the little verse to Ann as though it were in her praise, till at the last line, which fell from his lips as it were in scorn, he cast a reproving glance at Ursula, and many an one might see and feel how well the song befitted one and the other of the hostile damsels.

Yet was it hard to guess what Ursula was thinking of all this; she thanked the Duke right freely for his fine song which held up the mirror to all froward ladies. At the same time she looked steadfastly at Ann, and led both Herdegen and the Knight of Eberstein to talk with herself; yet how often all the time did my brother cast his eyes at his heart's beloved, whom he had betrayed.

As for myself, I can call to mind little enough of all that was said, for the most part concerning the flowers and trees in the garden. Only Ann and my brother dwell in my memory, each feigning neither to see nor to hear the other, while covertly each had not eyes nor ears for any other. Yes, and I mind me how my brother's unrest and distress so filled me now with joy and now with pity, that I longed to cry out to the Junker that this was a base trick they were playing on him, inasmuch as Ann poured oil and more oil on the flame of his love.

And there stood old Tetzal and his daughter, and it was plain to see that they deemed that they had Herdegen safe in their toils; nay, it seemed likely enough that he had done his uncle's bidding and was already betrothed to her. Howbeit this strange lover had up to that moment

cast not one loving look on his lady love.

What should come of it all? How could I ever find peace and comfort in so perverse a world, and amid this feigning which had turned upside down all that heretofore had seemed upright? Whichever way I turned there were things which I did not crave to see, and the saints know full well that I gazed not round about me; nay, that my eyes were set on two small specks plain to be seen--the two drops of blood which had fallen from Ann's finger, and which were now two dark, round spots on her white gown; and, as it grew dusk, meseemed they waxed blacker and greater.

At length, to my great joy, my lord the Duke rose and made as though he were departing; whereupon the false image vanished, and I beheld Ann giving her hand with a witching smile to Junker Henning, that he might help her to rise.

Supper was waiting for us at the Forest lodge. My Aunt Jacoba placed the Duke in the seat of honor at her right hand, with Ann and Junker Henning next to him. Herdegen she sent to the other end of the table to sit near his uncle, and Ursula far from him near the middle; to the end that it might be clearly seen that she knew naught of any alliance between that damsel and her nephew.

During that meal my squire had little cause to be pleased with his lady. The foolish sport begun in the garden was yet carried on and I liked it not, no more than my brother's French bravery; at table he appeared in a long red and blue garment of costly silken stuff, with a cord round the middle instead of a belt, so that it was for all the world like the loose gown which was worn by our Magister and by many a worthy citizen when taking his easement in his own home.

Besides all this, my heart was heavy with longing for my own true love, and my eyes filled with tears a many times, also I thanked the Saints with all my heart when at length my aunt left the table.

When we were outside she asked me privily whether Ann had rightly played her part; to which I answered "Only too well."

Herdegen, also, so soon as he had bid good night to Ursula, led me aside and desired to know what had come upon Ann. To this I hastily replied that of a surety he could not care to know, inasmuch as he had broken troth with her. Thereat he was vexed and answered that as matters were, so might they remain; but that he was somewhat amazed to mark how lightly she had got over that which had spoiled many a day and night for him.

Then I asked him whether he had in truth rather have found her in woe and grief, and would fain have had her young days saddened for love of him? He broke in suddenly, declaring that he knew full well that he had no right to hinder her in any matter, but that one thing he could not bear, and that was that she, whom he had revered as a saint, should now demean herself no more nobly nor otherwise than any other maid might. On this I asked him wherefor he had denied his saint; nay, for the sake--as it would seem--of a maid who was, for sure, the worldliest of us all.

And, to end, I boldly enquired of him how matters stood betwixt him and Ursula; but all the answer I got was that first he must know whether Ann were in earnest with the Junker. On this I said in mockery that he would do well to seek out the truth of that matter to the very bottom; and running up the steps by which we were standing, I kissed my hand to him from the first turning and wished him a good night's rest.

Up in our chamber I found Ann greatly disturbed.

She, who was commonly so calm, was walking up and down the narrow space without pause or ceasing; and seeing how sorely her fears and her conscience were distressing her, pity compelled me to forego my intent of not giving her any hopes; I revealed to her that I had discovered that my Herdegen's heart was yet hers in spite of Ursula.

This comforted her somewhat; but yet could it not restore her peace of mind. Meseemed that the ruthless work she had done that day had but now come home to her; she could not refrain herself from tears when she confessed that Herdegen had privily besought her to grant him brief speech with her, and that she had brought herself to refuse him.

All this was told in a whisper; only a thin wall of wood parted Ursula's chamber from ours. As yet there was no hope of sleep, inasmuch as that the noise made, by the gentlemen at their carouse came up loud and clear through the open window and, the later it grew, the louder waxed Herdegen's voice and the Junker's, above all others. And I knew what hour the clocks must have told when my brother shouted louder than ever the old chorus:

"Bibit heres, bibit herus
Bibit miles, bibit clerus
Bibit ille, bibit illa
Bibit servus cum ancilla.
Bibit soror, bibit frater
Bibit anus, bibit mater
Bibit ista, bibit ille:
Bibunt centem, bibunt millee."

[The heir drinks, the owner drinks,
The soldier and the clerk,
He drinks, she drinks,
The servant and the wench.
The sister drinks and eke the brother,
The grand dam and the gaffer,
This one drinks, that one drinks,
A hundred drink--a thousand!]

Nor was this the end. The Latin tongue of this song may peradventure have roused Junker Henning to make a display of learning on his part, and in a voice which had won no mellowness from the stout Brandenburg ale --which is yclept "Death and murder"--or from the fiery Hippocras he had been drinking he carolled forth the wanton verse:

"Per transivit clericus
[Beneath the greenwood shade;]
Invenit ibi stantent,
[A fair and pleasant maid;]
Salve mi puella,
[Hail thou sweetest she;]
Dico tibi vere
[Thou my love shalt be!]"

The rest of the song was not to be understood whereas Herdegen likewise sang at the same time, as though he would fain silence the other:

"Fair Lady, oh, my Lady!
I would I were with thee,
But two deep rolling rivers
Flow down 'twixt thee and me."

And as Herdegen sang the last lines:

"But time may change, my Lady,
And joy may yet be mine,
And sorrow turn to gladness
My sweetest Elselein!"

I heard the Junker roar out "Annelein;" and thereupon a great tumult, and my Uncle Conrad's voice, and then again much turmoil and moving of benches till all was silence.

Even then sleep visited us not, and that which had been doing below was as great a distress to me as my fears for my lover. That Ann likewise never closed an eye is beyond all doubt, for when the riot beneath us waxed so loud she wailed in grief: "Oh, merciful Virgin!" or "How shall all this end?" again and again.

Nay, nor did Ursula sleep; and through the boarded wall I could not fail to hear well-nigh every word of the prayers in which she entreated her patron saint, beseeching her fervently to grant her to be loved by Herdegen, whose heart from his youth up had by right been hers alone, and invoking ruin on the false wench who had dared to rob her of that treasure.

I was right frightened to hear this and, in truth, for the first time I felt honest pity for Ursula.

[End of the original Volume One of the print edition]

ETEXT EDITOR'S BOOKMARKS:

Love which is able and ready to endure all things
Wonder we leave for the most part to children and fools

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