

The German Classics of The Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries, Vol. IX

Various

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Friedrich Hebbel and Otto Ludwig

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VOLUME IX

FRIEDRICH HEBBEL

OTTO LUDWIG

THE GERMAN CLASSICS

Masterpieces of German Literature

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TRANSLATED INTO ENGLISH

Patrons' Edition IN TWENTY VOLUMES

ILLUSTRATED

1914

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EDITOR'S NOTE

The painters represented here alongside with the two writers to whom this volume is devoted, are Cornelius, Schnorr von Carolsfeld, Rethel, and Kaulbach. These men were not only contemporary with Hebbel and Ludwig, but may indeed be called their artistic counterparts. Though widely differentiated by individual temper and talent, these painters and poets belong to the same phase of mid-century German literature and art: the striving of Romanticism beyond itself, the struggle for a new style uniting depth of feeling and terseness of delineation, the longing for a new view of life harmonizing the worship of the past with the demands of modern society and the problems of the day. Hence the heroic

note in the work of these painters and poets, hence their predilection for great historical or mythological or religious subjects, hence their leaning toward tragic conflicts in every day situations, hence their all too conscious striving for pointed effects; hence, also, the inspiring influence emanating from their best productions.

KUNO FRANCKE.

THE LIFE OF FRIEDRICH HEBBEL

By WILLIAM GUILD HOWARD, A.M.,

Assistant Professor of German, Harvard University

The greatest German dramatists of the middle of the nineteenth century were Franz Grillparzer, Friedrich Hebbel, and Otto Ludwig. In a caustic epigram written in 1855, Grillparzer set forth that Dame Poetry, for some years a widow and now ailing, needed a husband, but could find none; and we remember that the heroine of *Libussa* rejects the wise Lapak, the strong Biwoy, and the rich Domaslaw because she desires in one man, united, the qualities which separately dominate the three. With more charity, Grillparzer might have more fully recognized the poet in Hebbel or Ludwig; but we may be permitted to think of these three dramatists as not unlike the three suitors for the hand of Libussa: Grillparzer was rich, Ludwig was wise, and Hebbel was strong. Each of them was somewhat deficient in the qualities of the other two; each, however, was a personality, and Hebbel one of the most powerful that ever lived.

Hebbel's career is a long battle against all but insuperable obstacles. Born at Wesselburen in the present province of Schleswig-Holstein on March 18, 1813, he was the son of a poor stone mason--so poor that, as Hebbel said, poverty had taken the place of his soul. Though Klaus Hebbel was a well-meaning man, he was a slave to the inexorable *non possumus* of penury. In winter, especially, lack of work made even the provision of daily bread often difficult and sometimes impossible for him. But Friedrich Hebbel's childhood, full of hardship as it was, was not cheerless. The father did what he could; and the mother, at whatever sacrifice to herself, could nearly always do something for the children. The greatest hardship was caused by the father's hostility to these maternal concessions to childish desires; for to him, whose life was labor, unproductive use of time was a crime. He thought it a matter of course that his son should become a laboring man like himself, and it is little less than a miracle that this did not happen. The mother, to be sure, fostered the boy's more ambitious hopes; the death of the father in Hebbel's fourteenth year was perhaps a blessing in disguise; undoubtedly the happiest chance in Hebbel's boyhood, so far as external events are concerned, was the fact that he won the favor of a real teacher in his schoolmaster Dethlefsen, who not only gave his education the proper start, but also recommended him, as his best scholar, to the local magistrate, J.J. Mohr.

For nearly eight years (1827 to 1835) Hebbel was in Mohr's employ, first

as an errand boy, and ultimately as a clerk, to whom more and more official business was intrusted. He lived in the household of his superior, continued in the magistrate's library the assiduous reading which he had begun with Dethlefsen's books, and acquired, along with the habits of official accuracy, something of the ways of a higher social station than that to which he had been born. His contact with the world of affairs and with litigation also considerably broadened his outlook, though it was often the seamy side of life that he saw, and his own early necessities had sharpened his sense of the essential tragedy of existence. Among the young people of the town Hebbel was as active and inventive as any; he wrote verses, took part in amateur theatricals, and was a leader in many undertakings that had not amusement as their sole object.

From the beginning Hebbel shows extraordinary sensitiveness to esthetic appeal and a disposition to dreamy imaginativeness. The Bible, the Protestant hymnal, pre-classical prose and poetry of the eighteenth century, as well as contemporary romantic fiction, including Jean Paul, Hoffmann, and Heine, touched his fancy and stirred him to emulation.

[Illustration: FRIEDRICH HEBBEL]

As a boy, he is said to have composed a tragedy *Evolia, the Captain of Robbers*, which his mother confiscated and burned. His early poems are echoes of Klopstock, Matthisson, Hoelty, Buerger, and other predecessors; but especially of Schiller, whose moral seriousness and sonorous language alike inspired the serious and rhetorically gifted youth. The influence of Schiller, however, marks no epoch in the poetic development of Hebbel; it dominates the period of adolescence. The sense of poetry was aroused in him as a boy, he said, by Paul Gerhardt's hymn "The woods are now at rest" (*Nun ruhen alle Walder*); the discovery of what poetry is he made in 1830, when he read Uhland's *Minstrel's Curse* and perceived that the sole principle of art is not to write, like Schiller, eloquently about ideas, but "to make in a particular phenomenon the universal intuitively perceptible."

Having published poems and stories from 1829 on in a local newspaper, Hebbel, in 1831, seeking a wider audience at the same time that he longed for a larger sphere of activity, submitted specimens of his work to Amalie Schoppe in Hamburg, the editress of a fashion paper; and in this and the following years she printed a considerable number of his productions. Moreover, she took a genuine personal interest in his ambitions; and after several plans had proved abortive, she succeeded in collecting for him a small sum of money and the promise of other material aid in a plan that should give a firm foundation for the structure of his hopes: he should come to Hamburg and prepare for the study of law. Accordingly, on the fourteenth of February, 1835, he left his modest but secure position in Wesselburen for the alluring great world where he felt that he belonged, but where he was destined to toil and to suffer, in a struggle for existence which only a hardy North-German peasant could have endured.

Hebbel came to Hamburg as a young man of twenty-two, far ahead of his years in knowledge, judgment, and capacity, but still unacquainted with rudimentary things belonging to higher education, such as Latin grammar. He could not find the right tone in dealing with his benefactors, and he suffered unspeakable humiliation in the conflict of a proud and independent spirit with the subjection which inconsiderate well-wishers imposed upon him. He learned more by private reading and by association

with students in a Scientific Society than he learned in school; and to one woman, Elise Lensing, who became his friend and angel of mercy, he owed more than to the whole aggregation of those who gave him money and meals. Somewhat more than eight years his senior, in respect to experience of the world and training in the finer graces of life his superior, she aided, encouraged, and loved him, well aware that his feeling for her was, at the most, admiration and gratitude, and that the intimate union and companionship which soon became for him an indispensable solace could never lead to marriage.

In Hamburg Hebbel began the diary which, continued throughout his life, is the most valuable source of information about him that we have, and which, being the repository of his meditations as well as the record of his experiences, is one of the most remarkable documents of the kind ever composed. He wrote and published a number of poems, and began several short stories. More significant, however, was the development of his critical faculty, which found in the Scientific Society a free field for exercise. Here, on the twenty-eighth of July, 1835, Hebbel read a paper on Theodor Koerner and Heinrich von Kleist which, in spite of a rather juvenile tone, shows a maturity of insight quite unparalleled in the critical literature of that day. It is greatly to Hebbel's credit, and was to his profit, as the sequel showed, that against the opinion of his generation he could demonstrate the poetic excellence of Kleist and could distinguish in Koerner between the heroic patriot and the mediocre poet; for it was a dramatic masterpiece that Hebbel analyzed in Kleist's *Prince of Hamburg*, and in this analysis he formulated views that remained the canons of all his subsequent activity as a playwright. The study of Kleist gave him for the drama the same sort of illumination that Uhland had given him for lyric poetry.

Though Hebbel was unable to acquire in Hamburg a certificate of preparedness for the university, he soon felt ready for university studies, and after some difficulty persuaded his benefactors to give him the balance of the fund that they had collected, and consent to his going to Heidelberg. In March, 1836, he departed thither, with less than eighty thalers in his pocket. He could be admitted only as a special student; nevertheless, he was hospitably received by members of the faculty of law, and attended their lectures. But the romantic scenery of Heidelberg, and, the reading of Goethe and Shakespeare, whom he now for the first time studied thoroughly, were more fruitful and suggestive to him than jurisprudence, however much he was interested in "cases" as examples of human experience. Such a "case" he treated in *Anna*, the first short story with which he was satisfied, and which indeed is worthy of his model in this *genre*, Kleist. Other narratives, and a few poems, testify to a closer approach to nature and a less morbid attitude toward life than had appeared in the earlier works. Hebbel was now finishing his apprenticeship, wisely restraining the impulse to dramatize until in the less exacting forms he had mastered the means of expression. But everything pointed toward literature as a calling, and before the year was out Hebbel resolved to migrate to Munich, still, to be sure, a student, but from the moment of his arrival living there under the name and title of *Literat*.

The journey to Munich Hebbel made afoot, leaving Heidelberg on September 12, 1836. He passed through Strassburg, and thought of Goethe as he climbed the tower of the cathedral; he visited the Suabian poets at Stuttgart and Tuebingen, and was deeply disappointed with the kindly but undemonstrative Uhland; and he reached Munich on September the twenty-ninth. Here he remained until March, 1839.

Hebbel's two and a half years in Munich, years of solitude, unheard-of privation, illness, and battling against despair, came near to wearing out the physical man, and were, through long-continued insufficient nourishment, the cause of the disease to which he finally succumbed; but they were also the finishing school of the personality that henceforth unflinchingly faced the world and demanded to be heard. Hebbel provided for his material needs partly by journalistic work, to which he was ill-adapted, but chiefly through the limitless bounty of Elise Lensing--for months at a time the only being with whom, and only by correspondence, he had human intercourse. He heard the lectures of Schelling and Goerres at the university; but, as at Heidelberg, he, gained most by prodigious reading in literature, history; and philosophy. His savage melancholy found relief in grimly humorous narratives and gloomy poems. At the time of his greatest wretchedness he conceived the plots of comedies, "ridiculing something by the representation of nothing." But we note that his reading now begins to suggest to him innumerable subjects for tragedies, such as Napoleon, Alexander the Great, Julian the Apostate, the Maid of Orleans, Judith and Holofernes, Golo and Genoveva,--all of them characters the key to whose destiny lay in their personalities, and in whom Hebbel saw the destiny of mankind typified. Still more directly, however, the tragedy of human life was brought home to him--not merely through his personal struggle for existence, but through the death of Emil Rousseau, a dear friend who had followed him from Heidelberg to Munich, the death of his mother, for whose necessities he had of late been able to do but little, and misfortune in the family of Anton Schwarz, a cabinet maker, with whose daughter, Beppy, Hebbel had been on too intimate terms. Hebbel's dramas *Judith*, *Genoveva*, and *Maria Magdalena* all germinated during these terrible years of the sojourn in Munich.

But the actual output of these years was not large. Attempts to publish a volume of poems and a volume of short stories had failed. Nevertheless, Hebbel was no longer an unknown quantity in the world of letters when, in the early spring of 1839, he decided to return to Hamburg. Hope of aid from Campe, Heine's publisher, and from Gutzkow, the editor of a paper published by Campe, encouraged this decision. But Hebbel was really going home, going back to Elise, after having accomplished the purpose of his pilgrimage, even though for lack of money he could not take with him a doctor's degree. He came as a man who could do things for which the world gives a man a living. The return journey, lasting from the eleventh to the thirty-first of March, 1839, amid alternate freezing and thawing, was a tramp, than which only the retreat from Moscow could have been more frightful; but Hebbel accomplished it, more concerned for the little dog that accompanied him than for his own sufferings. And it appeared that he had wisely chosen to return; for he found opportunity for critical work in Gutzkow's *Telegraph*, and Campe published the works which in rapid succession he now completed: *Judith* (1840), *Genoveva* (1841), *The Diamond* (1841; printed in 1847), and *Poems* (1842).

These publications won fame for Hebbel and yielded some immediate pecuniary gain. But although he had reached the goal of his ambition in having become a poet, and a dramatist whose first play had appeared on the stage, he still lacked a settled occupation and a sure income. Having been born a Danish subject, he conceived the idea of a direct appeal to Christian VIII. of Denmark for such an appointment as the king might be persuaded to give him. In spite of the unacademic course of his studies and his lack of strictly professional training, he thought of a

professorship of esthetics at Kiel. Even in those days, when professorships could be had on easier terms than now, this was a wild dream. But Hebbel did not appeal to his sovereign in vain. He spent the winter of 1842-43 in Copenhagen, where the Danish-German dramatist Oehlenschlaeger smoothed his path to royal favor; and after two audiences with Christian VIII. he was granted a pension of six hundred thalers a year for two years, in order that by traveling he might learn more of the world and cultivate his poetic talents. His first expression of gratitude for this privilege was the tragedy *„Maria Magdalena“*, begun at Hamburg in May, finished at Paris in December, 1843, and dedicated to the king.

Hebbel's departure for Paris, in September, 1843, did not mean for him what Heine's settlement there twelve years before had meant for Heine--the beginning of a new life. Hebbel's knowledge of French was very imperfect, and he was as much isolated in Paris as he had been in Munich; he did not seek stimulus from without so much as freedom to develop the ideas that were teeming in his mind. When he left Hamburg, however, he was destined never to return thither except as a visitor, and started on the long, roundabout way to an unforeseen new home in Vienna. He had been but little over a month in Paris when he learned of the death of the little son that Elise had borne him three years before. He was deeply grieved both for himself and for the despairing mother, to whom he offered all the comfort he could give, not excepting marriage, as soon as he should ever be able to provide for her. In May, 1844, Elise bore him another son who, dying in 1847, was never seen by his father. Hebbel did not forget what he owed to the mother of his children, but he felt the debt more and more as an obligation, in the fulfilment of which there was no prospect of satisfaction to either. Despite the fact that she had a hundred times declared to him that he was free, all her dreaming and planning tended solely to keep him bound. He, who had been her pupil, had now far outgrown her capacity to understand his endeavors and achievements; and he felt that he could sacrifice much for her, but not himself, his personality, and his mission. And so the unwholesome relation wore on, with aggravating burdensomeness, to the inevitable crisis.

In the fall of 1844 Hebbel journeyed from Paris to Rome. He had met few notables in Paris--Heine, Felix Bamberg, and Arnold Ruge almost complete the tale--but in Italy he, like Goethe, made the acquaintance of a group of German artists, and followed their leadership in the study of ancient art. He enjoyed this study in natural, unaffected appreciation of the beautiful; and a certain artistic polish distinguishes the poems which nature and art in Italy inspired him to write. The Italian journey, however, was far from being a renaissance to him as it had been to Goethe. Hebbel remained a Northern artist. Vesuvius impressed him, but Pompeii proved a disappointment; it was laid out, he said, like any other city. He departed from Rome in October, 1845, richer in the friendship of distinguished men--including Hermann Hettner--and in accumulated experience, but not as one to whom the *„Ponte Molle“* is a bridge of sighs.

Hebbel's design was to return to Hamburg by way of Vienna. In Vienna, which he reached on the fourth of November, 1845, he was cordially received in literary circles. Men of influence promised their good offices in getting his plays performed, but failed to take effective measures, and he was about to continue his journey when the romantic enthusiasm of two young barons Zerboni gave him an *„entree“* into aristocratic society, and he tarried. Ere long he had decided to stay

for life. In Christine Enghaus, the leading lady at the Hofburgtheater, he found the feminine counterpart to his masculine nature; and on the twenty-sixth of May, 1846, they were married.

From every point of view this marriage proved so perfect that we may well question whether anything whatever ought to have been allowed to stand in the way of it. To Elise, of course, it seemed an outrage--the more so that she was entirely mistaken as to the character of Christine; and with furious bitterness she reproached Hebbel for violating her most sacred rights in his infatuation for an actress. The storm broke, but it cleared the air for both; and upon the death of her second son in 1847, Elise came at Christine's invitation to Vienna and spent a year in the Hebbel household.

Hebbel himself rightly dated an epoch in his life from his marriage and the renewed productivity which followed upon it. He enjoyed now for the first time not only freedom from economic worries but also complete serenity of mind. Outwardly, indeed, he still had to keep up his offensive and defensive warfare. Beyond the circle of his immediate adherents, only the more enlightened of his contemporaries, such as Ruge, Hettner, and Theodor Vischer, perceived what he was aiming at, and his own public discussions were so abstruse and repellent that it is no wonder they were misunderstood. Grillparzer declared that he was groping in esthetic fog. Julian Schmidt recognized his power and the poetic charm of many of his passages, but thought him in danger of crossing the line which separates sense from nonsense, genius from insanity. Hebbel was restive under criticism, and the method of his polemics tended rather to exasperate than to conciliate his adversaries. Meanwhile Maria Magdalena and Judith were performed at the Hofburgtheater, with Christine as the heroine. But in 1850 Heinrich Laube became director of this theatre, and he not only rejected one play of Hebbel's after another, but also withdrew from Christine the leading parts which she had heretofore taken in the regular repertory.

The new epoch in Hebbel's dramatic activity really began in 1848. The fruits of his sojourn in Italy, A Tragedy in Sicily (1846), Julia (1847), and New Poems (published in 1847) were mediocre stragglers in the train of his first successes. But Herodes and Mariamne, begun in 1847 and completed in November, 1848, is the first of a new series of masterpieces. Mariamne, Hebbel said, was not simply written for Christine, she was Christine. The Ruby, which followed in the spring of 1849, is a graceful dramatization of a fairy-tale written ten years before in Munich; Michel Angelo (1850), a satire on his critics, is a slight but clever refutation of ignorant presumption. Agnes Bernauer (1851) is a worthy successor of Herodes and Mariamne; Gyges and his Ring (1854) is the most poetic and perhaps the most characteristic of his dramas. The trilogy on the Nibelungen (1855-1860) was Hebbel's last great work, ranking with Grillparzer's Golden Fleece and Schiller's Wallenstein; and if he had lived to complete Demetrius, we should have had another remarkable drama, on a subject which Schiller too was destined to leave unfinished.

In the fifties, Hebbel accompanied Christine on professional trips to North Germany, and had ample occasion to observe the spread of his influence. In 1852 he was feted at Munich in connection with the production there of Agnes Bernauer. In 1858 he attended a performance of Genoveva in Weimar, and was decorated with an order by the Grand Duke. In 1861 the Nibelungen trilogy was performed for the first time in Weimar, with Christine as Brunhild and Kriemhild; and in the following

year Hebbel, who had even thought of going to live at Weimar, was the guest of the Grand Duke at his castle in Wilhelmsthal. Though in Vienna honors came later, Hebbel felt himself to be during these years at the summit of his existence. In 1855 he bought a country home at Orth near Gmunden in the Salzkammergut, and to the idyllic atmosphere of that retreat he owed the inspiration for the epic poem *Mother and Child* (1857), his gentlest treatment of a tragic theme. In 1857 he issued a definitive edition of his *Poems*, dedicated to Uhland, "the first poet of the present time." In 1854 *Genoveva*, in modified form, was successfully presented as *Magellone* at the *Burgtheater*, with Christine as the heroine. But Hebbel's first Viennese triumph did not come until February 19, 1863, when Christine played Brunhild in the first and second parts of the *Nibelungen*. On his deathbed he received the news that the Berlin Schiller Prize had been awarded to him for the *Nibelungen*. Hebbel died on the thirteenth of December, 1863. Christine out-lived him by nearly half a century, until the twenty-ninth of June, 1910.

Rightly or wrongly, Hebbel regarded himself as the creator of a new form of drama, setting in at a step beyond Shakespeare and Schiller, and attacking problems in the manner suggested, but not fully developed, by Goethe. Shakespeare and Schiller, he said, locate the conflict in the breast of the hero: shall he, or shall he not, endeavor to attain the object of his desire, against forces which oppose him from without, and which have their allies in his own conscience, in his own sense of right and wrong? He desires the wrong, or neglects the right, and for his tragic fault atones with death. We pity the unfortunate individual, console ourselves, however, with the inviolability of the moral law, and profit by his example: only those are free whose will chooses to be moral. But Goethe, in the dramatically conceived *Elective Affinities*, focuses attention not upon the doings of individuals, but upon the sanctions of the law which a power superior to their wills forces them to break. And so Hebbel, passing over the individual, as one of myriads, directs inquiry into the causes that make him what he is, that make him do what he does, that prevent him from doing what at the same time they impel him to attempt; and he reveals, back of the individual typical phenomenon, an irreconcilable conflict in the very condition and definition of its existence. This conflict has its roots in the dualism of all being.

The corner-stone of Martin Luther's system of morals was the paradox: "A Christian is a sovereign lord over all things, and is subject to nobody; a Christian is a duty-bound servant of all things, and is subject to everybody." In other words, a man's soul is his own and is superior to all the things of the flesh; but through his body he is made dependent upon the life-giving earth, and subject to the laws which those other "bodies" in the community in which he lives make for the common defense and the general welfare. Hebbel carried the antithesis farther, asking what is the soul, and what is the body? And he answered, in effect, that the soul is indeed the very essence of personality, but is no original, self-begotten, and self-sufficient entity--on the contrary, it is a fragment, a participant in the animating principle of the universe--and that the body is indeed the medium of contact between person and person, but is also the separating barrier of soul from soul, and of the individual soul from the soul of the world. The body is the form or vessel which vouchsafes to the soul individual existence, and which the soul, by its very impulse to activity, wears out and destroys. Birth is a prophecy of destruction and a doom to death.

But life is activity, the soul is a motive force, self-assertion and self-preservation are heaven's first law. Self-assertion, however, is nothing but the operation of communicated and committed animation, and self-preservation nothing but the postponement of the day of surrender. Self-preservation is impossible; self-assertion is a challenge to the assertiveness of other selves, as well as a hastener of dissolution. The self follows its native bent, and its native impulse is for expansion; but it thus, as a fraction, leaves, on its centrifugal path, the course of the great world spirit from which it separates; and as both a separate entity and a member of a community it must, in its attempt at self-realization, meet the constraint which the community, whose only object is likewise self-realization and self-preservation, puts upon all within its power. The law is negative and repressive, self-interest is positive and assertive; between the two there is no possible reconciliation--at most a compromise--so that in the last analysis it appears that the assertion of individual will as such is immoral, that is, contrary to the will of the community; and is sinful, for it is not the will of God, but the will of a particularized individual, however godly he may be. There are differences in degree, but not in kind, among immoralities and sins, with corresponding degrees of punitive repression; but the potential tragic conflict is constant, and there is as little doubt about the eminent domain of the State as about the supremacy of God.

The laws of God are changeless and eternal, but human morality is a local and temporal development. As the character of an individual is the product of disposition and experience, so his fate is humanly determined by the particular forms of custom and law established in the community in which his lot is cast. But these change from time to time, and in periods of change the disparity between public and private interest is most conspicuous: the progressive individual bears not only the burden of proof but also the dead weight of public inertia. Only at infinity can the parallel antithetical interests coincide. Nevertheless, the world gradually effects self-correction by the evolution of new syntheses from the thesis and antithesis ever and anon presented for trial and judgment as between liberal and conservative forces.

Hebbel's drama, then, is the representation of a process, the process of life, by which things come into being. It reveals the individual in the making, and discusses the validity of the institutions that condition his life or cause his death. There is no question of guilt and atonement. Protagonist and antagonist are right, each in his way and from his point of view; the conflict may arise from excess of goodness as well as from excess of evil; but the representative of the whole prevails of necessity over the champion of a single interest; and in the knowledge of this truth, rather than in the futile attempt to modify the relation, we must seek our freedom. Hebbel's plays are historical: character in its setting of circumstances is the only character really and fully comprehensible. They are sociological: exhibiting the ceaseless collision of individualistic and collectivistic tendencies, they teach forbearance, and patience, and the will to face the facts--_tout comprendre, c'est tout pardonner_. And they are modern: treating problems of character and _milieu_, they disdain the adventitious aids of eloquence and theatrical splendor, and speak to us with the directness, often with the bluntness, of nature herself. Hebbel was no naturalist, in the sense of one who seeks but to reproduce phenomena in all their details, sordid, trivial, or vulgar, if such they be. But through Ibsen, who esteemed him alone among his German predecessors, he became a factor in the recent naturalistic movement;

and he might have saved it from many an aberration, if his example had been more closely followed.

Hebbel strikingly revealed his independence and originality at the beginning of his public career, by his new conception of old and familiar subjects. His Judith is a totally different person from the heroine of the Apocrypha. The Biblical Judith is a widow who slays a public enemy, and returns unscathed amid the plaudits of the multitude. But Hebbel's Judith is a widow who has never been a wife, a woman who seems to have been appointed by Providence to do a great deed in His service, who takes the duty upon herself only to find that as a woman she is unequal to it; for as a woman she loves the manly heathen. She kills him, as she set out to do; but the motive for her act is personal revenge for a personal outrage; and she returns to Bethulia broken in spirit and appalled at the thought that she may bear a son by Holofernes. The attempt to make of herself an impersonal instrument in the hands of the Almighty--certainly a laudable undertaking--is her only fault, and is tragic because inconsistent with the character of womanhood, which the Almighty has also ordained. Compared with the iron necessity of her being, to which Judith succumbs, the accidental and improbable fault of Schiller's Maid of Orleans seems as trivial as it is conventional.

Similarly, in the conception of the story of Genoveva, Hebbel shifted attention from the saint to the sinner. In the centre of his *Genoveva* stands Golo, the unfortunate young man whose good instincts are made criminal because the faults and errors of others excite them, and because his desire, justifiable according to nature, is directed toward a woman who is bound to another in a wedlock which, from the side of the husband at least, is only formally correct. In Golo's crime and atonement we accordingly see a great deal more than the operation of the moral law: we see how crime is begotten of innocence; and instead of thinking of the wretched creature, we think of the Creator who has so ordained it, and at whose central position in the moral universe there can be neither good nor evil, but an equilibrium of forces which become one or the other, and may become either when the equilibrium is disturbed. Good and evil, mutually exclusive qualities in the world of appearance, are, in the world of ideas, complementary conceptions, different aspects of one and the same thing.

Golo appears, despite his crimes, less guilty than Siegfried, the husband of Genoveva; and in his case a divine impulse, love, becomes an evil because it happens to collide with an institution, marriage, which we are here justified in calling human, since, though it has a social sanction, it lacks the evidence of divine approval. Clara, in *Maria Magdalena*, is chargeable with but the minimum of guilt, and perishes because, too honest and dutiful to safeguard her own interests in a stern and selfish community, she cannot otherwise preserve for her father that unassailable reputation which is, in his imperfect ethics, the highest good. The tragedy in this play is the tragedy of pharisaical *bourgeois* society itself. There is no collision between high and low, such as constituted the plot of the *tragedies bourgeoises* of the eighteenth century--e.g., Lessing's *Emilia Galotti*, Schiller's *Cabal and Love*--but the stubborn hardness of the middle-class society in its typical representative is unable to meet a crisis; and by the banishment, or the condemnation to suicide, of its most promising members, this society pronounces its own doom. Altruism is contrary to the custom, that is, to the morals of this community, and for that reason is forbidden and suppressed.

Another community in which altruism is unusual and discredited is Judaea just before the birth of Christ. Herod the king is a masterful ruler and a benefactor; but the end justifies the means that he adopts, and he is no respecter of persons. He does not even respect the person of his wife. The love of Mariamne is the one sure rock upon which he can rest when the earthquake, threatening at every moment, comes to shatter his throne and engulf him. He loves her too with a passion which dreams of union so perfect that death cannot break it, so perfect that one of them would wish to die at the moment when the soul of the other left the body. This is Mariamne's dream also, but Herod cannot trust her to fulfil it. Not once, but twice, upon going to the wars, he leaves orders that Mariamne shall be slain if he is killed; and these orders are an assassination of her soul. The community can execute an individual; but one individual can only assassinate another. In the ancient orient a wife was a precious possession, entirely subject to the will of her husband, and liable to be burned in his funeral pyre. Herod represents such an ancient, oriental point of view; but Judaea is on the eve of becoming occidental and modern. Herod represents the law and has the power to crush the insurgent personality of Mariamne: he has not the power to slay the infant Savior, nor to hinder the coming of the day when every human soul is known to be an object of divine concern.

That play of Hebbel's in which the dualism of all being is most conspicuously tragic is *Agnes Bernauer*. Agnes is the daughter of a barber and surgeon, and is so beautiful that she is commonly known as the angel of Augsburg. Albrecht, the son and sole heir of the reigning duke Ernst, comes to Augsburg, falls in love with her, and, in spite of friendly warning, marries her; for she has loved him at first sight, too. As persons, they do what is right for them to do; their marriage has been performed by a priest of the church; and they feel that it has divine sanction. But Albrecht is not an ordinary person; he is the heir to the throne, and public exigencies require that the succession shall be guaranteed. This marriage, however, is illegal--a board of incorruptible judges so finds it; it causes sedition and threatens interminable strife. Duke Ernst is deliberate and patient in dealing with the unprecedented case. He waits until he can wait no longer. Albrecht will not give up Agnes, nor Agnes give up him; Ernst respects the sacrament of wedlock by which they are united, and only after two and a half years does he sign the warrant by which Agnes was duly condemned to death. Agnes dies in perfect innocence and constancy, a victim of social convention. But Albrecht, whose disregard of this convention was rebellion, and whose vengeance for his wife's death brings him to the point of parricide, is made to see, not merely because excommunication accompanies the ban of the empire on him as a rebel, but also because of the instructive words and actions of his father, that the social organization he has defied has itself a divine sanction, and that a prince, standing by common consent at the head of that organization, cannot with impunity undermine the basis of his sovereignty. Devotion to him is like loyalty to the national ensign. The ensign is nothing in itself, but it symbolizes the idea of the State; and the prince is also the representative of an idea, which he must continue to represent in its entirety, or he ceases to be the prince. This lesson Albrecht learns when, like Kleist's *Prince of Homburg*, he is made judge in his own case, and when he perceives at the cost of what personal sacrifice his father has done his duty. The State prevails over Albrecht as it prevails over Agnes, whose only fault was that she did not immure her beauty in a nunnery.

The sanction of tradition and custom which Albrecht and Agnes could not break in *Agnes Bernauer* Hebbel most impressively demonstrated in *Gyges and his Ring*. Kandaules, King of Lydia, is a rash innovator in both public and private life. He despises rusty swords and uncomfortable crowns, he means to do away with silly prejudices, and, like Herod, regarding his wife as a precious possession only, he procures for his friend Gyges an opportunity to see her unveiled. But she, an Indian princess, is, in Christine Hebbel's words, a convolution of veils; her veil is inseparable from herself; and the brutal violation of her modesty is a less forgivable crime than the taking of her life would be. The wearing of a veil may be a foolish custom; but use and want hallow even the trivial. Half of our law is based upon precedent, and we are protected at every turn by unwritten law, which is nothing else than precedent. Mankind needs to repose in the security of this protection. Woe to him, said Hebbel, who disturbs the sleep of the world! Changes must come, but rarely in the way of revolution.

The tragedy of the Nibelungen Hebbel approached somewhat differently from the other subjects that he treated. He had his own conception of the tragic content of the matter, of course; but he found that the author of the *Nibelungenlied*, a dramatist from head to foot, has so clearly presented the tragic aspects of the story that the modern dramatist need only make himself the interpreter of the medieval epic poet. Herewith Hebbel's trilogy is at once distinguished from such other modern treatments of the subject as Geibel's *Brunhild* or Wagner's *Nibelungen Ring*. Geibel eliminated everything supernatural; Wagner made use chiefly of the Old Norse versions of the story; Hebbel, on the contrary, dramatized what he regarded as the significant content of the Middle High German poem, retaining its mythological, Christian, chivalrous, historical, and legendary elements. The mythological elements of the epic are indeed indistinct survivals of earlier ages. Hebbel leaned somewhat upon Norse myths in his reproduction of them, though it was part of his plan to preserve a certain indistinctness and mystery in these undramatic presuppositions. Similarly, he made more of the element of Christianity than is made of it by the *Nibelungenlied*. In both epic and drama the Burgundians are only formally Christian; the cardinal principles of heathen ethics, tribal loyalty and vengeance, are entirely unaffected by the Christian doctrine of forgiveness. In the play, however, the transition from one system to the other is much more strongly emphasized than in the poem. The heathen ethics lead to the mutual destruction of those who profess them, and out of the ruins of the old civilization a new world rises heralded by Theodoric of Verona, who accepts the sovereignty relinquished by Attila the Hun, "in His name who died on the cross."

The downfall of two peoples follows in the train of personal calamity. Siegfried, foreordained by the ancient gods to become the husband of Brunhild, neglects in the adventurous days of youth to woo her, and undertakes for the price of Kriemhild's hand to secure her as a wife for Gunther. Hidden in his cloak of invisibility, he twice overcomes Brunhild, thereby committing against her the same kind of outrage as Herod's against Mariamne, and that of Gyges against Rhodope. Through no direct fault of Siegfried's the fraud is discovered; it is an offense to the queen, which insults the State. Gunther the king will not punish it, for he is under personal obligations to the offender; but he takes no effective measures to prevent punishment by Hagen, who, though his loyal motives are mixed with envy, acts within his rights as the prime minister. But Siegfried, being vulnerable in only one spot, cannot be challenged to open combat; he has to be slain by stealth; so that

Hagen's act is not strictly to be called murder, and the Burgundians, even though their sense of solidarity should not require them to make common cause with him against Kriemhild, might with some show of reason confirm his oath that he is no murderer. Siegfried put himself outside the pale of humanity when he assumed the dragon's skin. Dragons are hunted to death. Only men are tried and executed.

We have chosen to examine Hebbel's principal plays from the point of view of their idea, for the reason that, as said above, it was primarily the idea which Hebbel found important in every individual phenomenon. He did not treat cases and conditions for the sake of merely representing life on the stage, but for the sake of exemplifying, in representations of life, the fundamental irreconcilability of the expansive and repressive forces which struggle in every individual. His characters are certainly persons, not abstract constructions; the action in his plays moves relentlessly forward, with no lack of inventiveness on his part or of sensuous impressiveness on the part of his inventions; he seldom fails to convince our understanding that in his dramatic debate each side is adequately represented, and that the side which at length prevails is the stronger under the presuppositions of time and place; it would be unfair, furthermore, to deny the appeal that he makes to our sympathy. But, on the other hand, he is not free from suggestions of artifice; his characters are abnormally introspective and self-explanatory, and they reveal a talent for logical exposition which belongs rather to Friedrich Hebbel than to men of like passions with ourselves. In the unsought, accidental, ingenuous details which ingratiate themselves in spite, or perhaps because of their insignificance, he is not to be compared with Grillparzer; nor, in the capacity to create a poetic atmosphere, with Otto Ludwig. His language is rugged and masculine; his style, frequently forensic. Taken as a whole, his work furnishes more abundant food for thought than objects of _naive_ esthetic enjoyment; but, like Grillparzer's, his plays were written for the stage; and proper enactment has seldom failed to produce with them an effect of power worthy of his powerful personality, which swam against the tide, knowing that the tide would turn and that the flood would bear him to the haven.

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FRIEDRICH HEBBEL

* * * * *

MARIA MAGDALENA

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

Master ANTONY, _a joiner_

His Wife

CLARA, _his daughter_

CARL, _his son_

LEONARD

A Secretary WOLFRAM, a merchant_

ADAM, _a bailiff_

Another bailiff

A Boy

A Maid

Place. A fair-sized town

MARIA MAGDALENA (1844)

TRANSLATED BY PAUL BERNARD THOMAS

ACT I

A Room in the Joiner's House.

SCENE I

Enter CLARA; _the_ MOTHER.

CLARA.

Your wedding dress? Oh, how well it becomes you! It looks as if it had been made today!

MOTHER.

Yes, child, fashion keeps on going forward until it can go no farther and has to turn around and go back. This dress has already been out of style and in again ten times.

CLARA.

But this time it is not exactly in style, dear mother! The sleeves are too wide! It must not annoy you!

MOTHER (_smiling_).

I should have to be you for that! CLARA.

And so this is the way you looked! But surely you carried a bunch of flowers too, didn't you?

MOTHER.

I should hope so! Else why do you think I nursed that sprig of myrtle in the pot for so many years?

CLARA.

I have often asked you to, but you have never before put it on. You have always said: It is no longer my wedding dress; it is my shroud now, and that is something one should not play with. I got so that I couldn't even look at it any more, because, hanging there so white, it always made me think of your death, and of the day when the old women would try to pull it on over your head. Why then today?

MOTHER.

When one is very sick, as I was, and does not know whether one is going to get well again or not, a great many things revolve in one's head. Death is more terrible than you think--oh, it is awful! It casts a shadow over the world; one after the other it blows out all the lights that shine with such cheerful brightness all around us, the kindly eyes of husband and children cease to sparkle, and it grows dark everywhere. But deep in the heart it strikes a light, which burns brightly and reveals a great deal one does not care to see. I am not conscious of ever having done a wrong; I have walked in God's ways, I have done my best about the home, I have brought you and your brother up to fear God, and I have kept together the fruits of your father's hard work. I have always managed to lay aside an extra penny for the poor, and if now and then I have turned somebody away, because I felt out of sorts or because too many came, it wasn't a very great misfortune for him, because I was sure to call him back and give him twice as much. Oh, what does it all amount to? People dread the last hour when it threatens to come, writhe like a worm over it, and implore God to let them live, just as a servant implores his master to let him do something over again that he has done poorly, so that he may not come short in his wages on pay-day.

CLARA.

Don't talk in that way, dear mother! It weakens you.

MOTHER.

No, child, it does me good! Am I not well and strong again now? Did not the Lord call me merely to let me know that my festal robe was not yet pure and spotless? And did he not permit me to come back from the very edge of the grave, and grant me time to prepare myself for the heavenly wedding? He was not as kind as that to those five Virgins in the Gospel, about whom I had you read to me last night. And that is the reason why today, when I am going to the Holy Communion, I put this dress on. I wore it the day I made the best and most pious resolutions of my life; I want it to remind me of those which I have not yet carried out.

CLARA.

You still talk as you did in your illness!

SCENE II

CARL (enters).

Good morning, mother! Well, Clara, I suppose you might put up with me, if I were not your brother?

CLARA.

A gold chain? Where did you get that?

CARL.

Why do I sweat so? Why do I work two hours longer than the others every evening? You are impertinent!

MOTHER.

A quarrel on Sunday morning? Shame on you, Carl!

CARL.

Mother, haven't you got a gulden for me?

MOTHER.

I haven't any money except for the housekeeping!

CARL.

Well, give me some of that then! I won't grumble if you make the pancakes thinner for the next two weeks. You have often done so before! I know that all right! When you were saving up for Clara's white dress, we didn't have anything decent to eat for a month. I shut my eyes, but I knew right well that a new hair ribbon or some other bit of finery was on the way. So let me get something out of it too, for once!

MOTHER.

You are absolutely shameless!

CARL.

I haven't much time, else--[He starts to go_.]

MOTHER.

Where are you going?

CARL.

I won't tell you, and then, when the old growler asks you where I am, you can answer without blushing that you don't know. Anyway I don't need your gulden--it is best not to draw all your water from one well.

[To himself_.]

Here at home they always think the worst things they can about me; why shouldn't I take pleasure in keeping them worried? Why should I say that, since I don't get my gulden, I shall have to go to church, unless a friend helps me out of my predicament?

SCENE III

CLARA.

What does he mean by that?

MOTHER.

Oh, he grieves me terribly! Yes, yes, your father is right! Those are the consequences! He is just as insolent now in demanding a gulden as he was cunning in pleading for a piece of sugar when he was a little curly-headed baby. I wonder if he would not demand the gulden now, if I had refused him the sugar then? That often hurts me! And I think he doesn't even love me! Did you ever once see him cry during my illness?

CLARA.

I didn't see him very often at best--almost never except at the table. He had more appetite than I!

MOTHER (_quickly_).

That was natural! He had to work so hard!

CLARA.

To be sure! And how strange men are! They are more ashamed of their tears than they are of their sins! A clenched fist--why not exhibit that? But red eyes!--And father too! The afternoon they opened your vein and no blood came, he sobbed at his work-bench until it moved my very soul! But when I went up to him and stroked his cheeks, what did he say? "See if you can't get this accursed splinter out of my eye! I have so much to do and can't accomplish anything!"

MOTHER (_smiling_).

Yes! yes!--I never see Leonard any more, by the way. How does that happen?

CLARA.

Let him stay away!

MOTHER.

I hope you are not seeing him anywhere else, except here at the house!

CLARA.

Is it because I stay out too long when I go to the well in the evening that you have reason to suspect that?

MOTHER.

No, not that. But it was just for that reason that I gave him permission to come here to the house, so that he wouldn't lie in wait for you out there in the dark. My mother would never allow that, either!

CLARA.

I don't see him at all!

MOTHER.

Have you had a quarrel? Otherwise I think I might like him--he is so steady! If he only amounted to something! In my time he would not have had to wait long. Then gentlemen were eager for a good penman, as lame people are for their crutch, for they were rare. Even we humble people could use one. Today he would compose for a son a New Year's greeting to his father and receive for the gilded initials alone enough to buy a child's doll with. Tomorrow the father would give him a sly wink and have him read the greeting aloud, secretly and behind closed doors, so as not to be surprised and have his ignorance discovered. That meant double pay. Then penmen were jolly people and made the price of beer high. It is different now. Now we old folks, not knowing anything about reading and writing, must allow ourselves to be made fun of by nine-year-old children. The world is steadily growing wiser; perhaps the time is yet to come when people who can't walk a tight-rope will have to feel ashamed of it!

CLARA.

The bell is ringing!

MOTHER.

Well, child, I will pray for you. And as far as Leonard is concerned, love him as he loves God--no more and no less. That is what my old mother said to me when she died and gave me her blessing. I have kept it long enough; now you have it!

CLARA (_hands her a nosegay_).

There!

MOTHER.

That certainly comes from Carl.

CLARA (_nods; then aside_.)

Would it were so! Anything that is to give her real pleasure has to come from him!

MOTHER.

Oh, he is so good--and he likes me! [_Exit_.]

CLARA (_looks after her through the window_).

There she goes! Three times I have dreamt that she was lying in her coffin, and now--oh, these awful dreams! I am not going to care about dreams any more; I will take no pleasure in a good dream, and then I shall not have to worry about the bad one that follows it. How firmly and confidently she steps out! She is already close to the church-yard. I wonder who will be the first person she meets? It would signify nothing--no, I mean only [_she shudders_]--the gravedigger! He has just finished digging a grave and is climbing out of it! She greets him and glances smilingly down into the dismal hole! She throws the nosegay into

it and enters the church!

[A choir is heard_.]

They are singing: _Praise ye the Lord_.

[She folds her hands_.]

Yes! yes! If my mother had died, I should never have recovered from it, for--[Glances toward Heaven_.] But Thou art kind, Thou art merciful! I would that I believed with the Catholics, so that I might offer Thee something! I would empty the whole of my little box of savings and buy Thee a beautiful gilded heart, and twine it with roses. Our pastor says that sacrifices mean nothing to Thee, because everything is Thine, and one should not offer Thee something Thou already hast. And yet everything in the house belongs to my father too; and still he likes it when I buy a piece of cloth with his money and embroider it and put it on his plate for his birthday. Yes, and he honors me by wearing it only on great holidays, at Christmas or Whitsuntide. Once I saw a little mite of a Catholic girl carrying some cherries up to the altar. They were the first the child had had that year, and I could see how she longed to eat them. Still she resisted the innocent desire, and, in order to put an end to the temptation, hurriedly threw them down. The priest, who was just about to pick up the chalice, looked on with a scowl, and the child hastened timidly away. But the Mary above the altar smiled gently, as if she would have liked to step out of her frame and overtake the child and kiss her.--I did it for her! Here comes Leonard. Oh, dear!

SCENE IV

LEONARD (_outside the door_).

Are you dressed?

CLARA.

Why so polite, so considerate? I am no princess, you know.

LEONARD (_enters_).

I thought you were not alone! In passing by I thought I saw your neighbor Babbie standing by the window.

CLARA.

And so that is why--

LEONARD.

You are forever so irritable! One can stay away from here for two weeks, rain and sunshine can have alternated ten times, and, when one does finally come again, he finds the same old cloud darkening your face!

CLARA.

Things used to be different!

LEONARD.

Correct! If you had always looked as you do now, we should never have become good friends!

CLARA.

What of it?

LEONARD.

So you feel yourself as free of me as that, do you? Perhaps it serves me right! Then [significantly] your recent toothache was a mere pretext!

CLARA.

Oh, Leonard, it was not right of you!

LEONARD.

Not right for me to seek to bind to me the greatest treasure that I have--for that is what you are to me--with the firmest of all bonds? And especially at a time when I stood in danger of losing it? Do you think I did not see the furtive glances you exchanged with the Secretary? That was a triumphant day of joy for me! I take you to the dance and--
CLARA.

You never stop saying things that hurt me! I looked at the Secretary, why should I deny it? But only on account of the moustache he had grown at the University, and which--

[She checks herself.]

LEONARD.

Becomes him so well--isn't that it? Isn't that what you started to say? Oh, you women! Anything that looks like a soldier, even a caricature of one, you like. To me the fop's ridiculous little oval face, with that tuft of hair in the middle of it, looked like a little white rabbit hiding behind a bush. I am bitter toward him--I won't try to conceal it. He held me back from you long enough!

CLARA.

I didn't praise him, did I? You don't need to run him down!

LEONARD.

You still seem to take a lot of interest in him.

CLARA.

We used to play together as children, and afterward--you know very well!

LEONARD.

Oh yes, I know! And that's just why!

CLARA.

Then I think it was only natural, seeing him again for the first time in a long while that way, for me to look at him and be astonished to see how big and--[_She checks herself_]

LEONARD.

Why did you blush then, when he looked back at you?

CLARA.

I thought he was looking at the little mole on my left cheek to see if it, too, had grown bigger! You know I always imagine people are looking at that when they stare at me so, and it always makes me blush. I have a feeling as if it were growing larger, as long as they look at it!

LEONARD.

However that may be, it got on my nerves, and I thought to myself: This very evening I will put her to the test! If she wants to become my wife, she knows that she risks nothing. If she says no, then--

CLARA.

Oh, you said a bad, bad word, when I pushed you back and jumped up from the bench. The moon, which up to that time had shone in through the foliage with such kindly consideration for me, at that moment sank shrewdly behind the wet clouds. I wanted to hurry away, but felt something holding me. At first I thought it was you, but it was the rose-bush, whose thorns held my dress like teeth. You outraged my heart, so that I no longer trusted it myself. You stood before me like one demanding the payment of a debt! I--Oh, God!

[Illustration: ALFRED RETHEL DEATH AS CUP-BEARER]

LEONARD.

I cannot yet regret it. I knew it was the only way I could have kept you to myself. The old girlhood love was opening its eyes again, and I could not close them quickly enough!

CLARA.

When I got home, I found my mother ill, mortally ill. She had been stricken suddenly, as if by an invisible hand. My father had wanted to send for me, but she would not consent to his doing so, not wishing to interrupt my happiness. And how I felt when I heard that! I held myself aloof, I did not dare to touch her, I trembled! She took it for childish anxiety and motioned me over to her; when I slowly drew near her, she held me down and kissed my desecrated mouth. I lost control of myself; I wanted to confess to her, to cry out what I thought and felt: It is my fault that you are lying there! I tried to do so, but tears and sobs choked my voice. She reached for my father's hand, and said with a blissful glance at me: What a heart!

LEONARD.

She is well again. I have come to congratulate her, and--what do you think?

CLARA.

What?

LEONARD.

To ask your father for your hand.

CLARA.

Oh!

LEONARD.

Don't you want me to?

CLARA.

Want you to? It will mean my death, if I do not become your wife pretty soon! But you do not know my father! He does not understand why we are in such a hurry--he cannot understand why, and we cannot tell him why! And he has declared a hundred times that he will never give his daughter to any man unless he has not only, as he says, love in his heart for her, but also bread in his cupboard for her. He will say: Wait another year or two, my son.--And what will be your answer?

LEONARD. You foolish girl, that difficulty is disposed of! I have the position now--I am cashier!

CLARA.

You cashier? And the other applicant, the pastor's nephew?

LEONARD.

Was drunk when he came to the examination, bowed to the stove instead of to the burgomaster, and when he sat down knocked three cups off the table. You know how hot-headed the old fellow is. "Sir!" he exclaimed angrily, but he restrained himself and bit his lip. Nevertheless his eyes glared through his spectacles like the eyes of a serpent about to spring, and his whole body became rigid. Then we started computing and, ha! ha!--my rival computed with a multiplication table of his own invention that gave entirely new results. "He's way off in his reckoning!" said the burgomaster, and, glancing in my direction, held out his hand to me with the appointment. It smelled terribly of tobacco, but I took it and raised it humbly to my lips.--Here it is now, signed and sealed!

CLARA.

That comes--

LEONARD.

Unexpectedly, doesn't it? Well, it was not altogether an accident either. Why didn't I come to see you for two weeks?

CLARA.

How do I know? I think it was because we got angry at each other the Sunday before!

LEONARD.

Oh, I was cunning enough to bring about that little disagreement on purpose--so that I could stay away without its astonishing you too much!

CLARA.

I don't understand you!

LEONARD.

I suppose not. I took advantage of the time to pay court to the burgomaster's little hump-backed niece, whom the old fellow thinks so much of, and who is his right hand, just as the bailiff is his left. Understand me correctly! I didn't say anything nice to her about herself, except perhaps a compliment regarding her hair, which everybody knows is red--so I just told her some nice things she liked to hear about you.

CLARA.

About me?

LEONARD.

Why should I keep still about it? I did it with the best of intentions--as if I had never intended to deal seriously with you, as if--enough! That lasted until I got this in my hands, and the credulous little man-crazy fool will find out what I meant when she hears the banns of our marriage published in the church.

CLARA.

Leonard!

LEONARD.

Child! child! You be as innocent as a dove, and I will be as wise as a serpent. Then, since a man and his wife are one, we shall entirely satisfy the demand of the Gospel.

[_Laughs_]

Neither was it altogether an accident that young Hermann was drunk at the most important moment of his life. You have surely never heard that the fellow is given to drinking?

CLARA.

Not a word.

LEONARD.

The fact made the execution of my scheme all the easier. It was done with three glasses. I had a couple of friends of mine waylay him. "May

one drink to your health?"--"Not now!"--"Oh, that is all arranged, you know. Your uncle"--"And now, drink, my brother, drink!"--This morning when I was on my way to you, he stood leaning on the bridge and gazing dejectedly down at the river. I greeted him sarcastically, and asked him if he had dropped anything into the water. "Yes," he answered, without looking up, "and perhaps it would be well for me to jump in after it."

CLARA.

You bad man! Get out of my sight!

LEONARD.

You mean it?

[_Moves, as if to go_.]

CLARA.

Oh, my God, I am chained to this man!

LEONARD.

Don't be a baby! And now one more word in confidence: Does your father still keep the thousand thalers in the apothecary shop?

CLARA.

I know nothing about it.

LEONARD.

Nothing about so important a matter?

CLARA.

Here comes my father.

LEONARD.

Understand me! The apothecary is said to be on the verge of bankruptcy--that's why I asked!

CLARA.

I must go into the kitchen! [_Exit_.]

LEONARD (_alone_).

Well, I guess there is nothing to be got here! I can't understand it at all; for Master Antony is one of those fellows whose ghost, if you should accidentally put one too many letters on his gravestone, would haunt you until you took it off. For he would regard it as dishonest to appropriate more of the alphabet than he was properly entitled to.

SCENE V

Enter LEONARD; _Master_ ANTONY.

ANTONY.

Good morning, Mr. Cashier! [_He takes off his cap and puts on a woolen cap_] Is it permissible for an old man to keep his head covered?

LEONARD.

You know then--

ANTONY.

Since yesterday evening. When I was going over in the dusk to take the deceased miller's measure for his final sleeping room, I heard a couple of your good friends slandering you. I thought right away: I guess Leonard has not broken his neck.--At the house I heard more about it from the sexton, who had come to console the widow, and, incidentally, to get drunk.

LEONARD.

And you had to let Clara find out about it from me?

ANTONY.

If you didn't care enough about it to give the girl that pleasure yourself, why should I do it? I don't light any candles in my house except those that belong to me. Then I know that nobody is going to come and blow them out, just as we are beginning to enjoy them.

LEONARD.

Surely you don't think that I--

ANTONY.

Think? About you? About anybody? I smooth over boards with my plane, but I never smooth over men with my thoughts. I stopped that sort of foolishness long ago. When I see a tree growing, I think to myself: It will soon be blossoming; and when it sprouts: It will soon bear fruit. In that I never see myself disappointed, and for that reason I don't give up the old habit. But about men I never think anything, good or bad, and then I don't have to turn alternately red and white when they disappoint my fears one minute and my hopes the next. I merely observe them and use the evidence of my eyes, which likewise do not think, but only see. I thought I had made a complete observation of you, but now that I find you here I must confess that it was only half an observation.

LEONARD.

Master Antony, you have it all upside down. Trees are dependent upon wind and weather, whereas men have laws and rules in themselves to govern them.

ANTONY.

Do you think so? Yes, we old people owe hearty thanks to death for

allowing us to run around so long among you young folks, thereby giving us an opportunity to educate ourselves. Formerly the stupid world used to think that the father was there to educate his son. But now the son is supposed to give his father the final touch of perfection, so that the poor, simple man will not need to feel ashamed of himself before the worms in his grave. God be praised! I have a fine teacher in my son Carl who, without sparing his old child by indulgence, takes the field against my prejudices. He taught me two new lessons this very morning, and in the most clever way, without opening his mouth and without even letting me see him--yes, by that very means. In the first place, he showed me that it is not necessary for a man to keep his word; in the second, that it is superfluous to go to church and freshen up one's memory of God's laws. Yesterday evening he promised me that he would go, and I counted on his doing it, for I thought to myself: He will want to thank the gracious Creator for the recovery of his mother. But he wasn't there, and I was very comfortable all alone in my pew, which, to be sure, is a little too short for two persons anyway. I wonder if he would like it if I myself were to act in accordance with the new doctrine, by not keeping my word with him? I have promised him a new suit for his birthday, and I might take the opportunity to test his joy over my docility. But prejudice! Prejudice! I shall not do it!

LEONARD.

Perhaps he was not well--

ANTONY.

Possibly! I need only to ask my wife, then I am sure to hear that he is sick. For she tells me the truth about everything else in the world, but never about the boy. And even if he was not sick!--There too the younger generation has the advantage over us old folks, in that they can find their spiritual edification anywhere, and can do their worshipping when they are out trapping birds, or taking a walk, or sitting in the ale-house. "Our Father who art in Heaven"--"Good day, Peter, shall I see you at the dance this evening?"--"Hallowed be Thy name"--"Yes, laugh if you will, Catherine, but it is true"--"Thy will be done"--"The devil take me, I am not shaved yet!"--and so forth. And each one pronounces the blessing on himself, for he is a man just as much as the preacher, and the power that emanates from a black garb certainly exists in a blue one as well. Nor have I anything to say against it; even if you want to intersperse the seven petitions with seven glasses, what of it? I can't prove to anybody that beer and religion don't mix well, and perhaps it will some day get into the liturgy as a new way of taking the Eucharist. Frankly, I myself, old sinner that I am, am not strong enough to keep pace with fashion; I cannot catch up worship in the street, as if it were a cockchafer; for me the chirping of swallows and sparrows cannot take the place of the organ. If I want to feel my heart exalted, I must hear the heavy, iron doors of the church close behind me and think to myself that they are the doors of the world. The dismal high walls with their narrow windows, that admit but a dim remnant of the bold garish daylight as if they were sifting it, must surround me on all sides. And in the distance I must be able to see the charnel-house, with its death-head cut in the wall. Oh well, better is better.

LEONARD.

You are too particular about it!

ANTONY.

Of course! Of course! And today, as an honest man, I must confess that what I have been saying did not hold good; for I lost my reverent mood in church, being annoyed by the vacant seat beside me, and found it again under the pear-tree in my garden. You are astonished? But look! I went sadly and dejectedly home, like one whose harvest has been ruined by hail; for children are like fields--we sow good corn in them and weeds sprout up. Under the pear-tree, which the caterpillars have half eaten up, I stood still. "Yes," I thought, "the boy is like this tree, empty and barren." Then I suddenly imagined that I was very thirsty, and absolutely had to go over to the tavern. I deceived myself--it wasn't to get a glass of beer that I wanted to go; it was to seek out the young man and take him to task in the tavern, where I knew he was sure to be. I was just about to start, when the sensible old tree let fall a juicy pear right at my feet, as if to say: Take that for your thirst, and for slandering me by comparing me with that good-for-nothing son of yours. I deliberated a moment, took a bite of it, and went into the house.

LEONARD.

Do you know that the apothecary is on the verge of bankruptcy?

ANTONY.

What do I care?

LEONARD.

Don't you care at all

ANTONY.

Surely! I am a Christian--the man has several children!

LEONARD.

And still more creditors. The children, too, are creditors in a way.

ANTONY.

Happy is he who is neither the one nor the other!

LEONARD.

I thought you yourself--

ANTONY.

That was settled up long ago.

LEONARD.

You are a prudent man; of course you immediately demanded your money when you saw that the green-grocer was about to fail.

ANTONY.

Yes, I need not tremble any more with the fear of losing it--it was lost

long ago!

LEONARD.

You are joking!

ANTONY.

In all seriousness!

CLARA (_looks in at the door_).

Did you call, father?

ANTONY.

Are your ears beginning to ring already? We had not talked about you yet!

CLARA.

The weekly paper!

LEONARD.

You are a philosopher!

ANTONY.

What do you mean by that?

LEONARD.

You know how to compose yourself.

ANTONY.

I wear a mill-stone as a cravat sometimes, instead of going to the river with it. That gives one a strong back.

LEONARD.

Let him who can imitate you.

ANTONY.

He who has such a gallant fellow to help him bear it, as I seem to have found in you, ought to be able to dance under the burden. You have grown quite pale. I call that sympathy!

LEONARD.

I hope you don't misunderstand me!

ANTONY.

Certainly not!

[_He drums on a dresser._]

That wood is not transparent, is it?

LEONARD.

I do not understand you!

ANTONY.

How foolish it was of our grandfather Adam to take Eve, when she was naked and destitute, and did not even bring a fig-leaf with her. We two, you and I, would have scourged her out of Paradise as a tramp! What do you think?

LEONARD.

You are exasperated with your son.--I have come to you regarding your daughter--

ANTONY.

You had better be careful!--Perhaps I'll not say no!

LEONARD.

I hope you will not. And I will tell you what I think: The patriarchs themselves never used to scorn the dowries of their women. Jacob loved Rachel and courted her seven years, but he also liked the fat rams and sheep that he earned in her father's service. That, I think, was not to his discredit, and to outdo him in anything would be to put him to the blush. I should have liked very much to see your daughter bring a couple of hundred thalers with her; and that was quite natural, because she herself would thereby be so much the better off with me. If a girl brings her bed in her trunk, then she will not have to card wool and spin yarn. In this case it will not be so, but what of it? We'll make a Sunday dinner out of Lenten fare, and a Christmas feast out of Sunday's roast. In that way we'll make out all right!

ANTONY (_offers him his hand_).

You talk well, and God smiles on your words. Well, I will forget that for fourteen days at tea-time my daughter put a cup on the table for you in vain. And now that you are to be my son-in-law, I will tell you where the thousand thalers are!

LEONARD (_aside_).

So they are gone then! Well, I shall not have to go out of my way to please the old werewolf, even if he is my father-in-law!

ANTONY.

Things went hard with me in my early years. I was no more of a bristly hedgehog than you when I came into the world, but I have gradually grown to be one. At first all the quills in my case pointed inward, and people found pleasure in pricking and pinching my soft smooth skin, and were amused to see me flinch when the points penetrated into my very heart and bowels. But the thing did not appeal to me; I turned my skin inside out and then the quills pricked their fingers and I had peace.

LEONARD (_to himself_).

Safe from the very devil, methinks!

ANTONY.

My father, by not allowing himself any rest day or night, worked himself to death in his thirtieth year, and my mother nourished me as well as she could with her spinning. I grew up without learning anything. When I became larger and was still unable to earn any money, I would gladly have disaccustomed myself to eating; but when now and then at noon I would pretend to be sick and push back my plate, what did it mean? It meant that in the evening my stomach would compel me to announce myself well again! My greatest grief was that I was so unskilled. I used to blame myself for it, as if it were my own fault, as if in my mother's womb I had been supplied with nothing but teeth to eat with, as if I had purposely left behind me there all the useful capabilities and assets. I used to blush with shame when the sun shone on me. Just after my confirmation the man whom they buried yesterday, Master Gebhard, came into our house. He scowled and made a wry face, as he always used to frown when he had anything good in mind to do. Then he said to my mother: "Did you bring your youngster into the world in order to let him eat the very nose and ears off your head?" I felt ashamed and put the loaf of bread, from which I was just on the point of cutting off a piece, back into the cupboard again. My mother took offense at his well-meant words; she stopped her wheel and replied vehemently that her son was a fine good fellow. "Well, we will see about that," said the Master. "If he wants to, he can come right now, just as he stands there, into my workshop with me. I do not ask any money for teaching him; he will get his board, and his clothes I will also supply; and if he wants to get up early and go to bed late, opportunities will not be wanting for him to earn a little money on the side for his old mother." My mother began to cry and I to dance. When we finally came to an agreement, the Master closed up his ears, walked out, and motioned me to follow. I did not need to put a hat on, for I had none. Without saying good-by to my mother, I went after him. And on the following Sunday, when I was allowed to go back to her little room for the first time, he gave me half a ham to take with me. God's blessing on the good man's grave! I still hear his half-angry: "Tony, under your coat with it, so my wife won't see it!"

LEONARD.

You are not crying?

ANTONY (_dries his eyes_).

Yes, I can never think of that without its starting the tears, no matter how well the source of them may have been stopped up. Oh well, that's all right! If I should ever get the dropsy, I shall at any rate not have to draw off these drops too.

[_With a sudden turn._]

What do you think about it?--Supposing on a Sunday afternoon you went over to smoke a pipe of tobacco with a friend, a friend to whom you owed everything in the world; and supposing you found him greatly confused and perturbed, a knife in his hand--the same knife you had used a

thousand times to cut his evening bread--and holding it, covered with blood, at his neck, and nervously drawing his handkerchief up to his chin--

LEONARD.

And that is the way old Gebhard went about to the end of his days.

ANTONY.

On account of the scar. And supposing you arrived in time to help save him, but to do it you had not only to wrench the knife out of his hand and bandage the wound, but you had also to give over a paltry thousand thalers that you had saved up; and, furthermore, you had to do it all absolutely on the sly, so as to induce the sick man to accept it, what would you do?

LEONARD.

Being a free and single man, without wife and child, I would sacrifice the money.

ANTONY.

And if you had ten wives, like the Turks, and as many children as were promised to Father Abraham, and if you took only one second to think about it, you would be--Well, you are to be my son-in-law! Now you know where the money is. Today I could tell you, for my old Master is buried; a month ago I would have kept the secret even on my death-bed. I slipped the note under the dead man's head before they nailed up the coffin. If I had known how to write, I would have written underneath: "Honestly paid!" But, ignorant as I am, there was nothing for me to do but tear the paper in two. Now he will sleep in peace--and I hope that I shall too, when they stretch me out beside him.

SCENE VI

MOTHER (*_enters hurriedly_*).

Do you still know me?

ANTONY (*_pointing to the wedding dress_*).

The frame, yes--that is perfectly preserved; but the picture--not so well. It seems to be covered with cobwebs. Oh, well! there has been time enough for it.

MOTHER.

Have I not a frank husband? Still, I do not need to praise him specially--frankness is a virtue of married men!

ANTONY.

Are you sorry that you were better gilded at twenty than you are at fifty?

MOTHER.

Certainly not! If I were, I ought to be ashamed both for myself and for you!

ANTONY.

Give me a kiss then! I am shaved and look better than usual.

MOTHER.

I say yes, merely to test you, to see if you still understand the art. It is a long time since such a thing has occurred to you!

ANTONY.

Good mother, I will not ask you to close my eyes; that is a hard thing to do, and I will take it off your hands. I will do that final service of love for you. But you must grant me time, understand, to harden and prepare myself for it, so that I won't make a botch of it. It would have been much too soon!

MOTHER.

Thank God that we are still going to have a little time together!

ANTONY.

I hope so too! You have your old red cheeks again!

MOTHER.

A comical fellow, our new grave-digger! He was digging a grave this morning when I passed through the church-yard. I asked him whom it was for. "For whomsoever God wills," he said. "Perhaps for myself. The same thing may happen to me that happened to my grandfather; he too had dug one on chance once, and at night when he came home from the Inn he fell into it and broke his neck."

LEONARD (_who, up to this time, has been reading the weekly paper_).

The fellow doesn't come from here--he can tell all the lies he likes.

MOTHER.

I asked him: "Why don't you wait until somebody orders a grave dug?" "I was invited to a wedding today," he said, "and I am enough of a prophet to know that I would still feel the effects of it in my head tomorrow if I went. Now of course _some_ body has been inconsiderate enough to go and die, so that in the morning I would have to get up early and would not be able to sleep it off."

ANTONY.

"You clown!" I would have said, "supposing now the grave doesn't fit?"

MOTHER.

I said that too, but he shook sharp answers out of his sleeve, as the

devil does fleas. "I took the measurement for Veit, the weaver," he said, "who, like King Saul, towers a head above everybody else. Now, come who may, he will not find his house too small; and if it is too large, that doesn't hurt anybody but me, for, as an honest man, I never charge for a single foot more than the length of the coffin." I threw my flowers into the grave and said: "Now it is occupied!"

ANTONY.

I think the fellow was only joking, and even that is sinful enough. To dig graves in advance is to set the trap of death too soon; the scoundrel who does it ought to be driven out of the business.

[To LEONARD, who is still reading.]

What's the news? Is there any philanthropist looking for a poor widow, who can use a few hundred thalers, or, *_vice versa_*, a poor widow looking for a philanthropist who can supply them?

LEONARD.

The police announce the theft of some jewelry. Strange enough! It seems that, in spite of the hard times, there are still people among us who can own jewels!

ANTONY.

The theft of some jewelry? Where?

LEONARD.

Over at Wolfram's.

ANTONY.

At--impossible! Carl polished a desk there a few days ago!

LEONARD.

They were taken from a desk. Right!

MOTHER (*_to Master_* ANTONY).

May God forgive you for saying that!

ANTONY.

You are right--it was a vile thought!

MOTHER.

To your son you are only half a father! I must tell you that!

ANTONY.

Wife! We'll not discuss that today!

MOTHER.

He is not like you--but is that any reason why he must be bad?

ANTONY.

Then where is he now? The noon hour struck long ago! I'll wager the dinner is burning and spoiling, because Clara has secret orders not to set the table until he is here!

MOTHER.

Where do you think he is? At the worst he is only bowling, and he has to go the longest way about so that you won't see him. Naturally it takes him a long time to get back!--I cannot see what you have against the innocent game.

ANTONY.

Against the game? Nothing whatever! Noble men must have some way to pass the time. Without the king of hearts, the real kings would often find life tedious; and if bowling balls had not been invented, who knows whether princes and barons would not be using our heads for the purpose? But an ordinary workingman cannot do anything worse than spend his hard-earned money on games. We must respect that which we have laboriously earned in the sweat of our brows; we must hold it high and precious, unless we are to lose our bearings and regard all our works and doings with contempt. How can I strain all my nerves to earn a thaler which I intend to throw away?

[The door-bell is heard outside.]

SCENE VII

[_Enter_ ADAM, _a Bailiff; another Bailiff._]

ADAM (to Master ANTONY).

Now, you just go ahead and pay your wager! No people in red coats with blue trimmings [with emphasis] shall ever enter your house, eh?--Well, here are two of us!

[To the other bailiff.]

Why don't you keep your hat on, as I do? Who is going to observe formalities among people of his own class?

ANTONY.

Your own class? You blackguard!

ADAM.

You are right--we are not among our own class! Scoundrels and thieves are not of our class! [Points to the dresser.] Open that up! And then three steps away--so that you can't sneak anything out of it!

ANTONY.

What? What?

CLARA (_enters with things to set the table_).

Shall I--[_She stops, speechless._]

ADAM (_exhibits a paper_).

Can you read writing?

ANTONY.

Should I be able to do what even my schoolmaster could not do?

ADAM.

Then listen! Your son has stolen some jewelry! We have the thief already! Now we are here to search the house!

MOTHER (_falls down and dies_).

Oh, God!

CLARA.

Mother! Mother! How her eyes roll!

LEONARD.

I will fetch a doctor!

ANTONY.

Not necessary! That is the last look! I have seen it a hundred times! Good night, Theresa! You died when you heard it! Let them write that on your gravestone!

LEONARD.

But perhaps it is [_starts to go_]--awful! But lucky for me!

[_Exit._]

ANTONY (_pulls a bunch of keys from his pocket and throws them down_).

There! Unlock everything! Drawer after drawer! Bring the ax! The key to the trunk is lost! Ha! Scoundrels and thieves! [_He turns his pockets inside out._] I find nothing here!

SECOND BAILIFF.

Master Antony, calm yourself! Everybody knows that you are the most honest man in town!

ANTONY.

So? So?

[_Laughs._]

Yes,

I have used up all the honesty in the family! There, poor boy! There was none left for him! She too [_points to the dead body_] was much too virtuous!--Who knows whether or not the daughter--[Suddenly to CLARA_]

What do you think, my innocent child?

CLARA.

Father!

SECOND BAILIFF (_to ADAM_).

Have you no pity?

ADAM.

Pity? Am I prying into the old fellow's pockets? Am I forcing him to take off his stockings and turn his shoes inside out? I meant to start out with doing that--for I hate him like poison, ever since that time in the tavern when he--you know what I refer to, and you would feel insulted too, if you had any self respect about you!

[To CLARA.]

Where is your brother's room?

CLARA (_points_).

Back there!

[Both Bailiffs, exeunt.]

CLARA.

Father, he is innocent! He must be innocent! He is your son, my brother!

ANTONY.

Innocent, and a matricide?

[Laughs.]

A MAID (_enters with a letter to CLARA_).

From the cashier, Mr. Leonard.

ANTONY.

You need not read it! He declares himself free of you!

[Claps his hands.]

Bravo, scoundrel

CLARA (_reads it_).

Yes! Yes! Oh, my God

ANTONY.

Let him go!

CLARA.

Father, father, I cannot--

ANTONY.

You cannot? Cannot? What do you mean? Are you?--

Both BAILIFFS reenter.

ADAM (_ spitefully_).

Seek and ye shall find!

SECOND BAILIFF (_ to ADAM_).

What do you mean by that? Did it turn out so today?

ADAM.

Hold your tongue!

[_ Exeunt both._]

ANTONY.

He is innocent--and you--you--

CLARA.

Father, you are terrible!

ANTONY (_ grasps her hand very gently_).

Dear daughter, Carl is only a bungler. He has killed his mother, and what does it mean? His father remains alive! So, come to his aid--you cannot ask him to do everything alone. You must make an end of me! The old trunk still looks rugged, doesn't it? But it has begun to totter already--it will not cost you much trouble to fell it! You need not reach for the ax. You have a pretty face--I have never praised you, but today I will tell you, so that you may acquire courage and confidence. Your eyes, nose, mouth are surely admired! Become--You understand me?--Or tell me, I have an idea that you are already--

CLARA (_ almost crazy, throws herself with uplifted arms at the feet of her mother, and cries out like a child_).

Mother! Mother!

ANTONY.

Take your mother's hand and swear to me that you are what you should be!

CLARA.

I--swear--that--I--will--never--bring--disgrace--on--you!

ANTONY.

Good!

[He puts on his hat.]

It is beautiful weather! We will go out and run the gauntlet! Up the street! Down the street!

[Exeunt.]

ACT II

A Room in the Master Joiner's House.

SCENE I

ANTONY (_rises from the table_).

CLARA (_starts to clear off the dishes_).

ANTONY.

Have you lost your appetite again?

CLARA.

Father, I have had enough.

ANTONY.

But you have taken nothing!

CLARA.

I ate out in the kitchen.

ANTONY.

A bad appetite means a guilty conscience. Oh, well, we shall see--or was there poison in the soup, as I dreamt yesterday? Perhaps some wild hemlock got in with the other vegetables by mistake, when they were gathered?--In that case you did well!

CLARA. Great Heavens!

ANTONY.

Forgive me! I--Away with your pale sad look, which you stole from our Savior's Mother! One should look ruddy when one is young! There is but one who might show such a face, and he does not do it! Hey! A box on the

ear for every man who says "ouch!" when he cuts his finger! No man has any right to do that now, for here stands a man who--ugh!--self-praise stinks!--But what did I do when our neighbor started to nail down the cover of your mother's coffin?

CLARA.

You wrenched the hammer away from him and did it yourself, and said: "This is my masterpiece!" The preceptor, who was just then leading the choir boys in the dirge over by the door, thought you had gone crazy.

ANTONY.

Crazy?

[Laughs.]

Crazy. Yes, yes, it is a wise head that cuts itself off at the right time. Mine must be too firmly fastened on, or else--We squat down in the world and imagine ourselves sitting behind the stove in a good inn. Suddenly a light is placed on the table and, behold! we find ourselves sitting in a den of thieves! There is a bing! bang! on all sides, but no harm it done--fortunately we have hearts of stone!

CLARA.

Yes, father, so it is.

ANTONY.

What do you know about it? Do you think you have a right to curse with me because your clerk has deserted you? There will be another to take you walking Suliday afternoons, another to tell you that your cheeks are rosy and your eyes blue, and still another to take you as his wife, if you deserve it! Wait until you have borne the burdens of life in chastity and honor for thirty years, and have endured sorrow and death and every human adversity with uncomplaining patience; then let your son, who ought to stuff a soft pillow for your old head, come and so overwhelm you with disgrace that you would like to cry out to the earth: Swallow me, if it does not sicken thee, for I am muddier than thou! Then you may utter all the curses that I suppress in my bosom, then you may tear your hair and beat your breasts!--You have that advantage over me, for you are not a man!

CLARA.

Oh, Carl!

ANTONY.

I wonder what I shall do when I see him again before me, when he comes home some evening before candlelight with his hair shaved off--for hair-dressing is not allowed in the penitentiary--and stammers out a good evening, keeping his hand on the door-knob? I shall do something, that is certain--but what?

[Gnashes his teeth.]

And if they keep him locked up for ten years, he shall find me, for I

shall live until then--that much I know! Mark you, Death, what I say:
From now on I am a stone in front of your scythe! It shall fly to pieces
before it shall budge me!

CLARA (_grasps his hand_).

Father, you ought to lie down and rest for half an hour!

ANTONY.

To dream that you are about to be confined? And then to fly into a
passion and seize you, and afterward bethink myself too late and say:
"Dear daughter, I did not know what I was doing!" Thank you! My sleep
has dismissed the magician and employed a prophet, who points out
loathsome things to me with his bloody finger! I don't know how it
is--everything seems possible to me now. Ugh! I shudder at the future as
at a glass of water seen under the microscope--is that the right word,
Mr. Precentor? You have spelled it out for me often enough! I looked
through one once in Nuremburg at the fair, and couldn't drink any more
water all day long. Last night I saw my dear Carl with a pistol in his
hand; when I looked closer into his eyes he pulled the trigger. I heard
a cry, but could see nothing on account of the smoke. When it cleared
away, I saw no shattered skull--but my fine son had in the mean time
come to be a rich man; he was standing and counting gold pieces from one
hand into the other. His face--the Devil take me!--a man could have no
calmer one after working all day and closing the door of his workshop
behind him at night! Well, that's a thing one might prevent! One might
take the law into one's own hands, and afterward present one's self
before the supreme Judge!

CLARA.

Calm yourself!

ANTONY.

Get well again you mean to say! Why am I sick? Yes, doctor, hand me the
drink that shall make me well! Your brother is the worst of sons; be you
the best of daughters! Like a worthless bankrupt I stand before the eyes
of the world! I owed it a fine man to take the place of this weak
invalid, and I cheated it with a scoundrel! Be you such a woman as your
mother was, and then people will say: It does not come from his parents
that the boy went wrong, for the daughter treads the path of
righteousness and excels all others.

[_With terrible coldness._]

And I will do my part in the matter; I will make it easier for you than
it is for others. The moment I see anybody point his fingers at you, I
shall [with a motion toward his neck_] shave myself, and then, I swear
to you, I shall shave off head and all. Then you may say I did it from
fright, because a horse ran away in the street, or because the cat
overturned a chair on the floor, or because a mouse ran up my legs.
Anybody that knows me, to be sure, will shake his head at that, for I
am not easily frightened--but what difference does that make? I could
not endure to live in a world where the people would refrain from
spitting at me simply out of pity.

CLARA.

Merciful God! What shall I do?

ANTONY.

Nothing, nothing, dear child! I am too severe with you--I realize it. Do nothing--be just as you are, and it is all right. Oh, I have suffered such rank injustice that I myself must do injustice in order not to succumb to it when it grips me so hard! Listen! Not long ago I was going across the street when I met that pock-marked thief, Fritz, whom I had thrown into jail a few years ago because for the third time he had shown himself light-fingered in my house. Formerly the scoundrel never even dared to look at me; now he walked boldly up and offered me his hand. I felt like boxing his ears, but I bethought myself and did not even spit. We have been cousins for a week now, and it is proper for relatives to greet each other! The minister, the sympathetic man who visited me yesterday, said that no man had anybody to look out for but himself, and that it was unchristian pride for me to hold myself responsible for the sins of my son; otherwise Adam would have to take it just as much to heart as I. Sir, I verily believe that it no longer troubles our first ancestor in Paradise when one of his descendants begins to rob and murder.--But did not he himself tear his hair over Cain? No, no, it is too much! Sometimes I find myself looking around at my shadow to see if it too has not grown blacker. For I can endure anything and everything, and have given proof of it, but not disgrace! Put on my back what burdens you choose, but do not sever the nerve that holds me together!

CLARA.

Father, Carl has not yet confessed anything, and they have found nothing on him.

ANTONY.

What difference does that make to me? I have gone around the town and inquired at the different drinking-places about his debts. They amount to more than he could have earned under me in a quarter of a year even were he three times as industrious as he is! Now I know why he always left off work two hours later than I every evening, and why, in spite of that, he got up before me in the morning. But he soon saw that it all did no good, or else that it was too much trouble for him and took too long; so he embraced the opportunity when it presented itself!

CLARA.

You always believe the worst things you can of Carl! You have always done so! I wonder if you still remember how--

ANTONY.

You talk as your mother would, and I will answer you as I used to answer her--I will keep quiet!

CLARA.

And supposing Carl is acquitted? Supposing the jewels are found again?

ANTONY.

Then I would employ a lawyer and stake my last shirt to find out whether or not the burgomaster was justified in throwing the son of an honest citizen into prison. If he was, then I would submit; for a thing that can befall anybody I also must accept with resignation. And if to my misfortune it cost me a thousand times as much as it does others, I would attribute it to fate. And if God struck me down for it, I would fold my hands and say: "Lord, Thou knowest why!" If he was not justified, if it should appear that the man with the gold chain around his neck acted too hastily, because he thought of nothing except the fact that the merchant who missed his jewels was his brother-in-law, then people would find out whether the law has anywhere a gap in it, whether the king, who doubtless knows that justice is the one demand his subjects make in return for loyalty and obedience, and who least of all would wish to remain under obligation to one of the humblest of them, would allow that gap to remain unfilled. But all this is useless talk! The boy has no more chance of coming through this trial unscathed, than your mother has of rising from her grave alive! From him, neither now nor ever shall I have any consolation! And for that reason do you not forget what you owe me--keep your oath to me so that I shall not have to keep mine to you! [_goes out, but returns again._] I shall come home late tonight, for I am going out in the mountains to the old lumber-dealer's. He is the only man who still looks me in the eye as he used to, because he knows nothing of my disgrace. He is deaf; nobody can tell him anything without yelling himself hoarse, and even then he hears it all wrong.--So he finds out nothing!

[_Exit._]

SCENE II

CLARA (_alone_).

Oh, God! God! Have pity on me I Have pity on the old man! Take me to Thee! There is no other way to help him! The sunlight lies like a golden blanket on the street, and the children try to seize it with their hands. The birds fly hither and thither, and the flowers and weeds do not tire of growing higher. Everything is alive, everything wishes to be alive! Oh, Death! Thousands of sick people are at this moment shuddering with fear of thee! He who called for thee in the restless night, because he could no longer endure his sufferings, now finds his bed soft and downy again. I call upon thee! Spare him whose soul shrinks most fearsomely from thee, and let him live until the beautiful world becomes again gray and desolate! Take me in his stead! I shall not shudder when thou givest me thy cold hand; I shall grasp it and follow thee more bravely than ever yet a child of God has followed thee!

SCENE III

[_Enter the Merchant, _ WOLFRAM.]

WOLFRAM.

Good day, Miss Clara! Is your father at home?

CLARA.

He has just gone out.

WOLFRAM.

I have come--my jewels have been found!

CLARA.

Oh, father! Why are you not here?--He has forgotten his spectacles--there they lie! Oh, if he only notices it and returns for them!--How then? Where Who had them?

WOLFRAM.

My wife--tell me frankly, Miss: Have you ever heard anything strange about my wife?

CLARA.

Yes!

WOLFRAM.

That she--[Points to his brow.] Is that it?

CLARA.

That she is not altogether in her right mind, to be sure!

WOLFRAM (_bursting out_).

My God! My God! All in vain! Not a single servant that I have ever taken into my house have I allowed to leave me; to each one I have paid double wages and closed my eyes to all remissness, in order to buy their silence! And yet--the false, ungrateful creatures! Oh, my poor children! Only for your sake did I seek to conceal it!

CLARA.

Do not blame your servants! Surely it is not their fault! Ever since your neighbor's house burned down, and your wife stood at the open window laughing and clapping her hands at the fire, yes, and even puffing out her cheeks and blowing at it, as if she wanted to make it burn more furiously, people have had to choose between taking her for the devil himself or for a lunatic. And there were hundreds who saw that!

WOLFRAM.

That is true. And now, since the whole town knows about my misfortune, it would be foolish for me to exact a promise of you to keep still about it! So listen! The theft for which your brother is in prison was committed by a lunatic!

CLARA.

Your own wife!

WOLFRAM.

That she, who was once the noblest and most sympathetic soul in the world, has become malicious and mischievous; that she shouts and screams with joy when an accident happens before her eyes, when a maid breaks a glass or cuts her finger--I knew that long ago; but that she also takes things in the house and puts them out of sight, hides money and tears up papers--that, alas! I found out too late--only this noon! I had laid myself down on the bed and was just about to fall asleep, when I became conscious that she had tiptoed noiselessly up beside me, and was watching me intently to see if I were yet asleep. I closed my eyes tighter. Then she took the key from the pocket of my vest, which was hanging over a chair, unlocked my desk, took out a roll of gold pieces, locked the desk again and put back the key. I was horrified! But I restrained myself, so as not to disturb her. She went out of the room and I crept after her on tiptoe. She climbed up to the attic and threw the gold into an old chest, which has been standing there empty since the days of my grandfather. Then she glanced timidly around the room, and, without seeing me, hurried out again. I lighted a taper and searched the chest; in it I found my youngest daughter's doll, a pair of the maid's slippers, a ledger, several letters, and, alas! or, God be praised!--which shall I say?--away down underneath, the jewels!

CLARA.

Oh, my poor mother! It is too terrible!

WOLFRAM.

God knows I would gladly sacrifice the jewelry if, by so doing, I could undo what has already been done! But the fault is not mine! That my suspicions, in spite of my profound respect for your father, fell on your brother, was natural; he had polished the desk, and with him the jewels had disappeared. I noticed it almost immediately, for I had occasion to take some papers out of the drawer in which they lay. Still it did not occur to me to take stringent measures to arrest him immediately. Merely as a preliminary, I told Adam, the bailiff, about the matter, and besought him to keep his investigations absolutely secret. But he would not listen to the idea of sparing anybody; he declared he must and would bring the case to court at once, for, he said, your brother was a drunkard and a debt-contractor. And he has, alas, so much influence with the burgomaster that he can put through anything he wants to. The man seems to bear a bitter grudge against your father--I do not know why, but it was impossible to soothe him; he held his hands over his ears and called out, as he was hurrying away: "If you had given me the jewelry, it would not have made me as happy as this!"

CLARA.

Once in the tavern the bailiff put his glass down on the table by my father's and nodded to him as if he wanted to touch glasses with him. My father then took his away, and said: "People in red coats and blue trimmings used to have to drink out of glasses with wooden feet. Also they used to have to wait out in front of the window, or, if it was raining, by the door, and respectfully remove their hats when the landlord handed them the drink. Moreover, if they felt a desire to touch glasses with anybody, they waited until neighbor Hangman happened in." Oh, God! What is not possible in this world! My mother had to pay for

that with an untimely death!

WOLFRAM.

One should never anger anybody, and least of all bad people! Where is your father?

CLARA.

In the mountains at the lumber-dealer's.

WOLFRAM.

I'll ride out and hunt him up. I have already been at the burgomaster's, but unfortunately found him out. Otherwise your brother would be here now. But the Secretary has already dispatched a messenger! You will see him before evening! [_Exit._]

SCENE IV

CLARA (_alone_).

Now I should rejoice! Oh, God! And I can think of nothing except: Now it is you alone! And yet I have a feeling as though something must occur to me at once that would set everything right again!

SCENE V

Enter, the SECRETARY.

SECRETARY.

Good day!

CLARA (_seizes a chair to keep from falling_).

He! Oh, if only _he_ had not come back!

SECRETARY. Your father is not at home?

CLARA.

No!

SECRETARY.

I bring you good news. Your brother--No, Clara, I cannot talk to you in this formal way. All these tables, chairs, and cupboards that I know so well--Good day, old friend!

[_He nods to a cup-board._]

How are you? You have not changed a bit!--around which we used to romp as children--it seems to me they will put their heads together and deride me as a fool, unless I quickly assume another tone. I must "thou"

you, as I used to do! If you do not like it, just say to yourself: The big boy is dreaming, I will awaken him, I will step in front of him and draw myself up to my full height [_With gestures_], and let him see that it is no longer a little child that stands before him--[_He points to a scratch on the door_]--that shows how big you were at eleven!--but a very proper, grown-up girl, who could reach the sugar when it is upon the sideboard! Surely you remember! That was the place, the firm fortress, where it was safe from us even without being locked up. We used to amuse ourselves by slapping flies, when it stood there, because we could not endure to see them flying around happily and enjoying what we ourselves were unable to reach.

CLARA.

I should think people would forget about such things when they had hundreds and thousands of books to study.

SECRETARY.

Indeed they do forget it! To be sure, what does one not forget over Justinian and Gaius? Small boys who persistently resist their A B C's know very well why they do it; they have a presentiment that if they do not apply themselves too hard to the primer they will never have to struggle with the Bible. But it is a downright shame! People deceive the innocent souls! They are shown the red rooster with the basket full of eggs on the last page, so that of their own accord they say: "Ah!" And then there is no more holding back; they go tearing down the hill to Z, and so forth and so forth, until all of a sudden they find themselves in the midst of the _Corpus Juris_, and are horrified when they realize what a wilderness the accursed twenty-four letters have enticed them into--the letters, which, in the beginning, formed themselves, in a merry dance, only into nice-tasting and nice-smelling words such as "cherry" and "rose."

CLARA.

And [_Absent-mindedly, and without interest_]--what happens then?

SECRETARY.

That depends upon the difference of temperament. Some work themselves through. Those usually come forth into daylight again after three or four years, but looking somewhat thin and pale; however, one must not blame them for that; I myself am one of that kind. Others lie down in the middle of the forest; they intend merely to rest themselves, but they seldom get up again. I myself have a friend who has been drinking his beer for three years already in the shade of the _Lex Julia_; he selected the place on account of its name--it recalls pleasant memories. Still others give up in despair and turn back; those are the stupid ones; people let them out of one thicket only on condition that they will run at full speed into another. And then there are some who are still worse, and who don't get anywhere!

[_To himself._]

How one chatters when one has something in his mind and does not know how to bring it out!

CLARA.

Everything is bright and cheerful today; that's because it is such beautiful weather.

SECRETARY.

Yes, in weather like this the owls fall out of their nests, the bats kill themselves because they feel the devil has created them, the mole burrows so deep into the earth that he cannot find his way out again and must pitifully suffocate unless he bores through to the other side and emerges again in America. Today every ear of corn shoots up twice as high, and every poppy grows twice as red as usual, even if only out of shame at not having been so at first. Shall man remain behind? Shall he defraud the dear Lord of the only reward which His world offers Him--a happy face and a bright eye, which mirrors and at the same time transfigures all this gloriousness? Truly, when I see one of these recluses sneaking out of his door in the morning, his brow furrowed with wrinkles, and staring at the sky as if it were a vault of blotting-paper, I often think to myself: It is going to rain soon; God will have to let down the curtain of clouds, so that that sour face will not irritate Him. They ought to take legal action against fellows like that on the ground that they are thwarts of merry parties and destroyers of harvest weather. How are you going to render thanks for your life if not by living? Sing joyously, bird, or else you will not deserve your voice!

CLARA.

Oh, that is true, so true! It almost makes me cry!

SECRETARY.

It was not meant for you. That for eight days you have been breathing more heavily than you used to, I well understand--I know your father. But, God be praised! I can make your heart free again, and for that very purpose I am here. You shall see your brother again this very evening, and people shall point their fingers, not at him, but at those who cast him into prison. Does that deserve a kiss, a sisterly kiss, if it cannot be any other kind? Or shall we play blindman's buff for it?--If I do not catch you in ten minutes, I am to go away without the kiss and take a box on the ear into the bargain.

CLARA (_to herself_).

I feel as if I had suddenly grown to be a thousand years old, and time were standing still with me. I can go neither backwards nor forwards! Oh, all this brazen sunshine and cheerfulness round about me!

SECRETARY.

You do not answer me. To be sure, I forgot--you are engaged. Oh, girl! Why did you do that to me? And yet have I any right to complain? She is like all that is dear and good, and all that is dear and good should have made me think of her. And yet to me she was for years as if she no longer existed in the world! For that reason she--If it only were a fellow before whom one had to cast down one's eyes! But this Leonard--

CLARA (_suddenly, when she hears the name_).

I must go to him. That is just it--I am no longer the sister of a thief!--Oh, God! what shall I do? Leonard will, he must! He needs only not to be a fiend! Everything will be as it used to be [_Shudders_]--as it used to be!

[_To the SECRETARY._]

Do not be offended, Frederick!--Why are my legs so heavy all of a sudden?

SECRETARY.

You will--

CLARA.

To Leonard! Where else should I go? Only that one road lies before me in this world!

SECRETARY.

You love him, then! Well--

CLARA (_wildly_).

Love him? It is either he or death! Does anybody wonder that I choose him? I would not do it had I only myself to consider!

SECRETARY.

He or death? Girl, thus speaks Despair, or--

CLARA.

Do not make me frantic! Do not mention that word again! You! It is you I love! There! I cry it out to you as if I were already wandering on the other side of the grave, where no one blushes any more, where cold and naked forms glide past one another, because the fearful, holy presence of God has entirely consumed in every one all thought of others.

SECRETARY.

Me? Still me? Clara, I divined it when I saw you out in the garden.

CLARA.

Did you? Oh, the other too!

[_Gloomily, as if she were alone._]

He stepped up in front of me--he or I!--Oh, my heart, my accursed heart! In order to prove to him, prove to myself, that it was not so, or to stifle it if it were so, I did what now [_Breaks out into tears_]--God in Heaven! I would have pity on myself, were I Thou, and Thou I!

SECRETARY.

Clara, be my wife! I came to look once more into your eyes in the old way. Had you not understood the look I should have gone away again

without speaking. Everything that I am and have I now offer to you. It is little, but it may grow to be more. I should have been here long ago, but your mother was sick, and then she died.

[Illustration: Alfred Rethel DEATH PLAYING THE FINALE]

CLARA (_laughs crazily_).

SECRETARY.

Take courage, girl! The fellow has your word--that worries you. And, to be sure, it is a damnable thing! How could you--

CLARA.

Oh, ask me everything that conspires to drive a poor girl crazy! Scorn and derision from all sides when you went to the University, and did not let me hear from you.--"She still thinks of him!" "She thinks that child's play was meant seriously!" "Does she receive any letters from him?"--And then, too, my mother: "Stay with people of your class!" "Pride never succeeds!" "Leonard is a very nice fellow; everybody is surprised that you look at him over your shoulder so!" And added to all the rest, my own heart: "If he has forgotten you, show him that you too--" Oh, God!

SECRETARY.

I am to blame. I realize it. Well, what is difficult is not necessarily impossible. I will get him to release you. Perhaps--

CLARA.

Release me? There!

[_Throws LEONARD'S letter to him._]

SECRETARY (_reads_).

As cashier, I--your brother--thief--very sorry--but out of consideration for my office, I cannot help it--[_To CLARA._] He wrote you that on the very day your mother died? For he adds his condolence on her sudden death!

CLARA.

I suppose so!

SECRETARY.

The Devil take him! Great God, the cats, snakes and other monsters which, so to speak, slipped through Thy fingers at Creation, so delighted Beelzebub that he imitated Thy patterns--but he finished them off better than Thou didst; he put them in a human skin, and now they stand in rank and file with the rest of Thy humanity, and one does not recognize them until they begin to scratch and sting!

[_To CLARA._]

But it is well, indeed it is fine!

[He tries to embrace her.]

Come! Forever! With this kiss--

CLARA (_sinks into his arms_).

No, not forever! Only to keep me from falling--but no kiss!

SECRETARY.

Girl, you do not love him, you have your release--

CLARA (_gloomily, straightening herself up again_).

And yet I must go to him, I must throw myself on my knees before him and cry out: "Behold my father's white hairs! Take me!"

SECRETARY.

Unhappy girl! Do I understand you?

CLARA.

Yes!

SECRETARY.

No man can overlook that! Think of having to cast down one's eyes before a man into whose face one would like to spit!

[He presses CLARA wildly to him.]

Poor, poor girl!

CLARA.

Go now, go!

SECRETARY (_to himself, brooding_).

Or else one would have to shoot the dog who knows of it. Oh, that he had some courage about him! That he would stand up and fight! That one could force him to it! I should not be afraid of missing him!

CLARA.

I beg of you!

SECRETARY (_going_).

As soon as it grows dark!

[He returns and grasps CLARA's hand.]

Girl, you stand before me--[He turns away.]

Thousands of your sex would have kept it a secret with shrewd cunning, and only in an hour of sweet forgetfulness would have confided it

coaxingly to the ear and soul of their husbands. I feel what I owe you!

CLARA (_alone_).

Oh, my heart, lock yourself up! Crush yourself together so that not another drop of that blood may escape which would kindle again the congealing life in my veins! For a moment a feeling akin to hope arose in you again! Now for the first time I am conscious of it!

[_Laughs._]

No! No man can, overlook that! And if--could you yourself overlook it? Would you have had the courage to grasp a hand that--No! no! Such evil courage you would not have! You would with your own hands have to lock yourself into your hell, if any one tried to open the door from the outside. You are forever--Oh, alas, that the pain is intermittent, that the piercing agony sometimes ceases! That is the reason why it lasts so long! The tortured man imagines he is resting when the torturer merely pauses to get his breath. It is like a drowning man's catching his breath on the waves, when the current that has drawn him under spews him forth again only to seize him once more and draw him down. He has nothing but a double, futile fight for life!--

Well, Clara?--Yes, father, I am going! Your daughter will not drive you to self-destruction! Soon I shall be the wife of that man, or--God! No! I do not go begging for happiness--it is misery, the deepest misery that I beg for! You will give me my misery!--Away! Where is the letter?

[_She takes it._]

Three wells you pass on your way to him! You must not halt at any of them, Clara--you have not yet the right to do that!

[_Exit._]

ACT III

SCENE I

LEONARD'S Room.

LEONARD (_at a table covered with documents, writing_).

That makes the sixth sheet since dinner! How good a man feels when he is doing his duty! Now anybody that wanted to could come through the door, even the king himself! I should rise, but I should not feel embarrassed! I make just one exception--that is the old joiner! But, after all, he cannot do much to me! Poor Clara! I am sorry for her. I cannot think of her without uneasiness! If only it were not for that one cursed evening! It was really more jealousy than love that made me so frantic, and she must have yielded to me only to silence my reproaches--for she was as cold as death toward me! She has some bad days ahead of her! Oh, well, I too shall suffer considerable annoyance! Let everybody bear his own burden! Above all things I must make the affair with the little humpback secure, so that she cannot escape me when the storm breaks out! Then I

shall have the burgomaster on my side, and shall have nothing to fear!

SCENE II

Enter, CLARA.

CLARA.

Good evening, Leonard!

LEONARD.

Clara! [_To himself._]

This is something I did not expect!

