

Margery — Volume 05 eBook

Margery — Volume 05 by Georg Ebers

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CHAPTER I.

The Imperial Diet in Nuremberg!—the Imperial Advent!

The next day their Majesties were to enter into the town, and with them my Hans.

A messenger had brought the tidings, and now we must use all diligence; Ann and Elsa and I, with one and twenty more, had been chosen among all the daughters of the worshipful gentlemen of the council, to go forth to greet the Emperor and Empress with flowers and a discourse. This Ursula was to speak, by reason that she was mistress of all such arts; likewise was she by birth the chiefest of us all, inasmuch as that her late departed mother was daughter to the great Reynmar, lord of Sulzbach. Nor need Ann and I seek far for the flowers. The Hallers' garden had not its like in all Nuremberg, and my dear parents-in-law had promised that we should pluck all we needed for our posies.

Or ever I mounted my horse, I had tidings that Herdegen and Junker Henning had, last evening, come to bitter strife, nay, well-nigh to bloodshed; for that when my brother had sung the ditty in praise of one Elselein and the other had called upon him to put in the name of Ann, Herdegen had cried: "An if you mean red-haired Ann, the tapster wench at the Blue Pike, well and good!" Whereupon the Junker sprang up and flung the tankard he had just emptied at Herdegen's head. Herdegen had nimbly ducked, and had rushed on the drunken fellow sword in hand; but Duke Rumpold had put a word in, and by this morning Junker Henning seemed to have forgotten the matter. In Brandenburg, verily, such frays were common at the drinking-bouts of the lords and gentlemen, and by dawn all offence given over-night in their cups was wiped out of mind.

My brother lodged again at our grand-uncle's, while the Junker dwelt at the Waldstromer's townhouse. My Lord Duke found quarters at the Hallerhof, and his Highness the Prince Elector, and Archbishop Conrad of Mainz likewise lodged there, with a great following. Cousin Maud had made ready to welcome the Margrave of Baden and the Count von Henneberg under our roof. The upper floor of the Pernhart's house was given up to his Eminence Cardinal Branda, the most steadfast friend at Rome of Master Ulman's brother the bishop. His Holiness the Pope had sent that right-reverend prelate as his legate to the assembly, and he presently celebrated mass with great dignity in the presence of their Majesties and of the assembled lords and princes.

To this day my memory is right good in all ways; and of what followed on these events much is yet as clear and plain in my mind as though I saw and heard it all at this present time; albeit I, an old woman, would fain hide my face in my hands and weep thereat. For, notwithstanding there were certain hours in those days which brought me sweet love-making, and others of sheer mirth and vanity, yet is the spirit of man so tempered that, when great sorrow follows hard on the greatest joy it sufficeth to darken it wholly.

And thus we may liken heaviness of heart to the chiming of bells, which hurts the ear if they sound over near, but at a distance make a sweet and devout music. Now, in sooth, inasmuch as I must make record of the deepest woe of my life, the brazen toll is a sad one, and the long-healed wounds ache afresh.

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Those two months of the Imperial Diet! They lie behind me like distant hills. I can no more discern them apart, albeit certain landmarks, as it were, stand forth plainly to be seen, like the church-tower, the windmill, and the old oak on the ridge on the horizon.

How the night sped after our return from the forest and the morning next after—the 27th of July in the year of our Lord 1422—I can no longer call to mind; but I can see myself now as, the afternoon of that day, I set forth with Ann, attired in silk and lace—all white and new from head to foot, as it were for a wedding—to go to the open place between St. James' Church and the German House, within the Spital Gate. Whichever way we looked, behold flowers, green garlands, hangings, pennons, and banners; it was as though all the gardens in Franconia had been stripped of their blossoms. Never had such a brave show been seen, and with every breath we drank in the odors of the leaves and flowers which were already withering in the July sunshine. A finer Saint Pantaloön's day I never remember; the very sky seemed to share the city's gladness and was fair to see, in spotless blue. A light wind assuaged the waxing heat, and helped the flags and banners to unfurl: Our fine churches were decked all over and about with garlands, boughs, and banners, and meseemed were like happy brides awaiting their marriage in holiday array. The market-place was a scene of high festival, the beautiful fountain was a mighty bower of flowers, the triumphal arches, methought, were such as the gods of wood and garden might have joined to raise. Every balcony was richly hung, and even the crested gables and the turrets on the roofs displayed some bravery. All, so far as eye could see, was motley-hued and spick and span for brightness. The tiniest pane in the topmost dormer-window glittered without a spot. The poorest were clad in costly finery; the patrician folk were in the dress of knights and nobles; every craftsman was arrayed as though he were a councillor, every squire like his lord. You would have weened that day that there were none but rich folk in Nuremberg. The maidens' pearl chaplets gleamed in the sun, and the golden jewels in their fur bonnets; and what did their mothers care for the heat as they went to and fro to display the costly fur turbans which crowned their heads as it were with a glory of fur? How carefully had they dressed the little ones! They were to see the Emperor and Empress with their own eyes, and their Majesties might even, by good hap, see them!

Presently we saw the procession of the guilds with their devices and banners; never had they come forth in such goodly bravery. They were to form in ranks, on each side of the streets and the highway, a long space outside the gate.

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At last it was nigh the hour when their Majesties should arrive. We maids had all assembled. Albeit we had agreed all to be clad in white, Ursula had decked her head-gear with Ostrich feathers of rose-pink and sky-blue; right costly plumes they were, but over many. Now would she look into her parchment scroll, and for us she had brief words and few. The nosegay which her servant in scarlet livery bore in his hand was a mighty fine one; and Akusch and a gardener's boy presently came up with the posies culled for Ann and me in the Hallers' garden. We, and many another maid, clasped our hands in sheer delight, but Ursula cast a look on them which might, if it could, have robbed the roses and Eastern lilies of their sweetness.

The Emperor, it was said, would keep to the hour fixed on; then all the bells began to ring. I knew them all well, and one I liked best of all; the Benedicta in Saint Sebalds Church, which had been cast by old Master Grunewald, Master Pernhart's closest friend. Their brazen voices stirred my soul and heart, and presently the cannon in the citadel and on the walls rattled out a thundering welcome to the Emperor, rending the summer air. My heart beat higher and faster. But suddenly I meseemed that all the bravery of the town and the holiday weed of the folks, the chiming of bells and the roaring of cannon were not meant to do honor to the Emperor, but only to my one true love who was coming in his train.

All my thoughts and hopes were set on him. And when the town-pipers struck up with trumpets and kettledrums, bagpipes and horns, when the far-away muttering and roll of voices swelled to a roaring outcry and an uproarious shout, when from every mouth at every window the cry rose: "They are coming!"—yet did I not gaze at their Majesties, to whom the day and festival belonged, but only sought him who was mine—my own.

There they are! close before us.—The Emperor and his noble wife, Queen Barbara, the still goodly daughter of the great Hungarian Count of Cilly.

Aye! and he looks the man to rule six realms; worthy to stand at the head of the great German nation. He might be known among a thousand for an Emperor, and the son of an Emperor! How straight he sits in his saddle, how youthful yet is the fire in his eye, albeit he has past his fiftieth birthday! High spirit and contentment in his look; and meseems he has forgotten that he ever summoned the Diet to meet at Ratisbon and is entering the gates of Nuremberg against his will, by reason that the Electors and German princes have chosen to assemble there. His wife likewise is of noble mien, and she rides a white palfrey which, as she draws rein, strives to turn its pink nostrils to greet the bay horse on which her lord is mounted.

Yet do my eyes not linger long on the lordly pair; they wander down the long train of Knights wherein he is coming, though among the last. For a moment they rest on the stalwart forms of the Hungarian nobles, all blazing with jewels even to the harness of the steeds; and glance unheedingly at the Electors and Princes, the Dukes, Counts and Knights—all in velvet and silk, gold and silver; at the purple and scarlet of the prelates; at



the solemn black with gold chains of the town councillors; on and beyond all the magnificent train which has come with his Majesty from Hungary or gone forth to meet him.

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Hereupon Ursula steps forth to speak the address; but sooner may a man hear a cricket in a thunderstorm than a maid's voice amid that pealing of bells and shouting and cries of welcome. Meseems verily as though the fluttering handkerchiefs, the flying pennons, and the caps waved in the air had found voice; and Ursula turns her head to this side and that as though seeking help.

Emperor Sigismund signs with his hand, and the two heralds who head the train uplift their trumpets with rich embroidered banners. A rattling blast procures silence: in a moment it is as though oil were poured on a surging sea. Men and guns are hushed; the only sounds to be heard are the brazen tongue of the bells, the whinnying of a horse, the dull mutter of men's voices in the far-off lanes and alleys, and the clear voice of a young maid.

Ursula made her speech, her voice so loud at the last that it might have seemed that the honeyed verses were words of reproof. The imperial pair gave each other a glance expressing surprise rather than pleasure, and vouchsafed a few words of thanks to the speaker. His Majesty spoke in German; but in his Bohemian home and Hungarian Kingdom he had caught the trick of a sharper accent than ours.

A chamberlain now gave the signal, and we maidens all went forth towards our Sovereign lord and lady. Two and two—Tucher and Schilrstab—Groland and Stromer; and the sixth couple were Ann and I—Ann as the daughter of a member of the council—and my godfather it was, besides her sweet face, who had done most to get her chosen.

Noble youths clad as pages in velvet and silks had received the flowers offered by the damsels; but as Ann and I stood forth, the Emperor and Empress looked down on us. I could see that they gazed upon us graciously, and heard them speak together in a language I knew not; and Porro, the King's fool—and I say the King's, inasmuch as it was not till later that Sigismund was crowned Emperor at Rome, and by the same token it was at that time that my Hans' brothers, Paul and Erhart, were dubbed Knights—Porro, who rode at his lord's side on a piebald pony spotted black and yellow, cried out: "May we all be turned into drones, Nunkey, if the flowers which have given this town the name of the Bee-garden are not of the same kith and kin as these!"

And he pointed to us; whereupon the King asked him whether he meant the damsels or the posies. But the jester, rolling on his nag after a merry fashion, till the bells in his cap rang again, answered him: "Nay, Nunkey, would you tempt a Christian to walk on the ice? An if I say the damsels, I shall get into trouble by reason of your strict morality; but if I say the posies, I shall peril my poor soul's health by a foul lie."

"Then choose thee another shape," quoth the Queen, "for I fear lest the bees should take thee for a stinging wasp, Porro."

“True, by my troth,” said the fool, thinking. “Since Eve fell into sin, women’s counsel is often the best. You, Nunkey, shall be turned into a butterfly, and not into a drone, and grace the flowers as you flutter round them.”

