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A WORD, ONLY A WORD

By Georg Ebers

Volume 2.

CHAPTER VIII.

The magistrate's horses did not reach the city gate, from the monastery, more quickly than Ulrich.

As soon as the smith was roused from sleep by the boy's knock and recognized his voice, he knew what was coming, and silently listened to the lad's confessions, while he himself hurriedly yet carefully took out his hidden hoard, filled a bag with the most necessary articles, thrust his lightest hammer into his belt, and poured water on the glimmering coals. Then, locking the door, he sent Ulrich to Hangemarx, with whom he had already settled many things; for Caspar, the juggler, who learned more through his daughters than any other man, had come to him the day before, to tell him that something was being plotted against the Jew.

Adam found the latter still awake and at work. He was prepared for the danger that threatened him, and ready to fly. No word of complaint, not even a hasty gesture betrayed the mental anguish of the persecuted man, and the smith's heart melted, as he heard the doctor rouse his wife and child from their sleep.

The terrified moans of the startled wife, and Ruth's loud weeping and curious questions, were soon drowned by the lamentations of old Rahel, who wrapped in even more kerchiefs than usual, rushed into the sitting-room, and while lamenting and scolding in a foreign tongue, gathered together everything that lay at hand. She had dragged a large chest after her, and now threw in candlesticks, jugs, and even the chessmen and Ruth's old doll with a broken head.

When the third hour after midnight came, the doctor was ready for departure.

Marx's charcoal sledge, with its little horse, stopped before the door.

This was a strange animal, no larger than a calf, as thin as a goat, and in some places woolly, in others as bare as a scraped poodle.

The smith helped the dumb woman into the sleigh, the doctor put Ruth in her lap, Ulrich consoled the child, who asked him all sorts of questions, but the old woman would not part from the chest, and could scarcely be

induced to enter the vehicle.

"You know, across the mountains into the Rhine valley--no matter where," Costa whispered to the poacher.

Hangemarx urged on his little horse, and answered, not turning to the Israelite, who had addressed him, but to Adam, who he thought would understand him better than the bookworm: "It won't do to go up the ravine, without making any circuit. The count's hounds will track us, if they follow. We'll go first up the high road by the Lautenhof. To-morrow will be a fair-day. People will come early from the villages and tread down the snow, so the dogs will lose the scent. If it would only snow."

Before the smithy, the doctor held out his hand to Adam, saying: "We part here, friend."

"We'll go with you, if agreeable to you."

"Consider," the other began warningly, but Adam interrupted him, saying:

"I have considered everything; lost is lost. Ulrich, take the doctor's sack from his shoulder."

For a long time nothing more was said.

The night was clear and cold; the men's footsteps fell noiselessly on the soft snow, nothing was heard except the creaking of the sledge, and ever and anon Elizabeth's low moaning, or a louder word in the old woman's soliloquy. Ruth had fallen asleep on her mother's lap, and was breathing heavily.

At Lautenhof a narrow path led through the mountains deep into the forest.

As it grew steeper, the snow became knee-deep, and the men helped the little horse, which often coughed, tossing its thick head up and down, as if working a churn. Once, when the poor creature met with a very heavy fall, Marx pointed to the green woollen scarf on the animal's neck, and whispered to the smith "Twenty years old, and has the glanders besides."

The little beast nodded slowly and mournfully, as if to say: "Life is hard; this will probably be the last time I draw a sleigh."

The broad, heavy-laden pine-boughs drooped wearily by the roadside, the gleaming surface of the snow stretched in a monotonous sheet of white between the trunks of the trees, the tops of the dark rocks beside the way bore smooth white caps of loose snow, the forest stream was frozen along the edges, only in the centre did the water trickle through snow-crystals and sharp icicles to the valley.

So long as the moon shone, flickering rays danced and sparkled on the ice and snow, but afterwards only the tedious glimmer of the universal snow-

pall lighted the traveller's way.

"If it would only snow!" repeated the charcoal-burner.

The higher they went, the deeper grew the snow, the more wearisome the wading and climbing.

Often, on the doctor's account, the smith called in a low voice, "Halt!" and then Costa approached the sleigh and asked: "How do you feel?" or said: "We are getting on bravely."

Rahel screamed whenever a fox barked in the distance, a wolf howled, or an owl flew through the treetops, brushing the snow from the branches with its wings; but the others also started. Marx alone walked quietly and undisturbed beside his little horse's thick head; he was familiar with all the voices of the forest.

It grew colder towards morning. Ruth woke and cried, and her father, panting for breath, asked: "When shall we rest?"

"Behind the height; ten arrow-shots farther," replied the charcoal-burner.

"Courage," whispered the smith. "Get on the sledge, doctor; we'll push."

But Costa shook his head, pointed to the panting horse, and dragged himself onward.

The poacher must have sent his arrows in a strange curve, for one quarter of an hour after another slipped by, and the top was not yet gained. Meantime it grew lighter and lighter, and the charcoal-burner, with increasing anxiety, ever and anon raised his head, and glanced aside. The sky was covered with clouds-the light overhead grey, dim, and blended with mist. The snow was still dazzling, though it no longer sparkled and glittered, but covered every object with the dull whiteness of chalk.

Ulrich kept beside the sledge to push it. When Ruth heard him groan, she stroked the hand that grasped the edges, this pleased him; and he smiled.

When they again stopped, this time on the crest of the ridge, Ulrich noticed that the charcoal-burner was sniffing the air like a hound, and asked:

"What is it, Marxle?"

The poacher grinned, as he answered: "It's going to snow; I smell it."

The road now led down towards the valley, and, after a short walk, the charcoal-burner said:

"We shall find shelter below with Jorg, and a warm fire too, you poor women."

These were cheering words, and came just at the right time, for large snow-flakes began to fill the air, and a light breeze drove them into the travellers' faces. "There!" cried Ulrich, pointing to the snow covered roof of a wooden hut, that stood close before them in a clearing on the edge of the forest.

Every face brightened, but Marx shook his head doubtfully, muttering:

"No smoke, no barking; the place is empty. Jorg has gone. At Whitsuntide--how many years ago is it?--the boys left to act as raftsmen, but then he stayed here."

Reckoning time was not the charcoal-burner's strong point; and the empty hut, the dreary open window-casements in the mouldering wooden walls, the holes in the roof, through which a quantity of snow had drifted into the only room in the deserted house, indicated that no human being had sought shelter here for many a winter.

Old Rahel uttered a fresh wail of grief, when she saw this shelter; but after the men had removed the snow as well as they could, and covered the holes in the roof with pine-branches; when Adam had lighted a fire, and the sacks and coverlets were brought in from the sledge, and laid on a dry spot to furnish seats for the women, fresh courage entered their hearts, and Rahel, unasked, dragged herself to the hearth, and set the snow-filled pot on the fire.

"The nag must have two hours' rest," Marx said, "then they could push on and reach the miller in the ravine before night. There they would find kind friends, for Jacklein had been with him among the 'peasants.'" The snow-water boiled, the doctor and his wife rested, Ulrich and Ruth brought wood, which the smith had split, to the fire to dry, when suddenly a terrible cry of grief rang outside of the hut.

Costa hastily rose, the children followed, and old Rahel, whimpering, drew the upper kerchief on her head over her face.

The little horse, its tiny legs stretched far apart, was lying in the snow by the sledge. Beside it knelt Marx, holding the clumsy head on his knee, and blowing with his crooked mouth into the animal's nostrils. The creature showed its yellow teeth, and put out its bluish tongue as if it wanted to lick him; then the heavy head fell, the dying animal's eyes started from their sockets, its legs grew perfectly stiff, and this time the horse was really dead, while the shafts of the sledge vainly thrust themselves into the air, like the gaping mouth of a deserted bird.

No farther progress was possible. The women sat trembling in the hut, roasting before the fire, and shivering when a draught touched them.... Ruth wept for the poor little horse, and Marx sat as if utterly crushed beside his old friend's stiffening body, heeding nothing, least of all the snow, which was making him whiter than the miller, with whom he had expected to rest that evening. The doctor gazed in mute despair at his dumb wife, who, with clasped hands, was praying fervently; the smith pressed his hand upon his brow, vainly pondering over what was to be done

now, until his head ached; while, from the distance, echoed the howl of a hungry wolf, and a pair of ravens alighted on a white bough beside the little horse, gazing greedily at the corpse lying in the snow.

Meantime, the abbot was sitting in his pleasantly-warmed study, which was pervaded by a faint, agreeable perfume, gazing now at the logs burning in the beautiful marble mantel-piece, and then at the magistrate, who had brought him strange tidings.

The prelate's white woollen morning-robe clung closely around his stately figure. Beside him lay, side by side, for comparison, two manuscript copies of his favorite book, the idyls of Theocritus, which, for his amusement, and to excel the translation of Coban Hesse, he was turning into Latin verse, as the duties of his office gave him leisure.

The magistrate was standing by the fire-side. He was a thick-set man of middle height, with a large head, and clever but coarse features, as rudely moulded as if they had been carved from wood. He was one of the best informed lawyers in the country, and his words flowed as smoothly and clearly from his strong lips, as if every thought in his keen brain was born fully matured and beautifully finished.

In the farthest corner of the room, awaiting a sign from his master, stood the magistrate's clerk, a little man with a round head, and legs like the sickle of the waxing or waning moon. He carried under his short arms two portfolios, filled with important papers.

"He comes from Portugal, and has lived under an assumed name?" So the abbot repeated, what he had just heard.

"His name is Lopez, not Costa," replied the other; "these papers prove it. Give me the portfolio, man! The diploma is in the brown one."

He handed a parchment to the prelate, who, after reading it, said firmly:

"This Jew is a more important person than we supposed. They are not lavish with such praise in Coimbra. Are you taking good care of the doctor's books Herr Conrad? I will look at them to-morrow."

"They are at your disposal. These papers. . . ."

"Leave them, leave them."

"There will be more than enough for the complaint without them," said the magistrate. "Our town-clerk, who though no student is, as you know, a man of much experience, shares my opinion." Then he continued pathetically: "Only he who has cause to fear the law hides his name, only he, who feels guilty, flees the judge."

A subtle smile, that was not wholly free from bitterness, hovered around the abbot's lips, for he thought of the painful trial and the torture-chamber in the town hall, and no longer saw in the doctor merely the Jew, but the humanist and companion in study.

His glance again fell on the diploma, and while the other continued his representations, the prelate stretched himself more comfortably in his arm-chair and gazed thoughtfully at the ground. Then, as if an idea had suddenly occurred to him, he touched his high forehead with the tips of his fingers, and suddenly interrupting the eager speaker, said:

"Father Anselm came to us from Porto five years ago, and when there knew every one who understood Greek. Go, Gutbub, and tell the librarian to come." The monk soon appeared.

Tidings of Ulrich's disappearance and the Jew's flight had spread rapidly through the monastery; the news was discussed in the choir, the school, the stable and the kitchen; Father Anselm alone had heard nothing of the matter, though he had been busy in the library before daybreak, and the vexatious incident had been eagerly talked of there.

It was evident, that the elderly man cared little for anything that happened in the world, outside of his manuscripts and printing. His long, narrow head rested on a thin neck, which did not stand erect, but grew out between the shoulders like a branch from the stem. His face was grey and lined with wrinkles, like pumice-stone, but large bright eyes lent meaning and attraction to the withered countenance.

At first he listened indifferently to the abbot's story, but as soon as the Jew's name was mentioned, and he had read the diploma, as swiftly as if he possessed the gift of gathering the whole contents of ten lines at a single comprehensive glance, he said eagerly:

"Lopez, Doctor Lopez was here! And we did not know it, and have not consulted with him! Where is he? What are people planning against him?"

After he had learned that the Jew had fled, and the abbot requested him to tell all he knew about the doctor, he collected his thoughts and sorrowfully began:

"To be sure, to be sure; the man committed a great offence. He is a great sinner in God's eyes. You know his guilt?"

"We know everything," cried the magistrate, with a meaning glance at the prelate. Then, as if he sincerely pitied the criminal, he continued with well-feigned sympathy: "How did the learned man commit such a misdeed?"

The abbot understood the stratagem, but Anselm's words could not be recalled, and as he himself desired to learn more of the doctor's history, he asked the monk to tell what he knew.