[_Aloud._]

Did you not receive my letter? Surely--Perhaps you are coming for your father to pay the taxes! How much is it?

[_He fumbles in a ledger._]

I really ought to have it in my head!

CLARA.

I have come to give back your letter! Read it again!

LEONARD (_reads it with great seriousness_).

It is a perfectly sensible letter! How can a man who has public money in trust marry into a family to which [_he swallows a word_]--to which your brother belongs?

CLARA.

Leonard!

LEONARD.

But perhaps the whole town is mistaken! Your brother is not in prison? He never was in prison? You are not the sister of a--of your brother?

CLARA.

Leonard, I am my father's daughter! Not as the sister of an accused, innocent man, who has been set free--for my brother is at liberty--not as a girl who trembles before undeserved disgrace, for [_in a low voice_] I tremble still more before you, only as the daughter of the old man who gave me life, do I stand here!

LEONARD.

And you wish?--

CLARA.

Can you ask? Oh, that I might go away! My father will cut his throat, unless--Marry me!

LEONARD.

Your father--

CLARA.

He has sworn it! Marry me!

LEONARD.

Hand and neck are near cousins--they never do harm to each other! Don't be anxious!

CLARA.

He has sworn it! Marry me! And, afterward, kill me! I will thank you even more for the latter than for the former!

LEONARD.

Do you love me? Did your heart prompt you to come here? Am I the man without whom you cannot live and die?

CLARA.

Answer that yourself!

LEONARD.

Can you swear that you love me? That you love me as a girl loves a man to whom she is to bind herself forever?

CLARA.

No, that I cannot swear! But this I can swear Whether I love you or do not love you, that you shall never know! I will wait on you, I will work for you, you need give me nothing to eat, I will support myself, I will do sewing and spinning for other people at night, I will go hungry when I have nothing to do, I will rather bite a piece out of my own arm than go to my father and let him suspect anything! When you beat me, because your dog is not at hand, or because you have kicked him out, I will rather swallow my own tongue than emit a cry which will betray to the neighbors what is going on. I cannot promise that my skin will not show the welts caused by your whip, for that is not in my power. But I will lie about it, I will say that I fell head foremost against the cupboard, or that I slipped on the floor because it was too smooth--that I will do before anybody has time to ask me where the black and blue marks came from!--Marry me! I shall not live long! And if it lasts too long for you, if you do not care to meet the expenses of the divorce proceedings necessary to get rid of me, then buy some poison of the apothecary and put it somewhere as if it were for your rats. I will take it without your even nodding to me, and tell the neighbors with my dying breath that I took it for pulverized sugar!

LEANARD.

A man of whom you expect all this will certainly not surprise you if he says no!

CLARA.

Then may God not frown too severely on me if I come before he calls me! If I had myself alone to consider I would endure it patiently. If the world kicked me in my misery, instead of standing by me, I would bear it submissively and regard it as just punishment for I know not what! I would love my child, even if it had your features, and I would cry so much before the poor innocent thing that, when it grew older and wiser, it would certainly not despise and curse its mother. But it is not myself alone; and on Judgement Day I shall much more easily find an answer to the Judge's question: why did you drive your father to it?

LEANARD.

You talk as if you were the first woman and the last to find herself in your predicament! Thousands have gone through it before you and submitted to their fate. Thousands after you will be confronted with the same situation and accept their fate. Are all these others strumpets, that you are so anxious to stand in the corner by yourself? They also had fathers who invented a score of new oaths when they first heard of it, and talked about murder and homicide! Afterward they were ashamed of themselves and repented their oaths and blasphemies; they sat down and rocked the child, or fanned the flies away!

CLARA.

I readily believe that you fail to understand why anybody in the world should keep an oath.

SCENE III

Enter a boy

BOY.

Here are some flowers! I am not to say from whom they come!

LEANARD.

Oh, what pretty flowers!

[_He beats his brow._]

The devil! How stupid of me! I should have sent Some! How can I get out of it? I do not understand such things, and the little girl will take it to heart! She has nothing else to think about!

[_He takes the flowers._]

But I shall not keep all of them.

[_To_ Clara] How about it? These here signify repentance and shame, don't they? Did you not say that to me once?

CLARA (_nods_)

LEANARD (_To the boy_).

See here, boy, these are for me. I fasten them on me here, you see--where my heart is. These, these dark red ones, which burn like a dismal fire, you may take back. Do you understand? As soon as my apples are ripe, you may come for some!

BOY.

That is a long time off!

[_Exit_.]

SCENE IV

LEANARD.

Yes, you see, Clara; you spoke about keeping one's word. Just because I am a man of my word I must answer you again as I have already answered once before. A week ago I wrote you a letter--you cannot deny it--there it lies! [_He hands her the letter, which she takes mechanically_.] I had reason--your brother--you say he is acquitted--I am glad of that! But during these eight days I have entered into a new relation. I had a right to do it, for you did not protest against my letter at the right time! I was free in my own conscience, as well as before the law. Now you come to me--but I have already given my promise and received another's! [_To himself_.] I would it were so!--The other girl is already in the same predicament as you are! I am sorry for you, but [_He strokes her hair, and she permits it, as if she were absolutely unconscious of it_]--you understand?--One cannot trifle with the burgomaster!

CLARA (_absent-mindedly_).

Trifle with him!

LEONARD.

See! You are getting sensible! And as far as your father is concerned, you can say it boldly to his face that he alone is to blame. Do not stare at me so; do not shake your head! It is so, girl, it is so! Just tell him that! He'll understand it all right, and repent! I'll vouch for that! [_To himself_.] Any man who gives away his daughter's dowry must not be surprised if she remains an old maid. When I think of that my back gets stiff, and I could wish that the old fellow were here to receive a lecture. Why must I be such a monster?--Only because he was a fool! Whatever happens as a result of that, he is to blame for it! That is obvious!

[_To CLARA_.]

Or would you prefer to have me talk with him myself? For your sake I will risk a black eye and go to him. He may be rough with me, he may throw the boot-jack at my head, but he will have to swallow the truth in

spite of the stomach-ache it gives him, and let you rest in peace!--Is he at home?

CLARA (_stands up straight_).

I thank you!

[_Starts to go._]

LEONARD.

Shall I go over with you? I have the courage!

CLARA.

I thank you as I would thank a serpent which had wound itself around me and unwound itself and sprung away again, because another prey enticed it. I know that I have been bitten, I know that it deserts me only because it does not seem worth the trouble to suck out what little marrow there is left in my bones. But still I thank the snake, for now I shall have a quiet death. Yes, man, I am not mocking; to me it is as if I had seen through your breast down into the abyss of hell, and whatever may be my lot in the awful eternity to come, I shall never have anything more to do with you, and that is a consolation! And just as the unfortunate person whom a viper has stung cannot be blamed for opening his veins in terror and disgust, in order that his poisoned blood may stream swiftly forth, so perhaps God in His everlasting mercy will take pity on me when He looks down upon you and me and sees what you have made of me! For how _could_ I do it, when I never, never _should_ have done it?--One thing more: My father knows nothing, he does not even suspect anything! And that he may never find out I shall quit the world this very day! If I thought for one moment that you [_she takes a step, wildly, toward him_]--oh, but that is foolishness! You would be only all the better pleased to see them all stand and shake their heads and inquire in vain of one another why it happened!

LEONARD.

Things will happen--what is one to do, Clara?

CLARA.

Away from here! The man can talk!

[_She starts to go._]

LEONARD.

Do you think that I believe you?

CLARA.

No!

LEONARD.

Thank God, you cannot be a suicide without being an infanticide as well!

CLARA.

Better both than a parricide! Oh, I know that one cannot atone for one sin with another! But what I now do affects me alone! If I hand the knife to my father the blow strikes him as well as me! It strikes me in any case! That gives me courage and strength in all my distress! Things will go well with you on earth!

[Exit.]

SCENE V

LEONARD (_alone_).

"I must, I must marry her!" And why must I? She is going to do a crazy thing in order to keep her father from doing one. Where lies the necessity of my doing a still crazier thing in order to ward off hers? I cannot admit the necessity--at least not until I see before me the man who wants to get ahead of me with the most insane act of all! And if he thinks as I do about it there will be no end! That sounds quite sensible, and yet--I must follow her! Here comes somebody! Thank God!--Nothing is more ignominious than to have to be at variance with one's own thoughts! A rebellion in the head, in which one brings forth viper after viper and each one tries to eat the other or bite his tail, is the worst of all!

SCENE VI

Enter the SECRETARY.

SECRETARY.

Good evening!

LEONARD.

Mr. Secretary? To what do I owe the honor--

SECRETARY.

Leonard, you will see at once!

LEONARD.

You say Leonard to me?--To be sure, we used to be schoolmates!

SECRETARY.

And we may perhaps be death-mates too!

[He draws forth two pistols.]

Do you know how to handle these?

LEONARD.

I do not understand you!

SECRETARY (_cocks one of them_).

Do you see?--This is how it is done! Then you aim at me, as I am now doing at you, and pull the trigger! So!

LEONARD.

What are you talking about?

SECRETARY.

One of us two must die! Die! And immediately!

LEONARD.

Die?

SECRETARY.

You know why!

LEONARD.

By God, no!

SECRETARY.

No matter--it will occur to you all right when you are dying!

LEONARD.

I have no idea--

SECRETARY.

Bethink yourself! Otherwise I might take you for a mad dog that has unwittingly bitten the one I love most on earth, and shoot you down as such! But for half an hour more I must let you pass as my equal!

LEONARD.

But don't talk so loud! If anybody should hear you--

SECRETARY.

If anybody could hear me you would have called him long ago! Well?

LEONARD.

If it is about the girl--I can marry her, you know! I had, in fact, half made up my mind to do it, when she herself was here!

SECRETARY.

She was here! And has gone away again without having seen you contrite and repentant at her feet? Come! Come!

LEONARD.

I beg of you! You see before you a man who is ready to do anything that you dictate. This very evening I will betroth myself to her.

SECRETARY.

That I shall do, no one else. If the world itself hung on it you should not even touch the hem of her dress again! Come! Into the woods with me! But mark this! I shall take you by the arm, and if on the way you emit a single cry--[_He holds up a pistol._] I trust you believe me! Nevertheless, that you may not feel tempted, we will take the road through the garden behind the house!

LEONARD.

One of them is for me--give it to me!

SECRETARY.

So that you can throw it away and compel me to murder you or let you escape! Is that why you want it? Be patient, until we are on the spot! Then I shall divide with you honestly!

LEONARD (_goes, and accidentally knocks his drinking-glass from the table_).

Shall I never take another drink?

SECRETARY.

Courage, my lad! Perhaps it will go well with you! God and the devil seem to be forever fighting for the world! Who knows which is master just now?

[_Seizes him by the arm; exeunt both._]

SCENE VII

A Room in the Joiner's House; enter CARL.

CARL.

Nobody at home! Had I not known about the rat-hole under the threshold where they always hide the key when they all go out, I could not have got in! Well, that would not have made any difference! I could run around the city twenty times now and imagine to myself that there was no greater pleasure in the world than that of using one's legs! Let's have a light!

[_He strikes a light._]

I'll bet the tinder-box is in the same old place, for we have twice ten commandments in this house! The hat belongs on the third nail, not on the fourth! At half past nine one has to be tired! Before Martinmas one must not shiver; after Martinmas one must not sweat! That stands on a line with: Thou shalt love and fear God! I am thirsty!

[Calls.]

Mother! Fie! As if I had forgotten that she lies where even the innkeeper's boots no longer has to open his nut-cracker mouth with a "Yes, sir!" when he is called! I did not weep when I heard the funeral bell in my dark cell, but--Redcoat, you would not even let me roll the last ball at the bowling alley, although I already had it in my hand. Well, I shall not leave you time for a last breath when I meet you alone, and that may happen this very evening! I know where you are to be found about ten o'clock! Afterward, aboard ship!--I wonder where Clara is? I am as hungry as I am thirsty! Today is Thursday--they have veal broth for dinner. If it were winter, they would have had cabbage--before Shrove-Tuesday white cabbage--after Shrove-Tuesday, green cabbage! That is as fixed as Thursday's having to come when Wednesday has passed, so that it cannot say to Friday: You go in my place--my feet are sore!

SCENE VIII

Enter, CLARA.

CARL.

At last!--You should not kiss so much! Whenever four red lips meet a bridge for the devil is built!--What have you there?

CLARA.

Where? What?

CARL.

Where? What?--In your hand!

CLARA.

Nothing!

CARL.

Nothing? Is it a secret?

[He snatches LEONARD'S letter.]

Give me that! When the father is not here the brother is guardian!

CLARA.

I held fast to the scrap of paper, and yet the evening wind is so strong that it blows the tiles off the roofs. As I was passing the church one fell right in front of me, so that my foot struck against it. Oh, God! I thought--one more! And I stood still. That would have been fine; they would have buried me and said: "She met with an accident!"--But I waited in vain for the second.

CARL (_has read the letter_).

Thunder and--I'll lame the hand that wrote that!--Bring me a bottle of wine! Or is your savings box empty?

CLARA.

There is one more in the house. I had bought it secretly for mother's birthday and put it aside. Tomorrow would have been the day--[She turns away.]

CARL.

Give it to me!

CLARA (_brings the wine_).

CARL (_drinks quickly_).

Now we can start in again--planing, sawing, hammering, and, in between, eating, drinking, and sleeping, so that we can go on planing, sawing, and hammering, and on Sundays do a bit of praying into the bargain! I thank Thee, O Lord, that I may plane, saw, and hammer!

[_Drinks._]

Long live every good dog that is tied to a chain, and yet does not snap at everything around him!

[_He drinks again._]

And once more: Here's to his health!

CLARA.

Carl, do not drink so much! Father says the devil lurks in wine!

CARL.

And the priest says God lurks in wine! [_He drinks._] Let us see who is right! The bailiff was here at the house--how did he behave himself?

CLARA.

As if he had been in a den of thieves. No sooner had he opened his mouth than mother fell over and was dead!

CARL.

Good! If you hear tomorrow that the fellow has been found dead, then do not curse the murderer!

CLARA.

Surely you are not going to--

CARL.

Am I his only enemy? Has he not been often attacked already? Among so many it might be difficult to find the right man to attribute the deed

to, unless he left his cane or hat on the spot! [_He drinks.] Whoever it is: Good success to him!

CLARA.

Brother, you talk--

CARL.

Don't you like it? Never mind! You will not see me very much longer!

CLARA (_shudders with terror_).

No!

CARL.

No? So you know already that I am going to sea? Do my thoughts crawl around on my forehead, that you can read them so easily? Or did the old man fly into a passion in his old way and threaten to shut me out of the house? Bah! That would be very much the same thing as if the jailer had sworn to me: You shall not stay in prison any longer--I am going to shove you out into the open again!

CLARA.

You do not understand me!

CARL (_sings_).

A ship lies in the offing,
A-sporting with the winds.

Yes indeed, there is nothing to bind me to the bench here any longer! Mother is dead, there is no longer any one to stop eating fish after every storm, and that has been my wish from boyhood. Away! I shall not prosper here--at least not until I know for sure that luck no longer favors the brave fellow who stakes his life on the game, who throws back onto the table the copper coin that he has received from the great treasure, in order to see whether luck will pocket it or return it to him gilded!

CLARA.

And are you going away to leave your father all alone? He is sixty years old!

CARL.

Alone? Aren't you going to be left?

CLARA.

I?

CARL.

You! His pet child! What sort of weeds are growing in your head that you ask me that? By going, I leave his joy with him and free him of

his everlasting annoyance! Why shouldn't I do it? Once and for all we cannot get along together. He can't get things contracted enough to suit him. He would like to close his fist and creep inside it. I would like to strip off my skin like a baby's coat--if it were only practicable!

[Sings]

The anchor they are heaving,
I trow they'll soon be leaving,
Now look! Away she spins.

Tell me yourself: Did he doubt my guilt for a single instant? And did he not find the usual consolation in his over-wise: "Just as I expected!" "I have always thought so!" "It could not end in any other way!" If it had been you, he would have killed himself! I should like to see him if you were to suffer a woman's fate! It would be to him as if he himself had become pregnant--and by the devil besides!

CLARA.

Oh, what anguish! Yes, I must go! Away!

CARL.

What do you mean by that?

CLARA.

I must go into the kitchen! What else should I mean?

[Clasping her forehead.]

Yes! That too! Just to hear that I came home again!

[Exit.]

CARL.

She acts very strangely!

[Sings]

A bold and saucy sea-gull
Sweeps round, as if possessed--

CLARA. [Reenters.]

The last thing is done! Father's supper is on the fire! As I closed the kitchen door behind me, I thought to myself: You are never to enter there again! I shuddered in my very soul! Thus I shall go out of the room too, thus out of the house, thus out of the world!

CARL. [Sings; he continues to walk back and forth; CLARA remains in the background.]

Aloft the sun is burning,
The fishes, glancing, turning,
Circle about their guest.

CLARA.

Why do I not do it then? Shall I never do it? Am I going to continue putting it off from day to day, as I am now doing from one minute to the next, until--certainly! Then, away! Away! And yet I stand still! I have a feeling as if imploring hands were raised in my womb, as if eyes--[_ She sits down on a chair._] What does it mean? Am I too weak to do it? Then ask yourself if you are strong enough to see your father with his throat cut!--[_ She rises._] No! No!--Our Father, Who art in Heaven, hallowed be Thy name--God! God! My poor head! I cannot even pray! Brother! Brother! Help me!

CARL.

What's the matter with you

CLARA.

The Lord's Prayer!

[_ She bethinks herself._]

It seemed to me as if I were already lying in the water and sinking, and had not yet prayed! I [_ suddenly_]--Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those that trespass against us! That is it! Yes! Yes! Certainly I forgive him! I shall think no more of him!--Good night, Carl!

CARL.

Are you going to bed so soon? Good night!

CLARA. [_ Like a child, repeating the Lord's Prayer._]

Forgive us--

CARL.

You might bring me a glass of water first--but it must be absolutely fresh!

CLARA (_ quickly_).

I will bring it to you from the well!

CARL.

All right! If you want to. It is not far, you know.

CLARA.

Thank you! Thank you! That was the last thing that still troubled me! The deed itself would have betrayed me! Now people will say: She had an accident! She fell in!

CARL.

Be careful of yourself! The board has probably not been nailed down yet!

CLARA.

It is bright moonlight!--Oh, God, I am coming only because otherwise my father would come! Forgive me, as I--have mercy on me--mercy--[Exit.]

SCENE IX

CARL (_sings_).

I fain would be aboard her,
My kingdom's on the sea.

Yes, but first [_He looks at the clock._]--What time is it?--Nine o'clock.

A lad that's young and growing
Must e'en be up and going,
No matter where, says he.

SCENE X

Enter, Master ANTONY.

ANTONY.

I should have an apology to make to you, but if I forgive you for contracting secret debts and pay them off for you into the bargain, you will probably allow me to omit the apology?

CARL.

The one is good, the other is not necessary. As soon as I sell my Sunday clothes I shall myself be able to satisfy the people who have a claim of a few thalers against me. And that I shall do tomorrow, for as a sailor [_To himself_]--There, it is out! [_Aloud_]--I shall no longer need them!

ANTONY.

What kind of talk is that again?

CARL.

This is not the first time you have heard it, but today you may answer me as you will! My mind is made up!

ANTONY.

You are of age, that is true!

CARL.

And just because I am of age I am not defiant about it! For in my opinion birds and fishes should not quarrel over the question whether it is better in the water or in the air. Just one thing--either you will never see me again, or else you will clap me on the shoulder and say:

Well done!

ANTONY.

We'll wait and see! I shall not have to pay off the fellow that I have taken on in your place. That's all.

CARL.

I thank you.

ANTONY.

Tell me: Did the bailiff, instead of taking you by the shortest way to the burgomaster, really lead you around through the whole town and--

CARL.

Up the street, down the street, across the marketplace like a carnival ox! But do not doubt it--I shall settle up with him too before I go!
ANTONY.

I do not blame you for that, but I forbid you to do it! CARL.

Ho!

ANTONY.

I'll not let you out of my sight! I myself would run to the man's aid, if you tried to attack him!

CARL.

I thought that you loved my mother too!

ANTONY.

I shall prove it!

SCENE XI

SECRETARY (_staggering in; he is pale, and is holding a handkerchief against his breast_). Where is Clara? [_He falls into a chair_.]
God!--Good evening! Thank Heaven that I had time to get here!--Where is she?

CARL.

She went to--Where is she? Her talk--I am afraid--[_Exit_.]

[Illustration: DEATH AS FRIEND _From a Drawing by Alfred Rethel_]]

SECRETARY.

She is avenged! The scoundrel is done for! But I too am--Oh, why did it have to be?--God! Now I cannot--

ANTONY.

What's the matter with you? What ails you?

SECRETARY.

It is nearly up with me! Give me your hand on it, that you will not cast off your daughter--do you hear?--will not cast her off, if she--

ANTONY.

That is strange talk! Why should I, pray--Ha! My eyes are opening!--Was I right after all in suspecting?--

SECRETARY.

Give me your hand!

ANTONY.

No!

[He puts both hands into his pockets.]

But I will clear the way for her--she knows that! I have told her so.

SECRETARY (_horrified_).

You told her!--unhappy girl! Now for the first time I quite understand--

CARL (_rushes in_).

Father! Father! There is somebody lying in the well! If only it is not--

ANTONY.

The long ladder! Hooks! Ropes! Why do you delay? Quick! Even were it the bailiff!

CARL.

Everything is already there! The neighbors arrived before me! If only it is not Clara!--

ANTONY.

Clara?

[He grasps the table.]

CARL.

She went to draw water, and they found her handkerchief!

SECRETARY.

Scoundrel, I know now why your bullet hit the mark! It is she!

ANTONY.

Go and find out!

[He, sits down.]

I cannot!

[Exit CARL.]

And yet--

[Rises again.]

If [to the SECRETARY] I understood you correctly, everything is all right!

CARL (_reenters_).

Clara! Dead! Her head terribly crushed on the edge of the well, as she--Father, she did not fall in, she jumped in! A maid saw her!

ANTONY.

Let her think before she speaks! It is not light enough for her to have distinguished things with certainty! SECRETARY. Do you doubt it? You would like to, but you cannot! Think only of what you said to her! You pointed out to her the road to death! I, I alone am to blame that she did not turn back! When you suspected her misery, you thought only of the tongues that would hiss at you, but not of the worthlessness of the snakes to which they belonged! Then you uttered a word that drove her to despair! And I, instead of catching her in my arms when her heart was bursting with nameless anguish before me, thought only of the scoundrel who could make light of it. And now I pay with my life for having made myself so dependent upon a man who was worse than I! And you too, who stand there so stolidly, you too will say one day: Daughter, I would to God you had not spared me the head-shaking and shoulder-shrugging of the Pharisees about me! It crushes me more deeply that you cannot sit by my death-bed and wipe the sweat of anguish from my brow!

ANTONY.

She spared me nothing! People have seen it!

SECRETARY.

She did the best she could! You did not deserve to have her act succeed!

ANTONY.

Or she did not!

[Tumult outside.]

CARL. They are coming with her!

[Starts to go.]

ANTONY (_immovable, as to the end; calls after him_).

Into the back room, where your mother stood!

SECRETARY.

Away to meet her!

[_He attempts to rise, but falls back._]

Oh, Carl!

CARL (_helps him up and leads him away_).

ANTONY.

I no longer understand the world!

[_Stands brooding._]

* * * * *

SIEGFRIED'S DEATH

A TRAGEDY IN FIVE ACTS

By FRIEDRICH HEBBEL

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

KING GUNTHER

HAGEN TRONJE

DANK WART

VOLKER

GISELHER

GERENOT

WULF _Warrior_

TRUCES _Warrior_

RUMOLT

SIEGFRIED

UTE

KRIEMHILD

BRUNHILDA, _Queen of Iceland_

FRIGGA, _her nurse_

A CHAPLAIN

A CHAMBERLAIN

Warriors, Populace, Maidens, Dwarfs

SIEGFRIED'S DEATH (1862)

TRANSLATED BY KATHARINE ROYCE

ACT I

Iceland, BRUNHILDA'S castle. Early morning.

SCENE I

Enter BRUNHILDA and FRIGGA from opposite sides.

BRUNHILDA.

From whence so early? Dewy is thy hair
And blood-stained are thy garments.

FRIGGA.

I have made
A sacrifice unto the ancient gods,
Before the moon was gone.

BRUNHILDA.

The ancient gods!
The cross rules now, and Thor and Odin dwell
As devils in deep hell.

FRIGGA.

And dost thou fear
Them less for that? Their curses still may fall
Upon us, though their blessings are withheld,
And willingly I sacrificed the ram.
Oh, wouldst thou kill one too! Thy need is great
Above all others.

BRUNHILDA.

Mine?

FRIGGA.

Another time.
I long had meant to tell thee, and today
At last the hour has come.

BRUNHILDA.

I've always thought
That at thy death the hour would come to me,
So did not importune thee.

FRIGGA.

Mark me now!
From our volcano came there suddenly
An aged man and left with me a child,
A tablet, too, with runes.

[Illustration: Peter Cornelius Title Page of the Nibelungenlied]

BRUNHILDA.

'Twas in the night?

FRIGGA.

How dost thou know?

BRUNHILDA.

When on thee falls the moonlight--On
thy face, thou speakest oft aloud,
Betraying much.

FRIGGA.

And thou didst harken to me?
At midnight we were watching with our dead--Our
beauteous Queen. The old man's hair was white,
And longer than a woman's. Like a cloak
It hung about him, flowing softly down.

BRUNHILDA.

The spirit of the mountain!

FRIGGA.

Naught know I!--
No syllable he spoke. The little maid
Reached forth her hands and grasped the golden crown
That glittered brightly o'er the dead Queen's brow.
We marveled that it fitted her.

BRUNHILDA.

The child?

FRIGGA.

The little maid; and it was none too large,
Nor later did it bind her.

BRUNHILDA.

'Twas like mine!

FRIGGA.

Like thine it was! And, yet more wonderful.
The child was like the maid that lay there dead
Within the mother's arms and disappeared
As had it ne'er existed--yes, so like
That only by the breathing could we know
The living from the dead. It seemed to us
That nature must have formed one body twice,
With life for one child only.

BRUNHILDA.

Had the Queen
A new-born baby in her arms?

FRIGGA.

Her life
She gave to bear her child, and with her died
The little maid.

BRUNHILDA.

Thou didst not tell me that.
FRIGGA. I never thought to tell thee. Sorrow broke
The mother's heart that she could never show
Her baby to her lord. For many years
This priceless joy in vain he had desired,
And, just a month before the child was born,
A sudden death o'ertook him.

BRUNHILDA.

Tell me more!

FRIGGA.

We sought the aged man, but he was gone.
The glowing mountain that had been cleft through
As one might split an apple, slowly now
Was drawn together there before our eyes.

BRUNHILDA.

The old man came no more?

FRIGGA.

Now hark to me!
Next morning to the grave we bore our Queen;
But when the priest was ready to baptize

The little maid, his arm fell helpless down,
Nor could he touch her forehead with the dew
Of holy water, and his good right arm
He never lifted more.

BRUNHILDA.

What, never more!

FRIGGA.

The man was old, and so we marveled not.
We called another priest. The holy dew
He sprinkled on the child. The blessed words
Of benediction halted on his tongue,
Nor hath his speech returned.

BRUNHILDA.

And now the third?

FRIGGA.

For him we waited long. We had to seek
In other lands afar, where of the tale
None knew. At last this priest baptized the child.
His holy office ended, down he fell
Upon the ground and nevermore arose!

BRUNHILDA.

And did the baby live

FRIGGA.

She throve apace,
And strong she grew. Her playful ways to us
Were signs what we should do or leave undone.
They ne'er deceived us, for the runes had said
That we might trust them ever.

BRUNHILDA.

Frigga! Frigga!

FRIGGA.

Thou art indeed the maid! Now dost thou know
Not in the gloomy caverns of the dead,
In Hecla where the ancient gods still dwell,
Among the Norns, among the Valkyries,
Seek thou the mother that gave birth to thee!
Oh, that no drop of holy water e'er
Had touched thy brow! Then were we wiser far.

BRUNHILDA.

What dost thou murmur?

FRIGGA.

How then did it hap
That on this morning we were not in bed,
But fully robed had tarried in the hall?
Our teeth were chattering and our lips were blue.

BRUNHILDA.

A sudden sleep o'erwhelmed us, that was all.

FRIGGA.

But had it ever happened?

BRUNHILDA.

Not before.

FRIGGA.

Then hark! The old man came and tried to speak.
It almost seems as if I'd seen him stand
And grasp thy shoulder; and he threatened me,
But heavy was thy sleep. Thou should'st not hear
What fate awaits thee if thou dost persist.
So offer sacrifice and then be free.
Oh, had I paid no heed unto the priest,
Howe'er he urged me! But the sacred runes
I had not read aright.--Come, sacrifice,
For danger cometh nigh.

BRUNHILDA.

'Tis nigh?

FRIGGA.

Alas!
Thou knowest that the fiery sea is quenched
That flamed around thy castle.
BRUNHILDA. Yet the knight
Still lingers who should wield the magic sword
And on his war-horse gallop through the flames,
When he had won proud Fafner's ill-starred hoard.

FRIGGA.

I may have erred. But yet this second sign
Cannot deceive me, for I long have known
That when the fateful hour shall come to thee,
Clear vision doth await thee. Sacrifice!
Mayhap the ancient gods surround thee now
Invisibly, and they will straight appear
With the first blood-drops of thine offering.

BRUNHILDA.

I do not fear.

[_Trumpets are heard._]

FRIGGA.

The trumpets!

BRUNHILDA.

Hast thou ne'er
Heard them before.

FRIGGA.

Never before with dread.
The time for lopping thistle-heads is past,
And iron helms arise before thee now.

BRUNHILDA.

Come hither all! For I will let her see
Brunhilda still can conquer! While the sea
Of fire still flamed I hastened forth to meet ye,
And friendly, as a trusty dog will spring
To give his master room, my faithful fire
Drew back before me, sank on either hand;
The road stands open now, but not my heart.

[_She ascends her throne._]

Now fling the portals wide and let them in!
Whoever here may come, his head is mine!

SCENE II

The gates are opened. Enter SIEGFRIED, GUNTHER, HAGEN and VOLKER

BRUNHILDA.

Who cometh seeking death?

(_To SIEGFRIED._)

Ah! Is it thou?

SIEGFRIED.

I am not seeking death, nor will I sue.
And too much honor dost thou yield to me
In greeting Gunther's guide before himself,
For I am but his helper.

BRUNHILDA (_turning to GUNTHER_).

Then 'tis thou?
And know'st thou what is toward?

GUNTHER.

Full well I know!

SIEGFRIED.

The rumor of thy beauty spreads abroad,
But further still the fame of thy hard heart.
And who hath gazed but once in thy deep eyes
Will nevermore forget, e'en in his cups,
That dreadful death beside thee always stands.

BRUNHILDA.

Tis true! Who cannot conquer, he must die,
And all his servants with him. Smilest thou?
Be not so proud! For if thou cam'st to me
As thou could'st hold a beaker full of wine
On high above thy head and still could'st gaze
On me as on a picture, yet I swear
That thou shalt fall as any other falls.

(_TO GUNTHER._)

But thee I counsel, if thine ears can hear,
List to my maidens! Bid them tell the tale
Of heroes that my hand hath laid full low!
The chance may hap among them there is one
Hath tried his strength with thee. There may be one
Hath laid thee conquered at his very feet!

HAGEN.

Ne'er was King Gunther conquered. That I vow!

SIEGFRIED.

High stands his castle by the Rhine at Worms,
And rich are all the treasures of his land;
Yet o'er all heroes stands he higher still,
And richer far in honors is our King.

HAGEN.

Thy hand, thou lowlander! Thou speakest well!

VOLKER.

And would it be so hard to leave this land
Amidst the ocean's desert solitude--
Of thy free will to leave it, and the King
To follow forth to life from night and hell?
This land is like no other on the earth.--
A desert waste, a rockbound wilderness;
All living things have fled long since in fear,
And if thou lovest it, 'tis only this,
That thou wast born the last of all thy race.
Above, the storms rage ever, and the sea
Forever surgeth and the fiery mount
In labor moaneth, while the fearful light
That streameth ruddy from the firmament,

As streams the blood from sacrificial stone,
Is such as devils only may endure.--
To breathe the air is like to drinking blood!

BRUNHILDA.

What knowest thou of this my wilderness?
Naught have I lacked from that fair world of thine.
And if I longed for aught, that would I take.
Remember that! Brunhilda needs no gifts!

SIEGFRIED.

Did I not tell ye true? To arms! To arms!
By force must she be brought from her wild home!
And once 'tis done, then will she give thee thanks.

BRUNHILDA.

Perchance that is not true. And knowest thou
The sacrifice thou askest? Thou know'st not,
And no man knoweth. Harken now to me,
And ask yourselves how I'll defend my rights.
With us the time is motionless; we know
Nor spring nor summer nor the autumntide.
The visage of the year is e'er the same,
And we within the land are changeless too.
But although nothing grows and blooms with us,
As in the sunlight of your distant home,
Still in our darkness ripen precious fruits
That in your land ye neither sow nor reap.
In the fierce joy of battle I delight
To conquer every haughty foe that comes
To steal my freedom. And I have my youth,
My glorious youth, and all the joy of life,
Which still suffice me, and, ere these I lose,
The benediction of the fates will fall
Invisibly upon me. I shall be
Their consecrated priestess evermore.

FRIGGA.

Is't possible? My offering sufficed?

BRUNHILDA.

The solid earth shall open 'neath my feet
Revealing all that's hidden in its depths;
And I shall hear the singing of the stars,
And their celestial music understand.
And still another joy shall be my share,
A third one, all impossible to grasp.

FRIGGA.

'Tis thou, 'tis Odin, hast unsealed her eyes!
In the deep night her ear was closed to thee--
Yet now she sees the spinning of the Norns.

BRUNHILDA (_rising to her full height, with fixed and dreaming eyes_).

There comes a morning when I do not go
To hunt for bears, or find the great sea-snake
That's frozen in the ice, and set him free,
So that his struggles may not smite the stars.
I leave the castle early, bravely mount
My faithful steed. He bears me joyfully,
But suddenly I halt. Before my feet
The earth has turned to air, and shuddering
I wheel about. Behind me 'tis the same!
All is transparent--glowing clouds beneath,
As overhead. My maidens prattle still.
I call them--Are ye blind? Do ye see naught?
We float in empty space! They are amazed,
They shake their heads in silence, while they press
About me closer. Frigga whispers me:
And has thine hour come? Ah, now I see!
The solid earth is crystal to my gaze,
And what I deemed were clouds were but the web
Of gold and silver threads that, glistening,
Lay tangled in the depths.

FRIGGA.

Thy triumph comes!

BRUNHILDA.

An evening comes. All's changed, and lingering
We sit here late together. Suddenly,
As they were dead, the maidens fall; their words
Are frozen on their lips. I needs must go
Upon the tower, for above me rings
The sep'rate music of each farthest star.
At first 'tis only music to mine ear,
But with the dawn I murmur as in sleep:
The King will die ere nightfall and his son
Will never see the daylight, for he dies
Within his mother's womb! The others say
That so I told my tale, but I know naught
Of how I learned it. Soon I understand,
And swift the rumor flies from pole to pole
And distant people flock as now to me,
But not with swords to battle with me here--
Nay, humbly come they, laying by their crowns,
To hear my dreams and strive to understand
The meaning of my murmurings. For my eyes
Can see the future, in my hands I hold
The key to all the treasures of this world.
Far above all I rule, untouched by fate,
And yet the fates I know. But I forget.
That even more is promised me. There roll
Whole centuries away--millenniums--
I feel them not! Yet finally I ask:
Where then is death? My tresses answer me--
I see them in the mirror--they are black,
The snow has never touched them, and I say:

This is the third gift. Death comes not to me.

[_She sinks back, and the maidens support her_.]

FRIGGA.

Why fear I still? For were it[1] Balmung's lord,
She hath a shield that will protect her now.
He'll fall, e'en if she loves but yet resists,
And she will struggle, since her fate she knows.

BRUNHILDA (_rising again_).

I spoke! What said I?

FRIGGA.

Take thy bow, my child.
Thy dart will fly today as ne'er before,
All else may wait!

BRUNHILDA (_to the knights_).

Come on!

SIEGFRIED (_to_ BRUNHILDA).

Thou swear'st
To follow us if thou art overcome?

BRUNHILDA (_laughs_).

I swear!

SIEGFRIED.

'Tis well! And I'll prepare the ship!

BRUNHILDA (_while going away addresses_ FRIGGA).

Go now into the trophy hall and drive
The nail that will be needed.

(_To the knights_.)

Follow me!

[_Exeunt omnes_.]

ACT II

Worms. Courtyard of the Castle.

SCENE I

Enter RUMOLT _and_ GISELHER, _meeting_.

GISELHER.

Now, Rumolt, will a single tree be left?
For weeks now thou hast brought whole forests in
And grimly thou provid'st the wedding feast,
As if men, dwarfs, and elves were all to come.

RUMOLT.

I make me ready, and if I should find
A single kettle that's not full enough,
I'll seize the lazy cook and throw him in
And use the scullion-boy to stir the stew.

GISELHER.

Art thou so certain what the end will be?

RUMOLT.

I am, for Siegfried woos. The man who takes
Two noble princes captive, sends them home
As though they were no more than frightened hares,
Will not be daunted by a witch-wife now.

GISELHER.

There thou art right! We have good hostages
Since we have Luedegast and Luedeger!
They meant to bring a host of armed men,
A greater than e'er Burgundy had seen.
Yet humbly here as prisoners they came,
Nor needed any guard upon their way.
So cook, my man, we shall not want for guests!

[GERENOT _enters_.]

And here's the hunter!

GERENOT.

But he brings no game!
I was upon the tower and saw the Rhine
All covered o'er with ships.

RUMOLT.

It is the bride!
I'll send my men to drive the beasts about,
That from the noisy turmoil in the court
The sound shall reach afar and prove to her
The welcome that awaits her!

[_Trumpets are heard_.]

GERENOT.

'Tis too late!

SCENE II

Enter SIEGFRIED, _with retinue_.

SIEGFRIED.

Here am I once again!

GISELHER.

Without my brother?

SIEGFRIED.

Nay, fear not! As his messenger I come!--
And yet I bear the message not for thee!
'Tis for thy Lady Mother, and I hope
That I may see thy sister Kriemhild, too.

GISELHER.

Brave knight, that shalt thou, for we owe to thee
Our thanks for capturing the noble Danes.

SIEGFRIED.

I wish that I had never sent them here.

GISELHER.

Why so? Thou hadst no better way to prove
What we have gained in winning thy right arm,
For truly are the Princes stalwart men!

SIEGFRIED.

It may be! Yet had I not done the deed,
Perhaps some bird had flown and spread abroad
The rumor that the Danes had slain me there,
And I might ask how Kriemhild heard the tale.

GISELHER.

But as it is they help thy cause enough!
That one can take good metal and alloy
And beat them into trumpets smooth and round,
I long have known. But that one could shape men
In such a way I knew not, but these two
Show us the work of such a smith as thou.
They praised thee--If thou hadst been there to hear,
Thy cheeks would still flame scarlet! Yet 'twas not
With measured praise, as men will praise their foe,
Thinking to lessen thus the burning shame
Of their own downfall. No, 'twas heartfelt praise.

But you should hear Kriemhilda tell the tale.
Unweariedly she asked them o'er and o'er.--
She's coming now.

SCENE III

Enter UTE _and_ KRIEMHILD.

SIEGFRIED.

I pray you!

GISELHER.

What's thy wish?

SIEGFRIED.

I never longed to have my father by,
That he might teach me how to bear my arms,
But ah! today I need my mother so,
That I might ask her how to use my tongue.

GISELHER.

Give me thy hand, since thou art shamefaced too.
They call me here "the child." Now let them see
A "child" may lead a lion!

[_He leads_ SIEGFRIED _to the women_.]

'Tis the knight
From Netherland!

SIEGFRIED.

Fair ladies, do not fear,
Because I've come alone.

UTE.

Brave Siegfried, no!
We do not fear, for thou art not the man
Who's left alone when all but he are dead,
To bear his tale, a messenger of woe.
Thou comest to announce a daughter dear,
And Kriemhild hath a sister.

SIEGFRIED.

So it is,
My Queen!

GISELHER.

So is it! Nothing more? And scarce
Those few words could he utter! Dost thou grudge

The king his bride? Or hast thou lamed thy tongue
In battle? That was never known before.
But no, for thou could'st use it fast enough
To tell me of Brunhilda's dark brown eyes
And raven tresses.

SIEGFRIED.

Prithee, say not so!

GISELHER.

How hotly he denies it! See him raise
On high three fingers, swearing that he loves
Blue eyes--light hair!

UTE.

This is an arrant rogue!
He is nor boy nor man, sapling nor tree.
And long hath he outgrown his mother's rod,
Nor ever hath he felt his father's whip.
Ungoverned is he as a yearling colt,
That's never known the bridle or the whip.
We must forgive or punish him!

SIEGFRIED.

'Twere not
So easy as you think! To break a colt
Is difficult, and many limp away
Ashamed, and cannot mount him!

UTE.

Then once more
He 'scapes his punishment!

GISELHER.

As a reward,
I'll tell a secret to thee.

KRIEMHILD.

Giselher!

GISELHER.

What hast thou to conceal? Be not afraid!
I do not know thy secret, nor will blow
The ashes from thy embers.--Never fear!

UTE.

What is it then?

GISELHER.

I have myself forgotten.
When a man's sister blushes rosy-red,
'Tis natural a brother is surprised
And seeks to know the reason.--Never mind!
The secret I'll recall before I die,
And then shall Siegfried learn it.

SIEGFRIED.

Thou may'st jeer,
For I forget my message utterly,
And ere I've given word that you should don
Your festal garments, do the trumpets blow,
And Gunther and his train bring in the bride!

GISELHER.

Dost thou not see the steward hastening?
Thy very coming told enough to him!
But I will help!

[He goes to_ RUMOLT.]

KRIEMHILD.

A noble messenger
May not be paid with gifts!

SIEGFRIED.

Indeed he may!

KRIEMHILD (_fastens her bracelet and in so doing drops her
handkerchief)_.

SIEGFRIED (_snatches at the handkerchief)_.

This is my gift.

KRIEMHILD.

Pray, no! 'Twere all unworthy!

SIEGFRIED.

Jewels I value as another, dust.
And houses can I build of gold and silver,
Yet lack I such a kerchief!

KRIEMHILD.

Take it then!
It is my handiwork.

SIEGFRIED.

And thy free gift?

KRIEMHILD.

My noble Siegfried, yes, 'tis my free gift.

UTE.

I crave thy pardon--it is time to go!

[_Exit, with_ KRIEMHILD.]

SCENE IV

SIEGFRIED.

A Roland[2] would have stood as stood I here!
I wonder that the sparrows did not nest
Within my hair.

SCENE V

Enter the CHAPLAIN.

CHAPLAIN (_advances_).

Your pardon, noble sir,
Has Brunhild been baptized?

SIEGFRIED.

She is baptized.

CHAPLAIN.

Then 'tis a Christian land from which she
comes?

SIEGFRIED.

They fear the cross.

CHAPLAIN (_steps back again_).

Perchance 'tis there as here!
Where men will place it next to Wotan's tree
Right gladly, for they do not surely know
If magic may not dwell there; as we see
Devoutest Christians hesitate to break
A heathen image, for some remnant still
Awakes within them of the olden fear
Before those staring eyes.

SCENE VI

Flourish of trumpets. BRUNHILDA, FRIGGA, GUNTHER, HAGEN, VOLKER,
retainers, KRIEMHILD _and_ UTE _approach them from the castle_.

GUNTHER.

And here's the castle!
My mother's coming now to welcome thee,
Kriemhilda too.

VOLKER (_to BRUNHILDA, _as the women approach each other_).

Are they no gain to thee?

HAGEN.

Siegfried, a word! Thy trick availed us naught.

SIEGFRIED.

Availed us naught? Was she not vanquished then?
Is she not here?

HAGEN.

What profit is in that?

SIEGFRIED.

Why, all!

HAGEN.

But nay! Who cannot take by force
Her first caress will master nevermore
This maid, and Gunther is not strong enough.

SIEGFRIED.

And has he tried?

HAGEN.

Why else should I complain?
In full sight of the castle! She at first
Resisted him, as it befits a maid,
And as our mothers may have done of old;
But when she saw that but the lightest touch
Sufficed to drive the ardent wooer forth,
She grew enraged, and, when he tarried still,
She seized and held him with her outstretched arm
Above the Rhine. A shame it was to him,
A shame to all of us.

SIEGFRIED.

She is a witch!

HAGEN.

Chide not, but help!

SIEGFRIED.

I think that if the priest
But married them--

HAGEN.

Were that old hag not there,
The woman that attends her! All day long
She spies and questions, and she sits by her
As the embodiment of wise old age.
I fear the nurse the most.

UTE (_to_ KRIEMHILD _and_ BRUNHILDA).

Now love each other,
And may the circlet that your arms have twined
In this first joyful moment widen out
Further and further to a perfect ring
Within which you may wander, side by side,
Sharing your joys in harmony complete!
Yours is a privilege that I had not,
For what I might not say unto my lord
I had to bear in silence; but at least
I could not speak complainingly of him.

KRIEMHILD.

Let us be like two sisters.

BRUNHILDA.

For your sake
Your son and brother may imprint the seal
Upon my lips that stamps me as his maid
Before the nightfall comes, for I am still
Unblemished and untouched like some young tree,
And were it not for your sweet gentleness
Forever would I hold this shame afar.

UTE.

Thou speak'st of shame?

BRUNHILDA.

Forgive me for that word;
I speak but as I feel. And I am strange
Here in your world, and as my rugged land
Would surely terrify you, were you there,
So does your land alarm me, for I feel
That here I could not have been born at all--Yet
must I live here!--Is the sky so blue
Forever?

KRIEMHILD.

Nearly all the time 'tis blue.

BRUNHILDA.

We know not blue, unless we see blue eyes,
And those we only have with ruddy hair
And milk-white faces! Is it always still,
And does the wind blow never?

KRIEMHILD.

Sometimes storms
O'erwhelm the land, and then the day is night
With thunderpeals and lightning.

BRUNHILDA.

Would it come
Today!--'Twould be a greeting from my home!
I cannot well endure the brilliant light;
It pains me and it makes me feel so bare,
As if no garment here were thick enough!
And are those flowers--red and gold and green?

KRIEMHILD. Thou ne'er hast seen them, yet thou know'st their hues?

BRUNHILDA. Of precious stones there is with us no lack--
Though never white or black ones; yet my hands
Have taught me white, and raven is my hair.

KRIEMHILD. Thou canst not know of fragrance!

[_ She plucks a violet for her_.]

BRUNHILDA.

Oh how sweet!
And is't that tiny flower that breathes it forth--
The only one my eye did not observe?
I'd love to give the flower a pretty name--
But surely it is named.

KRIEMHILD.

The little flower
Is lowlier than all, and none thy foot
More easily had crushed, for it appears
To be ashamed that it is more than grass,
And so it hides its head; but yet it drew
A gentle word from thee, the first we've heard.
So let it be a token that within
Our land is much that's hidden from thy gaze
That will delight thee.

BRUNHILDA.

That I hope indeed--
For I need joy! Thou know'st not what it is
To be a woman, yet to overcome
A man in every combat and to gain
His strength that ebbs away as flows his blood,

And from the steaming blood breathe in new force--
To feel yourself grow stronger, braver yet,
And then, when victory is surer still--

[Turning suddenly]

Frigga, I ask again! What did I see--
Before that latest contest, what said I?

FRIGGA.

It seemed thy spirit must have seen this land.

BRUNHILDA.

This land!

FRIGGA.

Thou didst rejoice.

BRUNHILDA.

And I rejoiced!--
Thine eyes, however, flamed.

FRIGGA.

Because I saw
Thy happiness.

BRUNHILDA.

These warriors looked to me
As white as snow.

FRIGGA.

They had been ever so.

BRUNHILDA.

Wherefore didst thou conceal the dream so long?

FRIGGA.

It is but now that it is clear to me,
Now that I can compare.

BRUNHILDA.

If I rejoiced
When my prophetic vision saw this land,
I must rejoice again.

FRIGGA.

Thou surely shalt!

[Illustration: SIEGFRIED'S RETURN FROM THE SAXON WAR _From the Painting by Schnorr von Carolsfeld_]

BRUNHILDA.

And yet it seems to me the vision dealt
With stars and metals too.

FRIGGA.

Yes, that is so.
Thou said'st the stars gleamed still more brightly here.
But yet that gold and silver were but dull.

BRUNHILDA.

Was't so?

FRIGGA (_to_ HAGEN).

Is't not the truth?

HAGEN.

I paid no heed.

BRUNHILDA.

I beg you all to treat me as a child;
Though I shall grow up faster than another.
Yet now I am no better.

(_To_ FRIGGA.)

That was all?

FRIGGA.

Yes, all!

BRUNHILDA.

Then all is well! Then all is well!

UTE (_to_ GUNTHER, _who has approached_).

My son, if she's too bitter toward thee now,
But give her time! The clamor of the crows
And ravens that she heard could never make
Her heart grow softer, but 'twill soften now
With the lark's song and with the nightingale.

HAGEN. So speaks the minstrel when he is in love,
And plays with foolish puppies. 'Tis enough!
The maiden must have time to find her heart,
But for the princess, hold her to her word;
By right of conquest she's already thine.--Then
claim thy rights!

(_He calls_.)

Chaplain!

(_And starts on_.)

GUNTHER.

I'll follow thee!

SIEGFRIED.

Wait, Gunther, wait! What didst thou promise me!

GUNTHER.

May I, my Kriemhild, choose a spouse for thee?

KRIEMHILD.

My lord and brother, be it as thou wilt!

GUNTHER (_to_ UTE).

I have no opposition then to fear?

UTE.

Thou art the king, thy handmaids, she and I.

GUNTHER.

I beg thee then amongst my kinsfolk here:
Redeem an oath for them and me, and give
Thy hand to noble Siegfried.

SIEGFRIED.

I've no power
To speak as I could wish to, when I gaze
Upon thy face, and of my stammering tongue
Perchance thou hast already heard enough.
And so I ask thee as the hunter asks,
But that I blow no feathers from my hat,
To hide my fear: O maiden, wilt thou me?
Yet lest thou err'st through my simplicity,
And unenlightened actest in the dark,
So let me tell thee, ere thou answer'st me,
How my own mother blames me oftentimes.
She says that I am surely strong enough
To conquer all the world, but yet to rule
The smallest molehill I'm too simple far.
And if I do not lose my very eyes
'Tis only that the thing's impossible.
Thou may'st believe the half of what she says,
The other half though, I can well disprove.
For if I once have won thee, I will show
The world how I can keep unharmed mine own.
Again I ask thee: Kriemhild, wilt thou me?

KRIEMHILD.

Why dost thou smile, my mother? I have not
Forgotten what I dreamed, the shudder still
Creeps over me and warns me more and more,
But still I say with dauntless courage: Yes!

BRUNHILDA (_steps between_ KRIEMHILD _and_ SIEGFRIED).

Kriemhild!

KRIEMHILD.

What wilt thou?

BRUNHILDA.

I will prove myself
Thy sister.

KRIEMHILD.

Now? Wherein?

BRUNHILDA (_to_ SIEGFRIED).

How dost thou dare
Aspire to her, the daughter of a king?
How dost thou dare, a vassal such as thou,
A serving man!

SIEGFRIED.

What?

BRUNHILDA.

Can'st thou not as guide,
As messenger departed?

(_To_ GUNTHER.)

Canst thou suffer
And aid him in such boldness?

GUNTHER.

Siegfried is
The first of all our warriors.

BRUNHILDA.

Grant him then
The foremost seat beside thy very throne.

GUNTHER.

In treasure, he is richer far than I.

BRUNHILDA.

Is that his claim upon thy sister? Shame!

GUNTHER.

A thousand of my enemies he's slain.

BRUNHILDA.

The man who conquered me thanks him for that?

GUNTHER.

He is a king as I am.

BRUNHILDA.

Yet he ranks
Himself amongst thy servants?

GUNTHER.

I will solve
This riddle for thee when thou art mine own.

BRUNHILDA.

Ere I am thine thy secret will I know.

UTE.

Thou wilt refuse to call me mother then?
Oh tarry not too long, for I am old.
And worn with many sorrows!

BRUNHILDA.

As I swore,
I'll go with him to church, and I will be
Most willingly thy daughter--not his wife.

HAGEN (_to_ FRIGGA).

Pray quiet her!

FRIGGA.

What need is there of me?
For if he once has overcome Brunhild,
The second time he surely will not fail;
And self-defense is every maiden's right.

SIEGFRIED (_taking_ KRIEMHILD _by the hand_).

That all may know me henceforth as a king,
The Niblung's treasure do I give to thee.
And now thy duty and my right I claim.

[He kisses her.]

HAGEN.

To church!

FRIGGA.

Does Siegfried hold the Niblung's hoard?

HAGEN.

Thou heard'st! The trumpets!

FRIGGA.

And is Balmung[3] his?

HAGEN.

Why not? Musicians! Wedding music here!

[Loud and joyful music. Exeunt omnes.]

SCENE VII

The great hall. Enter TRUCHS _and_ WULF. _Dwarfs bring treasures across the stage._

TRUCHS.

I am for Kriemhild.

WULF.

And for Brunhild I.

TRUCHS.

And why, if thou wilt tell me?

WULF.

Where would be
The play of rival lances, if we all
Should wear one color?

TRUCHS.

Why, I grant thee that!
The reason is sufficient, otherwise
It were mere madness.

WULF.

Say it not so loud,

For many heroes swear by Brunhild now.

TRUCHS.

They are as different as day and night.

WULF.

Who says they're not? Yet many love the night.

[_Points to the dwarfs_.]

What are they bringing?

TRUCHS.

It must be the hoard,
The treasure of the Niblungs Siegfried won.
He's called the dwarfs for escort duty here,
And bade them bring the treasure, and I'm told
It is the marriage portion for his bride.

WULF.

Uncanny are these dwarfs, with hollow backs!
But turn one over--there's a kneading trough!

TRUCHS.

And ever with the dragons is their home
Within the earth and in the mountain caves.--
First cousins to the moles they are.

WULF.

But strong!

TRUCHS.

And clever are they too! One need not seek
For mandrakes[4] if one has these dwarfs for
friends.

WULF (_pointing toward the treasure_).

He who owns that needs neither of the two.

TRUCHS.

I love it not. It is an ancient saw
That magic gold is thirstier for blood
Than ever was the driest sponge for water;
And, more than all, the Niblung heroes tell
The strangest tales!

WULF.

Of ravens was the talk.

What was it then? I heard it not aright.

TRUCHS.

A raven flew and lit upon the gold,
When it was carried to the ship, and there
He croaked till Siegfried, who could understand,
At first stopped up his ears and would not hear,
And whistled. Then the precious stones he threw
To drive the bird, and when it would not fly,
At last in desperation cast his spear.

WULF.

Why, that is strange! For Siegfried is at heart
As gentle as he's brave.

[_Horns are heard._]

They call for us!
They're gath'ring! Ho, Brunhilda!

TRUCHS.

Kriemhild, ho!

[_Exeunt. Other warriors, who meanwhile have assembled,
join them and repeat the cry. It grows dark gradually._]

SCENE VIII

Enter HAGEN and SIEGFRIED.

SIEGFRIED.

But Hagen! Why didst thou make signs to me
To leave the banquet? I shall nevermore
Sit at this table as I sit today.
Pray grant me this one day, I only ask

A just reward.

HAGEN.

Your task is not yet done.

SIEGFRIED.

Let be till morning, for a minute's worth
A year today. I still can count the words
That I have spoken to my loving bride;
Then let me have one evening with my wife.

HAGEN.

Without good reason I will ne'er disturb
A lover or a drunkard. It avails

No longer to resist! What Brunhild said
Thou'st heard, and now her wedding gayety
Thou may'st behold, for at the feast she weeps!

SIEGFRIED.

And can I dry her tears?

HAGEN.

She'll keep her word,
The threat that she has sworn, there is no doubt;
That endless shame would follow may we doubt
Still less. Dost thou not understand me now?

SIEGFRIED.

What follows them

HAGEN.

That thou must conquer her.

[GUNTHER approaches.]

SIEGFRIED.

What, I?

HAGEN.

Now listen! Gunther goes with her
Into the chamber.[5] In the Tarnhelm thou
Must follow. Quickly he demands a kiss
Ere she has raised her veil.--She grants it not.
He grapples with her.--She laughs mockingly.
He quenches, as by accident, the light--
Exclaims: So much is jest, 'tis earnest now.
It will not be on shore as on the ship!
Then shalt thou seize her and so master her
That she shall beg for mercy and for life.
And when thy part is done, then shall the king
Demand her oath to be his humblest maid,
And thou shalt vanish as thou cam'st.

GUNTHER.

Wilt thou
But do me this one service now, my friend,
I vow I'll never ask thee then for more.

HAGEN.

He must and will. The task he has begun,
How should he then not finish?

SIEGFRIED.

If I would!

For truly you demand a deed from me
That I might well refuse another time
Than on my wedding day to do for you--
How could I pray? What should I tell Kriemhild?
She has so much already to forgive,
The very ground is hot beneath my feet.
Should I repeat the misdeed once again
She never could forgive me in her life.

HAGEN.

When a young daughter from her mother parts
And leaves the room where once the cradle stood,
Into the bridal chamber she must pass,
The farewell is a long one, know my friend.
There's time enough for thee, and so--agreed!

(_As SIEGFRIED refuses his hand._)

Brunhilda now is like a wounded deer,
Who'd let it with the arrow run away?
A noble hunter sends the second shaft.
The lost is ever lost, nor may return.
The haughty heiress of the Valkyries
And Norns is dying. Give the final stroke!
A happy woman laughs tomorrow morn
And only says: I had a troubled dream!

SIEGFRIED.

I know not, something warns me.

HAGEN.

Will Frau Ute
Be ready ere thou art? Nay, there's no fear,
For three times yet will she call Kriemhild back
To bless her and embrace her.

SIEGFRIED.

I refuse.

HAGEN.

What? If this moment came a messenger
In haste announcing that thy father lay
Sick unto death, would'st thou not call at once
For thy good steed? And surely would thy bride
Speed thy departure! Yet a father may,
Though old, recover. Honor wounded once
By cruel wrong, nor mended speedily,
Will never from the dead be raised again.
The honor of the king's the guiding star
Which brings or light or darkness to the knights,
As to the king himself. O woe to him
Who hesitates and robs him of one ray.
Had I thy strength I'd sue to thee no more,
But do the deed myself with pride and joy.

And yet by magic was Brunhilda won,
And magic arts must finish now the task.
Then do it! Must I kneel?

SIEGFRIED.

I like it not!
Who would have dreamed of this! And yet it lay
So very near! O nature three times blest!
In all my life no deed I've shunned like this;
Yet what thou say'st is true. So let it be.

GUNTHER.

I'll go and give my mother but a hint--

HAGEN.

No, no! No woman! We're already three
And have, I hope, no tongue to tell the tale.
Let death the fourth one in our compact be!

[_Exeunt omnes._]

ACT III

Morning. Courtyard of the castle. The cathedral is at one side.

SCENE I

Enter RUMOLT _and_ DANKWART _armed._

RUMOLT.

Three dead!

DANKWART.

For yesterday it was enough,
For that was but the prelude! Now there'll be
Another tale to tell.

RUMOLT.

These Nibelungs
Are e'er prepared for death; they bring their shrouds
And each man wears both shroud and sword at once.

DANKWART.

The customs are so strange in northern lands!
For as the mountains grow more rugged still
And cheerful oaks make way for sombre firs,
Just so does man grow gloomy, till at last
He's wholly lost and but the brute remains!

First comes a race that cannot even sing,
And next another race that cannot laugh,
Then follows one that's dumb, and so it goes.

SCENE II

Music. A great procession. WULF _and_ TRUCHS _among the warriors._

RUMOLT (_joining_ DANKWART).

Will Hagen be content?

DANKWART.

I think he will.

This is a summons, as it were, to war!
Yet he is right, for this strange princess needs
Quite other morning serenades than sings
The lark that warbles in the linden tree.

[_They pass by._]

SCENE III

Enter SIEGFRIED _with_ KRIEMHILD.

KRIEMHILD (_calling attention to her attire_).

Wilt thou not thank me?

SIEGFRIED.

Nay, what dost thou mean?

KRIEMHILD.

But look at me!

SIEGFRIED. That thou art living, smiling,
I give thee thanks, and that thine eyes are blue--
I love not black--

KRIEMHILD.

Thou dost but praise the Lord
In his handmaiden! Did I make myself,
Thou simple fellow? Did I choose the eyes
Thou dost admire?

SIEGFRIED.

Yet love, methinks, might dream
E'en such strange fancies! One fair morn in May
When all things glistened as they glisten now,
Two crystal dewdrops, clearer than the rest,

Were hanging on the harebells bluest spray;
And thou hast stolen them, and evermore
All heaven's in thine eyes.

KRIEMHILD.

Then rather give
Thy thanks to me that as a child I fell
So wisely. My blue eyes I might have lost
The day I only marked my temple here!

SIEGFRIED.

Oh, let me kiss the scar!

KRIEMHILD.

Thy healing art
Would be but lost. No balsam craves the wound
That's long since healed. But tell me more!

SIEGFRIED.

I thank
Thy mouth--

KRIEMHILD.

With words?

SIEGFRIED (_about to embrace her_).

But may I thank thee so?

KRIEMHILD (_draws back_).

Dost think that I invite thee?

SIEGFRIED.

With words then
For thy words! No, for sweeter yet than words,
Thy murmuring of tender secret things
My ear finds precious, as my lips thy kiss.
I thank thee for thy secret gazing forth
To see us throwing weights to win the prize.
Oh, had I dreamed of it! And for thy scorn
And mockery--

KRIEMHILD.

A maiden's pride to soothe
For tarrying, thou thinkest? Cruel friend!
I told thee in the dark! But wilt thou see
My blushes now when in the light of day
Thou tellest me the tale? My foolish blood
Flushes and pales so fast, my mother says
That I am like a rose-bush that sends forth
Red buds and white upon a single stem--

Else hadst thou never found my secret out.
For I could feel the burning of my cheeks,
When yesternorn my brother teased me so.
I saw no way but to confess to thee.

SIEGFRIED.

Then may he start the noblest stag today!

KRIEMHILD.

And may he miss him! Yes, I wish it too.--
see thou art just like my uncle, Hagen,
Who, if one lays a garment by his bed,
That one has made in secret, will not heed
Unless perchance it is too tight.

SIEGFRIED.

And why?

KRIEMHILD.

Thou only see'st God's and nature's gifts
In all that's mine, but my own handiwork,
The raiment that adorns me, thou see'st not--
Not even the fair girdle that I wear.

SIEGFRIED.

The girdle's gay, and yet I'd rather wind
About thy waist the rainbow's lovely hue;
Methinks that ye would suit each other well.

KRIEMHILD.

But bring it me at night and I will change,
Yet do not throw it down like this I wear.
'Tis but by chance I did not lose thy gift.

SIEGFRIED.

What sayest thou?

KRIEMHILD.

But for the precious stones,
It might be underneath the table still,
But fire is a thing one cannot hide.

SIEGFRIED.

Is that my gift?

KRIEMHILD.

It is.

SIEGFRIED.

But thou art dreaming!

KRIEMHILD.

I found it in the room.

SIEGFRIED.

It is thy mother's!
She must have let it fall.

KRIEMHILD.

It is not hers!
For well I know her ornaments. I thought
It had been taken from the Niblung's hoard;
To give thee joy I put it on at once.

SIEGFRIED.

I thank thee, but the girdle I know not!

KRIEMHILD (_takes the girdle off_).

Then for my golden girdle make thou room
Which thou concealest! I was all attired,
And only put it on to honor thee,
My mother also, for this golden one
She gave to me.

SIEGFRIED.

But that is very strange!--
'Twas lying on the floor?

KRIEMHILD.

It was.

SIEGFRIED.

And crumpled?

KRIEMHILD.

I see you know it well! The second trick
Succeeded like the first, and now I have
My task twice over!

[_She starts to put the girdle on again._]

SIEGFRIED.

No! For God's sake, no!

KRIEMHILD.

Art thou in earnest?

SIEGFRIED (_to himself_).

'Twas with that she strove
To tie my hands.

KRIEMHILD.

Art laughing?

SIEGFRIED (_to himself_).

Then I raged,
And put forth all my strength.

KRIEMHILD.

Nay, thou art not?

SIEGFRIED (_to himself_).

I snatched at something.

KRIEMHILD.

That I'll soon believe.

SIEGFRIED (_to himself_).

I thrust it, when she grasped for it again,
Into my bosom, and--Now give it me!
No well is deep enough to hide it in;
With a great stone I'll sink it in the Rhine!

KRIEMHILD.

Siegfried!

SIEGFRIED.

I must have lost it--Give it me!

KRIEMHILD.

Where didst thou get this girdle?

SIEGFRIED.

Nay, this is
A dark and fearful secret; thou should'st seek
To learn no whit about it.

KRIEMHILD.

Yet thou hast
Confided one still greater, and I know
The place where Death may strike the fatal blow.

SIEGFRIED.

That I alone protect!

KRIEMHILD.

And there are two
To guard the other!

SIEGFRIED (_to himself_).

I was far too quick.

KRIEMHILD (_covers her face_).

Thou gav'st thy oath to me! Why didst thou that?
I had not even asked it.

SIEGFRIED.

Still I swear,
I ne'er have known a woman!

KRIEMHILD (_holds up the girdle_).

SIEGFRIED.

That was used
To bind me.

KRIEMHILD.

If a lion told the tale
'Twere less incredible!

SIEGFRIED.

And yet 'tis true.

KRIEMHILD.

This hurts me most! To such a man as thou,
The sin itself, however black it be,
Is more becoming than the cloak of lies
Wherewith he fain would hide it.

Enter GUNTHER _and_ BRUNHILDA.

SIEGFRIED.

We must go!
They come!

KRIEMHILD.

But who! Does Brunhild know the girdle?

SIEGFRIED.

Pray hide it quickly!

KRIEMHILD.

No, I'll show it them!

SIEGFRIED.

I pray thee hide it. Then thou shalt know all.

KRIEMHILD (_hiding the girdle_).

So Brunhilda knows the girdle?

SIEGFRIED.

Listen then!

[_Both follow the procession._]

SCENE IV

BRUNHILDA.

Was that not Kriemhild?

GUNTHER.

Yes.

BRUNHILDA.

How long does she
Tarry beside the Rhine?

GUNTHER.

She'll soon depart,
For Siegfried must go home.

BRUNHILDA.

I'll grant him leave,
And willingly dispense with his farewell.

GUNTHER.

But dost thou hate him so?

BRUNHILDA.

I cannot bear
To see thy noble sister sink so low.

GUNTHER.

She does as thou dost.

BRUNHILDA.

Nay, thou art a man!
This name which was of old to me the call
To arms, now fills my heart with joy and pride!
Yes, Gunther, I am wonderfully changed.
Thou see'st it too? There's something I might ask,
But yet I do not!

GUNTHER.

Thou'rt my noble wife!

BRUNHILDA.

'Tis sweet to hear that word, and now it seems
As strange to me that once I used to ride
To battle on my horse and hurl my spear,
As it would seem to see thee turn the spit!
I cannot bear the sight of weapons now,
And my own shield I find too heavy far;
I tried to lay it by, but had to call
My maid. I'd rather watch the spiders spin
And see the little birds that build their nests,
Than go with thee!

GUNTHER.

Yet this time thou must go!

BRUNHILDA.

And I know why. Forgive me! What I thought
Was weakness was but magnanimity,
For thou would'st not disgrace me on the ship
When I defied thee! Naught of that there dwelt
Within my heart, and therefore has the strength
That some caprice of nature gave to me
Departed from me, and returned to thee!

GUNTHER.

Since thou art gentle, then be reconciled
With Siegfried too!

BRUNHILDA.

Oh, name him not to me!

GUNTHER.

There is no reason thou shouldst hate him so.

BRUNHILDA.

And if I have none? When a king descends
To fill the humble office of a guide
And carry messages, it is indeed
As strange as if a man should take the place

Of his own horse, the saddle on his back,
Or bay and hunt in service of his hound.
But if it pleases him, what's that to me!

GUNTHER.

It was not so.

BRUNHILDA.

Still stranger 't is to see
His noble stature tow'ring high above
All other men, so that it even seems
That he has gathered all the royal crowns
Of all the world to forge them into one,
And thus to show the world for the first time
A perfect picture of true majesty.
For it is true, while still upon the earth
More crowns than one are gleaming, none is round,
And for the sun's full circle even thou
Wearest a crescent pale upon thy head.

GUNTHER.

But see. Thou hast already viewed the man
With other eyes.

BRUNHILDA.

I greeted him ere thee.
Then slay him--challenge him--win my revenge!

GUNTHER.

Brunhilda! He's the husband of my sister,
And so his blood is mine.

BRUNHILDA.

Do battle then
With him and lay him low upon the ground,
And let me see thy rightful majesty
When he is as a footstool for thy feet!

GUNTHER.

Our custom is not so.
BRUNHILDA. I will not yield;
His downfall I must see. Thou hast the heart
Of life, and he the glitter and the show.
But blow away this magic which e'er holds
The gaze of fools upon him. If Kriemhild
Casts down those eyes in shame, that now she lifts
Almost too proudly when she's by his side,
'Twill do no damage, and I promise thee
Far richer love if thou wilt do the deed.

GUNTHER.

He too is strong.

BRUNHILDA.

That he the dragon slew
And conquered Alberich, does not compare
With thy great prowess. For in thee and me
Have man and woman for eternity
Fought the last battle for supremacy.
Thou art the victor, and I ask no more
Than still to see those honors deck thy brow
Of which I was so jealous. For thou art
The strongest man of all; so cast him down
From golden clouds to earth for my delight,
And leave him naked, destitute, and bare--
Then let him live a hundred years or more.

[_Exeunt._]

SCENE V

Enter FRIGGA _and_ UTE.

UTE.

Brunhilda looks already happier
Than yesterday.

FRIGGA.

My Queen, she truly is.

UTE.

I thought it would be so.

FRIGGA.

But I did not!
Her mind is strangely altered, 'twould astound
Me not a whit now if her nature too
Should alter and her hair should change to blonde
Instead of raven tresses that of old
So richly waved beneath my golden comb.

UTE.

Thou dost not grieve, I trust?

FRIGGA.

I'm more amazed.
If this heroic woman thou hadst reared
As I have done, and knew all that I know,
Then would thy wonder be no less than mine.

UTE (_turning to go back into the castle_).

Do what thou canst!

FRIGGA.

I surely have done more
Than ever thou couldst dream of. How this came
I cannot tell, but if she's happy now
I am content, and of the olden time
She hath forgotten never will I tell.

SCENE VI

Enter KRIEMHILD and BRUNHILDA, hand in hand. A large number of warriors and people gather.

KRIEMHILD.

Wouldst thou not watch the combat from afar
Rather than join the fray?

BRUNHILDA.

Hast thou tried both,
That thus thou canst compare them?

KRIEMHILD.

I'd not bear
The heat of battle.

BRUNHILDA.

Then thou shouldst not try
To judge of it!--No insult I intend.
Nay, do not draw thy hand away from mine!
It may be so, and yet I thought this joy
Were but for me alone.

KRIEMHILD.

What dost thou mean?

BRUNHILDA. Surely no woman can rejoice to see
Her husband conquered.

KRIEMHILD.

Never!

BRUNHILDA. Nor deceive
Herself if in the fray he's not unhorsed,
Because his conqueror spares him.

KRIEMHILD. Surely not.

BRUNHILDA. What then!

KRIEMHILD. But I am quite secure from that?
Thou smilest?

BRUNHILDA. Over-confident art thou.

KRIEMHILD. It is my right!

BRUNHILDA. It may not come to proof,
And even a dream is sweet--so slumber on,
And I will never wake thee.

KRIEMHILD. What say'st thou?
My noble husband is too gentle far
To grieve the rulers of his royal realm,
Else had he made a sceptre long ago
Of his good sword and held it forth so far
That its great shadow covered all the earth.
For all the lands are subject unto him,
And should but one deny it, I would ask
That land from him to make a flower bed.

BRUNHILDA.

Kriemhild, what then would be my husband's place?

KRIEMHILD.
He is my brother, and the standard's his
Whereby one weighs all others. None weighs him.

BRUNHILDA.

No, for he is the standard of the world!
And as 'tis gold decides the worth of things,
So he the worth of heroes and of knights.
Thou must not contradict me, dearest child,
And in return I'll listen patiently
If thou wilt only teach me how to sew.

KRIEMHILD.

Brunhilda!

BRUNHILDA.

Nay, I did not speak in scorn;
I long to sew, and needle-work is not
My birthright like the throwing of the lance,
For which I never sought a master's aid,
More than I needed aid to stand or walk.

KRIEMHILD.

If 'tis thy wish, we can begin at once;
And since thou best enjoyest making wounds
We'll take the bodkin for embroidery.
I have a pattern!--

[She is about to show the girdle.]

No, I have it not.

BRUNHILDA.

Thou lookest on thy sister coldly now.
But 'tis not friendly to withdraw thy hand
From my fond clasp before I give it up--
At least our custom is the contrary.
And canst thou not be reconciled to know
The sceptre of thy dreams is given now
Into thy brother's hands? Thou art his sister,
And that should comfort thee. A brother's fame
Is half thine own, so thou shouldst yield to me,
Before all other women, honor's crown
That once for all could never have been thine,
For no one could have paid for it as I.

KRIEMHILD.

'Tis thus perverted nature takes revenge.
Thou didst resist love's rule as no one else,
And now this blindness is thy penalty.

BRUNHILDA.

Thou speakest of thyself and not of me!
We need not quarrel, for the whole world knows
That ere my mother bore me, 'twas my fate
The strongest knight alone should conquer me.

KRIEMHILD.

I can believe it.

BRUNHILDA.

Well?

KRIEMHILD (_laughs_).

BRUNHILDA.

Then thou art mad!
Perchance thou fear'st that we shall be too harsh
With all the vassals? Yet thou need'st not fear!
I plant no flower beds in conquered lands,
And only once will I claim precedence
If thou art not too proud and obstinate,--
Here at the church today and nevermore.

KRIEMHILD.

Indeed I'd never have denied it thee,
But, since my husband's honor is at stake,
I will not yield one step.

BRUNHILDA.

He will command

That thou shalt yield.

KRIEMHILD.

How dare'st thou scorn him so!

BRUNHILDA.

He made way for thy brother in my hall,
As vassals for their lord, and he refused
My proffered greeting!--That did not seem strange
While I still thought him--as he called himself--
A serving-man, a messenger to me.
But now it all seems changed.

KRIEMHILD.

And how is that?

BRUNHILDA.

I've seen a wolf slip silently away
Before a bear, and then I've seen the bear
Flee from the mountain bull. Though he's not sworn,
Yet is he still a vassal.

KRIEMHILD.

Say no more!

BRUNHILDA.

Wilt threaten me? Do not forget thyself!
I have my senses--see that thou keep thine:
There must have been some cause beneath all this.

KRIEMHILD.

There was! And if thou shouldst suspect the cause,
How thou wouldst shudder.

BRUNHILDA.

Shudder!

KRIEMHILD.

Yes, indeed!
But do not fear! I love thee even now
Too fondly. Never can I hate thee so
That I will tell the cause. Had aught like that
Befallen me, today I'd dig my grave
With my own hands. Brunhilda, never fear!
I will not make thee the most wretched soul
That draws the breath of life upon the earth!
Then keep thy pride, for pity makes me dumb.

BRUNHILDA.

Thou boastest, Kriemhild! I despise thee now!

KRIEMHILD.

My husband's concubine despises me!

BRUNHILDA.

Put her in chains! She rages! Bind her then!

KRIEMHILD (_draws out the girdle_).

Know'st thou this girdle?

BRUNHILDA.

Well I do. 'Tis mine.

And since I see it in a stranger's hands
It must be that 'twas stolen in the night.

KRIEMHILD.

'Twas stolen! 'Twas no thief that gave it me!

BRUNHILDA.

Who then?

KRIEMHILD.

The man who overpowered thee!
But not my brother!

BRUNHILDA.

Kriemhild!

KRIEMHILD.

Thy fierce strength
Had surely strangled Gunther, then perchance
Thou would'st have loved the dead as punishment.
My husband gave it me!

BRUNHILDA.

'Tis false!

KRIEMHILD.

'Tis true!
Now scorn him if thou canst! Wilt now consent
That I may pass before thee through the door?

(_To her women._)

Now follow. She shall see me prove my rights!

[_They leave and enter the cathedral._]

[Illustration: "SCHNORR VON CAROLSFELD THE QUARREL OF THE QUEENS"]

SCENE VII

BRUNHILDA.

Where are the lords of Burgundy!--Oh Frigga!
Didst thou hear that?

FRIGGA.

I heard, and I believe it.

BRUNHILDA.

Oh this is death! 'Tis true?

FRIGGA.

She said too much,
Surely too much--but this is plain to me,
That thou hast been betrayed!

BRUNHILDA.

'Tis not a lie?

FRIGGA.

'Twas Balmung's master. On the shore he stood
When died the flames.

BRUNHILDA.

Then he rejected me.
For I was on the rampart and I know
He saw me. But his heart was full of her.

FRIGGA.

That thou mayst know what thou hast lost by fraud,
I too deceived thee!

BRUNHILDA (_without listening to her_).

Hence the haughty calm
With which he gazed upon me!

FRIGGA.

Not alone
This narrow country, but the whole wide earth
Was meant to be thy kingdom, and to thee
The stars should tell their message. Even death
Should lose his fell dominion over thee!

BRUNHILDA.

Speak not of that!

FRIGGA.

Why not? Thy glories lost
Thou'lt not regain, but yet thou canst avenge
Thy wrongs, my child!

BRUNHILDA.

And I will have revenge!
Despised and scorned! Oh, woman, in his arms
If thou hast mocked at me a single night,
Thou shalt weep bitterly for many years!
I will--Alas! I am as weak as she.

[Throws herself on FRIGGA's bosom.]

SCENE VIII

Enter GUNTHER, HAGEN, DANKWART, RUMOLT, GERENOT, GISELHER _and_
SIEGFRIED.

HAGEN.

What then is wrong?

BRUNHILDA (_drawing herself up to her full height, to
GUNTHER_).

Am I concubine?

GUNTHER.

A concubine?

BRUNHILDA.

Thy sister calls me so!

HAGEN (_to FRIGGA_).

What happened here?

FRIGGA.

Ye are discovered now!
We know the conqueror, and Kriemhild vows
That he was twice a victor.

HAGEN

(_to GUNTHER_).

He has told!

[He speaks to him aside.]

SCENE IX

KRIEMHILD (_who has meanwhile come out of the cathedral_).

Forgive me, Siegfried, for the wrong I did!
Yet if thou knewest how she slandered thee--

GUNTHER (to SIEGFRIED).

Hast thou then boasted?

SIEGFRIED (_laying his hand on KRIEMHILD's head_).
By her life I swear,
I never did.

HAGEN.

No oath is needed here!
He only told the truth.

SIEGFRIED.

And even that
Upon compulsion!
HAGEN. That I do not doubt!
The tale can wait the telling. 'Tis our part
To separate the women, for we know
That serpents' crests may ever rise again
If they too soon gaze in each other's eyes.

SIEGFRIED.

I'm soon departing hence. Come, Kriemhild, come!

KRIEMHILD (_to BRUNHILDA_).

If thou couldst know how thou didst anger me,
Then even thou--

BRUNHILDA (_turns away_).

KRIEMHILD.

Since thou dost love my brother,
How canst thou hate the means that gave thee him
To be his bride?

BRUNHILDA.

Oh, Oh!

HAGEN.

Away! Away!

SIEGFRIED (_leading KRIEMHILD away_).

There's been no tattling here, as you shall see.

[_Exeunt._]

SCENE X

HAGEN.

Come, gather round and vote without delay
The doom of death.

GUNTHER.

Hagen, what sayest thou?

HAGEN.

Have we not cause enough? There stands the Queen
And burning tears are streaming from her eyes.
For shame she weeps!

(_To BRUNHILDA._)

Oh, thou heroic Queen,
To whom alone my homage I do yield,
The man who shamed thee so must surely die!

GUNTHER. Hagen!

HAGEN (_to BRUNHILDA_).

The man must die unless thou wilt
Forego revenge and plead for him thyself.

BRUNHILDA.

I'll touch no food till judgment is fulfilled.

HAGEN.

Forgive me that I spoke before my king!
I only strove to make the matter plain,
Yet free decision is thy royal right--
So make thy choice between thy bride and him.

GISELHER.

Thou canst not mean it! For a trifling fault,
Thou wouldst not slay the truest man on earth?
My King! My brother! Say it is not so!

HAGEN.

Will ye rear bastards here within your court?
I doubt me if the proud Burgundians

Will crown them! Yet thou art the master here!

GERENOT.

Brave Siegfried soon will quell all murmurings,
If we ourselves cannot perform the task.

HAGEN (_to_ GUNTHER).

Thou speakest not. 'Tis well. The rest is mine!

GISELHER.

In bloody counsels I will take no part!

[_Exit_.]

SCENE XI

BRUNHILDA.

Frigga, I tell thee he or I must die!

FRIGGA.

'Tis he must die!

BRUNHILDA.

I was not merely scorned,
But passed from hand to hand. They bartered
me!

FRIGGA.

They bartered thee!

BRUNHILDA.

Too mean to be his wife,
I was the price for which he bought him one.

FRIGGA.

The price, my child!

BRUNHILDA.

O this is worse than murder!
And I will have revenge, revenge, revenge!

[_Exeunt omnes_.]

ACT IV

Worms.

SCENE I

Great hall. GUNTHER _with his warriors._ HAGEN _carries a spear._

HAGEN.

A blind man e'en can hit a linden leaf;
At fifty paces I will wager you
With this good spear to split a hazelnut.

GISELHER.

Why dost thou choose this day to show thy skill?
We've always known thy arms would never rust.

HAGEN.

He comes! Now show me you can wear dark looks
And altered bearing although none has lost
His father.

SCENE II

Enter SIEGFRIED.

SIEGFRIED.

Ho, ye knights! And hear ye not
The hounds give tongue, and hark! Our youngest hunter
Impatient tries his horn! To horse! Away!

HAGEN.

The day is fair!

SIEGFRIED.

And have you not been told
That bears have ventured in the very stalls,
And that the eagles wait before the doors
And watch when they are opened for a child
That may stray out?

VOLKER.

Indeed that has been known.

SIEGFRIED.

While we were courting no one thought to hunt.
Then come, and we'll drive back the enemy,
And hack and hew him.

HAGEN. Friend, more need have we
To grind our swords and nail our spear-heads firm.

SIEGFRIED.

And why?

HAGEN.

Thou'st dallied all these last few days
With honeyed words, else hadst thou well known why.

SIEGFRIED.

I am about to say farewell, ye know!
Yet speak, what's toward?

HAGEN.

Danes and Saxons too
Again are coming.

SIEGFRIED.

Are the princes dead,
Who swore allegiance to us?

HAGEN.

Nay, not dead;
They're leading on the army.

SIEGFRIED.

Luedegast
And Luedeger, who were my prisoners,
Set free without a ransom?

GUNTHER.

Yesterday
Renounced they every oath.

SIEGFRIED.

Their messengers--
You surely must have hewn them limb from limb?
Has every vulture had his share of them?

HAGEN.

So speakest thou?

SIEGFRIED.

Such vipers' messengers
One tramples like a viper. Fiends of hell!
Now feel I my first anger! I believed

That often I knew hatred, but I erred;
'Twas but less love I felt. For I can hate
Nothing but broken vows and treachery,
Hypocrisy and all the coward's sins
That seek their victim as the spider crawls
Upon its hollow legs. How can it be
That such brave men (for surely they were brave),
Could so besmirch themselves? Oh, my dear friends,
Stand not so coldly by and gaze on me
As though you thought me mad, as though I knew
No longer great from small! We've never known
What outrage is till now. Our reckoning
May we strike calmly out to the last score.
Only these two are guilty.

GISELHER.

Shameful 'tis.
The way they praised thee echoes in my ear.
When came this messenger?

HAGEN.

'Twas even now.
Didst thou not see him. He made haste to leave
As soon as he had done his errand here,
Nor tarried for his messenger's reward.

SIEGFRIED.

Oh, shame that you did not chastise the man
For impudence! A raven would have come
And plucked his eyes out, and in very scorn
Have cast them forth again before his lord.
That was the only answer that was due.
This is no lawful feud, this is no war
That right and custom sanction--'tis the chase
Of evil beasts! Nay, Hagen, do not smile!
The headsman's ax should be our weapon now,
So that we should not soil our noble blades,
And, since the ax is iron like the sword,
It were a shame to use it till we find
No rope would be enough to hang the dogs.

HAGEN.

Thou say'st!

SIEGFRIED.

Thou mockest at me as it seems.
'Tis strange, for trifles used to anger thee!
I know thou art an older man than I,
But 'tis not youth that's speaking through me now,
Nor is it indignation that 'twas I
Who begged thy mercy for them. Nay, I stand
For the whole world. As calls a bell to prayer,
So calls my tongue to vengeance every one
Who stands as man amidst his fellow-men.

GUNTHER.

'Tis so.

SIEGFRIED (_to_ HAGEN).

Know'st thou betrayal? Treachery
Gaze on the traitor! Smile then if thou canst.
To open combat dost thou challenge him
And dost o'erthrow him. But thou art too proud,
If not too noble, to thrust home thy sword,
And so thou set'st him free, and givest him
His weapons once again that thou hadst won.
He does not rage at thee and thrust them back;
He gives thee humble thanks and praises sweet
And swears with thousand oaths to be thy man.
But when, the honeyed words still in thine ear,
Thou lay'st thy weary limbs upon thy couch,
Bare and defenseless as a helpless child,
Then creeps the traitor up and murders thee,
And even while thou diest spits on thee.

GUNTHER (_to_ HAGEN).

What dost thou say to that?

HAGEN (_to_ GUNTHER).

This noble wrath
Gives me such courage that I ask our friend
If he will grant us escort yet once more.

SIEGFRIED.

With my own Nib'lungs will I go alone,
For it is by my fault this trouble comes
To ye again! Howe'er I longed to show
My bride unto my mother and to win
For the first time her undivided praise,
It may not be while yet these hypocrites
Have ovens for their bread and flowing springs
To slake their thirst! I will at once put off
My homeward journey, and I promise you
That I will take them living, and henceforth
Before my castle shall they lie in chains
And bay like hounds whene'er I come or go,
Since, as it seems, they have the souls of dogs!

[_He hastens away_.]

SCENE III

HAGEN.

He'll surely rush to her in all his rage,
And when he leaves, then I will seek her out.

GUNTHER.

I'll move in this no further.

HAGEN.

What, my King?

GUNTHER.

Bid heralds come once more and let them say
That there is peace again.

HAGEN.

It shall be done
When I have talked with Kriemhild privately
And learned the secret from her.

GUNTHER.

Hast thou then
No bowels of compassion? Thy hard heart
No pity feeleth yet?

HAGEN.

Speak plainly, lord;
I cannot understand.

GUNTHER.

He shall not die.

HAGEN.

He lives while thou commandest. If I stood
Behind him in the woods and poised my spear,
But shake thy head, and for this traitor dies
A beast.

GUNTHER.

Not traitor, no! Was it his fault
That he brought back the girdle carelessly
And Kriemhild found it? It escaped him there,
As clings an arrow in a warrior's mail
If after battle 'tis not shaken off,
And only by its rattling is it marked.
I ask you one and all: was it his fault?

HAGEN.

No! No! Who says so? Nor was he to blame
For lacking clever wits to clear himself,
For doubtless he blushed crimson at th' attempt.

GUNTHER.

What then remains?

HAGEN.

Brunhilda's oath remains.

GISELHER.

Then let her slay him if she wants his blood.

HAGEN.

We're quarreling like children. May one not
Collect his weapons, though he knoweth not
When he may need to use them? One explores
An unknown land and finds its passes out.
Then why not, pray, a hero? I will try
My fortune now with Kriemhild, if it were
Only that this fine ruse that we have planned
Might not be all in vain. She'll not betray
The secret to me unless he hath told
The matter to her. Then you may decide
Whether to use the knowledge I may gain;
And you may really do, if so you please,
What I shall but pretend, and so in war
Protect the place where death may find him out.
But you must know where is his mortal spot.

[_Exit_.]

SCENE IV

GISELHER (_to_ GUNTHER).

Thou hast returned to thine own loyalty
And faithfulness, or else I'd say: this trick
Is far beneath a king!

VOLKER.

Thy angry mood
Is natural; thou wast thyself deceived.

GISELHER.

That was not why. Yet let us not dispute
When all is well again.

VOLKER.

When all is well?

GISELHER.

Is it not well?

VOLKER.

They tell me that the Queen
In mourning robes is clad, and food and drink
Refuses--even water.

GUNTHER.

True, alas!

VOLKER.

How then is't well? What Hagen said is true.
She's not like others; for the breath of time
Her wounds can never heal, nor give her peace.
And we must face the question: He or she!
Thou sayest truly, Siegfried's not to blame
That to him clung the girdle like a snake,
And was discovered. That is pure mischance;
But this mischance is deadly, and thou canst
Determine only whom it shall destroy.

GISELHER.

Let that one die who hath no will to live!

GUNTHER.

Oh, fearful choice!

VOLKER.

I warned thee long ago,
From starting on this course, but now at last
We see the end.

DANKWART.

And is it not our law,
That even blunders bring their penalty
He who runs through his bosom friend by night
Because he bore his lance too carelessly,
Can never free himself with all his tears,
However hot and bitter they may flow.--
The price is blood.

GUNTHER.

Now I will go to her.

[_Exit_.]

SCENE V

VOLKER.

There comes Kriemhild with Hagen. She's distressed,

As he predicted. Let us go.

[_Exeunt omnes_.]

SCENE VI

Enter HAGEN _and_ KRIEMHILD.

HAGEN.

Thou com'st
So early to the hall?

KRIEMHILD.

I could not bear
To linger in my chamber.

HAGEN.

Saw I not
Thy husband parting from thee? He was flushed,
And angry were his looks. Is there not peace
Between yourself and Siegfried once again?
Is he not kind and gentle with his bride?
Tell me, and I will talk with him.

KRIEMHILD.

Oh, no!
Did nothing else remind me of that day,
That evil day, 'twould be a dream that's past.
My lord hath spared me every unkind word.

HAGEN.

I'm glad he is so gentle.

KRIEMHILD.

I could wish
That he would blame me, yet perchance he knows
I blame myself enough!

HAGEN.

Be not too harsh!

KRIEMHILD.

I know how bitterly I wounded her!
I'll not forgive myself. I'd rather far
Have felt the hurt myself than injured her.

HAGEN.

And this it is that drove thee from thy room?

KRIEMHILD.

Oh, no! 'twould make me hide myself away!
I am so anxious for him!

HAGEN.

Dost thou fear?

KRIEMHILD.

There is another war.

HAGEN.

Yes, that is true.

KRIEMHILD.

The lying scoundrels!

HAGEN.

Be not overwrought
Nor cease thy preparations for the voyage.
Work tranquilly and do not be disturbed,
For thou canst put away his armor last.
What am I saying! For he wears no mail,
Nor doth he need to wear it.

KRIEMHILD.

Thinkest thou

HAGEN.

I well might laugh. If any other wife
So sighed, I'd say: Out of a thousand darts
But one could touch him, and that one would break.
But thee I ridicule and must advise
Let thy stray fancy sing some wiser song.

KRIEMHILD.

Thou speak'st of arrows! Arrows are the thing
That most I dread. I know an arrow's point
Needs at the most the space of my thumb nail
To penetrate, and yet it kills a man.

HAGEN.

Especially if 'tis a poisoned dart.
These savages, who broke the bulwark down,
The bulwark of our life and of the state,
Which we hold sacred even in our wars,
Would do a deed like this as soon as that.

KRIEMHILD.

Thou see'st!

HAGEN.

How can thy Siegfried come to harm?
He is secure. And if there were such shafts
That straighter flew than fly the sun's own rays,
He'd shake them off as we shake off the snow;
And this he knows, and so his confidence
Abandons him no moment in the fray.
We were not born beneath an aspen tree,
Yet we nigh tremble at the deeds he dares.
And heartily he laughs at this sometimes,
And we laugh too. For iron you may thrust
Into the fire--it changes into steel.

KRIEMHILD.

I shudder!

HAGEN.

Child, thou art but newly wed,
Or I'd rejoice at thy timidity.

KRIEMHILD.

Hast thou forgotten, or hast thou not heard
What in the ballads hath oft times been sung,
That Siegfried may be wounded in one spot?

HAGEN.

I'd quite forgotten that, although 'tis true.
I recollect, he spoke of it himself.
It seems to me he told us of a leaf,
But what it signified I cannot say.

KRIEMHILD.

It was a linden leaf.

HAGEN.

Oh yes! But say,
How could a linden leaf have done him harm?
For that's a riddle like no other one.

KRIEMHILD.

It floated down upon him on the breeze
When he was bathing in the dragon's blood,
And he is vulnerable where it fell.
HAGEN. He would have seen it if it fell in front!--
What matters it? Thou see'st thy nearest kin,
Thy brothers even, who would shield him still
Were but the shadow of a danger nigh,
Know nothing of his vulnerable spot.
What dost thou fear? Thy anguish is for naught.

KRIEMHILD.

I fear the Valkyries, for I have heard
They always choose the noblest warriors;
If they direct the dart, it ne'er can miss.

HAGEN.

But then he only needs a trusty squire.
Who shall protect his back. Think'st thou not so?

KRIEMHILD.

I think I should sleep sounder.

HAGEN.

Mark my words!
If he--thou know'st it almost happened once--
Should fall from out his skiff and in the Rhine
Should sink because his weapons drew him down
To feed the greedy fishes, I would plunge
To save our Siegfried, or else I myself
Would die with him.

KRIEMHILD.

And is thy thought so noble?

HAGEN.

So I think! And if the red cock lit
In darkest night upon his castle roof,
And he, half smothered and but half awake,
Should fail to find the way that leads to life,
I'd bear him from the flames in my own arms,
And should I not succeed, with him I'd die.

KRIEMHILD (_turns about to embrace him_).

Then must I--

HAGEN (_refusing the caress_).

Do not! But I swear, I'd do it.
Though only lately had I sworn that oath.

KRIEMHILD.

Thy kinsman he became but recently!
And dost thou really mean it? That thou would'st
Thyself?--

HAGEN.

I mean it, for he'll fight for me,
And no least one of all the thousand wonders
His sword can do, has he refused to me;

And so I'll shelter him!

KRIEMHILD.

I had not dared
To hope for that!

HAGEN.

But I must know the spot,
And thou must show it to me.

KRIEMHILD.

That is true!
Between his shoulders is it, half across.

HAGEN.

'Tis target height!

KRIEMHILD.

Oh uncle, you will not
Avenge on him the crime that's mine alone?

HAGEN.

What dost thou dream of?

KRIEMHILD. It was jealousy
That blinded me, or else her boastfulness
Would not have roused my anger.

HAGEN.

Jealousy!

KRIEMHILD.

I am ashamed! But even if that night
The blows were all, and that I will believe,
I grudge Brunhilda even blows from him.

HAGEN.

Be patient! She'll forget it.

KRIEMHILD.

Is it true
That she'll not eat or drink?

HAGEN.

She always fasts
This time of year, for 'tis the Norns' own week,
And still in Iceland 'tis a sacred time.

KRIEMHILD.

Three days have now passed by!

HAGEN.

What's that to us?
But hush! They're coming.

KRIEMHILD.

Well

HAGEN.

Were it not wise
To broider on his tunic a small cross?
Forsooth our care is needless, and he would
Deride thee if thou shouldst but tell thy fear.
Yet since I now have made myself his guard
I would not aught neglect.

KRIEMHILD.

That will I do.

[_She goes to meet_ UTE _and the Chaplain_.]

SCENE VII

HAGEN (_following her_).

Thy hero now is as a stag to me.
Had he not broken silence, he were safe,
And yet I surely knew that could not be.
If one's transparent as an insect is,
That looks now red, now green, as is its food,
One must beware of any mysteries,
Lest e'en the vitals show the secret forth!

SCENE VIII

UTE _and the Chaplain come forward_.

CHAPLAIN.

There is no image of it in this world!
You strive to liken it and comprehend,
Yet here all signs and measures too must fail.
But kneel before the Lord in fervent prayer,
And when contrition and humility
Have made you lose yourself, you may be drawn,
A moment only, as the lightning flash
Does tarry upon earth, to heavenly heights.

UTE.

And can that happen?

CHAPLAIN.

Stephen, blessed saint,
Saw, when the furious horde of angry Jews
Were stoning him, the gates of paradise
Standing ajar, and he rejoiced and sang.
His suffering body only they destroyed,
But 'twas to him as if the murderous band
That thought to kill him in their fury blind
Could only rend the garment he had doffed.