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And he waved his arms as they were wings and rode round about us on his pony with right merry demeanor, like a moth fluttering over us. Ann looked down, reddening for shame, and the blood rose to my cheeks likewise for maiden shyness; nevertheless I heard the King's deep, outlandish tones, and his noble wife's pleasant voice, and they lauded our posies and made enquiry as to our names, and straitly enjoined Ann and me not to fail of appearing at every dance and banquet; and I remember that we made answer with seemly modesty till the King's grand-master came up and so ended our discourse.

And I fancy I can see the multitude coming on; the motley hues of velvet and silk, the housings and trappings of the horses, the bright sheen of polished metal, and the sparkle of cut gems dazzle my eyes, I ween, to this day. But on a sudden it all fades into dimness; the cries and voices, the bells, the neighing, the crash and clatter are silent—for he is come. He waves his hand, more goodly, more truly mine and dearer to my heart than ever. But not here do we truly meet again; that joy is to come later in his own garden.

That garden could already tell a tale of two happy human creatures, and of hours of the purest bliss ever vouchsafed to two young hearts; but what thereafter befell I remember as bright, hot, summer days, full of mirth and play-acting, of tourneys and courtly sports, of music and song, dancing and pleasuring. The gracious favor of the King and Queen and the presence of many princes ceased not to grace it, and went to our brain like heady wine. Things that had hitherto seemed impossible now came true. Out of sheer joy in those intoxicating pleasures, and for the sake of the manifold demands that came upon us in these over-busy days, we forgot those nearest and dearest to our hearts. Yet never was I given to self-seeking, neither before nor since that time.

Ann's beguiling of the Junker, the homage paid to her by all, even the highest, Herdegen's seething ire, his strivings to win back the favor of the maid he had slighted, his strange and various and high-handed demeanor, his shameless ways with Ursula, to whom he paid great court when my grand-uncle was present, albeit at other times he would cast dark glances at her as if she were a foe—all this glides past me as in a mist, and concerning me but little. Then, in the midst of this turmoil and magnificence, this love-making and royal grace, now and again meseemed I was suddenly alone and forlorn; even at the tourney or dance; nay, even when the King and Queen would vouchsafe to discourse with me, I would be filled with longing for peace and silent hours—notwithstanding that the mighty Sovereign himself took pleasure in questioning me and moving me to those quick replies whereof I never found any lack. Queen Barbara would many a time bid me to her chamber, and keep me with her for hours; sometimes would Ann also be bidden, and she bestowed on us both many costly jewels.

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Then, no sooner had we quitted the castle, where their Majesties lodged, than we must think of our own noble guests; for Markgraf Bernhard of Baden, who was quartered on us, would often ask for me, and Cardinal Branda would desire Ann to attend him. The larger half of our days was given to arranging our persons, and while Cousin Maud and Susan would dress me I was already thinking of making ready the weed, the ribbons, and the feathers needed for the next day. My Hans was now a Knight. The same honor was promised to Herdegen—honor on honor, pleasure on pleasure, bravery and display! In the stead of our old sun twenty, meseemed, were blazing in the heavens. Many a time it was as though my breath came so lightly that I could float on air, and then again a nightmare load oppressed me. Even through the night, in my very dreams, the sounds of music and singing ceased not; but when I awoke the question would arise: “To what end is this?”

Hans held the helm, and was ever the same, thoughtful yet truly loving. Also he never forgot to keep a lookout for the surety of the bark, and if the pace seemed too great, or he saw rocks ahead, he did his part and likewise guarded me with faithful care from heedless demeanor or over-weariness. Margery the rash, who was wanted everywhere, and was at all times in the foremost rank, at the behest of the King and Queen, did her devoir in all points and nought befell which could hurt or grieve her—and she knew full well whom she had to thank for that.

Likewise I discerned with joy that my lover kept the Junker’s ardors in check, for he would fain have courted Ann as hotly as though he were secure of her love; and Hans called upon my brother Herdegen to quit himself as a man should and make an end of this double game by choosing either Ann or Ursula, once for all.

In the forest Uncle Conrad had bidden this noble company to the Lodge. After the hunt was over we went forth once more to the garden of Martin the bee-keeper, by reason that Duke Ernest of Austria, and Count Friedrich of Meissen, and my Lord Bishop of Lausanne, and other of the noble lords, desired to see somewhat of the far-famed bee-keeping huts in our Lorenzer-Wald. My uncle himself led the way, and Herdegen helped him do the honors.

Presently, as he over-hastily opened a hive, some bees stung his hand badly; I ran to him and drew the stings out. Ann was close by me, and Herdegen tried to meet her eyes, and sang in a low voice a verse of a song, which sounded sad indeed and strange, somewhat thus:

“Augustho pirlin pcodyas.”

Whereupon Ann asked of him in what tongue he spoke; for it was not known to her. He, however, replied that of a certainty it was known to her, and when she looked at him, doubtful yet, he laughed bitterly and said that he could but be well-content if she had

forgotten the sound of those words, inasmuch as to him they were bound up with the first great sorrow he had known.

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I saw that she was ill-at-ease; but as she turned away he held her back to put the words into German, saying, in so dull and low a voice that I scarce could hear him, while he stirred up the earth with the point of his sword, purposing to lay some on his swollen hand.

“A froward bee hath stung my hand;
Mother Earth will heal the smart.
But when I lie beneath the turf,
Say, Will she heal my broken heart?”

Then I saw that Ann turned pale as she said somewhat stiffly: “There are other remedies for you against even the worst!” and he replied: “But yours, Ann, work the best cure.”

By this time she was herself again, and answered as though she cared not: “I learnt them from a skilled master.—But in what tongue is your song, Junker Schopper, and who taught you that?”

To which he hastily answered: “A swarthy wench of gipsy race.”

And she, taking courage, said: “One peradventure whom you erewhile met in the forest here?” Herdegen shook his curly head, and his eye flashed lovingly as he spoke: “No, Ann, and by all the Saints it is not so! It was of a gipsy mother that I learnt it; she sang it to a man in despair—in despair for your sake, Ann—in the forest of Fontainebleau.”

Whereupon Ann shook her head and strove to speak lightly as she said “Despair! Are you not like the man in the fable, who deemed that he was burnt whereas he had thrust another into the fire? The cap fits, methinks, Junker Schopper.”

He replied sadly, and there was true grief in his voice: “Is a hard jest all you have to give me now?” quoth he, “Nay, then, tell me plainly, Ann, if there is no hope for me more.”

“None,” said she, firm and hard. But she forth with added more gently. “None, Herdegen, none at all so long as a single thread remains unbroken which binds you to Ursula.”

On this he stepped close up to her and cried in great emotion: “She, she! Aye, she hath indeed cast her devil’s tangle of gold about me to ensnare all that is vain and base in me; but she has no more room in my heart than those bees have. And if you—if my good angel will but be mine again I will cry ‘apage’—I tear her toils asunder.”

He ceased, for certain ladies and gentlemen came nigh, and foremost of them Ursula; aye, and I can see her now drawing off her glove and stooping to gather up some earth to lay on the burning hand of the man whom in truth she loved, while he strove to



forestall her and not to accept such service. That night we stayed at the lodge, and Ursula again had the chamber next to ours; and again I heard her appealing to her Saints, while Ann poured out to me her overflowing heart in a low whisper, and confessed to me, now crying and now laughing, how much she had endured, and how that she was beginning to hope once more.

CHAPTER II.

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Our grand-uncle and guardian, the old knight Im Hoff, had ever, so long as I could remember, demeaned himself as a penitent, spending his nights, and not sleeping much, in a coffin, and giving the lion's share of his great revenues to pious works to open unto himself the gates of Heaven; but what a change was wrought in him by the Emperor's coming! This straight-backed and stiff necked man, who had never bowed his head save only in church and before the holy images of the saints, learnt now to stoop and bend. His bloodless face, which had long ceased to smile, was now the very home of smiles. His great house was filled, for there lodged Duke Ernst of Austria, the Hungarian Count of Gara—who through his wife was near of kin to the Emperor, and his Majesty's trusty secretary, Kaspar Slick, and all their people. And so soon as either of these came, a gleam as of starlight lighted up his old features, or, if it fell that the sovereign granted to him to attend him, it was broad sunshine that illumined it. And whereas the other gentlemen of the council, hereditary and elected, albeit they were ever ready to shake hands with a common workman, would stand face to face with their Majesties or the dukes and notables, upright and duly mindful of their own worth, my guardian would cast off his gravity and dignity both together; and verily we all knew full well to what end. He, who had been defrauded of his life's happiness by a Baron's daughter, yearned to move the King to raise him to the rank of Baron. He loaded the Secretary Slick with gifts and favors, and seeing that his Majesty was graciously pleased to smile on me, his ward, he would be at much pains to flatter me, calling me his "golden hair" or "Blue-eyes;" and enjoin it on me that I should make mention of him to the King as his Majesty's most faithful servant, ever ready for any sacrifice in his service, at the same time he asked with a grin how it would pleasure me to hear Herdegen called by the name and title of Baron von Schopper-Im Hoff?

Our own honest and honorable name I weened was good enough for us three; yet, for my brother's sake and for Ann's, I held my peace, and took occasion while he was in so friendly a mood to urge him to release Herdegen, and grant him to choose another than Ursula. But how wroth he waxed, how hastily he put on the icy, forbidding bearing he was wont to wear, as he rated me for a wilful simpleton who would undo her brother's weal!

It was now St. Susannah's day—[August 11th]—We were bidden to the tourney. Duke Ernest of Austria had challenged Duke Kanthner of Oels in Silesia to meet him in the lists and, besides the glory to be gained, there was a prize of sixty and four gold pieces. Other knights also were to joust in the ring.

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Queen Barbara, of her grace, had bidden me attend with her ladies. At the jousting-place I found Ann; her mother had remained at home by reason that the old mother was sick. My faithful Uncle Christian Pfinzing, who played the host to the Emperor and Empress at the Castle as representing the town council, had brought his "dear watchman" hither and placed her in the keeping of certain motherly dames. Presently, seeing a moment when she might speak with me, Ann said in my ear: "I will end this sport, Margery; I can no longer endure it. He hath sworn to renounce all and everything that may keep us apart!" There was no time for more. Each one had to take his seat. As yet their Majesties were not come, and there was time to gaze about.

The lists were in the midst of the market-place. The benches were decked with hangings, the lords and ladies who filled them, the feathers waving, the sparkle of jewels, the glitter of gold and silver, the sheen of silk and velvet, the throng of common folk, head over head in the topmost places, the music and uproar, nay, the very savor of the horses dwell still in my mind; yet far be it from me to write of things well-known to most men.

