

## XVII.

### *THE PILGRIMS.*

THE twilight of one of those burning days of summer whose unclouded sky seems to speak to man of happier realms, had already flung broad shadows over the valley of Unspunnen; whilst the departing rays of a gorgeous sunset continued to glitter on the summits of the surrounding hills. Gradually, however, the glowing tints deepened; then grew darker and darker; until they finally yielded to the still more sober hues of night.

Beneath an avenue of lime-trees, which, from their size and luxuriance, appeared almost coeval with the soil in which they grew, Burkhardt of Unspunnen wandered to and fro with uneasy step, as if some recent sorrow occupied his troubled mind. At times he stood with his eyes stedfastly fixed on the earth, as if he expected to see the object of his contemplation start forth from its bosom; at other times he would raise his eyes to the summits of the trees, whose branches, now gently agitated by the night breeze, seemed to breathe sighs of compassion in remembrance of those happy hours which had once been passed beneath their welcome shade. When, however, advancing from beneath them, he beheld the deep blue heavens with the bright host of stars, hope sprang up within him at the thoughts of that glory to which those heavens and those stars, all lovely and beautiful as they seem, are but the faint heralds, and

for a time dissipated the grief which had so long weighed heavily upon his heart.

From these reflections he was suddenly aroused by the tones of a manly voice addressing him. Burkhardt advancing, beheld, standing in the light of the moon, two pilgrims, clothed in the usual coarse and sombre garb, with their broad hats drawn over their brows.

“Praise be to God!” said the pilgrim who had just before awakened Burkhardt’s attention, and who, from his height and manner, appeared to be the elder of the two. His words were echoed by a voice whose gentle and faltering accents showed the speaker to be still but of tender years.

“Whither are you going, friends? what seek you here, at this late hour?” said Burkhardt. “If you wish to rest you after your journey enter, and with God’s blessing, and my hearty welcome, recruit yourselves.”

“Noble sir, you have more than anticipated our petition,” replied the elder pilgrim; “our duty has led us far from our native land, being bound on a pilgrimage to fulfil the vow of a beloved parent. We have been forced during the heat of the day to climb the steep mountain paths; and the strength of my brother, whose youth but ill befits him for such fatigues, began to fail, when the sight of your castle’s towers, which the moon’s clear beams discovered to us, revived our hopes. We resolved to beg a night’s lodging under your hospitable roof, that we might be enabled, on to-morrow’s dawn, to pursue our weary way.”

“Follow me, my friends,” said Burkhardt, as he, with quickened step, preceded them, that he might give some orders for their entertainment. The pilgrims rejoicing in so kind a reception, followed the knight in silence into a high-vaulted saloon, over which the tapers that were placed in branches against the walls cast a solemn but

pleasing light, well in accordance with the present feelings of the parties.

The knight then discerned two countenances, the pleasing impression of which was considerably heightened by the modest yet easy manner with which the youthful pair received their host's kind attentions. Much struck with their appearance and demeanour, Burkhardt was involuntarily led back into the train of thoughts from which their approach had aroused him ; and the scenes of former days flitted before him as he recollected that in this hall his beloved child was ever wont to greet him with her welcome smile on his return from the battle or the chase ; brief scenes of happiness, which had been followed by events that had cankered his heart, and rendered memory but an instrument of bitterness and chastisement.

Supper was soon after served, and the pilgrims were supplied with the greatest attention, yet conversation wholly languished ; for his melancholy reflections occupied Burkhardt, and respect, or perhaps a more kindly feeling, towards their host and benefactor, seemed to have sealed the lips of his youthful guests. After supper, however, a flask of the baron's old wine cheered his flagging spirits, and emboldened the elder pilgrim to break through the spell which had chained them.

"Pardon me, noble sir," said he, "for I feel it must seem intrusive in me to seek the cause of that sorrow which renders you so sad a spectator of the bounty and happiness which you liberally bestow upon others. Believe me, it is not the impulse of a mere idle curiosity that makes me express my wonder that you can thus dwell alone in this spacious and noble mansion, the prey to a deeply-rooted sorrow. Would that it were in our power to alleviate the cares of one who with such bounteous hand relieves the wants of his poorer brethren !"

"I thank you for your sympathy, good pilgrim," said

the old noble, "but what can it avail you to know the story of those griefs which have made this earth a desert? and which are, with rapid pace, conducting me where alone I can expect to find rest. Spare me, then, the pain of recalling scenes which I would fain bury in oblivion. As yet, you are in the spring of life, when no sad remembrance gives a discordant echo of past follies, or of joys irrecoverably lost. Seek not to darken the sunshine of your youth with a knowledge of those fierce, guilty beings who, in listening to the fiend-like suggestions of their passions, are led astray from the paths of rectitude, and tear asunder the ties of nature."

Burkhardt thus sought to avoid the entreaty of the pilgrim. But the request was still urged with such earnest though delicate persuasion, and the rich tones of the stranger's voice awoke within him so many thoughts of days long, long past, that the knight felt himself almost irresistibly impelled to unburden his long-closed heart to one who seemed to enter into its feelings with a sincere cordiality.

"Your artless sympathy has won my confidence, my young friends," said he, "and you shall learn the cause of my sorrow.

