

Select Popular Tales from the German of Musaeus — Mute Love

Mute Love.

here was once a wealthy merchant, called Melchior of Bremen, who always used to stroke his chin with a kind of complacence when he heard the parable of the rich man in the Gospel read, whom, in comparison with himself, he considered but a poor shopkeeper. Such, indeed, was his wealth, that he had the floor of his banqueting-room paved with dollars; for luxury, though of a more substantial kind, was prevalent in those rude times, as well as now: and while his friends and fellow-citizens were not much pleased at such a proof of his ostentation, yet it was, in fact, intended more as a mercantile speculation than for idle display. He was sagacious enough to see that reports would go abroad of his excessive wealth, which would greatly add to his credit even among those who censured his vanity. This was exactly the case; his idle capital of old dollars, so prudently as well as ostentatiously employed, brought large returns of interest: it was a visible bond of payment which gave vigour to all the wily merchant's undertakings. Yet, in the end, it proved the rock upon which the stability of his house was wrecked.

Melchior one day partaking rather too freely of a rich liquor at a city feast, died suddenly, without having time even to make his will. His son, however, having just attained the age of manhood, succeeded to the whole of the property. Franz was a noble-spirited youth, endowed with many excellent qualities. Health glowed on his cheek, while content and animation shone in his dark eyes. He grew like a vigorous plant, which only requires water and a hardier soil to bear noble fruit, but which shoots to waste in too luxuriant ground. The father's prosperity, as is often the case, was unhappily the son's ruin; for no sooner did Franz find himself possessed of so princely a fortune, than he contrived how he could best get rid of it: and instead of smiling in scorn at the rich man in the parable, he imitated his example only too closely. He feasted in the most sumptuous manner, and altogether forgot his duties in the continual round of pleasure into which he had plunged himself.

No feasts could be compared for superfluity and splendour with those he gave, nor will the good city of Bremen ever behold such substantial and magnificent proofs of hospitality, as long as it is a city, again; each citizen was presented with a fine joint of roast beef, with a flask of Spanish wine; the people drank to the health and long life of old Melchior's son, and young Franz became the hero of the day.

In this giddy maze of delights, no wonder he never thought of a balance of accounts, then the “vade mecum” of our old merchants, but since unfortunately gone too much out of fashion. Hence the evident tendency of the modern system towards heavy losses and utter bankruptcy, as if the scale were drawn down by magnetic influence. Still the old merchant’s coffers had been so well stocked as to give his son no sort of uneasiness; hitherto his difficulty was rather how to dispose of his annual income. Open house, well-furnished tables, and throngs of parasites, loungers, &c., left our hero small time for reflection; one kind of pleasure followed another; his friends took care to provide a succession of extravagances lest he should pause, and think, and thus the prey should be snatched from their plundering grasp.

Suddenly the stream of prosperity ceased to flow; Franz found he had drained his father’s money-casks to their very lees. He ordered his steward one day to pay a large sum: he was not, however, in a condition to meet the demand, and he returned the bill. This was a severe reflection upon the young spendthrift; but he flew into a violent passion with his cashier, instead of blaming himself. He gave himself no kind of trouble to inquire into the cause; like too many thoughtless characters, he heaped reproaches upon his steward, and shrugging up his shoulders, ordered him, in very laconic style, to “find means!”

Now was the time for the old usurers and brokers of the city. They furnished Franz with means to continue his mad career, though on very exorbitant terms. In the eye of a creditor, a room well paved with dollars was then better security than bills upon an American house, or even upon the United Provinces. It served as a good palliative for a period; but it shortly got wind that the silver pavement had disappeared, and was replaced with one of stone. Judicial inquiry on the part of the creditors followed, and it was ascertained to be the fact. No one could deny that a floor of variegated marble, like mosaic, was more elegant for a banqueting-hall than one of old worn-out dollars; but the creditors, entertaining little reverence for his improved taste, one and all demanded their money. This not being paid, a commission of bankruptcy was issued against him; and forthwith an inventory was made of all the property,—the family mansion, the magazines, grounds, gardens, furniture, &c. All was then put up to auction, and Franz found himself deprived of all he possessed. He had saved a few of his mother’s jewels, however, from the general wreck, and with the help of these he contrived to prolong existence for a period, though not in a very enviable manner.

He now saw clearly through his past errors. He lamented and repented of his faults, and tried his best to resign himself to his altered lot. He took up his abode in a retired quarter of the city where the sunbeams seldom shone, except towards

the longest day, when they occasionally glanced over the high-built roofs. Here he found all he looked for in his present reduced circumstances. He dined at his host's frugal board; his fire-side was a protection against the cold; and he had a roof to shelter him from the effects of rain and wind: here, too, a new object awakened his attention and engaged his thoughts. Opposite his window, in the same narrow street, lived a respectable widow, who, in expectation of better times, gained a scanty livelihood, by means of her spinning-wheel, on which, with the assistance of a marvellously fair maiden, her only daughter, she produced every day such a quantity of yarn that it would have reached round the whole city of Bremen, ditch, walls, suburbs and all. These two spinners were not born for the wheel; they came of a good family, and had lived, at one time, in opulence and prosperity. The husband of Brigitta, and the father of young Mela, had been the owner of a merchant-vessel, which he freighted himself, and in which he made every year a voyage to Antwerp. But while Mela was yet a child, a dreadful storm buried him and his ship, with the crew and a rich cargo, in the waves.

Her mother, a sensible well-principled woman, bore the loss of her husband and of her whole property with wise composure. Notwithstanding her poverty, she refused, with a noble pride, all the offers of assistance which the compassion or benevolence of her friends and relations prompted them to make; deeming it dishonourable to receive alms, as long as she could hope to obtain the means of subsistence by the labour of her hands. She resigned her large house and its costly furniture to the hard-hearted creditors of her late husband, took her present humble dwelling, and spun from morning till night. At first this occupation appeared very irksome, and she often moistened the thread with her tears. By her industry, however, she was enabled to preserve herself independent, and to save herself from incurring unpleasant obligations; she accustomed her daughter to the same mode of life, and lived so sparingly that she even saved a small sum, which she laid out in buying lint; and, from that time, carried on a trade in that article on a small scale.

This excellent woman, however, whilst doing her best in her poor circumstances, nevertheless ventured to look forward to better times, hoping one day to be restored to something of that prosperity she had been deprived of, and to enjoy, in the autumn of her life, some of that sunshine which had gladdened its spring. Nor was this hope altogether an empty dream; it sprung from rational observation. She saw her daughter's charms unfold as she grew up, like a blooming rose, but not like it to fade and fall as soon as it is ripened into beauty. She knew her to be modest and virtuous, and gifted with such excellent qualities, that she already found in her society consolation and happiness. She therefore denied herself, sometimes, the common necessities of life, to give her daughter

the advantage of a respectable education; being convinced that, if a maiden only answered the description which Solomon has given of a good wife, such a costly pearl would be sought after, and selected as the brightest ornament an honest man could possess.

Virtue, united with beauty, were then quite as valuable in the eyes of young men, as powerful relations and a large fortune are at present. There were, likewise, a far greater number of competitors for a maiden's hand, a wife being then considered as the most essential, and not as (according to the present refined economical theory) the most unnecessary part of the household. The beautiful Mela, it is true, bloomed more like a rare costly plant in a greenhouse, than a healthy shrub in the free air. She lived quietly, and in retirement, under her mother's care and protection; visited neither the public walks, nor assembly-rooms, and, contrary to all the present principles of marrying policy, scarcely once in a twelvemonth went outside of her native city. Mothers, now-a-days, know better; they look upon their daughters as a capital, which must circulate to produce interest; in those times, they were kept under lock and key, like hoarded treasure; but bankers knew where it was hidden, and how to obtain it.

One day, as Franz was at the window, observing the weather, he saw the beautiful Mela returning from church, where she regularly accompanied her mother to service. In his days of prosperity, he had paid little or no attention to the other sex; the chords of his finer feelings had never yet been struck, his senses having been blunted and bewildered by the incessant intoxication of pleasure, in which his companions had kept him.

Now, however, that he had become a wiser and better man, the stormy waves of youthful turbulence were still, and the slightest breeze ruffled the mirror-like surface of his soul. He was enchanted at the sight of the most lovely woman he had ever seen! and he began questioning his landlord concerning his fair neighbour, and her mother, from whom he learnt the greater part of what the reader already knows.

He now felt still more vexed with himself for his wasteful extravagance, as it had deprived him of the means of providing handsomely for the lovely Mela, which his growing inclination would have prompted him to do. His miserable lodgings now appeared a palace to him, and he would not have exchanged them for the best house in Bremen. He passed great part of his time at the window, watching for his beloved; and, when she appeared, he felt a keener sensation of pleasure than the astronomer experienced, who first saw Venus pass over the sun's disk.

Unfortunately for him, the careful mother was vigilant in her observations, and soon discovered the cause of his constant presence at the window. As he was none

of her favourites, on account of his former behaviour, she was so much offended at his continual watching and staring, that she kept her window-curtains close drawn, and desired Mela never to appear at the window. When she took her to church, she put a thick veil over her face, and hurried round the corner as fast as she could to screen her treasure from the unhallowed gaze of our hero.

Poor Franz was not famous for his penetration; but love awakens all our faculties. He perceived that he had given offence by his intruding looks, and immediately retreated from the window. He now employed all his invention to find out the means of continuing his observations unseen, in which he succeeded without much trouble. He hired the largest looking-glass he could get, and hung it up in his room in such a manner that it reflected every thing which passed in the opposite room of his fair neighbour. For many days he never showed himself, till, at length, the curtains were drawn back by degrees, and the mirror sometimes received and reflected the beautiful form of the maiden to the great delight of its possessor. As love rooted itself deeper in his heart, his desire to make his feelings known to Mela grew stronger, and he resolved, if possible, to learn the state of her heart towards him.

