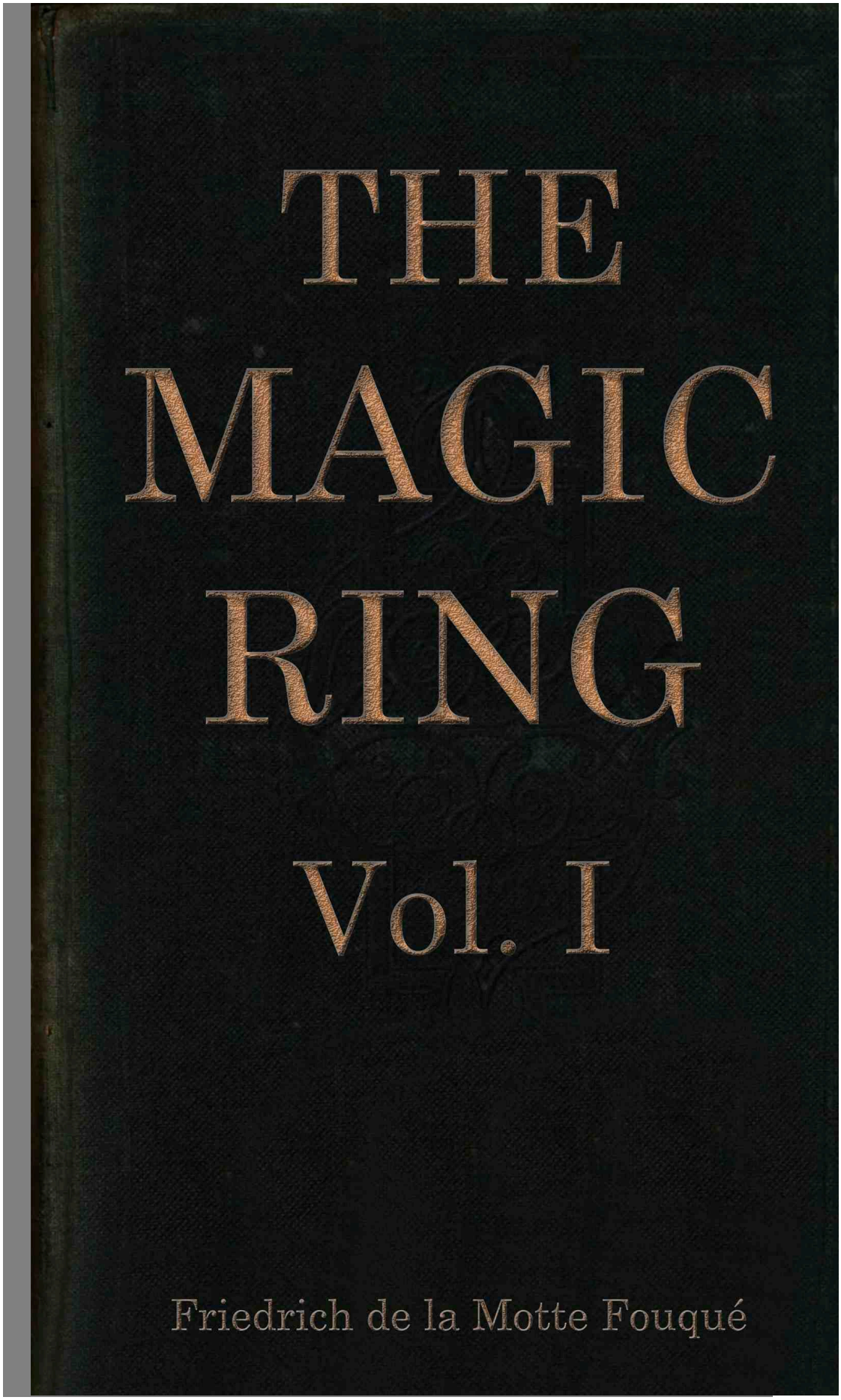
THE MAGIC RING

Vol. I

Friedrich de la Motte Fouqué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THE MAGIC RING.

OLIVER & BOYD, PRINTERS.

THE

MAGIC RING;

A ROMANCE,

FROM THE GERMAN OF

FREDERICK, BARON DE LA MOTTE FOUQUÉ

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

EDINBURGH;

PUBLISHED BY

OLIVER & BOYD, TWEEDDALE-COURT;
AND GEO. B. WHITTAKER, LONDON.

1825.

TO

CONRAD CHARLES,

FREYHERR VON ÄMSELNBURG, IN BERLIN,

TRANSLATOR OF

"The Lady of the Lake," "The Bridal of Triermain," and "The Antiquary."

I know not, my dear friend, whether you recollect a conversation that we had some time since respecting the Baron de la Motte Fouqué and his writings. If you do not, I take the liberty of calling it to your remembrance,—as what you then said has not only induced me to execute the following translation, but may likewise serve as an introductory notice to the readers of the work.

I remember well that, when speaking of the Baron, (in whose company we had dined that day at Charlottenburg,) you bestowed great praise on his various publications;—but, being then an incompetent judge of their merits, I could only reply, that I doubted not they deserved the eulogiums you passed upon them, since the Baron was certainly a jovial and pleasant companion,—a "chevalier, *sans peur et sans reproche*," if one might judge from the serenity of his aspect, and the complacency with which he quaffed his old Hochheimer and Johannisberg.

I had indeed, as a tyro in the German language, tried to read over his "Magic Ring," the only work of his which had fallen in my way; but I had not been long at Berlin ere I was

informed of the high reputation he had acquired by his writings on various subjects. I heard of his early devotion to literature; of his friendship with the Schlegels; of his being "*in utrumque paratus*," with the pen and the sword; of his campaigns as an officer, when the tumults and devastations of the French invasion were at their height; and especially of his conduct in the battles of Kulm in Bohemia, of Lutzen, of Leipsig, and afterwards on the banks of the "castellated Rhine." I had opportunities of meeting with the Baron, and was invited to pass some days at his country residence of Nennhausen; though circumstances rendered it impossible for me to profit sufficiently by his hospitality.

I also remember that, on the evening to which I have alluded, you were so eloquent in praise of the Baron, that we were detained till it was too late to go to the opera,—and therefore walked up and down in the long *allée*, under the lime-trees, for nearly two hours, during which time you went on analyzing and commending every one of his numerous productions. Among these, you expressed your special admiration of his "Hero of the North," and "Eginhard and Emma;" both of which, you insisted, were animated by the true spirit of chivalry and romance, and that in an English dress they would be excellent, either in their dramatic form, or remodelled into prose novels. But, as I expressed my dislike to dramatic poems which were unfit for the stage, you proceeded to mention the Baron's other narrative works, such as "Waldemar the Pilgrim," "Thiodulf's Wanderings," "Bertrand de Guesclin," and many more, which, though favourites of yours, are altogether unknown in this country.

At last we came to speak of the "Magic Ring,"—the only one of our author's works which I had then seen, and which I had only glanced at very hastily;—and you naturally asked me how it happened, that although "Undina," "Sintram," and even the "Minstrel Love," were translated into English, this romance had been hitherto neglected? To this I replied, that the "Sintram" and "Undina" were, even in the translation, interesting tales of wonder;—but that, on the contrary, the beauties of the "Magic Ring," which are so much admired by a German reader, depended on certain characteristic features,

which a translator could never impart, unless by means of a *remaniement* or *rifacimento*. These peculiarities were, first, the Baron's accurate imitation of the quaint, rude style of the old romancers; secondly, the melody of his verses, in which the thoughts are far too shadowy to be embodied in our language; thirdly, his allegorical representations and historical allusions, which no English reader could well comprehend, especially as the author has not furnished a proper key to unfold their meaning.

These objections, especially the last, you treated with indifference; and although my own opinion (that a *remaniement* would have been far better than a translation) remains unaltered,—yet, having resolved to translate the "Magic Ring" by way of experiment, I have adopted, as nearly as possible, the method you suggested for its execution.

For I recollect distinctly, that, on my requesting to hear your opinion how an English version ought to be attempted, your answer was, that the "Magic Ring" would, if *literally* translated, make a very amusing novel in the style adopted among us sixty years ago in "Popular Tales of the Germans," and which, by the way, has been recently exemplified in Mr Roscoe's Italian Romances. With regard to the *old-Frankish tournure* of language, the stiffness with which a translator too often moves through his task, and which has been aptly compared to the performance of our Macheath "dancing a hornpipe in real fetters," might perhaps serve as a tolerable imitation of that characteristic. As to the songs and other poetry, these, you said, were merely portions of the story thrown into rhyme, and would succeed just as well in prose as in verse.

Lastly, You observed, that, for understanding the author's allegorical allusions, nothing more was requisite than to bear in mind the history of the Norwegians, Swedes, Danes, &c.; otherwise known by the name of the Normans (Nordmänner) or "Men of the North." These people (represented in this work by an ancient warrior, bearing in his latter days the name of Sir Hugh von Trautwangen,) being poor, and dissatisfied with their own cold regions, emigrated in great numbers to the more southern countries of France, England, the Netherlands,

Germany, Italy; nay, it is said, even into Greece, Palestine, and other oriental climes. Of these historical facts, no school-boy in Britain is ignorant, as every one has read of Normandy and the Norman invasion.

The Nordmänner, or Normans, at the first period of their emigrations, were Pagans,—the votaries of Odin and the other fabulous gods of Valhalla; they were also skilled in necromancy and all the varied arts of the magician,—whether for purposes of good or evil,—wherein (as learned divines have sometimes maintained of the ancient oracles) the devil might be supposed to have assisted them.

Such are the materials whence Fouqué has drawn the machinery of his romances. The *white* magic of the now converted Druda contends against the black machinations of the infidel Gerda; and as for the "Mysterious Ring," it seems to have been only one among other necromantic spells, though some readers have supposed that the author hereby intended to allegorize the delusive spirit of the World, and of the worldly-minded, in opposition to that of pure religion and heavenly affections. Hence the Baron has represented the people of the North as led astray to wage war against all nations and against each other; till at last, by the influence of Bertha, (a personification of the true Christian faith,) they become harmonized and happily united into one community.

"Nothing," you added, "can be clearer and more intelligible than this outline; and, if the work were even *literally* rendered into English, it would present an excellent 'knightly tale of the olden time,' with a religio-historical moral. Let this be done, and there need be no doubt entertained of its success."

To these remarks I ventured to reply, that, to the best of my judgment, there was not one character in the romance, nor any part of the machinery, under which the author had not involved some abstruse and figurative meaning which ought to be explained. Gerda, for example, I alleged, was not a mere enchantress, introduced for the purpose of bringing about some strange adventures: on the contrary, she seemed to represent Superstition, whose horrid rites are contrasted with the mild and rational piety of the Druda. The Ring, too, I thought, might

not only be intended to allegorize the delusions of the world, but also those of natural-magic, (*die natur-kenntnisse*,) and other profane sciences.—"Trouble yourself no farther with such inquiries and speculations," you replied: "emblems and allegories are nuts hard enough to crack; let the readers break their teeth on them if they will."

With this homely metaphor our discourse ended; and your plan has accordingly been carried into effect. Instead of indulging my own feelings in a *remaniement*,—which would have been a new work founded on old materials,—I have merely translated the Baron's words, (which need not preclude other German scholars from bringing forward the same story on a different plan); and, under the auspices of your name, which is at least as well known here as that of the Baron, it is not without some degree of confidence that I introduce these volumes to the public.

I am, my dear sir, with great respect, &c. &c.

THE TRANSLATOR.

PREFACE

BY THE BARON DE LA MOTTE FOUQUÉ.

COURTEOUS READER!

It is with a mixed feeling of apprehension and delight, that the author now betakes himself to his task of writing the following story. There are people in the world who laugh scornfully, if they meet with one of their fellow-mortals who calls on Heaven to aid him in any worldly enterprise; but, notwithstanding this, the writer of these lines is not afraid to confess, that he has just now prayed with his whole heart to the Giver of all good, for assistance in the pleasant labour which awaits him. By this means, he has been supported ere now through similar undertakings; and he confidently trusts, that at this time also his prayers will not be unanswered. For, in truth, the history, which he now proposes to write, hovers yet, like a strange vision, before his "mind's eye;" it seems to him as if he were about to set sail on a wide weltering sea, with shores varied and romantic, with gleaming rainbow-tints on its waters, and not without whirlpools and rocks; while the sky is overspread with clouds of the wildest shapes and the richest colouring!

Full well do I know the arduous course which I have to steer; but as to the separate events that are to be encountered, I know them not; for these are yet uncertain as a dream. However this may be, not the less boldly, courteous reader, do I invite thee to join me in this voyage; for, should'st thou be unwilling to engage in the enterprise, it would seem as if the name of God, on whom I have now called, sounded strange and unwelcome in thine ears; otherwise thou would'st be satisfied with what I shall obtain by my prayers, and which I promise faithfully to communicate to thee. But consider, I beseech thee, that if thou shalt find any thing worthy of commendation, and pleasing in my work, it is not mine, but a gift from the Supreme Power, which is conveyed to me insensibly as I write; for I am then only capable of expressing myself with effect, when my mind

is more elevated than is usual in the present state of our depraved and mortal nature.

In the following pages, then, I lay before thee the best fruits of those hours when my fancy is most free and exalted; while, in this preface, I have spoken the plain, unadorned truth. On this, as a true knight, I pledge my word of honour. And now I bid thee heartily welcome to the groves and meadows, the battles and festivals, the joyous weddings, or mournful obsequies, which our story may unfold.

THE

MAGIC RING.

VOL. I.

CHAPTER I.

How the young Squire Otto and his pretty Cousin discoursed together, on the banks of the Danube, during a fine evening in May.

In the happy land of Suabia, close to the river Danube, there lies a fine level meadow, where once on a time (it was in the month of May, just as the declining sunbeams were taking leave of the flowers) a young squire, by name Otto von Trautwangen, was enjoying his evening recreation. At this beautiful season, it was Otto's custom frequently to leave his father's castle in the neighbouring mountains, and repair to the pleasant banks of the river. Here he amused himself alternately with angling in the streams, or in shooting with a cross-bow at marks, which he had contrived in many strange shapes, such as dragons, hobgoblins, witches, &c. and painted in glaring colours. On the wide level meadow he ran no risk of wounding any one with his arrows. This evening, however, his bow and quiver lay beside him on the grass, and he held his fishing-rod, watching as it seemed the play of his line in the water; but he was lost in reverie, and forgot that he had not even baited his hook.

Then Bertha von Lichtenried came walking towards him, his father's niece, along with whom he had from his childhood been educated at the castle. She took her place beside him on the grass, and half mocking, half anxiously questioned him on what he was meditating so deeply? He himself knew not well what to say, and now so much the less, when he saw his cousin's pretty face smiling on him reflected in the water. She looked even *too* beautiful in his estimation, and perhaps she thought the same of him, as she smiled on her companion so kindly. It was delightful to see how the two young people thus carried on a silent conversation together in the living mirror of the Danube! When Otto had considered for a while, it occurred to him that he had remarked a pilgrim, in a red-cross mantle, passing on the opposite side of the river, after which he had

fallen into a mood of deep thought. He told Bertha of this, and described to her how solemn was the impression left on his mind; how the pilgrim had always looked steadfastly on the road before him, without turning in the least to the right or left, so that one could not precisely say whether it was old age, humility, or an ardent longing after the sacred object of his journey, that bent his head forwards, and harmonized every gesture. To this the young man added his own reflections, how admirable it must be to travel across kingdoms, seas, and rivers, to distant unknown lands! Nothing in his opinion could be pleasanter than such a pilgrimage, and it would never be the fatigue of travelling, but only the tedium of repose afterwards, that would prove oppressive.

"You do not mean to turn a pilgrim then?" said Bertha with a confident smile. "The Saints forbid!" said the young man; "these woods and meadows here hold me like a magic spell within their circle. Take care then that you never desert them, my pretty cousin!" At these words, Bertha blushed so deeply and suddenly, that it seemed as if twin rosebuds had sprung up in the water, and said, "As you are so certainly to remain here, then we may jest a little on the supposed possibility of your going. Let us try for once that farewell ditty, in two parts, which Master Walter has so finely indited. As in winter, one likes to hear the snow-storm, when sitting warm by the fireside, so we may now venture to sing these verses, which, in their proper place, we should have no heart to repeat." Otto then began,

"Sweet home, so long beloved,
That I no more shall view," &c.

But after the first two stanzas they gave over their music, for on the other side of the river there came a great procession of pilgrims, among whom appeared such variety of characters, that the young people found their attention irresistibly attracted. In the midst of the assemblage were graceful figures of young women, mounted on mules, richly caparisoned, and attended for their protection by warriors on foot, with long halberts in their hands. Then there were certain pilgrims, of

whom, notwithstanding their grey mantles and oddly-shaped caps, it was easy to determine that they must be courtiers, and persons of high dignity, especially as their demeanour contrasted so powerfully with that of a great number of country people, who moved about irregularly enough in the procession. One could distinguish too, many respectable citizens of middle rank, painters also, and musicians, who bore with them the instruments of their respective arts, which they hoped to exercise in distant lands for the honour and glory of our holy religion. At last there came a troop of warlike knights, mounted on fine chargers, in bright-gleaming armour, who could be known as pilgrims only by the red cross on their shoulders. Just as the procession came opposite to Bertha and Otto, the ladies, mounted on their stately mules, and attended by their halberdiers, began to sing a grand choral hymn in praise of the eastern lands, whither they were thus pursuing their way.

The effect of their voices during the stillness of the evening was magical. Accidentally the sun, just then verging on the hills, broke through a cloud with new and unexpected refulgence, as if, instead of setting, he had been about to rise again, in order to reward and inspire those pious votaries. When the last notes had died solemnly and slowly away, the mail-coated knights struck in with a bold and martial chorus, in which they were joined by the halberdiers, while a powerful flourish of trumpets filled up the pause betwixt every stanza. Their song expressed contempt of the Saracens, and admiration of the English King Richard the Lion Heart, whose forces had just then gone forth like a thunder-storm, destructive and yet beneficial, into the Holy Land:

> “Who falls there, he is glorious,
> And he who lives, victorious.”

Such were the concluding words of their chaunt; and when the long train had passed by, both the young people remained for some time thoughtful and silent. At length, “It is very true,” said Otto, “King Richard of England, who, for his bravery and magnanimity, is called *Cœur de Lion*, has vowed to make a

crusade against the Saracens. My father and Master Walter spoke of this all last night at the castle. Good Heaven, what grand exploits will be performed there!" On saying this, the youth's cheeks glowed and his eyes sparkled. Bertha sighed as she answered, "If you talk with such pleasure of wars and foreign travels, whenever any one in the guise of a pilgrim happens to come hither, then I shall no longer have courage to sing that farewell-ballad which we had begun." "Nay, nay, be not afraid," said Otto smiling, "we shall not speak more of any such adventures. Only attend now to your voice, and keep up the octave. You know we are to sing the next stanza together."

It seemed destined, however, that they were not to finish their ballad to-day; for just as they had commenced again, they were disturbed by a noise as of many horses from the meadow behind them, and on turning their eyes thitherward, they perceived—what we shall describe in the next chapter.

CHAPTER II.

How two Strangers (a Lady and a Knight) suddenly arrived, and how the Lady told a marvellous Story of a Ring.

There were indeed many horses, from which had alighted a number of well-dressed squires, (or serving-men at arms,) who were already busily employed in pitching on the meadow handsome ornamental tents, coloured red, blue, green, and yellow. Then there came a most beautiful lady, with a train of female attendants, all on horseback, and a knight in full armour was waiting to receive her, by whom she was lifted from her white palfrey with great respect and attention. Thereafter it was a pleasure to see how the lady and knight walked backwards and forwards for pastime on the green level plain; the former dressed in sky-blue velvet, with a border of rich gold embroidery; the latter in a black coat of mail, yet finely burnished and inlaid with many emblematic devices in bright silver. His appearance altogether was not a little strange and mysterious, the fashion of his accoutrements being such as Bertha and Otto had till now never beheld. His demeanour, though courteous, was grave and solemn; yet, as he wore no helmet, they perceived that he was a young man of very agreeable and sprightly features.

The two strangers, in the course of their walk, came very near the spot where Otto and Bertha were stationed, who of course greeted them with a respectful salutation. The lady returned this compliment, and her looks seemed irresistibly attracted by the tall graceful figures of the young people. She made a signal that they should approach nearer, and began a conversation, from which she learned at once the whole history of their peaceful, regular, and happy life. Their narrative, indeed, was so short and simple, and had so few adventures, that more words would have been superfluous. With a melancholy smile then the lady turned to her companion; “Count Archimbald,” said she, “if we were called on to narrate our history, could the task have been so easily accomplished? And yet,” said she,

turning to the young couple, “it seems to me as if I had incurred a debt which I must compensate, by telling you the strange events of my pilgrimage. You will no doubt find some entertainment therein; and methinks it is only your modesty and polite behaviour that prevent you from asking who we are, and what has brought us hither? But since you have spoken so kindly and confidently to me, I should be very ungrateful if I wrapt myself any longer under the veil of mystery. Come then with us.”

With these words, Otto and Bertha were led by the stranger into one of the tents, which were by this time already spread. The lady seated herself on a sofa, and made them take their places beside her. Count Archimbald went out to make divers arrangements as to his little camp, and, in a few minutes, the lady began the following narration:—

“My name is Gabrielle, and I am descended from the ancient race of Portamour.—Being from my earliest infancy an orphan, I yet frequently heard from the people to whom I was given in charge, that I ought to be one of the noblest and richest ladies in all France, were it not for the absence of a certain ring, which a countess of the Norman family Montfaucon had contrived to get into her possession; and which had been inherited by her daughter, who was about the same age with myself. So the ring was constantly held out to me as the most desirable and important of all worldly possessions;—whether waking or asleep, I thought and dreamed but of this alone, knowing that this wonderful gem would not only convey to me some extensive territories, but, what was far more important in my estimation, would bring along with it the knowledge of several magical spells, and even a commanding influence over the world of spirits. Judge what were my feelings, when one evening at the King’s court, where I had just then made my first appearance, a young lady was introduced, by name Blanchefleur de Montfaucon, on whose beautiful hand (for she was indeed very beautiful) I directly recognized the ring, which, from the frequent descriptions that I had heard of it, was perfectly known to me! To get this treasure into my own possession was, for the first time, an easy task; for, during the festival, we were to pass the

night in the same chamber, and Blanchefleur having carelessly taken it from her finger, I seized on my own family-property as soon as she fell asleep. Next morning she scarcely seemed to regret her loss; but, after searching for a few moments in vain, she went away gayly to attend the tournament, which had just then begun. Thither I followed her, and soon after we had taken our places, a graceful and warlike knight rode up towards her, who, as I understand, was her brother, Sir Folko de Montfaucon. His bright falconlike eyes had, in a moment, observed the absence of the ring on her finger, and its appearance on mine. After having interchanged a few words with his sister, he came to me with looks respectful indeed, but grave and determined; then, pointing his lance to the ground, 'Lady,' said he, 'may it please you to select a champion, with whom I may try my fortune in the lists, and from whom I may win back that ring which now shines on your beautiful hand, but which belongs to my sister, Blanchefleur?' Of course I did according as he desired; but, in consequence of this agreement, one of the most renowned and skilful knights in France, whom I had chosen for my defender, was thrown prostrate on the sand, so quickly and decisively, that, according to the rules of the combat, I had no alternative left, but must immediately restore to him the family-jewel, which I had possessed for so short a while,—to be given back to his admired sister, Blanchefleur.

"I wept bitterly, and retired to my chamber, where I would not listen to the messages of my friends and youthful companions, who wished me to join with them in the amusements appointed for that afternoon and evening. I spoke harshly too with my attendant, when she brought into the room a finely-made fishing-rod, inlaid with mother-of-pearl, with a golden line and silver hook, which I was to have used on the following day at a gay party on the water. But of what consequence were to me such diversions now that I had lost my ring! The girl, discontentedly, set the fishing-rod in the window-corner, and, as I would not notice her, left me alone to weep. Towards evening I became more tranquil, and the loud laughing of my young companions, who were playing at ball in the garden, induced me at last to look through the window. Then I

observed that Blanchefleur, feeling that her ring was inconvenient, took it from her finger, laid it on a moss-covered seat under my window, and thoughtlessly ran back to her game. With a beating heart and anxious wishes, I drew open the lattice, upon which motion the fishing-rod, as if offering its services, fell into my arms. I immediately made a trial,—found that the golden line reached down to the ring, which, on the first touch, as if I had been assisted by magic, attached itself to the hook, and was drawn up and received by me with a thousand kisses.

"My triumph, however, was again but short-lived. No sooner had the childish Blanchefleur complained to her brother, and the ring been observed on my finger, (for I was too proud to conceal what I supposed to be my own property,) than he again requested that I would appoint a champion to defend my cause. And how could any one resist the giant strength of Sir Folko? My new warrior was overthrown like his predecessor; and this time Blanchefleur gave the ring into her brother's care, so that I had less hope than ever of regaining it. However, I did not fail to keep constantly in view an object which was so dear to me; and one day, when, after a hunting-party, we were resting beneath a tree almost without branches, some one said, that it would be quite impossible to climb to the top of it. Then, in a tone of mockery, I challenged Sir Folko de Montfaucon to make a trial of his hitherto invincible powers in this adventure. Just as I had hoped, his ambition and excessive delight in all knightly exercises made him quite lose sight of every other consideration. Consequently he laid the ring, which he generally wore always on his finger, on the grass, because it hindered him in climbing, then began his endeavours. I understood afterwards, that, after many vain attempts, he succeeded in reaching the top of the tree; but meanwhile, I had, unobserved, availed myself of the opportunity to seize on my treasure, and was on my way to England, in order that, in the court of King Richard Cœur de Lion, I might find out a knight able to maintain my rights against the frightfully victorious Folko de Montfaucon.

"The great King Richard received me with all the courtesy which was to be expected from that mirror of knighthood; and

when I besought him to grant me a protector, he made his most chosen favourite, and brother in the battle-field, be introduced, commanding him to kneel down, and beg for the honour of devoting his life to my service. How proud then was I, and with what indifferent and cold looks did I soon afterwards see Folko de Montfaucon enter the English court in order to renew the combat for the ring! Alas! my hopes were then vain. I should have known that the English champions, however brave and steadfast, are yet inferior to the French in the sports of the tournament. Indeed, my valiant defender, conscious of this, had insisted, as a condition of the fight, that it was not to be decided by the lance only, but that the vanquished party might maintain his rights afterwards with the sword. In consequence of that precaution, Folko's victory was more laborious and more honourable, but by no means less certain or less decisive. My champion was carried insensible, with three sword wounds, out of the lists, and Folko at the same moment kneeled before me, requesting that I would give him back the ring. The generous King Richard addressed him, saying, that he should be satisfied with having thus maintained and supported his pretensions in the combat, but as for the ring, he should leave it in the hands of the fair lady to whom the possession of it was evidently so very dear. 'Most noble king and pattern of all Christian knights,' said Folko, 'if it depended on myself alone, this beautiful lady should most certainly remain in undisturbed possession of the ring; nay, my life should be sacrificed if it would offer any compensation for the tears with which her bright eyes are now clouded; but the jewel is the property of my sister, Blanchefleur de Montfaucon, as whose champion I have now the honour of appearing here; and, as your majesty best knows, a knight dare not give away the rights of her for whom he has fought in the lists.'

