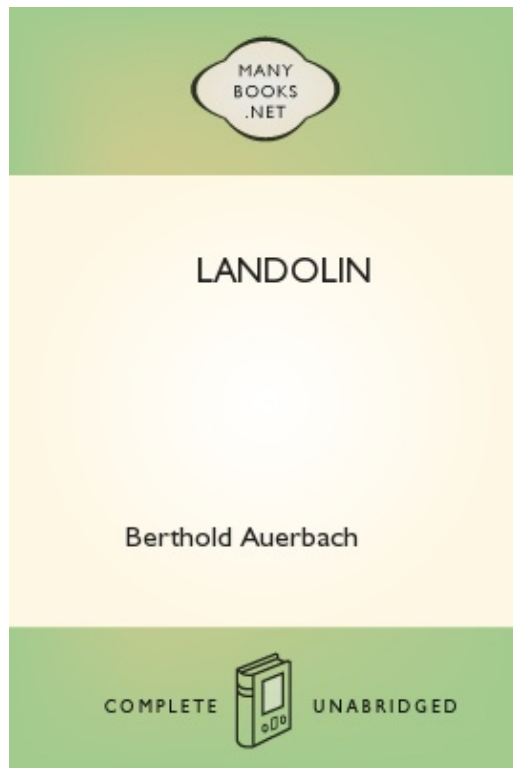




Landolin, by Berthold Auerbach

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LANDOLIN

BY BERTHOLD AUERBACH *Author of "On the Heights," "Waldfried," "Villa on the Rhine," etc.*

TRANSLATED BY ANNIE B. IRISH

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LANDOLIN.

* * * * *

CHAPTER I.

The spring has come again to the hills and valleys of our home. The day awakes, a breeze moves strongly through the forest, as if its task were to carry away the lingering night; the birds begin to twitter, and here and there an early lark utters his note. Among the pine-trees, with their fresh green needles, a whispering and rustling is heard. The sun has risen above the mountaintop, and shines upon the valley; the fields and meadows are glittering with dew. From the cherry-trees comes a stream of fragrance, and the hawthorn hedges that blossomed in the night are rejoicing in the first sunbeams, which penetrate to the very heart of each floweret.

Down in the valley, where the logmen's rafts are floating rapidly--down by the saw-mill, where the water dashes over the wheel, and the saw sounds shrill--a young man with white forehead and sunburnt cheeks opens a window, looks out, and nods gayly, as if greeting the awakening day. Presently he appears on the doorstep; he opens his arms wide, as if to embrace something; he smiles, as though looking at a happy, loved face. Taking his soldier's cap from his head, and holding it in his hand, he leaves the house; his step is firm, his bearing erect, and sincere honesty and candor look from his eyes. He goes through the meadows toward the forest-crowned hill, not stopping till he reaches its summit. Pausing there, he looks far into the distance, where a column of smoke ascends to the cloudless sky.

"Good morning, Thoma! Are you still sleeping? Awake! our own day is here!" he said in a deep, manly voice.

And now he joyously bounded down the hill, but soon moderated his step, and sang a yodel until the birds joined with him, and the echo repeated the song. Before long he reached the house; by the door stood his father, scattering bread crumbs to the chickens.

"Good morning, father!" cried the young man. The father, a tall, thin man, looked up with surprise, and answered:

"What, up already, Anton? Where have you been?"

"I? where? Everywhere. In heaven, and in this beautiful world below. O father! it has often seemed to me that I should not live to see this day; that I should die before it came, or that something else would happen. But now the day is here. And such a day!"

The old man drew the palm of his hand twice, three times, over his mouth; for he would have liked to say: "Your mother was just so, so faint-hearted, and again so confident;" but he kept back the words; he would not mar his son's happiness; and at last he said:

"Yes, yes, so it is; that's what it is to be young. Tell me, Anton, were you so uneasy in the war, and so----?"

"No, father, that was quite another thing. Father, I'm afraid you are not entirely satisfied with Thoma."

"It's true, I'm not in love with her, as you are."

"No, but that's not all."

"There's nothing else, but for me she is almost too----"

"Too rich, you mean."

"I didn't mean that. No girl is too rich for an honest lad. I only meant she is too beautiful. Yes, laugh if you choose; but a wife as beautiful as she, is a troublesome possession. I think, however, it will come out all right;

she certainly seems more like her mother than like Landolin. To be sure, she has some of his pride, but I hope not his ungovernable temper. In old stories we read of wicked giants; Landolin might have been one of them. It's well that we live in other times."

"But, father, you make too much of this; my Thoma----"

"Yes, yes, she has her mother's good disposition. I have been thinking it over, and I believe that, all told, I have been fifteen times at Rotterdam. There are no such violent men as Landolin in Holland."

"Father, perhaps it's because they have no mountain streams in Holland, only quiet canals."

"Well, well! Is there anything that the young people nowadays do not know all about? However, I did not mean to say anything bad of Thoma."

"That you can never do, father. There is one thing about her that will please you especially; an untruth has never escaped her lips, and never will."

"The world doesn't set much store by that now, but it's a great thing, after all. But enough of this. You are a man that can be master. I have only said this that your mind might be prepared. Enough now. It is a glorious day, thank God!"

"Yes, glorious indeed," replied Anton; but he did not mean the weather, for to-day was to take place, at the spring fair in the city, the betrothal of the miller's son, Anton, with Thoma (Thomasia), the daughter of the farmer and former bailiff, Landolin of Reutershöfen.

CHAPTER II.

High up on the plateau lie Landolin's broad acres. The buildings stand by themselves, for the farm-houses of the borough are scattered miles apart over the hill-sides. Only the dwelling-house, with its shingled roof, faces the road; its various outbuildings lie back of it, around an open square, and the pastures and fields extend up the steep hill-side to the beech wood, whose brown buds are glistening with the morning dew.

It is still early in the morning; no sound is heard in the farm-yard, save the noisy splashing of the broad rivulet from the spring. A roof extends far over the water, for in the winter the cattle are brought there to drink. Near by are heaps of paving stones, with which a new drain is to be built through the yard.

Gradually the larks began their songs high in the air; the sparrows on the roof twittered; the cows lowed; the horses rattled their halters; the doves began cooing; the chickens on their roost and the pigs in their pens all awoke and gave signs of comfort or discomfort. The huge watch-dog, whose head lay on the threshold of his kennel, lazily opened his eyes now and then, and closed them again as though he would say, "What strange sounds; what do they all amount to, compared with a hearty bark! That's, after all, the most beautiful and sensible noise in the world, for dogs of my rank never bark without good reason."

The first person who came through the yard was the farmer's stately wife, well dressed, and still in her prime. It is a well-ordered household where the master or mistress is the first awake.

The farmer's wife was a quiet woman, such a one as is called a "genuine farmer's wife;" not much more than this could be said of her. She was industrious, and watchful of her interests, and kept others under strict control. She held her husband in all fitting honor, as a wife should, but there was never any thought of love, either in her youth or now. She was the daughter of a farmer in a neighboring borough, and had married in the same rank, for she had never dreamed of the possibility of doing otherwise. During the time that Landolin was bailiff she had worthily done the honors of the house; she had unbounded confidence in her husband, and when people came with complaints to her, her usual answer was: "Just be patient, my husband will make everything right." She was entirely frank, what she said she meant; but she spoke little, for much speaking was not befitting a farmer's wife; and as for much thinking--for that there was no need. A wife must keep the house in order, economize, and be strictly honest, as the custom is--to think is quite unnecessary.

The head-servant, Tobias, came from the stable-door. The two nodded to one another without a word, and yet each had a deep respect for the other; for, in his place, the head-servant was equally responsible for the honor of the household; therefore he ranked next after the farmer, and before the only son, who, in this family, was indeed too young to be much thought of.

Tobias had already endured fifteen years in this house, for living here meant endurance, and during all this time he had never called upon the farmer's wife for aid against the violence of the master; in his heart he respected the mistress who never wanted anything for herself, but who seemed to think herself in the world only that she might be obedient to her husband. When the farmer drove through the country to the different gala-day festivals with his beautiful, proud daughter, his wife thought it only right and a matter of course that she should be left behind, and she had no longing for the world outside. She had grown up in a secluded farm-house, where the principal pleasure lay in being able, while the sun shone on Sunday--to sleep in the afternoon.

"Mistress," began the head-servant, Tobias, "Mistress, may I ask you a question?"

"Certainly."

"Is it true that your daughter----?"

"Will be betrothed to-day."

"Praise be to God and thanks!" cried the head-servant; "God forgive me, I was afraid the master would not give her to anybody, that he would think nobody good enough for her! Anton Armbruster is a fine, honest fellow, and in the war he showed himself a brave man; he will be the husband to----"

The farmer's wife interrupted this speech, lest something unpleasant about Thoma might be added, and said, "The betrothal is not to be here at home, it will take place in the city to-day, at the Sword Inn. I am to go too," she concluded, pleased that so great an honor should be done her. She walked more quickly than usual to the house, awakened the maids, and then mounted the stairs to the large guest chamber. There stood two high bedsteads, but they held bed-clothing enough for six, for from this house neither feathers nor linen were ever sold. It was easy enough to see that when the mistress opened the double doors of the great, gayly-painted wardrobe. She feasted her eyes on the masses of linen heaped up there; of which that in the left side of the wardrobe, tied with blue ribbon, was the outfit long ago prepared for Thoma. The mother laid her hand on it as if in blessing, and her lips moved.

But now she heard footsteps in the living-room, and went down stairs again.

CHAPTER III.

There, where the bright morning light streamed through many windows, and the ever-heated porcelain stove spread a pleasant warmth, the farmer was walking up and down. He was a broad, stately man; his thick hair was cut short, and the stubble stood upright, which gave his immense head a certain bull-dog look. From his smoothly-shaven face looked forth self-esteem, obstinacy, and contempt of the world. He was still in his shirt sleeves, but otherwise arrayed in holiday attire; the single-breasted, collarless, velvet coat alone hung on the nail; he wore high boots, whose tops fell down in folds, showing the white stockings below the knee-breeches; and also a gay silk vest, buttoned close to his throat.

As his wife entered he nodded silently. Following her came their son Peter, a discontented-looking, full-faced young fellow, and then the servant-men and maids. After grace was said, they sat down to breakfast. There was no conversation; no one even spoke of the chair that remained vacant, that of Thoma. Not until the after-grace had been said, did the peasant speak to Tobias, telling him to take the fat oxen to the fair.

He then sat down in the great arm-chair, not far from the stove, and looked toward the door. Thoma may be permitted to make an exception to-day. Usually she takes great pride in allowing no one to be before her at work, early or late.

Suddenly he arose, and stepping to the porch that led to the yard, called to Tobias to take the prize cow also to the fair. "Father," called a strong girlish voice from the chamber window over the door, "Father, do you mean to sell the prize cow too?"

Landolin half-turned his head, and looked toward the window, but seemed to think a reply unnecessary.

He called to the servant not to forget to stop at the "Sword."

The oxen were led out. They moved as though half asleep, then stopped and looked around, as if bidding farewell to the farm-yard. A splendid cow followed--she was of Simmenthaler stock, but raised here on the farm. The cow's eyes glistened as though she were conscious that she had taken the first prize at the last agricultural fair.

Landolin went down the broad stone steps into the yard, and stood balancing himself first on one foot, then on the other, surveying with great satisfaction the animals and the comfortable appointments of his house.

"Good morning, father!" called the same strong, girlish voice from the veranda. "I could not sleep till near morning. Father, are you really intending to sell the prize cow?"

"You do not know as much as I thought," answered Landolin laughing; "do you think nothing goes to the fair except to be sold? A man sometimes likes to show what he owns."

"You're right," answered the girl, shaking back her long, flowing yellow hair, "you're right."

And the miller was right too. The girl was almost too beautiful. She now seated herself upon the door-step, and began braiding her hair, and singing softly to herself; but she often stopped, and gazed dreamily into the far distance with her great blue eyes. She was thinking of Anton, down by the mill in the valley.

CHAPTER IV.

Arrayed in the velvet coat, on his head his broad hat adorned with a large silver buckle, and in his hand a stout stick, Landolin came through the door-way and said:

"Thoma, I'm going now; I want you and your mother to follow soon."

He started on, but waited a while at the gate, for the common people there, who greeted him obsequiously, to pass by; he could not accompany those who were driving to the fair only a poor little cow or a goat, or perhaps going empty-handed to make some small purchases. The Galloping Cooper greeted him as he hastened by. He was a gaunt man, by trade a cooper, and received this name because he was always in a hurry. The gamekeeper saluted by touching his hand to his cap. Landolin responded graciously, for he had appointed the man to his present position when he was bailiff. Cushion Kate, an old woman with sunburnt face and a red kerchief tied round her head, who carried a number of gay-colored head cushions, passed by without greeting; she was angry with Landolin, and had no other way of expressing it. Not until a wealthy farmer like himself came up and cried: "Come along, Landolin," did Landolin condescend to nod, and join his equal.

Our story lies in that part of the country where great farms are still found in the hands of peasants; these descend by inheritance from one generation to another; and with them certain lines of social demarcation which exclude from the farmer's circle those who are styled the "common people;" even at the inn an unwritten law prescribes that the farmers should sit at a separate table from the laborers and mechanics.

The village consists of thirty-two farm-houses, that lie scattered amidst their broad fields, and of a few small houses collected about the church, the school-house, and the inn.

"Where are your women folks?" said Landolin's companion, after they had walked silently side by side a good distance.

"They are coming after us; they are riding," answered Landolin.

The first speaker had indeed heard that something more important than the sale of cattle was to take place at the fair in the city to-day; but, as a discreet and self-controlled farmer, who allowed no one to meddle in his affairs or to trouble him with impertinent questions, he said no more.

The two walked a long distance, silent and supercilious, for each felt that here were walking two men who together represented three hundred acres of field and meadow, and nearly as many more of forest-land. At length the neighbor, who was the younger, and besides was Burgomaster, asked,

"Have you any old hay left?"

"No; sold it all."

"At a good price?"

"Yes. You too?"

"Of course."

They spoke to each other as unconcernedly as though neither had ever thought of increasing his acres; but for all that the enchanted dragon--Speculation--had flown over this peaceful valley, leaving dire destruction in his track. Each of these men had lost large sums of money by a recent bank failure, and in American railroad

stocks; but neither was willing to ask the other's sympathy, or even to acknowledge his own loss; and each thought, "I can bear it better than he."

One said to himself, "I am younger than he is," and the other, "I am older than he;" one, "How could the young man be so rash?" and the other, "How could the old man have shown so little experience?" On only one point did their thoughts agree; both intended to resist temptation for the future, and to be contented with the slow and sure profits of their fields.

"We are a little late," the younger farmer at last said.

"Oh," replied Landolin, standing still (he always stood still when he spoke), "what I have to buy will wait for me. I only sent my cattle that the fair might amount to something, as I hear that a great many Alsace traders are coming."

The other glanced sideways at Landolin, as though he would have enjoyed saying, "I know you wish the miller and his son to be there first, and be waiting for you; but I'll not give you the satisfaction of knowing that I understand your meanness."

Landolin's wagon with the two great horses now overtook them. In it were seated mother and daughter, in holiday attire. Landolin's companion bowed quickly many times, and murmured, as he glanced at Thoma, "It is certainly true; she is the most beautiful girl in the country." Thoma asked if the men did not wish to ride, for there was a second seat in the "Schaarenbank," as they here call the *Char-à-banc*, which has now taken the place of the old-fashioned coach. The men declined, and the wagon rolled on.

CHAPTER V.

Mountain and valley must join each other after all. Down by the brook Anton was walking with his father, and from the hill-side Thoma was coming with hers. A few weeks only had passed since Anton and Thoma gave themselves to each other; but when once the verdure of the spring-time appears, its spread is strong and unceasing.

It came about thus: the snow was lying heavy on the mountains and in the ravines, on the fields it had begun to melt, when three young men in soldiers' caps had come one Sunday to Landolin's gate. They greeted as a comrade the servant Fidelis, who was currying the horses, and also wore a soldier's cap.

"What!" said Fidelis, "do you dare to invite the master's daughter?"

"Yes, of course."

"I don't believe that she'll consent, or rather that her father will, but he won't mind having the honor offered him."

"Come with us, Fidelis," said Anton, "you are one of us."

The other two young men, who were sons of rich farmers like Landolin, looked astonished, but said nothing.

"As you will," answered Fidelis; "just wait till I put my Sunday coat on."

He accompanied the three to the house, but stopped on the threshold, and allowed the farmers' sons to approach his master alone. After welcoming them, Landolin seated himself quickly and asked:

"What can I do for you?"

The son of the farmer, Titus, called the Mountain-king, who lived on the other side of the plateau, a tall fellow with broad shoulders and a boyish face, answered glibly, as though reciting a carefully committed lesson, that they had come most humbly to invite the maiden Thoma to be Maid of Honor at the presentation of the flag to the Club.

"Who are to be the other maids of honor?" asked Landolin.

"My sister and the daughter of the District Forester."

Landolin nodded, and then asked on what day the festival was to take place. Anton, who had not before spoken, answered that the fifteenth of July had been chosen, as it was the anniversary of the declaration of war, and fortunately happened to fall on Sunday. He added adroitly, "that they desired to change the day of terror into one of gladness."

Landolin looked up, astonished at Anton's temerity in addressing him; then fixed his eye on the mountain prince, who, instead of replying himself, had permitted the miller's son to speak.

"You make arrangements far in advance; it's a long time from now to the middle of July; but never mind. We thank you for the honor, but we cannot join you," said Landolin, with decision.

"All right, we need go only one house farther," quickly answered the mountain prince, his face reddening. He was about turning away, when Anton interrupted:

"Pardon me; but if I have rightly understood the ex-bailiff, he is going to leave the decision to his daughter."

The farmer compressed his lips craftily, then said:

"Yes, yes; you are right. And mind you, I shall not say a word to her, and you shall find that she will give you the same answer that I gave."

"May I ask why?" inquired the mountain prince.

"You may ask," answered the peasant, going to the door and calling to Thoma to bring wine and something to eat. It seemed as if Thoma had already prepared this, for she came immediately, the young men following her movements with admiring eyes. She poured the wine, they touched their glasses, and Anton had begun to repeat his request, when she interrupted him:

"Say no more!"

Anton turned pale, and Thoma blushed; their eyes met, and Thoma's eyelids dropped. In a moment, however, she looked up frankly, and continued:

"I have heard all that has been said."

"Bravo! that's splendid!" cried Anton; "pardon me, but I imagine there are few who would so honestly confess that they had been listening."

"I thank you for your praise, but it is nothing--that is, I mean being honest deserves no praise."

The farmer shrugged his shoulders, and opened his mouth with delight. "He's getting it now," thought he, "she pays in good coin."

Turning to her father, Thoma continued:

"Father, did you really mean that I should do as I choose?"

"Certainly! Whatever you say will be right."

"Then I say yes; I accept the honor with thanks."

Fidelis, who was standing at the door, bit his lip to keep from laughing aloud; and an expression of astonishment spread itself over the faces of the farmer and the three young men. The mountain-prince and the other farmer's son thanked Thoma and shook hands with her, but when Anton offered his hand she turned quickly away, and busied herself with the plates and glasses.

Meanwhile the farmer's wife had entered, unnoticed, and now, whilst they were enjoying the refreshment, spoke to them all, for she knew their mothers. Turning to Anton, she expressed her sympathy at his mother's death, saying that she was a most excellent woman, and that her happiness must have been great indeed when her only son returned from the war, safe and with honor.

After the three young men had gone, the farmer's wife said:

"Anton's a splendid fellow, he pleases me best of them all."

"Do you think so too?" the farmer was about to ask his daughter, but he refrained, and only answered:

"He has a tongue like a lawyer's; the only real substantial farmer is Titus's son and heir."

Thoma left the room without a word, and that which Landolin dreaded came to pass. From this time Thoma and Anton met often, in public and alone, in the bright day time and the quiet evening. And when at length Thoma told her father of her love, he calmly endeavored to show her that this would be an unequal marriage, and that he had always had confidence that her pride would not allow her to throw herself away; as, however, he found that Thoma never wavered in her decision, he was wise enough to give his consent, thereby securing their gratitude instead of having to yield without it; for above all else he valued Thoma's love and respect.

So it came to pass, that to-day was to take place the betrothal of the haughty Landolin's proud daughter with her honest, but not quite so well-born lover, Anton.

CHAPTER VI.

"Mother!" said Thoma, during the drive, "when father was young he must have been the handsomest man in the country."

"He was, indeed, but wild and unruly, very wild; you will have a more gentle husband. It will be just the opposite with you to what it was with us."

Thoma looked up wonderingly; it was unusual for her mother either to think or speak so much; and her astonishment increased when her mother added:

"If your father had been a soldier like Anton, he too would have learned to give way to others, and not always think himself the only person in the world. Heaven forgive me, I was not going to speak of your father at all, I only meant to tell you that you must now learn to give up to others; with marriage willfulness must end."

The deference with which Thoma had listened at first, disappeared now that her mother concluded with advice and censure. She moved her lips impatiently, but said nothing.

From the valley could be heard the din of the fair; the drums and trumpets in the show booths, the lowing of the cows and oxen, and the whinnying of the horses in the broad meadow by the river side.

At the foot of the mountain, where the signpost is, Thoma beckoned to her a beggar, who sat by the roadside, holding out his handless arm, and gave him a bright, new mark.

"That pleases me," said the mother, as they drove on.

Thoma answered with a voice clear as the morning:

"Yes, mother, on this, my day of happiness, I cannot pass the first beggar I meet without giving him something; and see," she cried, looking back, "see, he is making signs to us; he has just found out how much he received, and is showing it to the others. If I could only make the whole world happy, as happy as I am! O mother, it must be terrible! There sits a poor man appealing with such pitiful glances; men pass by, one gives nothing, the others give nothing, it is too much trouble to put their hands into their pockets and open their purses, and the poor man begs with empty mouth."

The mother nodded with a happy face, and wanted to say: "You do not take after your father in everything, in some things you are like me," but she suppressed the words. She was still vexed for having so far forgotten herself as to say anything against her husband.

"Good morning, Thoma! Good morning, mother!" suddenly sounded in greeting the clear voice of Anton; he held out his hand and continued:

"Come, jump out and walk with me."

"No, you ride with us."

"I'll walk beside you," replied Anton, and rested his hand upon the railing of the wagon, as he walked along.

The mother made excuses for having kept him waiting, and said that the farmer was following on foot.

CHAPTER VII.

Upon entering the fair ground, Landolin was immediately greeted by the farmer Titus, called the Mountain-king, whose estate lay on the other side of the plateau. Titus offered him a large sum for the prize cow, which Landolin haughtily refused. He was soon surrounded by a crowd of farmers, who, partly in earnest, and partly in jest, charged him with having ruined the fair by exhibiting her, for the other cattle looked small and poor in comparison. Landolin smiled; he had brought her merely to gratify his pride, but he was very well pleased to find that he had been able to arouse the envy of others; and the annoyance of the Mountain-king especially pleased him, as they had long been rivals. The other farmers had really no ambition, their thoughts and efforts were centered on gain. This was the case with the rivals, too, but in addition to this, they desired a special recognition of their superior importance.

The Mountain-king Titus had this advantage, he despised the world, and let it be so understood; the man who does this the world runs after. He acted as if (and perhaps it was true) he desired nothing from any one; he had the indifference of the pretentious peasant; he might hear his name spoken behind him seven times without so much as turning his head to find out who spoke, or what was said of him. He rarely talked with any one, but when he did, the person addressed was happy; "The Mountain-king has just spoken to me, and so long, and so politely!"--he who could say this was elated with the honor. Landolin, on the other hand, despised the world no less than the Mountain-king; but he longed for applause and homage, and when it was not voluntarily offered him, he endeavored to compel it. He was boastful, and displayed his condescension, or even his anxiety for the good opinion of this and that one, and by that very means trifled away the desired standing.

Landolin and the Mountain-king treated each other like friends, while at the same time they hated each other profoundly.

Presently they stood in the presence of a third person, to whom each of them was bound to do honor. Pfann, the Circuit Judge, a man with a fine countenance, wearing gold spectacles, was walking with his wife on his arm, through the crowded fair, bowing here and there. He now came up to the two men, and told them that on the next day they would be summoned to serve on the jury.

"I'm sorry it cannot be arranged otherwise," he added, "but the next term of court falls during harvest."

"It's always so," cried Landolin; "in return for paying high taxes, we have the privilege of sitting for weeks at a time, nailed to a bench."

He thought that he had spoken not only with dignity, but with general approval, and he looked around for signs of assent; but nobody nodded.

Titus, on the other hand, was silent, and his silence was more weighty than Landolin's words.

"We may congratulate you," said the judge's wife to Landolin; "I hear your daughter is to be betrothed to the miller's son, Anton, of Rothenkirchen. He is an excellent young man, intelligent, well-educated, and brave."

Landolin did not appear to be altogether satisfied with this praise, and could not help saying, vaingloriously, even at the expense of his future son-in-law:

"Yes, the young folks are so desperately fond of each other, that I have given my consent. Thank God, I am able to take a son-in-law of lower rank; and, indeed, he might have been an officer. But I must say farewell; I have waited too long, they are expecting me at the 'Sword.'" He stepped quickly away.

When the Circuit Judge had found his way through the crowd to a quiet corner, he said:

"There you have a sample of your honest-hearted peasantry. Utter stupidity or cunning roughness is their alternative. The roughness hits at random, without reflecting how the smitten feels the blow. Landolin is not ashamed to belittle the brave boy his daughter is to marry, merely to make himself appear bigger by his side."

"I still hold," answered his wife, "that the hearts of these people are true, and are often better than their words and deeds. Landolin did not really wish to speak disparagingly of Anton; he only wanted to set down his old rival, Titus; for Titus, too, would have been glad to have Anton for a son-in-law."

The judge was astonished at this new information from his wife; but at her charitable judgment, which nothing could shake, he had long since left off being astonished.

They wandered on; and as they proceeded, the greetings given the wife were, if possible, more earnest than those given the judge himself. She nodded to some with special friendliness, and to a few she gave a pleasant passing word.

CHAPTER VIII.

On one side of the river was the noise and bustle of the crowded fair; on the other, in the shade of the elms and willows, hidden from all the world, sat Anton and Thoma, caressing each other.

"Now be sensible, and say something," said Thoma at length.

"No, no, I cannot talk, and I don't need to, for everything I would say you know already," replied Anton. He told, however, of his awakening before day, of his morning walk, and how he had greeted Thoma from the far distance.

She laughed gladly, and tears came to her eyes. She was certainly sincerely fond of Anton, but the deep, gushing love which now burst from him she had scarcely dreamed of.

"Yonder is the fair," said he, "anything can be got there. I should like to buy something for you, but it would be useless; the world, the whole world, is yours."

"Not quite the whole," she laughed, "but you are right, don't buy anything for me. All I want is your good heart; that I have, and such a one all the gold in the world couldn't buy. Do you know what pleases me best in all you say?"

"Tell me what it is."

"I believe every word you speak. I don't believe you could possibly tell an untruth."

Again they were silent until, as a happy smile broke over Anton's face, Thoma said:

"Why do you smile? Your soul laughs out. Tell me why!"

"Yes, yes, love; doesn't it seem as if our river were more joyous than usual to-day? I've grown up on its banks, you know. When I was in the war, I often fancied at night I heard it rushing. It made me homesick. I was thinking just now, darling, that the little fishes must be happy down there in the water."

"It will be hard, Anton, for me to grow accustomed to it. I have a real horror of water. When I was a very little child, one of our servants was drowned, and they told me that the river must have its sacrifice every year, and after three days it would give up the dead; so I hated it. But nonsense, what foolish talk! See, there comes Titus's wagon, with his son and daughter. The son wanted me and the daughter wanted you."

She arose and waved her hand to them, and then called out, taking care they should not hear her:

"Buy yourselves dolls at the fair."

Anton remained seated, and a cloud passed over his face, for it pained him that Thoma should greet them so scornfully.

A messenger came from the inn to say that Landolin had arrived. The hostess met them at the door, and said:

"Your friends are all up stairs in the corner room. Good luck to you!"

CHAPTER IX.

The hostess of the "Sword"--it so happens that every one speaks of the hostess and not of the host, and her husband seems to be quite satisfied with it--this wise woman, according to a plan of her own, had changed and enlarged the old inn until it was twice as large as before. For, as soon as a spot had been fixed upon for a railway station, she had a new building added on the side toward the river, with a large summer hall and verandas, where the people of rank in the village could hold their summer gatherings in the open air. The corner room of the house, on the town side, she arranged especially for betrothal festivities. There was a great mirror, in which people could survey themselves at full length--to be sure not always an advantage. There were colored prints of young lovers, of marriages, of christenings, and of golden weddings.

At the table sat the miller and Landolin's wife, and waited long for the farmer. The miller was annoyed, and Landolin's wife did not know what to say, for she could not deny that her husband probably kept the miller waiting intentionally, in order to show him who was the more important.

The miller had an earnest, good-natured face, and a thoughtfulness in every word and gesture. He had a high regard for the farmer's wife, and expressed it to her. She looked down, abashed, for she was not used to being praised, and became silent. The miller, too, ceased talking, and whistled gently to himself.

At length Landolin's step was heard, and following him came Thoma and Anton. Landolin shook hands with the miller.

"I have been waiting a long time," the miller said.

Landolin did not consider it necessary to excuse himself; he thought people must be satisfied with all he did, and the way in which he did it.

The miller poured out some of the wine which stood on the table, and, after touching glasses, Landolin said:

"We have really nothing more to arrange. You know what division Peter must make when he takes the estate. The money I have promised I will pay down the day before the wedding. The five acres of forest which I have bought, which border on your land, and are properly no part of my farm, I now give to Thoma to be hers in her own right. You have no one but your son, so there is nothing more to be said. Of course, you will not marry again?"

The miller smiled sadly, and said at length:

"Then give your hands to one another in God's name, and may happiness and blessing be yours for all time."

The lovers clasped each other's hands firmly, and so did the fathers and mother.

The betrothed drank from the same glass; and it was a good omen that Thoma did not take from his hand the glass, which Anton held out to her, but drank whilst he held it.

Landolin might have spoken, but he remained silent. It is not necessary for him to speak. Is he not Landolin? He even looked suspiciously at the miller. He did not esteem him highly, for every one praised his good nature, and Landolin was inclined to consider good nature as one kind of rascality.

"Father-in-law," said Anton, "whenever you come to our house you will find joy there, for as surely as our brook will never flow up the mountain side, so surely will Thoma's thoughts never turn toward her old home in discontent."

Landolin opened his eyes at this speech; but his only answer was a tap on the shoulder. The miller said, with a trembling voice:

"Yes, yes; 'twill be beautiful to have a young woman in our house once more."

"Thoma will hold you in all honor," said the farmer's wife. "She honors her parents, and that makes sound housewives."

Landolin shrugged his shoulders slightly, when the miller continued:

"I'm very sure, Landolin, that your daughter is not so hot-tempered as you and your side of the house have always been."

Landolin smiled, well pleased that people should think him hot-tempered, for this made them fear and respect him.

CHAPTER X.

As Landolin still remained silent, the miller felt called upon to speak.

"I can well understand that it must be hard for you to let your daughter leave your house; we found it so when our only daughter was married. My wife--it is from her that Anton gets his ready speech--said that when the daughter who sang as she went up and down the stairs is gone, then it seems that all the cheerfulness of the house has flown away like a bird."

At these stupid, soft-hearted words, Landolin gave the miller a disdainful look. But he did not notice this, and went on in a voice too low for the lovers to hear:

"I needn't praise Anton to you any more. He belongs to you as well as to me. He is well educated; the military authorities wished to keep him in the army. They said he would be made an officer, but that is not for one of us. It will not be long before your daughter is the wife of the bailiff. My wife, thank God, lived to see him come home from the war with the great medal of honor. I'm sure you are glad of it too. A man with that medal is worth much, I do not mean in money, but wherever he goes he is esteemed and respected, and needn't stand back for anybody, no matter who he is."

"We needn't do that, either," said Landolin, looking at the miller arrogantly. He laughed aloud when the miller added:

"The judge's wife put it well when she said, 'Wherever he goes he has the honorable recognition of the highest rank in the whole kingdom.'"

"Hoho!" cried Landolin, so loudly that even the lovers started. There was nothing more said; for, as the fair was over, the miller's relatives and the brother of Landolin's wife came in. The farmer's wife greeted her brother affectionately; and Landolin shook hands with him, and bade him welcome. He and his brother-in-law were enemies, as the brother-in-law sided with Titus; but to-day it was only proper that he should be invited to the family festival.

They sat down together to the feast, when the miller remarked that next Sunday he would go with the lovers to visit the patriarch Walderjörgli, in the forest, and announce to him their betrothal. Landolin's face reddened to the roots of his hair, and he exclaimed:

"I don't care anything for the patriarch. I don't care anything for old customs; and, as for me, Walderjörgli, with his long beard, is no saint; he's not down in my calendar."

"He is a relative of my wife," replied the miller, "and you know very well of how much importance he is."

"Just as much as there is in my glass," answered Landolin, after he had drained it.

