

Margery — Volume 08 eBook

Margery — Volume 08 by Georg Ebers

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CHAPTER XIV.

Our good hope of going forth with good-speed into the wide world to risk all for our lover and brother was not to be yet. We were fain to take patience; and if this seemed hard to us maidens, it was even worse for Kubbeling; the man was wont to wander free whither he would, and during these days of tarrying at the forest-lodge, first he lost his mirthful humor, and then he fell sick of a fever. For two long weeks had he to he abed, he, who, as he himself told, had never to this day needed any healing but such as the leech who medicined his beasts could give him. We awaited the tidings of him with much fear; and at this time we likewise knew not what to think of those gentlemen who heretofore had been such steadfast and faithful friends to us, inasmuch as that Doctor Holzschuher gave no sign, and soon after my grand-uncle's burying Uncle Christian and Master Pernhart had set forth for Augsburg on some privy matters of the town council. Yet we could do nought but submit, by reason that we knew that every good citizen thinks of the weal of the Commonwealth before all else.

Even our nearest of kin had laid our concerns on the shelf, while day and night alike it weighed on our souls, and we made ready for a long time to come of want and humble cheer. The Virgin be my witness that at that time I was ready and willing to give up many matters which we were forced to forego; howbeit, we found out that it was easier to eat bread without butter and no flesh meat, than to give up certain other matters. As for my jewels, which Cousin Maud would not sell, but pledged them to a goldsmith, I craved them not. Only a heart with a full great ruby which I had ever worn as being my Hans' first lovetoken, I would indeed have been fain to keep, yet whereas Master Kaden set a high price on the stone I suffered him to break it out, notwithstanding all that Cousin Maud and Ann might say, and kept only the gold case. It was hard likewise to send forth the serving-folk and turn a deaf ear to their lamenting. Most of the men, when they heard how matters stood, would gladly have stayed to serve us for a lesser wage, and each and all went about looking as if the hail had spoilt their harvest; only old Susan held her head higher than ever, by reason that we had chosen her to share our portion during the years of famine. Likewise we were glad to promise the old horse-keeper, who had served our father before us, that we would care for him all his days; he besought me eagerly that I would keep my own Hungarian palfrey, for, to his mind, a damsel of high degree with no saddle nor steed was as a bird that cannot rise on its wings. Howbeit, we found those who were glad to buy the horse, and never shall I forget the hour when for the last time I patted the smooth neck of my Bayard, the gift of my lost lover, and felt his shrewd little head leaning against my own. Uncle Tucher bought

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him for his daughter Bertha, and it was a comfort to me to think that she was a soft, kind hearted maid, whom I truly loved. All the silver gear likewise, which we had inherited, was pledged for money, and where it lay I knew not; yet of a truth the gifts of God taste better out of a silver spoon than out of a tin one. Cousin Maud, who would have no half measures, carried many matters of small worth to the pawn-broker; yet all this grieved us but lightly, although the sky hung dark over the town, by reason that other events at that time befell which gave us better cheer.

The Magister, as soon as he had tidings of our purpose, came with right good will to offer us his all, and declared his intent to share our simple way of life, and this was no more than we had looked for, albeit we steadfastly purposed only to take from him so much as he might easily make shift to spare. But it was indeed a joyful surprise when, one right dreary day, Heinz Trardorf, Herdegen's best-beloved companion in his youth, who had long kept far from the house, came to speak with us of Herdegen's concerns. He had now followed his father, who was dead, as master in his trade, and was already so well thought of that the Council had trusted his skilled hands to build a new great organ for the Church of Saint Laurence. I knew full well, to be sure, that when Herdegen had come back from Paris in all his bravery, he had cared but little for Trardorf's fellowship; but I had marked, many a time in church, that his eyes were wont to rest full lovingly on me.

And now, when I gave him my hand and asked him what might be his will, at first he could scarce speak, albeit he was a man of substance to whom all folks would lift their hat. At last he made bold to tell me that he had heard tidings of the sum demanded to ransom Herdegen, and that he, inasmuch as that he dwelt in his own house and that his profits maintained him in more than abundance, could have no greater joy than to pay the moneys he had by inheritance to ransom my brother.

And as the good fellow spoke the tears stood in his eyes, and mine likewise were about to flow; and albeit Cousin Maud here broke in and, to hide how deeply her heart was touched, said, well-nigh harshly, that without doubt the day was not far off when he would have a wife and family, and might rue the deed by which he had parted with his estate, never perchance to see it more, I freely and gladly gave him my hand, and said to him that for my part his offering would be dearest to me of any, and that for sure Herdegen would be of the same mind. And a beam as of sunshine overspread his countenance, and while he shook my hand in silence I could see that he hardly refrained himself from betraying more. After this, I came to know from his good mother that this offer of moneys had cost him a great pang, but only for this cause: that he had loved me from his youth up, and his noble soul forbid him to pay court to me when he had in truth done me so great a service.

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Still, and in despite of these gleams of light, I must ever remember those three weeks as a full gloomy and sorrowful time.

Kubbeling's eldest son and his churlish helpmate had fared forth to Venice instead of himself. They might not sail for the land of Egypt, and this chafed Uhlwurm sorely, by reason that he was sure in himself that he, far better than his master or than any man on earth, could do good service there to Ann, on whom his soul was set more than on any other of us.

Towards the end of the third week we rode forth to spend a few days again at the lodge, and there we found Young Kubbeling well nigh healed of his fever, and Eppelein's tongue ready to wag and to tell us of his many adventures without overmuch asking. Howbeit, save what concerned his own mishaps, he had little to say that we knew not already.

The Saracen pirate who had boarded the galleon from Genoa which was carrying him and his lord to Cyprus, had parted him from Herdegen and Sir Franz, and sold him for a slave in Egypt. There had he gone through many fortunes, till at last, in Alexandria, he had one day met Akusch. At that time my faithful squire's father was yet in good estate, and he forthwith bought Eppelein, who was then a chattel of the overseer of the market, to the end that the fellow might help his son in the search for Herdegen. This search they had diligently pursued, and had discovered my brother and Sir Franz together in the armory of the Sultan's Palace, in the fort over against Cairo, whither they had come after they had both worked at the oars in great misery for two years, on board a Saracen galley.

But then Herdegen had made proof, in some jousting among the young Mamelukes, of how well skilled he was with the sword, and thereby he had won such favor that they were fain to deliver sundry letters which he wrote to us, into the care of the Venice consul. Whereas he had no answer he had set it down to our lack of diligence at home, till at last he was put on the right track by Akusch, and it was plainly shown that those letters had never reached us, and that by Ursula's malice. To follow up these matters Akusch had afterwards betaken himself again to Alexandria; notwithstanding by this time his father had fallen on evil days. And behold, on the very evening after their return, as they were passing along by the side of the Venice Fondaco, whither they had gone to see the leech who attended the Consul—having heard that he was a German by birth—they were aware of a loud outcry hard by, and presently beheld a wounded man, whom they forthwith knew for Kunz.

At first they believed that their eyes deceived them; and that it should have been these two, of all men, who found their master's brother lying in his blood, I must ever deem a miracle. To be sure, any man from the West who was fain to seek another in the land of Egypt, must first make enquiry here at the Fondaco.

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A few hours later Kunz was in bed and well tended in the house of Akusch's mother, and it was on their return to Cairo, to speak with my eldest brother of these matters, that Epplein was witness to Ursula's vile betrayal and the vast demand of the Sultan. Then my brother, by the help of some who showed him favor, had that letter conveyed to Akusch of which Epplein had been robbed hard by Pillenreuth. More than this the good fellow had not to tell.

As I, on my ride home through the wood, turned over in my mind who might be the wise and trusty friend to whom we could confide our case and our fears, if Kubbeling should leave us in the lurch, verily I found no reply. If indeed Cousin Gotz—that wise and steadfast wayfaring man, rich with a thousand experiences of outlandish life—if he were willing to make common cause with his Little Red-riding-hood, and the companion of his youth! But a terrible oath kept him far away, and where in the wide world might he be found?

Ann likewise had much to cause her heaviness, and I thanked the Saints that I was alone with Epplein when he told me that his dear lord was sorely changed, albeit having seen him only from afar, he could scarce tell me wherein that change lay.

Thus we rode homewards in silence, through the evening dusk, and as we came in sight of the lights of the town all my doubting and wandering fears vanished on a sudden in wonderment as to who should be the first person we might meet within the gate, inasmuch as Cousin Maud had ever set us the unwise example of considering such a meeting as a sign, or token, or Augury.

Now, as soon as we had left the gate behind us, lo, a lantern was lifted, and we saw, by the light twinkling dimly through the horn, instead of old Hans Heimvogel's red, sottish face, a sweet and lovely maiden's; by reason that he had fallen into horrors, imagining that mice were rushing over him, so that his fair granddaughter Maria was doing duty for him. And I greeted her right graciously, inasmuch as Cousin Maud held it to be a good sign when a smiling maid should be the first to meet her as she came into the city gates.

As for Ann, she scarce marked that it was Maria; and when, after we were come home, I spoke of this token of good promise, she asked me how, in these evil days, I could find heart to think of such matters; and she sighed and cried: "Oh, Margery, indeed I am heavy at heart! For three long years have I taken patience and with a right good will. But the end, meseems, is further than ever, and he who should have helped us is disabled or ever he has stirred a finger, and even my lord Cardinal's home-coming is put off, albeit all men know that Herdegen is as a man in a den of lions—and I, my spirit sinks within me. And even my wise grandmother can give me no better counsel than to 'wait patiently' and yet again 'Wait' . . ."

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Whereupon Susan, who had taken off from us our wet hoods, broke in with: "Aye, Mistress Ann, and that has ever from the days of Adam and Eve, been the best of all counsel. For life all through is but waiting for the end; and even when we have taken the last Sacrament and our eyes are dim in death then most of all must we take Patience, waiting for that we shall find beyond the grave. Here below! By my soul, I myself grew grey waiting in vain for one who long years ago gave me this ring. Others had better luck; yet if the priest had wed us, would that have made an end of Patience? I trow not! It might have been for weal or it might have been for woe. A wife may go to mass every day in the month. But is that an end of Patience? Will the storks bring her a babe or no? Will it be a boy or a maid? And if the little one should come, after the wife has told her beads till her fingers are sore, what will the waiting babe turn out? Such an one as Junker Herdegen grows up to be the delight of every eye and heart, and if that make less need of Patience meseems we know full well! And Mistress Waldstromer, out in the forest, a lady, she, of stern stuff, she could tell a tale; and I say, Mistress Ann, if old Dame Pernhart's answer sinks into your heart, God's blessing rest on it!—I am waiting, as you are waiting. We each and all are waiting for one; if by the merciful help of the Saints he ever comes home, yet never dream, Mistress Ann, that Patience will be out of court."

And with such comfort as this the old woman hung our garments to dry while we bowed our heads and went up-stairs.

Up in the guest-chamber we heard loud voices, and as we went in a strange sight met our eyes. Uncle Christian and Doctor Holzschuher were sitting face to face with Cousin Maud, and she was laughing so heartily that she could not control herself, but flung up her arms and then dropped them on her knees, for all the world as she had taught us children to play at a game of "Fly away, little birds."

When she marked my presence she forgot to greet me, and cried to me well nigh breathless:

"A drink of wine, Margery, and a morsel of bread. I am ready to split—I shall die of laughing!"

Then, when I heard my good Godfather Christian's hearty laughing, and saw that Master Holzschuher had but just ceased, I was fain to laugh likewise, and even Ann, albeit she had but now been so sad, joined in. This lasted a long while till we learned the cause of such unwonted mirth; and this was of such a kind as to afford great comfort and new assurance, and we were bound to crave our good friends' pardon for having deemed them lacking in diligence. Master Holzschuher had indeed made the best use of the time to move every well-to-do man in Nuremberg who had known our departed father, and the Abbots of the rich convents, and many more, to give of their substance as they were able, to redeem Herdegen from the power of the heathen; and the other twain had worked wonders likewise, in Augsburg.

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But that which had moved Cousin Maud to mirth was that my Uncle Christian had related how that he and Master Pernhart, finding old Tetzal, Ursula's father, at Augsburg, had agreed together to make him pay a share towards Herdegen's ransom; and my godfather's face beamed again now, with contentment in every feature, as he told us by what means he had won the churlish old man over to the good cause.