"You see me here, lonely and forsaken. But fortune once looked upon me with her blandest smiles; and I felt myself rich in the consciousness of my prosperity, and the gifts which bounteous Heaven had bestowed. My powerful vassals made me a terror to those enemies which the protection that I was ever ready to afford to the oppressed and helpless brought against me. My broad and fertile possessions enabled me, with liberal hand, to relieve the wants of the poor, and to exercise the rights of hospitality in a manner becoming my state and my name. But of all the gifts which Heaven had showered upon me, that which I most prized was a wife, whose virtues had made her the idol of both the rich and the poor. But she who

was already an angel, and unfitted for this grosser world, was too soon, alas! claimed by her kindred spirits. One brief year alone had beheld our happiness.

“My grief and anguish were most bitter, and would soon have laid me in the same grave with her, but that she had left me a daughter, for whose dear sake I struggled earnestly against my affliction. In her were now centred all my cares, all my hopes, all my happiness. As she grew in years, so did her likeness to her sainted mother increase; and every look and gesture reminded me of my Agnes. With her mother’s beauty I had, with fond presumption, dared to cherish the hope that Ida would inherit her mother’s virtues.

“Greatly did I feel the void that my irreparable loss had made; but the very thought of marrying again seemed to me a profanation. If, however, even for a single instant I had entertained this disposition, one look at our child would have crushed it, and made me cling with still fonder hope to her, in the fond confidence that she would reward me for every sacrifice that I could make. Alas! my friends, this hope was built on an unsure foundation! and my heart is even now tortured when I think on those delusive dreams.

“Ida, with the fondest caresses, would dispel each care from my brow; in sickness and in health she watched me with the tenderest solicitude; her whole endeavour seemed to be to anticipate my wishes. But, alas! like the serpent, which only fascinates to destroy, she lavished these caresses and attentions to blind me, and wrap me in fatal security.

“Many and deep were the affronts, revenged indeed, but not forgotten, which had long since caused (with shame I avow it) a deadly hatred between myself and Rupert, Lord of Wädischwyl, which the slightest occasion seemed to increase to a degree of madness. As he dared no longer throw down the gauntlet, he found

means, much harder than steel or iron, to glut his revenge upon me.

“Duke Berchtold of Zähringen, one of those wealthy and powerful tyrants who are the very pests of that society of whose rights they ought to be the ready guardians, had made a sudden irruption on the peaceful inhabitants of the mountains, seizing their herds and flocks, and insulting their wives and daughters. Though possessed of great courage, yet being not much used to warfare, these unhappy men found it impossible to resist the tyrant, and hastened to entreat my instant succour. Without a moment’s delay, I assembled my brave vassals, and marched against the spoiler. After a long and severe struggle, God blessed our cause, and our victory was complete.

“On the morning that I was to depart on my return to my castle, one of my followers announced to me that the duke had arrived in my camp, and wished an immediate interview with me. I instantly went forth to meet him; and Berchtold, hastening towards me with a smile, offered me his hand in token of reconciliation. I frankly accepted it, not suspecting that falsehood could lurk beneath so open and friendly an aspect.

“‘My friend,’ said he, ‘for such I must call you; your valour in this contest has won my esteem, although I could at once convince you that I have just cause of quarrel with the insolent mountaineers. But, in spite of your victory in this unjust strife, into which doubtless you were induced to enter by the misrepresentations of those villains, yet as my nature abhors to prolong dissensions, I would willingly cease to think that we are enemies, and commence a friendship which, on my part, at least, shall not be broken. In token, therefore, that you do not mistrust a fellow-soldier, return with me to my castle, that we may there drown all remembrance of our past dissensions.’

“During a long time I resisted his importunity, for I had now been more than a year absent from my home, and was doubly impatient to return, as I fondly imagined that my delay would occasion much anxiety to my daughter. But the duke, with such apparent kindness and in such a courteous manner, renewed and urged his solicitations, that I could resist no longer.

“His Highness entertained me with the greatest hospitality and unremitting attention. But I soon perceived that an *honest* man is more in his element amidst the toils of the battle than amongst the blandishments of a Court, where the lip and the gesture carry welcome, but where the heart, to which the tongue is never the herald, is corroded by the unceasing strifes of jealousy and envy. I soon, too, saw that my rough and undisguised manners were an occasion of much mirth to the perfumed and essenced nothings who crowded the halls of the duke. I however stifled my resentment, when I considered that these creatures lived but in his favour, like those swarms of insects which are warmed into existence from the dunghill, by the sun's rays.

“I had remained the unwilling guest of the duke during some days, when the arrival of a stranger of distinction was announced with much ceremony; this stranger I found to be my bitterest foe, Rupert of Wädischwyl. The duke received him with the most marked politeness and attention, and more than once I fancied that I perceived the precedence of me was studiously given to my enemy. My frank yet haughty nature could ill brook this disparagement; and, besides, it seemed to me that I should but play the hypocrite if I partook of the same cup with the man for whom I entertained a deadly hatred.

“I resolved therefore to depart, and sought his Highness to bid him farewell. He appeared much distressed at my resolution, and earnestly pressed me to avow the

cause of my abrupt departure. I candidly confessed that the undue favour which I thought he showed to my rival, was the cause.