His wife, fearing a quarrel, declared she had great respect for Walderjörgli, and begged her husband to say nothing against him. Thoma joined her, and laid her hand on her father's shoulder, imploring him not to stir up a dispute unnecessarily.

Landolin smiled on his child; poured a fresh glass of wine, and drank to the lovers' health.

Anton and Thoma now started to go, but Landolin cried excitedly:

"Hold on! Wait a moment, Anton! You mustn't ask for the marriage to take place before Candlemas. Give me your hand on it."

"I have no hand to give. I have already given it to Thoma," replied Anton, laughing, as he went away with his betrothed.

CHAPTER XI.

"How many friends you have!" said Thoma; for they were often stopped on their way through the crowded fair grounds, especially by Anton's old comrades. "I wish we were alone," she added impatiently.

"Yes, love," answered Anton, "if we choose the day of the fair for our betrothal, and show ourselves then for the first time together, we must expect these congratulations, and I am glad to have them. Isn't it delightful to have so many people rejoice with us in our happiness? It adds to their enjoyment without taking from ours."

"Do you really believe they rejoice?" asked Thoma.

The conversation was interrupted by the handless beggar, who came up to thank Thoma again, and tell her how astonished he was at such a gift. He said he had been her father's substitute (for at that time substitutes in the military service were still allowed).

Anton encouraged him to tell where he had lost his hand. It was on a circular saw, in a mill on the other side of the valley. Anton told him to come the next day, and perhaps he could give him work. While he was speaking the judge's wife approached, and congratulated them heartily. Thoma looked at her in surprise when she said:

"You are the new generation; preserve the honesty of the old, and add to it the progressiveness of the present. I shall write to my son of your betrothal."

Anton shook hands twice with the judge's wife.

"I beg you will give the lieutenant my most respectful greetings."

It was still difficult for the lovers to disengage themselves from the crowd, for a group of Anton's comrades surrounded them, saying:

"At your wedding we are going to march in front of you with the flag of the Club and the regimental music."

Anton thanked them, and said he would be much pleased.

He had scarcely got out of the throng, when a teamster in a blue jacket, who was walking beside a four-horse wagon, called out, "Captain Anton Armbruster! Hallo!" and came up to him and said:

"How are you? So you've got her, have you? Is that she? Is that Thoma?"

"Yes."

"Then I wish you happiness and blessing. How tall and beautiful she is! Let me shake hands with you."

Thoma gave her hand with reluctance, and the teamster continued jokingly:

"Get him to tell you what he did one night when we were before Paris. We were lying by the camp-fire, roasted on one side, frozen on the other. Anton, who was asleep, called out, 'Thoma! Thoma!' He wouldn't own up to it afterwards, but I heard it plain enough. Well, good-by; may God keep you both. Get up," he called to his horses, and drove on.

At last the lovers made their way out of the crowd to the quiet meadow-path, where, for a time, they walked hand in hand, then stood still. Any one who saw them must have thought they were speaking loving words to

each other. The youth's voice was full of tenderness, but he spoke not of love, or, at least, not of love for his betrothed. He began hesitatingly: "Let me tell you something, darling."

"What is it? What's the matter?"

"Just think of our being here together, and having each other, and belonging to each other, and only a little while ago I was so far away in France. There, in the field, on the march, or in the camp, thousands upon thousands of us, we were like one man, no one for himself, no one thinking of what he was at home. The brotherhood was all; and now, each lives for himself alone."

"You are not alone, we are together."

"Yes, indeed. But you were going to ask me something."

"Oh, yes! How did it happen that you called my name in your sleep?"

"I'll tell you. Do you remember my passing your house when I was on my way to the army as a recruit?"

"Certainly I remember it."

"Did you notice that I took a roundabout way over the mountain, so as to pass it?"

"I didn't notice it then, but afterward I thought of it. When you gave me your hand in farewell you looked at me with your fiery eyes, that are so piercing."

"Yes, I wanted then to tell you how much I loved you, but I wouldn't do it, for your sake. I said to myself, 'You had better say nothing, and so save her from heart-ache and anxiety while you are in the war, and from life-long grief if you should be killed.' It was hard for me to keep silent, but after I had gone I was glad of it. And, do you remember? you had a wild-rose in your mouth by the stem, and the rose-leaves lay on your lips, just where I wanted to put a kiss; and at your throat was a corn-flower as blue as your eyes."

"Oh, you flatterer! But go on, go on; what else?"

Anton drew her to him and kissed her, then continued:

"There! Shall I go on? Well, you took the two flowers in your hand, and I saw you would like to give them to me, and I wanted to have them, but even that I wouldn't ask. Often and often by day and by night, in the field and on the watch, I thought of you, as the song says: and once, when the teamster lay beside me, I spoke your name in my sleep."

"Oh, you are so dear and so good and so sweet," cried Thoma, "I'm afraid I'm not gentle enough for you. In our home everything is rough, we are not so----. But you'll see I can be different."

Her eyes moistened while she spoke, and the whole expression of her face changed to one of humility and tenderness.

"I will not have you different," cried Anton, "you shall remain as you are, for just as you are you please me best. Oh, Heaven! who in the world would believe that Landolin's Thoma of Reutershöfen could be as gentle as a dove."

"I gentle?" she exclaimed, laughingly, "I a dove? All right then, catch me!" she cried, joyously clapping her hands and running quickly into the forest, whither Anton followed her.

CHAPTER XII.

They came within the border of the wood which belonged to Landolin. On the side where the sun is most searching and powerful, the bark of the mighty pine-trees was torn open, and the resin was dropping into the tubs which were set for it.

"It's a pity for the beautiful trees," said Anton; "your father mustn't tap such trees as these hereafter; they are good for lumber. He must leave them to me."

Thoma begged him to be very careful how he dealt with her father, for he would not bear opposition.

"I don't know," she added, "it seems to me father is very----very irritable to-day. I don't know why."

"But I know. He is vexed because he has to give you up. You'll see, I shall be so too in a thousand weeks. But a man must be a grandfather before----"

"Oh you!" interrupted Thoma, coloring.

They kept on deeper into the forest, away from the path, and sat down on the soft, yielding moss at the foot of a far-branching pine.

"We have had enough kissing, let me rest a little now, I'm tired," said Thoma, as she leaned against the tree. She smiled when Anton hastily made his coat into a pillow for her head.

Lilies of the valley blossomed at their feet. Anton plucked one, and with it stroked Thoma's cheek and forehead, gently singing the while all manner of nursery songs, and magic charms. ++ I wish thee a night of repose, A canopy of the wild rose, Young May-bells to pillow thy head, Sleep soft in thy flowery bed.

And where two lovers sit thus together, in the depth of the forest, there streams from the mists arising heavenward, and from the murmuring and rustling in the tree-tops, that same subtle enchantment and delight which resounds in song, and is portrayed in fairy tales, where trees and grass and wild beasts speak.

"Hark; there's a finch," said Anton. "Do you remember the story about the finch?"

"No; tell it to me."

"Once a young man went through a field to visit his sweetheart, and the finch called out: 'Wip! Wip!' (wife, wife.) 'That's just what I want,' said the young man. As he was on his way home again the finch cried: 'Bethink you well. Bethink you well.' Now we, dear Thoma, have bethought ourselves well. Fly on, finch, we don't need your help. 'Wip! Wip!'"

"How tender you are!" said Thoma, smiling; then she shut her eyes, and soon she was fast asleep. As Anton looked at her she seemed to become more beautiful, but she must have gone to sleep with some willful impulse in her mind, for her face had a strained expression.

From a little stone near by, some lizards looked with their bright, knowing eyes at the slumberer and her guard. They shuffled noiselessly away, and presently others came to see the wonder. Dragon-flies in green and gold came flying through the air, brushed against each other, and sped away. A gay butterfly lighted on Thoma's forehead, just at the parting of her hair, and rested there like a diadem. On the highest twig of the tree, a green finch perched. He turned his head, saw the sleeping girl, and flew swiftly away. A cuckoo alighted from his flight, and sounded his cry. Thoma awoke, and looked around bewildered.

"Good morning, my darling," said Anton, "you have been my betrothed ever since yesterday."

"Have I slept very long?" asked she.

"No, not very, but surely you dreamt something strange. What was it?"

"I never tell dreams; I don't believe in them. Come, let us go home."

And so they started homeward.

CHAPTER XIII.

At the edge of the wood they saw "Cushion Kate," with her red kerchief round her head, standing by a young man who sat by the roadside. She offered him a pretzel, but he refused it.

"See," said Thoma, "that's 'Cushion Kate' with her Vetturi. She spoils the good-for-nothing fellow. He used to be a servant of ours, but we found that he had been stealing oats, nobody knows how long. So, of course, father sent him away."

"The poor creature looks almost starved."

"He's not only poor, but he's a rascal. Father doesn't want to prosecute him, so the fellow keeps bothering him for his wages."

When they came up, the lad arose quickly. He was of slight build, and his bluish-black hair fell in disorder over his forehead. The dark, weary eyes had a frightened look. He took off a torn straw hat, and bowed several times to Anton. He seemed to be trying to say something.

"Your name is Vetturi, isn't it?" asked Anton. "Come here. Is there anything you want?"

"I won't take alms like a beggar, I'd rather strike my mouth against a stone," replied Vetturi in a hoarse voice; and turning to his mother as though she had contradicted him, said: "Mother, you shan't take anything."

Then in an entirely different tone he said to Thoma: "May I wish you joy?"

"No, you may not. Nobody who speaks so disrespectfully of my father shall wish me joy. Own up to stealing the oats. If you do, I will go to father and get him to forgive you."

"I won't do it."

"Then abuse me, not my father. My father might, perhaps, have given up to you, but I won't let him as long as you keep on lying."

"But I can wish you joy, Anton," cried Cushion Kate; "I hope your wife will be like your mother. She was a good woman; there isn't her like in the whole country. I was in your house when you came into the world. You are just eight days older than my oldest daughter would be now. Now, get your father-in-law to take my Vetturi again, and straighten everything out. We are poor people. We don't want to quarrel with such a powerful farmer as he is, but he must not squeeze us until the blood runs out from under our nails."

"Come along," cried Thoma, taking hold of Anton's arm, "don't let her talk to you so."

She walked away. Anton did not follow her, but said to Vetturi that he would employ him as a wood-cutter up in the forest.

"My Vetturi cannot do that," interrupted the mother. "He cannot work up there from Monday morning to Saturday night, and have no decent food, and no decent bed."

"Come! come!" urged Thoma from a distance. Anton obeyed, and Vetturi called after them all kinds of imprecations against Landolin.

With a frown Thoma said to Anton, in a reproachful tone:

"That Vetturi is no comrade of yours, and why do you stop and talk with him? I do not like it in you. You are not proud enough. Such people should not speak to us unless they are spoken to."

Anton looked at her with astonishment. There was a sharpness in her words and voice which surprised him. She noticed it, perhaps, for she gave him a bewitching smile, and continued:

"See, I am proud of you, and you must be proud of yourself. Such a man as you are! People ought to take off their hats when they speak to you. I wouldn't say good-day to a rascal, and you ought not to either. Perhaps you think I'm angry. Don't think that for an instant. It's only that I have no patience with a liar. Whatever a man does, if he confesses it, you feel like helping him; but a liar, a hypocrite----"

"But, Thoma dear," interrupted Anton, "lying belongs to badness; a man who is bad enough to steal, must be bad enough to lie."

"I understand everything at once. You need not always explain a thing to me twice. I could see a liar or a hypocrite perishing before my eyes and not help him until he----"

"Oho! You're getting excited."

"Yes, I always do when I'm on this subject. But enough of this. What are the cottagers to us! See there, it was there by the pear-tree that you said good-by to me, when you went to the war. See, it is the finest tree of all. It looks like a great nosegay."

"And before the flowers become fruit you will be mine."

CHAPTER XIV.

Anton asked about their neighbor's daughter, Thoma's old playmate. Sadly she told him how she had broken with her only friend. Anger and shame reddened her cheeks as she related to him how her old playmate had, on her wedding day, worn a wreath which she had no right to wear. Thoma's lips quivered when she said:

"They say that Cushion Kate's mother was forced to stand at the church door with a straw wreath on her head, and a straw girdle round her waist. That was hard, but just. But for the girl to lie so, before God and man; to accept an honor to which she had no right. To know it herself and yet be so bold----. There, that is just like Vetturi. I have no patience nor friendship with a liar, whether rich or poor, man or woman. He who will not take the responsibility of his own acts may go to perdition. Indeed, it is not necessary to tell him so, for he has already gone there. You laugh? You are right! Such an honorable man as you are doesn't need to be lectured. Now I don't need my playmate nor anything else while I have you and father. No princess could be happier than I."

They went on hand in hand. When they reached the farm-house, her mother, who had come straight home, called to them from the window to wait until everything should be ready for the visitors, who would soon be there with their congratulations.

So the two seated themselves in the garden back of the house, on the terrace beyond the cherry-tree, and the blossoms on the tree were not richer than the happy thoughts of the young couple.

While they were here under the cherry-tree, Cushion Kate was sitting by her son; he said:

"Mother, I must get away from here. I will go to Alsace, into a factory."

"And you will leave me alone," complained the mother for the hundredth time; and for the hundredth time related, as though it were a comfort, that Vetturi's grandfather had been one of the Reutershöfen family; and though he received his portion as a younger son, neither he nor his descendants had ever been able to get along. Vetturi let his mother talk, but still insisted that he would go.

"Mother, I'm a burden to you. It makes me ashamed."

"You're not a burden to me, and you shouldn't be ashamed to stay with your mother. What have I left in the world if you go away? I shall never want to get up again. I shall never want to make the fire. If you go away you must take me along."

"We'll see, mother. But first, I will have my pay from Landolin; this very day I will have it."

With these words he tore himself away, and hurried to the farm-house.

CHAPTER XV.

Just as the farmer's wife had expected, many people returning from the fair, and many too who had not been there, came to offer their good wishes upon Thoma's betrothal. She made them welcome, and invited them to eat and drink.

When Landolin reached home his greeting to the guests was cool and careless, and he did not look at all like the father of a girl who had just been happily betrothed to her lover.

People said afterward that they knew then from his manner what he was likely to do. But who knows whether they were really so wise?

Landolin said to his wife:

"Stop feeding these people. Start them off. Don't be so friendly and talkative with the herd. It's impudence for them to come to me with good wishes. I don't want their good wishes."

He then went across the yard and stood awhile by the dog. Yes, he even spoke to him. "You're right, you should have been with me. Such fellows don't deserve a word. They ought to have a dog set on them."

Then Vetturi rushed into the yard, bareheaded, and called out: "Farmer! for the last time I say, I want my pay, my money."

"What? You want anything from me! March out of this yard at once. Off with you! What? You're standing there yet? Once for all, go, or I'll make you!"

"I won't go."

"Shall I untie the dog and set him on you?"

"You needn't untie the dog. You're a dog yourself."

"I'm what?"

"What I just said."

"Vetturi, you know I have a hand like iron. Go! Go, or I'll knock you down so you'll never move again."

"Do it! Kill me! You man-skinner, you----"

A stone was thrown; there was a shriek; a moan was heard that even hushed the barking of the dog. Vetturi fell down, groaned once, and then lay motionless.

Anton and Thoma had come to the open gate. They stood there as if rooted to the spot.

"For God's sake! What has happened?" Anton cried, and hastened to the prostrate form. But Thoma stood still, and fixed her gaze on her father, who was tearing open his vest, and loosening his collar.

Controlling herself with a violent effort, Thoma went up to her father, who was staring into his open hands.

"Father! What have you done?" cried she. He looked at her. There was a terrible change in his face. Is this the look of a man at the moment that he has killed another?

Thoma laid her hand on his shoulder. He shook it off and said: "Let me alone." He was afraid of her, and she of him.

At this moment it came to pass that father and daughter lost each other.

"He's dead! His skull is broken!" called the hostler, Fidelis, who, with Anton, had lifted Vetturi up.

With eyes cast on the ground, Thoma went to the house. Landolin left the yard, and went to the spring on the other side of the road.

The people in the house, who had come to give their congratulations, hastened out. With lamentation and mourning they carried Vetturi home to his mother.

Landolin's yard was suddenly still and forsaken; only a little pool of blood, near the heap of paving-stones, showed what had happened there. The sparrows and chickens had gathered round. The head-servant Tobias drove them off, and quickly swept everything away. He then threw the stone and the broom into the drain.

CHAPTER XVI.

When Anton returned Landolin was still at the spring, holding his hands under its broad stream of water.

"How is it?" he asked, turning round.

"He is dead; he gives no sign of life," replied Anton.

Landolin shook the water from his hands fiercely, and shaking his head slowly, said:

"You saw it, Anton? You had just come up. The stone didn't touch him; he fell down at the sound of my voice."

Before Anton could reply, Landolin asked: "Was his mother at home?"

"Yes, she had just come in, and it was terrible when she threw herself on her son's body and cried out: 'Vetturi! open your eyes, Vetturi! Open your mouth, here is some brandy! Drink, do drink!'"

"I, too, must drink something," replied Landolin; and placing his lips to the trough, he drank long. Indeed, it was plain that he purposely allowed the water to splash into his face, and as he slowly wiped it dry, he said:

"Go to Thoma, now! I'll soon follow you."

Anton obeyed. He found Thoma standing near the porch by the flowers, picking off the dead leaves of the rosemary, the yellow jessamine, and the carnations. She did not look round.

"Thoma, here I am; don't you see me?" cried he.

"Yes, I see you," answered Thoma. Her voice and her face, which she now turned toward Anton, were changed; and her eyes, which before had been so fearless, now wandered uneasily here and there.

"I see you," she continued, "I see the flowers, I see the trees and the sky. Everything pretends to be alive, but everything is dead."

"Thoma, you are always so strong and resolute. Control yourself. I know it is sad and distressing, but for the sake of a person who is dead----"

"It is not only that a person has been killed; he, you, I, my father, all, all have received a deathblow."

"Thoma, don't excite yourself so, you are always so sensible. You know I have been in the war, and have seen many----"

"Yes, yes, it is true; you too have killed men. When he was still alive you were so tender-hearted toward him, and now that he is dead you are so hard. Say, am I still in my right mind?"

"You are, if you will only control yourself."

"I'll try, thank you. Do you think that my father, that any one of us, can ever be happy again for a single minute?"

"Certainly! Your father has done nothing."

"Who then has? Is Vetturi not dead?"

"He is dead, but he was hurt by falling on the paving-stones. Yes, he was."

"Anton!" cried Thoma, intensely excited, "Anton, you're not saying that yourself, some one else is speaking through you. Did my father tell you that?"

Anton trembled, and Thoma continued: "Anton, for my sake you are speaking falsely. You lie! There he stands, and has such true eyes, so honest, and yet will lie. How can I now believe your Yes before the altar? Anton, you're telling a lie."

With tremulous voice, Anton replied:

"Thoma, I'm--I'm a soldier." His hand touched the medal of honor upon his breast.

"Take that off," cried Thoma. "Go! go away! Even you can tell a lie. Go! go!"

"Thoma! I forgive you. In affliction one turns against his dearest friend----"

"You're no more my dearest friend. I'll not have your forgiveness. Go away forever and ever. I have no part in you, and you shall have no part in me."

She rushed away and locked herself in her bedroom. Anton stood for a time benumbed, then knocked at her door, and spoke lovingly to her. She made no answer. He threatened to break open the door unless she gave some sign. Then the bolt was drawn; the door opened a little way; and at his feet fell the engagement ring. The door was again closed and bolted; Anton picked up the ring and went away.

CHAPTER XVII.

Landolin turned away from the spring and went into the yard. He stopped a moment at the dog's kennel, and said to himself: "Chained! Chained!"

Did he feel, and did he wish to say that henceforth he himself was in chains?

He unfastened the dog, and it followed him into the living-room. No one was there. Landolin sat down in the easy chair, nervously grasped its arms, and moved his hands over them as if to convince himself that they were still there. Then he pulled up the loose tops of his boots, as though making ready for a walk. He arose, but went only as far as the table, which he repeatedly rubbed with his hands, as though trying to wipe something off. With a peremptory voice he called to have the supper brought. It was soon ready. His wife sat down beside him. She said nothing; she seemed comforted, even delighted, that her husband was willing to eat; and she forced herself to eat with him.

Landolin told the maid to call Thoma and Anton to supper. The maid returned with the answer that Anton had gone away, and that Thoma sent word that she was not coming. At this, Landolin seized his fork, and struck it through the cloth, deep into the hard table. His wife arose, her lips tightly compressed, and looked with dismay at the sacred family table, as though she expected to see it shed blood after her husband's terrible blow.

The fork was still sticking in the table, when a carriage drew up to the door, and the District Judge and his clerk entered. The farmer's wife had the courage to draw the fork quickly out.

Landolin held out his hand in welcome, but the District Judge appeared not to notice it. Landolin with a steady voice thanked the judge for coming so soon to find out the facts of the unhappy affair.

"Pray be seated, your honor; and you, too, Mr. Clerk," he said, ingratiatingly; then poured out three glasses of wine, and taking one in his hand, touched the other two, as a sign to the gentlemen to drink. But the District Judge said curtly: "No, thank you," and did not take the glass. He leaned back in his chair while the clerk spread a paper on the table.

"Sit down," he said to Landolin; but the latter replied: "I'm comfortable standing," and laid his hand upon the back of the chair which stood in front of him. He drummed on it with his fingers, and controlling himself with a violent effort, said:

"Will you ask me questions, or shall I tell it in my own way?"

"You may go on."

"Your honor, that wine there is pure, for I brought it myself from the vat at Kaiserstuhl; but I think the wine at the Sword is not pure. When I drink during the day, and talk at the same time, it sets me beside myself; but the fright at the accident has brought me to my senses."

"So you were drunk at the time of the----of the accident."

Landolin started. "This is not a man who has come to gossip with me. It is a judge, and a judge over me. Stop! How can being drunk help?" These thoughts passed rapidly through his mind, and he replied, almost smiling:

"Thank heaven, I am never so drunk as not to know what I am doing. I can stand a good deal."

He bestowed a confidential smile on the judge, but when he saw the unchanging gravity of his countenance, he shrugged his shoulders contemptuously, and went on determinedly:

"I can prove that the good-for-nothing fellow got no harm from me."

"Have you got that down?" said the judge to the clerk; and he replied: "Yes, I am taking it in short-hand."

The chair under Landolin's hand moved, for he was dismayed to find that his disconnected expressions were all written down. He now waited for questions to be put to him, and after a little while the judge began:

"Have you not had a violent quarrel, once before to-day, with one-handed Wenzel of Altenkirchen?"

"Have you found that out already?"

"Yes. Tell me how it happened."

"How it happened? The story is soon told. More than thirteen years ago Wenzel was my substitute in the army. My father knew him well. He was a boatman. You can ask Walderjörgli if he wasn't. Our families are the oldest in the country----"

"But what has that to do with Wenzel?"

"Oh yes! Well! My father gave both Wenzel and his mother a great deal of money and clothes, and now Wenzel still tries to bleed me."

"Did you not threaten to lay him out cold if he spoke to you before other people again?"

"Maybe I did, and maybe I didn't. A man sometimes says such a thing when he's angry; but I did not say it in earnest. Have I all at once become a man who is ready to kill any one that crosses his path? Am I an unknown adventurer?"

Landolin waited in vain for an answer, for the judge came back to the main point and asked:

"Were there any witnesses to the affair with Vetturi?"

"Yes, to be sure! My future son-in-law, Anton Armbruster, whom you know, and my daughter."

The District Judge desired them both to be called. He was told that Anton had gone away.

Thoma soon entered, and the judge arose and set a chair for her opposite to him.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Thoma sat down and folded her hands. She did not look up. "As you are Landolin's daughter you may refuse to testify," said the judge in a kindly tone. Thoma wearily raised her head.

"Father! What can I say?"

"What you saw."

She looked steadily into her father's face. She saw that he forced his eyes to remain open, but the eyelids trembled as though they must close before her glance. She turned away with a relentless movement of her head, and laying her clenched hand upon the table, said:

"Your honor----I say--I--I refuse to testify."

Landolin groaned. He knew what was going on in his daughter's mind. She rose and left the room without a look or a word for any one. They all gazed after her in silence.

The judge now asked Landolin if any of the servants had seen the affair. Landolin answered hesitatingly that he did not know; he had not looked around; but that Tobias and Fidelis were at home. It was with alarm that he perceived that his fate was in the hands of others.

The judge asked for his son Peter. Landolin shrugged his shoulders. Nobody cared whether Peter was at home or not. He was an obstinate, insignificant boy.

Nevertheless, though no one knew it, at this hour Peter had become an important personage.

No one dreamed that the little sliding window, between the living-room and the kitchen, was half-open, and that Peter lurked behind it. When he heard his father's answer, he quickly pulled off his boots, sprang noiselessly down the steps to the barn where Tobias was, and said:

"We now know how it happened. The stone did not hit Vetturi. Do you hear? And you too?" turning to the hostler Fidelis. Tobias nodded understandingly. Fidelis, on the other hand, made no answer.

There was no time to say anything more, for the two servants were called into the house. Before Tobias left the yard he threw a stone down near the gate.

Tobias was first reprimanded for having swept away the marks of blood. He took it all quietly, and said, in a firm voice, that he had plainly seen that Vetturi, who was always shaky, had not been hit by the stone, but had fallen down himself on the paving-stones. When the head-servant began speaking, Landolin had closed his eyes, but he now looked up triumphantly. His elbow rested on the chair; he held his hand over his mouth, and pressed his lips tightly together when Tobias concluded with:

"The stone that Vetturi threw, lies down there yet, scarcely a step from where the master stood."

Landolin raised himself to his full height. "That's the thing! Self-defense! I must justify myself on that ground." Landolin grasped the arm of the chair, as a drowning man, battling with the waves, grasps the rope thrown out to save him; and, just so, his soul clung to the thought of self-defense.

Fidelis said quite as positively that he had seen his master pick up a paving-stone with both hands, lean back, draw a long breath, and throw it. It had struck Vetturi on the head, and he had not seen Vetturi throw anything.

Landolin started up with an angry exclamation. He was told to be silent. The judge arose and said, evidently with forced calmness, that he was sorry, but, in order to prevent any tampering with the witnesses, he was compelled to place Landolin in confinement for the present.

The chair moved violently, and Landolin cried:

"Your honor, I am Landolin of Reutershöfen; this is my house; out there are my fields, my meadows, my forests. I am no adventurer, and I sha'n't run away for a beggar who is nothing to me."

The judge shrugged his shoulders, and said that they would probably be able to release him in a few days.

As the clerk folded his papers together, he cast a longing look at the poured-out wine; but he had to content himself with licking the ink-spots from his fingers.

"May I not send my husband a bed?" asked the farmer's wife. This was the first word she had spoken. The judge replied with a compassionate smile that it was not necessary.

Landolin took her hand, and, for the first time in many years, said in an affectionate tone:

"Dear Johanna." Her face was illuminated as though a miracle had been worked; and Landolin continued: "Don't worry. Nothing will happen to me."

"Can't he take me with him?" asked his wife of the judge.

"I am sorry that it is impossible."

She was about to send a maid-servant for Thoma, but Landolin prevented it, and said to the judge:

"I am ready to go now."

When Landolin had taken his seat in the carriage, a guard, who had been standing before the house, sprang upon the box with the coachman. The farmer's wife brought her husband's cloak, and he wrapped himself in it, for he was shivering, although the air was mild. He pulled his hat down to hide his face, and besides, it was night.

The carriage rolled away. The barking of the dog, and the rumbling of the wheels over the plateau could long be heard. At last it died away, and all was still.

CHAPTER XIX.

All was still in the yard. The moonbeams shone upon the house and barns, and glistened on the spring, the splashing of which could still be heard.

Under the broad eaves sat the head-servant and Peter. Tobias, in delight, clapped his hands together, and rubbed his knees. He had not only testified so as to help his master, but what, if possible, pleased him more, he had succeeded in cheating the judge, and making a laughing-stock of him. It was rare fun for him. He whispered to Peter:

"Only be sharp! You're smarter, slyer, than anybody guesses. You mustn't go after Fidelis hammer and tongs; that will only make the matter worse. He's a stiff-backed soldier of the new Prussian pattern. Just keep your head on your shoulders. By degrees, we'll teach him what he saw. If you turn him off now, then----Hold on! I've got it! Now listen to me."

He stopped a moment; put his hands together, as though he had a bird caged in them; chuckled to himself; and not until Peter questioned him did he say:

"Listen! Before taking the oath, they ask, 'Are you in the employ of the accused?' And if one answers 'Yes,' his testimony doesn't amount to much, good or bad. So we must keep Fidelis, do you understand! Hush! Who's knocking?"

Tobias opened the gate and greeted the pastor, whom he told that Landolin had already been taken away, and that his wife was in the house. The pastor went to the living-room, where he found the farmer's wife with an open prayer-book in her hand. He commended her for this, and said that he would have been there earlier, but had returned from the fair only an hour before, and had gone to "Cushion Kate's" first. He strove to comfort her, reminding her that man must bow to the will of Heaven.

The clergyman, a tall, hard-featured man, was the youngest son of a rich farmer. He was brusque in his intercourse with his people, but mingled little with them--election-time excepted--for he knew this conduct pleased the farmers best. In summertime the pastor was all day long by the brook in the valley, fishing. In the winter-time he stayed at home, and no one knew what he did.

"Oh, sir!" said the farmer's wife, mournfully, "people don't know how much they love each other until something like this happens." She blushed like a young girl, and continued: "Children live for themselves; but married people----it seems to me that I have done wrong in not letting my husband see how much----"

Her emotion would not allow her to continue. The pastor consoled her by saying that she had always been an honest woman, and a good wife; that God would ward off this evil from her; and that this misfortune would redound to her lasting welfare. He was astonished that this woman, whom people generally considered shallow, could show such deep affection.

"How does Thoma bear it?" he asked.

"I will call her," she answered.

She went out and soon returned with Thoma, who looked so careworn, that for a moment the pastor could say nothing. He soon, however, endeavored to comfort her.

"Herr Pastor," began Thoma, "what do you think about it? I don't know. I think I must go to Cushion-Kate's."

"Wait till to-morrow morning," interrupted her mother.

"No, I think I must go to-day."

"Yes! do so," said the pastor approvingly, "I have just come from her house. She did not show by word or sign that she heard what I said. She sits motionless on the floor beside her dead boy. Come, you can go a part of the way with me."

Thoma and the pastor walked side by side. The pastor could not speak of Anton, for this was no time for congratulations.

The moon had disappeared, and dark clouds covered the sky.

"It will rain to-morrow, thank God. It is much needed," was all that the pastor said during the walk. At the meadow-path which leads to Cushion-Kate's house, he asked if he should go there with her, but she declined and went alone. She had to pass the house of the "Gallopig Cooper," and there, in the shadow of a pile of barrel staves, she heard old Jochen say to the people who sat with him on the bench before the house,

"Oh yes! It's Landolin! They've got him now, and he won't get away. He'll have to pay for it, but not as his father used to pay for his tricks. Here, on my right thumb is still the scar where Landolin bit me in a fight we had. His father paid smart money for it. Yes; in old times the common people only had bones that the farmers' sons might break them. When Landolin stepped into the dancing-room, the floor trembled, and so did the heart of everybody there. Now, he's getting paid back."

"Will his head be cut off?" asked a child's voice.

"He deserves it; but they don't behead people any more."

All this fell on Thoma like a thunderbolt. She stood as though on fire. Her fresh life seemed all burned away and turned to ashes. She pressed her cold hands to her burning face, and fled homeward, unseen.

When she had almost reached the house, she started back in terror, as though a ghost had waylaid her; but it was only the dog who rubbed himself affectionately against her. Thoma was angry with herself for being so easily frightened. "That must not be, and certainly not now." The dog leaped before her, barking. He had evidently been driven home.

When she came in, her mother resting her hand on her open prayer-book, asked how Cushion-Kate was doing.

Thoma acknowledged that she had not been to see her, but did not tell the reason.

Her mother begged Thoma to stay with her during the night. Thoma sat by the bed until she had gone to sleep, and then went to her own room, for she knew that she would disturb her mother's rest.

CHAPTER XX.

It was late at night, when Thoma threw open the window of the room in which she should have been asleep. Her cheeks glowed; but her lover, who on this mild spring night, should have been talking with and caressing her, came not. From the forest came the song of a nightingale, and from the hill behind another answered, in rivalry. Thoma did not hear them. She was struggling with a demon that night.

Thoma was a well-bred farmer's daughter. To be sure she had not had much training. She had been one of the best scholars in the public school, and at home she was taught to be diligent and honest; and this she was. She was proud and imperious like her father, who had indulged her from her childhood, and, as her mother cared nothing for the outside world, had been her companion on all sorts of pleasure excursions. He delighted in her decision of character, and above all else had encouraged her pride.

A daughter of a neighboring farmer had been Thoma's playmate, but in reality, her father was her only confidant. It might do for poor people to fall in love, but Thoma, as became a rich farmer's daughter, had made up her mind to marry only a rich and influential man of the same class. Anton, to be sure, was of somewhat lower rank, but still he was of a good family; and, though not rich, he was sought after by all the daughters of the country side.