The librarian, in his curt, dry manner, yet with a warmth unusual to him, described the doctor's great learning and brilliant intellect, saying that his father, though a Jew, had been in his way an aristocratic man, allied with many a noble family, for until the reign of King Emanuel, who persecuted the Hebrews, they had enjoyed great distinction in Portugal. In those days it had been hard to distinguish Jews from Christians. At

the time of the expulsion a few favored Israelites had been allowed to stay, among them the worthy Rodrigo, the doctor's father, who had been the king's physician and was held in high esteem by the sovereign. Lopez obtained the highest honors at Coimbra, but instead of following medicine, like his father, devoted himself to the humanities.

"There was no need to earn his living--to earn his living," continued the monk, speaking slowly and carefully, and repeating the conclusion of his sentence, as if he were in the act of collating two manuscripts, "for Rodrigo was one of the wealthiest men in Portugal. His son Lopez was rich, very rich in friends, and among them were numbered all to whom knowledge was dear. Even among the Christians he had many friends. Among us--I mean in our library--he also obtained great respect. I owe him many a hint, much aid; I mean in referring me to rare books, and explaining obscure passages. When he no longer visited us, I missed him sorely. I am not curious; or do you think I am? I am not curious, but I could not help inquiring about him, and then I heard very bad things. Women are to blame for everything; of course it was a woman again. A merchant from Flanders--a Christian--had settled in Porto. The doctor's father visited his house; but you probably know all this?"

"Of course! of course!" cried the magistrate. "But go on with your story."

"Old Doctor Rodrigo was the Netherlander's physician, and closed his eyes on the death-bed. An orphan was left, a girl, who had not a single relative in Porto. They said--I mean the young doctors and students who had seen her--that she was pleasing, very pleasing to the eye. But it was not on that account, but because she was orphaned and desolate, that the physician took the child--I mean the girl."

"And reared her as a Jewess?" interrupted the magistrate, with a questioning glance.

"As a Jewess?" replied the monk, excitedly. "Who says so? He did nothing of the sort. A Christian widow educated her in the physician's country-house, not in the city. When the young doctor returned from Coimbra, he saw her there more than once--more than once; certainly, more often than was good for him. The devil had a finger in the matter. I know, too, how they were married. Before one Jew and two Christian witnesses, they plighted their troth to each other, and exchanged rings--rings as if it were a Christian ceremony, though he remained a Jew and she a Christian. He intended to go to the Netherlands with her, but one of the witnesses betrayed them--denounced them to the Holy Inquisition. This soon interposed of course, for there it interferes with everything, and in this case it was necessary; nay more--a Christian duty. The young wife was seized in the street with her attendant and thrown into prison; on the rack she entirely lost the power of speech. The old physician and the doctor were warned in time, and kept closely concealed. Through Chamberlain de Sa, her uncle--or was it only her cousin?--through de Sa the wife regained her liberty, and then I believe all three fled to France--the father, son and wife. But no, they must have come here...."

"There you have it!" cried the magistrate, interrupting the monk, and glancing triumphantly at the prelate. "An old practitioner scents crime, as a tree frog smells rain. Now, for the first time, I can say with certainty: We have him, and the worst punishment is too little for his deserts. There shall be an unparalleled execution, something wonderful, magnificent, grand! You have given me important information, and I thank you, Father."

"Then you knew nothing?" faltered the librarian; and, raising his neck higher than usual, the vein in the centre of his forehead swelled with wrath.

"No, Anselme!" said the abbot. "But it was your duty to speak, as, unfortunately, it was mine to listen. Come to me again, by and bye; I have something to say to you."

The librarian bowed silently, coldly and proudly, and without vouchsafing the magistrate a single glance, went back, not to his books, but to his cell, where he paced up and down a long time, sorrowfully murmuring Lopez's name, striking himself on the mouth, pressing his clenched hand to his brow, and at last throwing himself on his knees to pray for the Jew, before the image of the crucified Redeemer.

As soon as the monk had left the room, the magistrate exclaimed:

"What unexpected aid! What series of sins lie before us! First the small ones. He had never worn the Jews' badge, and allowed himself to be served by Christians, for Caspar's daughters were often at the House to help in sewing. A sword was found in his dwelling, and the Jew, who carries weapons, renounces, since he uses self-protection, the aid of the authorities. Finally, we know that Lopez used an assumed name. Now we come to the great offences. They are divided into four parts. He has practised magic spells; he has sought to corrupt a Christian's son by heresies; he has led a Christian woman into a marriage; and he has-- I close with the worst--he has reared the daughter of a Christian woman, I mean his wife, a Jewess!"

"Reared his child a Jewess? Do you know that positively?" asked the abbot.

"She bears the Jewish name of Ruth. What I have taken the liberty to make prominent are well chosen, clearly-proved crimes, worthy of death. Your learning is great, Reverend Abbot, but I know the old writers, too. The Emperor Constantius made marriages between Jews and Christians punishable with death. I can show you the passage."

The abbot felt that the crime of which the Jew was accused was a heavy and unpardonable one, but he regarded only the sin, and it vexed him to see how the magistrate's zeal was exclusively turned against the unhappy criminal. So he rose, saying with cold hauteur:

"Then do your duty."

"Rely upon it. We shall capture him and his family to-morrow. The town-clerk is full of zeal too. We shall not be able to harm the child, but it must be taken from the Jew and receive a Christian education. It would be our right to do this, even if both parents were Hebrews. You know the Freiburg case. No less a personage than the great Ulrich Zasius has decided, that Jewish children might be baptized without their father's knowledge. I beg you to send Father Anselm to the town-hall on Saturday as a witness."

"Very well," replied the prelate, but he spoke with so little eagerness, that it justly surprised the magistrate. "Well then, catch the Jew; but take him alive. And one thing more! I wish to see and speak to the doctor, before you torture him."

"I will bring him to you day after to-morrow." The Nurembergers! the Nurembergers!...." replied the abbot, shrugging his shoulders.

"What do you mean?"

"They don't hang any one till they catch him." The magistrate regarded these words as a challenge to put forth every effort for the Jew's capture, so he answered eagerly: "We shall have him, Your Reverence, we shall surely have him. They are trapped in the snow. The sergeants are searching the roads; I shall summon your foresters and mine, and put them under Count Frohlinger's command. It is his duty to aid us. What they cannot find with their attendants, squires, beaters and hounds, is not hidden in the forest. Your blessing, Holy Father, there is no time to lose."

The abbot was alone.

He gazed thoughtfully at the coals in the fireplace, recalling everything he had just seen and heard, while his vivid power of imagination showed him the learned, unassuming man, who had spent long years in quiet seclusion, industriously devoting himself to the pursuit of knowledge. A slight feeling of envy stole into his heart; how rarely he himself was permitted to pursue undisturbed, and without interruption, the scientific subjects, in which alone he found pleasure.

He was vexed with himself, that he could feel so little anger against a criminal, whose guilt was deserving of death, and reproached himself for lukewarmness. Then he remembered that the Jew had sinned for love, and that to him who has loved much, much should be forgiven. Finally, it seemed a great boon, that he was soon to be permitted to make the acquaintance of the worthy doctor from Coimbra. Never had the zealous magistrate appeared so repulsive as to-day, and when he remembered how the crafty man had outwitted poor Father Anselm in his presence, he felt as if he had himself committed an unworthy deed. And yet, yet--the Jew could not be saved, and had deserved what threatened him.

A monk summoned him, but the abbot did not wish to be disturbed, and ordered that he should be left an hour alone.

He now took in his hand a volume he called the mirror of his soul, and in which he noted many things "for the confession," that he desired to determine to his own satisfaction. To-day he wrote:

"It would be a duty to hate a Jew and criminal, zealously to persecute what Holy Church has condemned. Yet I cannot do so. Who is the magistrate, and what are Father Anselm and this learned doctor! The one narrow-minded, only familiar with the little world he knows and in which he lives, the others divinely-gifted, full of knowledge, rulers in the wide domain of thought. And the former outwits the latter, who show themselves children in comparison with him. How Anselm stood before him! The deceived child was great, the clever man small. What men call cleverness is only small-minded persons' skill in life; simplicity is peculiar to the truly great man, because petty affairs are too small for him, and his eye does not count the grains of dust, but looks upward, and has a share in the infinitude stretching before us. Jesus Christ was gentle as a child and loved children, he was the Son of God, yet voluntarily yielded himself into the hands of men. The greatest of great men did not belong to the ranks of the clever. Blessed are the meek, He said. I understand those words. He is meek, whose soul is open, clear and pure as a mirror, and the greatest philosophers, the noblest minds I have met in life and history were also meek. The brute is clever; wisdom is the cleverness of the noble-minded. We must all follow the Saviour, and he among us, who unites wisdom to meekness, will come nearest to the Redeemer."

CHAPTER IX.

Marx had gone out to reconnoitre in a more cheerful mood, for the doctor had made good the loss sustained in the death of his old nag, and he returned at noon with good news.

A wood-carrier, whom he met on the high-road, had told him where Jorg, the charcoal-burner, lived.

The fugitives could reach his hut before night, and in so doing approach nearer the Rhine valley. Everything was ready for departure, but old Rahel objected to travelling further. She was sitting on a stone before the hut, for the smoke in the narrow room oppressed her breathing, and it seemed as if terror had robbed her of her senses. Gazing into vacancy with wild eyes and chattering teeth, she tried to make cakes and mould dumplings out of the snow, which she probably took for flour. She neither heard the doctor's call nor saw his wife beckon, and when the former grasped her to compel her to rise, uttered a loud shriek. At last the smith succeeded in persuading her to sit down on the sledge, and the party moved forward.

Adam had harnessed himself to the front of the vehicle. Marx went to and fro, pushing when necessary. The dumb woman waded through the snow by her husband's side. "Poor wife!" he said once; but she pressed his arm

closer, looking up into his eyes as if she wished to say: "Surely I shall lack nothing, if only you are spared to me!"

She enjoyed his presence as if it were a favor granted by destiny, but only at chance moments, for she could not banish her fear for him, and of the pursuers--her dread of uncertainty and wandering.

If snow rattled from a pine-tree, if she noticed Lopez turn his head, or if old Rahel uttered a moan, she shuddered; and this was not unperceived by her husband, who told himself that she had every reason to look forward to the next few hours with grave anxiety. Each moment might bring imprisonment to him and all, and if they discovered--if it were disclosed who he, who Elizabeth was. . . .

Ulrich and Ruth brought up the rear, saying little to each other.

At first the path ascended again, then led down to the valley. It had stopped snowing long before, and the farther they went the lighter the drifts became.

They had journeyed in this way for two hours, when Ruth's strength failed, and she stood still with tearful, imploring eyes. The charcoal-burner saw it, and growled:

"Come here, little girl; I'll carry you to the sleigh."

"No, let me," Ulrich eagerly interposed. And Ruth exclaimed:

"Yes, you, you shall carry me."

Marx grasped her around the waist, lifted her high into the air, and placed her in the boy's arms. She clasped her hands around his neck, and as he walked on pressed her fresh, cool cheek to his. It pleased him, and the thought entered his mind that he had been parted from her a long time, and it was delightful to have her again.

His heart swelled more and more; he felt that he would rather have Ruth than everything else in the world, and he drew her towards him as closely as if an invisible hand were already out-stretched to take her from him.

To-day her dear, delicate little face was not pale, but glowed crimson after the long walk through the frosty, winter air. She was glad to have Ulrich clasp her so firmly, so she pressed her cheek closer to his, loosened her fingers from his neck, caressingly stroked his face with her cold hand, and murmured:

"You are kind, Ulrich, and I love you!"

It sounded so tender and loving, that Ulrich's heart melted, for no one had spoken to him so since his mother went away.

He felt strong and joyous, Ruth did not seem at all heavy, and when she again clasped her hands around his neck, he said: "I should like to carry

you so always."

Ruth only nodded, as if the wish pleased her, but he continued:

"In the monastery I had no one, who was very kind to me, for even Lips, well, he was a count--everybody is kind to you. You don't know what it is, to be all alone, and have to struggle against every one. When I was in the monastery, I often wished that I was lying under the earth; now I don't want to die, and we will stay with you--father told me so--and everything will be just as it was, and I shall learn no more Latin, but become a painter, or smith-artificer, or anything else, for aught I care, if I'm only not obliged to leave you again."