“‘I am hurt, deeply hurt,’ said the duke, affecting an air of great sorrow, ‘that my friend, and that friend the valiant Unspunnen, should think thus unjustly, dare I add, thus meanly of me. No, I have not even in thought wronged you; and to prove my sincerity and my regard for your welfare, know that it was not chance which conducted your adversary to my court. He comes in consequence of my eager wish to reconcile two men whom I so much esteem, and whose worth and excellence place them amongst the brightest ornaments of our favoured land. Let me, therefore,’ said he, taking my hand and the hand of Rupert, who had entered during our discourse, ‘let me have the satisfaction of reconciling two such men, and of terminating your ancient discord. You cannot refuse a request so congenial to that holy faith which we all profess. Suffer me therefore to be the minister of peace, and to suggest that, in token and in confirmation of an act which will draw down Heaven’s blessing on us all, you will permit our holy Church to unite in one your far-famed lovely daughter with Lord Rupert’s only son, whose virtues, if reports speak truly, render him no undeserving object of her love.’

“A rage, which seemed in an instant to turn my blood into fire, and which almost choked my utterance, took possession of me.

“‘What!’ exclaimed I, ‘what, think you that I would thus sacrifice, *thus* cast away my precious jewel! thus debase my beloved Ida? No, by her sainted mother, I swear that rather than see her married to *his* son, I would devote her to the cloister! Nay, I would rather see her dead at my feet than suffer her purity to be sullied by such contamination!’

“‘But for the presence of his Highness,’ cried Rupert

wrathfully, 'your life should instantly answer for this insult! Nathless, I will well mark you, and watch you, too, my lord; and if you escape my revenge, you are more than man.'

"'Indeed, indeed, my Lord of Unspunnen,' said the duke, 'you are much too rash. Your passion has clouded your reason; and, believe me, you will live to repent having so scornfully refused my friendly proposal.'

"'You may judge me rash, my Lord Duke, and perhaps think me somewhat too bold, because I dare assert the truth in the courts of princes. But since my tongue cannot frame itself to speak that which my heart does not dictate, and my plain but honest manner seems to displease you, I will, with your Highness's permission, withdraw to my own domain, whence I have been but too long absent.'

"'Undoubtedly, my lord, you have my permission,' said the duke haughtily, and at the same time turning coldly from me.

"My horse was brought, I mounted him with as much composure as I could command, and I breathed more freely as I left the castle far behind.

"During the second day's journey I arrived within a near view of my own native mountains, and I felt doubly invigorated as their pure breezes were wafted towards me. Still the fond anxiety of a father for his beloved child, and that child his only treasure, made the way seem doubly long. But as I approached the turn of the road which is immediately in front of my castle, I almost then wished the way lengthened; for my joy, my hopes, and my apprehensions crowded upon me almost to suffocation. 'A few short minutes, however,' I thought, 'and then the truth, ill or good, will be known to me.'

"When I came in full sight of my dwelling, all seemed in peace; nought exhibited any change since I had left it. I spurred my horse on to the gate, but as I advanced

the utter stillness and desertion of all around surprised me. Not a domestic, not a peasant, was to be seen in the courts; it appeared as if the inhabitants of the castle were still asleep.

“‘Merciful Heaven!’ I thought, ‘what can this stillness forebode! Is she, is my beloved child dead?’

“I could not summon courage to pull the bell. Thrice I attempted, yet thrice the dread of learning the awful truth prevented me. One moment, one word, even one sign, and I might be a forlorn, childless, wretched man, for ever! None but a father can feel or fully sympathize in the agony of those moments! none but a father can ever fitly describe them!

“I was aroused from this inactive state by my faithful dog springing towards me to welcome my return with his boisterous caresses, and deep and loud-toned expressions of his joy. Then the old porter, attracted by the noise, came to the gate, which he instantly opened; but, as he was hurrying forward to meet me, I readily perceived that some sudden and painful recollection checked his eagerness. I leaped from my horse quickly, and entered the hall. All the other domestics now came forward, except my faithful steward Wilfred, he who had been always the foremost to greet his master.

“‘Where is my daughter? where is your mistress?’ I eagerly exclaimed; ‘let me but know that she lives!’

“The faithful Wilfred, who had now entered the hall, threw himself at my feet, and with the tears rolling down his furrowed cheeks, earnestly pressed my hand, and hesitatingly informed me that my daughter *lived*: was well, he believed, but—had quitted the castle.

“‘Now, speak more quickly, old man,’ said I hastily, and passionately interrupting him. ‘What is it you can mean? my daughter lives; my Ida is well, but she is *not here*. Now, have you and my vassals proved recreants, and suffered my castle in my absence to be robbed of its

greatest treasure? Speak! speak plainly, I command ye!’

“‘It is with anguish, as great almost as your own can be, my beloved master, that I make known to you the sad truth that your daughter has quitted her father’s roof to become the wife of Conrad, the son of the Lord of Wädischwyl.’

“‘The wife of Lord Rupert’s son! my Ida the wife of the son of him whose very name my soul loathes!’