It was, indeed, much more difficult in those modest times for youths to get introduced to the daughters of a family than at present; and Franz's forlorn condition added to those difficulties. Notwithstanding this, however, things took their course as well then as now. Christenings, weddings, and burials, especially in a city like Bremen, were the privileged occasions for negotiating love affairs; as the old proverb says, "No marriage takes place but another is planned." An impoverished spendthrift, however, not being a desirable son, or brother-in-law, our hero was invited neither to weddings, christenings, nor burials. The by-ways of influencing the lady's-maid, waiting-woman, or some other subordinate personage, was, in Franz's case, likewise blocked up, for mother Brigitta kept neither one nor the other; she carried on her little trade in lint and yarn herself, and was nearly as inseparable from her daughter as her shadow.

Under such circumstances, it was impossible for Franz to open his heart to his beloved, either by speaking or writing; but he soon invented a language which seems expressly intended for the idiom of lovers. The honour of being the first inventor does not, indeed, belong to our hero; long before his time, the sentimental Celadons of Italy and Spain were in the habit of chanting forth the feelings of their hearts, under the balconies of their donnas. Their melodious pathos, more powerful than the eloquence of Cicero, or Demosthenes, rarely failed in its aim, and not only expressed the lover's feelings, but was usually successful in exciting in the object of his flame similar warm and tender emotions.

In a doleful hour, therefore, he seized his lute, and calling forth strains that far surpassed his usual powers, in about a month he made such rapid progress, that he might very well have been admitted to play an accompaniment to Amphion. To be sure, his sweetest melodies were at first little noticed, but, ere long, they attracted the admiration of the whole neighbourhood; for, the moment he touched his lute, mothers succeeded in quieting their children, the riotous little urchins ran away from the doors, and, at length, he had the delight of beholding a white hand open the window opposite, when he began to prelude an air. Having so far gained Mela's ear, he played several happy and triumphant strains, as if to express his joy; but when her mother's presence or other occupations deprived him of her sight, his sorrow broke forth in mournful tones, expressive of the agony of disappointed affection.

Mela proved an apt pupil, and soon acquired a knowledge of the new language. Indeed, she often made an experiment, to learn whether she interpreted it correctly, and invariably found that she could influence the invisible musician's tones according to her own feelings. Mild and modest young maidens are more correct in observation, and possess quicker perceptions than those wild careless creatures, sporting from object to object, like a simple butterfly, without fixing long upon any. Fair Mela's vanity was somewhat flattered at finding she could bring just such strains as she liked best, whether mournful or merry, from her young neighbour's lute.

Occupied with trade, her mother paid no kind of attention to the music; and her daughter did not think it necessary to impart her late observations. She rather wished, either from inclination, or as a proof of her sagacity, to show that she understood, and also knew how to reply to the symbolical language, in some other way that would discover equal skill. With this view, she requested her mother to permit her to place a few flower-pots in the window, and the good lady no longer observing the prying young neighbour, and dreaming of no possibility of any harm, easily gave her permission. Now, to attend to all these flowers, to water, to bind them up to the sticks, and to watch their progress in leafing, and budding, and flowering, brought their young mistress very often to the window. It was now the happy lover's turn to explain these hieroglyphics, and he never failed to send his joyous greetings across the way to the attentive ear of his sweet young gardener, through the medium of his lute. This, at length, began to make a powerful impression on her young heart; and she felt vexed at her mother for calling him a spendthrift, a very worthless fellow, which she took great pleasure in repeating during their conversations after dinner; sometimes even comparing him to the prodigal son. Poor Mela, though with great caution, would venture to take his part, ascribing his follies to youthful indiscretion, and the seductions of bad companions;

adding, "that now that he had had time for reflection, he had, in all probability, become a reformed character."

Meanwhile the youth, whom the old lady was so busily reviling at home, was indulging only the kindest feelings towards her, reflecting in what way, as far as his situation would permit, he could best improve her circumstances. His motive, to be sure, was rather to assist the young than the old lady by his gifts. He had just obtained secret information that her mother had refused Mela a new dress, under pretence of bad times. Apprehensive lest a present from an unknown would be refused, and that all his hopes might be blasted were he to name the donor, it was only by chance that he was relieved from this awkward dilemma, and the affair succeeded according to his wishes. He heard that Mela's mother had been complaining to a neighbour that the crop of flax having proved so small, it had cost her more than her customers would pay her again, and that this branch of the trade was become wholly unprofitable. Franz directly hastened to a goldsmith's, sold a pair of his mother's gold earrings, and purchasing a quantity of lint, sent it by a woman to offer it to his neighbour at a more moderate price. The bargain was concluded, and on such good terms, that on next All Saints' Day the lovely Mela was seen in an elegant new dress.

At the moment our hero was congratulating himself on the success of his stratagem, it was unluckily discovered. For mother Brigitta, desirous of doing a kindness to the good woman who had served her in the sale of the lint, invited her to a treat, very common in those days, before tea and coffee were known, of rice-milk, made very savoury with sugar, richly spiced, and a bottle of Spanish wine. Such a repast not only set the old lady's lips in motion, as she sipped and sipped, but likewise loosened her tongue. She declared she would provide more lint at the same price, granting her merchant would prove agreeable; which, for the best of reasons, she could not doubt. The lady and her daughter very naturally inquired further, until their female curiosity was gratified at the expense of the old woman's discretion, and she revealed the whole secret. Mela changed colour, not a little alarmed at the discovery; though she would have been delighted had her mother not been present. Aware of her strict notions of propriety, she began to tremble for her new gown. The good lady was, indeed, both shocked and displeased at so unexpected a piece of intelligence, and wished as much as her daughter that she alone had been made acquainted with it, lest their young neighbour's liberality, by making an impression on the girl's heart, might eventually thwart all her plans. She forthwith determined to adopt such measures as should eradicate every seed of budding affection which might be lurking in Mela's heart. Spite of the tears and entreaties of its possessor, the gown was next day sold, and the proceeds, together with the profits of her late bargain, returned

under the pretence of an old debt, by the hand of the Hamburg trading messenger, to young Mr. Franz Melchior. He received the packet as an especial blessing on the part of Providence, and only hoped that all the debtors of his father's house might be induced to discharge their debts with as much punctuality as the honest unknown. The truth never glanced across his mind; for the gossiping old body was careful not to betray her own treachery, merely informing him that Madame Brigitta had wholly discontinued the lint trade. His more faithful mirror, however, shortly told him that a great change had occurred in the opposite dwelling in the course of a single night. The flower-pots had vanished, and the blinds were drawn down even closer than before. Mela was rarely to be seen; and when she did appear, like the lovely moon, gleaming through a mass of dark clouds on the benighted traveller, her eyes were downcast, she looked as if she had been weeping, and he fancied he saw her wipe a tear away. The sight of her filled his heart with sorrow; he took his lute, and in soft Lydian measures expressed the language of his grief. Then he tried to discover the source of her anxiety, but here he was quite at a loss. Not many days afterwards he remarked that his looking-glass was useless: it no longer reflected the form of his beloved. On examining more minutely into the cause, he found that the curtains had been removed; that the rooms were not inhabited; his neighbours had left the place in perfect silence only the evening before.

Now, alas! he might approach the window, inhale the fresh air, and gaze as much as he pleased. But what was all this to him—to him, who had just lost sight of the dearest object on the face of the earth! On first recovering from the trying shock, he was led to make many sage reflections; and, among others, the painful one that he had been the cause of their flight. The sum of money he had received, the cessation of the lint trade, and the departure,—each seemed to throw light upon the other. It occurred to him, that Madame Brigitta must have discovered his secret; that he was no favourite with her, and that this was no kind of encouragement. Yet the symbolic language he had held with the fair maiden herself,—the flowers and the music, seemed to revive his spirit. No! he was sure she did not hate him;—her melancholy, and the tears he had seen her shed, not long before she went, served to restore his confidence and courage. Of course, his first effort was to find out the ladies' new residence, in order to renew, by some means or other, his delightful intercourse with the lovely Mela. This he soon accomplished; but he was grown too prudent to follow them, contenting himself with frequenting the same church, whither they went to hear mass, and never omitting to meet them, sometimes in one place, and sometimes in another, on their return. He would then find opportunities of greeting Mela kindly, which was about as gratifying as a billet-doux.

Yet both were mute: neither had exchanged a single word, though they as perfectly comprehended each other as any language could have made them do. Both vowed in their inmost hearts to preserve the strictest secrecy and fidelity, and never even to dream of forgetting one another.

Directly opposite to their humble lodgings lived an opulent brewer, whom the witlings of the day chose to call the King of Hops, on account of his great wealth. He was a spruce young widower, whose time of mourning was just drawing to a close, and who, without offending the laws of decorum, might now look out for a second helpmate.

Scarcely had he seen the fair Mela, than he formed his determination. Early the next morning he made himself as smart as possible, and sallied forth on his marriage business. He had no taste for music, and was ignorant of all the secret symbols and expressions of love; but his brewery was extensive; he had, besides, a large capital lent out at interest, a ship in the Weser, and a farm near the town. With such recommendations, he might well look for success, especially with a maiden who had no marriage portion.

According to the old custom, he went immediately to mother Brigitta, and, like a kind and affectionate neighbour, declared to her the honest intentions he had, in respect to her virtuous daughter. The appearance of an angel could not have delighted the good old lady more than this joyful piece of news. She now saw her well-laid plans about to be accomplished, and her long deferred hopes gratified. She blessed the circumstances that induced her to leave her former habitation; and, in the first spring of joy, looking on Franz as partly the cause of this, she thought with kindness even of him. Though he had never been a favourite with her, still she promised herself to make him, by some means or other, a sharer in her prosperity.

In her heart, she regarded the marriage articles as already signed, but decency required her to take some time for deliberation in so weighty an affair; she therefore thanked the honourable suitor for his good intentions; promised to consult with her daughter on his proposal; and to give him, as she hoped, a favourable answer at the end of eight days. With this, he seemed very well pleased, and politely took his leave.