He felt Ruth raise her little head, and press her soft lips on his forehead just over his eyes; then he lowered the arms in which she rested, kissed her mouth, and said: "Now it seems as if I had my mother back again!"

"Does it?" she asked, with sparkling eyes. "Now put me down. I am well again, and want to run."

So saying, she slipped to the ground, and he did not detain her.

Ruth now walked stoutly on beside the lad, and made him tell her about the bad boys in the monastery, Count Lips, the pictures, the monks, and his own flight, until, just as it grew dark, they reached the goal of their walk.

Jorg, the charcoal-burner, received them, and opened his hut, but only to go away himself, for though willing to give the fugitives shelter and act against the authorities, he did not wish to be present, if the refugees should be caught. Caught with them, hung with them! He knew the proverb, and went down to the village, with the florins Adam gave him.

There was a hearth for cooking in the hut, and two rooms, one large and one small, for in summer the charcoal-burners' wives and children live with them. The travellers needed rest and refreshment, and might have found both here, had not fear embittered the food and driven sleep from their weary eyes.

Jorg was to return early the next morning with a team of horses. This was a great consolation. Old Rahel, too, had regained her self-control, and was sound asleep.

The children followed her example, and at midnight Elizabeth slept too.

Marx lay beside the hearth, and from his crooked mouth came a strange, snoring noise, that sounded like the last note of an organ-pipe, from which the air is expiring.

Hours after all the others were asleep, Adam and the doctor still sat on a sack of straw, engaged in earnest conversation.

Lopez had told his friend the story of his happiness and sorrow, closing with the words:

"So you know who we are, and why we left our home. You are giving me your future, together with many other things; no gift can repay you; but first of all, it was due you that you should know my past."

Then, holding out his hand to the smith, he asked: "You are a Christian; will you still cleave to me, after what you have heard?"

Adam silently pressed the Jew's right hand, and after remaining lost in thought for a time, said in a hollow tone:

"If they catch you, and--Holy Virgin--if they discover.....Ruth....She is not really a Jew's child.....have you reared her as a Jewess?"

"No; only as a good human child."

"Is she baptized?"

Lopez answered this question also in the negative. The smith shook his head disapprovingly, but the doctor said: "She knows more about Jesus, than many a Christian child of her age. When she is grown up, she will be free to follow either her mother or her father."

"Why have you not become a Christian yourself? Forgive the question. Surely you are one at heart."

"That, that....you see, there are things....Suppose that every male scion of your family, from generation to generation, for many hundred years, had been a smith, and now a boy should grow up, who said: I--I despise your trade?"

"If Ulrich should say: 'I-I wish to be an artist;' it would be agreeable to me."

"Even if smiths were persecuted like us Jews, and he ran from your guild to another out of fear?"

"No--that would be base, and can scarcely be compared with your case; for see--you are acquainted with everything, even what is called Christianity; nay, the Saviour is dear to you; you have already told me so. Well then! Suppose you were a foundling and were shown our faith and yours, and asked for which you would decide, which would you choose?"

"We pray for life and peace, and where peace exists, love cannot be lacking, and yet! Perhaps I might decide for yours."

"There you have it."

"No, no! We have not done with this question so speedily. See, I do not grudge you your faith, nor do I wish to disturb it. The child must believe, that all its parents do and require of him is right, but the

stranger sees with different, keener eyes, than the son and daughter. You occupy a filial relation towards your Church--I do not. I know the doctrine of Jesus Christ, and if I had lived in Palestine in his time, should have been one of the first to follow the Master, but since, from those days to the present, much human work has mingled with his sublime teachings. This too must be dear to you, for it belongs to your parents--but it repels me. I have lived, labored and watched all night for the truth, and were I now to come before the baptismal font and say 'yes' to everything the priests ask, I should be a liar."

"They have caused you bitter suffering; tortured your wife, driven you and your family from your home....."

"I have borne all that patiently," cried the doctor, deeply moved.

"But there are many other sins now committed against me and mine, for which there is no forgiveness. I know the great Pagans and their works. Their need of love extends only to the nation, to which they belong, not to humanity. Unselfish justice, is to them the last thing man owes his fellow-man. Christ extended love to all nations, His heart was large enough to love all mankind. Human love, the purest and fairest of virtues, is the sublime gift, the noble heritage, he left behind to his brothers in sorrow. My heart, the poor heart under this black doublet, this heart was created for human love, this soul thirsted, with all its powers, to help its neighbors and lighten their sorrows. To exercise human love is to be good, but they no longer know it, and what is worse, a thousand times worse, they constantly destroy in me and mine the desire to be good, good in the sense of their own Master. Wordly wealth is trash--to be rich the poorest happiness. Yet the Jew is not forbidden to strive for this, they take scarcely half his gains;--nor can they deny him the pursuit of the pleasures of the intellect--pure knowledge--for our minds are not feebler or more idle, and soar no less boldly than theirs. The prophets came from the East! But the happiness of the soul --the right to exercise charity is denied to us. It is a part of charity for each man to regard his neighbor as himself--to feel for him, as it were, with his own heart--to lighten his burdens, minister unto him in his sorrows, and to gladden his happiness. This the Christian denies the Jew. Your love ceases when you meet me and mine, and if I sought to put myself on an equality with the Christian, from the pure desire to satisfy his Master's most beautiful lesson, what would be my fate? The Jew is not permitted to be good. Not to be good! Whoever imposes that upon his brother, commits a sin for which I know no forgiveness. And if Jesus Christ should return to earth and see the pack that hunts us, surely He, who was human love incarnate, would open His arms wide, wide to us, and ask: 'Who are these apostles of hate? I know them not!'"

The doctor paused, for the door had opened, and he rose with flushed face to look into the adjoining room; but the smith held him back, saying:

"Stay, stay! Marx went out into the open air. Ah, Sir! no doubt your words are true, but were they Jews who crucified the Saviour?"

"And this crime is daily avenged," replied Lopez. "How many wicked, how many low souls, who basely squander divine gifts to obtain worthless

self, there are among my people! More than half of them are stripped of honor and dignity on your altar of vengeance, and thrust into the arms of repulsive avarice. And this, all this....But enough of these things! They rouse my inmost soul to wrath, and I have other matters to discuss with you."

The scholar now began to speak to the smith, like a dying man, about the future of his family, told him where he had concealed his small property, and did not hide the fact, that his marriage had not only drawn upon him the persecution of the Christians, but the curse of his co-religionists. He took it upon himself to provide for Ulrich, as if he were his own child, should any misfortune befall the smith; and Adam promised, if he remained alive and at liberty, to do the same for the doctor's wife and daughter.

Meantime, a conversation of a very different nature was held before the hut.

The poacher was sitting by the fire, when the door opened, and his name was called. He turned in alarm, but soon regained his composure, for it was Jorg who beckoned, and then drew him into the forest.

Marx expected no good news, yet he started when his companion said:

"I know now, who the man is you have brought. He's a Jew. Don't try to humbug me. The constable from the city has come to the village. The man, who captures the Israelite, will get fifteen florins. Fifteen florins, good money. The magistrate will count it, all on one board, and the vicar says...."

"I don't care much for your priests," replied Marx. "I am from Weinsberg, and have found the Jew a worthy man. No one shall touch him."

"A Jew, and a good man!" cried Jurg, laughing. "If you won't help, so much the worse for you. You'll risk your neck, and the fifteen florins.Will you go shares? Yes or no?"

"Heaven's thunder!" murmured the poacher, his crooked mouth watering. "How much is half of fifteen florins?"

"About seven, I should say."

"A calf and a pig."

"A swine for the Jew, that will suit. You'll keep him here in the trap."

"I can't, Jorg; by my soul, I can't! Let me alone!"

"Very well, for aught I care; but the legal gentlemen. The gallows has waited for you long enough!"

"I can't; I can't. I've been an honest man all my life, and the smith Adam and his dead father have shown me many a kindness."

"Who means the smith any harm?"

"The receiver is as bad as the thief. If they catch him...."

"He'll be put in the stocks for a week. That's the worst that can befall him."

"No, no. Let me alone,--or I'll tell Adam what you're plotting...."

"Then I'll denounce you first, you gallows' fruit, you rogue, you poacher. They've suspected you a long time! Will you change your mind now, you blockhead?"

"Yes, yes; but Ulrich is here too, and the boy is as dear to me as my own child."

"I'll come here later, say that no vehicle can be had, and take him away with me. When it's all over, I'll let him go."

"Then I'll keep him. He already helps me as much, as if he were a grown man. Oh, dear, dear! The Jew, the gentle man, and the poor women, and the little girl, Ruth...."

"Big Jews and little Jews, nothing more. You've told me yourself, how the Hebrews were persecuted in your dead father's day. So we'll go shares. There's a light in the room still. You'll detain them. Count Frohlinger has been at his hunting-box since last evening....If they insist on moving forward, guide them to the village."

"And I've been an honest man all my life," whined the poacher, and then continued, threateningly: "If you harm a hair on Ulrich's head...."

"Fool that you are! I'll willingly leave the big feeder to you. Go in now, then I'll come and fetch the boy. There's money at stake--fifteen florins!" Fifteen minutes after, Jorg entered the but.

The smith and the doctor believed the charcoal-burner, when he told them that all the vehicles in the village were in use, but he would find one elsewhere. They must let the boy go with him, to enquire at the farm-houses in another village. Somebody would doubtless be found to risk his horses. The lad looked like a young nobleman, and the peasants would take earnest-money from him. If he, Jorg, should show them florins, it would get him into a fine scrape. The people knew he was as poor as a beggar.

The smith asked the poacher's opinion, and the latter growled:

"That will, doubtless, be a good plan."

He said no more, and when Adam held out his hand to the boy, and kissed him on the forehead, and the doctor bade him an affectionate farewell, Marx called himself a Judas, and would gladly have flung the tempting

florins to the four winds, but it was too late.

The smith and Lopez heard him call anxiously to Jorg: "Take good care of the boy!" And when Adam patted him on the shoulder, saying: "You are a faithful fellow, Marx!" he could have howled like a mastiff and revealed all; but it seemed as if he again felt the rope around his neck, so he kept silence.

CHAPTER X.

The grey dawn was already glimmering, yet neither the expected vehicle nor Jorg had come. Old Rahel, usually an early riser, was sleeping as soundly as if she had to make up the lost slumber of ten nights; but the smith's anxiety would no longer allow him to remain in the close room. Ruth followed him into the open air, and when she timidly touched him-- for there had always been something unapproachable to her in the silent man's gigantic figure--he looked at her from head to foot, with strange, questioning sympathy, and then asked suddenly, with a haste unusual to him.

"Has your father told you about Jesus Christ?"

"Often!" replied Ruth.

"And do you love Him?"

"Dearly. Father says He loved all children, and called them to Him."

"Of course, of course!" replied the smith, blushing with shame for his own distrust.

The doctor did not follow the others, and as soon as his wife saw that they were alone, she beckoned to him.

Lopez sat down on the couch beside her, and took her hand. The slender fingers trembled in his clasp, and when, with loving anxiety, he drew her towards him, he felt the tremor of her delicate limbs, while her eyes expressed bitter suffering and terrible dread.

"Are you afraid?" he asked, tenderly.

Elizabeth shuddered, threw her arms passionately around his neck, and nodded assent.

"The wagon will convey us to the Rhine Valley, please God, this very day, and there we shall be safe," he continued, soothingly. But she shook her head, her features assuming an expression of indifference and contempt. Lopez understood how to read their meaning, and asked: "So it is not the bailiffs you fear; something else is troubling you?"

She nodded again, this time still more eagerly, drew out the crucifix, which she had hitherto kept concealed under her coverlid, showed it to him, then pointed upward towards heaven, lastly to herself and him, and shrugged her shoulders with an air of deep, mournful renunciation.

"You are thinking of the other world," said Lopez; then, fixing his eyes on the ground, he continued, in a lower tone: "I know you are tortured by the fear of not meeting me there."

"Yes," she gasped, with a great effort, pressing her forehead against his shoulder.