“My wrath now knew no bounds; the torments of hell seemed to have changed the current of my blood. In the madness of my passion I even cursed my own dear daughter! Yes, pilgrim, I even cursed her on whom I so fondly doted; for whose sake alone life for me had any charms. Oh! how often since have I attempted to recall that curse! and these bitter tears, which even now I cannot control, witness how severe has been my repentance of that awful and unnatural act!

“Dreadful were the imprecations which I heaped upon my enemy; and deep was the revenge I swore. I know not to what fearful length my unbridled passion would have hurried me, had I not, from its very excess, sunk senseless into the arms of my domestics. When I recovered, I found myself in my own chamber, and Wilfred seated near me. Some time, however, elapsed before I came to a clear recollection of the past events; and when I did, it seemed as if an age of crime and misery had weighed me down, and chained my tongue. My eye involuntarily wandered to that part of the chamber where hung my daughter’s portrait. But this the faithful old man—who had not removed it, no doubt thinking that to do so would have offended me—had contrived to hide, by placing before it a piece of armour, which seemed as though it had accidentally fallen into that position.

“Many more days elapsed ere I was enabled to listen to the particulars of my daughter’s flight, which I will, not to detain you longer with my griefs, now briefly relate.—It appeared that, urged by the fame of her beauty, and by a curiosity most natural, I confess to youth, Conrad of Wädischwyl had, for a long time sought, but sought in vain, to see my Ida. Chance at length, however, favoured him. On her way to hear mass at our neighbouring monastery, he beheld her; and beheld her but to love. Her holy errand did not prevent him from addressing her; and well he knew how to gain the ear of one so innocent, so unsuspecting as my Ida! Too soon, alas! did his flatteries win their way to her guiltless heart.

“My child’s affection for her father was unbounded; and readily would she have sacrificed her life for mine. But when love has once taken possession of the female heart, too quickly drives he thence those sterner guests, reason and duty. Suffice it therefore to say she was won, and induced to unite herself to Wädischwyl, before my return, by his crafty and insidious argument that I should be more easily persuaded to give them my pardon and my blessing, when I found that the step that she had taken was irrevocable. With almost equal art, he pleaded too that their union would doubtless heal the breach between the families of Wädischwyl and Unspunnen; and thus terminate that deadly hatred which my gentle Ida, ever the intercessor for peace, had always condemned. By this specious sophistry my poor child was prevailed upon to tear herself from the heart of a fond parent, to unite herself with the son of that parent’s most bitter enemy.”

The pain of these recollections so overcame Burkhardt, that some time elapsed ere he could master his feelings. At length he proceeded.

“My soul seemed now to have but one feeling, *revenge*.

All other passions were annihilated by this master one ; and I instantly prepared myself and my vassals to chastise this worse than robber. But such satisfaction was (I now thank God) denied me ; for the Duke of Zähringen soon gave me memorable cause to recollect his parting words. Having attached himself with his numerous followers to my rival's party, these powerful chiefs suddenly invaded my domain. A severe struggle against most unequal numbers ensued. But, at length, though my brave retainers would fain have prolonged the hopeless strife, resolved to stop a needless waste of blood, I left the field to my foes ; and, with the remnant of my faithful soldiers, hastened, in deep mortification, to bury myself within these walls. This galling repulse prevented all possibility of reconciliation with my daughter, whom I now regarded as the cause of my disgrace ; and, consequently, I forbade her name even to be mentioned in my presence.

“ Years rolled on ; and I had no intelligence of her until I learned by a mere chance that she had with her husband quitted her native land. Altogether, more than twenty, to me long, long years, have now passed since her flight ; and though, when time brought repentance, and my anger and revenge yielded to better feelings, I made every effort to gain tidings of my poor child, I have not yet been able to discover any further traces of her. Here therefore have I lived a widowed, childless, heart-broken old man. But I have at least learned to bow to the dispensations of an all-wise Providence, which has in its justice stricken me, for thus remorselessly cherishing that baneful passion which Holy Law so expressly forbids. Oh ! how I have yearned to see my beloved child ! how I have longed to clasp her to this withered, blighted heart ! With scalding tears of the bitterest repentance have I revoked those deadly curses, which, in the plenitude of my unnatural wrath, I dared to utter

daily. Ceaselessly do I now weary Heaven with my prayers to obliterate all memory of those fatal imprecations ; or to let them fall on my own head, and shower down only its choicest blessings on that of my beloved child ! But a fear, which freezes my veins with horror, constantly haunts me lest the maledictions which I dared to utter in my moments of demoniac vindictiveness, should, in punishment for my impiety, have been fulfilled.