Even a princess is glad to be loved; and certainly no princess was ever more deeply loved, or received truer homage than Anton gave Thoma.

And now how had it all turned out!

The pride which Landolin had fostered in his child until it had grown all too powerful, was now turned against him, and against the whole world.

Thoma clenched her hands. She did not want to be pardoned, or receive anything as a gift, not even from her lover. "He shall not come and say, or even hint by his manner--'The honor of your family is lost; you are the daughter of a murderer; but still I will be good and true to you.' No--it is over."

As she thought of her father, her hands tightened convulsively. How could he have done such a thing! Common people, servants and beggars may now look into her life, discuss it, and pass judgment upon it. They may be respectful or not as they please. They will act as though she should be thankful to them for greeting her.

With a rapidity which knows no distance, Thoma's thoughts hastened from farm-house to farm-house, where the daughters were condemning or pitying her--her--Thoma; or they were sleeping--*they* could sleep peacefully, but Thoma could not sleep.

As when the poison from an adder's fang permeates the body of a strong, vigorous man; rushes through his veins, maddens him, urging him on, and at the same time making him powerless; seeks outlet where there is none; stifles his cry for help; destroys his life--so it was with Thoma, when on this night she clenched her hands in silent desperation. A concentration of thought, a subtlety of which she never dreamed, possessed her. She struggled against it as against a bitter enemy, but in vain.

Imprisonment, the penitentiary, capital punishment--these are things for the poor; but not for the rich and influential. Thus Thoma had always thought; or rather, scarcely giving it a thought, she had considered it a matter of course. But now--if her father confesses what he has done, eternal disgrace will be the consequence. Should he not confess, eternal falsehood, hypocrisy, constant trembling, a cowardly shunning of every glance, and a forced smile when criminals are mentioned.

Thoma groaned, stricken to the heart, and then her thoughts became pitiful; "Oh, my father! He is sitting sleepless and alone in prison. This one day must seem to him like many years; like a whole life-time. Who can help him? Who? Who can bring the dead to life, or wipe away sin from the soul?"

Thoma looked up at the stars. "They stand still, and twinkle and glitter over millions of sleepers; over millions of watchers in sickness, sorrow, and distress, and no one of them is more unhappy than I--"

Tears filled her eyes. She forced them back impatiently. She must not allow herself to become faint-hearted, nor to lament. She would have no pity from any one, for any one!----Proud, proud! "But where is my pride? 'Tis gone. Over yonder lies a corpse, a murdered man!"

It seemed to Thoma that she could plainly see Vetturi, standing before her with his bleeding head. She screamed aloud, but the terrible picture did not vanish. She threw herself on the pillows, then raised her head to listen. The cock crew. Her eyes closed tremulously, and, as she lay there but half awake, fragments of the verse from the Bible ran through her mind: "The cock crows--thou wilt deny"----In prison one does not hear the cock crow.

Thoma buried her face deeper in the pillows. It was raining gently, and she fell asleep.

The Thoma who awoke was a different girl from the Thoma of the betrothal morning. She soon heard this from strangers. Her former playmate, with whom she had quarrelled, came and told her how changed she was, and that they must be friends again. Thoma soon showed her, however, that she had not grown more lenient with the change, and would accept no pity. She repulsed the disgraced girl coldly and sharply.

CHAPTER XXI.

The prison at the county-town stands high up on the mountain; the sound of the bells in the village on the plateau reaches it from far away. Landolin knew they were tolling for a funeral. He thought of home, where they were burying Vetturi. He tried to imagine all that was passing, but he could not.

Round Cushion-Kate's little house stood a crowd of people, mostly women, for their husbands did not think it worth while to lose a day's work for an insignificant person like Vetturi.

The district physician left the house, followed by the bailiff and the clerk of the borough, who put on his hat as he came out of doors. Then came the pastor. The sobs and weeping became louder and louder, and almost drowned the tolling of the bells.

The procession was formed. Cushion-Kate followed the bier with her red kerchief tied under her chin, and pulled far down over her forehead, so that her face could scarcely be seen; and reaching from her shoulders to her feet hung the large black woolen cloak which the borough furnished to mourners. Her eyes were fastened on the ground as she walked.

As the procession passed Landolin's house, she shook her bony fist toward it, from under the black cloak.

The house was closed. No window was thrown open.

Anton, who walked in the procession next to the village clerk, could not see that Thoma joined the last persons of the little train, and knelt in the churchyard, hidden by a hedge.

The pastor spoke a few touching words of comfort. He exhorted the poor bereaved mother to bear no malice in her soul--to leave punishment to God. He repeated that he who thinks of revenge and retaliation does more harm to his own soul than to him whom he seeks to punish.

Cushion-Kate's moans changed to rebellious mutterings. But almost as many eyes rested upon Anton as upon Cushion-Kate herself; and overcome by his emotion, he suddenly burst into loud weeping.

The procession broke up, and the people scattered in different directions. Anton started away. He walked slowly, as though undecided what to do; and then turning as with a sudden presentiment, he saw Thoma, who was rising from her knees. She stood still. She seemed to be embarrassed at his seeing her. He turned back, and holding out his hand, said,--

"One must not say good day, in the churchyard; or perhaps you do not share the superstition?"

She neither answered, nor gave him her hand.

"May I walk with you? See, they are looking at us. Be calm!"

She walked by his side without raising her eyes.

"I'm waiting patiently for you to speak," said Anton in a low tone.

She looked into his face with her great eyes, but their glance was changed.

"Is your father here?" she asked at length; her voice too was changed.

"No, he is at home," replied Anton. "Shall he come and see you?"

She shook her head silently, and Anton continued:

"Unfortunately your father quarreled with every one yesterday; with the one-armed man, and with my father. He thought your father had already returned from town, and so he did not come now. Your father must make the first visit."

Thoma cast a bitter, wounded glance at Anton, who said in a soothing tone, almost gaily indeed, that Thoma's father had been so fierce with all the world because he had had to give up his daughter. A sad smile passed over Thoma's face.

"I may go home with you, may I not?" asked Anton.

Thoma stood still. She laid her hand on her heart, and said:

"I am done with this. I have settled it here. Don't say that it is pride, don't say that I did not love you;--or, if it is a comfort, you may think so. Anton, I am walking with you for the last time. I am speaking to you for the last time. Anton, it must, it *must*, be all over between us. I cannot, I will not----I will not go into a house where I do not bring honor. I will learn to bear my lonely life. Seek for yourself some other happiness. Farewell!"

"Thoma, you thrust from you him on whom you should lean."

"I thrust no one away from me, and I will lean on no one."

They had reached the house. She entered quickly, leaving Anton standing alone outside, but he was not long by himself, for Tobias and Peter came up to him. They welcomed him heartily; for of course he would testify, as they would, that the stone did not hit Vetturi, but that he had fallen down on the sharp-pointed paving stones in terror at Landolin's strong voice. They were very careful not to say that Vetturi had thrown a stone first.

They said how fortunate it was that a man so highly thought of as Anton had seen it all plainly; and Tobias added, smirkingly, that it was well that the engagement was broken off for the present; for, as son-in-law, his testimony would not have full weight. He further begged Anton to instruct his comrade Fidelis. "Go and call Fidelis," Tobias said to Peter, who soon returned with him. The head-servant and the son now urged Fidelis to let Anton convince him that he had been mistaken; but Fidelis remained immovable, and repeated that he had no doubts in the matter. He was sure that Anton's convictions were as honest as his own, even though they differed from them ... but for his part, he could not and would not say anything different from what he had seen. In court it would appear who was right.

Anton returned home troubled. He said to himself: "Have I let Landolin tell me what I saw? Shall I lose my heart to the daughter, and my conscience to the father? It would be better if the marriage had not been broken off, for then I could refuse to testify."

CHAPTER XXII.

The farmer's wife had often visited her husband in the presence of the examining magistrate. Peter had several times accompanied his mother, but Thoma did not come. Her father was too high-spirited to inquire for her, or ask why she staid away. Perhaps she disapproved of his obstinacy in staying in prison; perhaps she approved of his pride, for Landolin had told the judge, "I will not go out with a halter round my neck, for people to make sport of me; one to pull it tight, so as to choke me a little, and another to graciously loosen it. I will only go as a free man. And didn't you say that I am to appear in court next week?"

So he staid in prison, and was not obliged to see any one but his wife, his son, the examining magistrate, and his attorney. But one pair of eyes he saw, that looked more friendly at him than the eyes of a child or a sister. The district judge's wife had obtained permission to visit the prisoners.

And the hearts must indeed have been hard that were not gladdened when that lady entered the cell, while the guards waited at the open door.

Madame Pfann--for by this simple title did the judge's wife allow herself to be called--Madame Pfann was exceedingly happy in her marriage. Although her husband could not forbear occasionally laughing at her missionary zeal, nevertheless he willingly allowed her her own way in everything. He delighted in the many successes she achieved, but above all other things, in the unwavering faithfulness with which she fulfilled the duty she had taken upon herself.

They had an only son, who in July, 1870, entered the army as a volunteer, was promoted to a lieutenancy on the field of battle, and had remained in the service. Madame Pfann had not waited for some great event before she set herself to work. Years before she had commenced the work of philanthropy, and carried it out with a zeal that was universally acknowledged. She was the daughter of a plain professor in the gymnasium at the capital; and she took pleasure in saying that she owed her capacity for her work to her father's simple and noble character.

She was aware that people called her conduct eccentric and sentimental; but she cared nothing for that.

An old-time saying tells us that on the path of heroic deeds a man has to battle with giants and monsters. Madame Pfann had had to battle with a great and noble intellect. She remembered Goethe's cynical words, that finally the world would be bereft of all beauty, and each one would be only his neighbor's benevolent brother.

Veneration for our great poet was an heir-loom in her girlhood's home. Fierce was the conflict before she overcame the mighty coercion of the master mind, but she gained at last that liberty which shakes off the fetters of an undue veneration. She was convinced that even a Goethe cannot give precepts for all time. Our age has made the unity of human interests its law, and no longer tolerates a mere æsthetically selfish life. Yes, out of a life devoted to the common welfare, springs a new beauty of being.

Madame Pfann often met with rudeness and thoughtlessness where she least expected it, so that her experiences were sometimes painful; but she remained steadfast.

In her visits to the prisons, she refused to interfere in the least degree with the course of the law. She only desired to comfort the prisoners; to make them at peace with themselves; and above all things she wished to help their friends who were left destitute at home. Here, too, she had sorry experiences. Rascals imposed upon her, and amused themselves in sending her on fruitless missions, and would even give her directions whose baseness she could not suspect.

She knew that baseness and uncleanness existed, and yet clung to her faith in greatness, nobility, and purity.

In the course of time she settled upon a regular method of talking with the prisoners. She sought to learn of their early life, but she found that they distrusted her motive, suspecting that she was seeking to discover some crime which they might have committed, and she had to contend with their cunning, which led them to tell her falsehoods.

Often, however, she succeeded in bringing the most hardened to better thoughts and feelings, so that they spoke with tremulous voice of the paradise of youthful innocence.

When Madame Pfann visited Landolin in prison, she found her task easier than usual, for she had long known him and his family. He quickly gave her to understand that he did not value her visit very highly, as she honored the commonest prisoner in the same way.

He listened attentively for her answer, and was not surprised when she replied, with a smile:

"I cannot double myself when I visit you; but I will come oftener if you like."

It now happened, as it often had before with prisoners, that Landolin looked for her visit as a diversion, and that was something gained.

"Has Titus been here, and taken a look at the tower where I shut am up? Or perhaps he has not wanted to see me. I'll say beforehand I won't see him," said Landolin, angrily.

Madame Pfann saw that his thoughts were occupied with his rival, so she said that no one should rejoice in another's misfortune, for every one has his own secret sorrow.

"Has he? Has anything happened to him?" asked Landolin, eagerly.

The lady said: "No!" and then turned the conversation to his childhood. He related his boyish pranks, and laughed heartily over them; but still he censured his father for having yielded to him in everything, except once when he wanted to marry the Galloping Cooper's sister, for whom he had had a fancy. He even complained of his wife for having always yielded to him. He said he was the most grateful of men when any one kept him from his wild pranks, even though at first he rebelled against the restraint. Then he stopped short. He was afraid he had betrayed himself, and protested solemnly that he was innocent of Vetturi's death.

Madame Pfann asked, "Would you like me to have some flowering plants brought here?"

Landolin laughed aloud and said: "I don't want anything with me except my dog."

She promised to see that he should have it. She soon found that it really was a very deep grief and trouble, that Thoma did not come to see him.

Madame Pfann went to Reutershöfen, and listened patiently to his wife's lament that her life was changed since her husband's hat hung no longer on its accustomed nail. When Thoma came in after a long delay, the kind-hearted lady was touched by her appearance, and told her that she could well imagine her grief, in having been plunged in one day from the highest joy to the deepest sorrow.

Thoma trembled. She had never before placed the two events so close together. Madame Pfann felt the awkwardness of her remark, and endeavored to reassure her by saying that she had no doubt that she could adjust the difficulty with Anton, for he had great confidence in her. Thoma soon became more composed, but she was still silent.

Madame Pfann urged her strongly to lighten her father's imprisonment by visiting him.

"You mean it well, I know," replied Thoma, "you are very good, but I cannot; I cannot go down the road, and up the prison stairs, and I should be no comfort to my father, quite the contrary. It is better as it is."

"It is not better, only more comfortable, more easy for you; you will not conquer yourself."

Thoma was silent.

Madame Pfann arranged for Tobias to take the dog to its master.

She then went to see Cushion-Kate, who called out:

"You went to Landolin's first. I'll not let you into my house."

She bolted the door and Madame Pfann went quietly homeward.

CHAPTER XXIII.

"The house is changed when the husband's hat no longer hangs on its accustomed nail," the farmer's wife often said. Her thoughts were not many, but those she had she liked to repeat like a pater noster.

When, on the morning after her husband's arrest she said this for the first time, and was about handing Thoma the keys, Peter called out:

"Mother, give me the keys; I am the son of the house, and I must take the reins now."

If the stove had spoken they could not have been more astonished. Peter, whom they had all looked upon as a dull, idle fellow, who did only what he was told, and never undertook anything of himself--Peter of a sudden gave notice of what he was and what he wanted, and even his voice, generally heavy and drawling, became somewhat commanding and energetic. In reality a transformation had begun in Peter. He ceased to be taciturn and became almost talkative. His natural effort to aid his father had called forth a latent energy, which no one, least of all himself, had ever suspected, and which once aroused, continually grew in strength. Other awakenings assisted in changing his trouble into a joyous sense of courage; yes, almost of presumption. It was not only at home, but in the whole neighborhood that people saw with astonishment how his father's absence had changed him. The head-servant, Tobias, smiled as he went about his work at the thought that he had had a hand in helping Peter into the saddle. And, indeed, Peter was, literally, much on horseback, riding everywhere on the bay mare, to tell the people who were at the house congratulating Thoma at the time of the accident, what they had seen. Some of them thought they knew all about it; and some, on the other hand, declared they had seen nothing; for they did not want the trouble of testifying in court.

Wherever Peter went the people said, "No one knew that you were such a smart fellow. Thoma used to be the only one talked about, just as though there were no such person as you." Peter smiled craftily when he heard this; he put on a grieved, troubled look, and shook his head, but was nevertheless pleased to hear people add, "Your father rather put you down."

Peter was not unassuming; quite the reverse, for he looked upon all men as his debtors. They had allowed him to grow up in simplicity and honesty for three and twenty years without revealing to him how sweet knavery tastes. But now, he was finding out for himself.

"Look! Look! There comes Peter of Reutershöfen!" was heard up and down the mountain side.

"What Peter?"

"Landolin's Peter."

"Yes, people did not know what kind of a fellow he was; they thought he couldn't count three; and now he turns out to be one of the sharpest fellows possible."

It was true; he had not been exactly a blockhead; but dull and unsympathetic. And what had he now become?

It may, perhaps, seem unnatural, but nevertheless it was a thoroughly logical development; he had become an accomplished hypocrite.

Once, at a fair, when Peter had taken an electric shock, a strange something ran through his frame. He had very much the same feeling the first time that Tobias said to him, "We must act as though we had seen everything so, and seem thoroughly honest about it, and then we shall be able to make other people think so."

Peter discovered that hypocrisy was sweet to the taste; and that it was no new thing for the world to feast on it.

Wherever he went people condoled with him over his misfortune, even when he was quite sure they were glad of it.

However, he paid them in the same coin by pretending to be excessively amiable. This helped to make him energetic; for the secret pleasure and delight of making a laughing stock of others, animated him anew every morning. He and Tobias made themselves merry over the trick they were playing on the people, and on having succeeded in persuading a few simple-minded persons, as well as some rascals, to testify as they wished. Tobias gave his pupil this advice:

"Now, you see, sharp people get along best in this world. They are never cheated nor plagued. If you want anything of them, and knock at their door, they pretend not to be at home. 'There is no one at home; and I'm asleep,' as the old peasant woman called out to the beggar that knocked at her door on a Sunday afternoon."

Only once was Peter worsted. He went to see Anton, and told him he thought he had been very wise in breaking off with Thoma so promptly; for now, as he was no longer related to them, he could be a witness for his father.

Peter was not a little astonished to hear Anton answer that it was Thoma who had broken off the match, and that it was hardly possible for them to make it up again.

What? Will Anton refuse to tell him the truth? Is he so sly as to try to keep up a false show before his brother even?

Anton's bright face darkened when he heard Peter's words. He saw clearly through his scheme, and astonished him by replying that he would tell no one how he would testify; that he had taken counsel with his conscience, and would do as he thought right.

Notwithstanding this, Peter, with honest mien, confided to many persons, under strict injunction of secrecy, the testimony that Anton would give; and in this way persuaded some of them, for they thought: "Whatever Anton Armbruster says is certainly true."

It was with dismay that Thoma heard--for Peter made no secret of his preparations--what corruption he was spreading over the whole neighborhood; but she could do nothing to prevent it, and had to keep silent when her mother praised the good, kind people.

So the time drew near for Landolin to appear before the court for which he had been selected as juryman.

CHAPTER XXIV.

The days, the weeks, came and went; the crops in the field grew steadily; and the work went on in its usual good order, under the direction of Tobias and Peter. They had hired a new servant in place of Fidelis, who had left their service of his own accord, and had been engaged by Titus.

The pine trees had put on their yearly growth; rye and early barley were ready for harvest; and the hay was already cut and put away. Thoma was the most active in all this work; but she spoke with no one, and looked up astonished when the men and maid-servants sang as they went about their tasks. Her face said plainly: "They can sing, they have no father in prison."

It was a bright summer morning. The farmer's wife was up before day, for she wanted to see Tobias and Peter before they drove to the city.

After the servants who remained at home had eaten their breakfast, and the dishes had been cleared away, she still sat at the table, in the so-called "Herrgott's Corner." Her hands were folded on the table before her. She gazed at them wearily and sadly.

On a bench, beside the large stove in which there was no fire to-day, sat Thoma at her spinning. Nothing could be heard but the low whirring of the wheel, and the ticking of the clock on the wall.

"Thoma," at length began her mother, "you're right in not going to the field to-day. My feet feel as though they had given way. Say, is to-day Wednesday or Thursday? I don't know any more----"

"To-day is Thursday, the tenth of July, mother."

"And he is in court, on trial for his life. Look and see what saint's day this is."

"The calendar is hanging right behind you."

The farmer's wife seemed not to care to turn or look around. She rubbed her hands hastily over her head, as though to keep her hair from rising on end, and said, as if speaking her thoughts aloud:

"So many people! I see them all, one after another, just as they were when I was a little child, and they beheaded Laurian, on the city-green."

"Mother! Don't talk so. We must control our feelings, whichever way things turn out."

"What! Can it turn out any other way?"

"Who knows? That is what the trial is for."

"Surely there must be compassionate and just men there, who will have pity. There are many who rejoice in our misfortune, but there are more who mean well by us. Your Anton will testify for your father, and will pledge his medal of honor for him."

"More than that," added Thoma; but she did not explain what she meant.

Will Anton persist in saying that he saw what her father told him he did? Does he really believe that he saw it in that way? or will he ruin his own life in order to save another's? She compressed her lips tightly. She thought she must scream out for pain.

But her mother seemed to find it necessary to express her thoughts; and again she murmured, half aloud:

"What are the servants talking about, to-day? I am ashamed to go among them, and I dare not say a word, for fear they will answer me with insult and abuse. I hear that people from all over the valley have gone to the city to-day, to see Landolin sitting on the prisoner's seat. Yes, there he sits, and has to let the gentlemen of the court say everything they can think of right in his face. And everybody rejoices in it, and yet they themselves are--God forgive me! Yes, so it is, if anything is wrong with oneself, one tries to find something wrong with one's neighbor. There stands your arm-chair. Who knows if you will ever sit in it again, and rest your strong arms and good hands! When will the door open again and you come in? Hush! Listen Thoma! Don't you hear something? There is some one at the door! I hear some one breathing. It might be Cushion-Kate, or is it---Open the door!"

Even Thoma could not shake off her fear; but summoning her courage, she opened the door, and, with a sigh of relief, cried, "It is Racker."

"Come here," said her mother to the dog, coaxingly. "Do you know what is the matter with your master to-day? Will he ever see you, and lay his hand on your head again? Yes, yes; look at me pitifully! If men were as pitiful as you----"

"You're right, mother," said Thoma at length. "See, mother, everybody on his way to the field to-day, fills his pitcher at our well, as if there was water nowhere else. They look toward our house as though they took pleasure in our misfortune. I wish I could poison the well, so they would all die! I wish I could poison the whole world!"

The mother longed to soothe her daughter, but dared not try. She was thankful that Thoma at least spoke, instead of staring silently before her. And now that Thoma had once broken her silence, she continued:

"Mother, I want to go to the city."

"You, too, will leave me?"

Thoma explained that she would soon return. She only wished to telegraph to Peter, to report to her the verdict as soon as it should be rendered, and she would leave word at the telegraph office for the messenger, the "Gallop Cooper's" brother, to wait all night for the message.

Her mother took up her prayer-book, and said: "Well, you may go; but don't hurry too much."

"Come along," Thoma called to the dog, and, with him, hastened out of doors.

CHAPTER XXV.

At the edge of the forest stands a pine tree, with its top bent down. Some say that it was struck by lightning; others say a raven has lighted there so often that his weight and the clutching of his claws have broken it. But the strong-rooted pine grows on.

Is Landolin's house such a tree; struck by lightning, and bowed down by dark sorrow? And will it flourish again?

Thoma stood in the road, and looked around, as though for the first time she saw that the heavens were blue, and the trees and fields were green. She had to exert herself to remember for what and where she was going.

"Oh, yes," sighed she, and started away.

A narrow foot-path led over the hill, down into the valley, to the city. To be sure she must pass Cushion-Kate's house; but why shouldn't she? Nevertheless, Thoma, who before had been so strong and brave, could not overcome a certain terror; as though, like the children in the fairy-tale, she must pass a frightful dragon, lying in wait for her at the mouth of his rocky cave.

To be sure Thoma is much stronger than the poor old woman, but, for all that, it is hard enough to be obliged to conquer the crouching foe. "Or, may it not be possible to help the poor woman, who must suffer even more than we do? In the midst of her bitter trouble, may we not save her the necessity of working for her daily bread?"

Just as I thought! There is Cushion-Kate sitting at the stone door-sill; both hands pressed to her temples, and her head bent down, so that the red kerchief almost touches her knee.

Did the poor creature know that this was the day of the trial? She seemed to be asleep, and Thoma, holding her breath, walked noiselessly along. But when she had come nearly opposite to her, the old woman suddenly raised her head. Her eyes glittered, and she called out:

"You! you! To-day is the day of payment."

"May I not say a kind word to you?"

"Kind? To me? You? Go away or----"

She pulled out a pocket-knife, opened it, and cried: "I too, can murder! You are his child; and he was mine. Go!"

As Thoma turned tremblingly away, the open knife, which the old woman had thrown at her, fell at her side. She hurried down the hill; and, until she reached the forest, she could hear loud moans and screams behind her.

Cushion-Kate had been in the beginning a gay-hearted little woman enough. A patch-work tailor's daughter, a patch-work tailor's wife, one could almost say that her life was a patch-work of little gay-colored scraps like her cushions. She was one of those placid, grateful people who are thankful for the smallest gift of Providence, and who never wonder why they too cannot live in abundance, like the rich farmers. After she had drunk her chicory coffee, she went about her work, singing like a thrush. And who knows but she put the same ease with which she carried the burden of life into her cushions; for it was acknowledged that they were the softest in all the country side. She seemed to have entirely forgotten her sad birth. Now, a heavy affliction had come upon her. Her last and only treasure was taken away; and suddenly fear, bitterness and hate, and all

the spirits of evil took possession of her. Suddenly, as though she had awakened from a sleep in a paradise of innocence, she perceived how miserable her life was; and she hated every one who lived in prosperity, and had children to rejoice in. Above all others, she hated the murderer of her child, and his family. Her only thought and wish were that he and they should suffer and be brought to ruin.

The poor old woman carried a heavy burden of sorrow and hate. Her life had been darkened, and she only wished to stay until she had avenged herself on Landolin. This was why she had been so sullen and morose since her son's death.

Hate, anger and misery grew within her, and transformed her happy, kind heart into a sad and wicked one.

CHAPTER XXVI.

In the summer garden of the Sword Inn, the linden trees were in full bloom. The bees came, sipped, and flew away without asking for the reckoning. But to make up for this, the finches sang without pay; and the swallows circled round, as though dancing a figure in the air, and sometimes shot after a honey-laden bee.

Everything rejoiced in its own way. It was a morning so full of freshness, so full of enjoyment and exuberant life, one could hardly believe that misery still existed in the world.

A horseman trotted up to the garden fence, stopped, dismounted, and gave his horse to the servant, telling him to take it home and say to his wife that if any one asked for him she might send him here; that he would, however, soon be at home.

"Good morning, doctor," called the hostess, from the veranda. "You have come just at the right time. We have this moment tapped a keg of beer."

The physician had already heard that refreshing, enticing sound, that deep thud when the spigot is driven into the keg, and that clear sound when the bung is drawn.

The hostess brought him the first glass. He held it up to let the sun shine through the clear amber liquid, and then drank it with evident enjoyment.

"I had to go out before day this morning, all the way to Hochenbraud," said the doctor, as he drained the glass; then said, "Give me another, for my twins." As he drank the second glass, he told the hostess that he had that morning assisted at the advent of a pair of twins into the world; two fine, healthy boys.

"It is curious that something very extraordinary is always happening to Walderjörgli. His first great grandchildren are twins. It is a blessing that this strong, upright race should go on growing. They are honest-hearted men of the old primitive German type."

"They are shrewd, too," interposed the hostess. The physician went on to say that the primitive Germans must have been crafty rascals, for savages are always cunning.

"But where is our host?"

"Of course he has gone to the trial. There is an actual pilgrimage to-day. As early as half-past three this morning we had sold a whole keg of beer. The witnesses went on the express-train. There were men and women from Berstingen, from Bieringen, from Zusmarshausen, from everywhere, who had nothing to do with the trial, but went from curiosity. They wanted to see Landolin brought before the court. The station-master says that when a man is on trial for his life the people throng to see his distress. He thinks that people will spare neither pains nor money to gratify their desire to see the misfortunes of others. But the district-forester says that the people go more because they long for something new to break in upon the monotony of every-day life."

The cautious hostess gave this as a report, and not as an opinion of her own.

As soon as the physician said: "Both are true," she cried:

"I am glad to hear you say so. It is pleasant when one gives medicine to have the doctor come and say: 'that was right. I should have prescribed that myself.' But I should like to ask you----"

"What is it?"

"Do you think it possible for Landolin to be acquitted?"

"With God and a jury all things are possible."

"Yes; but then, who killed Vetturi? For he is dead!"

"That question is not on the list."

The hostess went on to tell how Landolin's head-servant, Tobias, had been talking that morning with every one, and cunningly instructing them what to say. How he had said, with a laugh, that the life of such a person as Vetturi was not of enough value to have a man like the ex-bailiff imprisoned an hour for it. Tobias wanted to pay for what they all drank; but--and as she told the story, the hostess' face became a flaming red--she had declared that each person must order her to take pay from Tobias for him; then it would be known what was to be thought of him and what might follow later. Some of them seemed to be frightened at this hint.

The doctor laughed and replied that the rich farmer thought money would do everything; and his son Peter, instigated by his father of course, had offered to sell him their fine horse at a third of its value. They wanted him to testify that Vetturi, who had suffered from severe illness ever since his childhood, was weak and easily injured; so that a fall on level ground might have killed him.

"I am sorry for Thoma," began the hostess. "She was such a stately, fresh-hearted girl; and how well she and the miller, Anton, were suited to one another. He, too, was here this morning. He is one of the witnesses, but he staid in the garden, and kept looking at the medal of honor on his breast. Do you think the trial will be finished in one day?"

The physician could give no opinion, and the hostess continued:

"Our dear good Madame Pfann was going to Landolin's house to spend this sad day with his wife and Thoma. I advised her not to go now. They will need her soon enough.

"I don't believe there is another pure soul like hers in the world. Why, she finds something pure hidden even in a man like Landolin. Our Madame Pfann is a woman such as they had in the time of the Apostles."

"Bravo!" cried the doctor, "I have seen a rare wonder: one woman unreservedly praising another."

"Yes; who can know the judge's wife and not praise her? But she seeks neither praise nor thanks from anybody."

"She needs none. He to whom nature has given the blessing of such a good heart is the possessor of all human good."

The telegraph messenger came into the garden, and handed the physician a dispatch.

"I've got it now," cried the physician, when he had read it. "When does the next express train leave?"

"In seven minutes."

The physician explained to her that the defendant had called for his oral opinion. He left word for his wife that he was called away, and hastened to the station, where he met Thoma, just coming in.

"Are you going too?" asked he.

"No; I just want to send word to my brother to telegraph me the decision as soon as it is announced."

"I will attend to that for you."

The train sped away. Thoma asked the telegraph messenger, who was a brother of the "Gallopig Cooper," to wait all night and bring her the dispatch as soon as received.

Thoma walked homeward. From the hill she could see the train in the distance. It sped by hamlets and villages, through newly-mown meadows, past fields where potatoes were being gathered in little heaps. The passengers talked together about the flood which had done such great damage in Switzerland; of the political questions of the day; of the conflict with Rome. The physician heard it all as in a dream. It troubled him that he had after all to testify in Landolin's case. How could the defence hope for any advantage from his testimony?

The train stopped at the county-town. One of the court officers was waiting for him with a carriage, and took him to the court-house. The air within was damp and sultry.

CHAPTER XXVII.

Long before day the bell from Landolin's prison cell rang violently. The keeper heard it, but did not hurry in the least.

"You can wait," he said to himself, and dressed leisurely. He was a tall, broad-shouldered man, of dignified and imposing appearance. He had been appointed to his excellent position as a reward for bravery in the war, and felt that he carried in his own person the whole dignity of the court. He was gruff, but could, when he chose, be polite and condescending; and he had a reason for being polite to Landolin. Softening his powerful voice as much as he could, he asked what Landolin wanted so early. It was scarcely day. Landolin gave him a bewildered look; then he said,

"I heard the early train whistle. The people from my village have come in it. Go to the Ritter inn and bring my head-servant, Tobias, here. It shall not be to your disadvantage."

"I'm sorry I can't do that. You were bailiff yourself, and you know what the law is."

"Then call my lawyer."

"It's too early."

"It is not too early. I have a right to see my lawyer at any time."

"All right, I'll bring him; but I advise you to compose yourself to-day. If you get so excited, you will be a witness against yourself."

Landolin looked at the keeper as though he wanted to knock him down, but he controlled himself. His face bore the marks of the battle which he, who was formerly so self-willed, had been fighting for weeks, and especially during the past night. Yesterday he had shaved off his full beard, which had grown in the prison; and it was plain that he had grown old very rapidly. The elasticity of his flesh, and the brown, healthy color were gone; and his features were faded and flaccid.

Swallows twittered as they flew hither and thither about the grated window. Landolin whistled a gay tune; and he continued whistling when the key turned in the door, and his lawyer entered.

"So gay already?" said the lawyer; "I hardly knew you. Why! What made you cut off your beard?"

"Why? So the jurymen can recognize me."

"Very good. Now what do you want?"

The lawyer had not uttered a syllable about the early hour. His relation to the accused was that of a physician to his patient. Landolin, however, felt that he must make some excuse for sending for him; and he asked to see the list of jurymen, so that he might determine whom to object to, and whom to accept. First on the list, which was in alphabetical order, was the name of the miller, Armbruster, who had been summoned in Landolin's place.

The lawyer said that he had asked to be excused.

"Hoho!" cried Landolin. "He is just the one I'll keep. Let him find me guilty if he dares! We are not related, and our children are no longer betrothed."

The next on the list was the lumberman, Dietler.

"He wants to be released too," said the lawyer.

"He wants to be released? So do I."

"But he will be angry with us."