UTE (_to_ KRIEMHILD _who has joined them_).

Take heed, Kriemhild!

KRIEMHILD.

I do.

CHAPLAIN.

That was the power
Of faith; And ye must also learn the curse
Of unbelief. Saint Peter, who has charge
Of sword and keys of our most holy church,
Loved and instructed in the faith a youth,
And brought him up. One day upon a rock
The youth was standing, and the stormy sea
Around him surged in fury. Then he thought
Of how his Lord and Master left the ship,
And trustingly obeyed the slightest sign
The Saviour gave, and walked upon the deep
That tossed and threatened him with certain death.
A dizziness came o'er him at the thought
Of such a trial, for the wonder seemed
Beyond the bounds of reason, then he caught
A corner of the rock and clung to it,
Crying aloud: All, all, yet spare me this!
Then breathed the Lord, and suddenly the stone
Began to melt away. He sank and sank,
And lost all hope, until for very fear
He sprang from off the rock into the flood.
The breath of the Eternal stilled the sea,
And made it solid and it bore him up,
As kindly earth bears up both ye and me.
Repentantly he said: Thy will be done!

UTE.

In all eternity!

KRIEMHILD.

My Father, pray

That He who changes water and firm rock,
Will shield my Siegfried. For each sep'rate year
Of happy life vouchsafed me by his side
An altar will I build unto a saint.

[_Exit_ KRIEMHILD.]

CHAPLAIN.

The miracle astounds thee. Let me tell
The tale of how I won my friar's cowl.
The Angles are my kin, a heathen folk,
And as a heathen was I born and reared,
And turbulent I was; at fifteen years
The sword was girded on me. Then appeared
The Lord's first messenger among my tribe.
They scorned him and despised him, and at last
They slew him. Queen, I stood and saw it all,
And, driven by the others, gave to him
With this right hand I nevermore shall use,
Although the arm's not helpless as you think,
The final blow. But then I heard him pray.
He prayed for me, and his pure soul expired
With the Amen. The heart within my breast
Was changed from that time forth. I threw my sword
Upon the ground, and put his garment on
And went to preach the Gospel of the Cross.

UTE.

Here comes my son! Oh, couldst thou bring again
To this distracted land the peace we've lost
So utterly!

[_Exeunt_.]

SCENE IX

[_Enter_ GUNTHER _with_ HAGEN _and the others_.]

GUNTHER.

It is as I have said,
She reckons on the deed as we believe
That autumn brings us apples. The old nurse
Has tried to rouse her, and has quietly
Bestrewn her chamber all with grains of wheat;
They lie there undisturbed.

GISELHER.

How can it be
That she should venture life for life to stake?

HAGEN.

I marvel at her also.

GUNTHER. And withal
She neither drives nor urges, as with things
Bound up with time and place and human will
'Twere natural to do. She questions not
Nor changes countenance, but sits amazed
That any man should speak and not announce--
The deed is done!

HAGEN.

But I must tell thee this:
His spell is on her, and her very hate
Is rooted deep in love!

GUNTHER.

Believ'st thou so?

HAGEN.

'Tis not such love as binds, a man and wife,
In holy union.

GUNTHER.

How then?

HAGEN.

'Tis a charm,
A magic, that would keep her race alive.
So drives the giantess to seek her mate,
Joyless and choiceless, since they are the last.

GUNTHER.

Is there no hope?

HAGEN.

'Tis death must break the spell.
Her blood congeals when his has ceased to flow.
His destiny it was that he should slay
The dragon and then take the dragon's road.

[_A tumult is heard_.]

GUNTHER.

What may that be?

HAGEN.

'Tis those false messengers.
And Dankwart drives them forth. He does it well.
Lovers will hear it even while they kiss.

SCENE X

Enter SIEGFRIED; _as_ HAGEN _notices hint_.

HAGEN.

By all the fiends of hell! No! ten times no!
It were disgrace for us, and Siegfried thinks
Assuredly as I do. Here he comes!
Now speak, thou may'st decide it.--

(_As_ DANKWART _enters_.)

Though thy word
Can alter nothing more. The answer's gone.

(_To_ DANKWART.)

Thou surely hast not spared to scourge them well

(_To_ SIEGFRIED.)

Yet set thy seal upon it even so!

SIEGFRIED.

What's this?

HAGEN.

The dogs have come again to sue
For peace. I ordered that the worthless knaves
With scourges should be driven from the court
Before they gave their message.

SIEGFRIED.

'Twas well done!

HAGEN.

The King indeed reproves me, for he thinks
We know not what has happened.

SIEGFRIED.

What? Not know?
I know! For when a wolf is chased along,
He harms not those before him!

HAGEN.

That is true!

SIEGFRIED.

And more than that! Behind them is a horde
Of savage tribesmen who will never sow,

And yet they want to reap.

HAGEN.

Now do you see?

SIEGFRIED.

But you should show no mercy on the wolf
Because he has no time to guard himself.

HAGEN.

We surely shall not.

SIEGFRIED.

Come, we'll help the foxes
And drive him to his final hiding place,
Within the foxes' bellies.

HAGEN.

That we'll do;
Yet let us not exert ourselves in vain,
And so--Let's hunt today.

GISELHER.

I will not go.

GERENOT.

Nor will I either.

SIEGFRIED.

You are young and brave,
Yet follow not the chase, but bide at home?
They would have had to tie me, and the cords
I would have gnawed in two. Oh huntsman's joy!
If one could only sing it!

HAGEN.

Wilt thou go?

SIEGFRIED.

Go!--Friend, I am so full of rage and wrath
That I could quarrel now with any man,
And so I long for bloodshed.

HAGEN.

And I too!

SCENE XI

Enter KRIEMHILD.

KRIEMHILD.

You're going hunting?

SIEGFRIED.

Yes, and pray command
What I shall bring thee.

KRIEMHILD.

Siegfried, stay at home!

SIEGFRIED.

My child, one thing thou canst not learn too soon,
Thou must not beg a man to stay at home,
But beg him: Take me too!

KRIEMHILD.

Then, may I go?

HAGEN.

That may not be!

SIEGFRIED.

Why not? She's not afraid!
And surely she has often gone before.
Bring falcons here! For she shall take the birds,
And we the beasts. There'll be more pleasure so.

HAGEN.

One woman hides her shame within her room--
Her rival rideth gaily to the hunt?
'Twould look like taunting her.

SIEGFRIED.

I had not thought.
Ah well, it may not be.
KRIEMHILD. Then change again
Thy garments!

SIEGFRIED.

Yet again? Thy every wish
I'll follow, not thy fancies.

KRIEMHILD.

Thou'rt severe.

SIEGFRIED.

But let me go! The breeze will change my mood.
Tomorrow night I'll make my peace with thee.

HAGEN.

Then come!

SIEGFRIED.

I will. But now my farewell kiss.

[_He embraces_ KRIEMHILD.]

Thou'lt not deny me? Thou'lt not say, tomorrow,
As I do? Thou art noble.

KRIEMHILD.

Oh, come back!

SIEGFRIED.

But what a strange desire! What's wrong, I pray?
I go a-hunting with my own good friends,
And if the lofty mountains do not fall
And bury us, we cannot suffer harm.

KRIEMHILD.

Alas! That is the very thing I dreamed.

SIEGFRIED.

My child, the hills stand firm.

KRIEMHILD (_throws her arms around him once more_).

Come back! Come back!

[_Exeunt warriors_.]

SCENE XII

KRIEMHILD.

Siegfried!

SIEGFRIED (_appears once more_).

What now?

KRIEMHILD.

If thou wouldst not be angry--

HAGEN (_follows SIEGFRIED hastily_).

Well, hast thou got thy spindle yet?

SIEGFRIED (_to_ KRIEMHILD).

Thou Nearest,
The hounds can be no longer held in leash;
What dost thou wish?

HAGEN.

Oh wait, pray, for thy flax!
And spin it in the moonlight with the elves.

KRIEMHILD.

Now go! I longed to see thee once again!

[HAGEN _and_ SIEGFRIED _go out_.]

SCENE XIII

KRIEMHILD.

And should I call him to me ten times more
I'd never find the heart to tell it him.
How can we do what straightway we repent!

SCENE XIV

Enter GERENOT _and_ GISELHER.

KRIEMHILD.

Are you not gone? The Lord hath sent them here!
My dearest brothers, earnestly I beg
Vouchsafe me my desire, though to you
It seems but foolish. Go ye with my lord
Where'er he goes, and keep behind his back.

GERENOT.

We are not going. We've no wish to go.

KRIEMHILD.

No wish to go!

GISELHER.

What say'st thou? We've no time!
We've much to do before our men march forth.

KRIEMHILD.

And is all that intrusted to your youth?
If I am dear to you, if you have not
Forgotten that one mother nourished us,
Ride after them.

GISELHER.

They're long since in the wood.

GERENOT.

And then thou hast one brother with him,
now,

KRIEMHILD.

I beg of you!

GISELHER.

We must collect the arms,
As thou shalt see.

[_ Starts to go _.]

KRIEMHILD.

Then tell me one thing more
Is Hagen Siegfried's friend?

GERENOT.

Why not, I pray?

KRIEMHILD.

But has he ever praised him?

GISELHER.

It is praise
If Hagen does not blame, and I've not heard
That he found fault with Siegfried.

[_ Both leave _.]

KRIEMHILD.

Most of all
This frightens me. They are not with my lord!

SCENE XV

Enter FRIGGA.

KRIEMHILD.

How, nurse? Art seeking me?

FRIGGA.

I seek for none.

KRIEMHILD.

Then is there something wanted for the Queen?

FRIGGA.

There is not. She needs nothing.

KRIEMHILD.

Nothing still?

But can she not forgive?

FRIGGA.

I do not know!

She has had no occasion to forgive;
She never was offended. I heard horns.
Is there a hunt?

KRIEMHILD.

Hast thou then ordered it?

FRIGGA.

I--No!

[_Exit_.]

SCENE XVI

KRIEMHILD.

Oh, had I only told it him!
Oh, my beloved, no woman hast thou known,
I see it now! Else nevermore hadst thou
Unto a trembling girl who doth betray
Herself through fear, intrusted such a secret.
Still do I hear the playful whispered words
With which thou told'st it to me when I praised
The dragon's death. And then I made thee swear
To tell no other soul in all the world,
And now--Oh birds that circle overhead,
Oh snow white doves that fly about me now,
Take pity on me, warn him, fly to him!

[_Exit_.]

ACT V

Oden Forest.

SCENE I

Enter HAGEN, GUNTHER, VOLKER, DANKWART _and serving men_.

HAGEN.

This is the place. The spring is gushing forth,
The bushes cover it. If I stand here,
I can impale the man who stoops to drink
Against the rock.

GUNTHER.

I've given no command.

HAGEN.

When thou hast taken thought thou wilt command.
There is no other way, and there will come
No second day like this one. Therefore speak,
Or if thou wilt not speak, be still!

(_To the serving men_.)

 Hello!
'Tis here we rest!

[_The serving men prepare a meal_.]

GUNTHER.

Thou'st always hated him.

HAGEN.

I'll not deny that gladly to this work
I lend my hand, and I would surely meet
In combat any man who came between
My enemy and me, and yet the deed
I hold not for that reason less than just.

GUNTHER.

And yet my brothers spoke against the deed
And turned their backs upon us.

HAGEN.

Had they then
The courage to warn him and hinder us?
They must have felt that we are in the right,

And it is but their youth that makes them shrink
From blood that is not shed in open fight.

GUNTHER.

It must be so.

HAGEN.

Why he has bought off death
And so ennobled murder.

(_To the serving men_.)

Sound the horns,
And call the hunt together. For 'tis time
That we should eat.

[_The horns are blown_.]

Now take things as they are
And leave it all to me. If thou art not
Offended, or forgivest what is past,
So be it, yet forbid thy servant not
To rescue and avenge thy noble wife!
She will not break the solemn oath she swore.
If she's deceived in her firm trust in us--Her
confidence that we'll redeem the pledge--Then
all the joy of life that once again,
May be aroused within her youthful heart
When shadows deepen and the end is near,
Will be transformed into one dreadful curse,
One final imprecation upon thee!

GUNTHER.

There still is time.

SCENE II

Enter SIEGFRIED _with_ RUMOLT _and_ huntsmen_.

SIEGFRIED.

I'm here! And now ye hunters,
Where are your spoils? Mine were to follow me
Upon a wagon, but the wagon broke.

HAGEN.

A lion is the game I chase today,
But I have failed to find one.

SIEGFRIED.

That I know,
For I myself have killed him!--Food is spread.

Sound trumpets in his praise who ordered that,
For now we feel the need. Accursed ravens,
Here too? Now blow your bugles till they burst!
I've thrown near every kind of game I killed
At this black flock; at last I threw a fox,
But still they would not fly, and yet I hate
Nothing so much in all the woodland green
As that deep black--'tis like the devil's hue.
The doves have never flocked around me so!
Shall we stay here to pass the night?

GUNTHER.

We thought--

SIEGFRIED.

'Tis well, the choice is fitting, and there gapes
A hollow tree. I'll take it for myself.
For all my life have I been used to that,
And I know nothing better than at night
On soft dry wood to lay my weary head,
And so to dream, half waking, half asleep,
To count the passing hours by the birds
That waken slowly, softly, one by one,
Each singing in his turn. Then tick, tick, tick!
Now it is two. Tock, tock, and one must stretch!
Kiwitt, kiwitt! The sun is blinking now,
And now its eyes are open. Chanticleer
Bids all arise, lest they should sneeze.

VOLKER.

I know!
It is as if Time wakened them himself,
As in the dark he feels his way along,
To beat the rhythm of his pace for him.
In measured intervals, as from the glass
Trickles the sand, and as the shadow long
Creeps on the dial, so there follow now
The mountain cock, the blackbird and the thrush,
And none disturbs the other as by day,
Nor coaxes him to warble ere his time.
I've watched it off myself.

SIEGFRIED.

I too.--My brother,
Thou art not happy.

GUNTHER.

But I am!

SIEGFRIED.

Oh, no!
I have seen people at a wedding feast,
And following a bier, and so I know

How different they look. Now let us do
As strangers might, who'd never met before
Until by accident within the wood
They meet, and one has this, the other that,
And so they put together all they have,
And thus with joy receive and also give.
'Tis well! For I bring meat of every kind,
And I will give to you a mountain bull,
Five boars and thirty, even forty stags,
And pheasants too, as many as you will,
Not mentioning the lion and the bear,
All this for one small beaker of cool wine.

DANKWART.

Alas!

SIEGFRIED.

What's Wrong?

HAGEN.

The wine has been forgotten.

SIEGFRIED.

Yes, I'll believe it. That may well befall
A hunter who is resting from the chase
And has a red hot coal for his own tongue
Inside his mouth. Well, I must seek myself,
Although I cannot scent it like a hound--
But let it be--I'll never spoil your sport!

[He seeks.]

There is none here, nor here! Where is the cask?
I pray thee, minstrel, save me, else I'll lose
The tongue that has till now been wagging so.

HAGEN.

And that may happen, for--there is no wine.

SIEGFRIED.

The devil and his fiends may take your hunt
If I am not to have a hunter's fare!
Whose duty was it to provide the drink?

HAGEN.

Mine! Yet I did not know where we should be,

[Illustration: Schnorr von Carolsfeld KRIEMHILD FINDS THE SLAIN
SIEGFRIED]

And sent the wine to Spessart, where it seems
There are no thirsty men.

SIEGFRIED.

Give thanks who will!
But have we then no water? Must a man
Be satisfied with evening dew, and lap
The drops from off the leaves?

HAGEN.

But hold thy tongue!
Thine ear will bring thee comfort!

SIEGFRIED (_listens_).

Hark, a spring!
Oh welcome stream! 'Tis true I love thee more
When thou, instead of welling from the stone
So suddenly and rushing to my mouth,
Thy winding way pursuest through the grape;
For from thy journey many things thou bring'st,
That fill our heads with foolish gaiety.
Yet even so be praised.

[_He goes to the spring._]

Ah no! I must
Do penance first and ye shall witness bear
That I have done it. I'm the thirstiest man
Among you all and I will drink the last,
Because I was so harsh with poor Kriemhild.

HAGEN.

Then I'll begin.

[_He goes to the spring._]

SIEGFRIED (_to GUNTHER_).

Pray look more cheerfully.
I know a way to reconcile thy bride;
Brunhilda's kisses shall ere long be thine.
My joy I will forego as long as thou.

HAGEN (_comes back and lays aside his weapons_).

The weapons will impede me when I stoop.

[_Retires again._]

SIEGFRIED.

Before the full assemblage of thy folk,
Kriemhild will sue for pardon ere we go.
This pledge was freely given, but she longs
To leave and hide her blushes.

HAGEN (_returns_).

Cold as ice!

SIEGFRIED.

Who next?

VOLKER.

First let us eat.

SIEGFRIED.

'Tis well!

[He goes toward the spring but turns back again.]

Ah yes!

[He lays aside his weapons. Exit.]

HAGEN (_pointing to the weapons_).

Away with them!

DANKWART (_carries the weapons away_).

HAGEN (_who has taken up his own weapons again and has meanwhile kept his back turned toward_ GUNTHER; _takes a running start and throws his spear_).

SIEGFRIED (_cries out_).

My friends!

HAGEN (_exclaims_).

Not quiet yet?

(_To the others._)

No word with him, whatever he may say!

SIEGFRIED (_crawls forward_).

Murdered--while I was drinking! Gunther, Gunther?
Have I deserved this from thee? In thy need
I stood by thee.

HAGEN.

Lop branches from the trees,
We need a bier. Quick, choose the strongest limbs,
For heavy is a dead man.

SIEGFRIED.

I am slain,
But yet not wholly!

[He springs up.]

Where then is my sword?
They've taken it! Oh, by thy manhood, Hagen,
Give the dead man a sword! I challenge thee
E'en now to mortal combat!

HAGEN.

In his mouth
He has his enemy, yet seeks him still.

SIEGFRIED.

My life drips from me like a candle spent,
And e'en my sword this murderer denies,
Though granting it would render him less vile.
For shame! Such cowardice! He fears my thumb,
For that is all that's left of me.

[He stumbles over his shield.]

My shield!
My faithful shield, I'll throw thee at the hound!

[He stoops over the shield, but cannot lift it, and rises
unsteadily once more.]

As if 'twere nailed there! E'en for this revenge
'Tis now too late!

HAGEN.

Oh, if this chatterer
Would maim his foolish tongue between his teeth
Where it has sinned so long all unreproved--
His idle tongue that is not silenced yet!--
Then would he have revenge, for that alone
Has brought him to this pass.

SIEGFRIED.

Thou liest! 'Twas
Thine envy!

HAGEN.

Silence!

SIEGFRIED.

Threats for a dead man?
Aimed I so true that thou dost fear me still?
Then draw, for now I fall, and thou canst dare
To spit upon me like a heap of dust,
For here I lie--

[He falls to the ground.]

And you are free from Siegfried!
Yet know, the blow that slew him killed you too,
For who will trust you? They will drive you forth
As I had driven the Danes.

HAGEN.

This simpleton!
He hath not grasped our trick!

SIEGFRIED.

Then 'tis not true?
Oh, horrible, that men should lie like this!
Ah well! You are alone in this! And folk
Will always curse you too, whene'er they curse.
They'll say: Toads, vipers and Burgundians!
Nay you are first: Burgundians, vipers, toads.
For all is lost to you--nobility
And honor, fame and all, are lost with me!
There is no bound nor limit now for crime,
The arm indeed may pierce the heart, but when
The heart is dead the arm is useless too.
My wife! My poor, foreboding, tender wife--
How wilt thou bear the blow! If Gunther's heart
Still means to do one deed of faith and love,
May he be kind to thee!--Yet rather go
Unto my father!--Hearest thou, Kriemhild?

[He dies.]

HAGEN.

He's silent now. Small merit is in that!

DANKWART.

What shall we tell?

HAGEN.

Some stupid tale of thieves
Who killed him in the forest. It is true
None will believe it, yet I think that none
Will call us liars. Once again we stand
Where none will dare to call us to account;
For we're like fire and water. Till the Rhine
Seeks out some lie to justify its floods,
And fire explains why it has broken forth,
We need not fear accusers. Thou, my King,
Gav'st no commands--thou should'st remember that!
The blame is mine alone. Now bear him forth!

[Exeunt with the body.]

SCENE III

KRIEMHILD'S room. Deep night.

KRIEMHILD.

'Tis far too early yet. It is my blood
That wakened me, and not the cock I heard,
Or seemed to hear.

[_She goes to the window and opens it partly._]

The stars are shining still,
It surely is an hour yet till mass.
Today I long to go to church and pray.

SCENE IV

Enter UTE softly.

UTE.

Already up, Kriemhild?

KRIEMHILD.

I am amazed
That thou art up, for thou hast always slept
More soundly after dawn and claimed thy right
To have thy daughter wake thee, as thou her
So long ago.

UTE.

Today I could not sleep,
I heard strange sounds.

KRIEMHILD.

And didst thou mark them too?

UTE.

It was like people trying to be still.

KRIEMHILD.

So I was right?

UTE.

They seemed to hold their breath,
Yet dropped a sword that clanged! On tiptoe walked,
And yet upset the brazier! Hushed the dog,
Yet trod upon his paw.

KRIEMHILD.

They have perhaps

Returned.

UTE.

The hunters?

KRIEMHILD.

Once it seemed to me
That some one softly crept up to my door.
I thought it must be Siegfried.

UTE. Didst thou make
Some sign that thou wast wakeful?

KRIEMHILD.

No.

UTE.

Indeed
It might then have been Siegfried, but 'twould be
Almost too soon.

KRIEMHILD.

To me it seems so too!
And then he did not knock.

UTE.

The hunt was not,
Or so I think, to bring us game for food;
They wanted our poor farmers to have peace,
Who have been threatening to burn their ploughs
Because the wild boar harvests where they sow!

KRIEMHILD.

Was that it?

UTE.

Child, thou art already dressed,
Yet hast not any maid with thee?

KRIEMHILD.

I thought
That I would learn who woke the first of all.
Besides, it was a pastime.

UTE.

Each in turn,
My candle in my hand, I gazed upon.
For each year brings a different kind of sleep.
Fifteen and sixteen sleep like five and six,
But seventeen brings dreams, and eighteen, thoughts,

And nineteen brings desires--

SCENE V

A Chamberlain cries out before the door.

CHAMBERLAIN.

Almighty God!

UTE.

What is it? What is wrong?

CHAMBERLAIN (_enters_).

I almost fell.

UTE.

And that was why you called?

CHAMBERLAIN.

Some one is dead!

UTE.

What's that?

CHAMBERLAIN.

A dead man lying at the door!

UTE.

A dead man?

KRIEMHILD (_falls_).

Then 'tis Siegfried, 'tis my lord!

UTE (_catches her in her arms_).

Impossible!

(_To the CHAMBERLAIN._)

Bring light!

[_CHAMBERLAIN brings a light and then nods his head._]

UTE.

'Tis Siegfried? Go!
Awaken all!

CHAMBERLAIN.

Help, help!

[The maidens rush in.]

UTE.

O piteous wife!

KRIEMHILD (_rising_).

Brunhild commanded, Hagen did the deed!--
A light!

UTE.

My child!

KRIEMHILD (_seizes a torch_).

'Tis he! I know, I know!
Let no one tread on him; for thou didst hear
The servants stumble over him.--The servants!
Yet once great kings made way for him.

UTE.

The light!

KRIEMHILD.

I'll place it there myself.

[She opens the door and falls to the floor.]

Oh Mother, Mother,
Why didst thou bear thy child! Oh thou dear head,
But let me kiss thee. I'll not seek thy mouth,
For all to me is precious. Thou canst not
Forbid me as thou would'st perhaps.--Thy lips--
'Tis too much pain!

CHAMBERLAIN.

She's dying.

UTE.

I could wish
That she might die!

SCENE VI

Enter GUNTHER with DANKWART, RUMOLT, GISELHER and GERENOT.

UTE (_approaching GUNTHER_).

My son, what deed was this?

GUNTHER.

I fain would weep myself. Yet of his death
You've heard already? By the holy words
Of our good priest you were to learn of this.
I went to tell him in the night.

UTE (_with a motion of the head_).

Thou see'st
The dead man told his story for himself.

GUNTHER (_aside to DANKWART_).

But how was this?

DANKWART.

My brother bore him here!

GUNTHER.

For shame!

DANKWART.

From his intent he'd not desist,
And when he came again he laughed and said:
This is my gratitude for his farewell.

SCENE VII

Enter the Chaplain.

GUNTHER (_going to meet him_).

Too late!

CHAPLAIN.

And such a man slain in the woods!

DANKWART.

The robber's spear was guided by blind chance,
So that it struck the spot. In such a way
A child may kill a giant.

UTE (_still busying herself with the maidens over KRIEMHILD_).

Rise, Kriemhild!

KRIEMHILD.

Another parting? No, I'll cling to him,
And to the grave together will we go,
Or you must leave him here. But half my love
I gave him living. Now that he is dead
I know it. Were it the reverse! His eyes
I never yet had kissed! All, all is new!
We thought we'd time before us.

UTE.

Come my child!
We cannot leave him lying in the dust.
KRIEMHILD. Oh that is true! The costliest and rarest
Today shall be as naught.

[She rises.]

Here, take the keys!

[She throws down keys.]

There'll be no festivals again! The silk,
The wondrous golden garments, and the linen--
Bring everything. Be sure to gather flowers--
He loved them so! And you must cut them all,
Even the little buds that have not bloomed.
For whom then should they blossom? Lay them all
Within his coffin, then my bridal robes,
And lay him softly down, and I'll do so,

[She stretches out her arms.]

And I will be his covering!

GUNTHER (_to his followers_).

Your oath!
Let no one harm her more.

KRIEMHILD (_turns around_).

The murderer's here?
Away, for fear the blood should flow again!
No! No! Come here!

[She lays hold of DANKWART.]

That Siegfried may bear witness!

[She wipes her hand on her dress.]

Alas, alas! My right hand nevermore
May dare to touch him. Does the blood gush forth?
O Mother, look! I cannot! No? Then these
But hide the deed. I seek the murderer.
If Hagen Tronje's here, let him come forth!
He is not guilty--I'll give him my hand.

UTE.

My child--

KRIEMHILD.

Now go and hear Brunhilda laugh.
She's eating too, and drinking.

UTE.

It was robbers--

KRIEMHILD.

I know them well.

[_She takes GISELHER and GERENOT by the hand._]

Thou wast not with them there!
Thou didst not go!

UTE.

But hear me!

RUMOLT.

Through the wood
We had been scattered; for it was his wish,
And 'tis our custom too. We found him dying
At our next meeting place.

KRIEMHILD.

You found him there?
What did he say? A word! His dying word!
I will believe thy tale, if thou canst tell,
And if it is no curse. But oh, beware!
For sooner would a rose bloom from thy mouth
Than thou imagine what thou didst not hear.

(_As RUMOLT hesitates._)

It is a lie!

CHAPLAIN.

'Tis possible! I've heard
A magpie dropped a knife that killed a man
Who could not have been reached by human hands.
And what a winged thief by chance could do
Because his gleaming booty burdened him,
A robber well might do.

KRIEMHILD.

Oh, holy father,
Thou knowest not!

DANKWART.

Princess, thy grief is sacred,
But yet unjust and blind. Our warriors here,
Our noblest will bear witness--

[_Meanwhile the door has been closed and the body is no longer visible._]

KRIEMHILD (_who observes this_). Halt! Who dares--

[_She hastens to the door._]

UTE.

Stop, stop! He was but gently lifted up
As thou thyself would'st wish.

KRIEMHILD.

Oh, give him back!
Else they will rob me, they will bury him
Where I shall never find him!

CHAPLAIN.

To the church!
I'll follow him, for now he's God's alone.

[_Exit._]

SCENE VIII

KRIEMHILD.

So be it! To the church!
(_To GUNTHER._)

'Twas robbers then?
I bid thee gather all thy kindred there
To try the test of murder.

GUNTHER.

Be it so.

KRIEMHILD.

But bring them one and all, for now I find
That some are missing. Call the absent too!

[_Exeunt omnes; the men and women by
different doors._]

SCENE IX

_In the cathedral. Torches. The Chaplain with other priests is at one side before an iron door. At the main entrance of the cathedral about sixty of _HAGEN's _kindred are assembled. Finally _HAGEN, GUNTHER _and the others. Knocking is heard._

CHAPLAIN.

Who knocks

VOICE FROM WITHOUT.

A great king from the Netherlands
Whose crowns are as the fingers on his hands.

CHAPLAIN.

I know him not.

[The knocking is repeated.]

Who knocks?

VOICE FROM WITHOUT.

A warrior brave,
Whose trophies are as many as his teeth.

CHAPLAIN.

I know him not.

[The knocking is repeated.]

Who knocks?

VOICE FROM WITHOUT.

Thy brother Siegfried,
Whose sins are as the hairs upon his head.

CHAPLAIN.

Then open!

[The door is opened and _SIEGFRIED's _body is brought in on the bier._ KRIEMHILD _and_ UTE _with their maidens follow him.]

CHAPLAIN (_turning toward the bier_).

Thou art welcome, my dead brother,
For peace thou seekest here!
[To the women whom he keeps away from the coffin by coming between them and it, while it is being set down.]

Be welcome too,
If you are seeking peace as Siegfried is.

[He holds up the cross before KRIEMHILD.]

Thou turn'st away from this most holy cross?

KRIEMHILD.

I come to ask for justice and for truth.

CHAPLAIN.

Thou seekest vengeance, and the Lord hath said,
Vengeance is mine. It is the Lord alone
Who sees what's hidden. He alone requites.

KRIEMHILD.

I am a woman, weak, half crushed to earth;
No warrior can I strangle with my hair.
What vengeance then is left for me, I pray?

CHAPLAIN.

Why should'st thou search to find thine enemy,
Unless thou seek'st on him to take revenge?
His Judge knows all, and is not that enough?

KRIEMHILD.

I do not want to curse the innocent.

CHAPLAIN.

Then curse thou no man, and 'twill not befall!--
Thou poor frail child created but from dust
And ashes, with no strength to breast the wind,
Thy burden's great, well may'st thou cry to heaven,
Yet gaze on Him who bore a greater still!
In humblest guise He came upon the earth,
And took upon Himself the sins of men,
And suffered for atonement all the griefs
That ever there have been throughout all time--
The griefs that follow fallen mortals still.
He suffered in thy sorrow more than thou!
And heavenly power flowed from out His lips
And all the angels floated round his head,
But Jesus Christ was faithful unto death--
Unto His shameful death upon the cross.
This sacrifice He brought thee in his love,
In pity that we may not comprehend.
Wilt thou deny thine offering to Him?
Then let them bury him! And turn thou back!

KRIEMHILD.

Thy work is done, and I will now do mine!

[_She goes and stands at the head of the coffin._]

Approach the bier, the dread ordeal begins!

CHAPLAIN (_goes also to the coffin and stands at the foot. Three trumpet blasts are heard_).

HAGEN (_to GUNTHER_).

What then has happened?

GUNTHER.

Murder has been done.

HAGEN.

Why stand I here?

GUNTHER.

Suspicion rests on thee.

HAGEN.

My kin are gathered here. Of my fair name
I'll question them.--Are ye prepared to swear
That Hagen Tronje is no murderer?

ALL EXCEPT GISELHER.

We are prepared.

HAGEN.

Thou'rt silent, Giselher?
Wilt thou not for thine uncle take thine oath
That Hagen Tronje is no murderer?

GISELHER (_raising his hand_).

I am prepared.

HAGEN.

Ye need not take the oath.

[_He goes forward to_ KRIEMHILD _in the cathedral._]

Thou see'st, my kin will clear me when I will,
'Tis needless that I now approach the bier,
Yet will I stand there and will be the first!

[_He walks slowly to the bier._]

UTE.

Oh Kriemhild, do not look.

KRIEMHILD.

Perchance he lives!
My Siegfried! Had he strength to speak one word
Or gaze but once upon me!

UTE.

My poor child,
It is but nature, moving once again.
Ghastly enough!

CHAPLAIN.

It is the hand of God,
That softly stirs once more these sacred springs
Because He must inscribe the sign of Cain.

HAGEN (_bending over the coffin_).

The scarlet blood! I ne'er believed the sign!
But now I see it here with mine own eyes.

KRIEMHILD.

Yet thou canst stand and gaze?

[_She springs toward him._]

Away, thou fiend!
Who knows but every drop of blood gives pain,
That thy foul, murderous presence draws from him!

HAGEN.

Fair Kriemhild, if a dead man's blood still boils,
Why may not mine? I am a living man.

KRIEMHILD.

Away! Away! I'd seize thee with my hands,
Had I but some one who would back them off
And cast them from me that I might be clean--
For washing would not cleanse them, even if
I dipped them in thy blood. Away! Away!
So stood'st thou not to deal the deadly blow,
Thy wolfish eyes fixed on him steadily,
With fiendish grin disclosing thy intent
Before the time! But slyly didst thou creep
Behind him, ever shrinking from his gaze,
As wild beasts do that fear the human eye,
And peered to find the spot, that I--Thou dog,
What was thine oath to me?

HAGEN.

To shelter him
From fire and water.

KRIEMHILD.

Not from human foes?

HAGEN.

That too, and I'd have done it.

KRIEMHILD.

Thou didst mean
To murder him thyself?

HAGEN.

To punish him!

KRIEMHILD.

Was murder ever called a punishment
Since heaven and earth began?

HAGEN. I'd challenged him
To mortal combat, thou may'st take my word,
But none might tell the hero from the dragon,
And dragons must be killed. So proud a knight,
Why did he hide him in the dragon's skin!

KRIEMHILD.

The dragon's skin! He had to slay him first,
And with the dragon slew he all the world!
The forest depths with all their monstrous beasts,
And every warrior that had feared to slay
The dreadful dragon, Hagen with the rest!
Thy slander cannot harm him. But the dart
Thine envy borrowed from thy wickedness.
And folk will tell of his nobility
As long as men still dwell upon the earth,
And just so long they'll tell thy tale of shame.

HAGEN.

So be it then!

[_He takes_ SIEGFRIED'S _sword, Balmung, from
beside the body._]

And now 'twill never end!

[_He girds on the sword and walks slowly
back to his kindred._]

KRIEMHILD.

To murder foul is added robbery!

(_To_ GUNTHER.)

A judgment, Gunther! Judgment I demand.

CHAPLAIN.

Remember Him who on the cross forgave!

KRIEMHILD.

A judgment! If the king denies it me,
The blood of Siegfried stains his mantle too.

UTE. Cease, Kriemhild! Thou wilt ruin thy whole house!

KRIEMHILD.

So be it! For the measure's over full!

[_She turns toward_ SIEGFRIED'S _body and falls upon the bier._]

FOOTNOTES:

[Footnote 1: Siegfried's wonderful sword is named Balmung.]

[Footnote 2: The reference is to a passage in the _Chanson de Roland_. Roland was in command of a rear guard and was warned of the approach of a large force of Saracens. His comrade Oliver begged him to sound his horn and summon Charlemagne and his forces. Roland would not blow the horn until nearly all his men were slain. At last, however, the Saracens learned of Charlemagne's approach and fled. Roland then blew his horn once more and died alone on the field as he heard Charlemagne's battle cry.--TRANSLATOR.]

[Footnote 3: Balmung is the name of Siegfried's magical sword.]

[Footnote 4: The Mandrake is a plant growing in the Mediterranean region and belonging to the potato family. It was early famed for its poisonous and narcotic qualities. Love philtres were also made from its roots, and an old High German story tells of little images made from the root, thus endowed with the power of prophecy and respected as oracles. Probably Hebbel refers to the German tradition, as he is speaking of the dwarfs who are both small and wise. The German name of the plant is _Alraune_.--TRANSLATOR.]

[Footnote 5: The translator finds that authorities and versions of the tale differ as to Siegfried's _"Kappe."_ In Maurice Grau's Goetterdaemmerung libretto it is called in the English translation "Tarnhelm," and Siegfried hangs it to his belt when not in use. Dippold in his account of the Nibelung tale speaks of the _Tarn kappe_ or magic _cap_ of darkness which _renders the wearer invisible._ But the _Encyclopaedia Britannica_ speaks of the "cape of darkness" and Heath's _Dictionary_ gives cap first, but calls _Tarn kappe_ "hiding cape." In either case invisibility was obtained.--TRANSLATOR.]

ANNA (1836)

BY FRIEDRICH HEBBEL

TRANSLATED BY FRANCES H. KING

"Mild the air, and heaven blue,
Fragrant flowers full of dew,
And at even dance and play,
That is quite too much, I say."

Anna, the young servant maid, was gaily singing this song one bright Sunday morning, while busily engaged in washing up the kitchen and dairy crockery. At that moment Baron Eichenthal, in whose service she had been for the last six months, passed by, wearing a green damask dressing-gown. He was a decrepit young man, full of spleen and whims. "What's the meaning of this yodelling!" he demanded haughtily, pausing in front of her--"You know that I cannot bear frivolity."

Anna blushed violently: she remembered that her severe master would have been very pleased to find her frivolous a few evenings ago in the summerhouse. A sharp retort was on the tip of her tongue, but forcibly suppressing it, she started to take up a white porcelain soup-tureen, and, in a violent struggle with her natural fearlessness, let it fall to the ground. The valuable dish broke and the Baron, who had already taken a few steps forward, turned around, his face flaming with anger.

"What!" he exclaimed loudly, and strode up to the girl, "would you cool your temper on my mother's kitchen crockery, you little sneak, because your stubborn spirit will not allow you to accept a well-merited reproof quietly, as becomes you?" And with that, scolding and storming, he gave her, right and left, box after box on the ear, while she, stunned, gazed at him, like a child, bereft of speech, indeed almost of her senses, still holding the handle of the tureen in one hand, and involuntarily pressing the other against her breast.

She was first aroused from this state, which bordered on a swoon, by the mocking laughter of the chamber-maid Frederika, who, more easy going than she, gladly allowed the Baron to trifle wantonly with her and pinch her cheeks or play with her curls. The insolent wench looked at her derisively, and called out, "That will give you a good appetite for the kermess, Miss Prude."

The Baron, however, laughed loudly and placing his arms akimbo, said: "You might just as well give up all desire for dance and play; I withdraw the permission accorded by my mother, you shall take care of the house. Is there nothing then for her to do today?" he continued, talking to himself. Frederika whispered something to him. "Right," he shouted, "she shall comb the flax until late at night; do you hear?" Anna, completely bewildered, nodded her head, and then sank down powerless on her knees; at the same time, however, she instinctively snatched up a brass utensil, and, while the hot, uncontrollable tears overflowed her eyes, she began to scour it bright.

The gardener had witnessed the foregoing scene from a distance. Fresh and blooming as she was, he had long pursued her with attentions, but in vain; coming up at that moment, he greeted her and asked maliciously how she was? "Oh, oh," she moaned, quivering spasmodically, and springing, up she clutched at the sneering fellow's breast and face.

"Madwoman," he cried, growing frightened, and, defending himself with all his masculine strength, pushed her away. She stared after him with wide-open eyes as though not realizing what she had done; then, as if coming to her senses, returned to her work, which she continued without interruption, except at times unconsciously heaving a loud sigh, until at midday she was called to the kitchen to dinner. Here nothing but faces expressing malicious joy at her discomfiture awaited her, and more or less suppressed laughter and tittering, which grew stronger and more pitiless as she continued to gaze down at her plate with burning cheeks, and replied not a word to the volley of allusions.

The maids, already partly decked out in their finery, exchanged bantering remarks, bearing unmistakable reference to her, on the score of the lovers whom they had found, or hoped to find, and the flat-nosed scullion, encouraged to commit the impertinence by the winks of the head farm-hand and the coachman, asked Anna if he might not borrow her red-flowered apron and the hat with the gay-colored ribbons that Frederick, the Major's man, had given her at Christmas. She would certainly not need these things in the flax-room, he said, and he hoped by means of them to win the good graces of a girl who had no finery.

"Boy," she cried with white trembling lips, "I'll not cook you any milk soup another time when you are sick in bed, and no one bothers himself about you!" and shoving back her plate, she snatched up the empty water-pails, which it was her duty to fill afresh at the well, and went out.

"Fie," said John, an old servant, who, having grown gray in the service of his lordship's father, was now eating the bread of charity in the house of Baron Eichenenthal. "It is wrong to spoil the wench's food and drink with bitter words."

"Pshaw!" retorted the gardener, "it will not hurt her. Since that lean-bodied toady, Frederick, has been running after her, she's as proud as though she had angled a nobleman!"

"Pride comes before a fall!" said Lizzie, the buxom little cook, with a tender glance at the phlegmatic head farm-hand. "Do you know that she laces?"

"Why shouldn't she be proud," interjected the coachman, "isn't she the schoolmaster's daughter!"

Frederika, the chambermaid, came into the kitchen with a heated face. "Isn't Anna here?" she asked, drying her forehead with her silk handkerchief. "The master has just gone to bed, he joked a good deal"--here she coughed, as the others cast significant glances at one another and laughed--"and I am to tell her that she is to begin combing the flax right away, and"--this she added on her own authority--"she must not stop work until ten o'clock."

"I'll give her the message, Rika!" answered Lizzie. Frederika tripped out again.

"Doesn't she lace too?" asked the head farm-hand.

"Chut! Chut!" whispered John, and jingled his fork against his plate in embarrassment. Anna entered the kitchen with her load of water.

"Anna," began Lizzie officiously, "I am to tell you--"

"I know all about it already," answered Anna drily, in a steady voice. "I met the messenger. Where is the key to the flax-room hanging?"

"Over there on the nail!" replied the cook, and pointed with her finger to the place.

Anna, composed, because inwardly crushed, took the key, and while the others went off to their trunks in order to complete their toilet before a three groschen mirror, she went hastily into the flax-room, the windows of which looked out upon the castle courtyard and the high-road. She sat down, her face turned toward the windows so that she could see all the merry-makers on their way from the village to the kermess and hear their gay talk. She began to work with gloomy industry. Although at times she unconsciously sank into a fit of brooding, she would immediately start up again terrified, as though bitten by a snake or tarantula, and continue her labor with increased, indeed, with unnatural zeal. Only once during the entire long afternoon did she get up from her low, hard, wooden stool, and that was when her fellow servants drove quickly down the castle yard in comfortable rack wagons drawn by fast horses. But with a loud laugh, as though in self-derision, she sat down again, and, although she grew so thirsty in all the heat and dust that her tongue clove to the roof of her mouth, she did not even drink the coffee that old Bridget, who on an occasion like this of today used to take care of the house for the maids, compassionately brought her toward four or five o'clock.

When night gradually came on she went into the kitchen, without smoothing back the locks of hair that hung wildly about her face. Making no answer to Bridget's friendly invitation to remain there and share with her a tempting dish of baked potatoes, she took a candle out of the candle box, and holding her hand over it to protect it against the draught, went back into the flax-room. It was not long before there was a knock at the window, and when she had opened the door Frederick entered hastily, dripping with perspiration.

"I must see what is the matter," he said, almost breathless and tearing open his waist-coat, "they are whispering all kinds of things."

"You see!" answered Anna quickly, then stopped short and arranged her bodice, which had been pushed somewhat awry.

"Your master is a scoundrel!" blustered Frederick, gnashing his teeth.

"Yes, yes!" said Anna.

"I should like to meet him up there on the cliff," cried Frederick, "oh, it's abominable!"

"How hot you are," said Anna, gently taking his hand. "Have you been dancing already?"

"I have been drinking wine, five or six glasses," rejoined Frederick. "Come, Anna, dress yourself, you shall go with me in spite of every devil who tries to interfere."

"No, no, no!" said Anna.

"But I say yes," Frederick flared out in a passion, and put his arm around her waist, "I say yes!"

"Most certainly not!" Anna answered softly, embracing him affectionately.

KRIEMHILD ACCUSES HAGEN OF THE MURDER OF SIEGFRIED

From the painting by Schnorr von Carolsfeld [Illustration]

"You shall, I wish it," cried Frederick, releasing her.

Anna, without making any answer, took up the flax-comb and looked down on the ground before her.

"Will you, or will you not?" persisted Frederick, and stepped right in front of her.

"How could I?" returned Anna, looking confidingly in his eyes, and laying her hand on her heart.

"Very well," cried Frederick. "You will not. God damn me if I ever see you again!" He rushed out like a mad man.

"Frederick," cried Anna after him, "Do stay, stay a moment, listen how the wind is howling."

She was starting to hurry after him when her dress brushed against the candle placed low down on an oak-block; it fell over and set fire to the flax which burst at once into powerful flames. Frederick, crazed with wine and anger, forced himself, as usually happens in such moments, to sing a song as he strode out into the night, which had turned out to be very stormy. The familiar tones, in wild hilarity, penetrated to where Anna was. "Oh! oh!" she sighed from the depth of her heart. Then for the first time she noticed that half of the room was already on fire. Beating with her hands and stamping with her feet she threw herself upon the greedy flames which, hot and burning, leaped toward her and scorched her. Frederick's voice died away in the distance in a last halloo. "Pshaw, why should I put it out, let it be!" she cried, and slamming the door behind her with all her might, she hurried out with a horrible laugh, involuntarily following the same path through the garden that Frederick had taken.

Soon, however, she sank down, exhausted, almost fainting, in a meadow which adjoined the garden, and groaning aloud pressed her face into the cold, wet grass. Thus she lay for a long time.

Then from far and near the fire and alarm bells sounded, hollow and terrifying. She half raised herself, but did not look around. Above her the sky was blood-red and full of sparks; an unnatural heat was spreading, and increasing from minute to minute. The wind howled and roared, the flames crackled, wails and shouts resounded. She lay down again at full length on the ground, and it seemed to her as though she could sleep. But the next moment she was frightened out of this death-like state by the words of two people hurrying past her, one of whom cried out, "Lord have mercy on us! the village is already burning!" She pulled herself together then with a superhuman effort, and hurried,

with flying hair, down to the village, which adjoined the burning side of the castle. There, in more than one place the inflammable straw roofs had already burst into flame.

The wind grew stronger and stronger. Most of the inhabitants, with the exception of the children and decrepit old people, were more than four miles away at the kermess. Had the necessary men been on the spot the miserable fire apparatus could have offered only a vain resistance to the league of the two dread elements. Since the summer had been unusually dry, even water was lacking.

Distress, danger, confusion, increased every minute. A little boy ran about crying, "O God, O God, my little sister!" And when he was asked, "Where is your sister?" he repeated his horrifying cry, as though, incapable of every intelligent thought, he had not understood the question.

One old woman had to be forcibly dragged from her house. "My hen," she moaned, "my poor little hen!" And indeed it was touching to see how the little creature fluttered terrified from one corner to the other in the suffocating smoke, and yet, because in better days it was probably accustomed not to cross the threshold, it would not allow itself to be driven through the open door into the air, even by its mistress.

Anna, weeping, screaming, beating her breast, and then again laughing, rushed into every kind of danger with the reckless daring of despair. She rescued, extinguished, and was an object at once of surprise, admiration, and uncanny mystery to all the others. At last they despaired of being able even to arrest the fire, which, continuing to spread, threatened to reduce the whole village to ashes. It was then that they saw her sink down on her knees in a burning house and gaze up to Heaven, wringing her hands.

The pastor called out, "For God's sake, rescue the heroic girl, the roof is falling in!" Anna, still on her knees, hearing his words, stuck out her tongue at him with a gesture of violent abhorrence, and laughed crazily. At this moment Frederick appeared. Hardly had he perceived the terrible danger in which she was placed than, growing deathly pale, he rushed toward the house which seemed about to collapse. She, however, noticing him at once, sprang up terrified and cried, "Don't, Frederick, don't; I, I am guilty, there--there." She pointed with her hand to the place where the castle lay, and, in order to make any rescue impossible, hurried up the already burning ladder, which led to the garret of the house. The ladder, too far consumed by the fire, broke under her, and at the same moment the roof fell in, forming a wall of flame. They heard one more piercing cry; then there was silence.

Baron Eichenthal arrived. As soon as Frederick caught sight of him he rushed up to him and before the Baron could defend himself kicked him in the abdomen, so that he fell over backward to the ground; then Frederick quietly gave himself up to the peasants, who at the order of the justice of the peace were trying to overpower him.

When the Baron learned next morning what had happened to Anna, he ordered them to search for her bones among the ashes and to bury them in the potter's field. This was done.

ON THEODOR KOERNER AND HEINRICH VON
KLEIST (1835)

By FRIEDRICH HEBBEL
TRANSLATED BY FRANCES H. KING

Not only in the history of the world but in the history of literature as well, we meet with strange aberrations on the part of entire epochs in their estimate of individual men, rightly or wrongly raised above their environment. Exactly what the age happens to demand, what fits in with its restless activity, that is what it rewards and values. We cannot deny, indeed, that every generation has the right to require the poet, as well as its other sons, to consult its needs so far as possible. But it is seldom satisfied with this; he must confer his benefits in the most agreeable way, and whether or not he is weak enough to humor it in this, determines, as a rule, whether it will take him fondly in its arms, or will crush him. These reflections were recently aroused in me when a volume of Heinrich von Kleist's writings came into my possession together with a volume of Theodor Koerner's works, and I trust that the Scientific Society will not consider them too unimportant to be developed in some detail.

In the two poets named we see two remarkable examples of the above-mentioned aberration of an entire epoch. While the first of the two, Heinrich von Kleist, possesses all the qualities that go to make up the great poet and at the same time the true German, the other, Theodor Koerner, has only enthusiasm for those qualities; but while Kleist refuses to forget his own dignity in the interests of the times, and finally strives to unite these interests with the highest mission of art, Koerner prefers to throw himself submissively into the vortex. For this reason Kleist was maligned, ignored, and misjudged during his lifetime, scorned at his death, and forgotten by immediate posterity, whereas Koerner was enthusiastically received and applauded, and when he descended into his early grave, was mourned by the whole world. I would gladly pass by his grave in silence, and leave him the laurels which he purchased with his death; but I see no reason why he should swell the number of our fathers' sins, and should neglect an act of justice, which will, in any case, be performed some day by our grandchildren, and then perhaps with a smile of pity for us.

Before we go farther it will be necessary to establish, so far as possible, certain conceptions of art in general, and of the branches of art cultivated by Koerner and Kleist. I purposely say "so far as possible;" for it would not be easy to expound a complete conception of art before one set forth a complete conception of the human soul, of which art might be called the most comprehensive phenomenon. We must therefore infer this conception from the effects of art, so far as they appear; but as these effects are infinite the conception may be something very different from a barrier erected for the purpose of a mere provisional designation, which ceases to exist the moment that it pleases genius to overstep it. We find this possibility confirmed when we examine how the conception in question has changed in German literature alone, during the various epochs of its relatively short history.

In the day of Gessner, Bodmer, and the like, who saw a muse in every

sheep and every herdsman, the imitation of nature was the gospel in which every one believed. This, at best, meant nothing at all, and closely analyzed, it is half nonsensical, in so far as this definition presupposes art to be something that exists outside the domain of nature. But man belongs within the domain of nature; he must be included within this domain, and at most can complete or enlarge it; and for this reason alone art can never imitate a whole of which it is a part.

Hereupon men went a step farther, and defined art as "imitation of the beautiful." We should have less cause to object to this definition if the question on which everything depends in this case had not been left unanswered; if they had not left undecided what it was they meant by "imitation of the beautiful." They were indeed very soon ready with an explanation, calling that "beautiful" which reveals an agreeable unity in variety. Unfortunately they could not prevail upon themselves to grant the proposition: "All is beautiful or nothing," which follows immediately from the first; for they had overlooked the fact that the word "agreeable" was superfluous, since every unity, because it gives a clear impression and permits us to look into the unviolated order of nature, appeals to us "agreeably"--I must use this word because it expresses _the least badly_ the feeling which I would describe. Now, however, in spite of all reluctance, they had to acknowledge that in the domain of art there were many phenomena in which no such narrow-minded imitation of the beautiful, as was demanded, could be shown to exist, but which nevertheless could not be denied recognition. It was truly remarkable how they tried to find an escape from this dilemma. They admitted that ugliness could sometimes form an ingredient in a work of art, by which means it became possible for the artist to arouse certain mixed sensations in default of purely agreeable sensations. Mark well, "in default of purely agreeable sensations!" As though the incapacity or the momentary embarrassment of the artist, and the inadequacy of a chosen subject, could do away with a law of art once recognized as supreme. It is just as though the political law-giver should modify the prohibition of stealing by the clause: "if, namely, thou canst earn something in an honest manner." Striking it is, that even Lessing should cling to such definitions and employ all his ingenuity to prove their tenableness. It goes to show that the taste of a nation never--as may very well be imagined--precedes the genius, but always limps along behind him. Still more striking it is that they could feel the inadequacy of the accepted definition, that they could come so near to the real remedy, and yet could overlook it. It seems to me, namely, that everything could have been adjusted, if they had made the same demands on the artist's work that they made on the subject chosen by him. This is so plain that it needs no demonstration.

If I should be asked to state my conception of art--it is understood that here, as elsewhere, that only the art of poetry is in question--I would base it on the unconditional freedom of the artist, and say: Art should seize upon life in all its various forms, and represent it. It is obvious that this cannot be accomplished by mere copying. The artist must afford life something more than a morgue, where it is prepared for burial. We wish to see the point from which life starts and the one where it loses itself, as a single wave, in the great sea of infinite, effect. That this effect is a twofold one, and that it can turn inward as well as outward, is of course self-evident. For the rest--be it said incidentally--here is the point from which a parallel can be drawn between the phenomena of real life and those of life embodied in art.

I will now review the separate branches of art at which Koerner and Kleist have tried their hand. We find that they are lyric poetry, drama, and narrative. All three have to do with the representation of life, and if a division can be made it can only be based upon the various ways in which life is wont to manifest itself. Life manifests itself either as a reaction upon outward impressions, or lacking these, directly from within. When it works directly from within, we usually designate the form under which it appears as feeling. Feeling is the element of lyric poetry; the art of limiting and representing it makes the lyric poet. Let no one object that there are feelings enough which arise in consequence of outward impressions, and that these too have been expressed sufficiently often by the poets; I am very much inclined to distinguish between the results of these impressions and the feelings which well up from the depths of the soul in consecrated moments; and in any case, these alone are a worthy subject for the lyric poet; for only in them does the whole man actually live, they only are the product of his whole being. I hate examples because they are either make-shifts or will-o'-the-wisps, but here I must add that in Uhland's song, "A short while hence I dreamed," I find such a feeling expressed.

The drama represents the thought which seeks to become a deed through action or suffering. The narrative is really not a pure form, but a combination of the lyric and dramatic elements,—a combination which differs from the drama in that it develops the outer life from the inner, whereas in the drama the inner proceeds from the outer.

Let us now examine what Theodor Koerner and Heinrich von Kleist have accomplished, in the first place, as lyric poets. Kleist (unhappily) has left us very little in this field, Koerner (again unhappily) all the more. Koerner's war-songs have, in this stage of our investigation, the precedence over his other lyric productions, for two reasons: in the first place, they found the largest public and earned for their author, beside the royalties, the title of a German Tyrtæus; and in the second place, Theodor Koerner's soul was most ardently engrossed with the supposed and the real sufferings of his time, with the dignity and the misfortune of his people, and with the necessity and sacredness of the war. Let no one scent any bombast in all this, but, on the contrary, let him admire my cleverness in condensing into three lines, everything that Theodor Koerner expressed in a whole volume, in *Lyre and Sword*! If, therefore, his war-songs are bad, we shall be justified in concluding that we need expect still less from his other poems, in which he is concerned with sentiments which certainly affected him more slightly than those which placed the sword in his hand. I turn over the index of his war-songs, and find *Call to the German Nation, Before the Battle, Germany*,—in short, titles that all point to material very often handled, and therefore grown trivial. I do not, indeed, immediately conclude therefrom that the poems are trivial, but I have the right to conclude that the man who attempts such worn out subjects must be either a very great or a very small poet. May I be permitted to analyze one of these poems? I will choose, as the most significant, the well known *Battle Song of the Confederation*. In this poem the poet has striven to collect everything that could serve to make the soldiers who were to take part in the battle of Danneberg more indifferent to the bullets. I should not, however, have liked to advise the commanding general actually to use it for this purpose. Mr. Koerner quite forgets with what sort of people he is dealing when, in the third strophe, he expects the soldiers to let themselves be slaughtered for German art and German song. This is more than a joke, for I have the right to demand that a *Battle-Song* of the Confederation shall be comprehensible and

intelligible to all who are to take part in the battle; and art and song are, in any case, not important enough to be named together with the causes that made the fighting of a battle necessary, together with the enslavement of a people; quite apart from the fact that both, art and song, belong to those national treasures which are most secure in the time of hostile invasion. But in order not to give my logic a bad reputation, I will begin at the beginning. Mr. Koerner not only began there but even ended there--this in parenthesis. The first strophe aims to give the picture of a battle; but it is fortunate that we already know, from the superscription, with what battle we are concerned; we should scarcely find it out from this first strophe, which finishes, but does not complete the picture. In the second strophe we learn rather more; we learn that the beloved German oak is broken, that the language--thank God, not the women--has been violated, and we find it quite natural that revenge should blaze up at last, even though we cannot escape a slight feeling of surprise that dishonor, shame and such like, already lay behind those heroes, and therefore had been endured. We have already tasted of the sweets of the third strophe; in spite of this, we see there is a great deal still remaining in this strophe, a happy hope, a golden future, a whole heaven, etc., etc.--it must be the fault of my eyes that, notwithstanding, I can see nothing at all in it. In the fourth strophe courage comes along on regular seven league boots, and I wish the critic had as much reason to be satisfied with its contents, as had the Fatherland, to which a splendid vow is sworn therein. The fifth strophe contains a real human sentiment; it might exclaim with Falstaff, "Heaven send me better company!" In the sixth strophe we learn that the poet was not blustering in the fourth strophe, but that the fighting is really going to begin: at the same time it contains the principal beauty of the song, namely the end. Now, I ask, apart from the school-boyish, crude composition of the poem, which throws suspicion merely on the taste, not precisely on the power, of a poet--where is even the faintest tinge of poetry? And the muse was a battle!

We have finished, then, with the poetic part of this poem; it now remains to investigate in how far it is a real German product, that is to say, such an one as could have been produced only on German soil by a German. Every one will find that it might very easily have been written by some person from the Sultan's seraglio, and used by any people who found themselves in a like situation. Even the French, although it is directed against them, could gain inspiration from it, if their good taste did not preserve them from doing so. Let no one throw the German oaks (strophe four) in my way; I must stumble along over whole oak trees.

Let us now compare with Koerner's Battle-Song of the Confederation, Kleist's poem To Germany, as I believe it is called. I am glad that I am not able to characterize the separate strophes of this poem; they are, what the divisions of a poem should be, nothing, when they are detached from the whole. "Germans," exclaims the poet--"Your forests have long been cleared, serpents and foxes ye have destroyed, only the Frenchman I still see slinking!" This is a folk song; the vast, the great, is associated with the simplest and most familiar objects, and the figures chosen are not only beautiful, but at the same time inevitable.

I will pass on to consider the achievements of Koerner and Heinrich von Kleist in the field of the drama. In this both have been very active, but in order to avoid boredom for a time at least, I shall begin with

the analysis of a piece by Kleist, choosing first a tragedy, his *Prince of Homburg* which, to be sure, is entitled simply "a drama" by its author. I do not know whether he did this because of the circumstances that the Prince, as the hero of the piece, happily escapes with his life, or, what is more likely, in order to humor the public, who think the tragic can only exist where there are rivers of blood; neither will I censure it, but only call attention to the fact that in my opinion that which makes a tragedy lies only in the *struggle* of the individual, never in the outcome of this struggle. The outcome is in the hands of the gods, says an old proverb, well then, acts of the gods--as events may very well be called which are the effects of fate--can never be anything else for the dramatic poet than what curtain and wings are for the stage; they limit without completing. I defined drama, above, as a representation of the thought which seeks to become a deed through action or suffering. What this thought may be like--upon that very little depends; but that it really should be there, that it should fill the entire man, so much, of a surety, is necessary. What is, then, the thought that, in the play under discussion, fills the soul of the Prince of Homburg, the chief hero? We find it expressed in scene two of the second act, in the place where the Prince says to Kottwitz, who reminds him, the man thirsting for deeds, of the Elector's orders:

"Orders? Eh, Kottwitz, do you ride so slow?
Have you not heard the orders of your heart?"

The thought is this: strength stands above the law, and courage recognizes no other barrier but itself. Kleist, in the fifth scene of the first act, with which the fifth scene of the fifth act corresponds, *appears* to have taken pains to set up as the lever of the piece, not so much this thought as rather a mere accident, namely the inattention of the Prince when the plan of battle was being dictated, but it is really only in appearance. For though he makes Hohenzollern, properly enough, lay great stress on this circumstance, that signifies little; only if the Prince himself--a thing which never happens--had laid stress upon it, could it have had an influence on the economy of the piece. Let us proceed to a more detailed development of the tragedy.

The historical part of it is based on the famous battle which the Elector Frederick William of Brandenburg fought against the Swedes at Fehrbellin. The story of the play is briefly as follows: The Prince of Homburg, to whom has been confided the commandment of the cavalry of the Mark of Brandenburg, arbitrarily disobeys the orders given him, and advances too soon. He wins the battle, but is placed on trial before a court martial by Frederick William and condemned to death for insubordination.

And truly--I should add, if I did not know that poetic enthusiasm is very ridiculous in a criticism--the action is brought before us with such power that this tragedy may very well be compared to a German oak, on which every branch flourishes luxuriantly, and whose summit is nearer to heaven than to earth. The whole play contains nothing but characters, not a single puppet--which can seldom be said of the work of even the greatest master--and I regret that I can develop in detail only the character of the Prince of Homburg, and, for the others, can merely touch upon those sides which come into contact with him.

I am not inclined, like Zimmermann, to see in the first scene simply an endeavor on the part of the poet to provide a mystic background for his picture. I do not see why a young man, who happens to be afflicted with

the sleep-walking malady, should not walk in his sleep even on the night before a battle, and why a young hero who has long been nursing the most high-flown thoughts concerning glory and immortality, should not, on such a night, make himself an oak-wreath. In the day time, to be sure, an occupation of that sort would not look very well, but night is the realm of phantasy and the wreath is the emblem of glory. Then, too, I find that this first scene--the naturalness of which I hope I have proved--is of deep significance for the play. In order to explain psychologically the Prince's headstrong disobedience of the Elector's express order, a great excitement of mind was needed. Now I really do not know where Kleist could better have derived this than precisely from a half-waking dream, in which the Prince supposedly received in advance all that constituted the highest goal of his hopes, and which should have been the most valued fruit of his endeavors--the making of the wreath points to this, and the fourth scene of the first act confirms it. The absent-mindedness which this dream causes in the Prince in the fifth scene, and particularly the monologue with which the first act closes, prove that I am not mistaken in my opinion concerning the significance which the poet placed upon the scene in question.

In the second act we must first notice the second scene. In this the real action begins and ends. That which precedes and that which follows are connected with it like cause and effect. The Prince wrests the victory from the enemy, and earns for himself death. Then the eighth scene of this act is of the greatest importance; in it the Prince declares his love to Princess Nathalie of Orange. I am minded to count this scene among the most important dramatic achievements ever accomplished by the greatest poets of Germany. Let us picture the exposition that introduces it. A rumor has been spread abroad that the Elector has fallen in the battle. The Electress, with her ladies, is a prey to the greatest anxiety. Homburg arrives and confirms the rumor. Nathalie says:[6]

"Who now will lead us in this terrible war
And keep these Swedes in subjugation?--

THE PRINCE of HOMBURG (_taking her hand_).

I, lady, take upon myself your cause!
The Elector hoped, before the year turned tide,
To see the Marches free. So be it! I
Executor will be on that last will.

NATHALIE.
My cousin, dearest cousin!

PRINCE.
Nathalie!
What holds the future now in store for you?

NATHALIE.
Oh, I am orphaned now a second time.

PRINCE.
Oh, friend, sweet friend, were this dark hour not given
To grief, to be its own, thus would I speak:
Oh, twine your branches here about this breast!

NATHALIE.

My dear, good cousin!

PRINCE.

Will you, will you?"

I believe that during this love-scene, lovers will not be the only ones to find amusement, though this is the case as a rule. The tenth scene of this act is the turning point of the play. The Prince hastens to the Elector with the conquered flags, rejoicing in the victory and in the certitude that the latter still lives. The Elector commands that his sword be taken from him and orders a court martial to be convoked. Let us not overlook what this scene is in itself, through the contrasts presented. It is moreover the chief argument for the correctness of the opinion I have already expressed concerning the idea of the play. For the Prince is far from being sensible of the fault committed, and when Hohenzollern says to him,

"The ordinance demands obedience," he replies bitterly: "So--so, so, so!"

And later:

"My cousin Frederick hopes to play the Brutus--
By God, in me he shall not find a son
Who shall revere him 'neath the hangman's axe!" etc.

He cannot as yet be just to the Elector, because he is still too indulgent to himself.

In the first scene of the third act he has come a step nearer the truth. He calls himself a plant which has burst into bloom too swiftly and opulently. But he still says,

"Come, was it such a capital offense,
Two little seconds ere the order said,
To have laid low the stoutness of the Swede?"

The dignity of the code of war, upon which the Elector's mode of action is based, still lies too remote from his comprehension; therefore he is persuaded that:

"Ere, at a kerchief's fall, he yields this heart,
That loves him truly, to the muskets' fire,
Ere that, I say, he'll lay his own breast bare
And spill his own blood, drop by drop, in dust."

And when Hohenzollern lets fall a word about the mission of the Swedish ambassador to ask for the hand of the Princess of Orange, the Prince is even inclined to think unworthily of the Elector. He is capable of believing that the Elector will let him die because the Princess has betrothed herself to him. This is genuinely psychological, and here, where Homburg's character begins to appear in a dubious light, is actually the real touch-stone of it. That he loves and admires the Elector, he has already proved, that he has taken great trouble to find a reason for the latter's conduct that is not unworthy of him, is self-evident; for the human heart knows no greater pain than to have given admiration where it should have bestowed contempt. When, therefore, the Prince nevertheless

believes that his betrothal to Nathalie has provoked the Elector's severity, he shows thereby that he has absolutely no comprehension of the dignity and necessity of the code of war, that consequently his violation of the ordinance could not have been caused by boyish petulance, but by a grievous error, which, as an error, could be forgiven in a man. But for that very reason it is not inconsistent with his heroic character for him to exclaim "Oh, friend! Then help me! Save me! I am lost!" For a man shows himself as such when he gives up for lost a possession which is lost, not when he, like a madman, renounces everything for the sake of making fine phrases: and the Prince only does his duty when he tries in whatever way he can, to rescue his life from the despotic will of an individual. In the fifth scene, where he implores the Electress to intercede for him, he says:

"You would not speak thus, mother mine, if death
Had ever terribly encompassed you
As it doth me. With potencies of heaven,
You and my lady, these who serve you, all
The world that rings me round, seem blest to save
The very stable-boy, the meanest, least,
That tends your horses, pleading I could hang
About his neck crying: Oh, save me, thou!"

Even that is, in my opinion, fine and human, for it is the first ebullition of emotion; and when is the feeling of painful loss ever separated from the lively desire to preserve the endangered possession? I do not make this statement because I believe I am saying something new, but because I think it is something old which has not been sufficiently taken to heart. For the rest, this fifth scene is very beautiful and produces a deep effect. Who does not feel annihilated with the Prince when he exclaims:

"Since I beheld my grave, life, life, I want,
And do not ask if it be kept with honor."

And farther on,

"And tell him this, forget it not, that I
Desire Nathalie no more, for her
All tenderness within my heart is quenched."

And how wonderful, how splendid does Nathalie appear in her calm nobility! How absolutely true to nature it is that her strength first begins gently and noiselessly to unfold its wings when the man, whom she had looked upon as her ideal, from whom she had expected all things, has succumbed. And how genuinely womanly are the words with which she attempts to raise him up once more:

"Return, young hero, to your prison walls,
And, on your passage, imperturbably
Regard once more the grave they dug for you.
It is not gloomier, nor more wide at all
Than those the battle showed a thousand times!"

But poetic beauty is like the fragrance of flowers--it cannot be described, but only perceived.

Nathalie's character is rounded off in the first scene of the fourth act when she begs the Elector to liberate Homburg. She could have borne the

death of the Prince, but this timorous misrepresentation of himself she cannot bear:

"I never guessed a man could sink so low
Whom history applauded as her hero.
For look--I am a woman and I shrink
From the mere worm that draws too near my foot;
But so undone, so void of all control,
So unheroic quite, though lion-like
Death fiercely came, he should not find me thus!
Oh, what is human greatness, human fame!"

It is then that the Elector decides to make the Prince himself the judge of his offense, and writes him the following letter:

"My Prince of Homburg, when I made you prisoner
Because of your too premature attack,
I thought that I was doing what was right--
No more; and reckoned on your acquiescence.
If you believe that I have been unjust,
Tell me I beg you in a word or two,
And forthwith I will send you back your sword."

He gives this letter to Nathalie for her to deliver to the Prince. I must set down the words with which she receives the letter:

"I do not know and do not seek to know
What woke your favor, liege, so suddenly.
But truly this, I feel this in my heart,
You would not make ignoble sport of me.
The letter hold whate'er it may--I trust
That it hold pardon--and I thank you for it!"

Many another writer would have believed it was not enough for Nathalie to prove herself a heroine, but that she must stride onward with seven league boots and become an Amazon as well. Kleist, however, had looked deeply into feminine nature, he knew that woman's greatness only blooms above the abyss, and that she loses her wings the moment that earth again offers her a spot where she can safely and firmly tread. Nathalie sighs only once: "Oh what is human greatness, human fame!" But she rejoices when she has the saving letter of the Elector in her possession, and, without troubling herself further about its contents, she hastens, enraptured, to the Prince of Homburg.

The Prince receives the letter. He reads it aloud while Nathalie listens. She grows pale; for she feels what a man must do who is called upon to be his own judge. Nevertheless she urges the Prince to write the words which the Elector requires; she snatches the letter from the Prince's hand; when he hesitates, she reminds him of the open grave he has already seen. But neither is the Prince any longer in doubt concerning the significance of the moment, concerning the Elector, concerning his own guilt. He says,

"I will not face the man who faces me
So nobly, with a knave's ignoble front!
Guilt, heavy guilt, upon my conscience weighs,
I fully do confess--"

He writes this to the Elector, and Nathalie embraces him exclaiming:

"And though twelve bullets made
You dust this instant, I could not resist
Caroling, sobbing, crying: 'Thus you please me!'"

I would gladly follow the great poet through the fifth act also, but it is not indispensable for the analysis of the play, as the denouement is easy to foresee--namely that the Prince, after already suffering one death through the relinquishment of that idea which has been the guiding principle of his life hitherto, is spared a second death. Finally I must add that I have not chosen the Prince of Homburg as the subject of my criticism because this tragedy is the most successful of all Kleist's plays, but merely because it offers the best opportunity for drawing a comparison between the dramatic achievements of Kleist and those of Koerner. And now, courage. We must start in with Koerner and we will choose that one of his products which is universally declared the greatest, his Zriny.

In discussing the Prince of Homburg I could limit myself to a general outline, as it is not possible that any one who reads the play could ever have the least doubt whether the characters are correctly drawn. We have not such an easy task with Koerner's Zriny, but rather must take the opposite way. In order not to overpass the limits of this essay, however, we will pay less attention to the play as a totality, which, indeed, can occupy our attention only if the first investigation prove favorable to the author.

The idea which kindles Zriny's enthusiasm is unconditional obedience to Emperor and Fatherland. It must be admitted that it is an idea which may have arisen in many a human breast in the year 1566, and which certainly animated the heroic Zriny. It is not sufficient, however, for the dramatic poet to give utterance to what fills the soul of his hero, for that falls to the lot of history to perform. While the historian looks upon every individual as a bomb, whose course and effect he must calculate, but with whose origin he is but slightly concerned, it is the affair of the dramatic poet--who, if he recognizes his high mission, strives to complete history--to show how the character whom he has chosen as a subject for treatment has become what he is. We find this, for example, in Shakespeare, to go back to the Bible of the playwright. Every passion which he describes we see as roots and tree at one and the same time. Theodor Koerner simplified the matter, he only shows us the flame; whence it comes he leaves in doubt, and therefore has himself to thank if we are undecided whether his heroes are pursuing will-o'-the-wisps, or--to use his favorite metaphor--stars. I need not call attention to the fact that this way is by far the easier.

The plot of this play is sufficiently well known. I will therefore turn immediately to a closer examination of the several characters. Honor to whom honor is due; let Sultan Soliman advance. I will not pause at the first scene in which he appears, although even there he reveals damnable weaknesses. After all a Turk may be forgiven for losing his temper because his physician-in-ordinary does not know how long he will live. In the second scene Koerner has tried to outline the hero who demands Vienna for his funeral torch. He has not succeeded as well as he might.

"Karl, Karl!"--cries Soliman in his beard--"If only thou
Thy Europe now would lie here at my feet"

[Illustration: THE BATTLE BETWEEN THE HUNS AND THE NIBELUNGS _From the Painting by Schnorr von Carolsfeld_]

Every other hero would have considered that in which Soliman beheld the curse of his life to be the greatest favor fortune could have shown him. I do not expect much from the hound--this parable is very well suited to the Turks--who only fights with little yelping dogs. How far Mr. Koerner has succeeded in spreading the oriental coloring over his picture is shown very plainly in the fourth scene, where Soliman receives his generals with the words:

"I greet you all, supporters of my throne,
Most welcome comrades of my victories,
I greet you all."

Seldom has the sun shone upon a politer Turk than this Soliman, who, to be sure, afterward throws around not only his oaths but his dagger. That it is no merit of Koerner if we behold in his Soliman a hero and a Turk, must be evident to every one; but let us now examine whether he has succeeded any better in representing the commander-in-chief and the tyrant. We find both in the third scene of the third act. Mehmed reports to the Sultan that the assault has been repulsed.

"A curse upon thee!"

answers the latter; then he inquires who gave the order for the retreat; Mehmed answers that he did; the Janizaries had been slaughtered by the thousands, but in vain, the army was exhausted, and it had been impossible to wrest the victory from the enemy; he intended, however, to bombard the castle the next night and was persuaded that the walls must give way. Soliman flies into a passion:

"But I from them will wrest it (the victory namely), must
wrest it!"

In very truth an excellent commander-in-chief, who is not to be persuaded by reasons such as Mehmed advanced, and who differs from a child who is denied his will only in that he bellows where the child screams. But--perhaps we have the tyrant before us where I thought I perceived the nullity of the commander-in-chief. Let us read on:

ALI.

"Remember Malta!

SOLIMAN.

Death and Hell! Ali!
Remind me not of Malta, if thy head
Is dear to thee. More I endure from thee
Than does befit the great lord Soliman!"

Really the beginning promises well.

ALI.

"My life is in thy hands, my Emperor!

SOLIMAN.

Since thou dost know that, yet didst freely speak
Thy heart's thought to me, I'll forgive thee.
For I love truth which knows no fear of death.
In token then of my imperial grace,
Thy council shall prevail; I'll not attack!"

I think we do not need to tremble before a tyrant whose fury could be appeased by Ali's paltry words. "My life is in thy hands, my Emperor!" which must have been said to him often enough before. Let no one reproach me if, henceforth, I keep silence on the subject of Soliman. Offenses of this kind are not mere blunders, they are the sign of complete incompetency on the part of the poet, and solely out of curiosity, not because it is necessary to demonstrate my argument, I shall continue to analyze Zriny, Helena, and the other marionettes.

Zriny is an abortive copy of Wallenstein; his originality consists in doing for the Emperor, what the latter does against him. Juranitsch is Max Piccolomini the second, but has the misfortune to stand as far below the first as other people who also happened to be seconds, as for example, Frederick the Second, Joseph the Second, etc., stood above their namesakes. In general, Zriny has made it clear to me that Koerner, had he lived, would, without any doubt, have become a second Schiller, namely, by completely absorbing the first. The plagiarisms which the noble young man has indulged in, in this tragedy, as regards the disposition of the scenes as well as in whole individual speeches and sentences, surpass all belief. I shall perhaps point out some of these in the course of my investigation of the characters.

But before I investigate the claims to heroism of Koerner's Zriny may I be allowed to determine what are the qualities absolutely indispensable for a hero. I will not place my demands very high, but circumspection and firmness I may at least be allowed to require, besides mere courage. Also a certain amount of modesty would not become him ill, perhaps we may even demand this of the hero of a drama; for the dramatic poet must not indeed in any sense idealize, but he should render only the genuinely human, not the purely accidental, which, because accidental, is rare. For an individual to be at the same time a hero and a braggart is, however, quite accidental, and the result merely of a deficient or a perverted education. If one wishes to find firmness in the fact that a man knows in advance what he wants, that he forms his decision before he is acquainted with the controlling circumstances, then certainly this quality cannot be denied our Zriny.

"His loyalty no nobler guerdon asks
Than to seek death, a joyful sacrifice,
For his own folk and his undying faith."

But it seems to me that a desperate resolution is only justifiable when it can no longer be avoided; whoever takes one before that, is cowardly rather than brave; for he has not the strength to make the sacrifice at the proper moment; therefore he tries, beforehand, to reason himself into being courageous. When Zriny, however, speaks the words quoted, he has already in his possession the letter of the Emperor, informing him that he need hope for no relief; but he cannot know yet how long Soliman will continue to assault Szigeth, and there is likewise no need to inspire his companions with courage by these words, in which he boasts of his own courage, for they were every one of them heroes. I fail,

therefore, to find in his braggadocio the firmness that is worthy of a great man, and this is a fault which I may be permitted to charge to Mr. Koerner's account; for he intended it to form part of his Zriny's character. The dear man has an even smaller share of circumspection: read but the sixth scene of the second act where he ponders the question, what he shall do with his wife and child. Truly, when he decides to leave them in the fortress, so that the garrison shall not lose courage, I cannot suppress the thought that the daughter has already had an illegitimate child and the wife has been a heroine in the wrong place; for if he had considered them worth a straw, he could not, for such a reason, have exposed them to such a danger. And is that a courageous garrison which is calm because it believes itself to be still safe? And shall its eyes never be opened simply because it sees that the danger is shared for a while by the wife and child of the commander--for whom, as Zriny himself remarks, there are secret passages which can be used in case of necessity. Mr. Zriny did not consider all this; his circumspection, therefore, is surely not very great. Just one sample of the noble simplicity and modesty of this hero:

"Thou knowest me, Maximilian,
I thank thee for thy high imperial trust,
Thou knowest Zriny, thou dost not mistake."

It is nauseating to continue, I have the impression at this moment that I am trying to prove that a soap-bubble is really only a soap-bubble. Just one word more about Helena. The tender child, who faints away at the end of the first act when Juranitsch takes leave of her to go into battle, has made such progress in bravery in the seventh scene of the second act, that she exclaims:

"Yes, father, father, send us not from thee!"

and at the conclusion of the fourth (indeed it is time, for in the next act the piece comes to an end) she even says:

"Yes, let us die! What care we for the sun!"

Spare your sympathy, reader or spectator; you must not think that you have to do with men who care anything for their lives, and who therefore are making a sacrifice--no indeed! They have nothing in common with such a weakling as you.

I hope I shall not be accused of hastiness--I must hurry on to the end, for there are just as many absurdities in Zriny as there are verses--if from all this I draw the conclusion that Theodor Koerner had not the slightest talent for the drama. I promised, a while ago, to specify some plagiarisms from Schiller, but I may safely refer to the whole book. Instead I will make a few more remarks on the death-scene of Helena, scene six, act five.

This scene is not badly constructed. I will not, indeed, examine too closely how far love made it justifiable for a girl to ask of her lover to kill her. For once we will take Helena's word for it that under similar circumstances she would have done the like had Juranitsch demanded it, and then she, as well as the poet, is held excused. We will only listen to what Juranitsch answers when she has made her wish clear to him. He says:

"Thee, I must kill? Thee? no, I cannot kill thee!"

This would be human, but listen to what follows:

"--When the storm wind
O'erthrows the oak and rages 'mongst the pines,
It leaves unharmed the tender floweret,
Its thunders change to gentle whisp'ring zephyrs
And shall I wilder be than the wild storm?
Shall I destroy life's loveliest vernal wreath?
In cruelty the boisterous elements
Surpassing, shall I break this floweret
To touch which destiny's hand has yet not dared?"

I ask you is it possible to surpass such trivial nonsense?

I shall say no more concerning Koerner's individual scenes. This is not committing an injustice; for it is absolutely unimportant, so far as our investigation is concerned, whether and in how far Koerner had the ability to construct a tragedy, since this faculty--as Goethe's example shows us--has nothing to do with poetry in itself. There is no need for us to draw the parallel between the *Prince of Homburg* and *Zriny*; it is quite evident. One reproach, however, which might be made by an attentive reader, I must anticipate: namely, I might be asked why I have subjected the two principal characters of Koerner's tragedy to a regular police examination, and, instead of accepting them in their totality, have required them to render account in how far they were heroes, commanders, tyrants, etc. But since they are, like all creations of mere talent, nothing but arrows which are shot from a certain bow-string toward a certain target, it follows that they can only be judged by the deflections from their course. Herein--be it remarked incidentally--lies the difference, often perceived but seldom explained, between the characters portrayed by Schiller and those portrayed by Goethe. Schiller's characters--to use a play on words which for once expresses the truth--are beautiful because they are self-contained; Goethe's characters because they are unrestrained. Schiller delineates the man who is complete in his own strength, and, a man of iron, is tried by circumstances; for this reason Schiller was great only in the historical drama. Goethe delineates the endless creations of the moment, the eternal modifications of the man caused by every step that he takes; this is the token by which we may recognize genius, and it seems to me that I have discovered it also in Heinrich von Kleist.

At this moment, when I would pass on to review the achievements of Koerner and Kleist in the field of comedy, I remember that I was not sufficiently definite, above, when developing my conception of the drama. I should have added that I cannot, strictly speaking, count comedy as a form of drama, but must include it in the category of dialogue narrative. If one recalls to mind the purpose of high-class comedy--"to describe individual ages and classes," one must admit that I am entitled to do so. I must remark in advance that neither Koerner nor Kleist has done anything for high-class comedy. But Kleist in his *Broken Pitcher* has drawn a comic character-picture which is so full of life that it reminds us of Shakespeare, if of any one, while Koerner in his *Nightwatchman* has drawn nothing but a funny caricature; with the former the character shapes the situations, whereas with the latter the situations shape the characters, if I may use this expression. I should be giving myself a great deal of unnecessary trouble if I should engage in a further analysis of the two comedies which I have mentioned, since at all events I could only adduce sundry details, and such details in

this case prove absolutely nothing; for the only safe criterion of the truly comic is that the picture as a whole, apart from what wit has done for it, should arouse interest as an organic adaptation of nature. With the rascally, lustful, country judge, Adam, in the *Broken Pitcher*, this is certainly the case; one can safely take away from him the few witty sallies which he indulges in: but what the nightwatchman Schwalbe would become if one attempted the same procedure with him, I should not like to decide; probably a clown, who has been deprived of his wooden sword and cap and bells, and whose plain, honest features show that he has only executed such droll antics for the sake of his bread and butter. Schwalbe is merely ridiculous, but Adam is comic; the difference, to define it more clearly, consists in this; every caricature, because it diverges from laws which are eternal and necessary, without standing in eternity as a peculiarly constructed whole, has a tinge of incongruity, consequently of ridiculousness; while only that caricature of nature can be comic of which the divergences are self-consistent, which shows therefore that it is founded *in itself*. The poet should take only the comic as a subject of treatment; for he can never lay stress upon detached separate phenomena, if he cannot prove the connection between them and the general whole, if they do not constitute for him a window through which he looks down into Nature's breast. It is easy to calculate, accordingly, how high Theodor Koerner's services to the comedy should be rated, provided he has actually succeeded with his smaller things, *The Nightwatchman*, *The Green Domino*, etc., in furnishing amusing farces. To accomplish this, nothing was required but natural gaiety combined with a talent for representation, and many men who were anything but poets have been equipped with both.

It still remains for us to estimate what Koerner and Kleist have achieved in narrative. In this field Koerner has produced such mere trifles that it would be unjust for one to infer from them the least thing touching his characteristics, as it probably never occurred to him to consider himself a story-writer. Heinrich von Kleist's novels and stories, on the other hand, belong among the best that German literature possesses. Almost all the narratives of our writers, with the exception of a few productions by Hoffmann and Tieck, suffer, if I may say so, from the monstrousness of the subjects chosen, if they do indeed rise at all above mediocrity. There is, however, no very deep psychological insight needed in order to know how the whole man will be affected by an event which sweeps down upon him like a stormwind, and very ordinary talents may safely attempt tasks of this kind; just as, for example, every painter with some technical skill can represent despair, fear, terror, all those emotions, in short, which only permit of one expression; whereas a Rembrandt is required, if a gipsy encampment is to be pictured. Kleist, therefore, set himself other tasks; he knew and had perhaps experienced in his own person, that life's process of destruction is not a deluge but a shower, and that man is superior to every great fatality, but subject to every pettiness. He proceeded from this theory of life, when he delineated his *Michael Kohlhaas*, and I maintain that in no German novel have the hideous depths of life been projected upon the surface in such vivid fashion as in this, when the theft by a squire, of two miserable horses, forms the first link in a chain, which extends upward from the horse-dealer Kohlhaas to the ruler of the Holy Roman Empire, and crushes a world by coiling round it. I should like to analyze the novel more in detail, but am glad that the limits of my essay, or rather the patience of my readers and auditors, do not permit me to do so; for the members of the society will thus feel prompted the sooner to acquaint and familiarize themselves with the

works of Heinrich von Kleist, if they have not already done so.

While hastening on to the close, I must, in accordance with the introduction to this essay, call attention to the fact that Kleist, no less than Koerner, did not leave unheeded the claims that his country properly made upon him in the portentous age in which he lived. In his breast, as in that of his contemporaries, there glowed the flame of enthusiasm for the honor and freedom of his people; and the oppression that they endured, the internal and external slavery in which he beheld them sunk, placed the pistol in his hand. I mention this because it has been imputed to the poet Koerner as a great merit that he was at the same time a martyr. But Kleist could behold his country unworthily treated without for that reason having unworthy thoughts of the man who was treading it in the dust; he was great enough to be able to forgive Napoleon the pain which he could not endure. He wrote no war-songs for patriotic journeymen-tailors and high-minded counter-jumpers, but he described Hermann's Battle and the battle of Fehrbellin; he called the dead to life in order to arouse the living.

FOOTNOTES:

[Footnote 6: The extracts from *The Prince of Homburg* are taken from Mr. Hagedorn's translation, Volume IV of THE GERMAN CLASSICS.]

LUDOLF WIENBARG'S "THE DRAMATISTS OF THE PRESENT DAY"

A REVIEW (1839)

By FRIEDRICH HEBBEL

TRANSLATED BY FRANCES H. KING

It is probable that no German who is able to appreciate the power of the theatre, its silent influence on the people, and the consequent reaction on the development of dramatic talent, has looked on indifferently at the decay and complete ruin of our stage. The drama of a nation, conceived in a worthy sense, represents that nation in its self-consciousness; it is the burning-mirror which receives the separate rays of the nation's innermost being while passing history is enticing them out of the depths, which condenses and concentrates them and thus kindles one century by means of another, and calls to life one glorious deed by means of another. Tragedy represents a people in its relation to the most important problems, its own as well as those of humanity in general. Comedy paints it in its natural aberrations and abnormalities, in its tendencies and endeavors which are directed earthward. Both must subsist together, in common development, and on an equal elevation, if we are to sum up the entire life of a nation, and give a true, eternal picture of its will-power and capacity, of its vacillations and defeats. This is the object which dramatic literature must always keep in view if it would be effectual. To be sure, it is possible to conceive a still higher species of drama, a tragedy which deals with man only in the abstract, with man in himself, in his mysterious relation to God and Nature; a comedy which lays nationalities themselves in their coffin and

gaudily dresses up the corpse. But it is still an open question whether, under such a general domination of the idea of humanity as is presupposed in that case, art can continue to exist at all; and at any rate the time of this spirit-like domination is still far off, although literature has witnessed the production of many dramatic poems which seem to be designed for it.

It was many years ago that Tieck, on the subject of some wretched stuff by Claren, made the remark that we had at last reached the cellar and must begin to ascend again. He was right in his remark, but, unhappily, not in the hope with which he accompanied it. Very far from hastening to leave the cellar, we have found it very comfortable down there; we have made ourselves at home as well as we could, and are hideously satisfied! Instead of the heroic spirit of our past ages, Jack Pudding now staggers out of the wings in a torn jacket and shows us what kind of humor is engendered by stupidity and brandy, when they have a rendezvous in the head of a porter. If Schiller and Goethe dare once to come out of their exile, then Nestroy's plum-pudding jinnee steps in their path, and they of course modestly give way to him. The magic worlds of Shakespeare and Calderon are already suffocated in their birth by the head-shaking of the stage-manager who must keep his machinery together for Raimund's bedlam hocus-pocus. Let us be just, however, let us remember that our theatre, in spite of the great talents which have been dedicated to it, was not what it should have been, even in its most brilliant period, and this perhaps not quite through its own fault. We have never had a real comedy; farces and absurdities take its place, and the critics themselves, if we except Schlegel, never seemed to divine that tragedy and comedy sprout from one and the same root, and that the former absolutely cannot unfold in all its greatness if the latter remains behind it. Confining the conception of comedy to the narrow etymological meaning of its name, and inferring the intrinsic impossibility of the poem from the accidental lack of a poet, we have imagined that we could not have a comedy, when on the contrary we, precisely, should and ought to have the very best, for reasons which cannot be developed thus in passing. Our tragedy, on the other hand, wished to take the second step before the first; it was not satisfied to start out to conquer the world from our own territory; it preferred to wander about as a homeless vagabond among all the peoples of the earth; and only when it had fully persuaded itself that one cannot grow fat off begged bread did it return in shame to its mother's breast. But, in Germany, in the meantime, the enthusiasm which can seldom or never be re-awakened had evaporated, and when Wallenstein and William Tell, when Hermann's Battle and the Prince of Homburg appeared, the fusion of the theatre with life, which might perhaps have still been possible at the time of Iphigenia, was no longer to be thought of. People had become used to looking upon the stage as a source of amusement, and, as a rule, whatever sinks to the level of a pastime is forever degraded. This was the cause of all the evil; this was the reason why for a long time dogs and monkeys, prestidigitators and modern athletes, celebrated their triumphs where art should have proclaimed her most profound oracles, and where a people should have found refreshment and elevation in quiet self-enjoyment, in the mild exertion of all their powers, and in the sensation of arousing their most secret sympathies and antipathies.

Wienberg believes that a turning point has now been reached. To this belief we owe his present literary contribution "which consists in seeking critically to elucidate, in irregularly appearing pamphlets, modern dramatic literature--especially book-dramas, which are rarely or not at all seen on the stage. He is guided in his selection each time by

some dramatic-educational purpose for author and public, and continually bears in mind an ideal centre of taste in the historic-poetic consciousness of the nation." Such an undertaking, carried out by a man who combines insight into the subject with the gift of presenting it as the times require, deserves full recognition. Only that criticism which knows how to make itself respected, can regain for the muse of the drama her temple, the stage; this cannot be done by the muse herself, who, every time she seeks to enter, is, with the politest of bows, shoved into the corner again by her noble priesthood. Criticism must, in view of the voluntary poverty of our repertory, draw attention to the neglected riches of our dramatic literature; it must, by characterization and analysis, act as mediator between the genius of the poet and the talent of the actor, and it sins heavily against the present when it turns its attention chiefly to the recent past which has not yet been canonized. It can, as a general rule, never look back often enough.

Wienburg begins with Uhland. From the point of view he has chosen he was quite right to leave unnoticed for the present Heinrich von Kleist's magnificent *Hermann's Battle* and *Prince of Homburg*. Of all our poets Uhland has unearthed in the purest form the treasure of German nationality: all the dreaming and longing, the hoping and enduring, but also all the courage, all the strength which steps into the first rank only in battle, not on the parade ground. One cannot blame Uhland without blaming Germany at the same time, but one can praise Uhland without at the same time praising Germany; for all poetry idealizes because it frames as in a mirror, but on account of its limits it compresses scattered details into a seemingly well ordered whole, which, however, does not by any means exist so harmoniously in nature. Uhland's poetry is a tear, forced from the flashing dark eye by the intolerable pain which dilates the heart and finds no more room there; but how much more beautiful is the pain than the wound, and how much more beautiful is the tear than the pain! Such tears are suffocated deeds. If our supineness and sentimentality only did not so often degrade holy water to the base uses of ablution!

Wienburg introduces his characterization of Uhland with some excellent remarks. We cannot take enough to heart what he says on page 17: "Our literature is a ghost, most of the species of poetry are spectres, and faith or unbelief in them is called esthetics. Fresh young life is sucked out, architectonic powers are misused in order to spiritualize and propagate lifeless forms and satisfy the vanity of literature by means of so-called works of art." If philosophy is destroyed by systematizing how much more so is poetry, which can exist only so long as it is free. The instinct to make an end of everything, and wilfully and arbitrarily to pen up what is not confined to time and space, is the ugliest trait in human nature. Life, in whatever phase it may be, always has a form, though sometimes one not to be seized with hands; it is always in fermentation, never in putrefaction; but its form is lost when we try to bring it into harmony with the tyrannical generalities which are bequeathed from grandfather to grandchild; then it congeals, and the stream that might have afforded us the most delicious bath can, at the most, be transformed into a sledge-road. Protect yourself against the sea but do not strive to hamper and dam up its movement; if this ever succeeded, the sea would become a swamp, and all of you--not only the sailors--would die a miserable death. To begin with, it is a misfortune that human society requires the form of the State, which cannot be traced back to any primitive foundation; for the individual tendencies and developments that are most full of genius are thus nipped in the

bud, and it is an open question whether those that remain, which to be sure are better protected against wind and weather inside the ramparts and walls than elsewhere, can, even when yielding their most abundant profits, make compensation for those that are held back and crushed. Will you go even further than necessity forces you; will you compel the spirit, even in its most peculiar sphere, to accept a constitution under the lamblike innocent name of esthetics? Of what advantage will it be to you? You can then, to be sure, lawfully scold and punish; today you can lock up a sentiment in the guardhouse for drunkenness: tomorrow you can drag off a thought to imprisonment for offense against your sovereign majesty; and the day after you can send a phantasy to the mad house on account of its all too bold flight. Life is its own law and its own rule, but you never want to adore the god until after you have crucified him. As long as the tree is green you cut off its branches, and out of the dried hewn-down one you make, not an axle for your mill-wheel, but an idol.

What Wienberg says of Uhland, the ballad-writer, is very pretty, but it was refuted before it was even written. Uhland, the ballad-writer, is not the dramatic poet, "broken into a thousand pieces;" the poems appeared in 1815, the first drama in 1818. I would not advance this superficial argument if it were not connected with an essential one. All these full, flowing songs and romances were finished before the nobly calm power that called them into being concentrated itself for the creation of a dramatic work; and in truth they do not bear on their forehead the red fever spot of aspiration groping in the dark, which does not find what it seeks and therefore clasps in its arms the object over which it stumbles; they breathe that smiling, lovely, self-absorbed contentment, without which there may be intoxication, but no joy, no life. It is true that through the songs as well as through the ballads, the dramatic genius which was later to produce *Duke Ernest* and *Louis the Bavarian* already treads softly like a sleep-walker; this it is which gives them the firm form, the deeper meaning which is so scandalously lacking in those good people who now and then innocently versify a legend or some trifling emotion. But the dramatic element is, strange as this assertion may sound, just as much an essential in poetry--one without which poetry would crumble away into dust--as the lyrical; from the former, poetry receives its body; from the latter, its soul, and both are mutually dependent upon one another. Is not suffering itself, only action turned inward!

On page twenty-one we read: "Do you know what it is that I love in Uhland's imperfect dramas? It is the pure, vital, German-dramatic poetry, which, piercing the tawdry veneer of culture and the prevailing wretched appearances of our life, strikes fire from the bed-rock of spiritual life itself, and with its divining rod points to the golden veins in the foundations of the national character. German-dramatic! that is the right word! and this is saying a great deal, for German and dramatic are contradictory terms. Just because Uhland is so German-dramatic he might give our theatre the national consecration which it lacks, and which alone can assure it intrinsic worth and dignity, efficacy and stability. Goethe's *Goetz* is not adapted to the stage, and it will be difficult for the scissors to make it so. Schiller's *Wallenstein*, in spite of its extensiveness, is only a character picture; the Thirty Years' War merely peeps through shyly now and again when the Duke's eloquence fails him, and when Max and Thekla take a rest from their love-making. With all due respect for the great dead, from whose laurel tree I do not intend to pluck a single leaf, be it said that the piece has something ridiculous about it when

it is played; it is a thunderstorm during which two turtle-doves are billing and cooing. There is some difference in *William Tell*, Bertha and Rudenz are more modest and more sparing with their sighs, tears, and premonitions. But the depicted situation is accidental, and under similar circumstances is repeated everywhere, therefore one cannot judge the Germanic nature by it--even if we include Switzerland as a representative of this nature--any more than one can judge of a man by the portrait which has been made of him during his illness. Neither am I able to find the spectacle of the strength that breaks external fetters so edifying as many others do: Why did it allow itself to be enchained? Kleist's *Hermann's Battle* and his *Prince of Homburg* carry us, the one too far back and the other too far forward. Uhland chose historic events better than Kleist, he treated them more worthily and more nobly than Schiller. For this reason, if for no other, he stands in the foreground of this discussion."