Then my grand-uncle came forth. He had Ursula on his arm as he walked through the gate-way into the lists and across the sanded ring to his seat on the far side. This was in truth forbidden, but the unabashed old man defied the rules, and as for Ursula she was well pleased to be gazed at. The old knight was smiling; how stately was his mien, and how well the silver breast plate beseemed him, with the golden lion rampant of the Im Hoffs! That helmet and breastplate had been forged for his special use of the finest silver and gold plate, and were better fit to turn the point of my pen-knife than that of sword and lance. Yet many an one admired the stalwart gait of the old man in his heavy harness. Even Tetzels dull face was less dull than its wont, and Ursula's eyes sparkled as though her knight had carried off the prize.

Presently my grand-uncle saw where I was sitting, and waved and bowed to me as though he had some good tidings to give me. Tetzels did likewise, seeming like the old man's pale and creeping shadow. Ursula's triumphing eyes proclaimed that now she had indeed gained her end; the dullest wit might not miss her meaning. In spite of Ann, Herdegen had pledged his troth to Ursula. The lists and seats, meseemed, whirled round me in a maze, and scarce had they settled down again, as it were, when Cousin Maud sat down heavily in her place, and by her face made me aware that some great thing had befallen; for now and again she drew in her cheeks and pursed her lips as though she would fain blow out a light. When my eyes met hers she privily pointed with her fan to show me Herdegen and Ursula, and shrugged her shoulders so high that her big head with its great feathered turban sank between them. And if there was surging and wrath in her breast not less was there in mine. Howbeit I had to put on a guise of content, nay of gladness, for the Royal pair had bidden me to their side and it was my task to explain all they desired to learn.

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A sunny blue sky bent over the ground; albeit dark clouds came up from the west, and I found it hard to make fitting answer to their Majesties' questions.

While the horses were pawing and neighing, and the lances rattled on the shields, nay, even when the Dukes of Austria and Schleswig rushed on each other and the Austrian unhorsed his foe, I scarce looked on the jousting-place on which all other eyes were fixed as though held by chains and bonds. Mine were set on the spot where Ursula and Ann were sitting, and with them the young knight from Brandenburg, Sir Apitz of Rochow, and my brother Herdegen. Junker Henning had his part to play in the tournament. To Rochow the tourney was all in all; Herdegen gazed only at Ann. She, to be sure, made no return, but still he would fix his eyes on her and speak with her. Ursula had turned paler, and meseemed she had eyes only for him and his doings. What went forward in the pauses of the tilting I could not mark, inasmuch as my eyes and ears were their Majesties' alone.

Now, two more knights sprang forth. What cared I of what nation they were, what arms they bore and what they and their horses might do; I had somewhat else to think of. Ursula and I had long been at war, but to-day I felt nought but compassion for her: and indeed, on this very day, when she believed she had won the victory, she more needed pity than when she had so besought Heaven to grant her Herdegen's love, inasmuch as my brother sat whispering to Ann with his hand on his heart. And Ann herself had put away all false seeming; and while she gazed into her lover's eyes with soft passion, Ursula sat bending her fan as though she purposed to break it.

To think of Ursula as ruling in our house, and of Ann pining with heart sickness was cruel grief, and yet were these two things almost less hard to endure than the shameless flightiness and strange demeanor of my noble brother, the pride of my heart.

The town council had voted eight hundred gulden to King Sigismund, and four hundred to the Queen; two hundred and thirty to Porro the jester, and great gifts to many of the notables and knights as a free offering from the city; and now, in a pause in the jousting, his Majesty announced his great delight at the faithful, bountiful, and overflowing hand held out to him by his good town of Nuremberg, which had ever been dear to his late beloved father King Charles. And then he pointed to the gentlemen of the council, who made a goodly and reverend show indeed in their long flowing hair and beards, their dark velvet robes bordered with fine fur, and thin gold chains; and he spoke of their noble and honorable dealing. I heard him say that each one of them was to be respected as joint ruler with him over that which was his own, and likewise in greater matters. Each one was his equal in manly virtue, and the worthy peer of his Imperial self. Then he pointed out to the Queen certain noble and goodly heads, and it was my part to make known whatsoever I could tell of their possessions and their manner of trade. The Hallers were well known to him, and not alone my best beloved, inasmuch as they did great trading with his kingdom of Hungary; and he was well pleased to see my Hans with his father as one of the council.

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His gracious wife was pleased to compare the good order, and cleanness, and comfort of Nuremberg with the cities in their native country. Whereas she had already been into some of our best houses, and indeed into our own, she spoke well of the wealth, and art, and skill in all crafts of the Nuremberg folk, saying they had not their like in all the world so far as she knew. And then again she spoke her pleasure at the honorable seemliness of the councillors, and asked me many questions concerning this one and that, and, among the rest, concerning Master Ulman Pernhart. The royal pair marked, in one his noble brow, in another his long flowing hair, in a third his keen and shrewd eye, till presently King Sigismund asked his Fool, Porro, which of all the heads in the ranks opposite he might judge to be the wisest and weightiest. The jester's twinkling eyes looked along the rows of folk, and whereas they suddenly fell on little Dame Henneleinlein, the Honey-wife, who sat, as was her wont, with her head propped on her hands, he took the King's word up and answered in mock earnest: "Unless I am deceived it is that butter-cup queen, Nuncle, seeing that her head is so heavy that she is fain to hold it up with both hands."

And he pointed with his bauble to the old woman, who, as the bee-master's widow, had boldly thrust herself into the front rank with those of knight's degree; and there she sat, in a gown of bright yellow brocade which Cousin Maud had once given her, stretching her long neck and resting her head on her hands. The King and Queen, looking whither the Fool pointed, when they beheld a little old woman instead of a stately councillor, laughed aloud; but the jester bowed right humbly towards the dame, and, she, so soon as she marked that the eyes of his Majesty and his gracious lady were turned upon her, and that her paltry person was the object of their regard, fancied that I had peradventure named her as being Ann's cousin, or as the widow of the deceased bee-master who, long years ago, had led the Emperor Charles to see the bee-gardens, so she made reverence again and again, and meanwhile laid her head more and more on one side, ever leaning more heavily on her hand, till the King and Queen laughed louder than ever and many an one perceived what was doing. The cup-bearer and chamberlain drew long faces, and Porro at last ended the jest by greeting the old woman with such dumbshow as no one could think an honor. The cunning little woman saw now that she was being made game of, and whereas not their Majesties alone, but all the Court about them were holding their sides, and she saw that I was in their midst, she believed me to be at the bottom of their mischief, and cast at me such vengeful glances as warned me of evil in store.

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After this tourney there was to be a grand dance in the School of Arms, to which their Majesties were bidden with all the princes, knights, and notables of the Diet, and the patricians of the town. Next day, being Saint Clara's day, there would be a great feast at the Tetzels' house by reason that it was the name-day of Dame Clara, Ursula's grandmother, and the eldest of their kin. At this banquet Herdegen's betrothal was to be announced to all their friends and kindred—this my uncle whispered to me as he went off after the jousting to attend the King, who had sent for him. The old man had seen nought of Herdegen's doings with Ann, by reason that he and old Tetzal had both been seated on the same side of the lists, and the tall helmets and feathers had hidden the young folks from his sight. So assurance and contentment even yet beamed in his eye.

The tourney had lasted a long time. I scarce had time enough to change my weed for the dance. Till this day I had sported like a fish in this torrent of turmoil and pleasure; but to-day I was weary. My body was in pain with my spirit, and I would fain have staid at home; but I minded me of the Queen who, albeit she was so much older, and was watched by all—every one expecting that she should be gracious—in her heavy royal array, went through all this of which I was so weary.

Meanwhile a great storm had burst upon us and passed over; all creatures were refreshed, and I likewise uplifted my head and breathed more freely. The fencing school—a great square chamber, as it is to this day, with places all round for the folk to look on—was lighted up as bright as day. My lover and I, now in right good heart once more, paced through the Polish dance led by the King and Queen. Ann's mother had been compelled to stay at home, to tend the master's old mother, and my friend had come under Cousin Maud's protection. She was led out to dance by Junker Henning; his fellow country-man, Sir Apitz von Rochow, walked with Ursula and courted her with unfailing ardor. Franz von Welemisl, who was wont to creep like her shadow, and who was again a guest at the Tetzels' house, had been kept within doors by the cough that plagued him. Likewise I looked in vain for Herdegen.

The first dance indeed was ended when he came in with my great-uncle; but the old knight looked less confidently than he had done in the morning.

Ann was pale, but, meseemed fairer than ever in a dress of pomegranate-red and white brocade, sent to her from Italy by her step-father's brother, My lord Bishop, by the hand of Cardinal Branda. As soon as I had presently begun to speak with her, she was carried off by Junker Henning, and at that same moment my grand-uncle came towards me to ask who was that fair damsel of such noble beauty with whom I was but now speaking. He had never till now beheld Ann close at hand, and how gladly did I reply that this was the daughter of Pernhart the town Councillor and she to whom Herdegen had plighted his faith.

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The old man was startled and full wroth yet, by reason of all the fine folk about us, he was bound to refrain himself, and he presently departed.

The festival went forward and I saw that Herdegen danced first with Ursula and then with Ann. Then they stood still near the flower shrubs which were placed round about the hall to garnish it, and it might have been weened from their demeanor that they had quarrelled and had come to high words. I would fain have gone to them, but the Queen had bid me stay with her and never ceased asking me a hundred questions as to names and other matters.

At last, or ever it was midnight, their Majesties departed. I breathed more freely, put my hand on my Hans' arm, and was minded to bid him take me to Herdegen and speak out my mind, but my brother, as it fell, prevented me. He came up to me and with what a mien! His eyes flashing, his cheeks burning, his lips tight-set. He signed to me and Hans to follow whither he went, and then passionately besought us that we would depart from the dance for a while with him and his sweetheart, that was Ann. Such an entreaty amazed us greatly, yet, when he told us that she would go no whither with him save under our care, and that everything depended on his learning this very hour how he stood with her, we did his will. And he likewise told us that he had not indeed given his word that morning to my grand-uncle and Jost Tetzels, but had only pledged his word that he would give them his answer next day.

So presently Hans and I stole out behind the pair, out into the road. I, for my part, was well content and thankful and, when we beheld them accuse and answer each other right doughtily, we laughed, and were agreed that Aunt Jacoba's counsel had led to a good issue; and I told my Hans that I should myself take a lesson from all this and let the smart Junkers and Knights make love to me to their hearts' content, if ever I should be moved to play him a right foolish trick.