"To this King Richard could not make any reply; and I was obliged to leave the court once more deprived of my ring, and in deep melancholy. Yet I lingered for some time in that country, hoping that, as Sir Folko had been always so fortunate in arms, I might yet get the better of him by stratagem and artifice. Accordingly I learned that he intended making a

journey into Wales, in order to behold with his own eyes the fortresses and ruined castles where, in old times, King Arthur, and his knights of the round table, had fought and banquetted. Determined to brave all dangers, I ventured before him among the Welsh mountains, and, disguising myself in an old rusty coat of mail and helmet, with the visor down, I waited for him in a retired valley, through which I knew that he must of necessity pass. He came up in due time, and in a deep rough voice, which my closed visor helped me to disguise, I challenged him to an immediate and mortal combat. He demanded to know my name, and the cause of my challenge, but I declined giving that information, and affected to think that he only sought a pretext to evade our engagement. Furiously incensed, he then leaped from his horse, (as I was on foot), with his armour and weapons rattling and glancing, so that I had almost fainted from terror. I recovered myself, however, and said to him, that I would not fight with him till he had taken his enchanted ring from his finger, as it was well known that this alone made him invincible, and that without such aid he was weak and cowardly as a child. With an exclamation of anger and contempt, he then pulled off his iron glove, threw the ring down on the grass, which I directly seized upon, at the same moment throwing off my visor'd helmet, and saying,—'Now, perhaps, Sir Folko de Montfaucon will recognize Gabrielle de Portamour, and he will doubtless have too much generosity to take the ring from a young damsel who has here no protector, or even to delay her intended journey.' He bowed, and was silent. After a pause, however, he said, 'I shall have the honour, lady, to meet you again in inhabited places, where you will doubtless find a choice of defenders.' Thereupon I directly made my escape, and having my attendants in waiting with my horses, I rode away as fast as possible to the sea-shore, where I was lucky enough to find a ship that brought me over in safety, and with favourable winds, to Germany, which country I now preferred to France, because I had heard that it was the very temple and chief resort of brave and generous knights.

"Accordingly, since I came thither, the noble Count Archimbald of Waldeck has sworn that he will be my

champion and defender of my rights; so that I have scarcely any farther anxiety, as he is so renowned a warrior, and has yet never been subdued in any rencontre. Consequently, also, I wear the blue and gold colours of the Montfaucon family, in order to indicate the claims which the ring gives me over their property. Houses and lands, however, I shall willingly leave in their power, provided I can still retain my beloved and wonderful ring. Perhaps the frightful Folko has by this time given up thoughts of it; for since our parting in Wales I have not seen him; so that I may applaud my own artifice and resolution, thus affording me an opportunity of becoming gradually acquainted with the wonderful properties of the jewel, which hitherto I had known only by dark and mysterious rumours."

Otto and Bertha expressed in courteous and well-chosen words their gratitude to the noble lady for her interesting story. Bertha then said, in a low timid voice,—"This ring must surely be very beautiful."—"I shall shew it to you most willingly," said the smiling Gabrielle, thereupon drawing it, suspended on a gold chain, from her snow-white bosom. It was fashioned as follows: Two serpents of the purest gold were intertwined with each other, on whose heads were crowns of rubies; on the circle were engraved characters such as Otto could not read; but he remembered having seen such before on very old weapons in his father's armoury. He knew also, that they were called Runic letters, and had their origin in distant countries of the north. Over and between the serpents' crowns was a bright green stone, which in colour might be compared to the waters of the Danube, but Gabrielle said that its hues were exactly like those of the sea.

While the young people were thus admiring the jewel, and wondering at the strange characters, (the tent being now brightly illuminated,) the curtain at the entrance was drawn aside, and Sir Archimbald entered, followed by another knight.

CHAPTER III.

How this Knight was challenged by Sir Folko de Montfaucon, and of a fearful combat fought by torch-light in the lists.

On the stranger's approach, Otto and Bertha exclaimed at the same moment,—"Good Heaven, there is the frightful knight, Sir Folko de Montfaucon!" During Gabrielle's narrative, they had formed to themselves a lively picture of this victorious hero, to which the looks of the stranger guest now wonderfully corresponded. They had not been deceived; for Gabrielle suddenly became deadly pale, and the knight came up with great respect and formality, inquiring whether she had chosen the warrior, by whom he had just before been invited into the tent, for her champion, and if it would now be allowed him to try his fortune in combat in order to win back the ring? To this address Gabrielle made a sign in the affirmative, and Sir Archimbald interposed. "Sir Knight, although you are yet a stranger to me, yet it is my duty to inform you, that I am the Graf von Waldeck. My character is, perhaps, already known to you; and you have now free choice whether you will venture with me in the lists, or give up the ring in friendship and peace." At these words a deep flush came over the cheeks of Sir Folko de Montfaucon, and his dark eyes gleamed like a distant thundercloud. However, he made a courteous bow, and said, in a mild voice,—"I know not, my Lord Count, if you will not think it beneath your dignity to conquer such a humble opponent as the Chevalier Folko de Montfaucon; but this much I can truly say, that the honour of contending with so renowned a knight as Count Archimbald von Waldeck would alone induce me to request the combat, even if there were not any other motive for our encounter." "Shall we then enter the lists to-night?" said Sir Archimbald. "That must be decided by this noble damsel," said Sir Folko; "perhaps from the fatigue of her journey it might not be convenient to her to look on our conflict this evening." "Rather let it be to-day than to-morrow," said Gabrielle, in an accent of haste and anxiety.

Accordingly the Count went out to prepare the ground, having previously agreed with his opponent, that whoever should first be driven out of the ring, (by whatever cause this might happen,) should be looked upon as vanquished, and should be allowed no farther chance on this occasion; otherwise, however, they were to be allowed the right of contending with swords, after their fortune had been duly tried with the lance, according to the example given in the court of King Richard the Lion Heart.

Meanwhile, Sir Archimbald being employed without in making preparations for this tragical pastime, Folko had taken Gabrielle's lute, seated himself with it at her feet, and begun gracefully to play with the strings. It was a pleasure to look on him in his dark-blue armour, finely inlaid and gleaming with gold, his dark-brown hair, upturned whiskers, smiling lips, and pearly teeth. As to Gabrielle, she fixed her eyes steadfastly on the ground, in silent impatience, and suffering all the agonies of suspense. Whoever had chanced to see these two, the knight and the lady, both clad in the same colours, and thus sitting together, would never have thought that there were any evil intentions betwixt them; but rather that the lady had made him a present of the fine blue and gold scarf which flowed over his broad shoulders, and that he was now thanking her for her courtesy by a love-melody on her lute. Such peace and tranquillity, however, were not of long continuance. Archimbald soon made his appearance, in a frightful guise, at the entrance of the tent; for he had now put on his helmet, with the visor closed, which represented the head of an eagle, with a great silver beak; to which strange headdress the rest of his armour so well corresponded, that he might have been looked on as a visitant front some fabulous land of hobgoblins and monsters. "All is ready," said he; whereupon Folko started up, light as a feather, from his position at Gabrielle's feet, laid away the lute with great care, where he had found it on the carpet, and with an elegant bow quitted the tent. Then Sir Archimbald offered the lady his arm, and led her out. Otto and Bertha followed, lost in astonishment, and scarce daring to believe in this realization of scenes such as had been known to them before only in their ballads and romances.

When they came out of the tent, a bright-beaming light guided them to the ground that had been prepared by Sir Archimbald. A circle, wide enough for the attack and career of two horses, was enclosed by a double row of torches, whose red flames burned powerfully amid the calm darkness of the night, casting all distant objects into the blackest shade, while even the minutest flower or plant was visible in the circle. Archimbald led Gabrielle to a turf-seat, covered with a rich carpet, so placed, that she was directly opposite the middle of the enclosed ground, on which spot the two knights would meet in their fearful encounter. Near the lady were stationed Otto and Bertha, one on each side; and behind her were a numerous train of her own and Archimbald's attendants. On the opposite side of the ring were visible, through the red torch-light, many strange figures in rich dresses, who were probably squires of Sir Folko de Montfaucon.

Count Archimbald now formally requested leave of absence from the lady, and went away, on her right hand, to mount his charger. Meanwhile, Sir Folko was already visible on her left, at the extremity of the ring, seated on a graceful light-footed grey horse, with a close-visored golden helmet on his head. His opponent not being yet ready, he pranced about in a playful manner along the turf, guiding his horse, as it seemed, more by words than by management of the reins. On coming near Gabrielle, the animal, on a secret signal from his rider, bent his knees for a moment in respectful homage, then started up with a fine capriole, continuing to bound and curvet so lightly and so elegantly, that he seemed almost to move on wings; the golden bells of the saddle and head-gear making pleasant music, till at length the rider regained his former position in the distance. There the horse stood obedient and tranquil like a statue, turning back his elegantly-formed head towards the knight, as if in friendly confidence, and asking whether he had performed his part correctly? whereupon Sir Folko took off his iron glove, and kindly clapped him on the neck.

During all this while, it afforded a strange contrast, to observe how Count Archimbald's charger, his dark coat spotted with foam, plunged, reared, and struggled, so that two squires, with

their utmost exertions, were scarcely able to hold him. In the midst of his fury, the Count sprung upon his back, and with violent strokes of the spur, made him plunge more wildly than ever, galloped him several times up and down with great strength of limbs and skill of bridle; till at last the horse knew his master, and stood, as if rooted to the ground, waiting his commands. Still, however, his eyes flamed so wildly, that they might be compared to the red glare of the torches; and with his right fore-hoof he began to paw and tear up the turf, as if he would prepare a grave for his rider's opponent.

Then both champions, in token that they were ready for the combat, bowed to Gabrielle so respectfully, that their long waving plumes almost touched the earth;—thereafter they both sat upright, firmly laying their lances in the rest. At length Gabrielle gave the signal for onset, by throwing up a white handkerchief;—the trumpets sounded, and the two knights rushed against each other with such velocity, that, contrary to what usually happens, one heard the crashing of their broken lances and loud ringing of their armour in the shock, even before his eyes could distinguish their meeting. The combatants passed one another without losing their seats, and now rode their horses up and down, on exchanged sides of the ring, each one, as it seemed, wondering to perceive that his opponent was still in the saddle. "More lances!" cried Archimbald, and the squires immediately offered on both sides a selection among many ponderous weapons. When they had weighed them, and made their choice respectively, "Knight of Montfaucon," said Archimbald, "two more encounters with the lance, this and another, will that suffice? And if the cause be not then decided, we shall have recourse to the sword." "I am here as a guest," said Folko, "and must follow whatever example is set by my noble entertainer." The trumpets sounded, and the knights again flew together; this time, however, with such violence, that both horses were thrown back, with their hind-legs doubled under them, but being violently spurred, rose again directly, and passed across into their places. Sir Folko's lance was broken into shivers against his adversary's coat of mail, while the Count's spear was merely snapped, and he held one half still in his hand. On both

sides, therefore, there was a great shouting and exultation, for the followers of Waldeck looked on the half weapon still wielded as a favourable omen, while those of Montfaucon insisted that their master must have played his part in a far more knightly and effectual manner in this encounter.

However this might be, the knights were once more supplied with lances, the trumpets sounded for the third time; anger and impatience rather than their former courtesy were now visible in every attitude and gesture. The spectators knew not well how or where their lances struck on this meeting. Folko's silver-grey steed recoiled and reared, then seemed to tremble and totter from the violence of the shock; but the knight, bending over his neck, still spurred him on, in a light gallop. On the other hand, Archimbald's black charger fell down on his knees, but instantly rose again with a violent plunge; then, no longer tamed by the efforts of his now almost powerless master, careered about through the ring, in all the madness of ungovernable rage, so that he and his strangely-attired rider seemed like demons rather than mortal beings. At length with a tremendous bound he leapt through the torches and disappeared! Thereafter, from some distance, amid the deep rayless gloom, one heard by the crash of his armour that Count Archimbald had been thrown to the ground.

Folko remained for some time motionless in his place; then he dismounted, gently stroked the mane of his silver-grey steed, threw away the fragment of his broken lance, and, drawing his sword, that gleamed like a flame in the torch-light, stepped into the middle of the circle. No one came to oppose him; and from without in the darkness were heard the anxious murmuring of voices, and the running to and fro of servants, now busied about their fallen master. At last Folko called out in a loud tone, "My Lord Count von Waldeck, your unruly horse bore you, against your will, out of the circle. This must not be reckoned against you; but you shall have a fair opportunity to make good with your sword that which you have lost in our contest with the lance. I shall therefore wait for you here." For a long time, however, all was silent. At last a squire called out,—"My Lord has fainted." "He cannot fight again!" cried another voice. "We must bring him to the nearest

convent to be cured by the monks," said a third; and immediately thereafter was heard the slow and mournful trampling of the horses as they bore away the now helpless champion across the meadow.

Then Sir Folko put up his gleaming sword into the scabbard, threw back his visor, went towards Gabrielle, and, kneeling, begged that she would bestow on him the prize of the combat. Weeping bitterly, the beautiful damsel once more drew the golden chain from her bosom, with feelings how different from those with which she had shewn it just before to the young people! Yet before her trembling fingers had unclasped the chain, Otto stepped up to Sir Folko de Montfaucon, and said,—"Sir Knight, if it please you to allow that a coat of armour be given me, also a horse, lance, and sword, I shall yet contend with you for the ring, in the name of this noble lady, provided she deems me not unworthy of such high honour." At these words, a glance of hope and joy flew over Gabrielle's countenance. In a moment, she thought of the many old stories in which she had read of the most renowned knights, and even giants, having been vanquished by young men, scarcely beyond the age of boyhood, who fought in defence of oppressed damsels. Folko had raised himself from the ground, and measured with his looks his unexpected adversary. Suddenly, however, he turned away with a smile, and said ironically, "Young squire! young squire! where are your golden spurs? Do you think yourself already qualified to break a lance with knights in the field? Three sword-strokes on the shoulders, and a midnight watch of your armour, then come to me again, and I shall willingly meet you." Whereupon he kneeled again before Gabrielle, and begged her for the ring; which he had no sooner received into his hands, than (after making a deep obeisance) he remounted his silver-grey steed, and, followed by all his train, galloped away.

Gabrielle, still weeping bitterly, turned to her attendants, who, directly after the unhappy issue of the tournament, had begun to take down the tents, and pack them up, with all their appurtenances, on led horses; which work they had now completed. Not a quarter of an hour longer, said the unhappy lady, would she remain on the place where she had

encountered such misfortune. And without taking heed of Otto's attempts to console her, or offers of his services, she turned away from him as from a prattling foolish child; and, having mounted her palfrey, rode away through the darkness. Otto, moreover, called out after her; "So, may Heaven aid me, noble lady, as I shall certainly not rest till I have become a knight, nor till I have laid the ring at your feet." Even this vow, however, seemed to make no impression on her ears; and in a short time the trampling of her horse, and noise of her attendants, died away in the distance.

Lonely and forsaken, Otto and Bertha remained standing on the fatal place. It was as if they had dreamed; only the half-burned torches and the broken turf of the battle-field bore witness silently that all had been real. Neither of them knew what to say; so that in silence they pursued their route through the darkness of the night homewards, wonderfully changed in mood from what they had been, when, but a few hours before, they had come from the castle to that pleasant meadow. All that passed betwixt them on the way was only now and then a question from Otto. "Weep'st thou, dearest Bertha;" to which she always answered, "No," in as firm a voice as she could assume; so that he was obliged to think himself mistaken, and that, because he could not help sighing deeply, he had supposed that Bertha answered him with her tears.

CHAPTER IV.

How the young Squire Otto received the honours of Knighthood.

While all these events had been passing on the banks of the river, Sir Hugh von Trautwangen was sitting in his proud ancestral hall, with its vaulted roof, where were deposited his own coats of mail and weapons, along with those of his warlike predecessors. In this apartment he spent most of his time, since he had now become too old and infirm for the sports of the chase or tournament; and was still less able to pursue the warlike career to which he had been accustomed in youth. During this night he was sitting at a great round table, whereon, in massy silver candlesticks, there were two wax-lights now almost burned down, while his son and his niece, contrary to all custom, kept him waiting, and vainly expecting their arrival. As often as he heard steps on the long-winding staircase, the old man thought that must surely be the two young people, and looked kindly and anxiously towards the door; but when it was opened, no one had appeared but a serving squire, who wished to know whether the knight still had light enough, or if the wine in his richly-embossed and carved silver goblet were drank out. So then Sir Hugh's countenance changed; he pretended to be quite unconcerned, and if the squire expressed some anxiety, answered briefly and peevishly, "Well! well! young people must have their pastime. What business is that of ours? They will be here soon enough."

But the castle clock struck nine; then at length ten o'clock; the night was fearfully dark, and Sir Hugh had no tidings of his son nor of his niece. So the old man took his green velvet cap from his head, held it in his clasped hands, and prayed fervently to Heaven that the manifold sins of his youth might not be reckoned against these poor children, but that Providence, in his infinite mercy, would bring them back safe to their home in the castle.

He was still engaged in prayer, when a heavy oak-pannelled door, right opposite to him, was opened, and the fresh blooming faces of the longed-for absentees made their appearance in the hall. This time he had not heard the slightest sound on the staircase; and the fulfilment of his most anxious wishes came on him unexpectedly, as usually happens, when one's wishes have been pure and good, and especially when one has prayed, in a right spirit, to the Fountain of all Mercy. The young people, however, were much distressed; they were moved to compassion and repentance, when they saw the tall venerable form of their guardian sitting in his arm-chair opposite to them, with clasped hands and a pale anxious countenance, blanched already by the cares of many past years, and now rendered paler than ever by the dim ghastly light of the declining candles. They felt immediately for whom he had prayed, and lifted up their clasped hands in the same manner, in order to express their gratitude, and beg his forgiveness. Sir Hugh, however, regained his usual composure, replaced his velvet cap on his head, and with a grave, though kindly manner, made signs that they should come nearer, and desired to know what had detained them so long? Then replied Otto von Trautwangen,—"Sir Knight, and my honoured father, if we had remained absent but a little longer, it would, according to my humble thoughts, have been better for us all, and especially for the beautiful lady with the ring; for the prize would have again been contended for, and the victory, as I hope, would have been ours. Now, Heaven knows how long I shall have to travel through the world, in order to fulfil my vows to the lady; and all this comes, because it has not been my fortune ere now to obtain the rank of knighthood." On hearing these words, Sir Hugh looked at his son with astonishment, not so much on account of the expressions which he had used, but for the tone and manner, the complete change that within a few hours seemed to have taken place in the youth's disposition and character. Bertha, meanwhile, began to weep bitterly, and without any attempt to conceal her tears; her affliction was indeed much greater than that of the beautiful Gabrielle for the loss of her ring. Hereupon Otto looked round with surprise, and, observing from his fair cousin's eyes, that this was not the commencement of her

distress, (for they were now swollen and clouded,) he said, in a faltering voice, “Dearest Bertha, then you have indeed wept all the way home. Wherefore did you answer ‘no,’ when I questioned you? And, above all, what is the cause of your affliction?” Bertha did not utter a word, but answered him only by a constrained and melancholy smile: then she begged of the old knight that she might be allowed to retire for this evening, and, hiding her face, directly left the chamber. Otto wished to detain her; but Sir Hugo, with a severe look, held him fast bound to his place at the table. Then, when Bertha had departed, “Boy,” said the old man, “thou hast either dreamed and talked wildly, in which case thy delusions will not last till to-morrow; or thou art in earnest about vows in a lady’s service, and the desire of being a knight. If thou art serious, then thy cousin Bertha’s childish tears are not of such consequence as they might have been heretofore. Bring your chair then directly opposite, and relate accurately, and with reflection, what happened to you this evening, so that we may better understand one another.”

Otto then began his story, and as he advanced, and described his own feelings on every incident, Sir Hugh became also more and more serious and interested; till at length, when the narrative drew towards a close, he could not turn away his eyes from a great sword, which hung at no great distance from them on the wall, and which was half drawn out of the scabbard.

When Otto had concluded his adventure of the tournament, Sir Hugh kept his eyes still fixed on the sword. “Many a time,” said he, “have I endeavoured to bring that old companion, who has been tried in many a fray, into the sheath, but nothing will induce him to move into concealment. It seems as if he had special objections to rest in obscurity; and now methinks he has reason on his side. Come out then once more, old Truepenny! Otto, fetch him down hither directly.”

It was not without a certain feeling of awe and perplexity, that the youth turned towards the object of which his father spoke so strangely. It seemed almost as if, on his moving thither, some visitant from another world would start up against him. Nothing, however, was visible to his eyes, but the well-known

old weapon;—only that, in the glimmering light, it appeared to shine with mysterious and unusual brightness. So he laid hold of it by the golden basket-hilt, and taking no heed of the scabbard, which fell rattling on the stone floor of the hall, brought the drawn sword to his father. “What a noble blade!” cried he. “The sword worn by the Knight of Montfaucon did not glitter more delightfully in the torch-light than this gleams now!” “Much, no doubt, might be said about the Knight of Montfaucon and his sword,” said the old man, weighing the heavy weapon in his right hand, “much too about rash vows and other matters; but of these at a future time, or perhaps better not at all; for vows once sworn must be fulfilled, and thy duty to Gabrielle must not be neglected. Only, if one day, in the course of thy travels, thou shouldst meet with a jeweller who had one precious gem, which was the delight of his heart, by which his eyes would have been refreshed and strengthened till his dying day, and from whom this jewel was taken against his will by some tyrannical empress, though he had fondly hoped never to part with it; or, moreover, if thou findest a gardener, who had, in the most sheltered and beautiful parterre, some one favourite flower which he rejoiced to tend and to cherish, till at length he beheld a wicked bird come sweeping down from the clouds, tear it up, root and branch, and fly away with it over the seas; if one day such things should come to pass in thy presence, then couldst thou guess nearly what the old knight Hugh von Trautwangen felt at this moment.”—Thereupon the tears rushed into his eyes, that from age were now deep and hollow, and Otto was about to express the painful emotion with which his father’s words had inspired him. The knight, however, stepped firmly and proudly into the midst of the hall. “Young man,” said he, “this hour is far too important and solemn to admit of indulging faint-hearted regret over events which cannot be recalled. Kneel down then, Herr von Trautwangen, that thou mayst receive the dignity of knighthood.”

Otto sank on his knees, and devoutly folded his hands; thus resembling one of those youthful figures, which we find on ancient marble monuments, of warriors untimely slain, with looks of pious simplicity and faith, waiting the hour of their

resurrection. Sir Hugh, meanwhile, touched his son's shoulders three times with the heavy blade, saying, "Suffer these blows now from my hand, but never from that of another man!" Then, drawing himself up to his full height, he said with solemn dignity, "Herr von Trautwangen; I have now, in right of my station as knight and banneret, conferred on you the full rank of the sacred order to which I belong. Fulfil your duties henceforth with honour and integrity, for the protection of distressed damsels, widows, and orphans; above all, for the service of our Redeemer and the glory of our holy religion. For the present, rise up, and let us embrace, like friendly comrades and brethren in arms."

Between Sir Hugh and his noble-minded son there had indeed always subsisted the utmost friendship and confidence; yet never had Otto's heart heaved with so much filial affection as now, when he had acquired this proud rank of equality. Thereafter the old knight stepped, with sword in hand, towards a great massive shield, that shone like burnished gold, and hung right over his arm-chair. He struck on it three times, and at measured intervals, so that the high-vaulted hall reverberated, in deep tones like thunder, to the blows; immediately after which the apartment was filled with armed squires and domestics.

Then, holding his son by the hand, he addressed them. "This," said he, "is the brave young knight, Sir Otto von Trautwangen, and to-night he is to keep watch over his armour in the chapel. Bring to him, therefore, the bright coat of mail inlaid with silver, for that shall henceforth be his apparel. Carry it down to the chapel, and whoever wishes well to the old oak-tree of Trautwangen, and this our youngest scion, let him keep awake and joyous to-night; but forget not his fervent prayers to Heaven, that these solemn hours of preparation may bring forth prosperous and noble fruits, both for time and eternity. Amen."

Hereupon they all bent their way down the long-winding stairs, and afterwards to the chapel, which, as if for the protection of the castle, stood at one corner of the outer wall near the eastern gateway. There the squires laid down the bright-gleaming armour before the altar. Sir Hugh placed the

great sword in his son’s hand, and gave him his blessing, then quitted the chapel with all his attendants.

The young man was thus left alone, and, with his drawn sword and graceful demeanour, seemed almost like a supernatural guardian of the sanctuary.

CHAPTER V.

How Sir Otto watched his Armour through the night.

Aloft in the chapel-roof there shone, from afar, a single lamp, illuminating in such manner the fine Gothic arches, with their richly-carved branches and foliage, that one might have deemed himself under the shade of a long leafy avenue in a wood, and have looked up through the trees for the clear blue light of heaven. Meanwhile the ground of the chapel (like the earth itself to the weak eyes of mortals) remained, with all its forms and imagery, dim and doubtful. At first the young knight's thoughts were wholly devout and religious. He knelt down with his hands folded over his sword-hilt, and holding up the cross, with which it was surmounted, like a crucifix before him, lifted up his eyes to the richly-fretted and illumined church-roof, reflecting by some natural associations on an event which had left deep impressions on his youthful mind. He remembered that his now sainted mother had died on a journey, without any other shelter than that of the forest trees. She was no longer able to speak with him, but, with sweet smiles and eyes still intelligent, had pointed to the brightblue vernal sky that was then visible above them. With his mother's death other associations were soon united, till by degrees his attention came back again to his situation at the present moment. It occurred to him, with a feeling of self-reproach, how little he had hitherto thought of the chapel in which he was thus left alone at midnight, and, with a mixed emotion of curiosity and awe, he started up from his place at the altar.

Of the various forms that were visible along the walls, some projected so far, that, in the play of light and shadow, they almost moved and started into life. Others were only painted on the stone,—shadows themselves among the grotesque shades, which, by the lamp-light, were cast from other figures upon them. It seemed as if all this imagery must in some way or another be connected with his father's past life; of which his

knowledge was only like that which he had just now acquired of the chapel walls. There were certain scenes and events clear and intelligible, others only faintly guessed at or imagined, and the plan or connexion of the whole lost in dim twilight. So much was here plainly visible,—that there were divers sepulchral monuments, with their sombre adornments,—divers trophies formed of ponderous weapons and gigantic armour; for Sir Hugh had been a great conqueror,—had travelled not only in the holy oriental lands, and in the blooming west of Europe, but into the wild regions of the north, where there is far more winter than summer, and where the sun remains for many weeks under the horizon. It might be supposed, that from all these distant climes certain spoils or tokens had been brought hither, in order to collect, within the narrow space, proofs how wide and venturous had been the achievements of that ancient knight, whose career was now fast verging to its final close, when he would be confined within far narrower limits than even those of the chapel.

Great banners and Mohommetan horse-tails waved here and there in the night wind; crooked sabres, with their richly-adorned hilts, shone beside them, mingled with old rusty swords and halberts. There were whole coats of mail ranged as if in battle-array; and between them appeared sometimes the hard features of old men carved in stone on the walls, and sometimes mild female visages, on which the lamp-light shone like pale moonshine. Among these there was one by which the knight was earnestly and irresistibly attracted. He could scarcely view it properly, on account of the grim statues and armorial trophies by which it was environed, and yet he was convinced that it could only be the monument of his revered mother. It seemed as if the figure, with its right hand outstretched, made signs to him that he should approach nearer. He would have gone thither immediately, but knew not whether it was permitted him by the laws of knighthood to move so far from his armour, for the monument was at the further end of the chapel. A strange conflict then arose in his mind, which he could by no means tranquillize. His mother seemed constantly repeating her signals, till at last he even thought that he heard her voice, the same sweet tones

recollected from his childhood, which had often soothed him in his dreams. “Dearest Otto,” said she, “come hither, though it were but for one moment! I have been so long among the dead, and so far removed from thee! Come then, and heed not thine armour, for it is under the protection of Heaven!” The youth was indeed aware that these sounds could not all come to him from without, but were mostly the work of his own imagination; however, his heart was in such degree moved by them, that at last he kneeled down before the altar, devoutly begging forgiveness, if he now infringed the rules of the sacred order to which he belonged, and thereafter went courageously towards the monument.