A hot tear fell on the doctor's hand, and he felt as if his own heart was weeping with his beloved, anxious wife.

He knew that this thought had often poisoned her life and, full of tender sympathy, turned her beautiful face towards him and pressed a long kiss on her closed eyes, then said, tenderly:

"You are mine, I am yours, and if there is a life beyond the grave, and an eternal justice, the dumb will speak as they desire, and sing wondrous songs with the angels; the sorrowful will again be happy there. We will hope, we will both hope! Do you remember how I read Dante aloud to you, and tried to explain his divine creation, as we sat on the bench by the fig-tree. The sea roared below us, and our hearts swelled higher than its storm-lashed waves. How soft was the air, how bright the sunshine! This earth seemed doubly beautiful to you and me as, led by the hand of the divine seer and singer, we descended shuddering to the nether world. There the good and noble men of ancient times walked in a flowery meadow, and among them the poet beheld in solitary grandeur--do you still remember how the passage runs? 'E solo in parte vidi 'l Saladino.' Among them he also saw the Moslem Saladin, the conqueror of the Christians. If any one possessed the key of the mysteries of the other world, Elizabeth, it was Dante. He assigned a lofty place to the pagan, who was a true man--a man with a pure mind, a zeal for goodness and right, and I think I shall have a place there too. Courage, Elizabeth, courage!"

A beautiful smile had illumined the wife's features, while she was reminded of the happiest hours of her life, but when he paused, gazed into her eyes, and clasped her right hand in his, she was seized with an intense longing to pray once, only once, with him to the Saviour so, drawing her fingers from his, she pressed the image of the Crucified One to her breast with her left hand, pleading with mute motions of her lips, intelligible to him alone, and with ardent entreaty in her large, tearful eyes: "Pray, pray with me, pray to the saviour."

Lopez was greatly agitated; his heart beat faster, and a strong impulse urged him to start up, cry "no," and not allow himself to be moved, by an affectionate meakness, into bowing his manly soul before one, who, to him, was no more than human.

The noble figure of the crucified Saviour, carved by an artist's hand in

ivory, hung from an ebony cross, and he thrust the image back, intending to turn proudly way, he gazed at the face and found there only pain, quiet endurance, and touching sorrow. Ah, his own heart had often bled, as the pure brow of this poor, persecuted, tortured saint bled beneath its crown of thorns. To defy this silent companion in suffering, was no manly deed--to pay homage, out of love, to Him, who had brought love into the world, seemed to possess a sweet, ensnaring charm--so he clasped his slender hands closely round his dumb wife's fingers, pressed his dark curls gainst Elizabeth's fair hair, and both, for the first and last time, repeated together a mute, fervent prayer.

Before the hut, and surrounded by the forest, was a large clearing, where two roads crossed.

Adam, Marx and Ruth had gazed first down one and then the other, to look for the wagon, but nothing was to be seen or heard. As, with increasing anxiety, they turned back to the first path, the poacher grew restless. His crooked mouth twisted to and fro in strange contortions, not a muscle of his coarse face was till, and this looked so odd and yet so horrible, that Ruth could not help laughing, and the smith asked what ailed him.

Marx made no reply; his ear had caught the distant bay of a dog, and he knew what the sound meant. Work at the anvil impairs the hearing, and the smith did not notice the approaching peril, and repeated: "What ails you, man?"

"I am freezing," replied the charcoal-burner, cowering, with a piteous expression.

Ruth heard no more of the conversation, she had stopped and put her hand to her ear, listening with head bent forward, to the noises in the distance.

Suddenly she uttered a low cry, exclaiming: "There's a dog barking, Meister Adam, I hear it."

The smith turned pale and shook his head, but she cried earnestly: "Believe me; I hear it. Now it's barking again."

Adam too, now heard a strange noise in the forest. With lightning speed he loosened the hammer in his belt, took Ruth by the hand, and ran up the clearing with her.

Meantime, Lopez had compelled old Rahel to rise.

Everything must be ready, when Ulrich returned. In his impatience he had gone to the door, and when he saw Adam hurrying up the glade with the child, ran anxiously to meet them, thinking that some accident had happened to Ulrich.

"Back, back!" shouted the smith, and Ruth, releasing her hand from his, also motioned and shrieked "Back, back!"

The doctor obeyed the warning, and stopped; but he had scarcely turned, when several dogs appeared at the mouth of the ravine through which the party had come the day before, and directly after Count Frohlinger, on horseback, burst from the thicket.

The nobleman sat throned on his spirited charger, like the sun-god Siegfried. His fair locks floated dishevelled around his head, the steam rising from the dripping steed hovered about him in the fresh winter air like a light cloud. He had opened and raised his arms, and holding the reins in his left hand, swung his hunting spear with the right. On perceiving Lopez, a clear, joyous, exultant "Hallo, Halali!" rang from his bearded lips.

To-day Count Frohlinger was not hunting the stag, but special game, a Jew.

The chase led to the right cover, and how well the hounds had done, how stoutly Emir, his swift hunter, had followed.

This was a morning's work indeed!

"Hallo, Halali!" he shouted exultingly again, and ere the fugitives had escaped from the clearing, reached the doctor's side, exclaiming:

"Here is my game; to your knees, Jew!"

The count had far outstripped his attendants, and was entirely alone.

As Lopez stood still with folded arms, paying no heed to his command, he turned the spear, to strike him with the handle.

Then, for the first time in many years, the old fury awoke in Adam's heart; and rushing upon the count like a tiger, he threw his powerful arms around his waist, and ere he was aware of the attack, hurled him from his horse, set his knee on his breast, snatched the hammer from his belt, and with a mighty blow struck the dog that attacked him, to the earth. Then he again swung the iron, to crush the head of his hated foe. But Lopez would not accept deliverance at such a price, and cried in a tone of passionate entreaty:

"Let him go, Adam, spare him."

As he spoke, he clung to the smith's arm, and when the latter tried to release himself from his grasp, said earnestly:

"We will not follow their example!"

Again the hammer whizzed high in the air, and again the Jew clung to the smith's arm, this time exclaiming imperiously:

"Spare him, if you are my friend!"

What was his strength in comparison with Adam's? Yet as the hammer rose

for the third time, he again strove to prevent the terrible deed, seizing the infuriated man's wrist, and gasping, as in the struggle he fell on his knees beside the count: "Think of Ulrich! This man's son was the only one, the only one in the whole monastery, who stood by Ulrich, your child--in the monastery--he was--his friend--among so many. Spare him--Ulrich! For Ulrich's sake, spare him!"

During this struggle the smith had held the count down with his left hand, and defended himself against Lopez with the right.

One jerk, and the hand upraised for murder was free again--but he did not use it. His friend's last words had paralyzed him.

"Take it," he said in a hollow tone, giving the hammer to the doctor.

The latter seized it, and rising joyously, laid his hand on the shoulder of the smith, who was still kneeling on the count's breast, and said beseechingly: "Let that suffice. The man is only...."

He went no farther--a gurgling, piercing cry of pain escaped his lips, and pressing one hand to his breast, and the other to his brow, he sank on the snow beside the stump of a giant pine.

A squire dashed from the forest--the archer, to whom this noble quarry had fallen a victim, appeared in the clearing, holding aloft the cross-bow from which he had sent the bolt. His arrow was fixed in the doctor's breast; alas, the man had only sent the shaft, to save his fallen master from the hammer in the Jew's hand.

Count Frohlinger rose, struggling for breath; his hand sought his hunting-knife, but in the fall it had slipped from its sheath and was lying in the snow.

Adam supported his dying friend in his arms, Ruth ran weeping to the hut, and before the nobleman had fully collected his thoughts, the squire reached his side, and young Count Lips, riding a swift bay-horse, dashed from the forest, closely followed by three mounted huntsmen.

When the attendants saw their master on foot, they too sprang from their saddles, Lips did the same, and an eager interchange of question and answer began among them.

The nobleman scarcely noticed his son, but greeted with angry words the man who had shot the Jew. Then, deeply excited, he hoarsely ordered his attendants to bind the smith, who made no resistance, but submitted to everything like a patient child.

Lopez no longer needed his arms.

The dumb wife sat on the stump, with her dying husband resting on her lap. She had thrown her arms around the bleeding form, and the feet hung limply down, touching the snow.

Ruth, sobbing bitterly, crouched on the ground by her mother's side, and old Rahel, who had entirely regained her self-control, pressed a cloth, wet with wine, on his forehead.

The young count approached the dying Jew. His father slowly followed, drew the boy to his side, and said in a low, sad tone:

"I am sorry for the man; he saved my life."

The wounded man opened his eyes, saw Count Frohlinger, his son and the fettered smith, felt his wife's tears on his brow, and heard Ruth's agonized weeping. A gentle smile hovered around his pale lips, and when he tried to raise his head Elizabeth helped him, pressing it gently to her breast.

The feeble lips moved and Lopez raised his eyes to her face, as if to thank her, saying in a low voice: "The arrow--don't touch it... Elizabeth--Ruth, we have clung together faithfully, but now--I shall leave you alone, I must leave you." He paused, a shadow clouded his eyes, and the lids slowly fell. But he soon raised them again, and fixing his glance steadily on the count, said:

"Hear me, my Lord; a dying man should be heard, even if he is a Jew. See! This is my wife, and this my child. They are Christians. They will soon be alone in the world, deserted, orphaned. The smith is their only friend. Set him free; they--they, they will need a protector. My wife is dumb, dumb....alone in the world. She can neither beseech nor demand. Set Adam free, for the sake of your Saviour, your son, free--yes, free. A wide, wide space must be between you; he must go away with them, far away. Set him free! I held his arm with the hammer.... You know--with the hammer. Set him free. My death--death atones for everything."

Again his voice failed, and the count, deeply moved, looked irresolutely now at him, now at the smith. Lips's eyes filled with tears; and as he saw his father delay in fulfilling the dying man's last wish, and a glance from the dim eyes met his, he pressed closer to the noble, who stood struggling with many contending emotions, and whispered, weeping:

"My Lord and Father, my Lord and Father, tomorrow will be Christmas. For Christ's sake, for love of me, grant his request: release Ulrich's father, set him free! Do so, my noble Father; I want no other Christmas gift."

Count Frohlinger's heart also overflowed, and when, raising his tear-dimmed eyes, he saw Elizabeth's deep grief stamped on her gentle features, and beheld reclining on her breast, the mild, beautiful face of the dying man, it seemed as if he saw before him the sorrowful Mother of God--and to-morrow would be Christmas. Wounded pride was silent, he forgot the insult he had sustained, and cried in a voice as loud, as if he wished every word to reach the ear now growing dull in death:

"I thank you for your aid, man. Adam is free, and may go with your wife and child wherever he lists. My word upon it; you can close your eyes in

peace!"

Lopez smiled again, raised his hand as if in gratitude, then let it fall upon his child's head, gazed lovingly at Ruth for the last time, and murmured in a low tone "Lift my head a little higher, Elizabeth." When she had obeyed his wish, he gazed earnestly into her face, whispered softly: "A dreamless sleep--reanimated to new forms in the endless circle. No!--Do you see, do you hear....Solo in parte'....with youwith you....Oh, oh!--the arrow--draw the arrow from the wound. Elizabeth, Elizabeth--it aches. Well--well--how miserable we were, and yet, yet....You--you--I--we--we know, what happiness is. You--I.... Forgive me! I forgive, forgive...."

The dying man's hand fell from his child's head, his eyes closed, but the pleasant smile with which he had perished, hovered around his lips, even in death.

CHAPTER XI.

Count Frohlinger added a low "amen" to the last words of the dying man, then approached the widow, and in the kindly, cordial manner natural to him, strove to comfort her.

Finally he ordered his men, to loose the smith's bonds, and instantly guide him to the frontier with the woman and child. He also spoke to Adam, but said only a few words, not cheery ones as usual, but grave and harsh in purport.

They were a command to leave the country without delay, and never return to his home again.

The Jew's corpse was laid on a bier formed of pine, branches, and the bearers lifted it on their shoulders. Ruth clung closely to her mother, both trembling like leaves in the wind, while he who was dearest to them on earth was borne away, but only the child could weep.

The men, whom Count Frohlinger had left behind as a guard, waited patiently with the smith for his son's return until noon, then they urged departure, and the party moved forward.