Presently, when we had many times paced the road to and fro the Pernharts' house, Ann was minded to knock at the door; but behold she was saved the pains. Mistress Hennelein just then came out whereas she had been helping Dame Giovanna to tend the sick grandmother. The lantern Eppelein carried in front of us was not so bright as the sun, yet could I see full plainly the old woman's venomous eye; and what high dudgeon sounded in her voice! Each one had his meed, even my Hans, to whom she cried: "Keep thy bride out of Porro's way, Master Haller. It ill-beseems the promised wife of a worshipful Councillor to be casting her lot in with a Fool! Howbeit, to laugh is better than to weep, and he laughs longest who laughs last!" And thereupon she herself laughed loudly and, with a scornful nod to Ann, turned her back on us.

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All was still in Master Pernharts' house; he himself had gone to rest. At Herdegen's bidding we followed him into the hall, and there he clasped Ann to his heart, and declared to us that now, and henceforth for ever, they were one. Whereupon we each and all embraced; but my friend clung longest to me, and whispered in my ear that she was happier than ever she could deserve to be. Herdegen asked me whether now he had made all right, and whether I would be the same old Margery again? And I right gladly put up my lips for his to kiss; and the returned prodigal, who had come back to that which was his best portion, was like one drunk with wine. He was beside himself with joy, so that he clasped first me and then Hans in his arms, and slapped Eppelein, who carried a lantern to show us the pools left by the storm of rain, again and again on the shoulder, and thrust a purse full of money into his free hand, albeit there was an end now of my grand-uncle's golden bounty. Nought would persuade him to go back to the dancing-hall, to meet Ursula and her kin; and when he presently departed from us we heard him along the street, singing such a love song as no false heart may imagine, as glad as the larks which would now ere long be soaring to the sky.

We got back to the great hall. The dancing and music were yet at their height; our absence we deemed had scarce been marked; howbeit, as soon as we entered, my grand-uncle made enquiry "where Herdegen might be," and when I looked about me at haphazard I beheld—my eyes did not cheat me— I beheld Mistress Henneleinlein in one of the side-stalls.

No man told me, yet was I sure and certain that she was saying somewhat which concerned me, and presently I discerned in the dim back-ground the feathered plume which Ursula had worn at the dance. My heart beat with fears; every word spoken by the old Dame would of a surety do us a mischief. Hans mocked at my alarms and at a maid's folly in ever taking to herself matters which concern her not.

Then Ursula came forth into the hall again, and how she swept past us on Junker Henning's arm.

A young knight of the Palatinate now led me out to a dance I had erewhile promised him.

We stopped for lack of breath. The festival was over; yet did Ursula and the Junker walk together. He was hearkening eagerly to all she might say, and on a sudden he clapped his hand into hers which she held out to him, and his eyes, which he had held set on the floor, fired up with a flash. Presently he and the Knight von Rochow made their way, arm in arm through the press, and both were laughing and pulling their long red beards.

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I still clung to my lover's arm and entreated him to take me to speak with Junker Henning, inasmuch as I sorely wanted to question him; but the Junker diligently kept far from us. Nevertheless we at last stayed him, and after that I had enquired, as it were in jest, whether he had healed his old feud with Mistress Ursula and concluded a truce, or peradventure made peace with her, he answered me, in a tone all unlike his wonted frank and glad manner, that this for a while must remain privy to him and her, and that we should scarce be the first to whom he should reveal the matter; and forthwith he bid us farewell with a courtly reverence. But my lover would not let him thus depart, and asked him, calmly, what was the interpretation of this speech, whereupon Rochow spoke for his young fellow-countryman, and enquired, in the high-handed and lordly tone which ever marked his voice and manner, whether here, in the native land of Nuremberg playthings, love and faith were accounted of as toys.

Junker Henning however, broke in, and said, casting a warning look at me: "Far be it from him to break friendship with an honorable gentleman, such as my Hans, before having an explanation." And he held out his hand somewhat more readily than before, bowed sweetly to me and led away his cousin.

At last we got out with the Haller parents and Cousin Maud. The old folks got into litters, and the serving men were lighting the way before me to mine, when my lover stayed me, saying: "It is already grey in the East. Never before were we together so well betimes, Margery, and happy hours are few. If thou'rt not too weary, let us walk home together in this fresh morning air."

I was right well-content and we went gently forward, I clinging to him closely. He felt how high my heart was beating and, when he asked me whether it was for love that it beat so fast, I confessed in truth that, whereas the Brandenburgers outdid all other knights in the kingdom, in defiance and hotheadedness, I feared lest there should be a passage of arms betwixt Junker Henning and my brother Herdegen. But Hans made answer that, if it were the Brandenburgers intent to challenge him, he could not hinder it; yet be trowed it would be to their own damage; that Herdegen had scarce found his match at the Paris school of arms; and at least should we not mar this sweet morning walk by such fears.

And he held me closer to him, and while we slowly wandered on he poured forth his whole heart to me, and confessed that through all his lonely life in foreign lands he had ever lacked a great matter; that even with the gayety of his favorite comrades, even when his best diligence had been crowned with great issues, yet had he never had full joy in life. Nor was it till my love had made him a complete and truly happy man that he had felt, as it were, whole, inasmuch as that alone had stilled the strange craving which till then had made his heart sick.

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Yea, and I could tell him that it had been the same with me; and as for what more we said, verily it should rather have been sung to sweet and lofty music on the lute and mandoline. Two rightly matched souls stood revealed each to each, and Heaven itself, meseemed, was opened in the strait ways of our town.

We kissed as we stood on the threshold of the Schopper-house, and when at length we must need part he held me once more to his heart, longer than ever he had before, and tore himself away; and laying his hands on my shoulders, as he looked into my eyes in the pale light of dawn, he said: "Come what may, Margery, we love each other truly and have learned through each other what true happiness means; and nevertheless we are as yet but in the March-moon of our love, and its May days, which are sweeter far, are yet to come. But even the March-joy is good—right good to me."

CHAPTER III.

I had forgotten my fears and gloomy forebodings by the time I climbed into bed in my darkened chamber. Sleep forthwith closed my eyes, and I lay without even a dream till Cousin Maud waked me. I turned over by reason that I was still heavy with slumber; yet she stood by my bed, and scarce half a quarter of an hour after, lo, again I felt her hand on my shoulder and woke up quaking, with a cold sweat on my brow. I had dreamed that I was riding out in the Lorenzer-wald with Hans and my grand-uncle and other some; but we went slowly and softly, by reason that all our horses fell lame. And it fell that on the very spot where Ann had flown into Herdegen's arms I beheld a high, yellow grave-stone, and on it was written in great black letters: "*Hans Haller*."

Hereupon I had started up with a loud cry, and it was long or ever my brain was clear as to the world about me. Cousin Maud laughed to see me so drunk asleep, as was not my wont; yet could she not deny that my dream boded no good. Nevertheless, quoth she, it was small marvel that such a heathen Turkish turmoil as we had been living in should beget monstrous fancies in a young maid's brain. She would of set purpose have left me to sleep the day through, to give me strength; howbeit Herdegen had twice come to ask for me, and so likewise had Ann and Hans, and it wanted but an hour and a half of noon. This made me laugh; nevertheless I minded me then and there of all that had befallen last night at Pernhart's house-door and in the school of arms, and, moreover, that we were bidden this day to eat with the Tetzels; also that they, and eke my grand-uncle, were still in the belief that Herdegen's betrothal to Ursula might be at once proclaimed to their friends.

I began to dress in haste and fear, and Susan was in the act of plaiting my hair when Cousin Maud flew in to say that Queen Barbara had sent her own litter to carry me to her. Thus had I to make all speed.

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The royal quarters in the castle had been newly ordered by the town at his Majesty's desire, and they were indeed bravely decked; yet never had the like show pleased me less. The Queen was giving audience to the Pope's Legate, to their excellencies the envoys from the Greek Emperor, to my Lord Conrad the Elector of Maintz, and many more nobles. She had made so bold as to declare that the German maidens were no less skilled in the art of song than the damsels of Italy, and had bidden me to her in such hot haste that I might let the notables there assembled hear a few lays. I might not say nay to the royal behest; for better, for worse, I must fain take my lute and sing, at first alone, and then with my lord Conte di Puppi. Our voices presently brought the King to the chamber, and in truth I won praise enough if I had best cared to hear it. Nay, for the first time it was a torment to me to sing, and when the notables had all been sent forth, and I was alone with the Queen and her ladies, I knew not what ailed me but I burst into tears, hot and bitter tears. The gracious Queen took me in her arms with womanly sweetness, but while she gave me her phial of vinegar to smell, and spoke words of comfort, I was suddenly scared at hearing close behind me right woeful sobbing and sighing, as from a woman's breast. I looked about me, and beheld Porro, the jester, who had cast himself on a couch and was mocking me, pulling such a grimace the while that his smooth, long, thin face seemed grown to the length of two lean faces. The sight was so merry that I was fain to laugh. Whereas he nevertheless ceased not from sobbing, the Queen reproved him and bid him not carry his fooling too far. Whereupon he sobbed out: "Nay, royal and gracious Coz, thou art in error. Never have I so shamelessly forgotten to play my part as Fool, as at this moment. Alack, alack! what a thing is life! Were we not one and all born fools, and if we did but measure it as it is now and ever shall be, with the wisdom of the sage, we should never cease to bewail ourselves, from the nurse's rod to the scythe of death."

Whether Porro were in earnest I could not divine; his face, like a mystic oracle, might bear manifold interpretations; verily his speech went to my heart. And albeit hitherto life had brought me an hundredfold more reasons for thanksgiving than sorrow, meseemed that it had many griefs in store. The Queen indeed replied full solemnly: "Peradventure it is true. Yet forget not that it is not as Sage that you attend us.—Moreover I, as a good Hungarian, know my Latin, and the great Horatius Flaccus puts your dismal lore to shame; albeit, as a Christian woman, I am fain to confess that it is wiser and more praiseworthy to bewail our own sins and the sins of the world, and to meditate on the life to come, than to live only for present joys. As for thee, sweet maid, for a long time yet thou may'st take pleasure in the flowers, even though venom may be hidden in their cups."

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“Men are not wont to eat them,” replied the fool. “And I have often marvelled wherefor the flighty butterfly wears such gay and painted wings, while every creature that creeps and grubs is grey or brown and foul to behold.”

Whereupon he burst into loud laughter and such boisterous mirth that we fairly wept for merriment, and my lady Queen bid him hold his peace.