Whereas the three good gentlemen had considered that all of Jost Tetzal's great possessions must presently fall to his daughter, and that it would be a deed pleasing to God to bring some chastisement on that traitorous quean, they had laid a plot against her father; and it was for that alone that Uncle Christian, who could ill endure the ride in the winter-season, had set forth, with Master Pernhart, for Augsburg. And there he had achieved a rare masterpiece of skill, painting Dame Ursula's reprobate malice in such strong colors to her father that Master Pernhart was in fear lest he should bring upon himself another fit. And he had furthermore sworn to lay the whole matter before the Emperor, with whom, as all men knew, he enjoyed much privilege, inasmuch as he had been as it were his host when his Majesty held his court at Nuremberg. Ursula, to be sure, was no subject now of his gracious Majesty's; yet would he, Christian Pfinzing, know no rest till the Emperor had compelled her father, Jost Tetzal, to cut off from her who had married an Italian, the possessions she counted on from a German city.

Thereupon Pernhart had spoken in calm but weighty words, threatening that his brother, the Cardinal, would visit the heaviest wrath of the Pope on the old man and his daughter, unless he were ready and willing to make amends and atonement for his child's accursed sin, whereby a Christian man had fallen into the hands of the godless heathen. And when at last they had conquered the churlish old man's hardness of heart and stiff-necked malice, they drove him to a strange bargain. Old Tetzal was steadfast in his intention to give up as little as he might of his daughter's inheritance, while his tormentors raised their demands, and claimed a hundred gulden and a hundred gulden more, up to many hundreds, which Tetzal was forced to yield; till at last he gave his bond, signed and sealed, to renounce all his daughter's estate, and to add thereto two thousand gulden of his own moneys, and to hold the sum in readiness to ransom Herdegen.

Thus, at one stroke, all our fears touching the moneys were at an end; and when the notary showed us the parchment roll on which each one had set down the sum he would give, we were struck dumb; and when we reckoned it all together, the sum was far greater than that which had cost us so many sleepless nights.

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By this time we scarce could read for tears, and our souls were so moved to thankfulness as we marked the large sums set forth against the names of the noble families and of the convent treasurers, that we had never felt so great a love for our good city and the dear, staunch friends who dwelt therein. Nay, and many simple folk had promised to pay somewhat of their modest store; and although my soul overflowed with thankful joy over the great sums to be given by our kith and kin, I rejoiced no less over the five pounds of farthings promised by a cordwainer, whom we had holpen some years ago when he had been sick and in debt.

And then was there hearty embracing and kissing, and the men, as was befitting after a deed so well done, craved to drink. Cousin Maud hastened with all zeal to do honor to friends and guests so dear; but as she reached the door she stood still as in doubt, and signed to me so that I perceived that somewhat had gone wrong. And so indeed it had, inasmuch as our silver vessels, down to the very least cup, had gone to the silversmith in pledge, and Uncle Tucher, the Councillor, who had bought my palfrey, had also been fain to have all our old wine, whereof many goodly rows of casks, and jars sealed with pitch, lay in our cellars. A few hams still hung in the chimney by good luck; and there were chickens and eggs in plenty; but of all else little enough, even of butter. When Cousin Maud set forth all this with a right lamentable face I could not refrain my mirth, and I promised her that if she could send up a few dainty dishes from the kitchen, I would make shift to please our beloved guests. That as for the wine, I would take that upon myself, and no Emperor need be ashamed of our Venice glasses. And herewith I sent her down stairs; but I then frankly confessed to our friends how matters stood; and when they had heard me, now laughing heartily, and now in amazement and shaking their heads, I enquired of Doctor Holzschuher, as a man of law, how I might deal with the wine, inasmuch as it had already found a purchaser? Hereupon arose much jocose argument and discussion, and at last the learned notary and doctor of laws declared that he held it to be his duty, as adviser to the Council and administrator of the Schopper estates, to taste and prove with all due caution whether the price promised by Tucher, and not yet paid down, were not all too little for the liquor, inasmuch as his clients, being but women-folk, had no skill in the good gifts of Bacchus, and could not know their value. To abstain from such testing he held would be a breach of duty, and whereas he did not trust his own skill alone, he must call upon Master Christian Pfinzing as a man of ripe experience, and Master Councillor Pernhart, who, as brother to a great prelate, had doubtless drunk much good liquor, in due form to proceed with him to the Schoppers' cellar, and there to mark those vessels or jars out of which the wine should be drawn for the testing. Moreover, to

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satisfy all the requirements of the case, a serving-man should be sent to call upon Master Tucher, as the purchaser, to be present in his own person at the ceremony. Inasmuch as it yet lacked two hours of midnight, he would, without doubt, be found in the gentlemen's tavern; and it might be enjoined on the messenger to add, that if Master Tucher were fain to bring with him one skilled in such matters to bear him witness on his part, such an one would be made right welcome at the Schopperhof.

Thus within a quarter of an hour the three worthy gentlemen, and Ann and I, were seated with the winejars before us, they having chosen for themselves of the best our cellar could afford; and when the meats which Cousin Maud sent up were set on the table, albeit there were but earthen plates and crocks, and no silver glittered on the snow-white cloth, yet God's good gifts lacked not their savor.

And presently Uncle Tucher came in, and with him, as his skilled witness, old Master Loffelholz; and when they likewise had sat down with us, and when we had bidden the Magister to join us, there was such hearty and joyful emptying of glasses and friendly discourse that Master Tucher declared that the happy spirit of our father, the singer, still dwelt within our walls. Howbeit, Ann had to do her duty as watcher over my uncle more often that evening than for a long time past.

In the course of that right joyful supper many weighty matters were discussed, and the gentlemen, meseemed, were greatly more troubled than Cousin Maud or I that we should so hastily have parted with sundry matters which should not be lacking in a house of good family, but which, as we had learned by experience, were in no wise needful in life. And many a jesting word was spoken concerning our poor platters and dishes, and tin spoons, and empty stables. The bargain over the wine was declared to be null and void, and my cousin took heart to assure the gentlemen, in right seemly speech, that now again she was happy, when she knew that what she had set before such worshipful and welcome guests was indeed our own, and not another's.

By the time of their departing it was nearer to cockcrow than to midnight; and when, on the morrow, I went into the chamber in the morning, to look forth into the street, the sun was shining brightly in a blue sky. I minded me with silent thanksgiving of all the good cheer yestereve had brought us, and of the wisdom and faithfulness of our good friends. Many a wise and a witty word uttered over their wine came back to me then; and I was wondering to myself what new plot had been brewing between my godfather and Uncle Tucher, whereas I had marked them laying their heads together, when behold, the stable-lad from the Tuchers' coming down the street, leading my own dear bayhorse; and as I saw him closer I beheld that his mane and flowing tail were plaited up with fine red ribbons. He stood still in front of our door and, when I flew down to greet the faithful beast, the lad gave me a letter wherein nought was written save these Latin words in large letters: "AMICITIA FIDEI" which is to say: "Friendship to Fidelity."

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Thus the pinch and sacrifice were on a sudden ended; and albeit a snow-storm ere long came down on us, yet the sunshine in my bosom was still as bright as though Spring had dawned there in the December season, and all care and fear were banished.

CHAPTER XV.

It was noon. Master Peter could not come to table for a bad headache, and Cousin Maud scarce opened her lips. The sudden turn of matters had upset her balance, and so dazed her brain that she would answer at cross-purposes, and had ordered so many pats of butter from the farm wench as though she had cakes to bake for a whole convent full of sisters. Likewise a strange unrest kept her moving to and fro, and this was beginning to come upon me likewise, by reason that Ann came not, albeit in the morning she had promised to be here again at noon.

I was about to make ready to seek her, when I was stopped, first by a message from the forest bidding me, albeit I had scarce left the lodge, to return thither no later than on the morrow; and next by an unlooked-for guest, who had for long indeed been lost to sight. This was Lorenz Abenberger, the apothecary's son, erewhile a companion of Herdegen in his youth, and he who, after he had beguiled the other pueri to dig for treasure, had been turned out of the school. Since those days, when likewise he had cast nativities for us maidens, and many a time amused us with his magic arts, we had no knowledge of him but that, after his parents' death, he had ceased to ply the apothecary's trade, and had given himself up to the study of Alchemy. If folks spoke truth he had already discovered the philosopher's stone, or was nigh to doing so: but notwithstanding that many learned men, and among them the Magister had assured me, that such a thing was by no means beyond the skill of man, Lorenz Abenberger for certain had not attained his end, inasmuch as that, when he appeared in my presence, his aspect was rather that of a beggar than of a potent wise-head at whose behest lead and copper are transmuted into gold.

He had heard of the great sum needed for Herdegen's ransom, and he now came to assure me of the warm friendship he had ever cherished for his old school-mate, and that he had it in his power to create the means of releasing him from bondage. Then, marking that I gazed pitifully on his thread-bare, meagre, and by no means clean raiment, whence there came a sour, drug-like smell, he broke into a foul laugh and said that, to be sure, it would seem strange that so beggarly a figure should make bold to promise so great a treasure; howbeit, he stood to his word. So sure as night follows day, he could reach the goal for which he had consumed all his father's and mother's estate, nay all he had in the world, if he might but once have three pounds of pure gold to do whatsoever he would withal. If I would yield to his entreaties and be moved to grant what he needed, he was ready

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to pledge his body and soul to death and damnation, and sign the bond with his heart's blood, if by the end of the thirteenth day he had not found the red Lion, and through its aid 'Aurum potabile' and the panacea against every evil of body or soul. This would likewise give him the power of turning every mineral, even the most worthless, into pure gold, as easily as I might turn my spinning-wheel or say a Paternoster.

All this he poured forth with rolling eyes and panting breath, and that he spoke every word in sacred earnest none could doubt; and indeed the fervent, eager longing which appealed to my compassion and charity from every fibre of his being, might have moved me to bestow on him that which he craved, if I had possessed such wealth; but, as it was, I was forced to say him nay; and whereas at this minute Susan came in with the tidings that a man had come from the Pernharts', bidding me go forthwith to Ann, I threw over me my cloak and gave him to understand how matters stood with me, bidding him farewell with all gentleness yet of set purpose.

The blood mounted into his pale cheeks; he came close up to me, and set his teeth, and said wrathfully that I must and I should save him, and with him my own brother, if I did but clearly understand the sense and purpose of his entreaty. And he began with a flood of speech to tell me how near he was to his end, with a number of outlandish, magical words such as "the great Magisterium," "the Red Lion," "the Red Tincture," and the like, till meseemed my brain reeled with the sinful gibberish; notwithstanding, to this day I believe that in all truth he was nigh attaining his purpose; and he might have done so at last were it not that, a short space after this, he was choked by the vapor from an alembic which burst.

But whence might I at that day procure the means to succor him?

Again and again I strove to check his fiery zeal, but in vain, till I told him plainly that I had not at my command three pounds of brass farthings, much less three pounds of gold, and that he must apply elsewhere and no longer keep me tarrying.

And I gave him my hand to bid him farewell; howbeit he seized it with both of his, and wrung and shook my arm till it ached; and being beside him self with rage, he admonished me with threatening words and gestures not to ruin his life's work, and him, and those dear to me, by my base avarice. When I had got over my first fear I snatched myself free from the miserable little man, and turned my back upon him; but he leaped in front of me, spread forth his arms to bar the doorway, and shrieked, foaming with fury:

"Away, away, down to the depths! Away with us all! Woe unto thee, mean, blind fool that thou art! Woe unto us all! Take away that hand! Verily even if my mouth were gagged, yet shouldst thou hear what is coming upon thee and all thy race! I could have

hindered it, and I would have hindered it; but now it shall be fulfilled. Oh, it was not for nothing that we were young together! I read thy horoscope and that arrogant brawler thy brother's long ago, and when I interpret it to thee, if the blood does not curdle in thy veins. . . ."

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Hereupon the blood of the Schoppers surged up; I laid hands on the mad wight, whose strength was scarce greater than mine, but he hit and stamped about like one bereft, crying: "Your planets stand over the houses of Death, Captivity, and Despair. The fulfilment thereof began on Saint Lazarus' day, and on this day it falls first on thee; and thus the doom shall run its course till it hath an end on Saint John's eve, by reason that ye will then have nought left to lose!"

Here Abenberger's raving came to a sudden end. His outcry had brought up Cousin Maud, and when she opened the door behind him and saw a man standing in my way, she clutched him from behind, throwing her arms about him, and dragged him out of the chamber. Meanwhile she shrieked aloud "Fire!" and "Murder!" and again "Fire!" and all the men and wenches ran up in hot haste and had the gold-maker down the stairs fast enough.