Not a word was spoken, till the, travellers stopped before the charcoal-burner's house.

Jorg was in the city, but his wife said that the boy had been there, and had gone back to the forest an hour before. The tavern could accommodate a great many people, she added, and they could wait for him there.

The fugitives followed this advice, and after Adam had seen the women provided with shelter, he again sought the scene of the misfortune, and waited there for the boy until night.

Beside the stump on which his friend had died, he prayed long and earnestly, vowing to his dead preserver to live henceforth solely for his family. Unbroken stillness surrounded him, it seemed as if he were in church, and every tree in the forest was a witness of the oath he swore.

The next morning the smith again sought the charcoal-burner, and this time found him. Jorg laid the blame to Ulrich's impatience, but promised to go to Marx in search of him and bring him to the smith. The men composing the escort urged haste, so Adam went on without Ulrich towards the north-west, to the valley of the Rhine.

The charcoal-burner had lost the reward offered the informer, and could not even earn the money due a messenger.

He had lured Ulrich to the attic and locked him in there, but during his absence the boy escaped. He was a nimble fellow, for he had risked the leap from the window, and then swung himself over the fence into the road.

Jorg's conjecture did not deceive him, for as soon as Ulrich perceived that he had been betrayed into a trap, he had leaped into the open air.

He must warn his friends, and anxiety for them winged his feet.

Once and again he lost his way, but at last found the right path, though he had wasted many hours, first in the village, then behind the locked door, and finally in searching for the right road.

The sun had already passed the meridian, when he at last reached the clearing.

The but was deserted; no one answered his loud, anxious shouts.

Where had they gone?

He searched the wide, snow-covered expanse for traces, and found only too many. Here horses' hoofs, there large and small feet had pressed the snow, yonder hounds had run, and--Great Heaven!--here, by the tree-stump, red blood stained the glimmering white ground.

His breath failed, but he did not cease to search, look, examine.

Yonder, where for the length of a man the snow had vanished and grass and brown earth appeared, people had fought together, and there--Holy Virgin! What was this!--there lay his father's hammer. He knew it only too well; it was the smaller one, which to distinguish it from the two larger tools, Goliath and Samson, he called David--the boy had swung it a hundred times himself.

His heart stood still, and when he found some freshly-hewn pine-boughs, and a fir-trunk that had been rejected by one of the men, he said to himself: "The bier was made here," and his vivid imagination showed him

his father fighting, struck down, and then a mournful funeral procession. Exulting bailiffs bore a tall strong-limbed corpse, and a slender, black-robed body, his father and his teacher. Then came the quiet, beautiful wife and Ruth in bonds, and behind them Marx and Rahel. He distinctly saw all this; it even seemed as if he heard the sobs of the women, and wailing bitterly, he thrust his hands in his floating locks and ran to and fro. Suddenly he thought that the troopers would return to seize him also. Away, away! anywhere--away! a voice roared and buzzed in his ears, and he set out on a run towards the south, always towards the south.

The boy had not eaten a mouthful, since the oatmeal porridge obtained at the charcoal-burner's, in the morning, but felt neither hunger nor thirst, and dashed on and on without heeding the way.

Long after his father had left the clearing for the second time, he still ran on--but gasping for breath while his steps grew slower and shorter. The moon rose, one star after another revealed its light, yet he still struggled forward.

The forest lay behind him; he had reached a broad road, which he followed southward, always southward, till his strength utterly failed. His head and hands were burning like fire, yet it was very, very cold; but little snow lay here in the valley, and in many places the moonlight showed patches of bare, dark turf.

Grief was forgotten. Fatigue, anxiety and hunger completely engrossed the boy's mind. He felt tempted to throw himself down in the road and sleep, but remembered the frozen people of whom he had heard, and dragged himself on to the nearest village. The lights had long been extinguished; as he approached, dogs barked in the yards, and the melancholy lowing of a cow echoed from many a stable. He was again among human beings; the thought exerted a soothing influence; he regained his self-control, and sought a shelter for the night.

At the end of the village stood a barn, and Ulrich noticed by the moonlight an open hatchway in the wall. If he could climb up to it! The framework offered some support for fingers and toes, so he resolved to try it.

Several times, when Half-way up, he slipped to the ground, but at last reached the top, and found a bed in the soft hay under a sheltering roof. Surrounded by the fragrance of the dried grasses, he soon fell asleep, and in a dream saw amidst various confused and repulsive shapes, first his father with a bleeding wound in his broad chest, and then the doctor, dancing with old Rahel. Last of all Ruth appeared; she led him into the forest to a juniper-bush, and showed him a nest full of young birds. But the half-naked creatures vexed him, and he trampled them under foot, over which the little girl lamented so loudly and bitterly, that he awoke.

Morning was already dawning, his head ached, and he was very cold and hungry, but he had no desire nor thought except to proceed; so he again went out into the open air, brushed off the hay that still clung to his

hair and clothes, and walked on towards the south.

It had grown warmer and was beginning to snow heavily.

Walking became more and more difficult; his headache grew unendurable, yet his feet still moved, though it seemed as if he wore heavy leaden shoes.

Several freight-wagons with armed escorts, and a few peasants, with rosaries in their hands, who were on their way to church, met the lad, but no one had overtaken him.

On the hinge of noon he heard behind him the tramp of horses' hoofs and the rattle of wheels, approaching nearer and nearer with ominous haste.

If it should be the troopers!

Ulrich's heart stood still, and turning to look back, he saw several horsemen, who were trotting past a spur of the hill around which the road wound.

Through the falling flakes the boy perceived glittering weapons, gay doublets and scarfs, and now--now--all hope was over, they wore Count Frohlinger's colors!

Unless the earth should open before him, there was no escape. The road belonged to the horsemen; on the right lay a wide, snow-covered plain, on the left rose a cliff, kept from falling on the side towards the highway by a rude wall. It needed this support less on account of the road, than for the sake of a graveyard, for which the citizens of the neighboring borough used the gentle slope of the mountain.

The graves, the bare elder-bushes and bushy cypresses in the cemetery were covered with snow, and the brighter the white covering that rested on every surrounding object, the stronger was the relief in which the black crosses stood forth against it.

A small chapel in the rear of the graveyard caught Ulrich's eye. If it was possible to climb the wall, he might hide behind it. The horsemen were already close at his heels, when he summoned all his remaining strength, rushed to a stone projecting from the wall, and began to clamber up.

The day before it would have been a small matter for him to reach the cemetery; but now the exhausted boy only dragged himself upward, to slip on the smooth stones and lose the hold, that the dry, snow-covered plants growing in the wide crevices treacherously offered him.

The horsemen had noticed him, and a young man-at-arms exclaimed: "A runaway! See how the young vagabond acts. I'll seize him."

He set spurs to his horse as he spoke, and just as the boy succeeded in reaching his goal, grasped his foot; but Ulrich clung fast to a

gravestone, so the shoe was left in the trooper's hand and his comrades burst into a loud laugh. It sounded merry, but it echoed in the ears of the tortured lad like a shriek from hell, and urged him onward. He leaped over two, five, ten graves--then he stumbled over a head-stone concealed by the snow.

With a great effort he rose again, but ere he reached the chapel fell once more, and now his will was paralyzed. In mortal terror he clung to a cross, and as his senses failed, thought of "the word." It seemed as if some one had called the right one, and from pure Weakness and fatigue, he could not remember it.

The young soldier was not willing to encounter the jeers of his comrades, by letting the vagabond escape. With a curt: "Stop, you rascal," he threw the shoe into the graveyard, gave his bridle to the next man in the line; and a few minutes after was kneeling by Ulrich's side. He shook and jerked him, but in vain; then growing anxious, called to the others that the boy was probably dead.

"People never die so quickly!" cried the greyhaired leader of the band: "Give him a blow."

The youth raised his arm, but did not strike the lad. He had looked into Ulrich's face, and found something there that touched his heart. "No, no," he shouted, "come up here, Peter; a handsome boy; but it's all over with him, I say."

During this delay, the traveller whom the men were escorting, and his old servant, approached the cemetery at a rapid trot. The former, a gentleman of middle age, protected from the cold by costly furs, saw with a single hasty glance the cause of the detention.

Instantly dismounting, he followed the leader of the troop to the end of the wall, where there was a flight of rude steps.

Ulrich's head now lay in the soldier's arms, and the traveller gazed at him with a look of deep sympathy. The steadfast glance of his bright eyes rested on the boy's features as if spellbound, then he raised his hand, beckoned to the elder soldier, and exclaimed: "Lift him; we'll take him with us; a corner can be found in the wagon."

The vehicle, of which the traveller spoke, was slow in coming. It was a long four-wheeled equipage, over which, as a protection against wind and storm, arched a round, sail-cloth cover. The driver crouched among the straw in a basket behind the horses, like a brooding hen.

Under the sheltering canopy, among the luggage of the fur-clad gentleman, sat and reclined four travellers, whom the owner of the vehicle had gradually picked up, and who formed a motley company.

The two Dominican friars, Magisters Sutor and Stubenrauch, had entered at Cologne, for the wagon came straight from Holland, and belonged to the artist Antonio Moor of Utrecht, who was going to King Philip's court.

The beautiful fur border on the black cap and velvet cloak showed that he had no occasion to practise economy; he preferred the back of a good horse to a seat in a jolting vehicle.

The ecclesiastics had taken possession of the best places in the back of the wagon. They were inseparable brothers, and formed as it were one person, for they behaved like two bodies with one soul. In this double life, fat Magister Sutor represented the will, lean Stubenrauch reflection and execution. If the former proposed to be down or sit, eat or drink, sleep or talk, the latter instantly carried the suggestion into execution, rarely neglecting to establish, by wise words, for what reason the act in question should be performed precisely at that time.

Farther towards the front, with his back resting against a chest, lay a fine-looking young Lansquenet. He was undoubtedly a gay, active fellow, but now sat mute and melancholy, supporting with his right hand his wounded left arm, as if it were some brittle vessel.

Opposite to him rose a heap of loose straw, beneath which something stirred from time to time, and from which at short intervals a slight cough was heard.

As soon as the door in the back of the vehicle opened, and the cold snowy air entered the dark, damp space under the tilt, Magister Sutor's lips parted in a long-drawn "Ugh!" to which his lean companion instantly added a torrent of reproachful words about the delay, the draught, the danger of taking cold.

When the artist's head appeared in the opening, the priest paused, for Moor paid the travelling expenses; but when his companion Sutor drew his cloak around him with every token of discomfort and annoyance, he followed his example in a still more conspicuous way.

The artist paid no heed to these gestures, but quietly requested his guests to make room for the boy.

A muffled head was suddenly thrust out from under the straw, a voice cried: "A hospital on wheels!" then the head vanished again like that of a fish, which has risen to take a breath of air.

"Very true," replied the artist. "You need not draw up your limbs so far, my worthy Lansquenet, but I must request these reverend gentlemen to move a little farther apart, or closer together, and make room for the sick lad on the leather sack."

While these words were uttered, one of the escort laid the still senseless boy under the tilt.

Magister Sutor noticed the snow that clung to Ulrich's hair and clothing, and while struggling to rise, uttered a repellent "no," while Stubenrauch hastily added reproachfully: "There will be a perfect pool here, when that melts; you gave us these places, Meister Moor, but we hardly expected to receive also dripping limbs and rheumatic pains...."

Before he finished the sentence, the bandaged head again appeared from the straw, and the high, shrill voice of the man concealed under it, asked? "Was the blood of the wounded wayfarer, the good Samaritan picked up by the roadside, dry or wet?"

An encouraging glance from Sutor requested Stubenrauch to make an appropriate answer, and the latter in an unctuous tone, hastily replied: "It was the Lord, who caused the Samaritan to find the wounded man by the roadside--this did not happen in our case, for the wet boy is forced upon us, and though we are Samaritans...."

"You are not yet merciful," cried the voice from the straw.

The artist laughed, but the soldier, slapping his thigh with his sound hand, cried:

"In with the boy, you fellows outside; here, put him on my right--move farther apart, you gentlemen down below; the water will do us no harm, if you'll only give us some of the wine in your basket yonder."