He had scarcely turned his back, when the spinning-wheel, spite of its faithful services, was banished as useless lumber. When Mela returned from church, she was astonished at observing this sudden alteration in their parlour, where every thing had been put in order, as if it were some great festival of the church. But she was still more astonished at observing her mother, who was unusually industrious,

sitting idle on a week-day, and smiling in such a way as to show she had not met with any disaster. Before she could ask her, however, about this change in the house, the latter gave an explanation of the miracle. Conviction was in her own heart, and a stream of female eloquence flowed from her lips, as she described, in the most glowing colours she could find in the range of her imagination, the happiness which awaited them. She expected from her daughter the gentle blush of modesty, and then a complete resignation to her will. For, in those times, daughters were exactly in the same situation as to marriage, as princesses at present. Their inclinations were never consulted, and they had nothing further to say in the choice of their husbands, than to give their assent at the altar.

Mother Brigitta, however, was much mistaken in her expectations; the fair Mela, far from blushing like a rose at this unexpected piece of news, grew pale as death, and fell fainting into her mother's arms. After she had been called to life and consciousness, her eyes were suffused with tears, as if a great misfortune had befallen her. The experienced matron was soon convinced that the offer of the rich brewer was not received with a willing heart by her daughter, at which she was much astonished, and spared neither prayers nor advice in her endeavours to persuade Mela not to neglect this opportunity of acquiring a rich husband. But Mela was not to be persuaded that her happiness depended upon a match, to which her heart denied its assent.

Her mother's wishes and persuasions in the mean time affected her so powerfully, that she faded away like a blighted flower. Grief gnawed at her heart; sleep came not to quiet and to soothe her; she fell dangerously ill, and demanded the priest to confess her, and give her the sacrament. The tender mother thus saw the pillar of her hopes give way; she reflected that she might lose her daughter, and resolved, after mature consideration, that it would be wiser to resign the present flattering prospect than run the risk of hurrying her child to an early grave; she, therefore, gave up her own wishes to gratify those of her daughter. It cost her many a severe pang to decline such an advantageous alliance; but she at length submitted, like a good mother, to the superior authority of the dear child, and even gave up reproaching her. When the ready widower appeared on the appointed day, to his astonishment he met with a refusal, sweetened however with so much politeness, that it was like wormwood covered with sugar. He soon resigned himself to his fate, and was no more affected than if a bargain for malt had been broken off. Indeed, he had no reason to despair; his native city has never experienced any want of amiable maidens, well qualified to make excellent wives; and, in spite of this failure, before the end of the month, he had selected and obtained the hand of one of them in marriage.

Brigitta was now obliged to bring back the exiled spinning-wheel, and to put it once more into activity. Every thing soon returned to its usual course. Mela recovered her health, her bloom, and her cheerfulness; she was active at her work, and went regularly to church. But her mother could not conceal her grief at the destruction of her favourite plan. She became peevish, discontented, and melancholy. On the day on which the king of hops celebrated his wedding, she was particularly uneasy. When the festive train moved on towards the church, accompanied by all the pipers and trumpeters of the city, she sighed and groaned, as at the hour when she first heard that the raging waves had swallowed her husband and all his fortune. Mela saw the bridal festivities with great composure; even the beautiful jewels, the precious stones in the bridal crown, and the nine rows of large pearls round the neck of the bride, could not disturb her quiet, which is rather astonishing, as a new bonnet from Paris, or some other fashionable trifle is sufficient, at times, to disturb the domestic peace of whole families. Nothing diminished her happiness, but the grief of her kind mother.

Towards the evening, when the dance began, Brigitta exclaimed, "Oh my daughter, you might at this moment have been leading this dance! But you have turned away from fortune when she smiled on you, and now I shall not live to accompany you to the altar."

"Confide in Heaven, my dear mother," answered Mela, "as I must;—if it is ordained that I shall go to the altar, you will live to adorn me with the bridal garment, and, when the right suitor comes, my heart will soon assent."

"Ah! child," replied the prudent mother, "portionless maidens are not much sought after; they must accept those who will have them. Young men are, in our days, more selfish than otherwise; they only marry when it suits themselves, and never think of the bashfulness of others. The heavens are not favourable to you, the planets have been consulted, and they are seldom auspicious to those born as you were in April. Let us see what says the almanack? 'Maidens born in this month bear kindly pleasant countenances, and are of a slender form, but they are changeable in their inclinations, like the weather, and must guard well the virgin mood. When a smiling suitor comes, let them not reject his offer.' See how well that answers! The suitor has come, and you have rejected his offer, and none will come again."

"Dear mother, heed not what the planet says! my heart whispers me that I ought to love and honour the man whom I wed; and if I find no such man, or am sought by none, then let me remain single. I can maintain myself by my own hands. I will learn to be both content and happy; and nurse you in your old age, as a good daughter ought. Yet, if the man of my heart should come, mother, oh! then bless us

both; and inquire not whether he be great, honoured, and wealthy, but whether he is virtuous and good; and if he loves, and is beloved.”

“Love, my poor daughter, keeps but a scanty table; it is not enough to live upon.”

“But where love is, mother, there peace and content will abide; yes, and convert the simplest fare into luxuries too.”—So inexhaustible a topic kept the ladies awake as long as the fiddles continued to play, nor could Madame Brigitta help suspecting that Mela’s magnanimity, which, in the bloom of youth and beauty, made her hold riches in such slight estimation, must be owing to some secret attachment previously formed. She, moreover, suspected its object, though she had never before entertained the idea that the lint merchant in the narrow street occupied a place in her daughter’s heart. She had considered him merely in the light of an extravagant youth, who made a point of gallanting every young creature that came in his way. The prospect before her gave her very little pleasure, but she held her peace. Agreeably to her strict notions of propriety, she believed that a young maid who allowed love to enter her heart previous to marriage, was no better than cankered fruit, very well to look at, but with a maggot within. She thought it might do very well to decorate a chimney-piece, though it had lost its intrinsic flavour, and was of no kind of use. Henceforth, then, the poor old lady despaired of ever resuming her lost station in her native city; resigned herself, like a good Christian, to her lot, being resolved to say nothing to her daughter on the subject—least said, the soonest mended.

Tidings of Mela’s refusal of the wealthy brewer having speedily gone abroad, shortly came to the ears of Franz, who felt quite overjoyed. He was no longer tortured with the suspicion lest some rich rival should supplant him in Mela’s heart. He felt that he had ground for hope, and knew how to solve the problem which puzzled so many wise inhabitants of the city of Bremen. Love had metamorphosed a poor youth into an excellent musician, but unfortunately that character was not a very strong recommendation for a lover in those times; for it derived neither as much honour nor emolument as now. “Oh, dear Mela,” he cried, “would that I had known you sooner, you would have become my guardian angel; you would have saved me from utter ruin! Ah, could I recall the years that are sped! could I be again what I was, when I began my mad career, the world would look like a paradise, and I would make it a paradise for you! Noble girl! you are sacrificing yourself for a wretch and a beggar—one who has lost all, but a heart torn with love and agony;—he cannot offer you a destiny worthy of your virtue.” He then smote his forehead, in a fit of passion, reproaching himself as a thoughtless, wilful being, whose repentance had come too late.

Despondency, however, was not the sole result of his reflections. The powers of his mind were put into action; he became ambitious of altering his present condition, and he was resolved to try what exertion and activity would effect. Among other plans that occurred to him, the most rational and promising appeared to be, to examine into his father's accounts, in order to see what debts were still due to the house. With such remnants of a princely fortune, should he be lucky enough to recover them, he trusted he might be enabled to lay the groundwork of another, if not as large as that he had lost, yet enough for the happiness and support of life. He resolved to employ the money he recovered in some business, which he hoped would increase by degrees, until, as he flattered himself, his ships would visit all parts of the world. But he found that many of the debts were due from persons residing at a distance, and that he would have a better chance of succeeding, were he to wait upon the parties in person, and claim his own. Accordingly, to effect this, he sold his father's gold watch, the last remains of his inheritance, in order to purchase a horse which was to carry him to his debtors, under the title of a Bremen merchant.

All that he regretted, was his departure from his beloved Mela. "What will she say to my sudden disappearance? I shall no longer meet her coming home from church; she will perhaps think me faithless, and banish me from her heart for ever!" Such ideas made him very uneasy, and, for some time, he could discover no means to inform her of his real intentions. Ingenious love at length supplied him with the happy notion of having prayers put up for the success of his journey in the church, which Mela and her mother generally frequented, and thus they would no longer remain ignorant of his object. With this view he gave the priest a small sum, begging that a daily prayer might be offered for a young man compelled to go abroad upon business, as well as for the success of his undertaking. The same prayer was to be continued until his return, when it was his intention to purchase a thanksgiving.

On meeting Mela for the last time, he was in his travelling dress. He passed quite close to her; saluted her in a more marked manner than usual, which brought the eloquent blood into the lovely girl's cheeks. Her mother scolded, made many unpleasant remarks, and expressed her dislike of him in no very guarded terms. She declared that such impertinence would injure her daughter's reputation, and spite of her vow to keep silence, she never dropped the subject during the whole of that day. Young Franz, however, had taken his leave of the good city of Bremen, and the most lovely eyes might now wander in search of him in vain.

Mela went to church, and heard her lover's prayer repeated very often; and, in truth, it was in some degree intended for her ears. Yet she paid little attention to it,

such was her grief for the disappearance of her lover. The very words that would have explained it, escaped her ear, and she was at a loss what to think of it. In the course of a month or two, when her sorrow was a little abated, and his absence grew less trying, she had been, for the first time, paying attention to the words of the prayer, and comparing them with other circumstances, she suddenly guessed their meaning, wondering at her own stupidity in not sooner discovering it, and at the same time praising her lover's ingenious notion.