"Then you must see that the government counsel keeps him on. Then he'll be for us and against the other side. He has known me a long time. I had almost said ever since wood was cut."

Landolin laughed. The lawyer smiled and looked at Landolin's wily face in astonishment. One after another he struck off all the city people, and the men of higher education. He wished to be tried by farmers. Only one man from the city, the host of the Ritter inn, who was a man ready of speech, was acceptable to him.

"I won't have Baron Discher."

"Why? He is a just man."

"That may be. But he is an enemy of mine because I outbid him at the sale of forest land. You will see," said Landolin in conclusion, "Titus will be the foreman. He hates me heartily; but I know him well. I know that in order to make a grand impression on the rabble, and to give vent to his insolence, and to show me what a great man he is, he will say not guilty, and induce the others to say the same."

The lawyer was careful not to shake Landolin's confidence; and he himself acquired new hope of a favorable result. As he was about leaving, Landolin asked, drawing his hand over his eyes and forehead,

"Is the----Is his mother called as a witness?"

"The government counsel was willing to do without her. I was surprised, but it was a good sign that he is not going to drive you to the wall. A poor, bereaved old mother makes a bad impression on the jury. He is not a bad man. He is, you know, a brother of your district judge's wife."

"That won't help me any."

"I think," continued the lawyer, "I think, the government counsel himself will recommend to the jury to find that there were mitigating circumstances."

"I will not have them find mitigating circumstances," cried Landolin, his face reddening. "You may in my name, by my authority, refuse such a verdict. I know what that means. It is easy for a jury to say guilty when mitigating circumstances are tacked on; but when it's neck or nothing, they think twice before they speak."

"Landolin, we are playing a serious game."

"I know it."

"Do you wish to address the jury yourself?"

"I don't know yet. I am afraid I should make some mistake."

"You can tell me your decision in the court-room. You have the privilege of speaking."

"I never thought of it before. It's come to me since I have been in prison. If I had my life to live over again, I'd like to be a lawyer."

The lawyer urged Landolin to try and sleep a little, for he had a hard day before him, and must husband his strength. He would try to be fresh and strong himself.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

Landolin tried to sleep, but he soon sprang up again. A man may sleep as much as he likes after he gets home, but now there is not a moment to be lost. He rang the bell, and very submissively asked the keeper to go for his son Peter, for he wanted to find out if the mother had come.

"What mother?"

"Oh pshaw! The mother of--of--of the poor fellow. Ask right out if Cushion-Kate is here. And tell my son to give you twenty marks for the saint's keeper."

"For the saint's keeper? Where is he?"

"Are you so stupid? Or are you only pretending? The saint's keeper is inside of your coat."

The grim keeper chuckled, and said to himself:

"And just think of people saying that farmers are stupid."

He soon returned, and said that Vetturi's mother had not come, but--

"But what? Not my wife and daughter? I expressly forbade that."

"No, not they; but half the village."

"Did the saint's keeper get anything?"

"Yes," chuckled the keeper. The day had brought him a rich harvest, both from those who were seeking to be dropped from the list of jurymen, and had sought his influence with the different counsel for that purpose, and from the people from the neighboring villages, whom he had promised to let into the court-room before any one else.

Landolin was again alone. He visited, in fancy, the various inns of the city, and the beer-garden near the station. He seemed to hear what the people said--how they could hardly wait for the time when they might see him in the prisoner's seat. Nothing is thought of to-day but whether Landolin will be sentenced to death, or to long imprisonment, or will be acquitted.

Something that was almost a prayer passed through his soul, but he did not utter it; for he could not escape the thought that Cushion-Kate was to-day praying to God for his just punishment. He started back. It seemed to him as though she, herself, had run against him bodily.

The prison door was unlocked. Landolin was led through along passage to the prisoner's waiting-room. The doors and the windows of the large court-room were open; bright sunshine streamed in; the room was empty---soon it would be crowded. The two keepers walked back and forth near Landolin. Loud laughing and talking could be heard from the street before the court-house. Who knows what jokes they were making! Men can still laugh though there is one up here whose heart would fain stand still. Landolin's eyes glistened. He said to himself: "After all I was right in despising the whole world."

In the room in which he was now confined he could hear, as he listened at the door, the tramp of steps through the long corridor. He would have been glad to know whose steps they were. A confused sound of voices reached his ear. At length he plainly heard the words "My father!" It was Peter's voice. No doubt he had called so loud on purpose that his father might hear him. Landolin felt as though he were buried alive. He heard

voices and could not answer them. His head swam so that he leaned against the door-post.

The door was unlocked, and Landolin was led into the court-room.

CHAPTER XXIX.

His eyes fastened on the floor, with measured steps Landolin entered the room. He seemed about to turn to the jury box, but the keeper laid hold of his arm, and motioned him to the prisoner's dock.

When he reached it he straightened himself with a violent effort, and looked calmly around; but he must have felt something like a veil before his eyes, for he repeatedly drew his hands over them. He saw his son Peter, who nodded to him, but he only answered with a slight motion of his head. He recognized men and women from his and neighboring villages; but Cushion-Kate's red kerchief was not to be seen.

He surveyed the jury with a keen scrutiny. He knew them all. They all stared at him, but no one of them gave him to understand, by so much as a motion of the eyelids: I know you and am friendly to you. The miller was not on the jury.

Who is foreman?

Titus. A red and white variegated pink lies before him on the desk. Now he takes it up and presses it to his large nose. The farmer of Tollhof, called the jester, who sits beside him, hands him an open snuff-box and says something. It is evidently, "Landolin is very much changed." Titus nods, takes a pinch of snuff, and sneezes loudly. The host of the Ritter inn, who is seated on the front bench, turns around, and says, "Your health!" and whispers something to the lumberman, Dietler. Who knows that the fickle host has not abandoned Landolin as a dead man, and commenced paying court to Titus! The other members of the jury are most all well-to-do, comfortable farmers--among them Walderjörgli's son, dressed in the old-time costume, with a red vest--have folded their large hands upon the desks, and look steadily before them.

The solemn, impressive ceremony of taking the oath is over; the witnesses are sent out of the court-room; the charge is read. While the reading is going on, the counselor drums with a large pencil on a volume of the statutes before him. It may be he is gently playing a tune, for he keeps perfect time. He is a young man with a heavy moustache, which he smooths incessantly; and an unframed eye-glass, attached to a broad, black ribbon, is fastened on his left eye. There is something in the appearance of the counselor that suggests a soldierly combativeness, and, in truth, he is an officer of the Landwehr. The glance through the eye-glass, which sparkles strangely, is often turned upon Landolin, and Landolin is uneasy under it. He would like to say: "Please put the glass down," but he may not.

Landolin's lawyer has risen to his feet, and leans on the railing of the prisoner's dock. His hands are thrust in his pantaloons pockets. Sometimes he turns his head and exchanges a few brief words with Landolin.

The charge is manslaughter.

The witnesses are called; and before the first one appears, the lawyer for the defense announces that he has telegraphed for the district physician, for the purpose of obtaining his professional opinion regarding Vetturi's frailty.

CHAPTER XXX.

Landolin sat perfectly still, and looked at his hands. They had grown soft and white in prison. Only when a new witness was called, he raised his eyes and watched him narrowly.

The witnesses in favor of the accused spoke hesitatingly. They had seen Vetturi fall on a heap of paving-stones, but whether the stone that had been thrown had gone past him, that they could not say with certainty. The blacksmith, from the upper village, was the only one who was sure that he had seen it quite plainly.

"Take care you don't commit perjury," called out the prosecuting counsel. The lawyer for the defense arose in great excitement, and earnestly protested against this intimidation of the witness. Even the jurymen put their heads together, and whispered to one another. The presiding judge said politely, but with marked decision, to the youthful counselor, that he must leave such matters to him. The counsel for the defense did not let this incident escape him; but made quite a point of it, and it was some little time before matters moved on in their usual quiet way. When Anton was called, Landolin's counsel asked to have the district physician heard first, as he was obliged to leave immediately. But the doctor's testimony proved to be of no importance. Then Anton was called, and all eyes were fastened upon him.

The iron cross on his breast rose and fell, as he breathed deeply and rapidly.

To the preliminary question, as to whether he was related to the prisoner, he answered in a tremulous voice, but in well chosen words, that at the time of the accident he was betrothed to the daughter of the accused.

At this the government counselor moved that Anton should not be sworn, but the counsel for the accused insisted that he should be. The judges retired for consultation. They soon returned, and the presiding judge announced that Anton Armbruster was not to be sworn. He added, however, with impressiveness, that because of Anton's high character for honesty, he should confidently expect him to tell the truth, and the whole truth, with a clear conscience.

"That I will do," said Anton. Every one held his breath, and Landolin clutched the railing of the bench with both hands. Plainly and readily Anton said that it was his conviction that Landolin had not intended to kill Vetturi. Still, he could not say that he had seen the occurrence distinctly. He had just stepped through the gate, holding his betrothed's hand, and had no eyes for any one else.

He drew a long breath, and paused. The counsel for the defense asked him if he did not remember what he had said to Landolin, on his return from the unfortunate man's house. Anton replied that it was Landolin who had spoken, not he.

With soldierly precision he answered each question, and ended by saying that it could not be imagined that a man like Landolin, that a father, would willingly kill a man on the day of his daughter's betrothal.

Without looking toward Landolin, Anton returned to his seat, and when there, he did not look up. His eyes glistened, and his face burned.

When Tobias was called, he came forward with long strides, bowed to the judge, to the jury, and most deeply to his master. He then said, with the utmost assurance in his manner, that he would not have believed that the good-for-nothing Vetturi, who was too lazy to lift a sheaf of grain, could have been able to throw such a stone; but as good luck would have it, the stone had fallen just at his master's feet. Otherwise Vetturi would have been sitting in the prisoner's dock, and his master lying in the grave.

The government counselor tried to drive Tobias into a corner with questions, but he seemed prepared for everything, and gave smiling answers; and at last, even said pertly, that he, who had been there and seen it all, must know what happened better than the counselor.

Fidelis was then called. Some discussion arose as to whether he could be sworn; as he had been Landolin's servant at the time of the occurrence.

Landolin made a good impression by saying that Fidelis was a good fellow, and would say nothing against him out of spite.

At these words of his master, Fidelis seemed disconcerted for a moment, but he soon gave his testimony, briefly and succinctly; that Vetturi had not bent over and picked up a stone, but that his master had thrown one, and that it had seemed to him that it would hit his own head.

The counsel for the defense inquired if any one had spoken to the witness regarding what he had seen. Whereupon the government counsel rejoined that, if such questions were to be allowed, he should put the question whether Tobias had not endeavored to persuade Fidelis to testify otherwise.

"Must I answer?" asked Fidelis.

The presiding judge replied that he need answer neither question.

The examination of witnesses was now closed, and a pause ensued, during which there was a final arming of the forces upon both sides.

It had grown dark and candles were lighted in the court-room. They lit up first the judge's desk, then the jury, then Landolin and his counsel, and at last the spectators, of whom not one seemed to be missing; indeed their numbers had apparently increased.

It was damp and sultry in the room. The battle began.

CHAPTER XXXI.

The counselor's eye-glass glistened and glittered, but his speech was plain and quiet. He seemed studiously to avoid any approach to vehemence. He began with a strong statement of the unruliness and presumption which characterized the servants of the present day; and of their frequent dishonesty in the present instance. The jury nodded assent. He was sorry to say that the guilt of the accused was very plain. The pretext of self-defense he materially weakened, by showing carefully and clearly that the defendant had only hit upon the subterfuge as a last resort, when he could find no other. It was more than strange that the stone thrown by Landolin, which was bloody and easy distinguishable from others, had so soon been made away with; while the one said to have been thrown by Vetturi had been found, where no doubt it had been placed for that very purpose.

At these words Landolin shook his head violently. The counselor paused for a moment, then continued composedly, that, as only justice should be done, he would recommend a verdict of guilty of manslaughter, with mitigating circumstances.

When he had finished, Landolin leaned forward to speak to his lawyer, who rose and proceeded with persuasive eloquence to set forth the perfect innocence of the accused. When he depicted Landolin's uprightness and influence, Landolin cast down his eyes. It made a strong impression when the lawyer raising his voice cried: "Gentlemen of jury! The accused was chosen as a juryman for this session of the court. He should be sitting among you, and not here; and I expect from your straightforward honesty he will soon be with you, shoulder to shoulder; for he belongs with you. The one of you that feels himself exempt from outbursts of anger which, against his will, might result in an unhappy accident; the one that feels himself free from all natural faults, let him throw the stone; the stony word, guilty. By the authority of the accused, I refuse 'mitigating circumstances.' That is merely disguising the deadly missile. I call for the verdict 'Not guilty.'"

A murmur ran through the mass of spectators, so that the presiding judge threatened to clear the court-room if such disturbance were heard again. In the profound silence that followed he gathered up the pros and cons, and laid them in the scales before the jury. When he had finished he asked Landolin if he had anything to say.

Landolin arose and bowed. He moistened his dry lips, and began:

"Your honors! Gentlemen of the jury! I--I am guilty!" Again a murmur ran through the room; but the judge did not repeat his warning. He was himself too much astonished at the words; and even Landolin's lawyer involuntarily threw up his arms in despair. The counselor's eye-glass sparkled more brightly than before, and his face had a triumphant expression. When silence was restored, Landolin continued:

"Yes, I am guilty. I deserve punishment, just punishment; but not for that of which I stand here accused. I deserve punishment because I was so soft-hearted and compassionate that I did not prosecute the miserable fellow for his theft.

"Gentlemen of the jury! You twelve men! It is terribly hard that such men as you should be taken from the harvest-field to sit here through a long, hot day! And why? Because of a miserable servant-man, whose life is not worth twelve hours' time, of twelve honorable men like you. I will not speak of myself, of my having to stand here. I only say I should not have been so tender-hearted. Through that I have become guilty of making servants ungovernable. For that, I deserve punishment, for nothing else. Should I have quietly allowed him to kill me? And is it likely that I, who forebore so long with him, sought to kill him? Was I likely to place my wife, and my children, my honor, my house, and my lands in peril for such a one as he? I will not abuse him; he is dead." Landolin's voice trembled. He seemed unable to continue. His counsel whispered to him: "Don't stop there. Say again that you are guilty." And Landolin cried again: "I am guilty in not having prosecuted the thief. Of that I am guilty, of nothing more."

Landolin sat down, and covered his face with both hands. He seemed to be weeping.

The judge handed the foreman of the jury the list of points for their consideration. They all arose, and Landolin was led to the room set apart for the accused. On the way out his son pressed his hand; they could neither speak a word.

"Keeper," asked Peter, "can I go with my father?"

"Certainly."

"But I want to be alone," interrupted Landolin sharply, and the door closed behind him.

"He would have let Thoma in, but he does not want me," said Peter to himself; and as other evil thoughts linked themselves to this one, he grated his teeth.

CHAPTER XXXII.

The court-room and the long corridor were filled with people, eagerly discussing the expected verdict. Some thought it well-advised, others thought it fool-hardy, that the accused and his lawyer had declined to accept a verdict with "mitigating circumstances." They all agreed, however, that Landolin's speech was a surprise, such as they would probably never live to see again. There were some even who tried to set a money value on it, and asserted that they wouldn't have missed hearing the speech for such or such a sum. No one had dreamed that Landolin was such an orator and actor.

During this time, Landolin stood at the open window of the prisoner's room, grasping the iron grating with both hands. The keeper brought wine. Landolin did not drink it, but he poured some on his hands, and washed them with it; then turned again and started out into the starlit night.

Although he felt the triumph that he had gained by his last words, his knees were weary as if he had climbed over a high mountain, and now, as it seemed to him, he was compelled to walk over a grave, yonder by his home----

A meteor shot across the heavens. Ah! if one could only believe that that is a good sign!

The prisoner's room, and that in which the jury was locked till they should agree upon a verdict, were only separated by one thick wall. Have they been there long, or only a short time? From the towers of the city twelve o'clock was tolled. "Twelve strokes of the bell! The voices of twelve men!" said Landolin to himself. Yonder, through the black night, comes a monster with two red eyes, ever nearer and nearer. Landolin knows very well that it is a locomotive, but nevertheless he starts back from the window in terror, and sits down in a chair. Hark! A bell rings. It is not outside; it is here. The jury are ready. A heavy trampling is now heard in the corridor, followed by an unbroken silence. Landolin is sent for. With a firm step he mounts the stairs to the prisoner's dock. He stands still; for he is saying to himself: "They shall never say they saw me break down." He looks at the twelve men, but their faces seem to him to be swimming in a sea. Now, as though emerging from the waves, they rise. The foreman, Titus, lays his right hand on his heart, in his left a sheet of paper trembles and rustles.

Titus first reads the points that have been submitted to them. Oh, how long that lasts! Why this repetition? Why not immediately say, Guilty; or, Not Guilty? Now Titus draws a deep breath, and says:

"The accused is pronounced not guilty, by six voices against six."

A blow is heard to fall on the statute book which lies on the counselor's table. His glistening eyeglass falls down, and twirls around on its broad, black ribbon, as if astonished.

The judges hold a whispered consultation; and the president rises, and after reading the passages of the law bearing upon the case, says:

"The accused is not guilty. Landolin! you are free."

Landolin sees gathering about him his lawyer, his son, Tobias, and several jurymen and old friends. He sits on the bench, nods silently, and tears that he cannot keep back roll down his cheek.

"Father, don't weep; rejoice!" cried Peter. But in a moment a different cry is heard. The spectators had crowded noisily out of the building, and announced the verdict to the many people waiting in the corridor, on the stairs, and in front of the court-house. And now one could hear loud cries of "the murderer's released!" then yells, whistles, and threatening exclamations from the keepers and guards.

"Wait until the mob has scattered," said the host of the Ritter, who was one of the jury, "you will put up with me. I have ordered a good meal to be prepared for you and your guests."

Landolin had regained his self-command, and answered in a clear voice: "Yes; serve as good a meal as you can, and invite all the jurymen. The other six are not my enemies. I--I will never have another enemy in the world."

"Father, I would like to give Titus a special invitation."

"Do so. Didn't I say that for the few years I have yet to live, I will be nobody's enemy?"

"And I will send a telegram to mother."

"Do so, and say that I am all right."

The electric spark flashes over the wire, knocks at the station of the little town where the stationmaster is still awake, and soon the brother of the "Gallopig Cooper" ascends the hill.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

On this still summer night a current of fresh air streams through the valley and over the hilltops. The ripe blades of wheat sway to and fro as they draw their last breaths. All nature is silent, save the river which rushes through the valley. The men are all resting from the hard work of the harvest, to begin again with renewed strength at the first glimmer of the morning sunshine.

Up the white mountain road moves a man who often presses his hand to his breast pocket, as if to convince himself that he had not lost the dispatch.

In Landolin's house a light is still burning. Thoma sits at the table, and stares at the candle. Her features are changed by bitterness and pain, and the lips that once so sweetly smiled, so warmly kissed, are tightly compressed. Will those lips ever smile again; ever kiss again?

Her mother reclines at the open window, and looks out into the night.

"Mother," said Thoma, "you must go to sleep. It is past midnight; and the doctor thought that the trial would scarcely be finished in one day."

The mother barely turned her head, and then looked out again. Is Cushion-Kate awake, too, thought she.

Yes, she was awake, but she could not afford a light. Perhaps, at the same moment, she was thinking of Landolin's wife. "She has not deserved such misery; but neither have I; and I have no one else; nothing but this gnawing sorrow."

Suddenly Cushion-Kate straightened herself. She heard footsteps.

"Have you brought anything for me?" she asked the frightened messenger.

"No! nothing for you."

"For whom then?"

"For Landolin's Thoma," he answered, pulling out the blue envelope.

"Do you know what is in it?" asked Cushion-Kate.

"I'm not supposed to know."

"But you do know. Say, is Landolin sentenced to death?"

"I'll lose my place if you tell anybody."

"I swear to you by all the stars I'll tell no one. I have no one to tell. I beg of you, have pity!"

"Landolin is acquitted."

"Acquitted? And my son is dead! Ye stars above, fall down and crush the world. But no: you are fooling me. Don't do that!"

"You have sworn that you would not tell," said the messenger, and hastened away. But Cushion-Kate threw herself on the ground, and wept and sobbed.

In the meantime the messenger had reached Landolin's house.

"Do you bring good news?" his wife called from the window.

"I think so."

Thoma hastened down the stairs with the light, and returned quickly with the open dispatch in her hand, and cried out:

"Father is acquitted. Not guilty by the court."

The mother sank on her knees. It was long before she could speak a word. At length she said, half smiling, half weeping:

"He will sit there at the table, there on the bench, once more! He will eat and drink there again! Wait, Cooper! I'll bring you something. You must be tired."

Thoma drew her mother into a chair, and then brought food and drink.

"Yes; eat and drink," said the mother. "Why are you so silent, Thoma? Why are you not happy? Eat your fill, Cooper, and take the rest with you. Oh, if I could only give food and drink to the whole world! Oh, if I could only awaken the dead, I would eat only half enough all the rest of my life! He should have the best of everything. Praise and thanks be to God! my husband is free; it is so good of him to send word that he is well. Yes, no one understands his good heart as well as---Cooper, go to Cushion-Kate, and tell her that I will come to see her to-morrow morning. As long as I live I will divide with her as though she were my sister. Tell her to be calm, and thank God with me. It would not have done her any good if the verdict had been different. Go, Cooper; go now."

The Cooper went to Cushion-Kate's. The house was open, but she was not to be found.

In Landolin's house his wife said, "Now we will go to sleep. Thank God that your father can sleep again in peace. You'll see he will bring Anton home with him to-morrow, and everything will be all right again. Dear Anton certainly helped your father a great deal with his testimony. He is so kind and good. God be praised and thanked, everything will be all right again."

"Everything all right again?" said Thoma; but her mother did not catch the questioning tone in which she spoke.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

Cushion-Kate had hurried through the village to the pastor's house near the church. She rang the bell violently. The pastor looked out, and asked, "Who is ringing? Have you come for me to take the sacrament to a dying person?"

"Pastor," shrieked Cushion-Kate, "tell me, is there a God in heaven? Is there justice?"

"Who are you that dare blaspheme so? All good spirits praise the Lord our God. Who are you?"

"The mother, the mother whose son was murdered; and the murderer is acquitted."

"Is it you, Cushion-Kate? Wait; I will open the door." The pastor opened it, but Cushion-Kate was no longer there. He went to the churchyard, to Vetturi's grave. There he found her red kerchief, but she had disappeared.

In mad haste, as though driven by invisible demons, Cushion-Kate ran through fields and forest, down to the river. There she stood, on a projecting rock, under which the water boiled and bubbled as though imprisoned. The whirlpool is called the "Devil's Kettle." Cushion-Kate leaned forward, and was about to throw herself in; but when her hands touched her head, and she became aware that her kerchief was missing, her self-control returned, and sitting down she said as she looked up to the sky:

"Mother, I feel it again. I, under your heart, and you, with a straw wreath round your head, and a straw girdle round your waist,--that was the world's justice to the poor unfortunate. Mother, you are now in the presence of eternal justice. Don't let Him turn you away! And Thou, on Thy throne in Heaven, answer me. Tell me, why is my son dead? Why hast Thou let the man that killed him go free, and live in happiness? Thou hast given me nothing in all the world; and I ask for nothing but that Thou shouldst punish him, and all those who acquitted him. Let no tree grow in their forest, nor corn in their fields. Torment them; or if Thou in Heaven above wilt not help me, then he, the other one, from below, shall! Yes, come from the water, come from the rocks; come, devil, and help me! Make a witch of me. I'll be a witch. Take my poor soul, but help me!"

A night-owl rose silently from out the darkness. Cushion-Kate beckoned to it, as though it were a messenger from him whom she had called. The owl flew past; a train of cars rushed by on the other side of the river. Cushion-Kate shrieked, but her cry was drowned in the clatter of the cars. She sank down--she slept. When the day awoke and shone in her face, she turned over with a groan, and slept on with her face to the ground.

"Wake up! How came you here?" called a man's voice.

Cushion-Kate opened her eyes, and drawing her hands over her forehead, she moaned out, "Vetturi!"

"No; it is I, Anton Armbruster. See, here is some gin. Come, drink!"

Cushion-Kate drank eagerly, then asked:

"Do you know that he is acquitted?"

"Yes; I have just come from the trial."

"Oh, yes," cried Cushion-Kate, and she struck Anton on the breast with her bony fist. "Yes, you too are----. They say you testified that he did not do it."

"Kate, you have a strong hand. You hurt me, but I forgive you. Kate, I did not testify falsely. I said honestly that I saw nothing that happened plainly."

"And why was he acquitted?"

"Because six men said not guilty. Come, raise yourself up. There!"

The old woman rose to her feet. She held her left hand to her head, and her dishevelled grey hair fluttered in the morning wind. She looked around in bewilderment, and seemed unable to collect her thoughts.

"Some one has stolen my kerchief from my head," she said at length. "Stop; it must be lying on his grave. Yes, he is in his grave, and the man who brought him to his death is free--I understand it all. I am not crazed. I know you. You are Anton; and your mother, in heaven, kept your tongue from lying. Thank God, you no longer belong to that family. They must go to ruin--all of them. The haughty Thoma, too. Great God," she cried, clasping her hands, "forgive me! Thou art a patient creditor, but a sure payer. You need not lead me, Anton; I can go alone--alone."

When Anton offered to accompany her, she motioned him back, and went through the woods, over the hill, to the village, gathering dry twigs on her way.

For a long time Anton stood gazing after her. He would so liked to have hastened to Thoma, but he overcame the impulse, and wandered homeward.

CHAPTER XXXV.

For weeks Anton lived among the wood-cutters in the forest, high up on the mountain. He was one of the most diligent workers, from early morning until nightfall; and he was rewarded by having in the log cabin such a sound sleep as he could not have had in his father's house in the valley. To be sure, the wood-cutters thought it strange that the miller's only son should devote himself to such hard work and privation; but they asked no questions, and days often passed without Anton's speaking a word. But he thought the oftener: How does Thoma live? She cannot, like me, find a new place for herself. She must stay at home, where everything awakens bitter recollections. Is she asked, as I am, by every one she meets, why our engagement has been broken off? And, like me, is she at a loss to know how to answer? Not the smallest lie escapes her lips, for she is honest and truthful. She demands that her father should confess what he has done, and submit to punishment. But, can her father confess what, perhaps, he has not done?

It was plain and clear to Anton that he could not give a full account of the occurrence. And when he was called before the court, he gave his testimony strictly in accordance with the truth; for that the stone had not hit Vetturi, he had only heard from Landolin, as he stood at the spring.

He wanted to go to Thoma, after the trial, and tell her this; but she had thrust him from her so unmercifully and unlovingly that he could not humble himself again.

Does she not love him? Did she never love him? The perfume of the lily-of-the-valley, which was just beginning to bloom up on the mountain, reminded him of a blissful hour.

Anton had gone down from the mountain to the trial; and after his meeting with Cushion-Kate, troubled thoughts filled his mind as he went on his way home. He said to himself that he would no longer hide in the mountain-forest; it was nothing but a cowardly flight. As he acknowledged this, the medal of honor on his breast trembled. Does Anton Armbruster fly from anything? He looked around with a fearless courage. He was himself again.

"How many years did he get?" asked his father when he reached home. Anton had to tell him that Landolin was fully acquitted.

The calm, thoughtful miller struck his fist on the table and exclaimed: "Well, that is----." He suddenly broke off, went to the window, and looked out. He did not wish to have a second dispute with his son; and Anton's composed manner seemed to him to say that he rejoiced in the verdict, and built new hopes upon it.

"Father, I am going to stay at home now," said Anton.

"That is right," answered his father, without turning round, "and you had better go to the river. We must send off a raft to-day."

"Father, have you nothing to say about the acquittal?"

"What difference does what I say make?"

"Much, father--it makes very much difference."

"Well, then, I will tell you. It would have been better for the cause of justice, and for the hot-tempered Landolin himself, if he had been punished for a few years. But, mark my words, he must now suffer much more for his crime. He needs now to be acquitted by every one he meets. If he had submitted to punishment he would be better off. He would have paid his debt to justice, and everything would go on smoothly and evenly. In two years he would regain his civil rights and his standing in the community. It was only a misstep.

But how is it now? And I believe Landolin is not tough enough--how shall I say it--he is not man enough to blot out the sense of his guilt from his own mind, and from other people's. But, Anton, let this be the last time we dispute about him. I don't deny that I have no place in my heart for him; but we two need not, on that account, live in discord. It is time for you to go now."

Anton went up the stream, and set himself busily to work, helping to bind the logs and planks together into a raft. He who saw this well-built man, handling the oar and boat-hook so energetically, and in his quickly changing attitudes presenting such a picture of strong, graceful manhood, would not have dreamed that he carried in his heart a bitter sorrow.

As Thoma was estranged from her father, so Anton was estranged from his. Thoma and the miller were of the same opinion, with only this difference; that in Thoma deep respect for her father had changed into the opposite feeling; whilst with the miller, a deeply hidden hostility, or rather aversion toward the haughty Landolin had only come to the surface.

The acquittal made no change in the miller's feelings, except, possibly, to intensify them; and perhaps it was so also with Thoma. Still Anton hoped that matters would change for the better; and he was continually studying how he could bring it about.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

At the capital, the night following the trial was to be spent in revelry and carousal.

When Landolin entered the chamber prepared for him at the Ritter inn, he pulled off his coat, and hurling it across the room, exclaimed:

"There! I'm rid of it! I've felt the whole time as if I had an iron jacket on."

In the great dining-room, where the table was already spread, he walked up and down in his shirt sleeves. The host said smilingly that supper would soon be served.

"Are the twelve men all coming?" asked Landolin.

"They were all invited, but they seem to have slipped into the ground and vanished."

The first to arrive was Landolin's lawyer. He seemed far from being elated with his victory; and in Landolin's manner toward him there was by no means the same dependence and helplessness as before. Then Landolin had treated him as a very sick man does his physician; every word and every glance were welcomed as though fraught with healing. Now Landolin was an ungrateful convalescent, who has come to the conclusion that he has not been sick at all; or, at any rate, that not the physician, but his own good constitution has helped him through.

"You are right," said his counsel, "you should have been a lawyer. Your last words turned the scale. It was a master stroke."

Landolin accepted this praise as his due, and made no reply.

"Call Anton! Where is Anton?" said he, turning to his son.

"When I was sending the dispatch I met him at the depot. He went home on the freight train, which usually takes no passengers; but the conductor is an old comrade of his, and smuggled him on board."

Landolin whistled, and walked hastily around the table, on which they were just placing the wine-bottles.

"Landlord, bring in the supper. Herr Procurator, take this chair beside me. So, this is a different way of sitting down together. I invited all the jurymen,--all. I don't want to know who said guilty, or who said not guilty. I don't want to have an enemy in the world. If they don't come--all right. I've shown how I feel, and that's enough. Landlord, let the witnesses come in, and anybody else that's there. Be sure and call Tobias."

Tobias soon appeared. To be sure he had just eaten in the hostler's room; but he wiped his mouth, as though he would say, "If it's necessary I'll do it again." So he sat down next to Peter, and fell bravely to work.

The so-called common people who had testified now came in. This was, to be sure, no company for Landolin, but he could not do less than give the poor fellows a good bite and a good drink. He asked what the witness fee was, and when he heard how small it was, he said he would like to double it, but he dared not, lest it should be said that he had tried to bribe them. By this speech he sought to ingratiate himself with these people at no expense to himself.

Tobias nudged Peter with his elbow, and laughed and drank. Peter cast a look at him as though he would like to tear him to pieces, then quickly controlled himself and joined in the laugh. His face wore the expression of a young fox who has just caught his first hare, and is feasting upon it.

Among the guests were some who had been Landolin's companions when he was young; and they strove to divert him by reminding him of his wild, youthful pranks. Landolin laughed and drank immoderately. The lawyer did not find it congenial, so he slipped quietly away. Landolin's eyes often fell upon the empty chair at his side, but he looked quickly away. Suddenly he called out, "Take away that empty chair! Who the devil is going to sit there? Take it away! Away with it!" He jumped up and overturned it with such force that all the four legs were broken.

"You oughtn't to do that father. Be quiet!" whispered Peter, sternly, and roughly grasped his father's arm.

"Let go! I'm all right," said Landolin, quieting down. "Come, Tobias, come with me! Indeed I have not drunk too much to-day, but I have gone through so much that its almost upset me. Here, Tobias, let me lean a little on you. Good night to you all. I hope you will get home all right. I shall soon follow you."

He went up to his room with Tobias, and as soon as he got there he caught tight hold of Tobias' arms and cried:

"Be still! I won't hurt you. Not you! You haven't deserved it. Do you know what I long for? Do you know what I wish?"

"How can I know it?"

"I'd like to have one of 'em between my thumb and finger, like this, so--Hutadi! I'd like to snap and crack his arms and legs. I'd like best to get at Titus--or all of the six--they ought to have been unanimous--the cursed--"

"Let me go, master," begged Tobias, for the grip of his hand was far from gentle; "and I advise you to keep quieter. You can say anything you like to me. What we two have got through together, can't be undone."