It was indeed the image of his mother, who was represented in the midst of a forest, with both hands uplifted to heaven, of which one only being visible to him from a distance, it had, therefore, seemed that she had made him signals. Now lie perceived that she directed them only towards the Giver of all Good, for her eyes were fixed on a golden triangle, which was represented among the deep-blue clouds. Whatever the figure and its adornments wanted in freshness and fidelity of resemblance, the youth’s imagination (though his eyes were now dim with tears) failed not to supply. It appeared as if he once more beheld actually the same azure and vernal sky, to which she had pointed at the hour of her death, and the green living forest, which then waved so pleasantly around him. Even this alone,—that the colours with which the countenance had once been painted were now faded away,—moved him unspeakably; for he remembered that his father, and others who were present, would not allow him to look on his mother’s pale and lifeless remains. “And yet,” said he, “I behold her now as she then was!” He considered seriously, whether this were not only the monument, but also the grave of the departed; but he could not recollect that any coffin had been deposited in the chapel, or that he had witnessed any funeral-procession.

Just then a great gust of wind swept through the aisle. The gates of the church and castle all groaned and rattled; an old banner right over his head began to wave and rustle; so that he started suddenly from his meditations, and looked anxiously

round to his armour. Thereupon a gigantic figure came forward betwixt him and the altar, stretching out a long black arm towards the treasure over which he should have stood sentinel! Incensed, he directly rushed up to the dark apparition, and seized on it so violently, that the helmet which it wore fell rattling, along with various weapons, to the ground, while, through the cloud of dust that rose from the old rusty fragments, a fleshless skeleton's head grinned out, as if scornfully, upon him. With horror he struck at it with his sword; whereupon the death's-head, with the coat of mail and all its appurtenances, fell to the ground with a tremendous crash. Then, for the first time, he perceived plainly that no ghost nor supernatural visitant had come against him, but that it was only with one of the lifeless monuments projecting from the wall with which he had contended. A new duty thus devolved on him; he had to collect the whole together again; to make the old rusty coat of mail stand erect; especially to place the skull on the shoulders, and surmount it once more with the ponderous helmet. In the course of this labour, when he took up the death's-head, it appeared that he had inflicted on it a deep scar with his sword, and could almost believe that it now grinned on him, not in scorn, but with pain and torment. This notion confused him strangely; and when he had set all to rights, he took off the helmet once more, in order to be convinced whether his imagination had misled him. Hereupon he perceived, that without doubt there were several wounds on the head, and that one of them (for he had struck but once) must have been inflicted by his sword; so that he hastened to cover up the frightful object. Returning then to the altar, he knelt down, and prayed to Heaven for forgiveness of the error which he had committed, in leaving the armour, which it was his duty to guard; in consequence of which the confusion of that spectral combat had been inflicted upon him. It seemed here as if the sacred image of our Redeemer over the sanctuary looked down kindly and encouragingly on him; and he was again tranquillized and cheerful. Sometimes, if the thought came with a chill shuddering over him, that his first combat, since he had been made a knight, had been with a ghastly defenceless skeleton; then his mother's mild voice once more

rose on his ears, softly chaunting four verses which he had often heard in a ballad composed by Walter the minstrel:—

> “Dark night precedes the morn,
> So grief may joyaunce bring;
> And death leads through the wintry grave
> To life’s eternal spring.”

Thus, boldly and rejoicingly, he continued to walk up and down before the altar; and when the distant pale image once more seemed to repeat her signals, he only bowed his head, made a graceful salutation with his sword, and pointed to his armour, indicating that he durst not leave his duty. At length the light and fragrance of the morning came to him through the lofty windows; he heard the key turn in the massive door-lock, and Sir Hugh stepped into the chapel.

CHAPTER VI.

How Sir Otto departed from his father's castle.

The old and the young knight greeted each other with a grave and melancholy demeanour. Sir Hugh then went to the high altar, lifted up the armour, and began to assist his son in bracing it on. The youth could hardly bring himself to receive service from hands so deeply honoured; but he knew the rules of knighthood, and therefore said not a word, whilst his father adjusted the cuirass, the corslet, the cuisses, finally set the helmet on his head, and even knelt down in order to buckle on his golden spurs. Both of them expressed wonder on finding that the sword-scabbard, which the old man had brought with him, now fitted exactly, so that the weapon could be drawn out and replaced without trouble, though heretofore this had been impossible. "It seems almost," said Sir Hugh, "as if this old friend had seen service during the night. There must be a notch more or less on the blade!" At these words Otto thought with horror on his encounter with the skeleton; and as they passed by the gigantic coat of mail by which it was covered, he could not help turning a shy and involuntary glance on the figure. Sir Hugh observed this, and said,—"Has *he* then disturbed you in the night? At this I should not wonder. Such at least would have been his conduct when living." Otto made no answer, but gazed wistfully on the strange fashion of the armour, which in the morning light appeared more than ever remarkable. His attention was especially attracted by two vulture's wings rising and protruding from the helmet, which, during the night, he had mistaken for great horns. At present the figure was indeed more frightful than it had been even in the night; and he called to mind certain marvellous stories, which his father had long ago told him, of a horrible man who wore vulture's wings on his helmet.

But thereafter they came opposite to the pale, saintly, and benevolent features of his mother, and how soon were all impressions of the death's-head, the black armour, and

vulture's wings forgotten! "Is then my mother's grave in this chapel?" said Otto, in a tone of anxious inquiry. Sir Hugh looked mournfully, and shook his head in silence. "I beg then," said the youth, "that some one may direct me to the spot, wherever it lies, that I may say my prayers there, as is fitting, before I go forth into the world. Only through ignorance has that duty been so long neglected." "This is no proper hour to speak of graves, nor of the dead," answered Sir Hugh, taking his son's arm, and leading him rapidly from the chapel. Thereafter they came out upon the ramparts of the castle, amid the fresh fragrant breezes, while beneath them the landscape unfolded all its varied splendours; the noble Danube, with its meadows, forests, and distant mountains, brightened by the long slanting radiance and dazzling dewdrops of the morning. "Thou should'st not allow the rein to such womanish fantasies, young Knight of Trautwangen," said the old man, giving his son a hearty shake; "it will be time enough for tears, and longings after graves, monuments, and such like, when thou art as old as I am now. But even then, such thoughts must be concealed within thine own breast. Wait here for the present, and enjoy the freshness of this May morning. When all is ready for thy departure thou shalt be sent for."

The old hero then strode away from the rampart down to the castle, leaving the youth cheered and revived in spirit by the reprimand which he had just received, while his sanguine hopes of the future always gained more strength as the landscape grew brighter around him, and the air was filled with the music of skylarks, and joyous carolling of shepherds driving out their flocks on the meadows. While he was thus boldly stepping up and down, rejoicing in the martial clang of his weapons and silver armour, which to his ears harmonized so well with the gladness that reigned around him, he happened during his walk to strike on something concealed among the tall grass, which also sounded, but with a sad and mournful tone, as if complaining of unprovoked injury. Looking down, he perceived that it was Bertha's lute, whose mistress must indeed have been lost in deep reverie, else she never would have left her beloved companion so carelessly among the damp moss and unfriendly dews. So he took up the

poor neglected instrument, pulled off his iron glove, and seating himself in the grass, prepared, as well as he could, to console his forsaken cousin with a farewell melody. He began with praises of the spring and the beautiful scenes that were around him; but, alas! he sang no words that were fitted for Bertha's ears. His fancy was soon kindled by dreams of the knightly career that awaited him, and the favour that he would gain by his exploits from the beautiful Gabrielle. Thus his melody was indeed jocund, and sounded so powerfully, that Bertha was attracted by the notes, and came unobserved to his side, with looks how changed from those which she had worn the preceding day! Her eyes were indeed still bright, but it was her tears only that glittered in the sun. "And this is then in truth your farewell song?" said she. Otto remained for a space silent and meditative, then answered,—"Dearest Bertha, that song has indeed expressed more than I intended; more indeed than I was well conscious of ere it was begun. Like the flowers, and the brightness of the new year, my own newly-awakened hopes and prospects dawned on my mind, and carried me quite away. For listen, dearest Bertha! We cannot longer disguise it from each other, that whatever this music has accidentally betrayed is but the truth. The strange lady, with her beauty and distress, has got complete possession of my heart, which is for the first time inspired with a chivalrous and knightly passion. Take courage then and be merry! Ere long there will doubtless appear some wandering knight-errant, who will arrive here as unexpectedly as Gabrielle has done, and for whose sake you will soon forget the fond foolish Otto."

"Such a knight will never come hither," said Bertha, mournfully; "and as for the distress of that lady, perhaps I too —" Here she blushed deeply, and was silent. "Nay," said Otto vehemently, and starting up, "if you indeed should ever be in distress, then would I think of no other. My life and all my endeavours should be devoted to you alone." "I shall not, however, choose you for my champion, Knight of Trautwangen," said Bertha, proudly and coldly. "Believe me, if our pagan foes, as we read in the old histories, had bound me to the stake, with the devouring flames kindling around me, and you came up on horseback, arrayed in your bright armour

as you are now, to offer your assistance, I would only say, —‘Thanks! I have no need of such a defender!’ and would cry out, ‘Pile on more flaming brands;’ and then I would extinguish them even with my tears; and yet methinks no! that might not be, for they are already too scorching!” With these words, weeping bitterly, she sank down upon the grass, and Otto, in the conflict of his feelings, accidentally drew his hand across the harp, so that one of the strings broke, with a long mournful intonation. Bertha raised herself up at the sound. “Mark,” said she, “how you treat all that belongs to me! Why have you first pulled off your iron gloves? With them you might have sooner broke my unfortunate harp into pieces. Give it to me, Sir Knight! This poor remembrance at least remains mine.” So she took the instrument vehemently out of his hands, and ran away. He called after her, but she only rocked the lute in her arms, as if it had been a child that had received some injury, drawing from it all the while mild and heart-moving tones, till, without once looking round, she vanished from his sight behind the chapel.

The stern deep voice of the old knight was now heard from the court, calling out repeatedly, “All is ready, all is ready! Sir Otto, come hither and mount your horse!” The youth then hastened down from the rampart, and found a number of cavalry squires in attendance; three of whom were holding by golden reins a light-brown charger, which he had often seen before, but had never dared to mount. On his appearance among them, “Young knight,” said Sir Hugh, with a forced smile, “parting and delay are both painful,—is it not so? Well, think then no more of the matter, but mount directly, and try how this noble steed will bear his new rider.” The young Sir Otto immediately sprang into the saddle, and rode his horse up and down with such extraordinary strength and agility, that all the by-standers expressed their admiration, insisting that this animal, whose disposition had been before wild and untameable, had at last found out and acknowledged his proper master. The venerable old knight was delighted, and stretched out his arms towards Sir Otto. “Dismount once more, dearest son,” cried he, “that ere you finally depart I may embrace and bless you.” Whereupon the youth threw himself from his horse

with a great clang and rattle of his armour, and rushed into his father's arms. The horse meanwhile snorted and plunged, till he had pulled the bridle from the hands of the squires, then trotted after his young master, stood quietly beside him, and even laid his head caressingly on his shoulder.

"Now, my son, depart in God's name," said Sir Hugh; "your attendants are already mounted and in waiting." "There is yet one request which I had to prefer," answered the youth, "and this perhaps my honoured father will not refuse to grant. It may be the last which I shall ever make here; for I must travel into far-distant lands, and have many a hard battle to encounter." "My son," said Sir Hugh, "one must avoid all words that sound like a foreboding of evil. Misfortune is ready enough to seize hold of every mortal, and the obstacles which often stand insurmountable betwixt us and our desires, form an easy and convenient ladder for our adversary to mount into our chambers. Therefore do not speak to me of last requests and so forth; but tell me at once what are your wishes, and they shall be fulfilled." "Sir Knight," answered Otto, "so far as I have yet heard or read of heroes and their exploits, they have always on their first adventures rode out alone. Such was the conduct of the great Seyfried, and of every one else that is most renowned. You have spoken, however, of a train to attend me; and I see a great number of armed horsemen in waiting; but I entreat that you will not thus send me forth like a spoiled child, who needs guidance and protection, but as a stout and wise champion, who, by his own independent strength, can both defend himself and afford assistance to others." Hereupon Sir Hugh immediately ordered all the horsemen to dismount; "for," said he, "my son has in such manner justified his request, that whatever my own wishes might be, it were a sin if I refused it to him. And now, young knight," added he, "do not any longer delay your departure, for otherwise your old father's heart will at last be too much moved. One injunction, however, I must yet offer you. Behave as courteously towards the Knight of Montfaucon as the circumstances of your vow will permit; for, in his detention of the ring, he is not guilty of such injustice as you believe."

Upon these words, Sir Otto flew, swift almost as a bird, into the saddle, and rode directly out of the court, while his old father returned, weeping bitterly, to his now lonely chambers. In his affliction, however, he appeared so dignified and worthy of respect, that no one of the household had courage then to meet his looks, or even go into his presence.

Just as Otto von Trautwangen came along at a hard trot across the meadow below the castle, Bertha and the old minstrel Walter were seated on the rampart, and looked mournfully down on his progress; for Bertha had confided all her sufferings and sorrow to the old man, who happened at this time to have made one of his accustomed visits to the castle. She was about to break out afresh into an agony of tears, when Master Walter said,—"Nay, nay, let us sing a farewell address to the young knight on his departure." He then took his harp, and sung one stanza, to which Bertha responded; but as the minstrel began again, she made him a signal to be silent, for she could bear it no longer. Her voice faltered, and she wrapt herself closely in her veil. Meanwhile the soft notes of their music were borne down by the morning breezes to Sir Otto, who spurred his horse, and drew down his visor as if resolved to hear no more. It was the first time that he had ever worn a close helmet; and as he looked through its bars on the vernal landscape, his heart heaved within him, and was filled with new and strange sensations. The whole world appeared new and mysterious; but the bright roseate hues of the eastern sky prevailed in his mind, and over the scenery. He shouted aloud, encouraged his noble horse, and, like a new-fledged bird or butterfly of spring, pursued his way over fields, woods, and meadows, forgetting all sorrow in his bright prospects of the future.

CHAPTER VII.

How Sir Otto vanquished Sir Heerdegen von Lichtenried.

In that smiling land, where the silver-blue Mayne rolls its waters past the old free town of Frankfort, where, on both sides, are situated the most attractive villages and garden-houses, vineyards and pleasure-grounds, life is indeed joyous and delightful! Whoever has the good fortune to be there in the vernal season of flowers and blossoms, especially if he be a young warrior, with his heart full and buoyant with grand and lofty anticipations, may quaff for once a cup of pleasure such as the whole course of his after-life may not offer to his lips. The truth of what has just now been said is known to the writer of this history from his own experience; and he heartily wishes that his readers may have proved it also, both for their own sakes, and in order that they may better sympathize with the feelings, which, as it were, spread a golden web of enchantment over all the objects by which the youthful Otto was now surrounded. He knew not what to look upon as most interesting, the thoughts of his journey and warlike exploits,—the blooming fairy-land, with its orchard-trees, winding-walks and avenues, varied hills and dales, in which he was placed; or, finally, the mirthful and courteous people by whom this land was inhabited.

In such mood of mind he rode up to a house for the entertainment of travellers, which was situated not far from the banks of the river, and whose inviting portico of vines and jasmines determined him to alight and rest here at least till after mid-day. His noble charger was duly led into the stable, and supplied with provender, though the knight must himself attend to this duty, as the faithful and attached animal would not allow any one else to come near him. At last Sir Otto was seated in the portico, with a flask of old Rudisheimer before him, which, as he poured out a full glass, shone like liquid gold amid the light that came flickering through the dark-green foliage of the arbour.

Soon afterwards a man happened to come out from the house into the portico, not much older than Otto in years, but of a sombre, sunburnt visage, accoutred as a knight, and with his whole armour dusty and rusted, as if from a long journey. His weapons too were without ornament, and buckled on in such a manner, that it was obvious the stranger cared not for external appearances; and he must have afforded a remarkable contrast to the youth, in his bright silver coat of mail, whom he now found sitting over his wine in the arbour. The stranger's salutation was courteous, though in a tone which betrayed somewhat of moroseness and discontent. He took his place opposite to the Knight of Trautwangen, and also demanded wine. The latter was at first by no means well satisfied with his companion, believing that such an intruder would put to flight all the fairy-visions which the pleasant scene around him had inspired, without offering by his discourse any desirable compensation. He soon discovered, however, that the stranger belonged to that class of people who are justly compared to rough diamonds, to hard ordinary-looking pebbles, that when struck, yield bright sparks, or to the dingy masses of ore from which the alchemist at last brings forth pure gold. He had travelled through many distant countries, yet had never lost his original character,—that of an honest unaffected German; or such attributes had been strengthened rather than weakened, as the more he had observed of other countries the more deeply he had been aware of his exclusive attachment to his native land. The conversation, when once begun, proved interesting to both parties, and they soon found themselves in such good humour, that they were not displeased when a third party made his appearance from the house and joined their table. This was a young merchant, named Theobaldo, of Italian birth, who had been sent by his relations in the south to study the commerce of this flourishing town. Among much other discourse, the strange knight in the rusty armour related the following history, to which they listened with great attention.

"In the distant northern kingdom of Sweden, there are not only people yet living under the clouds of ignorance and pagan superstition, but, especially on the borders of Finland, are many unfortunate victims of witchcraft and necromancy,

which arts are still practised there by magicians and sorcerers, who can bring against their enemies all sorts of evil in body, goods, and estate. Just on the Finland frontier there is situated a high mountain, which, on the Swedish side, is covered with beautiful copsewood, and on the other with dark pine-trees, so closely ranked together, and so luxuriant in shade, that one might almost say, the smallest bird could not find his way through the thickets. Below the copsewood there stands a chapel with the image of St George, as guardian of the land, and a defence against the dragons, (if there be such,) and other monsters of paganism; while on the other side, on the borders of the dark fir-wood, are certain cottages inhabited by wicked sorcerers, who have, moreover, a cave cut so deep into the mountain, that it joins with the bottomless abyss, whence come all the devils that assist them. The Swedish Christians, who dwelt in the neighbourhood of this mountain, thought it would be necessary, besides the chapel and statue of St George, to choose some living protector, and therefore selected an ancient warrior, highly renowned for his prowess in the battle-field, and who had in his old age become a monk. When this man went to take up his abode on the mountains, his only son (for he had formerly lived as a married man in the world) would on no account leave him; but lived there also, assisting his father in his duties as watcher, and in the exercises of prayer and penitence, fully equalling the example that was now afforded him, as he had formerly done by his bravery as a soldier. The life here led by those two valiant champions is said to have been most edifying and pious.

“Once on a time it happened, that the young hero went out to cut wood in the forest. He bore a sharp axe on his shoulders, and was besides girded with a great sword; for, as the woods were not only full of wild beasts, but also haunted by wicked men, the pious hermits took the precaution of always going armed. While the good youth was forcing his way through the thickest of the copsewood, and already beheld over it the pointed tops of the fir-trees, (for he was close on the Finland frontier,) there rushed out against him a great white wolf, so that he had just time enough to leap to one side, and not being able immediately to draw his sword, he flung the axe at his

assailant. The blow was so well aimed, that it struck one of the wolf's fore-legs, who being cruelly wounded, limped back, with a yell of anguish, into the wood. The young hermit-warrior, however, thought to himself, "It is not enough that I am rescued, but I must take such measures that no one else may in future be injured, or even terrified by this wild beast." So he rushed in as fast as possible among the fir-trees, and inflicted such a vehement blow with his sword on the wolf's head, that the animal, moaning piteously, fell to the ground. Hereupon there came over him all at once a strange mood of regret and compassion for his poor victim. Instead of putting it immediately to death, he bound up the wounds, as well as he could, with moss and twigs of trees, placed it on a sort of canvass sling, on which he was in the habit of carrying great faggots, and with much labour brought it home, in hopes that he might be able at last to cure and tame his fallen adversary.

"He did not find his father in the cottage, and it was not without some fear and anxiety that he laid the wolf on his own bed, which was made of moss and rushes, and over which he had painted a figure of St George and the dragon. He then turned to the fire-place of the small hut, in order to prepare a healing salve for the wounds; but, when thus occupied, how was he surprised to hear the moanings and lamentations of an articulate voice from the bed on which he had just before deposited the wolf! On returning thither, his astonishment was inexpressible on perceiving, instead of the frightful wild beast, a most beautiful damsel, on whose head the wound which he had inflicted was bleeding through her fine golden hair, and whose right arm, in all its grace and snow-white luxuriance, was stretched out motionless, for it had been broken by the blow from his axe! "Pray," said she, "have pity, and do not kill me outright. The little life that I have still left is indeed painful enough, and may not last long,—yet sad as my condition is, it is yet tenfold better than to die!"—The young man then knelt down weeping beside her, and she explained to him how she was the daughter of a magician on the other side of the mountain, who had sent her out in the shape of a wolf to collect plants from places which, in her own proper form, she could not have reached. It was but in terror that she had made

that violent spring, which the youth had mistaken for an attack on him, when her only wish had been to pass him by. “But you directly broke my right arm,” said she, “though I had no evil design against you!” How she had now regained her proper shape she could not imagine; but to the youth it was quite clear, that the picture of St George and the dragon had broken the spell by which the poor girl had been transformed.

“While the son was thus occupied, the old man returned home, and soon learned all that had occurred, perceiving, at the same time, that if the young pagan wanderer had been released from the spells by which she had been bound, the youth was in his turn enchanted, and spell-bound by her beauty and amiable behaviour.

“From that moment he exerted himself to the utmost, for the welfare of her soul, endeavouring to convert her to Christianity, while his son attended to the cure of her wounds; and, as their endeavours were on both sides successful, it was resolved among them, that the lovers should be united in holy bonds of matrimony, for the youth had not yet restricted himself by any monastic vows.

“The magician’s daughter was now restored to perfect health; a day had been appointed for her baptism and marriage, before which it happened that the bride and bridegroom went to take a pleasure-walk one evening through the woods. The sun was yet high in the west, and shone so fervently through the beech-trees on the green turf, that they could never resolve on returning home, but always came deeper and deeper into the forest. Then the bride told him stories of her early life; and sang old songs, which she had learned when a child, and which sounded beautifully amid the woodland-solitude. Though the words were such that they could not be agreeable to the youth’s ears, (for she had learned them among her pagan and wicked relations,) yet he could not interrupt her; first, because he loved her so dearly; and, secondly, because she sung in a voice so clear and sweet, that the whole forest seemed to rejoice in her music. At last, however, the pointed heads of the pine-trees again became visible, and the youth wished to turn back, in order that he might not come again too near the accursed Finland frontier. His bride, however, said to him,

—“Dearest Conrad,” (for that was his name,) “why should we not walk on a little farther? I would gladly see the very place where you wounded me so cruelly on the head and arm, and made me a prisoner; all which has in the end only contributed to my happiness. Methinks we are now very near the spot.” Accordingly they sought about here and there, till at last the twilight fell dim and heavily on the dense woods. The sun had long since set; the moon had risen, however, and as her light broke forth the lovers stood on the Finland frontier,—or rather they must have gone already some distance beyond it, for the bridegroom was exceedingly terrified when he found his cap lifted from his head, as if by a human hand, though this was only the branch of a fir-tree. Immediately thereafter the whole air around them was filled with strange and supernatural beings,—witches, devils, dwarfs, horned owls, fire-eyed cats, and a thousand other wretches that could not be named or described, whirled around them as if dancing to rapid music; at which, when the bride had looked on for a while, she broke out into loud laughter, and at last began to dance furiously along with them. The poor bridegroom might shout and pray, as much and as earnestly as he would, for she never attended to him, but at last transformed herself in a manner so extraordinary, that he could not distinguish her from the other dancers in that abominable waltz. He thought, however, that he had kept his eyes upon her, and seized on one of the dancers; but, alas! it was only a horrible spectre who held him fast, and threw her wide-waving shroud around him, so that he could not make his escape; while, at the same time, some of the subterraneous black demons pulled at his legs, and wanted to tear him down along with them into their bottomless caves.

“Fortunately he happened at that moment to cross himself, and call on the name of our Saviour; upon which the whole of this vile assembly fell into confusion. They howled aloud, and ran off in all directions; while, in the mean time, he saved himself by recrossing the frontiers, and getting under the protection of the Swedish copsewood. His beautiful bride, however, was completely lost, and by no endeavours could he ever obtain her again, though he often came to the Finland border, called out her name aloud, wept and prayed; but all in vain! Many times,

it is true, he saw her floating about through the pine-trees, as if in the chase, but she was always accompanied by a train of frightful creatures, and she herself also looked wild and disfigured. For the most part she never noticed Conrad; but, if she could not help fixing her eyes on him, she laughed so immoderately, and in a mood of merriment so strange and unnatural, that he was terrified, and made the sign of the cross; whereupon she always fled away howling into the thickets. He fell more and more into melancholy abstraction, hardly ever spoke, and though he had given over his vain walks into the forest, yet, if one asked him any question, the only answer he returned was, "Ay, she is gone away beyond the mountains!"—so little did he know or remember of any other object in the world but the lost beauty! At last he died of grief;—and, according to a request which he had once made, his father prepared a grave for him on the place where the bride was found and lost; though, during the fulfilment of this duty, he had enough to do, one while in contending with the crucifix against evil spirits, and at another with his sword against wild beasts, which were no doubt sent thither by the magicians to attack and annoy him. At length, however, he brought his task to an end, and thereafter it seemed as if the bride mourned for the youth's untimely death; for there was heard often a sound of howling and lamentation at the grave. For the most part indeed this noise is like the voices of wolves, yet, at the same time, human accents are to be distinguished, and I myself have often listened thereto on dark winter nights."

The knight in rusty armour having concluded his story, all three sat for some time silent and meditative,—till at length Theobaldo began to speak. "The cureless wounds of unfortunate love; the loss, or, much more, the changed heart of one whom we held most dear, and to whom, though changed, we yet feel an unconquerable attachment, are indeed among the most fearful causes of distress to which we are in this life subjected. I remember a story somewhat alike in this respect to that which we have now heard; and if my worthy companions are inclined to listen, am ready to narrate it." Both knights assured him that they would be deeply attentive, and he proceeded as follows:—"It may be about twenty-five or thirty

years since there lived, in my native town of Milan, a young maiden, who was not only amiable in temper, but such a paragon of beauty, as only some great master in painting, or sculpture, could imagine in a summer night's dream. At the same time she was modest, quiet, retired, and humble; though, notwithstanding this disposition, as a diamond will shine even amid the deepest shade, she became known and admired through the whole town, under the name of the beautiful Lisberta. This flower of the Milanese damsels was one day invited to make her appearance, adorned with garlands and in festal attire, at a religious procession, in order that her extraordinary charms might heighten its effect on beholders; and, as she considered this but as the fulfilment of a pious duty, she agreed to the request which had been urged upon her. She, therefore, adorned herself in the best manner with the richest dress, flowers, jewels, rings, and gold chains,—finishing her toilette, however, long before the procession was ready to commence; so that, having some time at her own disposal, and invited by the pleasant fragrant air of spring, she resolved to take a walk in the garden, which had been tastefully laid out round her father's house, who was one of the richest men in Milan.