Howbeit, I felt truly grieved for him; yet, as I gazed down on him from the window, I saw that he had taken his stand without in the street, and was shaking his fist up at me till a constable saw it and sent him homewards.

Then I must first comfort Cousin Maud for this untoward scene, and suffer her to rub my wrists with wine and spirit of balm, forasmuch as they tingled like fire and were scratched by the hapless wight's nails. She was beside herself with rage, and the evil prediction of the master of the black arts and of star-gazing filled her with unbounded terrors. Thus it was my part, though; the younger, to give her courage, notwithstanding the awful curse haunted me likewise, and rang in my ears even when at last I made my way through the dark streets, followed by the serving-man, to do Ann's bidding. My heart was heavier than it had been for many a day; for my fears were mingled with pity for that hapless soul, so skilled in much learning. I had learned to feel other woes and joys besides my own, and I could full well picture in my mind the despair which at this hour, must wring the soul of that poor fellow. I was glad to think that the serving-man might believe that I put my kerchief to my eyes only to wipe away the whirling snow. At the same time, methought that for certain some new and terrible sorrow hung over us nay, never so clearly as then, after Abenberger's violent attack, had I perceived how much alone and without protection I stood in the world. And wherefor had Ann not come to me? For what reason or matter had she sent for me at so late an hour?

Then, when I looked up at the Pernharts' house; saw that the windows of the first floor which had be made ready as guest chambers some days ago, for my lord Cardinal, were lighted up, so he must have come home and now be lodging there again.

But Ann knew full well how truly I honored the reverend and illustrious uncle, and for sure if he had brought her good tidings she would forthwith have sent me word, or have come to me herself.

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What then was now the matter? In what form had the misfortune come upon us which Abenberger had read in the stars?

I lifted the knocker with a faint heart, and could scarce breathe when I had to knock three times or ever the door was opened.

How swiftly my Ann was wont to fly to me when she heard my tap! Was she then afraid to meet me with the message of woe which my lord Cardinal had perchance received from Cairo through his chaplains there? We had the ransom ready to be sure; yet Ursula would be almost forced, after her treacherous deed, to pursue Herdegen to his death; what could she look for if he ever came home again? Come what might then, and were it the worst, I must set out, and that forthwith, even if I found no fellowship but Cousin Maud and Epplein. And to this purpose I had come, when at last the door was opened.

Below stairs nought was stirring. I hastily flung my wet mantle to Mario, the deaf-mute, who had let me in, and ran up stairs. Hardly had I reached the second floor when Ann met me, well and of good cheer; and when I began, in the outer chamber, to beseech her to be no less steadfast than I was in departing for the East, she nodded consent, and pointed the way into the inner chamber, where we might be more at our ease. I was amazed to see her in such good heart, and all the more so when she told me that my lord Cardinal had come home that morning.

There was above stairs, she hastily told me, a noble Italian Knight, who had desired to see our pictures; so we went into the guest chamber, which was all lighted up as when company was bidden. Nay, it was of such festal aspect as well nigh dazzled me, and I discerned at once that my portrait, which only a few days ago had been hanged on the wall by the side of Ann's for my lord Cardinal, was now placed on two chairs and leaning against the high backs.

All this and more I perceived in a few hasty glances, and when I enquired where might this stranger from Italy be, I was told that he had gone with Master Pernhart into the chamber which had been fitted for his Eminence with the magnificent stuffs from Rome and Florence which he had brought as a gift for his old mother. The finest of these were certain hangings of fine tissue and of many colors, which hung over the wide opening between the great guest chamber and that next to it. And the Italian must likewise have seen these, inasmuch as that they hung down, whereas they were wont to be drawn to the sides. Behind them, all was dark; thus the Master and his wife, with their strange guest, must have withdrawn into the chamber at the back of the house, where the Cardinal had loved to work, and wherein there were sundry works of art to be seen, and choice Greek manuscripts which he had brought with him to show to the learned doctors in his native town; as being rare and precious.

None was here save the old grandam, and her countenance beamed with joy as she held out her hands to me from her arm-chair, in glad and hearty greeting. She was dressed in her bravest array, and there was in her aspect likewise somewhat solemn and festal.

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Albeit I was truly minded at all times to rejoice with those who were rejoicing, all this bravery, at this time, was sorely against the grain of my troubled heart and its forebodings of ill. I could not feel at ease, and meseemed that all this magnificence and good cheer mocked my hapless and oppressed spirit.

In truth, I could scarce bring myself to return the old dame's greeting with due gladness; and her keen eyes at once discerned how matters were with me. She held me by the hand, and asked me in a hearty voice whence came the clouds that darkened my brow. When her bright, high-spirited Margery, whom she had never known to be in a gloomy mood, looked like this, for sure some great evil had befallen.

Whereupon what came over me I know not. Whether it were that the blackness and the terror in my bosom were too great a contrast with the gladness and splendor about me, or what it was that so tightly gripped my heart, I cannot tell to this day; but I know full well that all which had oppressed me since Abenberger denounced me came rushing down on my soul as it were, and that I burst into tears and cried out "Yes, grandmother dear, I have gone through a dreadful, terrible hour! I have had to withstand the attack of a madman, and hear a horrible curse from his lips. But it is not that alone, no, verily and indeed! I can, for that matter, make any man to know his place, were he twice the man that little Abenberger is; and as to curses, I learnt from a child to mind my dear father's saying: "Curse me if you will! What matters it if I may earn God's blessing!"

"And you have earned it, honestly earned it," quoth she, drawing me down to kiss my forehead. Hereupon I ceased weeping and bid my heart take fresh courage, and went on, still much moved: "It is nought but a woman's shameless craft that troubles me so sorely. Ursula's hate hangs over my brothers like a black storm-cloud; and on my way hither meseemed I saw full plainly that the ransom is not the end of the matter. Nay, if we had twice so much, yet Herdegen will never come home alive if we fail to cross Ursula's scheming; has she not cause to fear the worst, if ever he comes home in safety? But where is the envoy who would dare so much? Kunz lies wounded in a strange land, Young Kubbeling would doubtless be ready to cross the seas, notwithstanding his fever, but good-will would not serve him, so little is he skilled in such matters. Our other friends are over old, or forced to stay in Nuremberg. Thus do matters stand. What then is left to us—to Ann and me, Grandmother? I ask you—what, save to act on our first and only wise intent? And that which it is our part to do, which we may not put off one day longer than we need, is to take ship, under the grace of the Blessed Virgin, and ourselves to carry fresh courage to those who are nearest and dearest to us. Of a truth I am but an orphaned maid; my lover and my guardian are both dead; and

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yet do I not fear to depart for a land beyond seas; true and faithful love is the guiding-star which shall lead us, and we have seen in Ann how true is the Apostle's saying that love conquereth all things. Any creature who stands straight on a pair of strong legs, and who is sound in soul and body, and who looks up to Heaven and trusts in God's grace with joyful assurance, even if it be but a weak maiden, may rescue a fellow-creature in need; and I, thank God, am sound and whole. Nay, and I will even pledge my word that I will tear asunder the subtlest web which Ursula may spin, in especial if I have Ann's keen wit to aid me. So I will go forth, and away, through frost and snow, to find my brethren; and if his pains keep Kubbeling at home in spite of his catskins, and if Master Ulsenius should forbid Eppelein to ride so far, yet will we find some other to be our faithful squire."

And with this I drew a deep breath; and when I turned to seek Ann, with a lighter heart, to the end that she should signify her consent, on a sudden me seemed as though the floor of the chamber rose up beneath my feet, and I was nigh falling, by reason that the fine hangings which hid the Cardinal's chamber from my eyes were drawn asunder, and a tall man, tanned brown by the sun, came forth, and said in a deep voice: "Wilt thou trust these hands, Margery? They are ready and willing to serve thee faithfully."

Hereupon a cry of joy broke from me: "Gotz," and again "Gotz!"

And albeit meseemed as though the walls, and tables, and chairs were whirling round me, and as though the ceiling, nay and the blue sky above it had yawned above me, yet I fell not, but hastened to meet this new-comer, and grasped his kind, strong hand.

Yet was not this all; or ever I was rightly aware how it befell, he had clasped me in his arms, and I was leaning on his breast, and his warm bearded lips were for the first time set on mine.

Master Pernhart and his wife had come out of the further chamber with my cousin, and Ann, and the grandam, and the elder children gazed at us; yet neither he nor I paid heed to them and, as each looked into the other's eyes, and I saw that his face was the same as of old, albeit of a darker brown, and more well-favored and manly; then my heart sang out in joyful triumph, and I made no resistance when he held me closer to him and whispered in my ear: "But Margery, how may a cousin, who is not an old man, go forth as squire to a fair young maid, and so further on through a lifetime, and not rouse other folks to great and righteous wrath?"

At this the blood mounted to my face; and albeit I by no means doubted of my reply, he spared my bashfulness and went on with deep feeling: "But if he did so as your wedded husband, what aunt or gossip then might dare to blame him and his honored wife, Dame Margery Waldstrome?"

Whereat I smiled right gladly up at my new lover, and answered him in a whisper: "Not one, Gotz, not one."

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Thus I plighted my troth to him that very evening; and as for the costly jewels which he had bought on the Rialto at Venice to bring to his dear Red-riding-hood, and now gave me as his first love-tokens, what were they to me as compared with the joyful news wherewith he could rejoice our hearts? So presently we sat with the Pernharts after that Cousin Maud and Uncle Christian Pfinzing, my dear godfather, had been bidden to join us. Gotz sat with his arm round me, and my hand rested in his.

For how long a space had lands and seas lain betwixt us, how swift and sudden had his wooing been and my consent! And yet, meseemed as though I had but now fulfilled the purpose of Providence for me from the beginning; and there was singing and blossoming in my breast and heart, as though they were an enchanted garden wherein fountains were leaping, and roses and tulips and golden apples and grapes were blooming and ripening among pine-trees and ivy-wreaths.

Nevertheless I lost no word of his speech, and could have listened to him till morning should dawn again. And while we thus sat, or paced the room arm-in-arm, I heard many matters, and yet not enough of Gotz's adventurous fate, and of the happy turn my brothers' concerns had taken with his good help. And what we now learned from his clear and plain report, answering our much questioning, was that, after separating from his home, he had taken service as a soldier of the Venice Republic, and had done great deeds under the name of Silvestri, which is to say "of the Woods." Of all the fine things he had done before Salonica and elsewhere, fighting against Sultan Mourad and the Osmanli, yea, and in many fights against other infidels, thereby winning the favor of his general, the great Pietro Loredano—of all this he would tell us at great length another day. Not long since he had been placed as chief, at the head of the armed force on board the fleet sent forth by the Republic to Alexandria to treat with the Sultan as concerning the King of Cyprus, who was held a prisoner. With him likewise, on the greatest of the galleys, were there sundry great gentlemen of the most famous families of Venice, and chief of them all, Marino Cavallo, Procurator of Saint Mark; inasmuch as that the Council desired to ransom the King of Cyprus with Venice gold, and to that end had sent Angelo Michieli with the embassy, he being the Senior of one of the most powerful and wealthy merchants' houses in the East.

With all of these Gotz, as a hero in war, was on right friendly terms, and when they landed at Alexandria, Anselmo Giustiniani, the Consul, had given them all fine quarters in the Fondaco.

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Here, then, my new lover had met Ursula; howbeit, he made not himself known to her, by reason that already he had heard an evil report of her husband's dealings as Consul, and of her deeds and demeanors. Yet was there one man dwelling in the Fondaco to whom he confessed his true name, and that was Hartmann Knorr, a son of Nuremberg and of good family, who, after gaining his doctor's degree at Padua, had taken the post of leech to the Consul, provided and paid by the Republic. In this, his fellow countryman's chamber, the two, who had been schoolmates, had much privy discourse, and inasmuch as that Master Knorr knew of old that Gotz was near of kin to the Schoppers, he forthwith made known to him that he had been bidden to the house of Akusch's parents to tend and heal Kunz, and had learnt from him many strange tidings; accusing Ursula of the guilt of having concealed and kept back the letters written by Herdegen and Sir Franz to their kindred at home, of having set her husband's hired knaves on himself, to murder him, and lastly, of having maliciously increased the sum for his brother's ransom. Hereupon the worthy leech was minded to sail to Venice in the next homeward-bound galleon, to do what he might for his countrymen in sore straits; howbeit, Gotz might now perchance work out their release from grief and slavery in some other wise. And whereas Master Knorr could give him tidings of other criminal deeds committed by Giustiniani, my new lover had forthwith written a petition of accusation to the Council at Venice, and forthwith Marino Cavallo, in his rights as procurator of Saint Mark, had commanded the Consul and his wife to depart for Venice and present themselves before the Collegium of the Pregadi, which hath the direction of the Consuls beyond seas.