“ Often, in my dreams, do I behold my beloved child ; but her looks are always in sadness, and she ever seems mildly but most sorrowfully to upbraid me for having so inhumanly cast her from me. Yet she must, I fear, have died long ere now ; for, were she living, she would not, I think, have ceased to endeavour to regain the affections of a father who once loved her so tenderly. It is true that at first she made many efforts to obtain my forgiveness. Nay, I have subsequently learned that she even knelt at the threshold of my door, and piteously supplicated to be allowed to see me. But my commands had been so peremptory, and the steward who had replaced Wilfred, after his death, was of so stern and unbending a disposition, that, just and righteous as was this her last request, it was unfeelingly denied to her. Eternal Heaven ! she whom I had loved as perhaps never father loved before—she whom I had fondly watched almost hourly lest the rude breeze of winter should chill her, or the summer’s heat should scorch her—she whom I had cherished in sickness through many a livelong night, with a mother’s devotion, and more than a mother’s solicitude, even *she*, the only child of my beloved Agnes, and the anxious object of the last moments of her life, was spurned from my door ! from this door whence no want goes unrelieved, and where the very beggar finds rest ! And now, when I would bless the lips that even could say to me ‘ she lives,’ I can nowhere gather the slightest tidings of my child. Ah, had I listened to the

voice of reason, had I not suffered my better feelings to be mastered by the wildest and fellest passions, I might have seen herself, and perhaps her children, happy around me, cheering the evening of my life. And when my last hour shall come, they would have closed my eyes in peace, and, in unfeigned sorrow have daily addressed to Heaven their innocent prayers for my soul's eternal rest.

"You now know, pilgrims, the cause of my grief; and I see by the tears which you have so abundantly shed, that you truly pity the forlorn being before you. Remember him and his sorrows therefore ever in your prayers; and when you kneel at the shrine to which you are bound, let not those sorrows be forgotten."

The elder pilgrim in vain attempted to answer; the excess of his feelings overpowered his utterance. At length, throwing himself at the feet of Burkhardt, and casting off his pilgrim's habits, he with difficulty exclaimed,—

"See here, thine Ida's son! and behold in my youthful companion, thine Ida's daughter! Yes, before you kneel the children of her whom you so much lament. We came to sue for that pardon, for that love, which we had feared would have been denied us. But, thanks be to God, who has mollified your heart, we have only to implore that you will suffer us to use our poor efforts to alleviate your sorrows, and render more bright and cheerful your declining years."

In wild and agitated surprise, Burkhardt gazed intently upon them. It seemed to him as if a beautiful vision were before him, which he feared even a breath might dispel. When, however, he became assured that he was under the influence of no delusion, the tumult of his feelings overpowered him, and he sank senselessly on the neck of the elder pilgrim; who, with his sister's assistance, quickly raised the old man, and by their united

efforts restored him, ere long, to his senses. But when Burkhardt beheld the younger pilgrim, the very image of his lost Ida, bending over him with the most anxious and tender solicitude, he thought that death had ended all his worldly sufferings, and that heaven had already opened to his view.

"Great God!" at length he exclaimed, "I am unworthy of these Thy mercies! Grant me to receive them as I ought! I need not ask," added he after a pause, and pressing the pilgrims to his bosom, "for a confirmation of your statement, or of my own sensations of joy. All, all tells me that you are the children of my beloved Ida. Say, therefore, is your mother dead? or dare I hope once more to clasp her to my heart?"

The elder pilgrim, whose name was Hermann, then stated to him that two years had passed since his parent had breathed her last in his arms. Her latest prayer was, that Heaven would forgive her the sorrow she had caused her father, and forbear to visit her own error on her children's heads. He then added that his father had been dead many years.

"My mother," continued Hermann, drawing from his bosom a small sealed packet, "commanded me, on her deathbed, to deliver this into your own hands. 'My son,' she said, 'when I am dead, if my father still lives, cast yourself at his feet, and desist not your supplications until you have obtained from him a promise that he will read this prayer. It will acquaint him with a repentance that may incite him to recall his curse; and thus cause the earth to lie lightly on all that will shortly remain of his once loved Ida. Paint to him the hours of anguish which even your tender years have witnessed. Weary him, my son, with your entreaties; cease them not until you have wrung from him his forgiveness.'

"As you may suppose, I solemnly engaged to perform my mother's request; and as soon as our grief for the loss

of so dear, so fond a parent, would permit us, my sister and myself resolved, in these pilgrim's habits, to visit your castle ; and, by gradual means, attempt to win your affections, if we found you still relentless, and unwilling to listen to our mother's prayer."

"Praise be to God, my son," said Burkhardt, "at whose command the waters spring from the barren rock, that He has bidden the streams of love and repentance to flow once more from my once barren and flinty heart. But let me not delay to open this sad memorial of your mother's griefs. I wish you, my children, to listen to it, that you may hear both her exculpation and her wrongs."

Burkhardt hid his face in his hands, and remained for some moments earnestly struggling with his feelings. At length he broke the seal, and, with a voice which at times was almost overpowered, read aloud the contents.

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"My beloved father,—if by that fond title your daughter may still address you,—feeling that my sad days are now numbered, I make this last effort, ere my strength shall fail me, to obtain at least your pity for her you once so much loved ; and to beseech you to recall that curse which has weighed too heavily upon her heart. Indeed, my father, I am not quite that guilty wretch you think me. Do not imagine that, neglecting every tie of duty and gratitude, I could have left the tenderest of parents to his widowed lonely home, and have united myself with the son of his sworn foe, had I not fondly, most ardently, hoped, nay, had cherished the idea almost to certainty, that you would, when you found that I was a wife, have quickly pardoned a fault, which the fears of your refusal to our union had alone tempted me to commit. I firmly believed that my husband would then have shared with me my father's love, and have, with his child, the pleasing task of watching over his happiness

and comfort. But never did I for an instant imagine that I was permanently wounding the heart of that father. My youth, and the ardour of my husband's persuasions, must plead some extenuation of my fault.