Franz, meanwhile, was pursuing his way towards Antwerp, where his father's debtors chiefly resided, and where he hoped to recover some considerable sums. Such a journey, from Bremen to Antwerp was, in those days, more formidable than one from Bremen to Kamschatka in the present. The peace just proclaimed by the Emperor Maximilian was so little observed, that the public roads were in all parts infested with nobles and knights, who invariably despoiled the poor travellers who refused to purchase a safe passage from them, and frequently subjected them, in subterranean dungeons, to a cruel and lingering death. Our hero nevertheless succeeded, in spite of these obstacles, in reaching his destination, having encountered only one solitary adventure.

As he was crossing over the sandy and deserted plains of Westphalia he was overtaken by night, before he could reach any place of sojourn. The day had been uncommonly sultry, and darkness came on with a terrific thunderstorm, and heavy showers, which drenched him to the skin. This was extremely trying and novel to one of Fortune's spoiled children, as he had been. He had never been accustomed to the changes of the weather, and yet he might perhaps be compelled to pass the whole night in this horrid spot. The thought filled him with horror—when suddenly he saw a light, to his infinite relief, only at a short distance. On spurring towards it, he found a miserable little hut, which promised him small comfort. It was more like a shed for cattle than a human habitation; yet the inhospitable boor refused him admittance, declaring he had only straw enough for his oxen, and was too sleepy to get up and light his fire again for the sake of a stranger. At first poor Franz complained bitterly, but as it served no purpose, he laid his malediction on all Westphalian deserts and their unnatural inhabitants, while the boor proceeded to put out his lamp with the utmost indifference, without troubling himself about violating the laws of hospitality. Our incensed hero at length threatened and thundered at the door in such a way as effectually to prevent the brute's repose, who, better understanding such an appeal, soon found his tongue:—"Do you think, man, you will find a good supper and a soft couch here? If you do, you will be disappointed, friend; so please to be quiet. Can't you ride through the little wood on your left, and knock at the Castle-gate of Sir Eberhard of Bronkhorst, instead of battering at my poor door? He welcomes a stranger as a knight-hospitaller does

the pilgrim from the Holy Land. Heed thou not, though he be seized with a fit of madness, as he sometimes is; yet then he only wishes to give his guests a hearty drubbing before he takes leave of them. In all other respects, if you like to venture, you will find good entertainment."

Franz was some time at a loss how to act; yet he had rather run the risk of a sound drubbing, than stand drenched in his wet clothes the whole of the night. There was not much choice; he deliberated between passing the night upon a wooden bench without supper, suppose he were to get into the hut;—and a little flogging in the morning after enjoying a good supper and a bed. "Besides," he added, "such an application may, perhaps, drive away the fever which I am sure to take if I stay longer here, and that would be a sad thing." So he remounted, spurred away, and in a few minutes stopped before the gates of a Gothic castle, at which he knocked pretty smartly. He was answered as loudly, "Who is there?" from the other side. Our hero begged somewhat impatiently for admission, and he would explain afterwards; but he was compelled to wait the pleasure of Sir Eberhard, until the butler had ascertained whether he chose to give a night's lodging, for the satisfaction he would have in beating his guest in the morning.

This Sir Eberhard had early in life entered the army of the Emperor; had served under the celebrated George of Frondsberg, and subsequently commanded a company against the Venetians. Afterwards, on retiring from service, and settling at his castle, he began to lead a more pious and charitable life:—he held open castle for the destitute, or for hungry and houseless travellers; but, on taking leave, he invariably flogged them out of the castle. Sir Eberhard was a rude soldier, and retained the manners of a camp, though he had been living some years in retirement.

In a few minutes the bars of the gate were withdrawn, with a melancholy sound, as if giving warning of the approaching flogging, and Franz had a fit of cold shivers as he walked across the courtyard. He was hospitably received, and a number of lackeys ran to help him to dismount: one took his baggage, another his steed, while a third ushered him into the presence of the Knight. He was seated in a splendid hall, but rose to meet his guest, and shook him by the hand so heartily that Franz almost cried out with pain, and was struck with fear and awe. He could not conceal his terror, and trembled from head to foot at the warlike appearance of the Knight, who exclaimed in a voice of thunder, "What is the matter, young man, that you tremble and grow pale, as if in the clutches of death?" Franz felt that it was now too late to retract, and, being convinced that he was likely to pay dear for his fare, he summed up all his courage, and assumed even a haughty air to conceal his fears.

"Sir knight," he boldly replied, "the rain has drenched me as if I had swam through the Weser; I wish, therefore, to change my wet clothes, and to get a good warm posset to banish these shiverings, which seem like the commencement of an ague."

"Well said," replied the knight; "make yourself at home, and ask for what you want."

Franz made the servants wait on him, as if he had been the grand Turk, and, having only blows to expect, he thought it best to deserve them properly. He therefore ordered the servants about, and teased them in every possible way.

The master of the house, so far from showing any displeasure at these liberties, even obliged his servants to fulfil Franz's commands, and called them blockheads, who knew not how to wait on his guests. When the posset was ready, both landlord and guest, partook heartily of it. Soon afterwards the former said,

"Will you take some supper, young sir?"

"Let them put on the table," answered Franz, "what the cook has at hand, that I may see whether your larder is well supplied."

Orders were accordingly given, and the servants soon afterwards served up an excellent supper, fit for a prince. Franz sat down to it, and waited not till he was pressed, to eat voraciously. After having satisfied his hunger, he said, "Your larder is indifferently well supplied, and if your cellar be the same, I shall have to praise your house-keeping."

The knight made a sign to the butler, to fill a goblet with common table wine, which he did, and offered it to his master, who emptied it to the health of his guest. Franz did not fail to pledge him, and after he had also emptied the goblet, the knight asked, "What do you think of this wine?"

"It's but poor stuff," replied Franz, "if it is your best; but tolerably good, if it is only your table drink."

"You are a connoisseur," answered Sir Eberhard, and bid the butler bring some of the best.

When Franz had tasted this, he said, "That is a noble beverage, let us keep to this."

The goblets were filled accordingly, and the knight and his guest drank together, till both became merry and pleased with each other. Sir Eberhard began to talk of his campaigns, and told his guest how he had fought against the Venetians, broke through their encampments, and had killed them like so many sheep. This subject awakened the enthusiasm of the old soldier; he hewed down bottles and glasses,

brandished the carving-knife like a sword, and pressed so close on his companion, that the latter began to fear for his nose and ears.

The knight seemed quite in his element, when talking of his campaigns against the Venetians, and, though it grew late, he seemed to have no disposition to sleep. His description became more lively at every goblet he emptied; and Franz became apprehensive, lest this might be the prologue to the principal action, in which he was to perform the most conspicuous, though the least agreeable part. He wished to learn at once where he was to pass the night; and, therefore, asked for the parting cup, expecting that the knight would now begin to press him to drink, and, if he did not, would make his refusal the ground for a quarrel, and send him away with his usual quantum of blows, according to the custom of the house. Contrary to his expectation, however, his request was immediately complied with. The knight broke off his story, saying, "Every thing in proper time, more to-morrow."

"Pardon me, sir knight," replied Franz, "to-morrow I shall be far from here. I have a long journey before me to Brabant, and must depart early. I shall therefore bid you farewell to-night, that my departure may not disturb your rest in the morning."

"Do as you choose," said the knight, "but you shall not leave my house till I am up, and have seen you refreshed by a morning's repast; and then I will accompany you to the gates, and part with you according to the custom of my house."

Frank needed no commentary to explain these words. He would willingly have dispensed with the last civilities of his landlord, but he did not seem disposed to depart from the usual ceremonies. He ordered the servants to show the stranger into the bedchamber, and soon Franz was safely deposited in an excellent bed of down. Before he fell asleep, he could not help confessing to himself, that such a lordly entertainment was not too dearly bought by a moderate beating. Pleasant dreams took possession of his imagination. He saw his beloved Mela walking about among roses, with her mother, gathering the beautiful flowers, and he quickly concealed himself behind a thick hedge, not to be seen by the severe old lady. Again, he was transported into his old lodgings, and saw the snow-white hand of the maiden busy among the flowers. Then he sat beside her in the grass, and wished to talk of love, but was so bashful, he could find no words for it. He might have dreamt thus till midday, if the loud voice and the trampling of the knight, who was already booted and spurred, had not awakened him at daybreak. Frank heard the butler and cook ordered to prepare a good breakfast, and the other servants to be ready to wait on and dress him at his rising.

The happy dreamer parted very reluctantly from his safe and hospitable bed: but the loud voice of his landlord deprived him of all desire to sleep; he knew he must

get up, and therefore did; a dozen hands were immediately busy about him; and, when he was dressed, the knight himself came and led him into the hall, where he found a small but well-covered table. As the scene drew towards a close, however, our traveller had little appetite. His landlord encouraged him to eat, or at least to take something to protect himself against the coolness of the morning.

"Sir knight," said Franz, "your supper was too good to allow me to relish my breakfast; but, with your leave, I will fill my pockets, to be provided against hunger when it comes." He accordingly took the best and richest that was on the table, and crammed his pockets well. When his horse, well cleaned, bridled and saddled, was brought to the door, he drank in a glass of cordial to the health and welfare of his host, expecting that would be the signal for his being seized on and soundly beat.

But, to his great astonishment, the knight shook him as kindly by the hand as when he first met him, wished him a good journey, and the servants opened the gates. He mounted his horse, spurred rapidly on, and was in a few minutes outside of the gate, without a hair of his head being injured.

A heavy load fell from his heart when he saw himself at liberty, without having received the expected beating. He could not conceive why his host should have spared him, contrary to his general custom, and was now first grateful for the hospitable knight's kindness; he felt a great curiosity to know whether there was any foundation in the report he had heard, and, therefore, turned his horse's head and rode back. The knight was still standing at the gate, making observations on the shape and breed of Franz's horse, breeding horses being his own favourite pursuit. He thought his guest had missed some part of his baggage, and looked with displeasure on his servants. "What do you want, young man?" he called out to Franz, as he approached, "why do you return when you intended to pursue your journey?"