Likewise Gotz had taken in hand the cause of Herdegen and Sir Franz and forasmuch as he was held in great respect, Master Angelo Michieli was not hardly won to do what he might for them, taking Gotz and Kunz for surety. The Venice embassy went forth to Cairo, and whereas Master Michieli, who was skilled in such matters, beat down the ransom demanded for King Janus to the sum of two hundred thousand ducats, and paid it down for the royal captive, he likewise moved the Sultans to be content with fifteen thousand ducats each for Herdegen and Sir Franz, and my brother and his fellow in misfortune were set free.

All through this tale my heart beat higher; I secretly hoped that peradventure my brothers had come home with Gotz, and were hiding themselves away, only for some reason privy to themselves. Howbeit, I presently heard that they had set forth with their faces to Jerusalem; to the end that they might, at their homecoming, tell the Emperor with the greater assurance, that they had taken upon themselves the penance of going at last to the Holy Places whither they had been bidden to go.

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When Gotz had ended these great and comforting tidings, and I enquired of him what then had at last brought him homewards, he freely confessed that my brothers' discourse had recalled to him so plainly his fathers' house, his parents, and all that was dear and that he had left, that he could no longer endure to stay away beyond seas. Then he looked me in the eyes and whispered: "The images of my sick mother and my grey-headed father drew me most strongly; yet was a third; a dear, sweet, childish face; the very same as now looks into mine so gladly and lovingly. Yes, it is the very face I had hoped to find it; and when, erewhile, I saw your likeness in the red hood, and heard your speech as you poured forth your inmost soul to grandmother Pernhart, I knew my own mind."

How dear the newcomer was, in truth, to all in the Pernhart household I might mark that evening. The old grandam's eyes rested on him as though he were a dear son, and Master Pernhart would come close to him now and again, and stroke his arm. Twice only did he hastily turn away and privily wipe his eyes. Nevertheless he saw our love-making with no jealousy; nay, when Gotz could scarce tear himself away from my picture, Master Pernhart whispered to him that if ever a maid should stand in his Gertrude's place it should be Margery, and the grandam had cried Amen.

It was already midnight when horses' hoofs were heard in the street, and when they stopped Gotz rose, and then presently all the others vanished from the chamber. Yet were we not long suffered to enjoy each other's fellowship, inasmuch as he himself had ordered his horse, to the end that he might ride forth spite of the lateness of the hour to the forest. His servingman, himself the son of a forester, had been there already to desire Grubner, the headman, to bid my uncle to his dwelling early on the morrow, and the good son purposed there to gladden himself by meeting his father, after that he had greeted the house unseen in the darkness.

But how hard it was to part after so brief a meeting from this newly-found and best-beloved lover, and to see the weary traveller fare forth once more into the dark night. And how few words in secret had we as yet spoken, how little had we discussed what might befall on the morrow, and how he should demean himself to his mother!

To my humble entreaty that he would set aside the unnatural and sinful oath which forbade him to enter his parents' house he had turned a deaf ear. Yet how lovingly had he given me to understand his stern refusal, which I justly deserved, inasmuch as I knew full well the meaning of an oath; and yet I besought him with all my heart to send away his horse, and bid me not farewell when welcome had scarce been spoken. On the morrow it would be a joy to me to ride forth with him, and my uncle could never chafe at a few short hours' delay.

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All this poured from my lips smoothly and warmly enough, and he calmly heard me to the end; but then he solemnly declared to me that, sweet as he might deem it to have me by his side to keep him company, it might not be; and he set forth clearly and fully how he had ordered the matter yestereve, and I looked up at him as to a general who foresees and governs all that may befall, to the wisest ends. So steadfast and clear a purpose I had never met; howbeit, Mother Eve's part in me was ill-content. It was too much for me to suffer that he should depart, and, like the fool that I was, the desire possessed me to bend to my will this man of all men, whose stiff-necked will was ever as firm as iron.

I began once more to beseech him, and this time he broke in, declaring that, say what I would, he must depart, and therewith he pulled the hood of his cloak over his head so that his well-favored, honest brown face, with its pointed beard, framed as it were in the green cloth, looked down on me, the very image of manly beauty and mild gravity.

My heart beat higher than ever for joy and pride at calling the heart of such a man mine own, and therewith my desire waxed stronger to exert my power. And I knew right well how to get the upper-hand of my lovers. My Hans had never said me nay when I had entreated him with certain wiles. And whereas I had in no wise forgotten my tricks, I took Gotz by the hem of his hood and drew his dear head down to my face. Then I rubbed my nose against his as hares do when they sniff at each other, put up my lips for a kiss, stood on tip-toe, offered him my lips from afar, and whispered to him right sweetly and beseechingly:

"And, in spite of all, now you are to be my good, dear heart's treasure, and will do Margery's bidding when she entreats you so fondly and will give you a sweet kiss for your pains."

But I had reckoned vainly. The reward for which my Hans modestly served me, this bold warrior cared not to win. His bearded lips, to be sure, were ready enough to meet mine, nor was he content with one kiss only; but, as soon as he had enjoyed the last, he took both my hands tight in his own, and said solemnly but sweetly:

"Do you not love me, Margery?" And when I had hastily declared that I did, he went on in the same tone, and still holding my hands: "Then you must know, once for all, that I could refuse you nought, neither in great matters nor small, unless it were needful. Yet, when once I have said," and he spoke loud, "nothing can move me in the very least. You have known me from a child, and of your own free will you have given yourself over to this iron brain. Now, kiss me once more, and bear me no malice! Till to-morrow. Out in the forest, please God, we will belong to each other for many a long day!"

Therewith he clasped me firmly and truly in his arms, and I willingly and hotly returned his kiss, and or ever I could find a word to reply he had quitted the chamber. I hastened to the window, and as he waved his hand and rode off down the street facing the snow-

storm, I pressed my hand to my breast, and rarely has a human being so overflowed with pure gladness at being twice worsted in the fray, albeit I had forced it on myself.

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How I returned home I know not; but I know that I had rarely knelt at my prayers with such fervent thanksgiving, and that meseemed as though my mother in Heaven and my dead Hans likewise must rejoice at this which had befallen me.

As I lay in bed, or ever I slept, all that was fairest in my past life came back to me as clearly as if it were living truth, and first and chiefest I saw myself as little Red-riding-hood, under the forest-trees with Gotz, who did me a thousand services and preferred me above all others till, for Gertrude's sake, he departed beyond seas, and set my childish soul in a turmoil.

Then came the joy and the pain I had had by reason of the loves of Herdegen and Ann, and then my Hans crossed my path, and how glad I was to remember him and the bliss he had brought me! But or ever I had come to the bitterest hour of my young days, sleep overcame me, and the manly form of Gotz, steeled by much peril and strife for his life, came to me in my dreams; and he did not, as Hans would have done, give me his hand; Oh no! He snatched me up in his arms and carried me, as Saint Christopher bears the Holy Child, and strode forward with a firm step over plains and abysses, whithersoever he desired; and I suffered him to go as he would, and made no resistance, and felt scarce a fear, albeit meseemed the strong grip of his iron arm hurt me. And thus we went on and on, through ancient mountain-forests, while the boughs lashed my face and I could look into the nests of the eagles and wood-pigeons, of the starlings and squirrels. It was a wondrous ramble; now and then I gasped for breath, yet on we went till, on the topmost bough of an oak, behold, there was Lorenz Abenberger, and the evil words he spoke made me wake up.

After this I could sleep no more, and in thought I followed Gotz through the snow-storm. And in spirit I saw Waldtrud, the fair daughter of Grubner, the chief forester, bidding him welcome, and giving him hot spiced wine after his cold ride, and sipping the cup with her rosy lips. Hereupon a pang pierced my heart, and methought indeed how well favored a maid was the forester's daughter, and not more than a year older than I, and by every right deemed the fairest in all the forest. And the evil fiend jealousy, which of yore had had so little hold over me that I could bear to see my Hans pay the friendliest court to the fairest maidens, now whispered wild suspicions in mine ear that Gotz, with his bold warrior's ways, might be like enough to sue for some light love-tokens from the fair and mirthful Waldtrud.

Howbeit, I presently called to mind the honest eyes of my new heart's beloved, and that brought me peace; and how I was struck with horror to think that I had known the sting of that serpent whom men call jealousy. Must it ever creep in where true love hath found a nest? And if indeed it were so, then—and a hot glow thrilled through me—then the love which had bound me to Hans Haller had been a poor manner of thing, and not the real true passion.

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No, no! Albeit it had worn another aspect than this brand new flame, which I now felt burning and blazing up from the early-lighted and long smouldering fire, nevertheless it had been of the best, and faithful and true. Albeit as the betrothed of Hans Haller I had been spared the pangs of jealousy, I owed it only to the great and steadfast trust I had gladly placed in him. And Gotz, who had endured so much anguish and toil to be faithful to his other sweetheart, was not less worthy of my faith, and it must be my task to fight against the evil spirit with all the strength that was in me.

Then again I fell asleep; and when, as day was breaking, I woke once more and remembered all that had befallen me yestereve, I had to clutch my shoulders and temples or ever I was certain that indeed my eyes were open on another day. And what a day! My heart overflowed as I saw, look which way I might, no perils, none, nothing, verily nothing that was not well-ordered and brought to a good end, nothing that was not a certainty, and such a blessed certainty!

I rose as fresh and thankful as the lark, my Cousin Maud was standing, as yet not dressed and with screws of paper in her hair, in front of the pictures of my parents, casting a light on their faces from her little lamp; and it was plain that she was telling them, albeit without speech, that her life's labor and care had come to a happy issue, and I was irresistibly moved to fly to her brave and faithful heart; and although, while we held each other in an embrace, we found no words, we each knew full well what the other meant.

After this, in all haste we made ready to set forth, and the Magister came down to us in the hall, inasmuch as my cousin had called him. He made his appearance in the motley morning gabardine which gave him so strange an aspect, and to my greeting of "God be with 'ee !" he gaily replied that he deemed it wasted pains to ask after my health.

Then, when he had been told all, at first he could not refrain himself and good wishes flowed from his lips as honey from the honey-comb; and he was indeed a right merry sight as, in the joy of his heart, he clapped his arms together across his breast, as a woodhewer may, to warm his hands in winter. On a sudden, however, he looked mighty solemn, and when Cousin Maud, bethinking her of Ann, spoke kindly to him, saying that matters were so in this world, that one who stood in the sun must need cast a shadow on other folks, the Magister bowed his head sadly and cried: "A wise saying, worthy Mistress Maud; and he who casts the shade commonly does so against his will, 'sine ira et studio'. And from that saying we may learn—suffer me the syllogism—that, inasmuch as all things which bring woe to one bring joy to another, and vice-versa, there must ever be some sad faces so long as there is no lack of happy ones. As to mine own poor countenance, I may number it indeed with those in shadow—notwithstanding"—here

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his flow of words stopped on a sudden. Howbeit, or ever we could stay him, he went on in a loud and well-nigh triumphant voice. "Notwithstanding I am no wise woeful—no, not in the least degree. I have found the clue, and who indeed could fail to see it: Your shadow can fall so black on me only by reason that you stand in the fullest sunshine! As for me, it is no hard matter for me to endure the blackness of night; and may you, Mistress Margery, for ever and ever stand in the glory of light, henceforth till your life's end."

As he spoke he upraised his eyes and hands to heaven as in prayer, and without bidding us "Vale," or "Valet," as was his wont, he gathered his gaudy robe and fled upstairs again.

The storm was yet as heavy as it had been yestereve; howbeit, though Bayard sank into the snow so deep that I swept it with the hem of my kirtle, yet the ride to the forest-lodge meseemed was as short as though I had flown. Cousin Maud would ride slowly in the sleigh, so I suffered her to creep along, and presently outstripped her.

Gotz and I had yestereve agreed that I should first see Aunt Jacoba, and then meet him at Grubner's lodge to report of what mind she might seem to be. Ann had no choice but to stay at home, inasmuch as she must be in attendance at the Cardinal's homecoming.