On my departing I had need to pass through the King’s audience-chamber. He was bidding my Hans depart right graciously, and I went forth into the castle yard with Masters Tucher, Stromer, and Schurstab, all members of the Council. I fancy I hear them now thanking Hans for his fearless manfulness in saying to his Majesty that the treasure-chest must ever be empty if the old disorder were suffered to prevail. Likewise they approved the well-devised plan which he had proposed for the bettering of such matters, and my heart beat high with pride as I perceived the great esteem in which the worshipful elders of our town held their younger fellow.

Hans might not part company from them; but when I got into the litter he whispered to me: “Be not afraid—as to Herdegen and the Junker—you know. Farewell till we meet at the Tetzels’.”

When I came home I learnt that my brother, and Ann, and then Epplein had come to ask for me; now must I change my attire for the feast, and my heart beat heavy in my bosom. The bold Brandenburger and my brother were perchance at this very hour crossing swords.

Cousin Maud, who now knew all, and I stepped out of our litters at the Tetzels’ door. Epplein was standing by the great gate, booted and spurred, holding two horses by their bridles. My lord who spoke with him was my dear Hans. We went into the hall together, and as our eyes met, I wist that there was evil in the air. The letter he held bid him ride forthwith to Altenperg. Junker Henning and my brother were minded to have a passage of arms, and with sharp weapons. This, however, they might not do within the limits of the city save at great risk, inasmuch as that the town was within the King’s peace, and by a severe enactment knight or squire, lord or servant, in short each and every man was threatened by the Emperor with outlawry, who should make bold to provoke another to challenge him, or to lift a weapon against another with evil intent, be he who he might, throughout the demesne of Nuremberg or so long as the diet was sitting. Hence they would go forth to Altenperg, inasmuch as it was the nearest to arrive at of any township without the limits of the city.

All this my lover had heard betimes that morning; but Herdegen had told him that Master Schlebitzer and a certain Austrian Knight would attend him. Now the letter was to say that they had both played him false; the former in obedience to the stern behest of his father, the town-councillor; the second by reason that his Duke commanded his

attendance. And Herdegen hereby urgently besought my Hans that he would take the place thus left unfilled and ride forthwith to Altenperg.

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Nor was this all the letter. In it my brother set forth that he had pledged his word solemnly and beyond recall to Ann and her parents, and entreated my lover to declare to the Tetzels and to his grand-uncle that henceforth and forever he renounced Ursula. He would speak of the matter at greater length at the place of meeting.

Cousin Maud and Hans and I held a brief council, and we were of one mind: that this message should not be given to the Tetzels till after the great dinner and when we should know the issue of the combat. My heart urged me indeed to desire my lover to forego this ride, and I mind me yet how I implored him with uplifted hands and how he forced himself to put them from him with steadfast gentleness. And when he told me that he for certain, if any one, could pacify the combatants or ever blood should be shed, I gazed into his brave and manful and kind face, and methought whither he went all must be for the best, and I cried with fresh assurance: "Then go!" Every word do I remember as though it were graven in brass.

Eppelein cracked his whip against his leathern boot-tops; old Tetzels leaden voice cried out to enquire where we were lingering, and a silken train came rustling down the stairs. My lover kissed his hand to me, and I went forth with him into the court-yard. His fiery horse gave him so much to do that he never marked my farewell. On a sudden it flashed through my brain that this was that very horse which my grand-uncle had given to Herdegen, and herein again, meseemed, was an omen of ill. Likewise I noted that Hans was in silken hose with neither spurs nor riding-boots. Howbeit the Hallers had many horses; and as a lad he had been wont to ride with or without a saddle, and was a rider whom none could unhorse, even in the jousting-ring.

He had soon quelled his steed and was trotting lightly over the stones, followed by Eppelein; but as he vanished round the first corner meseemed that the bourn stone, as he rode past it, was turned into the yellow gravestone I had seen in my dream, and that again I saw the great black letters of the name "Hans Haller."

I passed my hands across my eyes to chase away the hideous vision, and I was young enough and brave enough to return Ursula's greeting without any quaking of my knees. Cousin Maud, meanwhile, had walked up the stairs, snorting and fuming like a boiling kettle; nor could she be at peace, even among the company who were awaiting the bidding to table. Many an one marked that something more than common was amiss with her. I refrained myself well enough, and I excused my brother's and my lover's absence with a plea of weighty affairs. My grand-uncle, however, guessed the truth, and when I gave true answer to his short, murmured questions he wrathfully cried: then these were the thanks he got? Henceforth he would plainly show how he, who had been a benefactor, could deal with the youth who had dared to mock his

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authority. Hereupon I besought him first to grant me a hearing for a few words; but he waved me away in ire, and signed to Ursula, who hung on his arm, and she set her lips tight when he presently with wrathful eyes whispered somewhat in her ear whereof I believed I could guess the intent. And when I beheld her call Sir Franz von Welemisl to her side and give him her hand, speaking a few words in a low voice, I discerned that, in truth she knew all.

She presently led her father aside and told him somewhat which brought the blood to his ashy face, and led him to say her nay right vehemently. But, as she was wont, she made good her own will and he shrugged his shoulders, wrathful indeed, but overmastered by her.

During this space the great door of the refectory had been thrown open, and when Tetzl with his old mother moved that way, desiring the guests to follow him, my Uncle Christian, Ann's faithful friend, whispered to me that Herdegen had told him that he was now pledged to his "dear little warder," and likewise what was on hand between him and the Junker von Beust. I might be easy, quoth he; the Brandenburger would have a bitter taste of Nuremberg steel, of that he was fully assured. And he ended his speech with a merry: "Hold up your head, Margery."

Then we all sat down at the laden table, Dame Clara sitting at the top, albeit she looked but sullen and ill to please.

Ursula had chosen to set Sir Franz by her side. Herdegen's seat, at her left hand, was vacant; and she bid her white Brabant hound, as though in jest, to leap into it. The meal was served, but it all went in such gloomy silence that Master Muffel, of the town-council, whom they named Master Gall-Muffel, whispered across the table to my Uncle Christian "was it not strange to give a funeral feast without ever a corpse." Again I shuddered. My jovial uncle had already lifted his glass, and stretching himself at his ease he nodded to me, and drank, saying loud enough for all to hear: "To the last pledged couple, and the faithfulest pair of lovers."

I nodded back to him, for I wist what he meant, and drank with all my heart. Ursula had meanwhile kept her ears and eyes intent on us, and she now signed to her father and he slowly rose, clinked on his glass, and seeing that many were hearkening for what he should say, he declared to his guests that he had bidden them to this banquet not alone to do honor to the name-day of his venerable mother, whose praises his friend Master Tucher had eloquently spoken, but rather that he might announce to them the betrothal of his daughter Ursula to the noble knight and baron Franz von Welemisl. Then was there shouting and clinking and emptying of wine cups, whereat old Dame Clara Tetzl, who was deaf and had failed to gather the purport of her son's address, cried aloud "Is young Schopper come at last then?"

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Hereupon Sir Franz turned pale; he had gone up to the old woman, glass in hand, with Ursula, and she now spoke into her grand-dame's ear to explain the matter. The old woman looked first at her son and then at my grand-uncle, and shook her head; nevertheless she put a good face on a bad case, gave Sir Franz her hand to kiss, and was duly embraced by Ursula; yet she sat nodding her head up and down, and ever more shrewdly as she heard the bridegroom cough. Amazement sat indeed on the faces of all the guests; howbeit the ice was broken, and the silent and gloomy company had on a sudden turned right mirthful. Cousin Maud, meseemed, was the most content of all. Ursula's betrothal had rescued her favorite from great peril, and henceforth her plumed head-gear was at rest once more.

All about me was talk and laughter, glasses ringing, voices uplifted in set speeches, and many a shout of gratulation. When a betrothal is in the wind, folks ever believe that they have hold of the guiding clue to happiness, even if it be between a simpleton and a deaf mute.

The seat on my left hand, which my lover should have filled, remained empty; on my right sat his reverence Master Sebald Schurstab, the minorite preacher and prior who, so soon as he had spoken in honor of one toast, fixed his eyes on the board and thought only of the next. Thus, in the midst of all this mirthful fellowship, there was nought to hinder my fears and hopes from taking their way. Each time that a cry of "Hoch!" was raised, I roused me and joined in; scarce knowing, however, in whose honor. Likewise the hall waxed hotter and hotter, and the air right heavy to breathe.

To-day again, as yesterday, a storm burst over us. Albeit the sun was not yet set, it was presently so dark that lights had been brought in and fifty tapers in the silver candlesticks added to the heat. The lightning flashes glared in at the curtained windows like a flitting lamp, and the roar of the thunder shook the panes which rattled and clanked in their leaden frames. The reverend Prior called on the blessed saints whose special protection this house had never neglected to secure, and crossed himself. We all did the same, and had soon forgotten the storm without. The glasses ere long were clinking once more. I watched the numberless dishes borne in and out-roasted peacocks, with showy spread tails and crested heads raised as it were in defiance: boars' heads with a lemon in their mouth and gaily wreathed; huge salmon lying in the midst of blue trout, with scarlet crawfish clinging to them; pasties and skilfully-devised sweetmeats; nay, now and again, I scarce consciously put forth my hand and carried this or that morsel to my mouth but whether it were bread or ginger my tongue heeded not the savor. Silver tankards and Venetian glasses were filled from flasks and jugs; I heard the guests praising the wines of Furstenberg and Bacharach, of Malvoisie and Cyprus, and I marked the effects of the noble

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and potent grape-juice, nay, now and then I played the part of “warder” to Uncle Christian; yet meseemed that it was only by another’s will or ancient habit that I raised a warning finger. Was I in truth at a banquet or was I only dreaming that I sat as a guest at the richly spread board? The only certain matter was that the storm was overpast, and that no hail nor rain now beat upon the window panes. How wet must my Hans be, who had ridden forth in court array, without a cloke to cover him.

To judge by the voices and demeanor of the menfolk the end of the endless meal must surely be not far off, and indeed dishes were by this time being served with packets of spices and fruits and pies and sweetmeats for the little ones at home. I drew a deeper breath, and methought the company would soon rise from the table, forasmuch as that Jost Tetzl had already quitted his seat. Then I beheld his pale face through a curtain and his lean hand beckoning to my grand-uncle. He likewise rose, and Ursula followed him. Forthwith, from without came a strange noise of footsteps to and fro and many voices. A serving man came to hail forth Master Ebner and Uncle Tucher, and the muttering and stir without waxed louder and louder. The guests sat in silence, gazing and enquiring of each other. Somewhat strange, and for certain somewhat evil, had befallen.