The priests, willy-nilly, now permitted Ulrich to be laid on the leathern sack between them, and while first Sutor, and then Stubenrauch, shrunk away to mutter prayers over a rosary for the senseless lad's restoration to consciousness, and to avoid coming in contact with his wet clothes, the artist entered the vehicle, and without asking permission, took the wine from the priests' basket. The soldier helped him, and soon their united exertions, with the fiery liquor, revived the fainting boy.

Moor rode forward, and the wagon jolted on until the day's journey ended at Emmendingen. Count von Hochburg's retainers, who were to serve as escort from this point, would not ride on Christmas day. The artist made no objection, but when they also declared that no horse should leave the stable on the morrow, which was a second holiday, he shrugged his shoulders and answered, without any show of anger, but in a firm, haughty tone, that he should then probably be obliged--if necessary with their master's assistance,--to conduct them to Freiburg to-morrow.

The inns at Emmendingen were among the largest and best in the neighborhood of Freiburg, and on account of the changes of escort, which frequently took place here, there was no lack of accommodation for numerous horses and guests.

As soon as Ulrich was taken into the warm hostelry he fainted a second time, and the artist now cared for him as kindly as if he were the lad's own father.

Magister Sutor ordered the roast meats, and his companion Stubenrauch all the other requisites for a substantial meal, in which they had made considerable progress, while the artist was still engaged in ministering to the sick lad, in which kindly office the little man, who had been hidden under the straw in the wagon, stoutly assisted.

He had been a buffoon, and his dress still bore many tokens of his former profession. His big head swayed upon his thin neck; his droll, though emaciated features constantly changed their expression, and even when he was not coughing, his mouth was continually in motion.

As soon as Ulrich breathed calmly and regularly, he searched his clothing to find some clue to his residence, but everything he discovered in the lad's pockets only led to more and more amusing and startling conjectures, for nothing can contain a greater variety of objects than a school-boy's pockets, if we except a school-girl's.

There was a scrap of paper with a Latin exercise bristling with errors, a smooth stone, a shabby, notched knife, a bit of chalk for drawing, an iron arrow-head, a broken hobnail, and a falconer's glove, which Count Lips had given his comrade. The ring the doctor's wife had bestowed as a farewell token, was also discovered around his neck.

All these things led Pellicanus--so the jester was named--to make many a conjecture, and he left none untried.

As a mosaic picture is formed from stones, he by a hundred signs, conjured up a vision of the lad's character, home, and the school from which he had run away.

He called him the son of a noble of moderate property. In this he was of course mistaken, but in other respects perceived, with wonderful acuteness, how Ulrich had hitherto been circumstanced, nay even declared that he was a motherless child, a fact proved by many things he lacked. The boy had been sent to school too late--Pellicanus was a good Latin scholar--and perhaps had been too early initiated into the mysteries of riding, hunting, and woodcraft.

The artist, merely by the boy's appearance, gained a more accurate knowledge of his real nature, than the jester gathered from his investigations and inferences.

Ulrich pleased him, and when he saw the pen-and-ink sketch on the back of the exercise, which Pellicanus showed him, he smiled and felt strengthened in the resolve to interest himself still more in the handsome boy, whom fate had thrown in his way. He now only needed to discover who the lad's parents were, and what had driven him from the school.

The surgeon of the little town had bled Ulrich, and soon after he fell into a sound sleep, and breathed quietly. The artist and jester now dined together, for the monks had finished their meal long before, and were taking a noonday nap. Moor ordered roast meat and wine for the Lansquenet, who sat modestly in one corner of the large public room, gazing sadly at his wounded arm.

"Poor fellow!" said the jester, pointing to the handsome young man. "We are brothers in calamity; one just like the other; a cart with a broken wheel."

"His arm will soon heal," replied the artist, "but your tool"--here he pointed to his own lips--"is stirring briskly enough now. The monks and I have both made its acquaintance within the past few days."

"Well, well," replied Pellicanus, smiling bitterly, "yet they toss me into the rubbish heap."

"That would be"

"Ah, you think the wise would then be fools with the fools," interrupted Pellicanus. "Not at all. Do you know what our masters expect of us?"

"You are to shorten the time for them with wit and jest."

"But when must we be real fools, my Lord? Have you considered? Least of all in happy hours. Then we are expected to play the wise man, warn against excess, point out shadows. In sorrow, in times of trouble, then, fool, be a fool! The madder pranks you play, the better. Make every effort, and if you understand your trade well, and know your master, you must compel him to laugh till he cries, when he would fain wail for grief, like a little girl. You know princes too, sir, but I know them better. They are gods on earth, and won't submit to the universal lot of mortals, to endure pain and anguish. When people are ill, the physician is summoned, and in trouble we are at hand. Things are as we take them--the gravest face may have a wart, upon which a jest can be made. When you have once laughed at a misfortune, its sting loses its point. We deaden it--we light up the darkness--even though it be with a will 'o the wisp--and if we understand our business, manage to hack the lumpy dough of heavy sorrow into little pieces, which even a princely stomach can digest."

"A coughing fool can do that too, so long as there is nothing wanting in his upper story."

"You are mistaken, indeed you are. Great lords only wish to see the velvet side of life--of death's doings, nothing at all. A man like me--do you hear--a cougher, whose marrow is being consumed--incarnate misery on two tottering legs--a piteous figure, whom one can no more imagine outside the grave, than a sportsman without a terrier, or hound--such a person calls into the ears of the ostrich, that shuts its eyes: 'Death is pointing at you! Affliction is coming!' It is my duty to draw a curtain between my lord and sorrow; instead of that, my own person brings incarnate suffering before his eyes. The elector was as wise as if he were his own fool, when he turned me out of the house."

"He graciously gave you leave of absence."

"And Gugelkopf is already installed in the palace as my successor! My gracious master knows that he won't have to pay the pension long. He would willingly have supported me up yonder till I died; but my wish to go to Genoa suited him exactly. The more distance there is between his healthy highness and the miserable invalid, the better."

"Why didn't you wait till spring, before taking your departure?"

"Because Genoa is a hot-house, that the poor consumptive does not need in summer. It is pleasant to be there in winter. I learned that three years ago, when we visited the duke. Even in January the sun in Liguria warms your back, and makes it easier to breathe. I'm going by way of Marseilles. Will you give me the corner in your carriage as far as Avignon?"

"With pleasure! Your health, Pellicanus! A good wish on Christmas day is apt to be fulfilled."

The artist's deep voice sounded full and cordial, as he uttered the words. The young soldier heard them, and as Moor and the jester touched glasses, he raised his own goblet, drained it to the dregs, and asked modestly: "Will you listen to a few lines of mine, kind sir?"

"Say them, say them!" cried the artist, filling his glass again, while the lansquenet, approaching the table, fixed his eyes steadily on the beaker, and in an embarrassed manner, repeated:

"On Christmas-day, when Jesus Christ,
To save us sinners came,
A poor, sore-wounded soldier dared
To call upon his name.
'Oh! hear,' he said, 'my earnest prayer,
For the kind, generous man,
Who gave the wounded soldier aid,
And bore him through the land.
So, in Thy shining chariot,
I pray, dear Jesus mine,
Thou'lt bear him through a happy life
To Paradise divine."

"Capital, capital!" cried the artist, pledging the lansquenet and insisting that he should sit down between him and the jester.

Pellicanus now gazed thoughtfully into vacancy, for what the wounded man could do, he too might surely accomplish. It was not only ambition, and the habit of answering every good saying he heard with a better one, but kindly feeling, that urged him to honor the generous benefactor with a speech.

After a few minutes, which Moor spent in talking with the soldier, Pellicanus raised his glass, coughed again, and said, first calmly, then in an agitated voice, whose sharp tones grew more and more subdued:

"A rogue a fool must be, 't is true,
Rog'ry sans folly will not do;
Where folly joins with roguery,
There's little harm, it seems to me.
The pope, the king, the youthful squire,

Each one the fool's cap doth attire;
He who the bauble will not wear,
The worst of fools doth soon appear.
Thee may the motley still adorn,
When, an old man, the laurel crown
Thy head doth deck, while gifts less vain,
Thine age to bless will still remain.
When fair grandchildren thee delight,
Mayst then recall this Christmas night.
When added years bring whitening hair,
The draught of wisdom then wilt share,
But it will lack the flavor due,
Without a drop of folly too.
And if the drop is not at hand,
Remember poor old Pellican,
Who, half a rogue and half a fool,
Yet has a faithful heart and whole."

"Thanks, thanks!" cried the artist, shaking the jester's hand. "Such a Christmas ought to be lauded! Wisdom, art, and courage at one table! Haven't I fared like the man, who picked up stones by the way side, and to-they were changed to pure gold in his knapsack."

"The stone was crumbling," replied the jester; "but as for the gold, it will stand the test with me, if you seek it in the heart, and not in the pocket. Holy Blasius! Would that my grave might lack filling, as long as my little strong-box here; I'd willingly allow it."

"And so would I!" laughed the soldier:

"Then travelling will be easy for you," said the artist. "There was a time, when my pouch was no fuller than yours. I know by the experience of those days how a poor man feels, and never wish to forget it. I still owe you my after-dinner speech, but you must let me off, for I can't speak your language fluently. In brief, I wish you the recovery of your health, Pellican, and you a joyous life of happiness and honor, my worthy comrade. What is your name?"

"Hans Eitelfritz von der Lucke, from Colln on the Spree," replied the soldier. "And, no offence, Herr Moor, God will care for the monks, but there were three poor invalid fellows in your cart. One goblet more to the pretty sick boy in there."

CHAPTER XII.

After dinner the artist went with his old servant, who had attended to the horses and then enjoyed a delicious Christmas roast, to Count von Hochburg, to obtain an escort for the next day.

Pellicanus had undertaken to watch Ulrich, who was still sleeping

quietly.

The jester would gladly have gone to bed himself, for he felt cold and tired, but, though the room could not be heated, he remained faithfully at his post for hours. With benumbed hands and feet, he watched by the light of the night-lamp every breath the boy drew, often gazing at him as anxiously and sympathizingly, as if he were his own child.

When Ulrich at last awoke, he timidly asked when he was, and when the jester had soothed him, begged for a bit of bread, he was so hungry.

How famished he felt, the contents of the dish that were speedily placed before him, soon discovered Pellicanus wanted to feed him like a baby, but the boy took the spoon out of his hand, and the former smilingly watched the sturdy eater, without disturbing him, until he was perfectly satisfied; then he began to perplex the lad with questions, that seemed to him neither very intelligible, nor calculated to inspire confidence.

"Well, my little bird!" the jester began, joyously anticipating a confirmation of the clever inferences he had drawn, "I suppose it was a long flight to the churchyard, where we found you. On the grave is a better place than in it, and a bed at Emmendingen, with plenty of grits and veal, is preferable to being in the snow on the highway, with a grumbling stomach. Speak freely, my lad! Where does your nest of robbers hang?"

"Nest of robbers?" repeated Ulrich in amazement.

"Well, castle or the like, for aught I care," continued Pellicanus inquiringly. "Everybody is at home somewhere, except Mr. Nobody; but as you are somebody, Nobody cannot possibly be your father. Tell me about the old fellow!"

"My father is dead," replied the boy, and as the events of the preceding day rushed back upon his memory, he drew the coverlet over his face and wept.

"Poor fellow!" murmured the jester, hastily drawing his sleeve across his eyes, and leaving the lad in peace, till he showed his face again. Then he continued: "But I suppose you have a mother at home?"

Ulrich shook his head mournfully, and Pellicanus, to conceal his own emotion, looked at him with a comical grimace, and then said very kindly, though not without a feeling of satisfaction at his own penetration:

"So you are an orphan! Yes, yes! So long as the mother's wings cover it, the young bird doesn't fly so thoughtlessly out of the warm nest into the wide world. I suppose the Latin school grew too narrow for the young nobleman?"

Ulrich raised himself, exclaiming in an eager, defiant tone:

"I won't go back to the monastery; that I will not."

"So that's the way the hare jumps!" cried the fool laughing. "You've been a bad Latin scholar, and the timber in the forest is dearer to you, than the wood in the school-room benches. To be sure, they send out no green shoots. Dear Lord, how his face is burning!" So saying, Pellicanus laid his hand on the boy's forehead and when he felt that it was hot, deemed it better to stop his examination for the day, and only asked his patient his name.