No one in all the dear old forest home was aware of my coming save the gate warden. My uncle had ridden forth at an early hour, and was not yet returned, but my aunt I found below stairs, strange to say, against her wont, dressed and in discourse with the chaplain. Peradventure then her husband had already made known to her what had taken him forth to Grubner's dwelling, and if so he had lifted a heavy task from me, for indeed my whole soul yearned to this dearly-beloved aunt, yet meseemed it was no light matter to prepare her, who was so feeble and yet so self-willed, for the joy and the strife of soul which awaited her. The board was spread for them as it were, and yet she and Gotz, by their baleful oath, had barred themselves from tasting of that bread and that cup.

I crossed the threshold in trembling, and as soon as she beheld me she cried out, with burning cheeks, which glowed not so, for sure, from the blaze in the chimney: "Margery, Margery! And so happy as she looks! You have seen your uncle, child, and can tell me wherefor he is gone forth?"

I told her truly that I had not; and then bid her rejoice with me, inasmuch as that all the price of Herdegen's ransom had been paid and, best of all, that we had good tidings of our brothers' well-being.

Then she was fain to know when and through whom, and made enquiry in such wise as though she had some strong suspicion; and I answered her as calmly as I might, that a pilgrim from the East had come to us yestereve, a right loyal and worthy gentleman, whom, indeed, I hoped to bring to her knowledge.

But I might say no more by reason that her eyes on a sudden flashed up brightly, and she vehemently broke in:

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“Chaplain, Chaplain! Now what do you say? When the old man rode forth so early this morning, and bid me farewell in so strange a wise, then— hear me, Margery—he likewise spoke to me of a messenger from the East who rode into the city yestereve— just as you say. But it was not of Herdegen that he brought tidings, but of him—of him —of Gotz that he had sure knowledge. And when the old man told me so much as that, for certain somewhat lay behind it.—And now, Margery—when I see you—when I consider. . . .” Here, as I cast a meaning glance at the Chaplain, on a sudden she shrieked with such a yell as pierced my bones and marrow; and or ever I saw her, her weak, lean hand had clutched my wrist, and she cried in a hoarse voice:

“Then you, you have hid somewhat from me! The look wherewith you warned the Chaplain, oh! I marked it well.—And you hesitate—and now—you— Margery— Margery! By Christ’s wounds I ask you, Margery. What is it?— What of Gotz? Has he.... out with it—out with the truth.... Has he written?—No.—You shake your head.... Merciful Virgin! He—he—Gotz is on his way Home wards.” And she clapped her hands over her face. I fell on my knees by her side, dragged first her left hand and then her right hand away from her eyes, covered them with kisses, and whispered to her: “Yes, yes, Aunt, Mother, sweet, dear little mother! Only wait—You shall hear all. Gotz is weary of wandering; he had not forgotten his father and mother, nor me, his little Red-riding-hood—I know it, I am sure of it. Patience! only a little patience and he will be here—in Germany, in Franconia, in Nuremberg, in the forest, in the house, in this hall, here, here where I am kneeling, at your feet, in your arms!”

Then the deeply-moved dame, who had listened to me breathless, flung her hands high in the air as if she were seeking somewhat, and it was as though her eyes turned inside out; and I was seized with sudden terror, inasmuch as I deemed that she had drunk death out of the overfull cup of joy that my hand had put to her lips. Howbeit, it was but a brief swoon which had come upon her, and as soon as she had come to herself again and I had told her the whole truth, little by little and with due caution, even that Gotz and I had found each other and both fervently and earnestly longed for her motherly blessing, she gave it me in rich abundance.

Now was it my part to make known to her that her returned son held fast to his oath; and I had already begun to tell her this when she waved her hands, and eagerly broke in: “And do you think I ever looked that he, who is a Waldstromer and a Behaim both in one, should ever break a vow? And of a truth he hath given me time enough to consider of it!—But to-day, this very day, early in the morning I found the right way out of the matter, albeit it is as like a trick of woman’s craft as one egg is like another.—You know that reckless oath. It requires me never, never to bid Gotz home again; but yet,”—and now her eyes began to sparkle brightly with gladness—“what my oath does not forbid is that I should go forth to meet Gotz, and find him wheresoever he may be.”

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Hereupon the Chaplain clapped his hands and cried:

“And thus once more the love of a woman’s heart hath digged a pit for Satan’s craft.”

And I ran forth to bid them harness the sleigh, whereas I knew full well that no counsel would avail.

And now, as of yore when she had fared into the town for love of Ann, she was wrapped in a mountain of warm garments, so we clothed her to-day in a heap of such raiment, and Young Kubbeling would suffer no man but himself to drive the horses. Thus we went at a slow pace to Grubner’s lodge, and all the way we rode we met not a soul save Cousin Maud, and she only nodded to me, by reason that she could not guess that a living human creature was breathing beneath the furs and coverlets at my side. Young Kubbeling on the box, and the ravens and tomtits and redbreasts in the woods had not many words from us. While I was thinking with fear and expectation of the outcome of this meeting of the mother and son, I scarce spoke more than a kind word of good cheer now and again to my aunt, to which Kubbeling would ever add in a low voice: “All will come right!” or “God bless thee, most noble lady!” And each time we thus spoke I was aware of a small movement about my knees, and would then press my lips to the outermost cover of the beloved bundle by my side.

At about two hundred paces from the Forester’s but the path turned off from the highway, so that we might be seen from the windows thereof; and scarce had the sleigh turned into this cross-road, when the door of the lodge was opened and my uncle and Gotz came forth.

The son had his arm laid on his father’s shoulder and they gazed at us. And indeed it was a noble and joyful sight as they stood there, the old man and the young one, both of powerful and stalwart build, both grown strong in wind and weather, and true and trustworthy men. The slim young pine had indeed somewhat overtopped the gnarled oak, but the crown of the older tree was the broader. Such as the young man was now the old man must have been, and what the son should one day be might be seen—and I rejoiced to think it—in his father’s figure and face. Howbeit, as a husband Gotz gave no promise of treading in his father’s footsteps, and when I thought of this, and of the lesson I had yestereve received, my cheeks grew redder than they had already turned in the sharp December air, or under the gaze of my new lover.

Howbeit I had no time for much thought; the sleigh was already at the door, and or ever I was aware the old man had me in his arms and kissed my lips and brow, and called me his dear and well-beloved daughter. Then the younger man pressed forward to assert his claims, and when he bent over me I threw my arms round his neck, and he lifted me up, for all that I was none of the lightest in my winter furs and thick raiment, out of the sleigh like a child, and again his lips were on mine. But we might not suffer them to meet for more than a brief kiss. Uncle Conrad had discovered my aunt’s face among

all her wrappings, and gave loud utterance to his well-founded horror, while my aunt cried out to her long-lost son by name again and again, with all the love of a longing and long-robbed mother's heart.

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I gladly set my lover free, and at the next minute he was on his knees in the snow and his trembling hands removed wrap after wrap from the beloved head, Kubbeling helping him from the driving-seat with his great hands, purpled by the cold.

And again in a few minutes the mother was covering her only son's head with tender kisses, so violently and so long that her strength failed her and she fell back on the pillows, overdone.

Hereupon Gotz bowed over her, and as he had erewhile lifted his sweetheart out of the sleigh, so now he lifted his mother; and while he held her thus in his arms and bore her into the house, not heeding the kerchiefs which dropped off by degrees and lay in a long line covering the ground behind her, as coals do which are carried in a broken scuttle, she cried in a trembling voice: "Oh you bad, only boy, you my darling and heart-breaker, you noble, wicked, perverse fellow! Gotz my son, my own and my All!"

And when she had found a place in the warm room, in the head forester's wife's arm-chair by the fire, I removed her needless raiment and Gotz sank down at her feet, and she took his head in her hands, and cried:

"I did not wait for you to come, but flew to meet you, my lad, by reason that, as you know—I took a sinful oath never to bid you to come home. But oath and vow are nought; they are null and void! I have learned from the depths of my heart that Heaven had nought to do with them—that it was pure pride and folly; and I bid you home with my whole heart and soul, and beseech your forgiveness for all the sorrow we have brought upon each other, and I will have and keep you henceforth, and nought else here on earth! Ah, and Gertrude, poor maid! She would have been heartily, entirely welcome to me as at this day, were it not that there is another maiden who is dearest to my heart of all the damsels on earth!"

Then was there heartfelt embracing and kissing on both parts, and, as I saw her weep, I made an unspoken vow that if the eyes of this mother and her son should ever shed tears again I would be the last to cause them, and that I would ever be ready and at hand to dry them carefully away.

I mind me likewise that I then beheld fair Waldtrud, the forester's daughter, inasmuch as she full heartily wished me joy; yet I remember even better that I felt no pang of jealousy, and indeed scarce looked at the wench, by reason that there were many other matters of which the sight gave me far greater joy.

It was a delightful and never-to-be-forgotten hour, albeit over-short; by my uncle's desire we ere long made ready to go homewards. Now when Gotz was carrying his mother from the hot chamber to the sleigh, and I was left looking about me for certain kerchiefs of my aunt's, I perceived, squatted behind the great green-tiled stove, Young Kubbeling in a heap, and with his face hidden in his hands. He moved not till I spoke to him; then

he dried his wet eyes with his fur hood, and when I laid my hand on his shoulder he drew a deep breath, and said:

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“It has been a moving morning, Mistress Margery. But it will all come right. It has come upon me as a sharp blow to be sure; and I have no longer any business here in the forest, all the more so by reason that I have children and grandchildren at home who have looked over-long for the old man’s home-coming. I will set forth to-morrow early. To tell the truth to none but you, I cannot endure to be away from the old place a longer space than it takes to go to Alexandria and back. My old heart is grown over-soft and weary for an absence of two journeys. And yet another matter for your ear alone: You will be the wife of a noblehearted man, but mind you, he has long been free to wander whithersoever he would. Take it to heart that you make his home dear and happy, else it will be with you as it is with my old woman, who hath never mastered that matter, and who lives alone for more days in the year than ever we dreamed the morning we were wed.”

Hereupon we went forth together; and I took his counsel to heart, and Gotz never left me for any long space of time, save when he must.

As for Kubbeling, he kept his word and departed from us on the morrow morning; yet we often saw him again after that time, and the finest falcon in our mews is that he sent us as a wedding gift; and after our marriage Ann received a fine colored parrot as a gift from old Uhlwurm, and the old man had made it speak for her in such wise that it could say right plainly: “Uhlwurm is Ann’s humble servant.”

We now spent two days at the forest lodge in bliss, as though paradise had come down on earth; and albeit it is a perilous thing to rejoice in the love of a man who has wandered far beyond seas, yet has it this good side: that many matters which to another seem far away and out of reach, he deems near at hand, and half the world is his as it were. And how well could Gotz make me to feel as though I shared his possession!

On the morning of the third day after his coming, my lord Cardinal rode forth to the forest with Ann; and, inasmuch as the duties of his office now led, him to sojourn in Wurzburg and Bamberg, he could promise us that he would bless our union or ever he departed to Italy. Albeit methought it would be a happy chance if we might stand at the altar at the same time with Herdegen and Ann, Gotz’s impatience, which had waxed no lesser even during his journeyings, was set against our waiting for my brother’s coming. Likewise he desired that we might live together a space as man and wife, before he should go to Venice to get his release from the service of the Republic.

At the same time he deemed it not prudent to take me with him on that journey, howbeit, after that we were wed, when he was about to depart, I made so bold as to beseech him; and he plainly showed me that I had not made him wroth or troubled him whereas he willingly granted me to journey with him, and without reproof. Thus I fared with him to the great and mighty city of Saint Mark, which I had ever longed to behold with my bodily eyes. I never went beyond seas, yet we journeyed as far as Rome, and there,

under the protection and guidance of my lord Cardinal, I spent many never-to-be-forgotten days by the side of my Gotz.

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But one thing at a time; some day, if my many years may suffer, I will write more concerning these matters.

How well my aunt and the Cardinal were minded towards each other would be hard to describe, albeit now and again they fell to friendly strife; the reverend prelate found it hard to depart from the lodge and from that strange woman, whose clear and busy brain in her sickly body came, in after times, to be accounted as one of the great marvels of her native town. Howbeit, it was his duty to pass Christmas-eve with his venerable mother. He plighted Gotz and me as he had promised us, and to his life's end he was ever a kind and honored friend and patron to us and to our children.