In the same place the question is raised: What is the conception of religion or fate from which our tragic drama has emanated? Wienberg skips over the question, or at least takes the answers to it too lightly. Nevertheless here is the root of the whole tree. Human nature and human destiny, these are the two riddles that the drama strives to solve. The difference between the drama of the ancients and the drama of the moderns lies in this: the ancients sought to illumine the labyrinths of fate by means of the torch of poetry; we moderns try to refer human nature, in whatever form or contortion it presents itself before us, to certain eternal and changeless principles, as to an immovable foundation. What to us is the means, was to them the end, and *vice versa*.

With the ancients the suffering results from the action; their tragedy was really a triumph of instinct. The first bold lightning flash of half-awakened consciousness illuminated the empty Olympus, and because man found the halls of the gods deserted, he sought in his own breast a centre for the circle of his existence. But when, revolving around himself and thereby denying the pole of the world, he stood, in his stubborn isolation, in the way of the great whole, the invisible fly-wheel which drives the universe seized him with tremendous power and flung him mockingly into an abyss. He felt that he had sinned, and did not know in what way. He found himself justified in his earthly relations and yet could not shake off the oppressive nightmare of a secret monstrous guilt. Then he shudderingly divined that sin can go further than knowledge, that in things and in events, as well as in human thought and feeling, there lies a mysterious final something, which, of whatever nature it may be and whatever its effect, must be regarded as holy. Let us remember Oedipus and the way in which in this drama one riddle is always solved by another riddle.

In the modern drama, on the contrary, the suffering as a rule first begets action. The hero gets into the whirlpool, he does not himself know how, but when near destruction he shows himself to be a brave, fearless swimmer. This comes from the attempt, not so much to reconcile, as to compare the idea of Freedom with the idea of Necessity. Modern tragedy has, therefore, when placed beside the ancient, a sickly hue, which is still further intensified by the circumstance that its point of departure is the individual. I should like to have time to indicate all the consequences of these opposite conceptions.

If I should be asked to express in brief the fundamental idea of modern tragedy I should find it in the harsh fetters that bind the highest

nobility of human nature, in suffering and death, and in the resistance of the world--occasioned thereby, nay presupposed as a necessity--which the world offers to all greatness as it strives for self-realization.

Wienberg, after his general preliminary remarks, proceeds to make an analysis of Uhland's drama, *„Louis the Bavarian.“* It is excellent and accomplishes everything that it should accomplish, by combining the characterization of the poet with the characterization of the German drama in its totality, of which totality the individual drama is an organic part. Of course every reader will wish that Wienberg had rendered the tragedy, *„Duke Ernest“*, the same friendly service, of which Uhland's dramas, in their unostentatious simplicity, stand so much in need, if they are ever to receive the appreciation which they deserve. Were it fitting to prolong the criticism of a criticism to such an extent, I should myself attempt to elucidate this most German of tragedies in all its ramifications; perhaps this will be done in another place. We are rich and consider ourselves poor; we have the diamonds, and there shall not be wanting people who know how to cut them. May the second part of Wienberg's treatise very soon appear! Many a one is now pushing forward the hand on the horologe of time and hastening nothing thereby but the hour of his own execution. Wienberg is not one of these.

REVIEW OF HEINRICH VON KLEIST'S PLAY

THE PRINCE OF HOMBURG, OR THE BATTLE OF FEHRBELLIN (1850)

By FRIEDRICH HEBBEL

TRANSLATED BY FRANCES H. KING

THE PRINCE OF HOMBURG is one of the most peculiar creations of the German mind, for the reason that in it, through the mere horror of death, through death's darkening shadow, has been achieved what in all other tragedies (this work is a tragedy) is achieved only through death itself: that is to say, the moral purification and apotheosis of the hero. The whole drama is planned to bring about this result, and what Tieck, in a well known passage, declares to be, the kernel of it, namely the illustration of what subordination is, in reality is only the means to an end. Neither do I agree with Tieck when he remarks further that the sleep-walking scene with which the piece begins, and the final *„denouement“* connected with it add to the other merits of the drama by lending it the charm of a pleasing and attractive fairy-tale. On the contrary, this feature is to be censured because it is disturbing, and if, as in *„Kaethchen of Heilbronn“*, it were intimately inwoven in the organism of the work it would deprive the latter of its claim to be considered a classic. For man must not be forced to do penance for the mischief which the moon causes; otherwise we might be obliged to call it a tragedy if a man, having climbed up to the apex of the roof in his sleep, and been spied there by his sweetheart, who, in the first terror of surprise, called his name, should fall at her feet crushed to pieces! Happily, however, we can eliminate the whole sleep-walking episode and the work continues to be what it is; it stands immovable on a solid psychological foundation, and the rank weeds of Romanticism, have only

twined themselves around it like superfluous arabesques. That, indeed, must not be understood to mean that half of the first and half of the last act could be struck out. If such a barbaric procedure were possible, Kleist would not be what, he is, a true poet, whom, like every original God-given growth, one must accept as a whole or must reject as a whole. No, we shall have to leave the Prince his garland-wreathing and the glove which he catches as a consequence of it. But the incident is by no means essential to the rest of the drama. The structure has, beside these artificial supports, other very different and entirely solid ones, and there is no need to enlarge upon the former unless one is animated with a desire to find fault. Here we have a youth who had the misfortune to have fortune smile upon him prematurely, and who loves where perhaps--he has as yet no certainty of it--he should not love; what more is needed to enable us to comprehend the arrogance displayed in the first catastrophe and the pusillanimity in the second? Kleist has put a set of pulleys in motion where the simplest lever would have sufficed, but the pulleys have been connected with the lever, and the purpose has been thoroughly accomplished, though not by the most direct, and therefore the best means.

The action, conceived from the point of view just described, is, briefly summed up, as follows: It is the evening, or rather the night, before the battle of Fehrbellin. The Great Elector, surrounded by his family, has gathered his generals about him and is making known to them, by his field-marshal, the plan which he has devised for the battle on the morrow. Each officer, Homburg among them, is informed what part he is to play in the bloody work of the following day; the Prince receives the most difficult post for one of his age and temperament, since he is to remain outside the firing line with the cavalry which he commands during the actual battle, and not until the victory is practically won can he come into action; even then he is to await a definite order from the Elector, and is merely to assist in completely routing the vanquished enemy. Here, be it noted, his ordeal already begins. It is not an accident that the Elector has assigned him a post which must necessarily bring him into conflict with his passions and the demands of his blood; the sovereign does it purposely in order that he may learn to control both. The Prince is scarcely listening to the field-marshal when his turn comes; he is absent-minded, for Nathalie, the Princess of Orange, an orphan who has taken refuge at the Brandenburg Court, and whom he secretly loves, is present, and the Electress is leaving with her and the other ladies while his orders are being dictated. However, he scarcely requires such pedantic instructions, for he sees in a battle only an opportunity for personal distinction in one form or another, not a moral task which can be properly executed only in one way. Nevertheless, he learns from his friend Hohenzollern exactly what the service requires of him; but of what avail is it? His friend can only lend him his ears, not his judgment, and thus the first act ends, conformably to this stage of his development, with a monologue, in which we learn that he is only thinking of the laurels and the girl at whose feet he will lay them, not of his duty and his country. Thus we see that the sleep-walking scene, and all that is connected with it, can easily be omitted; the exposition is complete without it, and therein lies the actual proof of the correctness of my view of the work. A youth always dreams of the man whom he already believes himself to be; there is therefore no need of a double-dream. The glove might have been replaced by a glance from the Princess, surprised unawares, followed by a sudden blush. Was it intended for me or for you? That is enough to occupy a youth to such an extent that he would pay no attention to Mars himself were he to descend to earth. The battle takes place and what was to be

expected, occurs. The Prince attacks too soon, and the victory is indeed gained, but it is not as complete a one as it would have been possible to win. He knows very well what he is doing; it is impossible that he should not know it, and therefore the poet might have spared himself the carefully detailed description of his absent-mindedness in the first act. Colonel Kottwitz, who is second in command, reminds him, with the gruffness of an old man who might be at the same time his father and his teacher, of the order that he should await from his sovereign, and another officer even advises that his sword be taken from him. But he curtly inquires of old Kottwitz whether he has not received the order from his own heart, and he uses violence to the officer, then he dashes away crying: "Now, gentlemen, the countersign: A knave who follows not his general to the fight!" He arrives on the battlefield itself just at the moment when the rumor is spreading that the Elector has fallen. He performs marvels of valor, and we learn how much he loved his sovereign by seeing how he avenges him. This is one of the most brilliant episodes of the plot, and, truly, it alone is worth more than a whole catalogue full of the ordinary dramas that one hears applauded in our theatres. Sprinkled with blood, he hurries then into the peasant's hut where the Electress, with her court of ladies, has had to take refuge because a wheel of her coach broke while on the journey, and here he meets his Nathalie. The women, who have also heard the terrible rumor, are crushed; the Electress has fainted and the Princess, overcome by the gravity of the situation, laments in a few simple, touching words her complete loneliness. The Prince had not betrayed his affection for her at the Elector's Court, but now that fortune seems to have abandoned the fatherless and motherless girl, who was entirely dependent upon her powerful uncle, he allows his heart to utter the first sound, and to this sound she responds. Here we catch a gleam of his native, inborn nobility of soul, which at the end of the whole purifying process is to shine forth in perfect serenity, and we feel an unshakable confidence in him. This love scene, which is brought about by death, belongs to the highest sphere of art, and even the embarrassment which is evident in the words exchanged between the Prince and the Princess, is warranted by the relation in which they have hitherto stood to one another. They do not dare to speak out plainly.

The scene is hardly over when the rumor which occasioned it is proved to be false. The Elector lives and is already on the road to Berlin; the battle has decided the whole war, and peace promptly follows. There is infinite rejoicing, above all in the soul of the Prince. In the emotion of his overflowing heart he tells the Electress his sweet secret, and begs for her consent; she answers, "Not a suppliant on earth could I deny today, whatever he ask, and you, our battle-hero, least of all." He is the happiest of mortals, and challenging "Caesar Divus" himself, as a rival in Fortune's favor, he, with the ladies, follows his sovereign to Berlin.

We must lay the proper weight upon this phase if we wish to comprehend the further development of the tragedy. Arrived in Berlin he hurries at once to the Elector, and places at his feet three flags captured from the enemy. The Elector asks him sternly whether he was in command at Fehrbellin, and when the Prince, in astonishment, replies in the affirmative, he orders his sword to be taken from him. It had been reported to the Elector that the Prince was wounded, and before knowing definitely whether Homburg or Colonel Kottwitz-whom he believed to be also capable of the deed-had led the cavalry into battle before receiving the order, the Sovereign had declared that the commanding officer was to be summoned before a court-martial and condemned to death

without respect of person. Now he simply carries out the sentence. The Prince does not comprehend in the slightest; he would find it just as natural if the trees should begin to speak and the stones to fly. He must indeed obey, but as he gives up his sword, he declares bitterly that if his "Cousin Frederick" wishes to play the role of Brutus, he will not find in him a son who reveres him even under the executioner's ax. That is all the more natural, as he is conscious of what he felt and did on the battlefield in the moment when he received the news of the death of his present judge. His friends try to calm him. The Elector pays no attention to his passionate behavior, but with calm majesty reads the inscriptions on the Swedish flags, and the Prince is led off to prison. The noblest style is maintained throughout this scene, which would have delighted the English of Shakespeare's day.

In the third act we find the Prince somewhat changed, but not to any great extent. After thinking over the matter in solitude he has finally grasped that the Elector could not allow the violation of his express command to pass without some sort of punishment. But is it not sufficient punishment for him to have spent some days in prison, and does he not, moreover, deserve a reward because he entered it voluntarily and did not strangle the jailer? Therefore he knows positively that the first person to visit him will announce that he is free, and when his friend Hohenzollern enters his cell, he exclaims "Well, then, I'm free of my imprisonment." But when the latter examines his position with very different eyes, when, by producing a series of threatening facts each one more ominous than the other, he gradually silences the Prince's emotion, which demonstrates exactly what the Elector can do and what he cannot do, when he even tells him at last that the death warrant is about to be brought for signature to the Elector's cabinet, the Prince finally loses his foolish feeling of security, and then of course he goes to the opposite extreme. Nay, when the anxious Hohenzollern further informs him that the Swedish ambassador, who has arrived on the occasion of the peace negotiations, would ask the hand of the Princess of Orange for his master, but that the Princess seems to have made her choice already and thus is apparently thwarting the Elector's plan, and when he asks the Prince if he is not in some way tangled up in all this, the latter cries out despairingly "I am lost," and hurries off to the Electress to entreat her to intervene in his behalf.

On the way he receives a last impressive confirmation of the seriousness of his situation. He sees his grave being dug by torchlight. In the apartment of the Electress now takes place the much decried scene, which people refuse to comprehend, and therefore, of course, will not forgive the poet for writing. The Prince, in the presence of the girl he loves, begs for his life. He does so in the most ignominious fashion; indeed, in order to remove what he considers one of the worst rocks of offense, he even renounces Nathalie, while she stands by shuddering at the state of humiliation in which she beholds her heart's ideal. Certainly that is utterly unworthy of a hero and of a man, and we may unquestionably depend upon it that the poet, who in the same piece created the Elector beside the Prince, knew that as well as any of us. In fact, this scene has no other purpose than to show us that the Prince is not yet either a hero or a man, and that along the path he has trodden so far nobody can become either the one or the other. Up to this time he has led a hollow, sham existence, which could very well fill his head with giddy intoxication, but could not put any real backbone into him. Now, however, the true meaning of life, at least in one form, in the form of love, has at last come close enough to him to make the continuation of

this sham existence impossible; therein lies the real import of the scene in which he and Nathalie declare their love, the great significance of which I pointed out above. If that had not taken place he would probably have become a duelling-celebrity, and after the first shock of surprise he would have been able to show the same contempt of death as a professional fencer accustomed to the duelling-ground, who, with perfect right, considers life--his own namely--to be a mere cipher; he would have awaited the bullets defiantly, with his arms crossed a la Napoleon, and the Elector would have had him shot, would indeed have been forced to have him shot. He can no longer sink to such depths as that now, but still less can he find the real moral strength soberly to make up his mind to take voluntary leave of the world; for he has as yet no feeling of completed existence and of duty performed to take away with him; his life is still a blank. Therefore at this moment he must act exactly as he does act; to be sure, the poet must not leave him in this doubtful stage for any length of time; but neither, indeed, does he do so. The Electress considers that any further step would be useless, as she has already of her own accord done her utmost. Nathalie, however, with death in her heart, promises to venture one last word with her uncle for the fallen man, but bitterly advises the Prince in any case to take another look at his grave, and to persuade himself that it is not one whit gloomier than the battle has showed it a thousand times.

In the fourth act Nathalie keeps her promise, and the Elector sends her with a mysterious letter to the Prince in his prison. He tells her laconically that the Prince is saved just as surely as pardon lies in his own wish. She brings the letter to the prisoner and he reads: "If you believe that I have been unjust, tell me, I beg you, in a word or two, and forthwith I will send you back your sword." Such words could be used only by the majesty which would be revered even without a crown, and the Prince feels it at once. "I cannot tell him that!" he cries out when Nathalie presses him to write as the letter bids him. "What matter?" he answers curtly, when she assures him that the regiment has been detailed, which is to render the burial honors above his grave by the thunder of their muskets. "I will tell him 'You did right!'" he cries, when she continues to urge him; and he does so! He realizes that the sovereign who summons him to judge himself, cannot have acted thus toward him, in order to play the Brutus, or from heartless despotism. It becomes clear to him that war, yes the State itself, rests upon the principle of subordination, and that the commander must first perform in his own person what he would require from his subordinates. He determines,--and this too, be it noted, in the presence of the girl he loves,--to make satisfaction to the offended code of war, and thus crush again the Hydra of anarchy, which his arbitrary action, crowned with victory though it was, might very well lead to. "And though twelve bullets made you bite the dust this instant," cries Nathalie transported with admiration, "I could not resist rejoicing, sobbing, crying: 'Thus you please me.'" Truly she is right; now the man and the hero is complete and never again in all eternity can he be seized with another paroxysm of hollow self-glorification or of petty cowardice--which, indeed, were intimately connected one with the other. The Prince has become a stoutly forged link in the moral order of the universe, and the more difficult it was for him, the more firmly he will endure. Whoever does not find in this scene complete compensation for the preceding one with the Electress--in which it is rooted like the flower in the black earth; and whoever does not understand at the same time that the one was not possible without the other, and that cause and effect cannot be separated, to that person I must deny all capability of comprehending a drama in its totality. The change effected by the Elector is one of the

most sublime conceptions that any literature can show, and is very far from having an equal in our own.

The fifth act brings the necessary test. The Elector is entreated on all sides to pardon the Prince; his family, the army, the Princess, all urge him, indeed the latter--a fine touch--repeats the offense of her lover. On her own authority, she calls a regiment of which she is chief, to Fehrbellin, in order that the officers there may also sign their names to a petition which is being circulated, and thus she could, in her turn, actually be amenable to a court martial. The Elector allows nothing to be wrung from him by coaxing or by bullying, but no one who has an idea of the structure of the play need tremble any longer for the Prince. It can already be seen that the Elector has no intention of allowing matters to be carried to extremities from the leniency with which he is inclined to treat old Kottwitz, who has suddenly arrived with the cavalry, without his knowledge and, as he believes, without his orders. When Kottwitz presses him hard, and heatedly assures him that at the very first opportunity he will repeat the act of the Prince, which he once condemned but now must approve,--since for one case where the impulse of the heart, the sudden instinct, does harm, there are ten in which it alone can lead to the goal,--the Elector answers that he does not know how to convince him, but he will call an advocate who is able to teach the old gentleman better than he can what discipline and obedience are. Then he sends for the Prince, and the latter, solemnly and of his own accord, declares before the entire body of generals that he wishes by a voluntary death to glorify the code of war, which he had criminally violated in the sight of the whole army, and that the only favor he asks of the Elector, to whose just sentence he bows unconditionally, is that he will not try, on behalf of the King of Sweden, to force Nathalie's inclinations. This is granted him and he returns to prison, which he leaves immediately after, to start, with bandaged eyes, on the way which he perceives must think his last, and in the moment when he expects the end he deservedly receives from the hands of the Elector his life, his freedom, and his love.

Of course the romantic accessories of the first act have an unsatisfactory sequel in the last, as the poet here too feels obliged to take a roundabout road instead of the direct one. But we surely do not need to prove thus late that the fault is quite as immaterial here as there.

It is without doubt obvious to every one that in this drama the evolution of an important man is presented with absolute directness, in a way in which it is done nowhere else; that we gaze into the characteristic medley of rough forces and wild impulses which as a rule are the original ingredients of such a man, and that we accompany him from the lowest stage up to the zenith, where the unrestrained roving comet, that in its disorderliness was exposed to the danger of self-destruction, is transformed into a clear self-dependent fixed star. Do we need any other proof that the work is capable of producing a most unprecedented effect? Even though it gave us nothing but the deep psychological unfolding of this evolution, such an effect would perforce be produced, for our dramatic authors, on general principles, seldom give us opportunity to become acquainted with more than the outside skin of the man, which, to be sure, is the same for Napoleon as for his most insignificant corporal. In exceptional cases when they allow us a glimpse into the heart and reins, they expect us to take a narrow interest in a peculiarly organized individual, and are wanting in every kind of background. However the psychological side in our drama is, with

extraordinary art, reduced to a mere substratum, out of which an entirely new figure of tragedy develops, which combines in a wonderful fashion the deepest tragic shudder with the gentle transports of a hope that is not extinguished even in the blackest night. We are reminded of a smiling May morning over which the first thunderstorm breaks with a horrible crash; and that is a triumph of dramatic technique.

I would gladly examine the innumerable beauties of detail of this drama, and in particular call attention to the central points of the plot, abounding in the most vigorous life, into which a situation or a character or the action itself is sometimes concentrated. But this would lead me too far afield; moreover, since the most glaring differences of opinion usually crop up precisely on this subject, I could not avoid the dangerous ground on which, according to Goethe's profound saying, the categorical imperative and the authority of the man who pronounces it, form the last court of appeal. Or if some one, with a liking for gaudy paint and iridescent rags, should prefer a puppet show to the living figures of the piece, vital to their very finger tips, but, to be sure, going about in very simple, sometimes even slovenly garments, how could we decide the matter otherwise than in the well known manner of Cato? The categorical imperative which occasionally found favor with the old Romans is, however, terribly unpopular with the Germans.

One question, notwithstanding, I dare not leave unanswered, the question of how it is possible that the Prince of Homburg, in view of its great literary importance and its abundant vitality, could up to this time have met with so very little success on the stage? The answer is easy. The great public, who in general suppose the poetical to lie in that which is opposed to real life, has a strange conception of dramatic heroism, and the greater part of the critics who should instruct the public unfortunately share the same opinion. Because, in most cases, the hero is entirely finished and manufactured to the last filament when he makes his appearance in the drama, it is taken for granted that it must be so under all circumstances. Therefore it follows that the poet fares badly when, instead of leaving the development exclusively to the action, he occasionally transfers it in part to the principal character, and thus does not arouse the sympathy which he needs for his hero until the end of the piece, instead of doing so in the very beginning. For we immediately take for granted, even when we already know the poet, that he has made a mistake, that he is growing enthusiastic over something imperfect, immature, immoral, and that he demands of us to be enthusiastic with him. That puts us out of humor, we do not await the end, and even when we do, and become aware of his real intention, we only partly abandon our former prejudice. This has already been proved on various occasions. Kleist, in his *Prince of Homburg*, moreover, touched what in his day was a most sensitive spot--when Theodor Koerner made his characters run a race to see who could die first. Fear of death and a hero! That was really going too far! It was an insult to every ensign "You ask a piece of bread and butter of me! I will not give you that! But my life you may have with pleasure!"

RECOLLECTIONS OF MY CHILDHOOD (1846-1854)

By FRIEDRICH HEBBEL

TRANSLATED BY FRANCES H. KING

At the time of my birth my father possessed a small house, with a garden adjoining, in which stood some fruit trees; in particular one very productive pear-tree. In the house there were three dwellings, the most pleasant and roomy of which we occupied; its principal advantage consisted in the fact that it was situated on the sunny side. The other two were rented. The one opposite to us was inhabited by an old mason, Claus Ohl, and his little stooping wife, and the third, to which a back-entrance through the garden gave access, by the family of a day laborer. The tenants never changed, and for us children they belonged to the house, just like Father and Mother, from whom indeed, as regards loving attentions bestowed upon us, they differed but little, if at all.

Our garden was surrounded by other gardens. On one side was the garden of a jovial master-joiner who loved to tease me. Even now I cannot understand how he could take his own life, as he did, later on. Once when I was a very little boy I had said to him over the hedge, with a precociously knowing look: "Neighbor, it is very cold!" and he never grew weary of repeating this remark to me, especially in the hot summer months.

Next to the garden of the joiner was that of the minister. It was inclosed by a high board fence, which prevented us children from looking over, but not from peeping through cracks and chinks. This afforded us infinite pleasure in the springtime when the beautiful strange flowers which filled the garden, came up again; but we trembled lest the minister should catch sight of us. We felt an unbounded reverence for him, which may have been inspired by his serious, severe, sallow face and his cold glance, as much as by his position and his functions, which seemed to us very imposing, such as, for example, walking behind the hearses, which always passed in front of our house. Whenever he looked over at us, as he occasionally did, we stopped playing and crept back into the house.

On another side an old well formed the boundary between our garden and the next. Shaded by trees and deep, as it was, with its rickety wooden roof covered with dark green moss, I never could look at it without a shudder. The longish quadrangle was closed by the garden of a dairy-man who was treated with the greatest respect by the whole neighborhood on account of the cows which he owned--and by the courtyard of a dresser of white leather, the most ill-humored of men. My mother always said of him that he looked as if he had swallowed one person and was just about to catch another by the head and take the first bite.

This was the atmosphere in which I lived as a child. It could not have been more restricted, and yet its impressions live on to the present day. Still the merry joiner looks at me over the hedge, the morose minister over the board fence. Still I see the strapping, corpulent dairy-man standing in his doorway, with his hands in his pockets, in token that they are not empty; still I look upon the dresser of white leather, with his bilious yellow face, to whom the mere red cheeks of a child were an insult, and who always seemed more terrible to me when he began to smile. Still I sit upon the little bench under the spreading pear-tree, and while refreshing myself in its shade, wait to see if a fruit, prematurely ripened by worm-holes, will not drop from its sun-lit top branches; and the well, the roof of which had to be repaired every little while, still inspires me with a feeling of dread.

[Illustration: GUNTHER AND HAGEN BROUGHT CAPTIVE BEFORE KRIEMHILD _From the Painting by Schnorr von Carolsfeld_]

II

My father was of a very serious disposition in his home, outside of it he was gay and talkative. He had acquired a reputation on account of his talent for telling fairy-tales; many years passed, however, before we heard them with our own ears. He could not bear to hear us laugh or make any noise; on the other hand he was fond of singing hymns, and indeed worldly songs as well, in the twilight of the long winter evenings, and loved to have us join in. My mother was excessively good-hearted and somewhat quick-tempered; the most touching kindness shone from her blue eyes; when she felt passionately agitated, she began to cry. I was her favorite; my brother, two years younger than I, was my father's favorite. The reason was that I resembled my mother, and my brother seemed to resemble my father, though this was by no means the case, as was proved later.

My parents lived on the best of terms with one another so long as there was bread in the house. There were painful scenes at times when it was lacking. This seldom occurred in summer, but often happened in winter when work was scarce. Although these scenes never degenerated into violence, I cannot remember the time when they were not more terrible to me than anything else, and for that very reason I may not pass over them in silence.

I can remember an unpleasant incident of another kind which took place in my earliest childhood. It is the first that I recollect and it may have happened in my third year, if not in my second. I can tell about it without offending against the sacred memory of my parents; for whoever sees in it anything out of the ordinary is not acquainted with the lower classes. My father when following his trade generally had his meals provided by the persons for whom he worked. Then we at home, like all other families, ate our usual midday meal. Occasionally, however, he had to furnish his own food, in return for extra wages. Then dinner was deferred, and in order to ward off hunger a simple bread and butter sandwich was partaken of at twelve o'clock. It was an economical arrangement for the little household which could not afford two large meals. On one such day my mother baked some pancakes, certainly more to please us children than to satisfy any desire of her own. We ate them with the utmost relish and promised not to say anything about them to our father in the evening. When he arrived we had already gone to bed and were sound asleep. I do not know whether he may have been accustomed to find us still up and the contrary event made him suspect that the rule of the household had been broken. Suffice it to say he awoke me, petted me, took me in his arms and asked me what I had eaten. "Pancakes," I answered, sleepily. He then proceeded to reproach my mother with it. She had nothing to say, and placed his food before him, throwing me a glance, however, which foretold evil to come. When we were alone again the next day, she, to use her own expression, gave me with a rod a forcible lesson in silence. At other times, on the contrary, she inculcated in me the strictest love of truth. One would be inclined to think that these contradictions might have had disastrous consequences. It was not the case and never will be the case, for life entails many other similar ones, and human nature can adapt itself even to them. Certain it is that I acquired one piece of information which it is better for a child to acquire late or not at all, namely, that at times

the father wishes one thing, and the mother another.

I do not remember that I really went hungry in my earliest childhood, as I did later, but I do recollect that my mother sometimes had to content herself with looking on while we children ate, and did so gladly, because otherwise we could not have had our fill.

III

The principal charm of childhood consists in the fact that every creature down to the household pets is friendly and kindly disposed toward children; for out of this arises a feeling of security which disappears with the first step out into the hostile world and never returns. This is especially the case among the lower classes. The child cannot play before the door without being presented with a flower by the neighboring servant-maid who has been sent across the street to make a purchase, or to draw water. The fruit-woman throws it a cherry or a pear out of her basket, or a prosperous burgher perhaps even gives it a small coin with which it can buy itself a roll. The driver cracks his whip in passing; the musician as he goes by draws some tones from his instrument, and whoever does none of all these things at least asks its name and age, or smiles at it. To be sure, the child must be kept neat and clean.

My brother and I came in for a bountiful share of this goodwill, especially on the part of the tenants of our house, our special neighbors who were almost as much to us as our mother and more than our severe father. In summer they had their work and could not pay much attention to us, but then at that season it was not necessary that they should, as we played in the garden from early till late, from one bed-time to the next, and the butterflies were company enough. But in winter, in the rain and snow, when we were confined to the house, almost everything that entertained and enlivened us came from them.

The wife of the day laborer, Meta by name, was a gigantic figure, somewhat bent forward, with a stern Old-Testament face, of which I was vividly reminded by Michaelangelo's Cumaean sybil in the Sistine Chapel. She usually came over to us at twilight in the long winter evenings, with a red cloth wound around her head, and stayed until the lights were lit. Then she told us stories of witches and goblins, that sounded more impressive from her lips than from any other. We heard of the Blocksberg and the witches-Sabbath; the broomstick, so contemptible in appearance, acquired a weird importance, and the dark hole in the chimney, which in every house, and therefore in ours also, can be misused in such malignant fashion by the powers of hell and their handmaids, inspired us with dread. I can still remember perfectly the impression made upon me by the story of the wicked miller's wife, who transformed herself at night into a cat, and how I consoled myself with the fact that in the end she did indeed receive due punishment for this wicked prank. The cat, namely, when once starting out on her nightly walk, had a paw chopped off by the miller's apprentice, who thought she looked suspicious, and the next day the miller's wife lay in bed with a bloody right arm minus a hand.

When the light was lit we usually went over to neighbor Ohl's, and in his room we certainly felt more at ease than in Meta's company. Neighbor Ohl was a man whom I have never seen cross, no matter how often he had occasion to be so. With an empty stomach, indeed with what in his case meant more, an empty pipe, he danced, sang, and whistled something for

us whenever we came; and in spite of his considerably reddened nose--which, according to a tale of my mother's, I once wished for longingly when looking up at him while being danced upon his knees--and in spite of the felt cap tapering to a point, which he wore continually, his always friendly, merry face still gleams before me like a star.

There had been a time when he was the only mason in the place and the employer of from twenty to thirty journeymen, of whom many later set up as masters and took the work away from him. At that time, so it was said later, he could have assured himself a future free from care if he had not visited the bowling alley too often, and loved a good glass of wine too well. But whoever bore evil fortune as he did, could not be reproached for careless enjoyment of the good. I cannot think of him without emotion; how would it be possible for me to do so? He once, at fair-time, presented my brother and me with a kettle-drum and a trumpet which he had, with the greatest difficulty, obtained on credit from the toy merchant, and as his poverty did not permit him to pay off the small debt until much later, he had to submit to being dunned for it years after, when I, already tall and knowing beyond my years, was walking at his side. He was inexhaustible in inventing ways to amuse us, and as with children nothing is necessary but goodwill, he never failed to do so. It was a source of great delight to us when he took a piece of chalk in his hand, sat himself down with us at his round table and began to draw-mills, houses, animals, and all sorts of other things. At the same time he cracked the merriest jokes, which still resound in my ears. Even the chief of his pleasures was not one for him if we did not share it. It consisted in drinking slowly a half jug of brandy, in remembrance of better days, and in smoking a pipe at the same time, on Sunday morning after the sermon and before dinner. We each had to have a thimble full of this brandy or he did not enjoy it himself. The drink was certainly not the best thing for us, but the quantity was small enough to prevent disastrous consequences. My father, however, forbade this kind of Sunday treat when he came to find out about it. This troubled the good old man exceedingly, but did not prevent him, I am forced to add, from having us drink with him again; only this took place quite secretly, and he urgently recommended us to keep out of our father's way, so that he should not have occasion to kiss one of us and thus discover the transgression. It was a kiss, to wit pressed upon my father's lips, that had betrayed the secret the first time.

Sometimes one or the other of his two unmarried brothers, who as a rule tramped around the country and were probably good-for-nothings, would spend the winter with him. They always found a ready welcome and remained until the spring or hunger drove them away. He never turned them out. Small as his piece of bread might be he gladly divided it once again, but when he had nothing at all, then indeed he could not give away anything. It was a regular treat for us when Uncle Hans or Johann arrived, for they brought news of the world to our nest. They told us of woods and their adventures in them; of robbers and murderers whom they had escaped from with great difficulty; of the dark giblest stew which they had eaten in lonely forest-taverns, and of men's fingers and toes which they pretended to have found at last in the bottom of the dish.

The swaggering, parasitic brothers-in-law were extremely unwelcome to the housewife, for she did not bear the burden of existence as light-heartedly as her husband did, and she knew they would not leave again so long as there was a piece of bacon hanging in the chimney; but she contented herself with complaining in private, and at times pouring out her heart to my mother. She, too, was fond of us children, and in summer, as often as she could, she presented us with red and white

currants, which she, in turn, begged from a stingy friend. I, however, avoided her too close proximity, for she made it her business to cut my nails as often as it was necessary, and I detested this on account of the prickly feeling in the nerve ends which it caused. She read the Bible diligently, and long before I could read it myself I received from her my first strong, nay terrible, impression from this gloomy book, when she read to me out of Jeremiah the horrible passage in which the angry prophet foretells that in the time of great distress the mothers would slaughter their own children and eat them. I can remember yet with what terror this passage inspired me when I heard it, perhaps because I did not know whether it referred to the past or to the future, to Jerusalem or to Wesselburen, and because I was myself a child and had a mother.

IV

In my fourth year I was sent to a primary-school. It was kept by an old spinster, Susanna by name, of tall and masculine stature, with friendly blue eyes, which shone forth like candles from out a pale grayish face. We children were planted around the walls of the spacious chamber which served as school-room, and which was rather dark. The boys were on one side, the girls on the other; Susanna's table, piled high with school books, stood in the middle, and she herself, a white clay pipe in her mouth and a cup of tea before her, sat behind it in an ancestral arm chair which inspired no little respect. Before her lay a long ruler, which, however, was not used for drawing lines but for chastising us when we were no longer to be held in check by frowning and clearing of the throat. A cornucopia full of currants, destined as a reward for extraordinary virtues, lay beside it. The raps, however, fell more regularly than the currants; indeed, the cornucopia, sparingly as Susanna made use of the contents, was sometimes completely empty; we thus learned Kant's categorical imperative sufficiently early.

Children large and small were called up to the table from time to time, the more advanced pupils for instruction in writing, the multitude to repeat their lessons and to receive raps on the fingers with the ruler, or currants, as the case might be. A sullen maid-servant, who even occasionally took a hand in inflicting punishment, went up and down the room, and was at times occupied in a most unpleasant manner with the youngest pupils, for which reason she kept sharp watch that they should not partake too freely of the sweet things which they brought with them.

Behind the house was a small yard, adjoining which was Susanna's little garden. During recess we played our games in the yard; the garden was kept locked up from us. It was full of flowers, whose fantastic shapes I can still see swaying in the sultry summer wind. Susanna, when in a good humor, used sometimes to pluck a few of these flowers for us, not, however, until it was nearly time for them to fade; before that she would not rob of a particle of their adornment the neatly laid-out, carefully-weeded beds, between which ran footpaths that hardly seemed wide enough for the birds to hop on. Susanna, moreover, distributed her gifts with great partiality. The children of well-to-do parents received the best and were allowed to give voice to their desires, which were frequently lacking in modesty, without being reproved; the poorer had to be satisfied with what remained, and received nothing at all if they did not await the act of grace in silence. This was most flagrantly apparent at Christmas time. Then a great distribution of cakes and nuts took place, but in most faithful adherence to the words of the Gospel: "To him who hath, shall be given." The daughters of the parish clerk, a

mightily respected person, the sons of the doctor, and so forth, were loaded with half-dozens of cakes, with whole handkerchiefs full of nuts; on the contrary the poor devils whose prospects for Christmas Eve, unlike those of the rich children, were entirely dependent upon Susanna's charitable hands, were scantily portioned off. The reason was that Susanna counted upon return gifts, doubtless was forced to count upon them, and could not expect any from people who even had difficulty in getting together the school-money. I was not entirely neglected, as Susanna received her tribute from our pear-tree regularly every autumn, and besides, on account of my "good head," I enjoyed a sort of advantage over many of the others. Nevertheless I too felt the difference, and in especial had much to suffer from the maid-servant, who put a spiteful construction upon my most innocent actions; for example, she once interpreted the pulling out of my handkerchief as a sign that I wished to have it filled, which drove the most burning blushes to my cheeks and tears to my eyes. As soon as I became conscious of Susanna's partiality and the injustice of her maid I stepped outside the magic circle of childhood. It occurred very early.

V

Two incidents which took place in this school-room are still vividly present before me. I remember, to begin with, that I received there my first awful impression of nature and the invisible power which prophetic man surmises behind it. The child has a period, which lasts a fairly long time, when it believes that the whole world is subject to its parents, at least to the father who always remains standing somewhat mysteriously in the background, and when it would be just as likely to beg them for good weather as for a plaything. This period naturally comes to an end when the child, to its astonishment, undergoes the experience that things occur which are quite as unwelcome to its parents as a beating is to itself, and with this period disappears a great part of the mystic spell which surrounds the sacred head of the father: indeed not until it is past does real human independence begin. My eyes were opened on this subject by a fearful thunderstorm, which was accompanied by a cloud burst and hail.

It was a sultry afternoon, one of those which scorch up the earth and roast all its creatures. We children sat around on our benches, lazy and depressed, with our catechisms or primers. Susanna herself nodded sleepily, and indulgently allowed to pass unnoticed the jokes and teasing, by means of which we tried to keep ourselves awake. Not even the flies were buzzing, except the very small ones which are always lively, when all of a sudden the first thunderclap sounded and reverberated, crashing and roaring, among the worm-eaten rafters of the old, dilapidated house. In the most desperate combination, such as only occurs during storms in the north, a clatter of hail stones now followed, which in less than a minute demolished all the window-panes on the windy side, and immediately after this, indeed in the midst of it, came a downpour of rain which seemed to be the prelude of a new deluge. We children, starting up terrified, ran about screaming and clamoring. Susanna herself lost her head, and her maid succeeded in closing the shutters only when there was nothing more to be saved; and there needed only the Egyptian darkness added to the flood which had already overtaken us, to heighten the general terror and increase the prevailing confusion. In the pauses between one thunderclap and the next Susanna did indeed collect herself somewhat and tried to calm and comfort her charges, who according to their age were either hanging on to her apron or crouching by themselves with closed eyes in the corners of the room.

But suddenly a bluish flame of lightning flashed once more through the cracks of the shutters and the words died on her lips, while the maid, almost as frightened as the youngest child, howled and screamed out, "The good God is angry!" When it was dark again in the room she added with pedagogical moroseness, "You're all of you good for nothing, anyhow!" These words, no matter how odious the mouth from which they fell, made a deep impression on me; they forced me to look upward, above myself and above everything which surrounded me, and kindled in me the spark of religious emotion.

On my return from school to my father's house, I found there, too, the horrors of devastation. Our pear-tree had lost not only its young fruit but likewise all its beautiful leaves, and stood there bare as in winter: what is more, a very fruitful plum-tree, which used to supply not only ourselves but half the town besides, and, at the very least, our fairly numerous kinsfolk, had even been despoiled of the richest of its branches, and in its mutilation looked like a man with a broken arm. Though my mother found a sorry comfort in the fact that our pig was now supplied with dainty fare for a week, I could derive none at all from it, and even the pieces of glass lying around in abundance--from which the most excellent mirrors could be made in the easiest way in the world by sticking them together with damp earth--offered scarcely any compensation for the irrecoverably lost autumn pleasures. Now, however, I understood all at once why my father always went to church on Sunday, and, why I was never allowed to put on a clean shirt without saying: "God's mercy upon us!" when I did so. I had learned to know the Lord of Lords; his angry servants, thunder and lightning, hail and storm, had opened wide the portals of my heart to him, and he had entered in all his majesty.

What had taken place in my soul was made manifest shortly afterward. For one evening when once again the wind blew mightily down the chimney, and the rain beat hard upon the roof as I was being put to bed, the mechanical babbling of my lips was suddenly transformed into a real, anxious prayer, and therewith the spiritual navel-string, which up to that time had bound me exclusively to my parents, was broken. Indeed things soon went so far that I began to complain to God of my father and mother when I thought I had been unjustly treated by them.

Further there is connected with this school-room my first and perhaps most bitter martyrdom. In order to make plain what I would say I must explain a little. Even in the infant-school all the elements are to be found which the maturer man later encounters in an intensified degree, in the world. Brutality, deceit, vulgar cleverness, hypocrisy, all are represented, and a pure mind always stands there, like Adam and Eve in the picture, among the wild beasts. How much of this is to be ascribed to nature, how much to early education, or rather to neglect in the home, must remain undecided here; the fact admits of no doubt. This, then, was likewise the case in Wesselburen. Every species was to be met with, from the brutal boy who plucked the feathers from the living birds and pulled the legs off the flies, down to the light-fingered little rascal, who stole the bright colored book-marks out of the primers of his comrades. The fate which their better-behaved fellow-pupils--who were condemned to suffer on that account--sometimes angrily prophesied for the young sinners, when the good boys had happened to be the object of their jeers or their malicious tricks, was fulfilled to the letter in the case of more than one of them. The gamins always have instinct enough to know whom their sting will strike first and sharpest, and therefore I was, for a time, the one most exposed to their spite.

Sometimes a boy pretended to be reading very zealously in the catechism, which he held close before his face, but instead he whispered over the top of the page all sorts of scurrilous things in my ear, and asked me if I were still stupid enough to believe that children came out of the well, and that the stork fetched them up? Sometimes another called to me "If you want an apple, take it out of my pocket, I brought one along for you!" And when I did so, he cried! "Susanna, I am being robbed," and denied having said anything to me. A third even spat upon his book and then began to howl and declared with a brazen face that I had done it.

Although I was almost the only one exposed to vexations of this kind,

partly because I felt them most keenly, and partly because they succeeded best with me on account of my extreme unwariness, there were other annoyances which all, without exception, had to put up with. Foremost among these was the bragging of certain overgrown young rogues who were considerably ahead of us others in years, but in spite of that still sat on the A.B.C. bench, and from time to time played truant. They got nothing out of it at the time but double and threefold boredom, for as they dared not go home and could not find any playmates, there was nothing for them to do but crouch down behind a hedge or lurk in a dried-up ditch until the hour of deliverance struck, and then to mingle with us on the way home as though they really had been where they belonged. But they knew how to make up for it and get some fun for themselves afterward, when they came back to school and related their adventures. They would tell us how once their father had gone by right close to the hedge, the cane with which he used to thrash them in his hand, and yet had not noticed them; how another time their mother, accompanied by the spitz dog, had come up to the ditch, the dog had smelt them out, their mother had discovered them, but the lie that they had been sent there by Susanna herself to pick camomile flowers for her, had helped them through in spite of all. Then they plumed themselves like old soldiers who are telling their heroic deeds to wondering recruits, and the moral always was: we risk the whip and the cane, you at most the switch, and yet you do not dare to do anything.

This was irritating and all the more so as it was not possible absolutely to deny the truth of their assertions. Hence when the son of a cobbler once came to school with his back black and blue, and told us his father had caught him and punished him severely with his shoemaker's stirrup, but that he was only going to try it now all the oftener, for he was no coward, I also determined to show my courage, and that, too, that very afternoon.

When, therefore, my mother sent me away at the usual hour, provided with two juicy pears to quench my thirst, I did not go to Susanna's, but crept, with a beating heart and anxiously peering behind me, into the woodshed of our neighbor, the joiner, encouraged and assisted to do so by his son, who was much older than I and already worked in his father's shop. It was very hot and my hiding place was both dark and close; the two pears did not last long, besides I could not eat them without some twinges of conscience, and an old cat cowering in the background with her young ones, who growled fiercely at my least movement, did not contribute very much to my amusement. The sin carried its punishment along with it; I counted every quarter and every half hour of the clock, the strokes of which penetrated from the high tower to where I was with a harsh, and it seemed to me, threatening sound. I tormented myself wondering whether I could get out of the shed again without being noticed, and I thought only very rarely and fleetingly of the triumph

which I hoped to celebrate on the morrow.

It was already getting rather late when my mother came into the garden and glancing gaily and contentedly about her, went over to the well to draw some water. She almost passed directly in front of me, and that in itself arrested my breathing. But how was it with me when my confidant suddenly asked her if she knew where Christian was, and to her astonished reply, "With Susanna!" rejoined half mischievously, half maliciously "No! no, with the cat!" and winking and blinking showed her my hiding place! Beside myself with rage, I sprang out and would have kicked the grinning traitor. My mother, however, her whole face aflame, set her pail down on one side and seized me by the arms and hair to take me to school after all. I tore myself away, I rolled on the ground, I howled and screamed, but in vain. The discovery of such a criminal in her quiet darling, whom every one praised, incensed her so that she would not listen to me, but dragged me away by force; and my continued resistance had no other result than to cause all the windows on the street to be opened and all heads to pop out. When I arrived my companions were just being dismissed; they crowded around me, however, and heaped mockery and derision upon me, while Susanna, who may have realized that the lesson was too severe, tried to pacify me. Since that day I believe I know how the man feels who runs the gauntlet.

VI

I should really have mentioned, above, a third experience, but this last, whether in retrospect one rate it high or low, is, in any case, so unique and incomparable in the life of man that one dares not place it in the same category with any other. In Susanna's gloomy school-room, namely, I learned to know love, and that, too, in the very same hour in which I entered it; therefore in my fourth year.

The first love! Who does not smile when he reads these words; before whose vision does not an Aennchen or a Gretchen hover, who once seemed to him to wear a starry crown and be arrayed in the blue of heaven and the gold of the morning, and who now perhaps--it would be criminal to paint the reverse of the picture. But who does not say to himself, too, that at that time he was carried, as though on wings, past every honey-cup in the garden of earth, too quickly indeed to become intoxicated, but slowly enough to breathe in the sacred morning fragrance. It is therefore with emotion that I now smile when I think of the beautiful May morning on which actually took place that great event, long since resolved upon, repeatedly deferred, and at last unalterably appointed for a definite day--I mean my departure from the paternal home to school. "He will cry!" said Meta on the evening before, and nodded sibylline fashion, as though she knew everything. "He will not cry, but he will get up too late!" rejoined neighbor Ohl's wife. "He will behave bravely, and be out of his bed at the right time, too!" threw in the good-natured old man. Then he added, "I have something for him, and I'll give it to him when he comes in at my door at seven o'clock tomorrow morning, washed and combed."

At seven o'clock I was at our neighbor's and as a reward was presented with a little wooden cuckoo. Up to half past seven I was in good spirits and played with our pug-dog, at quarter to eight I began to weaken, but toward eight I was a man again, because Meta entered with a face full of malicious enjoyment, and I sat out courageously, the new primer, with John Ballhorn's egg-laying cock under my arm. My mother went with me in order to introduce me ceremoniously; the pug followed; I was not yet

entirely forsaken, and stood in Susanna's presence before I realized it. In school-master fashion Susanna patted me on the cheek and stroked back my hair. My mother, in a severe tone which she had great pains in assuming, bade me be industrious and obedient, and departed hastily, so as not to allow her emotion to get the better of her; the pug was undecided for some little time, but at last he went off to join her. I was presented with a gold paper saint, then my place was shown me and I was incorporated into the humming, buzzing child-beehive, which, glad of the interruption, had watched the scene inquisitively.

It was some time before I dared to look up, for I felt that I was being inspected and this embarrassed me. At last I did so, and my first glance fell upon a pale, slender girl who sat directly opposite to me; she was called Emilia and was the daughter of the parish clerk. A thrill of emotion passed through me, the blood rushed to my heart, but a feeling of shame also mingled at once with my first sensation, and I dropped my eyes to the ground again as quickly as though they had committed a crime.

From this hour I could not banish Emilia from my mind. School, formerly so much feared, now became my favorite abiding place, because there only could I see her; Sundays and holidays, which separated me from her, were as hateful to me as they would otherwise have been welcome; I was genuinely unhappy if she happened to stay away. She hovered before me wherever I went and I never grew tired of repeating her name softly to myself when I was alone; her black eyebrows and her very rosy lips, in particular, were always present before me; on the other hand, I do not remember that her voice made any impression upon me, although later everything, for me, depended upon that.

It can easily be understood that I soon gained out of all this the reputation of being the most constant attendant at school and the best pupil. I felt rather strangely about it though, for I knew very well that it was not the primer which attracted me to Susanna's, and that it was not in order to learn to read quickly that I spelled away so busily. However, no one must ever be allowed to divine what was going on with me, and least of all Emilia. I avoided her most anxiously, so as, by any and all means, to keep from betraying myself. When the games in common nevertheless brought us together, I was hostile toward her rather than in the least friendly. I pulled her back hair in order to touch her at least for once, and hurt her in doing it, so as not to arouse suspicion. Once, however, nature forcibly asserted itself, because put to too severe a test. One afternoon in the romping hour which always preceded lessons--for the children assembled slowly and Susanna liked to take a midday nap--a distressing sight greeted me as I entered the school-room; Emilia was being ill-treated by a boy, and he was one of my best comrades. He pulled her about and buffeted her lustily, and I bore it, though not without great difficulty and with ever increasing, silent exasperation. At last, however, he drove her into a corner, and when he let her out again, her mouth was bleeding, probably because he had scratched her somewhere. Then I could control myself no longer, the sight of the blood drove me mad, I fell upon him, threw him to the ground and gave him back his thumps and slaps double and threefold. But Emilia, far from being grateful to me, herself called for aid and assistance for her enemy when I showed no signs of desisting, and thus betrayed involuntarily that she liked him better than the avenger. Susanna, awakened from her slumbers by the noise, hurried to the scene and, naturally being cross and angry, demanded strict account of my sudden outburst of rage. What I stammered and stuttered forth in excuse

was incomprehensible and foolish, and thus I received a rude chastisement as a reward for my first gallant service. My affection for Emilia lasted until my eighteenth year and passed through very many phases; I must therefore often refer to it again.

VII

Even in my earliest years my imagination was very vivid. When I was put to bed in the evening the rafters above me began to crawl, from every nook and corner of the room distorted visages made grimaces, and the most familiar objects, such as the cane on which I myself used to ride, the foot of the table, yes, even the coverlet on my bed with its flowers and figures, grew strange and filled me with terror. I believe it is well to distinguish here between the vague general fear, which is natural to all children without exception, and a greater one which embodies its terrifying images in clear-cut distinct forms and really makes them objective to the young soul. The former fear was shared by my brother, who lay beside me, but his eyes always closed very soon and then he slept quietly until bright daylight; the latter tormented me alone, and not only did it keep sleep far from me, but when sleep finally came, often frightened it away again and made me call for help in the middle of the night. How deeply the phantasms of this same fear impressed themselves upon me can be gathered from the fact that they return in full force in every serious illness. As soon as the feverishly seething blood rushes over my brain and drowns my consciousness, the oldest devils, driving out and disarming all laterborn ones, come back again, and that best shows, without doubt, how they must once have tortured me.

But by day, as well, my imagination was unusually, and perhaps unhealthily, active. Ugly people, for example, whom my brother laughed at and mimicked, filled me with dread. A little hunch-backed tailor--on either side of whose triangular, deathly-pale face, immoderately long ears stood out, ears moreover which were bright red and transparent--could not pass by without my running with screams into the house; and it almost caused my death when he once, in a passion, followed me, scolding and calling me a stupid youngster, and upbraiding my mother because he thought she was making him play the bug-bear in her domestic discipline. I could not endure the sight of a bone and buried even the smallest one that came to light in our garden; nay later, when in Susanna's school, I obliterated with my nails the word "rib" in my catechism, because it always brought before me the disgusting object which it designated as vividly as though the object itself lay there in repulsive decay before my eyes. On the other hand, a rose-leaf, which a breeze blew to me over the hedge, was as much to me as--nay, more than the rose itself was to others, and words like tulip and lily, cherry and apricot, apple and pear, immediately transplanted me into spring, summer, and autumn; so that in the primer I liked to spell aloud the pieces in which they occurred better than any others, and grew angry each time when it was not my turn to do so. Only, unhappily, in the world one needs the diminishing glass much oftener than the magnifying, and this holds good even of the beautiful days of youth, except in very rare cases. For as it is said of horses that they respect man only because, on account of the construction of their eye, they see in him a giant, so the child endowed with imagination stands still before a grain of sand only because it seems to him an insuperable mountain. Things in themselves therefore cannot set the standard here; on the contrary, one must inquire about the shadows which they cast; hence the father can often laugh while the son is enduring the tortures of hell because the

scales by which they weigh are fundamentally different.

An incident, comical in itself, belongs in this place because it throws a very clear light precisely on this point, so important for education. I was once sent to get a roll for dinner. The baker's wife handed it to me and good-humoredly gave me at the same time an old nut-cracker, which had probably turned up somewhere when she was cleaning house. I had never seen a nut-cracker before. I was not acquainted with any of its hidden qualities, and took it like any other doll which appealed to me by reason of its red cheeks and staring eyes. Joyously starting on my way home and pressing the nut-cracker, like a newly acquired favorite, tenderly to my breast, I noticed all of a sudden that it opened its jaws and in gratitude for my caresses showed me its cruel white teeth. One may imagine my fright! I shrieked loudly, I ran across the street as though pursued, but I had not sense or courage enough to throw the demon away, and as it naturally sometimes closed its mouth and sometimes opened it again, according to the movements I made while running, I could not help considering it alive, and arrived home half dead. Here I was, of course, laughed at and enlightened as to the truth, at last even scolded. It was all of no avail. It was impossible for me to become reconciled again to the monster although I recognized its innocence, and I did not rest until I had received permission to give it away to another boy. When my father learned of the matter he was of the opinion that there was no other youngster alive to whom such a thing could happen. That was very possible, for there was perhaps no other at whom the cousins of the nut-cracker had made faces from the floor and from the walls in the evening when he was just going to sleep. This very night the activity of my seething imagination culminated in a dream, which was so monstrous and left such an impression upon me that for that very reason it returned seven times in succession. It seemed to me as though the dear Lord, of whom I had already heard so much, had stretched a rope between heaven and earth, had set me upon it, and placed Himself beside it to swing me. Then without rest or pause I flew up and down with dizzy speed; now I was high up among the clouds, my hair fluttering in the wind, and I held on convulsively and closed my eyes; now I was so near the earth again that I could plainly see the yellow sand and the little red and white stones--indeed could even reach them with my toes. I wished to throw myself off; that, however, required resolution, and before I succeeded, I went up in the air again, and there was nothing for me to do but seize the rope once more so as not to fall and be dashed to pieces. The week in which this dream occurred was perhaps the most terrible one of all my childhood, for the memory of it did not leave me the whole day. When, in spite of my struggles, I was put to bed I carried the fear of its return with me, even immediately into my sleep so that it was no wonder the dream continually recurred, until by degrees it faded out.

VIII

I remained in Susanna's school until my sixth year and learned there to read fluently. I was not permitted to learn to write yet on account of my youth, as it was said; it was the last thing that Susanna had to teach and therefore she prudently held it in reserve. But I had already started with the first necessary exercises in memory; for as soon as the youngster had been promoted from the sexless frock to trousers, and from the primer to the catechism, he had to learn by heart the ten commandments and the chief articles of the Christian Faith as Doctor Martin Luther, the great reformer, formulated them three hundred years ago for the guidance of the Protestant Church. Memorizing went no

farther and the tremendous dogmas, which without explanation or elucidation passed from the book into the undeveloped childish brain, became transformed into wonderful and in part grotesque pictures. These, however, did the young mind no manner of harm, but gave it a healthy impetus and stirred it up to prophetic activity. For what does it matter if the child, when it hears of original sin, or of death and the devil, forms a conception or a fantastic image of those profound symbols? To fathom them is the task of our whole lifetime, but the developing man is warned at the very beginning of an all-disposing higher power, and I doubt if the same end could be reached by early initiation into the mysteries of the rule of three or into the wisdom of AEsop's fables. The remarkable part of it was, to be sure, that in my imagination Luther came to stand almost directly beside Moses and Jesus Christ, but without doubt the reason was that his thundering "What is that?" always resounded immediately after the majestic laconic utterances of Jehovah, and that moreover his rough, expressive face, out of which the spirit speaks all the more forcibly because it must manifestly first gain the victory over the thick resisting flesh, was reproduced in the front of the catechism in heavy black ink. But so far as I know that had no more injurious consequences for me than my belief in the real horns and claws of the devil, or in the scythe of death, and I learned, as soon as there was any necessity for it, to distinguish perfectly between the Saviour and the reformer.

For the rest the modest acquisitions that I had made at Susanna's sufficed to procure for me a certain respect at home. To Master Ohl it was immensely impressive that I soon knew better than he himself all that the true Christian believes, and my mother was almost moved to tears when for the first time I read the evening blessing aloud by lamp-light, without faltering or stammering. Indeed she felt so edified that she gave over to me forever the office of reader, the duties of which I hereafter performed for a considerable length of time with much zeal and not without self-complacency.

Toward the end of my sixth year a great change, nay a complete transformation, took place in the school-system in Holstein, and consequently in that of my own little fatherland. Up to that time the State had not interfered at all in primary instruction and but little in the secondary. Parents could send their children wherever they wished and the primary schools were purely private institutions, about which even the ministers scarcely troubled themselves, and which often sprang up in the most curious manner. Thus Susanna had arrived in Wesselburen one stormy autumn evening, in wooden shoes, without a penny, and an entire stranger. She had been given a night's lodging, for sweet charity's sake, by the compassionate widow of a pastor. The latter discovers that the pilgrim can read and write and also knows quite a little about the Bible and thereupon makes her on the spot the proposition to remain in the town, in her very house, and teach. The youth of the place, or at least the crawling part of the same, had, as it happened, just been orphaned. The former teacher, for a long time highly praised on account of his strict discipline, had undressed a saucy little girl and set her upon a hot stove in punishment for some naughtiness, perhaps in order to procure still greater praise thereby, and that had been too much for even the most unqualified reverers of the rod. Susanna was quite alone in the world, and did not know where she should turn or what she should take up. She therefore gladly, although according to her own words not without misgivings, exchanged the accustomed labor with her hands for the difficult labor with her head, and the speculation succeeded perfectly, and in the shortest space of

time imaginable.

To the boys and girls of more advanced age severe, sombre gymnasiums and grammar-schools did indeed open their doors. These were under a sort of supervision and in case of necessity were recruited by the secular arm, if new comers did not enlist of their own accord. But in these institutions too, only the merest manual training was given, in spite of the pompous sounding names which they flaunted, and which to this hour have remained a mystery to me. A brother of my mother's, universally admired on account of his talents--whom the principal, though by no means over modest, had dismissed with the solemn declaration that he could teach him nothing further because he knew as much as he himself--was indeed a mighty calligrapher, and decorated his New Year's cards with tints and flourishes in India ink as the old printers Fust and Schoeffer did their incunabula, but nevertheless he could not achieve a single grammatical sentence.

These conditions, undeniably defective and much in need of improvement, were now once and for all to be brought to an end. The people were to be educated from the cradle up, superstition was to be exterminated root and branch. Whether thorough consideration was given to that which should have been considered above everything else must remain in doubt; for the conception of culture is extremely relative, and just as the most disgusting intoxication follows the nipping from every bottle, so superficial encyclopedical knowledge, which at the most can be made broad, engenders precisely the most repulsive kind of arrogance. It will no longer bow to any authority and yet never penetrates to the depths in which the multifarious logical inconsistencies and contradictions find their own solution.

Probably the right method was adopted when they founded normal schools on the one hand and primary schools on the other, so that the essence which had been distilled in the former and poured into the empty schoolmaster heads in the form of rationalism, could from the latter spread itself immediately over the whole land. The result was that a somewhat superstitious generation was followed by an excessively overwise one; for it is astonishing how the grandchild feels when he knows that a nocturnal fiery meteor is composed merely of inflammable gases, while his grandfather sees in it the devil trying to enter some chimney or other with his shining money bags.

But however the matter may have stood in general,--and I repeat my conviction that in this case the happy medium is hard to find,--to me the reform was a great blessing. For Wesselburen, like the other towns, acquired an elementary school and a man was chosen as teacher of it whose name I cannot write down without a feeling of the deepest gratitude, because in spite of his modest position, he exercised an immeasurable influence on my development. He was called Franz Christian Detlefsen and came to us from the neighboring town of Eiderstedt, where he had already held a small official position.

IX

No house is so small as not to seem to the child who has been born in it like a world whose wonders and mysteries he discovers only little by little. Even the poorest cottage has at least a garret to which a ladder leads up, and with what feelings is this climbed for the first time! Some old rubbish is sure to be found up there, which, useless and forgotten, points back to days long past, and reminds us of men whose

last bone has already moldered to dust. Behind the chimney there is surely a worm-eaten, wooden chest which excites curiosity. The dust is lying on it hand high, the lock is still there, but there is no need to look for the key; for one can forage in it wherever one wants, and when with fear and trembling the child does so, he pulls out a torn boot, or the broken distaff of a spinning wheel which was laid aside half a century ago. Shuddering he flings away the double find, because involuntarily he asks himself where is the leg that wore the boot and where is the hand that set the wheel in motion. But the mother carefully picks up the one or the other because she happens to need a strap which can be cut out of grandfather's boot, or because she believes that she can start the fire again with great-aunt's distaff.

[Illustration: THE DEATH OF KRIEMHILD _From the Painting by Schnorr von Carolsfeld_]

Even though the chest had found its way into the tiled stove during the last hard winter, when people were even forced to burn dried cakes of dung, there is still hidden away in the garret a rusty sickle which once went off to the fields, shining and merry, and stretched low at one swing of the arm a thousand golden-green stalks; and above it hangs the uncanny scythe which a farm-hand once ran into a long time ago, so that he cut off his nose--it having hung too far down over the garret hatch, and he having mounted the ladder too quickly. Beside them the mice are squeaking in the corners, a couple perhaps jump out of their holes and after executing a short dance creep back into them again; a little shiny white weasel is visible for a moment, lifting its clever little head and forepaws in the air, peering and sniffing; and the single sunbeam that enters through some hidden chink is so perfectly like a gold thread that one would like to wind it around one's finger at once.

The cottage is not provided with a cellar but the burgher-house is, though not indeed on account of the wine but of the potatoes and turnips. The poorer classes keep these out doors under a goodly pile of earth, which they raise above them in the autumn, and in winter, in time of hard frost, carefully cover over with straw or dung as well.

Now to reach the cellar is really much more difficult than to climb to the attic, but where is the child who does not know how to satisfy this longing too in one way or another! He can go to the neighbors and hang on coaxingly to the maid's apron when she goes down to get something, or can even watch for the moment when the door is left open by mistake, and venture down on his own account. That is dangerous to be sure, for the door may be suddenly closed, and the sixteen-legged spiders, that crawl around the walls in the most hideous deformed shapes, as well as the trickling greenish water that gathers in the cavities intentionally left here and there, do not invite one to tarry long. But what does it matter? One has one's throat after all, and whoever screams lustily will be heard sooner or later. Now if the house itself suffices, under all circumstances, to make such an impression upon the child, how must the town strike him! When he is taken along by mother or father for the first time, he surely does not start to walk through the tangle of streets without a feeling of astonishment, and it is still less likely that he reaches home again without experiencing a sensation of giddiness. Nay, he perhaps brings back lasting typical conceptions of many objects, lasting in the sense that in after life they imperceptibly stretch and widen _ad infinitum_, but never allow themselves to be effaced; for the primitive impressions of things are indestructible and maintain themselves against all later ones, no matter how far these, in

themselves, may surpass the old. For me too, then, it was a moment never to be forgotten, and one whose influence continues to be felt to the present day, when my mother took me with her for the first time on the evening walk which she indulged in on Sundays and holidays during the beautiful summer months. Good gracious, how large this Wesselburen was! Five-year old legs were nearly tired out before they had made the entire round! And what did one not meet on the road! The very names of the streets and squares sounded so puzzling and fantastic! "Now we are on the Lollard's Foot! That is White Meadow! This way goes over to Bell Mountain! There stands the Oak Nest!" The less apparent reason there was for these names, the more certain it seemed that they concealed some mystery! And then the objects themselves! The church whose pealing voice I had already heard so often; the graveyard with its dark trees and its

crosses and tombstones; a very old house, in which a, "forty-eighter" had lived, and in the cellar of which a treasure was said to lie buried, over which the devil kept watch; and, finally, a big fish-pond: all these details coalesced in my mind, as though like the limbs of a gigantic animal they were organically related, into one huge general picture, and the autumn moon shed a bluish light over it. Since that time I have seen St. Peter's and every German cathedral, I have been to Pere la Chaise and the Pyramid of Cestius, but whenever I think in general of churches, graveyards and the like, they still hover before me today in the shape in which I saw them on that evening.

X

About the same time that I exchanged Susanna's gloomy room for the newly-built bright and pleasant primary-school, my father also had to leave his little house and move into a hired lodging. That was a strange contrast for me. School had broadened: I gazed out of clear windows with wide frames of fir wood, instead of trying my curious eyes on green glass bottle panes with dirty leaden rims; and the daylight, which at Susanna's always commenced later and stopped earlier than it should, now came into its full rights. I sat at a comfortable table with a desk and an ink bottle; the odor of fresh wood and paint, which still has some charm for me, threw me into a sort of joyous ecstasy, and when, on account of my reading, I was told by the inspecting minister, to exchange the third bench, which I had modestly chosen, for the first, and moreover to take one of the highest places on the latter, my cup of felicity was nearly full.

Our home, on the contrary, had shrunk and grown darker; there was no more garden now in which I could romp with my comrades when the weather was fine, no hallway to receive us hospitably when it rained and blew. I was restricted to a narrow room in which I myself could hardly move around and into which I dared not bring any playmates, and to the space before the door, where it was seldom that any one would stay with me very long, as the street ran directly past it.

The reason for this change, which brought about such serious consequences, was strange enough. My father at the time of his marriage had, by going security, laden himself with another's debt, and would no doubt have been driven out much earlier if his creditor had not fortunately had to serve a long term in the penitentiary in punishment for an act of incendiarism. He was one of those terrible men who do evil for evil's sake, and prefer the crooked path even when the straight one would lead them more quickly and surely to the goal. He had that lowering, wicked, diabolical look in his eyes which no one can endure,

and which in a childlike age may have begotten belief in witches and sorcerers, because enjoyment of evil finds expression in it, indeed it seems of necessity to be forced to increase evil. A tavern and general store-keeper by profession and more than prosperous for his station, he might have led the most peaceful and merry existence possible, but he absolutely had to be at enmity with God and the world, and to give free rein to a truly devilish humor, such as I have never come across elsewhere, even in detective stories.

Thus he once, with the greatest friendliness, allowed his wife, at her request, to go to confession on Saturday, but forbade her to take the communion on Sunday, in accordance with the Protestant custom, because she had not asked his permission to do so. When any one of his neighbors happened to be raising a fine young horse, he would go to him and offer an absurdly low price for the animal. If the other refused it, he would say: "I would think about it, and bear in mind the old rule, that one should hand over everything that has once been bargained for; who knows what may happen!" And surely enough the horse, in spite of careful watching, would sooner or later be found in the meadow or in the stable with the tendons of its feet cut and would have to be stabbed to death; so that in the end he could buy whatever happened to please his fancy. He willingly assisted his son-in-law in declaring a fraudulent bankruptcy, and perhaps even beguiled him into it, but when the latter, after having perjured himself, demanded the embezzled goods back again, he laughed him to scorn and dared him to go to law. However he was surprised by his own maid-servant while committing arson and taken in the very act, in spite of his cleverness and his equally great luck, and it was to this circumstance that my father, who had been talked into going security by all sorts of cunning deceptive promises, owed the few years of quiet possession which he enjoyed during his short lifetime.

As soon as the penitentiary had given its charge back to the community we were obliged to leave the abode in which our grandparents had shared joy and sorrow for over half a century. It seemed like the end of the world to my brother and myself when the old pieces of furniture, which up till then had scarcely been moved from their places even when the rooms were whitewashed, suddenly emigrated into the street; when the respectable old Dutch striking-clock that never went correctly and always caused confusion, all at once found itself hanging on a branch of the pear tree, brightly illuminated by the beams of the May sun, while under it stood insecurely the round worm-eaten dining-table which, when there happened to be very little on it, had so often elicited from us the wish that we could have everything that had ever been eaten off it. However, the whole affair was also, quite naturally, in the nature of a spectacle for us, and as in the course of clearing out, a bright colored pipe-head that I had lost a long time before came to light again in some rat hole or other, and, moreover, various odds and ends, which the other families who were moving out with us had come across when dusting in the corners and did not consider worth taking along, fell to our share--since we could make use of the least thing--the day soon began to seem like a holiday. We parted, not indeed without emotion but still without sorrow, from the house in which we had been born.

I did not learn what it really meant until later, though to be sure it was soon enough. Without realizing it myself I had, up to that time, been a little aristocrat, and now ceased to be one. This is how it was. In the same way that the peasant proprietor and the rich burgher look down However, in the end, all this had a very good effect upon me. I had been up to that time a dreamer, who in the daytime liked to creep away

behind the hedge or the well, and in the evening cowered in my mother's lap, or in that of one of our women neighbors, and begged to be told fairy and ghost stories. Now I was driven out into active life. It was a question of defending one's skin, and though I engaged in my first scuffle only "after long hesitation and many, by no means heroic efforts to escape," yet the result was such, that I no longer tried to avoid the second, and began at the third or fourth quite to relish the idea. Our declarations of war were even more laconic than those of the Romans or Spartans. The challenger looked over at his opponent during school-hours, when the teacher had turned his back for a moment, clenched his right fist and laid it over his mouth, or rather over his jaw; the opponent repeated the symbolic sign the next moment that it was safe to do so, without by even so much as a look requiring a more specific manifesto, and at midday, in the churchyard, in the vicinity of an old vault, before which there, was a grass plot, the affair was settled in the presence of the whole school, with natural weapons, by wrestling and pounding, in extreme cases also by biting and scratching. I never indeed rose to the rank of a genuine triarian, who made it a point of honor to go about the whole year with a black eye or a swollen nose, but I very soon lost the reputation for being a good child, which I owed to my mother and which up to that time had meant so much to me, and, to make up for it, rose in my father's estimation, who behaved toward his sons as Frederick the Great did toward his officers, punishing them if they fought and mocking them if they allowed themselves to be trifled with. Once my opponent, while I was lying on top of him pounding him at my ease, bit my finger through to the bone, so that for weeks I could not use my hand for writing. That was, however, the most dangerous wound that I can remember, and, as sometimes happens later in life also, it led to the forming of an intimate friendship.

EXTRACTS FROM THE JOURNAL OF FRIEDRICH

HEBBEL

Reflections on the world, life, and books, but chiefly on myself, in the form of a journal.

TRANSLATED BY FRANCES A. KING

(1836)

At the moment in which we conceive an ideal, there arises in God the thought of creating it.

Social life in all its _nuances_ is no mere confluence of meaningless accidents; it is the product of the experience of whole millenniums, and our task is to apprehend the correctness of these experiences.

A poetic idea cannot be expressed allegorically; allegory is the ebb-tide at once of the intellect and of the productive power.

Nature eternally repeats the same thought in ever widening expansion; therefore the drop is an image of the sea.

Poetic and plastic art are alike in being both formative; that is to say, they are intended to bring to view a limited amount of matter in definite relations which are fixed by nature; and when the poet gives expression to an idea, the process is exactly the same as when a painter or sculptor represents the noble or beautiful outlines of a body.

"Throw away so that thou shalt not lose!" is the best rule of life.

There are said to have been people who, when a limb had been amputated, still felt pain in the severed member. Twofold mode of all being: what has been from the beginning and what has only become. Cogito ergo sum; am I not much more under the dominion of the thinking faculty within me than the latter is under my dominion? Individuality is not so much the goal as the way, and not so much the best way as the only one.

Two human beings are always two extremes.

Words are monuments not of what mankind has thought for centuries about certain subjects but only of the fact that it has thought about them. The difference is considerable.

A really great genius can never chance upon an age which would make it impossible for him to allow free play to his superior powers. If he chances upon a dull, exhausted, empty century,--well then, this century is his problem.

Most of my knowledge about myself I have gained in moments when I perceived the peculiarities of other people.

It is a sign of mediocre intelligence to be able to fix one's attention upon details when contemplating a great work of art; on the other hand, it is a sign of the mediocrity of a work of art (poetic or plastic) if one cannot get beyond the details, if they, so to speak, impede the way to the whole.

Goethe says in regard to Michael Kohlhaas that one should not single out such cases in the general course of human events. That is true in so far as one should not draw any conclusions therefrom to the detriment of mankind. But it seems to me that it is precisely to exceptions of this sort that the poet must turn his attention, in order to show that they, as well as common-place events, have their origin in what is most genuinely human.

Man cannot abstract his ego from the universe. As firmly as he is interwoven with the universe and life, just so firmly does he believe that life and the universe are interwoven with him.

(1837)

It takes a great deal of time merely to perceive where the enigmatical in many things is actually located. Many simply introduce logic into their poetry and believe this is equivalent to motivation.

All reasoning (and here belongs what Schiller, under the trade mark of the sentimental, would smuggle in as poetry) is onesided and allows the heart and mind no further activity than simply to deny or affirm. On the contrary, all that is actual and objective (and here belong the so-called natural sounds, which reveal the innermost essence of a state

or a human personality) is infinite, and offers to those who are in sympathy and to those who are not the widest scope for the employment of all their powers.

Philosophy strives ever and always for the absolute, and yet that is properly speaking the task of poetry.

With every human being (let him be who he will) disappears from the world a mystery, that, owing to his peculiar construction, he alone could reveal, and that no one will reveal after him.

It is dangerous to think in images, but it cannot always be avoided; for often, especially in regard to the highest things, image and thought are identical.

A miracle is easier to repeat than to explain. Thus the artist continues the act of creation in the highest sense, without being able to comprehend it.

(1838)

God Himself when, in order to attain great ends, He exerts a direct influence upon an individual, and thus allows Himself an arbitrary interference (if we put the case we must use expressions that fit it) in the world's machinery, cannot protect His tool from being crushed by the same wheel which this individual has arrested for a moment or has turned in another direction. This is surely the principal tragic motif which underlies the history of the Maid of Orleans. A tragedy which should reflect this idea would produce a great impression through the glimpse it would afford into the eternal order of nature, which God Himself may not disturb with impunity.

When the poet attempts to delineate characters by making them speak, he must be careful not to allow them to speak about their own inner life. All their utterances must relate to something external; only then does their inner nature come out vividly and expressively, for it fashions itself only in reflections of the world and of life.

To depict two kindred characters one by means of the other, to have them mutually reflect one another without their becoming aware of it, would surely be the triumph of delineation.

It is a masterly trait in the Prince of Homburg that the suspicion that the Elector has had the Prince condemned to death, not so much on account of the act of overhastiness committed on the battlefield as for another reason, does not arise spontaneously in the Prince's soul, but is first awakened by Hohenzollern's questioning.

A double process must take place in the mind of the true poet before it can evolve anything. The crude matter must be resolved into an idea, and the idea must condense again into a form. Man is the continuation of the act of creation, an eternally growing, never completed creation, which prevents the termination of the world and keeps it from congealing and hardening. It is highly significant (this thought led me to the one I have just expressed) that everything which exists as a human conception is never wholly and perfectly--only fragmentarily--embodied in nature, and everything which exists perfectly and completely in nature eludes human conception, man's own nature not excepted. Thus we know and define

right and wrong, virtue and innocence (the latter as soon as we have lost it), but not life itself, etc. Where knowledge has been vouchsafed us, there nature requires our cooperation.

The first and last aim of art is to render intuitively perceptible the process of life itself, to show how the soul of man develops in the atmosphere surrounding him, let it be suited to him or not, how good engenders evil within him, and evil in turn produces something less evil, and how this eternal growth has a limit so far as our apprehension is concerned, but none at all in reality; this is symbolization. It is an error when men say that only the fully developed is matter for the poet; on the contrary, what is in process of development, what is first begotten in conflict with the elements of creation, that is matter for him. What is finished can be only a plaything of the waves, it can only be destroyed and devoured by them; can art have anything to do with that which is most common, in other words, most universal? But what is in process of development must pass from one form into another at the hands of the poet, it must never as formless soft clay dissolve before our eyes into chaos and confusion; it must always, in a certain sense, be at the same time a finished product, just as in the universe we never encounter naked raw material. Man exists only because of his future; an inexplicable mystery, but one that may not be denied. Man, therefore, cannot be brought before us as something complete in himself; for not how he affects the world but how the world affects him arouses our interest and is of importance to us; the great forces and powers outside of him find embodiment by exerting an influence over him, and thus lose their formidableness, the riddle of the universe is solved as soon as it finds utterance, and even though at the end a question remains, we can bear this much easier than an empty nothing.

Not only in art but in history as well life sometimes assumes a form, and art should not seek her subjects and her themes where this has occurred.

God was a mystery to Himself before the creation; He had to create in order to understand Himself. If only some one thing had been completely explained, then everything would be explained.

The motives before a deed are usually transformed during the deed, and at least seem quite different after the deed: this is an important circumstance which most dramatists overlook.

Lyric poetry has something childlike about it, dramatic poetry something manly, epic poetry something senile.

Two hands can indeed clasp one another but cannot grow together. This is the relation of one individuality to another.

(1840)

From my conception of form many consequences ensue of the most varied kind. In reference to lyric poetry: the whole emotional life is a shower, the emotion which is singled out is a drop illumined by the sun. Dramatic poetry: form is the point where divine and human strength neutralize one another.

The true idyll results when a man is represented as happy and complete in himself within his own appointed sphere. So long as he remains within this sphere fate has no power over him.

Poetry of the highest kind is the true historiography. It grasps the result of historical processes and holds it fast in imperishable images as, for example, Sophocles has done with the idea of Hellenism.

All life is a struggle of the individual with the universe.

Duality pervades all our intuitions and thoughts and every moment of our being, and is our supreme, our last idea. Beside it we, have absolutely no fundamental idea. Life and death, health and sickness, time and eternity: we can imagine and picture to ourselves how one gradually shades off into the other, but not that which lies behind these divided dualities as a common solvent and reconciliation. (1841)

Antigone, representing as it does a romantic individual subject in a classical form, is the masterpiece of tragic art.

Life is the attempt of the defiantly refractory part to tear itself loose from the whole and to exist for itself, an attempt that succeeds just so long as the strength endures which was robbed from the whole by the individual separation.

"What a man can become, that he is already." God will not lay the decisive weight on the sins committed by sinful individuals against one another but only on the sins committed against the idea itself, and there actual and merely possible sins are one and the same.

(1843)

Expiation in tragedy occurs in the interest of the community, not in that of the individual, the hero, and it is not at all necessary, although it is better, that he himself should be conscious of it. Life is the great river, individualities are drops; tragic individualities are, however, blocks of ice which must be liquefied again, and in order that this may be possible they must break and wear themselves away one against the other.

There is only one necessity, which is that the world should continue to exist; what happens to individuals in the world is of no consequence. The evil that they commit must be punished because it endangers the existence of the world; but there is no reason why they should be indemnified for the misfortune that befalls them.

(1844)

Absolutely everything depends upon a right conception of guilt. Guilt must not, in any direction, be confounded with the subordinate conception of sin, which even in the modern drama--where indeed it finds, for reasons which are not far to seek, a wider scope than in the ancient--must always be merged again into the conception of guilt, if the drama is to rise above the anecdotal to the symbolical. For the conception of tragic guilt can be developed only from life itself, from the original incongruity between idea and phenomenon--which incongruity manifests itself in the phenomenon as extravagance, the natural consequence of the instinct of self-preservation and self-assertion, the first and most legitimate of all instincts. But it cannot be developed from one of the many consequences of this original incongruity, which lead us too far down into the errors and aberrations of the individual to allow the working out of the highest dramatic possibilities. So, too,

the conception of tragic expiation should be developed only from extravagance, which, since it is irrepressible in the phenomenon, represses the phenomenon, and thus frees the idea again from its imperfect form. It is true the original incongruity between idea and phenomenon remains unremoved and unovercome; but it is evident that in the sphere of life, which art, so long as it understands itself, will never go beyond, nothing can be removed that lies outside this sphere, and that art reaches its supreme goal when it seizes upon the immediate consequence of this incongruity, extravagance, and points out in it the element of self-destruction; but leaves the incongruity enshrouded in the darkness of creation, unexplained, as a fact immediately posited.

(1845)

A genuine drama may be compared to one of those great buildings which have almost as many passages and rooms below the earth as above it. Ordinary people only know the former; the architect knows the latter also.

A king has less right than any other person to be an individual.

(1846)

In the poet humanity dreams. Decidedly, a dream is for the spirit what sleep is for the body.

As every crystallization is dependent upon certain physical conditions, so every individualization of human nature depends upon the state of the historical epoch in which it occurs. To represent these modifications of human nature in their relative necessity is the main task which poetry has to fulfill in contradistinction to history, and here it can, if it attains to pure form, render a supreme service. But it is difficult to separate the merely incidental from the main task and then besides to avoid subjective moods; so that we scarcely have even the beginnings of such poems as now hover before my mind.

(1847)

To present the necessary, but in the form of the accidental: that is the whole secret of dramatic style.

If the characters do not negate the moral idea, what does it matter that the piece affirms it? The negation of the individual factors must be so very decided, precisely in order to give emphasis to the affirmation of the whole.

Human institutions require a man to be a man like other men; but man, whoever and whatever he may be, wishes to be an individual, indeed is, as such, individualized. Hence the rupture.

Let the understanding question in a work of art, but do not let it answer.

(1848)

The understanding no more makes poetry than salt makes food, but it is necessary to poetry as salt is to food.

(1849)

One does not sit down to play on the piano in order to verify mathematical laws. Just as little does one write poetry in order to demonstrate something. Oh, if people would only learn to comprehend that! Indeed the beauty of all the higher activity of man is precisely the fact, that ends which the individual never even thinks of are attained thereby.

(1853)

The process of dramatic individualization is perhaps best illustrated by comparison to water. Everywhere water is water and man is man, but as the former acquires a mysterious flavor from every stratum of earth that it flows or trickles through, so man acquires a peculiarity from his time, his nation, history, and fate.

(1857) Man would perhaps still have as acute senses as animals, if thinking did not divert him from the outer world.

(1859)

Ideas are the same thing in the drama that counterpoint is in music; nothing in themselves but the primary condition for everything.

(1861)

(Concerning my *_Nibelungen_*.)

It seems to me that a purely human tragedy, natural in all its motifs, can be constructed upon the mythical foundation inseparable from this subject, and that so far as my powers permit I have constructed one. The mysticism of the background should at most remind us that what we hear in this poem is not the seconds' clock, which measures off the existence of gnats and ants, but the clock that marks the hours only. Let the reader who is nevertheless disturbed by the mythical foundation consider that, if he examines closely, he will also discover such a basis in man himself, and that, too, in the mere man, in the representative of the species, and not only in the more specific branch of the same, in the individual. Or may man's fundamental qualities, either physical or mental, be accounted for, that is to say, can they be deduced from any other organic canon than the one which has been posited once for all with man himself, and which cannot be traced farther back to a final primitive cause of things, or be critically resolved into its components? Are they not in part, as for example most of the passions, opposed to reason and conscience, therefore to the very faculties of man which, being quite general and disinterested, may most safely be designated as those which connect him immediately with the universe, and has this contradiction ever been explained away? Why, then, in art negate an act upon which is founded even our view of nature?

Otto Prechtler related to me the following incident. When Grillparzer made my acquaintance upon my arrival in Vienna he said to Prechtler: "No one on earth will be able to influence this man. One person might have done so, but he is dead; I mean Goethe." A few years later he added, "I was mistaken, not even Goethe would have been able to influence him."

(1863)

I do not know the world, for although I myself represent a piece of it,

this is such a minutely small part that no conclusion as to the true nature of the world can be deduced therefrom. Man, however, I know, for I am myself a man, and even though I do not know how he originates in the world, yet I know very well how, having once originated, he reacts upon it. I therefore conscientiously respect the laws of the human soul; in reference to everything else, however, I believe that imagination draws inspiration from the same depths out of which the world itself arose, that is to say, the multifarious series of phenomena which exists at present, but which at some future time, may perhaps be replaced by another.

(To Siegmund Engländer.)

--You wish to believe in the poet as you believe in the Deity; why ascend so high into the region of clouds, where everything ceases to be, even analogy? Would you not probably attain more if you descended to the beast and ascribed to the artistic faculty an intermediate stage between the instinct of the beast and the consciousness of man? There at least we are in the sphere of experience, and have the prospect of ascertaining something real by applying two known quantities to an unknown one. The beast leads a dream life which nature herself immediately regulates and strictly adapts to those purposes, by the attainment of which, on the one hand, the creature itself subsists, but, on the other, the world continues. The artist leads a similar dream life, naturally only as an artist, and probably from the same cause; for the cosmic laws hardly come any more clearly into his field of vision than the organic laws come into that of the beast, and yet he cannot round off and complete any of his images without going back to them. Why then should nature not do for him what she does for the beast? You will, however, find in general--to go still deeper--that the processes of life have nothing to do with consciousness, and artistic generation is the highest of all processes; they differ from the logical precisely in that they absolutely cannot be traced back to definite factors. Who has ever closely watched evolution in any of its phases, and what has the impregnation theory of physiology, in spite of the microscopic detailed description of the working apparatus, done for the solution of the fundamental mystery? Can it explain even a humpback? On the other hand, there can be no complex which it would not be possible to follow up in all its involutions and finally to resolve. The structure of the universe is revealed to us, we can, if we like, play the fiddle for the dance of the heavenly bodies; but the sprouting blade of grass is a riddle and will always remain one. You would therefore be perfectly right in laughing at Newton if he wanted to "play the naive child" and declare that the falling apple had inspired him with the idea of the system of gravitation, whereas it may very well have given him the impetus which started him to reflect upon the subject. On the other hand, you would wrong Dante if you should doubt that Heaven and Hell had arisen in colossal outline before his soul at the mere sight of a wood, half in light and half in shadow. For systems are not dreamed, but neither are works of art made by minute calculations, nor, what amounts to the same thing, since thinking is only a higher kind of arithmetic, thought out. The artistic imagination is the organ which drains those depths of the world which are inaccessible to the other faculties, and in accordance herewith, my mode of viewing things puts, in place of the false realism which takes the part for the whole, only the true realism, which also comprises what does not lie on the surface. For the rest, this false realism is not curtailed thereby, for even though one can no more prepare oneself for writing poetry than for dreaming, yet dreams will always reflect daily and yearly impressions, and no less do poems

reflect the sympathies and antipathies of the author. I believe all these propositions are simple and comprehensible. Whoever refuses to recognize them must throw the half of literature overboard, for example _Edipus at Colonus_ (for geography knows nothing of sacred groves), Shakespeare's _Tempest_ (for there is no such thing as magic), _Hamlet_ and _Macbeth_ (for only a fool is afraid of ghosts, etc.); nay he must also--and this even he who might be ready to make the other sacrifices would find it hard to bring himself to do--he must also place the French at the head of what remains; for where can one find realists like Voltaire, etc.? This, to me, seems to demonstrate my proposition, at least the counter-test is made.

THE LIFE OF OTTO LUDWIG

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The career of Otto Ludwig belongs to a sad period in nineteenth century literature in Germany. Sad not because of any lack of works of originality and power, but sad because of the wanton neglect with which the German public of those years treated its ablest and most forceful writers. The historian Treitschke, in an essay probably written not long after the death of Otto Ludwig, sarcastically says in direct reference to the latter's tragic life: "No nation reads more books than ours, none buys fewer." To be sure, Germany was then a poor country and its readers had some excuse for being economical in supplying their literary wants. But there was no excuse for the notorious narrowness of vision and judgment shown by many of the leading critics, theatres, and literary journals of that time. Writers of mediocre talent were praised to the skies. But old Grillparzer, Hebbel and Ludwig, Keller, Raabe, Storm, and others who brought a really new and vital message were left to bear the burden of neglect, if not of animosity. No wonder that in foreign lands, after the middle of the nineteenth century, contemporary German literature fell into an almost universal disrepute from which it is only slowly recovering at present. Foreign critics were justified in judging the significance of the literary output of Germany by those writers on whom the Germans themselves were placing the seal of national approval. Zschokke, Gerstaecker, Auerbach, Spielhagen, not to mention the ubiquitous Muehlbach or Marlitt or Polko--these were the names which in America, for instance, figured most prominently in the magazines between 1850 and 1880. [Illustration: OTTO LUDWIG] [Blank Page] Their works were reviewed and translated. They were considered as the representatives of Germany in the literary parliament of nations, while those of her men of letters whom we have since learned to recognize as the real forces of her mid-century literature remained unknown. Of Ludwig, who clearly belongs to this more select group, the _Atlantic Monthly_ and the _North American Review_, for obvious reasons, reviewed at some length his _Studies in Shakespeare_ ; but, as far as the present writer's knowledge goes, not one of his works was ever translated in this country until the _Hereditary Forester_ appeared in _Poet Lore_ only a few years ago.

Otto Ludwig was born in 1813 in Eisfeld, a small town picturesquely situated in the foothills of the southern slope of the Thuringian

Forest, and his entire life was spent within the limited confines of Thuringia and Saxony. Leipzig and Dresden, not much over one hundred English miles to the northeastward of Eisfeld, were the only two larger cities with which he ever became acquainted, and, even when living there, it was characteristic of him to take refuge in some rustic suburb or near-by village. Ludwig's parents belonged to the "leading families" of their town and were in very comfortable circumstances at the time of his birth and early childhood. Sudden reverses, however, soon interfered with the boy's prospects in life. At the age of twelve, he lost his father, six years later his mother. After the father's death a well-to-do uncle took it upon himself to care for the boy, whom he intended to be his heir and his successor in business. But neither the imaginative, nervously sensitive mother, nor the well-meaning but happy-go-lucky uncle were able to furnish that guidance which the delicate and prematurely contemplative youth needed. After only a short period of irregular schooling, Ludwig, sixteen years old, had to enter his uncle's business; but a few years of apprenticeship convinced even the uncle that the young man was hardly on his right track as a salesman of groceries. A renewed effort to take up systematic school work with the view of preparing for one of the learned professions did not prove any more successful, and, in 1833, Ludwig, who had always shown an unusual talent for music and enjoyed excellent instruction in it, decided to become a musician. Continuing his secluded life at Eisfeld he devoted himself for years to the leisurely study and composition of music, until a few successful amateur performances of some operatic compositions of his attracted attention to him in musical circles in Meiningen, the near-by ducal residence. He was granted a scholarship amply sufficient to permit him to perfect his musical education at Leipzig under Mendelssohn, then the renowned director of the famous Gewandhaus concerts. But the large city only deterred the shy recluse, Mendelssohn showed little appreciation for Ludwig's efforts to cultivate a realistically characteristic style of musical expression, and finally a severe spell of illness came to make the Leipzig venture a complete failure.

After a year's absence we thus find Ludwig again at home. But his experiences in the great world were not to be without consequences. While he was at Leipzig his homesickness had made him paint in rosy colors the dreamy hermit-life at Eisfeld. Now, however, after his return, he became keenly conscious of the pettiness and inadequacy of his surroundings and of the lack of well-defined purpose in his life thus far. It was during this period of introspection and doubt that he finally decided to devote himself to a literary career. He took up the study of English, plunged into Shakespeare and Goethe, and worked assiduously on a number of dramatic and novelistic ventures. In 1843 he again left Eisfeld, this time for good, and first turned to Leipzig and then to Dresden. Efforts to get some of his dramas accepted by the Leipzig and Dresden theatres continued to prove fruitless. But in 1844, after his uncle's death, he had come into possession of a small fortune, and as his habits were always exceedingly frugal, he now saw before himself the assurance of a few years free from all care. In characteristic fashion he again created for himself a quiet retreat, partly in the idyllic surroundings of Meissen, partly in Meissen itself, the charmingly picturesque town of historic fame not far from Dresden, on the Elbe. He soon became engaged to a lovable young woman, who entered heart and soul into all of his hopes and plans, and with but brief interruptions he continued to live here in rustic retirement, until the year 1850 at last was destined to bring him recognition and fame.

Thus far none of Ludwig's writings, aside from a mere trifle or two, had found their way before the public. As many as five or six regular dramas had been completed, but none had been printed, none performed. But now he finished his *Hereditary Forester* and with it made a deep impression upon his influential friend Eduard Devrient, the famous actor of the Dresden court theatre. Through Devrient's mediation the drama was accepted at Dresden and, although its reception by the public was at first a divided one, it was at once recognized by friend and foe as a literary and theatrical event of great significance. Though late, yet all of a sudden, Ludwig, like Byron, awoke to find himself famous. When, in 1852, he at last felt able to marry the woman of his love, his life battle seemed to have been won for good. In the same year, 1852, he published his second great drama, *The Maccabees*, which, though not attaining the popularity of the *Hereditary Forester*, did even more perhaps to enhance the poet's fame. He could now count among the steadily widening circle of his friends and admirers men like Julian Schmidt, the prominent critic and editor, Gustav Freytag, and Berthold Auerbach. At Auerbach's suggestion, Ludwig for awhile turned to narrative literature and in the years 1855 and 1856 published his two best stories, the *Heiterethi* and *Between Heaven and Earth*--the former again the more popular, the latter of higher literary merit. These brief years from 1850 to 1856 were the zenith of Ludwig's career, the height of his productivity as an artist and of his success and happiness as a man. But already the shadows were gathering which were to cast such a deep gloom over the last years of the poet's life.

In 1856 he was again stricken by what seemed to be the same mysterious illness, never fully explained, that had befallen him in Leipzig. He recovered, to be sure, for the time being, but his ailments returned again and again. From about 1860 Ludwig practically never was a well man. Confined to the house and soon to his bed, he slowly wasted away. The tenderest care of his devoted wife and the affection of a few loyal friends could do but little to relieve the most excruciating pain or to keep away the actual want that began to knock at his door. Ludwig had never learned to look upon his art as a commercial asset; his few published works had never brought him much return, and his own slender means had for some time been exhausted. Some gifts of honor were bestowed upon the invalid by authors' societies and princely patrons, but they came too late to prevent the inevitable. As late as 1859 Ludwig still had hope for the future. "I see before me," he wrote in his diary, "a veritable world of conceptions and forms which I might conquer if, freed from the weight that keeps me down, I could take wings again. I believe it would not be too late yet." It was not to be. Successful production of a high order would probably have been impossible under such circumstances in any case. With Ludwig it was further prevented by an obstacle of a psychological nature. As the feeling of health and strength and ease of mind departed from him, there came in its place an ever growing, almost morbid, spirit of self-questioning criticism and doubt. As the springs of creative energy ceased flowing, Ludwig thought he could replenish them by turning to theory and analysis. In the free intervals between the attacks of his illness, when his mind worked as vigorously as ever, the luckless poet filled volume upon volume with esthetic and ethical reflections upon poetry and literature. From Shakespeare especially he thought he might be able to wrest those last secrets of an art which tantalizingly hovered before his vision. In these studies, fragmentary, ill-organized, not prepared for publication as they are, we nevertheless possess a veritable treasure-house of soundest reflection and subtlest intuition on many of the fundamental

questions of poetry, especially of the drama. They have often been compared with Lessing's *Hamburg Dramaturgy*, of which, in many respects, they are the worthiest continuation. But in this unequal struggle Ludwig became less and less able to give life and color to his own conceptions or to be satisfied with his results when he had done so. How many could safely try to measure up to a standard taken directly from Shakespeare! Plan upon plan was started and laid aside. A field of ruins, disquieting, threatening, piled up around the lonesome fighter who slowly succumbed beneath the crushing greatness of his vision. Noble, but also tragic beyond words it is when, shortly before his death, Ludwig declared to one of his friends that even in his suffering no poet had ever been to him such a source of strength as Shakespeare, to whom he owed far more than the clarification of his ideals of art. Thus the mariner sang the praises of the ocean as it was about to engulf his shipwrecked craft. Ludwig died in Dresden in February, 1865, fifty-two years of age. Of his three surviving children, two sons came to this western hemisphere and attained, in successful business and professional life, to positions of honor and influence among the German element of Southern Brazil.