"Ulrich," was the reply.

"And what else?"

"Let me alone!" pleaded the boy, drawing the coverlet over his head again.

The jester obeyed his wish, and opened the door leading into the tap-room, for some one had knocked. The artist's servant entered, to fetch his master's portmanteau. Old Count von Hochburg had invited Moor to be his guest, and the painter intended to spend the night at the castle. Pellicanus was to take care of the boy, and if necessary send for the surgeon again. An hour after, the sick jester lay shivering in his bed, coughing before sleeping and between naps. Ulrich too could obtain no slumber.

At first he wept softly, for he now clearly realized, for the first time, that he had lost his father and should never see Ruth, the doctor, nor the doctor's dumb wife Elizabeth again. Then he wondered how he had come to Einmendingen, what sort of a place it was, and who the queer little man could be, who had taken him for a young noble--the quaint little man with the cough, and a big head, whose eyes sparkled so through his tears. The jester's mistake made him laugh, and he remembered that Ruth had once advised him to command the "word," to transform him into a count.

Suppose he should say to-morrow, that his father had been a knight?

But the wicked thought only glided through his mind; even before he had reflected upon it, he felt ashamed of himself, for he was no liar.

Deny his father! That was very wrong, and when he stretched himself out to sleep, the image of the valiant smith stood with tangible distinctness before his soul. Gravely and sternly he floated upon clouds, and looked exactly like the pictures Ulrich had seen of God the Father, only he wore the smith's cap on his grey hair. Even in Paradise, the glorified spirit had not relinquished it.

Ulrich raised his hands as if praying, but hastily let them fall again, for there was a great stir outside of the inn. The tramp of steeds, the loud voices of men, the sound of drums and fifes were audible, then there was rattling, marching and shouting in the court-yard.

"A room for the clerk of the muster-roll and paymaster!" cried a voice.

"Gently, gently, children!" said the deep tones of the provost, who was the leader, counsellor and friend of the Lansquenets. "A devout servant must not bluster at the holy Christmas-tide; he's permitted to drink a glass, Heaven be praised. Your house is to be greatly honored, Landlord! The recruiting for our most gracious commander, Count von Oberstein, is--to be done here. Do you hear, man! Everything to be paid for in cash, and not a chicken will be lost; but the wine must be good! Do you understand? So this evening broach a cask of your best. Pardon me, children--the very best, I meant to say."

Ulrich now heard the door of the tap-room open, and fancied he could see the Lansquenets in gay costumes, each one different from the other, crowd into the apartment.

The jester coughed loudly, scolding and muttering to himself; but Ulrich listened with sparkling eyes to the sounds that came through the ill-fitting door, by which he could hear what was passing in the next room.

With the clerk of the muster-rolls, the paymaster and provost had appeared the drummers and fifers, who the day after to-morrow were to sound the license for recruiting, and besides these, twelve Lansquenets, who were evidently no novices.

Many an exclamation of surprise and pleasure was heard directly after their entrance into the tap-room, and amid the confusion of voices, the name of Hans Eitelfritz fell more than once upon Ulrich's ear.

The provost's voice sounded unusually cordial, as he greeted the brave fellow with the wounded hand--an honor of great value to the latter, for he had served five years in the same company with the provost, "Father Kanold," who read the very depths of his soldiers' hearts, and knew them all as if they were his own sons.

Ulrich could not understand much amid the medley of voices in the adjoining room, but when Hans Eitelfritz, from Colln on the Spree, asked to be the first one put down on the muster-roll, he distinctly heard the provost oppose the clerk's scruples, saying warmly "write, write; I'd rather have him with one hand, than ten peevish fellows with two. He has fun and life in him. Advance him some money too, he probably lacks many a piece of armor."

Meantime the wine-cask must have been opened, for the clink of glasses, and soon after loud singing was audible.

Just as the second song began, the boy fell asleep, but woke again two hours after, roused by the stillness that had suddenly succeeded the uproar.

Hans Eitelfritz had declared himself ready to give a new song in his best vein, and the provost commanded silence.

The singing now began; during its continuance Ulrich raised himself

higher and higher in bed, not a word escaped him, either of the song itself, or the chorus, which was repeated by the whole party, with exuberant gayety, amid the loud clinking of goblets. Never before had the lad heard such bold, joyous voices; even at the second verse his heart bounded and it seemed as if he must join in the tune, which he had quickly caught. The song ran as follows:

Who, who will venture to hold me back?
Drums beat, fifes are playing a merry tune!
Down hammer, down pen, what more need I, alack
I go to seek fortune, good fortune!

Oh father, mother, dear sister mine,
Blue-eyed maid at the bridge-house, my fair one.
Weep not, ye must not at parting repine,
I go to seek fortune, good fortune!

The cannon roar loud, the sword flashes bright,
Who'll dare meet the stroke of my falchion?
Close-ranked, horse and foot in battle unite,
In war, war, dwells fortune, good fortune!

The city is taken, the booty mine;
With red gold, I'll deck--I know whom;
Pair maids' cheeks burn red, red too glows the wine,
Fortune, Paradise of good fortune!

Deep, scarlet wounds, brave breasts adorn,
Impoverished, crippled age I shun
A death of honor, 'mid glory won,
This too is good fortune, good fortune!

A soldier-lad composed this ditty
Hans Eitelfritz he, fair Colln's son,
His kindred dwell in the goodly city,
But he himself in fortune, good fortune!

"He himself in fortune, good fortune," sang Ulrich also, and while, amid loud shouts of joy, the glasses again clinked against each other, he repeated the glad "fortune, good fortune." Suddenly, it flashed upon him like a revelation, "Fortune," that might be the word!

Such exultant joy, such lark-like trilling, such inspiring promises of happiness had never echoed in any word, as they now did from the "fortune," the young lansquenet so gaily and exultantly uttered.

"Fortune, Fortune!" he exclaimed aloud, and the jester, who was lying sleepless in his bed and could not help smiling at the lad's singing, raised himself, saying:

"Do you like the word? Whoever understands how to seize it when it flits by, will always float on top of everything, like fat on the soup. Rods are cut from birches, willows, and knotted hazel-sticks-ho! ho! you know

that, already;--but, for him who has good fortune, larded cakes, rolls and sausages grow. One bold turn of Fortune's wheel will bring him, who has stood at the bottom, up to the top with the speed of lightning. Brother Queer-fellow says: 'Up and down, like an avalanche.' But now turn over and go to sleep. To-morrow will also be a Christmas-day, which will perhaps bring you Fortune as a Christmas gift."

It seemed as if Ulrich had not called upon Fortune in vain, for as soon as he closed his eyes, a pleasant dream bore him with gentle hands to the forge on the market-place, and his mother stood beside the lighted Christmas-tree, pointing to the new sky-blue suit she had made him, and the apples, nuts, hobby-horse, and jumping jack, with a head as round as a ball, huge ears, and tiny flat legs. He felt far too old for such childish toys, and yet took a certain pleasure in them. Then the vision changed, and he again saw his mother; but this time she was walking among the angels in Paradise. A royal crown adorned her golden hair, and she told him she was permitted to wear it there, because she had been so reviled, and endured so much disgrace on earth.

When the artist returned from Count von Hochburg's the next morning, he was not a little surprised to see Ulrich standing before the recruiting-table bright and well.

The lad's cheeks were glowing with shame and anger, for the clerk of the muster-rolls and paymaster had laughed in his face, when he expressed his desire to become a Lansquenet.

The artist soon learned what was going on, and bade his protege accompany him out of doors. Kindly, and without either mockery or reproof, he represented to him that he was still far too young for military service, and after Ulrich had confirmed everything the painter had already heard from the jester, Moor asked who had given him instruction in drawing.

"My father, and afterwards Father Lukas in the monastery," replied the boy. "But don't question me as the little man did last night."

"No, no," said his protector. "But there are one or two more things I wish to know. Was your father an artist?"

"No," murmured the lad, blushing and hesitating. But when he met the stranger's clear gaze, he quickly regained his composure, and said:

"He only knew how to draw, because he understood how to forge beautiful, artistic things."

"And in what city did you live?"

"In no city. Outside in the woods."

"Oho!" said the artist, smiling significantly, for he knew that many knights practised a trade. "Answer only two questions more; then you shall be left in peace until you voluntarily open your heart to me. What is your name?"

"Ulrich."

"I know that; but your father's?"

"Adam."

"And what else?"

Ulrich gazed silently at the ground, for the smith had borne no other name.

"Well then," said Moor, "we will call you Ulrich for the present; that will suffice. But have you no relatives? Is no one waiting for you at home?"

"We have led such a solitary life--no one."

Moor looked fixedly into the boy's face, then nodded, and with a well-satisfied expression, laid his hand on Ulrich's curls, and said:

"Look at me. I am an artist, and if you have any love for my profession, I will teach you."

"Oh!" cried the boy, clasping his hands in glad surprise.

"Well then," Moor continued, "you can't learn much on the way, but we can work hard in Madrid. We are going now to King Philip of Spain."

"Spain, Portugal!" murmured Ulrich with sparkling eyes; all he had heard in the doctor's house about these countries returned to his mind.

"Fortune, good fortune!" cried an exultant voice in his heart. This was the "word," it must be, it was already exerting its spell, and the spell was to prove its inherent power in the near future.

That very day the party were to go to Count von Rappoltstein in the village of Rappolts, and this time Ulrich was not to plod along on foot, or he in a close baggage-wagon; no, he was to be allowed to ride a spirited horse. The escort would not consist of hired servants, but of picked men, and the count was going to join the train in person at the hill crowned by the castle, for Moor had promised to paint a portrait of the nobleman's daughter, who had married Count von Rappoltstein. It was to be a costly Christmas gift, which the old gentleman intended to make himself and his faithful wife.

The wagon was also made ready for the journey; but no one rode inside; the jester, closely muffled in wraps, had taken his seat beside the driver, and the monks were obliged to go on by way of Freiburg, and therefore could use the vehicle no longer.

They scolded and complained about it, as if they had been greatly wronged, and when Sutor refused to shake hands with the artist,

Stubenrauch angrily turned his back upon the kind-hearted man.

The offended pair sullenly retired, but the Christmas sun shone none the less brightly from the clear sky, the party of travellers had a gay, spick and span, holiday aspect, and the world into which they now fared stoutly forth, was so wide and beautiful, that Ulrich forgot his grief, and joyously waved his new cap in answer to the Lansquenet's farewell gesture.

It was a merry ride, for on the way they met numerous travellers, who were going through the hamlet of Rappolts to the "three castles on the mountain" and saluted the old nobleman with lively songs. The Counts von Rappoltstein were the "piper-kings," the patrons of the brotherhood of musicians and singers on the Upper Rhine. Usually these joyous birds met at the castle of their "king" on the 8th of September, to pay him their little tax and be generously entertained in return; but this year, on account of the plague in the autumn, the festival had been deferred until the third day after Christmas, but Ulrich believed 'Fortune' had arranged it so for him.

There was plenty of singing, and the violins and rebecs, flutes, and reed-pipes were never silent. One serenade followed another, and even at the table a new song rang out at each new course.

The fiery wine, game and sweet cakes at the castle board undoubtedly pleased the palate of the artisan's son, but he enjoyed feasting his ears still more. He felt as if he were in Heaven, and thought less and less of the grief he had endured.

Day by day Fortune shook her horn of plenty, and flung new gifts down upon him.

He had told the stable-keepers of his power over refractory horses, and after proving what he could do, was permitted to tame wild stallions and ride them about the castle-yard, before the eyes of the old and young count and the beautiful young lady. This brought him praise and gifts of new clothes. Many a delicate hand stroked his curls, and it always seemed to him as if his mighty spell could bestow nothing better.

One day Moor took him aside, and told him that he had commenced a portrait of young Count Rappolstein too. The lad was obliged to be still, having broken his foot in a fall from his horse, and as Ulrich was of the same size and age, the artist wished him to put on the young count's clothes and serve as a model.