Ann was ever his favorite, and ere he quitted Nuremberg, he bestowed on her a dowry such as few indeed of our richest nobles could give with their daughters.

Christmas-eve, which we spent at the lodge with our parents and the Chaplain and my dear godfather, uncle Christian Pfinzing, was a right glorious festival, bringing gladness to our souls; yet was it to end with the first peril that befell our love's young joy. After the others had gone to their chambers, and Gotz had indeed given me a last parting kiss, he stayed me a moment and besought me to be ready early in the morning to ride with him to the hut of Martin the bee keeper, whose wife had been his nurse. On many a Christmas morning had he greeted the good woman with some little posy, and now he had not found one hour to spare her since his home-coming. Now I would fain have granted this simple request but that I had privily, with the Chaplain's help, made the school children to learn a Christmas carol wherewith to wake the parents and Gotz from their slumbers. Thus, when he bid me hold myself in readiness at an early hour, I besought him to make it later. This, however, by no means pleased him; he answered that the good dame was wont of old to look for him full early on Christmas morning, and he had already too long deferred his greeting. Yet the surprise I had plotted was uppermost in my mind, and I craved of him right duteously that he would grant me my will. Whereupon his eyebrows, which met above his nose, were darkly knit, and he gave me to wit, shortly and well-nigh harshly, that he would abide by his own.

At this the blood rose to my head, and a wrathful answer was indeed on my tongue when I minded me of the evening when we had come together, and I asked of him calmly whether he verily deemed that I was so foolish or evil-minded as to hinder him in a pious and kindly office if I had not some worthy reason. And herein I had hit on the right way; he recovered himself, his brow cleared, and saying only "Women, women!" he shook his head and clasped me to him; and as I fervently returned his kiss, and opened my chamber door, he called after me: "We will see in the morning, but as early as may be."

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When I presently was in my bed I minded me of the carol the little ones were to sing; and then I remembered my own school-days, and how the Carthusian Sisters had explained to us those words of Scripture: "And the times shall be fulfilled." They were written, to be sure, of a special matter, of the birth of our Saviour and Redeemer; yet I applied them to myself and Gotz, and wondered in my heart whether indeed anything that had ever befallen me in life, whether for joy or for sorrow, had been in vain, and how matters might have stood with me now if, as a young unbroken thing, or ever I had gone through the school of life, I had been plighted to this man, whom the Almighty had from the first fated to be my husband. If the wilful blood of the Schoppers, unquelled as it had then been, had come into strife with Gotz's iron will, there would have been more than enough of hard hitting on both sides, and how easily might all our happiness have been wrecked thereby.

It was past midnight when at last I slept; and in the dim morning twilight the Christmas chorus rang through the house in the words the Shepherds heard in Angels' voices: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace." It woke Gotz, and when we presently got into the sleigh, he whispered to me: "How piously glad was your hymn, my sweetheart! And you were right yestereve, and peace shall indeed reign on earth, and above all betwixt you and me, everywhere and at all times till the E N D."

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A POSTSCRIPTUM BY KUNZ SCHOPPER

The children entreat me to write more of Margery's unfinished tale. Howbeit I am nigh upon eighty years of age, and how may I hope to win favor in the exercise of an act to which I am unskilled save in matters of business? Yet, whereas I could never endure to say nay to any reasonable prayer of those who are dearest to my heart, I will fulfil their desire, only setting down that which is needful, and in the plainest words.

They at whose bidding I sit here, all knew my dear sister well. Margery, the widow of the late departed Forest-ranger, the Knight Sir Gotz Waldstromer, Councillor to his Imperial Majesty and Captain of the men-at-arms in our good city; and each profited during a longer or shorter space by her loving-kindness, and her wise and faithful counsel.

Many of them can likewise remember the late Anna Spiesz, sometime wife of Herdegen Schopper; and as to the said Herdegen Schopper, my dear brother, Margery's book of memorabilia right truly shows forth the manner of his life and mind in the bloom of his youth, and verily it is a sorrowful task for me to set forth the decay and end of so noble a man.

As to myself, the last remaining link of the Schopper chain whereof Margery hath many times made mention, I am still with you, my dear ones; and I remain but little changed, inasmuch as that my life has ever flowed calmly and silently onward.

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How it came to pass that Margery should so suddenly have brought her memories to an end most of you know already; howbeit I will set it down for the younger ones.

Till she reached the age of sixty and seven years, she never rode in a litter, but ever made her journeyings on horseback. For many years past she and her husband abode in the forest during the summer months only, and dwelt in their town-house the winter through. Now on a day, when in her written tale she had got as far as the time when she and Gotz, her dear husband, were wed, she besought him to ride forth with her to the forest, inasmuch as that she yearned once more to see the spot in the winter season which had seen the happiest days of her life in that long-past December. Thus they fared forth on horseback, although it was nigh on Christmas-tide, and when they waved their hands to me as they passed me by in sheer high spirits and mirthfulness, meseemed that in all Nuremberg, nay in Franconia or in the whole German Empire a man might scarce find an old white-haired pair of lovers to match these for light-heartedness and goodly mien. Some few happy and glad days were at that time vouchsafed to them in the old well-known forest; but on the ride home Margery's palfrey stumbled close without the city gates on the frozen ground. Her arm-bone was badly broken and her right hand remained so stiff, notwithstanding Master Hartmann Knorr's best skill, that she could no more use the pen save with great pain, albeit she often after this rode on horseback. Thus the little book lay aside for a long space; and while she was yet diligently striving to write with her left hand death snatched from her Ann Schopper, the widow of our late dear brother Herdegen Schopper and her heart's best friend, and this fell upon her soul as so cruel a grief that she never after could endure to take up the pen.

Then, when she lost her dearly-beloved husband, a few months after their golden wedding day, all was at an end for her; the brave old woman gave up all care for life, and died no more than three months after him. And indeed often have I seen how that, when one of a pair, who have dwelt together so many years in true union of hearts, departs this life, this earth is too lonely for the other, so that one might deem that their hearts had grown to be as it were one flesh, and the one that is left hath bled to death inwardly from the Reaper's stroke.

Then I read through this book of memories once more, and meseemed that Margery had written of herself as less worthy than of a truth she was in her life's spring-tide.

Most of you can yet remember how that my lord the Mayor spoke of the bride with the golden chaplet crowning her thick silver hair, as the pride of our city, the best friend and even at times the wisest counsellor of our worshipful Council, the comforter and refuge of the poor; and you know full well that Master Johannes Lochner, the priest, spoke over her open grave, saying that, as in her youth she had been fairest, so in old age she was the noblest and most helpful of all the dames of the parish of Saint Sebald; and you yourselves have many a time been her almoners, or have gazed in silence to admire her portrait.

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And at Venice I have heard from the lips of the very master who limned her, and who was one of the greatest painters of the famous guild to which he belonged, that such as she had he imagined the stately queen of some ancient German King defeated by the Romans, or Eve herself, if indeed one might conceive of our cold German fatherland as Paradise. Yea, the most charming and glowing woman he had ever set eyes on was your mother and grandmother.

And whensoever she went to a dance all the young masters of noble birth, and the counts and knights, yea even at the Emperor's court, were of one mind in saying that Margery Schopper was the fairest and likewise the most happy-tempered maid and most richly endowed with gifts of the mind, in all Nuremberg. None but Ann could stand beside her, and her beauty was Italian and heavenly rather than German and earthly.

Margery's manuscript ends where she had reached a happy haven; howbeit there were others of whom she makes mention who were not so happy as to cast anchor betimes, and if I am to set forth my own tale I must go back to Alexandria in the land of Egypt.

The dagger hired by Ursula to kill Herdegen struck me; howbeit, by the time when my cousin Gotz brought my dear brother to see me, himself a free man, I was already healed of my wound and ready to depart. The worthy mother of Akusch had tended me with a devotion which would have done honor to a Christian woman, and it was under her roof that first I saw Herdegen and my cousin once more. And how greatly was I surprised to see Gotz, taller than of old, appear before me in the magnificent array and harness of a chief captain in the army of the all-powerful Republic of Venice! Instead of an exiled adventurer I found him a stalwart gentleman, in every respect illustrious and honored, whose commanding eye showed that he was wont to be obeyed, albeit his voice and mien revealed a compassionate and friendly soul. Yea, and meseemed that at his coming a fresher, purer air blew about me; and as soon as he had made Herdegen's cause his own and stood surety for him, the chief of the great trading house of Michieli paid the ransom, which to me, knowing the value of money, must have seemed never to be compassed, unless my grand-uncle had been fain to help us. Howbeit, my cousin would not do the like service for the Knight of Welemisl, in whose mien and manners he put less trust, wherefore I became his surety, out of sheer pity and at Herdegen's prayer.

Here you will ask of me wherefore I do not first speak of my meeting again with my dear long-suffering brother. And indeed my heart beat high with joy and thanksgiving, when we held each other clasped; but alack what changes had come over him in these years of slavery! When he came into my chamber, his head bowed and his hands behind his back, after that we had greeted I turned from him and made as though I had some matter to order, to the end that he might not see me dry my tears; inasmuch as that he who stood before me was my Herdegen indeed, and yet was not.

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For eighteen long months had he plied the oars on board of a Saracen galley, while Sir Franz, who was overweak for such toil, served as keeper of slaves on the benches, himself with chains on his feet. And it was this long, hard toil which had made my brother diligently to hide his hands behind his back, as though he were ashamed of them; whereas those strong hands of his with their costly rings he had ever been wont to deem a grace, and now of a truth they were grown coarse and as red as a brick, and were like to those of a hewer in the woods. And whereas men are apt often to pay less heed to another's face than to the shape and state of his hands, I ever mind me of Herdegen's as I saw them on that day, and a star and a crescent were branded in blue on the back of his right, so that all men must see it.

Likewise his deep breast had lost some of its great strength, and he held himself less stately than of old. Meseemed as though the knight had laid some part of his sickness upon him, inasmuch that many a time he coughed much. Likewise the long golden hair, which had flowed in rich abundance down over his shoulders, had been shorn away after the manner of the unbelievers, and this gave to his well-favored face a narrow and right strange appearance. Only the shape of his countenance and his eyes were what they had ever been; nay, meseemed that his eyes had a brighter and moister light in them than of yore.

One thing alone was a comfort to me, and that was that my heart beat with more pitiful and faithful love for him than ever. And when evening fell, as we brethren sat together with Gotz and Master Knorr and Akusch, drinking our wine, which only Akusch would not touch, this comforting assurance waxed strong within me, by reason that Herdegen's voice was as sweet as of old, both in speech and in song; and when he set forth all the adventures and sufferings he had gone through in these last past years I was fain to listen, and even so was Gotz; and first he drew tears from our eyes and presently made us laugh right mirthfully. And what had he not gone through?

I betook me to bed that night in hope and contentment; howbeit, on the morrow Master Knorr told me privily that whereas my brother's lungs had never been of the strongest, if now, in the cold December season, he should fare north of the Alps after such long sojourning under a warmer sky, it could not fail to do him a serious mischief, as it likewise would to Sir Franz. Thus it must be my part to delay our homecoming; and albeit the leech's tidings made me heavy at heart I was fain to yield, inasmuch as that Herdegen might not appear in the presence of his sweetheart in his present guise.

To this end we made him to believe that he might not come home in safety unless he had performed the penance laid upon him by the Emperor; and albeit felt it a hard matter to refrain the craving of his heart, nevertheless he gave way to our pressing admonitions.

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Now, while Gotz fared back to Venice, the galleon which carried Don Jaime, Prince of Catalonia, as far Joppa, brought us likewise to the Promised Land to the holy city of Jerusalem. From thence we made our pilgrimage to many other Holy Places, under the protection of the great fellowship of that royal Prince who ever showed us much favor.

At last we journeyed homewards, passing by Naples and Genoa; at Damietta, in the land of Egypt, Sir Franz departed from our company to make his way to Venice. It was with care and grief that I saw him set forth on his way alone, and Herdegen was like-minded; in their misfortune he had learned to mark much that was good in him, and during our long journeying had seen that not only was he sick in body, but likewise that a shroud hung over his soul and brain. Also, if Ursula were yet free to work her will, the very worst might haply befall him in Venice, by reason that the Giustinianis were of a certainty evil-disposed towards him, and the power and dignity of that family were by no means lessened, although, as at that time Antonio Giustiniani had dishonored his name in Albania, and had been punished by the Forty with imprisonment and sundry penalties. Yet his cousin Orsato was one of the greatest and richest of the signori at Venice, and Ursula's husband would have found in him a strong upholder, as in truth we heard at Naples, where tidings reached us that the Pregadi, who had passed judgment upon him, had amerced him in a penalty of no more than two thousand ducats, which Orsato paid for him by reason that he would not suffer that his kinsman should be in prison.