"To have one word with you, sir knight," said the rider. "A malicious report has, to the discredit of your name and reputation, gone abroad, that you receive all strangers well, but that you beat them soundly before you allow them to depart. Relying on this report, I have done all I could to deserve the parting salutation, and you have allowed me to depart in peace, without making me pay the customary reckoning. This astonishes me. Tell me, therefore, is there any foundation for this report, or shall I give the foul defamers the lie?"

To this the knight replied, "Report has, in this instance, told the truth; and there is no popular saying indeed quite destitute of foundation. I shall explain to you, however, the real circumstances. I receive every stranger who comes to my gates,

and share my food and my goblet with him. But I am a simple German of the old school, who speaks as he thinks, and I expect that my guests should be also cheerful and confiding, and enjoy with me what I have, and freely ask for what they want. But there are some people who tease me with all sorts of follies, and make a fool of me, with their bowing and scraping—who never speak openly, and use many words without sense or meaning; they want to flatter me with their smooth tongues, and behave at meals like foolish women. If I say “Eat,” they take with great apparent reluctance a miserable bone, which I should not offer to my dog: if I say “Drink,” they scarcely wet their lips with the good wine, as if they despised the bounties of God. They carry their follies to so great a length, that I scarcely know what to do in my own house. They put me at last into a passion, I seize them by the collar, cudgel them soundly, and turn them out of my doors. This is my plan, and I treat every guest thus, whom I find troublesome. But a man like you is always welcome to my house. You spoke your mind openly and freely, as the good people of Bremen always do. Let me see you again, therefore, on your return,—and now farewell.”

After these words Franz departed, and continued his journey towards Antwerp with renewed strength and courage, sincerely wishing he might everywhere meet with as kind a reception as at the castle of Sir Eberhard of Bronkhorst. At his first entrance into that city, the queen of the cities of Brabant, his hopes were raised to a high pitch. Opulence and luxury were everywhere visible, and it seemed as if want and poverty were banished from this seat of industry. “My father’s debtors,” he said to himself, “are most likely sharing in this general wealth; they have again improved their circumstances, and will be ready to pay me if I produce my documents to prove my demands are just.” After he had recovered from the fatigues of his journey, he made some inquiries concerning the circumstances of some of his debtors, before he went to call on them. “How is it with Peter Martens?” he asked his companions at table, “is he still living, and does he thrive?”

“Peter Martens is a wealthy man,” replied one of the company, “and drives a flourishing trade.”

“Is Fabian van Plurs in good circumstances?”

“Oh! he scarce knows how to employ his immense capital; he is one of the council, and his woollen manufactures give him ample profits.”

“Has the house of the Bütokant failed, or does it carry on business?”

“Some years ago it was tottering, but the Spanish Caravelles have helped to prop it up, so that it seems now likely to stand.”

Franz having inquired after several other houses, or persons, on whom he had demands, learned that most of them, who had in his father's time stopped payment, were now flourishing, which confirmed a common opinion, that a seasonable bankruptcy is a sure foundation for after prosperity. This news served to cheer up his spirits; he arranged his papers, and presented the old bills at their proper places. But he experienced from the people of Antwerp the same treatment which his travelling fellow-citizens of this age experience from shopkeepers in the provincial towns of Germany. Every one treats them well until they call to get in their money. Many would hear nothing of their old debts, declaring that they had all been settled at the time of the bankruptcy; and it was the creditor's fault if he had not accepted payment. Others said, they did not even remember the name; their books gave no account of any Melchior. A few submitted a large balance against Franz's father; and in the course of three days he found himself safely lodged in prison, to answer for them to the very last farthing.

This was an unpleasant prospect for a man who had so far confided in the honest people of Antwerp, as to consider them as the authors of his future fortune. The bubble had vanished in a moment; and he began to feel all the tortures of purgatory—thrown into prison—his vessel wrecked just as he was making the harbour, where he hoped he should be safe from the storms of life. The thought of Mela was a dagger to his heart: there was no longer even a shadow of probability that he could ever emerge from this abyss of ruin into respectability and credit. And, were he able even to raise his head above water, his beloved was, on her part, perfectly unable to pull him to dry land.

It was not the intention of the hard-hearted citizens of Antwerp to make him pay money, so much as to compel him to renounce all claims upon them; so that at the end of three months Franz left his prison, upon condition of quitting the city within four-and-twenty hours, and never returning to it. He then received a small sum of money to defray his expenses home; for the law had already seized upon his horse and baggage, to pay for the proceedings against him, and for his board. With no other companion than a walking-stick, and with a heavy heart, Franz humbly took his leave of the proud city, whose walls he had shortly before entered with such grand expectations. Reckless and dispirited, he wandered on, without marking the road which he had taken. He asked no questions, saluted no one, and took notice of nothing, until excess of hunger and fatigue compelled him to seek out some place where he might relieve his wants. Many days he thus wandered on without any aim in view, and even ignorant that he had, instinctively, as it were, taken the right direction homewards. Suddenly he seemed to awake out of a disagreeable dream, and recognised the road he was going.

He now stopped to reflect whether he had better go on, or retrace his steps. He was overwhelmed with shame and trouble, at the idea of living a beggar in his native city, and soliciting the benevolence of those whom he had formerly surpassed in credit and opulence. How could he appear in the presence of Mela under such circumstances? She would die with shame to behold him! It was certain he would now lose her; and he turned away from the melancholy picture, as if he had already beheld the rabble gathering round and greeting his return to Bremen with scorn and mockery.

No! he determined he would rather make for one of the Dutch seaports, and enter on board some Spanish ship as a sailor. He would sail for the new world, try his fortune in Peru, where wealth abounded; and never return to his native land, until he succeeded in recovering that property which he had so heedlessly lavished. His beloved Mela appeared now only like some distant shadow that he should catch at in vain; though he felt a beam of pleasure warm his heart at the bare idea of her becoming connected with his future destiny; and he hastened rapidly forwards, as if he were about to reach the spot where she dwelt. He had returned as far as the frontiers of the Netherlands, when one night, about sunset, he approached a small place, called Rummelsburg, which was subsequently destroyed in the thirty years' war. There were a number of carriers in the tavern, and he could find no room. The landlord bade him hasten to the next village, as he, in fact, mistook him for the spy of some gang of thieves, on watch, perhaps, for the carrier's goods. So, in spite of his increasing weariness, Franz found he must again take his bundle on his shoulder, and prepare for a farther journey that night.

As he went, however, he made some cutting reflections upon the landlord's inhumanity; insomuch, that, as if repenting of his own harsh proposal, he began to pity the poor traveller, and called out, "One word yet, young man: if you particularly wish to pass the night here, I think I can contrive it. There are plenty of apartments in the castle hard by; I have got the keys, if you should not think it too solitary for you." Franz willingly closed with the offer, requiring only supper and shelter, whether in a palace or in a hut. But mine host was somewhat of a wag, and, intending to revenge himself upon poor Franz for his abuse of him, he proposed a night's residence in the haunted old castle, where there had been no inhabitant for many years, owing to the cruel pranks of a spirit which had frightened them all away in succession.

This castle stood on a steep cliff, in the outskirts of the town, and directly opposite to the inn, being merely separated by the public road, and a small brook. It was kept in good repair, on account of its delightful situation: and was very well built and furnished, though it served its present possessor only for a hunting-seat.

Occasionally he gave a splendid feast there, but was sure to leave it along with all his followers on the approach of evening, having so often been terrified by the spirit, which made a hideous noise, and raged through the castle, though he never appeared during the day. However disagreeable to the lord of the castle, as a spectre, it had the good effect of protecting his property from robbers, the boldest of whom refused to venture near the spot.

It was now quite dark. Franz carried a lantern, accompanied by the host, and a little basket of provisions. He was soon at the castle gates, where the host had provided a good supper, and a bottle of wine, which he did not intend to appear in the bill; likewise a pair of wax candles, as there were none in the castle, nobody remaining there after twilight. As they were walking, Franz observed the basket and candles, and, though they would be quite useless to him, thought he might still have to account for them in the bill.

"The piece of candle in the lantern is enough for me," said our hero, "until I go to bed. I hope I shall not open my eyes before it be broad day; for I feel very sleepy, and want a deal of rest."

"Then I ought not to conceal from you," replied the host, "what report says. The castle is haunted by a plaguy ghost, who walks about all night. But we shall be so near that you need not be the least afraid. Should anything occur, you have only to call out pretty loudly, and we shall be ready to assist you. People with us are stirring all night, and somebody or other will be at hand. Why, I have lived here these thirty years, and, for my own part, I have never seen anything. The noise that is sometimes heard proceeds, I take it, from cats, or other animals, that harbour in the garrets. As a precaution, I have provided you with candles; and, as they are consecrated, no goblin will venture into their light."

Mine host spoke truth when he declared he had never seen any spectre; for he took care never to be near enough the castle at night. Even now the varlet did not venture to proceed across the threshold; but opening the door, he handed Franz the basket, directed him which way to proceed, and bade him a good night.

Our traveller entered the great hall without feeling the least awe, despising the story as mere gossip, or some old tradition of a real event adorned with a little of the supernatural. He called to mind the report of Sir Eberhard, whose heavy hand he had so much dreaded, and yet who had treated him with so much kindness. In fact, he made a point of believing just the contrary of what he had heard, quite forgetting, as the knight himself stated, that all such reports had some foundation in truth.

According to the host's direction, he ascended a winding stair-case, which brought him to a door, the key of which the landlord had given him. He entered a long dark passage, where his steps echoed along the walls; thence he passed into a grand saloon, which led into a row of smaller rooms, well supplied with all that was necessary, both for ornament and use. He fixed on the most comfortable one he could find, with the windows looking towards the tavern-yard, whence he could gather every word that was spoken. This was reviving, and the room had a soft bed on which to repose his weary head. He now lighted his candles, sat down to his supper, of which he partook with as hearty a relish as if he had been eating at his old lodgings in the good city of Bremen. A large bottle soon removed his thirst, and while his appetite lasted he had no time to think of the spectre. When he heard some noise at a distance, and fear whispered, "Listen! there comes the ghost!" his courage only answered, "Nonsense! the cats are fighting." After supper he listened rather more attentively, as it drew near midnight, and fear uttered three anxious ideas before Franz's courage could find a single answer.