Aside from the posthumous *Studies* just spoken of, Ludwig's fame as a writer rests entirely on the two dramas, the *Hereditary Forester* and *The Maccabaeans*, and on the two long novel-like stories, the *Heiterethei* and *Between Heaven and Earth*. They represent practically everything that he ever published during his lifetime. The few insignificant lyrics, the additional dramas and stories, partly completed and partly fragmentary, which have become known after his death, have added no new traits to the picture of Ludwig as it will remain in the history of German literature, and they can well be omitted from consideration in this brief appreciation. It must be admitted that it is a rare phenomenon to see lasting fame and influence built on such a slender amount of work and on so brief a period of productivity. But within this limited range Ludwig must be recognized as a writer of unusual powers of observation and sympathy, of imagination and embodying execution. Truthful to himself and to the ideals of his art, uninfluenced by the popular demands of the day or by any desire for gain or fame, free from everything that smacks of sham or artifice, he succeeded in creating works that speak to us with the robustness and authority of life itself and yet are ennobled by the graces of a selective and restraining art.

In his *Hereditary Forester* Ludwig produced one of the best middle-class tragedies of modern literature, combining in it, as indeed he had set out to do, highest literary merit with impelling effectiveness upon the stage. "It is exceedingly easy," he said, "to write a poetic drama if one does not care to keep an eye upon the stage, or one that is a successful stage play, but without poetry. * * * I shall do what I can to help create that really healthy condition of the drama which consists in the intimate union of poetry and the stage." Following in the footsteps of Schiller in his *Intrigue and Love* and of Hebbel in his *Maria Magdalena*, he has not attained, it is true, the massive solidity of the latter, nor has he breathed into his drama that lofty spirit of social challenge that wings the former. On close inspection, the construction of Ludwig's drama shows undeniable flaws of motivation. The playwright has allowed too free a play to chance and slender probability. The spirit of the revolutionary unrest of 1848 is in the background, especially in the tavern scene of the third act, but it does not in any way organically connect the family tragedy which we witness with the broad movements of contemporary public life. But the

play is indeed, as Ludwig desired it to be, "a declaration of war against the unnaturalness and conventionalities of our latter-day stage literature." The life-like characters which it portrays, the convincing language which they speak, the carefully drawn _milieu_ in which they move, the intense struggle of passions in which they are engaged-these are all handled with a skill as rare as it is artistically true to life. And even though the atmosphere enveloping it all seems to combine the realism of Ludwig's maturity with the romantic pre-disposition of his earlier works, it remains in fine keeping with that shadowy forest-world which forms the setting of the play.

Ludwig's next drama, _The Maccabaeans_, was of a radically different mold. From prose we pass to verse, from humble middle-class life to the traditional grandeur of classical tragedy, from the narrow circle of domestic happenings to a Shakespearean canvas of broad historical associations, from contemporary Germany to those heroic struggles in which, in the second century, B.C., the Jews under the leadership of Judas Maccabaeus defended their national and religious freedom against Syrian oppression. In this drama also, certain faults of construction are evident. There is a lack of central unity of interest, in part due, no doubt, to the long processes of development which the play underwent before completion. But again, there is the same masterly technique in all matters of detail, a wonderful strength and beauty of language, subtle and convincing character-portrayal and a splendid realization of that ethnic atmosphere of Jewish life and character in which the drama moves and from which its conflicts spring.

Of the two stories of Ludwig, the _Heiterethei_ is in every way the lighter; nevertheless, it is one of the best of those famous stories from peasant life in which German literature is so rich. More artistic than Jeremias Gotthelf and in a deeper sense truer to life than Auerbach, Ludwig has here created a popular tale of great charm and power. The "poetic realism" of his manner and the subdued ethical didacticism of his purpose have been skillfully united in forming an excellent example of truly popular art. The story is that of the gradual mellowing and final happy marriage of two young people who, with the best of hearts, are veritable firebrands of self-willed defiance to everything suggesting outside interference. The nickname of the girl, "Heiterethei," given her on account of her bright and sunny disposition, explains the title of the story. And it must not be left unsaid that, despite the underlying seriousness of the character-development portrayed, the story as a whole is characterized by a sovereign play of humor, at times a bit grotesque and boisterous, maybe, but none the less irresistible in its quaint charm and deeper meaning.

In _Between Heaven and Earth_, Ludwig finally achieved his masterpiece, creating a work in which vision and workmanship are both on the highest level and thoroughly worthy of each other. No "hero" in the traditional sense, no glamor of what is commonly regarded as "poetic," no broad social background, no philosophic outlook, but within a narrow, and if you will, commonplace range, the author here permits us to get some of the profoundest glimpses of human life and character. It is a story of slaters working on steep roofs and tall church spires; and as does their scaffolding, so the poet tries to move along "between heaven and earth," his feet and eyes firmly fastened to life's realities, his heart and soul lifted into the realm of the ideal, the eternal. Thus interpreted, the title of the story may indeed be taken as a symbol of that principle of "poetic realism" which Ludwig strove for and of which the story is one of the best embodiments. The technique of the work, to be sure, is

that of Ludwig's day, not of our own. There are long descriptions and reflections and a good deal of direct psychological analysis, in all of which the narrator does not hesitate to speak from his subjective point of view. Such a method modern theorists would feign stamp as a crime against the spirit of epic art, as though a novel were a drama, and genuine narration did not by nature participate of both the objective and subjective manner of presentation. But even if these things were undeniable flaws of technique, which we are far from admitting, they certainly cannot mar genuine art in its essential beauty and appeal. The Thuringian landscape and the life of the small town embedded in it, the tragic happenings in the Nettenmair family, the slow processes of soul-life in the two hostile brothers and the martyred woman between them--all this is made to live before our eyes with such simple and yet absolutely adequate means that we get from it that deep and satisfying feeling of harmony of content and form that characterizes a true masterpiece of art. Character drawing and milieu painting, always Ludwig's strong points, have again been most felicitously handled. With equal success the author has developed the plot of the story which, in a few memorable scenes, attains to truly dramatic scope and power. More admirable than everything else, however, is the subtly realistic treatment of the psychological processes in Fritz Nettenmair. His gradual deterioration, step by step, from self-indulgent joviality, through envy and jealousy, to the hatred of despair that does not even shrink from fratricide, is depicted with masterly insight and consistency. This phase of Ludwig's art strikes us as fresh and modern today, and it must have appeared like a revelation to a generation that did not yet, know Flaubert's *Madame Bovary* or George Eliot's *Adam Bede*.

Considered in his totality as man and as artist, Ludwig cannot be counted among the names of the very first rank in German nineteenth century literature. To him cannot be assigned the unequivocal greatness of a Kleist, a Hebbel, a Keller. The narrowness of the circumstances of his life and the invalidism of his mature years combined with, and no doubt were aided by, an apparent lack of robustness and forcefulness of character and temperament, and thus conspired to keep him from attaining that victorious self-assertion, that sovereign balance between volition and power, without which true greatness in the full sense of the word is impossible. But among the leading names of second rank, his will always occupy a place of distinction. If his was not the work of a Messiah, it was that of a John the Baptist. Having been nurtured in the traditions of the romanticism of Tieck, E.T.A. Hoffmann, and Jean Paul, he was one of the first to experience the artistic charm and possibilities of unidealized reality and to respond to its call. It was he who seems to have coined the phrase, even if he was not first to formulate the principle, of that restrained or "artistic realism" that tries to set its standards half-way between subjectively idealistic and objectively naturalistic art. Even his extravagant admiration for Shakespeare was chiefly due to the fact that he saw in his art the supreme embodiment of this principle. Ludwig did not renounce beauty of art except where it infringed upon the one thing needful--essential truthfulness to reality, especially in all that pertains to what Hebbel called "the laws of the human soul." Many of the utterances of Ludwig's *Studies* are as startlingly modern, not to say Ibsenesque, as similar ones in Hebbel's *Diaries*, in their frank recognition of the solemn claims of reality, even ugly reality, upon the honest artist who endeavors to interpret life in its entirety. For art, too, like all other achievements of human culture, according to Ludwig, must render service unto life. It is its function to furnish insight into life, mastery over life. "Rather no

poetry at all," he exclaims, "than a poetry that robs us of the joy of living, that makes us unproductive in life, that, instead of nerving us for life, unnerves us for it."

In German literature Ludwig thus occupies a not unimportant place. Far more penetrating and far more artistic than "realists" like Auerbach or Spielhagen he paved the way for the coming of Anzengruber who, in turn, anticipated the realism of the moderns in more, ways than is generally recognized. Ludwig will always be a figure of prominence in the history of the modern middle-class tragedy, in the development of the story dealing with village life, in the efforts to emphasize the value of a literature close to the native soil, in the attempts of German criticism to fathom the secret of Shakespearean art. More than that, however. When the final account of the gradual evolution of nineteenth century realism will some time be written from another than a one-sidedly French point of view, a place of honorable recognition will be due to the thoughtful and forceful author of the Studies and Between Heaven and Earth.

FOOTNOTES:

[Footnote 6: The extracts from The Prince of Homburg are taken from Mr. Hagedorn's translation, Volume IV of THE GERMAN CLASSICS.]

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OTTO LUDWIG

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THE HEREDITARY FORESTER

A TRAGEDY IN FIVE ACTS

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DRAMATIS PERSONAE

STEIN, a rich manufacturer and country gentleman.

ROBERT, his son.

CHRISTIAN ULRICH, forester on the estate of Duesterwalde, called "The Hereditary Forester".

SOPHY, his wife.

ANDREW, forester's assistant }

MARY } their children.

WILLIAM }

WILKENS, _a wealthy farmer, uncle of_ SOPHY.

The Pastor of Waldenrode.

MOELLER, _Stein's bookkeeper_.

GODFREY, _a hunter_.

WEILER, _keeper in Ulrich's forest_.

The proprietor of the "Boundary Inn."

FREI }
LINDENSCHMIED} _Poachers_.
KATHARINE }

BASTIAN, _Stein's valet_.

Two porters.

The scene is alternately the forester's house at Duesterwalde and Stein's mansion at Waldenrode; once, in Act III, the Frontier Inn and the Dell.

THE HEREDITARY FORESTER (1850)

TRANSLATED BY ALFRED REMY, A.M.

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ACT I

The FORESTER'S _house at Duesterwalde_.

In the back of the room a folding door and a closet; at either side ordinary doors. On the right, a window; on the left, in the rear, the stove; more to the front a cuckoo-clock; then a rack where several rifles are hanging, among them two double-barreled ones, hunter's bags and similar utensils; and a book shelf on which are a Bible and hymn-books.

SCENE I

Behind the scenes musicians are heard playing. WEILER, _looking about him, slowly through the centre door; the_ FORESTER'S _wife at the same time from the left with an air of being very busy. Then_ ANDREW, WILLIAM, _and finally_ MARY.

SOPHY. There, the musicians have come already. I wonder where I put the cellar-key. The musicians must have something to drink. You here, Weiler?

WEILER.

Yes, I'm here. But where is the old man--the forester?

SOPHY.

My husband? Isn't he outside?

WEILER.

I want to see him about the wood-cutters.

SOPHY.

Can't you wait?

WEILER.

Wait? Bless you, no. I have my hands full.

SOPHY.

Then get along with you!

WEILER (_quietly filling his short clay pipe with tobacco_).

Yes.

SOPHY.

Is he perhaps already with Herr Stein--

WEILER.

Yes; the sand was already strewn on Tuesday. And the garlands outside at the door. If I do not mistake we are today celebrating the engagement of Miss Mary to Mr. Robert Stein? Then they will be even more chummy when he can say "my father-in-law, Mr. Stein." And that is by no means all. Now Stein has also bought the estate where Ulrich is forester. The fat lawyer from town fixed up the deeds yesterday. And this morning Stein got out of bed as proprietor of Duesterwalde.

SOPHY.

The table here--

WEILER (_while they carry the table together, on the left_).

Won't Ulrich have an easy time of it, now that his old friend has become his master, and is going to be his father-in-law into the bargain!

SOPHY.

Nearer the stove. We must get in one more table.

WEILER (_chuckling to himself_).

Regular ale-house politicians those two, Stein and Ulrich. Every day they have a row.

SOPHY.

What are you talking there about a row? They're only fooling.

[Exit in a hurry; reenters immediately afterward.]

WEILER (_going as far as the door, gesticulating behind her_).

Fooling? Don't you believe it! The one is hot-headed, the other obstinate. Ever since there was talk of buying the estate, the clearing of the forest has been the daily apple of discord. Rich people always pretend to know something, even if they don't know the first thing. Now Stein thinks that by cutting down every other row of trees in the forest the first would have more light and room for growing. Maybe Godfrey has hunted that up in some old book. But when he comes with that theory to Ulrich he strikes the wrong man. Only day before yesterday I thought they were going to eat each other up, so that nothing would remain of either of them. Stein says: "The forest will be _cleared_." The forester: "The forest will _not_ be cleared." Stein: "But it _shall_ be cleared." The forester: "It _shall not_ be cleared." Stein jumps up, buttons his coat, two buttons at a time, knocks down two chairs, and is gone. Well, I thought, that is the end of the friendship! But Lord bless my soul! That happened the night before last, and early yesterday morning--it was scarcely dawn--who comes whistling from the castle and knocks at the forester's window, as though nothing had happened? That's Stein. And who has already been waiting for a quarter of an hour and grunts forth from under his white moustache, "I'm coming?" That's Ulrich. And now both of them, without asking each other's pardon, go together out into the forest, as though there never had been a quarrel! Nobody takes any notice of it any longer. At night they quarrel, in the morning they go together into the forest, as though it could not be otherwise. But does he treat his boy any differently? Robert? Does he? Didn't he want to leave home half a dozen times? And afterward he is too good. Queer business that!

[During the last words he has retreated step by step before the table which ANDREW and WILLIAM are carrying in and placing against the table which already stands on the left in the direction from the footlights to the back of stage.]

SOPHY.

Put it here. That's it. And now chairs, boys. From the upper room. Weiler might--

[ANDREW and WILLIAM exeunt.]

WEILER (in a hurry, making ready to go).

Well, if Weiler did not have his hands full! Outside with the wood-cutters--then with the fir-seed and with the salt--there--I don't know where my head's standing with all the work. And the old man--

[A pantomime expressive of ULRICH'S severity.]

SOPHY.

Well, I don't want to be to blame if you neglect anything.

[Exit.]

WEILER (very calmly).

All right!

[Laying his finger against his nose.]

But I wonder whether he will still always be the first to patch up differences? I mean Stein. Now that he is the forester's master? Well; I don't want to prophesy, but--the master is always right because he is the master. Humph! I wish something serious would come to pass. At any rate, I am getting tired of merry faces again.

[Enter ANDREW and WILLIAM, carrying chairs.]

SOPHY. Seven, eight, nine, ten, chairs.

[Counts once more, softly.]

Correct!

WEILER.

That was a queer expression that Godfrey had on his face yesterday, Mr. Andrew. I bet you had another quarrel with him.

SOPHY.

With that vindictive brutal fellow?

[_ She sets the table. _]

ANDREW.

Who can live in peace with him?

SOPHY.

Well, what's done can't be undone. But you'd better look out for him.

WEILER.

So say I. For there is not a muscle in that fellow's body which is not wicked.

ANDREW.

I am not afraid of him.

SOPHY.

Come, William; run into the garden. Get me some crown-imperials, snap-dragons, larkspurs--something big, so that it will look like something in the glass. The Steins will soon be here with Mr. Moeller, the bookkeeper.

WEILER.

The old bachelor--

SOPHY.

Just look, Andrew, whether cousin Wilkens isn't coming yet.

[_ANDREW and WILLIAM exeunt._]

WEILER.

Wilkens is coming too?

SOPHY (with emphasis).

Mr. Wilkens? He will not stay away when his niece's daughter announces her engagement.

WEILER.

No, indeed. He has money, has Mr. Wilkens. The richest farmer for miles around. I also was Mr. Weiler once, before my creditors closed up my coffee store. Then they jammed the "Mr." in the door and there it is still. Now people say simply "Weiler"--"Weiler might"--"As long as Weiler is here," etc. Sometimes, when I am in the humor, I get angry over it. A strange pleasure, to get angry, but it is a pleasure. Hey! There comes the bride-to-be.

[_MARY appears; during the following dialogue the women set the table._]

WEILER.

My! Like a squirrel!

SOPHY.

Weiler means to pay you a compliment, Mary. He has a peculiar manner.

WEILER.

That is true. It does not matter whether the flattery is coarse or fine. If a woman only notices that one means to flatter her, she is satisfied. It is just as when boys stroke a kitten. Whether they pet it gently or roughly, whether it likes it or not, it cannot help purring.

MARY.

And I presume you mean to pet me with this comparison.

WEILER.

If you feel obliged to purr it must have been a petting.

MARY (looking out of the window).

He is coming, mother.

SOPHY.

Who? Robert?

WEILER.

I had better be off to my wood-cutters. Otherwise the old man will make a row.

[Exit.]

SOPHY (calling after him).

If you cannot come in I will save your portion. An uncomfortable fellow! And it is not likely that he will acquire polite manners at this late day. That is a relic of his better days. And for that reason your father is indulgent with him because they were old comrades. Godfrey also was one of them. When he had wasted his property in drink he fell in with Stein.

[_Surveying the table_]

Here at the head the father of the bridegroom; next to him your father; then the good droll pastor. If it had not been for him, Robert would have gone long ago.

MARY.

Mother, at that time Robert was so wild, so impetuous--

SOPHY.

You are right. At that time the pastor and we could scarcely keep him. [_Counts once more the afore-mentioned persons_] Then here Mr. Moeller; and there your godfather, my cousin Mr. Wilkens; then I myself here; there Robert and you; finally, at the foot, Andrew and William. How the time passes! If I think back to my engagement day! Then I was not as happy as I am today.

MARY.

Mother, I wonder whether every girl that is to become a bride feels as I do? SOPHY. Not every one has such good cause to be glad as you have.

MARY.

But is it gladness that I feel? I am so depressed, mother, so--

SOPHY.

Of course. You are like the flower on which clings a dewdrop. It hangs its head, and yet the dew is no burden.

MARY.

I feel as if it were wrong of me to leave my father, even if it is to go with Robert.

SOPHY.

The Bible says, "A woman shall leave father and mother and cleave to her husband."--But my case was quite different from yours. Your father was a

stately man, no longer quite young, but tall and straight like a pine. At that time his beard was still black as coal. Many a girl that would gladly have married him set her cap at him; that I knew. But to me he seemed too serious, too severe. He took everything so seriously, and he cared nothing for amusements. It was no easy matter to accommodate myself to him. I never had to worry about the means of subsistence; and if I should say that he ever treated me harshly, I should be telling a lie; even if he pretended to be harsh.

MARY.

And that was all you had expected? Was that all.

SOPHY.

As if the good Lord could grant everything that is dreamt of by the heart of a girl who herself does not know what she desires! But here comes Robert. We will be quite merry, so that no gloomy thoughts will come to him.

SCENE II

Enter ROBERT.

ROBERT.

Good morning, mother dear. Good morning, Mary.

SOPHY.

Good morning, Mr. Bridegroom-to-be.

ROBERT.

How glad I am to see you so cheerful. But you Mary? You are sad, Mary? And I am so joyful, so over-joyful. The whole morning I have been in the forest. Where the bushes glistened brightest with the dew, there I penetrated, so that the moist branches should strike my heated face. There I threw myself down on the grass. But I could not stay anywhere. It seemed that nothing could relieve me but weeping aloud. And you--at other times as blithe and gay as a deer--you are sad? Sad on this day?

SOPHY. She surely is glad, dear Robert. But you have known her ever since she was a little child; when others proclaim their happiness, she hides hers in silence. MARY. No, Robert. Sad I surely am not. I only have a feeling of solemnity; it has been upon me the whole morning. Wherever I go, it seems to me as though I were in church. And--

ROBERT.

And what?

MARY.

And that now my life is soon to be broken off behind me, as if it were sinking away from under me, and that a new life is to begin, one so

entirely new--don't be offended, good Robert! This to me is so strange--gives me such a feeling of anxiety!

ROBERT.

A new life? A life so entirely new? Why, Mary, it is still the old life, only more beautiful. It is still the dear old tree under which we are sitting, only it is in bloom now.

MARY.

Besides, the thought that I am to leave my father and my mother! The old I see passing away, the new I do not see coming; the old I must leave, the new I cannot reach.

ROBERT.

Must you indeed leave your father? Do we not all remain together? Has not my father for this very reason bought the estate of Duesterwalde?

SOPHY.

That is the anxiety which comes over one in spring; one knows not whence it comes, nor why. And yet in spring one knows that everything will become more and more beautiful, and still one feels anxious. One is merely afraid of happiness. Now that my dearest wishes are about to be fulfilled--do I not experience the same sensation? I might almost wish that a roast were burnt, or that a piece of the fine china were broken. Happiness is like the sun: There must be a little shade if man is to be comfortable. I will just go to see whether a little shade of that sort has not been cast in the kitchen.

[_Exit to the left_.]

MARY (_after she and_ ROBERT _have been standing in silence facing each other_).

Is anything wrong with you, Robert?

ROBERT.

With me? No. Perhaps--

MARY.

You are still angry with your father? And he is so good!

ROBERT.

That is just the trouble, that he is so good. Oh, his kindness is almost more difficult to bear than his violent temper! His anger only hurts, his kindness humiliates; over against his anger I set my pride--but what can I set against his kindness?

MARY.

And you wanted to go away, you wicked Robert, and leave us all!

ROBERT.

I wanted to go, but I am still here. Oh! That was a wretched time! I despaired of everything; of you, Mary; of myself; but all that is now past. There must be a little shade, only not too much. Let us go out, Mary. It is so close here in the house. The musicians shall play us the merriest piece they know. [_They are about to go_.]

SCENE III

The same. Enter the FORESTER, _his Wife behind him. As soon as_ MARY _sees the_ FORESTER, _she leaves_ ROBERT _and embraces her father_.

FORESTER.

Get out, wench! [_Tearing himself free_.] Is this the sun's ray after a rainy day, that the gadflies come buzzing about one's head? Have you filled Robert's ears with lamentations, you women folks? You silly girl there!

[_Pushes_ MARY _from him_.]

I have something to say to Robert. I have been looking for you, Mr. Stein.

ROBERT.

Mr. Stein? No longer Robert?

FORESTER.

Everything has its due season, familiar speech and formal speech. When the women folks are gone--

SOPHY.

Don't worry, we'll retreat, you old bear. Don't be afraid to talk.

FORESTER.

All right. As soon as you are out.

ROBERT (_leads her out_).

Don't be angry, mother dear.

SOPHY.

If I were to mind him, I should never cease being angry.

FORESTER.

Close the door! Do you hear?

SOPHY.

Hush, hush!

FORESTER.

Who is master here? Confound it!

SCENE IV

The FORESTER; ROBERT. _The_ FORESTER, _when they are alone becomes embarrassed, and walks up and down for some time_.

ROBERT.

You wished to say--

FORESTER.

Quite right--

[_Wipes the perspiration from his forehead_.]

Well; sit down, Mr. Stein.

ROBERT.

These preparations--

[FORESTER _points to a chair at the end of the table_. ROBERT _seats himself_.]

FORESTER (_takes the Bible from the shelf, seats himself opposite_)

ROBERT,(_puts on his spectacles, opens the book and clears his throat_).

Proverbs, chapter 31, verse 10: "Who can find a virtuous woman? for her price is far above rubies. The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her, so that he shall have no need of spoil. She will do him good and not evil all the days of her life." [7]

[_Short pause; then he calls brusquely toward__the window, while he remains seated_.]

William, be careful out there! And then further on, verse 30. You'll trample down all the boxweed, confound you! "Favor is deceitful, and beauty is vain; but a woman that feareth the Lord, she shall be praised."--Robert!

ROBERT (_starting_).

Father Ulrich--

FORESTER.

Again, Ecclesiasticus, verse so and so--Mr. Stein--

ROBERT.

Once more "Mister."

FORESTER.

I see I shall have to use the familiar form of address. Otherwise I shall not be able to speak my mind.--Robert--

ROBERT.

You are so solemn!

FORESTER.

Solemn? Perhaps so. But this affair is enough to make one solemn. I am not a heathen.

[_Strikes an attitude_] So you are decided with God's help, Robert--

ROBERT. Well--

FORESTER.

Hang it!--Don't look at me that way!--You intend to marry, Robert?

ROBERT (_rises, surprised_).

Why, you know that--

FORESTER.

That's true. But there must be some sort of introduction. Never mind, sit down. However, you must give me a chance to finish what I have to say. On other occasions I am not afraid to talk, but now that I am about to preach a sermon, it strikes me just as if I were to see the pastor in his cassock trying to chase a hare.

[_Relieved_.]

Now, then; at last I have struck the trail. Suppose a stag from Luetzdorf is roaming about. You understand, Robert? Now give me your attention. This fork here represents the stag. Right here, do you see? Here is the salt-cellar: that's you. And the wind blows from the direction of that plate. What are you going to do now in order to stalk the stag? Hey?

[_Trying to assist him_.]

You--well?

ROBERT.

I must--

FORESTER (_nodding assent_).

You must--

[_Makes a pantomime_.]

ROBERT.

I must get to the windward of him.

FORESTER.

Get to the windward. Correct. Do you begin to see what I am driving at? You must get to the windward of him. That's it! Do you see now? That is the reason why I had to have a talk with you.

[_Solemnly_.]

You must get to the windward of the stag.

[_Rises_.]

And now--make her happy--Robert--my Mary.

[_About to go_.]

ROBERT.

But what has all this to do with Mary?

FORESTER.

Why, you have not yet understood me? Look here! The stag must not have an inkling that you are very anxious about him; and much less a woman. You make too much fuss about the women. Children must not know how dearly one loves them; anything but that! But women even less so. In reality, they are nothing but grown-up children, only more shrewd. And the children are already shrewd enough.--Sit down, Robert, I must tell you something.

[_They sit at the edge of the table, facing the audience_.]

When that Mary of mine was four years old--no taller than this--I once came home later than usual. "Where is Mary?" I ask. One child says: "In her room;" the other: "In front of the house. She'll be here pretty soon." But one guess was as far from the truth as the other. Evening comes, night comes--Mary does not appear. I go outside. In the garden, in the adjoining shrubbery, on the rocks of the dell, in the whole forest--not a trace of Mary. In the meantime my wife is looking for her at your house, then at every house in the village, but nowhere can she find a trace of Mary. Can it be possible that some one should have kidnapped her? Why, she was as beautiful as a wax-doll, my Mary. The whole night I never touched my bed. Even at that time Mary was everything to me. The next morning I alarm the entire village. Not a person fails to respond. All were passionately fond of Mary. At least I wished to bury the corpse. In the dell, you know, the thicket of firs--under the cliffs where on the other side of the brook the old footpath runs high along the rocks--next to it the willows. This time I crawl through the whole thicket. In the midst of it is the small open meadows; there at last I see something red and white. Praised be heaven! It is she--and neither dead nor ill, no, safe and sound in the green grass; and after her sleep her little cheeks were as red as peonies, Robert. But--

[_He looks about him and lowers his voice_.]

I hope she is not listening.

[_Draws closer to_ ROBERT; _whenever he forgets himself, he immediately lowers his voice_.]

I say: "Is it you, really?" "Of course," she says, and rubs her eyes so that they sparkle. "And you are alive," I say; "and did not die," I say, "of hunger and fear?" I say. "Half a day and a whole, night alone in the forest, in the very thickest of the forest! Come," I say, "that in the meantime mother may not die of anxiety," I say. Says she: "Wait a while, father." "But, why and for what?" "Till the child comes again," says she. "And let us take it with us, please, father. It is a dear child." "But who, in all the world, is this child?" I ask. "The one that came to me," says she, "when I ran away from you a little while ago after the yellow butterfly, and when all at once I was quite alone in the forest and wanted to cry and call after you, and who picked berries for me and played with me so nicely." "A little while ago?" I say. "Did not the night come since then?" I say. But she would not believe that. We looked for the child and--naturally did not find it. Men no longer have faith in anything, but I know what I know. Do you understand, Robert? Say nothing. It seems to me I were committing a sacrilege if I should say it right out. There, shake hands with me without saying anything. All right, Robert.--For heaven's sake, don't let her hear what we are saying about her.

[_Goes softly to the door; looks out_.] MARY (_outside_).

Do you want anything, father?

FORESTER (_nods secretly toward_ ROBERT, _then brusquely_).

Nothing. And don't you come in again before I--

[_Comes back; speaks just above a whisper_.]

Do you see? That's the way to treat her. You make far too much fuss about that girl. She is [_still more softly_] a girl that any father might be proud of, and I think she is going to be a wife after God's own heart. I have such a one. Do you see, I don't mind telling you, because I know you are not going to repeat it to her. For she must not know it; otherwise all my pains would go for nothing. And pains it certainly cost me till I got her so far; pains, I tell you. I advise you not to spoil my girl, whom I have gone to so much trouble to bring up properly.

ROBERT.

You may think,--but I don't understand you at all.

FORESTER.

There's just the rub! You don't do it purposely. But, confound it! Don't make such a fuss over the girl, do you hear? If you go on this way, she will have you in her pocket within a month. The women always want to rule; all their thoughts and aspirations tend to that end, without being themselves aware of it. And when they finally do rule, they are unhappy in spite of it; I know more than one instance of this. I only look inside the door, and I know for certain what sort of figure the man cuts. I only look at the cattle. If the dog or the cat is not well trained, neither are the children; and the wife still less. Hey? My wife does not yet know me as far as that here [_points to his heart_] is concerned. And if she should ever get hold of that secret--then good-by,

authority! The wife may be an angel, but the man must act like a bear. And especially a huntsman. That's part of the business, just as much as the moustache and the green coat.

ROBERT.

But could it not be possible that--

FORESTER (eagerly). No, Robert. Once and for all, no! There is no way out of it. Either he trains her, or she trains him.--For example; let me give you only one instance how to go about it. My wife cannot see any human being suffer; now the poor wretches come in troops, and I should like to know what is to come of it all, if I were to praise her to her face. Therefore I grumble and swear like a trooper, but at the same time I gradually withdraw, so that she has full liberty. And when I notice that she is through, then I come along again, as if by accident, and keep on grumbling and swearing. Then people say: "The Hereditary Forester is harder on the poor than the devil himself, but his wife and his girl, they are angels from heaven." And they say this so that I should hear it; and hear it I do. But I pretend not to notice it, and laugh in my sleeve; and to keep up appearances I bluster all the more.--It seems the guests are arriving. Robert, my wife, and my girl, my Mary--if I at some time--you understand me, Robert. Give me your hand. God is looking down on us.

[Wipes his eyes.]

The deuce! Confound it! Don't let the cat out of the bag to the women--and you rule her as it ought to be.

[He turns around to hide his emotion, with gestures expressive of his vexation that he cannot control himself. At the door he encounters the following]:

SCENE V

The same. STEIN; MOELLER; WILKENS; MARY; SOPHY. They exchange greetings with the FORESTER.

STEIN.

What's your hurry, old man? Have you already had a row with him?

FORESTER.

Yes. I have given the young gentleman a lecture on the subject of women-folks.

STEIN.

High treason against the majesty of petticoat-government? And you permit that, madam?

SOPHY.

A little more, a little less--when one has to put up with so much!

FORESTER.

And now can anybody say that this woman is not clever enough to get one under her thumb. But let us have cards. I had to promise Stein that he should have his revenge today before lunch--

STEIN. Revenge I must have.

[_The_ FORESTER _and_ STEIN _sit down opposite each other on the right side of the stage and play cards_.]

SOPHY (_watches them a moment; then to_ ROBERT, _while going to and fro with an air of being very busy_).

I hope to heaven they are not going to discuss the clearing of the forest today.

MOELLER (_on the left side, stepping up to_ WILKENS _and pointing to_ MARY, _who is talking to her mother and_ ROBERT).

That is what I call a fine-looking bride!

WILKENS.

And she is not a beggar's child either, Sir.

MOELLER (_politely_).

Who does not know that Mr. Wilkens is her mother's uncle?

WILKENS (_flattered_).

Well, well!

MOELLER.

And Mr. Wilkens need not be ashamed, I believe, of the firm of Stein and Son.

WILKENS (_calmly_).

By no means.

MOELLER (_with great enthusiasm_).

Sir! The firm of Stein and Son! I have served the firm twenty years. That is my honor and my pride. For me the firm is wife and child!

WILKENS.

I do not doubt it.

MOELLER.

The foremost houses of Germany would consider it an honor to ally themselves in marriage with Stein and Son.

WILKENS. I am sure of it.

[Turns to the bridal couple.]

MOELLER (_angrily to himself_).

And that fellow parades his peasant's pride, as if Stein and Son ought to esteem it a high honor to ally themselves with that forester's goose. His forty-five will be divided into three parts, and only after his death. The only daughter of Loehlein & Co. with her eighty! That were quite a different capital for our business; and cash down today! This mesalliance is unpardonable. But what can one do? One must [A waltz is heard without_] dance off one's vexation. May I have the honor, madam [to_ SOPHY] on the lawn?

[Bows with an old bachelor's jauntiness.]

STEIN.

I wonder whether I'll get decent cards!

SOPHY.

I guess we'll have time for that?

WILKENS.

Old Wilkens is not yet going to sit in a corner.

[Fumbles in his pocket.]

Wilkens must also contribute his dollar for the benefit of the musicians. I hope I have your permission, Mr. Bridegroom?

[MOELLER _leads out_ SOPHY; WILKENS _leads_ MARY; ROBERT _follows_.]

SCENE VI

STEIN; _the_ FORESTER.

STEIN (_throwing down his cards_).

Have I a single trump?

FORESTER (_calling_).

Twenty in spades.

STEIN (_taking up his cards again; impatiently_).

Why not forty? Talking about spades reminds me--have you considered that matter about the clearing?

FORESTER. That fellow is a--

[They continue to play.]

STEIN.

What fellow?

FORESTER.

The fellow who hatched that scheme.

STEIN.

Do you mean me?

FORESTER.

Your Godfrey there--

STEIN (*_getting excited: with emphasis_*).

My Godfrey?

FORESTER (*_growing more and more calm and cheerful_*).

Well, for all I care, mine, then.

STEIN.

Why do you always drag him in?

FORESTER.

Never mind him, then.

STEIN.

As if I--it is you--whenever an opportunity offers, you, you drag him in. You can't get rid of him. Like dough he sticks to your teeth.

FORESTER (*_very calmly_*).

As, for example, just now.

STEIN.

You have made up your mind to annoy me.

FORESTER.

Nonsense! You only want to pick a quarrel. STEIN. I? But why do you immediately trump, when I play a wrong card?

FORESTER.

Playing a wrong card means losing the game.

STEIN (*_throwing down his cards_*).

Well, there you have the whole business!

[*_Jumps up_*.]

FORESTER. I deal.

[_Shuffles calmly and deals_.]

STEIN (_has taken a few steps_).

I am not going to play any more with you.

FORESTER (_unconcerned_).

But it is my turn to deal.

STEIN (_sits down again_).

Obstinate old fellow!

FORESTER.

You immediately lose your temper.

STEIN (_taking his cards; still angry_).

You would not give in, even if it were as clear as day that you are wrong!

SCENE VII

The same. Enter MOELLER, _leading in_ SOPHY; WILKENS. _The waltz outside is finished_.

SOPHY.

But now I think that--

FORESTER.

One more turn.

SOPHY.

Everything is ready--

FORESTER.

The pastor--

SOPHY.

He sent word that we are not to wait lunch for him. But he would be here at eleven o'clock sharp for the betrothal.

FORESTER.

Then sit down and eat.

STEIN.

Please, do not let us detain you.

FORESTER.

It is immaterial whether we sit here or there. Now then! Forty in spades.

[_Continuing to play_.]

STEIN.

All right! Go ahead.

FORESTER (_triumphantly_).

Are not you thinking of Godfrey again? And the clearing? Hey?

STEIN (_controlling himself_).

Now you see--

FORESTER (_more excited_).

That the fellow is a fool--Queens are trumps.

STEIN.

I'm bearing in mind that we are not alone.

FORESTER (_excited by the game_).

And trump--and trump!--the forest shall be cleared!

STEIN.

That will do, I say. The idea was mine.

FORESTER.

And trump.

STEIN.

And if I--[_He controls himself_.]

FORESTER (_triumphantly_).

Well, what then?

[_Puts the cards together_.]

STEIN (_making a desperate effort to contain himself_).

And if I should wish to have it so--if I should insist upon it--then--
FORESTER.

Everything would remain as it is.

STEIN.

The forest would be cleared.

FORESTER.

Nothing of the kind.

STEIN.

We'll see about that. And now the forest shall be cleared.

FORESTER.

It shall not.

STEIN.

Sir!

FORESTER (laughing).

Mr. Stein!

STEIN.

It's all right! It's all right!

FORESTER (very calmly).

As it is.

STEIN.

Not another word--

FORESTER.

And not a tree--

STEIN (rises).

No contradiction and no sarcasm! That I request. That I insist upon. I am the master of Duesterwalde.

FORESTER.

And I am the forester of Duesterwalde.

[STEIN is getting more and more excited. He shows plainly that the presence of other persons increases his sensitiveness, and he makes an evident effort to control his temper. The FORESTER treats the matter lightly, as an every-day affair. SOPHY with increasing anxiety looks from one to the other. WILKENS does not move a muscle of his face. MOELLER exhibits his sympathy by accompanying his master's words with appropriate gestures. The entire pantomimic by-play is very rapid.]

STEIN.

You are my servant, and I command: The forest shall be cleared. If not,

you are no longer my servant. The forest shall be cleared.

FORESTER.

Old hot-head!

STEIN.

Either you obey, or you are no longer forester.

FORESTER.

Stuff and nonsense!

STEIN.

And I shall put Godfrey in your place.

FORESTER.

Quite right. Congratulations.

STEIN (_buttons his coat_).

The forest shall be cleared.

FORESTER.

The forest shall not be cleared.

SOPHY (_stepping between the two_).

But--

STEIN.

I regret this exceedingly.--Mr. Moeller!--I bid everybody good-day.

[_Exit_.]

MOELLER.

Bravo! At last he has spoken his mind in a manner worthy of Stein and Son. Yours truly.

[_Follows_ STEIN.]

FORESTER.

I deal--

[_He looks up while shuffling the cards_.]

But--well, let him go. If he can't sit for an hour without exploding, the old powder-bag--

SCENE VIII

The FORESTER _remains seated imperturbably_. SOPHY _stands beside his chair_. WILKENS _steps up to the_ FORESTER.

SOPHY.

But what in the world is going to come of this?

WILKENS.

He should have gone after him.

FORESTER. The old hot-head!

SOPHY.

I am absolutely dumbfounded. On the very day of betrothal!

WILKENS.

But for the sake of a few miserable trees he surely is not going to--

FORESTER.

Miserable trees? Thunder! In my forest there is no miserable tree!--Nonsense. There is no cause for lamentation.

WILKENS.

But Mr. Stein--

FORESTER.

Is not going to run far. When his anger has subsided, he will be the first one to--he is better than I.

WILKENS.

But--

FORESTER.

Hang it! You always have a "But." That's the way he goes on every day. For twenty years--

WILKENS.

But today he is your master.

FORESTER.

Master or not. The forest shall not be cleared. WILKENS. But you will lose your place.

FORESTER.

To Godfrey? Idle talk! Stein himself can't bear Godfrey, and he knows what I am worth to him. I need not sing my own praise. Show me a forest anywhere in the whole district that can be compared to mine.--Do you

hear? Why, there he is back again. Sit down. And if he comes in, act as if nothing had happened.

SCENE IX _The same. Enter_ MOELLER _rapidly; later_, ANDREW.

FORESTER (_not looking up_).

Well, I deal.

[_Takes the cards, notices his mistake_.]

Is that you, Mr. Moeller?

MOELLER (_pompously_).

At your service.

FORESTER.

Well, sit down. Has he cooled down again, the old hot-head? Why doesn't he come in? I suppose he expects me to fetch him?

[_Is about to go_.]

MOELLER.

Mr. Stein sends me to ask you, sir, whether you have changed your mind.

FORESTER.

I should say not!

MOELLER.

That you will clear the forest?

FORESTER.

That I will _not_ clear the forest.

MOELLER.

That means, that you are going to resign your position as forester.

FORESTER.

That means--that you are a fool.

MOELLER (_very pompously_).

I have been commissioned by Mr. Adolf Friedrich Stein, head of the firm of Stein and Son, in case you should still persist in your refusal to execute the command of your master, to announce to you your dismissal, and to notify Godfrey immediately that he is forester of Duesterwalde.

FORESTER.

And that would be a great pleasure to you--

MOELLER.

I am not to be considered in this matter. What is to be considered is the firm of Stein and Son, whom I have the honor to represent. I give you five minutes time for consideration.

[_Steps to the window_.]

[Illustration: SCHNORR VON CAROLSFELD THE FINDING OF MOSES]

FORESTER.

Dismiss me? Dismiss me? Do you know what that means? Dismiss a man who has served faithfully for forty years? Good heavens, sir! If I should do what he wishes--then I deserved to be dismissed. Clear the forest! And the mountain faces north and northwest, absolutely exposed--

WILKENS.

Well! But this is not a question of your trees.

FORESTER.

So that the wind can rush in and break down everything. Hang it! Nonsense! He does not mean it at all. If he only comes to his senses--

WILKENS.

That's just what I say. Until it comes to the actual cutting down, one has time to think a hundred times. And don't you see that it is not at all the cutting down that Mr. Stein is concerned about? He is only concerned about maintaining his authority. If he is the master he necessarily must be right.

FORESTER.

But he is wrong, and I shall not give my consent to anything that is wrong. For forty years I have disregarded my own interest for the sake of what was intrusted to my care; I have--

WILKENS.

Well. My opinion is, that if for forty years you have had such tender regard for your trees, you might now, for once, have a similar regard for your wife and children and yourself.

FORESTER.

Do you know that to Stein there may result from this a loss of six thousand dollars? Do you? Of that sum I should deprive him if I consented. And would you have some one come along and say: "Ulrich gave his consent to that? In fifteen years there might have been such a forest of timber, that a forester's heart would have swelled with pride, and--"

WILKENS.

Well. That might still--

FORESTER.

After the cursed wind from the direction of Hersbruck once has made havoc in it? You talk as you understand it.

SOPHY (_anxiously_).

But what is to become of us?

FORESTER.

We are honest people, and such we shall remain. WILKENS. Well! As if honesty entered even remotely into this question!

FORESTER.

But, gracious heavens! What else does enter? Hey? Am I to play the sycophant? Just try to kick me! You'll soon learn better. And laugh in my sleeve? Only no honest, fearless word! That is your peasant's philosophy. As long as they don't touch your pocket-book, you put up with anything. If you are not compelled--

WILKENS (_self-satisfied_).

Well, yes. If the peasant is not compelled, he moves neither hand nor foot. There he is quite right. That is the peasant's philosophy. And, I tell you, this peasant's philosophy is not so foolish. Had you practised this philosophy, you would have done your duty, and not a penny's worth more; you would have spent your money on yourself, your wife and your children, and not to increase somebody else's wealth. In that case, it would not concern you now what becomes of it.--Whose bread I eat, his praise I sing. You are paid to be servant, not master. When, therefore, your master says: The forest shall be cleared--

FORESTER.

Then I must see to it that it is not done. The honest man comes before the servant.

WILKENS.

Well. Now we are just as far as we were at the beginning.

[_Turns away_.]

SOPHY.

You are not going? You are my only consolation, cousin. No doubt, he will change his mind. He has the greatest respect for you, cousin.

WILKENS.

I notice he has.

SOPHY.

The betrothal!--Mary! How unfortunate that the pastor has not yet

arrived! Cousin, if you only would--

Enter ANDREW.

WILKENS.

His head is as hard as iron. Can any one make anything plain to him?

MOELLER (_who until now has been looking out of the window without saying anything, looks at his watch, and then turns pompously to the_ FORESTER).

Sir, I should like to ask you for your final decision.

FORESTER.

What I have said, I have said.

[_Takes a few steps, then stops_.]

And moreover, he can't do it; I mean, dismiss me. He has no right to dismiss me. First of all he must produce evidence that I have deserved it. He has no right to dismiss me without any cause whatever.

MOELLER (_with authority_).

So you will not clear the forest? Say it plainly: You will not?

FORESTER.

If it was not sufficiently plain to you before, then: No! I can't state it more plainly. I will not be a scoundrel, and he cannot dismiss an honest man. Is that plain, definite and unmistakable? I am forester, and I remain forester--and the forest shall not be cleared. That you may tell your master and your Godfrey and whomever you please.

SOPHY.

Have only a little patience with him. I am sure Mr. Stein does not mean it, and you have been so kind already--

MOELLER.

If the decision rested with me, with me, Justus Moeller,--what would I not do to please you, madam? But I am here as the representative of Stein and Son.

FORESTER.

And if he thinks he has a right, let him act accordingly. But you, woman, do not insult my good right by asking favors of the wrong-doer. Good-day, Mr. Moeller. Is there anything else you desire? Nothing? Have you anything else to tell me?

MOELLER (_very pompously_).

Nothing beyond the fact that your incumbency of the post of forester ceases with the present moment. Here is your salary--a half year in advance. In consideration whereof, as soon as possible, within three days at the latest, you will vacate this house, so that the present

forester may move in, upon whom, from this moment on, rests the sole responsibility for the forest.

[The FORESTER is obliged to sit down.]

SOPHY (_to_ ANDREW, _whom she has been compelled to restrain all the while, and who now rushes toward the door_).

Where are you going, Andrew?

ANDREW.

I am going to tell Robert what his father--

SOPHY.

Don't you dare to--

ANDREW.

Let me go, mother, before I lay hands on that fellow there--

[Exit in violent anger.]

FORESTER.

Never mind. Never mind! Keep quiet, woman.

[Rises.]

Good-day, Mr. Moeller. You have left some money behind you, sir. Better take it, or I'll throw it after you.

[Steps to the window and whistles.]

MOELLER.

You see, madam, it gives me pain to discharge my duty. I am going to Godfrey.

FORESTER (_without turning toward him_).

Good luck on the way!

SCENE X

The FORESTER _is standing at the window whistling_. WILKENS _is looking for his cane and hat_. SOPHY _in perplexity looks from one to the other. As he is about to leave_, MOELLER _encounters_ ROBERT _and_ ANDREW, _who come rushing in_. MARY _is clinging to the arm of_ ROBERT _whom she tries to calm_.

ROBERT (_entering angrily_).

He shall give in. He shall not spoil the beautiful day.

ANDREW.

Go to your father. He commenced this quarrel.

MOELLER.

It is lucky that I meet you, Mr. Stein. I am commissioned to beg you to come home at once.

[_Exit_.]

ROBERT.

Ulrich, you yield; you must yield.

FORESTER (_turning away from the window_).

You, Mr. Stein? What do you want from me? Mary, you go out there! What do you want from the man whom your father intends to dismiss?

ROBERT.

But why will you not consent?

ANDREW.

Because he wishes to remain an honest man, and will not suffer himself to be made a scoundrel by you. [_The_ FORESTER _makes a sign to him to be silent_.]

ROBERT.

I am not talking to you now, Andrew.

FORESTER.

You are here with your father's consent, Mr. Stein? Moreover--sir, and if your father had the power to take from me my position and my honor--the fact that I have an irreproachable child, that is something he cannot take from me. And any one else--hey? Young man, on this point I am touchy. Do you understand?

SOPHY.

But will you fall out even with your last friend?

FORESTER.

Mary's reputation is at stake. If he is a friend, he knows without my telling him what he has to do.

ROBERT.

I know what I have to do; but you do not. Otherwise you would not risk your children's happiness for a whim--for--

FORESTER.

Ho! ho! Tell that to your father, young man!

ROBERT.

For your obstinacy. I have your word, and Mary has mine; I am a man, and will be no scoundrel.

FORESTER.

And because you will not be a scoundrel, I am to be one? Shall people say: "Ulrich caused a quarrel between father and son?" Sir, my girl is too good to have it said of her that she stole into your family. Mr. Stein, this is my home. You know what I mean.

SOPHY.

At least let the children--

FORESTER.

Do something foolish? And you look on; and afterward you can do nothing better than weep.

ROBERT.

Mary, whatever befall--

FORESTER.

I do not know whether I know Mary. If I am mistaken in her then it is better you go with him at once.

MARY.

Father, he is so true.

FORESTER.

Very well. Go with him.

SOPHY.

So inflexible--

ROBERT. In the name of heaven, Mary, which has destined us for one another--

FORESTER (_as before, to his wife_).

And let me advise you not to--Do you hear, if it should come to pass--

[_Turns with her toward the background_.]

ANDREW (_bursting out_).

Now it's enough! Mary, either you go or he goes.

SOPHY.

Now you are beginning too, Andrew! [_Goes to him on the left side of the stage_.]

ANDREW.

I have been silent long enough. Let me alone, mother. His father has insulted my father; I will not allow this fellow to insult my sister also.

ROBERT.

You belong to me, Mary. I should like to see him who--keep your hands off!

MARY.

Robert, it is my brother!

ANDREW (_threatening_).

Only one step further, or--

ROBERT.

Away, I say; for God's sake--

ANDREW.

You are no match for me--

ROBERT.

Not with the point of your finger shall you touch what belongs to me. I defy you all--

ANDREW.

Do you hear that, father?

FORESTER (_stepping between the two_).

Back there, fellow! Who is master in this house?

ANDREW.

If you are master, father, then show that you are. Otherwise let me show it to that fellow there.

FORESTER.

Andrew, go over there, and say not another word!

ANDREW.

Father--

FORESTER.

Will you mind what I say?

[ANDREW _pulls a rifle from the wall_.]

FORESTER.

What are you doing there?

ANDREW (_with suppressed rage_).

Nothing. Here in the house you are master. Outside no one is master; outside we all are.

FORESTER.

In my forest I am master.

ANDREW.

But not a step beyond.

FORESTER.

What do you mean? Answer!

ANDREW.

Nothing particular, father. Only that fellow there need know.--If you are not concerned about your own honor--I shall protect Mary's honor. That is for him who dares to come near Mary.

SOPHY.

What words are those?

ROBERT.

Idle words. It is children that are afraid of words.

ANDREW.

There will be something more than words, as surely as I am a man.

ROBERT.

If you were a man you would not threaten, you--

ANDREW.

If we were somewhere else, you would not taunt--

FORESTER.

Andrew!

ROBERT.

Make room--

ANDREW.

Get out, I say--

[FORESTER _almost at the same time puts his finger in his mouth and gives a shrill whistle_.]

ANDREW.

If you no longer--

FORESTER (_stepping between the two_).

Rebellious boys! Hold your peace! Don't you dare to strike, either one of you! You confounded fellow! When I need a guardian I certainly shall not select a greenhorn. Is it I who is master here or is it some one else? What business have you here, fellow? Get you gone into the forest; look after Weiler that he does not loaf; then take out a dozen maple trees from the nursery and put them up in damp moss; see to it that the messenger from Haslau does not have to wait when he comes. Not a word! Along with you!

[ANDREW _obeys and goes, after having cast a threatening look at ROBERT, _to which the latter replies_.]

FORESTER.

And you, Mr. Stein; good-day, Mr. Stein. You know what I mean.

SOPHY.

If you would intercede with your father; but gently and kindly! And if you would bring him back!

MARY.

Then I should see how truly you love me, Robert.

FORESTER (_less roughly_).

Don't come again before that. Good-by, Robert. And leave that girl alone.

ROBERT.

I am going. But come what may, I shall not resign my claim upon Mary. [_Exit_.]

SOPHY.

Is everything to turn out unlucky today? And you, cousin, are you also going to leave us?

WILKENS.

Well! If one insists on running his head through a wall, I'm not the fool to hold my hand in between.

[_Exit_.]

ACT II

In the Manor House

SCENE I

STEIN _alone, seated._

STEIN.

Confound his obstinacy! The whole fine day spoiled! Otherwise we should now be at table. I suppose he is right after all, that this clearing serves no good purpose. But is that a reason why he should put me into this rage? It is true, I should have been wiser than he. Probably my excitement was also partly to blame.--I am only sorry for his wife--and the children. I am going to--[_Rises, then sits down again._] Do what? Repair one foolish action with another? Be as rash in yielding as I was in taking offense? The old hotspur! But that shall serve me as a lesson.

[_Short pause. Then he rises again, takes his cane and hat and throws both down again._]

No, it won't do--It simply will not do. Well! I should make myself ridiculous forever! This time he must come to me; I can't help him. But perhaps he has already--isn't that Moeller?

[_Hastens toward the person coming in._]

SCENE II

ROBERT; STEIN.

ROBERT (_entering, in a passion_).

You will ruin my happiness, father?

STEIN (_surprised, indignant_).

Robert!

ROBERT.

You have no right to do that.

STEIN.

That's the last straw! Now you too must come along and set me fuming.

ROBERT.

Father, you have me fetched away from the betrothal festivities like a child from his playthings. But I am no child to whom one gives and takes

away as one likes. I have your word, and you must keep it. Do you intend to sacrifice my happiness to a whim? Paternal authority cannot go so far.

STEIN.

But tell me, what is your object in saying this?

ROBERT.

I wish to ask you whether you intend to bring about a reconciliation between the forester and yourself.

STEIN.

Boy, how can you dare to ask? Do you mean to call me to account? Go to that obstinate fellow. It is he that is in the wrong; it is he that must yield!

ROBERT.

I just came from the forester; he referred me to you.

STEIN.

I can do nothing. And now leave me in peace.

ROBERT.

You will do nothing toward a reconciliation?

STEIN.

Nothing, unless he yields. And now go your ways.

ROBERT.

If you will do nothing toward a reconciliation I shall never again cross his threshold. Andrew and I have become mortal enemies. Perhaps this very day I shall face him in an encounter for life and death. Come what may, I have done everything I was able to do. Father, no blame can attach to me. If a catastrophe takes place--you could have prevented it, the forester could have prevented it. Mary is mine, and neither you nor the forester shall take her from me.

STEIN.

Are you mad, boy? To your room this moment! Do you hear?

ROBERT.

Father, I ask you--

STEIN.

You shall obey, not ask!

ROBERT.

Your anger carries you away. Father, I implore you, do not tear open the wound which healed only because I made allowance for your excited state. I shall wait till you have become calm; till you are again master of yourself.

STEIN.

You see that I am master of myself. You try to provoke me by all means, and you do not succeed. But now not another word! Not a sound!

ROBERT (_beside himself_).

Not a word? A hundred words, a thousand words; as many as I have breath to utter. I _will_ speak; until I have relieved myself of this load on my heart, I will speak! You may forbid your Moeller, your blacksmiths to speak, not me! Show your impatience as much as you want, remain or go--speak I _will_. Once for all you shall know that I will no longer stand being treated like a boy, that I will be free, that I can stand on my own feet, that you shall be obliged to respect me, that I will be neither your toy nor any man's!

STEIN.

Do you threaten me with the old song? I know it by heart. You are still here? I thought you had gone. Oh, indeed! You mean to speak, do you? Speak, do what you wish. I shall not prevent you.

ROBERT (_calmly, with the accent of determination_).

And if you wished to prevent me, it were too late. I insist upon my right, even if it should cost my own or another's life. But I hold you and the forester responsible.

STEIN (_who is beginning to repent his anger_).

Boy--

ROBERT.

Farewell--perhaps forever! [_Rushes out_.]

SCENE III

STEIN _alone; later, the_ PASTOR.

STEIN (_forgetting himself, going a few steps after him_).

Where are you going? Robert! My boy!--Curse it! I have scarcely got over my anger, and the next moment--But does it not seem as though all had entered into a conspiracy to keep me in a turmoil of excitement? If he really has had a falling out and meets those hotspurs--But I cannot run after him. Will he come back?

Enter the PASTOR.

STEIN.

You, parson? You find me here.

PASTOR.

I have heard of the affair.

[_Shakes hands_.]

STEIN.

Robert, my boy--

PASTOR.

Almost knocked me down. He wants to leave home again, hey? We'll manage to hold him.

STEIN.

And with that obstinate old fellow--

PASTOR.

I know. It's the old story again, the everlasting story, the ending of which one always knows in advance.

STEIN.

But this time one cannot be so certain.

PASTOR.

True. It is more complicated than usual, because at the same time the affair of the young gentleman was mixed up with it. Moreover, the young gentleman this time has also had words with Andrew. However--

STEIN.

Isn't that he who is coming along there?

SCENE IV

MOELLER; STEIN; _the_ PASTOR.

STEIN.

You, Moeller? What is the prospect? Will he yield?

MOELLER.

So little does he think of yielding that he even wishes me to tell you, you have not the power to dismiss him.

STEIN.

He thinks I have not the power?

[More composed.]

If he only thought I had not the intention!--And you have tried everything?

MOELLER.

Everything.

STEIN.

Did you also threaten him with Godfrey? As if he were to be appointed forester, as if you were to deliver to him his commission immediately, in case--

MOELLER.

As if I were to?--My instructions were more definite. I bring you Godfrey's respectful acknowledgment; he accepts the position.

STEIN.

He ac--he accepts it? He really accepts it? What an obliging man he is, that Godfrey! And you into the bargain--with your haste. Have you entirely lost your senses, sir? The whole thing was intended to scare Ulrich. I wanted him to listen to reason--to yield. And if in the first heat I actually did say it as you understood it, you should have interpreted it differently. You know that in my heart I am not thinking of dismissing that old man who is worth a thousand times more--but you understand it, you understood it right, but--now that it is too late, I recall you always opposed this marriage.

MOELLER.

I have served the firm of Stein and Son for twenty years, time enough to learn at last that one can serve too faithfully. I have done nothing but execute your instructions literally. And if, in spite of that, you persist in misjudging me, then this must be my consolation. I have never compromised the dignity of Stein and Son.

[Sits down to work.]

STEIN.

Then the dignity of Stein and Son may thank you for what you have done; I shall not. [Pause.] And yet, when one considers the matter calmly, what else was to be done? After all that took place? Don't be uneasy; I simply asserted myself as master.

PASTOR.

That is quite a new sensation!

STEIN.

Now I have confronted him with that confounded alternative, before old Wilkens there. Surely, I cannot--confound the rash word!--a word that in my innermost heart I did not mean seriously, and which now becomes fate, because I did not take the pains to keep that word under

control.

PASTOR.

Indeed! it is exceedingly disagreeable for discretion to acknowledge the debts that passion has contracted. Why, in the name of common sense, did you not have your quarrel by yourselves, as usual?

STEIN (_who has been walking up and down_).

No, it will not do. And yet, if I think of those hot-headed boys--Moeller, please send immediately for my Robert; send some one to find him and tell him that I must speak with him.

[_Exit_ MOELLER, _and returns soon_.]

STEIN.

I can't help the obstinate old fellow; this time _he_ must knuckle under. I cannot go back on my word; that he must see himself. And by this time he also may have come to his senses. But in order that he may see that I am ready to do whatever I can toward a reconciliation, without losing my dignity--how would it be, parson, if you went to see him? His post, I dare say, he must resign for the time being; but his present salary he may--yes, he shall draw twice the amount. He may regard it as a pension, until further notice. I should think--after all, his is the chief fault in this business--in this way he is let off easily enough for his share.

PASTOR.

I am going at once.

STEIN.

And I shall accompany you part of the way. I ought not to walk all alone.

[_Exeunt to the left_.]

SCENE V

MOELLER _alone; later, _GODFREY.

MOELLER.

Even if the marriage with Miss Loehlein should not come to pass, at least Stein and Son have asserted themselves. It used to turn my stomach to see how he always was the first to make up. This time I am satisfied with my chief, and will not mind his rebuke. But who is making that noise out there? [_At the door_.] It is lucky that they went through the rooms. It is Godfrey. And in what condition! What sort of man do you call that? [_Leads in _GODFREY, _who is intoxicated_.]

GODFREY (_while still behind the scenes_).

Where is Stein? Hey there, fellow! Stein, I say! Is that you, Moeller?

MOeLLER (_with a patronizing air_).

There can be no doubt that it is you. What do you want here?

GODFREY (_while_ MOeLLER _pushes him down on a chair_).

Thank him, why, I must thank him. Fetch Stein. Thank him, for that's the fashion.

MOeLLER.

In this condition?

GODFREY (_while_ MOeLLER _is obliged to hold him forcibly down on the chair_).

Condition? What's my condition to you? That I want to express my thanks is condition enough. Let me alone with my condition. Is he in? Hey?

MOeLLER.

Nobody is in there. Be glad that nobody is in. You are past all help. You have made up your mind not to get along. Those who have your interest at heart can never do anything for your advantage without your doing something that counteracts their efforts a hundredfold, so that everything is spoiled. My master already repents having given you the post, and now you at once give him an opportunity--

GODFREY.

You stupid fellow, you. With your patronizing air, hang it! As if you did not want to make a break between Stein and Ulrich because of that Loehlein girl. I should know that, even if I were as stupid as that confounded, patronizing fellow of a Moeller. That's all I have to say. And what of it, that I am forester for a day? For it won't be two days before those two cronies are again one heart and one soul; after that it's all over with my forester's job. You think you are a decent fellow, because you are not thirsty. It will last one day--for one day I shall be sp--spite-forester--and that day I have turned to account, my dear fellow--with Ulrich's Andrew--turned to account, my dear fellow. Come, my dear fellow, for I am jolly, my dear fellow. You patronizing fellow of a Moeller. [_Embrace him_]

MOeLLER (_ashamed and very much embarrassed, trying to keep him off_).

For heaven's sake, what are you thinking of? If any one should see this! Shame on you!

[_Making an effort to recover his dignity_]

You have hatched a scheme with Ulrich's Andrew, have you?

GODFREY.

Scheme, scheme! I have had a talk with him, do you know? Because of yesterday, you know? and because of my grudge against his old man, you know? You know nothing, you know? When he hears it he'll bite his white beard with rage, the old man will.

MOeLLER.

But what the deuce could you have put into Andrew's head?

GODFREY.

What? Nothing. You'll learn it soon enough. Hey? Thirst, thirst--that is my wail, that is my chronic ill-health, my misery; that is the cause of my gout; that will kill me while I am still young. Where is Stein?

MOeLLER.

Now come along to my room and drink a cup of black coffee, so that you may recover your senses. Then I must go to the blast-furnace. I'll take you along as far as the mill in the dell, and then you go the rest of the way to your home. One has to tie your hands, if you are not to drive away your good fortune.

GODFREY (_while_ MOeLLER _is leading him off_).

Where is he? Hey, there! Where is he? Stein!

SCENE VI

In the FORESTER's _house_.

SOPHY _alone; then_ WEILER; _and, later, the_ FORESTER.

SOPHY (_closing the window_).

Robert hasn't come back yet, nor the pastor.

WEILER (_entering through the centre door_).

Bless my soul, if he don't come to grief! But who, in thunder, is really forester? I wonder whether the mistress has saved me anything? But, anyhow, I have no appetite. Well!

SOPHY.

I suppose it has become cold by this time.

[_Takes from the oven a plate with food, from the closet bread, etc., and puts it on the table to the left_.]

WEILER.

We shall all be cold some day.

[_Sits down to eat_.]

FORESTER (_has entered from the side_).

Have you found the trail of the stag from Luetzdorf again?

WEILER.

Stalking about. But that's the way it goes. As soon as they are man and wife, master and servant--then love and friendship fly out of the window.

FORESTER.

What do you mean by "stalking about?"

WEILER.

On his four legs he stood by the boundary forest in the oats, and was eating.

FORESTER.

Who?

WEILER.

The stag from Luetzdorf.

FORESTER (*_emphatically_*).

A stag does not--eat; he browses.

WEILER.

All right!

SOPHY (*_waiting on him_*).

But what is your news?

WEILER.

Well--

SOPHY.

I wonder whether I shall hear anything now? If I don't care to know anything, then you never get through talking.

FORESTER (*_stands before him; severely_*).

Weiler, do you hear?

WEILER.

Well, Godfrey. Today he has grown six inches; he immediately put on his laced hat, girded on his hunting knife and drank two bitters and a half dozen glasses of whisky more than usual; in consequence he has need of a road that's broader than the ordinary by half.

FORESTER.

Have you done eating?

WEILER.

Almost. But tell me, who is now the real forester of Duesterwalde? The other fellow is already giving orders to the woodcutters for the clearing, so he must be the forester. But you also act as if you were still forester.

FORESTER.

You may be sure, I still am. I am forester of Duesterwalde, and nobody else.

WEILER.

You intend to carry your point? But I'll tell you who is in the right nowadays [_makes a pantomime of counting money_]--whoever has the longest breath.--Who is coming there in such a hurry?

SCENE VII

WILKENS _enters as hurriedly as his figure permits_. WEILER _eating_;
FORESTER; SOPHY.

WILKENS (_while entering_).

But what in the world has happened here? Good-day to you all.

SOPHY (_alarmed_).

Happened! But for heaven's sake--has anything happened?

FORESTER.

You immediately lose your head.

WILKENS.

You'll see, you obstinate fellow!

SOPHY.

But what is the meaning of all this?

WILKENS.

How should I know? On the road I meet that crazy John, and he is gesticulating with his arms as if he were striking some one, and points in the direction of the forester's house--

FORESTER.

He was pointing toward the forest; he meant to call attention to the clearing--

WILKENS.

I really was going in another direction, but I thought I'd better see. And immediately I see some one standing absorbed in thought, not far

from the house. It's Andrew. You ask him, I say to myself. Well! As he hears me coming he starts up, gives me a wild look, and--is gone. I call after him. Well! It seems he has forgotten his name. I run after him, but he--disappears, as if he had an evil conscience.

SOPHY.

I wonder what that can mean.

FORESTER (_calls out of the window, with authority_).

Andrew!

WILKENS.

There he comes.

SCENE VIII

The same. The PASTOR; WEILER _seated_. WEILER.

It's the pastor! [_All exchange greetings_.]

SOPHY.

God be praised! Our good pastor!

FORESTER.

You are under the impression that you are coming to the betrothal, pastor, but--

PASTOR.

I know all that has been going on here.

FORESTER.

Mr. Stein--

PASTOR.

I have just come from him. And the message I have to give you--I know, you will not receive it less kindly because I am the messenger.

SOPHY.

If you come from Mr. Stein, then everything may still end well. But, pastor, you do not know how obstinate that man is.

PASTOR.

How so? I know everything. But yet he is not the chief culprit; otherwise I should not be here as Stein's ambassador. He is willing to take the first step.

WILKENS.

I should not take it, if I were the master.

PASTOR.

Yes, old friend Ulrich, Stein is sorry that his impetuosity was the cause of spoiling this beautiful day.

FORESTER.

Do you hear that, cousin Wilkens?

PASTOR.

The threat about dismissal was not meant as seriously as it sounded.

FORESTER.

Do you hear, Weiler?

PASTOR.

That the matter should rest there--

FORESTER.

Should rest there? Pray, what does he mean by that?

PASTOR.

He means that he could not retract his word immediately without making himself ridiculous. He thinks you would see this yourself.

FORESTER (_drawing_).

Indeed? And Godfrey?

PASTOR (_shrugs his shoulders_).

Is forester of Duesterwalde for the time being. That cannot be helped--

FORESTER.

That is what you say. But I tell you Godfrey is not. I am the forester of Duesterwalde. That I am, and that I remain, until Mr. Stein proves that I have not acted in accordance with my duty.

PASTOR.

But, in order that you might see how ready he is, for his part, to redress his share of the wrong and to reestablish the old comfortable relation, you are to draw the double amount of your present salary as a pension.

[FORESTER _walks up and down, and whistles_.]

PASTOR.

Thus far my message, old friend; and now--

FORESTER (_stops in front of the pastor_).

For what, sir? Does he think of buying my honor with it? Sir, my honor is not to be bought with money.

[_Walks up and down, and whistles_.]

PASTOR.

But, queer old friend--

WILKENS.

Yes, if he would only listen to one!

FORESTER (_as before_).

Is that pension to be given from charity? I need no charity. I can work. I will have nothing gratis. I accept no alms. I know he cannot dismiss me, if I have not been unfaithful. That I know from several instances--for example, hunter Rupert in Erdmansgruen. If I allowed myself to be dismissed without protest, it would be tantamount to a confession that I were dishonest. Nothing could be proved against Rupert, and he remained in his position. And who will employ a man that has been dismissed? Sir, from my father and grandfather I have inherited my honor, and I owe it to my children and children's children. Before me my father occupied this post, and my grandfather before my father. Throughout the whole valley people call me the Hereditary Forester. I am the first of my race to be dismissed. Go out into my forest, sir, and if it is not a sight to gladden your soul--Sir, I have planted the forest as far as the church-yard. There my father and grandfather lie buried, and upon their tombstones you may read their masters' testimony: "They were honorable men and faithful servants." They are resting under green pine trees, as behooves huntsmen. Sir, and if my grandchild should ever come there and ask: "But why is he who planted the pines not resting under them? Why have we no business there? Was he a scoundrel, that his master had the right to dismiss him?" And when they are looking for my grave, and find it behind the church-yard wall? Sir, if you can live without your honor, it is well for you--or, rather, it is wicked of you. But you see, sir, for me there is only one choice: either by the side of my father and grandfather under the pine trees--or behind the church-yard wall. Sir, I am forester here, or Mr. Stein would be obliged to proclaim publicly that he has treated me as only a scoundrel would treat a man. My money I have spent for his forest. I will take out nothing but the staff with which I shall go forth into the world to seek in my old age a new position. But from me the disgrace must be removed, and to him it must ever remain attached. I am within my right, and I will maintain it. WILKENS. Within your right? Well! What will you do with your right? Right costs money. Right is a plaything for the rich, as horses and carriages. Well! With your talk about right and wrong! Your right, that is your obstinacy. You will even go so far as to snatch the clothes from the bodies of your wife and children, just to keep your obstinacy warm.

PASTOR.

But--

SCENE IX

The same. Enter WILLIAM.

WILLIAM.

Father, Andrew is outside, and refuses to come in. I told him that you had called him.

SOPHY.

Come, William, let us go out to Andrew.

FORESTER.

Keep quiet, woman. Are you going to make him completely crazy with your lamentations? Either you keep quiet, or you go in there, and I shall lock you in.

[_Goes solemnly to the rear door_.]

Andrew! Come in at once! Do you hear?

SCENE X

The same. Enter ANDREW. ANDREW _at the door; when he sees the people he is going to withdraw_.

FORESTER.

Andrew, you come in. Before your superior!

[_Seats himself as if preparing for trial_.]

The FORESTER, SOPHY, WEILER, WILLIAM _on the left. The_ PASTOR, WILKENS _on the right_. ANDREW, _who dares not look any one in the face, in the centre_.

FORESTER.

Come here, forester's assistant Andrew Ulrich. Where do you come from?

ANDREW. From the nursery, father.

FORESTER.

Where is your rifle, Andrew Ulrich?

[ANDREW _is silent_.]

FORESTER.

Who has it?

ANDREW (_in a hollow voice_).

Godfrey.

[FORESTER _rises involuntarily_.]

SOPHY (_in great alarm_).

Ulrich!

FORESTER (_sits down again_).

Here no one has anything to say, except the forester's assistant Ulrich and his superior. Andrew--

ANDREW.

Father--

FORESTER.

Why do you not look at me?

ANDREW.

I no longer can look any one in the face. I want to go to America as cabin-boy. Let me go, father.

FORESTER.

Boy, it is your duty to answer when your superior asks. What is it that Godfrey has? Out with it!

ANDREW.

I was just at my task of taking out the maple trees in the nursery--

FORESTER.

As I had ordered you.

ANDREW.

Then came--

FORESTER.

Godfrey? Go on, Andrew Ulrich.

ANDREW.

With six woodcutters from the Brandsberg--

FORESTER.

From--go on, Andrew Ulrich.

ANDREW.

He was intoxicated--

WEILER (_half audibly_).

As usual--

[_When the forester casts a look at him, he pretends not to have said anything_.]

ANDREW.

And so were the woodcutters. He had them pass the bottle round. "Here we begin," he said. "Ulrich has made a fine mess of it," he said; "for that reason he is dismissed." When he had said that I stepped forward forward--

FORESTER.

You stepped forward?--

[_Rises_.]

ANDREW.

And said he was a miserable slanderer. And that, moreover, he had no business to give orders in the forest.

FORESTER (_straightens himself_).

In the forest.

ANDREW.

And that he should go where he belonged.

FORESTER (_emphatically_).

Where he belonged.

[_Sits down_.]

And he--

ANDREW.

Laughed.

FORESTER (_rises and sits down again; whistles, and drums on the table_).

Go on.

ANDREW.

And said: "What does that fellow want?"

FORESTER (_in a loud voice_).

Andrew!

ANDREW.

Father--

FORESTER.

And you? Go on, go on.

ANDREW.

"Hasn't he plants from my forest in his hand?" [_Lowering his voice._]

"Hold that thief who steals wood and plants."

FORESTER (_short pause_).

And they--

ANDREW.

Held me.

FORESTER.

And you--

ANDREW.

They were too many. My resistance was of no avail--

FORESTER (_acting as if he were present at the fight_).

Was of no avail. They were six against one.

ANDREW.

I was furious when I saw what he intended to do. They took off my clothes. I told him to shoot me, otherwise I would shoot him if he let me escape with my life. At that he laughed. They--had--to hold--me.

FORESTER (_jumps up_).

And he--

ANDREW (_reluctantly, imploring_).

Father--

FORESTER.

And he--he--

ANDREW.

He--

FORESTER (_faintly_).

He--

ANDREW (_beside himself_).

Father, I cannot say it. No man in God's world has ever dared to do that to me!

FORESTER (_drawing a deep breath_).

Be quiet now. Say it later--Andrew.

[_Pause. He passes by ANDREW, who now steps over to SOPHY._]

Fine weather today, pastor. All at once the old rheumatism in my arm begins to bother me again.--And the gnats are flying so low. We shall have a thunderstorm before the day is over.--Andrew, he did--I never did, and a stranger--a--say nothing, Andrew--I understand you.

[_Goes up and down._]

SOPHY (_to ANDREW_).

How unfortunate that you provoked Godfrey yesterday!

WEILER.

Haven't I foretold it?

SOPHY.

You are deathly pale. I will give you some drops--

FORESTER (_drawn up to his full height, stops before_ ANDREW. SOPHY _timidly draws back_).

Listen, Andrew. And you, Weiler.

[WEILER _advances_.]

Open your ears! Whoever comes into my forest with a gun--you challenge him! You understand?

WEILER.

Well, yes.

FORESTER.

Those are your instructions. You challenge him! I am forester, and nobody else, and you are my servants. The master and his son may pass. But whoever else comes into my forest with a gun--do you hear?--be he who he may--whether he wears a green coat or not--he is a poacher, he is to be challenged--"Stop! Down with your gun!" As is provided in the regulations. If he throws it down--all right. If he does not throw it down--fire! As is provided in the regulations. And you, William, go without delay to town to see lawyer Schirmer. You tell him the whole affair. He is to draw up a complaint against Stein and his Godfrey, and

is to file it with the court. Don't forget anything, William: that my father and grandfather held the position; that people call me the Hereditary Forester; the case of Rupert in Erdmansgruen. It probably will not be necessary, but one cannot be too careful. Don't forget that the forest is exposed toward the north and west and that Stein intends to dismiss me because I refuse to act as a scoundrel toward him. If you go now, you can be home before night. Andrew and I will accompany you as far as the Boundary Inn. There Andrew can wait for you in the evening when you return.

[_To_ ANDREW, _who is examining the guns_.]

Take the double-barreled one with the yellow strap, Andrew. I am going to take the other.

ANDREW (_does as told_).

Mother, a muffler; I feel chilly.

SOPHY (_takes one from the closet_).

But you really should stay home, Andrew, after that outrage.

[_Helps him to tie the muffler around his neck_.]

WILKENS.

And you don't see that you are absolutely in the wrong? You will be wilfully blind?

PASTOR.

You wish to begin a suit because of your dismissal? You cannot do that.

FORESTER (_who in the meantime has girded on his hunting knife_).

I cannot do that? Then it is right that he wishes to dismiss me?

PASTOR.

It certainly is unfair; wrong before the tribunal of the heart, but not before the law.

FORESTER.

Whatever is right before the heart must also be right before the law.

PASTOR.

If you would permit me to explain to you--

FORESTER.

Explain? Here everything is clear, except your cobwebs of the brain by means of which those gentlemen would like to puzzle you, so that you might lose confidence in your own common-sense. Those Buts and those Ifs! I know all about that! The Buts and the Ifs--they originate entirely in the head; the heart knows nothing of them; they are the creators of intrigues. Very well, sir, go ahead with your explanation.

But confine yourself to plain Yes and No. Anything outside of that is a nuisance. The Buts and Ifs are a nuisance. Mr. Stein intends to rob me of my honor; he intends to reward my fidelity and my honesty with disgrace; in my sixty-fifth year I am to stand before the world as a scoundrel. Now, Sir, Yes or No--is that right?

PASTOR.

I am to answer Yes or No? Indeed, it is not right in the ordinary sense, but--

FORESTER (_interrupts triumphantly_).

Then it is not right? And if it is not right, it must be wrong. And for this purpose the courts are there, that no wrong shall be done. No man shall make me doubt my good right. And I shall break friendship forever with him who says another word to me about yielding. Amen! If only a But were required to make wrong right, then I would rather live among the savages, then I would rather be the most miserable beast on God's earth than a human being. Are you ready, boys?

ANDREW _and_ WILLIAM.

Yes.

FORESTER.

Come then, boys. Everything else may go to the devil, sir. But right, sir, right must remain right!

[_Exeunt_.]

ACT III

The Boundary Inn.

SCENE I

LINDENSCHMIED; HOST. _Enter_ MOELLER, _after him_ FREI.

MOELLER.

Host, let me have a drink. [_Aside_.] I guess he will find his way home; Godfrey will. From the mill in the Dell it is scarcely a quarter of an hour to his house.--Good evening.

FREI (_still without_).

Let's take a drink while we are passing.

[_Enters_.]

I am going over to the duke's estate. There they are having a jolly time.

HOST.

God save us from that sort of jollity! Your health, Mr. Moeller!

MOeLLER.

Fine company!

HOST.

Will you not take a seat, Mr. Moeller?

MOeLLER.

Thank you. I still have to go to the blast-furnace this evening; my men have gone ahead.

[_Aside, while putting the glass to his lips_.]

To the happy consummation of the marriage with Loehlein and Co!

FREI.

Over yonder things are going topsy-turvy, and with us here the crisis will come today or tomorrow. The Hereditary Forester has already barricaded himself in his house.

HOST.

Nonsense! He! He is conscientiousness personified!

FREI.

One is conscientious as long as it pays. That man is a fool who remains so one hour longer. He or his people are going to shoot Godfrey wherever they find him.

[_Makes a gesture_.]

And the Hereditary Forester does not waste many words. In that respect I know the old fellow with his white moustache.

LINDENSCHMIED (_laughing hoarsely_).

Is that so?

FREI (_looks at him_).

Do you mean to say you are going to take Godfrey's part? Hey, Lindenschmied?

LINDENSCHMIED (_as before_).

Godfrey's--

FREI.

Every child knows how much you love him!

LINDENSCHMIED (_with a gesture, as before_).

Ha! Ha!

FREI.

Weiler himself heard the Hereditary Forester say it. And, I tell you, what the Hereditary Forester says--that's as good as if another fellow had already done it.

LINDENSCHMIED.

He'll look out for his skin, the Hereditary Forester will.

[_Softly._]

If there were no judges that sit around the green table, and if there were no--

[_Indicates by a pantomime that he means the hangman._]

FREI.

His reign is at an end. He--For now it is

[_Strikes the table._]

Liberty! Long life to the Hereditary Forester! And whoever has any evil intentions toward him--I am alluding to no one--

MOELLER (_hurriedly_).

Here, host. Almost eight o'clock!

HOST.

Are you in such a hurry, Mr. Moeller?

MOELLER.

At the blast-furnace they are waiting for me.

HOST.

Your change--

MOELLER (_already at the door_).

Never mind! Credit it to me for tomorrow.

[_Exit._]

SCENE II

LINDENSCHMIED; HOST; FREI.

FREI (_rises, shaking his fist after him_).

Nothing shall be credited to you and fellows of your kind. Everything shall be paid to you. Lindenschmied, are you coming along to the duke's estate?

LINDENSCHMIED.

I'm going my own way. [_Advances._]

Those judges around the green table! The idea, that an honest fellow should be frightened when a leaf rustles, and look behind him to see whether the constable isn't after him!

FREI.

We'll knock it down--the green table--I tell you. We'll see to it that in ten years from now nobody will be able to get any information as to what sort of thing a constable ever was. Now it is Liberty, and Order has ceased to exist: everybody can do what he pleases. No more constables, no green table, I tell you. No tower, no chains. If the Lord had created the hares expressly for the nobleman, he would at once have stamped his coat of arms into their fur. That would have been an easy matter for a person like the Lord. Now men know that those who are in prisons are martyrs worthy of veneration, and that the noblemen are rascals, be they ever so honest. And the industrious people are rascals, for it is their fault that honest people who do not like to work are poor. That you can read printed in the newspapers. And if the Hereditary Forester gets hold of Godfrey [_pantomime_] nobody can hurt him for that; for Godfrey got honest people into prison, when they had stolen.

LINDENSCHMIED.

And he will not be punished? No? And another fellow neither, if he does it?

FREI.

Another fellow neither, I tell you. Over yonder the honest people set fire to the castle and plundered it; several people lost their lives in the affair; nobody cares a fig. Lucky he who now has an old grudge. And Ulrich need not run far. Godfrey is reeling around there in the Dell; he's lost his hat--

LINDENSCHMIED (_puts his hands with convulsive haste into his pockets_).

And nothing--absolutely nothing--not even a blunt knife about me!

SCENE III

The same. Enter ANDREW.

ANDREW (_entering_).

Isn't it close in here! [_Takes off his muffler._] Good evening.

[_Wraps the muffler around the lock of the gun, and puts the gun next to him against the wall._]

I advise every one not to touch this; the gun is loaded.

[To the host.]

I do not know what is the matter with me. All at once I began to feel so badly out there. I was going to wait for my brother at the boundary.
HOST.

Make yourself at home, Mr. Andrew.

ANDREW.

I suppose William has not yet come.

[Throws himself on a bench, puts his arms upon the table and rests his head upon them.]

FREI (_rattles his glass on the table_).

Let me have another one, host. And it is a favor that I now drink in your place, when you still charge for it. In a week from now you will have to provide the stuff, and no honest man need pay you a penny for it, I tell you.

LINDENSCHMIED (_from this point on incessantly casting furtive glances sometimes at_ ANDREW, _sometimes at the gun_).

If he would only go to sleep--that fellow!

[Leaning across the table, secretly to_ FREI.]

There in the Dell, you say?--And are you quite sure, Frei, that nothing will be punished any longer?

FREI.

Superstition, I tell you! If you do something, and they hang you, you may call me a rascal for the rest of your life. Look here! What formerly was called fidelity and honesty, that's a tale with which old grannies used to humbug us. And a fellow that keeps his word is a scoundrel; such a one I would not trust as far as the door. The common people are essentially honest, because they are the common people. You ought to hear those gentlemen over there talk; there was a professor among them; he ought to know.

LINDENSCHMIED (_leads him aside_).

But what about conscience? And about the hereafter?

FREI.

All superstition! Nothing else, let me tell you.

LINDENSCHMIED.

That's what I always thought. But formerly a person was not allowed to say such things.

FREI.

They humbugged people with heaven and hell, so that our noble and gracious master might keep his hares all to himself. They have drummed a conscience into poor people in their childhood, so that they should submit patiently when the rich are living in luxury and extravagance.

LINDENSCHMIED.

And he is in the Dell?

[HOST _becomes attentive._]

FREI.

Who?

LINDENSCHMIED.

That--

[_Buttons his coat._]

FREI.

Where are you going?

LINDENSCHMIED.

To pay debts before another day comes.

[_While he watches_ ANDREW _furtively, he fumbles with his left hand in his vest-pocket, in order to pay the host_.]

Why, I can't get it out with--

FREI.

The fingers of your left hand are stiff.

LINDENSCHMIED (_with a pantomime_).

Those of my right will soon become crooked.

FREI.

Have you had a stroke?

LINDENSCHMIED (_laughing hoarsely_).

Yes, a leaden one. Two ounces of powder and three of buckshot.

[_Constantly speaks in a subdued voice, so as not to awaken_ ANDREW.]
A memorandum from that fellow in the Dell.

FREI.

From Godfrey?

LINDENSCHMIED.

Because I coined money out of the deer belonging to the owner of Strahlau. There was enough uncoined money running about in the forest.

FREI.

Let me have another one, host.

[Holds out his glass.]

LINDENSCHMIED (lost in thought, alone in the foreground).

Six times I ran out where he was to pass; but he did not come. At that time conscience was still the fashion. Then I thought: "It is not to be now," and postponed it to some time when he should come along by accident, so that I should be obliged to see that it was to be. For whole nights it choked me like a nightmare and wasted my body, that I should not lay hands on him, and now--ha! ha! ha!

[Gives a short convulsive laugh, thus rousing himself out of his thoughts; looks around embarrassed.]

FREI.

Did you laugh, Lindenschmied?

LINDENSCHMIED.

I don't know whether it was me.

FREI.

You have a queer laugh. Are you going along, Lindenschmied, into the ducal territory?

LINDENSCHMIED (slaps him on the shoulder).

Man, now we have liberty! I have my own way.

FREI.

I don't care.

[Steps to the background to the host.]

What do I owe you on this last occasion that it is necessary to pay? There; give me change.

HOST.

You have had three, four--

[LINDENSCHMIED has availed himself of the moment when no one is looking at him to take away ANDREW'S gun furtively, and hurries out with it.]

FREI.

What is the time, host?

HOST.

Past eight.

FREI (_going out_).

Good-by.

SCENE IV

HOST; ANDREW.

ANDREW (_starts up_).

Eight? Now William may come.

HOST (_approaches_ ANDREW _timidly_).

You are an honest man. To you I may unburden my mind. They are an abominable set--those that just left. They let fall some words. Godfrey is drunk in the Dell, and Lindenschmied, his mortal enemy, has gone after him. And what didn't he say! He was talking of making his fingers crooked. And that fellow is capable of everything!

ANDREW.

You believe Lindenschmied intends to have Godfrey's life?

HOST.

I have said nothing. If I expose their plot, they will burn my house over my head. And if I do nothing--

[_Walks up and down_.]

ANDREW (_was about to rise, but sits down again_).

To save that fellow? Let happen to him what God permits. I will not turn a finger to save him.

HOST (_as before_).

What shall I do?

ANDREW.

Father says: When a person is in distress every decent man must come to his assistance, and when it's all over he may ask: Whom did I assist?

[Illustration: MOSES ON MT. SINAI SCHNORR VON CAROLSFELD].

HOST.

Perhaps I had better inform? But--

ANDREW (_rises with sudden decision_).

I am going. I will see whether I can find Godfrey. I am sure nothing will happen to William. It is only a few steps from here to the house. What am I looking for? My muffler. There in my temples something is hammering and buzzing. What did I do with it? I tied it around the gun.

[_When he cannot find it_.]

But where is my gun?

HOST.

You miss your gun?

ANDREW.

I put it right here. The one with the yellow strap.

HOST.

Only a moment ago I saw it standing there.

ANDREW.

Did you take it up, perhaps?

HOST.

I? I have not touched it. Good heavens! If Lindenschmied--you were resting, and I was just counting. What is to be done?

ANDREW.

Nothing. I go without my gun. I have no time to get another one from home.

HOST.

But unarmed--

ANDREW.

Never mind! If that pain in my chest only does not become worse.

[_At the door_.]

I only hope I shall not be too late.

[_From without_.]

Good-night, host.

[_Exeunt both_.]

SCENE V

In the Dell. Picturesque forest glen; in the background the brook right across the stage; on the other side rocks, along which a steep, narrow path runs parallel with the brook. Twilight.

Enter ROBERT _with a gun on his shoulder_; KATHARINE.

KATHARINE.

How gruesome it is here! We have gone a long way from the mansion. Where are we now, Mr. Robert?

ROBERT.

In the Dell, Katharine.

KATHARINE.

In the Dell? Where one is never safe? Where there are always poachers from across the Duchy's frontier?

[_Looks about timidly_.]

ROBERT.

Don't be afraid, little one. We have a reliable companion with us--

[_Putting his hand on his gun_.]

Do you see over there?

KATHARINE.

Something glimmering like a white wall with dark shutters--

ROBERT.

That is the forester's house.

KATHARINE.

Really? Yes, thank heaven! Now I see the stag's horns on the roof-tree outlined against the evening sky.

ROBERT.

Here is the letter. But you must not carry it so openly in your hand. Have you thought of some pretext, in case the old man should meet you?

KATHARINE (_bashful, and smiling with self-satisfaction_).

Oh, Mr. Robert, do you suppose a girl is so stupid? Don't worry about that. My little sisters take knitting and sewing lessons from the young lady--so--

ROBERT (_folds the letter, which he was reading_).

Here it is, Katharine. But give that letter only into Mary's or her mother's hands; to no one else, neither to Andrew nor William. Only into her own or her mother's hands.

KATHARINE.

But must I go all alone so far?

ROBERT.

It is scarcely two gunshots. Nobody must see me in the vicinity of the forester's house. When you go home, you follow the road. Only in case you should not succeed in delivering the letter come back.

KATHARINE.

But surely you will not go away?

ROBERT.

No, Katharine, I shall remain here.

[Exit KATHARINE.]

SCENE VI

ROBERT, _alone; later_, GODFREY; finally MOELLER _with two workingmen_.

ROBERT (_looks for some time after KATHARINE; _then walks up and down_).

I wonder whether she will come? Whether she will leave her father for my sake?

[Stops_.]

I shall go into the world as a hunter. I am young, strong, and understand my profession thoroughly--why should I not succeed?

[Losing himself in thought_.]

And then--when I come home from the forest--healthily tired out by my work in the open air--and she has been watching for me--and comes to meet me--and takes my gun, so as to have something to carry--and hangs it on her shoulder--and my hunter's house standing like that one yonder--the trees rustling--and I holding her in my arms, exclaiming jubilantly: Only that happiness is happiness which one owes to one's own efforts!--And then--

[The report of a gun is heard, and startles him_.]

GODFREY (_still behind the scenes, groaning_).

Scoundrel!

ROBERT.

What is that?

GODFREY (_staggers upon the scene_; ROBERT _hurries toward him and

catches him just as he is falling down_).

I--am--done for--

ROBERT.

Godfrey! For heaven's sake! Has some one shot you? Hallo! Is nobody near? Hallo! Help!

MOeLLER (_behind the scenes_).

Hurry up, men! Over there! The shouting comes from the path!

ROBERT.

People are coming. Come here, come here! Help!

MOeLLER (_as before_).

That is Mr. Robert's voice.

ROBERT.

If help is to be of any avail here, it must come quickly.

[_Opens_ GODFREY'S _coat and vest_.]

MOeLLER.

To be sure, it is you, Mr. Stein.

[_Enters with two workingmen_.]

But--

ROBERT.

Moeller, is that you? Look here what has happened!--Are you still alive, Godfrey?

GODFREY.

Still--but--

MOeLLER (_coming up_).

Godfrey! Merciful heavens!

ROBERT.

Shot from ambush. The bullet entered at the back.

MOeLLER.

Godfrey, speak! Who did it?

GODFREY.

He had--the rifle--with the yellow strap--

ROBERT.

Andrew's rifle?

GODFREY.

He--threatened--to shoot me--

ROBERT.

It is not possible.

MOELLER.

Was it Andrew, Godfrey?

GODFREY.

Andrew--yes--

MOELLER.

He is dying.

[Pause.]

Take him up, men. And you, Mr. Stein--this here is a nest of murderers. Come along. There are others about here lying in ambush. Just now we met Weiler with a gun--that vicious fellow. He was out spying, that's clear. It is a regular hunt. Come along! But, for heaven's sake, why will you not--

ROBERT.

Never mind! Go ahead.

MOELLER.

But what do you intend to do? And your father--if I leave you alone in danger--if I do not bring you home with me! How will he ever believe me, that I tried to persuade you?

ROBERT.

Why, you have witnesses here with you. When I say a thing I mean it--I am going to stay here.

[Walks up and down in agitation.]

MOELLER.

Well, come along, men. You have heard it.

[While going out.]

Good heavens! How will it all end?

[The men have lifted up the corpse; exeunt with_ MOELLER.]

SCENE VII

ROBERT, *_alone;* then *_ANDREW;* *_finally_* LINDENSCHMIED.

ROBERT.

Disgraceful! Disgraceful! Could it be possible that Andrew was capable of this kind of revenge? And I must believe it--I must! The dying man said it; he had threatened him with it--it was his gun--and all this is real--here the murdered man died--here is--with his blood he wrote it in the turf, so that I can have no doubt. And such men stand between me and my happiness? Take a firm stand, Robert; here everything is at stake. You are dealing with men who are afraid of no crime. Who comes there? It is Andrew himself. [*_Shouting to_ ANDREW, _who is not yet visible_.*] Come on! If you are looking for me, murderer! You shall not find me defenseless and unwary as Godfrey--

ANDREW (*_entering, pale and tottering_*).

Godfrey?--

ROBERT.

There they carry him. He has been murdered, and you have done it.

ANDREW (*_angrily_*).

I, Robert?

ROBERT.

The murdered man recognized you and your gun--and your conscience betrays you.

ANDREW.

Hear me--for God's sake!

[*LINDENSCHMIED _comes stealing along the rocky path in the background_.*]

ROBERT.

Flee, murderer! Every step carries you nearer the gallows! Here is the blood that accuses you, and you yourself carry the confession on your pale face. The fever that shakes you testifies against you.

ANDREW.

May the fever rack your bones, shameless liar! The gun was stolen from me by Lindenschmied, who was on the lookout for Godfrey. I hurried after him as soon as I learned it. I fell in a swoon--by sheer will-force I recovered from the swoon--and--

ROBERT.

You say it is Lindenschmied who--

ANDREW.

If you do not believe me, look there toward the rocky path--

ROBERT.

Murderer, stand! Or I shoot you down!

[LINDENSCHMIED _hurries across the stage on the rocky path._ ROBERT
follows him below.]

ANDREW (_totters after him_).

Be careful, Robert! The man is desperate--it is a matter of life and death.

LINDENSCHMIED.

Stand back! I'll shoot.

ROBERT (_also behind the scenes_).

Down with your gun, and stand!

ANDREW.

He is taking aim--jump aside, Robert!

[_Two shots are heard in succession_.]

Now it is done!

[_Disappears in the bushes_.]

* * * * *

SCENE VIII

The Manor House.

Enter STEIN, _uneasy; then_ BASTIAN; _later, the_ PASTOR.

STEIN.

I wonder whether Moeller forgot to send some one to look for Robert? Or should the boy--that quarrel with Andrew! Bastian!

[BASTIAN _appears at the door_.]

Where is the bookkeeper?

BASTIAN.

Toward evening he went to the blast-furnace.

STEIN.

Hasn't Robert been home again since noon?

BASTIAN.

Mr. Robert made preparations for a journey, and then went away with Katharine, the Steward's daughter.

[STEIN _makes a sign of dismissal. Exit_ BASTIAN.]

STEIN.

And the pastor--he might have been back long ago.

BASTIAN (_at the door_). The pastor.

STEIN. In the nick of time!

[_The_ PASTOR _appears_.]

STEIN (_shakes hands with him_).

At last! At last! Have you good news?

PASTOR (_shrugging his shoulders_).

It might be better.

STEIN.

Did you meet that hothead, Robert?

PASTOR.

No.

STEIN.

I was in hopes, because you stayed away so long, that you would bring him with you.

PASTOR.

A sick person, to whom I was called while on my way to you, kept me until now.

STEIN.

Then fancy that you are coming from a sick person to one more seriously sick. If impatience, dissatisfaction with oneself, evil presentiments, were diseases, then I should be a dangerous patient.--But your answer--I don't even give you time to catch your breath. [_Motions to him to take a seat; sits down, but rises again_.] If at least I could remain seated! Six times I mechanically took my hat in my hand; to that extent my old habit of being together with the forester makes my hands and feet twitch worse than the gout. In the meantime a thought struck me--but first of all: How do matters stand with the obstinate old fellow?

PASTOR.

Your offer did not exactly meet with the kindest reception. And yet, who knows whether, after all, he had not agreed to it, if unfortunately the affair with Andrew--

STEIN.

With Andrew? What affair?

[_Jumps up_.]

You don't mean to say he has come to blows with Robert?

PASTOR.

This time only with Godfrey--

STEIN (_sits down again_).

You see I am trembling with impatience.

PASTOR.

Godfrey, intoxicated as usual, treated him like a prowling thief, had him whipped--

[STEIN _jumps up again_.]

PASTOR.

Then it was no wonder that the old man would no longer listen to anything, and gave orders to treat as a poacher every one, except you, who enters the forest with a gun.

STEIN (_who has been walking up and down_).

Bastian!

[BASTIAN _appears at the door_.]

As soon as Moeller comes the scoundrel shall be deposed, the brute shall be locked up--do you hear?

BASTIAN.

The bookkeeper?

STEIN.

Godfrey--and Moeller with him, if he--come, pastor.

[_Takes his hat and cane. Exit_ BASTIAN.]

PASTOR.

You intend--

STEIN.

You ask?--I am going to the old man! I am going to brush away those caprices in spite of all Wilkens and Moellers!