"On her way through the long avenues and shady walks, wherein were the rarest fruit-trees and flowering plants, she came to the borders of a lake clear as crystal, which lay there like a sleeping beauty in the arms of the green thickets by which it was environed. As if bound by magic spells to the spot, she stood on the water's brink, looking at her reflected image, in all her pomp of dress and glittering jewels; so that, like the fabulous Narcissus of old, she could not help wondering at her own attractions. At last, she forced herself, by a kind of vehement effort, to fix her eyes on the real objects by which she was surrounded, in order that she might escape from the delusions of the watery mirror, and thus became aware of something among the grass, which glittered like burnished gold and silver. Glad of aught that could divert her attention, and desirous to know what extraordinary meadow-flower this could be that shone so brightly, she hastened to the spot, and found, to her great surprise, that it was a highly-

polished sword, with a golden hilt, a scabbard bound with silver, and altogether of a most elegant fashion. She took it up, as if it had been a mere toy, notwithstanding the terror which she usually entertained of such warlike instruments; nay, she even drew it half out of the sheath, and wondered to find that her features were now reflected in greater beauty from the polished steel than they had been before from the water, while at the same time she felt less apprehension and perplexity. Alas! poor Lisberta, thou hadst then unwittingly the means of thine own destruction in thy hands, which, like a merciless sickle, was to cut down thy life and happiness like a May flower in bloom! Though the sword alone would not cause such misfortune, yet thou wert destined to fall the victim of him by whom it was usually worn and wielded.

"From amid the verdant thickets stepped forward a knight in full armour,—no longer a youth, but yet not old, and with such indescribable heroic dignity in his person and demeanour, that, on his appearance, the beautiful Lisberta, from an involuntary emotion of respect, had almost fallen on her knees before him. "Fairest of damsels," said the knight, "beware of wounding yourself with that sharp-edged weapon. Far rather would I see my heart's blood streaming from my veins, than even the slightest drop from these snow-white hands!" Thereupon, with the greatest respect, he took from her the sword, placing it again in the belt by his side, and before he had time to say more, the servants came into the garden, calling aloud for Lisberta, as the procession had already begun. The shy timid girl hastily made a sign to the knight that he should withdraw, and, after a respectful obeisance, he disappeared immediately through the green hedges by which the garden was enclosed.

"How confusedly the procession, the singing of the choir, and the applause of the multitude, were blended and lost to the senses of Lisberta, I need not further describe; besides, my heart bleeds to think of the fate which awaited the poor victim; and thus I have dwelt too long on the circumstances of her early life, well knowing how melancholy were the events that attended her afterwards. From this point then allow me to proceed more quickly towards the end.

“In the evening after the festival, when she was sitting lost in thought at her window, the declining sun shone so brightly and beautifully, that she could not help observing one of her favourite flowers,—a tall and slender plant, which had broke loose from the rushes with which it had been tied up, and now hung down from the veranda towards the terrace-walk below. On her endeavouring to restore the plant to its former station, she observed a figure passing through the garden, in which she recognised but too plainly, the knight with whom she had spoken in the morning,—the owner of that brightly gleaming sword. In all haste she tied up the flower, and would have retreated; but what was her surprise to find a letter attached thereto, which no doubt had been the work of that mysterious wanderer. On unfolding and reading it, she indeed found that it was a love-letter from him, and that he was a renowned knight from a distant country, who, in the town of Milan, was known by the name of Signor Uguccione, and of whose warlike exploits and amiable conduct she had already heard many wonderful stories. Her heart, therefore, which was already moved in his favour, soon yielded, when she thought of the high praises that had been bestowed on him. The blooming plant was ere long loosed again from its support, and sent down with her love-embassy, in reply to that which she had received;—and soon after returned with another letter from Uguccione. In this way salutations went and came, till at last Lisberta herself went down by moonlight by the private staircase which led into the garden; for in the night hours she was sure that no one would come to disturb their conversation.

“It happened, after some time, however, that though Lisberta’s letters were sent down as usual, yet no one came thither to take them from their verdant envelope. When she drew up the plant, she found them, alas! unopened. At last she began to make inquiries after Uguccione, and learned that many days ago he had vanished, in a manner the most unaccountable, from Milan. Yet every night the unfortunate damsel used to bend the plant down as usual to the terrace, and if she drew it up and found no letter, she always wept bitterly. This was continued so long, that at last, by such continual grief, her heart was broken. After her death and funeral, a lady who had

won her confidence made the fatal flower be planted on her grave; and I have often beheld it there, spreading its green shade and fragrance over that lonely and mournful place.”

CHAPTER VIII.

The Combat with Sir Heerdegen von Lichtenried.

During the relation of this story, a deep gloom had gathered always more and more over the countenance of Theobaldo, so that by the time he had got to the end he seemed quite changed; and now, instead of being a careless merry companion, looked like one whose whole hopes are buried in the grave with some beloved object.

After a pause he said, “You must forgive me, noble warriors, if I have, by such a narrative, thrown a cloud on this happy meeting, and as it were dimmed the lustre of your bright old Rudisheimer. For the most part, I myself am cheerful enough, and can enjoy a goblet of wine, and the sportive conversation of my companions; only, that the mournful events which I have just related come now and then betwixt me and all pleasure; and, until I have relieved my mind by repeating them, I cannot obtain any rest. This happens, because my relations have so often led me to Lisberta’s grave, and told me so much of her beauty, and her sufferings from the treachery of the stranger knight, that the story has been deeply impressed, even from childhood, on my mind. If this Signor Uguccione should ever fall in my way, he may look to his own safety as he best can; for I could scarcely imagine a greater pleasure, than to stab him to the heart with his own bright sword, and at the same moment to call aloud in his ears, ‘Lisberta, Lisberta!’”

At these words, his eyes gleamed like two fiery beacons, from the vehemence of his emotion; but Otto scarcely perceived this, and had attended but little to what now passed. His whole heart was still fixed on the story and distresses of the forsaken Lisberta, till at last his melancholy found relief in words, and he began to relate to his companions the fortunes of his own life, but in the third person, as if the events had happened to another. Thus, he told them how happily he had lived on the banks of the Danube with his beloved cousin Bertha; but now

a more powerful attachment had led him away from his home, and induced him to break these early ties; adding, how the two stories of unfortunate lovers had brought his attention painfully back to his forsaken cousin. To conclude, he could not help, in the simplicity of his heart, asking his companions whether they believed that Bertha too would die of grief, like the hermit of the forest, and the betrayed beauty of Milan.

Hereupon the strange knight in rusty armour looked him sternly in the face, and, with a tone and demeanour so changed, that it seemed as if all the friendly feelings that he had before expressed had been frozen to ice within him; he said,—"As thou hast spoken so much of the Danube's pleasant banks, and of a damsel named Bertha, perchance thou art called Otto von Trautwangen, and thy fair cousin is the Lady von Lichtenried?" Scarcely had Sir Otto answered in the affirmative, when the stranger rose up, placed the massive helmet which he had brought out with him upon his head, and said,—"It is good that we have thus met one another; for I am the Knight Heerdegen von Lichtenried, Bertha's brother, who, after long laborious pilgrimages through the world, have now returned home, in hopes of finding my sister grown up in the bloom of health and beauty. I have been fortunate therefore in the opportunity granted me of avenging her wrongs on such a conceited and foolish babbler as thou art!" The conclusion of this discourse quite stifled in Otto's heart the wish for reconciliation which he might otherwise have entertained, and in vehement haste he started up, in order to find his sword and helmet. Meanwhile, as he was thus arranging his armour, the Italian wished to interpose a few words of mediation; but Heerdegen answered him sternly, "Give yourself no trouble; if this young coxcomb, with his silver bright armour, has spoken the truth, then he ought to fall the victim of my revenge; if, on the other hand, he has uttered unmeaning and groundless words, he deserves, notwithstanding, chastisement for that fault." By this time Otto stood prepared at the entrance of the portico, and pointed to a thicket of trees which stood below on the banks of the river. Sir Heerdegen immediately set himself to close his rusty visor, which was effected with a great crash, then placed himself by the side of his opponent, and they

walked together towards the intended field of battle. Theobaldo, meanwhile, who seemed now delighted with what was going forward, moved briskly, sometimes before, and sometimes after them.

“Noble sirs,” said he, when they had come about half-way, “forgive me if I seem thus cheerful, when you have business so tragical on your hands. But through my whole life I have never wished so much for any sight that is recreative and reviving to the beholder, as a real combat for life and death, between two heavily-armed and valiant champions. Such an encounter I would often have tried willingly at the risk of my own life; but it has never been my fortune hitherto to engage in conflict with any assailants better than light-armed cowardly banditti. And when people make pretended fights together, nothing, in my opinion, can be more contemptible and ridiculous. I consider myself fortunate, therefore, as I shall to-day behold a glorious encounter; for I am thoroughly convinced that you will both conduct yourselves like well-proved and undaunted heroes.”

Amid the thickets of the copsewood, the two knights soon discovered a free open glade, with smooth turf, which was well fitted for their combat. Without making farther conditions, or even interchanging a word, they directly took their places, drew their swords, and attacked one another with great wrath and violence, while Theobaldo composedly took his station as a looker-on, leaning against a high lime-tree. The whole air rung with the clashing of their swords, though not one blow hit effectively, but was either driven back by the shield or by their plumed helmets, so that the ground, instead of being stained with blood, was strewed with partycoloured feathers. During the conflict, Sir Heerdegen’s voice was always heard from the hollow of his rusty beaver, calling aloud, “Bertha! Bertha!” and it seemed often as if Otto recoiled at this exclamation, though he still repelled every stroke of his enemy’s sword. Perceiving this, Heerdegen redoubled his blows, and Sir Otto continued merely to ward them off as well as he could, without, as it appeared, attempting to make any farther attack, till at last his shield was cut in two, and he had only one half left in his hand. Then his

rage suddenly broke out like that of a wounded lion;—as if a lightning-flash of inspiration had kindled within his heart, he threw aside the broken remnant of his shield,—and from his silver helmet were heard the silvery tones of his youthful voice, pronouncing fervently the name, “Gabrielle! Gabrielle!” At the same time he held his sword grasped in both hands, and therewith inflicted such a storm of blows on his opponent’s head, breast, and shield-arm, that suddenly a stream of blood burst from the visor of Sir Heerdegen. At the moment when Sir Otto perceived this, he held back his sword, and the wounded knight, being no longer able by any effort to support himself, fell powerless, with a great crash of his armour, upon the grass.

Theobaldo and Otto kneeled beside him to render their assistance. The helmet, already almost broken in pieces by the vehemence of Otto’s last attack, was quickly loosed, and Sir Heerdegen’s visage was found covered with blood. Otto, who was well skilled (as every knight ought to be) in the healing art, washed it carefully away; whereupon it was discovered, that the wound began on the right side of the forehead, from whence it stretched across between the eyebrows, and came down over the right cheek. A proper bandage was provided, and securely fixed; but the knight continued to lie there insensible and motionless, as if he were already dead, and in his pale visage, now divested of its former stem expression, a resemblance to Bertha was clearly discernible. As he thus bent over his fallen foe, Sir Otto wept bitterly. An old story came now to his remembrance, which Sir Hugh had often related of a knight, who, in the confusion of the battle-field, had slain his beloved mistress, who was dressed in a coat of mail, which he mistook for that of an enemy; and now he almost accused himself of being Bertha’s murderer. “Ay,” said he to himself, “I deserve no other name. The careless mood in which I took my departure inflicted the first deadly blow, and with her brother’s life I have cut asunder the last ties that bound her to this world!”

The young merchant reminded him, that it was now time to carry the wounded man back to their inn, for the evening was drawing on, and rest in bed was, of all remedies, the most needful. Thereupon they took up their yet insensible

companion, and bore him away on their shoulders in such manner, that Theobaldo alone had his head to support; “for,” said Otto mournfully, “if he should awake on the road, he would rather behold your countenance than mine; while, on the other hand, his features remind me so painfully of the forsaken Bertha, that I dare not look on him.” After his arrival at the inn, where he was attended by two of his own squires, Sir Heerdegen again recovered his senses; and on learning that Otto intended to remain there, probably as long as his antagonist’s life was in danger, he said,—“Knight of Trautwangen, if you entertain in reality any friendly intentions towards me, then I beseech you to take your departure this evening, or, if it be possible, within this very hour. Even to look upon you, or hear your voice, has become so intolerable, that, without doubt, I must die if I am any longer subjected to such torment.” In a mood of deep melancholy, Otto then left the wounded Sir Heerdegen, and rode away under the light of the moon and stars, (which were then just risen,) along a road fragrant with blooming woods and flowers, which led towards the town, Theobaldo bearing him company, and riding by his side.

CHAPTER IX.

How Sir Otto was entertained by the Merchant.

The two horsemen, who thus proceeded on their way, were indeed of tempers the most opposite that could be imagined. As for Otto, one might have said, that his whole feelings were drawn from the darkest shades of night that lay in the forest around them; while Theobaldo's, on the contrary, were inspired and modified by the fragrance of the blossoms, and the brightness of the stars. The latter tried, by every means in his power, to impart his own high spirits to his companion; and when he found that such endeavours were vain, began, in the melodious language of his country, to sing one love-song after another, which sounded beautifully amid the placid stillness of the night. Theobaldo was a good musician, so that Otto's meditations were by no means disturbed by these songs; for, as he could not understand the words, it seemed to him almost as if one of the numberless nightingales from the neighbouring groves had determined to follow him, and sing for him alone. He might indeed interpret the language (or notes rather) in any way that best suited the current of his own emotions.

They came at last over a grassy eminence, from which they beheld the large town of Frankfort, with all its lights, on both sides of the Mayne, outspread before them. Otto halted there for a space, quite lost in wonder; for, educated, as he had been, at a lonely castle in the country, he had never before seen such a town; and the great number of lighted windows and lamps, though nothing more than is visible every night, seemed to him like some grand festal illumination. Theobaldo amused himself for some time with the surprise expressed by his companion, then said, "Yes, Sir Otto, this is the far-famed free town of Frankfort, and if you will enter within its walls, and condescend to honour my humble dwelling with your presence, I shall perhaps be able to shew you scenes that are yet more worthy of your approval and admiration."

Immediately thereafter, they rode past several elegant villas and garden-houses on the outside of the gates. For the most part these dwellings made a brilliant appearance; one heard the sounds of the harp, female singers, and ringing of glasses; moreover, the light came through handsome verandas, bow-windows, and balconies, intertwined with vines and jasmine, the sight of which added effect to the sounds of convivial mirth within. Sir Otto believed that he had already entered the town, till at last, at Theobaldo's command, the massy wings of the gate were opened, and they rode under the echoing portico, as if into a great castle, to which indeed Frankfort might be compared; and if the citizens were proud (as Sir Hugh had sometimes described them) the young knight thought, when he came into the long lightedup streets, that they had indeed good reason to be so.

Just as Otto's horse took fright at the gleaming bow-windows of a large and handsome building, Theobaldo said,—"Noble sir, we are now arrived. Welcome to my humble abode." Immediately there hastened from the palace many servants in elegant dresses, who, on a signal from their master, went to assist the knight; but he threw himself lightly and carelessly from the saddle, and as they were about to take his horse by the reins, "Nay, good friends," said he, "that would prove no such easy undertaking; for he will not suffer any attendance but mine. I must myself lead him into the stable, take off the saddle and bridle, and give him his provender." The glaring eyes of the charger, and his unquiet pawing with his fore-hoof, bore witness to the truth of what his rider had said. So the servants lighted him to a stable, where there were already many horses, which were all vehemently startled by the entrance of the stranger guest, stamping and neighing under the portico, which Otto now brought among them. He was indeed only withheld by his rider's serious commands from directly trying his strength against some of his neighbours; and when the servants busied themselves in getting a halter to bind him fast, Otto said to them,—"That alone would be of little service, for he could easily break every band; but if I bid him be quiet, he will obey me." Accordingly, he cried in a stern voice,—"Ruhig Bursch!" whereupon the noble animal stood

like a lamb, and began to eat the corn which his master shook out before him.

Thereafter Otto accompanied Theobaldo, who had waited for him in the outer hall, into the state-chambers above. Here, in a lofty vaulted apartment, they found a numerous and brilliant assemblage, while at the farther end of the room arrangements were made for a kind of temporary theatre. The floor was raised, and there appeared thereon, in the back-ground, many figures in costly dresses, who seemed about to play their parts in some comedy. It was easy to perceive that Theobaldo was the king of this festival; for, of those who were least distinguished in the company, all made room for him with deep obeisance; while others, who were evidently of high rank, ladies and gentlemen, (the latter often with gold chains like senators,) received as marks of special favour his apologies, that he who was the master of the feast should have arrived so late. The performers in the back-ground of the hall stood still, and were silent, waiting, as it seemed, for their master's signal, whether they should proceed or give over, till Theobaldo, having taken his place with his new guest on a seat near the stage, kindly nodded to them that the play should be continued.

Their performance was a sort of allegorical mystery, and the scene with which they were then occupied exhibited a gorgeous figure seated on a throne, representing the god of wealth, with the name "Plutus" in gold letters on his breast. Then there came all sorts of characters, priests, courtiers, judges, poets, minstrels, &c., who paid their homage to the god, entreating his protection. Thereupon Plutus, from a great store of bags, supposed to contain gold, gave more or less to each applicant, and the gift was delivered and received with some awkward rhymes, intending to satirize all ranks. At length there stepped forward a knight in complete armour, who paid his court even more humbly than the rest, and in a string of verses, indicated that gold and silver were the best balsam for wounds and bruises, concluding with these rude lines:

"Gold for blood, sir,—give enow;
Your battles shall be fought I trow!"

Plutus was ready to deliver his answer, when, on hearing these last words, Otto started up in great wrath, laid his hand vehemently on his sword, and called out aloud, “That base recreant disgraces the armour which he wears, and I shall revenge on his own head the falsehood which he has uttered, if he has but courage to meet me on the field!”

Half laughing and half terrified, the whole company fixed their attention on the young angry champion. Theobaldo, however, who was also incensed, put an end to the performance, threatening the unfortunate representative of knighthood, that he should never again be suffered to enter within his doors. He then turned courteously to Otto, and begged that his guest would not impute the blame to him, if those stupid players, because they were in a merchant’s house, had absurdly tried to gain favour by satirizing all other professions. By this explanation the knight was quite calmed, and on his part offered many excuses for his rash conduct in thus disturbing the company. Soon after, the whole party adjourned to a magnificent banquet, which was prepared for them in another apartment.

But, notwithstanding the brilliance of the lights, the excellence of the viands, and profusion of wine, Otto could not help reflecting again on the hateful rhymes by which he had been roused to that fit of anger. This did not proceed, however, from any resentment which he had conceived against his courteous entertainer, nor against the company, but he could not help feeling that it was in consequence of his tragical encounter with Sir Heerdegen that he had been invited hither; and that he had as it were received gold for blood; for whether his reward were paid in the liquid gold of old Johannisberg, or in solid metal, made, in his estimation, no difference. Added to this, the conversation did not please him. He heard only endless debates about gain and loss, principal and interest; and when Theobaldo, sympathizing, as it seemed, with his guest’s feelings, tried to turn the discourse to the crusades of King Richard, this only led to a calculation, whether the Genoese or the Venetians would gain most on that occasion. Then, in the confusion of Otto’s brain, it almost appeared as if the wine that

mantled in their cups were blood drawn from the veins of Christian knights; that the party knew this, and therefore drank it with greater pleasure. Nay, it came over him like a frightful dream, that Sir Heerdegen of Lichtenried, with a hollow voice, from his broken visor, addressed him:—"From my heart's blood thou now fill'st thy luxurious cup, and while thou preparest for thyself a rich bed of down, I am stretched on the hard couch of pain, from whence, perchance, I may never more arise!"

Otto could no longer bear this; all the realities around him were lost in the creations of his madness. So he quitted his seat, and begged of Theobaldo that he might be allowed to depart, as he must pass that night at an auberge; for which resolution he would tell him his reason on the following day. "I do not require explanation," answered Theobaldo, "for I already know the cause of your dissatisfaction. But, for Heaven's sake, come again to-morrow, otherwise I must think that I too have become an object of your contempt!" "On the honour and word of a knight," said Sir Otto, "I cherish for you only respect and friendship, nor shall I fail to come to-morrow, as you desire." Thereupon they embraced, and Otto, accompanied by one of Theobaldo's squires, led forth his horse, and went to spend the night at a house of public entertainment, to which he made his way through the now dark streets, according to directions that had been given to him.

CHAPTER X.

How Sir Otto changed his armour, and the Merchant resolved to accompany him into the world.

When Otto awoke, the morning light was already beaming on his windows, and the confused bustle of carriages and people in the streets mingled strangely with his nightly dreams. When he had shaken them off, he dressed as quickly as possible, and ran to the lattice; for he believed, from the noise, that something extraordinary must have occurred. In a short time, however, he became aware that the disturbance, which appeared to him so remarkable, was nothing more than what must be caused by the daily goings-on of life in a large town, of which no one took any notice; or rather, it would have been a cause of wonder and apprehension if the tumult had ceased. He bethought him also, that so many large houses, most of which were equal in extent to his father's castle, must depend for their support on a great number of inhabitants, among whom there must exist many different feelings and dispositions, pain and pleasure, falsehood and sincerity, hatred and love, whence arose the varied and discordant voices around him. In the lonely fortress of Trautwangen, since the date of its building, how much had been suffered and enjoyed! But here in the town many hundreds of forsaken Berthas might weep, many wandering minstrels like Walter tune their neglected harps, and many old men like Sir Hugh mourn for the departure of their beloved sons.

During these thoughts he was interrupted by a servant of Theobaldo's, who came, bearing his armour and accoutrements, all brightly polished, offering at the same time to assist the knight in bracing them on. "You must forgive me, noble sir," said he, while Sir Otto looked with satisfaction on his glittering mail, "if you should remark on the middle of the cuirass, right over the heart, one spot; it seems to be from blood which has lately settled there; but, as it was neglected for some hours, it has now turned into rust, which, as long as

the armour lasts, cannot be effaced. But certainly, noble sir, this is not my fault." "No, good friend," answered Sir Otto; "it is, as thou sayst, no fault of thine." He thus repeated the squire's words in a slow mournful tone, fixing his eyes on the cuirass; whereon he indeed perceived plainly the blood of Sir Heerdegen of Lichtenried, which must have dropped on him as he was dressing his wounds. Henceforth he could not bear the thoughts of wearing that hauberk, and, instead of accepting the squire's services, sent him away with a complimentary message to his master Theobaldo. "He had already a servant who would assist in putting on his armour, and who, though now absent, would soon arrive." But, when left alone, he only walked up and down the room, and when he came near the cuirass, started from it as if it had been a spectre; or, when at last he forced himself to touch it, he only tried every art, which he had learned from his father and other warriors, in order to efface the rust. But the longer he laboured the more convinced he became, that such efforts were wholly in vain. "No!" said he, with a deep sigh, "the stain will indeed remain there for ever." Then he strode up and down the room, more vexed and melancholy than ever.

At length he overheard, in the next apartment, loud expressions of discontent, and even great wrath; then, fearful stamping on the floor, and execrations. As the voice spoke only of armour, greaves, corslet, and cuirass, he soon learned that all this anger arose because some one had got a coat of mail which by no means fitted. Wishing to escape from the conflict of his own feelings, Otto hastily rose, and threw open the door, which led into his neighbour's room; whereupon a knight, half cased in armour, stepped up to him, and with equal impetuosity demanded what he wanted. Both, however, stood silent for a space, and gazing on each other; for Otto directly recognised the former opponent of Folko de Montfaucon, namely, the Count Archimbald von Waldeck; while the latter also seemed to remember the youthful witness of that combat, and his overthrow. In a short time they came to mutual explanations, and Count Archimbald said, "I am not vain enough to wish that you should keep me in countenance, and also fall before the powerful or fortunate arm of the French

chevalier; on the contrary, I should be heartily glad if you could again recover, for the beautiful Gabrielle, her favourite ring; and if, to say the truth, there seems not much probability of this, yet no one can tell what is in store for him either of prosperous or evil fortune. You have my sincere good wishes for your undertaking, which may yet realize all your hopes. For the present, observe, I pray you, how the fates are tormenting me! In great wrath, at the events of that fatal evening, I had rashly sworn that I would never again wear my black and silver mail, with the eagle's head-piece; and, moreover, that I would ride without armour, until I had even, thus defenceless, won a complete suit as the prize of a successful combat. In this undertaking I have at last succeeded; but mark only how pitiful must have been the limbs of my opponent! I cannot force myself into the greaves nor the armlets; the pigmy gloves are already thrown out at the window, and as for the corslet and cuirass, I have indeed drawn them on, but, as you perceive, they will by no means clasp together." During these words, the knight heaved and writhed as if he would force the hauberk to expand, and in so doing, tore asunder some of the plates with a loud crash. Two squires who attended him drew near to repair this misfortune, but he repulsed them angrily. "It is all in vain," said he, "therefore give yourselves no farther trouble. I have only to throw off these vile pigmy accoutrements, and for that purpose require no assistance." Thereupon he tore open the half-closed buckles and straps, and took off the corslet and cuirass, throwing them on the ground with such violence, that the nails and hooks started out upon the floor. He then cast melancholy looks on his black and silver armour, which lay in a corner, and which Otto easily recognized by the eagle's beak on the visor. "When I wore these," said he, "I was yet a champion; now I am powerless, and shall never again find a coat of mail that will fit these limbs." Otto had not forgotten the horror with which he had just before contemplated his own armour, and said,—"My Lord Count, methinks we could now easily help one another out of our distresses. If you have sworn never to wear your harness, I have in the next room a suit which I would not willingly use again; and this for reasons of which it is not fitting that I should now speak farther than to assure you,

that they are not connected with shame or disgrace to the wearer." "I should not expect any less from you, young sir," answered Sir Archimbald, with a pleasant smile. "Well then, let us make an exchange," said Otto. "Done, it is a bargain," replied Sir Archimbald; "I doubt not we shall be fitted; for we are both framed like right old German heroes." The silver mail was immediately brought into the room; and each being assisted by a squire, they were soon equipt, standing, as if transformed by magic, wondering at each other. The now stern and wrathful visage of Sir Archimbald contrasted strangely with the mild light reflected on it by Otto's bright silver harness; while the youth's blooming, almost womanish features were surmounted by the frightful helmet and visor in the shape of an eagle's head. At length they began to stride, with thundering steps and threatening gestures, through the room, to try how their new accoutrements fitted; and both being well satisfied, they shook hands, Archimbald rejoicing in his heart that his black and silver mail, with the eagle's head, would yet once more come in the way of Sir Folko de Montfaucon. "For," said he, "you will at least make him fight a hard battle, young knight of Trautwangen! Of this I require no other proof, than the hardness of your grasp even now, and the noble warlike spirit which appears in your whole demeanour." They now took leave of each other, like old and tried friends. Archimbald, in order to mount his horse, and Otto in order to fulfil his promise to the young merchant.

The wealthy Theobaldo was now standing in his great vaulted warehouse, with many clerks, servants, and customers, around him, ruling like a petty prince, even by signs and single words, over all the business of the day, and yet not disdaining to put his own hand to the work in cases of necessity. Thus, on Otto's arrival, he was employed in measuring out some pieces of very rich gold embroidered cloth; on completing which, he perceived the knight, without recognising him in his black armour, for Otto had pulled down his visor. Notwithstanding this, Theobaldo felt attracted by him, like iron by the magnet; for there was indeed a share of iron (if one may so speak) in the courageous heart of the merchant. "Have you any commands, noble sir?" said he to the youth; "if so, please to

inform me, and you shall be served before all other customers." Hereupon Otto threw open his visor, and the merchant started back with astonishment and admiration. "Good Heaven!" cried he, "how much nobler and more dignified are your looks now than even yesterday! and must I thus appear before you with the pitiful measuring rod in my hand?" Therewith he threw away the despised implement with such force, that it struck against a pillar, and broke into a hundred pieces, though as it was made of ivory and gold; the attendants thought it could never have been their master's design to destroy it in such manner. They therefore ran and picked up the fragments, anxiously informing him, that it would be very possible to have it again repaired, and made as good as ever. The merchant, however, took no notice of these words, but hastily led the knight up stairs into his house.