"The day that I learnt the news of your having pronounced against me that fatal curse, and your fixed determination never more to admit me to your presence, has been marked in characters indelible on my memory. At that moment it appeared as if Heaven had abandoned me, had marked me for its reprobation as a parricide! My brain and my heart seemed on fire, whilst my blood froze in my veins. The chillness of death crept over every limb, and my tongue refused all utterance. I would have wept, but the source of my tears was dried within me.

"How long I remained in this state I know not, as I became insensible, and remained so for some days. On returning to a full consciousness of my wretchedness, I would instantly have rushed to you, and cast myself at your feet, to wring from you, if possible, your forgiveness; but my limbs were incapable of all motion. Soon, too, I learned that the letters which I dictated were returned unopened; and my husband at last informed me that all his efforts to see you had been utterly fruitless.

"Yet the moment I had gained sufficient strength, I went to the castle, but, unfortunately for me, even as I entered, I encountered a stern wretch, to whom my person was not unknown; and he instantly told me that my efforts to see his master would be useless. I used prayers and entreaties; I even knelt upon the bare ground to him. But so far from listening to me, he led me to the gate, and, in my presence, dismissed the old porter who had admitted me, and who afterwards followed my fortunes until the hour of his death. Finding that all my attempts were fruitless, and that several of the old servants had been discarded on my account, with a heart

completely broken, I succumbed to my fate, and abandoned all further attempt.

“After the birth of my son (to whose fidelity and love I trust this sad memorial), my husband, with the tenderest solicitude, employed every means in his power to divert my melancholy, and having had a valuable property in Italy bequeathed to him, prevailed upon me to repair to that favoured and beautiful country. But neither the fond attentions of my beloved Conrad, nor the bright sunshine and luxurious breezes, could overcome a grief so deeply rooted as mine; and I soon found that Italy had less charms for me than my own dear native land, with its dark pine-clad mountains.

“Shortly after we had arrived at Rome, I gave birth to a daughter;—an event which was only too soon followed by the death of my affectionate husband. The necessity of ceaseless attention to my infant in some measure alleviated the intense anguish which I suffered from that most severe loss. Nevertheless, in the very depth of this sorrow, which almost overcharged my heart, Heaven only knows how often, and how remorsefully, while bending over my own dear children in sickness, have I called to mind the anxious fondness with which the tenderest and best of fathers used to watch over me!

“I struggled long and painfully with my feelings, and often did I beseech God to spare my life, that I might be enabled to instruct my children in His holy love and fear, and teach them to atone for the error of their parent. My prayer has in mercy been heard; the boon I supplicated has been granted; and I trust, my beloved father, that if these children should be admitted to your affections, you will find that I have trained up two blessed intercessors for your forgiveness, when it shall have pleased Heaven to have called your daughter to her account before that dread tribunal where a sire's curse will plead so awfully against her. Recall then, oh,

father! recall your dreadful malediction from your poor repentant Ida! and send your blessing as an angel of mercy to plead for her eternal rest. Farewell, my father, for ever! for ever, farewell! By the cross, whose emblem her fevered lips now press; by Him, who in His boundless mercy hung upon that cross, your daughter, your once much loved Ida, implores you, supplicates you, not to let her plead in vain!"

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"My child, my child!" sobbed Burkhardt, as the letter dropped from his hand, "may the Father of All forgive me as freely as I from the depths of my wrung heart forgive you! Would that your remorseful father could have pressed you to his heart, with his own lips have assured you of his affection, and wiped away the tears of sorrow from your eyes! But he will cherish these beloved remembrances of you, and will more jealously guard them than his own life."

Burkhardt passed the whole of the following day in his chamber, to which the good Father Jerome alone was admitted, as the events of the preceding day rendered a long repose absolutely necessary. The following morning, however, he entered the hall, where Hermann and Ida were impatiently waiting for him. His pale countenance still exhibited deep traces of the agitation he had experienced; but having kissed his children most affectionately, he smilingly flung round Ida's neck a massive gold chain, richly wrought, with a bunch of keys appended to it.

"We must duly install our Lady of the Castle," said he, "and invest her with her appropriate authorities.—But, hark! from the sound of the porter's horn it seems as if our hostess would have early calls upon her hospitality. Whom have we here?" continued he, looking out up the avenue. "By St. Hubert, a gay and gallant knight is

approaching, who shall be right welcome—that is, if my lady approve. Well, Willibald, what bring you?—a letter from our good friend the Abbot of St. Anselm. What says he?”

“I am sure that you will not refuse your welcome to a young knight, who is returning by your castle to his home, from the Emperor’s wars. He is well known to me, and I can vouch for his being a guest worthy of your hospitality, which will not be the less freely granted to him because he does not bask in the *golden* smiles of fortune.”

“No, no, that it shall not, my good friend; and if fortune frown upon him, he shall be doubly welcome. Conduct him hither instantly, good Willibald.”

The steward hastened to usher in the stranger, who advanced into the hall with a modest but manly air. He was apparently about twenty-five years of age; his person was such as might well, in the dreams of a young maiden, occupy no unobtrusive place.