To protect himself against sudden surprise, he first locked and bolted the door, seated himself on a stone bench at the window, then opened it and looked out, to divert his mind with a view of the heavens and the silvery queen of night. Gradually the street below grew quite silent, contrary to mine host's assurance that his people were always stirring. Franz heard one door closed after another, the lights were extinguished, and the whole inn was buried in profound repose. The watch, going his round, told the hour and the state of the weather; besides beginning, to Franz's great consolation, to sing an evening hymn directly under his window. Had he not feared that the man would be terrified away, if he heard himself spoken to from the haunted castle, he would gladly have entered into conversation with him.

In the midst of a populous town, when a man is harassed by silly people, it may appear a pleasant relief to retire to some solitary spot, and philosophize on the charms of solitude. He then represents it as most soothing to the mind; he multiplies its advantages, and sighs for its enjoyment. But where such solitude is,—as in the island of Juan Fernandez, where one poor shipwrecked sailor lived many years quite alone,—in a thick forest at midnight,—or in an old uninhabited castle, where damp walls and unexplored vaults create apprehension and horror, and where nothing gives signs of life, but the mournful ruin-loving owl,—there solitude is hateful, and companions pleasant, especially if the solitary person, like Franz, should expect every moment to see some horrid spectre. In such a situation, a conversation from the window, even with the watchman, may appear more entertaining than the most interesting book, were it even a dissertation on solitude. Had Zimmermann been in Franz's place, in the castle of Rummelsburg,

on the frontiers of Westphalia, he would then probably have planned as interesting a work on the pleasures of society, as troublesome people provoked him to write on solitude.

The midnight hour is said to be the time when the spiritual world begins to live and act, while the more coarse animal kingdom enjoys repose. For this reason, Franz wished to go to sleep before the critical hour arrived; he shut the window therefore, surveyed once more every corner of his room, and quickly threw himself on the soft couch, greatly to the delight of his wearied limbs. Sleep, however, came not so soon as he wished. A palpitation, which he ascribed to the wine he had drunk, kept him awake for some time, during which he repeated his prayers more fervently than usual; at length he fell soundly asleep. After a short time, he awoke with a sudden start, when, on remembering where he was, he heard the town clock strike twelve; which news the watchman soon afterwards loudly proclaimed. No other noise was, however, heard. Franz listened for some time, and, turning round, was again relapsing into sleep, when at some distance he heard a door opened, and immediately afterwards shut with a loud crash.

“Woe! woe to me!” whispered fear, “here comes the ghost!” “It is the wind, nothing but the wind,” replied courage. But the noise approached nearer and nearer, like the heavy steps of a man, rattling his chains as he moved, or like the chamberlain of some old castle, wandering about his domain clanging his bunch of keys. This could not be the wind—courage vanished, fear drove all the blood to Franz’s heart—till it beat, as if too full, and were trying to burst from its confinement.

As the noise approached, the matter appeared quite serious to Franz, and he could not even collect resolution enough to rise and call from the window to the people of the inn. He took refuge under his coverlet, which he drew quite over him, as the ostrich is said to hide his head in the grass, when he can no longer escape the enemy. Doors were opened and shut with a terrible noise; and at last, an attempt was made on the door of Franz’s chamber. Several keys were tried, and at length the right one found: still the bars held the door, when at length a loud crash, like a clap of thunder, burst them asunder, and the door flew open. A tall thin man entered, with a very black beard, and clothed in an old-fashioned dress. A scarlet mantle was thrown over his left shoulder, and his hat was high and pointed. He walked silently through the room with the same slow and heavy step with which he had approached, looked at the candles, and even snuffed them. Then he threw off his mantle, opened a bag which he carried under his arm, took out instruments for shaving, and began to sharpen a shining razor on a broad leather strap, which he wore on his belt.

Franz perspired under his downy covering with fear and dread; recommended himself to the protection of Heaven, and looked forward with great anxiety for the end of this manœuvre, not knowing whether it was meant for his beard or for his throat. To his consolation, the spectre poured water from a silver flagon into a basin of the same material, and with his bony hand beat the soap up into foaming suds; placed a chair, and then, with great earnestness, beckoned the terrified Franz from his retreat. It was no more possible to resist this meaning sign, than it generally is to resist the mute who has orders from the grand Turk to bring him the head of some exiled vizier. It is the most sensible plan, in such a case, to make a virtue of necessity, and patiently allow oneself to be throttled. Franz obeyed the order, threw off the mattress, rose from his couch, and took the assigned place on the chair.

The spectre barber put the napkin round the neck of his trembling customer, seized his scissors, and cut off Franz's hair and beard. Then he proceeded to cover his chin, and even his head, with soap, and, when this was done, he shaved him so smoothly, and so completely, that not a hair was left on his whole head. When the spectre had completed this operation, he washed Franz very clean, dried him carefully, bowed, packed up his implements, resumed his scarlet cloak, and turned to depart. The consecrated candles burned perfectly bright during the whole of the proceeding, and, by the light, Franz saw in the mirror opposite him that the barber had made him like a Chinese pagod. He was vexed at losing his beautiful brown curls, but he breathed freely, being aware that he should escape otherwise unhurt, and that the spectre had no longer any power over him.

The man in the red cloak walked in silence, as he had come, towards the door, and seemed quite the reverse of his gossiping brethren; scarcely had he retired three steps, however, when he stood still, looked round with a mournful mien at his well-served customer, and touched his own black beard with his hand. He repeated this ceremony twice; and again, a third time, when he had his hand on the door. Franz began to think that the ghost wished him to do something for him, and, the thought struck him, that he expected from him the same service which he had rendered to him.

The barber spectre, in spite of his mournful looks, seemed more disposed to jest than earnest, and as he had played Franz a trick rather than tormented him, the latter had lost all his fear. He therefore beckoned the spectre to take the place in the chair, which he had just left. The ghost obeyed with great alacrity, threw down his cloak, laid the bag on the table, and sat down in the position of a person who is to be shaved. Franz was careful to imitate the manner in which the ghost had proceeded, cut off the beard and hair with the scissors, and soaped his whole head,

while his strange companion sat as still as a statue. The awkward youth had never before had a razor in his hand, knew not how to handle it, and shaved the patient ghost so much against the grain, that the sufferer displayed the oddest grimaces. The ignorant bungler began to be afraid; he remembered the wise precept, "Do not meddle with another man's business," but still he proceeded,—did as well as he could, and shaved the spectre as clean and as bald as he was himself.

Suddenly the ghost found its tongue: "Kindly I thank thee for the great services thou hast rendered me; by thy means I have been released from long captivity, which for three hundred years bound me within these walls, where my departed spirit was condemned to dwell, till a mortal man should retaliate on me, and treat me as I did others when I was alive.

"Know that, in times of yore, there dwelt a shameless infidel within this castle, who mocked both at priests and laymen. Count Hartman was no man's friend: he acknowledged neither divine nor human laws, and violated the sacred rules of hospitality. The stranger who sought refuge under his roof, the beggar who asked alms of him, was always seized and tormented. I was his barber, flattered his passions, and lived as I chose. Many a pious pilgrim, passing the gates, was invited into the castle; a bath was prepared for him, and when he meant to enjoy himself, I took hold of him according to orders, shaved him quite bald, and then turned him out of the castle, with scorn and mockery. In such cases Count Hartman used to look out at the window, and enjoy the sport, particularly if a number of malicious boys collected round the insulted pilgrim, and laughed and mocked at him, calling out after him, 'Bald head, bald head!' as the wicked boys of old called after the holy prophet.

"Once a pilgrim came from abroad. He entered and asked for water to wash his feet, and a crust of bread. According to my custom, I took him into the bath, and, without respecting his venerable appearance, I shaved him also quite bald. But the pious pilgrim pronounced a heavy curse on me: 'After death, reprobate! heaven and hell, and the iron gates of purgatory shall be equally inaccessible to thy soul. It shall dwell, as a spectre, within these walls, till a wanderer unmasked shall retaliate on thee thy own evil deeds!'

"I grew sick at hearing the curse; the marrow of my bones dried up, and I decayed away gradually, till I became like a shadow; my soul at length separated from its mortal dwelling, but remained within this place, as the holy man had ordered. In vain I expected deliverance from the dreadful chains that bound me to the earth. The repose which the soul languishes for when it is separated from the body was denied to me, and made every year which I was obliged to pass here an age of woe. I was obliged also, as a further punishment, to continue the business which I had

carried on during my lifetime. But, alas? my appearance soon made this house be deserted; it was very rarely that a pilgrim came to pass the night here, and, though I shaved every one who came as I did you, no one would understand me, and perform for me that service which was to deliver my soul from captivity. Henceforth I shall not haunt this castle. I now go to my long desired repose. Once more I give thee my thanks, young stranger. If I had any hidden treasures at my command, they should all be thine, but I never possessed wealth; in this castle there is no treasure hidden. But listen to my advice. Tarry here till your chin and head are again covered with hair, then return to your native city, and wait on the bridge over the Weser at the time of the autumnal equinox, for a friend, who will there meet and tell you what you must do to thrive on earth. Farewell; I now depart hence, never to return."

The wicked wag of a landlord had watched from early dawn for the arrival of the castle guest. Anticipating a bald head, he was prepared to receive him with well-affected surprise, but secret ridicule, at his night's adventure. As midday came, and no guest appeared, he grew uneasy lest the spectre had treated him too roughly—perhaps strangled, or frightened him to death. Not wishing to have carried the joke so far, he hastened with his servants in some anxiety towards the castle; and sought out the room where he had seen the light the preceding evening. He found a strange key in the door, but it was bolted, a measure Franz adopted on the ghost's departure. He knocked with such violence, that Franz leaped up at the noise, thinking, at first, that the spectre was coming on another visit. But hearing it was mine host's voice entreating him to give some sign, Franz rose and opened the door.