On their entrance into a retired and richly furnished chamber, Theobaldo took his guest by both hands, bent over them with a deep blush of anxiety and ardour on his countenance, and said, —"For Heaven's sake, Sir Otto von Trautwangen, refuse not the earnest entreaty which I am now about to make to you. Allow me also to wear armour, and as your friend, your servant and squire, or in any way that you are pleased to appoint, to go with you into the world, and share in all your dangers." Otto looked at him with wonder, then reminded him of his rich merchandize, his brilliant and luxurious house, insisting that his stars had destined him to play a very different part in the world from that of a knight-errant. "Say not so," answered the merchant vehemently. "I am by birth a Milanese, and it has been proved already on the shields of German warriors, even against the attacks of emperors, that our citizens are not ignorant of warfare. There survives yet somewhat of the old Roman spirit among us. Besides, you must not judge the party at our last night's banquet by their conversation alone. You perceived too, that I was dissatisfied and wearied therewith, though more for your sake than my own, because I perceived that you misunderstood them, and was offended." "Nay," answered Sir Otto, "I took no offence; but, as so much was said of gain and loss, of goods and prices, it appeared to my disordered fantasy as if the festivous entertainment which I

then enjoyed, and the night's lodging which had been promised me, were also like goods which I had purchased with the blood of the unfortunate Sir Heerdegen. Thus I was obliged to retire. I give you this explanation the more freely, because I have now recovered from the wild dreams by which I was then haunted, and against you and your friends have not one word of just complaint." "You are in the right," answered Theobaldo; "the various characters of mankind in this world may indeed be compared to the varied flowers, plants, and trees of the forest, which all differ from each other, and yet all contribute to one purpose. Their conversation no doubt differs from yours, even as their dresses contrast with your glittering armour; yet, in time of need, they are not found destitute of honour, generosity, and courage. You are in the right, therefore, not to despise these merchant citizens, although I for my part have resolved to desert them and try my fortune with you." "Nay, dear Theobaldo," replied Sir Otto, "allow me to dissuade you from this design. You are older, and have far more experience and judgment than I am possessed of. How then can I become your leader and instructor, or by what means could I compensate to you the loss of all those advantages which you enjoy here?" "Well," answered Theobaldo, "if, as you say, I have more experience and judgment, you may with the less hesitation allow to me my own free choice in this matter." "Besides," resumed Sir Otto, "from the friendship I bear to you, I should be deeply grieved if you meet with any injury. But how can that be avoided, since you have probably never yet been accustomed to the use of the sword or lance?" Theobaldo looked at him with a good-humoured half-ironical smile, then turned round, and opened the door into a neighbouring cabinet, wherein was visible a great collection of shirts of mail, helmets, crossbows, targets, and battle-axes. "These are but the accoutrements of simple horsemen, not of knights," said Theobaldo; "but such weapons I am well able to wield and use to good purpose." Thereupon he took from the wall a handsome cross-bow, bent it with great skill and strength, and laid an arrow in the rest; then, opening the window, "Mark," said he, "the knotted branch in yonder oak-tree!" Scarcely allowing himself a moment to take aim, he sent his arrow with such force and unerring accuracy, that it

not only struck the branch, but penetrated so far into the tree, that only the trembling feathers were now visible. Thereafter Theobaldo took up a heavy battle-axe, and exercised himself with it against a strong shirt of mail, exhibiting such power and rapidity of arm, that Otto could not help expressing his admiration. “Are you now willing that I should go with you?” said the merchant, with a confident smile. “Ay, truly,” answered the knight; “and from my heart I can affirm, that you are well able to maintain, by your deeds as a soldier, all that you have before alleged in words. Where in all the world could I find a better companion? But, alas! Theobaldo, since you are not of knightly birth, how can we venture to speak of your wearing golden spurs? and if you are never to become a knight, why should you needlessly subject yourself to the humiliation of being a squire to such a humble unpractised warrior as I am?” At these words, a dark shade passed for a moment over Theobaldo’s countenance; but he answered firmly,—“Let us speak no farther of the difference of ranks. I wear arms, ride a good horse, and am content to follow you. Young men of knightly birth strive for golden spurs. Young citizens aim but at the wreath of victory. When in your society I have obtained skill and experience in warfare, I may yet lead on the banners of my native city, Milan, to the battle-field, and then golden spurs will be forgotten!” “I had no thought of offending you,” said Otto, somewhat surprised; but immediately thereafter the dark shade passed away from Theobaldo’s features, and his looks were again gay and smiling as the vernal sky that shone above them. He now accompanied the knight to a luxurious breakfast, which was prepared in the banquet-hall. Indeed the whole day was spent in feasting and music; though as the merchant was often called away on matters of importance, on which he seemed to bestow great attention, Otto began almost to believe, that, as to his riding out like a knight-errant, he had only been in jest. Yet at night, when Theobaldo led him to his apartment (for he had been obliged to promise that he would pass the night there) he found that this apprehension was groundless. “To-morrow before sunrise,” said the merchant, “Sir Knight of Trautwangen, forget not that I shall be ready to attend you. I have already appointed a trust-worthy curator over my

possessions in this town, and made every needful arrangement.”

In the morning, before daylight, Sir Otto was in the stable, engaged in saddling and bridling his charger; in which task he was assisted by an active youth in a complete horseman’s armour. As they did not speak, it was not until the latter came out into the morning twilight, and sprung lightly on the back of a chesnut-coloured Polish horse, that the knight recognised Theobaldo. Smiling on each other, they shook hands like old and tried friends, then trotted on merrily to the town-gates, while the sun, bright and jocund, as if to welcome the two happy youths, began to shed his long slanting radiance over the landscape.

CHAPTER XI.

How Sir Heerdegen returned to the Castle of Trautwangen, and of the wonderful Lady Minnatrost.

Thus Otto and his companion continued to pursue their way, crossing ere long the frontiers of the knight's father-land, and meeting with various adventures in the kingdom of France, among people to whose language they were yet little accustomed. Meanwhile, how different was the life now led by the inhabitants left in the old castle of Trautwangen! A third party had indeed broken on the lonely hours of Sir Hugh and the forsaken Bertha, but his presence only made the scene more gloomy than ever. This was Sir Heerdegen of Lichtenried, who, notwithstanding his wounds, had hastened onwards to visit his sister, and by this untimely exertion, had brought on himself a fearful illness. In a chamber not far from the great hall was placed the couch of the unfortunate Sir Heerdegen, in order that Bertha might attend him, and yet be near to the old knight. It was indeed needful that he and Bertha should console each other; for in the delirium of his fever, the youth had unfortunately betrayed all which he would in health have so gladly concealed; they had learned from whose hands, and on what grounds, he had received his dangerous wounds. Thereafter, Bertha often wept so bitterly, and blushed so deeply, that her tears might be compared to the morning dew, brightened by the red gleams of the east. On the other hand, Sir Hugh fixed his eyes on the ground in gloomy meditation, drawing, from this first unhappy combat of his son, the darkest anticipations of the future. Now and then, however, his confidence in the goodness and mercy of Providence would return, and a smile would steal over his features, though he spoke no words by which the by-standers could have guessed at this change in his feelings; only he repeated sometimes that rhyme of the old minstrel, which Otto had remembered during the mysterious night, when he watched his armour in the chapel:

"Dark night precedes the morn,
So grief may joyance bring,
And death leads through the wintry grave
To life's eternal spring."

Sir Hugh dared not enter the apartment of his nephew; for the latter, in the wildness of his delirium, always addressed the old man as if he had been Otto von Trautwangen, commanding him in a stern angry voice to leave the room, otherwise he would throw at his head all the scorching firebrands that were now heaped upon his own. At such times he indeed grappled violently at the bandage which was tied over his wounds; and his uncle, with mournful aspect, and sighing deeply, came back to the hall, passing by that heavy oak-pannelled door, at which, alas! the blooming happy countenances of Bertha and Otto never more presented themselves. However, when the wounded youth had only his beloved sister beside him, especially in the night hours, when the room was illuminated by a single lamp placed in a corner, he was tranquil and happy, so that, now and then, he could even tell her long stories; among which she once heard from him the narrative which here follows:—

"On the shores of the North Sea there lies a country named East Friesland, where, even at this day, there are endless dissensions between the princes and their vassals; the former insisting that every one should blindly submit to their sovereign will and pleasure, while the latter no less vehemently maintain, that their opinions should be consulted on all subjects. Thus, through the whole land, there are constant insurrections and tumults, even like those, dear Bertha, which now torment the brain of your wounded brother. Yet in East Friesland there is a wondrous castle stationed on a rock, whence there beams, far and wide, a pale tranquil light, the reflection as it were of the moon and stars, whose radiance falls ever brightly and unbroken on these lofty towers. In the castle dwells a female descendant of that ancient race named the Druden. They were powerful wizards and magicians; and such too is this female descendant with whom we claim

relationship; for she is our aunt. Her name is the Lady Minnatrost,[1] importing, that by love she affords consolation to unfortunate lovers; and all day long she boils wonder-working flowers and roots in a kettle, which is made of pure gold. I had one evening lost my way, and drew up my horse's reins when opposite to her lofty castle, which proudly diffuses its light over all that country, which is elsewhere flat and level. Tired as I then was, and in need of refreshment, I felt as if some mysterious obstacle always lay in my road when I wished to spur my horse up the steep acclivity. The castle too was so silent, and so wholly unknown to me, that I felt an unwonted dread of approaching it. Thus, while I stood still, and doubted what course I ought to take, lo! there came riding at a rapid pace, along the plain, a well-accoutred knight, bearing in his arms a slender female form, who clung to him at once, lovingly and timidly. As they passed by I heard her sing, —

> "Spur, spur thy steed, Sir Frederick dear,
> The silent Druda's towers are near;"

to which the knight answered,—

> "What need of Druda, dearest life?
> Already we are man and wife."

"Just as these rhymes were uttered, there sprung out from among the thickets a number of armed men, who, as I perceived by their dresses, were of low rank. A tall powerful youth rushed up, and, seizing the knight's horse by the reins, called aloud, 'Villain, villain, whither art thou bearing my sister,'—the rest, meanwhile wielding great halberts, and other weapons, made a circle round the lovers. The knight, however, on the first attack, had drawn his sword, and now said, 'Not so fast, base churl! She loves me, and I love her. What business is it of thine, if thy chief is pleased to demand thy sister? Knows't thou not that I am Sir Frederick von Edekon?' 'In a few seconds more thou shalt be but his ghost,' answered the youth, 'if thou dost not instantly give back this maiden to her

family.' Thereupon the knight struck him a blow with his sword, and a furious battle commenced. As I perceived very well that the maiden wished to remain with her lover, I assisted him, and attacked the countrymen in a manner which they had little expected. Notwithstanding their courageous resistance, the victory would soon have been ours; but, in the midst of our conflict, Heaven knows how it could happen, but we all heard the sound of a lattice opened in the castle that stood above us, and, for reasons inscrutable, found ourselves irresistibly impelled to pause in our encounter, and look upwards for whatever should present itself at the window. Then, behold, the full moon shone calm and bright on the lattice, and we all saw the figure of the Lady Minnatrost, tall in stature, clad in a white garment, and with her right hand held up threateningly towards the stars. At this apparition a cold shuddering vibrated through our frames. We remained for a long while silent and motionless, till at length she spoke, 'Lift not again your swords in vain and impious contention! I know that there is one among you who is my nephew, and is named Heerdegen von Lichtenried. He is here a stranger, but, nevertheless, he shall place that maiden before him on his horse, and shall bring her to me in my castle. The rest shall go peaceably home for this night; but in three days let her bridegroom and brother come also to me.' All was done as she had commanded. Though the maiden wept bitterly, though the knight and her brother gnashed their teeth with rage, yet no one felt inclined to pass a night under the roof of that ghastly white-robed Druda! But it seemed as if her will were now irresistible, and every one must submit in silence. Without saying a word, therefore, the combatants laid down their swords, and, in the same mood of humble obedience, I brought the maiden to the castle.

"What I found there, dearest Bertha, I am not able to describe in many words, and truly, where all is strange and supernatural, words fail to afford any adequate impression. But look on those pale rays of your nightly lamp that now flicker around us; look at your own pale and saint-like face in the mirror, and even here you may behold a gleam,—the tenderest and loveliest,—of that light which was shed all about the castle of the Lady Minnatrost. I durst not enter her habitation; she

commanded me to wait under the portico. ‘It will not be unpleasant to you,’ said she, ‘to pass the night here, half sheltered, half in the open air. There are no tempests to annoy you, and if rain falls, it is but a mild dew from heaven, which refreshes without injuring the limberest flowers. Such too will be your tears,’ added she, turning to the maiden, ‘and, after transient showers, the sunrise of joy will be brighter and lovelier.’ In truth, I perceived that the damsel immediately ceased to weep, after she had looked on the calm, thoughtful features of the Druda, illumined as they now were by the moonshine. Both then retired into the castle, and soon thereafter I heard a delightful harmony of harps and flutes sounding from its chambers. The music was slow, soft, and of exquisite modulation, fitted, as I could well imagine, to lull the unhappy maiden to forgetfulness and sleep. Thereafter the Lady Minnatrost came to me in the portico, bringing with her a golden goblet filled with wine, also a massive salver with exquisite viands. She took her place near me, and related how she was our mother’s sister, and how for many years there had belonged to her family a store of deep and miraculous knowledge, whose mysteries were yet all sanctioned by our holy religion; finally, how she believed herself to have been chosen to reside here for the guidance and instruction of a wild disorderly people. These stories were long and marvellous, lasting, indeed, through the whole of that moonlight night. Sometimes I listened with a kind of mysterious dread, but for the most part my feelings were calm and tranquil, so that I could almost think that I was once more a child, that my mother rocked me in her arms, and told me fairy tales as she had done of yore. Towards the dawn of day the Druda left me, saying, ‘Thou wilt probably remain here, in order to learn how these adventures will end, and may stay without fear of any danger.’ Thereafter I fell asleep calmly, as if I had been under the protection of a mother’s roof.

“On the following day, I perceived now and then the Lady Minnatrost walking with that lovelorn damsel on the castle ramparts, among tall white flowers that grew there, and from whose blossoms, as they waved in the morning air, there exhaled the sweetest odours. Often, however, the maiden wept

bitterly, and called aloud for Sir Frederick von Edekon. At such time the Druda spoke not; she offered neither consolations nor promises, but only fixed on the weeping girl her thoughtful eyes, whose light was always mild and soothing as the moonbeams, or broke off a blooming sprig from the white flowers that grew there, and with it fanned her burning cheeks. At last too she sung old simple ballads, till the listener was calmed, and even smiled with wondrous cheerfulness. Such too was the conduct of the white-robed lady every time when the damsel's brother and the knight appeared, and with threatening looks and angry words demanded her release. The Druda only smiled, and looked on them in silence; whereupon their angry words died away on their lips like a mournful sigh, or changed into humble and patient entreaties. After they had thus come three times, they were on the ninth day all become mild, submissive, and pious. Then the Lady Minnatrost gave them back the now smiling damsel, who soon afterwards was led to the altar, in peace and unanimity, betwixt her brother and the knight. Thereafter they all lived happily together; nor were there ever dissensions any more betwixt that chief and his vassals.

"Many other stories are told in that neighbourhood of the consolation which the wonderful lady of the castle has afforded to those in distress, especially to victims of unfortunate love; so that she well deserves the name that is bestowed on her, since her aid has always been afforded in the spirit of love and charity, not in that of violence or constraint."

FOOTNOTE:

[1] *Minne* (pronounced *minna*) is an obsolete word for *love*, and *trost* means *consolation*.

CHAPTER XII.

How the Lady Bertha went with her brother in quest of the Lady Minnatrost.

By degrees, as the knight spoke thus with his sister, and told her more and more stories of that wonderful lady, his own feelings, both of mind and body, became soothed and tranquil. He no longer raved in feverish delirium, but asked calmly for his uncle; and when Sir Hugh came into his apartment, spoke respectfully and kindly, entreating forgiveness, if his words before had been wild and unbecoming. The old knight, therefore, often sat by his couch, but this was not long needful; for scarcely had the wounded youth begun to obtain a victory over his illness, ere he went gaily forth into the fields and forests to enjoy the sports of the chase, and sat with Sir Hugh at the mid-day and evening banquet, over full mantling goblets of old Hungarian or Johannisberg.

On the other hand, Bertha, whilst her brother thus recovered his strength and spirits, became every day more and more pale and melancholy. It was easy to perceive, that only her anxiety for Sir Heerdegen's life, and her wish to comfort the old knight, had before prevented her from falling into this mood of sadness. Now, however, the two warriors sat together over their full brimming wine-cups, enlivened often by the old minstrel Walter, who came to entertain them with his heroic ballads. Bertha meanwhile was left amid the woods and meadows, like a poor lonely flower, wearing out her life with melancholy dreams, mournful songs, and deep-drawn sighs, amid the solitude of nature. Truly she would soon have faded quite away, even like the fair Lisberta, or like the hermit of the Finland frontiers, only that her brother also knew these stories, and told them to Bertha; so that she knew there had been others in the world who had sufferings like her own. Yet she clung to him always with most confidence when he spoke to her of the Lady Minnatrost, and was in heart rejoiced to think that this pious Druda had not been merely a phantom raised by

the feverish dreams of her brother, but that in East Friesland there really lived a heroine of that name, who was also her near relation.

But, notwithstanding all this, she became always paler and more absorbed in her own meditations, so that she scarcely ever spoke; and when Sir Heerdegen questioned her, she used to answer, “Alas! dear brother, it will never be my lot to see in this life the wonderful lady, of whose love and charity you have said so much. But beyond the grave are the realms and habitations of love, and it is time methinks, that death, like a gentle sleep, should close up this world from my senses, that I might awake in that sanctuary.”

These and other words of the same tenour were faithfully repeated to Sir Hugh by the Knight of Lichtenried, who added hereto, that if Bertha were not soon conducted to the castle of the Lady Minnatrost, she would in a few months be departed to join her loving ancestors in heaven. Sir Hugh then summoned up all his resolution, directed that his niece should be brought before him, and in a solemn voice ordered that in a few days she should be prepared to go with her brother to the distant land of East Friesland, where was situated the castle of her aunt, named the Lady Minnatrost. Bertha looked doubtfully and mournfully at the old man, whose heart had already been so grieved by the departure of his son. Thereupon Sir Hugh laughed aloud; “The foolish little bird thinks, perhaps, that such an old ruined tower must fall to pieces if she no longer flutters around it!” He laughed again, went into another chamber, and shut the door; but when alone the old knight wept bitterly.

Afterwards, however, he ordered speedy preparations to be made for their departure; so that, on the morning of the second day, a palfrey, with a packhorse, the war-steed of Sir Heerdegen, and four squires, were ready in the castle-court. Sir Hugh came down the wide staircase with the brother and sister, humming all the way an old song, remembered from the days of his youth. He embraced them ere they mounted, then forced them to ride away; and thereafter went with the minstrel Walter to the rampart, seated himself silently on the grass, and gazed at the travellers as they proceeded always farther and

farther along the plains, now bright with the dews and ruddy sun-gleams of the morning. Thereupon the minstrel called to mind how he had before sat there with Bertha in the same place, when the young Sir Otto was spurring his light-brown charger across the meadow; and, without reflection, led on by natural associations, he began once more the first verses of the song which he had chaunted on that occasion. The words were as follows:—

"A weak old man am I,
No longer dare I roam!"

Then the venerable knight, in great wrath, seized hold of him by the arm, and shook him heartily. In a thundering voice too, like the roaring of a lion, he called out,—"Would'st thou mock me, then? I shall hurl thee down from the rampart into the valley beneath, unless thou confessest that the old grey-haired warrior hath yet strength in his limbs and courage in his heart!" The minstrel was with these words dragged to the very edge of the rampart; but, without changing colour or countenance, he looked the knight firmly in the face, saying, —"If it be your pleasure to attack an old man, who is no warrior, but a minstrel, and at the same time your guest, do so in God's name. That is your affair, not mine, and the whole adventure may soon be ended!" Thereupon Sir Hugh trembled vehemently, and let him go. "For Heaven's sake forgive me!" said he; "you know that evil spirits have formerly exercised their power over me in this life; and now, when my solitary penance was begun, methought that a strange man had come hither to sing ballads, mocking me in the impotence of mine old age. It was the strange man that I wished to fling over the rampart." "That was forsooth a proper mode of proving your penitence," said the minstrel. Sir Hugh was for some moments silent and ashamed;—at length he said,—"I know not, Master Walter, if I can invite you any more to join me over a goblet of wine in the castle." "Wherefore should you not?" answered the old poet; "we minstrels were indeed unworthy of protection and patronage, if we knew not how to bear with the varying

humours of irritable and yet noble minds." Thereupon he followed his venerable host into the fortress.

CHAPTER XIII.

How the Lady Bertha was received in the Druda's castle.

Heerdegen and Bertha had now travelled for many days, and the nearer they approached towards the shores of the North Sea, the damsel was the more cheerful, and the youth more discontented. When Bertha questioned him why he was thus vexed, he answered,—"It seems to me almost as if I were now leading you into the cloister; for if that wonderful lady has you once within her walls, Heaven knows whether she will ever allow you to come again among mankind; nor indeed, so far as I can judge by your own disposition, will you ever wish again to leave that silent castle, with its flowers on the rampart, and its moonlight radiance!" "Well, dear brother," answered the damsel, "that would only be the fulfilment of my own desires, which, doubtless, you would not prevent." "It were a loss to the world," answered Heerdegen; "and I had gladly seen you led to the altar." "Nay," said Bertha, "we shall doubtless find at the pious lady's castle all that is fitting for religious duties, a chapel, a cross, and an altar." "It was not thus," said Heerdegen, "that I wished to be understood;" then looked discontentedly at his horse's feet, while Bertha turned away, blushing, and gazing at the long grass and flowers that grew around them.

After such discourse, she thought to render her brother more tranquil, by praising the beauty of the land through which they now past, the green grassy hills, winding streams, and verdant woods. To which he answered,—"In the bright days of midsummer all this is indeed pleasant and delightful; but let the winter once come on, with its howling winds and deep snows, while the lonely habitations of the poor inhabitants send up their smoke amid the pathless wilderness, more like funeral piles than pleasant dwellings, then you would cease to praise the country which you now so much admire." "But at the castle of the Lady Minnatrost there are neither snow-storms nor howling winds," said Bertha. Whereupon

Heerdegen peevishly answered,—“Ay, ay, so it has been said. I myself have never been there in the winter!” Then he rode on in silence; and the more gloomy he appeared, the more earnestly did Bertha long to be with her wonderful aunt, who might, by her magic spells, restore the knight to serenity.

One day Sir Heerdegen seemed more than ever lost in deep reflection, from which Bertha concluded that they were now near the end of their journey. Her heart heaved and beat with her own visionary expectations, while towards evening her brother, almost with terror in his aspect, looked round for some house of entertainment for travellers; but nothing was visible but some lonely moss-covered cottages. He sent out both their attendants to explore in different directions; and as, after having stood still for some time, he found that they did not return, he ordered those who had charge of the packhorse to wait there while he rode about with Bertha. But in the winding paths of the wooded country they soon lost their way altogether, found no fitting house to rest in for the night, nor could they even make their way back to the spot where he had desired the servants to wait for him. The stars were now shining bright in heaven, and Sir Heerdegen suddenly halted as they came to the foot of a steep ascent. “Good Heavens!” cried he, “if I mistake not, we are come earlier to our journey’s end than I had expected or wished. How gladly, dearest Bertha, would I have still had you with me till the morning! Look up towards the summit of the hill, and try whether by star-light you can distinguish a fortress.” At that moment the full moon, that was now rising, broke forth in refulgence from the east, and immediately the windows of the castle were illuminated in glittering radiance; crosses too were seen gleaming on the towers and ramparts; soft music came floating from afar, through the woods, gently waved by the night wind. Bertha stretched out her arms towards the light, with looks of triumph and rejoicing, while her brother struck his cuirass with his iron-gloved right hand, heaving a sigh of doubt and apprehension.

Then, among the stems of some tall birch-trees, they saw approaching them a female form, tall and white, even like the trees, and with a green veil over her head and shoulders.

Bertha thought this must be the Lady Minnatrost; and when the veil was thrown back, and she beheld the mild gleam of her tranquil eyes, in which shone the spirit of innocence and peace, the damsel alighted from her palfrey, and sunk down, kneeling on the grass before the Druda. Sir Heerdegen too forgot all his doubts and discontent. He dismounted, bowed respectfully, and wished to speak of Bertha's visit, but the lady said,—"It is enough, all is already known to me; therefore I came to meet the guests that were to me so heartily welcome. This time you also, Sir Heerdegen, shall go with us to the castle." Thereupon she gave a hand to each, placing herself between them to lead them up the mountain, chaunting all the way a song of which the silvery tones alone, even without words, were enough to inspire peace and happiness in the heart of every listener. They arrived in no long time at the fortress, where Sir Heerdegen kindly, and without expressing any low spirits or displeasure, took leave of his sister. It seemed as if he had never, during his whole life, known difficulties, or been roused to anger. They conversed all three kindly and confidentially with each other, appointing certain days on which he was to come to the castle, in order to visit Bertha. Then he walked (courteously kissing his iron glove and waving his helmet) down the mountain, while Bertha went with the smiling Lady Minnatrost into the mansion.

The gate opened, and then closed immediately behind them; whereupon Bertha perceived with surprise, that they had to cross a small lake of the purest water, wherein the moon and stars were reflected in all their loveliness. A bark came, self-impelled, floating towards them, in which they took their places, and were gently ferried across. Bertha perceived immediately, on the ramparts and towers, the waving and fragrance of the tall white flowers of which her brother had spoken with her when he lay on his sick-bed. Now she understood for the first time the full force of his descriptions, when she was sailing on the tranquil waters of that lake, with the odours of those white flowers bathing her temples and floating around her. From the building within came the sound of harps and cymbals, as if in friendly salutation; and when the two voyagers had disembarked, and begun to walk through the

long vaulted halls, those pleasant sounds became always louder and more articulate. Every room was illuminated, but with a mild pensive light; for it was from the reflection of the full moon, by mirrors so contrived, that her rays were multiplied and cast without shadow on every object. At last, entering into a great hall with Gothic arches, Bertha perceived whence had arisen that music with which her senses had before been refreshed and delighted. This apartment was filled with wonderful mechanism, such as no artisan could imitate. Golden rings, self-moved, turned round their endless circles, and as they touched each other, produced the most exquisite melody. These rings also set in motion the cymbals, and awoke the harp-strings, which were stretched, like a magical net-work, between the pillars. Bertha was now able to imagine how that damsel must have been soothed into refreshing sleep, as her brother had described; she too, having seated herself on a soft couch, soon lost herself in pleasant dreams; from which, if at times she half awoke, she beheld and heard those magic rings circling around her, and the tranquil eyes, with their moonlike radiance, of the watchful Druda.

CHAPTER XIV.

How the Lady Bertha was left alone in the Druda's castle.