“Sir Knight,” said Burkhardt, taking him cordially by the hand, “you are right welcome to my castle, and such poor entertainment as it can afford. We must make you forget your wounds, and the rough usage of a soldier’s life. But, soft, I already neglect my duty in not first introducing our hostess,” added the aged knight, presenting Ida. “By my faith,” he continued, “judging from my lady’s blushing smile, you seem not to have met for the first time. Am I right in my conjecture?”

“We *have* met, sir,” replied Ida, with such confusion as pleasantly implied that the meeting was not indifferently recollected, “in the parlour of the abbess of the Ursulines, at Munich, where I have sometimes been to visit a much valued friend.”

“The abbess,” said the young knight, “was my cousin; and my good fortune more than once gave me the

happiness of seeing in her convent this lady. But little did I expect that amongst these mountains the fickle goddess would again have so favoured a homeless wanderer."

"Well, Sir Knight," replied Burkhardt, "we trust that fortune has been equally favourable to us. And now we will make bold to ask your name; and then, without useless and tedious ceremony, on the part of ourselves and our hostess, bid you again a hearty welcome."

"My name," said the stranger, "is Walter de Blumfeldt; though humble, it has never been disgraced; and with the blessing of Heaven, I hope to hand it down as honoured as I have received it."

Weeks, months rolled on, and Walter de Blumfeldt was still the guest of the Lord of Unspunnen; till, by his virtues, and the many excellent qualities which daily more and more developed themselves, he wound himself around Burkhardt's heart, which the chastened life of the old knight had rendered particularly susceptible of the kindlier feelings. Frequently would he now, with tears in his eyes, declare that he wished he could convince each and all with whom his former habits had caused any difference, how truly he forgave them, and desired their forgiveness.

"Would," said he one day, in allusion to this subject, "that I could have met my old enemy, the Duke of Zähringen, and with a truly heartfelt pleasure and joy have embraced him, and numbered him amongst my friends. But he is gathered to his fathers, and I know not whether he has left any one to bear his honours."

Each time that Walter had offered to depart, Burkhardt had found some excuse to detain him; for it seemed to him that in separating from his young guest he should lose a link of that chain which good fortune had so lately

woven for him. Hermann, too, loved Walter as a brother; and Ida fain would have imagined that she loved him as a sister; but her heart more plainly told her what her colder reasoning sought to hide. Unspunnen, who had for some time perceived the growing attachment between Walter and Ida, was not displeased at the discovery, as he had long ceased to covet riches; and had learnt to prize the sterling worth of the young knight, who fully answered the high terms in which the Prior of St. Anselm always spoke of him. Walking one evening under the shade of that very avenue where he had first encountered Hermann and Ida, he perceived the latter, at some little distance, in conversation with Walter. It was evident to Burkhardt that the young knight was not addressing himself to a very unwilling ear, as Ida was totally regardless of the loud cough with which Burkhardt chose to be seized at that moment; nor did she perceive him, until he exclaimed, or rather vociferated,—

“Do you know, Walter, that, under this very avenue, two pilgrims, bound to some holy shrine, once accosted me; but that, in pity to my sins and forlorn condition, they exchanged their penitential journey for an act of greater charity, and have ever since remained to extend their kind cares to an aged and helpless relative. One, however, of these affectionate beings is now about to quit my abode, and to pass through the rest of this life’s pilgrimage with a helpmate, in the person of the fair daughter of the Baron de Leichtfeldt, and thus leave his poor companion with only the tedious society of an old man. Say, Sir Knight, will thy valour suffer that such wrong be done; or wilt *thou* undertake to conduct this forsaken pilgrim on her way, and guide her through the chequered paths of this variable life? I see by the lowliness with which you bend, and the colour which mantles in your cheek, that I speak not to one insensible to an old man’s appeal. But soft, soft, Sir Knight, my

Ida is not yet canonized, and therefore cannot afford to lose a hand, which inevitably must occur if you continue to press it with such very ardent devotion. But what says our pilgrim; does she accept of thy conduct and service, Sir Knight?"

Ida, scarcely able to support herself, threw herself on Burkhardt's neck. We will not raise the veil which covers the awful moment that renders a man, as he supposes, happy or miserable for ever. Suffice is to say that the day which made Hermann the husband of the daughter of the Baron de Leichtfeldt, saw Ida the wife of Walter de Blumfeldt.

Six months had passed rapidly away to the happy inhabitants of Unspunnen, and Burkhardt seemed almost to have grown young again. He was one of the most active in the preparations which were necessary in consequence of Walter suggesting that they should spend Ida's birthday in a favourite retreat of his and hers. This chosen spot was a beautiful meadow, in front of which meandered a small limpid stream; at the back was a gorgeous amphitheatre of trees, the wide-spreading branches of which cast a refreshing shade over the richly enamelled grass.

In this beauteous retreat were Burkhardt, Walter, and his Ida passing the sultry hours of noon, when Walter, who had been relating some of his adventures at the court of the Emperor, and recounting the magnificence of the tournaments, turning to his bride, said,—

“But what avails all that pomp, my Ida. How happy are we in this peaceful vale! we envy neither princes nor dukes their palaces or their states. What say you, my Ida, could you brook the ceremony of a court, and the pride of royalty? Methinks even the coronet of a duchess would but ill replace the wreath of blushing roses on your head.”