"Mercy!" cried the landlord, lifting up his hands with feigned surprise and terror, "then old Red Cloak has been here," (for the spectre went by that name,) "and the tradition is really true. How did he look? what said he? and more than all, what did he do?"

Frank, aware of mine host's roguery, replied, "How should he look? as a man in a red cloak does; what he did is evident to any one; and I shall always take care to remember his words. 'Kind stranger,' he said, 'trust not the landlord who dwells opposite, he knew too well what would happen to you. But leave him to me, I will reward him. I am going to leave the castle, and will take up my quarters at his inn—I will pinch and plague him to the end of his life; unless, indeed, he consent to receive you in his house, and treat you handsomely, until your hair and beard be again full grown.'"

Our poor host trembled sadly at hearing this threat; he crossed himself, and protested that he would be glad to give Franz the run of his house as long as he

pleased. He forthwith conducted his guest to the inn, and waited upon him, with the utmost obsequiousness, himself.

Our hero obtained great reputation as an exorcist, for the spectre was no longer to be heard at the castle. He often went to sleep there, and a young fellow, who had courage to accompany him, returned without a shaven head. The owner of the castle, hearing that the spectre had disappeared, sent orders, with great alacrity, to have the stranger most hospitably treated, who had delivered his property from such a disagreeable house-steward.

By the approach of autumn, Franz's brown locks began to cover his temples again; and he grew anxious to proceed home. His thoughts were busied with conjectures about the friend whom he was to meet upon the bridge—the author of his future fortunes. Being prepared for his departure, the landlord presented him with a fine horse, and a well-filled purse, sent by the owner of the castle as some token of his gratitude for the service he had received. Thus Franz was enabled to re-enter his native city on horseback, quite in as good circumstances as those in which he had left it the year before. He sought out his old quarters in the narrow street, where he continued to live very retired, and contented himself with making inquiries after his beloved Mela, who, he learnt, was still single, and enjoying very good health. At present this was sufficient for him; as he would not presume to appear in her presence until his fate was ascertained; so that he did not even inform her of his arrival in the place.

He looked forward very anxiously for the period of the equinox; his impatience made each day appear as long as a year. The long wished-for time at last arrived; and the night previous he could not close his eyes, on account of his eager anticipations: his heart beat strong, and he felt as if the blood was about to burst from his veins, just as it was in the castle of Rummelsburg before the spectre's appearance. He rose at daybreak, in order not to let his unknown friend wait, and hastened to the bridge, which he found quite deserted. He amused himself with planning a variety of modes of appearing before his beloved, when he had realized his grand hopes; not being able to decide whether it would be better to present himself in all his splendour, or to communicate the happy change of affairs by degrees. Then he was very inquisitive to learn who this secret friend of his might be. "One of my own old acquaintances, I wonder:—but they seem one and all to have abandoned me since my reverses. Then how will it be in his power to serve me so astonishingly? Will the affair be hard or easy to accomplish? "None of these questions did he know how to answer satisfactorily, in spite of all his earnest meditations. The bridge now began to be thronged with people, coaches, waggons, horse and foot passengers, hastening to and fro; besides a number of mendicants

of every description, one after another coming to take their usual stations in a place so favourable to their calling. They soon began to work upon the compassion of passengers, and the first of this ragged regiment, who implored Franz's charity, was an old veteran, bearing his military honour of a wooden leg, having left the other behind him in his country's cause. As the reward of his valour, he was permitted to beg wherever he chose; and as he was a good physiognomist, versed in a knowledge of the human heart expressed in the lines of the face, he applied it with such success, that he seldom solicited alms in vain. He was not deceived with Franz on this occasion; for the latter, in the joy of his heart, flung a silver piece into his hat.

For some time Franz did not expect to see much company, besides the lower classes, passing over the bridge; the more rich and indolent still enjoying their morning slumbers. He imagined that his benefactor must, of course, belong to the wealthier class, and took no notice of the rest of the passengers, until, the courts of justice being opened, the lawyers and magistrates should proceed in their full dress to the Council, and the rich merchants to the Exchange. Then he began to grow very anxious, and peered into the faces of all the most respectably-dressed people who passed by. But hour after hour elapsed, until the morning was gone. Dinner came, and business seemed to cease; yet no friend caught our hero's eye. He paced to and fro along the bridge, where there remained only himself and the mendicants; who now opened their scrips, and dined on cold meat, still keeping their respective stations. Franz wished to follow their example; but, having no provisions with him, he purchased some fruit, which he ate as he walked along. The members of the club, as they sat at dinner, remarked how long he had been haunting the same spot, without speaking to any one, or, like themselves, transacting business. They set him down for an idle youth, though most of them had experienced his benevolence; and he did not escape their facetious observations. At length, they gave him the title of the bridge-surveyor. The old soldier, however, noticed that his face no longer betokened the same cheerfulness; that he seemed to have some serious business upon his mind; his hat was slouched over his eyes, his step slow and cautious; while he was engaged in eating the remnant of an apple, as if hardly conscious of what he was doing.

The old physiognomist wished to apply his observations to some profit; he set his natural and artificial leg both in motion, passed to the other side of the bridge, and prepared to ask our musing hero for more alms, as if he had been a fresh comer. He succeeded—the thoughtful visionary only thrust his hand into his pocket, and threw a piece of money without even looking at him.

After dinner, numbers of new faces appeared; but not a single person spoke to poor Franz, who now began to grow impatient. His attention was still fixed upon every respectable passenger; strange, he thought, that no one addressed him—that all should pass him without the least notice; very few even deigning to return his salutation.

As he was leaving the bridge, he met the old soldier, who had been, meanwhile, busily guessing at the motive of the poor young fellow, in watching on the bridge the whole day. He waited longer than usual, to see whether he would take his departure, until his patience being quite exhausted, he could not resist his curiosity to inquire into the reason of his turning the bridge into a dwelling-place. “Pray, sir,” he began, “may I be permitted to ask—?”

Franz, by no means in a communicative humour, and finding the long expected address come from the lips of an old mendicant, answered rather sharply—“What do you want, old greybeard? Speak out.”

“Sir,” said the old man, “you and I were the first who took our stations on the bridge to-day, and you see we are the last to leave it. As for me and my companions, it is our business; but you do not belong to our fraternity, and yet you have passed all the day here. May I be informed, if it be no secret, what can have been your reason, and what weighs so much upon your mind, that you want to get clear of here?”

“What boots it for thee to know, my old fellow, what ails me, and what lies so heavy upon my heart? it can avail thee nothing.”

“But, sir, I feel an interest in you; you have given me alms twice this blessed day, for which God reward you. Yet your face is not so happy as it was this morning, and I am sorry to see it.”

This simple honest expression of sympathy won Franz’s heart; and losing all his misanthropy, he gave the soldier a kind answer. “Learn, then,” said he, “why I have waited here so patiently the whole day; a friend promised to meet me here, who has, however, made me wait in vain.”

“With your permission,” said the cripple, “your friend, whoever he be, is a scoundrel, thus to make a fool of you. If he had treated me so I would make him feel the weight of my crutch. If he were prevented from coming, he should have let you know, and not have treated you like a schoolboy.”

“I must not condemn him,” said Franz, “he did not exactly promise. It was only in a dream that I was told of it.”

Franz did not like to tell the old man the story of the Spectre Barber; so he changed it into a dream.

"That is another thing," said the old man; "if you believe in such things, I don't wonder that you should be disappointed. If I had all the money that has been promised me in my dreams, I might buy the whole town of Bremen with it, if it were for sale. Well, it amuses me, that you should waste a whole summer's day for the sake of an empty dream, while you might have been happy all the time with your friends."

"I was told so distinctly and circumstantially, however, more than three months ago, that I was to meet on this spot a friend to-day, who had things of the utmost importance to communicate to me, that I thought it was, at least, worth while to try the chance."

"Nobody," said the cripple, "dreams more clearly than I do. One dream I shall never forget. How many years ago it was I do not remember, but I dreamt that my guardian angel, in the shape of a beautiful youth, with yellow curled hair, and two wings on his shoulders, stood at my bedside, and said to me, 'Berthold, listen to my words, and lose none if thou desirest happiness. Thou art destined to possess a large treasure, and to enjoy it for the rest of thy life. To-morrow, after sunset, take a spade and shovel, and go from thy dwelling across the river to thy right hand; pass all the houses, and the monastery of St. John, till thou reachest a garden into which four steps lead from the road. Wait there concealed till the moon lends thee her light; then press with all thy strength against the door, and it will spring open. Enter the garden without fear, and turn towards the walk, on the left hand, which is overhung by vines. Behind them stands a large apple-tree; step up to the stem of it, with thy face turned to the moon. In this same direction, about two yards distance, thou wilt see two rose-bushes; begin to dig close to them, till thou comest to a stone plate, and under it thou wilt find an iron box full of gold and other valuables. Though it be heavy and unwieldy, do not fear the trouble of lifting it out of the hole, and thy pains will be well rewarded, if thou findest the key which is concealed below the box.'"

Franz grew dumb with astonishment as he listened to the old man, and would not have been able to conceal his agitation, had not the darkness of the evening prevented his companion from seeing his face; he discovered, from the description and the peculiarities mentioned, that the soldier's dream related to a garden which had once been his own, and which he disliked from the remembrance that it had been his father's hobby.

The old cripple became instantly interesting to Franz, who now comprehended that he was the very friend to whom the spectre had directed him. He would fain have embraced him, and, in his first delight, have called him father and friend, but prudence suggested greater caution. He therefore merely said, "That was indeed a distinct dream! But, what did you do the next morning, friend? Did you follow the advice?" "Not I, indeed!" answered the invalid. "Why it was only a dream." Franz took the last silver coin out of his pocket; "Take this," he said, "old father, go and drink my health in a pint of rhenish; thy conversation has banished my ill temper. Do not forget to visit this bridge every day; I hope we shall meet again." The lame old man had not, for many days, received so much as on this day; he blessed his benefactor, therefore, and limped into a tavern to enjoy himself; while Franz, filled with new hopes, hurried home to his lodgings in the narrow street.