Henceforward Bertha's life in the castle was spent as if in the threshold between two worlds, one while occupied with childish plays, and at another with gleams of higher wisdom, derived from sources mysterious and far remote. As her brother rode up now and then to the gates, she spoke with him from the ramparts, told him of all the wonders that she had beheld, and how happily she now lived. He, on the other hand, rejoiced, that her cheeks wore the rose of health, contrasting with the white flowers by which she was there surrounded; and so they always parted from each other in hope and confidence.

Among other amusements, Bertha was especially delighted with a certain mirror, which, surrounded by strange talismanic characters, was placed against the wall of a retired chamber. When the Druda, for the first time, withdrew the dark red curtain by which it was covered, she said to the damsel, —"There, child, divert yourself for a space with the varied imagery which you will behold in that glass. For the present I have serious duties to perform." Bertha then stood alone before the mirror, trembling and doubtful what she was to expect to see there; but in a few minutes a new world seemed starting into life within its sphere; landscapes, men and women, towns and castles. At one time the scene presented a wide sea, on which ships were sailing for purposes of merchandise or warfare, now under a bright smiling sky, now amid storms and dark thunder-clouds. Then she beheld long church aisles full of people assembled in prayer, or great squares of a city, with enclosed lists, and knights engaged in desperate encounters. These last Bertha was unwilling to look upon; for they forced her to reflect on the combat between the Chevalier de Montfaucon and Count Archimbald von Waldeck, whence arose all her sufferings. Again, however, the mirror changed the scene to the interior of a magnificent castle, where a great king was seated on a throne, and around him were

many knights and ladies. Then there were visible Moorish towns, with their strangely-attired inhabitants, in long dresses, on the streets. Of all the pictures, however, that by which Bertha was most interested was a wild rocky country, answering to the descriptions which she had oftentimes heard of Norway and Sweden. On one of the highest cliffs, there was an old moss-grown watch-tower, from which, through a single window, there gleamed a steady light, pale indeed, like departing moonshine; and on this object the damsel could have gazed for hours together, believing, that in that lonely abode she might yet find consolation for all her misfortunes. These thoughts she often described to the Lady Minnatrost, who answered her,—"That solitary watch-tower, by which your attention has been thus attracted, lies far remote in the cold climate of the north. I must very soon make a journey thither; but, alas! you cannot go with me!" Such discourse only made those northern realms to the damsel more and more interesting; and never was she so calm and contented in spirit, as when the rocky landscape with the pale beacon-light came before her in the mirror.

Late one evening the friendly Druda came out with Bertha on one of the lofty watch-towers of the castle, where over their heads was only the clear azure of heaven, and the night air was filled with fragrance from the snow-white flowers. The Druda then fixed her eyes on the starry sky; and, by her looks and gestures, it seemed to the damsel as if her mysterious companion not only saw the stars, but listened to exquisite melody. At last Bertha broke the long pause, and said, —"Dearest lady, you listen watchfully, as if you heard the circling gold rings in your great hall, and yet all is silent!" "Do I not hear them?" said the Druda, with a smile of rapture. "To you, indeed, my dear child, all is silent. But even as the golden circles sometimes revolve in the hall beneath, so in the beaming boundless chambers of heaven are ever moving those blessed spheres which we call the stars, and sound so beauteously, that all other music compared with them is discord, even were it the loveliest that has ever been heard on earth. Only the chosen votary whose heart and feelings are in unison with those sounds may hear them; others must be

content to believe and wonder; or sometimes, for a transient space, they are visited by such melody in their dreams."

The damsel now looked at her aunt with a fixed and anxious gaze; for she had of late felt more desire to learn the mysterious arts of which she had heard so much, than of that awe with which they had before inspired her. She was therefore now ready to beg that the Lady Minnatrost would initiate her in the true science of those wonders by which she was surrounded. Perceiving her design, however, the lady cast on her a look, at which she recoiled and trembled. "Foolish child," said she, in a severe tone; "of what art thou now dreaming? Think'st thou that, because these mysteries have contributed to thy entertainment, they are in truth no more than a game which the young and unexperienced may play at? The chosen votary, on whom such gifts are conferred by Providence, must bear with her lot as she best can, for such knowledge is often a cause of fearful sufferings. Think'st thou, that I have always lived in this castle? that I have always been thus lonely, and never borne my share in the pleasures of the world? Alas! it is far otherwise. I once led a happy life among my fellow-mortals; but the science conferred on me disturbed my peace, though that was indeed no fault of mine. Now I am called Minnatrost, and truly, as the name imports, I have consolation for the grief of others; but, alas! none for my own sorrows." Thereupon the lady began to weep, and, as if wearied, leaned her head on the damsel's bosom, whose heart was deeply moved; for she had before only seen her wonderful aunt in the mood of cheerfulness and serenity. Now she discovered that the Druda had experienced, like others, her share of joy and suffering in this world; she embraced her fervently, and weeping also, said,—"Dearest aunt, how unspeakably I love you!" The Lady Minnatrost, however, soon resumed her composure. "If thou indeed lovest me so dearly," said she, in a kind though solemn tone, "this must be proved by thy care, that for the future we may live together. I must now make a long journey, even as far as to that old watch-tower in Sweden, which has afforded you so much pleasure when it appeared in the mirror. It is true, that I travel more quickly than other mortals, yet the journey is long, the

business important, and long must be our separation. In the meanwhile, then, live retired and peaceably, look not often through the windows, and, if thou wilt be guided by my counsels, walk seldom or never on the ramparts. During this time thy brother will not appear at the castle, for I have already informed him by a messenger that he must not come hither; yet thou shalt not want for pastime: the mirror will unfold its rarest and most varied scenery; the golden rings, the harps and cymbals, will delight you with their music; the lake reflect the pleasant moonshine, and the flowers give out their fragrance, even as if I were here present. But, dearest child, remember that thou should'st not with thine own hand withdraw the curtain from the mirror, attempt not to move the golden rings when they are still, and never touch the flowers. When thou hast need of aught, or hast formed any wish, then sing a ballad to thy lute, or play on it a few notes, and thy desires will be fulfilled. Have patience, dear child, be obedient and humble in spirit; then we shall live together, and all will turn out well."

With these words she kissed the astonished damsel, and in silence returned to her chamber. On the following morning Bertha sought all through the castle for the Lady Minnatrost, but in vain, for she was no where to be found.

CHAPTER XV.

How the Lady Bertha fled from the Druda's castle.

Bertha had spent several days of solitude in calmness and peace. From the great hall she was serenaded by delightful music; the mirror had displayed all her favourite landscapes; and, though she was without any companion, and had the sole charge of the castle, yet her duties were by invisible hands rendered so light, that they seemed like a mere game contrived for her entertainment. Thus, one afternoon she stepped into the bark, in order to enjoy for some time the cool fragrant air on the water. The day was so lovely, that even the light fleecy clouds in heaven appeared to dance for joy as they were driven along by the zephyrs; there were also numberless singing birds that came flying round the castle towers, playing and chasing each other among the white flowers that grew thereon. They seemed to her like ambassadors, bearing joyful tidings from the world which she had been forbid to look upon, and yet insensibly the wish grew upon her, that she might indulge in one fleeting glance from out these lonely walls. "What harm," said she to herself, "could possibly come of this? It is doubtful even whether I have rightly understood the lady's admonition. Merely to look for a moment on that world, of which I was born to be an inhabitant, cannot surely have evil consequences." Almost as soon as the thought was formed had Bertha turned the bark again towards the shore, and re-entered the castle. Then, as her aunt's instructions not to look out from the windows had been less strict than against walking on the ramparts, she thought that she proved her self-command and obedience, by passing quickly through the inviting garden of snow-white flowers, and entering a chamber, at the window of which she had often seen her aunt when she was speaking with her brother from the battlements. In this room there was nothing mysterious, and immediately Bertha drew open the lattice, with its painted glass, and began to gaze out over the wide landscape.

From hence she indeed beheld a beautiful prospect across rich-blooming meadows and valleys towards the sea, on which the sun now shone with full refulgence and glory. There too she saw a beautiful island, which lay with its verdant woods like a green emerald amid the blue waters. A strange mood of mind now came over the lonely damsel. She felt attracted towards that island with an irresistible longing, and could not help believing that Sir Otto von Trautwangen dwelt thereon, that he had built for himself a hermitage under the green shade of the trees, where he had completely forgot the attractions of the noble Gabrielle, and waited anxiously for the reappearance of his beloved Bertha. At first this was like a dream, but every moment its influence became more powerful, and had more of reality. She thought that she could distinguish blooming gardens, parterres, and winding-walks, which Sir Otto had cultivated around his hermitage; and soon afterwards she marked a boat approaching the shore, floating about on the sun-illumined waters, in which she could clearly distinguish her brother's figure. These were his very gestures,—his form, —the colour and fashion of his garments! "Good Heaven!" said she, "if indeed he should have found Otto in that island, if he should have been reconciled to his former adversary, and wish to bring me across?" Thereafter it seemed as if Sir Heerdegen waved a white handkerchief, making her signs; but, when she had drawn off her veil to return the signal, she was withheld by an inward terror, and hastily closed the window. With deep melancholy she now thought on the good kind Lady Minnatrost; how sad and affectionate had been her behaviour on the night of her departure, and she wept bitterly, because she had been even once disobedient to her injunctions; yet, so weak are we, poor mortals, in resisting temptation, that she could not, even now, divert her thoughts from the island and the boat, and, by way of defence against herself, she said many times aloud, "Thank Heaven, I have not even the keys of the castle-gate!" Suddenly the recollection occurred to her, that she knew very well where they lay, and her anxiety increased every moment, for she knew not where to seek for help and consolation.

Anxious to find any object that might divert her attention, she ran to the chamber wherein was stationed the wonderful mirror. On the way she brushed, with her garments, a chair on which she had laid her lute, and immediately it sounded, as if her once favourite companion addressed to her words of admonition and reproach; for the Lady Minnatrost had commanded her to play on the lute, if she wished for aid, or had any desire to gratify. Bertha, however, was too much agitated to attend to sounds so light and gentle; she ran breathless into the chamber, and though the glass was covered with a red curtain, which hung over it in deep mysterious folds, yet, in a mood of wild forgetfulness, she drew it suddenly away.

Over the whole surface of the mirror there was then a dark waving and heaving, like that of a stormy sea, as if its creations, rashly looked upon, ere they were perfect, shunned the light, and, therefore, were contorted in frightful indeterminate shapes. Thereupon Bertha wished to draw the curtain over it; but as she was about to touch it with her trembling hand, the forms which it presented began to whirl in circles with such vehemence, that she was terrified, and remained motionless. At last there came forward the figure of a man, pale and agitated, and with the expression of wild anger on his features. Unwillingly Bertha recognised in this figure her brother Heerdegen. On his head was placed somewhat like golden vulture's wings, and she knew not whether he wore a helmet in this fashion, or if it were indeed a vulture, whose attacks had thus made him pale and enraged. While she reflected on this, a female figure, wounded and bleeding, made its appearance, and looking on it but for a moment, Bertha screamed aloud, "Have mercy, Heaven!" for she recognised that the features were her own. Terrified by this phantom, and even by the sound of her own voice, she rushed out of the chamber into the hall, in which hung the golden rings. They were now silent and motionless, as if held by invisible bands, and at this time, above all others, Bertha would have rejoiced in the slightest sounds of their former music; for it seemed to her disordered fantasy, as if the fearful shapes in the mirror had started out into real life; that they were moving through

the apartment which she had left with rustling garments and sounding steps. How glad would she have been, therefore, if the magic rings, the harps, and cymbals, had overpowered those fearful sounds, and the terror by which her heart was now oppressed! Then she, indeed, remembered the lady's instructions, that by a few notes on her lute she was to obtain whatever she wished for in this enchanted castle. But, alas! her voice was rendered powerless by fear, and in order to obtain her lute, she must have passed again through the frightful apartment with the mirror. Horror deprived her of all self-possession; so that, as if supernaturally compelled, she touched one of the golden rings;—immediately they all began to move and to sound aloud; but, alas! not in harmonious music. Their tones were like an awful mixture of thunder and tempestuous winds, or hoarse roaring as of wild beasts,—then there was the clashing of swords as in battle, and at intervals arose lamentable moanings, as of the wounded and dying. At length the rings began to turn in furious haste; the noises were more and more hideous, accompanied too by yells of unearthly fiendish laughter; so that Bertha was attacked by fearful giddiness, and could scarcely support herself. There was then a loud knocking at the door, which communicated with the chamber of the mirror. Bertha thought she could not refrain from calling out, "Who is there?" And that she would then be answered by her own voice,—that she would behold her own form enter, pale, dishevelled, and bleeding,—that the horrid spectre would stretch out its arms to seize upon her! Half delirious, she rushed out of the hall, ran along the corridor down stairs, and through the court, till she found herself on the banks of the lake, which, instead of being serene and still as before, now heaved and raged with waves like those of a stormy sea! All was indeed changed around her; most of the white flowers had grown blood-red, and waved downwards like flames from the ramparts, as if threatening and angrily against her. How was her terror augmented, however, when, on gaining the opposite bank of the lake, she remembered that she had not brought the keys of the gate! Should she now return to that scene of horrors? Such attempt would have been vain, as she felt that utter madness would ensue. So she ran onward, calling aloud on her brother, though she might have well

known, that within these walls he could not render her assistance. But the gates stood wide open, while their ponderous wings moved as if agitated by a hurricane, threatening to close and crush to death any one who would venture beyond the portal. However, the damsel took courage, and rushed forwards. Scarcely was she on the other side, when the gates closed with a horrible crash; so that, perceiving how narrowly she had escaped with life, she fled, swift as an arrow, down the hill, and when arrived in the plain beneath, sunk down on the ground, exhausted and motionless. She heard on all sides the murmuring of voices, and confused clashing of armour and weapons, and on half recovering her self-possession, perceived that she was carried in her brother's arms, and that he said, as if communing with himself, "We must bring her into the boat, and cross over to the island, for the people here are mad with terror at the horrid sights on the castle ramparts." Then Bertha, remembering the prospect which she had seen from the window, faintly whispered, "Oh yes! let us go to that beloved island!" But thereafter she again closed her eyes, wearied and insensible.

CHAPTER XVI.

Of a fearful combat betwixt Sir Heerdegen and the Knight of the Sea.

Having once more awoke, she found herself reclining on the turf,—her brother kneeling beside her, and anxiously employed for her recovery. Still she heard the same wild murmuring of voices and clang of weapons from the main land, and then looking at the boat which had brought them across, “Thank Heaven,” said she, “that we are now in the island!” “Ay, truly,” said her brother, “we are safer here; for, on account of the thundering noises and frightful sights at the Druda’s castle, the people have all risen up in arms, partly to assist the lady, whom they supposed in danger, and partly to attack each other, since the disturbance in her hitherto silent and peaceful abode seems like a signal for the renewal of their contentions. That is indeed no longer a fitting habitation for a timid damsel; and we must endeavour to remove from it as far as possible.” “Wherefore then should we leave this island?” said Bertha; “here surely we might remain in peace and joy. Follow me, for I already know whither we should go.” With these words, she stept boldly onwards into the green thickets, convinced that she should find there the hermitage of her lover, Sir Otto von Trautwangen, according to the visionary prospect which she had beheld from the window of the lady’s castle. Her brother thought, that what she had now said might be the result of secret information received from the Lady Minnatrost, and went silently after her into the woodland coverts.

There, however, they found no flowery parterres, nor gravel walks, nor aught which she had expected at her lover’s habitation. Bertha, however, was not discouraged, but persisted in her search. She was even tempted to call aloud on Sir Otto by name, only that she was afraid of rousing her brother to anger. Meanwhile, the branches of the trees became always more and more densely interwoven; their roots always

made the damp ground more uneven; serpents, too, and other reptiles, disturbed by the unaccustomed tread of human visitors, were visible, writhing or crawling among the tall grass. At length the clear light of the ocean waves appeared once more on the other side of the island; and on reaching the shore, Bertha only found a wild country, where the evening sun was now shedding his rays upon old Runick tombs and monuments, and the wind rustled mournfully among the luxuriant moss and tall grass by which they were covered. Weeping bitterly, the disappointed damsel sat down on one of these old tomb-stones, and, with a painful feeling of resignation, exclaimed,—"So then, all that I was destined to find on this island was but a grave!" The more that her brother questioned and tried to console her, the more her affliction increased. She felt all the bitterness of disappointment and shame at the self-confidence which she had just before shewn.

Sir Heerdegen, perplexed and mortified, began to pour forth reproaches on the mysterious lady of the castle, by whose magic arts he supposed that she had been thus led astray. On the first mention of the Druda's name, a new source of regret and sorrow was opened for the unfortunate Bertha. She called to mind once more the solemn admonitions, the affectionate embraces, the heart-drawn tears of her aunt at their last interview, and the hopes then expressed of the future happiness that was in store for them. She became quite overpowered by these melancholy reflections, and her brother's impatience increased every moment. At length they heard near them the sound of a clear and melodious female voice, which sung a few words, of which the import was as follows:—

"Blood-red berries, leaves so green,
Brew drink for heroes meet, I ween."

Looking up, Bertha saw a tall female figure walking about on the sea-shore, sometimes stooping down as if to pluck flowers from the turf, sometimes pulling leaves from branches over her head, all which she threw into a great golden cup under her arm. Over the neck and shoulders of this stranger waved luxuriant blond tresses; and when she bent down her head,

they fell also like a veil over her features. She wore a richly-embroidered garment, (such as betokened her to be of high rank,) but carelessly girdled, and with the skirts folded up, as if for a journey. From a belt round her waist hung a large glittering sword, and from her neck behind were suspended a bow and quiver. She continued her employment in collecting plants, all the while singing a wild melody, to which the brother and sister listened, forgetting for a space their own sorrows; for the figure of the stranger had irresistibly attracted their attention, and her music too was such as they had never before heard. Her songs alluded throughout to some extraordinary drink, which rendered warriors furious in battle, and altogether invincible, as if they wore enchanted armour. Every stanza, however, closed with soft melancholy notes, whereby she cautioned the stranger against drinking too freely from the cup which possessed such power of inspiration. Just as the mysterious stranger was bending down to the grassy shore, Heerdegen happened involuntary to exclaim,—"Good Heavens, how beautiful must be her features!" Whereupon she suddenly reared herself in her full height, like a tall pine-tree, and the beauty of her countenance, being fully revealed, gleamed with a sun-like splendour through that desolate wilderness. Her large blue eyes flashed with anger, and in a stern threatening tone, she said,—"You have disturbed me! What boots it now this mild auspicious evening? What avails it that so many bright and precious flowers are assembled?" With these words she emptied the golden cup, so that her collected treasures were scattered on the turf. Sir Heerdegen wished to draw nearer and beg her forgiveness; but immediately she unsheathed her sword, and made him a sign that he was to keep at a distance. Then she stepped solemnly on to the water's brink, took her place in a boat which was there waiting for her, and with the strength and rapidity of a practised rower, made her way out among the waves, soon afterwards disappearing behind a wooded promontory. The brother and sister looked after her with astonishment; and as, after a pause, they were about to express their thoughts, Bertha suddenly started up, and cried out, "Look yonder, dearest brother! What objects are those that wave and rock over the woods? Methinks they are like the masts of a great fleet." Looking in

the direction to which she had pointed, Sir Heerdegen perceived not indeed ship-masts, but the heads of enormous halberts, which rose above the copsewood, and were moving towards him. In a short time many of the warriors, by whom these weapons were carried, stepped out of the thickets. These were gigantic figures cased in iron cuirasses, which rung and rattled at every step, and bearing great shields covered with brass on their left shoulders. Sir Heerdegen started up, and laid his hand on his sword; but, lo! from the other side, there came out of the wood an equal number of armed men! A handsome youth, in a hauberk that shone like gold, with a high towering helmet, surmounted strangely by vulture's wings, stepped forwards from the troop, pointed with his spear at the brother and sister, and said, "Take them prisoners, and bear them on shipboard!" "What right hast thou over us, who are freeborn?" said Sir Heerdegen, drawing his sword, and wielding it with desperate resolution. "Walk behind me, Bertha," said he, "and whoever dares first attack us, shall with his life pay the forfeit of his insolence!" Then all around there was a quivering of javelins ready to be sent against the unfortunate young people; but the leader in the golden armour called out, "Down with your arms! I will have them living!" Whereupon the javelins were laid aside; but the broad shields were ranked together like a wall of brass, and an impenetrable circle was always drawn closer and closer round the helpless victims. "Fy on this abuse of over-strength!" cried Sir Heerdegen; "if thou in the golden harness hadst courage in thy heart, and wert a knight as I am, this contest might be decided in another way!" "Halt!" cried the young leader, and the giants with their brazen shields stood as if motionless. Thereafter he came alone within the circle, placed himself opposite to Sir Heerdegen, leaned on the hilt of his long sword, and said, "Darest thou then maintain that thou art a knight, and yet wearest no armour?" "Did I then come forth prepared for battle?" inquired Sir Heerdegen. "I was this evening engaged in peaceable conversation with my sister, and for what reason could I suppose that we should be thus attacked?" "That should have been provided for," said the stranger; "if you have withheld from me the tributary dues which I have a right to demand, then I take in lieu of them whatever best pleases me, and bear it on board my ships. Now

it so happens, that my pleasure is to take both of you along with me, although, in your weatherbeaten doublet and cap, you make an appearance very different from that which your chiefs are wont to display." "In this land I am neither chief nor vassal," said Sir Heerdegen. "I am a stranger knight; and as for gorgeous apparel, on that head I give myself no concern." "In truth, that may be plainly enough perceived," said the leader with a scornful smile; "and as for thy knighthood, who knows whether thy words on that subject be true or false. Take them prisoners!" Thereupon the circle of brazen shields began once more to close together; but Sir Heerdegen cried out, "Halt!" in such a thundering voice, that the iron-cased giants stood motionless, as if they had heard the commands of their own leader. "I recognise you now for Normans," said Sir Heerdegen. "Your language, figures, and dress, leave me no doubt on that score. Normans should be valiant champions, who love single combat, whether with the lance or the sword, and every noble and daring encounter. I, therefore, challenge thee, thou leader of this band, to try thy skill and strength with me in arms. Let the conqueror decide what is to become of me and of my sister." "Ay, that indeed must be listened to," said the youth with the golden armour. "Give room then, soldiers, and make a fitting circle around us; for I now perceive that we have to do with a true knight. But there is first one question to be answered, Canst thou wield our weapons, for I have no others to offer thee?" "Dost thou look on me as an inexperienced boy?" said Sir Heerdegen. "A warrior who has spent so much of his time in the wild regions of the north as I have done, should methinks know how to use arms as ponderous as any that thou art likely to offer me. Give me then a spear and a massive shield." Thereupon the leader commanded, that a fine coat of mail, a helmet, and target, should immediately be brought, also a number of the best javelins, among which he left his opponent the free choice. "As for swords," said the stranger, "I have not ordered them to be provided, as I perceive that thou hast one by thy side, and that which we have already worn and proved, is among us warriors like an old friend, in whom, at the hour of need, we can best confide."

Sir Heerdegen then began to arm himself for battle, at which the stranger assisted, saying, “Canst thou now perceive that I am a true knight? At first I knew not so well what were thy pretensions, nor if I had one who was my equal in birth and in courage before me. Since thou hast travelled in the north, it must probably be known to thee, that we knights of the sea, not only can maintain our rights on the battle-field, but can also shew towards our opponents forbearance and courtesy.” “I know it well,” answered Sir Heerdegen, “and, confiding in your honour, I challenged thee to single combat. But, before all other considerations, tell me now, Sir Knight, hast thou been sent hither by the beautiful damsel, with the golden cup and the sword, as her avenger, because I disturbed her when she was collecting leaves, berries, and flowers?” “I know not even,” said the sea-knight, “of what damsel thou speakest;—except that beautiful trembling form there, whom thou callest thy sister, I know not of any fair damsel, far or near. Thou shouldst, therefore, explain more clearly what adventure thy question alludes to.” Sir Heerdegen complied; and no sooner had he finished his description of the wonderful figure that he had seen on the sea-shore, than the Norman warrior turned round to some of his companions, who were nearest him, and said, “Think only! Gerda has been here, and this but half an hour ago. In these woods she has been collecting plants for her magic spells. What may this portend?” The men thus questioned, shook their heads discontentedly and in silence. When at length they seemed about to speak, their answer was delayed; for a young soldier came up to them hastily, and said, “To what purpose this questioning and consultation? He who intends to fight during the last rays of sunset let him make haste, and not confuse his brain with such doubts. If he remains alive, he will have time enough afterwards for consideration; and should he fall, he will no more be disquieted by his curiosity.” So then, as Sir Heerdegen was completely armed, and had also chosen a shield and javelin among many that were offered to him, the two champions stepped into the ring, which, according to northern custom, had been measured out for them, and enclosed with branches of oak and hazel. A hoary-headed warrior led each of the combatants to his place, grasped his hand at parting, saying,

“Now do your duty!” after which they were left alone looking at each other.

With their spears elevated, and their shields held for protection over their hearts, the knights began slowly and with measured steps to pace round the circle, each watching his opportunity to make an attack on the other. Bertha indeed remarked, with great terror, that her brother was quite unaccustomed to the use of such weapons,—that he moved tottering and awkwardly under the weight of the gigantic shield, and tried laboriously to balance the ponderous javelin; while, on the contrary, the sea-knight played with his as if it had been a mere toy in his right hand. Courage, however, and a quiet enjoyment of the battle, gleamed equally in the eyes of both, and if the looks which they darted at each other could have turned into javelins, they must have both been pierced to the heart. Sometimes one or other would brandish his spear in such manner, that the lookers-on felt convinced that he would now hurl it at his opponent; but this was only intended to force the latter into a hasty attack, or into some incautious movement of his shield. Both resumed again their solemn course round the circle, keeping watch mutually on every gesture. At last, Sir Heerdegen’s spear came suddenly singing through the air; whereupon the knight of the vulture’s wings turned round his gleaming shield like a revolving moon, received the blow right in the middle of his target, and threw back the missile against his adversary. Almost in the same moment his own weapon took flight, and struck with such violence through the border of Sir Heerdegen’s shield, that he was unable to withstand the shock, but fell under his target, and the spear at the same time entering the ground, he could not immediately disengage himself. On the other hand, the sea-knight leapt across like a tiger on his prey, first grasping him by the throat, then confining his arms with one hand, while with the other he seized the hilt of his sword, pulled it out of the sheath, and hurled it away far beyond the limits of the circle.

Meanwhile Bertha beheld with horror her brother thus prostrate on the ground, and saw the vulture’s wings on the sea-knight’s helmet, shadowing his countenance that was now pale with rage; she thought of the horrid vision that she had

seen in the mirror, and screamed out, “Vulture, vulture! have mercy on the noble prey that thou hast captured!” Then the sea-knight smiled kindly on her, and said,—“I shall do him no injury!” He bent again over Sir Heerdegen, saying,—“Thou art defenceless, wilt thou resign thyself? If so, be assured thou art in the hands of an honourable conqueror.” Heerdegen hung down his head with an expression of bitter regret and shame. The Norman then let him go, and went smiling to Bertha. “I trust,” said he, “that neither of you will regret the necessity you are now under of making a voyage with me for some time through the salt seas. I have honourably taken you prisoners; and, with regard to the damsel, the difference methinks is no more, than if she had two brothers instead of one. This newly-acquired brother is the elder of the two, or at least passes for such; and therefore it is right that you should follow his commands, and proceed in any path wherein he leads the way.” Thereupon he cried aloud,—“Let the boat be drawn up on the beach. Set sail in the ships! We must travel many miles yet by star-light!”