At Genoa we found many letters full of good tidings of our kindred at home, all overflowing with love and the hope of speedily seeing us there. Hereupon Herdegen could not refrain himself for impatience and, if I had suffered it, he would have ridden onward by day and by night with no pause nor rest, taking fresh horses as he might need them; for my part what I chiefly cared for was to bring him home as fresh and sound as I might, and so preserve Ann from grief of heart. Herdegen had given me her letters to read, and how true and deep a love, how lofty and pure a soul spoke in those lines! Howbeit, when I heard her, as it were, cry out by those letters, how that she longed for the moment when she might again stroke his flowing locks and press his dear faithful hand to her lips as his dutiful maid, my heart beat with fresh fears. He held him more upright, to be sure, and his countenance was less pale and hollow than it had been; but nevermore might he be a strong man. His light eyes were deep in their sockets, his hair was rarer on his head, and there were threads of silver among the gold. Ah, and those luckless hands! It was by reason of his hands—albeit you will doubtless smile at the confession—that I moved him to refrain his longing, even when we were so near our journey's end as Augsburg, and to grant me another day's delay, inasmuch as that

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I cared most that he should at first hide them in gloves from the womankind at home. And in all the great town was there not a pair to be and that would fit him, and it would take a whole day to make him a pair to his measure. Thus were we fain to tarry, and whereas we had in Augsburg, among other good friends, a faithful ally in trading matters at the Venice Fondaco, Master Sigismund Gossenprot, we lodged in his dwelling, which was one of the finest that fine city; and, as good-hap ruled it, he had, on the very eve of that day, come home from Venice.

He and his worthy wife had known Herdegen of old, and I was cut to the heart to see how the sight of him grieved them both. Nay, and the fair young daughter of the house ne'er cast an eye on the stranger guest, whose presence had been wont to stir every maiden's heart to beat faster. Howbeit, here again I found comfort when I marked at supper that the sweet damsel no longer heeded my simple person, whereas she had at first gazed at me with favor, but hearkened with glowing cheeks to Herdegen's discourse. At first, to be sure, this was anything rather than gay, inasmuch as Master Gossenprot was full of tidings from Venice, and of Sir Franz's latter end, which, indeed, was enough to sadden the most mirthful.

When the Bohemian had come to Venice he had lodged at a tavern, by name "The Mirror," and there mine host had deemed that he was but a gloomy and silent guest. And it fell that one day the city was full of a dreadful uproar, whereas it was rumored that in the afternoon, at the hour when Dame Ursula Giustiniani was wont to fare forth in her gondola, a strange man clad in black had leaped into it from his own and, before the serving-men could lay hands on him, he had stabbed her many times to the heart with his dagger. Then, as they were about to seize him, he had turned the murderous weapon still wet with his victim's blood, on himself, and thus escaped the avenging hand of justice.

As soon as the host of The Mirror heard this tale, he minded him of that strange, dark man and, when that way-farer came not home to his inn, he made report thereof to the judges. Then, on making search in his wallet, it was discovered that he had entered there under a false name, and that it was Sir Franz von Welemisl who had taken such terrible vengeance on Ursula for her sins against himself and Herdegen.

From Augsburg we now made good speed, and when, one fine June morning, our proud old citadel greeted our eyes from afar, and I saw that Herdegen's eyes were wet as he gazed upon it, mine eyes likewise filled with tears, and as we rode we clasped hands fervently, but in silence.

I sent forward a messenger from our last halting-place to give tidings of our coming; and when, hard by Schweinau, behold a cloud of dust, our eyes met and told more than many and eloquent words.

Great and pure and thankful joy filled and bore up my soul; but presently the cloud of dust was hid by a turn in the road behind the trees, and even so, quoth my fearful heart, the shroud of the future hid what next might befall us.

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The cruel blows of fate which had fallen on Herdegen had not been all in vain, and the growing weakness of his frame warned him not to spend his strength and eagerness on new and ever new things. Yet what troubled me was that he was not aware of the changes that had come upon him within and without. From all his speech with me I perceived that, even now, he might not conceive that life could be other than as he desired: notwithstanding it gave me secret joy to look upon this dear fellow, for whom life should have had no summer heats nor winter frosts, but only blossoming spring-tide and happy autumn days.

But now we had got round the wood, and we might see what the cloud of dust had concealed. Foremost there came a train of waggons loaded with merchandise and faring southwards, and the first waggon had met a piled-up load of charcoal coming forth from the forest at a place in the road where they were pent between a deep ditch on one hand and thick brushwood and undergrowth on the other; thus neither could turn aside, and their wheels were so fast locked that they barred the road as it had been a wall. Thus the second waggon likewise had come to hurt by the sudden stopping of the first, and it was but hardly saved from turning over into the ditch. There was a scene of wild turmoil. The waggons stopped the way, and neither could the rest of the train, nor their armed outriders, nor our own folks come past, by reason that the ditch was full deep and the underwood thick. We likewise were compelled to draw rein and look on while the six fine waggon horses which had but just come from the stable, their brown coats shining like mirrors, were unharnessed, and likewise the draughtoxen were taken out of the charcoal-waggon; which was done with much noise and cursing, and the brass plates that decked the leathern harness of the big horses jingling so loud and clear that we might not hear the cries of our kinsfolks. Nay, it was the plume in Gotz's hat, towering above the throng, which showed us that they were come.

Now, while Herdegen was vainly urging and spurring his unwilling horse to leap down into the ditch and get round this fortress of waggons, two of the others—and I instantly saw that they were Ann and her father, on horseback—had made their way close to the charcoal waggon; howbeit, they could get no further by reason that it had lurched half over and strewed the way with black charcoal-sacks.

My heart beat as though it would crack, and lo, as I looked round to point them out to Herdegen, he had put forth his last strength to make his horse take the leap, and could scarce hold himself in the saddle; his anguish of mind, and the foolish struggle with the wilful horse, had exhausted the strength of his sickly frame. His face was pale and his breath came hard as he sat there, on the edge of the ditch, and held his great hand to his breast as though he were in pain. Hereupon I likewise felt a deep pang of unspeakable torment, albeit I knew from experience that for such ills there was no remedy but perfect rest. I looked away from him and beheld, a little nearer now, Ann high on her saddle, diligently waving her kerchief, and at her side her father, lifting his councillor's hat.

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In a few moments we were united once more. But no....

As I wrote the foregoing words with a trembling hand I vowed that I would set down nought but the truth and the whole truth. And inasmuch as I have not shrunk from making mention of certain matters which many will deem of small honor to Herdegen, who was, by the favor of Heaven, so far more highly graced in all ways than I, who have never been other than middling gifted, it would ill-become me to shrink from relating matters whereof I myself have lived to repent.

There, by the ditch, was my dear only brother, weary and pale, a man marked for an early grave; and in front of me, within a few paces, the woman to whom my heart's only and fervent love had been given even as a child. She sat like a King's daughter on a noble white horse with rich trappings. A magnificent garment of fine cloth, richly brodered with Flanders velvet, flowed about her slender body. The color thereof was white and sapphire-blue, and so likewise were the velvet cap and finely-rounded ostrich feather, which was fastened into it with a brooch of sparkling precious stones. I had always deemed her fairest in sheeny white, and she knew it, while Herdegen had taken blue for his color; and behold she wore both, for love per chance of both brothers. Never had I seen her fairer than at this minute and she had likewise waxed of a buxom comeliness, and how sweet were her red cheeks, and swan-white skin, and ebony-black hair, which flowed out from beneath her little hat in long plaits twined with white and sapphire-blue velvet ribbon.

Never did a maid seem more desirable to a man. And her father on his great brown horse—he was no more a craftsman! In his councillor's robes bordered with fur, with the golden chain round his neck, his well-favored, grave, and manly countenance, and the long, flowing hair down to his shoulders, meseemed he might have been the head of some ancient and noble family. None in Nuremberg might compare with these two for manly dignity and womanly beauty, and was that sickly, bent horseman by the ditch worthy of them? “No, no,” cried a voice in my heart. “Yes, Yes!” cried another; and in the midst of this struggle I could but say to myself: “He has an old and good right to her, and as soon as he has found breath he will claim it.”

But she? What will she do; how will she demean her; is she aware of his presence? Will she shrink from him as Dame Gossenprot did at Augsburg, and the inn-keeper's smart wife at Ingolstadt, who of old was so over-eager to be at his service? Would Ann, who had rejected many a lordly suitor, be as sweet as of yore to that breathless creature? And if she were to follow the example which he long since set her, if she now cut the bond which he of old had snatched asunder, or if—Merciful Virgin!—if his sickness should increase, and he himself should shrink from fettering her blooming young life to his own—then, oh, then it might be my turn, then

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And on a sudden there was a cry from the depths of my heart, but heard by none: "Look on this side. Look on me, my one and only beloved! Turn from him who once turned from thee, and hearken to Kunz who loves thee with a more faithful and fervent love than that man, who to this day knows not what thy true worth is, whose heart is as fickle as mine is honest and true. Here I stand, a strong and stalwart man, the friend of every good man, willing and able to carry you in my strong hands through a life crowned with wealth and happiness!"

And while the voice of the Evil One whispered this and much more, my gaze, meseemed, was spellbound to her countenance, and the light of her eyes from afar shone deep into mine. And on a sudden I flung up my arms and, without knowing what I did, stretched them forth, as though beside myself, towards that hotly-loved maiden. Whether she saw this or no I may never learn. And the grace of the Blessed Virgin or of my guardian Saint, preserved me from evil and disgrace, for whereas all that was in me yearned for that beloved one, a clear voice called to me by name, and when I turned, behold it was Margery, who had leaped her light palfrey into the ditch and now had sprung up the grassy bank. It was a breakneck piece of horsemanship, to which she had been driven by longing and sisterly love; and behind her came a man, my cousin Gotz, whose newly-married wife's daring leap was indeed after his own heart. One more plunge, and their horses were on the highroad, and I had lifted Margery out of her saddle and we held each other clasped, stammering out foolish disconnected words, while we first laughed and then wept.

This went on for some while till I was startled by an outcry, and behold, Eppelein, in his impatience to greet his dear master, had been fain to do as Margery and Gotz had done, but with less good fortune, inasmuch as that he had fallen under his horse, which had rolled over with him. His lamentable outcry told me that he needed help, and once more in my life I fulfilled my strange fate, which has ever been to cast to the winds that for which my soul most longed, for another to take it up. While Margery turned to greet Herdegen I hastened down the bank to rescue the faithful fellow who had endured so much in my brother's service, ere the worst should befall him.

And this, with no small pains, I was able to do; and when I was aware that he had suffered no mortal hurt, I clambered up on to the road again, and then once more my heart began to beat sadly. Ann and Herdegen had met again, and once for all. How was she able to refrain herself as she beheld the changed countenance of her lover, and to be mistress of her horror and dismay?

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Now, when I had climbed the bank with some pains, in my heavy riding-boots, I saw that the waggon-men had harnessed the six brown horses to their cart once more, and behind them, on the skirt of the wood, were the pair that I sought; and as I went nearer to them Ann had drawn the glove, for which we had tarried so long in Augsburg, from off her lover's battered right hand, and was gazing at it lovingly, with no sign of horror, but with tears in her eyes; and she cried as she kissed it again and again: "Oh, that poor, dear, beloved hand, how cruelly it has suffered, how hard it must have tolled! And that? That is where the blue brand-mark was set? But it is almost gone. And it is in my color, blue, our favorite sapphire-blue!" And she pointed joyously to her goodly array, and she confessed that it was for him alone, that he might see from afar how well she loved and honored him, that she had arrayed herself in the color of fidelity in which he had ever best loved to see her. And he clasped her to him, and when she kissed his thin, streaked hair, and spoke of those dear flowing curls, to which love and care would restore their beauty, I swore a solemn vow before God that I would never look on the union of Herdegen and Ann but with thanksgiving and without envy, and ever do all that in me lay for those two and for their welfare.

Of the glad meeting with our other kith and kin I will say nought. As to Cousin Maud, she had remained at home to welcome her darling at the gate of the Schopperhof, which she had decked forth bravely. Yea, her warm heart beat more fondly for him than for us. She could not wholly conceal her dismay at seeing him so changed. She would stroke him from time to time with a cherishing hand, yet she went about him as though there were somewhat in him of which she was afeard.