My heart beat in my temples like the clapper of an alarm-bell. That which was going forward, and to which one after another was called forth, was my concern; it must be, and mine alone. I felt I could not longer keep my place, and I had pushed back my seat when I saw Uncle Tucher standing by Cousin Maud, and his kind and worthy face, still ruddy from the wine he had drunk, was a very harbinger of horror and woe. He bent over my cousin to speak in her ear.

My eyes were fixed on his lips, and lo! she, my second mother, started up hastily as any young thing and, clasping her hand to her breast she well-nigh screamed: “Jesu-Maria! And Margery!”

All grew dark before my eyes. A purple mist shrouded the table, the company, and all I beheld. I shut my eyes, and when presently I opened them once more, close before me, as it were within reach, behold the yellow headstone with black letters thereon, as in my dream; and albeit I closed my eyes again the name “Hans Haller” was yet there and the letters faded not, nay, but waxed greater and came nigher, and meseemed were as a row of gaping werewolves.

I held fast by the tall back of my heavy chair to save me from falling, on my knees; but a firm hand thrust it aside, and I was clasped in a pair of old yet strong arms to a faithful heart, and when I heard Cousin Maud’s voice in mine ear, though half-choked with tears, crying: “My poor, poor, dear good Margery!” meseemed that somewhat melted in my heart and gushed up to my eyes; and albeit none had told me, yet knew I of a

certainty that I was a widow or ever I was a wife, and that Cousin Maud's tears and my own were shed, not for Herdegen, but for him, for him....

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And behold, face to face with me, who was this? Ursula stood before me, her blue eyes drowned in tears—tears for me, telling me that my woe was deep enough and bitter enough to grieve even the ruthless heart of my enemy.

CHAPTER IV.

The storm had cleared the air once more. How fair smiled the blue sky, how bright shone the sun, day after day and from morning till night; but meseemed its splendor did but mock me, and many a time I deemed that my heart's sorrow would be easier to bear with patience if it might but rain, and rain and rain for ever. Yea, and a grey gloomy day would have brought rest to eyes weary with weeping. And in my sick heart all was dark indeed, albeit I had not been slow to learn how this terror had come about.

That was all the tidings I had craved; as to how life should fare henceforth I cared no more, but let what might befall without a wish or a will. Sorrow was to me the end and intent of life. I spurned not my grief, but rather cherished and fed it, as it were a precious child, and nought pleased me so well as to cling to that alone.

Howbeit I seldom had the good hap to be left to humor this craving. I was wroth with the hard and bitter world for its cruelty; yet it was in truth that very world, and its pitiless call to duty, which at that time rescued me from worse things. Verily I now bless each one who then strove to rouse me from my selfish and gloomy sorrow, from the tailor who cut my mourning weed to Ann, whose loving comfort even was less dear to me than the solitude in which I might give myself up to bitter grieving. All I cared for was to hear those who could tell of his last hours and departing from this life, till at last meseemed I myself had witnessed his end.

From all the tidings I could learn, I gathered that old Henneleinlein, whose gall had been raised against me by the Court Fool, had no sooner parted from us at Master Pernhart's door than she had hastened to the school of arms to make known to Ursula that my brother had plighted his troth anew to his cast-off sweetheart. Hereupon Ursula had dared to say to the Junker that Herdegen was her knight, who would pick up his glove which he had cast down at the former dance; but that he nevertheless was playing a two-fold game, and had treacherously promised Ann to wed her, to win her favor likewise. Hereupon the Brandenburger had been filled with honest ire, had sworn to Ursula that he would chastise her false lover, and was ready, not alone to accept my brother's defiance, but to fight with ruthless fury.

Thus Ursula's plot had prospered right well, inasmuch as, so long as she hoped to win Herdegen, she had been in deathly fear lest the Junker should fall out with him; whereas, now that in her wrath she only desired that the faithless wight should give an account to the Junker's sword, she thought fit in her deep and malignant fury to brand my brother as the challenger, knowing that if the combat had a bloody issue he would of

a surety suffer heavy penalty. And in truth she had not reckoned wrongly when she declared that my brother, whom she knew only too well, would be her ready, champion.

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On the morning next after the great dance she had addressed a brief letter to Herdegen beseeching him, for the friendship's sake which had bound them from their youth up, and by reason that she had no brother, to teach Junker von Beust that a patrician's daughter of Nuremberg should not lack a true knight, when Brandenburg pride dared to cast scorn on her in the face of all the world. My brother's response to this letter was a challenge to the Junker; yet had he not perchance been in such hot haste, save that he had long burned to punish the overweening young noble who had given him many an uneasy hour. He scarce, indeed, would have drawn his sword at Ursula's behest, inasmuch as he could plainly see that what she had most at heart was to make their breach wear such seeming to other folks as though he, who had been looked upon by the whole city as her pledged husband, had not quitted her, but had been ready rather to shed his heart's blood in her service.

Verily Ursula believed that she had found a sure instrument of vengeance, whereas she had heard say that Junker Henning von Beust was one of the most dreaded swordsmen in the Marches. Herdegen, to be sure, was likewise famed in Nuremberg as a doughty champion; yet it is ever the way in Franconia, nay, and in all Germany, to esteem outlandish means more highly than the best at home. Moreover she had many a time heard my grand-uncle declare that the gentlemen of our patrician families were not above half knights, and her intent was to sacrifice Herdegen to the Brandenburger's weapon.

Howbeit she had reckoned ill. Hans, who did service to my brother as his second at Altenperg, after striving faithfully to make peace between the two, was witness how our Nuremberg swordsman, who had had the finest schooling at Erfurt, Padua, and Paris, not merely withstood the Brandenburger, but so far outdid him in strength and swiftness that the Junker fell into the arms of his friends with wounds in the head and breast, while Herdegen came forth from the fray with no more hurt than a slight scratch on the arm.

The witnesses saw what he could do with amazement, and Sir Apitz von Rochow avowed that at my brother's first thrust he foresaw his cousin's evil plight; and they said that during the combat the supple blade of the Nuremberger's bedizened sword was changed into a raging serpent, which wound in everywhere, and bit through iron and steel. Afterwards he set forth that perchance Junker Schopper, who was said to be even better versed in all manner of writing than in the use of his weapon, had made use of some magic art, whereat a pious Knight of the Marches would fain cross himself.

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Now whereas Junker von Beust had been in attendance on the King's person, the end of the fray could not be hidden from his Majesty, and so soon as the wounded man had been carried into the priest's house at Altenperg for shelter and care, it was needful to remove his fortunate foe into surety from King Sigismund's wrath. In this matter both Rochow and Muschwitz, who were the Junker's seconds, demeaned them as true nobles, inasmuch as they offered my brother refuge and concealment in their castles, albeit they accused him between themselves of some secret art; but he who was so soon to die counselled him to bide a while with Uncle Conrad at the forest lodge, and see what he himself and other of his friends might do to win his pardon.

When, at length, my lover was about to depart, the storm had burst; wherefore the Brandenburgers besought him to tarry in the priest's house till it should be overpast. This he would not do, by reason that his sweetheart looked for him with a fearful heart, knowing that her brother was in peril; and forthwith he rode away. Herdegen gave him Eppelein to attend him, and to bring back to him such matters as he had need of, and so my beloved set forth for the town, the serving man riding behind him.

It rained indeed and lightened and thundered, yet all was well till, nigh to Saint Linhart, the hail came down, beating on them heavily. At that moment a burning flash, with a terrible crash of thunder, reft a tree asunder by the road-way; his powerful horse was maddened with fear, stood upright, fell back, and crushed his rider against the trunk of a poplar tree. Never more did I look on the face of the true lover to whom I was so closely knit—save only in dreams; and I thank those who held me back from beholding his broken skull. To this day he rises before me, a silent vision, and I see him as he was in that hour when he gave me a parting kiss on our threshold, in the pale gleam of early morning, solemnly glad and in his festal bravery. Yet they could not hinder me from pressing my lips to the hands of the beloved body in its winding-sheet.

It was on a fair and glorious morning—the day of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin—when Hans Haller, Knight, Doctor, and Town councillor, the eldest of his ancient race, my dear lord and plighted lover, was carried to the grave. The velvet pall wherewith his parents covered the bier of their beloved and firstborn son was so costly, that the price would easily have fed a poor household for years. How many tapers were burnt for him, how many masses said! Favor and good-will were poured forth upon me, and wherever I might go I was met with the highest respect. Even in my own home I was looked upon as one set apart and dedicated, whose presence brought grace, and who should be spared all contact with the common and lesser troubles of life. Cousin Maud, who was ever wont to mount the stair with an echoing tread and a loud voice, now went about stepping softly in her shoes, and when she called or spoke it was gently and scarce to be heard.

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As for me I neither saw nor heard all this. It did not make me thankful nor even serve to comfort me.

All things were alike to me, even the Queen's gracious admonitions. The diligent humility of great and small alike in their demeanor chilled me in truth; sometimes meseemed it was in scorn.

To my lover, if to any man, Heaven's gates might open; yet had he perished without shrift or sacrament, and I could never bear to be absent when masses were said for his soul's redemption. Nay, and I was fain to go to churches and chapels, inasmuch as I was secure there from the speech of man. All that life could give or ask of me, I had ceased to care for.

If, from the first, I had been required to bestir myself and bend my will, matters had not perchance have gone so hard with me. The first call on my strength worked as it were a charm. The need to act restored the power to act: and a new and bitter experience which now befell was as a draught of wine, making my heavy heart beat high and steady once more. Nought, indeed, but some great matter could have roused me from that dull half-sleep; nor was it long in coming, by reason that my brother Herdegen's safety and life were in peril. This danger arose from the fact that, not long ere the passage of arms at Altenperg, in despite of strait enactments, the peace of the realm had many times been broken under the very eyes of his Majesty by bloody combats, and the Elector Conrad of Maintz had gone hand in hand with him of Brandenburg to entreat his Majesty to make an example of this matter. These two were likewise the most powerful of all the electors; the spiritual prince had, at the closing of the Diet, been named Vicar of the Empire, and he of Brandenburg was commander-in-chief of all the Imperial armies. And his voice was of special weight in this matter, inasmuch as the great friendship which had hitherto bound him to the Emperor had of late cooled greatly, and both before and during the sitting of the Diet, his Majesty had keenly felt what power the Brandenburger could wield, and with what grave issues to himself.