On the next day he prepared everything necessary for digging. He had not the materials usually employed by searchers after treasure; such as, a conjuration from an osier twig, an enchanted girdle, hieroglyphics, and the like; neither are they necessary, if the three principal things,—viz., a pickaxe, spade, and, above all, the subterraneous treasures are at hand. Soon after sunset, Franz carried the digging implements near to the spot, and hid them in a hedge. He waited for the appearance of the moon with great impatience, and, as soon as her silvery horns were seen through the bushes, he began his labour, observing, in its progress, to pay attention to everything the old soldier had said; and, at length, actually found and got out the treasure, without any accident or opposition, either from a black mastiff, or a scowling wolf, and without having the light of a blue flame to guide him.

He took up, with unspeakable joy, some of the different gold coins which the iron chest had faithfully guarded. After the first delight had somewhat subsided, he began to consider how he might transport the treasure safely and unperceived to his lodgings. It was too heavy for him to carry it without assistance, and he experienced, therefore, immediately, some of the anxiety which is inseparably united to the possession of wealth. Our new Crœsus could discover no other way but to place his riches in a hollow tree, which stood in a meadow behind the garden; he then put the empty chest back into the hole, covered it with earth, and made the ground as level as he could. At the end of three days, he had carried all the money-bags from the hollow tree safely to his own humble dwelling. Thinking himself now authorized to throw off his incognito, he dressed himself richly, desired the prayers at church to be discontinued, and a thanksgiving to be offered in its place, for a traveller on his safe return to his native city, after having successfully concluded his business. He hid himself in a corner of the church, where he might, unobserved, see his beloved Mela; his eyes were fixed on her, and

when the thanksgiving was pronounced, her cheeks glowed with joy, and she could scarcely conceal her raptures. Their meeting afterwards in the church was so expressive, that nobody who had seen it could have misinterpreted it.

From this time forward, Franz again appeared at change, and entered into business. He extended his transactions greatly in a few weeks, and, as his prosperity became every day more apparent, his envious fellow-citizens observed, according to the old proverb, that he must have had more luck than sense to get rich in collecting old debts. He took a large house opposite the statue of Sir Roland, in the principal square; engaged clerks and servants, and applied himself with great earnestness to his business. Those miserable races of parasites and toadeaters again flocked to his door, and hoped once more to be the partakers of his wealth. But, grown wise by experience, he returned only polite speeches for politeness, and allowed them to depart with an empty stomach, which he found to be a sovereign remedy, and it freed him at once from all further trouble from them.

In Bremen, Franz became the talk of the day; the fortune he had made abroad, in such an unaccountable manner, quite occupied the public attention. In proportion as his opulence increased, and became more known, Mela's happiness seemed to diminish. She thought her mute lover was at last in a condition to declare himself; still he remained silent, except occasionally meeting her in the street, and even here he became daily less attentive. Such a demeanour showed but a cold lover; and that harpy, jealousy, soon began to torment her, whispering the most unpleasant suspicions possible: "Let me banish the fond hope of fixing so variable a being, thus changing like a weathercock, blown about by the least breeze. True, he loved, and was faithful to me as long as he was my equal in rank; but with this revolution in his affairs, he looks down upon the purest affection, because of its poverty. Surrounded with wealth and splendour, he perhaps adores some haughtier beauty, who abandoned him in his misfortune, but now, with her siren voice, calls him back. Yes, and the voice of adulation has changed his heart. His new companions tell him to choose from among the richest and loftiest of his native place; that no fathers would refuse their daughters, no maidens reject him as a lover. They will make him fond of power and importance; he will connect himself with some mighty family, and forget his poor Mela."

Thoughts like these tormented her incessantly. The first time she had heard of his prosperity, she hailed it with delight; not because she was ambitious to share so large a fortune, but to gratify her mother, who had never been thoroughly happy since she resigned the wealthy brewer. Mela now almost wished that the prayers which had been offered up for his success had not been heard, and that the

traveller's business had not succeeded, as he would then, perhaps, have proved more faithful.

Her mother was at no loss to discover the cause of her daughter's melancholy. The report of the late lint merchant's improved circumstances had reached her; she was aware of Mela's attachment; and as he was now a busy reputable merchant, and the very model of good order, she could no longer see any reason for his delaying his offer of marriage, if he really wished to possess her. She never mentioned the subject to Mela, in order not to wound her feelings; but the latter, no longer able to conceal her grief, at length confided the source of it to her mother. The old lady, however, only heard what she knew well enough before; though it gave occasion for her to offer her opinion on the subject. Above all, she avoided saying a single word of reproach, being resolved to make the best of everything that could not be helped. In fact, she tried every means she could of consoling her unhappy daughter, teaching her to bear up against her blighted prospects with piety and firmness.

"Dearest child," she would say, "as you have brewed, you know, so you must bake; you threw away Fortune when she solicited, and you must learn to bear her loss. Experience has shown me that the hope we most count upon is often delusive. Follow my example; listen to it no longer, and endless disappointments will no longer destroy your peace. Look for no favourable change in your fate, and you will soon be contented. It is better to honour our spinning-wheel, which procures us the means of living, than to dream of greatness and wealth, since we have learnt to do without them." Such philosophical remarks came from the good old lady's heart, since the failure of her last dear hope connected with the worthy brewer.

But now came a report that Franz was preparing an establishment for the reception of his bride, a rich lady of Antwerp, who was on the point of arriving. This was, indeed, a death-blow to poor Mela's hopes, and was too much even for her feelings of resignation. She vowed to tear the image of the faithless wretch for ever from her heart, and to dry her tears,—while at the same time they flowed afresh.

In an hour,—and there were many such, when she quite forgot her vow, and was recurring with sweet and bitter fancies to the one loved idea, however she esteemed it unworthy her,—she was roused by a low tap at the door. Her mother opened it;—it was Franz; their old neighbour Franz, from the narrow street. He wore a rich dress, and his fine brown curls clustered round his forehead, and seemed to perfume the room. So splendid an appearance betokened some more important object than selling lint. The old lady started—she attempted to speak; but the words faltered on her lips. Mela rose suddenly from her seat;—she blushed

and grew pale by turns, but remained silent, as well as her mother. Franz, however, was perfectly at his ease; he now adapted words to the soft melody which he had often played on his lute; and in bold open terms he at length declared his long silent love. Then, turning to the happy mother, he solemnly entreated her consent to his union with her daughter. Next he gave an explanation of all suspicious circumstances, concluding by declaring that the bride for whom preparations had been making was only the fair Mela herself.

On recovering from her surprise, the ceremonious old lady determined, as a matter of propriety, to take one week's consideration, though tears of joy were in her eyes, and eloquently spoke the consent she could not. Franz, however, became so pressing, that she was compelled to steer a middle course between old custom and propriety and the wishes of the new lover; and she delegated her daughter to give an answer agreeable to herself. A strange revolution had been at work in Mela's heart since his entrance into the room. No stronger proof of his innocence could be imagined than such a visit; his apparent indifference was all explained. He had been so very assiduous and active in his business, and in preparing also for their marriage, that he had not sooner had time; but there was now no reason why she should refuse her consent.

The happy lovers had now, for the first time, leisure to translate into its proper language the hieroglyphics of their secret correspondence,—which they soon discovered they had already understood,—and to do justice to each other's sentiments. This supplied them with a pleasant subject of conversation, and it was long before Franz took leave of his amiable bride.

He now wished to meet with his old friend the soldier, whom he had always remembered, though he had apparently neglected him. On his part, the cripple had examined the faces of all the passengers who had appeared on the bridge, without recognising his generous young friend, as he had been led to expect; but the moment he saw him approach, he limped as fast as his crutch could carry him, to bid him welcome; and Franz, kindly hailing the old man, said, "Do you think, friend, you could go with me to the new town on business? you shall be well paid for your trouble?"

"Why not?" returned the old veteran; "I have a wooden leg that is never tired; and I can walk at a pretty smart pace when it suits me. Only wait a little, till the little grey man comes; he never fails to cross the bridge towards evening."

"There is no need to wait for the little grey man," said Franz: "what can you have to do with him?"

"What!" repeated the soldier; "why, the grey man brings me a silver groat every night of his life, from whom I neither know nor care. Sometimes a thought crosses me, that it must be the Evil One, who wants me to barter my soul for money. But he has made no such proposal, so I shall not be bound by it."

"I fancy not," said our hero, smiling; "but if you will now follow me, you shall have the silver groat." So the cripple followed him through a number of streets, into a remote part of the town near the rampart. There he stopped before a small house, just newly built, and knocked at the door. On its being opened, Franz walked in, and said to the old man, "My friend, thou hast once bestowed upon me a very pleasant evening, and it is right that I should cheer up the evening of thy life. Behold this house and all its contents! they are thine, with the little garden beyond. There will be a person to take care of you, and you will find the silver groat every day upon your dining-table. Fear not the Evil One on the score of thy silver groat, old fellow, for he in the gray jacket was no other than an agent of mine. He appeared only to bring you the money until this thy new dwelling was provided."

Next morning the abode of the fair Mela resembled a fair; such was the throng of milliners, jewellers, lace-merchants, tailors, shoemakers, and semstresses, all vying with each other in laying their treasures at her feet. Mela spent the whole of that day in selecting the various articles which, in those days, made up a bridal-dress, and in giving orders to the tradespeople. The bridegroom went, in the mean time, to procure the banns to be published; for, in those days, the wealthy and high-born were not ashamed to tell the whole world they meant to contract the solemn engagement of marriage; and, before the expiration of a month, he led his long-loved Mela to the altar, with so much pomp and solemnity, as very far to outshine even the splendid wedding of the rich brewer.

Mother Brigitta had the satisfaction to see her daughter united to a prosperous and deserving young man; and to enjoy, in the evening of her life, that comfort she had so long wished for; and, indeed, she deserved her good fortune, for she was the most tolerable mother-in-law that ever lived.