PASTOR.

That's right! I am with you. [_Rises_.]

STEIN (_stops_).

Wait a moment, parson. Am I to have had that good idea in vain? Listen, what came into my mind a little while ago--as if straight from heaven! Parson, what do you say if this very day I should transfer Duesterwalde to Robert as his own independent property? He could reinstate the old man with all honors, and nobody's dignity would be hurt. I shall immediately draw up the deed of transfer. Go quickly to the forester's house, parson.

PASTOR.

With this message--

STEIN.

Before the old man, or the hotheaded boys, or all three, do something impetuous which--

[_Makes preparations for writing_.]

PASTOR.

And tomorrow--

STEIN.

As if today had never been--

PASTOR.

Mr. Stein comes as usual around the corner of the forester's house and knocks at the window, and the white moustache inside grunts his "Immediately--"

STEIN.

And if you meet Robert--

PASTOR.

I shall be the first one to congratulate the new proprietor of Duesterwalde.

STEIN.

And today you bring them all along--the old man, the boys, the mother and the bride. Then[_advances to the pastor at the door_], as a preliminary celebration we'll crack a bottle of my oldest Johannisberger. But what is the matter out there? Who comes rushing up the stairs?

[At the door_] What has happened?

SCENE IX

The same: MOELLER, _then_ BASTIAN.

MOELLER (_comes in, beside himself_).

Horrible! Horrible!

STEIN.

But what is the matter?

MOELLER.

A murder!--A dreadful murder!

STEIN.

But, man alive, speak--

MOELLER.

Mr. Robert--

STEIN. My son!

[Falls into a chair_.]

PASTOR.

Has Robert been murdered?

[Goes anxiously up to_ STEIN.]

Enter BASTIAN.

MOELLER.

Not yet. Not yet, I hope. But--I am quite beside myself. Ulrich's Andrew has already shot and killed Godfrey. Those from the forester's house have instituted a regular hunt for their enemies. I had Godfrey carried home. He looks horrible. The bullet entered at the left side of the spine. He died in Mr. Robert's arms. I asked him: Was it Andrew, Godfrey? It was Andrew, he said--it was Andrew--and lay down a dead man. I implored Mr. Robert to come home for God's sake; he was quite beside himself, and would not come. And I had not gone two hundred steps with my men, when two more shots were fired behind us.

STEIN (_rises, beside himself_).

Mount your horse at once--ride till it drops dead--only be quick--get soldiers from the town--surround the whole forest--catch that murderer's band from the forester's house! You, Bastian, get quickly my Luettich rifle, the one that's loaded--then call the workingmen--have them armed--to--where was it, Moeller?

MOELLER.

At the first bridge--in the Dell, scarcely ten minutes beyond the forester's house.

PASTOR.

God grant that the worst may still be prevented!

STEIN (_stamps his foot_).

Bastian! Bastian! Why are you still standing there! Make haste!

[_Exit_ MOELLER.]

And I--while--Bastian!

[BASTIAN _brings the rifle_. STEIN _tears it from him_.]

I am coming!
Robert, hold your own! I am coming!

[_Exeunt omnes_.]

ACT IV

Twilight. The FORESTER'S _House._

SCENE I

WILKENS; SOPHY.

WILKENS.

Your husband has been dismissed. There is no doubt about that. And if he desires to remain here he is going just the wrong way about it. Stein certainly cannot afford to allow Ulrich to gain his point by defiance and revolt. Godfrey now is forester. Well, Godfrey is a brutal fellow; but here he is in the right. If now they should come together, your husband and Godfrey? And each is going to treat the other as a poacher? Or if Godfrey should come across Andrew once more? And if he does what his father commanded him? Or if Andrew and young Stein come together? Well? And viewed in the most charitable light, Ulrich is a dismissed man, whom nobody will wish to employ after this open rebellion of which he has been guilty. And what is then to become of you and your children?

SOPHY.

I am sure you will not withdraw your aid from us. If you would only talk to him once more!

WILKENS.

After the trump that he has played? Even if it were not for that, I value my breath too much to preach to deaf ears. You and your children must leave him. That I said to myself a little while ago, while on my way, and made a solemn resolution to bring this about; and I came back to tell you. Before you have a corpse or a murderer in the house--

SOPHY (_throws up her hands in terror_).

Matters surely cannot come to that pass!

WILKENS.

Well. I see you'll risk it. You also are a queer mother. But I am not so indifferent as you, and I will not have a catastrophe on my conscience, if I can prevent it. I have most to lose by this. To be brief: If you leave him and come with your children to me, I shall have it settled that very hour that you and your children are to be my heirs. Till tomorrow noon you have plenty of time to consider the matter. If by noon tomorrow you are at the Boundary Inn, where I will wait for you, then we'll go at once into town to the notary; if you are not there--all right also. But I'll be a scoundrel--and you know I am as good as my word--and cursed be my hand, if after that it ever gives a piece of bread either to you or your children.

[_Exit_.]

SOPHY (_quite overcome; then follows him anxiously and hastily_).

But, cousin! Cousin Wilkens!

SCENE II

MARY _alone; then_ SOPHY _returning_.

MARY (_has a letter in her hand_).

Why did I take it till I had considered matters?--and then I had it in my hand. And Katharine, too, was so quickly gone!--I should not have taken it!

SOPHY (_reappearing_).

Those cruel men! Prayers avail nothing. What have you there, Mary?

MARY.

A letter from Robert.

SOPHY.

If your father should see that!

MARY.

I cannot understand at all how I came to accept it; but I felt so sorry for Robert. Katharine told me he was down in the Dell, and waiting. Then I again recollected my dream of last night.

SOPHY.

A dream?

MARY.

I dreamt I was at the spring among the willows in my favorite spot, and was sitting among the many colored flowers and looking up into the sky. There I saw a thunder-storm, and I became as depressed as if I were to die. And the child, you know, the one that had been with me fourteen years ago when I lost my way, was sitting beside me and said: Poor Mary! and pulled the bridal wreath out of my hair, and in place of it fastened to my bosom a large blood-red rose. Then I fell backwards into the grass, I knew not how. Yonder in the village the bells were ringing, and the singing of the birds, the chirping of the crickets, the soft evening breeze in the willows above me--all that seemed like a lullaby. And the turf sank down with me lower and ever lower, and the chimes and the singing sounded ever more distant--the sky became blue once more, and I felt so light and free--

SOPHY.

A strange dream! Have you opened the letter?

MARY.

No, mother. And I do not wish to do so.

SOPHY.

At least don't let your father see it. Alas, Mary! we shall be obliged to leave your father!

MARY.

Leave father? We?

SOPHY.

He is coming. Do not betray anything! Put away the letter. Put the Bible there before you, so that he may not suspect anything. I will try once more--if he thinks we are going away, he perhaps may yet give in, and we may stay.

SCENE III

The stage is becoming darker and darker.

The FORESTER; SOPHY; MARY.

FORESTER.

William not yet back?

SOPHY.

I have not seen him.

[FORESTER _steps to the window, and, lost in thought, drums against the panes_. SOPHY _begins packing_.]

MARY.

But, mother--

SOPHY.

Be quiet now, Mary, and don't take part in the conversation.

FORESTER (_has turned around and watched his wife for some time_).

What are you doing there?

SOPHY (_without looking up_).

I am packing some dresses--if I have to go away--

FORESTER.

We don't have to go. There is a law to prevent that.

SOPHY (_shaking her head_). _Your_ law? [_Continues packing_.]

I shall be obliged to go away with the children.

FORESTER (_surprised_).

You are going to--

SOPHY.

If you don't come to terms with Stein--

FORESTER.

If--

SOPHY.

You need not get angry, Ulrich. You cannot act otherwise, and neither can I. I do not reproach you; I say nothing, absolutely nothing. You persist in regarding as your enemy whoever counsels you to yield--and cousin Wilkens is going to disinherit the children if you remain obstinate, and if I and the children are not in his house by noon tomorrow. Under the circumstances I can do nothing but go in silence.

FORESTER (_drawing a deep breath_).

You wish--

SOPHY. I wish nothing. You wish and cousin Wilkens wishes. You cruel men decree our fate, and--we must bear it. If you would give in, then, indeed, we might stay. Do you believe I am going with a light heart? As far as I am concerned, I should be willing to stand by you till death. But for the children's sake and--for your sake also.

FORESTER (_gloomily_).

How for my sake?

SOPHY.

You are dismissed, you have no resources; and another position at your age--after your affair with Stein--you might--

FORESTER (_violently_).

Accept charity? For my wife and children?

SOPHY.

Don't become angry. I don't say: Yield. I will press nothing upon you. You cannot yield, and I--cannot remain--unless you yield. If we must part [_Her voice shakes_]--then let us part amicably. Let us forgive each other for what one party does against the interests of the other, or [_with gentle reproach_]--for what the other party thinks is being done against his interests.

FORESTER.

You intend, then, going to Wilkens?

SOPHY.

I must.

FORESTER.

And the children are to go also?

SOPHY.

It is for their sake that I go.

FORESTER.

Will you not also take Nero along? Out there? The dog? Why should the dog remain longer with his dismissed master? Take the dog along. And when I get my rights, as I am bound to get them--and stand before the world no longer as a scoundrel--then--why, then the dog may come back again. You think he is not going to leave me? Surely the dumb beast is not going to be more stupid than human beings are? Wife and children are prudent, and only such a poor beast is going to be stupid? One ought to kick the beast for such stupidity. An old man, a ruined man, who in his old age would be branded as a scoundrel, if Stein had his will, and such a beast refuses to see reason? After fifty years of faithful service thrown out of my position as a scoundrel, because I refuse to be a scoundrel--and I have sacrificed my own money into the bargain, and the poor beast in its kennel is going to show more gratitude than the rich Stein in his mansion? In that case one should simply blow out the brains of the whole brood of beasts, if they served no other purpose but to make man bow his head in shame before them. [_Walks up and down; turns to her with emotion_.] We are to be two? After twenty-five years?--Very well! Then from now on may each suffer alone--as long as the heart holds

out!

SOPHY.

Ulrich--

[_She is obliged to restrain_ MARY, _who wishes to throw herself at the_ FORESTER's _feet_].

FORESTER.

From now on we are two. Go away! Go away! Wilkens is rich, and I am a poor man in spite of my right. You're going after the money. I'll not prevent you. But if you say you have acted rightly--then--and now the matter is disposed of. Not one more word about it.

SCENE IV

The same. Enter WILLIAM.

FORESTER (_seated on the right of the stage_).

Come here, William. Where did you leave Andrew?

WILLIAM.

I waited for him a quarter of an hour at the Boundary Inn.

FORESTER.

Perhaps he thought you were coming later--

SOPHY (_aside_).

Andrew has not come back with him? I can't get my uncle's words out of my head.

[MARY _lights the lamp and puts it on the table by the_ FORESTER.]

FORESTER.

Did you ask the lawyer how long it would be before the matter is settled? Till I have my rights?

WILLIAM.

He refuses to institute proceedings.

SOPHY (_drawing a deep breath; aside_).

Then there is still some hope left!

FORESTER (_rises; quite perplexed_).

He refuses--

WILLIAM.

He says you are not in the right, father.

FORESTER.

Not in the right?

[_Is obliged to sit down_.]

SOPHY (_as before_).

If he only would yield.

WILLIAM.

He said state officials could not be deposed, unless it could be proved against them that they deserved it. But you were not a state official; your master was not the state, but he who owned the forest, the owner of the estate.

FORESTER (_with suppressed anger_).

Then, if I were an official of the state, Stein would not be allowed to do me an injustice. And because I am not, he is allowed to brand me as a scoundrel?--You did not understand him rightly, William!

WILLIAM.

He repeated it to me three times--

FORESTER.

Because you did not represent the matter to him as it is--that already your great-grandfather had been forester of Duesterwalde, and your grandfather after him, and that for forty years, throughout the whole valley, people have called me the Hereditary Forester.

WILLIAM.

That, he said, was an honor to both masters and servants; but before the court nothing could be based on it.

FORESTER.

But he does not know that Stein wants to depose me, because I had his best interests at heart, that the forest is exposed on the north and west. A lawyer does not know that a forest is like a vault, where one stone always holds and supports the others. Thus the vault can withstand any force, but take out only a dozen stones from the centre, and the whole thing comes tumbling about your ears.

WILLIAM.

At such arguments he only shrugged his shoulders.

FORESTER (_growing more excited_).

And my money that I have put into it? And all the trees that I planted with my own hands? Hey? Which the wind now shall wantonly break?

WILLIAM.

At that he only smiled. He said you might be a very honest man, but in court that would prove nothing.

FORESTER (_rises_).

If one is an honest man, that proves nothing? Then one must be a rascal, if he is to prove anything in court?--But how about Rupert of Erdmansgruen--hey, William?

WILLIAM.

He happened to have been a state official. After I had left him, I even went to another lawyer. This man laughed right in my face. But to that fellow I spoke my mind like a hunter's son.

FORESTER.

You did well. But what about Andrew? Hey?

WILLIAM.

He said that you had been deposed at the time that Andrew went into the forest. You ought to know yourself that no stranger is allowed to take plants from a forest according to his own inclination, without the knowledge and consent of the forester. That then Godfrey was the lawful forester, and consequently Andrew had no one to blame but himself, if he was treated as a poacher. And that Andrew himself must understand it would be wiser to take his punishment quietly, and not stir up the matter any further; and he might be glad to have come off so easily.

[_The_ FORESTER _has seated himself again; pauses; then whistles, and drums on the table_.]

SOPHY (_watching him with anxiety_).

When he becomes so calm--

FORESTER.

So I must remain a scoundrel before the world? Very well!--Why don't you pack your things, you women-folk? William, get me a bottle of wine.

SOPHY.

You are going to drink wine? And you know it is not good for you, Ulrich? And just now, in your present state of vexation--

FORESTER.

I must get my mind off the subject.

SOPHY.

You always become so excited after wine. If you drink now it may be your death.

FORESTER.

Better to drink oneself to death than live as a scoundrel! And a scoundrel I must remain before the world. William, a bottle and a glass. Have matters come to that pass, that I am no longer master in my own house? Hurry up, there!

[_Exit_ WILLIAM.]

SOPHY.

If only you would change your mind! But you will not do it, and--I must leave you.

FORESTER.

That matter is settled, woman, and my resolution is taken. None of your lamentations! Tomorrow I am going. Since I am not an official of the State and--today I intend to be right jolly.

[WILLIAM _brings wine; the_ FORESTER _pours out and drinks repeatedly, every time a full glass. Between glasses he whistles and drums_.]

FORESTER.

Put that light away, so that I may not see my shadow.

[WILLIAM _puts the lamp on the table near the women, seats himself by them and takes the still opened Bible before him_.]

SOPHY (_aside and to Mary_).

Andrew still stays out, and it has been dark for a long while. And tomorrow I must go. Now I say indeed: I must go; and yet I am not sure that, when the moment comes, I shall have the strength of mind to carry out my intention--after we have lived together for twenty years, sharing joys and sorrows! And to say farewell to the forest with its green leaves which all day long looks into every window! How still it will seem to us, when during the entire day we no longer shall hear the rustling of the trees, the singing of the birds, and the sound of the wood-cutter's ax. And the old cuckoo-clock there--it was ticking when I was a bride, and now you too have been betrothed here! There in that corner you raised yourself on your feet for the first time, Mary, and began to walk, and took three steps; and there where your father is sitting, I sat and wept for joy. Is that what life is? An everlasting bidding farewell? If, after all, I were to remain? And yet when I think of all the things uncle said might happen! If Robert's letter--William, please go into the garden. I must have left the glass by the spring, or in the arbor or somewhere thereabouts.

[_Exit_ WILLIAM.]

SCENE V

The same, without WILLIAM. SOPHY _and_ MARY _in front of the stage busied with the lamp. The_ FORESTER _sometimes seated in the rear, sometimes walking up and down past the table to the window_.

SOPHY (_having waited till_ WILLIAM _is out_).

Suppose you find out what Robert has been writing.

MARY.

You mean I should open the letter, mother?

SOPHY.

Perhaps everything can still be arranged, and Robert writes us how. If you will not open it, give me the letter. If I do it, you have nothing to reproach yourself for.

[_Opens it_.]

If I only could read by lamp-light. If I put on my spectacles, he would notice it. Read it to me, Mary.

MARY.

You want me to read it, mother?

SOPHY.

If I give you permission, you may surely do so. Put it there next to the Bible. And if he comes near, or his attention is attracted, you read from the Bible.

MARY.

But what?

SOPHY.

Whatever your eyes light upon. If I cough, you read from the Bible. First the letter.

MARY (_reads_).

"Dear Mary. I have so much to--

SOPHY.

He is getting up again from his chair. Read from the Bible till he is at the window.

MARY.

"Breach for breach, eye for eye, tooth for tooth: as he hath caused a blemish in a man, so shall it be done to him again."

[FORESTER _drums on the window_.]

SOPHY (_constantly watching him_).

Now the letter, Mary. Till I cough.

MARY.

"I have so much to tell you. Sometime during the evening or the night come to the Dell by the spring under the willows. There I shall wait for you. Come, Mary. Tomorrow morning I am going out into the world to win happiness for you and for me. If you do not come, I know what you mean, and you will never see me again."

SOPHY.

He intends to go? Out into the world? Forever, if you do not go? Then everything would be lost!

MARY.

"You will never again see your Robert."

SOPHY (_coughs, just as the_ FORESTER _is turning away from the window_).

From the Bible, Mary.

MARY.

"As he hath caused a blemish in a man, so it shall be done to him again. Ye shall have one manner of law, as well for the stranger as for one of your own country: for I am the Lord, your God."

FORESTER (_has become attentive; stops_).

What is that there about law?

MARY.

"Ye shall have one manner of law--"

FORESTER.

"Ye shall have one manner"--Where is that?

MARY.

Here, father. Up there at the left.

FORESTER.

Put a mark there where that begins, what you have read there about the law. Do you see now that I am right? Even if I have to put up with injustice? That my old heart here is no liar? "Ye shall have one manner of law"--not a special one for officials of the State. At that time the Law was still sound; then it did not live in dusty, moldy offices. It was administered under the gates in the open air, as we read there. If I had my way, the courts ought to have sessions in the forest; in the forest man's heart remains sound; there one knows what is right and what is wrong without Ifs and Buts. With their secret tricks they have put a string of Ifs and Buts to it; in their dusty, moldy offices it has become sick and blunt and withered, so that they can turn and twist it as they like. And now what is right must be put in writing and have a seal to it, otherwise it is not to be recognized as right. Now they have

deprived a man's word of all value and degraded it, since one is only bound by what one has sworn to, what one has under seal and in writing. Out of the good old right they have made a turn-coat, so that an old man, whose honor was never sullied by the slightest blemish, must stand as a rascal before men--because they in their offices have two rights instead of one.

[Sits down and drinks.]

SOPHY.

The night is advancing further and further, and Andrew does not come. And with such talk one becomes doubly frightened. If you went to Robert--

MARY.

To Robert? What, in the world, are you thinking of, mother?

SOPHY.

That it is God's finger--that letter of Robert's.

MARY.

I am to go to Robert? Now? To the Dell?

SOPHY.

What is to prevent it? You are not afraid.

MARY.

The idea of being afraid!

[Proudly.]

Ulrich's daughter!

SOPHY.

How often have you not been out at a more advanced hour of the night!

MARY.

But then father knew it. If I have father's permission and yours, I know that an angel stands behind every tree. And father said: "If I am mistaken in Mary"--

SOPHY.

I cannot slip away, without his noticing it, as well as you can. The matter might still have taken a favorable turn, but it was not to be. And your dream? You felt so light, the sky became so blue--you see, in the Dell by the spring under the willows, there the sorrow that weighs on you and on us all is to end.

MARY (_shaking her head_).

Do you really think so, mother?

SOPHY.

If you would go. We might then remain with father, Robert would try once more to persuade his father, uncle Wilkens also would yield, and when you wear the bridal wreath a second time it would be even more becoming to you.

MARY.

I am to deceive my father, mother? In that case I believe no good could ever come to me again in this world.

SOPHY.

You would have the satisfaction of knowing that you went for his sake. Perhaps if, tomorrow, he must go forth into misery, or if they confine him in the tower, or if something still worse happens--

MARY.

To father?

SOPHY.

Yes. Then you will think, perhaps too late: "Had I only gone!"

MARY.

But mother, if I were in the forest, and father should meet me? Or if he should find us together?

SOPHY.

We must ask him, whether he is going to stay home.

MARY.

I cannot look at him without feeling as if my heart were bursting.

SOPHY.

Ask him on account of the soup.

MARY.

I shall ask him at once.

[_ She approaches the_ FORESTER _timidly, stands next to him without his noticing her_.]

SOPHY (_encouraging her_).

Don't be a child.

MARY (_softly_).

Father!

[_She bends over him, beside herself with pity_.]

Father, poor father!

[_Is going to embrace him_.]

FORESTER (_looking about, roughly_).

What's the matter? No lamentations!

SOPHY (_as_ MARY _stands disconcerted_).

Mary--

MARY (_controls herself_).

Are you again going into the forest tonight?

FORESTER.

Why?

MARY.

Because--

SOPHY (_interrupts, for fear_ MARY _might tell the truth_).

Because of the soup; she wants to know whether she is to warm it.

FORESTER.

No. And what are you waiting for, you silly wench?

[_Turns away. As_ MARY _hesitates, calls out roughly_.]

Do you hear?

MARY (_goes back to_ SOPHY).

Mother, he has been crying! I saw a tear hanging on his eye-lash, mother! And I am about to deceive him!

SOPHY.

He is crying because in his old age he has to go forth into misery.--And as to you--why, you are not obliged to go.

MARY.

If you speak in that way, mother!--I am going.

SOPHY.

Then say good-night to him. It is time. Afterward I shall help you climb out of the window. At this moment Robert is already waiting. You can be back soon.

MARY.

Yes, mother, I will go. But not for Robert's sake, mother, nor for mine; only for father's sake. I will tell him: "Robert," I will say to him, "you will yet find a girl, more beautiful and better than myself, but my father will not find another child, if I leave him." I will tell him: "Robert," I will say to him, "I will forget you! God will give me strength that I may be able to forget you. Remain away from me, so that I may not see you again." God will help me, mother, will he not? He will, for I did love Robert so much.

SOPHY.

Now go. Say good-night and don't betray yourself.

[MARY _stands by the_ FORESTER.]

SOPHY.

Mary wants to say good-night to you.

FORESTER.

Can't you say it yourself, silly thing?

MARY (_mastering her emotion_).

Good-night, father.

FORESTER.

Good-night. You need not wait for me tomorrow when you are going to your uncle. Perhaps I shall have gone out by that time. I have an errand; don't know whether I shall come back tomorrow. And take Nero along--and whatever else is there; take everything along. I no longer need anything--but my tools, my short rifle and--powder and bullets. The other rifles you may sell. Go to Wilkens, you poor thing, he perhaps will get Robert for you yet--after I have gone; after people have once forgotten that your father was a dismissed man.

MARY.

Good-night.

[_Beside herself_.]

Good-night, father!

FORESTER.

Wench, that is a good-night as if forever.--You are right, Mary. Such a stain as I am upon your good reputation must be removed. Go, Mary. Do you hear, Mary?

MARY.

You shall remain, father. And if you go, I go with you.

FORESTER.

The way I have to go one goes alone. Go, Mary.

SOPHY.

Go to bed, Mary.

FORESTER.

Good-night. And now it's enough. You know I cannot bear lamentations.

MARY.

You are not going without me, father. You cannot live without me, father. Father, I now feel that in my heart.

FORESTER (_protesting_).

Yes, I can. What doesn't such a greenhorn feel!

MARY.

You turn away, father, so that I should not see you crying. Father, pretend you are ferocious, as much as you like--

FORESTER (_wants to disengage himself_).

Silly thing there--

MARY.

I am going with you. You insist upon your right, and I upon mine, and that is, that I must not leave you. Father, I feel now for the first time that I love no one in the world as much as you. Tomorrow we go together--if you must go. I am going to put on William's clothes. There are still green forests in the world. And surely you shall not hear me complaining. Don't be afraid of that. Why, I can cry during the nights, when you don't see it. But then you will see it by my eyes in the daytime. Why, I must not cry at all! I will only laugh and skip along before you and sing--the beautiful hunting songs.--You see, father, this is the last tear for Robert! And it is already dried, do you see? I am sure that we shall still find happiness in this world--if you must go, father. And if it is not to be, we will thank God and pray, if He only keeps us honest. Then we will think: It is asking too much, if we also wish to be happy. Have I not you? Have not you your good conscience and your Mary? What more do we need?

[_Hanging on his neck_.]

FORESTER (_who has been warding her off constantly, almost furious, because he can scarcely control his emotion_).

Indeed, indeed! Stupid thing!

[_More calmly_.]

And a "table--spread--thysself," a "gold--mule--stretch-thysself," and the fairy-story is complete. Now go to bed, Mary.

[Roughly_]

Do you hear?

SOPHY.

Come, Mary.

MARY (_at the door of her room she looks around, and runs again to him; embracing him, beside herself_).

Good-night, good-night!

[She hurries to her room;_ SOPHY _follows_.]

FORESTER (_looking after her_).

My girl, my poor girl! It must not be here that I make an end of myself!--Confound it. Shame on you, old--

SCENE VI

WEILER; _The_ FORESTER.

WEILER (_greeted him with a silent nod; he is very much excited; hangs the rifle on the rack and busies himself with the hunting utensils_).

Well!

FORESTER (_notices him_).

Is it you?

[Lapses again into his thoughts_.]

WEILER.

It's me.

FORESTER.

Where are you coming from at this time?

WEILER.

From the forest. At the fence I had a talk with your William. So, after all, you are dismissed.

FORESTER.

Because there are two kinds of right.

WEILER.

And didn't you know that before?

FORESTER.

You have your pay for three months in advance.

WEILER.

And may go. I know that too. Where is your William? Why, to be sure! I just met him. And your Andrew?

FORESTER (_half absent-mindedly_).

Not at home.

WEILER.

But I suppose you know where your Andrew is?

FORESTER (_impatiently_).

What else do you want? Leave me alone!

WEILER.

All right. It's none of my business.

FORESTER.

Therefore I think you'd better go.

WEILER.

But to come back to Andrew. You don't know where he is?

FORESTER.

Always harping on Andrew? If you have something to say, don't be like a thunderstorm that keeps threatening for hours.

WEILER (_points toward the window_).

Some one is coming up across the Lautenberg. The plovers were screeching as if in fear. I expected it. It was too sultry. Ulrich [_approaches him_] an hour ago some one was shot.

FORESTER.

You know who?

WEILER.

You don't know it? If your Andrew were home--

FORESTER.

Always Andrew! You know something about him!

WEILER.

Well. The rifle--tell me, did Andrew have the one with the yellow strap?

FORESTER.

Why?

WEILER (_as if lost in meditation_).

Surely I know your rifle--

FORESTER.

Do you want to drive me mad?

WEILER.

You haven't it in the house?

FORESTER.

I won't answer you any more. I'm ugly enough as it is. I have been drinking wine.

WEILER.

Take good care that you are not mistaken.

FORESTER.

Take good care that I don't take you by the collar.

WEILER.

It's no joke--

FORESTER.

You shall see that it is not.

WEILER.

I know nothing but what I have heard and seen. And now sit down. I don't feel like standing long. It seems to me that I must look like my clay-pipe there.

[_The_ FORESTER _sitting down at the table to the right;_ WEILER _has drawn a chair close to him, and talks hurriedly in an uncanny, subdued voice_.]

A little while ago, as I was quitting work and going away from my wood-cutters, I heard a shot from the direction of the Dell. I thought perhaps it was you, and went in that direction. But it must have been Robert Stein. He was walking up and down there by the first bridge like a sentinel. I thought to myself: What can he be waiting for? Not for game; for in that case one doesn't run up and down; I thought: You must get to the bottom of this. You get behind the high oak. There you can see everything and can't be seen. But I was hardly there, when I heard a commotion behind me. And what was it I heard? Your Andrew and Robert in a most violent dispute. I could not understand anything clearly, but one could hear that they were after each other for life and death. I was just about to creep closer, when they already came rushing along. The

one on the further side of the brook on the rocky path, the other on this side. The one on this side was Robert with his gun against his cheek. Two steps from me he stopped--"Stand or I shoot." On the rocky path no two persons can pass each other. There it is--"Man, fight for your life." And now, pif! paf!--two shots in succession. The bullet from the one on the rock whistled between me and Robert into the bushes. But Robert's bullet--Ulrich, I have heard many a shot, but never such a one. One could hear by the sound of the lead, it scented human life. I do not know what sensation I felt when he on the other side collapsed like a wounded stag--

FORESTER.

Andrew?

WEILER.

Who else could it have been? Hey? Perhaps he's home? Perhaps you know where else he is? And the person that was shot had the rifle with the yellow strap. He held it tight. The strap really glistened in the twilight like a signal of distress. It was a weird sound, as the iron parts of the gun in falling struck the rocks and the corpse tumbled after it, breaking the bushes--till there was a splash in the brook below, as if it started in terror. And when, after this, there succeeded such a strange stillness, as if it had to bethink itself of what had really happened, I had a sensation as though some one were pursuing me. I should have been back half an hour ago, if I had not lost my way--I, who know every tree thereabouts. Now you may imagine how I felt! Not until I had reached the second bridge there toward Haslau, did I have courage to stop a moment to take breath--there where the brook is roaring among the rocks. Accidentally I looked down. There the brook was playing with a colored rag. Do you know it, perhaps?

[_Takes out_ ANDREW'S _muffler, and holds it before the_ FORESTER'S _eyes; the latter snatches it from his hand_.]

FORESTER.

All sorts of shapes before my eyes--the wine--

[_Holds it sometimes far, sometimes near, without being able to see it_.]

WEILER (_short pause_).

You are so quiet. Is something wrong with you?

[FORESTER _draws a single loud breath, and still keeps holding the muffler mechanically before him, without seeing it_.]

WEILER.

Your face is quite distorted. I am going to call your wife.

FORESTER (_makes a movement, as if he were pushing a load from him with utmost exertion_).

Never mind! A slight dizziness. Have not been bled recently; the wine into the bargain--it's already passing away--say nothing to any one

about this.

[_Rises with difficulty_.]

WEILER.

So they have had a regular stand-up fight, Andrew and Robert! But what do you intend to do now? As a dismissed man? If that fellow says: "I challenged the poacher, he did not throw down his gun?" You know better than any one that a hunter may then shoot. He is not even obliged to challenge; if he only hits the mark, he is also in the right. And whoever, like your Andrew, has fallen the height of two stories from the rock into the water, his tongue will cease wagging even without powder and lead. You know the law, as it is nowadays. And they will lock you up into the bargain because of insubordination. I am sorry for you. I should not like to be you. Hey?

FORESTER.

The thunderstorm has already passed the Lautenberg, do you hear? If you delay any longer you will be caught in the rain.

WEILER.

There was lightning some time ago. As I came along the hill with the larch-firs, the whole country was lighted up. Then I saw Robert still walking up and down by the willows below.

[FORESTER _goes to the door so that_ WEILER _may see he is waiting for his departure_.]

WEILER.

Are you going once more to the lawyer? That might do some good if you were an official of the state. But what are you going to do when you are not?

FORESTER.

Nothing.

WEILER.

Whoever believes it--

FORESTER.

Fool that you are! I'm going to bed.

WEILER.

It isn't late enough for that.

FORESTER.

I am going to lock the door and the shutters.

WEILER (_as he has no alternative, hesitating_).

Now then, sleep well, Ulrich--if you can.

[Exit, the FORESTER after him.]

SCENE VII

[Enter SOPHY; then the FORESTER and WILLIAM.

SOPHY (coming out of MARY'S room).

Now she may be where the willows begin.

[At the window.]

He is closing the shutters. I must close Mary's for appearance's sake, so that she can climb in when she returns. And Andrew not yet back! All at once a feeling comes over me, as if I should not have allowed Mary to go.

[Enter the FORESTER with WILLIAM. SOPHY goes again into MARY'S room.]

WILLIAM (while entering).

Father, Lora Kramer came to the fence, and said that Stein was beside himself--that shots had been heard in the forest--that Robert was missing, and that Stein had sent Moeller into town; he was to get the soldiers; they were to arrest the whole band of murderers from the hunter's house, he said. She also said that Moeller had passed Kramer's house at full gallop. They might be expected to arrive before one o'clock.

FORESTER (while SOPHY steps out of MARY'S room).

What have you still to do outside?

[Looks about him.]

WILLIAM.

In the garden, father. Mother, there was nothing in the arbor.

SOPHY (remains at the door).

Then somebody must have brought it in.

[To the FORESTER.]

Are you looking for anything?

FORESTER.

I? No. Yes, the rifle with the yellow strap. Where can that be? Perhaps in Mary's--

SOPHY (involuntarily covering the door, quickly).

There is no rifle in Mary's room.

WILLIAM.

To be sure, Andrew took it along when he went to accompany me.

FORESTER. True. [_Shows the muffler_.]

There, I have somebody's muffler in my pocket! Is it yours, William?

SOPHY.

The red and yellow muffler? That belongs to Andrew.

FORESTER.

He left it around yesterday, and absentmindedly I must have put it in my pocket.

SOPHY.

Yesterday? Only today, before you went, I gave it to him.

FORESTER.

You gave it to--all right!

SOPHY (_comes nearer_).

Yes, yes. That is Andrew's muffler.

[_She examines it_.]

Here is his monogram.

FORESTER (_wishes to take it from her_).

Give it to me.

SOPHY.

It is wet!--And what blood is that upon the muffler?

FORESTER.

Blood?

[_Suppresses his emotion_.]

It's from my hand. I cut it on the lock of the gun. Never mind!

SOPHY (_busies herself on the other side of the stage_).

FORESTER.

William, come here. Read to me. There in the Bible, begin where the book-mark is.

WILLIAM.

In the middle of the chapter?

FORESTER.

Beginning at the mark there. Go on!

[_Gets his hat_.]

WILLIAM (_reads_).

"And he that blasphemeth the name of the Lord, he shall--"

FORESTER.

That isn't it.

[_Hangs the gun over his shoulder_.]

WILLIAM.

"And he that killeth any man"--is that it?

FORESTER (_profoundly moved, comes a step nearer_).

No--but go on reading.

[_He stands next to_ WILLIAM. _During the following he involuntarily takes off his hat, and folds his hands_.]

WILLIAM.

"And he that killeth any man shall surely be put to death. And he that killeth a beast shall make it good; beast for beast. And if a man cause a blemish on his neighbor; as he hath done, so shall it be done to him; breach for breach, eye for eye, tooth for tooth; as he hath caused a blemish in a man, so shall it be done to him again. And he that killeth a beast, he shall restore it: and he that killeth a man, he shall be put to death."

FORESTER.

He shall be put to death.

WILLIAM.

"Ye shall have one manner of law, as well for the stranger, as for one of your own country: for I am the Lord your God."

FORESTER.

Amen.

[_Puts on his hat and is about to go; turns back_.]

When did she say they might be there, William?

[Illustration: SCHNORR VON CAROLSFELD JACOB AND RACHEL AT THE WELL]

WILLIAM.

The soldiers?

FORESTER.

Before--

WILLIAM.

Before one o'clock.

FORESTER.

There's time enough.

WILLIAM.

For what, father?

FORESTER.

For--getting a sound sleep.

WILLIAM.

Father, how strangely you look at me?

FORESTER.

Go to bed, William.

[_As_ SOPHY _enters_.]

Shake hands with your mother.

SOPHY (_surprised_).

Are you going out now, Christian?

FORESTER.

Yes.

SOPHY.

Did Weiler pick up the trail of the stag again?

FORESTER.

Yes. Maybe.

SOPHY.

How you look! One might be afraid of you, if one did not know how it is with you when you have taken wine.

FORESTER.

For that reason I want to go out into the open air.

SOPHY.

At such times you see everything different from what it is. You may fall into the abyss.

FORESTER.

Then you cut the leaf there from the Bible and put it into my coffin.

SOPHY.

How you talk!

FORESTER.

GO to bed, William.

[_Exit_ WILLIAM.]

Pray--or do not pray--

SOPHY.

What is the matter with you, Christian? Why am I so anxious? Stay, for God's sake, stay! Your business surely can wait.

FORESTER.

No. It must be done even today. [_Going_.]

SOPHY (_about to follow him_).

Ulrich--

FORESTER (_turning around at the door, softly to himself_).

"Eye for eye, tooth for tooth."

[_Exit_.]

SOPHY (_recoiling from the glare of the sheet-lightning which is seen through the open door_).

God have mercy on us!

[_At the door_.]

Ulrich!

[_In far-away voice, outside_.]

Ulrich!

ACT V

The FORESTER'S _House. Night. For a short time the stage remains empty_.

SCENE I

SOPHY (_alone, comes in with a lamp, looks into _MARY'S _room, puts the lamp upon the table, goes to the window, opens the shutter through which the reflection of the sheet-lightning is visible, looks out; then she closes shutter and window, takes the lamp again, and looks once more into _MARY'S _room. At intervals she listens and betrays great anxiety_.)

Not yet! What if he's encountered her! What if he's met them together! She ought to be back by this time. Oh, why did I let her go? And Andrew does not come, either! And then this sultry, stormy night!

[_Listens_.]

Surely, that was she? At last! God be praised!

[_Looks into the room_.]

No. It is not she. The wind blew open the half-closed shutter.

SCENE II

WILLIAM, _in his shirt-sleeves_; SOPHY.

WILLIAM.

Are the soldiers there, mother?

[_At the door of _MARY'S _room_.]

Mother, where is father?

[SOPHY _is startled, and quickly closes the door_.]

WILLIAM.

And Mary? She is not in her room?

SOPHY.

What ideas you get into your head!

WILLIAM.

Her bed is still as if it had just been made.

SOPHY (_listens, frightened_).

Is that your father? William, say nothing about this before your father!

WILLIAM.

I'm the fellow to play the informer! But you must tell me where Mary is.
SOPHY.

Gone to the Dell to ask Robert--

WILLIAM.

Mother, we beg at nobody's door. I am going to fetch her.

SOPHY.

In this storm?

WILLIAM (*_puts on his jacket_*).

He would be a fine hunter's boy who is afraid of a little bit of lightning. Only tell me which way Mary went. The one below along the brook? All right. She is not like the others, but she is only a girl. And they are afraid.

[*_Exit_.*]

SCENE III

SOPHY (*_alone; after him_*).

William! William! [*_Comes back_.*]

He is gone! And the storm is getting worse. A fog below, and the thunderstorm above coming nearer. And another one is coming on from the Brandsberg. And Ulrich outside, and none of the children at home. And I all alone in this solitary hunter's house in the midst of the forest, and at such an hour of the night!

[*_A door is heard slamming; she starts up_.*]

Merciful God! It is he! If he should look into the room and should not see Mary! Or--

SCENE IV

Enter the FORESTER *_in haste; pale and distracted_;* SOPHY.

SOPHY (*_going to meet him_*).

Back already?--[*_Correcting herself_*] at last?

FORESTER (*_looking shyly about_*).

Did anybody ask for me?

SOPHY.

No. Are they pursuing you?

FORESTER.

Who?

SOPHY.

Godfrey--

FORESTER.

Why?

SOPHY.

Because you come in as if you were being hunted.

FORESTER.

I meant the soldiers.--Why do I see Mary everywhere! In the Dell--

SOPHY (is frightened).

In the Dell!

[Aside.]

Good Heavens!

FORESTER.

And all the way back I heard her walking behind me.

SOPHY.

On your way back--

FORESTER.

Whenever I walked, I heard her behind me; whenever I stood still, she also stood still, but I did not look around.

SOPHY (relieved).

You did not look around?

FORESTER.

Why, I knew it was nothing. I have a feeling as though even now she were still standing behind me.

SOPHY (wishes to divert him from the subject).

Did you shoot anything? Is it outside?

FORESTER (shuddering involuntarily).

Outside?

SOPHY.

Before the door. What a strange look you give me! What is that on your clothes?

FORESTER (_turns away involuntarily_).

What is it?

SOPHY.

A spot--

FORESTER.

What you see--

SOPHY.

Why will you not let me see it?

FORESTER.

It is nothing.

[_Turns to the table at the right, takes down his gun_.]

Is the soup warm? My tongue is glued to the roof of my mouth.

SOPHY (_takes a plate and spoon from the closet, goes to the stove where she pours out the soup_).

If he should look into the room! What I ask, I ask only in anxiety to have him forget about Mary.

[_She puts the soup before the_ FORESTER _on the table to the right; listens_.]

Isn't there a noise in the room?

[_Walks about the_ FORESTER'S _chair, so as to distract him_.]

Ulrich, don't you think that Robert could still restore the old friendly relations?

[FORESTER _makes a movement_.]

SOPHY.

Why do you start so?

FORESTER.

Don't wake up Mary! Wasn't there some one at the window?

SOPHY.

That is the old rose-bush outside, which is always nodding so anxiously and knocking at the window, as if it had to prevent a catastrophe, and

nobody paid any attention to it.

[_Pause; aside_.]

It is so still. I must keep on talking, otherwise he can hear me breathing, and will notice my anxiety--and also that he may not hear Mary when she climbs in at the window.

[_Listening repeatedly_.]

The whole evening I have been thinking about it. Only yesterday Robert said to me--

FORESTER.

Always Robert--

SOPHY (_has seated herself by his side_).

We were walking along the willows, where the pine-thicket is, under the rock, in the Dell--

FORESTER (_violently_).

Don't mention that--

SOPHY.

How you start! It was at sunset; and as I looked around, something was coming out from under the pines--so red. I--frightened--For God's sake, I say, why, that is blood!

[FORESTER _throws down his spoon and rises_.]

SOPHY.

Then the evening glow was reflected in the water.--But what is the matter with you?

FORESTER.

Always with your Dell. What do you care about the Dell?

SOPHY.

Did something happen to you there? People say the place is haunted. Robert said so to me yesterday. They say that there is an accursed spot! There some one committed a murd--

FORESTER (_seizes his gun_).

What do you know?

SOPHY (_recoiling in terror_).

Ulrich!--

FORESTER.

Will you keep quiet?

SOPHY (_stops before him, shuddering, filled with a presentiment_).

Ulrich! What have you done?

FORESTER (_has recovered his self-possession_).

Stuff and nonsense! Is this a night for such stories?

[_Lost in thought_.]

SOPHY.

Go ahead. Whether an hour sooner, or an hour later. You have me on your conscience.

[_Sinks down upon a chair to the left_.]

FORESTER (_pause; then he walks slowly up and down, and gradually comes near her, hesitating_).

I must tell you something, Sophy--if you do not already know it; it will not let me rest. I am in the right; but--and then I cannot tell--is it true or is it only an oppressive dream?--a dream in which one cannot do what one wishes--and exhausts oneself--because one must always do what one does not wish. Come here! Do you hear? Place your hand on the Bible.

SOPHY.

Great God! What can be the meaning of this!

FORESTER.

It would be horrible if I had been obliged to kill her, and after all everything were only--and then I should have in vain--Sophy!

[_Quite close to her; softly_.]

There is a report that a corpse is lying in the Dell!

SOPHY.

You are drunk or mad!

FORESTER.

I am in my right mind. Look at me, woman! Do you believe in a God in Heaven? Very well, Very well! Then place your hand upon the Bible, right here. There my right is written. Now say after me: "As truly as I hope to be saved--"

SOPHY (_faintly_).

As truly as I hope to be saved--

FORESTER.

"So truly shall it remain a secret what I am now about to hear."

SOPHY.

So truly shall it remain a secret what I am now about to hear.

[Is obliged to sit down_.]

FORESTER.

And now give heed.--It is short--no But and no If about it--it is clear as the right--and right must remain right--else we need no God in Heaven! [After he has made several attempts to begin, in a dejected and low voice, while he leads her to the footlights_.] Do not be frightened. Robert shot our Andrew, and I--I have executed judgment upon him.

SOPHY.

Oh, God! [She can scarcely keep herself on her feet; wants to go to the chair. He supports her_.]

FORESTER.

I have judged him. As it is written there--"Eye for eye, tooth for tooth." I have judged him, because the courts no longer judge right. They have two kinds of law, and here it is written: "Ye shall have one manner of law." I have not murdered him, I have executed judgment upon him. [He walks up and down, then loses himself in thought at the place where he believes_ SOPHY _still to be, who totters to the chair_.] But I do not know whether it did happen--what has happened. My brain is so wild and confused--[Recollects with difficulty_] but I suppose it really did happen--what has happened--and as it was about to happen--what has happened--I saw Mary before my eyes, as if she put herself in front of him and made a sign to me to stop, and cried: "It is"--well, you know who! It was a delusion; it was only in my imagination. After I have had wine, I always am in a state that I see things which do not exist. And if it should have been she--the bullet then was no longer under any control.

SOPHY.

Almighty God!

[She drags herself with difficulty into_ MARY'S _room_.]

FORESTER (_does not notice it and, staring before him, continues as if she were still standing beside him_).

It was not she. How could Mary have come there? It is nothing but the effect of the wine, that today I see her everywhere. But nevertheless I was frightened until I saw it had only been the smoke from the gun. Everything was turning around before my eyes. But when the smoke had cleared away--that was only a moment--then I saw him--still standing as before, but only for a moment--then he collapsed--then had happened what did happen. Then I folded my hands over my gun, and said: "You have been judged according to your desert." And I prayed: "God have mercy on his poor soul." Then a swarm of owls flew up and screeched. That sounded as though they said Amen. Then I stood again erect on my feet. For God and Earth and Heaven and every creature demand justice.

[He loses himself in a brown study.]

SCENE V

[The FORESTER, lost in thought, alone. Then STEIN and the PASTOR, at first only heard behind the scenes.]

STEIN (still outside).

Ulrich!

FORESTER (awaking, mechanically).

Stein!

STEIN (as above).

Do you hear?

FORESTER (the connection of the events suddenly flashes upon him).

It did happen!

[Makes a movement as if to seize his gun; but controls himself.]

No! Not an iota more than my right!

STEIN (entering, the PASTOR behind him).

Where is your Andrew, Ulrich?

FORESTER.

What do you want with my Andrew?

STEIN.

To demand my Robert from him.

FORESTER.

Your Robert?--From my Andrew?--Look here!

[Shows the muffler.]

PASTOR.

For Heaven's sake!--There is blood on the muffler!

STEIN.

What is that?

FORESTER.

That is my Andrew's blood, and your Robert spilled it. And you sent your Moeller for the soldiers! And you made me a scoundrel before the

world--with your two kinds of right--so that you may twist it as you like! But here--[_ striking his breast_] there still is a right! That neither you nor your lawyers can twist.

SCENE VI

ANDREW, _still without_. STEIN, FORESTER, PASTOR.

ANDREW (_outside, in a low voice_).

Father--

PASTOR.

Who calls?

STEIN.

Is not that Andrew's voice?

FORESTER (_continuing_).

Here it is written: "Ye shall have one manner of law." And the law has judged you. "And he that killeth any man he--"

ANDREW.

Father!

FORESTER (_trembling, staring at the door, with smothered voice, mechanically_).

"He--he--shall--surely--be--put to death"--

Enter ANDREW.

STEIN (_going toward him_).

God be thanked! Andrew, you live!

FORESTER (_makes a great effort_).

It is not true. He is dead. He must be dead.

ANDREW.

Father!

FORESTER (_stretching out his hand, as if warding him off_).

Who are you?

ANDREW (_more and more alarmed_).

Do you not know your Andrew any more?

FORESTER.

My Andrew is dead. If you lie slain in the Dell--then you shall be my Andrew--then everything is well--then we will rejoice--then we will sing: Lord God, we praise Thee!

PASTOR.

He is demented!

STEIN.

Andrew, my Robert--

ANDREW.

You have my muffler which Lindenschmied stole from me before he killed Godfrey?

STEIN.

Lindenschmied killed Godfrey? And my Robert--

ANDREW.

Robert was pursuing him. He compelled Robert to shoot him.

FORESTER.

He? He had your gun?

ANDREW.

Stolen it with my muffler.

FORESTER.

And Robert did--

ANDREW.

Lindenschmied was not mortally wounded. I had his wound dressed in the mill, and had him removed before the magistrate--

FORESTER (_gradually collapsing_).

I am in the wrong!

[_Sinks down upon a chair_.]

ANDREW.

That is the reason why I am so late.

FORESTER (_rises; goes to_ STEIN _with his gun in his hand_).

Stein, do to me according to my desert.

STEIN.

What do you mean?

FORESTER.

"Eye for eye, tooth for tooth"--

STEIN (_looking at the_ PASTOR).

What does he mean by that again?

FORESTER.

Weiler thought that Lindenschmied with the gun was my Andrew. Your Robert wounded Lindenschmied, and I--killed your Robert for this!

PASTOR.

Almighty God!

ANDREW (_at the same time_).

Robert!

FORESTER (_almost simultaneously_).

Shoot me!

STEIN (_has seized the gun_).

You murderer!

[_The_ PASTOR _arrests his arm_.]

ANDREW.

You shot Robert, father? Robert lives!

STEIN.

He lives?

PASTOR.

He lives?

FORESTER.

He lives?

ANDREW.

He lives, as surely as I live!

FORESTER.

It was only a dream? Can it be that I am not a murderer? That I am an honorable man?

PASTOR.

That you are, Ulrich. Drive away that unfortunate delusion.

STEIN.

Man alive, to what might you have provoked me!

[_Puts away the gun_.]

FORESTER.

You saw him? When did you see him, Andrew? Now, Andrew? Just now, Andrew?

ANDREW.

Just now, as I was coming home, I met two men from the mill with a stretcher. Robert had just called them out of their beds; they were going to the Dell; Robert had gone ahead of them.

FORESTER.

To the Dell?

PASTOR.

With a stretcher?

STEIN.

What can be behind all this?

FORESTER (_has gone to the door of_ MARY'S _room; releases the latch_).

Thanks be to God!

[_Listening_.]

I hear her breathing. Oh, she sleeps a peaceful sleep. I am oppressed with a world of cares, and she takes them from my heart with her breath. Do you hear, Pastor, do you hear?

STEIN.

The unfortunate man! His delusion is returning.

PASTOR (_after an anxious pause, during which the_ FORESTER _has not taken his eyes from the_ PASTOR'S _face_).

I hear nothing. That is your own heavy breathing that you hear.

FORESTER (_begins to collapse again_).

My own heavy breathing that I hear--

[_Summons up courage, opens the door_.]

My eyes deceive me? Where she is not, there I see her; and where she is, there I do not see her. Pastor, for God's sake, tell me: "There lives

Mary."

[_He has convulsively clutched the_ PASTOR'S _arm_.]

PASTOR.

I do not see her. The bed there is untouched, the windows open--your wife--

FORESTER (_rushes into the room_).

Woman! Woman! Poor, poor woman!

SCENE VII

SOPHY, _like a ghost; can hardly stand or speak; dragged in forcibly by the_ FORESTER.

FORESTER.

Where is my child?

ANDREW.

Mother, what ails you?

[_He supports her on one side, the_ PASTOR _on the other_.]

SOPHY.

Andrew! At least one!

FORESTER (_shakes her_).

My child! My child! Where is my child?

SOPHY (_with repulsion, but faintly_).

Leave me, you--

FORESTER.

My Mary!

SOPHY.

To the Dell--you--

FORESTER.

Creature, you lie!

SOPHY.

To Robert--

FORESTER.

Yes, she met me--in the fog--as I was coming--

SOPHY.

That was William.

FORESTER.

It was Mary, woman; Mary!

PASTOR.

She cannot answer any more. She has fainted.

STEIN.

Take her away from the madman!

FORESTER.

You mean to say that I--my own child--

ANDREW.

Mother! Mother!

[He and the PASTOR are busy about her, at the table to the right.]

STEIN (who in the meantime is trying to keep the FORESTER away from her).

Hands off, you madman!

FORESTER.

Madman? God grant that I am!

[A knock is heard; he steps back in horror and stretches out his hands toward the door, as if warding off something.]

Nonsense! What do you want, the whole lot of you? Why, that is Mary. She is standing outside, and does not dare to come in, because she ran out in the night. She hasn't the courage. I am severe--oh, I am severe! Silly wench!

[Stands up straight.]

Come what may!

[He rushes toward the door; before he reaches it, another knock is heard; he steps back again horrified and powerless.]

The raging fever has seized me--nothing else. These are the symptoms--chattering of the teeth and chills along the spine. Elderberry-tea--a night or two of perspiration! What has the knocking to do with my fever? Why does not some one open, some one call her in? Why are you all so pale and tongueless? Has some one told a fairy-tale, and

are you afraid? My Mary was a living fairy-tale--she is-she is, I mean to say. That Mary could be dead--but she would not give me such pain! She knows that I cannot live without my Mary. Do you hear her giggling outside? Now she will come skipping in and hold her hands over my eyes, as she is accustomed to do, and I must not spoil her fun. Oh, it is--[Attempts to laugh, but sobs_.]--a--[Beside himself_.]--After all, it has to be! Come in!

[Attempts to go to the door, but with eyes closed sinks into a chair on the left_.]

SCENE VIII

ROBERT, WILLIAM, _then two men with a covered stretcher, which they put down. The men go away_.

STEIN.

Robert!

[Going toward him_.]

Do you see, Ulrich? He lives!

ROBERT (_embracing him, pale and distracted_).

Father! Father!

STEIN.

What has happened to you?

ROBERT.

Would that the murderer had killed me! Father Ulrich, be a man!

FORESTER (_making a supreme effort to collect his energies_).

Go on! I will see whether I am a man.

[ROBERT _removes the covering_.]

STEIN.

Great God!

SOPHY (_who, supported by_ ANDREW _and the_ PASTOR, _has fallen upon her knees by the stretcher_).

Mary!

ANDREW.

Oh, God! It is Mary!

STEIN.

How did this happen? Explain it, Robert.

PASTOR.

It is dreadfully clear to me.

ROBERT (_with difficulty maintaining his self-possession_).

She was praying: "God, let me belong only to my father." I was about to say to her: "Mary, you are going to give me up?" Then she rushed upon me, as if she wished to protect me with her own body, made a sign and called in the direction of the forest. I saw no one; I did not understand her; I was about to ask: "What is the matter, Mary?" when--the report of a gun--she sank down in my arms; I threw myself over her; a bullet had penetrated her heart.

SOPHY.

That was her dream.

STEIN (_holds_ ROBERT _in his embrace, almost simultaneously_).

She died for you!

FORESTER.

She saw me aim at him, and ran purposely into the course of my bullet. I wanted to judge and--have judged myself. Crime and punishment at the same moment! I was praying: "God have mercy on his poor soul!" I prayed for myself, and the owls screeched Amen, and meant me!

ROBERT (_recoils, horrified_).

Almighty God--he himself!--

STEIN.

You did not do it consciously. A fearful madness urged you against your will.

PASTOR.

Do not be so obstinate, man; God does not measure the deed according to a superficial standard. Innocence and crime are at the extreme poles of human nature. But often it is merely a quicker pulse that separates the innocent from the criminal.

FORESTER.

Give me words of life instead of your cobwebs of the brain--no If and no But. Tell me something, so that I must believe it! Your words do not convince me. Why do you offer consolation to my head? Offer consolation to my heart, if you can. Can you with your consolation restore my child to life, so that she will rush into my arms? In that case keep on consoling me. Every word that fails to restore my child to life slays her once more.

STEIN.

Flee to America; I will procure passports for you; all my money is yours. Your wife and your children are mine!

FORESTER.

Do you hear, Andrew, what that man there is saying? He wants to give you money. Buy a hand-organ with it. Go about to the fairs, and sing of the old murderer who shot his child--for no reason, for no reason at all in the world. You need no picture. Take the old woman there along with you. No painter can paint the story as it stands written upon her face. Praise the child. Represent her more beautiful than she was--if you can--as you imagine the most beautiful angel, and then say: "And yet she was a thousand times more beautiful!" And represent the old murderer so that people will shed a waterfall of tears for the child, and that every street-urchin will shake his fist at the old fellow. And he who hears this story and does not give you with chattering teeth his last penny, though he had ten starving children at home, and does not pray to God for the child and curse the old murderer that shot her, must have a heart like the old murderer's who committed the deed. Do not say: "The man was honest throughout his life and avoided evil and believed in a God, and did not permit the least taint upon his honor." If you do, they will not believe you. Say: He looked like a wolf; do not say: His beard was white when he committed the crime. If you do, no one will give you anything; none will believe that one can be so old and yet such an abandoned villain. And on the lower part of your organ have a picture painted--how the old murderer blows out his brains and walks as a ghost during the night--and on the spot where the crime was perpetrated he sits moaning at midnight with his fiery eyes and white beard--and there no breeze wafts coolness, and there no dew falls and no rain--there grow poisonous weeds--the spot is accursed like himself--and the animal that accidentally strays there bellows with fear--and man is shaken as with the ague. And have an angel painted from whose mouth proceeds a scroll on which is written: "There sits he whom God has marked. Abel was a man, and Cain was only his brother; but this was a child, and he that slew her was her father. For Cain, there is still a hope of salvation, but for the old murderer of his child, none--none--none!" Oh! Some comfort! Some comfort! Only a shadow of comfort! For this I would give my salvation, if I had any hope of salvation. I will ask God whether there is any comfort for me!

[_He takes the Bible and reads, at first trembling in every limb, with panting breath_.]

"And he that killeth any--"

PASTOR.

No further, Ulrich. Let me show you words of life, words of humanity: "As I live," saith the Lord God, "I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live."

FORESTER (_who keeps a firm hold of the Bible, and breaks away from the_ PASTOR, _almost simultaneously_).

Leave me alone, you inhuman creatures, with your humanity!

[_He continues reading. With every word his manner becomes more calm and certain, the sound of his voice stronger_.]

"And he that killeth any man shall surely be put to death."

[Lays down the Bible_.]

STEIN.

Does he find solace in these words?

PASTOR.

Let him have such comfort as consoles him.

FORESTER (_takes up the Bible again; his manner assumes an expression of joyousness_).

That is certainty, that is promise, that convinces me--no But and no If. "And he that killeth a man shall surely be put to death." That means: Then it is expiated, then it is wiped out, and he is pure once more.

[Puts on his hat and buttons his coat_.]

I am going before the magistrate.

[About to go_.]

STEIN.

And you think they are going to put you to death?

[FORESTER _stops and turns around_.]

PASTOR.

People more guilty than you have been pardoned.

FORESTER.

Pardoned to be imprisoned--hey? Like Leutner? He--Indeed, they don't judge right in those courts, not as it is written here. I know very well--but--never mind!--All right!--

[Takes his gun_.]

STEIN.

What do you intend to do?

FORESTER.

Nothing, I must take along the rifle with which the deed was done. O, they are particular about that! Farewell, Andrew, William. Take good care of your mother.

[Shakes hands with everybody_.]

Stein, Pastor, Robert, Sophy--she has fainted. God will soon let her come after me. Bury my child. Have the bells ring; lay her bridal wreath upon her coffin. O, I am an old woman! When we meet again I shall be a murderer no longer.

[_Makes with his hand a sign of farewell_.]

STEIN.

You want--

FORESTER (_turns around at the door_).

My sight--and then--[_Points upward to heaven_.]--to meet my child.

[_Exit. Short pause, during which the others look after him with surprise and emotion_.]

STEIN (_seized with a sudden apprehension_).

If the other barrel is still loaded--quick--after him--

[_Outside the door a shot is heard_.]

Too late! I suspected it!

ANDREW, WILLIAM (_rushing out_).

Father!

ROBERT (_in the open door, rooted to the spot through horror and pain at what he sees_).

He has his right!

STEIN (_also at the door_).

A second time his own judge!

PASTOR (_stepping to the others_).

May God do unto him according to his faith.

[_Exeunt_.]

FOOTNOTES:

[Footnote 7: Translation of the King James version.]

BETWEEN HEAVEN AND EARTH (1856)

By OTTO LUDWIG

TRANSLATED AND CONDENSED BY MURIEL ALMON

The little garden lies between the dwelling-house and the slate shed;

whoever goes from one to the other must pass it. As you go from the house to the shed it is on your left; on the right there is a yard with a woodshed and a stable, separated from the neighboring house by a trellis-fence. Every morning the house opens twelve green shutters onto one of the busiest streets of the town, the shed opens a large gray door on a back street; the roses on the bushes that have been trained to grow like trees in the little garden can look out into the lane which connects its two larger sisters. On the other side of the lane stands a tall house which, in elegant seclusion, does not deign to bestow a glance on the smaller one. Its eyes are open only to the doings of the main street; if you look nearer at its closed eyes facing the narrow street, you soon see the reason for its eternal sleep--they are only a sham, painted on the outer wall.

Not all sides of the house that belongs to the little garden look as decorative as the one on the main street. There, a pale rose-colored tint contrasts not too sharply with the green window-shutters and the blue slate roof. The weather side of the house, on the narrow street, looks as if it were clad in an armor of slate from top to toe; the other gable-end joins directly on to the row of houses of which it is the beginning or the end; at the back, however, it is an example of the proverb that everything has its weak point. There, an upstairs piazza has been built onto the house, not unlike half a crown of thorns. Supported by roughly-hewn wooden posts it runs along the upper story and expands toward the left into a little room. There is no direct entrance to it from the upper story of the house. To reach the "gallery chamber" from there one must leave the house by the back door, walk perhaps six steps along the wall, past the dog-kennel, to the wooden stairs, resembling those of a henhouse, and after climbing these must wander the whole length of the piazza to the left.

If all the structures are not equally ornamental and if piazza, stable and shed stand out noticeably against the dwelling-house, yet there is nowhere lacking a quality which adorns more than beauty of form and shining ornamentation. Extreme cleanliness smiles at the observer from the most hidden corners. In the little garden it reaches such a pitch that it hardly dares to smile. The garden does not look as if it were cleaned with a hoe and broom; it looks as if it had been brushed. The little beds that stand out so sharply against the yellow gravel of the walks look, not as if they had been dug by a cord, but as if they were drawn on the ground with a ruler and compasses, the box edging has the air of being daily attended to by the most accurate barber in town with comb and razor. And yet the blue coat which, if one stands on the piazza, one may see twice daily stepping into the little garden and every day at exactly the same minute, is still more neatly kept than the garden. When, after doing various pieces of work, the old gentleman leaves the garden again--and every day he goes at the same minute, just as punctually as he comes--the white apron over his blue coat shines with such unblemished whiteness that it is really incomprehensible why the old gentleman should have put it on. When he moves about among the tall rose-bushes which seem to have taken the old gentleman's bearing for a model, each of his steps is like the other, none is longer or fails to keep the regularity of his tempo. If one looks at him closer as he stands thus in the middle of his creation, one sees that he has merely copied externally that of which nature has created the model in himself. The regularity of the different parts of his tall figure seems to have been as accurately measured as the beds of the little garden. When nature formed him, her countenance must have borne the same expression of conscientiousness

as the old man's face--an expression which, because of its strength, would appear to be obstinacy if an expression of loving gentleness, indeed almost of dreamy enthusiasm, were not mixed with it. And even now nature seems to watch over him with the same care that his eye shows when it looks over his little garden. His hair, cut short at the back and twisted above his brow into a so-called "corkscrew-curl," is of the same unblemished whiteness that is shown by his neckerchief, waistcoat, collar and the apron over his buttoned-up coat. Here, in his little garden, he completes the finished picture that it presents; away from home his appearance and personality must appear a little odd. His hat still has the high pointed crown, his blue overcoat the narrow collar and padded shoulders of a long vanished fashion. These offer opportunities enough for bad jokes; but no one makes them. It is as if there were an invisible something emanating from the stately figure that prevents the rise of flippant thoughts.

When the older inhabitants of the town, meeting Herr Nettenmair, pause in their conversation to greet him respectfully, it is not alone the magic something that has this effect. They know what it is that they respect in the old gentleman; when he has passed, their eyes follow him as they stand, still in silence, until he has disappeared round the corner; then it may well be that a hand is raised and an extended forefinger tells more eloquently than lips could of a long life adorned with all the virtues of a good citizen and untarnished by a single misdeed. He is never seen in a public place, unless indeed something relating to the common welfare is to be discussed or started. The recreation which he allows himself he seeks in his little garden. At other times he sits over his ledgers or stands in the shed superintending the loading and unloading of the slate which comes from his own quarry and which he sells all over the country and far beyond its borders. A widowed sister-in-law looks after his house for him and her sons manage the business of slating which is connected with the trade in slate and is scarcely inferior to it in size. It is their uncle's spirit, the spirit of orderliness, of conscientiousness to the point of obstinacy, that rests upon the nephews and gains and keeps for them such confidence that they are sent for from far away wherever a slater is needed to roof a new building or to make extensive repairs to an old one.

It is a peculiar life that goes on in the house with the green window-shutters. The sister-in-law, still a beautiful woman, little younger than the master of the house, treats him with a kind of silent respect, or even veneration. And her sons do the same. The old gentleman shows his sister-in-law a respectful consideration, a sort of chivalry that has something touching in its grave reserve; toward his nephews he displays the fondness of a father. Yet even there something lies between them that lends to their whole intercourse something of considerate formality.

The sabbath-like peace that now spreads its wings above the most strenuous activity of the dwellers in the house did not always hover there. There was a time when bitter sorrow that came from stolen happiness, and wild desires divided its inmates, when even the menace of murder cast its shadow into the house; when despair at self-created misery wandered, wringing its hands in the still night, from the back door, up the stairs and along the piazza and down again by the path between the little garden and the stable-yard to the shed, creeping restlessly to the front again and again to the back.

What, at that time, made the hearts in the house swell to the bursting-point, what went on in the shadowed souls and issued from them in part, in the self-forgetfulness of fear, or became a deed, a deed of desperation--all that may pass through the memory of the man with whom we have been occupied. It is thirty-one years today since he returned to his home town from a long absence. So we turn back the thirty-one years and find a young man instead of the old one whom we leave. He is tall, but not so strong; and, like the old man, he wears his brown hair cut short at the back and brushed into a "corkscrew-curl" above his high white forehead. The sternness of the old man does not yet appear in his face, and the scar of mental pain endured has not yet been stamped upon his good-humored expression. Yet he is far from showing the light-hearted carelessness usually belonging to his age and the easy-going manners that are so frequently habitual with the traveling journeyman. The high road still leads him through the dense woods; but from the town, far down below, the sound of St. George's bells rises up to the height, as impossible to restrain as a mother flying to the loved child that comes toward her. Home! How much lies in this one short syllable! What swells within the human heart when the voice of home, the tone of the bells, calls a welcome to him who is returning from abroad, the tone that called the child to church, the boy to his confirmation and his first communion, that spoke to him every hour! In the idea of home, all our good angels embrace one another.

Tears gathered in our young wanderer's serious and yet kindly eyes. If he had not been ashamed he would have sobbed aloud. He felt as if he had only dreamed his sojourn away from home and, now that he was awake, could scarcely remember the dream; as if he had only dreamed that he had grown to be a man while abroad; as if it had always seemed to him in his dreams that he was only dreaming abroad in order, when he should wake up at home, to be able to tell about it. It might have been noticed that, in spite of all this inward agitation of the moment, he did not fail to see the cobweb that the breeze from home laid as a greeting against his coat collar, and that he carefully dried his tears so that they might not fall on his neckerchief, and that he removed the last, tiniest scraps of the silver thread with the most persistent patience before he gave himself up to his feeling for home with his whole soul. And even his attachment to his home was in part only an expression of his obstinate need of cleanliness which made him regard everything alien that threatened to fly against him as dirt; and this need in turn sprang from the warmth of feeling with which he embraced everything that stood in closer relation to his personality. The clothes on his body were a piece of home to him, from which he must ward off everything strange.

Now the road turned; the mountain ridge which had closed it in up to this point was now left behind to one side and the top of a spire appeared above the young growth. It was the top of St. George's steeple. The young wanderer paused. Natural as it was that the highest building of the town should become visible to him before the others, the tender meaning with which his fancy imbued the fact made him forget that it was so. The slate roof of the church and steeple needed repairs. This work had been given to his father; and it was the reason, or at least the pretext, for his father's calling him back home sooner than he had intended. Perhaps tomorrow he would begin his part of the work. There, above the wide arch through which he saw the bells moving, the steeple door had been placed. There the two beams would have to be pushed out to bear the ladder on which he should

climb up to the broach-post to fasten to it the rope of the contrivance in which he would make his airy circuit of the roof. And as it was his nature to bind the cords of his heart to the objects with which his work brought him in touch, he saw a greeting in the sudden appearance of the spire and involuntarily reached out toward it as if he would press a hand offered him in friendship. Then the thought of the work quickened his step, till a clearing in the wood and his arrival on the highest slope of the mountain showed him his whole home town lying at his feet.

Again he stopped. There stood his father's house with the slate shed behind it, not far from it the house where she had lived at the time he went away. Now she lived in his father's house, was his father's daughter, his brother's wife; and from now on he was to live in the same house with her and to see her daily as his sister-in-law. His heart beat harder at the thought of her. But it did not allow any of the hopes which had formerly been bound up with her memory to rise. His affection had become that of a brother for a sister, and what moved him now was more like anxiety. He knew that she thought of him with dislike. She was the only one in his father's whole house who looked forward to his coming with displeasure. How had this all come about? Had there not been a time when she seemed to be fond of him, when she had apparently liked to meet him as much as she later avoided him? Down below there, in front of the town, the shooting-house stood surrounded by gardens. How much bigger the trees round the house had grown since he had waved his last greeting to it from this height! Shortly before he had stood there under that acacia--it had been a beautiful spring evening, the most beautiful he thought he had ever known--at the Whitsuntide shooting. Within all the other young people were dancing; he walked happily round outside the house in which he knew her to be dancing. Even now he still felt embarrassed with girls and women and did not know how to talk to them; at that time he had felt even more so. How dearly he would have loved to tell her--how much he had to tell her, when he was alone, and how well he knew how to say it; and if chance ordained that he met her alone (it was wonderful how busy chance seemed to be in arranging such meetings) the thought that now the moment had come drove all the blood to his heart, the words from his tongue back into their hiding-place in the depths of his soul. Thus it had been when, her cheeks still glowing from the dance, she had come out of the house alone. She seemed to be concerned only with getting cool; she fanned herself with her white scarf, but her cheeks only grew the redder. He felt that she had seen him, that she expected him to come nearer; and it was the knowledge that he understood her that dyed her cheeks redder--that drove her, as he hesitated, back again into the hall. Perhaps, too, she had heard a third person coming. His brother came out of another door of the hall. He had seen the two standing silently opposite each other, perhaps had also seen the girl's blush. "Are you looking for Beate?" asked our hero to hide his embarrassment. "No," answered his brother, "she is not at the dance--and it's just as well. Nothing can come of it, after all; I must get another--and until I find one, Bohemian beer is my sweetheart."

There was something wild in his brother's speech. Our hero looked at him amazed and at the same time disturbed. "Why can nothing come of it?" he asked. "And what is the matter with you?"

"Oh, yes, you think I ought to be like you, pious and patient so long as there is no thread on your coat. But I am another kind of fellow,

and if anybody upsets my calculations I have to let off steam. Why can nothing come of it? Because the old man in the blue coat won't have it."

"Father called you into the little garden yesterday--"

"Yes, and raised his white eyebrows, which are drawn with a ruler, an inch and a half. 'I thought it was so. You are going with Beate, the collector's daughter. That comes to an end today!'"

"Is it possible? And why?"

"Did you ever know old Blue-coat to give any 'why'? And did you ever ask him 'But why, father?' He didn't say so, but I know why it has to come to an end with me and Beate. I've been expecting it the whole week; whenever he raised his hand I thought he was pointing to the little garden and was ready to follow him like a poor sinner. That is the place where he gives his cabinet orders. The collector is said not to be in very good circumstances. There is some gossip about his spending more than his pay. And--well, you are a quill-driver, too, like old Blue-coat. But what can the girl do? Or I? Well, the affair must stop--but I'm sorry about the girl, and I must see how I can forget her. I must drink or get another one."

Our hero was accustomed to his brother's manner; he knew that the words were not intended to be as wild as they sounded, and his brother was showing his love and respect for their father by the fact of his obedience; still our hero would have liked to see them shown in speech as well as in action. It seemed to Apollonius as if there were something unclean on his brother's soul and involuntarily he stroked the other's coat collar several times with his hand as if he could brush it off him from outside. Dust had collected on the collar during the dance; when he had removed it he felt as if he had really removed what had troubled him.

The subject of their conversation changed. They began to speak of the girl who had just been out, fanning herself to get cool; Apollonius certainly did not know that he was responsible for this. Just as the girl was the goal to which all his lines of thought led, so, too, when once he began to speak of her he could not escape from his theme. He forgot his brother so completely that at last he was really talking to himself. His brother now seemed for the first time to perceive all the beautiful and good things in her that the hero lauded with unconscious eloquence. He agreed with more and more enthusiasm until he broke into a wild laugh which roused the hero from his self-forgetfulness and dyed his cheeks as red as those of the girl had been a short time before.

"And so you slink about round the hall where she is dancing with others, and if she shows herself you haven't the heart to draw her into conversation. Wait, I will be your ambassador. From now on she shall dance no turn except with me, so that no one else shall cross your plans. I know how to get on with girls. Let me take your part for you."

Our hero was frightened at the thought that the girl should learn that very day what he felt for her. Besides, he was ashamed of his own embarrassed and awkward behavior to her, and of what she must think of him when she knew that he needed a mediator. He had already raised his

hand to stop his brother when the appearance of the girl herself caused everything else to grow dark to him. Quietly and alone, as before, she stepped out of the door. Beneath the scarf with which she had fanned herself she seemed to glance furtively about her. Again he saw her cheeks grow redder. Had she seen him? But she turned her face in the opposite direction. She seemed to be looking for something in the grass in front of her. He saw her pick a little flower, lay it on a bench and, after she had stood for a time as if in doubt whether she should pick it up again or not, with quick decision turn again to the door. A half involuntary movement of her arm seemed to tell him to take it, that it was picked for him. Once more a wave of red rushed up over her face to her dark brown hair, and the haste with which she disappeared in the door seemed intended to prevent a regret which might give rise to anxiety as to how her conduct would be understood.

The brother, who seemed not to have noticed anything of all this, had continued to speak in his lively, vehement fashion; his words were lost; our hero would have had to have had two lives in order to hear them, for all the one he possessed was in his eyes. Now he saw his brother rushing away toward the hall. He thought of detaining him, but it was too late. In vain he hurried after him up to the door. There the flower absorbed him again which the girl had left lying for some finder, for a happy one, if he found it for whom it was intended. And while his lips continued to call softly and mechanically to his brother, who no longer heard him, to keep silence, he was inwardly asking himself: "Was it really I for whom she laid the flower here? Did she lay it here for any one?" His heart answered both questions with a happy "Yes," while at the same time the thing that his brother intended to do troubled him.

If it was a sign of love from her and for him, then it was the last.

Twice he glanced surreptitiously into the hall when the door was opened; he saw her dancing with his brother and then, when they were resting after the dance, he saw his brother talking persuasively to her in his hasty way. "Now he is talking of me," he thought, his whole face burning. He rushed into the shade of the bushes when she left the hall. His brother took her home. He followed them at as great a distance as he thought necessary to prevent her seeing him. When his brother came back from accompanying her he stepped away from the door. He felt naked with shame. His brother had noticed him nevertheless. He said: "She won't hear of you yet; I don't know whether she means it, or whether it is just airs. I shall meet her again. No tree falls at one stroke. But I must confess, you have good taste. I don't know where my eyes have been up to now. She's away ahead of Beate; and that's saying a good deal!"

From then on his brother had danced untiringly with Walter's Christiane and spoken for Apollonius and always, after he had taken her home, he came and gave our hero an account of his efforts on his behalf. For a long time he was uncertain whether it was only affectation, or whether she really looked with disfavor on our hero. He repeated conscientiously what he had said in our hero's praise, and how she had answered his questions and assurances. He still had hope after our hero had already given it up. And her behavior toward the latter would have compelled him to realize that he could expect no return of his affection, even if he had not known what answers she gave his brother. She avoided him wherever she saw him as assiduously as she had formerly seemed to seek him. And had it really been he whom

she had sought before, if indeed she had sought any one?

A hundred times his brother urged him to waylay her and press his own suit. He exerted all his inventive power to procure him an opportunity of speaking to her alone. Our hero refused to be urged or to accept his offers. After all, it was useless. All that he might accomplish would be to make her still more angry.

"I can't stand by any longer and see you growing thinner and paler all the time," said his brother one evening, after he had reported how unsuccessfully he had spoken for him again that day. "You must go away from here for a while; that will have good results for you in two ways. When I tell her that it is on her account that you have gone out into the world, perhaps she will turn. Believe me, I know the long-haired tribe, and I know how to treat them. You must write her a touching letter for good-by; I will deliver it, and I'll manage to soften her heart. And if it can't be accomplished, it will do you good to be away from here where everything reminds you of her, for a year--or several years. And finally, strange places will make another man of you, who will know better how to get round the apron-wearers. You must learn to dance; that's already half the battle. And anyway, the old Blue-coat has been asked by his cousin in Cologne to send one of us to him; I read it the other day in a letter that had fallen out of his pocket. Just tell him that you have gathered something of the sort from several things he has said lately and that you are ready to go if he wants you to. Or let me do that. You are too honest."

And he really did arrange it. It is a question whether our hero would have been able voluntarily to make up his mind to leave home. He could not understand how any one could live anywhere else but in his home town; to him it had always seemed like a fairy tale that there were other towns and people living in them. He had not imagined the life and doings of these people as real, like those of the inhabitants of his home, but as a kind of shadow-play that existed only for the looker-on, not for the shadows themselves. His brother, who knew how to treat the old man, led the conversation up to the cousin in Cologne as if by chance, and was clever enough to interpret the suggestions that Herr Nettenmair made in his diplomatic way as preliminary hints and connect them with others that referred to our hero. After frequent conversations he seemed to take it as the express desire of the old man that Apollonius should go to his cousin in Cologne. This put the idea into the old man's mind and, as it passed for his own, he brooded over it in his own way. There was little work to do at the time, and there seemed to be no prospect of its increasing materially for some time. A pair of hands could be spared; if they remained in the business all the workers would be condemned to semi-idleness. The old man could stand nothing as little as what he called dawdling. The only thing that was lacking was that our hero should resist. He knew nothing of his brother's plans. The latter had wisely not initiated him into them, because he knew him too well to expect his support in a matter that he would have rejected as both underhand and disrespectful to his father.

"You want to send Apollonius to Cologne," said his brother to the old man one afternoon; "but will he want to go? I don't think so. You will have to send me out on my travels. Apollonius won't go--at least not today, nor tomorrow."

That was enough. That very evening the old man beckoned our hero to

follow him into the little garden. He stopped in front of the old pear-tree and, removing a little twig that was growing out of its trunk, said: "Tomorrow you will go to your cousin in Cologne."

With a rapid movement he turned toward his son, and saw with astonishment that Apollonius nodded his head obediently. It seemed almost to displease him that he should have no self-will to break. Did he think that the poor boy was nursing defiant thoughts, even if he did not express them, and did he want to break down even the defiance of thoughts? "You pack your knapsack this very day, do you hear?" he shouted at him.

"Yes, father," said Apollonius.

"You start tomorrow at sunrise." After he had seemed to try almost to force a defiant answer, he may have regretted his anger. He made a gesture of dismissal; Apollonius went obediently. The old man followed him, and several times he came up to the brothers' room with milder sternness to remind his son, who was packing, of this and that which he was not to forget.

And the last of four strokes was just ringing out from the tower of St. George's when the door of the house with the green shutters opened, and our young wanderer stepped out, accompanied by his brother. At the same spot where he now stood looking down on the town lying below him, his brother had taken farewell of him, and he had looked after him a long, long time. "Perhaps I can win her for you after all," his brother had said; "and then I'll write you so at once. And if you can't get her, she isn't the only one in the world. I can tell you, you are as good-looking a fellow as any; and if you'll only lay aside your stupid way you can get on with any of them. Once for all, things are so that the girls can't court us--and I shouldn't even want one that threw herself at my head of her own accord. And what can a lively girl do with a dreamer? Our cousin in Cologne is said to have a couple of pretty daughters. And now, good-by. I will deliver your letter today." With that his brother had left him.

"Yes," said Apollonius to himself as he looked after him. "He is right. Not because of my cousin's daughters, or any other girl, no matter how pretty she might be. If I had been different perhaps I need not have had to go away now. Was it I for whom she laid the flower there at the Whitsuntide shooting? Did she want to meet me then, and before then? Who knows how hard it has become for her! And having done all that in vain must she not have felt ashamed? Oh, she is right not to want to have anything more to do with me. I must learn to be different."

And this resolution had been no bloomless bud. His cousin's house in Cologne did not encourage dreaming of any kind. Apollonius found an entirely different family life there from that in his own home. His old cousin was as full of life as the youngest member of the family. Loneliness was impossible. A lively sense of the ridiculous [Illustration: Jacob's Journey. Schnorr Von Carolsfeld] [Blank Page] prevented the growth of any kind of peculiarity. Every one had to be on his guard; no one could let himself go.

Apollonius could not have avoided growing to be another man, even if he had not wanted to change; and he recognized clearly that it was a piece of good fortune that had led him to his cousin. He lost more and

more of his dreaminess; before long his cousin could put the most difficult task into the young man's hands and he would complete it, without the aid of another's advice, so satisfactorily that his cousin was obliged to confess to himself that even he would not have begun the matter more thoroughly, carried it on more energetically, finished it more speedily and happily. Soon the youth was able to form his own opinion of the way in which the business at home had been carried on. He was obliged to acknowledge that it had not been the most practical way, in fact, that some of his father's orders could not but be called wrong-headed; then he reproached himself bitterly for his unfilial criticism, endeavored to justify his father's actions to himself, and, if he found that impossible, forced himself to believe that the old man must have had his good reasons and it could only be that he himself was too limited in knowledge to be able to guess them.

Letters came from his brother. In the first one he wrote that he was now clear in his mind about the girl to this extent, that her harshness toward Apollonius was due to her fondness for another whom he could not bring her to name. In the next, one in which he scarcely spoke of the girl, Apollonius read between the lines a certain pity for himself, the reason for which he knew not how to find. The third gave this reason only too clearly. His brother himself was the object of the girl's secret affection. She had given him various signs of this, after he had renounced his former sweetheart in accordance with his father's will. He had suspected nothing of this; and when he had approached her as a suitor on his brother's behalf, shame and the conviction that he himself did not love her had sealed her lips.

Now Apollonius realized with pain that he had been mistaken when he believed that those dumb signs had been meant for him. He wondered that he had not seen that he was in error at the time. Had not his brother been as near to her as he when she laid down the flower which the wrong man found? And when she had met him alone so intentionally unintentionally--indeed, when he called to mind the moments that dominated his dreams--she had sought his brother, that was why she had been so startled to meet him, that was why she had fled every time as soon as she had recognized him, as soon as she found him whom she was not seeking. She did not talk to him, but she could joke for a quarter of an hour at a time with his brother.

These thoughts characterized hours, days and weeks of pain that lay deep within him, but his cousin's confidence which he had to reward by living up to it, the healing effect of busy and purposeful work, the manliness which both these things had already ripened in him, all held their own in the struggle and came out of it strengthened.

A later letter which he received from his brother announced that old Walther had discovered the inclination of the girl's heart and that he and the old gentleman in the blue coat had decided that Apollonius' brother should marry the girl. The old gentleman's "should" was a "must;" Apollonius knew that as well as his brother. The girl's affection had touched his brother; she was beautiful and good; should he oppose his father's will for Apollonius' sake, for the sake of a love that was without hope? Being certain of Apollonius' consent beforehand, he had resigned himself to the decree of heaven.

Throughout the first half of the following letter, in which he announced his marriage, this pious mood echoed. After many cordial words of comfort came his brother's apology, or rather justification,

for having allowed two years to elapse between this letter and the last one. Then followed a description of his domestic happiness; his young wife who still clung to him with all the fire of her girlish love, had borne him a girl and a boy. In the mean time his father had been afflicted by an ailment of the eyes, and had grown constantly less able to conduct the business alone in his sovereign manner. This had made him grow odder and odder. After he had left the reins in his son's hands for a time, the old imperative desire to rule, intensified by the monotony of enforced idleness, had caused him to rouse himself once more. Finally, however, he had been obliged to realize that things could not go on in his way. To subordinate himself to another merely as an advisory assistant, and particularly when the other was his own son who until recently had carried out his commands without being consulted and without any will of his own, this proved to be impossible for the old man. He found occupation in the little garden. There he could remove the old, think of something new, and again make room for something newer; and he did so. Ruling unrestrictedly in the little green realm in which from now on no "why" might be heard, where, beside the law of nature, only one other governed and that his will, he forgot or seemed to forget that he had formerly borne a mightier sceptre.

But his brother's following letters were not so full of the business and of the odd old gentleman as they were of the festivities of the shooting society of the home town and of a club which had been formed to keep its pleasures separate from those of the lower classes. In all the descriptions of bird and target shooting, concerts and balls of which he and his young wife appeared as the centre, shone the utmost gratification of the writer's vanity. Only in a postscript to the last letter did he mention the more serious fact that the town wanted to have repairs made to the tower and roof of St. George's, and that the work had been entrusted to him. The old gentleman in the blue coat urged him to ask Apollonius to return to his home town and the business. It was his brother's opinion that Apollonius would not care to leave the life in Cologne of which he had become fond for such a trifling matter. The repairs could be completed in a short time with the present working force. There were only a few damaged places on the tower and roof. Moreover, apart from his wife's dislike of Apollonius which he had continued to combat in vain, it would be a useless torture to his brother to refresh in his mind all that he must be glad to have forgotten. He would easily find an excuse for refusing to obey a command which only oddity had suggested. The conclusion of the letter contained a teasing insinuation of a relation between our hero and his cousin's youngest daughter, of which his home town was talking. His brother sent his regards to her as his future sister-in-law.

Although no such relation existed, Apollonius acknowledged to himself that it was only for him to call it into being. He knew that he could become his cousin's son-in-law if he wished. The girl was pretty, good, and fond of him, as was her sister. But he looked on her only as a sister; he had never felt a wish that she might be more to him. He believed he had conquered his love for Christiane; he did not know that after all it was only she that stood between him and his cousin's daughter, as she would have stood between him and any other woman. When he learned that Christiane loved his brother, he had taken from his breast the little metal box in which he had carried the flower ever since the evening when he had picked it up in the mistaken belief that it had been laid there for him. When Christiane became his

brother's wife, he packed up the box with the flower and sent it to him. He could not throw away what had once been dear to him--but he might no longer possess it. Only he had a right to the flower for whom it had been intended, to whom belonged the hand which had bestowed it.

His father called him back; he must obey. But it was more than mere obedience that awoke in him. He not only went; he went gladly. His father's words conveyed to him a permission rather than an order. When the spring sun penetrates into a room that has been uninhabited and closed for the winter we see that what has lain on the floor like dry mummies was really sleeping life. Now it moves and stretches itself and becomes a buzzing cloud and swarms up jubilantly into the golden ray. Not his father alone, every house in his home-town, every hill, every garden about it, every tree within it, called him. His brother, his sister--this was the name he gave Christiane--called him. Yet, she did not call him. She felt a dislike of him, a dislike so strong that for six years his brother had struggled in vain to overcome it. He felt as if he must go home on that account if on no other; he must show her that he did not deserve her dislike, that he was worthy to be her brother. He wrote this to his brother in the letter which announced his intention to obey and named the day on which they might expect him. He was able to assure him that recollections of the time that was gone would not torture him, that his brother's anxiety was groundless.

It had come to that--the thought of her did not awaken any of the old hopes. When he looked down from the height he asked himself: "Shall I succeed in becoming a brother to her who is now my sister?"

He has arrived at the door of the paternal home. In vain he has scanned the windows, seeking for some familiar face. Now a thickset man in a black coat comes rushing out. He dashes out so hastily, embraces him so wildly, presses him so close to his white waistcoat, lays his cheek so near his cheek and keeps it there so long that one must choose to believe either that he loves his brother to the utmost or--that he does not want him to look into his eyes. But at last he has to let go of him; he takes him by the right arm and draws him into the door.

"It's fine that you've come! It's grand that you've come! It really wasn't necessary--simply an idea of the old man's, and he has nothing more to say about the business. But it really is splendid of you; I'm only sorry that you're making your betrothed's eyes red for nothing." He said the words "your betrothed" so distinctly and in such a loud tone that they could be heard and understood in the living room. Apollonius searched his brother's face with moist eyes, as if to check off, point by point, whether everything was still there that had been so dear to him. His brother did nothing to help him; he looked only at what lay between Apollonius' chin and toes.

"Father wanted it," said Apollonius easily; "and what you say of a betrothed--"

His brother interrupted him; he laughed loudly in his old manner, so that even if Apollonius had gone on speaking he could not have been understood. "That's all right! That's all right! And once more, it's splendid that you've come to visit us, and we won't let you go for a fortnight at least, whether you want to or not. Don't mind her," he added softly, pointing through the doorway with his right hand while

he opened the door with his left.

The young wife was standing at a cupboard with the contents of which she was busy, her back toward the door. She turned, in an embarrassed and not quite friendly manner, and only toward her husband. Her brother-in-law could still see nothing but a part of her right cheek, with a burning blush upon it. Whatever other criticism might be made of her behavior, an unmistakable honesty showed itself in it, an incapability of pretending to be otherwise than she was. She stood there as if she were preparing herself to hear an expected insult. Apollonius went up to her and took her hand, which at first she seemed to want to draw away and then allowed to lie motionless in his. He was glad to greet his sister-in-law. He begged her not to be displeased at his coming and hoped by earnest endeavor to conquer the unmistakable dislike that she felt for him.

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However considerate and courteous were the terms in which he clothed his pleading and hope, yet he expressed both only in thought. That everything was just as he had imagined it and yet so entirely different robbed him of all ease and courage.

His brother put a welcome end to the painful pause, for his wife did not utter a syllable in reply. He pointed to the children. They were still crowding, unconfused by all that oppressed their elders and which they did not notice or understand, about their new uncle; and he was glad of the opportunity to bend down to them and to have to answer a thousand questions.

"They're a forward brood," said their father. He pointed to the children, but he looked furtively at his wife. "For all that I'm surprised to see how soon you have become acquainted--and intimate at once," he added. Perchance he continued his last remark in thought: "it seems that you know how to become intimate quickly and to make others intimate with you!" A shade as of anxiety spread over his red face. But his anxiety was not about the children; otherwise he would have looked at the children and not at his wife.

Apollonius was talking more and more eagerly to the children. He had failed to hear the remark or he did not want to let the angry woman know whose face he carried so vividly within him. He would have recognized the little ones, if they had met him by chance, as his brother's children by their resemblance to their mother. But the question how they had become so quickly intimate with him ought to have been put to old Valentine. It was he who had been continually telling them about the uncle who was soon coming to see them--perhaps only so as to be able to talk with some one about what he liked to talk of so much. The brother and the sister-in-law avoided such conversations, and the father did not make himself familiar enough with the old fellow to talk with him about matters which might give him an excuse to drop into any kind of intimacy. Old Valentine would also have been able to say that the children had not met their uncle just by chance. They had come to find him. Old Valentine had thought of how love that has waited long hurries to meet thousands of homecomers; it had hurt him to think that his favorite alone should fail to find any greeting before he knocked at his father's door.

Apollonius suddenly ceased speaking. He was shocked to think that his

embarrassment had caused him to forget his father. His brother understood his start and said with relief: "He's in the little garden." Apollonius jumped up and hurried out.

There, among his beds, crouched the figure of the old gentleman. He was still following old Valentine's shears with his critical hands as the servant slipped along on his knees before him. He found many an inequality which the fellow had to remove at once. It was no wonder. Twice every minute old Valentine thought: "Now he's coming!" And when he thought thus the shears cut crookedly right into the bog. And the old gentleman would have growled in quite another manner if the same thought had not made uncertain the hand that was now his eye.

Apollonius stood before his father and could not speak for pain. He had long known that his father was blind and had often pictured him to himself in sorrowful thought. At such times he had seen him looking as usual, only with a shield over his eyes. He had thought of him sitting or leaning on old Valentine, but never as he now saw him, the tall figure helpless as a child, the trembling and uncertain hands feeling their way. Now he knew for the first time what it meant to be blind.

Valentine laid the shears down and laughed or cried on his knees; it could not be said what he did. The old gentleman first inclined his head to one side as if listening, then he pulled himself together. Apollonius saw that his father felt his blindness to be something of which he must be ashamed. He saw how the old man exerted himself to avoid every movement that might recall the fact that he was blind. The old gentleman felt that the new-comer was somewhere near him. But where? On which side? Apollonius understood that his father felt this uncertainty with shame, and forced himself to cry with a voice that almost failed him. "Father! Dear father!" He dropped on his knees beside the old man and wanted to throw both arms around him. His father made a motion which seemed to beg for forbearance, though it was only intended to keep the young man away from him. Apollonius threw the arms his father had refused around his own breast to hold the pain there which, if it had risen and crossed his lips, would have betrayed to his father how deeply he felt the latter's misery. The same consideration made old Valentine turn his involuntary motion to help the old gentleman to stand upright, into a movement to pick up the shears which lay between him and his master. He too wanted to hide from the son what could not be hidden, so faithfully and deeply had he learned to live in the father's feelings.

The old gentleman had risen and held out his hand to his son much as if the latter had been absent as many days as he had been years. "You must be tired and hungry! I am somewhat troubled with my eyes--but it is of no consequence. As regards the business, talk to Fritz. I have given it up. I want to have peace. But that is not the real reason; young people must become independent some time. It makes them more eager to work."

He came a step nearer his son. He seemed to be carrying on a struggle within himself. He wanted to say something which no one should hear except his son. But he was silent. Why did he suppress what he wanted to say? Did it concern the business, or the honor of the house? And did he know or suspect that the one who was now responsible for both in his place was standing leaning against the gate of the little garden and could hear what he said to the new-comer, or, if he spoke secretly to him, could at least see that he did so? Was this why he

had had Apollonius called home from abroad? And did the expression of a "why" now still seem to him incompatible with his position?

It was a curious party at the midday meal. The old gentleman dined alone in his little room as usual. The children too had been sent away, and did not come in again until after the meal. The young wife was more in the kitchen or elsewhere out of the room than at the table; and if she did once sit down there for a few minutes, she was as dumb as she had been when Apollonius greeted her; the resentful cloud did not pass from her forehead. Fritz was accustomed to his father's condition, which pierced Apollonius' heart with the keenness of new-felt pain. He talked only of the old man's oddities; old Blue-coat did not know what he wanted himself, and made life needlessly unpleasant for himself and all the others in the house. If Apollonius began to talk of the business, of the repairs to be made to the roof of St. George's, his brother spoke of pleasures with which he was glad to be able to make his brother's stay with him more agreeable--and he always mentioned this stay as he would a passing visit. When Apollonius told him he had not come to enjoy himself but to work, he laughed as if it were an incomparable joke that Apollonius should want to help to do nothing, and showed that he understood wit, however dry might be its expression. Then, when his wife had gone out of the room, he asked about his brother's understanding with his cousin's daughter, and then laughed again at his brother's wag, in whom no one would recognize the old dreamer.

After dinner the children came in again, and with them more life and easy familiarity. While the old conditions still confronted Apollonius as new and strange, to the children what was new had already become old and familiar. All the afternoon Fritz, and apparently his wife too, were occupied only with a ball that was to be given. Fritz forgot more and more whatever might have caused him uneasiness, in thinking of the impression that he, as the chief person, would make on the new-comer at the festivity, and made use of the time till it should begin in giving him a foretaste of the affair by means of tales and hints dropped of the honor and attention shown him on such occasions by the most prominent citizens. He became noticeably more cheerful, and walked more and more proudly up and down the room. The creaking of his well-polished shoes said for the present, before the guests at the ball could do so: "Ah, there he is! Ah, there he is!" And when at intervals he jingled the money in his trousers-pockets all the corners of the hall rang with: "Now the fun will begin! Now the fun will begin!" And thither among those who were welcoming the guests--but he was no longer walking, he was gliding, swimming on the music--every dance was a jubilant overture on the name Nettenmair--he felt no floor, no feet, no legs beneath him, he scarcely still felt young Frau Nettenmair swimming along beside him, hanging to his right fin, the most beautiful among the beautiful, just as he was the most jovial among the jovial, the thumb on the hand of the ball.

And two hours later cries of "There he is!" really did ring from all sides and all the corners shouted: "Now the fun will begin!" Wherever they passed chairs were offered them. No hand was shaken as often and as long as that of jovial Fritz Nettenmair, no member of the company had so much sincere praise poured into his ears as he. But then, how agreeable he was! How condescendingly he accepted all this deserved homage! How witty he showed himself; how pleasantly he laughed! And not at his own jokes alone--there was no art in that; they were so brilliant that he had to laugh even if he didn't want to--he laughed

at others too, little as they deserved it, compared with his. There were people, to be sure, who paid little attention to him, but he did not notice them; and those who showed it more plainly were "Philistines, everyday fellows, insignificant people," as he whispered to his brother with contemptuous pity. It was quite peculiar: everyone's greater or lesser importance as a man and a citizen could be measured with perfect exactitude by the degree of his admiration for Fritz Nettenmair.