Thus, when my lord the Elector and the high constable Frederick demanded that the law should be carried out with the utmost rigor in the matter of Herdegen, it was not, as many deemed, by reason that the King was not at one with our good town and the worshipful council, and that he was well content to vent his wrath on the son of one of its patrician families, but contrariwise, that his Majesty, who hated all baseness, had heard tidings of Herdegen's bloody deeds at Padua and his wild ways at Paris. Likewise it had come to his Majesty's ears that he had falsely plighted his troth to two maidens. Nay, and my grand-uncle had made known to King Sigismund that Ursula, who had been known to the Elector from her childhood up, had been driven by despair at Herdegen's breach of faith to give her hand to the sick Bohemian Knight, Sir Franz von Welemisl.

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Moreover the Knight Johann von Beust, father of Junker Henning, had journeyed to Nuremberg to visit his wounded son; and whereas he learnt many matters from his son's friends around his sick-bed, he earnestly besought the Elector so to bring matters about that due punishment should overtake the Junker's foeman.

My lord the Elector had many a time showed his teeth to the knighthood of Brandenburg, appealing to law and justice when he had taken part with the citizens and humbled the overbearing pride of the nobles. It was now his part to show that he would not suffer noble blood to be spilt unavenged, though it were by the devilish skill of a citizen; forasmuch as that if indeed he should do so all men would know thereby that he was the sworn foe of the nobles of Brandenburg and kept so tight a hand on them, not for justice' sake, but for sheer hatred and ill-will.

When at a later day, I saw the old knight, with his ruddy steel-eaters' face and great lip-beard, and was told that in his youth he had been a doughty free booter and highway robber, who by his wealth and power had made himself to be a mainstay of the Elector in Altmark, I could well imagine how his threats had sounded, and that all men had been swift to lend ear to his words. Yet that just King to whom he accused Herdegen gave a hearing to von Rochow and the other witnesses; they could but declare that all had been done by rule, and that Rochow had said from the first that of a certainty the devil himself guided Herdegen's sword. Muschwitz, indeed, was sure that he had seen his blade flash forth fire. Hereupon the father was urgent on the King's Majesty that he should seek to seize my brother, pronounce him a banished outlaw, and that whenever his person should be taken he was to be punished with death.

All this I learnt not till some time after, inasmuch as folks would not add new cause of grief to my present sorrow.

The way I was going could lead no-whither save to madness or the cloister; I had so lost my wits in self, that I weened that I had done my part for my brother when I had humbly entreated their Majesties to vouchsafe him their gracious pardon, and had signed my name to certain petitions in favor of the accused. Of a truth I wist not yet in what peril he stood, and rarely enquired for him when Uncle Conrad had assured me that he lay in safe hiding.

Sometimes, indeed, meseemed as though Ann and the others kept somewhat privy from me; but even all care to enquire was gone from me, nor cared I for aught but to be left in peace. And thus matters stood till rumor waxed loud and roused me from my leaden slumber.

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I had passed the day for myself alone, refusing to see our noble guests; I was sitting in silence and dreaming by my spinning-wheel, which I had long ceased to turn, when on a sudden there were heavy steps and wrathful voices on the stairs. The door of the room was thrown open and, in spite of old Susan's resistance, certain beadles of the city came in, with two of the Emperor's men-at-arms. My cousin was not within doors, as had become common of late, and I was vexed and grieved to be thus unpleasantly surprised. I rose to meet the strangers, making sharp enquiry by what right they broke the peace of a Nuremberg patrician's household. Hereupon their chief made answer roundly that he was here by his Majesty's warrant, and that of the city authorities, to make certain whether Junker Herdegen Schopper, who had fled from the Imperial ban, were in hiding or no in the house of his fathers. At first it was all I could do to save myself from falling; but I presently found heart and courage. I assured the bailiffs that their search would be vain, albeit I gave them free leave to do whatsoever their office might require of them, only to bear in mind that great notables were guests in the house; and then I drew a deep breath and meseemed I was as a child forgotten and left in a house on fire which sees its father pressing forward to rescue it.

Hitherto no man had told me what fate it was that threatened my brother, and now that I knew, I hastily filled up the meaning of many a word to which I had lent but half an ear. My cousin's frequent absence in court array, Ann's tear-stained eyes and strange mien, and many another matter was now full plain to me.

My newly-awakened spirit and restored power asserted their rights, and, as in the days of old, neither could rest content till it knew for a certainty what it might do.

While Susan and the other serving folks, with certain of the retainers brought by our guests, were searching the house through, I hastily did on my shoes and garments for out-door wear, and albeit it was already dusk, I went forth. Yea, and I held my head high and my body straight as I went along the streets, whereas for these weeks past I had crept about hanging my head; meseemed that a change had come over my outward as well as my inner man. And as I reached Pernhart's house, with long swift steps, more folks would have seen me for what in truth I was: a healthy young creature, with a long span of life before me yet and filled with strength and spirit enough to do good service, not to myself alone, but to many another, and chiefest of all to my dearly beloved brother.

And when I was at my walk's end and stood before the old mother,—who was now recovered from her sickness and sitting upright and sound in her arm-chair with her youngest grandchild in her lap,—I knew forthwith that I had come to the right person.

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The worthy old dame had not been slow to mark what ailed me; nay, if Cousin Maud had not besought her to spare my sorrowing soul, she long since had revealed to me what peril hung over Herdegen. She had not failed to perceive that my weary submission to ills which might never be remedied, had broken my power and will to fulfil what good there was in me. And now I stood before her, freed from that sleepwalking dulness of will, eager to know the whole truth, and declared myself ready to do all that in me lay to attain one thing alone, namely to rescue my brother. On this I learnt from the venerable dame's lips that now I was indeed the old Margery, albeit Cousin Maud had of late denied it, and with good reason; and the old woman was right, inasmuch as that the more terrible and unconquerable the danger seemed, the more my courage rose and the greater was my spirit. Now, too, I heard that what I had taken for love-sick weakness in Ann was only too-well founded heart-sickness; and that she likewise, on her part, had not been idle, but, under the guidance of Cousin Maud and Uncle Christian, had moved heaven and earth to succor her lover, albeit alas! in vain.

In truth the cause was as good as lost; and Uncle Christian, who ever hoped for the best, made it no secret that, in the most favorable, issue Herdegen must begin life afresh in some distant land. Yet was neither Ann nor I disposed to let our courage fail, and it was at that time that our friendship put forth fresh flowers. We fought shoulder to shoulder as it were, comrades in the struggle, full of love towards each other and of love for my brother; and when I bid her farewell and she would fain walk home with me, all those who dwelt in the coppersmith's house were of the same mind as men might be in a beleaguered town, who had been about to yield and then, on a sudden, beheld the reinforcements approaching with waving banners and a blast of trumpets.

In truth there was a shrewd fight to be waged; and the stronghold which day by day waxed harder to conquer was my lord chief Constable, the Elector Frederick; his peer, the Elector of Mainz, put all on him when Cardinal Branda, who was Ann's kind patron, besought his mercy.

Until I had been roused to this new care in life I had never been to court, in spite of many a gracious bidding from my lady, the Queen. My supplications found no answer, and when Queen Barbara granted me audience at my entreaty, though she received me graciously, yet would she not hear me out. She would gladly help, quoth she, but that she, like all, must obey the laws; and at last she freely owned that her good will would come to nought against the demands of the Elector of Brandenburg. The greatness of that wise and potent prince was plainly set before our eyes that same day, for on him, as commander-in-chief of the crusade to be sent forth against the Hussite heresy, the Emperor's own sword was solemnly bestowed in the church of Saint Sebald. It was girt on to him by reverend Bishops, after that he had received from the hand of the Pope's legate a banner which his Holiness had himself blessed, and which was borne before him by the Count of Hohenlohe as he went forth.

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That it would be a hard matter to get speech with so potent a lord at such a time was plain to see; howbeit I was able to speak privily at any rate with his chamberlain, and from him I learned in what peril my brother was, inasmuch as not the Junker's father alone was bent on bringing him to extreme punishment, but likewise no small number of Nuremberg folk, who had of yore been aggrieved by my brother's over-bearing pride.

Every one who had ever met him in the streets with a book under his arm, or had seen him, late at night, through the lighted window-pane, sitting over his papers and parchments, was ready to bear witness to his study of the black arts. Thus the diligence which he had ever shown through all his wild ways was turned to his destruction; and it was the same with the open-handed liberality which had ever marked him, by reason that the poor, to whom he had tossed a heavy ducat instead of a thin copper piece, would tell of the Devil's dole he had gotten, and how that the coin had burnt in his hand. Nay and Epplein's boasting of the gold his young lord had squandered in Paris, and wherewith he had filled his varlet's pockets, gave weight to this evil slander. Many an one held it for a certainty that Satan himself had been his treasurer.

Thus a light word, spoken at first as a figure of speech by the Knight von Rochow, had grown into a charge against him, heavy enough to wreck the honor and freedom of a man who had no friends, and even to bring him to the stake; and I know full well that many an one rejoiced beforehand to think that he should see that lordly youth with all his bravery standing in the pointed cap with the Devil's tongue hung round his neck, and gasping out his life amid the licking flames.

CHAPTER V.

The Diet was well-nigh over, yet had we not been able to gain aught in Herdegen's favor. One day my Forest Aunt, who had marked all our doings with wise counsel and hearty good-will, sent word that he on whose mighty word hung Herdegen's weal or woe, the Elector Frederich himself, had promised to visit at the Lodge next day to the end that he might hunt, and that we should ride thither forthwith.

By the time we alighted there his Highness had already come and gone forth to hunt the deer; wherefor we privily followed after him, and at a sign from Uncle Christian we came out of the brushwood and stood before him. Albeit he strove to escape from us with much diligence and no small craftiness, we would not let him go, and kept up with him, pressing him so closely that he afterwards declared that we had brought him to bay like a hunted beast. Of a truth no bear nor badger ever found it harder to escape the hounds than he, at that moment, to shut his eyes and ears against bright eyes and women's tongues made eloquent by Dame Love herself. Moreover my mourning array, worn as it was for a youth who had stood above most others in his love, would have checked any hard words on his lips; thus was he once more made to know that Eve's power was not yet wholly departed. Yet were we far from believing in any such power in

ourselves, as we appeared before that great and potent sovereign, whose manly, calm, and withal fatherly dignity made him, to my mind, more majestic than the tall but unresting Emperor.

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I can see him as he stood with his booted foot on the hart's neck, and turned his noble head, with its long, smooth grey hair, gazing at us with his great blue eyes, kindly at first, but presently with vexation and well-nigh in wrath.

We held our hands tight on our hearts, striving to call to mind some few of the words we had meditated with intent to speak them in defence of Herdegen. And our love, and our steadfast purpose that we would win grace and mercy for him came to our aid; and whereas my lord's first enquiry was to know whether I were that Mistress Margery Schopper who had been betrothed to his dear Hans Haller, too soon departed, my eyes filled with tears, but the memory of the dead gave me courage, so that I dared to meet the great man's eye, and was right glad to find that the words which in my dread I had forgot, now came freely to my mind. Likewise meseemed that, in overriding my own fears, I had conquered Ann's; whereas she had been pale and speechless, clinging to the folds of my dress, she now stood forth boldly by my side.