The situation dawned upon Landolin. He, the farmer, was reproved by his own servant.

"All right, all right," he muttered and soon fell sound asleep.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

It was almost noon when Landolin awoke. He prepared for his journey home, and paid his bill. It was very evident that the landlord had cheated him. He was greatly vexed at being taken in by this plausible fellow, but he did not want an open quarrel. The thought that, for some time to come, he must allow himself to be cheated without daring to say anything, worried him more than the loss of his money. He now wished to return home immediately, and enter the village in triumph; but Peter put off going until near evening; for he did not want his father to reach home until after dark; and when Landolin swore at the unnecessary delays, Peter said, coolly and meaningly:

"Father, you will have to give up fussing and spluttering so. I should think you would have learned, by this time, to keep quiet and be patient. Yes, you may well stare at me. I am no longer the simple Peter, over whose head you looked, as though he didn't exist. I am here, and you and I have no secrets from one another. Self-defense is a nice thing, but--well I guess you understand me. Of course I have great respect for you. You drove the cart well, and Tobias and I pushed at the hind-wheels. The cart is out of the rut, and now we'll wash our hands."

Landolin looked at his son as though another man were standing before him. Peter noticed it, and continued:

"Yes, father, I've found out what the mainspring of the world is; and I know that it's all one what a man does. He can do what he likes, if he only keeps other people from knowing it. Am I right, or not?"

Landolin was so astonished that he could not utter a word. Who dare speak to him in such a way? Can it be Peter! But something still worse followed; for Peter began again:

"Now, see here, father; before we go home we'd better have matters settled. You are the farmer; you are the master. And before the world you may appear as you always have; but at home, in house and field, only my word must be obeyed. You may be sure that you shall want for nothing."

"Where is Tobias?" asked Landolin, gnashing his teeth.

"You needn't halloo so; I'm not deaf. I sent Tobias home before us; and I might as well tell you at once, that I shall dismiss him soon. He knows too much, and puts on too many airs. Moreover, I intend to send away all of the servants. I'm going to lay a new foundation."

Landolin kept silent, but smiled. He was incensed at Peter's impertinence, yet he could not repress his delight that his son had become so fearless and resolute.

"I could almost be proud of you, you have changed so," he said, at length. And Peter cried exultingly:

"That's right. You shall see that I'll do everything right; and that I'll do the right thing by you. I find that we've been losing a big pile of money in speculation, but that's past and done with, and I'll say nothing more about it."

Landolin kept his wrath down, and thought: "Just wait till we get home, then I'll talk to you differently."

Father and son spoke not a word after this. A wagon was waiting at the depot in the city; and Landolin asked his wife, who with tears in her eyes came to meet him: "Where is Thoma?" He was told that she would not come.

Landolin thought to himself: "I am acquitted, but my children----. My son wants to depose me, and my daughter will not even come to meet me."

In the meadow near the station was an unfinished platform, and though it was twilight, the men were still hammering busily.

"What are they doing?" asked Landolin; and before an answer could be given, he continued: "I remember, when I was a child, that a scaffold was built there, and a man beheaded on it. Beheading is not the worst thing in the world."

"Oh! husband!" replied his wife. "What strange thoughts! Peter, don't you know what they are doing?"

"Certainly; certainly. Next Sunday the soldiers have their celebration."

As the wagon drove past the garden of the Sword inn, a number of ladies and gentlemen were looking down from the veranda. Landolin raised his hat and bowed, but no one returned the salutation; and, for the first time in his life, he tasted the bitter experience of stretching out his hand in greeting, and of finding no hand ready to take it.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

No one had returned Landolin's greeting from the veranda of the inn. To be sure the judge's wife, who sat near the railing, looked an acknowledgment, but that could not be seen at the distance. More she dared not do, for they were having a full meeting of the members of the "Casino," a society or association of the people of rank in the city, which met the first Wednesday after each full moon. Several members from a distance were there; the Catholic priest; and the only Protestant pastor of the district, with his wife.

The conversation naturally turned upon the monstrous verdict of the previous day. The corporation-attorney said that he was glad he had declined to defend the case. He could well imagine the surprise of Landolin's counsel when his client was acquitted. Of course, in such cases, a lawyer feels bound to make use of all possible dialectic arts and strategies, but still, when successful, he must feel the recoil of the gun.

The school-teacher, whom but few knew to be the editor of the weekly paper, *The Forest Messenger*, complained in a disheartened tone that this verdict of the overbearing farmers would necessarily intensify the hate existing between the different classes; for the poor man felt that he had no rights. It was high time that the choice of jurymen should no longer depend upon the length of a man's tax-list.

The attorney coincided with him, but went even farther, and asserted that it was an old prejudice of liberalism, that the ordinary mind could render a just verdict.

The judge nodded to him, and he continued, somewhat vehemently: "I now understand the legend of Medusa. The uneducated class is such a head. If a man should look into its face, he would turn into stone before its horrid visage, so wild, so malevolent, so false, so furious. Our much vaunted German nation is not yet ripe, either for universal suffrage, or for the right of sitting on a jury. Indeed, since we have obtained what we have so long and ardently desired, the German wave in the tide of morality is sinking away. Our German people are not so great as we believed and hoped."

The judge earnestly protested against this assertion, and insisted that although there were undoubtedly deplorable indications, still the wave was beginning to rise again.

The physician, who still clung to the old ideal of his student days--an ideal always mingled with a profound hatred of Metternich--came bravely to the judge's assistance, by declaring that the influence of the profligate times of Metternich is still felt; for our people persist in the belief that everything that our rulers propose to do is wrong and tyrannical; and applaud when the law is evaded, or a criminal slips through without punishment.

In conclusion the physician could not refrain from giving the lawyer, who, while he really had a contempt for the people, belonged to the so-called radical wing of the liberty party, to understand that his party was greatly to blame for the disorganization of the popular mind, by its carping depreciation of the great and good things which had actually been accomplished.

The clergyman agreed that the foundation of all the mischief lay in the weakening of religious belief; but the schoolmaster was bold enough to assert that in the boasted days of unshaken faith there was much more wickedness in the world than now.

The discussion was apparently about to be taken up with the subject of religion, which was strictly forbidden in the Casino. But the Protestant minister's timid, quiet wife, happily turned the conversation, by asking, during a slight pause:

"Are there not more offenders who are undetected than are ever brought to justice?"

No one seemed to care to answer this question, and the young lady blushed deeply at the silence that followed her words, but at length the schoolteacher took pity on her, and said, with a smile:

"It is quite impossible to give an exact answer to your question; but it is probably much as it is with the *aërolites*. Two-thirds of our planet is covered with water, consequently two-thirds of the *aërolites* fall into it unnoticed; and of the last third, which falls on dry land, not all are found."

This bright and skilfully devised figure led the company back into a more agreeable frame of mind.

The school-teacher, who liked to deal in generalities, continued:

"I would like to present another subject for consideration. It would be profitable to inquire in what different degrees, truthfulness, whether due to nature or education, is found to exist in different nations. This department of statistics would, I grant, be the most difficult."

The problem was not discussed; for the stationmaster entered, and said that Landolin's wife had come with the carriage, and that Landolin was expected by the evening train. Again the conversation turned upon Landolin. The old district forester, who, until now had not spoken, but had been steadily smoking his long pipe, said in his strong, grave voice:

"Nothing can be more pernicious than that the best and most universal belief, the belief in justice, should be shaken, or quite destroyed. Public opinion will and must rebel against the verdict in Landolin's case. The conscience of the people is still too strong and pure. But the very fact that the popular conscience condemns both him and the jury, undermines all stability."

The forester had scarcely finished speaking when the train arrived. Landolin soon drove past. The company had risen from the table, and the physician stood beside the judge's wife.

These two shared the noblest of vocations, and often met in their common work of aiding the unfortunate.

"Do you think," asked the lady, "that the innocent young people, Thoma and Anton, can now be happily united?"

The physician shrugged his shoulders, and she continued:

"I was going to Landolin's house, but our hostess advised me not. But now I think it is time to do something, and that I can be of benefit to them."

"You had better wait a few days, at least," counseled the physician. "You know a wound must bleed awhile, before it is allowed to heal. Besides, I am inclined to think that affairs have undergone a change. At first Landolin yielded an unwilling consent, now the miller will be obstinate. I should not be surprised if in the end the young people themselves----"

"I think I can prevent that."

With a polite bow the physician replied: "Faith is supposed to be able to remove mountains. I have great confidence in your faith. But hush!"

The piano struck up in the next room. A portly, merry Catholic priest sang with strong tenor voice; and presently the young wife of the Protestant clergyman was persuaded to sing a duet with him.

Joyous songs, sung by sweet voices, floated out into the moonlit summer evening, and all dissension and all

misery seemed to be forgotten.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

It was a source of vexation to Landolin that the people of rank of the Casino did not notice him; and as their wagon went slowly up the hill, he said to his wife, with unaccustomed tenderness:

"We'll not concern ourselves at all about the world, but be happy in having each other and being together again. Nobody cares for a man as his own family does."

His wife looked at him in astonishment, and her careworn face shone in the clear moonlight. She was not used to such affection from Landolin, and she had never known that he felt any need of sympathy.

"Is Thoma ill?" he asked, after a little while.

"No, only frightened, and angry about Anton. She goes around for days without speaking a word; but she works busily, and eats and drinks as usual. To be sure, she doesn't sleep as she should. I made her sleep with me; but she would not lie in your bed, and I had to give her mine."

"Everything will come around all right now," said Landolin. For his part, he thought it strange that his wife, contrary to her usual habit, had so much to say; but he wanted to hear more, so he asked:

"Has the prize cow a bull calf?"

"Yes; coal black, with a white star on its forehead, and stout hoofs. Didn't Peter tell you that we were going to raise it?"

As for Peter, who sat on the front seat driving, his sides shook. He was evidently laughing.

Landolin, who had striven against the temptation, at last yielded, and asked:

"How does Cushion-Kate get along?"

His wife did not answer, and Landolin repeated impatiently, "Don't you hear me? Didn't you hear what I said? I asked how Cushion-Kate was getting along."

"Don't scream so! You have changed very much."

"It's you, not I, that have changed. Why don't you give me an answer?"

"Because I have none to give. Last night Cushion-Kate was not at home. Early this morning she came back, and lit a fire for the first time in many days. She must have been at the grave yesterday, for the pastor found her red kerchief there, and sent it to her. Since then she has disappeared again; and her goat cries terribly, for it has had no fodder. The poor animal----"

"What do I care for the goat! I don't know how it is--either everybody is crazy or I am crazy myself. Is this my forest? Are those my fields? To whom do these horses and this wagon belong? Say, am I crazy?"

"If you go on in this way, you'll make both me and yourself so. For God's sake, don't torment us both! What do you want with Cushion-Kate just now?"

His wife had scarcely uttered these words, when Cushion-Kate rushed out of the forest, and grasped the horse's reins.

"Let go!" cried Peter. "Let go! or I'll drive over you."

"Hold still!" said Landolin. "Kate! I mean well by you."

"But I don't mean well by you. They didn't cut off your head. They didn't hang you. You shall hang yourself. There is your forest, with thousands and thousands of trees. They all wait for you to hang yourself on them."

"Oh, Kate! come here to me," besought his wife. But Kate continued to pour terrible execrations.

"Give her a cut with the whip," cried Landolin; "give it to me; I'll strike her."

"No, father, I'll fix it," said Peter; and springing down quickly, he pushed Kate to one side; then, mounting again, he drove rapidly up the hill.

Landolin's wife looked back, and drawing a long breath, said: "Thank God! she has sat down on those stones. Some one has come up the hill, and is speaking to her."

CHAPTER XL.

When they reached home, Peter cracked his whip loudly, and drove through the open gate to the house. A strange servant brought a chair; Peter helped his mother out, then turned to assist his father, who said:

"Never mind! I'm still able----"

He stood again on his own ground. No sound of welcome was heard, save the barking of the chained dog.

The bright moon lit up the square yard, which was neatly paved, and entirely changed in appearance.

"Who made these changes?" asked Landolin.

"Thoma had them made," replied her mother.

Landolin understood it. She desired for her own sake, and perhaps for his, that the place where the murder was committed should be no longer recognizable.

"Again I say, God keep you, and I bid you most heartily welcome," said his wife, in a tone full of emotion. "May the years that are still granted to you pass in peace!"

"There, there, that will do," responded Landolin. He went to the dog and unfastened his chain. The dog leaped up against his old master, and ran round and round about him, wild with joy.

"That's a good dog," said Landolin. "Be quiet. You know me, don't you? They said my hands were covered with blood; but you don't smell anything wrong, do you? The only faithful thing in the world is a dog."

The tears on his wife's cheeks glittered in the moonlight, and he said, turning toward her,

"Go in first!"

"No, you go first, you are the master. It was just such a night as this when we came home for the first time after our marriage; then you went first into the house. It seems like a wedding again."

She held out her hand for him. He gave it to her, and hand in hand they went up the steps. As he entered the room, she sprinkled him with holy water from the basin that stood at the door.

There was no one in the room but an old servant.

"Where is Thoma?" asked Landolin.

"She is in her bedroom."

"Tell her to come here; that I have got home."

"I called to her through the closed door, but she did not answer."

Landolin seated himself in the great arm-chair, and his wife gave thanks to God that her husband sat there once more. She had often doubted that he ever would again. Landolin looked at her, and it seemed to him that she reeled to and fro, and that the room and furniture were all in motion. He straightened himself with an effort, went out on the porch, and knocked at Thoma's door. Nothing moved.

"Thoma, I am here, your father."

The door was unbolted and Thoma stood before him. In a constrained voice she said: "Welcome, father!"

"Have you nothing more to say to me?"

"You never liked people to talk much."

Landolin took his daughter's hand, which she had not offered him.

"My child, do you no longer love me?"

"I should never ask a child such a question."

"My child, I am a poor man; as poor as a beggar. Do you understand me?"

Thoma shook her head, and her father continued:

"I have sinned against you all, especially against you; but now I beg you to forgive me. Don't let me perish." His heart beat so fast that he could not speak another word. As Thoma still remained silent, he turned quickly away, and went with tottering steps to the living-room. He listened to hear if Thoma would not follow him; but he heard nothing.

He looked at the table in the living-room, and asked:

"Is that a new table?"

"No, but Thoma had it planed because the holes were there."

Landolin remembered having stuck the fork in the table.

Steps were now heard. It was not Thoma, but the pastor, who came. His words were kind and comforting, but Landolin stared at him blankly. True, he saw him, but he heard him not; his thoughts were with his daughter, who was so terribly changed. It was not until the pastor mentioned Cushion-Kate, and said that she had grown wild and uncontrollable, and talked most blasphemously, that Landolin paid any attention to what he said. And when the pastor added that it seemed as if Cushion-Kate had gone crazy, he cried:

"There are insane asylums for such people. She should be put into one. The town can pay for it."

"That's not so easily done; the district physician will have to order it."

Thoma had unexpectedly appeared, and brought in the supper, which she had had prepared. The pastor started to leave, but upon Thoma's and her mother's entreaties he remained. They needed a man of peace to bring quiet and concord. The meal-time passed cheerfully, and Landolin ate ravenously. During a pause, he asked: "Herr Pastor, is neither the young bailiff nor any of the councilmen at home? It would be no more than proper for them to call. They must have known that I was coming."

The pastor seemed to find no answer, and Landolin's wife spared him embarrassment by reminding her husband that he had said that he would no longer concern himself about other people.

When the pastor took his leave, Landolin accompanied him respectfully. Pausing before the house, the pastor said in a low tone:

"Give me half."

"Half of what?"

"When you were in prison, did you not vow a hundred times that when you were released you would give liberally to the poor and the church? Give me half, or a third, or a fourth."

"Herr Pastor, you're joking. It is too soon for me to joke with you."

"If you change your mind, you know where to find me," said the pastor. As he turned away, Landolin looked after him scornfully.

He went to the well and drank of the water that poured swiftly from it. As he wiped his mouth, he said to his wife who was looking out of the window:

"Nothing in the world quenches my thirst so, and makes me feel so well and fresh as water from our own well."

"Come in, it is bed-time."

CHAPTER XLI.

Landolin strove to think of something else than that which, against his will, forced itself upon him; and asked his wife after they had got to their room:

"Is there nothing new? Hasn't anything happened all this long time?"

"No; at least not much. The old Dobel-Farmer was so badly hurt, unloading a wagon-load of wood, that he died. Perhaps you heard of it. The government has bought the Dieslinger farm for a forest. The owner of the Syringa farm is married again. In Heidlingen they have a new minister. The former one tried to make his church Old-Catholic, as they call it; and the Improvement Society, as they call it, has laid out a new road near our forest. The superintendent, the good old General, has often been here, and asked after you."

Thus his wife went on.

"Who came to see you oftenest while I was away?"

"My brother. But there were a good many other people who came to condole with me. I wouldn't listen to their pity, so after awhile they stopped coming."

"Didn't the miller ever come to see you?"

"No; not once."

"That's just like a Dutchman. He won't go unless he's pushed. To-morrow I'll straighten matters between Anton and Thoma. I'll go and see the miller."

"Don't do that. Don't try to hitch up so fast. You understand what I mean. You know when a man wants to turn a wagon round, or back his horses, he can't do it on a gallop."

"Aha!" thought Landolin, "she's trying to be smart. Everybody thinks they're smarter than I am."

As Landolin was silent, his wife continued: "Now, you go to sleep. I'm sleepy."

The quiet did not last long, for Landolin tossed back and forth on his bed, and sighed and groaned.

"What is the matter? Aren't you tired?"

"Oh, wife, I can't make it real that I am not alone; and that the sword no longer hangs over my head. I see the counselor's glittering eye-glass on its black ribbon all the time. Indeed, you haven't your old husband any more. You have another--and I can't abide the fellow, he's so soft-hearted. I wish you would often remind me not to care for what other people think. They have forgotten me, and I'll do what I can to forget them. Only you must be very patient with me; but don't give up to me, and don't let me be so soft-hearted."

The strong man wept bitter tears in the depth of the night, and called out, almost with a curse:

"May my eyes run out if I ever weep again, as long as we two live together! I make this promise to you, and to myself. Others cannot embitter my life, if I do not embitter it myself. Yes, yes! Self-defense! Self-defense!"

His wife lighted a candle, and tried to comfort the self-tormented man. He said, at length:

"One thing more. Cushion-Kate called after me, that I must make away with myself--I won't do that, for your sake."

His wife stroked his hand, wet with freshly-fallen tears.

"I won't give people the satisfaction of thinking we need sympathy. Leave the candle burning; and then, if I wake up again, I shall know I am no longer in prison. Good-night, we'll go to sleep now."

He slept until late in the day. His wife rose gently and went about her work, carefully avoiding the least noise that might wake her husband. She blessed every moment that brought him sleep and exhilarating strength and health.

CHAPTER XLII.

Thoma was still in the harvest field when Landolin came into the living-room. His wife sat down beside him, and he said:

"You can't think how different food tastes when one has to eat it alone, in prison."

"Don't let your thoughts run back to that all the time."

"Has any one been here to see me?"

"No. But remember what you said last night."

Yes, that was easily said; but Landolin could not help thinking of the people outside, and how it could be possible that they were not at least curious to look at him again.

He looked out of the window. Heavily laden grain-wagons passed by, but no farmer, no servant, so much as gave a glance toward his house. The new bailiff came up the road, steadying the wagon with his pitchfork. He had evidently seen Landolin from a distance; for, not far from the house, he walked to the other side of the wagon, where he could not be seen.

Landolin drew back into the room, and seating himself in the great arm-chair he drummed awhile on its arms, then went into the bedroom and pulled on his high boots.

"You're not going out?" said his wife. He looked at her in astonishment. This questioning, this observation of all he did or left undone, was distasteful to him. He was about to say so to his wife, but checked himself, and explained that in prison he had worn slippers, and he felt like putting on his boots again, and going out.

The cracking of a whip was heard in the yard.

It was Peter on the saddle horse, driving the four-horse grain-wagon. Landolin went out, and met Thoma with sunburnt face following the wagon. For a while she looked at her father in silence, as though she could find nothing to say. Her look was severe and gloomy.

"Good morning, Thoma."

"Good morning, father," she replied. A milder frame of mind seemed to gain predominance as she looked on her father's care-worn face, but she threw back her head as if to shake off the gentle feeling. Now that father and daughter met in the clear light of day, they seemed unfamiliar--yes, almost strange in appearance to each other. To Thoma her father appeared smaller in size than she remembered him; and the self-confident, defiant expression of his face had become uncertain and timorous.

On the other hand Thoma had grown stronger, prouder, more erect in her carriage; her eyebrows seemed to have sunk lower; and between them deep, narrow wrinkles had been traced. These are furrows from which a bitter harvest springs.

"Good morning, master," was the greeting of the head-servant Tobias, in a confidential tone. "You will find everything, the stock and the fields, in good condition."

Landolin only nodded. So Peter had not yet dismissed the head-servant; perhaps he will not do it.

Landolin spoke to the servant who had been taken in Fidelis' place; and asked him, condescendingly, from what district he came, and in whose service he had previously been. The servant answered respectfully, and Landolin was reassured. Peter had evidently not announced that he was now to be master, and Landolin was almost grateful for this deference, which in reality was simply what was due to him. He went through the stables, and found everything well cared for. A maid, who was singing as she filled the racks with fresh clover for the cows, did not stop her song when she saw him. He looked at her in astonishment, and asked at length, "Why do you not speak to me?"

"Because I've hired out to the Gerlach farmer, and the other two maids are going too."

"Why?"

"Peter has dismissed us; but we would have gone anyway."

Landolin went into the yard again, and while he unfastened the dog's chain and patted him, he said,

"You'll not forsake me, will you?" He pushed the dog's jaws apart, to look into his mouth. "You must be happy! they have broken out my teeth. I can bite no more, and people are no longer afraid of me. Come; hold still, while I put a spiked collar round your neck. I must have something of the kind for myself."

He went in and sat down in his arm-chair. The dog lay on the floor beside him. Strange! The chair is not so easy as it used to be--the seat is hard, the back too straight! But, notwithstanding this, Landolin forced himself to stay quietly at home. He felt sure that somebody or other would call, if only as they were passing. He frequently looked toward the door; but it did not open, and no one came.

Finally, when evening drew near, he went out of doors.

CHAPTER XLIII.

Only a few months ago a strong man had crossed this threshold. He was now changed, and the world was changed, particularly his own household. During his absence he had constantly thought how merry it was at home. And yet there was nothing merrier there than quiet, uninterrupted work; and he himself had always been a stern, morose man, before whom every one in the house, save Thoma, trembled. To be sure Thoma had always been light-hearted, and perhaps that was why he thought the whole household merry.

With downcast gaze Landolin went up the road. His present frame of mind was the most injurious a man could be in, and highly improper for a farmer. He was irritable, and, as is always the case with irritable people, he was weak and helpless, and trusted to external causes to bring him new energy and incitement.

As he raised his eyes he saw, at some distance, a woman with a red kerchief approaching him. Is that "Cushion-Kate?" Should he turn back?

He called the dog nearer to him; but it was not "Cushion-Kate;" it was a stranger.

See! There comes the "Gallop-Cooper." He was walking faster than usual, and as he hurried by he said "Good evening" carelessly, and without waiting for a response. Landolin stood still, looked back after him, and shrugged his shoulders contemptuously at the beggarly man, who once, if he wanted to borrow a log of wood for barrel staves, could not find submissive words enough. "Not another chip shall you have from me," said Landolin to himself as he walked on. He had now reached the bailiff's farm. The watch-dog rushed out at Racker; but as soon as he saw the spiked collar he fled. Racker started in pursuit of the coward; but Landolin called him back. The bailiff, who was sitting astride a block of wood, mending a scythe, must certainly have heard him, but he did not look up; and not until Landolin stood in front of him and spoke, did he stop hammering. Then, running his fingers along the edge of the scythe, to see if there were any notches left, he said:

"Back again, eh?"

"As you see. Down! Racker." The dog had been standing perfectly still beside him; and it seemed as though he visited upon the dog a fit of anger which something else had provoked. It galled him that the bailiff should speak so disrespectfully, neither offering to shake hands, nor rising; but he said with a forced smile:

"I only came to tell you, and you may announce it generally, that I shall not be a candidate for councilman for this district at the election; and that I resign my office of judge of the orphans' court."

"All right. I'll attend to it."

Landolin stared at the young bailiff. Is that the way to speak to him? Must he put up with that? And not dare to get angry and give blow for blow? Yes, Landolin; you are no longer feared. Curb your passions, and learn to rule yourself.

After a long pause, during which Landolin struggled against his indignation, he said abruptly:

"Good by."

"Good by," was the dry answer.

Landolin walked away, and the bailiff went on hammering his scythe. But the strokes fell faster and faster; for he thought exultingly that he had treated Landolin as he deserved, for having brought scandal and dishonor upon the whole district. Had not Landolin acted as though he could still lay claim to something? "Now, I

think, he'll know what his standing is."

But Landolin only knew that the whole world was hostile to him, and begrudged him his life.

"Good evening, Mr. Ex-bailiff." Thus he was suddenly accosted.

He looked up and saw a rough-looking young man of sinewy make standing before him, and taking off his hat. Disordered, bristly hair fell over his forehead into the unquiet, black eyes, that wandered restlessly here and there.

"Who are you?"

"The ex-bailiff does not remember me? I am Engelbert, the shepherd of Gerlachseck. I have been waiting for you."

"For me?"

"You'll surely take me into service now."

"Where do you come from?"

"From down there."

The vagrant made a motion toward the plain. "I had three years. If my master had been good to me, and had not prosecuted me----"

"So you are just out of the Penitentiary?"

The man nodded, and smiled in a confidential way.

"And why should I, in particular, take you?"

"Well, just because it is so. Of course, after this, your servants will have an easy time. You'll get a new set throughout, and you'd better have me to watch the rest."

The veins swelled on Landolin's forehead, but he concealed his annoyance, laughed aloud, and called out in a commanding tone:

"March! How dare you speak to me so? Off with you, or----"

"Oho! So you want to murder another man. You can't finish me as quickly as you did Vetturi."

He put on his hat and clenched his fists.

Without speaking another word, Landolin went on, while the vagrant called after him with threats and insult.

The evening bells began ringing. Landolin nodded, as if greeting the sound, or as though he felt they were calling him. He took a roundabout way, so as not to pass through the church-yard where Vetturi's grave was.

The church stood open. Landolin took off his hat, ordered the dog to lie down and wait for him, and was just putting his foot on the threshold, when Cushion-Kate came out. She gave him a look that made him blench; then she caught the heavy church-door, and dashed it to with such force that it fairly groaned. And louder yet

the terrible woman cried:

"For you the church is closed. Raise your hand! Here, at the church door, kill me! You are equal to anything. You are rejected by God, cast out by men. You----"

The dog had sprung up. His master quieted him, and the old woman went away.

Landolin opened the door and entered the church. All was silent within, save the pendulum's measured tick, far up in the tower. A bird had flown through the open window. It fluttered about, affrighted, until it found the opening again, and Landolin was alone in the vast edifice, where the ever-burning lamp alone shed its light. No prayer escaped his lips. Rather, in imagination he gathered in the whole congregation, men and women, one by one, to their places. In imagination he took hold of each one, looked him in the face, and shook him--but what good did that do? They still hated him. Cast out, as a dead body, by the stream! Cast out. All the empty benches repeated Cushion-Kate's words.

Hate of the God of whose compassion he had been taught in his childhood, grew within him. It is not true, and if it were, what good does it do for God to be pitiful, if he does not force men to be pitiful too?

A sudden terror seized him, as though the roof were falling, and he left the church and went home.

"Has no one been here?" he asked his wife when he reached home. She said, "No;" but he did not answer her question as to where he had been and with whom he had spoken. His wife's curiosity and idle questioning were disagreeable to him. She saw that he did not value her love and care, but she was patient. For she thought she was not wise and clever enough for him, and resolved to be very careful in everything she did or said. But in the goodness of her heart, the very next moment, she tried to talk to him and cheer him, and that annoyed him. For it showed that the past was still in her thoughts; and that he did not like. She took special pains with his supper, and said: "Eat heartily, now that you are at home again."

"It does no good to wish that," he replied, "if it doesn't taste good of itself."

He waited and waited for a kind word from Thoma, but her strict and cruel truthfulness forbade her to give him one. She was dissatisfied that her father, in his weariness, and the humility which he had gained by a violent effort, should be so indulgent with Peter. Day after day she saw him taking upon himself the sole control of affairs, and her father permitting it. Yes, he even worked like a servant, and seemed to take satisfaction in being tyrannized over by his son. Everything was transformed and changed.

CHAPTER XLIV.

The determined, steadfast Landolin had become a coward. He despised himself for it, but that did not mend matters. His lips were always tightly compressed, and their bitter expression became habitual. Often he would stop suddenly while walking along. He felt that he must draw his breath: he was almost smothered by the thoughts that lay so heavy upon him. Then he looked around beseechingly, and went on his way. How rich he had been before! He had had an outstanding capital of honor with every one; and now, when he wanted to draw upon it, it was no longer there. Strictly speaking, he had thought neither well nor ill of other people, he was indifferent to them; but now things had changed. His power of thought had lain fallow; and now upon this fallow land all manner of weeds, whose seeds had lain unsuspected in the ground, made their appearance. He had lived and had had an acute mind, especially when an advantage for himself was to be gained. But now, it seemed as though he were half asleep. Stop! What are men to you? What do you care for this one and that one? What does one gain in life, after all? Plowing, sowing, and reaping. The forest trees grow, long after the man who planted them has become a clod of earth. Is it for this that a man gives himself so much trouble and thought? Yes--gives thought. That is what is hard for a man who, until now, has not had it to do.

When the soul comes to a spot where harshness, and selfishness pass step by step before its eyes, then it is difficult for it to turn back and take another path. It seems as if irresistible forces drive it along the path of grief and bitterness, and yet all the while a longing to meet with friendship and responsive love grows stronger and warmer within it.

Landolin felt something of this emotion, although he probably could not have given it utterance. But in the soul there is much that is unutterable, even for a far more thoughtful and meditative nature than Landolin's.

The man who was formerly strong as iron, had become unnerved, and one could conceive of nothing which could happen to renew his strength. Perhaps Thoma's love could have accomplished it. Perhaps! Certainly, he said to himself. There were even times when he not only mourned that this love was denied him, but was yet more deeply grieved to see his child, his proud, beautiful child, bent with sorrow, and her life left waste and bleak. He had nurtured a pride and severity in her, which now threatened her destruction. In his distress he groaned aloud, and submitted to Peter's dominion as if to a penance; indeed, though Peter's boldness was so serious an offense, it often extorted his admiration.

"He will some day be the man to trample the whole world under foot, and laugh as he does it. He will be more powerful than Titus himself."

Landolin resolved to dissemble and play the hypocrite; to act as if he mistook people's malice for good will, and to retaliate secretly. But his pride was incompatible with success in hypocrisy. He was annoyed at his own lack of courage, he very candidly called it cowardice, but still that did not help him to regain the old fearlessness--the old pride. Yes, he had become over-sensitive.

His walk had now brought him to the forest, with its overhanging branches. In other times how little he had cared for the noxious insects of the woods. He had not grown up with gloved hands, but now he shuddered at the caterpillars that hung in the air by their slender threads, as though they were waiting to drop down upon him. These caterpillars can be shaken off, but the world's malicious thoughts, that like caterpillars hang everywhere by invisible threads, cannot.

Landolin was sitting on an old tree-stump, when the game-keeper approached, and addressed him in a friendly manner, expressing his sorrow that Landolin had had to undergo so much trouble. Landolin complained that in the short time, he had grown twenty years older, and suffered with a constant palpitation of the heart.

Suddenly he paused, for he became aware that he was begging for sympathy. And from whom? But the game-keeper responded,

"I know myself how a man feels the half hour that the jury are out, and he is waiting for the verdict of life or death."

"How do you know about it?"

"Have you forgotten my shooting the poacher? He had his piece leveled at me from behind a tree. Crack--crack. It is self-defense! There you lie," said the game-keeper, with a crafty smile.

Landolin went home fortified. "It was self-defense. The court has acknowledged that it was, and it was so. I must learn to keep that in mind. I must."

CHAPTER XLV.

The summer night was mild and clear. A Saturday evening in harvest-time has a peculiar quiet, a premonition of the full day of rest after the six days' unceasing work.

At all the farm-houses, far and wide, the people sat on the out-door benches and talked of the harvest; of how much was already stored away, and of how much was still standing in the fields. Then they talked of their neighbors far and near, and of course of Landolin also. They spoke pityingly of his misfortune, but with a certain quiet self-congratulation that they themselves were free and happy. It was almost like breathing, upon the mountain, air purified and freshened by a thunder-storm in the valley.

Soon with weary steps they sought their beds; for in the morning young and old were going to the celebration in the city.

Landolin and his wife were sitting on the bench before his house. Thoma sat at one side on an old tree-stump, where the men often mended their scythes.

These three had so much to say, and yet spoke so little!

"So to-morrow is the fifteenth of July," said Landolin. Thoma looked around, but turned quickly away, and again seemed buried in her own thoughts.