When the dancing began Fritz drew his brother into a room at the side. "You must dance," he said. "My wife would turn you down, and that would be unpleasant for me. I will bring you a partner who is firm on her feet and can keep you in time. Pluck up heart, boy, even if it doesn't go smoothly all at once."

In the excitement of vanity Fritz Nettenmair had forgotten six years. His brother was still to him the dreamer of old whom he forced to dance at times for his pleasure. Now, when, paying no attention to his refusal, he led the girl to Apollonius, the latter resigned himself so as not to appear impolite.

Fritz Nettenmair was the best-natured fellow in the world as long as he knew himself to be the sole object of the general admiration. In such a mood he could perform deeds of sacrifice for those who threw his brilliance into the shade. So it was now. As he sat among the important people, treating them to champagne, and read in his wife's eyes the gratification with which she saw him overwhelmed with honors, a feeling crept over him as if he had forgiven his brother a great wrong, and he felt himself to be an extraordinarily noble man, who deserved all these marks of honor and who yet with wonderful modesty condescended to allow himself to be touched by them. He saw that his brother was no longer the dreamer of old; but he forgave him that too. All eyes were directed toward the handsome dancer and his skilful carriage. Fritz teased his wife, and, in the certainty that he must far outshine his brother, he felt the additional gratification of forgiving any amount of wrong that Apollonius had never done him.

But, oh the ungrateful one! He would not allow himself to be outshone. Fritz Nettenmair danced jovially, as one who is at home in the world and knows how to treat the species that wears long hair and aprons; his brother was a stiff figure in comparison. He did not keep time with his head, nor, if the step was made with the left foot on the down beat, throw the upper part of his body to the right and vice versa; he did not now and again, with the boldness of a genius, slide across the hall and outdistance other couples. He danced neither jovially nor as one who is familiar with the world and knows how to treat the species that wears long hair and aprons; yet all eyes remained fixed on him, and Fritz Nettenmair outdid himself in vain.

It was the dullest ball that Fritz Nettenmair had ever experienced; it could not have been more so if Fritz Nettenmair had stayed at home. Fritz Nettenmair proclaimed the fact with mighty oaths, and the important people who had drunk his champagne agreed with him in his opinion, as they always did.

Some of the important women expressed to Frau Nettenmair their righteous and friendly indignation at her brother-in-law. That he had not asked his sister-in-law for the first dance betrayed an unpardonable disparagement of her. Frau Nettenmair, who felt the

universal wrong done to her husband as deeply as if it had been done to herself, said that her brother-in-law had long known that she would only have turned him down if he had. But still Apollonius was only admired and honored more and more, and consequently the ball only became still duller. It became so dull, in fact, that Fritz Nettenmair left with his wife at an hour when as a rule he was only just beginning to be really jovial. Nevertheless he heaped coals of fire on his ungrateful brother's head. He asked the girl in his brother's name to allow Apollonius to accompany her home. Then he went out of the little room at the side into the hall again to his wife, and with her left the house, to the unfeigned despair of the important people, who were still thirsty for champagne.

After he had performed his enforced knightly service for his lady, Apollonius found the door of the paternal home open and all its inmates already asleep. At least there was no light to be seen anywhere and everything was still. His brother had assigned to him the little room at the left of the second-story piazza. Fortunately for Apollonius, the six years had not altered the house as they had its inmates. He went softly through the back door, past Moldau who growled in a friendly way and whose rough neck he stroked full of gratitude for this sign of constancy, mounted the stairs, walked the length of the piazza and found a bed in his little room. But before he undressed he still sat for a long time on the chair by the window and compared what he had found with what he had left. Before he lay down for the night he had determined on his future course of action. The next morning he must learn what he was to do here, his relation to his father's house must be clearly settled. If there was no work for him, he would be on his way back to Cologne before the day was over.

He was up with the sun; but he had long to wait before it pleased his brother to rise from his couch. He made use of the time to take a walk to St. George's; he wanted to see for himself what was to be done there. When he came back again he met his brother and a gentleman with him who were just about to leave the living room. Apollonius knew the gentleman as the inspector of buildings from the town council. They greeted each other. They had already spoken to each other the day before at the ball, where the gentleman had not proved himself to be a prominent man and citizen, but, on the contrary, had joined the Philistines, everyday fellows, and insignificant people. Apparently he was not displeased to meet Apollonius just now. After the customary exchange of courtesies he explained the purpose of his presence. A final conference of experts was to take place that morning to consider what was to be done to the roof of the church and the tower, so that the result could be reported at a meeting of the council in the afternoon and a decision reached. Fritz Nettenmair and the inspector were on the way to St. George's, where they knew that the rest of the experts were already assembled.

Fritz, as he said, did not want to trouble his visitor by making him participate in business in which he was not concerned; just as little--but he did not say this--did he want to leave him alone at home. He asked him to be at the house in the woods, from which he would fetch him to go for a walk. Apollonius assured him quite easily that he would rather be present at the meeting; and when the inspector went so far as to ask him to go with him as another expert, no pretext could be found on which this could be prevented. Perhaps Fritz Nettenmair had a suspicion that he would soon have a great deal more to forgive the newcomer.

They found the rest of the meeting, two strange master-slaters and the official builders of the council, carpenter, masons, and tinsmiths, waiting for them at the tower-door. Several scaffoldings had already been fastened to the roof so that it could be examined; the conference took place in the church-loft nearest the largest of them. Apollonius stood modestly a few steps away in order to hear and, if he were asked, to speak. He had carefully examined the roof beforehand and formed his own opinion of the matter.

The two strange slaters stated that they thought extensive repairs were necessary. Fritz Nettenmair, on the contrary, was convinced that with a few patches which he enumerated, nothing more need be done for years. The builders, carpenter, masons and tinsmith eagerly agreed with him; all of them jovial and prominent men at yesterday's ball who conscientiously believed that if you drank a man's champagne, his was the opinion you must hold. The strange slaters knew very well that the Council feared the expense of more extensive repairs and had postponed those that had long been highly necessary from year to year. As, moreover, they had no prospect of being intrusted with the repairs themselves, they did not give themselves unnecessary trouble to aid in forcing upon Herr Fritz Nettenmair work and profit for which he himself seemed to care nothing at all. Hence in the course of the discussion they became more and more convinced that, whatever way you looked at the matter, Herr Fritz Nettenmair too was right. The inspector, a good man, perhaps grasped their motives and those of the prominent men. For a time he had listened in silence with a dissatisfied face, when he remembered Apollonius. He saw something in the latter's expression that seemed to correspond to his own opinion. "And what do you say?" he asked, turning to him.

Apollonius modestly came a step nearer.

"I wish you would look at the matter as carefully as possible," said the councilman.

Apollonius replied that he had already done so.

"I need not draw your attention to the fact that the matter is very important," continued the councilman.

Apollonius bowed. The councilman repressed what he had been about to say. With all its softness and mildness, such strict conscientiousness and obstinate honesty was expressed in the young man's countenance, that the councilman was almost ashamed of the admonition he had been on the point of giving him.

Apollonius began by stating the results of the examination he had made. He explained the condition of the places he had been able to test and what might be inferred from that as regarded the others. As the church accounts showed, no extensive repairs had been made to the church roof for eighty years. Even though the slate itself, if the material was good, might defy the elements for a long time yet, this was not true of the nails with which the slates were fastened to the lathing and planking. And wherever he had tested them he had found the nails either entirely destroyed or very nearly so.

It was unavoidably necessary to re-lay the entire slate covering and to replace with new material the rotten spots in the lathing and

planking. Another winter would make the condition of the roof so much worse that there was nothing to be gained by postponing the repairs with the object of saving the interest, for, without greater loss, the repairs could at the most be delayed only till the next year. He led those assembled to places which might serve as samples. He did not draw the conclusion himself, but knew how to use the cleverness which he had learnt from his cousin to force his opponents to do that for him.

The councilman's confidence in and respect for our Apollonius grew visibly. During the rest of the discussion he appealed almost entirely to him and shook his hand cordially when he left the meeting. If the undertaking should receive the approval of the Council, which he now no longer doubted, he hoped that Apollonius would take an active part in it, and he requested him to write out a report as to the most practical method of beginning it. Apollonius thanked him modestly for his confidence, of which he would try to show himself worthy. As to his taking part in the work itself, he replied that his father, as the master, would have to decide.

"I'll go with you at once," said the councilman, "and speak to him."

Even though Fritz had conducted the business until now and was regarded and treated by the important people as the master, still he was not. The old man had let him become master just as little as he had formally made over the business to him; he wanted to reserve to himself a sovereign power of interference wherever he should find it necessary.

He heard the two approaching while still at a distance and groped his way to a bench in his arbor. There he was sitting when they entered. After greetings had passed the councilman asked after Herr Nettenmair's health.

"Thank you," replied the old gentleman, "I am somewhat troubled with my eyes--but it is of no consequence." He smiled as he spoke, and the councilman exchanged a glance with Apollonius that won the latter's whole soul. Then he told the old man the whole conference, and made Apollonius blush in his modesty so that it was long before his usual color came back. The old man pulled his shield lower down on his face, that no one might see the thoughts which were oddly struggling with one another there.

Any one who could have seen beneath the shield would have thought at first that the old gentleman was glad; the shade of suspicion with which he had received Apollonius the day before disappeared. He need not be afraid, then, that this son would make common cause with his brother against him! Indeed, a something appeared on his countenance that seemed to rejoice malignantly at the elder's humiliation. Perhaps he might have interfered, as was his way, with a laconic: "You will take my place from now on, Apollonius, do you hear?" if the councilman had not sung Apollonius' praise and if it had not been so well deserved.

"Yes," he said in his diplomatic manner of hiding his thoughts by only half expressing them; "yes, indeed, youth! he is young." "And yet so efficient already!" supplemented the councilman.

The old gentleman inclined his head. One who was interested, as was

the councilman, might believe that he nodded. But he said: "It's the young men that are all-important today in the world!" Yes, he felt proud that his son was so efficient, ashamed that he himself was blind, glad that Fritz could now no longer do as he liked, that the honor of the home had gained one guardian more, afraid that the efficiency in which he rejoiced would make him himself superfluous. And he could do nothing to prevent it; he could do nothing more, he was nothing more. And as if Apollonius had expressed that, he rose stiffly erect, as if to show that his son was triumphing too early.

The councilman begged the old gentleman to keep his son at home during the time that the repairs were being made and to allow him to work at them. The old gentleman was silent for a time as if he were waiting for Apollonius to refuse to stay. Then he seemed to assume that Apollonius refused for, with his harsh brevity, he commanded: "You are to stay; do you hear?"

Apollonius went to his little room to unpack his things. He was still thus engaged when the news came that the town council had approved the repairs.

So it was settled: he was to stay. He was to be allowed to work for his beloved home and to apply what he had learnt while abroad.

After he had arranged all his things in his room, he at once set to work on the report which the councilman had requested. The repairs had been decided upon on his advice, he was concerned in them not alone as one of his father's "hands," as a mere workman; he felt that he had taken upon himself in addition a special moral obligation toward his home town; he must do everything in his power to fulfil it. He would not have needed such an incentive; even without it he would have done all that he could; he did not know himself well enough to know that.

In this exalted mood it appeared to him easy to overcome whatever threatened, on the part of his brother and his sister-in-law, to make his stay uncomfortable. After all, his brother wished him to go only on account of his sister-in-law's dislike of him and that could be conquered by enduring, honest effort. He had never offended his brother; he would willingly subordinate himself to him in the business. It did not occur to him that we can offend without knowing it or wishing to do so, in fact, that duty may command us to offend. It did not occur to him that his brother might have offended him. He did not know that one can also hate him whom one has offended, not only the offender.

Below, near the shed, a disagreeable-looking workman stood grinning in front of Fritz Nettenmair and said: "I understand some one at the first glance. Oh, yes, Herr Apollonius knows what he's about! But it's of no consequence. That won't last long!" Fritz Nettenmair gnawed his nails and ignored the gesture that was intended to excite him to ask what the fellow meant when he said, that would not last long. He went toward the living room and as he went he flew out quietly at somebody who was not there: "Uprightness? Knowledge of business, as that Philistine of an inspector says? I know why you're forcing your way in and insinuating yourself in here, you fluff-picker! Pretend to be as innocent as you like, I"--he made the gesture that meant: "I am one who know life and the species that wears long hair and aprons!" With this he turned toward the door, but his movement was not jovial, as usual.

How many people think they know the world, and know only themselves!

* * * * *

Between heaven and earth lies the slater's realm. Far below is the noisy tumult of the wanderers of the earth, high above are the wanderers of the sky, the silent clouds in their vast course. For months, years, decades, this realm has no inhabitants but the restlessly fluttering race of cawing jackdaws. But one day the narrow door halfway up the tower-roof is opened; invisible hands push two scaffolding timbers out, part way into space. To the spectator below it looks as if they wanted to build a bridge of straws into the sky. The jackdaws have fled to the pommel of the steeple and to the weather-vane and look down from there, ruffling their feathers with fear. The timbers stand out only a few feet from the door and the invisible hands cease pushing. Then a hammering begins in the heart of the tower-loft. The sleeping owls start up and tumble staggeringly out of their scuttles into the open eye of the day. The jackdaws hear it with horror; the child of man below on the firm earth does not catch the sound, the clouds above on the sky pass over it untroubled. The pounding continues a long time; then it ceases and two or three short boards follow the timbers and are laid across them. Behind them appear a man's head and a pair of vigorous arms. One hand holds the nail, the other swings the hammer that strikes it until the boards are firmly nailed down. The "flying" scaffold is ready. Thus the builder calls it, for whom it may become a bridge to heaven, without his desiring it. Then from the scaffold the ladder is built and, if the tower roof is very high, ladder upon ladder. Nothing holds it together but iron hooks, nothing holds it firm but two pairs of hands on the scaffold and, at the top, the broach-post against which it leans. Once it is tied fast to the broach-post and at the bottom, the slater no longer sees any danger in mounting it, however anxious the dizzy man may feel down on the firm earth when he looks up and thinks the ladder made of match-wood glued together, like a child's Christmas toy. But before he has bound the ladder fast--and in order to do that he must climb it once--the slater may commend his poor soul to God. Then he is indeed between heaven and earth. He knows that the slightest shift of the ladder--and a single false step may shift it--will dash him helplessly down to certain death. Stop the clang of the bells beneath him, it may startle him! The spectators far below on the earth involuntarily clasp their hands breathlessly; the jackdaws, who have been driven from their last place of refuge by the ascending figure, caw as they flutter wildly round his head; only the clouds in the sky pursue their way above him, untouched. Only the clouds? No. The daring man on the ladder goes on as calmly as they. He is no vain dare-devil wantonly bent on making himself talked of; he goes his dangerous way in the course of his calling. He knows that the ladder is firm; he himself has built the scaffold, he knows that it is firm; he knows that his heart is strong and his tread sure. He does not look down where the earth holds out her green arms luringly, he does not look up where from the procession of clouds in the sky the fatal giddiness may drop down on his steady eye. The centre of the rungs is the pathway of his glance, and he stands on top. No heaven exists for him, no earth, nothing but the broach-post and the ladder which he ties together with his rope. The knot is made; the spectators breathe with relief and give utterance in all the streets to their admiration for the daring man and his doings high up between heaven and earth. For a week the children of the town play at being slaters.

But now the daring man begins his work indeed. He fetches up another rope and lays it as a rotary ring round the post below the pommel of the steeple. To this he fastens his tackle with three blocks, to the tackle the rings of his hanging seat. A board to sit on with two places cut out to allow his legs to hang down, and with a low, curved back, on either side boxes for slates, nails and tools; in front, between the places for his legs, a little anvil on which he hammers the slate to the shape he wants it with his slater's hammer; this apparatus, held by four strong cables which unite above to form two rings for the hooks of the tackle, is the hanging-seat as he calls it, the light craft in which he sails round the roof of the steeple high in the air. By means of the tackle he easily pulls himself up or lets himself down as high or as low as he likes; the ring above turns round the steeple with the tackle and hanging-seat in whichever direction he desires. A gentle kick against the roof sets the whole in motion, for him to stop where he pleases. Soon no one stands below any longer looking up; the slater at work is no longer any novelty. The children turn again to their old games. The jackdaws grow accustomed to him; they regard him as a bird, like themselves, only bigger, but peaceful, as they are; and the clouds in the sky have never troubled themselves about him from the beginning. The ladies envy him his view. Who can look out so freely across the green plain and see how mountains range themselves behind mountains, first green, then growing bluer and bluer to where the sky, even bluer than they, rests on the last ones! But he troubles himself as little about the mountains as the clouds trouble themselves about him. Day after day he works on with iron and claw-hammer, day after day he hammers slates and drives in nails, till he is done with hammering and nailing. One day man, tackle, ladder and scaffolding have disappeared. The removal of the ladder is just as dangerous as its setting up; but no one below folds his hands, no mouth extols the achievement of the man between heaven and earth. The crows wonder for a whole week and then it seems to them as if years ago they had dreamt of some odd bird. Far below the tumult of the wanderers of the earth still sounds, high above the wanderers of the sky, the silent clouds still continue in their vast course, but no one flies around the steep roof save the cawing swarm of jackdaws.

It was proposed to put the whole management of the repairs in Apollonius' hands. In order not to hurt his brother's feelings, he begged the council to arrange differently. He was so anxious not to hurt his brother that he did not even say why he asked this. His work in Cologne had accustomed him to act independently; he foresaw that his brother, as he had found him again, would be the cause of many a hindrance. He knew that he was taking a heavy burden upon himself when he promised the inspector that the work itself should not suffer by reason of the two-headed management. The honest man, who guessed Apollonius' purpose and only respected him the more on that account, obtained the consent of the council for him, and silently resolved that wherever it should be necessary he would take the part of his favorite and uphold the latter's orders against those of his brother.

It was a difficult task that Apollonius had set himself; it was much more difficult than he knew. His presence at home had not pleased his brother from the beginning; Apollonius attributed that to the influence of his sister-in-law; since then he had grown even more estranged from him--and no wonder! Apollonius had already become acquainted with his brother's vanity and greed for honor, and what had happened since then had made the latter feel himself slighted in favor

of Apollonius. His sister-in-law's dislike Apollonius thought he could overcome in time by honest endeavor, his brother's injured greed of honor by outward subordination. If there was no further obstacle in the way, he might hope to perform the task, difficult as it seemed. But what lay between him and his brother was something different, very different, from what he thought; and that he did not know it only made it more dangerous. It was a suspicion, born of the consciousness of guilt. Whatever he did to clear the apparent obstacles out of the way could only increase the real one.

Apollonius soon saw that the system to which he had become accustomed in Cologne, the rapid and carefully planned cooeperation, did not exist here, nor even such methodical management as his father had formerly maintained. The slater had to wait for fifteen minutes and longer at a time for the slates; the tenders dawdled and had a good excuse for doing so in the slackness and laziness of the cutters and sorters. His brother laughed half compassionately at Apollonius' complaint. Such system as he demanded did not exist anywhere and was not even possible. In his own mind he made fun again of the dreamer who was so unpractical. And even if the system had been possible the work was done by the day. Wasted time was paid for just the same as that properly applied. And when Apollonius himself tried to put an end to the old method of jogging along, his brother saw in him again the time-server of the inspector and the council, while he saw himself as the straightforward man who disdained such tricks. He persuaded himself that Apollonius wanted to unseat him altogether, and had even worse intentions in his mind--in which, however, he should not succeed with all his cunning, although he had come home on purpose to do so. And still he thought the dreamer would make a fool of himself if he tried to carry out what he himself, who knew the world, could not succeed in doing;--he who was keener in action than even old Blue-coat had been in his day.

Fritz Nettenmair thought he was outdoing the old gentleman when he whistled still more shrilly on his fingers, coughed still more wrathfully and spat still more decisively. The qualities in the old gentleman that had really commanded respect, the consistency which, even where it degenerated into obstinacy, compelled esteem, the calm, self-contained dignity of a capable personality--these he failed to see. Not possessing them himself, he lacked also the desire to perceive them in others. Just as his figure was absolutely at variance with the bearing of the old gentleman which he sought artificially to assume, so too his lack of repose and inward stability constantly contradicted it. He seemed merely to have borrowed the old gentleman's diplomatic manner of speaking in order to show his own superficiality and emptiness. Then at times he would suddenly lapse from the stiff demeanor of the wearer of the blue coat into his own patronizing joviality and onto a plane where joking rubs out with dirty fingers the line between superior and subordinate as if it had never existed. Then when he forcibly jerked himself back just as suddenly into the person of authority, he did not regain the respect he had lost, he merely offended. To all this was added the fact that he knew himself to be excelled by some of his workmen, and in difficult cases was obliged to let them do as they liked.

Apollonius, on the contrary, had by nature and by virtue of the training that he had received at his cousin's what his brother lacked; he possessed dignity of personality, consistency to the point of obstinacy. His inward sureness made him authoritative; he did not have

to exert himself to be so--he was raised above the necessity of demanding respect by visible effort which so seldom attains its purpose, indeed usually defeats it. And so he succeeded in doing what he wanted. Soon the work was being carried on in the most systematic order, and all those concerned seemed to feel contented under the change--all except Fritz Nettenmair. The rapid coeoperation that moved as on the track of an invisible necessity made the figure in the blue coat in which he felt himself so big, superfluous. Another reason for uneasiness was that the new system came from his brother; from him whom he already had so much to forgive and whom he wanted less and less to forgive. He did not know, or did not want to know, what charm a self-contained personality exercises, although he himself was obliged to acknowledge it against his will, and still less that he lacked this and that his brother possessed it. He had agreed in his own mind that his brother had used means which he was pleased to feel himself too noble to apply. In that way Apollonius had won the people away from him. The latter had no suspicion of what was going on in his brother's breast; he was on his guard against him, as one must be against cunning persons, for such enemies can only be defeated with their own weapons. The brotherly friendliness and respect with which Apollonius treated him was a mask behind which he thought he could certainly hide his sinister plans; he would pay him back and make him more easily harmless if he hid his watchfulness behind the same mask. Apollonius' good-natured willingness outwardly to subordinate himself to him appeared to his brother like derision in which the workmen, won over by the deceitful one, knowingly took part. In his sensitiveness, he himself resorted to the means that he assumed his brother employed. He was prevented from opposing him openly by the fact that Apollonius impressed him himself, even though he would not have acknowledged this to be the reason. He laid the blue coat of thunder aside and descended to the very lowest rung of his joviality. He began by hints and then gradually by words to show his sympathy with the workmen who groaned beneath the tyranny of a time-serving intruder, as he proved to them; as he had not the courage to incite them to open rebellion he sought to lead them to commit single petty acts of mutiny. He began to treat them to food and drink daily. They ate and drank, but remained as before in the course that Apollonius marked out for them.

The common man has a child's keen eye for the strong points and weaknesses of his superior. This endeavor, which they saw through, lost Fritz Nettenmair the last vestige of the men's respect; it taught them, if they did not already know it, in whose bad books they might safely come, in whose they might not. And if they had been uncertain, the inspector's different behavior toward the two brothers might have determined them. And as they were not so finely organized, and also had not the same reasons as Fritz Nettenmair, their opinion made itself undisguisedly plain. They took liberties with him which showed him that the success of his condescension was entirely different from what he had intended. Then he drew the cloud of the blue coat once more wrathfully about him, whistled more shrilly than ever, so that the big bell on the other side resounded, was doubly bombastic and raised his shoulders as high again toward his black head. The wrath and decision of his former coughing and spitting was child's play to those he displayed now. But the workmen soon knew that this went on only in Apollonius' absence; and his chance appearance, like the rising full moon, disconcerted the heaviest thunder-storms.

Fritz Nettenmair was obliged to despair of reestablishing his lost importance on the scene of the repairs. Naturally he added also the

result of his mistaken measures to Apollonius' ever-growing account. The feeling that he was superfluous seized him as it had his father, but not with quite the same effect. What the little garden was to the old gentleman the slate-shed now became to the elder son; at least as long as he saw Apollonius on the hanging-seat or on the church roof. But now he also brought the blue coat with him into the living room. His children--and this was easy as he himself did not trouble himself about them--had also been won over by his brother, by reprehensible means, of course. The reprehensible means were just those which he himself never applied: unintentional kindness and love that was wise in its severity. But even in his wife he began to see more and more one who was to some extent his brother's ally in the latter's conspiracy against him. He saw this long before he had the slightest real cause to do so, and that was the shadow that his guilt threw across the future of his imagination. Its old law was to compel him, by reason of the wrongness of his means of defense, to make of this shadow a real, living form and to place it in his life as a retributive force.

Vague, premonitory fear that fluttered by in momentary clear intervals, seemed to tell him that his changed behavior toward his wife must hasten this change. At such times he suddenly became doubly pleasant and jovial with her; but even this joviality bore something of the nature of the sultry soil from which it grew.

One cure for such a disease is highly praised; that is diversion, self-forgetfulness. As if the navigator should forget himself at sight of the threatening reef, as if every one should forget himself wherever double foresight is necessary! Fritz Nettenmair took the cure.

From now on he was never missing at a ball or any public amusement; he felt himself to have fled the danger forever if he were absent only for an hour from the place where he saw it threatening. He was more out of his house than in it--and not he alone. He thought the cure still more necessary for his wife than for himself. His vengeful self-consciousness assumed what lay as a mere possibility in the future to be a reality of the present. And his wife was still so much on his side that she was now angry with his brother to whose influence she attributed the change in her husband's behavior--only not in the way in which it really was responsible.

Apollonius, who was oppressed by all this as by a heavy cloud, an uncomprehended intuitive feeling, understood only this: his brother and his sister-in-law avoided him. He kept away from the places to which they went. The inmost need of his nature, the tendency to gather together rather than to dissipate, in itself, would have led him to do so. Solitude became a better cure for him than diversion proved to be for the other two. He saw how different his sister-in-law was from what she had seemed to him to be before. He was obliged to congratulate himself that his dearest hopes had not been fulfilled. His work gave him enough sense of himself; whatever gaps remained the children filled.

And the old man in the blue coat? Has he in his blindness no suspicion of the clouds that are piling up all about his house? Or is it such a suspicion that grips him at times when, meeting Apollonius, he exchanges indifferent words with him? Then two powers strive on his brow which his son, confronted by the shield over his father's eyes,

does not see. He wants to ask something but he does not ask. So thick is the cloud that the old man has spun about him like a cocoon that there is no longer any way through it from him out into the world nor any, leading from outside in to him. He behaves as if he knew about everything. If he did not do so, he would show the world his helplessness and himself challenge it to abuse this helplessness. And if he should ask would people tell him the truth? No! He believes the world to be as obdurate toward him as he is toward it. He does not ask. He listens where he knows he is not seen listening, straining feverishly to catch every sound. And in every sound he hears something that is not there; his strained imagination builds boulders of it that crush his breast, but he does not ask. He dreams of nothing but of things that bring disgrace on him and his house.

It is the nature of guilt that it entangles not alone its author in new guilt. It has the magic power of drawing into its fermenting circle all who surround him and of ripening in him whatever is bad to fresh guilt. Well for him who successfully defends his unblemished heart against this magic power! Even if he cannot save the guilty one himself, he may be an angel to the others. Here are these four human beings with all their differences of individuality, held together in one knot of life which is being consumed by the guilt of one! What destiny will they spin for themselves, the people in the house with the green shutters?

Weeks had now passed since Apollonius' return and still he had not realized his sister-in-law's fears. During the first few days Fritz Nettenmair read in her demeanor a convulsive effort to pull herself together, a desperate endeavor to be prepared; now this gave way to something that appeared to be amazement. He, and he alone, saw how she began to observe his brother more and more courageously when he did not suspect that her gaze rested upon him. She seemed to be comparing his personality, his behavior with her expectation. Fritz Nettenmair felt in her soul how little the two agreed. He took pains to nurse his young wife's dislike of her brother-in-law back to its old strength. He did so, feeling all the time how vain his effort was; for a single glance at his brother's gentle, upright countenance must tear down what it had taken him days laboriously to build up. He felt how delicately he ought to go to work and how roughly he really did so; for the same power that sharpened his feeling for the degree carried him beyond it as soon as he came to act. He knew that what he had begun must complete its course to his ruin. He sought forgetfulness and drew his wife ever deeper with him into the whirlpool of diversion.

Medicines taken in too large doses are said to have the opposite of the desired effect. Thus it was with Fritz Nettenmair's medicine; at least as regarded his young wife. In the midst of every-day domestic work she had formerly longed for the festival of pleasure; now that this had become her every-day atmosphere her longing was for the quiet life of her home. Satiated with the marks of honor bestowed upon her husband by the important people, she now began for the first time to notice that there were other people who measured him according to a different standard. She began to compare, and the important people fell lower and lower in her eyes beside the every-day people. She thought of the dull ball on the evening of Apollonius' arrival.

She was sitting in the garden sewing while the old gentleman dreamt his heavy midday dreams. She felt so peculiarly happy at home. Her

boys were playing at her feet, as quietly as if the old gentleman had been present, or no, not like that, for if he had been in the little garden they would not have dared to go in there at all. The little girl had thrown her arms round her mother, who seemed herself to be still a girl, so chaste did she appear. Now the child raised her little head with old-fashioned earnestness, looked meditatively at her mother and said: "Whatever can be the reason?"

[Illustration: SCHNORR VON CAROLSFELD DAVID BEING STONED BY SINAI]

"Reason of what?" asked her mother.

"Whenever you have been with us and then go away, he looks after you so sadly."

"Who?" asked her mother.

"Why, Uncle Apollonius. Who else could it be? Did you scold him, or slap him as you do me when I take sugar without asking? You must have done something to him, or he wouldn't be so sorry."

The little girl went on chattering and soon forgot her uncle over a butterfly. Not so her mother. She no longer heard what the child said. What a queer feeling was this that had come over her, happy and unhappy at the same time! She had let her needle fall without noticing it. Was she startled? It seemed to her that she was startled, much as she would have been if she had been speaking to some one and suddenly realized that it was not the person she thought. She had thought that Apollonius wanted to insult her, and now the child told her that she had insulted him. She looked up and saw Apollonius coming from the shed toward the house. At the same moment another man stood between her and him as if he had grown up out of the earth. It was Fritz Nettenmair. She had not heard him approaching.

After putting an indifferent question he went on with strange haste to speak of the "dull ball." He repeated what people had said about it, told her how offended every one felt that Apollonius had not asked her for a dance, not even for the first one. It was curious that when he reminded her of it now she felt it more keenly than ever; but not with anger, only with sad pain. She did not say so; she did not need to. Fritz Nettenmair was like a man in a magnetic sleep; from the leaf of a tree, from a picket in the fence, from a white wall he read, with closed eyes, what his wife felt.

"We shall soon get rid of him, I think," he went on as if he had not been reading from the stable-wall. "There is no room here for two households. And Anne is accustomed to plenty of space."

That was the name of the girl with whom Apollonius had been obliged to dance at the dull ball and see home afterward. Since then she had often been at the house on pretexts which her crimson cheek branded as lies. Her father too, a much-respected citizen, had sought Apollonius' acquaintance, and Fritz Nettenmair had furthered the matter in every way he could.

"Anne?" cried his wife as if shocked.

"It's good that she can't lie," thought Fritz Nettenmair with relief. But it occurred to him that her inability to disguise her feelings

would also promote his brother's evil plan. He had sought to make her jealous as a last resort. That had been foolish of him, and he already regretted it. She could not pretend; and even if he were still the dreamer of old, her excitement could not but betray to him what was going on in her breast, could not but betray it to herself. And then--once more he had reached the point to which every conclusion led him; he saw her awakening to an understanding of herself. "And then"--he forced the words out so that every syllable tore itself on his teeth--"and then--she'll learn to know what it means!"

His brother expected him in the living-room. "Of course, now that he knows I saw him, he must make some excuse for having passed by here when he thought she was alone." Thus thought Fritz, and followed his brother.

Apollonius was really waiting for him in the living-room. He wanted to see his brother in order to warn him against the evil-looking workman. He had heard much that was suspicious about him, and knew that his brother trusted him implicitly. "And so you order me to send him away?" asked Fritz; and this time he could not help allowing his spite to gleam through his disguise. From the tone in which he spoke Apollonius could not fail to read his real feeling. It was: "So you want to force your way even into the shed too, and drive me out of it. Try it, if you dare!"

Apollonius looked into his brother's eyes with unconcealed pain. He brushed the lapel of his brother's coat as if he would wipe away whatever clouded the relations between them, and said: "Have I done anything to hurt you?"

"Me?" laughed his brother. His laughter was intended to mean: "I'm sure I don't know what!" But it really meant: "Do you ever do anything else, do you ever want to do anything else, but just what you know will hurt me?"

"For a long time I have wanted to say something to you," went on Apollonius, "I will tomorrow; you are not in the right humor today. You had to know what I have told you about the workman, and it wasn't meant as you have taken it."

"Of course! Of course!" laughed Fritz. "I'm convinced that it wasn't so meant."

Apollonius went and Fritz supplemented his speech with, "it was not meant as you would have me believe, old fox. And wasn't it meant as I took it? You think--The workman is a bad fellow; but you would never have warned me if you hadn't needed an excuse." He turned on his heel with a movement that suggested his feeling of superiority. In his desolate state of mind it had pleased him to make successful use of his father's diplomatic method of concealing his thoughts by half expressing them.

His pleasure was short-lived; his old worry fastened him again to the rack. And a newer one had been added to it. He had neglected the business. In his master's absence from the shed the workman had had opportunity enough to steal, and had certainly made use of it. It was long since Fritz had done any work at the church; Apollonius had been obliged to engage another workman and put him in his brother's place. He had earned nothing now for a long time and yet never missed any

public amusement. The esteem of the important people showed a growing inclination to fall, and could only be kept up by increasing quantities of champagne. He had plunged himself into debt, and continued to add to his obligations daily. And yet the moment was bound to come when the appearance of prosperity which he had been at such pains to sustain would disappear.

Anne Wohlig had often been at the house since Apollonius' arrival; and Christiane, with the credulity which in simple souls is the natural consequence of their own truthfulness, had seen nothing suspicious in her most far-fetched pretexts. This was not so today. She had suddenly grown so keen-sighted that what she recognized to be an excuse assumed in her eyes the proportions of an unpardonable crime. She disliked any girl that could be so double-faced, and she herself was too honest to hide her opinion. Anne sought the reason for Christiane's treatment of her in the latter's dislike of her brother-in-law. It was well known that she begrudged the poor fellow his brother's affection. She herself had said that she would turn him down if he should dare to ask her for a dance. And Apollonius' appearance showed that she made it impossible for him to enjoy his stay in his father's house. Vexation made Anne honest, too, and she expressed her thoughts as far as she could without touching on the delicate point of her own feeling for Apollonius. Christiane was now obliged to hear the same reproach from a stranger's mouth that she had already heard from her own child.

The girl went. Apollonius, on his way back from his brother, passed by again. He was still in time to see Anne leaving. But nothing showed in his face to confirm Christiane's only half understood fear.

The child had said: "You have done something to him." Anne had said: "You hate him, you won't let him enjoy himself." And the sad glance that he sent after her--she herself caught him now and then unnoticed--said the same thing. Like a flash of joyous light it came into her mind that he did not look sadly after Anne--nor joyfully either. His gaze was as indifferent as it was with every one else. She had been told: "You hate him, you have offended him and you want to hurt him." And she had believed that he hated her, that he wanted to hurt her. And had he not done so? She looks back into the time long past when he insulted her. It is long now since she had felt angry with him for it; she had only feared a fresh insult. Could she still be angry, when he had become such a different man, when she herself knew that he would not offend her, when people said, and his own sad glance confirmed it, that she offended him? And she let her thoughts run back eagerly, so eagerly that the music sounded again about her and she sat again among her girl friends, in her white dress with the pink sash, in the shooting-house, on the bench in front of the windows; and she got up again, driven by a vague impulse and, dreaming, made her way among the dancers to the door--there she saw outside, was it not the same face that looked after her now when she passed, so honest, so gentle in its sadness? Was it not the same peculiar sympathy now as then, that followed her every step and never left her? Then, she had avoided him and looked at him no more, for he was false. False? Is he false again? Is he still false?

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All day long Fritz Nettenmair thought of what it could be that Apollonius wanted to say to him tomorrow: "Tomorrow, because I am not in the humor for it today? In the humor? I've let the fox see my hand.

If I hadn't, he would have blurted it out; now I have warned him and made him cautious. I am too honest with a player who cheats so; I am bound to lose. Good; I will be 'in the humor' tomorrow, I'll act as though I were blind and deaf, as if I didn't see what it is he is trying to do, even if it were still clearer. A cobweb on the lapel of my coat so that he may have something to brush off! I can't bear to have a fellow like that look into my face--the hypocrite!"

Thus prepared and resolved to outdo the fox in cunning, even though it should put his self-control to the severest test, Apollonius found his brother waiting for him the following day. Apollonius too had resolved on his course. He was determined not to let himself be confused today by any mood of his brother's; everything depended on shutting off the source of all these moods. Fritz wished him the most unembarrassed, jovial good morning that he could command.

"If you will listen to me calmly and in a spirit of brotherliness," said Apollonius, "I hope that this will be the best kind of a morning for you and me and all of us."

"And all of us," repeated Fritz and put nothing of his explanation of the three words into his tone. "I know that you always think of us all, so speak out merrily from your heart; I'll do the same."

Apollonius omitted his intended introduction. He had learnt to be wise and cautious; but to be wise and cautious toward a brother would have seemed to him to be duplicity. Even if he had known of his brother's duplicity he, unlike the latter, would never have thought of meeting him with the same weapons. Even in the face of his experience he would have persuaded himself that he was mistaken.

"I think, Fritz," he, began cordially, "we should have been different toward each other from what we have been." He good-naturedly took half the blame on himself. In his own mind his brother put the whole of it on him, and was about to assure him jovially of the contrary when Apollonius continued. "Things have not been the same as they used to be between us, nor as they should be. The reason for this, as far as I know, is only your wife's dislike of me. Or do you know of any other?"

"I know of none," said his brother shrugging his shoulders regretfully; but he thought of Apollonius' return against his advice, of the ball, of the conference in the church loft, of his being pushed aside in the matter of the repairs, of his brother's whole plan, of that part of it that had been and of that part which was still to be carried out. He thought that Apollonius was occupied only in trying to put it into execution, and of how much depended on his guessing Apollonius' next intention and bringing it to naught.

While he was thinking this, Apollonius went on speaking, with no idea of what was passing in his brother's mind. "I do not know what it can be that has made your wife dislike me. I only know that it cannot be anything that I have done intentionally. Can you tell me what it is? I do not want to accuse her; it is possible that there is something about me that displeases her. And if so, then it is certainly nothing that should be praised or spared. And I should be the very last to spare myself if I only knew what it is. If you know, please tell me. If it is anything bad you must not spare me, even if it should cause you pain to tell me. If you know it and don't tell me, that can be the only reason. But you would not offend me by telling me, really,

Fritz."--

Fritz Nettenmair did what Apollonius had just done; in his own mind he measured his brother by himself. The result was bound to be to Apollonius' disadvantage. Apollonius took his thoughtful silence for an answer.

"If you do not know," he went on, "let us go to her together and ask her. I must know what I ought to do. Our life cannot go on like this. What would father say if he knew? I reproach myself day and night that he does not know. It is better for us all, Fritz. Come, let us not put it off."

Fritz Nettenmair heard only his brother's presumptuous demand that he should take him to her! That he should take him to her now! Did Apollonius already know of her state and want to take advantage of it? The question was superfluous; if they saw each other now they could not fail to understand each other. And then it would be there, the thing that for weeks he had not allowed himself an hour's rest in trying to prevent. Then it would come to pass, the thing of which he knew that it must come and the coming of which he had yet made desperate efforts to hinder. They must not see each other face to face now; they must not see each other now until he had built a new dividing wall between them. Of what? He had no leisure to think of that now. He must have some pretext on which to prevent the meeting, must have time to find an excuse. And merely to gain time he said laughingly:

"Of course! Ask her freely and cheerfully. Whoever asks is told. But how do you come to think of that just now? Just now?" A thought that flashed overwhelmingly into his mind involuntarily expressed itself in this question. Apollonius was already at the door. He turned back to his brother, and answered with a gladness that seemed fiendish to the latter because he did not look into the other's honest face. If he had, Apollonius would have caught something of the devilish fear that disfigured his brother's countenance. And still, perhaps he would not. He might have thought his brother ill, so entirely was he without the slightest suspicion of anything in his proposal that could inspire his brother with fear. In fact he thought that what pleased him must please his brother also.

"Before," replied Apollonius, "I was obliged to fear that I should make her still more angry. And that would have been even more disagreeable for you than for me."

His brother laughed and nodded in his jovial way with his head and shoulders merely for the sake of doing something. And his: "And now?" sounded as if it were half stifled with laughter, not with anything else.

"Your wife has been different for some time," went on Apollonius confidingly.

"She is"--answered Fritz Nettenmair's start against his will and wanted to say what he considered her to be. It was an evil word. But would he himself who had made her that tell him so? No, it has not yet come to pass, what he fears. And even if it is bound to come; he can still delay it. He forces himself not to give utterance to his excitement. He would like to ask: "And how do you know that she--is

different?" But he knows that his voice would tremble and betray him. He must know who has told his brother. Has he already spoken to her? Has he read it in her eyes at a distance? Or is there a third person involved--an enemy whom he already hates before he knows whether he exists?

Apollonius seems to have caught something of his brother's unfortunate gift of reading another's thoughts. His brother does not ask; his face is turned away; he is seeking like a desperate man and cannot find; and yet Apollonius answers him. "Your little Annie told me," he said, and laughed as he thought of the child. "'Uncle,' said the odd little thing, 'mother is not so cross with you any more; go to her and say you won't do it any more; then she'll be kind again and will give you sugar.' That's how she put the idea into my head. It's wonderful how it sometimes seems as if an angel were speaking out of a child's mouth. Your little Annie may have been an angel to us all."

Fritz Nettenmair laughed so boisterously at the child that Apollonius' laughter caught fire again from his. But Fritz knew that it was a devil that had spoken out of the child's mouth. Yet he laughed--so hard that it did not strike Apollonius how forced and disconnected his reply was. "Well then, tomorrow, as far as I'm concerned, or even this afternoon; now I can't possibly spare the time. Now I'll go down with you to St. George's. I have a necessary errand to do tomorrow! Oh, the confounded child!"

Apollonius had no suspicion how seriously the laughing "confounded" was meant. He said, still laughing at the child himself, "Good. We'll ask tomorrow then. And then everything will be different. I am looking forward to it as gladly as the child, and you are too, I know, Fritz. We'll make it a very different life from what we have been leading." Kindhearted Apollonius rejoiced so heartily at his brother's joy! He continued to do so even after he was up again on his swinging seat, flying round the church roof.

Just as restlessly hovered about his brother's fear the sinister something that hung above him and threatened to engulf him; still more industriously did his heart hammer away at the crumbling plans to hinder the fall: but the ship of his thoughts did not hang between heaven and earth, held by the light of heaven. It pitched deeper and ever deeper between earth and hell, and hell branded him ever darker with its fire.

Toward evening Christiane was suddenly aroused from her dreaming by two men's voices. She was sitting in the grass not far from the closed door of the shed. Fritz and his brother had just entered the shed from the street at the back. She heard him teasing his brother about Anne Wohlig. Anne was the best match in the whole town--and Apollonius was a rascal who knew the world and the species that wore long hair and aprons. Anne was already sewing away at her outfit, and her cousins were carrying the news of her approaching marriage to Apollonius from house to house. Christiane heard her husband ask when the wedding was to be. She had been about to move away; now she forgot to go, she forgot to breathe. And then she almost gave a jubilant shout: Apollonius had said that he was not going to marry at all, either Anne or any one else.

His brother laughed. "Then that's why the evening you came back you didn't dance with any one but Anne and took her home afterward?"

"I would have danced with your wife," replied Apollonius. "You warned me that she would turn me down because she was so set against me. Then I didn't want to dance at all. You brought Anne up to me, and when you went you asked her if I might see her home. I couldn't do anything else under the circumstances. I have never thought of Anne in connection with--"

"Marriage?" interrupted his brother laughing. "Well, she's pretty enough to--amuse yourself with too, and it's worth the trouble to make her perfectly mad about you."

"Fritz!" exclaimed Apollonius, displeased. "But you're not in earnest," he added to soothe himself. "I know you know me better; but even in fun it isn't right to jest lightly about a respectable girl."

"Pshaw," said his brother, "if she behaves like that herself! What does she come to the house for and throw herself at your head?"

"She hasn't done that," answered Apollonius hotly. "She is a good girl, and comes here without any thought of wrong."

"Yes, or you would have put her right," laughed Fritz, and there was mockery in his voice.

"Did I know what she thought?" said Apollonius. "You've teased her about me and me about her. I have done nothing that could have awakened any such thoughts in her. I should have thought it a sin."

The men went back the way they had come. It did not occur to Christiane that they might have come along the path where she stood. All that was open and true in her rose in indignation against her husband. It was not other people who had lied to him; he himself was false. He had lied to her and to Apollonius and she had erred and had hurt Apollonius, Apollonius who was so good that he could not bear to hear Anne made fun of, who had certainly never made fun of her. Everything had been a lie from the beginning. Her husband was persecuting Apollonius because he was false and Apollonius was good. Her inmost heart turned away from the persecutor and toward the persecuted. Out of the rebellion of all her emotions a new and sacred feeling rose triumphant, and she gave herself up to it with the complete abandon of innocence. She did not know it. Oh, that she might never learn to know it! As soon as she learnt to know it would become a sin.--And already the steps were rustling through the grass that were to bring her the bitter knowledge.

Fritz Nettenmair had to erect a new dividing wall before he could bring his brother to his wife. He came for this purpose. His gait was uneven. He was still choosing and could not decide. He became even more uncertain when he stood before her. He read what she felt in her face; it was too honest to conceal anything; it knew too little of what it spoke to think it must hide this feeling. He felt that he could do nothing more with her by repeating the old slanders. He knew that petty absurdities are better fitted to destroy a growing interest than are gross faults. He imitated Apollonius going back along a way along which he had already passed with a light, for fear that he might have let a spark fall; he showed how his brother could not rest at night for thinking that perhaps a workman had not deserved the harsh word that he had spoken to him in the heat of the moment, how he

sprang up out of bed to straighten the position of a ruler that he had left lying crooked on the table. At the same time Fritz kept on blowing imaginary fluff from his sleeves. He saw indeed that his efforts were having an opposite effect to what he wished. Irritated by this he went on to stronger measures. He pitied poor Anne whom Apollonius had made fall in love with him by hypocrisy, and told how coarsely he made fun of her in public.

A dark red had come into his young wife's cheeks. Frank, simple natures have a deep hatred of all duplicity, perhaps because they feel instinctively how defenseless they stand before such an enemy. She was trembling with emotion as she rose and said: "_You_ might do that; he could not."

Fritz Nettenmair was startled. In the sight of the figure that stood before him full of contempt there was something that disarmed him. It was the power of truth, the loftiness of innocence confronting the sinner. He pulled himself together with an effort. "Did he tell you so? Have you got so far already?" he said, forcing the words out between his teeth. Christiane wanted to go into the house; he stopped her. She wanted to tear herself away.

"You have lied about everything," she said. "You have lied to him. You have lied to me. I heard what you said to him just now in the shed."

Fritz Nettenmair drew a breath of relief. So she did not know everything. "Was I not obliged to?" he said, his eye scarcely able to stand the purity of her gaze. "Was I not obliged to in order to prevent your disgrace? Do you want the fluff-picker to despise you?" Now her eyes made him drop his. "Do you know what you are? Ask him what a woman is who forgets her honor and her duty. Of whom do you think as you should think only of your husband? When you creep about like a wench in love wherever you think you will see him? And you think that people are blind. Ask him what he calls that kind of a woman? Oh, people have fine names for a woman of that sort."

He saw how she started, shocked. Her arm quivered in his hand. He saw she was beginning to understand him, was beginning to understand herself. He had feared her obstinacy--and behold, she was breaking down! The angry red faded in her cheek and a blush of shame flushed wildly over its pallor. He saw her eyes seek the ground as if she felt the gaze of all men fixed upon her, as if the shed, the fence, the trees all had eyes and they were all staring into hers. He saw how in the suddenness of her perception she called herself one of the women for whom people have such fine names.

The pain poured its rain over her burning cheeks that bled with shame and her tears were like oil; the fire grew when a voice sounded from the shed and his tread was heard. She tried to tear herself violently away and looked up with a half wild, half imploring glance that, dying, sank again to the ground before the thousand eyes that were fixed upon her. He saw that the eye of the man who was coming through the shed was the most terrible of all to her. He was again in possession of all his courage.

"Tell him,"--he forced the words out softly--"what you want of him. If he is as you think he is he must despise you."

Fritz Nettenmair held the struggling woman fast with the strength of

the victor until he had beckoned to Apollonius, who stepped questioningly out of the shed, to come over to him. He let her go and she fled into the house. Apollonius, shocked, stopped halfway up to him.

"You see how she is," Fritz said to him. "I told her you wanted to ask her. If you like we will go after her, and she must confess to us. I'll see whether my wife can safely insult my brother, who is so good."

Apollonius had to restrain him. Fritz would not consent at first. Finally he said: "Well, now you see, at least, that it is not my fault. Oh, I am so sorry!"

There was an involuntary dismay in the last words which Apollonius connected with the failure at a reconciliation. Fritz Nettenmair repeated them softly, and this time they sounded like a mockery of Apollonius, like mocking regret at the failure of a sly trick.

Christiane had rushed into the living-room and bolted the door behind her. She was not thinking of Fritz; but Apollonius might come in. She turned over and over the feverish thought of fleeing out into the world. But wherever she thought of herself, on the steepest mountain, in the deepest valley, he met her and saw what it was that she wanted and he had to despise her. Little Annie was in the room; she had not noticed the child. All the mother's life was engaged in her inward struggle; Annie could not tell from her mother's look what was going on within her. She drew her mother onto a chair, threw her arms round her in her usual fashion and looked up into her face. Her gaze struck her mother as if it came from Apollonius' eyes. Little Annie said:

"Do you know, Mother, Uncle 'Lonius"--the mother jumped up and pushed the child away from her as if it had been he himself. "Don't tell me anything more about--don't tell me anything more about him!" she said with such angry fear that the little girl stopped speaking and began to cry. Little Annie did not see the fear, she saw only the anger in her mother's action. It was anger at herself. The little girl lied when she told her uncle of her mother's anger at him. He did not need to be told. Had he not seen her red cheek himself, when she fled from his and his brother's question; the same red of angry dislike with which she had received him when he came home? Oh, from then on life was curiously sultry in the house with the green shutters for days and weeks.

Fritz Nettenmair was very little at home. From early in the morning till late at night he sat in a public house from which the door in the church roof and the hanging seat on the tower could be seen. He was more jovial than ever, and treated everybody in order to forget himself in their insincere admiration.

In the shed and in the slate quarry the disagreeable-looking workman took his place. Until he came home late at night, the workman wandered back and forth in the passage leading from the living-room to the shed. There had been some cases of theft in the neighborhood, and the workman stood watch; Fritz Nettenmair had become a very anxious man about his home. Other people wondered at Fritz Nettenmair's confidence in the workman. Apollonius warned him repeatedly. Of course! He had good reason not to desire any watch kept, least of all by this workman who did not like him. And that was just why Fritz Nettenmair trusted

the workman and would not listen to warnings. When Fritz Nettenmair said to his brother: "I am so sorry," he had just caught sight of the workman. The latter's grin showed him that the workman saw through him and knew what it was that he feared. He ground his teeth; half an hour later he intrusted him with the watch and his place in the shed and the quarry. It needed but few words. The workman understood what Fritz told him that he must do; he also understood what Fritz did not tell him and what he must do nevertheless. Fritz Nettenmair had as little confidence in the fellow's honesty in the business as had Apollonius; but the man's dishonesty there secured him his honesty where he needed it more.

The old gentleman in the blue coat had worse dreams than ever; he listened more anxiously than ever to every fleeting sound, heard more in it, and added ever greater loads to what lay on his breast. But he did not ask.

It was late one evening. From the tavern window Fritz Nettenmair had seen Apollonius leave his hanging seat and tie it to the scaffold. According to his custom, he hurried out of the restaurant so as to get home before Apollonius. He found his wife in the living-room, busy about her household work. The workman came in and made his customary report. Then he whispered something to his master and went.

Fritz Nettenmair sat down at the table with his wife. He usually sat there until the sound of the workman's shuffling tread in the hall told him that Apollonius had gone to bed. Then he went back again to his tavern; he knew that the house was safe from thieves, the workman was on the watch.

The feeling that he had his wife in his hand and that she resigned herself to the situation with suffering had until now aided the wine to cast over him a faint reflection of the jovial condescension which formerly had shone like the sun from every button of his clothes. Today the reflection was unusually faint--perhaps because her eye had not sought the ground when it met his glance. He put a few indifferent questions, and then said: "You have been merry today." He wanted her to feel that he knew everything that went on in the house even when he was not there. "You were singing."

She looked at him calmly and said: "Yes, and tomorrow I'll sing again. I don't know why I shouldn't."

He got up noisily from his chair and walked up and down with heavy steps. He wanted to intimidate her. She rose quietly, and stood there as if expecting an attack that she did not fear. He stepped close to her, laughed hoarsely and made a gesture which he intended to frighten her into stepping back. She did not do so. But the crimson of hurt feelings spread over her cheeks. She had grown keen-sighted, distrustful of her husband. She knew that he had her and Apollonius watched.

"And did he tell you nothing more?" she asked. "Who?" shouted Fritz. He raised his shoulders and thought he looked like the old man in the blue coat. His wife did not answer.

Presently she said softly, "I have come to be at peace with myself," and this was written so brightly in her eyes that the man began to walk up and down again in order not to have to look at them. "I am at

peace with myself. The thoughts came to me; I was not to blame for that, and I did not call them into my mind. I did not know they were evil. Then I fought with them and I will not tire as long as I live. In my soul I went to my dear mother's bed where she died, and I saw her lying there and laid three fingers on her heart. I promised her that I will do and suffer nothing dishonorable and I begged her with tears to help me not to do or suffer anything dishonorable. I promised and begged until all my fear had gone away, and I knew that I was an honorable woman and would remain an honorable woman. And no one may despise me. Whatever you may do to me, I am not afraid and will not defend myself. But you shall not do anything to the child. You do not know how strong I am and what I can do. I will not have it; that I tell you."

His glance passed fearfully by the slender figure without touching her pale, beautiful countenance; he knew that an angel stood there and threatened him. Oh, he realized, he felt how strong she was; he felt how powerfully the resolution of an honest heart protects. But only against him! His weakness made him feel that. He felt that no one who had the power of belief could fail to believe her. He had gambled away this right in the crooked game. He would have had to believe her, if he had not known that what must come, would come. Not she nor any one could prevent it. He had fallen into the hands of the spirit of his guilt, the thought of retribution, which drove him irresistibly to bring about what he wished to prevent; the long steady habit of thinking this thought had buried him too deep. Hope and trust were alien to the thought; hate was more akin to it. And it was hate that he called to his aid.--Outside the workman's feet shuffled on the sanded floor of the hall. The house was safe from thieves: he could leave it again.

Fritz Nettenmair was as jovial in the tavern that night as he could possibly be. His flatterers were thirsty, and pleased with his condescension. He drank, pushed the guests' hats down over their ears, performed many another tender caress with his stick and his hand, and laughed admiringly at them as brilliant jokes. He did everything to forget himself; but he did not succeed.

If he could only have changed with his wife, who during this time was sitting solitary at home! The thing for which he longed--to forget himself--was the very thing against which she must be on her guard. What he must do, what he could not avert by any effort, was the thing for which she strove unavailingly--to remember herself. All her thoughts spoke to her of Apollonius. She thought she was avoiding him, and now she saw that he had fled from her. She ought to be glad, and it hurt her. Her cheeks burned again. It was peculiar that she herself regarded her position more sternly or more mildly according to whether Apollonius in her thoughts judged it more sternly or more mildly. He had become to her the involuntary standard by which to measure things. Did he know what she was, and despise her? He was so gentle and indulgent; he did not ridicule Anne, did not despise her. Even before he came, did she already have thoughts that she should not have had and did he guess them? And he was sorry for her, and that was why he looked after her with such a sad glance when she went? Yes! Of course! And now he fled from her in order to spare her: the sight of him should not arouse thoughts in her that had better sleep till she herself slept in her coffin. Perhaps he himself had said so to her husband, or written; and the latter had chosen dislike as a means of curing her.

Was it chance that at this moment she glanced at her husband's desk? She saw that he had forgotten to take the key out of the lock. She remembered that he had never been so careless before. Usually she would have taken no notice of it; now she remembered that if he knew her to be there he had never left the room even for a moment without locking the desk and taking the key with him. Apollonius' letters lay in the top right-hand drawer; usually her glance avoided the spot. Now she opened the desk and drew out the drawer. Her hands trembled, her whole form quivered--not for fear that her husband might surprise her in what she was doing. She must know how it stood between her, Apollonius, and her husband; she would have asked the latter, she would not have come to her own aid if she could have trusted him. She trembled in expectation of what she should find. Had she any premonition of what it would be?

There were many letters in the drawer; all of them lay open and unfolded. She touched them all, one after another, before she read them. With each one that she touched a fresh flush spread over her cheeks, as if she touched Apollonius himself, and involuntarily she drew back her hand. Now a little metal box fell from one of the letters back into the drawer; the box flew open and out of it fell a small, dry blossom--a little bluebell. It was just such a one that she had once laid on the bench that he might find it. She was startled. That one, Apollonius had auctioned off the same evening with ridicule and mockery among his comrades, asking them what they would give and finally, amid the general laughter, solemnly knocked it down to his brother. He had brought it to her and told her about it while they were dancing and Apollonius had looked in at the hall window, mockingly, as his brother had said. That one she had pulled to pieces; all the young people had danced over the ruins. The blossom in the box was another one. The letter must tell from whom it was or to whom Apollonius sent it.

And yet it was the same flower. She read it. What feelings took possession of her as she read that it was the same one. Tear after tear fell on the paper and out of them mounted a rosy haze and veiled the narrow walls of the little room. Oh, it was a world of happiness, of laughing and crying with happiness that rose from the tears; every one shone more like a rainbow, every one cried: "She was yours!" And the last one lamented: "And she has been stolen from you!" The flower was from her; he carried it on his breast in yearning, hope, and fear, until she of whom he thought when he touched it had become his brother's. He was so good that he had thought it a sin to keep the poor blossom away from the man who had stolen the giver from him. And she might have clung to such a man, might have enfolded him in the arms of her yearning and never let him go! She could have done it, might have done it, should have done it! It would not have been a sin; it would have been a sin if she had not done so. And now it was a sin because the other had defrauded him and her, the other who now tormented her about what he himself had made sinful, who forced her to sin--for he forced her to hate him, and that too was a sin and his fault. With terribly sweet fear she thought of the nearness of the man who should be a stranger to her, who was not a stranger to her, from whom in the dread of her weakness she saw no escape. She fled from him, from herself, into the room where her children slept, where her mother had died. There, where such peace had come to her, she heard the slight movement of the innocent little slumberers whose guardian God had made her, heard their quiet breathing whispering into the

still, dark night. She went from bed to bed, sank motionless on her knees before each, and pressed her forehead against the sharp edges of the bedsteads.

From the tower of St. George's the bells rang as the step of time passed over her; and he did not cease his march. She lay, her hot hands clasped, a long, long time. Then from the gentle web of her feelings there rose, silvery as the sound of Easter morning bells, the thought: why are you afraid of him? And she saw all her angels kneeling about her and he was one of her angels, the most beautiful and the strongest and the gentlest. And she might look up to him as one looks up to his angels. She rose and went back into the other room. She spread the letters out on the table and then laid herself to rest. She meant their possessor to know, when he came home and found the letters, that she had read them. It was hard for her to part with them; but they did not belong to her. She took away only the little box with the withered flower, and meant to tell him in the morning that she had done so.

Fritz Nettenmair still sat on all alone in the wine-tavern. His head hung wearily down on his breast. He justified to himself his hatred and his course of action. His brother and she were false; his brother and she were guilty, not he who sat here squandering what belonged to his children. He who had stolen her heart away from him might look after them. Just at the moment when he had succeeded in convincing himself, the door of the bedroom at home opened. His wife had got up out of bed again and put back the box containing the flower with the letters. Apollonius had not kept it, neither might she. Her husband had not yet thought of going home when she once more pulled the covers over her chaste limbs. In the thought that thence-forward Apollonius should be her lode-star, and that if she acted as he did she would remain pure and safe from evil, she fell asleep and smiled in her slumber like a carefree child.

Apollonius knew little of his brother's mode of life. Fritz Nettenmair hid it from him through the involuntary restraint that Apollonius' efficient personality laid upon him, though he would not have acknowledged it to any one, least of all to himself. And the workmen knew that they might not go to Apollonius with anything that looked like tale-bearing, least of all where his brother was concerned, whom he would have liked to see respected by them all more than himself. But he had noticed that Fritz looked on him as an intruder on his rights who robbed him of all pleasure in his business and occupation. From the day of his return Apollonius had not felt happy at home. He was a burden to those whom he loved most; he often thought of Cologne, where he knew himself to be welcome. Until now the moral obligation had held him which he had taken upon himself in respect to the repairs. These were nearing completion with rapid strides. Thus his thought was at liberty to demand realization; and he imparted it to his brother.

It was difficult for Apollonius at first to convince his brother that he was in earnest in his intention to return to Cologne. Fritz took it for a sly pretext meant to reassure him. Man gives up a fear with as much difficulty as he does a hope. And he would have had to confess to himself that he had done wrong to the two whom he had become so accustomed to accusing of having done wrong to him that he felt a kind of satisfaction in so doing. He would have had to forgive his brother for a second wrong which the latter had suffered from him. He did not

become reconciled until he had succeeded in seeing again in his brother the dreamer of old and in his intention a piece of foolishness, until he saw in it an involuntary confession that his brother had recognized in him a superior opponent and was leaving in despair of ever being able to carry out his evil plan. Then at once all his old jovial condescension waked as from a winter sleep. His boots creaked again: "There he is!" and his dangling seal once more voiced the triumphant shout: "Now the fun will begin!" His boots drowned what his head said to him of the unavoidable consequences of his extravagance, of his descent in the general esteem. It seemed to him that everything would be just as it had been, once his brother was away. Looking ahead, he even believed in his extraordinary magnanimity in forgiving his brother for having been there. He stood before his brother in all his old greatness, in which he confronted the intruder as the sole head of the business; with his most condescending laugh he waved to his brother the assurance that he would manage to get the old man in the blue coat to consent; he himself must send Apollonius away.

The young wife felt as if her angel were about to leave her. She felt that she was safer from him when near him than when he was at a distance; for all the charm that forbade her desires to be sinful fell upon her from his honest eyes.

Apollonius had also told the councilman of his decision. It hurt him that the good man--who usually approved of everything that Apollonius wanted to do, in advance, as if the latter could not do anything that he would not be obliged to approve--received his news with odd, wondering, monosyllabic coldness. He pressed him to tell him the reason for this change. The two good men understood each other easily. After recovering from his surprise at finding Apollonius in ignorance of it, the councilman told him what he knew of his brother's mode of life and expressed the opinion that his father's house and business could not exist without Apollonius' aid. He promised to make further inquiries about the matter, and was soon able to enlighten Apollonius as to the details. Here and there in the town his brother owed not inconsiderable sums; the slate business, particularly of late, had been so carelessly and unconscientiously carried on that some customers of many years' standing had already withdrawn their patronage, and others were about to do so. Apollonius was frightened. He thought of his father, of his sister-in-law and of her children. He thought of himself too, but it was just his own strong sense of honor that made him first imagine what the proud, upright, blind old man would have to suffer under the disgrace of a possible bankruptcy. He would be able to earn his bread; but his brother's wife and children? And they were not accustomed to hardship. He had heard that Christiane's inheritance from her parents had been considerable. He took heart. Perhaps the situation could still be saved. And he wanted to save it. He would not stop at any sacrifice of time and strength and property. If he could not hinder the decline, at least those who were dear to him should not want.

The staunch councilman rejoiced at his favorite's view of the matter, on which indeed he had reckoned; he had thought it odd that Apollonius had not shown it before. He offered him his aid, saying that he had neither wife nor child and that God had permitted him to acquire something so that he might help a friend with it. Apollonius did not as yet accept his offer. He wanted first to see how matters stood and to feel sure that he could remain an honest man if he took his friend at his word.

Hard days came for Apollonius. His old father must as yet know nothing, and, if it were possible to uphold his honor, should never learn that it had tottered. In his treatment of his brother Apollonius required all his firmness and all his gentleness.

After having found out who the creditors were and what the various sums amounted to, Apollonius examined the condition of the business and found it even more confused than he had feared. The books were in disorder; for some time no more entries had been made at all. Letters from customers were found complaining of the poor quality of the material delivered and of carelessness in the execution of their orders; others, with bills inclosed, were from the owner of the quarry who did not want to take any new orders on credit until the old ones were paid. The greater part of Christiane's fortune was gone; Apollonius had to force his brother to produce the remains of it. He was obliged to threaten him with court proceedings. What did not Apollonius, with his punctilious love of order, suffer in the midst of such confusion! What did he not go through, with his intense love of his family, in having to act thus toward his brother! And yet the latter saw in every utterance, every act of this man who was suffering so, only badly concealed triumph. After infinite pains Apollonius succeeded in getting a comprehensive survey of the state of affairs. If the creditors could be persuaded to have patience and the customers who had transferred their business could be won back again, it would be possible, with strict economy, industry and conscientiousness, to save the honor of the house; and, by untiring effort, he might succeed in assuring to his brother's children at least an unincumbered business as their inheritance.

Apollonius wrote at once to the customers and then went to his brother's creditors. The former agreed to give the house another trial. Among the latter he had the pleasure of learning what confidence he had already won in his home town. In every case if he would stand security the creditor was willing to allow the sum owing to remain as a loan, at low interest, to be gradually paid off. Some of them even wanted to intrust him with cash in addition. He did not attempt to test the sincerity of these offers by accepting them, and thus only added to the confidence that those who made them felt in him. Then he modestly and gently explained to his brother what he had done and still wanted to do. Reproaches could not do any good, and he thought that admonitions were superfluous where the necessity was so plain. If from now on Apollonius, acting alone and independently, took over the management of the whole, of the business and of the household, his brother surely could not see in his conduct any voluntary derogation. In a matter in which he had staked his honor he must have a free hand.

Above all things the selling end of the business must once more be brought up to its former standing. The quality of the material delivered by the owner of the quarry had steadily deteriorated, and his brother had been obliged to accept it in order to get any material at all. The other creditors' offers, to let the money owing them stand as loans, he accepted, in order to settle the quarry owner's old account with what could at once be liquidated of the remnant of Christiane's fortune, and to pay cash at once for a new order. Thus it was possible to obtain good material again at a reasonable price and to satisfy his purchasers. The owner of the quarry, who on this occasion made Apollonius' acquaintance and saw something of his

knowledge of the material and of its treatment, made him an offer, as he himself was old and tired of work, to lease him the quarry. The conditions under which he was willing to do this would have allowed Apollonius to reckon on large profits; but as long as he had only himself to depend upon in his difficult situation, he could not divide his strength among several enterprises.

Apollonius made his plan for the first year and fixed a certain sum which his brother was to receive from him weekly for his household expenses. He dismissed as many of the hands as he could possibly spare. He put the faithful Valentine in charge during the time that he himself was obliged to be busy about affairs outside. There was a well-founded suspicion that the disagreeable-looking workman had been guilty of various dishonest acts. Fritz Nettenmair, who clung to the guardian of his honor as to its last bulwark, did everything he could to justify him and thus to keep him in the house. He explained that he had given the man express orders to do all the things of which he was accused. Apollonius would have liked to have made a legal complaint against the fellow, but he was obliged to be content with paying him off and forbidding him the house. Apollonius was inexorable, gentle though he was in putting his reasons before his brother. Any unprejudiced person would have to admit that he could not do otherwise, that the fellow must go. And with a savage laugh Fritz Nettenmair, too, thought, when he was alone, "Of course he must go!" Whatever Apollonius showed him, strictness and gentleness merely strengthened him in the belief that relaxed its hold upon him the less the longer he nourished it and that grew the thirstier for his heart's blood the longer he fed it from that fount. He saw no further obstacle to prevent his brother's criminal intention from succeeding.

From now on his state of mind alternated between despairing resignation to what could no longer be prevented, what had already probably taken place, and feverish endeavors to prevent it notwithstanding. In accordance with these two moods his behavior toward Apollonius took the form of unconcealed obstinacy or of cringing and vigilant dissimulation. When the first mood governed him he sought forgetfulness day and night. Unfortunately the discharged workman had found employment in a quarry near by and was his companion on many a night. The important people turned away from him, and revenged themselves on him with unconcealed contempt for the desire that he had awakened in them and could no longer satisfy. He avoided them, and followed the workman into places where the latter was at home. There he sounded his jovial condescension an octave lower. The gin-shops now rang with his jokes; and they took on more and more the character of the surroundings.

Roofs that are covered with metal or tiles usually require repairing only after a number of years have elapsed; it is different with slate roofs. While the roof is being covered damage to the slates from the scaffolds and the workmen's feet cannot be avoided. And such damage often does not become apparent until afterward. Often more considerable repairs are required during the three years immediately following the covering of the roof than for fifty years afterward. The roof of St. George's added its testimony to the truth of this old experience. The slate roof of the tower, on the contrary, which Apollonius had attended to alone, bore gratifying witness to its maker's obstinate conscientiousness. The jackdaws who inhabited it would have been left in peace by his swinging seat for a long time if

an old master-tinsmith had not chosen to show his ecclesiastical leanings by donating a tin ornament. This wreath of tin flowers which Apollonius was to lay around the tower roof was now the cause of his once more fastening his ladder to the broach-post. A little more than six months had elapsed since he had taken it down.

In the meantime his strenuous efforts had not been without success. He had kept his old customers and won new ones in addition. His creditors had their interest and a small payment on the principal for the first year; confidence in Apollonius and respect for him grew from day to day and with them grew his hope and his strength, for which he paid by redoubled exertions. If only the same thing could have been said of his brother, of the understanding between him and his wife!

It was fortunate for Apollonius that he had to put his whole soul into his purpose, that he had no time to follow his brother with his eye and heart, to see how the man whom he was trying to save sank deeper and deeper. When he rejoiced in his success, he did so from a feeling of loyalty to his brother and his brother's family; Fritz saw something quite different in his rejoicing and thought of nothing but of how to destroy it.

In the beginning he had given his wife the greater part of the money that he received weekly for his household expenses. Then he began to keep back more and more and finally he carried the whole of it into the places where the need of buying flatterers by treating them had followed him more faithfully than had the respect of the town. The experience he had had with the "important" people had not converted him. His wife had been obliged to get on with less and less. Old Valentine saw her distress, and from now on the house money went through his, instead of her husband's, hands. Finally Valentine became her treasurer, and never gave her more than she needed at the moment because money was no longer safe from her husband in her hands.

She used what time she had from her housekeeping and her children in doing different pieces of work which Valentine, as her agent, sold for her. The money that she thus received she used partly--she herself would rather go hungry even though she could not see her children do so--to adorn the living-room with all kinds of things that she knew that Apollonius loved. And yet she knew that Apollonius never came in there, that he never saw it. But then, she would not have done it if she had known that he would see it. Her husband saw it as often as he came into the room. Nothing escaped his eyes that might act as an excuse for his anger and his hatred. Then he began to abuse Apollonius, and in such terms as if he too must now show how much it is possible to acquire of another person's manner.

If the children were present it was his wife's first care to send them away. They must not witness his roughness and learn to despise their father--not for his sake but for their own. He did not betray how glad he was to be rid of the "spies." He feared that the children would complain of him to Apollonius. He did not think that his wife would complain herself, although he assumed that she and Apollonius met each other. Everything that he saw in the room was to him a fresh proof of his shame. How could he believe that it was for any other purpose than to be noticed by Apollonius? Then, when she told him that he might abuse her, only not Apollonius, the keen eye of jealousy showed him what pleasure she took in suffering for Apollonius. He reproached her with it, and she did not deny it. She said to him: "Because he suffers

for me and for my children. He gives what he has been at great pains to save to take the place of the weekly sum of which the father has robbed his children."

"And he tells you that? He tells you that!" said the man, laughing with savage joy at having trapped her into a confession that she met him.

"Not he," returned his wife angrily, because the man she despised was judging Apollonius by himself. "Old Valentine told me." She went on to tell him that Valentine had sold as his own the watch that Apollonius had brought with him from Cologne. Apollonius had forbidden him to tell her.

"And also to tell you that he forbade him?" laughed her husband. And there was something of contempt in his laugh. Such things might indeed be believed of the dreamer; but now he would not believe it of him. "Of course!" he laughed still more wildly. "Even a stupider fellow than that dreamer knows that no woman will do it for nothing. The worst of them thinks herself worth something. One with such hair and such eyes and such a body!" He seized her by the hair and gazed into her eyes with a glance before which purity must blush; only depravity could meet it and laugh. He took her blush for a confession and laughed still more wildly. "You want to say that I am worse than he. Ha, Ha! You're right; I married such a woman. He wouldn't have done that. He isn't bad enough for that!"

Old Valentine must have failed to keep his word, or else Apollonius passed the door by chance when his brother believed him far away. He heard his brother's savage outbreak of anger, he heard the clear tone of the wife's voice, still clear and melodious in spite of her excitement. He heard them both without understanding what they were saying. He was shocked. He had not imagined that the breach between them had gone so far. And he was the cause of this breach. He must do what he could to improve matters.

His brother stood in his threatening attitude as if turned to stone when he caught sight of Apollonius entering. He had the feeling of a man suddenly surprised while doing a wrong. If Apollonius had turned on him as he deserved he would have groveled before him. But Apollonius wanted to reconcile them, and said so calmly and from his heart. He might indeed have known, for he had experienced it often enough, that his gentleness only gave his brother the courage to be sneeringly obstinate. It was the same this time. Fritz sneered at him, laughing savagely, and said that he was making an excuse where he was master. Was that the reason he had made himself master of the house? He knew that in Apollonius' place he would have behaved quite differently. He would have let the woman feel it whom he knew to be in his power. He was an honest fellow, and did not need to pretend to be so sweet. It occurred to him, moreover, how often he had sneaked about the door in vain, hoping to surprise Apollonius in the room. Now he was in the room. He had come in because he had not expected to find him. It was Apollonius who must be startled, Apollonius was the person caught, not he. The reconciliation was merely the first excuse on which Apollonius had seized. That was why he was so meek. That was why his wife was frightened--she had been trying to make him believe that Apollonius never came into the room. That was why she looked up at him so pleadingly. The contemptuous gaze with which she had just measured him had suddenly been torn from her consciously guilty face with the

mask of pretended innocence. Now he knew with certainty: there was no longer anything to prevent; nothing remained to him but retribution. Now he could show his brother that he knew him, had always known him.

He pointed to his wife. "She's begging me to go. Why should I? I'll look out of the window. That will do just as well. I shan't see what you are doing."

Apollonius did not understand him. Christiane knew that he did not, without looking at him. She tried to leave the room. She could not endure to be humiliated in Apollonius' presence till she was nothing but dirt under his feet. Her husband held her with a savage grip. He seized her with the swoop of a bird of prey. She would have had to scream aloud if her mental torture had not deadened her physical pain.

"Don't mind her wanting to go away," gasped Fritz Nettenmair, stifled with unnatural laughter, and held his brother with his eye as he held his wife with his hand. "You needn't be afraid. Just as soon as I turn my back she will be here again. Go on, talk to each other. Go on, tell him that you can't bear him; I believe it of course; what won't a man believe if a woman like you tells him so? And you, give her some of your teachings from Cologne, where you learnt everything, how to drive your brother out of his house and business so as to--hm--well--Ha, ha! Why don't you tell her? A woman ought to be willing. Oh, such a willing woman is--go on, tell her what that kind of a woman is. She doesn't know it yet, innocent as she is! Ha, ha!"

Apollonius understood nothing of what he heard and saw; but the abuse of a man's strength on a helpless woman filled him with indignation. Involuntarily this feeling carried him away. It doubled his strength, which was far superior to his brother's at all times, when he gripped him by the arm that held his wife so that it let go its prey and dropped as if paralyzed. Christiane tried to leave the room, but she collapsed helplessly. Apollonius caught her and laid her on the sofa, supported against its back. Then he stood before his brother like a wrathful angel.

"I have tried to win you by gentleness, but you are not worthy of it. I have endured much at your hands and will continue to endure," said Apollonius; "you are my brother. You blame me for having driven you into misfortune; God is my witness that I have done everything that I knew to hold you back. For whom have I done what you reproach me with doing, if not for you, and for the sake of your honor and to save your wife and your children? Who compelled me to be hard on you? For whom do I work? For whom am I doing all that I do? If you knew how it hurts me to have you force me to tell you what I am doing for you! God knows, you force me to it; I have never done it yet, not with others, nor with myself. You know that you are only seeking an excuse to be unbrotherly toward me. I know it, and will continue to endure you as I have done till now. But that you should make an excuse of your wife's dislike of me to torture her too, and to treat her as no good man treats a good woman, that I will not stand."

Fritz Nettenmair burst into a horrible laugh. His brother had put him to shame in every way, and now still wanted to play the virtuous hero to him, the innocently offended, the chivalrous protector of the innocently offended woman. "A good woman! Such a good woman! Oh yes indeed! Is she not? You say so--and you are a good man. Ha, ha! Who should know better whether a woman is good or not than such a good

man? You have not robbed me of everything? You have still to rob me of my reason so that I shall believe your fairy-tale. She dislikes you? She can't bear you? Oh, you don't know yet how much she dislikes you. I need only be away, then she will tell you. Then it will be bad for you! She will strangle you to make you believe her. When I am present she won't tell you. A woman won't tell a thing like that when her husband is there--a good woman, as she is. Why don't you say that you can't bear her either? Oh, I have no longer any sense! I'll believe anything that you two tell me!"

Forgetting everything but his passion, Fritz Nettenmair was convinced that Christiane and Apollonius had invented the fairy-tale of her dislike.

Apollonius stood shocked. He was obliged to say to himself what he did not want to believe. His brother read in his face terror at the light that was breaking in on him, dismay and pain at the misconstruction put upon his conduct. And everything that he saw was so genuine that even he was obliged to believe it. He was silenced by the thoughts that pierced his brain like strokes of lightning. So it might still have been prevented after all; what must come might still have been hindered! And again it was he, himself--But Apollonius--he saw that in spite of his confusion--still doubted and could not believe. So he might still destroy the effects of his madness, might still perhaps prevent, still hinder what must come, even if it were only for today and tomorrow. But how? Should he make a wild joke out of the whole scene? Such jokes were not unusual with him, and in his mind Apollonius once more became the dreamer of old who believed everything that was told him. He broke into a laugh, a fearful caricature of the jovial laugh with which he had formerly been accustomed to reward his own sallies. That was a confounded joke, that Apollonius could be made to believe that Fritz Nettenmair was jealous! Jovial Fritz Nettenmair jealous! Jovial Fritz Nettenmair! And, better still, of him. He had never heard a more confounded joke than that! He read in his wife's face how relieved she was at the turn he had given to the scene. He dared to appeal to her to confirm the fact that it was a confounded joke. Her "yes" made him still bolder. Now he laughed at his wife who could be "confounded" enough to reproach him angrily with having made her dependent on the favor of the man she hated, and explained laughingly that it was such things that gave rise to little quarrels in married life. He laughed at Apollonius for taking such a little dispute so seriously. He asked to be shown the married people who didn't have such disagreements now and then. It was easy to see that Apollonius was still a bachelor!

Apollonius heard the councilman's voice in the hall, asking for him; he went out quickly so that the councilman should not come in and be a witness to the scene. His brother heard them going away together. He was far from being reassured yet. When he went out Apollonius' face had shown that he was still struggling with the thought that had dawned on him.

Two passions were fighting against each other in Fritz Nettenmair's soul. The dissolute habit of forgetting himself in drink drew him out of the house by a hundred chains; jealous fear held him at home with a thousand talons. If his brother had not yet thought of what he might have if he liked, he himself had now introduced the thought into his mind. All day long he turned his fear over and over and did not let his wife out of his sight. Not until it had all grown quiet around

him, till his wife had put the children to bed and laid herself to rest, till he no longer saw any light in Apollonius' windows, did the talons relax their hold and the chains draw the stronger. He locked the back door which separated Apollonius from the rest of the house, he even bolted it as well, and locked the door of the stairs leading to the piazza and finally the door at which he went out. He had cause for haste without knowing it. The disagreeable-looking workman could not stay much longer. Fritz Nettenmair did not yet know that Apollonius had been to the quarry owner and succeeded in having the workman dismissed, had talked to the police and brought it about that the workman might no longer let himself be seen in the neighborhood on the morrow. The workman was ready for his departure; from the public house he was going straight out into the wide world. He only wanted to take leave of his former master and tell him something more before he went.

There was little left in the world to which Fritz Nettenmair was attached. The road that he had been traveling led farther and farther down from what he loved most; it was irretrievably lost to him. He would never again be the centre of admiration and flattery. All that still bound him to his wife was the searing chain of jealousy. He never had been fond of his father; he hated his brother. He knew himself to be hated or, in his madness, believed himself to be hated. Little Annie would have clung to him with all the strength of a child's heart longing to be loved, but he drove her away from him with hatred; to him she was "the spy." To one man alone did his heart cling, to the one who least deserved it. He knew that the man had cheated him, had helped to ruin him, and still he clung to him. The man hated Apollonius, he was the only person besides himself who hated Apollonius and therefore Apollonius' brother clung to him!

Fritz Nettenmair accompanied the workman a part of his way. The workman wanted to walk faster, so he thanked him for his company, intending to proceed alone. When others part their last words are of what they both love; Fritz Nettenmair's and the workman's last words were of their hatred. The workman knew that Apollonius would have liked to have put him in the penitentiary, if he could. As the two now stood facing each other at parting, the workman measured the other with his eye. It was an evil, lurking glance, a grimly surreptitious glance that asked Fritz Nettenmair, without intending to be heard, whether he was ready for something which the workman did not name. Then he said, in a hoarse voice which would have struck the other but that Fritz Nettenmair was accustomed to it: "What was it I wanted to say? Oh, yes, you will soon be in mourning. I saw him the other day." He did not need to mention any name, Fritz Nettenmair knew whom he meant. "There are people who see more than others," the workman continued, "there are people who can see in a slater's face if he is doomed to fall that year, who see him being carried home, and see him lying there, only he is not there any more. An old slater told me the secret of how to see with the 'second sight.' I have it. And now farewell. Meet it with resignation when they carry him home."

The workman had left him; his steps were already growing faint in the distance. Fritz Nettenmair still stood and gazed into the white-gray fog into which the workman had disappeared. The layers of fog hung horizontally above the meadows by the street spread out like a cloth. They rose and melted together, forming strange shapes, they curled, floated apart and sank down again only to rear themselves once more. They hung on the branches of the willows by the way, now veiling them,

now leaving them free, till it seemed uncertain whether the fog was dissolving into trees or the trees into fog. It was a dreamlike activity, untiring movement without aim or purpose. It was a picture of what was going on in Fritz Nettenmair's soul, such a true picture that he did not know whether he was looking at something outside or something within himself. There came a hazy bending down and wringing of hands about a pale figure on the ground, then a slowly moving funeral procession, and now it was his enemy, his brother who lay there, whom they carried. Now malicious joy flamed up sharply, died down and pity took its place, now both were mixed and one tried to hide the other. The figure lying there, whom they carried, Fritz forgave everything. He wept over him; for in the intervals of the funeral song the merry dance-tune sounded softly which the future struck up: "There he comes! Now the fun will begin!" And beside the dead lay a second corpse, invisible, his fear of what must come if his poor brother did not lie dead. And in the coffin, Fritz Nettenmair's old jovial happiness put forth new buds. Fritz Nettenmair felt himself to be an angel; he wished that his brother need not die, because--he knew that his brother must die.

He was still walking in the fog when the pavement of the town sounded again under his feet. He had forgotten a past, he forgot the present, for the future was his again. And he was one who--as he turned into his street the old words rang as jovially as they ever did.

It gave him a curious feeling to think that through the door which he had just opened a coffin was going to be carried out. Involuntarily he stood aside as if to let the procession pass him. "We must submit," he said softly, as if repeating to himself what he would have to answer some one offering him consolation when once the time had come, "We must submit to what is unalterable." And as he raised his shoulders in accompaniment to the words, he perceived a faint glimmer of light. He looked up; the light came through the crack between the lower part of the shutter and the window ledge. There was a light in there, in the living-room. "So late?" He gasped; the load lies again on his breast. His brother was still alive; and what must come if he were not to die, might still come before he died, or--it was already here! How swiftly his hands moved--and yet the door was locked again quietly in an instant! Just as softly and just as quickly he went to the back door. It was not open, but the key was only turned once in the lock, and Fritz Nettenmair could swear to it that he turned it twice before he went. He felt his way to the door of the room; he found the latch and gently pressed it; the door opened; a faint glimmer shone out into the hall. It came from a covered light on the table; beside the table a small bed stood in the shadow. It was little Annie's bed, and her mother was sitting beside it.

Christiane did not notice the opening of the door. Her head was bent low down over the bed; she was singing softly and did not know what she was singing; she was listening full of fear, but not to her song; she would cry if the tears did not dim her eyes. But now the color might come back to the child's cheek again, the strange expression about the child's eyes and mouth might disappear, and she might fail to see it and might fear in vain. It seemed to her as if the color must come and the expression change if she only tried hard enough to notice this coming and going. And at the same time she was able to think how suddenly this thing had come that had made her so afraid; how little Annie in the bed beside her own, suddenly cried out in a strange voice and then could not speak any more; how she jumped up and

dressed; how she waked Valentine in her distress, and he, without her knowledge, waked Apollonius. The old fellow had tried all the keys in the house until he found that the key of the shed opened the back door; she did not know that. So much the more vividly did she picture how Apollonius came in, how she felt at his unexpected appearance, full of terror and shame and yet wonderfully tranquillized. Apollonius had fetched the doctor at once and medicines. He had stood by the bed and bent over little Annie as she did now. He had looked at her full of pain and said that little Annie's illness was owing to the discord between herself and her husband, and that she would not get well unless this ceased. He had told her of the miracles that are possible to a mother and of how men and women can and must conquer themselves. Then he had given Valentine a few more orders relating to little Annie and had left, fearing that his brother, in his error, might otherwise believe that he wanted to drive him away from the sick-bed of his children. Apollonius had said that little Annie would not get well again if the discord did not cease. He had said that people can and must conquer themselves; Christiane determined to conquer herself because he had said so. A mother could do miracles for her child; if she thought of Apollonius' face when he spoke thus, the greatest miracle must become possible to her.

Fritz Nettenmair entered. He thought of nothing but that Apollonius must have been there, even if he were not there any longer. Everything danced before his eyes he was in such a fury. He would have flown at his wife if he had not seen old Valentine sitting at the door of the bedroom. He meant to wait till the old man had left the room, and crept to the chair at the window where he had always sat formerly, when he was such a different man. His wife heard his soft tread; she could not see his face. It seemed to her that he knew of little Annie's condition and walked so softly on that account. She looked at little Annie with a glance that said, that what she was about to do now she would do for the sake of her sick child; a glance at the door by which he had gone out added: "And because he said I should."

"Here is father, Annie," she said. In reality she was talking to her husband who sat at the window, but she could not turn her face toward him, could not address her words directly to him. "You always asked for him, you know. You thought that when he came he would be as he used to be before you were sick. Mother wants him to be like that too--for your sake."

Her voice came from so deep down in her chest that the man had to force himself to control his rage. He thought: "She is speaking so sweetly so as to deceive me. They planned that when he was here." And the soft tones in which she continued only caused his anger to swell more wrathfully.

"And you won't go to Heaven yet, will you Annie? You're such a good little girl and you'll stay with father and mother. If only--you mustn't be afraid of father, you silly little Annie, because he speaks so loud. He doesn't mean to be cross."

She stopped; she expected an answer from the father, not from the child. She expected that he would come to the bed and speak to the child as she had done, and through the child with her. Whatever she might think of him, the child was his child, after all, and it was ill.

The man remained silent and sat on quietly in his chair. For the length of time that it takes to say half the Lord's Prayer there was no sound but the ticking of the clock; and that grew faster and faster like the beating of a human heart that feels misfortune approaching. The flame of the light flickered as with fear.

Valentine rose from his chair to attend to the light.

There was a sound of wheezing in the child's chest; she wanted to speak and could not. She wanted to stretch out her hands toward her father, and she could not. She could do nothing but hold out the arms of her soul to her father. But her father's soul did not see the beseeching arms; it held its wrath convulsively in its hands and had no hand free for the child. Valentine stepped away from the light and went out to give vent to his feelings in tears. The man rose and approached his wife softly without her noticing him. He wanted to surprise her, and he succeeded. She started, frightened, as she suddenly saw facing her across the bed a distorted human countenance. She started, and he said through his teeth: "You are frightened? Do you know why?"

She meant to tell him herself that Apollonius had been there, but she had not yet had an opportunity; she did not dare to do so at the sick child's bedside, because she knew that he would fly into a rage; whenever she could she had spared the child the sight of his roughness while she was still well; now it might frighten the little girl to death. She did not answer him, but looked at him beseechingly, indicating the child by a glance.

"He was here! Wasn't he here?" he asked, not for information but to show that he did not need any. He raised his clenched fist; little Annie struggled to sit up. He did not see it; but his wife saw it, and her terror grew. She clasped her hands, she looked at him with a glance in which there was everything that a woman can promise, that a woman can threaten. He saw only her terror at his knowing what had happened--and his fist descended on her forehead.

There was a shriek. The child writhed in convulsions; the mother, who had fallen upon her, wept loudly. Valentine hurried in, Fritz Nettenmair went into the bedroom. He did not know which was uppermost in him, gratified revenge or fright at what he had done. He sank down on the bed as if the blow that he struck had stunned himself. He only half heard Valentine running for the doctor. In the same state he heard the latter come and go, and in the same state he listened to see if he could hear Apollonius' voice whispering and his soft tread. He did not dare to show himself; shame restrained him. He justified his behavior and called little Annie's illness just a desire to be coddled. "Children think they're dying one day, and the next they're more lively than ever," he said to himself.

His feverish listening and efforts to reassure himself turned into feverish dreaming. Between waking and sleeping he heard quiet steps in the next room, quiet voices, quiet weeping, and at intervals silence.

The quiet weeping that grows loud and is controlled again as if a sleeper were near whom it will not wake, that breaks out again as if it could not wake the sleeper, and again grows soft as if it were frightened at itself for being so loud when every one is quiet: who does not know such weeping? Who does not guess what it means, even if

he does not know it?

Fritz Nettenmair knew it, half asleep; there was a dead person in the next room. They had brought him home. "We must submit to what is unalterable."

For the first time for many months he slept quietly again.

And why should he not? The quiet weeping turned into a merry waltz. "There he is! Now the fun will begin"--the words rang triumphantly from the "Red Eagle Tavern" in the distance, into his sleep.

But the quiet steps and the quiet voices were real, and they continued; and there was a dead body in the next room, the beautiful, dead body of a child. The breach between the parents had made the child ill; pain at her father's savage attack on her mother had broken her little heart.

When the new day sent its first glimmer of light through his window, Apollonius rose from the chair on which he had sat ever since his return to his room. There was something solemn in the manner in which he stood upright. He seemed to say to himself: "If it is as I fear, I must act for us both; it is for that that I am a man. I have sworn to uphold my father's house and his honor, and I will do what I have sworn to do, in every sense."

Fritz Nettenmair woke at last. He knew nothing more of the dream-scenes of the night. He only knew that his wife had magnified the "spy's" desire to be coddled into an illness so that she might have an excuse for being together with "him." He began to think of how he should put an end to this coddling. With this idea in his mind he stepped through the door and stood--before a dead body. A shudder ran over him. The dead child lay there before him like a sign to warn him: "You shall not go farther on the way that you have taken!" There the child lay, his child, and she was dead. The child stood before him, an accuser and a witness. She bore witness for her mother. The mother had known that she was dying; and at the deathbed of her child not even the lowest creature would do what he had thought her capable of doing. The child accused him. He had struck a mother at the side of her child's deathbed. No man can do that, not even if the woman were guilty. And she was not; the child testified to that. Now he knew that the pale, dumb countenance of the mother had cried: "You will kill the child; don't strike!" And he had struck nevertheless. He had killed the child. That thought fell on him like a thunder-bolt, so that he collapsed before the child's bed, across which he had struck her mother, before the bed in which his child had died because he struck her mother.

There he lay a long time. The bolt that struck him down had lighted the past with cruel distinctness: he had seen them both innocent whom he persecuted. And there was no guilt but his. He alone had built up the misery that lay crushingly upon him, load on load, guilt on guilt. But after all it was not yet too late! He heard his wife's quiet step in the hall coming toward the door of the room. He heard the door open. If little Annie had been standing in the door of the bedroom then, she would have smiled. He meant to be kind, he meant to be again as he had been before little Annie had been taken sick. He held out his hand to the woman as she entered. She saw him and started. She was as white as little Annie's body, even her lips, usually so crimson,

were white. Her neck, her beautiful arms, her soft hands were white, her eyes that were always so shining, were dull. All the life in her had withdrawn to the deepest recesses of her heart and there wept for her dead child. When she saw him her whole body began to tremble. In two steps she stood between him and the body; as if she still wanted to protect the child from him. And yet it was not that. Neither fear nor dread quivered about her little mouth; it was firmly closed. It was a different feeling that drew her beautifully arched eyebrows together and flamed in her usually so gentle eyes. He saw: this was no longer the woman who had spoken melting words of peace; she had died with her child in the terrible night just past. The woman who stood before him was no longer the mother who looked at him with hope, whose child he could save; it was the mother whose child he had killed. It was a mother who drove the murderer away from the holy place where her child lay. He spoke--Oh, if he had but spoken yesterday! Yesterday she had yearned for the words; today she did not hear them.

"Give me your hand, Christiane," he said. She drew her hand back convulsively, as if he had already touched her. "I have been mistaken," he continued; "I will believe you, I see myself; I will not do it again! You are better than I."

"The child is dead," she said, and even her voice sounded pale. "Don't leave me without comfort in my terrible fear. If I can become different I can only do so now, and if you give me your hand and raise me up," said the man. She looked at the child, not at him.

"The child is dead," she repeated. Did that mean it was indifferent to her what became of him now that his improvement could no longer save the child? The man half raised himself; he gripped her hand with a strength full of fear and held it fast.

"Christiane," he sobbed wildly, "Here I lie like a worm. Don't tread on me! Don't tread on me! For God's sake, have mercy. I could never forget it, if I had lain here like a worm in vain. Think of it! For God's sake, think of it; you have me in your hand now. You can make of me what you will. I hold you responsible. You will be to blame for anything that may come after this."--She had finally succeeded in withdrawing her hand from his grasp; she held it away from herself as if she looked at it with loathing because he had touched it.

"The child is dead," she said. He understood that she said: "Between me and the murderer of my child there can never be anything more in common, neither on earth nor in heaven."

He rose. A word of forgiveness might perhaps have saved him! Perhaps! Who knows! He staggered back into the bedroom. Christiane did not see him go, but she felt that his presence no longer profaned the place in which lay the sacred image of her maternal sorrow. Weeping softly, she sank down over her dead child.

In the meantime Apollonius had begun the decorating of the tower-roof of St. George's. He had built a scaffold, fastened his ladder to the broach-post, put a hempen ring on it, attached his tackle to the ring and hung his swinging-seat on the pulley. The tin ornamentation, which consisted of single long pieces, was intended to represent two garlands festooned around the spire.

Apollonius was industrious at his work. The mastertinsmith, who was anxious to see his decorations completed as soon as possible, had less ground to complain of Apollonius than the latter had to be dissatisfied with him. At first the master urged Apollonius; soon Apollonius had to drive the master on. A part of the top garland which was to hang in a festoon over the door in the roof was lacking. Apollonius could not finish his work until he had the material for it. A neighboring village required his services for minor repairs. Leaving his tackle hanging from the tower of St. George's he went to Brambach.

The next day old Valentine knocked at the living-room door. He had already been there several times and gone away again. His entire being expressed uneasiness. He was so preoccupied with something that he had on his mind that he thought he must have failed to hear the answer to his knock and laid his ear to the key-hole as if he assumed that it must still be there to hear if he only listened hard enough. His anxiety aroused him from his absent-mindedness. He knocked a second and a third time and, still receiving no answer, plucked up courage to open the door and go in. The young wife had avoided him for some time. She did so now, too, but today he had to speak to her. She intentionally sat at some distance from the windows, near the bedroom door. The old man did not perceive that she was as uneasy as he, and that his presence made her even more so. He apologized for his intrusion. When she made a movement to leave the room, he assured her that he would not remain long and that he would not have forced himself upon her had he not been impelled to do so by something which was perhaps very important. He hoped that it was not so, but still, it might be. She listened and looked more and more anxiously now at the windows, now at the door. Her demeanor showed plainly that she hoped if he had anything to say to her he would say it as quickly as he could.