The smith's son now received the best clothes belonging to his aristocratic companion in age. The suit was entirely black, but each garment of a different material, the stockings silk, the breeches satin, the doublet soft Flanders velvet. Golden-yellow puffs and slashes stood forth in beautiful relief against the darker stuff. Even the knots of ribbon on the breeches and shoes were as yellow as a blackbird's beak. Delicate lace trimmed the neck and fell on the hands, and a clasp of real gems confined the black and yellow plumes in the velvet hat.

All this finery was wonderfully becoming to the smith's son, and he must have been blind, if he had not noticed how old and young nudged each other at sight of him. The spirit of vanity in his soul laughed in delight, and the lad soon knew the way to the large Venetian mirror, which was carefully kept in the hall of state. This wonderful glass showed Ulrich for the first time his whole figure and the image which looked back at him from the crystal, flattered and pleased him.

But, more than aught else, he enjoyed watching the artist's hand and eye during the sittings. Poor Father Lukas in the monastery must hide his head before this master. He seemed to actually grow while engaged in his work, his shoulders, which he usually liked to carry stooping forward, straightened, the broad, manly breast arched higher, and the kindly eyes grew stern, nay sometimes wore a terrible expression.

Although little was said during the sittings, they were always too short for the boy. He did not stir, for it always seemed to him as if any movement would destroy the sacred act he witnessed, and when, in the pauses, he looked at the canvas and saw how swiftly and steadily the work progressed, he felt as if before his own eyes, he was being born again to a nobler existence. In the wassail-hall hung the portrait of a young Prince of Navarre, whose life had been saved in the chase by a Rappoltstein. Ulrich, attired in the count's clothes, looked exactly like him. The jester had been the first to perceive this strange circumstance. Every one, even Moor, agreed with him, and so it happened that Pellicanus henceforth called his young friend the Navarrete. The name pleased the boy. Everything here pleased him, and he was full of happiness; only often at night he could not help grieving because, while his father was dead, he enjoyed such an overflowing abundance of good things, and because he had lost his mother, Ruth, and all who had loved him.

CHAPTER XIII.

Ulrich was obliged to share the jester's sleeping-room, and as Pellicanus shrank from getting out of bed, while suffering from night-sweats, and often needed something, he roused Ulrich from his sleep, and the latter was always ready to assist him. This happened more frequently as they continued their journey, and the poor little man's illness increased.

The count had furnished Ulrich with a spirited young horse, that shortened the road for him by its tricks and capers. But the jester, who became more and more attached to the boy, also did his utmost to keep the feeling of happiness alive in his heart. On warm days he nestled in the rack before the tilt with the driver, and when Ulrich rode beside him, opened his eyes to everything that passed before him.

The jester had a great deal to tell about the country and people, and he embellished the smallest trifle with tales invented by himself, or

devised by others.

While passing a grove of birches, he asked the lad if he knew why the trunks of these trees were white, and then explained the cause, as follows:

"When Orpheus played so exquisitely on his lute, all the trees rushed forward to dance. The birches wanted to come too, but being vain, stopped to put on white dresses, to outdo the others. When they finally appeared on the dancing-ground, the singer had already gone--and now, summer and winter, year in and year out, they keep their white dresses on, to be prepared, when Orpheus returns and the lute sounds again."

A cross-bill was perched on a bough in a pine-wood, and the jester said that this bird was a very peculiar species. It had originally been grey, and its bill was as straight as a sparrow's, but when the Saviour hung upon the cross, it pitied him, and with its little bill strove to draw the nails from the wounded hands. In memory of this friendly act, the Lord had marked its beak with the cross, and painted a dark-red spot on its breast, where the bird had been sprinkled with His Son's blood. Other rewards were bestowed upon it, for no other bird could hatch a brood of young ones in winter, and it also had the power of lessening the fever of those, who cherished it.

A flock of wild geese flew over the road and the hills, and Pellicanus cried: "Look there! They always fly in two straight lines, and form a letter of the alphabet. This time it is an A. Can you see it? When the Lord was writing the laws on the tablets, a flock of wild geese flew across Mt. Sinai, and in doing so, one effaced a letter with its wing. Since that time, they always fly in the shape of a letter, and their whole race, that is, all geese, are compelled to let those people who wish to write, pluck the feathers from their wings."

Pellicanus was fond of talking to the boy in their bedroom. He always called him Navarrete, and the artist, when in a cheerful mood, followed his example.

Ulrich felt great reverence for Moor; the jester, on the contrary, was only a good comrade, in whom he speedily reposed entire confidence.

Many an allusion and jesting word showed that Pellicanus still believed him to be the son of a knight, and this at last became unendurable to the lad.

One evening, when they were both in bed, he summoned up his courage and told him everything he knew about his past life.

The jester listened attentively, without interrupting him, until Ulrich finished his story with the words "And while I was gone, the bailiffs and dogs tracked them, but my father resisted, and they killed him and the doctor."

"Yes, yes," murmured the jester. "It's a pity about Costa. Many a

Christian might feel honored at resembling some Jews. It is only a misfortune to be born a Hebrew, and be deprived of eating ham. The Jews are compelled to wear an offensive badge, but many a Christian child is born with one. For instance, in Sparta they would have hurled me into the gulf, on account of my big head, and deformed shoulder. Nowadays, people are less merciful, and let men like us drag the cripple's mark through life. God sees the heart; but men cannot forget their ancestor, the clod of earth--the outside is always more to them than the inside. If my head had only been smaller, and some angel had smoothed my shoulder, I might perhaps now be a cardinal, wear purple, and instead of riding under a grey tilt, drive in a golden coach, with well-fed black steeds. Your body was measured with a straight yard stick, but there's trouble in other places. So your father's name was Adam, and he really bore no other?"

"No, certainly not."

"That's too little by half. From this day we'll call you in earnest Navarrete: Ulrich Navarrete. That will be something complete. The name is only a dress, but if half of it is taken from your body, you are left half-bare and exposed to mockery. The garment must be becoming too, so we adorn it as we choose. My father was called Kurschner, but at the Latin school Olearius and Faber and Luscinus sat beside me, so I raised myself to the rank of a Roman citizen, and turned Kurschner into Pellicanus. . . ."

The jester coughed violently, and continued One thing more. To expect gratitude is folly, nine times out of ten none is reaped, and he who is wise thinks only of himself, and usually omits to seek thanks; but every one ought to be grateful, for it is burdensome to have enemies, and there is no one we learn to hate more easily, than the benefactor we repay with ingratitude. You ought and must tell the artist your history, for he has deserved your confidence.

The jester's worldly-wise sayings, in which selfishness was always praised as the highest virtue, often seemed very puzzling to the boy, yet many of them were impressed on his young soul. He followed the sick man's advice the very next morning, and he had no cause to regret it, for Moor treated him even more kindly than before.

Pellicanus intended to part from the travellers at Avignon, to go to Marseilles, and from there by ship to Savona, but before he reached the old city of the popes, he grew so feeble, that Moor scarcely hoped to bring him alive to the goal of his journey.

The little man's body seemed to continually grow smaller, and his head larger, while his hollow, livid cheeks looked as if a rose-leaf adorned the centre of each.

He often told his travelling-companions about his former life.

He had originally been destined for the ecclesiastical profession, but though he surpassed all the other pupils in the school, he was deprived

of the hope of ever becoming a priest, for the Church wants no cripples. He was the child of poor people, and had been obliged to fight his way through his career as a student, with great difficulty.

"How shabby the broad top of my cap often was!" he said. "I was so much ashamed of it. I am so small. Dear me, anybody could see my head, and could not help noticing all the worn places in the velvet, if he cast his eyes down. How often have I sat beside the kitchen of a cook-shop, and seasoned dry bread with the smell of roast meat. Often too my poodledog went out and stole a sausage for me from the butcher."

At other times the little fellow had fared better; then, sitting in the taverns, he had given free-play to his wit, and imposed no constraint on his sharp tongue.

Once he had been invited by a former boon-companion, to accompany him to his ancestral castle, to cheer his sick father; and so it happened that he became a buffoon, wandered from one great lord to another, and finally entered the elector's service.

He liked to pretend that he despised the world and hated men, but this assertion could not be taken literally, and was to be regarded in a general, rather than a special sense, for every beautiful thing in the world kindled eager enthusiasm in his heart, and he remained kindly disposed towards individuals to the end.

When Moor once charged him with this, he said, smiling:

"What would you have? Whoever condemns, feels himself superior to the person upon whom he sits in judgment, and how many fools, like me, fancy themselves great, when they stand on tiptoe, and find fault even with the works of God! 'The world is evil,' says the philosopher, and whoever listens to him, probably thinks carelessly: 'Hear, hear! He would have made it better than our Father in heaven.' Let me have my pleasure. I'm only a little man, but I deal in great things. To criticise a single insignificant human creature, seems to me scarcely worth while, but when we pronounce judgment on all humanity and the boundless universe, we can open our mouths-wonderfully wide!"

Once his heart had been filled with love for a beautiful girl, but she had scornfully rejected his suit and married another. When she was widowed, and he found her in dire poverty, he helped her with a large share of his savings, and performed this kind service again, when the second worthless fellow she married had squandered her last penny.

His life was rich in similar incidents.

In his actions, the queer little man obeyed the dictates of his heart; in his speech, his head ruled his tongue, and this seemed to him the only sensible course. To practise unselfish generosity he regarded as a subtle, exquisite pleasure, which he ventured to allow himself, because he desired nothing more; others, to whom he did not grudge a prosperous career, he must warn against such folly.

There was a keen, bitter expression on his large, thin face, and whoever saw him for the first time might easily have supposed him to be a wicked, spiteful man. He knew this, and delighted in frightening the men and maid-servants at the taverns by hideous grimaces--he boasted of being able to make ninety-five different faces--until the artist's old valet at last dreaded him like the "Evil One."

He was particularly gay in Avignon, for he felt better than he had done for a long time, and ordered a seat to be engaged for him in a vehicle going to Marseilles.

The evening before their separation, he described with sparkling vivacity, the charms of the Ligurian coast, and spoke of the future as if he were sure of entire recovery and a long life.

In the night Ulrich heard him groaning louder than usual, and starting up, raised him, as he was in the habit of doing when the poor little man was tortured by difficulty of breathing. But this time Pellicanus did not swear and scold, but remained perfectly still, and when his heavy head fell like a pumpkin on the boy's breast, he was greatly terrified and ran to call the artist.

Moor was soon standing at the head of the sick-bed, holding a light, so that its rays could fall upon the face of the gasping man. The latter opened his eyes and made three grimaces in quick succession--very comical ones, yet tinged with sadness.

Pellicanus probably noticed the artist's troubled glance, for he tried to nod to him, but his head was too heavy and his strength too slight, so he only succeeded in moving it first to the right and then to the left, but his eyes expressed everything he desired to say. In this way several minutes elapsed, then Pellicanus smiled, and with a sorrowful gaze, though a mischievous expression hovered around his mouth, scanned:

"'Mox erit' quiet and mute, 'gui modo' jester 'erat'." Then he said as softly as if every tone came, not from his chest, but merely from his lips

"Is it agreed, Navarrete, Ulrich Navarrete? I've made the Latin easy for you, eh? Your hand, boy. Yours, too, dear, dear master....Moor, Ethiopian--Blackskin...."

The words died away in a low, rattling sound, and the dying man's eyes became glazed, but it was several hours before he drew his last breath.

A priest gave him Extreme Unction, but consciousness did not return.

After the holy man had left him, his lips moved incessantly, but no one could understand what he said. Towards morning, the sun of Provence was shining warmly and brightly into the room and on his bed, when he suddenly threw his arm above his head, and half speaking, half singing to Hans Eitelfritz's melody, let fall from his lips the words: "In fortune,

good fortune." A few minutes after he was dead.

Moor closed his eyes. Ulrich knelt weeping beside the bed, and kissed his poor friend's cold hand.

When he rose, the artist was gazing with silent reverence at the jester's features; Ulrich followed his eyes, and imagined he was standing in the presence of a miracle, for the harsh, bitter, troubled face had obtained a new expression, and was now the countenance of a peaceful, kindly man, who had fallen asleep with pleasant memories in his heart.

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No one we learn to hate more easily, than the benefactor
Once laughed at a misfortune, its sting loses its point
To expect gratitude is folly
Whoever condemns, feels himself superior

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