The dedication of the flag was to take place the following day. One might imagine that years had already passed since the day when Anton, with his two companions, came to ask Thoma to be maid of honor. Thoma was unselfish enough not to think first of the pleasure and distinction she would lose, but she sighed sadly when she thought how dreary and sorrowful the day would be for Anton.

"What do you think, Thoma," asked Landolin; "shall I go to the celebration, or not?"

"I have no opinion as to what you should do, or not do."

"Will you go with me?" said he, turning to his wife.

"I would like to, but I'm not well. I'm so chilly, I think I'll go right to bed."

Thoma wanted to go into the house too, but her mother refused, and insisted that she should remain with her father.

Her mother went in, and Thoma felt that she now ought to talk with her father; but she couldn't think of a word to say. Every pleasant word appeared to her to be a lie, and the bitterness of her fate lay in the fact that there was a lie to contend with. It distressed her to pass her father by, at home and in the field, in silence, or with only a cold greeting, and now to sit so speechless, and force him to think of their trouble; but she could not do otherwise.

Landolin said that her mother was more ill than she was willing to admit, and that it was evidently hard for her to keep up. Thoma tried to quiet his fears; but her words sounded as hard as stone, when he said, "But that is a matter where the doctor can help us."

"And I know something that no doctor can prescribe, which would make your mother strong and well again."

Landolin had to wait long before Thoma asked what it could be, and he explained that the joy which her wedding with Anton would give her mother was the remedy. Thoma said, in a hollow voice,

"That can never be, no more than"--she stopped suddenly.

"Well! No more than what?"

Thoma gave no answer, and Landolin knew that she would have said--"No more than Vetturi can live again."

A well-known voice suddenly broke in upon the silence which followed.

"Good evening to you both!"

Anton stood before them. Landolin arose and held out his hand. Thoma kept her seat, and wrapping both arms in her apron, said only "Good evening."

Landolin made room for Anton beside him, and told Thoma to come and sit on the bench too. But she replied, "I am quite comfortable where I am; besides, I must go in to mother. She is not at all well."

"You will stay here," said Landolin, in his old commanding voice. Then he explained to Anton that he would have liked to go to see his father, but--and it was hard for him to say this--he did not wish to be obtrusive; and so he waited for people to come to see him. He thanked Anton for his favorable testimony at the trial, and said, that he was glad that he had kept his conscience so clear.

"When I saw you standing there so resolutely, and heard you speak so firmly, I loved you twice as much as before," he added.

Anton understood what it meant for the proud and arrogant Landolin to speak in this manner.

Hesitatingly, at first, and then in well-considered words, Anton explained that he had come to beg father and daughter to go with him to the celebration; that would show the whole world at one stroke that everything was all right again, and everybody would congratulate them anew.

No word, no motion showed that Thoma had heard him. Anton continued in a tremulous tone:

"Thoma, dear Thoma! You sit there as though you were frozen, but I know that deep in your heart, love for me is still burning. Thoma, for this once throw away your pride."

"Pride?" said Thoma, in a low voice.

Anton did not hear her, for he went on: "Thoma, you turned me away. I too am proud, but not with you. I have come back again. Show yourself as good and loving as you really are. Give me one single word--one kind word."

Thoma arose.

"I thank you, Anton. I thank you a thousand times; but I cannot. Good night; I thank you."

"No! You shall stay here, and I will go," cried Landolin, as Thoma turned toward the house.

"Anton, for my part, I am----But settle matters alone between yourselves."

He hastened into the house. Anton and Thoma were alone.

"You need not speak, Thoma. Give me a kiss, and that will say everything."

"I cannot. Anton, 'tis hard for me to talk. I would far rather be dumb, and unable to speak. Anton, it's good and kind of you to come. But tell me,--you are honest--tell me, does your father feel toward my father as you do? Is it not true,--you can't say yes?--you are here against his will. Your father"----

"My father honors and loves you."

"I believe that. But, Anton, I can never be happy again, nor bring happiness to others. I beg of you strike our house from your mind. One blow will be enough to destroy it."

"Oh! Your house still stands firm. Thoma, you were right. On that day I did not know what I saw or what I heard; but now that is all past. Thoma, I know you. Your heart is honest, and I cannot blame you for it, though it gives you much sorrow. Thoma, you cannot appear to be happy before the world, because you are not happy. Say, do I not understand you?"

She nodded, suppressed sobs were heard, and Anton continued:

"Darling Thoma! I tell you, you can and must be happy; and that without telling a lie."

"I can't rejoice in stolen goods." Thoma forced herself to say.

"I understand. I know what you mean. But your honor and my honor are not stolen. I beg of you, be good, be kind. I beg the wicked Thoma to trouble my good Thoma no longer. You exaggerate----.

"Perhaps so. There--you may take my hand for the last time."

"I will not take it for the last time."

"Then I say good night; thank you a thousand times!"

Anton tried to throw his arm around her, but she tore herself away, and hastened into the house.

He waited awhile to see if she would not relent; but as all continued silent, a spirit of defiance awoke within him, and he went away without turning around, though he sometimes paused and listened to hear if any one were following or calling him. At length he disappeared in the forest.

CHAPTER XLVI.

There is still merriment in the world; song, music, and laughter. Joyous, singing, laughing people drive along the plateau in wagons decorated with flowers and green boughs. They are seen and heard from Landolin's house; he nods to them from the open window; he is in holiday attire and has decided to go to the celebration, and take part again in the world's gayety. Turning, he said to his wife, who sat in the room:

"Hanne, Thoma won't go; can't you go with me?"

"I would rather you'd let me stay at home."

Landolin would have liked to say, "If you are with me they will pay me more respect;" but he could not bring himself to say it. He had humbled himself before the humblest; but before his wife he could not--she had always been so submissive to him. He often looked toward Thoma and wondered if she would not tell him what had passed between her and Anton the day before; and if she would not go with him to the celebration; but she remained motionless and silent. He ordered the wagon to be hitched up immediately; but Peter said that the horses had worked so much in the harvest-field during the week that they would have to rest to-day: at most the bay mare might be saddled, but that wouldn't be wise. Landolin looked at Peter furiously, but he did not want to quarrel with him; for, as long as they did not disagree openly, it was not noticeable that the authority was no longer his. So he consented to ride, but soon changed his mind and said he would go on foot.

As the church bells began to ring, he started for the city. "Won't you go to church, too?" asked his wife timidly. He answered angrily:

"No! They have sung and prayed thus far without me. I guess they can keep it up awhile longer."

This he said; but he thought besides: "They must treat me kindly before they can pray with clear conscience."

"Won't you wait till afternoon? I have something nice for you," said his wife.

"You are always talking about eating--beginning about dinner already! I have money in my pocket, and shall get myself something in town."

His wife made no answer, but pressed her prayer-book to her bosom. There are no more good thoughts in the book than in her heart, but both are now dumb.

As the bells were ringing for the third time, Landolin went down the road toward the city. A rider was trotting along after him. He came nearer. Landolin lifted his hat and said:

"Good-morning, Baron Discher. I owe you an explanation."

"I did not know it."

"I refused you as a juryman, through my attorney. I know you are a just man."

"Thank you."

"I only refused you because it would be pleasanter for you not to have to sit on a jury in such hot weather."

The Baron laughed and held the knob of his riding-whip to his mouth; then he said, "Good-morning," gave his horse the spur, and rode on.

A presentiment of the reception he was exposing himself to came over Landolin. He wanted to turn back: there was no necessity for his presence at the festival; but he was ashamed for his family to see him so irresolute. Peter is, then, in the right in having taken the reins from his hand. He went toward the town with long strides. Gunshots echoed, multiplying themselves in the wood through which he was passing, for the dedication of the flag was just beginning in the church.

Landolin moderated his step; indeed he sat down on the side of the road; he had already missed the chief solemnity, and could take his ease. The coach came up from the railway station. The driver asked Landolin if he would ride. Landolin was tired, and it was a good opportunity for returning; but he refused as if something drove him to the city. He laughed at himself as he recollected that in his childhood the May-meadow had been a place of execution. What can happen to him? He is acquitted, free, and in all honor.

Now clear trumpet-notes sounded from the upper town. Landolin hastened his steps--not to miss the procession.

CHAPTER XLVII.

Up and down the valley, in all the villages of the district, there was busy life on this Sunday morning. The children on the street announced to one another that they too were going. Not a few were exceedingly proud, for soldiers' caps had been given them; and many a father was persuaded into promising his son that he would buy him one, too. The youth of the whole district seemed to have caught a martial enthusiasm. The men of the fire-companies, in glittering helmets, gray linen coats, and red belts, assembled before the court-house. They formed in line, the signals were sounded; and they marched out, accompanied by an escort of men, women, and children. They stopped at the forest to put green twigs in their caps. The children shouted, the old people walked thoughtfully along, and the maids and matrons, in their Sunday dress, whispered to one another.

As the little mountain-rivulets flow down to the river in the valley, so to-day, the stream of humanity rose, and flowed down the roads and foot-paths, to the May-meadow near the city.

But there were few of the old peasant-costumes to be seen among the men. Military service and the railroads do away with that, and efface the many distinguishable differences between village and city. But in still another manner a new ground of equality is established. This marching side by side, and especially the election of the officers of the soldiers' associations and fire companies, bring about an equalization or readjustment of the former classification. To be sure the captain of the organization was the district forester, but Anton Armbruster was unanimously chosen lieutenant; and the son of the district physician, who was a merchant, and a member of the association, had cast his vote for Anton.

Landolin reached the valley in good season. The May-meadow on which the procession was to disband, where tables were arranged, and a green platform put up for the speakers, was kept clear by the young pupils of the Gymnasium.

The women and young girls, with their white aprons and gay caps, sat in rows and groups in the outer meadow near the forest, and some daring boys had climbed the linden trees, which to-day sent out a strong fragrance.

"They are coming! They are coming!" was heard among the waiting crowd; and the music of the trumpets at the head of the column was drowned by the hurrahs which arose from the people on the hollow slope of the meadow, and in the trees.

Landolin stood on the edge of the crowd, near the students, and was surrounded by a group of people who seemed not to know him.

The procession drew nearer. The band struck up one of the national hymns, and all the people joined in singing.

"Who is carrying the flag? Why, that is not the miller's Anton--where is he? I don't see him. He isn't there at all."

These words Landolin heard from the people behind him, and a feeling of terror came over him. He had intended to walk by Anton's side, and show the whole world on what friendly terms he was with the man who was so highly honored. Now Landolin felt as though his protector had forsaken him. He strained his eyes to see if Anton was not there after all, but he was not to be seen.

"See the lieutenant there. That is the son of the district judge--it was good of him to get a furlough to come to the celebration. Yes; he has inherited his good disposition from his parents; his mother in particular."

Thus the people around Landolin were talking. Then he heard a person who had just come up say:

"Do you know why Anton Armbruster did not come? He is ashamed, though he hasn't done anything to be ashamed of; but Landolin, whose acquittal was such an atrocity, was to be his father-in-law. Aha! There stands Landolin himself! That man there with the broad back, that's he."

Landolin's broad back moved. The cordon of students was broken, and he found himself in the midst of the festivities.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

High up in the mountain forest, near the log-hut where the woodcutters lived from Monday morning till Saturday night, Anton sat this Sunday morning. About him lay axes, and wedges of iron or ash, as if resting themselves. For the men who used them had all gone down to the valley to spend the Sunday at home with their families, or perhaps at the celebration in the city. No sound was heard save the occasional twitter of the wren who was just brooding. All the other birds were mute, and the hawks circled in silence over the treetops. A drowsy odor of pitch from the felled trees and split wood rose from the ground on which the weary, tired young man had slept. A cannon thundered, and Anton awoke and felt at his side for his gun. He imagined for a moment that he was lying in the field before the enemy; but he smiled sadly as he reflected that the enemy he had to combat was no visible one, who could be mortally wounded. It was not a cannon which had awakened him, but a mortar from the city, where the flag was being dedicated. Anton drew a deep breath and his face lighted up as though he were being greeted by hundreds and hundreds of his old comrades, as though he held the many faithful hands that were stretched out toward him. But he soon looked sadly down before him. He had not only destroyed the celebration for himself, but had robbed his companions of a great part of their pleasure, by sending a messenger early in the morning to say he could not be with them. What did his companions' love profit him, when the love of the one for whom his heart beat was wanting? What did he care for a joy or an honor that Thoma did not share?

He stood up. There is yet time. He can yet hasten to join his comrades, and though late, he will be gladly welcomed. He rejected the thought, and gave himself up to painful questionings and fancies. Would he find happiness in anything again? He had humbled himself before Thoma, and she had scornfully spurned him. He had done what he could to set matters right again. Perhaps Thoma will be softened when she sees that for her sake he avoids the most enticing pleasures. She knows what he suffers, but what must she suffer!

Thoma was not in the solitude of the forest, she was solitary and forsaken in her father's house. She, too, heard the report of the mortar, and she asked herself if Anton was at the celebration, honored and happy. No, it cannot be. She mourned deeply that she had been forced to destroy and fill with sadness this day, and all the coming days of his life. She remembered in terror that she had yesterday said to Anton: "I cannot rejoice in stolen goods." Is it then so hopeless? Had not the words escaped unguardedly from the depth of sorrow? She almost envied her mother, who could sleep all day long. She must stay awake, and harbor such bitter thoughts in her soul.

What will happen to her father at the celebration? Will he, rebuffed on all sides, allow himself to be drawn into committing a new crime? With folded hands, staring fixedly before her, Thoma sat in her bed-room, till at last her heavy heart was lightened by a flood of tears.

CHAPTER XLIX.

Thoma was not curious to learn why Peter was talking with his mother so long, nor would it have given her pleasure had she known, for he whispered:

"Mother, hereafter you mustn't let father roam around the world this way, and I'll help you keep him at home. We've helped him through, and that's enough. He must be quiet now, and not keep people gaping at him."

The mother looked at Peter sadly, as though looking at a stranger. Peter understood the look to mean something quite different, and continued confidently:

"We've got the upper hand now, mother; but we won't make a noise about it. Before, you weren't accounted anybody; neither was I. 'Twas always the farmer and Thoma; we two were never spoken of. Now help me. You can do it smoothly as a wife can, and I'll be quiet about it too. Not a soul shall notice that I control the farm. But, on the other hand, you must see to it that he doesn't roam around any more. Of course he's told you that he lost a great deal of money in stocks. However, that's past and over with. We won't say a word of reproach to him about it, but I'll guarantee that he shan't squander any more."

"Is our whole house bewitched?" said the mother, speaking her thoughts aloud--"Is our house no longer a home? Where shall I go?"

"Mother, you mustn't talk so, nor look at it that way. I am here, and you shall see what I'll do. Good fortune has followed us for your sake. Wherever I've been, people say, 'Yes certainly, Landolin must be helped out of his trouble, for Johanna's sake.'"

"Not for my sake," exclaimed his mother. "Your father is innocent, and he proved himself so; nothing is due to me."

"Of course not, and everything is all right. And besides, now let me tell you something. That Tobias is an unfaithful rascal. I shall only keep him through harvest; then I'll send him away. He may claim that it was he who lied father out of the scrape, but that won't help him; on the contrary he must learn that we don't fear him. Father was acquitted at the trial, and no appeal can be taken from that. I asked the lawyer."

After an astonished silence his mother asked,

"What did you say? Your father is no longer master?"

"Yes, mother; don't you think I've managed it cleverly? Not even you have noticed it. He thought, too, that I ought to keep Tobias; but I know better."

The mother and son sat a long time together in silence; but at length she said, "Take the wagon and go to meet your father. I feel as though something would happen to him; I am so frightened."

"Very well, mother, I will do as you say. I'll go, but I don't know whether I can find him or not."

"Yes, go, for heaven's sake, and be a good boy. I will try and get a little sleep."

Peter went; but he soon turned down an alley to a tavern where they were rolling ten-pins. Here he enjoyed himself highly, winning a good sum of money from the woodcutters of the upper forest, and from some half-grown boys; for Peter was an adept at ten-pins.

CHAPTER L.

Landolin was suddenly in the midst of the crowded meadow, and the first person that he hit against was the one-handed man who had been his substitute in the army.

"Come here, I'll give you something," said Landolin, putting his hand into his pocket. The one-handed man hesitated to reach out his left hand, but at length he did it; for he couldn't bear to refuse a gift, although he was earning good wages, especially just now; for Anton had bought him some pictures of the heroes of our day, which he was hawking about, and he well understood the art of praising his wares. Titus watched Landolin as he gave the man something, and their eyes met, but neither greeted the other. Titus was of the opinion that Landolin should speak to him first in a very humble manner; and Landolin expected the man of unsullied honor to make the first advances.

Landolin saw Fidelis. The servant who had formerly been in his employ, passed by as though he didn't know him; perhaps he was annoyed that his master had been acquitted notwithstanding his damaging testimony. Landolin was inclined to speak to him and be friendly, but he heard Titus call him (for Fidelis was now in his service) and say: "Enjoy yourself as much as you can--your honor is without a stain--and I will pay for what you eat."

The maids of honor with wreaths on their heads went past, walking arm in arm. Their number had evidently been increased. They were the daughters of the district forester, of Titus, and of another farmer; but what would they all have been beside Thoma, had she been there?

The men shook hands and congratulated one another upon the pleasant day and the fine celebration. Landolin rubbed his cold hands--no one had touched his hand--was there blood sticking on it? Had he not been acquitted?

"What can be the matter with Anton Armbruster? What has kept him from coming?... The best part is wanting when he is away.... Thoma wouldn't let him come to the celebration.... No, their engagement is broken off.... I'll tell you; Anton is ashamed of Landolin, whose acquittal was such an atrocity. Look! There he goes now."

Such, and still more biting words Landolin heard from every group, as he went around like one risen from the dead, with whom no one would have anything to do. "I have not deserved this, not this----" said Landolin, angry and at the same time sad. His eyes burned as they sought a friendly glance. He not only felt that all the people at the celebration disliked him because of what he had done, and delighted to wound him by ignoring his presence, but he also saw plainly that they were particularly angry at him, because on his account Anton was absent. Here, at the very place where, on the day of the fair, he had vaingloriously boasted that he considered Anton of lower station than himself--here he was made to hear how universally the man whom he might have called son was beloved and honored.

Landolin turned to go. Why should he stay? But "Hush! Stand still!" was heard from all sides; for a trumpet sounded, and the district forester mounted the platform. He said that Anton Armbruster had been selected to welcome their friends and comrades.

Cries of "Hurrah for Anton!" arose here and there; but silence was commanded, and the forester, in simple words, welcomed the guests, and explained the significance of the celebration. He said he intended to be brief, for hungry stomachs do not like to be fed with words; and he concluded with a cheer for the Fatherland.

"To dinner! To dinner!" was now the cry. The tables were soon crowded, while the band played lively airs. Titus sat at a table with the other rich farmers. Landolin took a chair, and saying, "With your leave," sat down with them.

"So, Mr. Ex-bailiff, you here too?" Landolin heard himself addressed, and turning around, saw Engelbert, the shepherd of Gerlachseck, who had wanted to hire out to him. He now wore a large white apron, for the hostess of the Sword had engaged him as an assistant for the day. Landolin did not answer.

His companions at table ate and drank heartily, and talked loudly, but no one spoke a word to Landolin, until at length Titus said: "Well, how is it, Landolin? I hear you're going to sell your farm. If that's so, I'm a purchaser. I'll pay a good price. You can have a valuation put on it."

"Who said that I was going to sell?"

"Oh, it's generally reported that you're going to leave the neighborhood."

"If I knew who started that story, I'd pull his tongue out of his throat."

"I wouldn't do that," laughed Titus; "you certainly ought to know that that isn't a good plan."

"'Twas you," cried Landolin, "that started it--you!"

Titus gave no answer, but got up and walked away; the others soon followed him, and Landolin was left alone at the table.

Music filled the air. There was dancing; and during the intervals people laughed and sang, and made merry, while Landolin struggled with rage and sorrow. Are these people here all snow-white innocents? Are there not dozens of them who have much worse things on their conscience?

He wished that he had power to rush in and crush everything under foot.

At other times a sadness came over him, and he thought: "Were I only in prison, or, better still, not in the world at all."

But lest he should show his emotion, he leaned back, lighted his pipe, and smoked with a defiant look on his face. "They shall not succeed in making me eat humble pie."

At that moment merry laughter arose from the table where the people of rank were sitting. "What does that mean? Are the great folks rejoicing over my misfortune? No, that cannot be, for there sits the judge's wife, with her son, the lieutenant."

CHAPTER LI.

At this table, which was spread with a white linen cloth, and decorated with vases of flowers, the school-teacher was just saying:

"Yes, Madam Pfann, that is the hardest riddle hidden in the whole history of man. Why can nothing but a myth or a people's war move the souls of the masses? In a war the souls of nations see one another, if one may say so, face to face."

He paused in the midst of his dissertation; for the lieutenant said in a clear voice:

"The Frenchmen literally took us for cannibals. In a village near Orleans, I went to a house and called; there was no answer. Presently I saw a woman, sitting on top of the brick oven; I spoke to her pleasantly, but she remained dumb, until, at last, I asked where the children were. She looked at me in terror; and I said, laughing: 'Bring me one, and roast it well. I want to eat it.' Then the woman laughed too, and let the children out of the oven, where she had really hidden them."

It was at this they had laughed so loud, at the great folk's table. They were all pleased with the lieutenant, whose former wild boyishness had changed to dignified composure. The eyes of the judge's wife danced with a mother's pride; and if she was always thoughtful of comforting and helping others, to-day she would have been glad to have poured joy upon every one. But to-day no one needed her, for there was joy and happiness everywhere. Just then she saw Landolin, and said:

"There sits the farmer of Reutershöfen all alone."

"It is well," said the district forester, "that the people are still strong-hearted and straight-forward enough to cast out a man who was unjustly acquitted."

"Wolfgang, come with me," said the judge's wife, rising; and taking her son's arm, she went to Landolin's table. She said to her son that she would remain there, and that he might join his comrades; and giving her hand to Landolin, she sat down beside him, asked after his wife and daughter--people never asked after Peter--and promised to visit them soon. She also intimated that she hoped to be able to straighten out the difficulty with Anton. Landolin told her, composedly, that Anton had visited them the evening before, but that Thoma had refused him, and that was probably the cause of his staying away from the celebration.

"Had I known that, I should not have come either," he concluded; and the lady discovered what suffering he must that day have undergone; and with the most sympathetic expression of voice and countenance, she said:

"Ex-bailiff, I have some good advice for you."

"Good advice? that is always useful."

"I think you ought to go away with Thoma for a few weeks. Go to a bathing place. It will do you good."

"I'm not sick. There is nothing the matter with me. I didn't know that our judge's wife was a doctor, too."

"You understand what I mean."

"I'm sorry I'm so stupid, but I don't understand you."

"Then I must speak plainly. Do you think that I desire your welfare?"

"Yes, certainly; why not?"

"You ought to go away a few weeks, and when you come back matters will be in a better condition. Other things will have happened in the meantime, and----You may believe me it would be well."

Landolin shook his head, and said after a long silence: "I know you mean thoroughly well; of course you do; but I shall not stir from this spot. I'll stay, if only to fool the rest of them. Already the honorable Titus--the hypocrite!--has been trying to spread the rumor that I am going to sell my farm. I'll stay here and cry fie upon the whole country. We have owned our farm for hundreds and hundreds of years. You can ask Walderjörgli; he will testify."

"I believe your word alone," said the judge's wife; Landolin nodded well pleased, for it did him good to be so readily believed, and he continued, in a clear voice:

"Yes, madame, we farmers are not so easily displaced as the----people of rank. We at Reutershöfen are a strong stock; people may dig as much as they choose at the roots; they will not bring it down."

All his pride arose; his sunken face became full; his form seemed to grow larger. The judge's wife did not know what more to say; and she would have been heard no longer, for a thousand voices cried:

"Walderjörgli! The Master of Justice! Walderjörgli!"

The cry spread, the girls and children on the further meadow took it up; crying, "Walderjörgli!"

A man appeared, who stood head and shoulders above all who surrounded him. His head was covered with soft, snow-white hair; his snow-white beard fell far down to his breast, and his face, with its heavy contracted brows and its large nose, looked as if chiseled with an axe.

"Hutadi! Hutadi!" screamed Landolin, springing up as if in a frenzy, and dashing into the crowd. "Hutadi!" he screamed, stretching out his arms, and clenching his fist in Titus' face.

CHAPTER LII.

"Be quiet, Landolin! The time for that has gone by," said Walderjörgli in a commanding tone; and laid his broad hand between the combatants. They stood still; but their chests heaved, and they looked down at the ground like chidden boys.

The ancient cry of defiance, "Hutadi!"--no one knows exactly what it means; probably 'Beware' or 'Take care of yourself'--was formerly regarded as a challenge which no one could refuse. When it rang out, whether from forest or from meadow, whoever heard it must give battle to him who called.

In his youth, Walderjörgli had been considered the readiest and most powerful of combatants; but in his riper years he had become one of the most even-tempered and circumspect of men, so that he was elected Master of Justice for the forest republic in the mountain; which, as an independent peasant state, acknowledged no lord but the emperor.

Jörgli settled lawsuits, decreed punishments, and in conjunction with the council, apportioned the taxes; and all without appeal.

Jörgli was the only survivor of that last embassy which the forest peasants sent to the emperor at Vienna, to protest against being made subject to any prince. They desired to remain a free peasantry of the empire. Jörgli insisted that he was ninety-three years of age, but it was universally believed that he was already over a hundred; for the church registers had been burned with the church and parsonage in Napoleon's time.

The thought flashed through Landolin's mind that Walderjörgli could, with one stroke, reinstate him in all his old honor; so he said:

"From you, Master of Justice, I am glad to receive commands. All reverence is due you; and besides, you were my grandfather's dearest friend."

He laid his hand on his heart, and hoped that Walderjörgli would grasp it; but the old man looked sternly at him from under his bushy, snow-white brows, and said:

"How is your wife?"

Landolin could scarcely answer. What did this mean? His health was not asked after! Had his wife then suddenly acquired any peculiar distinction? Did the old man ask after her only to avoid asking after Landolin's own health?

He stammered out an answer; and the old man sent a greeting by him to his wife, who was "a good, honest housewife." Landolin smiled. If nothing is given him, still it's well that one of his family gets something, for then he too has a share in it.

Landolin informed the bystanders that Walderjörgli's family and his own were the oldest in the country, for theirs had been the only two farmer families that had survived the war with Sweden. While he was talking, he noticed that nobody listened to him; but he went on, and finished what he was saying with his eyes fixed on the ground.

The judge's wife had approached, and Titus gained an advantage by introducing her, and saying:

"This is the benefactress of the whole neighborhood."

Jörgli took the lady's delicate hand in his large one, and said:

"I've heard of you before. You are a noble woman; it is well. In old times women were not of so much account as they are now. But it is quite right now. And is that your son? Did you not once come to see me when you were a student? You have behaved yourself nobly."

He clapped the lieutenant on the shoulder, and every one was astonished that Walderjörgli still talked so well, and knew everything that was going on. It was considered a great honor to be spoken to by him.

Titus said very cleverly what an honor it was that Walderjörgli had come to the celebration, and begged that he would ascend the platform and speak a few pithy words to the assembly. The judge's wife added that it would be a precious memory to old and young, to children and children's children, if they could say that they had heard the last Master of Justice speak.

Walderjörgli looked at Titus and the judge's wife with a penetrating, almost contemptuous glance; for he was not vain, nor did he wish to be considered wise, and play the part of a prophet; so he shook his great head, and stuck his thumbs into the arm-holes of his long red vest, but straightened himself to his full height, and his eyes sparkled, when the district forester, who knew exactly how to deal with Jörgli, added that it would be well if the clergy were not allowed to entirely monopolize everything, even the soldier's associations, and to dedicate the flag; it would be particularly appropriate that a man like Jörgli should drive the nail that fastened the flag to the staff: the Emperor Joseph would certainly have approved of that.

When the Emperor Joseph was mentioned it seemed as if a new life were awakened in Jörgli. Around Emperor Joseph, who was venerated like a holy martyr, were gathered recollections of Jörgli's father, which he almost considered events in his own life.

He clenched his hands, and raising his arms, said, "Very well; so let it be."

He was led to the platform, and boundless were the acclamations of joy when he appeared, supported on the right hand by Titus, and on the left by the lieutenant.

There fell such a silence that the people noticed the whirring of the wings of a pair of doves which flew over the speaker's stand. Pointing to them, Jörgli cried:

"There they fly! One says not to the other, 'We will turn this way or that.' Their flight agrees by nature. So it is. Agreeing by nature--"

He paused, and seemed unable to proceed. The figure had evidently led him off from what he meant to say. He looked around perplexed, and seemed not to be able to speak another word--yes, even to have forgotten that he stood upon the platform.

His two companions above, and the audience below, stood in painful embarrassment. It was wrong to have brought an old man of a hundred on the stand.

Just then the district forester, who stood near, said audibly, "Emperor Joseph."

Jörgli opened his mouth wide and nodded. Yes, now he had his guiding-star again. Almost inaudibly, and in a very confused manner, he spoke of the Emperor Joseph and of the new emperor. Only this much was plain--that he considered the present emperor as the direct successor and continuer of the Emperor Joseph's struggles against the Pope.

Titus handed Jörgli a nail, and the lieutenant gave him a hammer. He nailed the flag to the flag-staff, and this widely visible act was more than the best speech; and he left the stand amid cheers and the sounds of trumpets.

He immediately called for his wagon. He wished to go home, and no one dared urge him to remain.

The four-horse wagon drove up the meadow. Landolin pushed his way up to it, and said, "Jörgli, I will go home with you. Take me along."

"Give my greetings to your wife," said Jörgli, turning away from him. He let himself be helped into the wagon, and then drove away. The wheels were hardly heard on the meadow, and the people on both sides saluted reverently, as they made way for him.

"How glad I should have been, if I could have sat in the wagon beside him!" thought Landolin.

No one ever prayed--no one ever offered to an angel,--to a saint,--more childlike petitions than these--"Take me with you; deliver me from this misery,"--which had just passed Landolin's lips. But in these days the best are no longer good, and have no pity.

When Jörgli had gone the merriment began anew. They invited one another to drink, and new groups were soon formed. Only Landolin was not invited. He stood alone. Stop! Landolin struck his hand on his pocket, and the money jingled. With that a man can call a comrade who will talk with him better than any one else, and make him forget his cares.

He turned away from the meadow, and went to the city side of the Sword Inn. There were no guests there to-day. An old servant brought him wine. He drank alone, and had his glass refilled again and again.

As he still wanted every one to consider him of great importance, he explained to the old waitress that he was going to a bathing place for his health pretty soon. There they wouldn't let a man drink anything but mineral water, and so he was going to take plenty of wine before he went.

The old waitress said that was wise, and then returned to the illustrated paper which she had brought down from the Casino.

It was quiet in the cool room. Only a canary bird in his cage twittered awhile, and then began whistling half of the song "Who never on a spree did go."

Landolin frequently looked up at the bird and smiled; until, remembering Walderjörgli, he murmured, "Give my greeting to your wife."

CHAPTER LIII.

The mother slept in her chamber. Thoma sat at the table in the living-room before a large, handsomely-bound book, filled with beautiful pictures. It was an illustrated history of the last war, which Anton had given her. Many book-marks lay between the leaves, at the places where the battles in which Anton had taken part were described. There were many soldiers in the pictures, but Anton's face was not distinguishable. She had heard that he was not at the celebration to-day. It was on her account. What could she do for him? There seemed to be nothing that she could do. Thoma had intended to read, but she could not bring herself to it; and to-day it horrified her to see in the pictures the men murdering each other, and shell tearing them to pieces.

For a long time she stared before her into the empty air. She was weary after the harvest work. Her head sank forward on the open book, and she fell asleep.

A cry awoke her; for her mother was calling,

"Landolin! For God's sake! don't do it! Stop!"

Thoma hastened to her mother, who looked at her wildly, as though she scarcely knew who and where she was.

"Is it you?" she asked at length. "Where is your father?"

"At the celebration."

"He must come home. Has not Peter found him yet? Where is he staying so long? Oh, Thoma! The eye-glass on the little black ribbon! He kneeled down on Titus, and tried to choke him! The farmer must come home, home!" she cried, weeping. She was in a fever. Thoma succeeded in quieting and undressing her. With chattering teeth she begged that a messenger should be sent for her husband, and Thoma obeyed her request.

Boys and girls rode past the house in the decorated wagons, singing,--the people on foot talked and laughed,--while in the house the farmer's wife lay in a fever. But at last, with burning cheeks, she fell asleep.

Thoma had ordered the messenger she sent for her father to go for the physician at the same time. The messenger found the doctor, but not the farmer.

It was late at night when Landolin crossed the bridge on his way home. He hit against the railing, and cried, "Oho!" as though it were some one blocking his way.

"Are you drunk?" he said, laying his finger on his nose; then laughed and went on.

The meadow was empty; not a soul was there. Landolin crossed it with a steady step, and ascending the speaker's stand--

"All you people there together, may the devil catch you all! Hutadi! Hutadi!" he cried, in a terribly strong voice. He seemed to expect that some one would come and fight with him; but no one came; so he descended from the stand, and went up the mountain road.