Then, when I had presented her to his Highness as Herdegen's promised bride, to whom he had been plighted in love from their childhood, I made known to his lordship that it was not my brother's desire, but that of my grand-uncle, that Ursula should be his wife. Likewise I strove to release my brother from the charge of making gold, by diligently showing that the old Knight had ever showered ducats on him to beguile him to his will. Then I spoke at length of Herdegen's skill with the sword, and hereupon Ann made bold to say that it would be well to bid her lover return in safe-keeping to Nuremberg, and there let him give proof of his skill with a weapon specially blessed by my lord Cardinal Julianus Caesarinus, the Pope's legate, which could have no taint of devilish arts.

Thus did we give utterance to everything we had meditated beforehand; and albeit the Elector at first made wrathful answer, and even made as though he would turn his back on us, each time we made shift to hold him fast. Nay, or ever we had ceased he had taken his foot from the stag's neck, and at length we walked with him back to the forest lodge, half amused, yet half grieved, with the mocking words he tormented us with. Then he bid us quit him, promising that he would once more examine into the matter of that young criminal.

Within doors supper was now ready, but we, as beseemed us, kept out of the way. My brother's case was now in safe hands, inasmuch as my Uncle Conrad and Christian sat at table with my lord. Likewise we were much comforted, whereas my aunt told us that the elder Knight, Junker Henning von Beust's father, who was here in the Elector's following, had, of his own free will, said to her that he now rued his deed in so violently accusing Herdegen, by reason that his son, who was now past all danger, had earnestly besought him to save this man, whose skill was truly a marvel, and had likewise said that he whom Hans Haller had honored with his friendship could not have practised black arts. Also he held me dear as the widowed maid to whom his friend was to have

been wed, and he could never forgive himself if fresh woe came upon me through him or his kith and kin.

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All this was glad tidings indeed, not alone for Herdegen's sake, but also by reason that there are few greater joys than that of finding good cause to approve one whom we respect, and yet whom we have begun to doubt.

Ann and I went to our chamber greatly comforted, and in such good heart as at that time I could be, and when from thence I heard Uncle Christian's great voice, as full of jollity as ever, I was certain that matters were all for the best for Herdegen. Our last fears and doubts were ere long cleared away; while the gentlemen beneath were still over their cups a heavy foot tramped up the stairs, a hard finger knocked at our chamber door, and Uncle Christian's deep voice cried: "Are you asleep betimes or still awake, maidens?"

Whereupon Ann, foreboding good, answered in the gladness of her heart that we were long since sleeping sweetly, and my uncle laughed.

"Well and good," quoth he, "then sleep on, and let me tell you what meseems your very next dream will be: You will be standing with all of us out in a green mead, and a little bird will sing: 'Herdegen is freed from his ban.' At this you will greatly rejoice; but in the midst of your joy a raven shall croak from a dry branch: 'Can it be! The law must be upheld, and I will not suffer the rascal to go unpunished.' Whereupon the little bird will twitter again: 'Well and good; 't will serve him right. Only be not too hard on him.' And we shall all say the same, and thereupon you will awake."

And he tramped down the stair again, and albeit we cried after him, and besought him to tell us more of the matter, he heard us not at all.

When we were at home again, lo, the Elector had done much to help us. I found a letter waiting for me, sealed with the Emperor's signet, wherein it was said that, by his Majesty's grace and mercy, my brother Herdegen was purged of his outlawry, but was condemned in a fine of a thousand Hungarian ducats as pain and penalty.

Thus the little bird and the raven had both been right. Howbeit, when I presently betook me to the castle to speak my thanks to the Empress, I was turned away; and indeed it had already been told to me that at Court this morning that sorrowful Margery, with her many petitions, was looked upon with other eyes than that other mirthful Margery, who had come with flowers and songs whensoever she was bidden. None but Porro the jester seemed to be of the same mind as ever; when he met me in the castle yard he greeted me right kindly and, when I had told him of the tidings in the Emperor's letter, he whispered as he bid me good day: "If I had a fox for a brother, fair child, I would counsel him to lurk in his cover till the hounds were safe at home again. In Hungary once I met a certain fellow who had been kicked by a highway thief after he had emptied his pockets. I tell you what. A man may well pawn his last doublet, if he may thereby gain a larger. He need never redeem the first, and it is given some folks to coin gold ducats out of humbler folks' sins. Ah! If I had a fox for a brother!"

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He sang the last words to himself as it were, and vanished, seeing certain persons of the Court.

Now I took this well-meant warning as it was intended; and albeit Ann and I were heartsick with longing to see Herdegen and to release him from his hiding, we nevertheless took patience. The legal guardians of our estate, having my uncle's consent, took my Cousin Maud's suretyship, and expressed themselves willing to pay the fine out of the moneys left by our parents, into the Imperial treasury. And that which followed thereafter showed us how wise the Fool's admonition had been.

The knight, Sir Apitz von Rochow, who had served as Junker Henning's second in the fight, tarried yet in Nuremberg, and this rude, arrogant youth had devoted himself with such true loving-kindness to the care of his young cousin, at first in the priest's house at Altenpero and afterwards in the Deutsch-haus in the town, that he had taken no rest, day nor night, until the Junker's father came, and then he fell into a violent fever. It was but of late that the leech had granted him to go out of doors, and his first walk was to our house to show me his sorrow for my grief, and to thank my cousin for many pleasant trifles which she had sent to him and the Junker during their sickness, to refresh them. At the same time he broke forth in loud and unstinted wrath against Sir Franz von Welemisl, and gave us to wit that with his whole heart he grudged him the fair Ursula, whose favor he himself had so diligently sued for since the first days of the Diet. From our house he went to the Tetzels', and then he and the Bohemian forthwith came to high words and defiant glances.

Shortly after this, and a few hours only after my brother's penalty had been paid into the Treasury, the two young gentlemen met in the nobles' wine-room by the Frohnwage, and von Rochow, heated by wine and heeding neither moderation nor manners, began to taunt Ursula's betrothed. After putting it to him that he had left the task to Herdegen of picking up the glove, "which peradventure he had thought was of too heavy leather," to which the other made seemly reply, he enquired, inasmuch as they were discoursing of marriage, whether the Church, which forbids the joining of those who are near of kin, hath not likewise the power to hinder a young and blooming maid from binding herself for life to a sickly husband. Such discourse was ill-pleasing by reason of the Bohemian's presence there: and the Junker went yet further, till to some speech made by old Master Grolaud, he made answer by asking what then might be a priest's duty, if the sick bridegroom failed to say "yes" at the altar by reason of his coughing? And as he spoke he cast a challenging look at Welemisl.

The hot blood of the Bohemian flew to his brain; or ever any one could hinder him, his knife was buried to the hilt in the other's shoulder. All hastened to help the Brandenburger, and when presently some turned to seize the criminal he was no more to be seen.

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This dreadful deed caused just dismay, and most of all at Court, inasmuch as the chamberlain and the maid of honor in close attendance on their Majesties' persons were near kin to the Bohemian, whose mother was of the noble Hungarian house of Pereny.

As to the Emperor, he flew into great fury and threatened to cancel the murderer's coat of arms and punish him with death. Never within the peace of his realm, nay and under his very eyes, had so much noble blood been shed in base brawling as here in our sober city, and he would forthwith make an example of the guilty men. He would make young Schopper pay some penalty yet more than a mere fine, to that he pledged his royal word, and as for young Welemisl, he was minded to devise some punishment that should hinder many an over-bold knight from drawing his sword! And he commanded that not only his own constables and men-at-arms, but likewise the town bailiffs, should forthwith seek and take both those young men.

Only two days later Sir Franz was brought in by the city watch; he had dressed himself in the garments of a waggoner, but had betrayed himself in a tavern at Schwabach by his coughing. Howbeit his Majesty had by this time come to another mind; nay, Queen Barbara left him less peace than even the court-folks, for indeed her father, Count Cilly, was near of kin to the Perenys, and through them to the Welemisl.

The Emperor Sigismund was a noble-minded and easy-living prince, who once, when forty thousand ducats had been poured into his ever-empty treasure chest, divided it forthwith among his friends, saying: "Now shall I sleep well, for that which broke my rest you bear away with you." And this light-hearted man, who was ever tossed hither and thither against his will, now saw that his peace was in evil plight by reason of Sir Franz. This was ill to bear; and whereas his royal wife called to mind in a happy hour that Welemisl had been provoked out of all measure by Rochow's scorn, and had done the deed out of no malice aforethought but, being heated with wine, in a sudden rage, and that he was in so far more worthy of mercy than young Schopper, who had shed noble blood with a guilty intent, counting on his skill as a swordsman, the Emperor surrendered at discretion. In this he was confirmed by his privy secretary, Caspar Slick, whom the Queen had beguiled; and this man, learned in the law, was ready with a decision which the Imperial magistrate gladly agreed to forthwith, as mild yet sufficient. Matters in short were as follows: About ten years ago the Knight Sir Endres von Steinbach had slain a citizen of Nuremberg in a fray with the town, and had made his peace afterwards with the council under the counsel of the Abbot of Waldsassen: by taking on himself, as an act of penance, to make a pilgrimage to Vach and to Rome, to set up stone crosses in four convents, and henceforth to do service to the town in every quarrel, in his own person, with

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a fellowship of ten lances for the space of two years. All this he had duly done, and it came about that the Emperor now condemned the Bohemian and my brother both alike to make a pilgrimage, not only to Rome—inasmuch as their guilt was greater than Steinbach's— but likewise to Jerusalem, to the Holy Sepulchre and other sacred places. Welemisl was to pay the same penalty in money as Herdegen had paid, and in consideration of their having thus made atonement for the blood they had shed, and as their victims had escaped death, they were released from the doom of outlawry. On returning from their pilgrimage they were to be restored to their rank and estates, and to all their rights, lordships, and privileges.

Not long after this sentence was passed the Court removed from Nuremberg through Ratisbon, where the Emperor strove to make up his quarrel with the Duke Bavaria and then to Vienna; but ere his departing he gave strait orders to the chief magistrate to see that the two criminals should fare forth on their pilgrimage not longer than twenty-four hours after the declaration of their doom.

ETEXT EDITOR'S BOOKMARKS:

All things were alike to me
Fruits and pies and sweetmeats for the little ones at home
Were we not one and all born fools

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