Already, ere the sun had vanished over the mountains, the brother and sister had embarked in the state-vessel of the sea-knight, and floated away. The fleet consisted of but three ships, rapid of motion and strangely rigged. Bertha was forced to stand on the deck, and wept bitterly when the shores gradually vanished from her view,—when the evening fogs gathered on the land, and spread themselves out, as if, with longing arms, to embrace her. It was like a friendly salutation from the good-hearted, kind Lady Minnatrost. “Gladly would I go back to her,” said Bertha; “oh how gladly! But I shall never return again!” At that moment, a snow-white wood-pigeon flew around her, and cooed aloud; but the land vanished quite away in the obscurity of the night, and, as it were, melted into the waves.

CHAPTER XVII.

How Sir Otto von Trautwangen and the merchant Theobaldo fared in France.

Some time after these events happened on the shores of the north sea, Sir Otto von Trautwangen and his friend Theobaldo were one day seated together on the turf beneath the luxuriant shade of a forest in France; the sun was high in the cloudless heaven, and his rays, without scorching, made a fine play of light and shade as they descended through the leafy covert. Their horses meanwhile grazed tranquilly in a neighbouring glade; for, notwithstanding the fiery temper of Sir Otto's charger, they had made acquaintance during their long journey; so that the chestnut-coloured Pole led as quiet a life with his companion as he could desire. Sir Otto seemed lost in thought. He leaned backwards against the trunk of a tree, gazing up to the cloudless azure of heaven; so, while he was thus abstracted, Theobaldo took up a mandoline, which he always carried with him on his journey, and sang to its notes a few stanzas in praise of travelling and constant change of scene. "Hold, hold!" said Sir Otto, awakening from his reverie; "I cannot join in that ballad." "Who desired that you should do so?" said Theobaldo, smiling. "Sing another. Few people can bear to repeat the same notes over and over, far less to hear them repeated; on which account there are so many poets and musicians."

"Nay, I have no wish to sing," said Otto. "My heart is oppressed with a longing which music cannot gratify. Tell me, Theobaldo, is it not wholly inexplicable, that two such distinguished characters as Sir Folko de Montfaucon and his sister Gabrielle, with whose names all France rings, should thus evade all our endeavours to discover them?"

"They are indeed like figures reflected from many mirrors,—like sounds repeated by manifold echoes," answered Theobaldo. "The very rumours that we have heard of them render our senses confused, and defeat all our attempts. They

are, in truth, become like phantoms from the ancient world of wonders and chivalry, of which every one relates whatever seems most incredible, and thinks that, under the auspices of such names, he has a right to demand belief for that which is the work of his own invention. They are idolized during their lifetime; and for this very reason, are, like other idols, no more in reality to be discovered."

"You wish that I should laugh," said Sir Otto; "but give me the mandoline. Rather than this I shall sing."

"Mark you now," said Theobaldo; "this is indeed what I desired. Sing, I pray you; for music may, in truth, be impersonized as the purest and kindest angel, who is permitted by Providence to visit and console unhappy mortals."

Otto then touched the lute, and sung to its accompaniment an address to a little bird that was just then fluttering above him: —

"Sweet bird, that thus on rapid wing
Ascend'st to realms above,
Oh! could'st thou point to me the path
That leads unto my love!
But, ah! thy course is wandering too;
So thou perchance art crost
By fruitless longing, even as I,
And thy true love hast lost!"

"It is strange," said Theobaldo, "when, in this foreign land, you speak your native tongue, vehemently indeed, and with passion, it seems as if the very woods, flowers, and fountains, were amazed at such harsh and unwonted sounds. But when you begin to sing, all is again tranquil, happy, and harmonious; for music is indeed a universal language. Mark, I pray you, what grand adventure is announced as your reward by the stranger who just now makes his appearance from the thickets!"

Lifting up his eyes, Otto indeed saw that a young man, handsomely attired, and mounted on a white horse, just then came riding out of the wood. He wore a plaited green dress,

like that of a minstrel, and over it a magnificent gold chain, by which his harp was suspended from his neck. All the while he continued to play thereupon; for his horse was so quiet and sensible, that of his own accord he turned away from the down-hanging branches, so that his rider might not be interrupted by them in his employment. Coming up near to Sir Otto and the merchant Theobaldo, he halted, and said,—"Was it then your voices which I just now heard sound so harmoniously through the forest?" When Otto courteously answered in the affirmative, the stranger dismounted, saying, —"Permit me then to have the pleasure of joining for a while in your amusements." Thereupon he took the bridle from his horse, and allowed him to graze at liberty in the glades of the forest. At the same moment, Otto's war-steed came up snorting and neighing, prepared for a combat with his new neighbour; from which the latter shrunk back affrighted, and, as if seeking protection, trotted away to his master. Then Sir Otto spoke aloud some words of severe admonition to his charger; whereupon he betook himself quietly to the society of the chesnut Pole; and the minstrel's horse regaining courage, went curvetting and caprioling back to the pasture.

"We are, perhaps, all three going the same road," said the minstrel, "and I trust it may be so. Wherever I now see a knight cased in armour, I cannot but suppose that he is travelling, or means to travel, into the Holy Land," "Alas! it is not so with me," answered Sir Otto blushing; "earnestly as I would wish to go thither. A solemn vow which I have made drives me onwards evermore towards the west, notwithstanding the ardent longings of my soul towards the warm suns of the oriental climes." "It grieves me heartily to hear this," said the minstrel; "it would have been so pleasant to travel in your society. But as the matter now stands, you are in the right. A vow made is a sacred pledge which must be redeemed; and that knight would indeed be unworthy of his rank, who could forget this duty even for the sake of journeying into Palestine. For the present, however, will you not sing again?" "I know not," answered Sir Otto; "but, in truth, were I to sing, both words and notes would be mournful; for what you have just now said of the Holy Land has made

too deep an impression on my heart;—much rather would I hear music from you." "Nay," said the stranger, "I know not aught of which I can chaunt but those eastern climes, of which the very name has already made you sad. However, if you are willing to listen, I am prepared."

Thereupon he commenced a long and beautiful ballad, of which every stanza was fashioned in praise of the crusaders, and, above all, of King Richard Cœur de Lion. Otto's cheeks glowed, and he would have gladly left every other pursuit in this world, in order to go with the wonderful minstrel after the banners of King Richard to the east. He was just about to inquire whether the stranger knew if Sir Folko de Montfaucon were also among the crusaders; for if every separate contest between the champions of this age might be deferred, and they could all join together in this enterprise against the Saracens, it would assuredly prove the most glorious and successful war that had ever been known in the world. But ere he had time to propose that question, there came a troop of armed men from the thickets, who spoke very respectfully with the minstrel; whereupon he ordered them again to put the bridle on his white horse, and immediately afterwards, with a courteous salutation, rode away. One of his attendants lingered, however, and Sir Otto had time to ask him what was the name and rank of his master. "He is," said the squire, "the renowned Master Blondel, the best minstrel in all England, and the bosom-friend of King Richard; on which account he is to accompany our army to Palestine. We are ordered by the king to attend him, that he may not be attacked and suffer injury, when, as now, he leaves the straight road, in order to make excursions hither and thither, as minstrels and poets are wont to do." Thereupon he mounted his horse, and rode gaily on to overtake his comrades, whose voices were heard from afar, joining the minstrel in a choral song, which resounded merrily through the forest. "Seems it not," said Sir Otto, "as if all the best enjoyments and noblest duties of this life were destined always to come under our notice, only to mock and torment us, because they are now wholly out of our own reach? Or, as your looks now seem to indicate your dissent from what I have said, it will be better that I speak for myself alone. Is not this adventure of to-day

like the contrivance of some wicked magician, who specially wishes that I should feel, as it were within my grasp, all that appears to me most estimable and desirable, only to be reminded more painfully of the chains by which I am bound, and which I dare not strive to break asunder?"

"In truth," said Theobaldo, "I might have more reason than you to complain of this matter; for, if you have bound yourself by rash vows, I know not of any such which I have ever sworn. Yet I remain here, though Heaven knows how gladly I would have followed this noble minstrel on his way to Palestine!" "Leave me then for ever, Theobaldo," said Sir Otto. "I have already undergone so many painful separations, that I may well feel accustomed thereto."

Theobaldo gazed on him kindly, and said in a faltering voice, —"No, God forbid that I should forsake you. But desist from such lamentations, and once more lift up your eyes. Mark, I pray you, how the light fleecy clouds, the verdant branches of the forest, and the soaring larks, play betwixt us and the bright expanse of heaven. Methinks from a sky so beauteous and smiling must descend balm and refreshment for all the sorrows of this world." Otto looked up and said,—"Thou art in the right; and, in truth, nothing can better serve to counteract useless grief and repining, than to look on that glorious vault, with its moving clouds and boundless depths of azure, which is now so bright above us!"

For some time the two youths lay outstretched on the turf, with their eyes fixed on the sky, when, lo! there came sailing through the air, right above them, a most beautiful falcon, at such a height that he seemed to them to be even above the sun, for the rays of golden light came under his wings and body. Rejoiced at this sight, Otto started up, and called and whistled like a true-bred falconer to the bird, which, however, would not come down to him. It was indeed easy to perceive that the hawk understood his signals, lowering its flight, for a certain space, and wheeling in circles round the knight. Thereafter, on a signal audibly made to him from another quarter of the forest, he clapped his wings, and resolutely made his way thither, swift as an arrow, over the trees. It was plain that he had now heard the voice of his proper master. "I am glad that

he is gone," said Theobaldo; "there is nothing which is to me more intolerable than a bird of this kind, thief and rogue as he is, with his crooked hook-bill, his glaring eyes, and long robberlike claws! What pleasure could you find in making him signals?" "After your manner," said Sir Otto, "every animal or bird might be described as a monster; but I love all such creatures, and more especially the falcon, who is so wise and so faithful." "Wise!" answered Theobaldo; "the devil himself has also wisdom; and if you call it fidelity to seize on every victim that falls within his power with his crooked talons, the devil too might boast of that virtue." "You have never then rode out on a hawking excursion?" said Sir Otto. "It is among the prejudices of knightly rank," answered Theobaldo, "to look on such things as a source of enjoyment." "Nay, say not so," replied Sir Otto; "such pastime is, on the contrary, like a twofold life. Above us are the winged hunters of the air; while beneath we have fleet horses, whirling us around the plains and meadows, while the free winds of heaven are whistling through our dishevelled hair, and we are cheered by the jocund shouts of the sportsmen. At length the falcon, like a magician, wheels in circles round his devoted prey, hovering and gleaming over him, till at last he comes down, and—and"——

At this moment Theobaldo's bow sounded with a loud reverberation; and Otto, confused and disturbed in his discourse, looked round, till he saw the noble bird descending rapidly, vainly fluttering to support himself, with an arrow through one of his wings, over that side of the wood to which he had directed his flight when he left them. "Who commanded thee to injure the bird which I loved so dearly?" said the young knight, with his eyes darkly flashing. "I knew not surely that it was your falcon," said Theobaldo; "and if, according to your own words, you love all such creatures, you should rejoice that the arrow which I have now shot has rescued some poor timid songster, which had concealed itself in the thickets of the forest." "Thou art not appointed to be a judge in the wide realms of the eagle," said Otto, discontentedly. "It may be so," said Theobaldo; "nor, methinks, art thou more than any other mortal privileged to be a hunter therein."

In this dispute, however, the young men were soon disturbed by the presence of a third party.

CHAPTER XVIII.

How Sir Otto met again with the Knight of Montfaucon.

Mounted on a fine silver-grey horse, in a magnificent hunter's dress, with a bugle-horn at his side, a young man of handsome features and graceful demeanour made his appearance before them. At the same moment, when Otto saw the bleeding falcon supported on the breast of the stranger, the latter observed the cross-bow in the hands of Theobaldo, and considering him as but a squire, he turned an angry glance on the knight, saying, —"If it pleases you, sir, to allow your attendants to hunt in my forests, you indeed impute to me no more hospitality and civility towards strangers, that I am willing to shew. But, nevertheless, I must earnestly request, that, for the future, you will content yourself with humbler game, and spare so noble a bird as this which your squire has now wounded." Thereupon he tenderly stroked the head and back of the poor stricken falcon, with many kind and caressing words, and without attending to Sir Otto's apologies, which, in truth, were but confusedly delivered; for he was himself greatly irritated by Theobaldo's strange conduct. The latter, however, had now become more obstinate than ever. He went up with a look of defiance to the stranger sportsman, and said,—"It was I alone, without being commanded, or receiving permission from any one, who took aim at your falcon; and I only, therefore, am to be spoken with on that matter." "Stand back, Theobaldo," said Sir Otto; "thou seem'st not aware of the guilt thou hast brought on thine own shoulders, in thus having infringed the laws of hunting and of knighthood, by taking aim at a prey so noble." "Nay, I know it all full well," answered Theobaldo. "You princes and knights have divided this world into special portions for your own private advantage; and as to the rights freely bestowed by Providence on other men, it is said, that they never must exercise them. Mark you, sirs, it is *said* so; but it follows not that the rules you have laid down will always be observed. That independence which Milan has maintained as a free town, every Milanese will also support in his own

proper person, in despite of king or emperor, count or duke. In proof of these words, I shall now shoot a few more birds." And, with these words, he again stretched his cross-bow. "You have, in truth, chosen a strange-minded squire for your attendant, Sir Knight," observed the stranger. But thereupon Sir Otto, vehemently incensed, and feeling the spirit of knighthood insulted and outraged within him, suddenly tore the cross-bow out of Theobaldo's hands, broke it into pieces in a moment, stampt on it with his feet, and then scattered the fragments about the meadow. "This conduct translated into audible words," said Theobaldo, "means no doubt a last adieu!" And as the knight turned from him with disdainful glances, he went gloomily to his Polish steed, and began to adjust the saddle and bridle. Otto's war-horse perceiving this, came also trotting up, with kind and joyous looks; but Theobaldo repulsed him peevishly, saying, "Ay, ay, thou would'st yet bear me company, but thy master wills it not, and, therefore, thou too may go thine own way." Otto, hearing this new insult, called to his charger, drew the saddle-girths closer, and mounted; after which he readily accepted the stranger's invitation, that he should accompany him to a neighbouring castle, in order that, amid a numerous party of brother knights, he might forget all vexation at the strange event which had brought about their meeting. Theobaldo was also mounted, and rode slowly away, while Sir Otto and the stranger took an opposite direction. The two horses neighed aloud, and wished to rejoin each other; but their riders still spurred them on, although they could not help turning round with looks of regret and melancholy.

Sir Otto had proceeded a considerable distance, following the stranger, when they heard the sound of a horse in rapid trot behind them, and on looking back they saw that it was Theobaldo, who pulled up the reins immediately, as soon as he was observed, and with a degree of humility which was to him unwonted, said, in the German language, and in a low tone, "Sir Knight, methinks I have here been in the wrong, and gladly would I still atone for my error, if it please you that I should again join you on your journey." Sir Otto immediately stretched out his arms towards him; whereupon Theobaldo

galloped up, and as the two friends shook hands together, the Polish steed and the light-brown war-horse neighed merrily to each other, as if they fully understood what was now going forward.

As they all three rode onwards, the noble falconer expressed great joy at this reconciliation, insisting that knights should willingly overlook many faults in squires who were so faithful and attached; for on such fidelity the safety even of kingdoms and the relationship between monarchs many times depended. Thereafter he began to tell many marvellous stories of his wounded falcon, and of other such birds,—how they had been known to live till they were more than an hundred years old, having been found bearing golden collars round their necks, with the names thereon of princes long since dead. Such falcons then flew about over land and sea, till they had discovered a master equal in generosity, rank, and valour, to him that was departed. Theobaldo hereupon acknowledged, that all the opinions which he had before uttered were rashly adopted, and expressed deep regret for his conduct of that morning.

Ere this time, however, Sir Otto, notwithstanding the change of dress and demeanour, had clearly perceived that the hunter of the French forests was no other than the renowned Sir Folko de Montfaucon; while the latter by no means recognised, in the proud haughty knight, in his black and silver armour, the young inexperienced and talkative squire whom he had formerly met on the banks of the Danube. That armour indeed, with the formidable eagle’s visor, was not unknown to him; but Otto’s young blooming countenance and light hair contrasted so strangely with those accoutrements, that Sir Folko could not form any distinct recollection. In his mind all was like a dream, which, on awaking, we vainly strive to renew, and which in a short space is wholly forgotten.

CHAPTER XIX.

How the Knights feasted in the Castle of Sir Folko de Montfaucon.

In Sir Folko's castle were now seated at the banquet table many brave champions from different nations, also various other guests,—painters, minstrels, musicians, and poets, among whom Theobaldo soon discovered some of his lively countrymen. Especially there was one named the Count Alessandro Vinciguerra, with whom he began to converse in a manner so witty and cheerful that their discourse afforded amusement to the whole company. Sir Otto meanwhile remained thoughtful and silent, so that, after the first admiration excited by his noble form and graceful demeanour had subsided, he was scarcely noticed by the party. As the wine-cups, mantling with the richest juice of Medoc and Burgundy, circled round the festive board, it occurred to the warriors, that, for better pastime, every one should relate, from the experiences of his life, some remarkable story. Among so many valiant knights, and other distinguished characters as were here assembled, materials could not be wanting for such narratives. All, however, insisted that their noble host should set an example to his guests,—to which he replied, "I am aware that the excuses which I would gladly offer would not relieve me from the duties which I owe to the noble friends who are now around me. What I have to relate is indeed but of little importance; but I am like a gardener, from whom a festal wreath is demanded, and who, if he possesses not roses and jasmine, must be content with daisies and *forget-me-not*.

"It must be known," continued he, "to several who are here present, that our family of Montfaucon derives its origin from Norwegian ancestors, and that in the mountains of that wild country we have at this day many noble relations. From thence my predecessors came, as conquering invaders into France,—arrived with great forces within that district which is now called Normandy, and with them brought, among other strange

stories, the legend which I am now to repeat to you. In Norway there dwelt an ancient and far-famed hero, who had an amiable daughter, well known by the name of the beautiful Sigrid. She was talked of and praised all over that northern country, and therefore had many loving suitors. Besides her beauty, she was also distinguished for her superiority in all female accomplishments, having a deep knowledge of magic and necromancy, to which pursuits the young ladies of that land are particularly addicted. Especially she had found means to prepare a certain drink, which, if used in moderation, inspired the warrior with unheard-of strength and courage; nay, it was said, that he was thereby rendered even impenetrable by the weapons of his adversary. Many other women of Norway have been in possession of the same charm, and one of our relations at this day is in the habit of exercising that wonderful art.

"So it happened, that once on a time the old hero said to his daughter, 'Pretty Sigrid, leave your household cares for one day and go forth into the woods,—pluck there the red berries and green leaves that you wot of, for to-morrow I shall need your aid. I have a hard battle before me.' 'With whom then, father, do you mean to fight?' said the fair Sigrid. 'With the young Hakon Swendson,' answered the old warrior, 'who in his ambition will wing his flight above me through all the regions of the north, if I do not take care in time to clip his wings. Besides, you know that he is sprung from a race, betwixt whom and us there is an old and deadly feud.' So the beautiful Sigrid went out towards sunset into the dusky woods, alone and unprotected, according to the laws of her mysterious science.

"Up and down the rocky cliffs, along the banks of the woodland river, through many a dim valley, and on the brink of many a fearful precipice, the fair damsel pursued her way, and by the time she had collected all her roots, leaves, and berries, she found that the night-shadows had already gathered around her, and that she was alone in a district of the forest which she had till now never beheld. Her whole attention had been fixed on her plants and flowers, and she had never thought of the stars, that had shone out one by one above her, and now, though they glittered so brightly, yet she was quite

unable by their light to discover her road homewards. While she thus stood meditative, and doubtful what course to pursue, she heard a great crashing and rustling through the woods, and, behold! a frightful black bear, rearing himself on his hind-legs, broke out as if to devour her, or strangle her in his horrid embraces. Just as she had given herself up for lost, a javelin came hissing through the air over her head, and in the next moment she saw the bear struck through the heart, fall writhing on the ground, so that, in the next moment, he rolled over a neighbouring precipice.

"Thereafter a handsome young warrior made his appearance from the recesses of the forest, and respectfully offered to attend to her own home the damsel, whom his interference had thus rescued. The fair Sigrid, however, wept bitterly; for in her terror she had lost all her roots, berries, and leaves; so that, according to the laws of magic, she must begin the labour of collecting them anew,—though the evening was far advanced, and the country around her wholly new and mysterious. 'Search then, and pluck as many more as it pleases you,' said the young knight. 'I know, moreover, that at such times one must be alone and undisturbed. Therefore I shall walk round thee, fair stranger, making a wide circle, so that no one shall speak with thee, nor approach too nearly,—and ere the dawn of day I shall lead you home to your father's castle. Search then, pretty maid, and fear not aught that can befall you in these woods.' With these words the young knight vanished again amid the forest thickets; the fair Sigrid continued her employment as he had enjoined, and if, in that lonely unknown place, terror now and then assailed her, she felt herself immediately refreshed and encouraged, when she heard the rattling of the knight's golden armour through the distant green coppice.

"At length she had collected another store like that which had been lost; and thereupon it occurred to her how much better it would be to boil them immediately in a golden vessel which she had with her, so that she might at once carry home with her the precious drink which the old knight had desired her to prepare. Directly after her first and slightest signal, her protector was close at hand, and scarcely had she made her

wishes known to him, ere he began to gather dry branches and brushwood, from which in a moment arose bright flames, casting their light far amid the darkness of the night. But the boiling of her magical plants required a long time, and when it was nearly ended, the damsel began to weep bitterly; for she was now so wearied that she was quite unable to undertake her long journey homewards. Hereupon the knight said, 'Fairest of maidens, you may here rest securely. I shall watch over you while you sleep, and awake you at the proper hour.'—Then he spread out his mantle on the ground,—collected also a great quantity of soft moss, making for her a warm and pleasant couch, and while she looked at it shyly and timidly, he had already vanished away into the deepest shades.

"The morning red was already bright in the east, when she was awoke, terrified by the distant sounds of martial horns and trumpets; but the young hero again stood near her, and said, 'You must now make all possible haste to reach your home, for the horns that sound yonder from a distance are the signals of Hakon Swendson, that now summon your father to the battle-field. Take up your golden cup then and follow me.'

"Thereafter, he led the maiden through many winding and secret paths of the forest, till she arrived at her father's castle. Before taking leave of him there she wished to know the champion's name to whom she had been so much indebted. 'I am Hakon Swendson,' answered he, 'and I know right well that you are named the beautiful Sigrida, daughter of the renowned old hero who resides in this castle. I know too, that the drink which you have this morning prepared is intended to work my destruction. But I have long been your ardent lover, beautiful Sigrid, and that ancient and deadly feud between our houses has killed all my hopes. Therefore I shall now gladly die by your father's sword, and wish that the drink which you have brewed from these magical herbs may render him, as you designed, invincible!'

"Although Hakon Swendson intended after these words instantly to return to the forest, the fair Sigrid insisted that he should accompany her into the castle. There she related to her father all that had happened to her in the foregoing night, and with such eloquence, that the two warriors forgot all their

former wrath against each other. They mutually threw aside their battle-array, and thereafter Hakon Swendson and the fair Sigrid were happily united in marriage."

The company were well pleased with this story. The contrast, afforded by the noble and generous affections which it exemplified, to the wild and fierce characters of the northern knights, were compared, by a great master in the art of painting, (who was among the guests,) to the effect of a rainbow stretched across a dark threatening thundercloud; while the Italian Count preferred the similitude of a rose, which, though not valued amid the blooming gardens of his native country, would yet, amid the chill mountains of the north, be prized as a great treasure.

Meanwhile several of the party had turned their attention on a man of very tall stature, with a dark sunburnt visage; he was a Spaniard, by name Don Hernandez; and they earnestly requested that he would relate to them some legend from his own romantic and wonderful country, especially somewhat of the long and fearful conflicts between the Christians and Moors. Thereupon he took up a lute, and began to sing a wild Spanish ballad, unfolding the tragical fortunes of the beautiful Donna Clara, and her lover, Don Gayferos. The first stanzas began in a gay tone, describing how he had persuaded her to leave her father's palace, and take a moonlight walk with him through the lonely forest.

I.

"Don Gayferos,—Don Gayferos, though the stars are
bright on high,
And the nightingale exalts her voice in sweetest melody;
Yet longer in the darksome wood, I will not,—may not
stay!"
"Then, dearest Lady, but command,—thy servant shall
obey."

II.

“’Tis well! then guide me homeward straight; but mark,
in yonder vale,
The cross that glimmers silently amid the moonlight
pale.
That silent form is eloquent;—I must the voice attend,
That warns me by the holy fane my homeward course to
wend.

III.

“Nay, wherefore by the chapel, dearest lady, should we
go?
The path, methinks, is rough.” “Dares a servant answer
so?
Thou should’st my will obey.” “Well, well, it shall be
done;”
So down the mountain, arm in arm, the lovers now have
gone.

IV.

“Don Gayferos, Don Gayferos, by the crucifix we stood,
And wherefore was thy head not bow’d in meek
humilitude?”
“Donna Clara, Donna Clara, on thy beauteous hands I
gazed,
Wherein, just then, that wreath of flowers was gracefully
upraised.”

V.

“Don Gayferos, Don Gayferos, but when the grey-hair’d
priest
So piously from heaven invoked a blessing on his guest,
Say wherefore wert thou silent?”—“Dearest lady, on
mine ear,

Thy silvery voice alone did sound; no other could I
hear."

VI.

"Don Gayferos, Don Gayferos, would'st thou leave the
chapel now,
Nor with water from the holy font sign the cross upon
thy brow?"
"I had not mark'd the holy font; for from thine eyes so
bright,
A dazzling radiance fell on mine, that blinded me with
light."

VII.

"Nay, nay, thou art my servant still; then hear what I
command!
As I have done, so in the font, dip reverently thy hand;
And therewith sign thy forehead."—With a shudder and
a frown
The silent knight has turned away, and through the forest
flown!

Thus began the Spaniard's story. Then he changed the music and measure to a strain somewhat sad and solemn, describing how, on the following night, Don Gayferos once more brought the Lady Clara, by the notes of a well-known serenade, to the window, and how she conjured him to say who he was; above all, whether he were a Spaniard or Moor, an Infidel or Christian. To this at length he answers, that he is no Christian, but a Moorish king, who loves her ardently; who has great treasures and numberless soldiers; who would place her with him on his throne, and entertain her in all regal magnificence, at his palace of Alhambra, and in the flower-gardens of Grenada. She leaves her room, and comes angrily forward on a terrace-walk of the castle, intending to reproach him; but he joins her there, and scarcely has she pronounced a few harsh

words ere she falls fainting into his arms. Thereafter he places her before him on his horse, and rides rapidly away through the dark shades of the forest.

The Spaniard now changed his music once more into slow melancholy notes, like those of a church anthem or dirge. He described how, at the dawn of day, when the ruddy gleams of the east were on the landscape, the beautiful Donna Clara knelt on the turf beside the lifeless frame of her Moorish lover, who had been attacked in the forest, and killed by two of her own brothers. With dishevelled hair, and no longer disguising her attachment, she weeps over his pale remains. Looking up to the bright sky, she acknowledges, that even as the stars rise and set, and as the eagle hovers up and down, all in this world is variable and inconstant, only her affections are unchangeable. Therefore her brothers built for her, in after times, a lonely hermitage, with a chapel and an altar, where she spends her life in weeping and in prayers for the soul of her departed lover.

The sound of the harp died away in slow vibrations, and the listeners gazed on each other in silent melancholy.