A sober Landolin struggled with a tipsy one.

"Fie! shame on you, Landolin!" he said to himself, "what a fellow you are--Fie upon you! A man like you drunk on the open road, before everybody--Let me alone, Titus! I don't want anything to do with you--I'm not drunk. And if I am--no--. The cursed wine at the Sword--at that time--Go away--away!--If you don't go,

Vetturi, you shall--There, there you lie--"

He bent over to pick up a stone, and fell down.

Getting up again, he said to himself, as he would to an unruly horse: "Keep quiet, quiet! So, so!" And then he cried angrily: "If I only had a horse! At home there are twelve, fourteen horses and one colt--Who's coming behind me? Who is it? If you have any courage, come on! 'Tisn't fair to hit from behind. Come in front of me! Come, and I'll fight with you!"

From the steep hillside a stone rolled into the road, loosened by who knows what animal's flying foot? Landolin clenched both hands in his hair, that rose on end with fright, and cried:

"Are you throwing stones? That's it, self-defense! self-defense! Just wait!"

He stopped and said, "Don't drive yourself crazy, or they'll put you in an asylum."

A railroad train rushed through the valley. The locomotive's red lights appeared like the flaming eyes of a snorting monster. Landolin stared at it, and in doing so he became calmer, for ghosts cannot haunt a locomotive's track. The sweat of fear ran down his face, and with loudly beating heart he hastened up the road. At length he breathed more freely; he took off his hat; a refreshing breeze blew over the plateau: he saw his house, and said:

"The light is still burning; they are waiting for me; supper is on the table. Control yourself; you are Landolin of Reutershöfen. You have a wife called Johanna, a daughter called Thoma, and a son called Peter. I care nothing for the hammering in my temples. I am not drunk--tipsy: three times three are nine--and one more is ten. You lie when you say I am drunk. I can walk straight. So, there is the well. Oh well, you are happy; you can stay at home, and yet be full all the time. Ha! ha! Hush! don't try to make jokes. Hush!"

Again he stood at the well, and cooled his hands and face, then went into the yard, and without stopping to speak to the dog, passed up the steps and into the living-room, where he found the doctor sitting at the table, writing.

"What is it? There's nothing the matter?"

"Your wife is sick."

"It is not serious?"

"I don't know yet. At any rate you must keep quiet. You may go in; but don't talk much, and come right away again."

The walls, the tables, the chairs, seemed to reel; but his step was firm as he went to his wife's side and said:

"Walderjörgli sent his greeting to you; he charged me with it twice."

He had sufficient self-control to say all this with a steady voice, and his wife replied:

"I know it already; the doctor told me that Walderjörgli was there. Where he is, everything goes right. Thank him. Good-night."

Landolin threw himself into the great chair out in the living-room, and cried:

"Oh, what misery it is to come home and find your wife sick, and no joy, no welcome, nothing!"

He looked at Thoma, who, without moving or making a sound, stood leaning against the bedroom door.

To what a pass has it come when, in the midst of such misery, the father thinks of himself alone!

Landolin arose wearily and whispered to Thoma:

"You've noticed that I'm tipsy? Yes, I am; and if you do not treat me affectionately, as you used to, I will be so every day,--then you'll see what will come of it!"

"I cannot keep you from doing what you choose, either to yourself or to us."

"Bring me something to drink. I'm very thirsty," ordered Landolin. Thoma went, and returned with a bottle.

"That is nothing but water! But never mind; you're right. You're sharp."

For the first time in many days, father and daughter laughed together, but their laughter soon died away.

CHAPTER LIV.

"The farmer works like a hired man," said the servants and day-laborers on Landolin's farm.

It was true that Landolin was the first up in the morning, and the last abed at night; and that he took hold of the work in the field he had never done before. His appetite was good, and he slept all night without tossing about. He never left the farm, neither week-days nor Sunday; and he did what cost him a great effort: he said in the presence of the servants that Peter should now have the control of everything; for in the few years he had left, he wanted to see with his own eyes how Peter would carry things on after they should be closed forever.

His speech was milder, and his manner less haughty.

He seemed grateful that a heavy storm had passed over his house without breaking; for his wife was out of danger. To be sure, she was yet ailing, and had to keep her room; but she seemed to revive when she saw that her husband had discovered the best mode of living; that is--to be independent of the world's opinion, and to keep his own life straight. She did not know that he had discovered what a treasure he had in his wife, and he did not tell her; for he could not express himself on the subject.

There were but two persons in the house whom he shunned. One of them noticed it, and the other did not. Landolin avoided being in the same field, or at the same work anywhere, with Thoma; for he felt as though he were under a ban whenever she looked at him: and even when he was not looking at her, he thought he could feel her eyes following every motion he made. He could not imagine what more she wanted of him, since she had forbidden his making any effort to arrange matters with Anton. Since his coming home, and especially since the celebration, Landolin was in the habit of shutting his eyes when he thought he was unnoticed; and even when looking at anyone they winked incessantly, as though they were tired and only kept open by force. A glance that Thoma gave him made him conscious of this habit for the first time, and also apprised him that she knew its cause.

The other person whom Landolin avoided was Tobias; for Peter persisted in saying that Tobias must be sent away. And although Landolin was by no means soft-hearted, especially toward servants, whom, at the best, he considered rascals; yet the thought of this dismissal was painful to him. He could not forget how much Tobias had helped him to his acquittal.

Outside of the house there were two persons whom they would all have been glad to forget entirely. One was Anton. They heard nothing from him directly; for he had gone, with a large raft, down the Rhine to Holland. But all the people who came to the house--and gradually many began coming--expressed their regret that Anton was not to be his son-in-law; and their inquiries as to the cause were unceasing.

Whoever could have observed her closely must have seen that Thoma's eyebrows had sunk a degree lower since Anton went away. He had once told her that his father had often urged him to go to Rotterdam with a raft some time, and get acquainted with the daughters of his business friends there, and look around for a wife. There was already a Dutch woman in the neighborhood--a comfortable, clear-complexioned, good woman, also married to a miller; and Thoma fancied that Anton could be happy with such an honest, careful wife.

The second person whom they would have liked to forget was Cushion-Kate. She lived quietly, and scarcely spoke with any one; but every night she might have been seen with her lantern, at her son's grave. Whenever she met one of Landolin's family, she stopped and stared at them. She never returned their greeting, and always went out of her way to avoid Landolin himself.

Landolin's wife and Thoma had both taken great pains, personally and through friends, to help Cushion-Kate, but she refused everything.

"I will not be bought off by the murderer Landolin," was her invariable answer. She gathered grain in every field except Landolin's. Once, when crossing the bridge, on her way to the mill with her gleanings, she met him on horseback. She sprang before the horse, and cried: "Get off and drown yourself, you murderer! Ride on! Drive on! Whether you ride or drive, you carry your hell around with you! Get off and drown yourself!"

"Are you done? Then step out of my way," said Landolin, calmly. But as the old woman still clung to the horse's bridle, he cried angrily:

"Let go, or I'll let you feel my whip or set Racker at you!"

The dog understood his master's words. He set his paws on the woman's shoulders, and snapped at her red kerchief. She stepped back. Landolin made Racker drop the kerchief, and then rode on without a look at the old woman, who picked up her sack of wheat again. At home he did not mention the occurrence.

CHAPTER LV.

It is unfortunate, as every one knows, when two horses hitched to the same wagon fail to pull evenly together. But no one can suppose that it is from malicious intention, and either horse might complain that it was all the fault of the other, and that it was only from a surly delight in obstinacy that he didn't put himself to the harness, and so pull the wagon along. But with two persons it is quite different; especially with those who have before pulled so well together as Peter and Tobias. The latter had of course noticed Peter's imperiousness and malignity; but he did not understand it, nor ask the reason for it, for he really gave the matter very little thought. This was no time for bickering and contentions as to which should outrank the other. Tobias thought to himself, "Only wait till after the harvest; then we'll have threshing-time." Peter likewise thought, "Only wait till the harvest is over; then I'll draw my hand over the measure and level it off." Tobias smilingly allowed Peter to give orders; he even scarcely looked up when Peter countermanded those which he had himself given to the servants and day-laborers. It is harvest-time; stormy weather would be injurious now, but a storm between people working together would be still worse.

Tobias gave the servants to understand that he was glad to let the little boy Peter sit in the saddle and manage the whip; for, thanks to his care, the wagon would move on safely.

Matters continued in this way during the whole harvest-time. Peter and Tobias stood opposite one another like two men that, with axes raised, ready to strike each other, wait a moment to draw their breath. When will the blow fall?

Landolin pretended to see or hear nothing that was taking place between the head-servant and his son. He had not had a confidential talk with Tobias since the evening after the trial. But Tobias was not concerned about it. A man does not say to the forest behind his house, "It's right for you to stay there and keep on growing;" and it was just as easy to imagine the mountains moving away with the forest as to think of Tobias leaving the farm, especially since he had helped, so cleverly and well, to have his master acquitted.

But Tobias often looked at his master to see if he would not say a word of reproof to Peter for his overbearing manner.

When Landolin could no longer avoid doing so, he said, shaking his finger and winking confidentially: "Let him alone. A horse that pulls so hard at first will soon let up."

But Peter did not let up. The principal part of the harvest was over. They were about to take the grain that had been threshed out on rainy days to market. This had been for many years Tobias's undisputed right, but Peter now declared that he would do it alone.

"It's not necessary for me to answer you," replied Tobias. "You are not the master. The farmer and I will show you who is master."

He called Landolin, and made his complaint to him. Landolin took a grain of wheat out of a sack that had just been filled; bit it in two; looked at the white meal, and nodded without giving a reply. But Tobias pressed him for an answer, and demanded to know whether he was in the farmer's service or in Peter's.

"Peter and I are now one and the same," said Landolin, at length, swallowing the grain of wheat, the first that had ripened since spring. He decided that it would be wisest to side with his son. Tobias could do him no more harm, and one need not be better than all the rest of the world; ingratitude is the world's wages. But still he did not want to appear ungrateful; so he said, when he had swallowed the wheat, "Be wise, Tobias."

"Wise? Who is master--you or Peter?"

"Peter," Landolin forced himself to say; and then turned away. It may be that Tobias is treated unjustly; it may be. But Landolin must look out for himself first. He thought he had burden enough of his own, without bearing other people's.

He went up the steps and stood on the porch.

Peter was triumphant.

"Did you hear that? Now listen to something more. You may go to-day, or to-morrow, or at this minute; the sooner you go, the better."

Tobias looked toward the stables, toward the barns, and toward the mountains to see if they were not shaking. "So I'm sent away--dismissed? I--by you?"

"Yes, yes, by the little boy you so willingly let play at being master, just for fun. I've calculated what is still coming to you."

"What is coming to me? And what price have you set on what I have done for you? For you, you acquitted man up there!--and for you, you----"

"If you want a witness fee, I'll give you four marks more," said Peter, with a sneer. "We're not afraid of you. Go and say that you gave false testimony, and see what you'll get by that. Father! don't speak--not a word; he has to deal with me."

"Well, it serves me right: I might have known it would be so. The stones that lay here then are now firmly bedded in the pavement; but, Peter, mark my words: Stones will fly through the air at you, till you are dead and buried. I am an innocent child in comparison with you. You will suffer for this."

"Prophecy, if you like. You know from experience what a good prophet you are. You understand what I mean."

Tobias groaned like a goaded bull; he pulled at his clothes; he evidently wanted to rush upon Peter: but Peter stood still and lit a fresh pipe. Tobias clenched his hands upon his breast, and, without another word, went to his room.

CHAPTER LVI.

The wind whistled over the stubble, and when they awoke in the morning, the first snow lay high upon the crest of the mountain. The powerful autumn sun soon melted it, and laughing rills ran down through all the little channels to the river in the valley.

It was St. Ægidius Sunday, shortly before church time, when Tobias went to the farmer's wife, who was sitting in the living-room, and said:

"Mistress, I've come to say good-bye to you, and thank you for all your kindness through these many years. You know I've been dismissed." The farmer's wife nodded. "By Peter," continued Tobias, "by Peter, not by the farmer; that I see plainly enough, though he did give his consent. But he isn't of any account any more. For your sake, Mistress, I wish the house no evil as long as you live. I've deserved to have this happen to me; it serves me quite right. Why did I lie, and say before the court that Vetturi threw a stone at the Master? Why, the shaky fellow couldn't have lifted one of those paving-stones. It serves me right; and Peter is smart. He carries things with a high hand. He knows that I can't say this to anybody but you, and you knew it before. Wherever else I'd say it, they'd laugh at me, and despise me into the bargain. Now good-bye, and I hope you'll see many happy years yet."

A cold shudder crept over the farmer's wife. Her hands trembled and her head moved from one side of the great chair to the other. But at length she controlled herself and said:

"I beg you, for my sake, don't say this to any one else. Give me your hand on it."

Tobias hesitated, but he could not withstand her imploring look. So he grasped her cold hand.

"Where are you going when you leave here?" asked she.

"You are the first that's asked me that. What do the others care for a dismissed servant, even though he has served them so many years? I'm going to my brother, the teamster's."

"Take him my greeting. And you shall soon come back again--I'll fix that."

"No, I think not. I'll not come back again. I've laid by something, and perhaps I can get another place. I won't go to Titus, but perhaps Anton will take me when he comes home. So again farewell."

"Farewell, and keep up a brave heart."

The farmer's wife looked through the window as Tobias, with his brother's help, lifted his great chest into the wagon. It looked almost like a coffin. She stepped back from the window, and called a maid to help her to her bed.

Landolin and Thoma were frightened when they were summoned to her bedside. She lay with her back to them, and without turning around she said, "Don't be frightened; I'll soon be all right again." Landolin knew in a moment that Tobias had been doing mischief here, so he said:

"I shouldn't have let the rascally fellow come up to see you alone. Before my eyes he wouldn't have dared to pour his stupid spite into your--into your good heart."

Such an affectionate word caused his wife to turn over and grasp her husband's hand. Holding her hand in one of his, and stroking it gently with the other, Landolin continued:

"Yes, one only finds an unfaithful man out when it's too late. When a servant is discharged, his hidden meanness shows itself. Tobias has the impudence to say that he invented a lie for my sake. It's infamous how malicious the greatest simpleton can yet be. But, thank God, what he says won't make any difference with you."

His wife looked at him with glistening eyes; and casting a sidelong glance at Thoma, Landolin continued:

"I must beg Peter's pardon; I didn't know him. He's smart; smarter than--than I knew. We send Tobias away, and that is the best proof that we, thank God, have nothing to hide. But I've talked enough. Not another angry word shall escape my lips. You know I'm going to confession to-day?"

The farmer's wife lay perfectly quiet. She felt chilly, but she begged the family to go to church; for the bells were just ringing.

Landolin went, and not without great self-satisfaction. To be sure, it was not a difficult matter to deceive his confiding wife; but Thoma had received a hit at the same time. She deserved it for her obstinate hard-heartedness; for of course she must know in what direction the praise of Peter led.

Thoma stayed with her mother, who prayed quietly.

CHAPTER LVII.

Up the same road over which Landolin had passed the night after the celebration, now came, on this clear autumn Sunday, the judge's wife. A scoffer, who knew her thoughts, might have said to her: Not the intoxication of wine alone makes a man talk to himself, and changes his view of everything; and, worse still, the recovery from an over-indulgence in exciting thought is, perhaps, even bitterer.

This might have been said, and still the lady would not have stopped in her walk. Obeying a voice from within and not from without, she felt that she ought no longer delay in an effort to establish peace and quietness in Landolin's house, and peace between them and Cushion-Kate. She knew right well, for she had often enough experienced it, that a man sets little value on unsolicited help; yes, even frequently refuses it. But she also knew that her advice, even when repulsed, had had effect, and worked for good; and, above all things, she felt herself within the circle of the duties that spring from the union of man to man. As in war the wounded is no enemy, so in peace the sufferer is no stranger.

So the lady went up the hill. The church bells were ringing for the noon-day service; but in her ears rang the sound of a bell whose metal was not yet molten, and for which, who knows when a tower will be built!

The lady's thoughts by no means hovered in the so-called "higher regions"--quite the reverse. She thought of the nearest and most every-day subjects.

As she stood by the road, she saw a four-horse spring-wagon coming down the hill on a trot. A cow, grazing by the wayside, sprang, frightened, into the middle of the road, and ran along before the wagon, terrified, and with difficulty; at last the coachman rose in his seat, and hit her with his long whip, so that she turned aside, stood awhile, staring after the dust-enveloped monster with the four horses, and then went on grazing.

Smilingly the lady thought that this might be given as an example to the villagers. Turn aside, and you will be free from fear of what comes rolling behind you, threatening destruction.

But one must not give country-folk an illustration from their own immediate surroundings. Clergymen understand this; or perhaps hold by tradition that only strange, powerful figures have any effect. This is why they so like to speak of the storm-tossed ship on the sea, of the palmy oases in the desert; when neither they, nor their hearers, have ever seen either.

Engaged in these thoughts, Madam Pfann had reached the plateau, and came in sight of Landolin's house. The shingled roof glittered in the mid-day sun, and the tree on the east side was standing full of nuts.

Although Landolin, who was sitting on the bench before the house, saw the lady coming, he did not move, but kept on cracking nuts in his hand, and shelling out the kernels. Not until she had drawn very near did he rise and say:

"Good-day, Madam. Will you not rest here a little while?"

"Yes; I was just coming to see you."

"May I ask what news you bring me?"

"Properly speaking, none. Or perhaps--I hope----

"Well! what is it?"

"I would like to talk with you in the house; not here."

"My wife, I'm sorry to say, is sick. It's nothing serious, but she might wake up."

"Then take me to the upper room."

"If you wish, why not? But are you not afraid to be alone with a murderer?"

"You must not say that word again; and no one else must. I hope to root out even the thought of it from every mind."

"You'll have to use witchcraft," thought Landolin; but nevertheless he wondered what the lady had to say.

When the two rose, Peter came from behind the nut-tree. It was strange, one met Peter everywhere. It seemed as though he had come out of the wall, or through the steps. Without paying any attention to the fact that his sudden appearance must be surprising, Peter said, very submissively:

"Madam does us great honor in coming to see us. Great folks know what is the proper thing to do. They are the best, after all."

Landolin opened his eyes wide at hearing Peter talk thus. "Where has the boy learned it all?" The lady, too, looked at him in astonishment; but Peter went on composedly:

"Madam, my father keeps no secrets from me. May I not know what news you bring us?"

With these words Peter fixed his eyes sternly upon his father, that he might not be able to give the lady the slightest sign, even with his eye. But the judge's wife helped him out, for she replied:

"What I wish or bring is for your father alone; but I am heartily glad that you and your father are in such unison. A child that is not good to his parents never prospers in this world."

Peter chuckled. It is delicious how every one dissembles. Of course the lady knows how he and his father stand toward one another, and yet she plays the hypocrite. He laughed again and again until his father said to him:

"Send something for the lady to eat and drink to the upper room; but don't wake your mother."

As Landolin and Madam Pfann went up the stairs, Landolin stepped as lightly as the lady.

In the upper room, where Thoma's outfit was stored, the air was close. The judge's wife quickly opened the window, and then turned to Landolin, and looked at him with the clear, friendly glance before which harshness and obduracy seemed always to disappear. Wherever she came, she diffused peace and calmness and noble graciousness.

A maid-servant brought food and drink.

Landolin went to the doors to see that no one was listening, and then said, with a modest politeness that was quite new for him:

"Pray be seated on the sofa; and permit me now to ask what you have to tell me?"

CHAPTER LVIII.

"Mr. Ex-Bailiff," began the lady.

"Please say simply Landolin, without the Mr. or ex-bailiff."

"Well then, Landolin, a while ago you said a word which I will not repeat. You said it in derision, in anger and vexation. Landolin, you are acquitted, but I wish that you would acquit yourself, and that you can do to-day, to me, by my help."

"Madam, I went to confession to-day, to the priest, at church."

"Very well. I don't mix myself in church affairs; but I see in your eyes, I see in your heart, that you have a feeling like one who strives to hide a secret sorrow, and thinks that it is not seen. You do not feel yourself free, and clear, and at ease."

The veins in Landolin's forehead swelled in anger, but the lady looked steadily into his face as though he were a wild animal that could be tamed by a firm, unwavering look. His eyelids rose and fell quickly, his tightly compressed lips quivered, and his hand that lay on the table clenched nervously.

"I know what you want to say," said the lady, quickly; "you have a right to do so: only say right out that I must leave your house; that I had no right to force myself into your home, or into your heart. Only say it, and I will go."

"No, stay. You are a brave woman, I must say. I should not have thought it possible, never,--a woman! Speak without fear. From such a woman as you I will hear anything. I think there can be but one such as you in the world."

The lady blushed, and for hardly longer than a thought takes the flattery disconcerted her, and seemed to turn her from her course.

Landolin perceived this momentary confusion, and smiled triumphantly. "After all, she's only a woman, and, like every woman, can be bought with dress and praise!"

Controlling herself quickly, the lady resumed, with a tone that came from her inmost soul:

"Landolin, men are put in the world together that one may help another----"

"I see nothing of it. Nobody troubles himself about his neighbors," interrupted Landolin.

Did you ever do otherwise yourself? Did you formerly concern yourself about others? the lady wanted to say; but she was quick-witted enough to suppress that, and replied instead:

"You have a right to be bitter against the world."

Landolin looked at her in astonishment. He felt something of that mild art of healing which does not try to soften sorrow by denying it and covering it over, but by recognizing it in its reality and importance.

"Thank you," said Landolin, "but I have taken advantage of that right. The world is nothing to me, and I am nothing to the world."

"May I ask a question?"

"Why not?"

"Then tell me if the misfortune, or accident, in this poor fellow's case had happened, not to you, but to Titus, to the Oberbauer, or to Tobelurban, would Landolin of Reutershöfen have acted differently toward him?"

Landolin shrugged his shoulders and whistled softly. He followed her through the first, second, even the third thought, but at the fourth he stopped, and, like a balking horse, was not to be moved from the spot. With an encouraging smile the lady said:

"I will answer for you. 'Yes, Madam Pfann; I should have acted toward the others just as they have acted toward me.'"

Landolin nodded.

"You are sharp; you cut one through and through."

"Very well; then do not be so timid and afraid."

"I afraid? Of what?"

"Of your own thoughts. Within Landolin there are two Landolins, and one of them wants to cast out the other. And now I want to say, don't turn away the only one who can help you."

"Nobody can help me."

"Yes, yes, there is one, and he is a strong man; only he does not know it now. And do you know what his name is? Landolin of Reutershöfen. You alone can help yourself, and then you will have no one else to thank."

"Yes; but how?"

"Take a drink first, and give me one, and then listen."

CHAPTER LIX.

"Landolin," began the judge's wife anew, "if we could rely upon it that people would lay penance upon themselves, and do good where they had done evil, or when a bad accident had happened to them--if we knew that surely, we should need no courts and no punishment in the world. Landolin, there is a way in which you can free yourself and your whole house from unhappiness."

"Does this look like an unhappy house?"

"It does not look so, but it is so, Landolin. Outside, there sits a poor woman, whose only son is dead. In field and forest this woman has only the one little spot of earth in which her son rests, where grows----"

"The woman is nothing to me."

"Your mouth only says that; the soul within you speaks quite differently. If you had been found guilty you would have had to support this desolate widow."

She was startled when she was suddenly interrupted by a laugh from Landolin. To be sure, it was a forced one, but a laugh nevertheless. She looked at him inquiringly, and he cried:

"I see you understand all about law."

"We are not talking of law. The poor woman has no legal claim. What you do you will do voluntarily, and it is that that is beautiful. Landolin, you will give the money that I desire; but that is not enough for me: you must also give the right thoughts with it."

"I have no money, and no right thoughts."

"Yes, you have; you have both. You will have them, and the more you give the more you will have. I vouch for you, you will yet make the poor woman's days happy and peaceful."

"Oho!" cried Landolin, "so that the world shall say, 'He feels, after all, that he is guilty, and is trying to cover it over with generosity.'"

"What difference does what the world says make to you?"

A violent struggle must have taken place in Landolin's soul, and it showed itself in his manner. He walked restlessly up and down the room. He clenched his hands; he opened them again. At length he stood still before the judge's wife and said:

"Madam, even should you succeed with me, seven angels could not tear a wicked woman from her wickedness. 'Tis easier to drag a fox from his hole with the bare hand. Perhaps you do not know that Cushion-Kate has always had a hardened disposition. Perhaps she cannot help it. Her mother stood at the church door with a straw wreath on her head before Cushion-Kate was born. No, Madam Pfann, with me--you have seen--I let myself be persuaded; but who knows----"

"Just leave that to me. Oh, dear Landolin, you'll make my life more happy if you'll obey me; and every morsel you eat, every moment you sleep, will be doubly blessed to you. Come now with me to Cushion-Kate."

"I go to Cushion-Kate! If she wants anything of me she may come to me. I wouldn't like to tell you of all she tries to do to me on highway and byway."

"And for that very reason go to her with me now. I know very well what that is--Landolin to Cushion-Kate;--but do not ask yourself now if you are doing too much--if you are lowering yourself. Come with me! Give me your hand. Come!"

"Very well. I will go with you."

It was quiet in the road; no one was to be seen while Landolin walked along with the judge's wife. She frequently looked at her companion, as if in fear that he might suddenly turn and run away; but he kept step with her, and only where the road and the meadow path met he stopped and said:

"I should never have believed it if any one had told me that I should do this. But I do it for your sake; and Cushion-Kate may curse and insult me as she will. I will say nothing in return."

"She will change for the better," said the judge's wife, confidently.

CHAPTER LX.

In the little house past which led the meadow path, Cushion-Kate sat at the table this Sunday afternoon. Before her lay the hymn-book, but it was not open. The old woman had rested her elbow on the table, and her left cheek lay on her bony hand; she was gazing out of the window before which the black elderberries glistened, and a young starling sang.

For a long time she looked before her without moving, and a bitter smile passed over her hard features as she muttered:

"He dares to go to the Lord's Table before the whole congregation. O Thou above! forgive me that I quarrel with Thee so. But even Thou art not as Thou wast in old times. Landolin should have stood before the church door in a penitent's dress. Yes, mother; you had to stand there with a straw wreath on your head, and thought that you must sink into the ground in shame; and you cursed the whole world; and I beneath your heart learned it then--there is nothing but sorrow and distress in my blood. O God, I pray for only one thing; let me not die before I have seen how this ends with Landolin. I cannot wait till the next world; I will not----"

She took her hand from her cheek and listened; voices, steps, drew nearer; the wooden bolt of the house door was pushed back, and the room door opened.

"Sit still, Kate," said the judge's wife; and behind her stood Landolin. The old woman opened her mouth, but she could not bring out a word. The judge's wife laid her hand on her shoulder, and said, "Kate! Here is the ex-bailiff; he wants to bring you rest and kindness, and everything that is beautiful and right. Now I beg you, take heart, and lighten your soul and his; he wants to take care of you as though you were his own mother."

"His mother! I was a mother; I am called so no longer. Had there been, not twelve men, but twelve mothers, in court, they would have hanged him, and the ravens would have eaten his eyes and his fat cheeks."

The judge's wife was struck dumb by this raving; but Cushion-Kate now turned to Landolin:

"They say that you spoke for yourself in court; do you now need some one else to speak for you?"

Controlling himself with a violent effort, Landolin said that he was heartily sorry that so great a sorrow had come upon Cushion-Kate; that he could not bring the dead to life, but he promised her that she should live as though she were a rich farmer's wife. With a shrill cry Cushion-Kate screamed:

"And I say to you, fie upon all your gold and goods! Only because the good lady is there do I not spit in your face. I have found out in weary nights that every sinner can be forgiven except one--except the liar, and that is what you are. You must go to ruin, you must have no rest by day or night, and all that is yours must go to ruin too. Come with me! Come to my Vetturi's grave; kneel down there; call the congregation together and confess--But true, you never go through the churchyard. But take heed! You must soon go, when one of your family dies----"

"That is enough," cried Landolin. "Come with me, Madam Pfann, or I shall go alone; I cannot stand this any longer."

He turned away; Madam Pfann cast one more beseeching glance at Cushion-Kate, but she laughed scornfully.

Landolin and the judge's wife walked silently together to where the footpath joins the road; there they stood still, and taking his hand, she said:

"Farewell! I thank you for having been so good to me; and you may be sure it will do you good too. You have done all a man could, and may now rest easy. We have not gained what I hoped, but your soul must feel easier and freer."

"Yes; but I should like to ask a favor----"

"Only tell it," said the judge's wife, encouragingly, as Landolin paused hesitatingly.

"Well, Madam, when I think of it fairly, I cannot blame Cushion-Kate so much, that she is so frantic and raves against me; I am innocent, but still it happened. I don't believe in witchcraft and prophecy; but the way she spoke of death in my family frightened me. Now what was I going to say? I forget. Oh! this. Cushion-Kate may cherish a hate toward me; but my daughter--yes, I will tell you how deaf and dumb she is toward me. It is hard that a stranger should come between father and child; but I think----"

"So do I. You may depend on it I will speak to Thoma, and I shall succeed better than we did over there. I will ask her to come and see me."

With hearty thanks, Landolin and the lady parted. She walked on a while as if lost in thought, and forgetful of the way; but she soon began, as usual, to pick flowers and grasses and pretty sprigs, and arrange them in a beautiful bouquet.

In the garden of the Sword Inn her husband met her, and she soon sat pleasantly conversing with the people of rank in their separate arbor.

CHAPTER LXI.

"The members of the Casino had made it an variable rule never to question the judge's wife respecting her experiences in her work; and she herself never mentioned it unless she had need of another's help. It could easily be seen that she must have met with something difficult to-day; but her face brightened when the school-master began:

"The gentlemen will allow me to explain to Madame Pfann the starting-point and progress of our conversation. The physician had told us that Walderjörgli, since the day of the celebration, had been approaching his release. This suggested the assertion that the advantage of culture to the common people is questionable in every respect; that roughness keeps the people even physically stronger than culture. The judge replied that a child must become a youth, and then a man, and it is an idle question whether it would not have been happier if it had remained a child. The physician was just about to speak of the effect of culture in relation to diseases."

"Not exactly that," said the physician; "but I was going to say that the greater difficulty of regulating the peasant's diet is attributable to his degree of culture; and, again, the acute character of a disease that is already developed may often be broken up by timely remedies."

"I claim this also for intellectual and social discipline," cried the school-teacher. "The moderating power of culture will turn aside the violence of the passions, and ward off their tragical end. Obstinacy and unbending willfulness are not real strength."

"A quarrel about the people's beard," said a clergyman to a colleague, smiling, and handing him an open snuff-box. The school-master had heard a whisper, but had not understood what was said; so he continued, with a sharp sidelong glance at the disturbers:

"As sure as the means of healing from the apothecary help struggling nature in sickness, or put aside a hindrance to nature's work, just as certainly will the means of culture, which for centuries have been gathered together by science, mitigate and heal moral infirmity, and the outbreak of passion that leads to crime--yes, even crimes that are already committed."

Turning to the clergyman, he continued: "Religion is also a health-giving means of culture, but it is not the only one."

"Thanks," replied the clergyman, waving his hand, between the thumb and fore-finger of which he held a pinch of snuff. "But, most honored doctor, your culture-cure is a brewage of classic and scientific education, a teaspoonful every hour, to be well shaken before taken--probatum est."

Amidst general laughter his colleague added:

"Your plan of education would not even give the people new enjoyments. What do you propose to give them? They have not the coarseness that is necessary. Look there! Those boys who have been tiring themselves all the week at harvest work, on Sunday play ten-pins and throw the heavy balls."

The game of ten-pins was here interrupted, for the railroad train rushed past; and the boys, who had evidently been waiting for some one, hastened to the station, which could be seen from the Casino arbor, and the company exclaimed:

"The Hollanders! There comes Anton Armbruster with the raft-drivers." Powerful men descended from the cars; they carried cloaks rolled up tightly on the axes over their shoulders. They came into the inn garden, and soon sat drinking the foaming beer, surrounded by groups of friends and strangers. The voices of the raftsmen

were loud, and their laughter sounded like logs rolled over one another. Anton sat with his father, who had awaited him here. He had regained his old, fresh appearance; but, from his manner, as well as from that of the miller, it was easy to see that something had happened that was not to the old man's liking. To be sure, he touched glasses with his son; but he put his down again without drinking.

The judge's wife walked up and down the garden with the hostess; but the latter soon went and said something to Anton. He rose and went toward the judge's wife, greeting her politely. She gave him her hand, and went with him toward the vacant promenade by the river side. There she first gave him the lieutenant's greeting, and then told him where she had been that day, and what she had experienced. She looked at him closely and added:

"Thoma is soon coming to see me. May I speak to her of you?"

"Oh, certainly."

"So you did not become engaged in Holland?"

"No, indeed! As long as Thoma does not marry, I too will remain single. It was very pleasant in Holland. They are very pleasant, hearty people, and they have got over the stupidity of thinking that we Germans want to take Holland. They listened to me attentively when I told of the war, and the eldest daughter of our business friend said to me that she could listen three days while I told about it."