Valentine began: "Master Fritz is on the roof of St. George's. I saw him just now in the church-yard."

"And did he look this way? Did he see you coming into the house?" asked Christiane breathlessly.

"God forbid!" replied the old man. "He is working like the devil today, not even thinking of anything to eat and drink. When a man works like that--" Valentine stopped and completed the sentence to himself--"he has some end in view." Christiane was silent. She was struggling with the desire to confide her whole anxiety to the faithful old soul. He saw nothing of this. "Our neighbor, over there," he continued, "has times, you know, when he cannot sleep at all. The night before Master Apollonius went to Brambach he was at his kitchen window and saw somebody sneaking from the back of our house into the shed." He did not say whom the neighbor had seen, he probably expected the young wife to ask. But she had not even heard his story. "The previous evening," he went on, "before Master Apollonius left for Brambach, he tried to get together the things he wanted to take with him; he examined everything, as he always does, but he could not make up his mind what to take. And it is so strange that Master Fritz has become so industrious all of a sudden."

Apollonius' name roused Christiane; she listened as the old man continued: "It occurred to me for the first time, just now, when our neighbor told me that somebody had crept into the shed. I wondered what he could be wanting there, and at night too. And when I looked up

and saw Master Fritz working so hard, an uneasy feeling came over me and drove me into the shed as if I were being chased with a stick. There, I imagined what any one who had sneaked in there might have done. First I saw the ax that belongs with the other tools lying near the door. I thought to myself: did he do anything with the ax? And again I imagined what any one who had crept in there at night might have done with it. It occurred to me that he might have done something to the ladders. But I found nothing wrong there. Nor was there anything wrong with the swinging-seat that still lay there. Then I began to look at the pulleys and last of all at the tackle. It seemed as if one of the ropes had been worn a little by rubbing against something hard. I thought to myself: 'that often happens,' and was about to lay it down again, but then I thought: 'there is nothing else wrong, and if somebody crept in here at night he meant to do something, and if he had the ax then he did something with that.' I looked a little closer and--merciful Heavens!--the rope had been cut into in several different places. I threw it over the beam and hung on it; the cuts gaped open. I believe if the seat were hung on it the rope would break." The old man had become quite pale. Christiane hung breathlessly on his every word; she had fallen back in her chair and could scarcely speak.

"It was not so the evening before," he continued. "Master Apollonius has an eye for every detail. He would have discovered it. I think the person who cut the rope watched Master Apollonius as he examined everything, and thought he would not look them over again before he used them. That is the reason why he crept in at night."

"Valentine!" cried the young wife, seizing him by the shoulders, half as if she wanted to compel him to tell the truth, half as if to support herself, "he did not take it with him? Valentine, tell me!"

"No, not that one," said Valentine. "But the other seat that was there, and the tackle belonging to it."

"And was that cut too?" she asked with ever increasing fear. He replied: "I do not know. But the man who did it had no idea which one Master Apollonius would take with him."

The woman trembled so violently that the old man forgot his fears concerning Apollonius in his fear concerning her. He had to support her to prevent her from falling. She pushed him away and half imploringly, half threateningly, cried: "Oh, save him, Valentine, save him. Oh God, it is I who have done it!" She prayed to God to save him, and then moaned that he was dead and that it was her fault. She called Apollonius by the tenderest names and entreated him not to die. Valentine, in his distress, sought for words to comfort her and in so doing found comfort for himself; or if there were no real comfort, at least there was the hope that Apollonius was already on his way home. He had certainly examined the tackle again. If he had met with an accident they would have heard of it by now. He had to repeat this a dozen times before she understood what he meant. And now she began to expect the bearer of the terrible tidings, and started at every sound. She even imagined her own sobbing to be his voice. Finally Valentine, infected by her desperate terror and not knowing what else to do, ran to fetch the old gentleman, thinking that he might know how to save Apollonius, if it were still possible.

The old gentleman sat in his little room. As he withdrew deeper and

deeper into the clouds that separated him from the outer world, even his little garden finally became strange to him. Especially the eternal question: "How are you, Herr Nettenmair?" had driven him to the house. He felt that people no longer believed his: "I am somewhat troubled with my eyes, but it is a matter of no consequence," and in every question he heard only a mockery. Much as Apollonius suffered with him, his father's isolation and increasing unsociability were not altogether unwelcome to him; for the deeper his brother sank, the more difficult it had become to conceal from the old gentleman the condition of the house; and to exclude busybodies from the garden was impossible. Apollonius did not know that his father suffered tortures in his room equal to those from which he wanted to protect him. Here the old gentleman sat the livelong day, crouched down in his leather chair behind the table, and brooded over all the possibilities of dishonor that might come to his house; or he strode up and down with hasty step, the flush in his sunken cheeks and the vehement gestures of his arms betraying all too plainly how in his thoughts he did his utmost to avert impending calamity. His was a condition which would eventually lead to complete insanity, if the external world did not throw a bridge across to him and force him to leave his isolation.

This was what happened on that day. Force of habit compelled old Valentine, without his being conscious of the fact, to open the door gently, and gently to step in; but the old gentleman, with his morbidly acute perception, discerned at once the unusual. His anticipation naturally took the same course which all his thoughts pursued. Some disgrace must be threatening the house so to alter Valentine's usual manner; and it must be a terrible one indeed thus to upset the old fellow and break through his assumed composure. The old gentleman trembled as he arose from his chair. He struggled with himself as to whether he should ask. It was not necessary. The old fellow confessed, unasked. With nervous haste he related his fears and his reasons for them. The old gentleman was startled, in spite of the fact that his imagination had prepared him for the truth; but Valentine observed none of this in his exterior, he listened to him as always, as if he were relating matters of the utmost indifference. When Valentine had finished, the sharpest eye could no longer have perceived the slightest tremor in the tall, stately figure. The old gentleman had the firm ground of reality under his feet once more; he was again the old gentleman in the blue coat. He stood as austere as of yore before his servant; so austere and so quiet was he that his bearing inspired Valentine with courage. "Imagination!" he exclaimed in his old grim manner. "Are none of the journeymen around?" Valentine called one who was just about to fetch slate. The old gentleman despatched him to Brambach to bid Apollonius return home at once. "If you think he won't go quickly enough for you, you fussy old woman, tell him to hurry so that you may soon learn that you've worked yourself into a state about nothing. But no word of this to anybody and lock up the wife so that she can't do anything silly." Valentine obeyed. The old gentleman's assurance, and the fact that something had really been done, had a more powerful effect upon him than a hundred good arguments. He imparted his encouragement to Christiane. He was in too great haste to tell her upon what grounds it was based. If he had had time for that he would probably have left her less reassured. Nothing was further from himself than the suspicion that the old gentleman, while characterizing his fears as idle fancies, and pretending to send the messenger only to reassure him and the young wife, was inwardly convinced of the guilt of his elder son and of the danger, if not actual death, of his younger son.

"Now," said Herr Nettenmair, when Valentine had returned to him, "the old fool has of course told our neighbor the fairy-tale that he spun out of thin air, and the young wife has confided it to all the gossips in town!"

Valentine noticed nothing of the feverish suspense with which the old gentleman awaited an answer to the question which he had disguised as an exclamation. "I've done nothing of the kind," he replied earnestly. The old gentleman's supposition had wounded him. "In the first place I didn't really think myself that anything was very wrong yet; and Frau Nettenmair has not spoken to a soul since then."

The old gentleman took hope anew. During Valentine's absence he had given way for a moment to all the anguish that a father cannot but feel under such circumstances; but then he reasoned with himself that there was no use in wasting time in idle complaint as long as something might still be done. Even if Valentine and Christiane had told nobody what they knew, other things of the same sort might have become known. Such a criminal thought does not originate by chance; it is the blossom of a poisonous tree with trunk and branches. Valentine had to tell him all that had happened since Apollonius' return home. It was the story of a wanton, inordinate, pleasure-seeking spendthrift who in spite of the efforts of his better brother had sunk to the level of an ordinary libertine and drunkard; of a faithful brother who, compelled by the necessity of rescuing the honor of business and home, had shouldered the care of everything and as a reward was being persecuted unto death by the degraded prodigal.

The old gentleman sat motionless. Only the blush that burned ever warmer on his thin cheeks betrayed what he suffered for the honor of his house. Otherwise he seemed to know it all, already. That was his old manner, which he perhaps made use of now because he thought that Valentine would then be less likely to conceal or alter facts against his better knowledge. His inward agitation prevented him from perceiving in what strong contradiction this semblance of calm stood to his morbid sense of honor. Valentine did not endeavor to deepen the shadows which fell upon Fritz Nettenmair's conduct, but, knowing the old gentleman as he thought he did, he deemed it necessary to place Apollonius' actions in the brightest possible light. But he only half knew the old gentleman after all. He miscalculated the effect that he would produce when he praised the filial tenderness with which Apollonius had withheld all news of danger from his father's ears. Thus he undid what a simple tale, describing the son's efforts to save that which the old gentleman held most dear, had accomplished. The father saw only a realization of the fear which Apollonius' diligence had awakened in him. In unfilial fashion Apollonius had concealed the danger from him in order to be able to take the whole credit for the rescue to himself. Or he looked upon his father as a helpless, blind old man who was not, and could not be anything but an incumbrance. This latter feeling the old gentleman could forgive him less than the former, even in face of his grief over his son's death, which he now deemed a certainty. The more he thought of it, the more convinced he became that things would never have come to such a pass if he had known about it and taken the matter in hand, and that Apollonius in fact had only his own ambitious desires to thank for his death. These thoughts, however, had to give way before immediate necessity. What he knew concerning Fritz was enough to strengthen suspicion once it was aroused, but not to create it in the first place unless there were

some additional reason of which he knew nothing. He must learn from his guilty son himself if such existed. He had made up his mind what to do in any case. He called for his hat and cane. At any other time Valentine would have been astonished at this command, perhaps even frightened. But when one is wrought up over something unusual, only the usual seems unexpected, only that which calls to mind the old quiet state of affairs. As the old gentleman made ready to depart, he pointed out to Valentine once more how foolish and groundless his fears were. "Who knows," he said grimly, "what our neighbor saw? How could he recognize anybody at night, so far off? And you with your ax story! If the rope should break by chance or any other accident happen to the boy in Brambach, of course you would be sure and certain that it was your imaginary ax-slashes that had done it, and that the man whom our neighbor pretends to have seen sneaking into the shed, had made them. And if you say a word or make mysterious hints about all that you imagine in your silly pate, the whole town will be full of it in no time. Not because what you have invented is probable enough for any sensible man to believe, but just because people are glad to speak ill of anybody. God will take care that nothing happens to the boy. But of course it might happen, and maybe it has already happened. How easy it is for an accident to happen to anybody, specially to a slater who hovers between heaven and earth like a bird, and yet has not the wings of a bird. That is why the slater's calling is such a noble calling; the slater is the most manifest picture of how Providence holds the man who works at an honest profession safe in its hands. But if Providence lets him fall, there is a reason for it, and nobody has a right to go around spinning yarns which will bring unhappiness and even disgrace on somebody else. I am sure this affair will soon show itself as it really is and not as your fears have led you to imagine. For--"

The old gentleman had reached this point in his speech when some one was heard outside setting down a load. He stood for a moment dumb, petrified. Valentine looked through the window and saw that it was the journeyman tinner unloading.

"It's Joerg," said he, "who is bringing the tin garlands."

"And you get frightened and think they are bringing, goodness knows whom. Where is Fritz?"

"On the church roof," replied Valentine.

"Good," said Herr Nettenmair. "Tell the tinner to come in when he has done--" Valentine did so. Until he came Herr Nettenmair continued his lecture in a somewhat lower tone. Then he turned to where the workman's respect made itself audible in a quiet clearing of the throat and asked him if he had time to accompany him to the church roof of St. George's where his elder son was at work. The tinner assented. Valentine ventured the suggestion that it would be better to send for Fritz. The old gentleman said grimly: "I must speak to him up there. It is about the repairs." He turned again to the tinner and said with condescending grimness: "I shall take your arm. I am having a little trouble with my eyes, but it is a matter of no consequence."

The appearance of the old gentleman on the street was calculated to create a sensation. He would certainly have been stopped by a hundred hand-shakers and interrogators if something had not diverted public attention. A hurried, whispered rumor ran through the streets. Two or

three stood together in little groups awaiting the approach of a third or fourth, who would give them to understand that he knew what it was that was responsible for the formation of the ten or twelve similar groups standing around. Then somebody would whisper it as he passed rapidly by, beginning always with a: "Haven't you heard?" which was generally brought forth by a: "What has happened?" Herr Nettenmair did not need to ask; he knew without being told what had happened, but he did not dare to appear as if he knew. The journeyman thought Herr Nettenmair was going to sink down beside him, but the old gentleman had only struck his foot: "it was of no consequence." The journeyman questioned a hurrying passer-by. "A slater has been killed in Brambach." "How?" asked the journeyman. "A rope broke; nothing further is known." Herr Nettenmair felt that the journeyman was frightened, and that he was frightened at the thought that it was the son of the man he was leading who had been killed. He said: "It was probably in Tambach. They have made a mistake. It is of no consequence." The journeyman did not know what to think of Herr Nettenmair's indifference. The latter kept repeating to himself, as a burning flush came into his cheeks: "Yes, it must be. It must be." He thought of a way in which one can escape all courts, all investigations. It must have been a hard way of which he thought, for he clenched his teeth, as he shook his head and said: "It must be, now it must be." As if in a dream the journeyman led the old gentleman up the tower steps of St. George's. The people were right, Herr Nettenmair was certainly a queer man!

The old gentleman had said he had to speak to his son on the church-roof--about some repairs. He had spoken unconsciously in his diplomatic way.

It had to be on the church-roof, and it was about some repairs--but not about those of the church-roof.

Between heaven and earth is the slater's realm. Between heaven and earth, high up on the roof of St. George's Fritz Nettenmair was at work when the old gentleman was led up the steps to him. He had fled here to escape the eyes of men which he imagined riveted upon him; he had fled here to escape his own thoughts in a fury of diligence. But he had brought with him all the demons of hell, and, industriously as he toiled, the moisture that stood on his brow was not the warm sweat of honest labor, but the cold sweat born of a guilty conscience. In agonized haste he hammered and nailed slate together as if he were nailing fast the universe which otherwise would crumble to pieces in a quarter of an hour. But his soul was not where he hammered; it was where ropes were constantly breaking and luckless slaters plunging headlong to certain death. Now he heard voices, and the sound of one of them struck like the blow of a hammer on his tortured heart. It was the only voice which he did not expect to hear. Would he to whom it belonged ask, "Where is thy brother Abel?" No. He wanted to tell his son that his brother had met with disaster, that it was a day of misfortune and that he must not work any more. And if he should ask, the answer was almost as old as the human race; "Am I my brother's keeper?" It seemed like a relief to him when he remembered that his father was blind. For he knew that he could not endure his father's seeing eyes. He hammered and nailed more and more hurriedly. He would elude his father if he could, but the roof-truss was small, and the old gentleman's voice was already at the roof door. He would not notice him until he was compelled. He heard him say: "This is far enough. My compliments to your master, and here is something for you.

Drink my health with it." Fritz Nettenmair, listening, heard his father sit down on the empty board in the dormer window and knew that his tall figure filled the entire opening. He heard the journeyman's thanks and his footsteps as they gradually receded.

"Beautiful weather," said Herr Nettenmair. The son realized that the father wanted to know if anybody else were near by. There came no answer, the words died in Fritz Nettenmair's breast, he hammered always louder and more vehemently. He wished the hour, the day, his life were at an end. "Fritz!" called the old gentleman. He called again and yet again. At last Fritz Nettenmair was compelled to answer. He thought of the call, "Cain, where art thou?" and responded "Here, father," and hammered on.

"The slate is solid," said the old man, indifferently; "I can tell by the sound; it does not split."

"Yes," replied Fritz with chattering teeth, "it will let no water through."

"It is better than it used to be," continued his father, "they have got deeper into the quarry. You seem to be alone." A "Yes" died on the son's lips. "The deeper it lies, the stronger the slate is. Is there no other scaffold near?"

"None."

"Good. Come here. Here in front of me!"--

"What do you want me to do?"

"To come here. What has to be said must be said softly."

Fritz Nettenmair went and stood before his father, shaking all over. He knew that he was blind and yet he sought to avoid his glance. The old man struggled for composure but not a line of his withered face betrayed the struggle, only the length of his silence and his breathing, which sounded like the tired echo of the creaking swing of the pendulum on the tower clock near-by, might have suggested it. These preparations awoke in Fritz Nettenmair a premonition of what was to come. He strove for defiance. "If he in his distrust has surmised it, who can prove it? And if he could prove it, he would never tell, of that I am sure. Otherwise why does he speak so softly? He may say what he will--I know nothing, it was not I. I have done nothing." The muscles of his face quivered; an expression of wild defiance played upon his features. The old gentleman said no word. The sound of traffic in the streets rose muffled to the heights, violet shadows lay on all below, about Apollonius' swinging seat trembled the sun's last ray.

"Where is your brother?" came at last from between the father's teeth.

"I do not know. How should I know?" answered the son defiantly.

"You do not know?" It was only a whisper but every word struck like thunder in the soul of the son. "I will tell you. Yonder in Brambach he lies dead. The rope broke with him, and you had made slits in it with the ax. Our neighbor saw you sneaking into the shed. You threatened before your wife that you would do it. The whole town knows

it, they are carrying it now to the courts. The first person who comes up these steps will be the bailiff to lead you before the judge."

Fritz Nettenmair broke down completely; the scaffolding creaked beneath him. The old gentleman listened. If the miserable wretch should fall over the edge of the scaffolding, he would be plunged into the depths and all would be over. All that had to be, would be! A lark soared above them scattering its merry Tirili over trees and houses. Happier mortals heard the song from afar; workmen let their spades rest, children their whips and tops; with eyes turned heavenward all sought the soaring, singing bird and hearkened with bated breath. Herr Nettenmair did not hear the lark; he also held his breath, but he was listening to what was happening below, not above. It was nothing that sounded like the song of a lark which he wanted to hear. There was a rumbling, and a broken cry of anguish. At first he listened full of hope, then filled with despair. On the boards of the scaffolding before him he heard the rattle of heavy breathing. Fate, which might have stretched out a sympathizing, helping hand, had not done so. He must do it, for it must be done. If he did not, people would point their finger at the children and say: "It was their father who slew his brother and died on the gallows" or "in the penitentiary." And when it was long forgotten the children would only need to appear and it would be called into life again; people would point with their fingers and turn from them in horror. The confidence of the world which one inherits from one's parents is the capital with which one begins life. Confidence must be placed in man before he deserves it, in order that he may learn to deserve it. Who would place confidence in children branded with a father's guilt? The flush on his thin cheeks burned brighter, his sunken breast panted heavily. Involuntarily he pointed forward with his arm. Fritz Nettenmair divined his meaning, tried to pull himself together, and would have sunk helplessly down again if he had not supported himself with both hands. Lying thus on his hands and knees before the old gentleman he cried out in an agony of fear, "What do you want, father? What have you in mind?"

"I want to see," said the old gentleman in a shrill whisper, "whether I must do it or whether you will do what must be done. For it must be done. Nobody knows anything as yet which could lead to an investigation before the courts except me, your wife and Valentine. For myself I can answer, but not for them; they may betray what they know. If you should fall now from the scaffolding, so that people could think it was an accident, the great disgrace would be prevented. The slater who meets his death through accident stands before the world as an honest man--honest as the soldier who dies on the battle-field. You are not worthy of such a death, you bankrupt soul. The hangman should drag you on a cowhide to the gallows, you villain, who have murdered your brother and have tried to poison the future of your innocent children and my past life which has been always full of honor. You have brought down disgrace enough on your house, you shall not bring more. They shall never say of me, that my son, or of my grandchildren, that their father, died on the gallows or in the penitentiary. Say the Lord's Prayer, now, if you can still pray. Then turn as if you were going back to your work and step with your right foot over the scaffolding. If I say the shock of your brother's death made you dizzy, the courts and the town will believe me. That is the return for a life that has been different from yours. If you will not do it of your own accord, I shall go with you and you will have me too on your conscience. People know that I have trouble with my eyes; they

will say that I stumbled and tried to hold on to you and dragged you down with me. My life is of no value after what I have heard today, but your children's is just beginning. And no disgrace shall be attached to them, as truly as my name is Nettenmair. Make up your mind now what is to be done. I shall count thirty--by the pendulum there."

Fritz Nettenmair had listened to his father's words with growing horror. That his deed had not yet become generally known, gave him hope. Fear of impending death aroused his energies. He took refuge again in defiance. Vehemently he declared: "I do not know what you want. I am innocent. I do not know what you mean by an ax." He expected his father to enter into his protest, even if sceptically at first. But the old gentleman began calmly to count--"one--two--"

"Father!" he cried with increasing fear, and his mocking defiance broke into a wail. "Only listen to me. The courts would listen and you will not. I will throw myself over because you want me to be dead; I will die, though I am innocent. But at least listen to me." The old gentleman gave no answer; he counted on. The miserable man saw that sentence had been pronounced. His father would not believe him no matter what he said, and he knew that what the stubborn old man undertook, he always carried out, unrelentingly. First he decided to acquiesce in his fate; then the thought came to him that he would plead again; and then it occurred to him that he could push the old man aside and make his escape; then that he could hang on to something in some way when the old man caught hold of him and not fall with him. Nobody could blame him for this. Through all these thoughts he saw shudderingly what awaited him if he escaped and the courts should seize him. It was better to die now. But on the other side of death something still more terrible awaited him. He looked back and lived his whole life through in a moment to see if the eternal Judge would find pardon for him. His thoughts became confused, he was now here, now there, and had forgotten why. He saw the mist gathering in which the workman had disappeared and at the same time he looked into the bright windows of the Red Eagle inn where he heard voices: "There he comes--now the fun will begin." He stood on the street corners and counted, and the boards beneath Apollonius would not break, nor the ropes above him; he stood before his wife and, leaning over little Annie's dying bedside, said, "Do you know why you are frightened?" and reached out his hand to give the fatal blow; also he lay as if in a fever dream before his father and brooded in anxious, terrible fear. Then it was as if he had come to himself again and unending time had elapsed between the moment when his father began to count and the present. Everything must be all right by now, only he must try to recall whether he had pushed his father aside and thus made his escape or whether he had held back when his father attempted to drag him down with him. But there he still lay, and there his father still sat. He heard him count "nine" and stop. Consciousness forsook him completely. The old gentleman had in truth ceased to count. His sharp ear heard a hurrying footstep on the stairs. He seized hold of his son and held fast as if to be sure that he did not escape him. So cold and lifeless was the son's body that the father knew it was not necessary to hold him; he must be unconscious. A new uneasiness awoke in him. If the son had lost consciousness, he must be hidden from strange eyes, for this unconsciousness might in some way arouse suspicion. He arose and turned away from the window in the direction of the newcomer. He was undecided whether he would stand before the window covering it with his body or go forward to meet the intruder.

[Illustration: SCHNORR VON CAROLSFELD JOSIAH HEARS THE LAW]

The journeyman whom he had sent to Brambach, for it was he who was approaching in such haste, coughed as he came up the stairs. He could keep him back from the scaffolding and most likely prevent him from seeing that somebody was lying there if he went to meet him; if he stood in front of the window it was probable that he would not be able to cover the whole space. The old gentleman felt now for the first time how his strength had been broken by what he had gone through that day. The journeyman, however, observed nothing unusual as Herr Nettenmair, leaning on the rafters of the stairs, barred the way.

"Shall I tell him to come to you here, Herr Nettenmair?" asked the journeyman.

"Tell whom?" Herr Nettenmair had difficulty in retaining his artificial composure.

"He will be home by this time," responded the journeyman. The old gentleman did not repeat his question; he held fast to the rafter on which he was leaning. "He was already on his way home," continued the journeyman. "I came with him as far as the gate. Then he sent me to the tinner's to see if the tin was ready at last. Joerg told me that he had already brought it to the house and had just come from the roof of St. George's where he had led you and I thought because you were in such a hurry to see Herr Apollonius, I would ask you if I must tell him to come up here."

Herr Nettenmair ran his hand up and down the rafter as if he had only taken hold of it to examine it. But, feeling that his hands trembled, he gave up the examination. As grimly as he could, he replied, "I shall come down myself." Wait at the landing until I call you. The journeyman obeyed. Herr Nettenmair drew a deep breath when he knew he was no longer observed. This breath became a sob. The terrible strain which he had undergone was beginning to find an end, and the agony of the father which had been swallowed up till now in passionate fear for the honor of the house, asserted itself. But he knew that his good son's life would hang in the same danger as long as the wicked son lived near him. He had foreseen this contingency and had mapped out a plan of action. He felt his way back to the window. Fritz Nettenmair in the meanwhile had recovered consciousness and been able to rise. The old gentleman bade him come in from the scaffolding and said: "Tomorrow before sunrise you will no longer be here. See if you can become another man in America. Here you are in disgrace, and can only bring disgrace. You will follow me home. I will give you money, you will make ready for the trip. You have done nothing for your wife and children for years. I will take care of them. Do you hear?"

Fritz Nettenmair reeled. He had just looked inevitable death in the face and now he might live! Live where nobody knew what he done, where every chance sound would not frighten him with the vision of the bailiff.

"Apollonius did not fall," continued the old gentleman, and Fritz Nettenmair's bright, new heaven sank into nothingness. The old spectre held him again in its grasp. He loved again the woman from whom he had just wanted to flee. The old gentleman had awaited his son's assent. "You will go," he said, when the son remained silent. "You will go. Tomorrow before day-break you will be on your way to America, or I

shall be on my way to the court. If disgrace must be, it is better to have disgrace alone and not disgrace combined with murder. Remember, I have sworn it. Take your choice."

The old gentleman called to the journeyman to come up to him and lead him home.

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The rumor which the old gentleman had heard on his way to St. George's, had penetrated to the street where the house with the green shutters stands. One passer-by said to another: "Have you heard the news? A slater has been killed in Brambach." The young wife sprang from her chair but sank fainting to the floor. A second time Valentine forgot his fears for Apollonius in his anxiety about her. He sat near her as she lay on the floor and held her head in his trembling hands. At last she made a slight movement. He helped her raise the upper part of her body and supported her. She brushed her disheveled hair from her face and looked about her. Her gaze was such a strange tense one that Valentine's fear increased. She nodded her head and said in a low voice, "Yes!" Valentine knew that she was saying to herself that she had really heard the terrible news and had not dreamed it. She sat for a long time motionless, hearing no word of all that Valentine spoke to her--not even when he tried to prove that Apollonius could not be dead, that he was too careful and too good for an accident to happen to him. He would have given his life to help her, but he knew not how. So he talked on and on, hoping by ceaseless chatter to help her and himself over the anguish of the moment.

At last she found tears. Valentine lived again; he saw that she was saved. He read it in her face, which, open as she herself, could conceal nothing. He sat and listened with joyful attention to her weeping, as if it were a beautiful song she was singing him. He listened to the pure melody of her voice as she wept, the melody which she had not lost when, leaning over little Anne's dying bed, she had uttered the twofold cry of pain and horror. She wept her heart out and arose without help from Valentine. Then she prepared to go out. There was something solemn and resolute in her bearing. Valentine perceived it with astonishment and dread. He asked anxiously if she were going anywhere. She nodded her head. "But I must not let you," he said. "The old gentleman made me solemnly vow."

"I must," she replied. "I must go to the court. I must say that I am guilty. I must suffer my punishment. Their grandfather will take care of my children. I would like to tell them to lay him by little Anne's side, he loved her so. I should like to lie there too, but they won't allow that. No, I won't say anything to them about that."

"Won't you stay until the old gentleman comes back? Then I shall be free of my responsibility." He hoped that Herr Nettenmair would find some way to dissuade her from her purpose.

The young wife nodded assent. "I will wait that long," she said.

Anxiety and hope drove Valentine out of the house to see if Herr Nettenmair were anywhere in sight. Christine took her hymn-book from the desk and sat down at the table.

When Valentine returned he was no longer the same man who had gone

out. He was confused and embarrassed, but in a very different way from what he had been before. He appeared constantly on the point of doing or saying something, became suddenly frightened and did and said something entirely different, and then seemed uncertain whether he should not be frightened at that too. At first the young wife did not notice the change in him, but soon she began to watch him curiously and with increasing apprehension. Gradually she became infected by his behavior. When he laughed involuntarily she glowed with hope, and when he put on a long face she clasped her hands convulsively together and turned pale; sometimes she pressed her hands to her beating heart, sometimes to her burning, hammering temples. At last Valentine considered her sufficiently prepared, to abandon the weather topic. "It is a day," said he, "when men might rise from the dead, and who knows--but please, for my sake, don't be frightened." She became frightened, however. She said to herself, "But it isn't possible." And she was all the more frightened because it was not only possible but certain. "Look toward the back of the house," sobbed Valentine, attempting to laugh. She had looked before he told her to do so. She held fast to the door post as she heard footsteps in the shed. But even the door post no longer stood firmly, she herself stood no longer on firm ground; she rocked dizzily between heaven and earth. When she saw him coming, there was nothing in the world for her except the man for whom she had suffered weeks of death-agony; everything whirled about her in a circle, the walls, the floor, the ceiling, the trees, the sky and the green earth; it was as if the whole world would sink from under her and drag her into its vortex if she did not hold fast to him. She felt herself fall to the ground, and then she knew nothing more.

Apollonius caught her as she fell. He stood and held in his arms the beautiful woman whom he loved, who loved him. She was pale and seemed dead. He did not carry her into the room, he did not let her fall to the ground, he did nothing to revive her. He stood bewildered; he did not know what had happened to him, he had to collect himself. Valentine had not yet spoken with him, he had only heard from the journeyman who was hastening to St. George's that Apollonius was following him and would soon be there. Apollonius had been detained at the gate for a moment by the nail-smith. He had then made haste to obey his father's command which he, however, found surprising, as he could discover no reason for it. He had heard of the slater's death in Tambach; but he did not know that rumor had confused the names of the two places, and that it was possible for anybody to believe that the accident had occurred to him. Absolutely unprepared for that which was to happen in the next moment, he came through the shed. He had meant to go straight to his father in his room, when, seeing Christiane fall fainting to the ground, he hastened toward her. Now he held her in his arms. Slowly her deep blue eyes opened. She looked at him and recognized him. She did not know how she had come into his arms, she did not know that she lay there, she knew only that he lived. She wept and laughed at the same time, and put both arms around him to be sure that he was there. She asked in yearning, anxious eagerness: "Is it you? Are you really here? Are you still alive? You didn't fall? I didn't kill you? You are you, and I am I? But he--he may come." She gazed about wildly. "He will kill you. He will not rest till he has killed you." She clasped him to her as if she wanted to cover him with her body from the enemy, then she forgot all fears in the certainty that he still lived, and she laughed and wept and asked him again if it were really he, and if he were alive. But she must warn him. She must tell him everything that the other had done--and what he had

threatened to do to him. She must do it quickly; any minute he might come. Warning, sweet unconscious love-words, weeping, laughter, blessed gladness, fear, anguish over lost happiness, bride-like embarrassment, forgetfulness of the world in the one moment which was life to her--all this trembled through each quivering word she uttered. "He lied to you and to me. He told me that you jeered at me and that you had offered my flower to the highest bidder. You know, at the Whitsun feast, the little blue-bell that I laid there. And you sent it to him. I saw it. I did not know why I was sorry for you. Then he told me during the dance that you had laughed at me. You went away, and he told me you made fun of me in your letters. That hurt me. You don't know how it hurt, even though I did not know why. Father wanted me to marry him. And when you came I was afraid of you, but I was still sorry for you and I loved you though I did not know it. It was he who first told me so. Then I avoided you--I didn't want to become a bad woman--and I still don't want to. Then he compelled me to lie. And he made threats of what he would do to you. He would see to it that you fell and were killed. It was only a joke, he said, but if I told you, then he would do it in earnest. Since then I have not slept a night, I have sat up in my bed and been full of deadly fear. I saw you in danger and could not tell you and could not help you. And he made slits in the rope with the ax the night before you went to Brambach. Valentine told me that our neighbor had seen him creeping into the shed. I thought you were dead, and I wanted to die too. For I was the cause of your death, when I would die a thousand times to save you. And now you are alive and I cannot grasp it. Everything is just as it was, the trees, the shed, the sky, and you are not dead. And I wanted to die because you were dead. And now you are alive, and I don't know whether it is true or whether I am dreaming. Is it true? Tell me, is it true? I will believe anything you say. And if you tell me that I must die, I will die. But he may be coming! Perhaps he has been listening! Tell Valentine to go to the court and have him taken away, so that he can do you no more harm."

Thus the feverish woman went on raving, laughing and weeping in his arms. Forgetting everything, like a child playing on the edge of an abyss of which it knows nothing, she unconsciously called into life a danger more deadly than the one which had just been averted, more threatening than the one from which she wanted to guard the man with her body. She did not realize what her passionate movements, the sweetness of her reckless abandon, her caresses, her warm, throbbing embraces must arouse in the man who loved her; that she was doing everything that could make the man whose uprightness and honor she trusted so blindly, forget uprightness and honor in the tumult of his blood. She had no idea what a conflict she was kindling in him, and how hard, if not impossible she was making the victory. Now he knew that the woman in his arms was his, that his brother had defrauded him of her and her of him. Now he knew it, while the woman in his arms revealed to him the greatness of the happiness of which his brother had robbed him. The brother had stolen her and had ill-treated her; and for all that he had suffered and done for his brother's sake, he now persecuted him and sought his life. Did the woman belong to him who had stolen and ill-treated her, to him whom she hated--or to him from whom she had been infamously stolen, who loved her and whom she loved? These were not clearly defined thoughts, but countless detached sensations which, borne along in a stream of deep, wild feeling, rushed through his veins and made taut the muscles in his arms--to clasp to his heart that which was his! But a vague, dark fear rose counter to this current and stiffened his muscles in a convulsive

cramp--the feeling that he wanted to do something and did not know what it was or where it might lead him, a far-off recollection that he had made a vow and would break it if he now let himself be carried away. He struggled for a long time beneath the flow of intoxicating sounds before he realized that he was struggling and that the thing for which he struggled was clearness, the fundamental requirement of his nature. At last this clearness came to him and said: "The vow that you have made is to uphold the honor of your house, and what you want to do now will destroy it forever." He was the man, and must answer for himself and for her. The treachery of which he with a touch, with a glance, might be guilty toward this woman whose trust in him was so unbounded, stood before him in all its blackness. There still stood, protectingly, a holy reserve between him and her, which a single touch, a single glance might dispel forever. He looked anxiously about for a helper. If only Valentine would come! Then he would have to let her go from his arms. Valentine did not come. But shame at his weakness that sought help from without, became his helper. He gently laid the defenseless woman down. Not until he felt the soft limbs slip from his grasp did he lose her. He had to turn away and could not choke back a loud sob. Just then the youngest boy peeped curiously into the yard. He hastened to him, took him in his arms, pressed him to his heart and placed him between him and her. It was strange; the pressure with which he clasped the child to his heart relieved his wild yearning and his tense muscles relaxed. In the child he had clasped her to his heart in the only way he dared hold her close to him.

She saw him place the child between him and her and understood him. A burning flush rose to the roots of her brown, unruly locks. She knew now for the first time that she had lain in his arms, had embraced him, had talked to him as only unforbidden love may talk. She saw now for the first time the abyssmal danger in which she had placed him and herself. She raised herself up on her knees, as if she wanted to beseech him not to despise her. Then it occurred to her that her husband might have been listening and might still carry out his threat. Through her joy over his escape she might still be his destruction. He saw all this and suffered with her. He had gained the conflict with himself not to show her what was going on within him, but he had not yet fought the inward struggle to its end. He leaned toward her and said "Above us and your husband is God. Go in now, sister, my dear, good sister." She dared not look up but through her closed lids she saw the benevolence, the deep, inexhaustible kindness, the indelible respect for man which shone in his eyes and played about his gentle mouth. And as he was her conscious and unconscious standard, so now she knew that she was not bad, could not become so, he would carry her in his strong arms, protected, as a mother carries her child. Herr Nettenmair came from the shed toward them accompanied by the journey-man. Fritz Nettenmair who followed them saw Apollonius lead Christiane to the house door.

When Herr Nettenmair came home, nothing was to be read in his crusty face of all that he had suffered and planned that day. The young wife and Valentine had to listen to a sermon on unfounded imaginings, for the story had proved to be as it was, not as Valentine had imagined it in his fear. He spoke of Fritz Nettenmair's trip as one which his son had had in contemplation for a long time but to which he had not consented until today. Apollonius was told to bring the account books into the old gentleman's room at once.

He had to read them aloud to the old gentleman; a curiously purposeless task, for neither of them had his mind on the figures. And moreover the old gentleman behaved as if he knew all about everything already. Valentine came and received various instructions relative to the departure of the elder son. An hour later he returned, having performed his duties. He told how Fritz Nettenmair was looking forward to his new life in America. They would be astonished when they saw him again. He could hardly await the time. The old gentleman's courage revived. Grimly he commanded Apollonius to go to bed; the work they had begun could be continued another time.

Disquieted, like a tortured spirit, now wringing his hands, now clenching his fists, Fritz Nettenmair wandered from the shed to the house and from the house again to the shed. With each round he made, his soul rose up in the wildest defiance and sank again into despairing helplessness. His heart cried out for a word of love. His arms stretched out convulsively to press something to his heart which was his, that he might know he was not lost. For nobody is lost who has somebody in the world to love. Endowed of a sudden with renewed strength, he hastened through the house door into the room where his children lay. A night-light protected by a shade shone brightly enough for the father to see his children. He sank on his knees before the nearest little bed. A long forgotten sound rose to his lips and he whispered it, yearningly as never before. "Fritz!" He only wanted to clasp his children to his heart once, to see their love and then to go; to go and become another man, a better one, a happier one. The little fellow awakened: he thought his mother had called. Smilingly he opened his eyes and--shivered with fright. He feared the man standing at his bedside; one he knew so well, and yet more strange than a stranger to him. It was the man who had given him such angry glances, the man from whom his mother had locked him in his room that he might not see what the man did to her. But he had got up trembling and listened at the door; and clenched his little fists in powerless rage.

"Fritz," said the father anxiously, "I am going away and I shall not come back. But I will send you beautiful apples and picture-books, and think of you a thousand times a minute."

"I don't want them," replied the boy, frightened but defiant. "Uncle 'Lonius gives me apples. I don't want yours."

"Don't you love me either?" asked the father in a breaking voice at the second little bed. George took flight into his brother's bed. There the children clung to each other in fright. Scorn and repugnance were reflected in George's face. "I love mother and I love Uncle 'Lonius, but I don't like you. Let me alone; I'll tell Uncle 'Lonius."

Fritz Nettenmair laughed in wild mockery, and at the same time sobbed in impotent pain. The children were no longer his. He was no longer their father. Yet they were his children! And he had to go away and leave them; and those whom he hated, who had ruined everything for him, would be happy through his going. He became even more miserable than he had already been. He saw his wife lying before him in her beauty, and the desire entered his mind to destroy this beauty. But his recollection of the moment when he lay stretched before his father, prepared for death, was mightier than the desire and banished it. The picture of that moment lived strong within him, only there was an exchange of persons. He painted it with more and more vivid colors. And now it was a fierce joy that drove him again from the house to the

shed and from the shed to the house. His arms moved in violent gesticulation. The moon rose. The house with the green shutters lay there so peaceful in its shimmer. No passer-by would have divined the unrest concealed behind its walls; none would have suspected the thought that hell was brewing there in a ruined vessel.

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Apollonius was exhausted from watching and struggling. He needed rest. The next morning he had to complete the garlanding of the tower-roof, and then take down his swinging-seat, block and pulley, iron ring and ladder. His step must be firm, his eye clear. For the single hour that remained before work was to begin, he did not wish to undress and go to bed. He sat down in his wooden chair. There sleep came to him sooner than he expected--but it was not the kind of sleep he needed; it was an uninterrupted disturbing dream. Christiane lay in his arms as she had lain the day before; he struggled again, but this time he did not conquer, he clasped her to him. When he opened his eyes, it was day and time to go to work. He was in a more excited state of mind than when he had left his father. He hoped that the visions of his dream which had intensified his old desires and his pangs of conscience concerning them would retreat before the fresh morning air and the sobering effect of a cold water rub. But this did not happen; they stayed with him and would not let go of him, not even during his work. The breath of her warm lips lingered on his cheek, he felt himself always in her throbbing embrace; passionate upbraidings of his brother rose again and again in his heart. He did not know himself any longer. In addition to the reproaches he made himself for his evil thoughts, came dissatisfaction because he knew he was not putting his whole mind on his work. Usually he worked his cheerful, industrious self into each task he performed, and it was bound to be good and lasting. But today it seemed to him that he was hammering unrighteous thoughts into his work, that he was forging out of them an evil charm, and that the result could not be good nor enduring.

The slater must work thoughtfully. The man who undertakes repairs today must rely upon the faithfulness of him who stood decades, perhaps centuries ago where he stands now. The lack of conscientiousness that rivets a roof-hook slovenly today may be the cause of a good man's death fifty years hence when he hangs his ladder on that hook. Behind the struggle of his conscience against the visions of his sinful dream lurked, like a dark cloud, the fear that in his distraction he might be forging a future disaster for somebody.

His work was done. The new tin decoration gleamed in the sun around the dark surface of the slate roof. Ring, tackle, swinging-seat and ladder had been removed; the workmen who had assisted at the removal had gone again. Apollonius had taken down the "flying" scaffold and the poles on which it rested; he stood alone on the narrow board which formed the path from the cross-beam to the roof-door. He stood thinking. He felt as if he had forgotten to drive in nails somewhere. He looked in the slate and nail boxes of his swinging-seat which hung near him on a beam. The sound of a mysterious hurrying step came to his ears from the tower stairs. He paid no attention to it, for just then he found a sheet of lead lying among his things. He had brought with him the exact number of sheets that he needed. So this was evidently one that he had forgotten; in his distracted state of mind he had overlooked one of the riveting points. From the door he looked up and down the surface of the roof. If the mistake had happened on this side of the tower he could perhaps rectify it without his seat.

Perhaps the ladder would suffice to reach the required point. And so it proved to be. About six feet above him, near the roof-hook he had taken out a slate and had neglected to replace it with a sheet of lead and to fasten the garland to it. In the meantime the mysterious steps were coming ever nearer; the man in such haste had now reached the end of the stone stairs and was climbing the ladder to the roof. The clock below rumbled. It was almost two. Apollonius had not yet had dinner, but when there was a flaw of any kind in his work he could not rest until he had rectified it. He had gone back to fetch the ladder. It lay on the beam near the swinging-seat. As he stooped to get it he felt himself seized and pushed with wild violence toward the door. Instinctively he caught hold of the lower edge of a beam with his right hand while with his left he sought in vain for support. This movement brought him face to face with his assailant. Horrified he saw the distorted, wild features of his brother.

"You shall have her all to yourself, or down you go with me."

"Away!" cried Apollonius. In his angry pain all his reproaches against his brother mounted into his face. Exerting all his strength he pushed him back with his free hand.

"So you show your true face, at last?" mocked Fritz Nettenmair in still greater rage. "You have dislodged me from every place that I possessed; now it is my turn. You shall have me on your conscience, you fluff-picker. Throw me over, or down you go with me!"

Apollonius saw no deliverance. The hand with which he held desperately to the sharp edge of the beam was well-nigh exhausted. With all his strength he would have to seize his brother by the arms, turn him round and push him over if he did not want to be dragged down with him. And yet he cried: "I will not!"

"Very well," groaned Fritz. "You want to put the blame of this too on me; you want to make me do this too. Your sanctimoniousness shall now have an end." Apollonius would have sought a new hold, but he knew that his brother would take advantage of the instant when he let go his present one. Fritz was already just on the point of making a violent dash at him. Apollonius' hand was slipping from the edge of the beam. He would be lost if he did not find some new hold. He could perhaps make a jump and catch the beam with both hands; but then his brother, by the force of his own onset, would certainly fall through the door. A vision of his honest, proud, old father, of the young wife and her children, rose before him, and he remembered the vow that he had made to himself; he was their only support--he must live. One spring and he had caught the beam in his arms; at the same moment his brother rushed headlong past him. The weights below rattled, and the clock struck two. The jackdaws, disturbed in their rest by the struggle, swooped wildly down to the roof-door and fluttered about in a croaking cloud. There was the sound of a heavy body striking on the street pavement far below. A cry went up from all sides. Pale living faces looked on a paler dead one which lay all bloody on the pavement. Ghastly haste, screams, a clasping of hands, a running hither and thither, spread like a whirlwind from the church-yard to the farthest corner of the town. But the clouds high above in the sky heeded it not and continued on their vast course unmoved. They see so much self-created misery below them that a single instance cannot touch them.

Everything in the world has its use, if not in itself or for him who does it or who has it, then at least for others. So that which had brought disgrace on the house of Nettenmair was now a guard against greater disgrace. Fritz Nettenmair's love of drink was known everywhere; everybody had seen him drunk; it was no wonder that all who learned of his death attributed it to this vice. It was well that nobody outside of the Nettenmair household knew that he had intended to go to America; it was also well that, to avoid attracting attention upon his return, he had worn his ordinary workman's clothes in the mail coach with only his overcoat thrown over them. The coat had got lost on the way and those who had a right to its restitution naturally put in no claim for it. It did not occur to anybody to attach much importance to this scarcely-noticed incident, as it was not necessary to piece a story together when a complete one was already at hand. Moreover, before the deed he had gone to his usual place of recreation, had drunk heavily, and, after boasting in his foolhardy way that he would now perform his master-piece, had left the tavern for St. George's much intoxicated. All these outward circumstances served to confirm the generally accepted opinion. By a fortunate chance there had been no workmen at St. George's; of the struggle that had taken place before the fall nobody knew anything except Apollonius and the jackdaws who lived there. As soon as the inspector learned of Fritz's death he looked up Apollonius, whom he found sitting exhausted at the foot of the tower, and told him the story that was going the rounds. It entered nobody's head to question Apollonius. They all told him about it instead of letting him tell. He therefore kept silence about that which nobody questioned. The courts found no reason to make an investigation, and the danger which had menaced the honor of the family passed quietly over.

One evening a black bier was seen before the house with the green shutters. At a distance stood groups of women and children, now whispering softly to one another, now peering eagerly in one direction with a curiosity that at times became impatient. Here and there a long black coat and a three-cornered hat came down the street in solemn gloom and vanished behind the bier into the house. At last the door opened. The coffin stood on the bier, the pall covered both; gently, in rhythmical motion, there appeared a black moving mass; now they were in their places; the pall-bearers adjusted their hats. The procession moved, rippling, wavering. On top gleamed bright the hammer which Valentine had polished, and told that what they were now surrendering to earth had worked honestly between heaven and earth. The sweet tears of the old women washed away whatever stains clung to his memory. Inwardly they made a vow that none who belonged to them should ever become a slater. The slater's calling is a dangerous one, between heaven and earth; the man who lay beneath the black pall, between the boards, silent as he was, preached that with poignant eloquence. They turned their eyes toward the old gentleman who was led by two mourners. He seemed to embody the very spirit of honest burial. But when their gaze fell upon Apollonius they forgot the mildness with which they had just judged; they unburied the dead man from the cool funeral flowers that covered his human nakedness. The hammer lying above him would have been covered with the dark rust of shame had it not been for Apollonius. Then they looked at the young wife, and, according to the way of their sex, the mourners became match-makers. And indeed they had right on their side; a bonnier couple or one better suited could scarce have been found in the whole town. The procession passed by the Red Eagle, where a ball was in progress at which Fritz Nettenmair was missing--surely a dull affair! The

procession went the same way that Fritz Nettenmair had gone after he had talked with the workman. He had then seen in spirit his brother lying beneath the black fluttering pall and himself following as a mourner. The procession went on, still keeping to the streets that Fritz Nettenmair had trodden on that occasion. Outside the town-gate the willows melted again into mist or the mist into willows. Here and there mist-men carried mist-coffins near the real one. At the cross-ways, where Fritz Nettenmair had seen the journeyman disappear in the mist, he himself disappeared. In Tambach they were bearing the journeyman to burial. The two must have had much to say to each other. Fritz Nettenmair could have told the workman how carefully he had carried out the thought sown by him, even to the cutting of the rope; and the workman could have told his former master how he became a victim to the cuts thus made. The pastor who preached the sermon over Fritz Nettenmair's grave, who was buried with all the honors due to his standing or to be bought with money, did not know what an awe-inspiring theme had eluded him.

The last word of the funeral sermon had died away, the last spadeful of earth had fallen on the coffin, the mourners had gone home; it became night, and again day, and again night, and again and again day and night; other things drove Fritz Nettenmair's unfortunate death from the minds of the townsmen--and still other things these things. A stone was erected over his grave, and his honest death was vouched for by a sculptor and impressed with chisel-strokes upon forgetful posterity. One might think that the dark cloud that had hovered over the house with the green shutters would have burst in the storm that dashed the older son from the tower-roof of St. George's to the pavement below, and that life would now be bright there, as its outer aspect promised. One might indeed think so if one saw only the young widow and her children. The three strong young beings raised their drooping heads as soon as the burden which had oppressed them was lifted. The young widow did not look as if she had been a wife, still less an unhappy wife; from day to day she seemed more like a bridal maiden or a maidenly bride. And why should she not? Did she not know that he loved her? Did she not love him? Did not the teasing words of others, even if she did not think of it herself, remind her that her love was no longer a forbidden one? The marriage was so natural, so necessary according to traditional ideas that those who were too old or too dignified to jest took it as a matter of course without mentioning it, and did not mention it merely because they took it as a matter of course.

In his diplomatic fashion the old gentleman made various intimations that if he had remained at the head of things all would have happened differently. What Apollonius had spoiled, he would now carry out to the best possible end. Necessity had placed him at the helm again, and he would remain there. He forgot that he had twice been forced to the acknowledgment that when one becomes old, control in the business is only possible when one need not see through strange eyes. He was to experience this now for a third time. Since the night before his older son met a violent death, Herr Nettenmair had resumed his position as manager of the business. Apollonius reported to him daily concerning the progress of current work and received orders. When a piece of work has once been fairly started it can go on by itself and requires from the superintendent nothing but inspection and an occasional stimulus. If, however, something new is to be undertaken, a groove must be sought in which it can run, and the groove must be the shortest, surest, and most profitable. Clear-seeing eyes are needed, with a

quick power to grasp. That Apollonius possessed these the old gentleman perceived on the first occasion. It pertained to a particularly difficult piece of work. Apollonius put it before him with such clearness that the old gentleman believed he saw it with his bodily eyes. It was a case, however, in which his experience failed him. To Apollonius it presented no difficulties. He pointed out three or four different ways in which it could be done and reduced the old gentleman to such a state of confusion that he could scarcely conceal it. A curious, wild train of contradictory sensations rushed through his brain—joy and pride in his son, then pain that he was nothing and never could be any more, then shame and wrath that his son knew this and triumphed over him; the desire to curb him and show him that he still was lord and master. But even if he wanted to carry his point, would his son obey? There was no way to preserve even the appearance of leadership save through his diplomatic art. In a grim voice he gave commands which were utterly unnecessary, because they pertained to things which would have been done as a matter of course without command. In new matters he angrily disapproved of all suggestions made by Apollonius; but the commands which he finally gave were always in general accord with that which Apollonius had suggested as most expedient. Afterward he made excuses to himself and found something that would have been much better than Apollonius' suggestion. He was convinced that if he only had his eyesight everything would be different. Sometimes he gave himself up unreservedly to his joy and pride in his son's efficiency; but this feeling was soon replaced by the wrathful necessity to exert his diplomatic art. Apollonius realized the restraint that he was imposing upon his father quite as little as he did his father's pride in him. He was glad that he had nothing more to conceal from the old gentleman concerning the business, and that obedience to him did not interfere with the fulfilment of his vow. The sky above the house with the green shutters took on a brighter, bluer hue. But the spirit of the house still wandered about wringing its hands. When the clock struck two in the morning it stood in the arbor before the door to Apollonius' room and raised its pallid arms pleadingly toward heaven.

The business increased under Apollonius' diligent hand; the orders were twice as many as they had formerly been. The postman brought great piles of letters into the house. Apollonius accepted an advantageous offer made by the owner and leased the slate quarry. He understood the management of the works from his stay in Cologne, and he employed a former acquaintance from that city whom he knew to be an expert in the business and reliable in his dealings. His choice was a good one; the man was energetic, but in spite of this fact much additional work fell on Apollonius. The councilman shook his head sometimes doubtfully, fearing that Apollonius had over-estimated his strength. It did not strike the young widow how seldom Apollonius came into the living-room. The children, whom he often called to him to perform little services whereby they might learn, kept up the intercourse. They could testify that Apollonius had very little time. She went to his room frequently, but always when he was not at home. She adorned the doors and walls with everything she had which she knew he loved, and she spent many hours there at work. She noticed the pallor of his face, which seemed to become greater each time she saw him. As she was but a mirror of his feelings, his pallor reflected itself in her. She would have liked to cheer him up, but she did not seek to be near him; her presence seemed to have the opposite effect upon him from what she desired. He was always friendly and full of chivalrous respect toward her. This at least comforted her to a

certain extent. She had endowed him with all the virtues that she knew; among these she had not forgotten truthfulness, the first of them all to her. Therefore she knew that he would not compel himself to show respect to her if he did not feel it. He made merry sometimes, especially when he saw her eyes fixed anxiously upon his pale face, but she noticed that her society did not make him healthier or more cheerful. She would have liked to ask him what was the matter. When he stood before her she did not dare. When she was alone she asked him. Many nights through she thought of ways to entice the confession from him and talked with him. Surely if he had heard her weep, had heard how sweetly and tenderly she cajoled and pleaded, had heard the dear names she gave him, he would have told her what ailed him. Her whole life was between heart and mouth; and when her heart whispered in her ear what she had said, she flushed rosily and hid her blushes deep beneath the covers from herself and the listening night.

She confided her fears to the old inspector. "Is it a wonder?" he asked, "when a person sits all day long for a year and a half over his business and all night long over books and letters? And then all the anxiety he had about his--God forgive him, he is dead and one should not speak ill of the dead--about his brother; and then the fright, which made me ill for three days, over--and when his widow is there too--I never did like him much, least of all toward the end. But youth is so! I warned him a hundred times, the brave fellow! And now the confounded quarry! Such conscientiousness! He is one who would never consider his own health." The councilman gave the young widow a long lecture which was not in the least meant for her. Then they agreed that Apollonius ought to have a doctor whether he wanted him or not; and the councilman immediately went to the best physician in town. The physician promised to do all that was possible. He called on Apollonius, who put up with him because those whom he loved desired it. The doctor felt his pulse, came again and again, prescribed and re-prescribed; Apollonius became ever paler and gloomier. At last the good man declared that here was a malady against which all art was useless. So deep-seated was the trouble that no remedy of his could reach it.

Apollonius knew that no physician could cure his illness. The councilman had only partly divined the cause. Overwork had merely watered the soil for the parasite growth which was gnawing at Apollonius' inmost being. The first symptoms seemed of a physical nature. As his brother had plunged to death before him, the clock below had struck the hour of two. Since then every sound of a bell frightened him. What aroused more serious apprehension was an attack of dizziness. All the horrors of that day did not obliterate the feeling of uneasiness which had taken possession of him when he discovered the inexactitude in his work. Every time a bell sounded it seemed to him a warning. Early the next morning he went to the roof-door with his ladder in his hand. He had already noticed how insecure his step was as he climbed the tower stairs; now, when through the open door the distant mountains began to nod so curiously to him and the firm tower to rock beneath him, he became frightened. That was dizziness, the slater's worst, most malicious enemy when it takes sudden hold of him on a swaying ladder between heaven and earth. In vain Apollonius strove to overcome it; he had to give up his purpose for the day. No way had ever been so hard for Apollonius as the tower stairs down from St. George's. What would happen? How could he fulfil his vow if this dizziness did not leave him? On the same day he had some work to do on the tower of St. Nicholas. There he had to

venture into more dangerous places than at St. George's; the bells rang at the most critical instant; he felt no trace of dizziness. Joyfully he hastened back to St. George's, but again the ladder trembled under his feet, the mountains nodded, the tower rocked. He was on the lowest rung of the ladder when the clock began to strike the hour. The sound penetrated every nerve of his body; he had to hold fast to the railing until the last echo had died away. He made attempt after attempt, and climbed all ladders and towers with his old sureness of foot; only at St. George's did dizziness return. There he had hammered his sinful thoughts into his work; he had felt at the time that he was forging an evil charm, a coming disaster. Day and night the picture followed him of the place where he had forgotten to insert the sheet of lead and to rivet the decoration. The flaw was like an evil spot, a spot where a crime had been begun or completed and where no grass grows, no shadow falls; like an open wound which does not heal until it has been avenged, like an empty grave which does not close until it has received its denizen. If only the gap were closed the charm would lose its potency. He might authorize a workman to do the job, but the thought of leaving his neglected work to another brought a flush of shame to his pale cheeks. The sheet of lead nailed by another would be certain to fall; the gap cried out for him, and he alone could close it. Or the destruction which he had forged there would seize hold of the workman, dizziness would overtake him and he would plunge into the depths.

Since his brother's wife had lain in his arms he had lived a double life. During the day he worked outside and at night he sat in his room among his books, all that went on mechanically; in spite of his efforts his heart was only half in his work; the other half lived its own life, hovering with the jackdaws about the flaw in the tower-roof and brooding over the coming disaster which he had forged that morning. His soul fought ever anew the battle with his brother. Was it his brother's fall that he had forged? Perhaps it would have been possible to save the madman. Anxiously he sought for possibilities, and shrank with horror from the thought that he might find one. All his good qualities became overwrought--his loyalty, his conscientiousness, his scrupulousness. He did not try to put his shortcomings upon his brother; with loving hand he took his brother's guilt and placed it on his own shoulders. It became ever clearer in his mind that he might have saved his brother. He could have found some way if his heart and head had not been full of wild, forbidden desires, if he had not been full of wrath against the madman instead of feeling pity for him. With his evil thoughts he had forged disaster for his brother. Without those thoughts his work would have been finished and his brother would not have found him in the tower, would have come too late and would have repented of his resolve. Or, if he had still been there, he was the stronger, cooler headed, and he should have found a way to prevent the calamity.

It was natural that people should chaff him about the marriage that seemed a necessity to them. He had to confess to himself that they were right and that his desires were no longer forbidden ones. But the fact that they had once been so cast its shadow over the blameless present. His love seemed sullied to him. Reason and love might say what they would, he felt that there would be guilt in the marriage. And so it came that Christiane's presence brought him no cheer. There were moments when his gloom struck him as a sort of illness and he hoped that it would pass over. But even then he drew no nearer to Christiane, much as his heart yearned for her. He continued the same

as on that day when he placed the child between him and her. She remained pure and holy to him.

To the old gentleman with his external sense of honor, a life like Apollonius' and Christiane's, without the consecration of the church, was a grave offense. Only under the name of her husband could Apollonius, without disgrace, be the protector and supporter of the beautiful young widow and her children. According to his way he pronounced the ultimatum. He fixed the time for the wedding. The indispensable half-year of mourning was over; in a week the betrothal should be announced, three weeks later the marriage should take place.

Life in the house with the green shutters grew more and more sultry. The new clouds which had gathered invisibly about it threatened a storm severer than that in which the old ones had been dispelled. The young widow had no choice but to play the part of the affianced; she was rallied about her wedding garment, and, adjusting herself to the situation, she began preparations. Tears fell upon her work, and joy had an ever smaller and smaller part in it. She saw the condition of the man she loved become hourly worse; and she could not fail to know that the approaching marriage was to blame. The paler and more fragile he became, the gentler and more full of respect was his conduct toward her. There was something in it that seemed like pitying pain and an unexpressed prayer for forgiveness of a wrong, an insult of which he felt himself guilty toward her.

Apollonius was compelled to come to a decision. He could not. The yawning discord in his soul became ever greater. If he resolved to renounce happiness, the phantom of guilt disappeared and happiness stretched out alluring arms toward him. She loved him and had always loved him, only him; all the world approved, in fact demanded it of him. He saw her before she had been stolen from him, how she had laid the little blue-bell down for him, all rosy beneath the brown curling locks which struggled to be free; then, pale under the ill-treatment of the brother who had stolen her from him, pale for him; then trembling before his brother's threats, trembling for him; then laughing, weeping, full of anguish and full of happiness in his arms. His brother's fall had made this woman free. He had known that when he let his brother fall. If he should wed his brother's wife, who had become free through the fall, he would make himself guilty of this fall. If he received the reward of the deed, the deed was also his. If he took her, the feeling would never leave him; he would be unhappy and would make her unhappy with him. For her sake and for his he must refrain. When he came to this decision, he realized how unsubstantial his conclusions were, viewed with the clear eye of the spirit; and yet, if he tried to reach out for happiness, the dark feeling of guilt hovered over him like an icy frost about a flower, and his soul could do nothing against its annihilating power. And the bells of St. George's continued to ring their warning. What made Apollonius' agitation even more feverish was the knowledge that the flaw in his work had not been corrected. It rained incessantly, the gap yawned wide, the boarding greedily drank in the water, the wood was bound to rot. If the winter cold increased, the water would freeze in the wood and injure the slate. The town, which trusted to his sense of duty, would suffer harm through him. Each night the stroke of two awakened him from sleep. Shadows mingled with his fever-dreams. The reproaches of his inward and outward yearning for purity blended. The open wound cried aloud for justice, the open grave for him who would close it. And it was he whom the bells called to justice, he who must close the

grave before the disaster he had forged should descend upon an innocent head. He must climb to the tower and correct the flaw. But when he got there, it struck two, dizziness seized hold of him and dragged him down after his brother. From day to day, from hour to hour, the beautiful young widow saw him grow paler and became pale with him. Only the old gentleman in his blindness did not see the cloud which was lowering so threateningly. The air was very sultry in the house with the green shutters. No one who looks at the little house now would suspect how sultry it once was there.

It was on the night before the appointed betrothal day. Snow had fallen, and then great cold had suddenly set in. For several nights the so-called St. Elmo's fire had been seen darting tongues of flame from the tops of the towers to the gleaming stars of heaven. In spite of the dry cold, the inhabitants of the district felt a curious heaviness in their limbs. There was no air stirring. The people looked at one another as if each were asking the other if he too felt the same uneasiness. Odd prophecies of war, sickness and famine went from mouth to mouth. The more intelligent smiled, but were themselves unable to refrain from clothing their inward gloom in corresponding pictures of some impending disaster. All day long dark clouds, of different form and color from what the wintry sky is accustomed to display, had been gathering. Their blackness would have been in unbearably glaring contrast to the snow which covered mountains and valley and hung like candied sugar on the leafless boughs, if their dark reflection had not somewhat deadened the dazzling splendor. Here and there the firm outline of the cloud-castles softened and seemed to hang down over earth like drooping breasts. These bore more nearly the aspect of ordinary snow-clouds, and their dull reddish gray served to unite the leaden blackness of the higher plane with earth's drab whiteness and dingy appearance. The whole mass hung motionless over the town. The blackness increased. Two hours after midday it was already night in the streets. Dwellers on the ground floor drew down their blinds; in the windows of the upper stories appeared one light after another. In the public squares of the town, where a greater portion of the sky could be seen, groups of people stood, looking now upward into the heavens, now into the long, doubtful faces around them. They told of the ravens that had come in great flocks into the suburbs, they pointed to the deep, restless, uneven fluttering of the jackdaws around St. George's and St. Nicholas', they spoke of earthquakes, of land-slides and even of the Judgment Day. The more courageous thought it was only a violent thunder-storm. But even that seemed serious enough. The river and the so-called fire-pond, the waters of which could, at a moment's notice, be let into any part of the town by means of subterranean channels, were both frozen. Some hoped the danger would pass by. But each time they looked up at the sky they saw that the dark cloud-mass had not changed its position. Two hours after midday it had stood there; toward midnight it still stood there unmoved. Only it seemed to have become heavier and had sunk lower. How could it move when there was not a breath of air in motion, and to scatter and dispel such a mass as this a hurricane would have been required!

It struck twelve from St. George's tower. The last stroke seemed unable to die away. But the deep trembling murmur that hung on so long was no longer the dying tone of the bell. For now it began to grow; as if on a thousand wings it came rushing and surging and pushed angrily against the houses that would retard it; whistling and shrieking, it drove through every crevice that it met, and blustered about the house

until it found another rift to drive out of again; it tore shutters open and slammed them furiously, it squeezed its way groaningly between adjacent walls, whistled madly round street corners, lost itself in a thousand currents, found itself again and rushed headlong into a raging stream, careered up and down with savage joy, jolted everything that stood fast, trilled with wild-playing fingers on the rusty vanes and weather-cocks and laughed shrilly at their groans; it blew the snow from one roof to another, swept it from the street, chased it onto steep walls where it crouched with fear in all the window chinks, and whirled great, dancing fir-trees of snow before it in its mad course.

Seeing that a storm was imminent, no one had taken off his clothes. The town and county storm night-watch, as well as the fire company, had been gathered together for hours. Herr Nettenmair had sent his son to the main guard-room in the town hall to represent him there as the master-slater of the town. The two journeymen sat with the tower watchman, one at St. George's, one at St. Nicholas'. The other municipal workmen entertained one another in the guard-room as well as they could. The building inspector looked anxiously at Apollonius, who, feeling his friend's eye fixed upon him, rose, to conceal from him if possible his brooding state of mind. At this very moment the storm broke forth with renewed violence. From the town-hall tower it struck one. The sound of the bell whimpered in the grip of the storm which dragged it along in its wild chase. Apollonius stepped to the window as if to see what was happening outside. A gigantic, sulphur-blue tongue leaped into the room, sprang twice trembling upon stove, wall and people, and then, leaving no trace, was swallowed up in itself again. The tempest raged on: but, even as the storm had seemed born out of the last sound of St. George's bell, there now arose a something out of the raging which exceeded it in force as far as the raging had exceeded the sound of the bell. An invisible world seemed to tear it to pieces in the air. The storm raged and panted with the fury of the tiger which cannot destroy what it holds in its grasp; the deep, majestic rolling that outsounded it was the roar of the lion which has his foot on the enemy--the triumphant expression of struggle satisfied by action.

"That struck somewhere!" said one. Apollonius thought: "If it should strike St. George's tower, where the gap is, and I should have to climb up, and the clock should strike two, and"--he could think no further. A cry for help, a cry of fire resounded through storm and thunder. "The lightning has struck!" was the cry on the street. "It has struck St. George's tower! Quick to St. George's! Fire! Help! Fire! St. George's! Fire in the tower of St. George's!" Horns blew, drums beat. And always the storm and peal after peal of thunder! Then the cry came: "Where is Nettenmair? If anybody can help it is Nettenmair. Fire! Fire! At St. George's! Nettenmair! Where is Nettenmair? The tower of St. George's is on fire!"

The councilman saw Apollonius turn pale, his form sink more deeply into itself than before. "Where is Nettenmair?" was again the cry from the street. Then came a dark flush over his pale cheeks and his slender figure rose to its full height. He buttoned his coat quickly, and drew the strap of his cap firmly under his chin. "If I stay," he said to the councilman, as he turned to go, "remember my father, my brother's wife and the children." The councilman was taken aback. The young man's "if I stay" sounded like "I shall stay." A presentiment came over the friend that here was something that had to do with the

salvation of Apollonius' soul. But the expression on Apollonius' face was no longer one of suffering; nor was it anxious or wild. In spite of apprehension and alarm, the stout-hearted man felt something like joyful hope. It was indeed the old Apollonius again who stood before him, with the same quiet, modest resoluteness that had won his heart at the first sight of the young man. "If he would only remain so!" thought the inspector. He had no time to reply. He pressed his hand. Apollonius felt all that this hand-pressure wanted to say. Compassion crept over him for the good old man, and something like regret for the anxiety he had caused him and would still cause him. He said with his old-time smile: "For such cases I am always prepared. But there is no time to spare. Good-by for a while!" Apollonius, who moved more quickly than the councilman, was soon out of sight. All the way to St. George's, amid the cries, the horns, drums, storm and thunder, the councilman kept repeating to himself: "Either I shall never see the good fellow again, or he will be well when he returns." He did not try to explain to himself how he had come to this conclusion. There was no time. His duty as municipal inspector demanded his entire attention.

The cry "Nettenmair! Where is Nettenmair?" greeted Apollonius on all sides and echoed in the distance. The confidence of his fellow-citizens awakened in him a renewed sense of his own worth. When, upon returning from afar, he had seen his native town stretched out before him, he had dedicated himself to her and her service. The opportunity now presented itself to show whether he had meant this vow in earnest. He reviewed in his mind all the possible forms of danger and how they could best be met. A fire-sprinkler lay ready in the roof-truss, and cloths were at hand to dip into water and protect the places most in danger. The journeyman had been instructed to have hot water ready. The beams were connected everywhere by ladders. For the first time since his return from Brambach he threw his whole soul into his work. Before real necessity and its demands the visions of his brooding fancy receded like dissolving shadows. All his old elasticity and buoyancy were [Illustration: The Prophet Jeremiah] [Blank Page] called into being again, intensified by the feeling of relief which had taken possession of him. Thoughts can be refuted by thoughts, against feelings they are a very weak weapon. In vain had his spirit seen the way of salvation; he had fallen a victim to the general apathy about him. Now a strong, healthful feeling sprang up in opposition to the strong, morbid ones and devoured them in the ardor of its flame. He knew, without any special thought on the subject, that he had found the solution which brings redemption, and that this was the cause of his renewed being. He knew that dizziness would not overcome him, but if he should remain it would be a sacrifice made to duty, not to guilt, and God and the gratitude of the town would assume in his stead the responsibility for his loved ones.

St. George's Square was thronged with people who gazed in troubled fear at the roof of the tower. The ancient building stood like a rock in the fierce battle which the brightness of lightning and the old night waged untiringly about it. A thousand glowing arms embraced the tower with such ardor that it seemed as if it would be consumed in their glow; like a great surging sea the light broke upon its walls, only to fall back again before the power of night which engulfed all in its dark flood. The mass of pale faces, pressed close together at the foot of the tower, flashed into view during momentary gleams of light but were soon lost again in dreary blackness. The storm tore at their hats and coats, blew hair into their faces, struck them with flapping garments and pelted them with glistening drops of snow, as if

it wanted to make them atone for the wounds it received when it beat as rain on the rocky ribs of the tower. And as the people now appeared, now disappeared in alternating light and darkness, so also their confused attempts at conversation were drowned at every turn by storm and thunder.

Somebody called out in self-consolation: "It was a harmless flash; though it struck, nothing caught fire." Somebody else thought that the flame might still break out. A third became angry; he took this suggestion as a wish that the flame might break out. He had been comforted by the first thought; he had to avenge himself for the uneasiness which the suggestion created in his mind. Trembling with cold and anxiety, many stared up stupidly with blinded eyes into space and knew not even why. A hundred voices explained what misfortune would befall the town, must befall it, if the lightning had really struck and the tower had caught fire. Some told of the nature of slate, how it melts in fire and is carried as slack through the air, often setting fire to a whole city at the same time. Others lamented that the storm would further a possible fire, and that there would be no water with which to extinguish it. Still others said that if there were any water it would freeze in the engines and be of no avail. Most of them depicted with fearful eloquence the course that the fire would take. If the burning truss should fall the storm would blow it right where there was a thick cluster of houses, quite near the tower. This was the most dangerous place in the whole town in case of fire, for there were numberless frame verandas in narrow courts, boarded gable roofs and shingle-covered sheds, all crowded so closely together that it would be impossible for a fire-engine to be squeezed in among them or for the firemen to get at their work. If the burning truss should fall on this side, as it most certainly would, the entire portion of the town that lay before the wind would be irretrievably lost. These reflections reduced the timid to such a state of mind that every new flash seemed to them the inevitable fire. That nobody could see more than one side of the tower at a time tended to increase the misapprehension. It was curious, but from all sides the cry was heard: "Where? Where?" Storm and thunder prevented mutual understanding. Everybody wanted to see for himself. Wild excitement prevailed.

"Where did it strike?" asked Apollonius, who had just arrived. "On the side toward Brambach," answered many voices. Apollonius pushed his way through the crowd. With long strides he hastened toward the tower steps. He had come considerably in advance of his more deliberate associates. In the tower his questions were to no purpose. The people in the tower thought that though the lightning had struck it had not set fire to anything; still they were on the point of gathering together their best things to flee from the danger. Only the journeyman, whom he found occupied at the stove, remained self-possessed. Apollonius hastened with lanterns to the truss, to hang them there. The ladder steps did not tremble beneath his feet; he was in too great haste to notice it. There seemed to be no trace of incipient fire in the truss. Neither the odor of sulphur, which denotes fire by lightning, nor ordinary smoke was perceptible. Apollonius heard his associates on the steps. He called to them that he was there. Just at that moment a blue light flashed through all the tower-windows followed immediately by a tremendous crash of thunder. Apollonius stood for an instant, stunned. If he had not unconsciously caught hold of a beam, he would have fallen to the ground from the shock. A thick fume of sulphur took his breath away. He sprang to the nearest window to obtain fresh air. The workmen farther from where it

had struck had not been stunned, but stood motionless with fright on the topmost flight of steps. "Come!" cried Apollonius. "Quick! the water! The sprinkler! It must have struck on this side--that's where the pressure and the smell of sulphur came from. Quick, water and the sprinkler at the door!" The master-carpenter, standing on the ladder steps, called, coughing, "But the smoke!" "Quick!" replied Apollonius, "the door will give more air than we want." The mason and the chimney-sweep followed the carpenter, who carried the hose with the sprinkler, as quickly as he could, up the ladder steps. The others brought buckets of cold water, the journeyman a pail of hot water to pour over the cold to prevent its freezing.

At such moments he who remains calm inspires confidence; to the self-possessed man of action others defer without question. The wooden passage-way to the door was narrow, but through Apollonius' intelligent directions room was immediately found for all. Next to Apollonius stood the carpenter, then the sprinkler, then the mason. The sprinkler was so turned that the two men had the levers before them. Two strong men could work it. Behind the mason stood the journeyman who was to pour hot water on the cold as often as was necessary. Others performed the journeyman's previous duty; they melted snow and ice and kept the water thus obtained in the watchman's warm room so that it should not freeze again. Still others were ready to serve as carriers and formed a sort of double line between roof and watchman's room. While Apollonius was explaining to the carpenter and mason, in rapid words and signs, his plan of action which they then carried into effect, he had taken hold of the roof-ladder with his right hand and was reaching out with his left toward the bolt of the door. The workmen were all full of hope, but when the storm whistled in through the opened door, tore the carpenter's cap from his head, blew masses of fine snow against the beams, howled, rattled, and blustered against the ridge of the roof, while flash after flash of lightning broke through the dark opening, the bravest among them wanted to withdraw his hand from the futile work. Apollonius had to stand with his back to the door to get his breath. Then gripping the lath-work above the door, with both hands, he bent his head back in order to get a look at the roof from the outside. "It can still be saved," he cried with an effort so that he could be heard above the storm and the uninterrupted rolling of the thunder. He seized the tube of the shorter hose, the lower end of which the carpenter had screwed onto the sprinkler, and wound the upper part around his body. "When I pull twice on the hose start the sprinkler; we'll save the church and perhaps the town." With his right hand propped against the lath-work he swung himself out of the door; in his left hand he held the light roof-ladder which he wanted to hang on the next hook above the door. This seemed impossible to the workmen. The storm would certainly tear the ladder down, and all too possibly the man with it. It came in well for Apollonius that the wind pressed the ladder against the surface of the roof. There was plenty of light by which to find the hook; but the fine snow which flurried about and, rolling down from the roof, struck him in the eyes, was a hindrance. He could feel, however, that the ladder hung securely. There was no time to lose; he swung himself up on it. He had to trust more to the strength and sureness of his arms and hands than to a secure footing as he climbed upward, for the storm swayed man and ladder to and fro like a bell. Above, to one side of the topmost rung of the ladder, blue flames with yellow points leaped forth from under the gap and licked the edges of the slate roof. The lightning had struck two feet below the point where the sheet of lead was lacking. A short hour ago he had been frightened by the thought of

the mere possibility that the lightning could strike there and that he would have to climb up--a series of dark, deadly fever visions had risen before him: now, all had happened as he had pictured it--but the gap was like any other part of the tower-roof and he stood on the ladder, free from all dizziness, pervaded only by a keen, strong desire to avert impending danger from church and town. Yes, something that had enhanced his vague fears now proved to be of distinct advantage to him. The water which had been pouring into the hole for weeks, and which was now frozen in the wood, prevented the flame from obtaining the upper hand as quickly as it would otherwise have done. The area taken possession of by the fire up to the present time was small. The frost in the boarding had stubbornly beat back the leaping, ever-returning flames and it would take time before they could permanently strike root and from their vantage point do further destruction. If they had united in one big flame and overstepped the space below the hole protected by the frost, the fire would soon have grown to gigantic proportions and the church, perhaps the town, have succumbed to the combined force of fire and storm. He saw that there was still time to save, and he needed the strength that this thought gave. The ladder not only swung backward and forward, it moved up and down. What could be the cause of that? If the beams of the roof were loose--but he knew that that was not the case--this movement would be impossible. But the trouble was that the ladder was not hanging on the hook; he had hung it on a projecting tin oak-leaf which formed part of the roof's decoration, near one of the rivets, and he had neglected to fasten the other end of the garland on which the ladder hung. His weight was pulling on it now and dragging it and the ladder gradually down. An inch more and the leaf would be horizontal, the ladder would slide off it and he and the ladder together would fall into the tremendous depth below. His newly-acquired courage was to be put to the test. Six inches from the leaf was the hook. He took three cautious steps up the tottering ladder; then, seizing hold of the hook with his left hand and holding fast, he raised the ladder with his right hand from the leaf to the hook. It hung securely. He let go the hook and, holding fast to a rung of the ladder with both hands, stepped back onto it again. And now the slates below the hole began to glow; it would not be long before the burning particles carried destruction far and near. Apollonius drew his claw-hammer from his belt; a few strokes with the tool and the slate fell, splintering below. Now he could see clearly the very small area of burning surface; his confidence increased. He pressed twice on the hose and the sprinkler began to work. First he held the nozzle toward the hole so that the lath-work above might be the better protected from the flame. The sprinkler proved to be powerful; the water that penetrated beneath the edge of the slate shivered it into small bits. The flames cracked and leaped angrily under the gushing water; only when the jet was turned directly upon them, and then more by means of its smothering power than its inherent qualities, did it finally vanquish them.

The surface of the fire lay black before him; there was no hissing in response to the jet from the hose. Far below him the works of the clock rattled. It struck two! Two strokes! Two! And he stood and did not plunge headlong into space. How different in reality from what his feverish forebodings had threatened! In his brooding, waking dreams he had stood at the top of the tower, it had struck two, a great dizziness had come over him and dragged him down, to expiate a dark crime. But now he stood there in reality, the ladder swayed in the storm, snowdust flurried about him, lightning darted around him, the

sheet of snow on roofs, mountains and valley shimmered bright with each gleaming flash, it struck two below him, the tone of the bells, rent by the storm, wailed in the tumult, and he stood, stood free from all dizziness and did not fall. He knew that no guilt was attached to him, he had done his duty where thousands would have failed, he had saved the town which he loved with all his soul, from a terrible danger. But there was no vainglory in his heart, only a prayer of thanksgiving. His thoughts were not of the people who would praise him, but of those who would breathe freely again, of the misery that had been prevented, of the happiness that would be preserved. For the first time in many months he felt what it means to breathe freely. This night had brought gladness to him. With joy he looked back on the vow that he had made. To men like Apollonius, the highest blessing of a good deed is that it gives courage for new good deeds.

The throng below still cried: "Where? Where?" and crowded close together when the second stroke occurred. They stood for a moment paralyzed with fear. "Thank the Lord! It was harmless this time too!" exclaimed one voice. "No! No! It is burning. God have mercy!" replied others; sharp eyes saw in the darkness that appeared between the flashes little blue flames leaping like candles over the slate. These flames sought one another and when they found one another they blazed up convulsively into a larger flame, then fled dancingly away and shivered into pieces. The storm bent and blew them here and there; sometimes they seemed to die out, but suddenly they leaped up brighter than ever. They were growing, one could see that, but their growth was not rapid. Much more rapid and vehement was the new cry of fire that swelled through the town. In anxious suspense the gaze of all was riveted on the one small spot. "Help! Now! It can still be put out!" And again through storm and thunder sounded the agonized cry: "Nettenmair! Where is Nettenmair?" A voice called, "He is in the tower." All hearts felt relief when they heard that. And most of them did not know him, even among those who called out for him, and those who did not know him cried out loudest. In moments of general helplessness the crowd clings to a name, to a mere word. Some thus thrust from themselves the calls of conscience which demanded personal effort, personal risk, and these are they who are most merciless in their judgment of the helper if he is unable to help. The rest are happy if they can delude themselves for the moment. "What could he do?" cried one. "Help! Rescue!" cried others. "Even if one had wings, he would not dare the ascent in such a storm." "Nettenmair surely would." In the depths of their hearts, however, even the most confident knew that he would not. The thought that the flame could be extinguished if it were only accessible aggravated the general spirit of uneasiness. It prevented that dull submission which the inevitable with gentle severity compels. When the door opened and the suspended ladder became visible, and it seemed as if somebody were going to dare the deed, the effect on the crowd was as terrifying as the stroke itself had been. And the ladder hung and swayed in the air with the man who was climbing upward, enveloped in snow, encircled by lightning; the ladder that seemed cut from a splinter swinging with the man like a bell in the awful heights. Every one held his breath. The same expression of horror stared from hundreds of unlike faces at the man on high. None believed in the daring feat--and yet they saw the man who dared. It was like something that was at the same time dream and reality. Nobody believed in it, and yet each one stood himself on the ladder while under him swung the light splinter in storm and lightning and thunder, high between heaven and earth. And again they stood below on the firm earth and looked upward; and yet if

the man should fall it would be they who fell. The people on the firm ground held convulsively to their own hands, to their canes, to their clothes, that they might not fall from the terrible height. They stood secure, and yet at the same time they hung over the abyss of death, for years, for a lifetime; the past had never been; and yet they had only been hanging on high for a moment. They forgot the peril to the town and their own, in the peril of the man above them whose peril was their own. They saw that the fire was quenched, the danger to the town was over; they knew it as in a dream when one knows that he dreams; it was a mere thought without a living meaning. Only when the man had climbed down the ladder, had disappeared into the door and drawn the ladder after him, only when the people no longer clung to their own hands, canes, and clothes, only then did admiration battle with anxiety, only then did the exultant cry: "Hurrah! Brave fellow!" become smothered in the lament: "He is lost!" A trembling old voice began to sing: "Now thank we all our God!" When the aged man came to the line: "Who has protected us," a great consciousness seemed to sweep over the people of what might have been lost and what had been rescued for them. Absolute strangers fell into one another's arms, each embraced in his neighbor the loved ones whom he might have lost and who had been saved. All united in the singing of the hymn; the sounds of thanksgiving swelled through the whole town, soared over the streets and squares where the people stood who had feared to go closer, entered the houses, penetrated into the innermost chambers, rose to the remotest garrets. The sick man in his lonely bed, the old man in the chair where weakness had bound him, little children who did not know the meaning of the hymn or of the danger that had been averted, all joined in the song of praise. The town was one great church, and storm and thunder the giant organ. Again the cry was heard: "Nettenmair! Where is Nettenmair? Where is our helper? Where is our rescuer? Where is the brave fellow? Where is the noble man?" Wind and storm were forgotten. Everybody pushed forward, looking for the man who was being called on all sides. The tower of St. George's was besieged. The carpenter appeared, saying that Nettenmair had lain down in the watchman's room to rest for a few moments. The carpenter was beset with questions. Had he been injured at all? Would his health suffer? The carpenter could tell nothing except that Nettenmair had done more than a man is capable of doing in the ordinary course of events. In such supreme moments man is a different being; later he marvels himself at the power he displayed. But everything must be paid for. It would not surprise the carpenter if, after the tremendous exertion, Nettenmair should sleep for three days and nights at a stretch. The people seemed prepared to wait on the steps for that length of time, in order to see the brave man as soon as he waked. In the meantime a prominent man had begun to take up a collection in the market-place. Money, of course, could not reward such a deed as had been performed that day; but at least they could show their gratitude to the courageous doer. Carried away by the impulse of the moment, acknowledged misers hastened home to fetch their contribution, regardless of the fact that in an hour they would regret having done so. Not many of the well-to-do refused to contribute, all the poor gave their share. The collector was astonished at the rich success of his efforts.

Apollonius rested for half an hour. Before he lay down he saw that the lanterns were carefully put out. He closed the door, and had the sprinkler emptied and the hose brought into the watchman's room so that the frost could do no harm to them. He was able to stand no longer. The councilman, who had come to him in the meantime, had to

compel him almost with force, to go down to the watchman's room. His friend then bolted the door, made Apollonius take off his frozen clothes, and sat down like a mother at his bedside. Apollonius could not sleep, but the old man did not allow him to speak. He had brought rum and sugar with him, and there was hot water enough; but Apollonius, who had never drunk anything strong, declined the grog with thanks. In the meantime the workman had brought clothes. Apollonius assured them that he felt perfectly himself again but that he felt a hesitancy about getting out of bed. Laughingly the old man gave him his clothes. Apollonius had undressed under the bedclothes and in the same way he now dressed beneath them. The councilman turned his back to him and looked laughingly out of the window at storm and lightning; whether his smiles were over Apollonius' bashfulness or from pure joy at having his favorite again he did not know. He had often regretted having remained a bachelor, now he was almost glad. He had a son at any rate, and as good a one as a father could wish.

Trouble now began for Apollonius. He was torn from arm to arm; even women of prominence kissed and embraced him. His hands were so shaken and squeezed that for three days he had no feeling in them. He did not lose, however, his naturally noble bearing. His modest, blushing embarrassment in the face of so much enthusiastic thanks and admiring praise, became him as well as his brave, determined conduct in time of danger. Those who did not already know him were amazed; they had formed a very different conception of him: dark, bold-eyed, audacious, overflowing with spirits, in fact almost wild. Still they had to acknowledge that his appearance was not at variance with his deed. His maidenly blushes lent an added charm to the tall manly figure, and the modest embarrassment of his honest face, which seemed in no way to realize what he had done, was very winning; his gentle thoughtfulness and quiet simplicity placed his achievement in a still more pleasing light, for it was plainly to be seen that vanity and ambition had played no part in it.

* * * * *

We pass now in spirit over a period of three decades and return to the man with whom we were occupied at the beginning of our tale. We left him in the arbor of his little garden. The bells of St. George's called the dwellers of the town to morning service; they sounded also in the garden behind the house with the green shutters. There he sits every Sunday at this time. When the bells call to afternoon service he is seen wending his way to church with his silver-headed cane in his hand. Nobody sees the old gentleman without greeting him with reverence. It has been nearly thirty years, but there are still people who lived through that remarkable night. They can tell those who do not know what the man with the silver-headed cane did for the town on that night. And to what he set on foot the next day the stones themselves bear witness. Just outside of the town, on the road to Brambach, not far from the rifle-range there rises a stately building with a pleasant garden. It is the new town hospital. Every stranger who goes to it learns that its conception originated with Herr Nettenmair. He also has to listen to the entire story of that night, and of Herr Nettenmair's brave deed, who was then a young man; and how a collection was taken up for him, and how he gave this money to the town as a nucleus for the hospital, and how rich citizens, inspired by his example, donated and bequeathed until, after a number of years, an additional contribution from the town completed the sum necessary for the erection of the building.

When Herr Nettenmair returns from church he spends the rest of Sunday in his little room where he still lives; or he takes a walk to the slate quarry, which now belongs to him, or rather to his nephews. The fulfilment of the vow which he made to himself has continued to be the aim of his life. Everything that he has done he has done for his brother's family, he has considered himself only the administrator. If he happens to see a pretty little girl anywhere, he thinks of dear little dead Annie. His memory is as conscientious as he himself, for he always calls the child to him, strokes her hair, and it would be strange indeed if he did not find in the pocket of his blue coat something or other wrapped up in nice clean paper which he produces to bring forth a word of thanks from the little mouth. The child, however, cannot enjoy herself to the full until he has gone, for, in spite of his friendliness, his tall figure has something so grave and solemn about it that her joy is usually swallowed up in respect. During the week Herr Nettenmair sits over his books and letters, or superintends the packing and unpacking, the chipping and sorting of the slate. Punctually at twelve o'clock he has his dinner in his room, punctually at six his evening meal; this takes a quarter of an hour. Then, rubbing his hand gently over the old sofa, he rises and, if it is summer time, exercises for three-quarters of an hour in his garden. On the stroke of a quarter to one and a quarter to seven he latches the door behind him. On Sunday it is different; then he sits for a whole hour in the arbor and gazes up at the church roof of St. George's. There is little for us to tell; the reader knows all that goes on in Nettenmair's soul, and what he reads from the church tower. The reader also knows to whom the aged but still beautiful face belongs that sometimes peers through the trellised arbor at the old man. The lock which is now white was dark brown and full, falling over an unwrinkled forehead, the cheeks glowed with youthful strength, the lips were red and smiling and the blue eyes gleamed when she hastened to meet the man who had rescued the town. He kissed her gently on the brow and called her "Sister." She understood what he meant. Even at that time she looked up to the man with the submission, nay, the devotion with which she now hangs on his every word; but at that time there was another feeling as well that showed itself in her open countenance.

The old gentleman flew into a rage when Apollonius told him of his determination not to marry. He gave his son his choice between considering the honor of the family or returning to Cologne. Apollonius' heart found it harder than his head to convince his father that it devolved upon him alone to uphold the honor of the family and that he must remain. He knew that he could keep his word only by remaining true to his determination. But he could not tell his father this, for if the old man should discover the true relation existing between the two young people he would insist upon the marriage more strongly than ever. Then he would also have to tell him how his brother had met his death, and that would cause his father unnecessary pain. He did not realize that his father in his heart was convinced that his brother had taken his own life. The two men, so closely related, did not understand each other. Apollonius assumed that his father had the same inward sense of honor which he himself possessed; and the father saw in his son's refusal and in his argument of having to maintain the position of the family, nothing but the old obstinacy contending that his presence was indispensable and not even taking the trouble to conceal itself--he thought that in his son's eyes he was nothing but a blind, helpless old man. And what caused and furthered

their misunderstanding was reserve, that family trait which they held in common. On the same morning a delegation had tendered Apollonius the thanks of the town and its most prominent citizens had vied with each other in giving tokens of esteem and respect. This was cause enough to arouse arrogance in an ambitious soul, and cause enough for the old gentleman, who considered that Apollonius had such a soul, to believe in this arrogance. The old gentleman had to admit that his son was indispensable and dared assert neither right nor might against him. The emotion and mental exertion on the day before the death of his eldest son had undermined his strength; he collapsed entirely now and became each day queerer and more sensitive. He no longer demanded subserviency from Apollonius; he found a certain self-tormenting pleasure in reproaching his son with unfilial conduct, and in continually giving expression to his bitter regret that such an industrious son should have to put up with so much from an overbearing old father who was not, and never could be, anything any more. At the same time he rejoiced in his eccentric fashion over the industry of his son, the growing honor and increasing fortunes of his house. He lived to see the purchase of the slate quarry which Apollonius had previously leased. The son endured his father's eccentricities with the same loving, untiring patience which he had exhibited toward his brother. He lived only in the thought of fulfilling as completely as lay within his power the vow that he had made to himself, and in this vow he had included his father. The success of his work gave him strength to bear all little annoyances with cheerfulness.

On the day after the winter night's storm he had told the old building inspector the whole story of his inner life. The councilman, who till the day of his death clung to Apollonius with all his soul, remained the latter's only companion, as he was the only person with whom he could hold intimate intercourse without being untrue to his own nature.

For several days after the storm Apollonius had to lie in bed. A burning fever had taken hold of him. At first the physician pronounced his illness a very serious one, but in reality it was only the body fighting triumphant battle against the general suffering which had found mental absolution in the resolve of that night. The sympathy of the town manifested itself in various touching ways. The old councilman and Valentine were his nurses. The one whom nature through love and gratitude had determined upon as the best nurse for the sick man, Apollonius did not call to his bed, and she dared not go uncalled. Throughout his illness, however, she took up her abode in the little trellised arbor and remained there so as to be as near to him as possible. When he slept the old councilman beckoned to her to enter. Then she stood with folded hands behind the screen at the foot of his bed and accompanied his every breath with anxiety and hope. Unconsciously her gentle breathing regulated itself by his. For hours she stood looking through a crack in the screen at the sick man. He knew nothing of her presence, and yet the inspector could see how his sleep became easier, his face more smiling. There was no bottle from which he took his medicine which, without his knowing it, he did not receive from her hand, no plaster, no application which she had not prepared; no cloth, no cover touched him which she had not warmed on her breast, kissed with her loving lips. When he talked with the councilman about her, she saw that he was more anxious concerning her than himself; when he sent friendly, comforting messages to her she trembled behind the screen with joy. She rested but little; and when the cold night wind blew flakes of snow through the loose blinds onto

her warm face, when her own breath, frozen on the pillow, touched icily throat, chin and bosom, she was happy in the thought that she was allowed to suffer something for him who had suffered all for her. In those nights sacred love conquered earthly love in her; out of the pain of sweet, disappointed desire which yearned to possess, arose his image surrounded once more by that halo of unattainable glory in which she had known him of yore.

Apollonius recovered quickly. And now began the joint life of these two people. They saw each other but seldom. He lived in his little room by himself. Valentine brought him his meals, as always. The children were often with him. If the two happened to meet, he greeted her with friendly reserve and she returned his greeting. If they had anything to discuss together it happened each time as if by chance that either the maid was present or the children and Valentine. But no day passed without some silent token of courteous respect. On Sundays, when he came in from his garden, he brought a bouquet of flowers with him which Valentine then presented to her. He could have made a brilliant marriage, gallant lovers sued for her hand; but he repelled all offers and she all suitors. So passed days, weeks, months, years, decades. The old gentleman died and was buried. The good councilman followed, and then Valentine. The children grew to be youths. The unruly lock over the widow's brow, Apollonius' corkscrew-curl, turned gray; the children became men, strong and gentle like their teacher and master; lock and curl were silver white; the life of the two remained the same.

Now the reader knows all the past which the old man, sitting in his arbor, reads from St. George's tower when the bells call for Sunday morning service. Today he looks forward into the future, rather than backward into the past. For his older nephew is soon to lead Anna Wohlig's daughter to the altar of St. George's, and then home; not to the house with the green shutters, however, but to the big house close by. The pink-tinted house is too small for the growing business--and besides the new household would not find room there; Herr Nettenmair has bought the big house across the way. The youngest nephew is going to Cologne. The old cousin who did so much for Apollonius has been dead for many years; also the son has died, leaving his large business to his only child who is the betrothed of Fritz Nettenmair's younger son. There will be a double wedding at St. George's. The two old people will then live alone in the house with the green shutters. For a long time the old gentleman has wanted to hand over the business to his nephews, but the young men have steadfastly refused till now. The older nephew insists that his uncle shall remain at the head; the old gentleman does not wish to do so. A part of the councilman's estate, which he inherited, he has reserved for himself for his lifetime; everything else, and that is by no means little, for Herr Nettenmair is considered a rich man, he will give over to his nephews; what he has reserved for himself will go at his death to the new town hospital. He has made good his word; he will go down to his grave with unsullied name.

The future bride protests against accepting all that her mother-in-law wants to give her. There is but one thing that the old lady wishes to keep for herself; it is a little tin box with a withered flower, and it lies with her Bible and hymn-book, as sacred to the owner as these.

The bells still call. The roses on the tall bushes are fragrant as of yore; a white-throat sits on the bush beneath the old pear-tree and

sings; a gentle breeze steals through the garden and even the box around the circular beds rustles its dark leaves. The old gentleman looks musingly at the tower of St. George's; the beautiful matron's face peers through the trellis at him. The bells call it, the white-throat sings it, the roses breathe it, the gentle breeze whispers it, the beautiful aged faces speak it, from the tower roof of St. George's you may read it: "Men tell of the happiness and unhappiness that heaven brings them! What men call happiness and unhappiness is but the raw material. It lies within man himself to mold that material as he will. It is not heaven that brings happiness; man prepares happiness for himself, and raises heaven in his own breast. Man need take no care to go to heaven, if heaven but comes to him. Who carries not heaven within himself may search in vain for it through all the universe. Be guided by reason, but encroach not upon the sacred bounds of feeling. Turn not disapprovingly from the world as it is, but seek to be just to it, and it will be just to thee. In this sense let thy path be

BETWEEN HEAVEN AND EARTH."

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