"Gently, my good husband," replied Ida, laughing; "they say, you know, that a woman loves these vanities too dearly in her heart ever to despise them. Then how can you expect so frail a mortal as your poor wife to hold them in contempt? Indeed, I think," added she, assuming an air of burlesque dignity, "that I should make a lofty duchess, and wear my coronet with most becoming grace. And now, by my faith, Walter, I recollect that you have this day, like a true and gallant knight, promised to grant whatever boon I shall ask. On my bended knee, therefore, I humbly sue that if you know any spell or magic wile, to make a princess or a duchess for only a single day, that you will forthwith exercise your art upon me; just in order to enable me to ascertain with how much or how little dignity I could sustain such honours. It is no very difficult matter, Sir Knight: you have only to call in the aid of Number Nip, or some such handy workman of the woods. Answer, most chivalrous husband, for thy disconsolate wife rises not until her prayer is granted."

"Why, Ida, you have indeed craved a rare boon," replied Walter; "and how to grant it may well puzzle my brain till it becomes crazed with the effort. But, let me see, let me see," continued he musingly; "I have it!—Come hither, love, here is your throne," said he, placing her on a gentle eminence richly covered with the fragrant wild thyme and the delicate harebell; "kings might now envy you the incense which is offered to you. And you, noble sir," added he, addressing Burkhardt, "must stand beside her Highness, in quality of chief counsellor. There are your attendants around you; behold that tall oak, he must be your Highness's pursuivant; and yonder slender mountain ashes, your trusty pages."

"This is but a poor fulfilment of the task you have undertaken, Sir mummer," said Ida, with a playful and arch affectation of disappointment.

"Have patience for a brief while, fair dame," replied Walter, laughing; "for now I must awaken your Highness's men-at-arms."

Then, taking from his side a silver horn, he loudly sounded the melodious reveille. As he withdrew the instrument from his lips, a trumpet thrillingly answered to the call; and scarcely had its last notes died away, when, from the midst of the woods, as if the very trees were gifted with life, came forth a troop of horsemen, followed by a body of archers on foot. They had but just entirely emerged, when numerous peasants, both male and female, appeared in their gayest attire; and, together with the horsemen and the archers, rapidly and picturesquely ranged themselves in front of the astonished Ida, who had already abdicated her throne, and clung to the arm of Walter. They then suddenly divided, and twelve pages in richly-embazoned dresses advanced. After them followed six young girls, whose forms and features the Graces might have envied, bearing two coronets placed on embroidered cushions. In the rear of these, supporting his steps with his abbatial staff, walked the venerable Abbot of St. Anselm, who, with his white beard flowing almost to his girdle, and his benign looks that showed the pure commerce of the soul which gave life to an eye the brightness of which seventy years had scarcely diminished, seemed to Ida a being of another world. The young girls then advancing, and kneeling before Walter and his wife, presented the coronets.

Ida, who had remained almost breathless with wonder, could now scarcely articulate,—

"Dear, dear Walter, what is all this pomp—what does—what *can* it mean?"

"Mean! my beloved," replied her husband; "did you not bid me make you a duchess? I have but obeyed your high commands, and I now salute you, *Duchess* of Zähringen!"

The whole multitude then made the woods resound with the acclamation,—

*“Long live the Duke and Duchess of Zähringen !”*

Walter, having for some moments enjoyed the unutterable amazement of the now breathless Ida, and the less evident but perhaps equally intense surprise of Burkhardt, turning to the latter, said,—

“My more than father, you see in me the son of your once implacable enemy, the Duke of Zähringen. He has been many years gathered to his fathers; and I, as his only son, have succeeded to his title and his possessions. My heart, my liberty, were entirely lost in the parlour of the Abbess of the Ursulines. But when I learnt whose child my Ida was, and your sad story, I resolved ere I would make her mine to win not only her love, but also your favour and esteem. How well I have succeeded, this little magic circle on my Ida’s finger is my witness. It will add no small measure to your happiness to know that my father had for many years repented of the wrongs which he had done you; and, as much as possible to atone for them, entrusted the education of his son to the care of this my best of friends, the Abbot of St. Anselm, that he might learn to shun the errors into which his sire had unhappily fallen. And now,” continued he, advancing, and leading Ida towards the abbot, “I have only to beg your blessing, and that this lady, whom through Heaven’s goodness I glory to call my wife, be invested with those insignia of the rank which she is so fit to adorn.”

Walter, or, as we must now call him, the Duke of Zähringen, with Ida, then lowly knelt before the venerable abbot, whilst the holy man, with tears in his eyes, invoked upon them the blessings of Heaven. His Highness then rising, took one of the coronets, and placing it on Ida’s head, said,—

“Mayst thou be as happy under this glittering coronet,

as thou wert under the russet hood in which I first beheld thee."

"God and our Lady aid me!" replied the agitated Ida; "and may He grant that I may wear it with as much humility. Yet thorns, they say, spring up beneath a crown."

"True, my beloved," said the duke, "and they also grow beneath the peasant's homely cap. But the rich alchemy of my Ida's virtues will over convert all thorns into the brightest jewels of her diadem."

FINIS.