"Did you like her?"

"Oh yes. She is a beautiful girl, and good-nature shines from her face; but nevertheless she was not Thoma. As I said, I have not changed. Look! There comes Peter of Reutershöfen with the wagon. Peter, what's the matter?"

"My mother is sick, and I have come for the doctor. There isn't much the matter, but father is so anxious."

"Are all the rest well?"

"Of course they are."

The doctor drove away with Peter, and the judge's wife asked him to send Thoma to her as soon as she could leave her mother.

Anton, too, soon went home with his father.

The physician on the plateau, and the raft-drivers in the valley, were overtaken by a severe thunderstorm that burst forth with wind and hail.

CHAPTER LXII.

Two days and two nights it stormed in the valley and on the plateau, with only short intermissions. When the thunder-clouds are ensnared between close-set wooded mountains and sharply pointed rocks, they can find no outlet. They toss hither and thither; they break and then come together again; it thunders and lightens, rains and hails, till they have entirely disburdened themselves.

One could almost say that it was the same with the people here; when bad humor had fastened on these hard, sharp-pointed natures, the anger and quarreling had no end.

Landolin and Thoma sat by the mother's sick bed; sometimes together, sometimes alone. Their eyes flashed, but their thoughts were unspoken. The mother was constantly faint, for the air did not cool off during the two days and nights. On the third day, however, when the sun shone again, and a balmy, fresh air quickened everything anew, she said:

"I feel better. Thoma, it would do you good to go out, and the judge's kind wife has certainly something good to say to you. Go and see her. She sent you word by the doctor. Go, for my sake, and bring me back good news. You can go right away. You have nursed me as I hope some day your child may nurse you."

Peter had told them that Anton had returned from Holland, and that he had seen him talking earnestly with the judge's wife. And, although her mother did not say so, she secretly hoped to live to see their reconciliation.

Thoma prepared herself for the walk into the city. But she did not wish a stranger to mix in their affairs. She did not need outside help, and it would do no good.

When she went to her mother, in her Sunday dress, the mother said, taking her hand:

"Child, you look quite different, now you have fixed yourself up a little. Let me give you this advice. You are so gentle and so kind to me; be the same to others. Don't put on such a dark face. There, that's right. When you laugh you are quite another person. Say good-bye to your father; he is at the stable. The bay mare has a colt. That is a good sign. Go in God's name, and you will come home happy again. God keep you!"

As Thoma went past she called a hurried good-bye into the stable, and did not wait for an answer. On the road it seemed to her as if she must turn back: she ought not to leave her mother to the care of strangers; but she went forward, thinking over what she should say to the judge's wife.

Thoma often threw up her hands in distress, and looked sadly at the destruction which the hail had wrought in the fields; but she soon comforted herself. She knew that her father had them insured against hail. Now they should have something in return for the tax they had paid so many years. When she reached the beautiful pear-tree which before had looked like a nosegay, she stood still. The storm had shaken off almost all the pears, and they lay scattered on the ground. Thoma called a girl who was working in the potato field to come and pick them up. Then she went on her way.

Everything reminded her of her first and only walk with Anton, after their betrothal. Since then she had not been on this road. She avoided the spot where Vetturi had spoken to her; but where she had rested, and Anton had stroked her face with the lily of the valley, she paused awhile. There was no sound in the forest; not a bird sang, a sultry stillness brooded over moss and grass on which the sunbeams quivered, the path was strewn with dead and green branches, and the trees which had been tapped for resin were broken down. The way was not clear and open again till she reached the path through the meadow where the grass was still trodden down from the celebration. The water in the river was yellow, and ran in high, roaring waves almost to the upper arch of the bridge.

The hostess of the Sword Inn nodded to Thoma from the window. Thoma responded and hurried past.

CHAPTER LXIII.

The judge's wife was not at home, but the maid--saying that she would be back soon: she had only gone to the station; her brother was expected, and might perhaps come by the first train--opened the corner room, where Thoma was to wait.

An air full of rest and comfort, full of refreshing odors from blooming plants on tables and pedestals, surrounded Thoma; and her eyes wandered over the beautiful pictures and statues on which the sun shone so brightly. Everything was as still as the flowers and the pictures; even the clock over the writing-table, among the family pictures, moved its pendulum without making the least noise.

Thoma sat down in the corner. The river and the mountains of her home appeared strange to her; everything looked so different through these great panes of glass.

The judge's wife soon entered, with a fresh bouquet of field flowers in her hand. She welcomed Thoma heartily, and the tones of her voice were both gentle and firm.

"How beautiful it is at your house! How very beautiful!" Thoma said, her voice trembling.

"I am glad that it pleases you."

"Oh! and to think," Thoma went on, "that this lady who has such a beautiful home goes to the huts of the poor--goes to Cushion-Kate!"

"Sit down and make yourself comfortable with me. How is your mother?"

"Better, but not quite well yet."

"Do you bring me good news from your father?"

"My father says nothing to me. I learned from strangers that he went with you to see Cushion-Kate. His going there shows that you can do more with him than any one else. May I ask you something?"

"Certainly."

"Did my father ask Cushion-Kate's forgiveness? And did he confess?"

"Confess? Your father is acquitted."

"Indeed! Then I have nothing more to say. I beg you to let what I have said be as if unheard."

"Dear Thoma, try and think that I am your mother's sister. Have confidence in me. I see that something weighs down your heart. I beg you disburden your soul."

"Yes, I will; even if it does no good, it must come out. Dear lady, I--I saw it with my own eyes. I saw how the stone from my father's hand hit Vetturi; and Vetturi no more picked up a stone than that picture on the wall picks up one. Then my father went and denied everything; and caused all the witnesses and the whole court to lie. O heavens! What have I said?"

"Be quiet. So you think then your father should have confessed?"

"Certainly, right out. I would have gone to our Grand Duke and kneeled before him; but justice would have been done. 'I did not mean to kill him, I did it in anger,'--that is honest and brings one to honor again. How often has my father spoken in anger and derision of this one and that one who pretends to be richer than he is and deceives people for money--for money! And what good has it done my father? He must beg from the lowest, for a good word or even for silence. Madam Pfann! last year on Whitsunday I was with my father at St. Blasius. There was a woman there who had painted her cheeks red, and put flour on her neck and forehead. There she sat, in broad daylight, and looked boldly at people, to see if they saw her beautiful red cheeks and white neck, while she herself knew that she was not young, but on the contrary, old and wrinkled."

"I understand. You think it is unworthy of your father."

"Unworthy?" repeated Thoma, for this expression, from a higher sphere of thought, affected her strangely; and the judge's wife continued: "Child, your thoughts at first were not so hard, but by degrees they have grown sharper, have become bitterer and more poignant; and that which should have softened you only made you more harsh. When your father was humble it revolted you, and when he was proud, likewise."

Thoma's eyes grew larger and larger. She was like a patient whom the physician tells exactly how he feels; and this amazement at another's knowledge becomes a preparation for, and the commencement of a cure.

The judge's wife laid a hand on her shoulder.

"Dear Thoma, in imprisonment a man can only do no evil; but at liberty he can do good. My child, your love of truth is good, beautiful, and excellent, but--how shall I say it?--it is not in place now----"

The good lady was sensible of a deep embarrassment, and her face reddened as though with shame. She, who was always urging straightforwardness, should she now shake this girl's strict truth?

But she recovered herself, and continued: "If your father did deny the truth, he is suffering a heavy punishment, because you also deny it."

"I?"

"Yes. You disown your child's heart. Don't tremble. You need not promise me anything, except that you will once again examine yourself earnestly and conscientiously. And your doing so will show itself in the matter for which in reality I sent for you. My brother may soon come, and I must arrange this with you quickly."

The judge's wife then told her about Anton; how much every one esteemed and loved him; and how honorably and beautifully he had expressed himself after his return from Holland. She showed Thoma her mistake--how she, from upright and honorable feeling--and this commendation did good--was acting wrongly, both toward her parents and her lover.

"You think," she added, "you think you cannot call your lover yours again, because you cannot bring him the same honor that he brings you."

"Oh, how do you know everything?"

"But you do not know, or have forgotten, that love does not calculate--so much have you, and so much have I. Collect yourself and build up your happiness for yourself and your lover, and your parents, and all who mean well and kindly by you, as I do. Hush! There's someone coming up stairs."

The door opened; the counselor entered, and the judge's wife embraced him.

"Welcome, dear Julius."

Thoma stood at one side, and the judge's wife introduced her brother, the government counselor. Thoma could not answer a word. A counselor is a brother, and is called "dear Julius!" A government counselor was to her a sort of executioner, who brought people to the block. And now, as this courteous gentleman put his eye-glass up, she was aware that this was the man who had prosecuted her father. Defiance and smiles alternated swiftly in her manner. "Would not I, too, have defended myself against this man with all means in my power?" She did not recover her speech until, after the introduction, the counselor let his eyeglass fall. As if in a dream, she heard him say:

"Your father made a master-stroke. He played for a high stake, but he won it. I wish him good fortune. Give him my greeting."

"So, even the judges do not look at it so severely!" Thoma thought.

The counselor opened the piano, ran his fingers over the keys, and said to his sister:

"I shall be glad to play a duet with you again."

Thoma prepared to go. The judge's wife accompanied her to the stairs, and begged her again not to delay making things happy and right once more. She should remember that we do not know how long we shall have our parents, and then repentance comes too late.

A sudden fear overcame Thoma that she had stayed here too long, and she hastened homeward. At the pear-tree the Galloping Cooper met her, and said that he had been sent to tell her to come home quickly; that her mother was very ill.

CHAPTER LXIV.

Not long after Thoma had gone, her mother called Landolin and said:

"Put your mind at ease and be cheerful again. You may be sure that Thoma will come home with pure happiness and blessing. Everything will be right again. She will come holding Anton's hand."

Landolin was silent. He was struck by his wife's glorified expression, and changed voice. She closed her eyes, but after a while she said, laughing:

"Walderjörgli! Nothing has pleased me so much for a long time as his greeting. When I am well again you must take me up to see him."

Landolin nodded. He could not tell his wife that the news had just come that Walderjörgli was dying.

Landolin went into the living-room and looked out of the window. He saw the agent of the Hail Insurance Company come out of the field with the bailiff and several of the town council. The agent was putting his note-book into his pocket. The men had evidently been looking at and estimating the damages done by the hail. They drew nearer to Landolin's house, and he greeted them pleasantly, but the agent nodded, and was passing by.

"Well! How is it?" asked Landolin. "Have you not looked at my fields and valued the damages? And why without me?"

The agent replied that Landolin was no longer insured; that Peter had discontinued in the spring.

Landolin drew back and shut the window. He probably did not want to show the people how this news of Peter's willfulness and indiscretion surprised him. He sat down on the bench, and pressing his hands between his knees, and biting his lips, he thought: "Now they are laughing at me; now they can rejoice in my trouble, and the more because it is plain to be seen that I am of no consequence in my own house."

He went into the yard, and asked for Peter. He was told that he had gone into the forest with the horses. He said to himself: "It is well that my anger has time to cool; there shall be no quarrel. They shan't have the satisfaction of rejoicing at our misunderstanding, but Peter must be made to own that he has been thoughtless."

Landolin seemed to have conquered his uneasiness; and again looked out of the window, and saw Peter coming with a great load of wood. He called to him to come into the living-room, after he had unhitched and unloaded, for he had something to say to him. It was long before Peter obeyed, and Landolin, whose anger was ready to boil over again, preached composure to himself. At length he came, and asked what his father wanted.

Landolin took a chair and said: "Sit down."

"I can stand."

"Don't speak so loud. Your mother is sick in the bedroom."

"I'm not speaking loud."

"Very well, then; come away with me to the porch."

They went out together, and Landolin said that he was only going to speak in kindness, and Peter must understand it so; that he had made a mistake in discontinuing the hail insurance, and it should be a warning to him. He should see that his father had, after all, done some things better than he, and that he ought to confess his mistake.

"Confession is not to be spoken of between us," replied Peter, defiantly.

Landolin felt a pain in his breast, as though he had been stabbed with a dagger. He groaned, and said:

"Only think how the people will ridicule us!"

"It would be well if that were all the ground they had. They do it at many other things. That's enough! I won't be found fault with."

"I didn't find fault with you."

"Very well. You can deny that too if you like. There are no witnesses."

"Peter, don't provoke me. I was only speaking to you in kindness."

"I didn't see any."

"Peter, don't force me to lay hands on you."

"Do it. Kill me, as you did Vetturi, and then deny it."

A cry sounded from the porch; but another, much shriller, rang from the living-room. Landolin rushed in. On the threshold of the chamber door lay his wife, a corpse.

She had evidently heard the quarrel; had wanted to make peace; and had dropped dead.

Peter too had come into the living-room; but Landolin motioned him away, and he obeyed.

They laid his wife on the bed again. Landolin sat beside her a long time; then he went out and said they must send a messenger for Thoma.

It was not long before Thoma came into the room. She sank down beside the body, and cried:

"O mother, mother! Now, I am all alone in the world--all alone!"

When she looked around for her father, he was no longer there.

CHAPTER LXV.

Thoma had often looked into the cold, stony face of death; she did not force herself where misery and sickness were, but she never refused a call. But how different it was now, when she knelt beside her mother's dead body! It seemed incomprehensible that the good, faithful mother, who was always so ready for every call, could not answer any moan of sorrow or cry for help. That is the bitterness of death. Thoma had really only learned to know her mother since trouble had broken in upon the house. In the days before that, she, like her father, had paid little attention to her quiet, modest, busy mother, although she had never refused her childlike respect.

"Mother! Dear, dear, good mother!" cried Thoma; but that is the bitterness of death--it gives no answer.

Thoughts about everything ran through Thoma's soul in confusion; things long past, and of to-day. The judge's wife lives down there in the beautiful room with her pictures and flowers; she is probably now playing duets with her brother; but out there sits Cushion-Kate. Will she be glad that death has entered Landolin's house? No, that she cannot! Down by the saw-mill sits Anton, and thinks of his beloved; and she now bends her head, as though her longing were fulfilled; as though Anton were by her side, and she could lay her heavy head on his breast.

With what happy reconciling thoughts Thoma had returned home! And now----?

"Where is Peter? Where is father? Why is he away? How did it happen so suddenly?" Thoma no longer remembered what she had called out to her father.

Now she hears steps in the upper chamber; that is her father's step. "Why does he not come? Why is he not here?" Now she hears a fall.

It seemed to Thoma hard-hearted to leave the dead; but she went, nevertheless. She wanted to comfort the living, and tell him what was in her soul. She went up the stairs; the door was locked. She knocked; no one answered. She called out, "Father! father!" It was the first time in many days that she had spoken that word.

Landolin raised himself up from the floor and listened. This cry from his child seemed to revive him; but he answered:

"You said that you were alone. I too will be alone. I am alone. For you I am no longer in the world."

"Father, open the door! My heart is breaking."

The door opened, and Thoma fell on her father's neck, and could not speak for sobbing. But at length she said:

"Father, I wanted to ask your forgiveness."

"Not you, I--I wanted to come to you. Don't speak; let me talk. Thoma, you were right; I did do it. I killed Vetturi, and then denied it."

Thoma sank on her knees and covered her father's hard, rough hand with tears and kisses. The moon shone into the room; and when Thoma looked up and saw her father's face, it seemed to her as if glorified; it was no longer the face of the hard, indomitable man.

"I shall say it to no one but you, and no one but you has a right to hear it from me. I have forgiveness to ask from no one but you; and no one but you can help me bear my burden, the few years yet till I am with your mother," said Landolin. And the strong man sobbed and cried as though his heart were broken.

"Thoma, you thought it, and never said it to me, and never pretended to be friendly to me before the world; but he, he threw it in my face; and I did not die, but it killed your mother."

He told of the quarrel with Peter, and its consequences.

"Father," began Thoma, "you cannot wish that Peter should be ruined; he is your child. We cannot excuse to him what he has done; but we can help him. And the best help, the only help is, that we two, whom it has hurt, should forgive him."

"You are right, child. You are brave-hearted. We will do it. We will strive to keep things from ruin. We will stand by Peter; he must not utterly sink. I know how a man sinks. Come, let us go to him."

Father and daughter went hand in hand to Peter's room; he was not there. They went to the stable, and there he sat on the fodder bin, beside the new-born colt.

If his dead mother had come to life and walked toward him, Peter would not have been more astonished than now, when he saw his father and Thoma coming hand in hand.

"Peter," said the father, "I forgive you everything as I pray to God to be forgiven myself. And do not fret your heart out. You are not to blame for your mother's death; she was very sick; the doctor acknowledged it to me. Do speak! Do say one word!"

"All right," said Peter; "all right. I thank you."

"Will you not go with us?"

"No! I will stay here. I am best off here. I wish I were a horse; such a creature has the best time, after all."

"Oh come, dear brother!"

"I am not your dear brother; let me alone."

Father and daughter went into the living-room, and there the father related what his sainted wife--he sobbed aloud when he spoke this word--had said while Thoma was gone; and Thoma told about the judge's wife, and about Anton.

All night long father and daughter sat by the body. At daybreak Landolin said, "Your mother can never see the day again."

The father now tried to rest; and Thoma too went to her room, but she could not sleep.

CHAPTER LXVI.

The rain had passed over and had come back again, and now seemed to make itself quite at home in the valley and on the height.

When Landolin followed his wife's coffin down the outer stairs, he caught, step by step, with his left hand at the wall of the house, as though he needed support. The school children, who were in the yard singing the funeral hymn, looked up at the changed man.

At the burial, at which one could hardly hear the words of the pastor, for the pattering of the rain on the open umbrellas, there was only a small attendance, although she was honored and loved by the whole neighborhood. For at the same hour that the bells were tolling here, they were also tolling on the mountain in Hoechenbrand, the highest village in the province, for the funeral of Walderjörgli.

For this reason Anton was not present. He had to lead the soldier's association, which had decided to go in a body and pay the last honors to the last Master of Justice.

Among the men with long black mantles, who carried Landolin's wife's coffin, relieving one another from time to time, was one who from the house to the open grave did not move from his post. It was Tobias. In the short time since he had been dismissed from the farm he had grown old fast; and the former crafty expression of his face had disappeared.

As the funeral procession left the church-yard, Cushion-Kate was seen kneeling on her son's grave. She had no umbrella, which even the poorest always has. She was kneeling on the ground, letting the rain pour down upon her red kerchief and her dress, and did not look up.

"I would like to go to her," said Thoma; "I should think she would accept a kind word from us now in our sorrow; but I am afraid she will rave and abuse us here by mother's new-made grave."

As Landolin and Thoma went past, Cushion-Kate's glance followed them, and she clenched her fist. Had she expected the mourners to go to her?

A man struggling with a river's death-bringing waves cries involuntarily for help, even though he is weary of life. Thus, tossed on the waves of sorrow and pain, of hate and revenge, the sad, gloomy soul hearkens for rescue--for a storm dispelling word.

"Why does no one help me?" Landolin had so often thought. Perhaps the poor bereaved woman there now asks, "Why does no one help me?"

Through his deep, dark grief for his wife's death, his child's love shone like a star that he had won back. He looked at Thoma, who walked beside him, and over his sorrow-worn face there flashed, as it were, a swift gleam of joy. He heard indeed what Thoma had said; but he could not think of strangers now.

At home, in the yard, in the living-room, in the chamber, it seemed as though all the lifeless things had been robbed of a nameless something, and as though they all were waiting for the dead to come back and greet them with her cheering smile!

Saying nothing, his eyes fastened upon the floor, Landolin was sitting in his chair, when the pastor soon after presented himself again at the house of mourning. He spoke words of comfort, but when he had gone Landolin said, "He goes away again. He lives for himself; no one lives for me any longer."

The regular stroke of the threshers awoke him from his reverie. These sounds were not new to him, but they startled him from his chair. To-day, the day of his wife's funeral, they still keep on threshing? But, to be sure, in this streaming rain, there is nothing else for the servants and day-laborers to do.

His wife's brother came; it was the first time he had shown himself since Thoma's betrothal. He did not say much; and not until Thoma came in, who in composed self-forgetfulness was attending to everything, were friendly words spoken. It was arranged that the so-called "Black Mass" should be said for the departed one in the village where she was born.

The uncle asked for Peter. He was called, and they sat down at the table. They ate, and when the uncle went away, Peter, who had scarcely spoken a word, accompanied him.

"Come up again, Peter," his father called after him; but he neither answered nor came back.

Peter's taciturnity from this day on became more marked.

When the candles were lit, Landolin said:

"This is her first night in the grave; I wish I lay beside her in the ground."

Thoma tried to comfort her father, but he said, looking at the light:

"You will see, Anton will come to-day when he gets back from Hoechenbrand. And if he does not come, do you know what I shall do? I'll go to him to-morrow. I haven't a day to lose. 'Twould be better if I were to go to-day; now."

"Father, it's raining as hard as it can pour. You must not go to-day; you are no longer young, and must not hurt yourself."

"Very well; I'll do as you say. Say good-night to Peter for me."

The whole house was silent. Landolin and Thoma slept, overcome by the fatigue of grief. But Peter tossed in his bed for a long time, and did not find rest until he had resolved that he would again give all honor and control of affairs to his father. He would do it, but would not say so; for he had become again, and more than ever, "the silent Peter."

CHAPTER LXVII.

The day awoke, but it did not seem like day; the rain had ceased, but thick clouds enwrapped mountain and valley in deep shade.

When Landolin was again alone with Thoma, he said:

"I'll not stay on the farm; I'll live with you at the mill. You will take good care of me, and the Dutchman is just the right comrade for me now. I'll not be useless or burdensome to you. Peter can take the farm and pay you your portion. I think he has an eye on one of Titus' daughters. I don't care. I've nothing against it. But I want to stay with you the few years I have left; and when I die, bury me beside your mother."

Thoma nodded silently; then she said: "I would like to let the judge's wife know how matters are between us now. She has been very good to us."

"That is very true; and we'll invite her to the wedding; and she must lead the bride in the mother's place. Your mother in heaven will rejoice in your happiness; she said so before, but she thought you would bring Anton home with you then."

The bells rang, and Thoma said it was time to go to church, where mass was to be said for her mother's soul. Landolin and his two children went to church. Peter's silence couldn't strike any one, for no one spoke a word.

When they came out of church, the clouds had disappeared, with the exception of some small flaky ones that crept over the mountains. "Thank God, the sun has come again," each one thought; and their sorrowful faces brightened.

In the yard Peter separated from his father and sister, and gave orders, in brief words, for every one to go into the field, to bind and stack the oats that were cut, and put them up to dry; then he went into the stable. Landolin soon came out and ordered a horse to be saddled; for he wanted to ride to the saw-mill to see Anton and his father.

"Yes, father; but you can't take the bay mare: its colt is only a few days old."

"Then let me have the black horse."

"Yes, father; but I really need him in the field, and----"

"And what?"

Peter shot a startled glance, perhaps also an evil one, at his father, when he spoke these words so sharply, but he repeated them still more sharply: "And what? Speak out. You could speak well enough a while ago."

Peter was evidently struggling with his anger, when he replied, in a calm tone:

"I don't know why, but the black horse isn't good for riding now. You can't ride him."

"I can't? I can ride the wildest horse!" cried Landolin, lifting his clenched hand; and going to the stall, he unfastened the horse.

Landolin had said these words with no double meaning, but because his pride was hurt by the hint that there was a horse which he was not able to ride. But Peter understood the words to have a different meaning; he thought his father had meant to say that he should be able to get the better of him again.

The black horse was saddled; Landolin unchained his dog and mounted.

Thoma had come out into the yard, and her father gave her his hand, saying, "If we were not in mourning you should fasten a sprig of rosemary on my coat with a red ribbon." The cows were just then let out to drink, and Landolin cried, "Thoma, you shall have the prize cow. May God keep you! Peter, give me your hand. I'll often come up from the saw-mill to see you."

He urged his horse forward, so that it reared and struck sparks from the paving-stones at the very spot where Vetturi had fallen.

Landolin mastered it with a strong hand. His son and daughter watched him from the gateway as he let the horse prance down the road; their father appeared again in all his old stateliness; and where the road bends into the forest toward the valley he turned around and lifted his hat in greeting.

As Thoma turned again toward the house an open carriage drove up from the other side, and in it sat the judge's wife with her brother the counselor. They stopped and got out. They had come to comfort the mourners, and the judge's wife heard, to her great joy, on what mission Landolin had gone.

CHAPTER LXVIII.

While Landolin was riding to the valley, Peter had saddled the other horse for himself, had dressed himself in his Sunday clothes, and now, wrapped in his mantle and noticed by no one, took the road to the city, across the bridge that was almost covered by the water.

At the Crown Inn he ordered a pint of beer without dismounting. Then he trotted up the opposite hill to the plateau where Titus lived.

Peter did not look around much, but once he stopped to observe a strange sight; for on the rocks by the roadside were a large number of hawks. There were evidently young ones among them, whom the old ones were talking to, and encouraging to fly. They tried it, and in their outcries there must have been great pride and happiness; the nest was so narrow, the air is so wide, and prey that can be caught and killed is flying everywhere. And when the young ones have learned to fly, they care no more for the old ones.

"Where are you going so soon?" Peter was asked. The questioner was Fidelis, his former servant, who was now in Titus' service.

"Glad I've met you. Is Titus at home, and----?"

He was probably about to say, "and his daughter too." But he kept that part of it back. Fidelis said "Yes;" and without wasting another word on him, Peter rode on.

Titus' farmhouse was not so isolated as Landolin's; there were several cottages near by. Titus had bought the houses and fields from----emigrants, and had added them to his farm. The gates were wide open, and things were going on merrily inside. A large hog had just been killed, and Titus' daughter stood beside it with her sleeves rolled up.

"There comes Peter of Reutershöfen," said the butcher, taking a knife from between his teeth. "What does he want so soon? His mother was only buried yesterday."

Peter called out welcome to Titus' daughter, and jumping nimbly from his horse, he held out his hand to her. But she said her hands were wet; she could not give him one; and she disappeared.

Peter went into the living-room, where Titus sat at a large table, figuring on some papers that lay before him.

"Oh, that's you!" he called out to Peter; "you're come just in time for butcher's soup. Sit down."

Peter did not use much ceremony, but told his wish. His mother was dead; his father had gone to see Anton to-day to straighten out matters for Thoma again; and was going to give up the farm and live with her at the saw-mill. "So," said Peter, in conclusion, "you know what I want. I need a wife."

"You go ahead quickly," replied Titus; "but I have no objection. Have you already spoken to Marianne?"

"Not exactly; but I guess it'll be all right."

"I think so too. Shall I call her?"

"Yes."

Titus sent a maid for his daughter; but she sent back, asking her father to "come to her for a few minutes."

"What does that mean?" said Titus. He was not used to have his children oppose any of his orders. "Excuse me," he said to Peter; and left the room.

Peter felt cornered: how would it be if he had to ride home dejected? Perhaps he had a suspicion of what was going on between Titus and his daughter; for she said:

"Father, do you want me to take Peter? Yesterday his mother was buried, and to-day he goes courting."

Titus declared that that was of no consequence, and when Marianne began to express a dislike, an aversion, to Peter, he interrupted her peremptorily.

"Peter is a substantial farmer. So there's nothing more to be said about it. You must take him. Put on another dress and make haste to come in."

He returned to Peter, and said, "The matter is arranged."

But Marianne said to the old maid-servant in her bedroom, "I take him because I must; but he shall pay for it. He shall find out who I am."

She entered the room. Peter held out his hand to her, simply saying that this was only for the present; that to-morrow or Sunday his father would come and ask for her hand in the usual form.

"Yes, your father," interrupted Titus. "Does he know that you are here?"

"It isn't necessary for my father to know; the farm has been in my hands for a long time, and I've only let him appear to be of some consequence before the world."

"Yes; but does your father know that I was one of those who said guilty?"

"No, he need never know it."

While they were speaking a man came with the message that Peter must come immediately to Anton's saw-mill, for Landolin was in great danger.

Just as the butcher's soup was served, and Peter's mouth was watering for it, he was obliged to leave.

CHAPTER LXIX.

The wild water rushes from mountain to valley. It flows and splashes through all the ditches. Even through the middle of the road a small brook has torn its way. It is all so merry, and to-morrow it will not be there.

In the fields men work busily; every year they cut the grass and grain. The forest trees grow many years, but at last the axe fells or the storm uproots them. Only the earth, in which men are buried, remains.

Down in the rapids, not far from the Devil's-kettle, lies an uprooted pine. No one can pull it out. In the summer-time the ground caves in; in winter the ice is too slippery. So this tree had stood many, many years by the whirlpool, and had forced its roots into the rocky bed. The water sprinkled upon it from the falls had nourished it so richly; and now it is done with decaying----. "What a pity for the fine, valuable tree!" was really Landolin's last thought.

The black horse neighed loudly, then looked back at his master, who held the reins so loose. Landolin straightened himself in the saddle and tightened his hold on the bridle. See, there comes Cushion-Kate, with a bundle of dry twigs. Landolin nodded approvingly at his own resolution.

"Wait; I'm coming," he cried to Cushion-Kate. She stopped and threw down the bundle of wood. Landolin sprang from his horse, and holding it by the bridle, he said:

"Kate, my wife is dead."

"I suppose so; they buried her."

"I want to talk kindly to you. Who knows how long either you or I shall live?" And in deep contrition he went on, in a low tone: "You have lost your son, and I am almost persecuted to death by my son. I suffer----"

A devilish laugh interrupted him. The dog snuffed around the old woman. Landolin called him away, and continued:

"I would like to do something for you."

"Then hang yourself!" cried Cushion-Kate. Hastening to her bundle of twigs, she unfastened the string.

"There, there you have it! Hang yourself on the tree there. That's the only thing you can do for me. I want to see you hanging."

Landolin mounted his horse again, and rode away. He did not look around. He did not see how Cushion-Kate, with the cord in her hand, hastened after him through the forest.

Landolin reached the valley. The stream has risen above its bed, but there is the bridge, and just across is Anton's saw-mill.

The horse stepped gayly into the water that scarcely reached its knee. The dog waded by its side, and often looked up at his master, as though begging him to turn back. But Landolin rode on and on, and did not look around when it splashed so strangely behind him. He reached the bridge over which the water was already rushing. Just then something like a noose wound itself about his neck. He looked round. Cushion-Kate was clinging beside him to the horse. A struggle, a wrench, splash! and Cushion-Kate's red kerchief appeared for a moment; then nothing more was to be seen. Only the dog swam through the roaring waters, down to the mill, and there sprang on land.

CHAPTER LXX.

The judge's wife and her brother were just about entering their carriage to return home, when a messenger came from Anton to say that Thoma and Peter must come immediately to the mill. The messenger told them that Anton had rescued the ex-bailiff from the water with great danger to his own life, and that the horse was drowned.

"But my father! Is he alive?" asked Thoma.

The messenger said that when he left they were trying to restore him, and he seemed to show signs of life.

The carriage was quickly turned round, for her guests wished to accompany Thoma. Word was sent to the field for Peter to follow at once.

They drove down into the valley as quickly as the roads, torn and damaged by the water, would allow. In the stream was a boat, and Anton called from it:

"He is alive!"

The boat had to be taken far up the stream, in order that the current might drive it to the other shore. Floating pieces of rafts and forest trees with roots and branches made the journey across long and difficult.

"Give me an oar--I've seen how it's done," begged Thoma. Anton did so; but the oar soon escaped from her hand and floated away.

"Be brave and strong, as you always are," was all that Anton said to her.

When they reached the shore she hastily begged her friends to let her go alone to her father. She could not say that she wished to keep her father from seeing the counselor, although he was so kind and friendly.

Thoma hastened to her father. The old miller was with him, and fortunately the physician also. The dog, on whose head Landolin's hand was resting, stood by the bed. The miller was unfastening the spiked collar, so that Landolin should not prick himself.

The physician motioned to Thoma to be quiet and keep at a distance, and she heard her father moan out:

"Where is she? Kate! Kate! Rope round the neck!"

Thoma could control herself no longer, but ran forward, kneeled at her father's bed and caught his hand.

"'Tis good that you are here. That's right," said Landolin. "Come here, Anton: I have brought her for you, and--the forest is yours, and the prize cow, and----"

He seemed to find no more words; he closed his eyes, but he breathed calmly, and the physician made a sign of encouragement.

Just then the door opened. Landolin opened his eyes, and the judge's wife entered.

"Oh, that's good!" cried Landolin, but suddenly perceiving the counselor, he raised himself up, and screamed:

"Keep off, glass eye! Keep off! Thoma! Anton!"

He breathed his last. When Peter came he found only his father's dead body.

On the day of Landolin's funeral, Cushion-Kate's body floated to the shore. She had a rope tightly clasped in her hand.

* * * * *

To-day Peter is master at the farm, but he is only called so; for he is, they say, not master of a penny. He married Titus' daughter, and she is said to be sharp-tongued; some even say a shrew.

Anton Armbruster is Burgomaster of Rothenkirch; and Thoma wears her honors with becoming dignity.

THE END.

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