Howbeit, in the evening it was with her as it had been with me in the land of Egypt, and she found him again for whom her heart yearned so faithfully. Now, that which had seemed lacking came to light once more, and from that hour she no longer grieved for what he had lost and which a true mother peradventure might never have missed; indeed as his bodily health failed, and she shared the care of tending him with Ann, none could have conceived that he was not verily and indeed her own son.

The evil monster which had crept into my brother's breast grew, thank Heaven, but slowly; and when the young pair had been wed, with a right splendid feast, and my brother had taken Ann home to the Schoppers' house as his dear wife, a glad hope rose up in me that Master Knorr had taken an over-gloomy view of the matter, and that Herdegen might blossom again into new strength and his old hearty health. Howbeit it was but his heart's gladness which lent him so brave and glad an aspect; the sickness must have its course, and it was as it were a serpent, gnawing silently at my joy in life, and its bite was all the more cruel by reason that I might tell no

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man what it was that hurt me save the old Waldstromers. But they likewise grew young again after their son's homecoming, and notwithstanding her feeble frame, Aunt Jacoba saw Margery's eldest son grow to be six years of age. And she sent him his packet of sweetmeats the first day he went to school; but when the little lad went to thank his grandmother, the old dame was gone to her rest; and her husband lived after her no more than a few months.

One grief only had darkened the latter days of this venerable pair, in truth it was a heavy one; it was the death of my dear brother Herdegen, which befell at the end of the fifth year after he was happily married.

At the end of the fourth year his sickness came upon him with more violence, yet he went forth and back, and ever hoped to be healed, even when he took to his bed four weeks before the end.

On the very last day, on a certain fine evening in May, it was that he said to Ann: "Hearken, my treasure, I am surely better! On the day after tomorrow we will go forth into the sweet Spring, to hear Dame Nightingale who is singing already, and to see Margery. Oh, out in the forest breezes blow to heal the sick!"

Yet they went not; two hours later he had departed this life. By ill fortune at that very time I was at Venice on a matter of business, and when the tidings came to me that my only beloved brother was dead, meseemed as though half my being were torn away, aye, and the nobler and better half; that part which was not content to grieve and care for none but earthly estate and for all that cometh up and passeth away here below, but which hath a position in the bliss of another world, where we ask not only of what use and to what end this or that may be, as I have ever done in my narrow soul.

When Herdegen's eyes closed in death, my wings were broken as it were; with him I lost the highest aim and end of all my labors. For five hard years had I toiled and struggled, often turning night into day, and not for myself, but for him and his, ever upheld and sped forward by the sight of his high soul and great happiness. Our grand-uncle Im Hoff had left me his house and the conduct of his trade, as you have learned already from Margery's little book; and during my long journeyings many matters had not been done to my contentment, and the sick old man had taken out overmuch moneys from the business. A goodly sum came to us from our parents' estate, and my brother and sister and Cousin Maud were fain to entrust me with theirs; but how much I had to do in return!

Moreover a great care came upon me from without, by reason that Sir Franz's kin and heirs refused to repay the moneys for the ransom which Master Michieli of Venice had laid down, and for which Herdegen and I had been sureties. Albeit in this matter we had



applied to the law, we might not suffer Michieli to come to loss by reason of his generosity, so I took upon me the whole debt, and that was a hard matter in those times and in my case; and the fifteen thousand ducats which were repaid me by judgment of law, thirty years afterwards, made me small amends, inasmuch as by that time I had long been wont to reckon with much greater sums.

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I made good my friend's payment of Herdegen's ransom to the last farthing; yet what pressed me most hardly, so long as my brother lived, was his housekeeping; few indeed in Nuremberg could have spent more.

My eldest brother was the only one of us three who might keep any remembrance of our father, whose trade with Venice and Flanders had yielded great profits, and he could yet mind him how full the house had ever been of guests, and the stables of horses. Now, therefor, he was fain to live on the same wise, and this he deemed was right and seemly, inasmuch as he took the moneys which I gave him as half the clear profits of the Im Hoff trade, which were his by right. And I was fain to suffer him to enjoy that belief, albeit at that time concerns looked but badly. It was I, not he, whose part it was to care for those concerns; and I rejoiced with all my heart when he and his lovely young wife rode forth in such bravery, when he sat as host at the head of a table well-furnished with guests, and won all hearts by his lofty and fiery spirit, which conquered even the least well-disposed. Yet was it not easy to supply that which was needed, or to refrain from speech or reproof when, for instance, my brother must need have from the land of Egypt for Ann such another noble horse as the Emirs there are wont to ride. Or could I require him to pay when, after that Heaven had blessed him with a first born child, Herdegen, radiant with pride and joy, showed me a cradle all of ivory overlaid with costly carved work which he had commanded to be wrought for his darling by the most skilled master known far and wide, for a sum which at that time would have purchased a small house? Albeit it was nigh upon quarter day, I would have taken this and much more upon me rather than have quenched his heart's great gladness; and when I saw thee, Margery the younger, who art now thyself a grandmother, sleeping like a king's daughter in that precious cradle, and perceived with how great joy it filled thy parents to have their jewel in so costly a bed, I rejoiced over my own patience.

It did my heart good, though I spoke not, to hear the Schoppers' house praised as the friendliest in all Nuremberg; yet at other times meseemed I saw shame and poverty standing at the door; and whereas, indeed, those years of magnificence, which for sure were the hardest in all my life, came to no evil issue, I owe this, next to Heaven's grace, to the trust which many folks in Nuremberg placed in my honesty and judgment, far beyond my desert. And when once, not long before my brother's over-early death, I found myself to the very brow in water, as it were, it was that faithfulest of all faithful friends, Uncle Christian Pfinzing, who read the care in my eyes and face during the very last great banquet at Herdegen's table, and led me into the oriel bay, and offered me all his substance; and this is a goodly sum indeed and saved my trade from shipwreck.

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Next to him it is Cousin Maud that we three links the Schopper chain ought ever to hold dearest in memory; and it was by a strange chance that he and she died, not only on the same day, but, as it were, of the same death. Death came upon him at the Schoppers' table with the cup in his hand, after that Ann, his "watchman" had warned him to be temperate; and this was three years after her husband's death. And Cousin Maud, as she came forth from the kitchen, whither she had gone to heat her famous spiced wine for Uncle Christian, who was already gone, fell dead into Margery's arms when she heard the tidings of his sudden end.

Among the sundry matters which long dwelt in the minds both of Margery and Ann, and were handed down to their grandchildren, were the Magister's Latin verses in their praise. It is but a few years since Master Peter Piehringer departed this life at a great age, and when Gotz's boys went through their schooling so fast and so well they owed it to his care and learning. But chiefly he devoted himself to Ann's daughters, Margery and Agnes, and indeed it is ever so that our heart goeth forth with a love like to that for our own sons or daughters to the offspring of the woman we have loved, even when she has never been our own.

Eppelein Gockel, my brother's faithful serving-man, was wed to Aunt Jacoba's tiring-woman. After his master's death I made him to be host in the tavern of "The Blue Sky," and whereas his wife was an active soul, and his tales of the strange adventures he had known among the Godless heathen brought much custom to his little tavern parlor, he throve to be a man of great girth and presence.

By the seventh year after our home-coming my hardest cares for the concerns of my trade were overpast, albeit I must even yet keep my eyes open and give brain and body no rest. Half my life I spent in journeying, and whereas I perceived that it was only by opening up other branches of trade that I might fulfil the many claims which ever beset me, I set myself to consider the matter; and inasmuch as that I had seen in the house of Akusch how gladly the women of Egypt would buy hazel-nuts from our country, I began to deal in this humble merchandise in large measure; and at this day I send more than ten thousand sequins' worth of such wares, every year, by ship to the Levant. Likewise I made the furs of North Germany and the toys of Nuremberg a part of my trade, which in my uncle's life-time had been only in spices and woven goods. And so, little by little, my profits grew to a goodly sum, and by God's favor our house enjoyed higher respect than it ever had had of old.

And it is a matter of rejoicing to me that at this time there is again an Im Hoff at its head with me, so that the old name shall be handed down; Ann's oldest daughter, Margery Schopper, having married one Berthold Im Hoff, who is now my worthy partner.

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The sons of the elder Margery, the young Waldstromers, had much in them of the hasty Schopper temper, and a voice for song; and all three have done well, each in his way. Herdegen is now the Hereditary Ranger, and held in no less honor than Kunz Waldstromer, my beloved godson, who is a man of law in the service of our good town. Franz, who dedicated himself to the Church at an early age, under the protection of my lord Cardinal Bernhardi, has already been named to be the next in office after our present aged and weakly Bishop.

The son of Agnes, Herdegen's younger daughter, is Martin Behaim, a high-spirited youth in whom his grandfather's fiery and restless temper lives again, albeit somewhat quelled.

And if you now enquire of me how it is that I, albeit my heart beats warmly enough for our good town and its welfare and honor, have only taken a passing part in the duties of its worshipful Council, this is my answer: Inasmuch as to provide for the increase of riches for the Schopper family took all the strength I had, I lacked time to serve the commonwealth as my heart would have desired; and by the time when my dear nephew Berthold Im Hoff came to share the conduct of the trade with me I was right willing to withdraw behind my young partner, Ann's son-in-law, and to take his place in the business, while he and Kunz Waldstromer were chosen to high dignity on the Council. Nevertheless it is well-known that I have given up to the town a larger measure of time and labor and moneys than many a town-mayor and captain of watch. Of this I make mention to the end that those who come after me shall not charge me with evil self-seeking.

Likewise some may ask me wherefor I, the last male offspring of the old Schopper race, have gone through life unwed. Yet of a certainty they may spare me the answer to whom I have honestly confessed all my heart's pangs at the meeting of Herdegen with Ann.

After the death of her best-beloved lord the young widow was overcome with brooding melancholy from which nothing could rouse her. At that time you, my Margery and Agnes, her daughters, clung to me as to your own father; and when, at the end of three years, your mother was healed of that melancholy, it had come about that you had learned to call me father while I had sported with you and loved you in "your" mother's stead, and taught you to fold your little hands in prayer and led you out for air walking by your side. Your mother had heeded it not; but then, when she bloomed forth in new and wondrous beauty, and I beheld that Hans Koler and the Knight Sir Henning von Beust, who had likewise remained unwed, were again her suitors, the old love woke up in my heart; and one fair May evening, out in the forest, the question rose to my lips whether she could not grant me the right to call you indeed my children before all the world, and her....

But to what end touch the wound which to this day is scarce healed?

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In this world and the next she would never be any man's but his to whom her heart's great and only love had been given. But from that evening forth I, the rejected suitor, must suffer that you children should no longer call me father, but Uncle Kunz; and when afterwards it came to be dear little uncle you may believe that I was thankful. She no less rejected the suit of Koler and of von Beust; but the last-named gentleman made up for his dismissal by marrying a noble damsel of Brandenburg. At a later time when he came to Nuremberg he was made welcome by Margery, and then, meeting with Ann once more, he showed himself to be still so youthful and duteous in his service to her, in despite of her grey hairs, that for certain it was well for his happiness at home that he should have come without his wife.

Not long after Ann's rejection I confessed to Margery what had befallen, and when she heard it, she cast her arms about my neck and cried: "Why, ne'er content, must you crave a new home and family? Are not two warm hearths yours to sit at, and the love and care of two faithful house-wives; and are you not the father and counsellor, not alone of your nephews and nieces, but of their parents likewise?" All this she said in an overflow of sisterly love; and if it comforted me, as I here make record of it, by reason that I sorely needed such good words, if I here recall how sad life often seemed to me.

Nay, nay! It was sweet, heavenly sweet, and worthy of all thanksgiving that I, who of the three Schopper links was so far the most humbly gifted, was suffered by Fate to be of some use to the other two, and even to their children and grandchildren, and to help in adding to their well-being. In this—insomuch I may say with pride—in this I have had all good-speed; thus my life's labor has not been in vain, and I may call my lot a happy one. And thus I likewise have proved the truth of old Adam Heyden's saying, that he who does most for other folks at the same time does the best for himself.

The end.

ETEXT EDITOR'S BOOKMARKS:

Ever creep in where true love hath found a nest—(jealousy) One who stood in the sun
must need cast a shadow on other folks We each and all are waiting

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(Three Pages)

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