Don Hernandez himself was the first to break the silence. With graceful and courteous demeanour, “No doubt,” said he, “I should both accuse and condemn myself, noble champions and gentlemen, for having thus with my mournful songs disturbed your merriment, had it not been that you desired to hear a legend from my native land. In my country, it is true, the people are serious and solemn of mood; for where there are such contentions between Moors and Christians, one’s thoughts must often turn on melancholy events,—often, for example, on death.”

“Your story, (song rather I should say,) requires no such apology,” said the Knight of Montfaucon. “Can you believe that we also do not entwine dark-coloured flowers in our festal garlands? God be praised, Frenchmen are not yet depraved into such levity, that we should despise the solemn character of the Castilian heroes: besides, who is there among the present company, who would not gladly drink from those deep fountains of warlike energy and poetic imagination, which

have their source in the rich warm peninsula of the Pyrenean mountains?"

"You are pleased to speak kindly of us," said Don Hernandez; "nor, in some respects, are we unworthy of your praise. However, be that as it may, too many dark flowers must spoil the beauty of the wreath. A bright lily, or rose, must now and then be intwined therein; and to such a flower, if I mistake not, may be compared the story which now seems hovering on the lips of the Count de Vinciguerra."

"Spaniards and Italians should doubtless assist each other," replied the Count; "and, since you desire it, I shall willingly commence my story:—

"In the fine town of Naples, which, both on account of its situation and magnificent buildings, cannot be too much praised, there lived, some time since, a brave, far-famed, but already grey-headed warrior, named Signor Dimetri. After a life spent in toil and tumult, he wished to enjoy his old age in luxurious tranquillity, and therefore collected from different countries all possible rarities and treasures, his house being filled with the finest paintings, statues, and tapestry; nor was a cellar of the most costly wines neglected; but the rarest of all his possessions was a most beautiful young wife, descended from one of the most noble and wealthy families in Italy. With her, no doubt, he brought a good share of disquiet and anxiety into his palace; for, notwithstanding the modesty, the mild and correct demeanour of the Signora, yet the old hero was but too conscious of his grey hairs and want of personal attractions; so that he had but little respite from the jealous fantasies by which he was tormented.

"If, in consequence of his marriage, he was thus disquieted, another inhabitant of Naples was yet more so. This was the handsome and accomplished Signor Donatello, a young nobleman universally admired in the Neapolitan circles, who had chanced to behold Signora Portia at early mass, (at which time alone she was allowed to go abroad), and whose whole thoughts, and even dreams, had, since that meeting, been engrossed by her graceful and enchanting figure. Thenceforward he endeavoured by every means in his power

to draw her attention to himself, resolving, if he failed in this object, that he would die for her sake. He did not proceed, however, like those foolish young men, who send love-embassies by tattling messengers; who ride or walk up and down daily before their mistress's windows, or send her costly presents; thus endangering her domestic peace by rousing the attention of a jealous husband. Such lovers have themselves to blame, if they lose all share in those affections which they are so anxious to gain; but Signor Donatello, on the contrary, behaved with the utmost prudence and foresight, taking care, no doubt, that Madonna Portia should notice his passion, which even a single look was sufficient to convey; but in such manner, that she might be convinced her security and peace were to him infinitely more dear than the gratification of his own wishes.

"So it happened at last, that she herself contrived the means of expressing her mutual affection, and the gratitude she felt for his prudence and consideration. She found a trusty messenger to convey several letters; and all that Donatello had next to arrange was but to obtain free entrance as a friend into the house of his beautiful inamorata. For the future, then, he took advantage of every occasion to shew the utmost attention and politeness to the old Signor Dimetri; and yet so wisely did he behave, that it was impossible to suspect him of any particular motives. All seemed but the effect of accident; yet he had one attribute, which, though it had aided him more than all the rest with the fair Portia, yet proved the greatest possible hindrance to his designs on her husband. This was his extraordinary grace and beauty of person, without which, being so lively and agreeable a companion, he would doubtless have been invited long since into Dimetri's house; but though he had given scores of magnificent banquets, to which the old gentleman was invited, yet the latter, being determined to avoid all risks, kept his doors closed, with the utmost obstinacy, against his courteous entertainer. In such banquets the young lover had already spent a considerable share of his fortune, yet never arrived a single step nearer the object of his wishes. At length he fixed his attention on a plan, which he had before often thought of, though it was then more like a dream than reality.

This was, that he should contrive to rescue Signor Dimetri from some great apparent danger, by which exploit he might infallibly secure his future confidence and favour. Accordingly he made an agreement with some hired bravoes, who were to attack the old hero unawares in a retired place. As soon, therefore, as Dimetri fell into the snare, Signor Donatello was to rush out against the assassins, who, after a short pretended resistance, would give over, and take to flight. The plot was admirably carried through. Dimetri was fully persuaded that his life had been saved by Donatello, and expressed his gratitude with an air of the utmost gravity and earnestness. But then, his doors remained just as firmly locked as ever; nay, since that adventure, his temper seemed more peevish and capricious than it had been before.

"In truth, the old warrior was unable to disguise from himself, that in regard to his own person, years, disposition, and manners, he was by no means fitted to gain or retain the affections of a young beauty like Madonna Portia. On the other hand, he strove to encourage himself by reflecting on his own heroic achievements, and all that poets have written on the love and respect cherished by ladies for warlike valour and renown. Therefore he did not fail to relate often the history of his own exploits in the most brilliant colours to his young wife; and, moreover, to place books in her way, in which the same adventures were fairly recorded. It seemed to him, however, as if she read these volumes without any more lively interest than she would have felt for the wonders told of Hannibal, Scipio, or any other hero, who had been mouldering for centuries in the dust. Consequently he would, notwithstanding the weakness of his health, have tried to refresh his withering laurels by some new campaign, had it not been that his excessive jealousy would by no means permit him to remain long absent from his own house. Sometimes, indeed, he made young spirited horses be paraded at his castle, and mounted them in his wife's presence, or shot at marks with a cross-bow, which no one but himself could have bent. Yet he could not help feeling, that he no longer shone in such exercises as he had done in his youthful days; while, as to the anxiety which Madonna Portia expressed for him, it was much

more like that of a daughter for the safety of a weak old father, than of a wife dreading the loss of a beloved and too venturous husband. How much then must that inglorious combat with the assassins, and his rescue out of their hands by the interference of a handsome youth like Donatello, have wounded the old warrior's pride! From that day he gradually endeavoured to break off the acquaintance; and as to inviting the young man to his house, that was now wholly out of the question.

"After so many disappointments, Donatello at length lost all patience. With Signor Dimetri he still kept up an appearance of civility and friendship; but towards every one else his temper and behaviour became quite intolerable, as if, being miserable himself, he was resolved that all the world should be so in order to bear him company. Thus it came to pass, that he, who had been universally admired and sought after in Naples, was now shunned and hated even by his most intimate friends; so that two or three young men, whom he had provoked by his scornful manners, and also crossed in some favourite scheme, resolved to waylay him in the night, and if not to commit murder, yet at least to wound and beat him in such manner, that he would be forced to conduct himself differently for the future. Accordingly he fell one evening into the snare that was laid for him; for, as he could not refrain from walking always after dark near the house of his beloved Madonna Portia, it was easy for them to find means of putting their plans into execution. Notwithstanding that he made a brave defence, yet, having been taken unawares, he was unable to stand against the number of his assailants, and soon received two severe wounds.

"Meanwhile the old warrior heard the clashing of arms and loud voices on the street; and being determined not to lose such an opportunity of playing the part of an Orlando before his beautiful lady, he girded on his belt, and brandishing his great battle-sword, rushed out of the house. Perhaps, being thus prepared and resolute, he proved a powerful assailant, or perhaps mere terror at such a frightful figure got the better of Donatello's youthful adversaries. Suffice it to say, they fled immediately, and he was set at liberty. Thereupon the triumphant victor forgot all at once his former doubts and

fears. He directly brought in his rescued friend as a trophy into the presence of Signora Portia, insisting, moreover, that a room should be provided for him, and that she should herself undertake the cure of his wounds. As Donatello was far too prudent, in Signor Dimetri's presence, to speak on any other subject but the wonderful prowess and courage of his deliverer, describing how he had by his single arm put to flight a whole troop of banditti, all suspicions were lulled to sleep. Moreover, he continued to talk with such eloquence of the old hero's former exploits, and numberless adventures by sea and land, that, after his recovery, he lived still as an intimate and chosen friend in Dimetri's palace. The latter found him oftentimes alone with his wife; but then he was always speaking or reading of the same heroic achievements, to which the lady now seemed to listen with the greatest attention.

"From this story we may learn, that all our best-laid plans to gain the confidence of another may prove unsuccessful, and that it is not always by conferring favours that one can excite his good-will. On the other hand, as soon as his own vanity is inlisted on our side, we have no farther trouble, but the game of itself will be won."

CHAPTER XX.

How Sir Otto challenged the Knight of Montfaucon.

Many opinions were immediately offered on this story of the old warrior and young lover. Some praised the prudence and reserve of Donatello; others extolled the quick-sightedness of Signora Portia, for having understood the wishes and motives of such a silent lover; while it was agreed on all sides that the persons in the drama were to be looked on as equally fortunate, Signor Dimetri not excepted, since he, like the rest, had obtained at last the object which he had so long wished for.

During this discourse, the kind and hospitable Sir Folko de Montfaucon was looking eagerly round the table, watching whether his guests were well supplied with wine and satisfied with their entertainment. It now seemed to him as if Sir Otto von Trautwangen sat lost in thoughts, which, from the expression of his features, could not be either cheerful or agreeable. Wishing to rouse him from this trance, Sir Folko observed, “My noble guest from Germany has heard all the remarks which have been made on the Count’s narrative, but has not himself uttered one word. May it please you, sir, to say which of these characters seems to you the most praiseworthy and enviable? Whether do you like best the young lady or the knight?”

With his eyes darkly gleaming, and in a deep severe tone, which contrasted strangely with the mirthful levity of the party, Sir Otto replied, “I am indeed unable to perceive how the most ingenious listener could find aught to approve in the character or conduct of such a knight or lady. If you had inquired of me which of the two was the more base, abominable, devilish, and depraved, I might indeed have more readily provided myself with an answer, although even then the choice would have been difficult. Fy on it! That renowned warrior had raised up a vain coquette to a situation such as she never deserved, had shared with her his house and fortune,

placed his honour and happiness in her hands, hoping that the late evening of his life might still be cheered by gleams of confidence, fidelity, and love! Then, lo! the wretched creature forfeits all the reward and praise which she might have obtained for virtue and dignified demeanour, by encouraging a libertine paramour! Shame, shame! That idle and despicable young fellow, who, for himself, would never have won any wreath of fame, had succeeded in gaining the friendly notice and society of a renowned hero, at which any generous and honest heart would have been proud and rejoiced; and this friendship he only uses for his own base purposes, in order to lay his snares with more effect. Then he hires, forsooth, bravoes and assassins; wherefore should he not as well have tried poison? At last the brave old man performs that exploit in earnest, of which he had made a base and cowardly pretence; uses, perhaps for the last time, his already honoured and victorious sword in the service of that deceitful poltron, who, instead of sinking into the earth with shame——but forgive me, noble sir, I have not temper nor patience to speak farther, and have already dwelt too long on a subject so hateful!"

Every one in the banquet-hall was now silent, and on every cheek glowed a deep blush of self-reproach, from which even the count Alessandro de Vinciguerra was not exempted. He said, however,—"This noble stranger has judged the characters of my story rather too severely. In the light in which he has placed them, they may indeed deserve all the censure which he has so freely bestowed; but in our glowing climate beyond the Alps, the inhabitants, both men and women, are, by nature, differently framed and disposed from the quiet people of his cold native land; and, methinks, the same moderation and virtue cannot be demanded of us." "This were to affirm then," said Sir Otto, "that right and wrong depended on the nearness or distance of the sun; but I well know, that the inhabitants beyond the Alps would as unwillingly incur the risk of eternal malediction as those of any other country; and that the road which your story instructs us to travel leads but to the realms of the devil there cannot be any doubt."

The simple and child-like energy, the tranquil consciousness of right, which were visible on Sir Otto's countenance when he

spoke these words, reminded one of the angels' heads carved in marble by the old devout artists of Germany or Italy. An involuntary emotion of awe, an influence, breathed as it were from the regions of eternal life, was felt through all the party there assembled; so that even the proud and gay Count de Vinciguerra could not lift his eyes from the ground. Don Hernandez meanwhile had risen from his chair, and gone round, unperceived, behind Sir Otto. He touched him on the shoulder, and, looking back, the youth saw the kindly countenance and dark eyes of the Castilian gleaming on him with an expression of triumph and approbation.

After a long silence, the Chevalier de Montfaucon also rose, and addressed himself to the German youth: "Sir Knight," said he, "you have indeed made us all heartily ashamed, and therefore merit our gratitude and praise; for the very tones of your voice sounded on our ears like the silvery music of a chapel-bell, warning us to self-reproval, to humility, and devotion. Accept, therefore, my sincerest thanks, and believe me, that I rejoice in possessing, even for a short space, such a jewel and mirror of knighthood within my castle." Thereupon he made to Sir Otto a low and solemn obeisance. All the knights and other guests rose at the same time, and followed his example.

Sir Otto was confused, and blushed deeply. "Noble sirs," said he, "I believe that you pay this homage to Heaven only, to whose mandates I have chanced to direct your attention. Were it otherwise, a humble and inexperienced youth, such as I am, would indeed ill deserve such honour."

"Valiant stranger," answered the Knight of Montfaucon, "we are unwilling to allow that you should speak of yourself so unjustly. May we beg to know your name, and, if it so please you, to hear the story of your past life?"

"Should I ever have a story worth relating," answered Sir Otto, "and what the story may be, will depend on your renowned and victorious arm, Sir Knight of Montfaucon. Can you still remember the young squire on the banks of the Danube, who was present during that eventful evening, when you so gloriously overcame the powerful Count Archimbald of

Waldeck? I wear now the golden spurs; nor have the three strokes of a knightly sword on my shoulders, nor a moonlight watch, been forgotten."

"'Tis well, Sir Knight," answered the Chevalier; "and you are now perchance in quest of Gabrielle's ring?" With a courteous bow, Sir Otto replied in the affirmative. "I am then at your command," answered Sir Folko; and, turning to the company, he added, "This brave young knight has indeed not related any adventure for your entertainment; but, to compensate for his silence, you may be eye-witnesses of one to-morrow, if you will do me the honour to accompany me to another of my castles in Normandy, where he will engage with me in the lists, and whither I shall invite also the beautiful Gabrielle de Portamour to behold our encounter." Thereafter he explained to them how he had before now met with Sir Otto near the fortress of Trautwangen, and contended there with the Count Archimbald von Waldeck for the ring. Also, how the castle to which he would invite the Lady Gabrielle was the principal mansion on those territories of which the ring gave the exclusive right of possession; so that she would doubtless not fail to honour them with her company. All the guests now present accepted the invitation; and Sir Otto, with downcast eyes, thanked them for their great courtesy, in as much as they would condescend to behold how a youth, hitherto so humble and unpractised in arms, was to be admitted to the honour of a combat with the renowned Sir Folko de Montfaucon. Every heart was prepossessed in his favour; and even the Count Alessandro de Vinciguerra embraced him cordially, saying, "Truly, since the fates were resolved, that, for the chastisement of my sinful levity, I should be visited by a severe moralist and stern preacher, there could not have been found one in all the world to whom I should have listened so willingly as to him who is now among us."

CHAPTER XXI.

How Sir Otto heard from the Chevalier de Montfaucon, a Story of the Ring.

With the first sun-rays of the following morning, all those valiant knights and other guests had arisen, and departed on their way to Normandy. It was a pleasure to look on them as they proceeded on their journey, now half lost amid the shadowy copsewoods, then breaking out again along the bright green meadows; poets and painters, renowned in their several arts, mingling in groupes, with warriors and their squires in bright-gleaming armour, attended too by sumpter-horses in rich coverings fringed with gold and silver. Among the most brilliant figures was that of the Count Alessandro de Vinciguerra, wearing a great cloak embroidered with the arms of his family, which waved and fluttered in the wind. His garments, too, glittered in the sunlight, and feathers of all colours in a vast plume surmounted his barett. He had laid aside his coat of mail, wearing only a travelling dress, and riding on a stately mule, richly caparisoned, with no other weapons but a sword and a small glancing buckler, both of which hung from his blue velvet saddle. Not far distant, however, was a squire, who led by the golden reins his war-steed, prancing and snorting, and there was also a sumpter-horse, bearing his massive armour, surmounted by the close head-piece, with nodding plumes of heron's feathers, all arranged as if it had been to make up a subject for the painter. The brave Chevalier de Montfaucon and the young Knight of Trautwangen rode for the most part together, deeply engrossed in their discourse, and always feeling more and more friendship for each other. In like manner, also, Sir Otto's light-brown steed and De Montfaucon's silver-grey seemed to acquire mutual good-will and attachment, notwithstanding the hatred which the former used to entertain towards all strangers. Of the conversation which passed between the knights it may be allowed us here to divulge what follows:—

“I had at length almost despaired of finding you in France,” said Sir Otto. “At the holy sepulchre rather, I thought we should meet one day, or perhaps on the road thither. For are not all the noblest hearts in Europe now attracted to that sacred monument, which, environed and profaned by Saracens with their heathenish abominations, draws, like an irresistible magnet, the processions of pilgrims and warriors from all quarters to effect its liberation? Your heart too, my noble adversary, doubtless beats in unison with these devout feelings. Wherefore then do I not behold the cross on your shoulders?”

“Because,” answered Sir Folko, “it is not for the holy war only that soldiers are required. Our king demands the services of his barons for the protection of our own blooming land. He indeed is himself gone to the crusades, and for that reason has enjoined me and others of my rank to remain at home, in order to guard the terrestrial paradise of France until his return from Palestine. The Moors of Spain are here not so far remote that we can feel in security, nor are we divided from them by any arm of the sea. If the valiant champions of Castile do their utmost to keep off those assailants, we too must lend our aid to that brave nation, or appear even in our own estimation like abject cowards. I think, in the next place, to ride into Spain, in company with the valiant Don Hernandez, and perhaps also with you, provided I should fall, and yet survive our combat; for in that event you are doubtless aware that you become a vassal of France.” Otto looked at him inquiringly, and the chevalier continued:—“I thought you must have known that the beautiful Gabrielle has promised to bestow herself, as well as all her possessions, on the knight who is so fortunate as to win back her ring. How your eyes now gleam with hope and anticipated triumph!” In truth, Sir Otto’s whole mind was lighted up by a joy such as he had never before felt; and yet, when he had time for reflection, he could not help being more than ever agitated by doubts, whether he should win the victory,—or (so overpowering was his emotion) whether he should even live to see the day when he might try his fortune in a combat so glorious. Sir Folko meanwhile seemed delighted by the mood of mind into which he had brought his

companion; and then, after a space, he looked on him with a changed and melancholy aspect, perchance, because he remembered that Sir Otto's courage and joy of heart might lead him on to destruction, dealt out by that arm which had already sent so many adversaries to the grave. Thereafter both of them endeavoured, by a change of discourse, to forget mutually, that they were shortly to engage with each other in a mortal combat. Among various questions, Sir Otto inquired of De Montfaucon, what he had actually learned of the Magic Ring's wonderful history and virtues; whereupon the chevalier answered him as follows:—

"The ring is an inheritance derived from my stepfather, a renowned and valiant hero, by name Sir Huguenin, and who was held in high honour at our king's court. Although he had come as a stranger into the land, some said from the East, and others from the North, yet he had obtained, as a reward for his brave exploits, great feudal territories; over which his right of disposal was so unlimited, that he could leave them to whomsoever he pleased, whether lady or knight. Appearing with great splendour at all the court-festivals, he had fallen in love with a beautiful damsel, descended from one of the first houses in France; they were regularly betrothed, and, among other gifts, he had promised her a wonderful ring, possessed of many magical virtues, which it was said that he had brought with him from distant realms of the North. This ring was also to serve his bride for a pledge, that the feudal tenures in France were to be hers; and it was affirmed, that the lady had even appeared with it on her finger at grand festivals; yet it always returned again into the possession of Sir Huguenin.

"About that time he travelled into Normandy, in order to survey his beautiful estates, some of which lay close to our family mansion, where my mother was living in seclusion, zealously occupied in the education of her son, so that he might become a brave knight, not unworthy of the name of Montfaucon. In her retirement, however, she was often disturbed, on account of her extraordinary and all-surpassing beauty, by the visits of numberless admirers, whose presence was in her estimation always troublesome and unwelcome. I can yet well recollect, how the brilliant Sir Huguenin came for

the first time on horseback to our castle,—how my whole heart was won, by his fine figure and courteous demeanour, as he spoke with my mother; for I was then a boy ten years of age, and could well distinguish the difference between him and our other neighbours. If since then I have been fortunate enough to win the smiles of many noble ladies, I must say that I owe that distinction to the lessons and example which I received from Sir Huguenin, though I have never equalled that model of all noble and warlike accomplishments which was then set before me. On my mother too his appearance and conduct made a deep impression; while he, on the other hand, was so struck with her unrivalled beauty, that the thoughts of a marriage with any one else became insupportable. Henceforth his first care was to make himself free from his former engagements, and though the relations of the damsel to whom he had been betrothed were vehemently enraged, yet such was the terror they entertained of the renowned Sir Huguenin, more especially because he was the king's chosen favourite, that the transaction was carried through without a murmur. The knight retained possession of his ring, and it was not till long after her marriage that my mother knew of the vows that for her sake had thus been broken.

"Willingly and confidently, therefore, had the beautiful widow resigned her person and fortune; and what was yet nearer and dearer to her heart,—the education of her son,—into the hands of the far-famed Sir Huguenin. In what degree he might have valued the possessions thus bestowed on him I know not; for the season of love, with its sunbeams and roses, was for them of brief duration. For a space of about two years, within which time my step-sister, Blanchefleur, a living picture of her beautiful mother, came into the world, Sir Huguenin lived in our castle; then he went out across the seas, and never more returned. For his fame, and his soul's sake, we hope that a sudden and honourable death had somewhere overtaken him. My mother never heard of him again; and the more that her happiness had been increased during the short time of their union, the more resolutely she now devoted herself to penance and seclusion. For a few years grief preyed unceasingly on her

frame; and at length, with a smile of melancholy resignation, she sank into the now welcome grave.

“As to that other duty, the care of my youthful education, which she had confided to him, it was, in truth, amply fulfilled. Grave, yet affectionate,—dignified, yet kind, like a guiding pillar of light, his image, even at this hour, always moves before me. Through the day he spoke with me indeed but little, but afforded me the most admirable example in the use of arms, in hunting, and in horsemanship. In the evenings he became eloquent, and proudly related to me many wondrous legends of the olden times. Little or no admonishment accompanied these stories; but they were told in such manner, that every glorious adventure came before my sight with all the force of reality, and my heart was filled with irresistible longing to obtain the brilliant honours of knighthood. This desire became the more passionate, when I reflected, that he, from whose lips I heard all those marvellous tales was himself a renowned hero, whose invincible arm had doubtless performed achievements equal to those which he described of others. Without boasting, I may truly say, that through those two years I proved myself no undeserving scholar; on which account he treated me with great kindness; and on the night before his departure, he led me into his chamber, shut the door, and said,—‘Folko, I am now going hence on a campaign;—how long I shall remain absent, Heaven knows,—perhaps it may be for ever! In your eyes I can already read the request that you would prefer, for my permission that you should accompany me to the battle-field; but that may not be; you must continue here to be the protector of your mother and the little Blanchefleur; for although you are now only in your thirteenth summer, yet, both from your prudence and skill in the use of arms, you might be counted full six years older. It shall be your duty, therefore, to protect your sister in the undisturbed possession of a wonderful ring, which I shall now leave in her hands; but of which, as I am well aware, many claimants will henceforth appear, wishing to deprive her of that valuable gift. But mark you, young lion of Montfaucon, let them not succeed in such attempts; and be it your care also, that, when at last you are both grown to man and woman’s

estate, the Lady Blanchefleur shall bear the name of your house; for mine, though it is renowned and honourable, is yet less known here, and sounds strange to the inhabitants of Normandy. Wilt thou now promise to remember these injunctions?' Proudly, and rejoiced in heart, I agreed to all that he desired; and, with God's help, have been true to my word, even to the present day. The damsel, who had been betrothed formerly to Sir Huguenin, married afterwards the Knight of Portamour, and became the mother of Gabrielle. Thereafter the beautiful Gabrielle, who, in early youth, was left an orphan, heard from her guardians many stories of the Magic Ring, and how it should by right have been in her possession, in as much as her mother, in her dying moments, had called for it, as for some dear and precious gift, which, by solemn vows, had become hers. Thence arose the many conflicts for this mysterious gem. Perhaps, if it is the will of Heaven, and you are fortunate, these disputes may, to-day or to-morrow, be brought to an end; for, behold the towers of the Norman castle, to which I have invited my beautiful adversary, are now visible over the trees!"

CHAPTER XXII.

How the Knights arrived at the Castle of Sir Folko de Montfaucon.

Amid a green forest, below the heights of the castle, the party had made a halt under the verdant canopy of the beech-trees, in order to enjoy in quiet the cool pleasant air of an autumnal evening, while a courier went before in order to announce the coming of his master and the numerous party of noble guests at the fortress. But scarcely had they dismounted, and begun to pass round the wine-cup, replenished from the sumpter-horses, when the courier returned hastily, announcing, that the Lady Gabrielle de Portamour had already arrived; and, at her desire, the Lady Blanchefleur de Montfaucon had commanded, that an evening banquet should be provided under the green shades of the forest; also, that a procession, led by the two noble damsels, was now descending from the castle. In truth, the knights already saw through the trees the gleam of armour and weapons, the gold and silver vessels for the banquet, and the bright embroidery of festal garments. The Knight of Montfaucon now turned to Don Hernandez and the Count de Vinciguerra, begging, that for a short interval they would take their places in the van of the party, in order to receive the ladies; “for,” added he, “it is proper that we two combatants should make our appearance before the beautiful Gabrielle, in a guise more fitting than that which our rapid journey and this sudden visit has for the moment left within our power.” With these words he went along with Sir Otto into a dense thicket of the valley, whither they were followed by Theobaldo and another squire.

Earnestly, and in great haste, the two young champions prepared for their martial toilette. Their cuirasses and greaves were carefully rubbed and burnished, the leather straps drawn tighter, and the ends plaited up; their helmet-plumes arranged, and their sashes taken off, in order that they might be cleared from dust, and replaced in a fashion more becoming. At the

moment when both were adjusting their helmets, Sir Folko looked steadfastly at his young adversary. “Now,” said he, “when you draw down your eagle’s visor, I can explain to myself clearly the dim recollections, which were awoke by the black armour inlaid with silver. Is it not in truth the same coat of mail that was heretofore worn by Count Archimbald von Waldeck?” Sir Otto having answered in the affirmative, he continued, “I shall at some time or another beg of you to relate to me how one so young as you are,—but a mere spring-blossom of knighthood,—could have cased himself in armour such as this. On the other hand, I shall describe to you the many strange dreams by which I have been visited, of desperate conflicts with a black and white eagle, which methought always flew across the Rhine from Germany hither; that it sat upon my head, and, with its powerful hooked bill, plucked at a wreath of flowers which was wound around my temples. When I awoke from this dream, I used to say to myself, ‘Thou thinkest doubtless of battles that may yet take place with the valiant Sir Archimbald von Waldeck. But this may not be. He is bound by the conditions of our former encounter, and may never more claim this ring; yet the eagle is once more prepared for battle before me!’ Come then, brave young Knight of Trautwangen. The ladies await us.” Thereupon the two warriors went together, hand in hand, to join the noble company.

Amid that circle of fair damsels, valiant champions, and skilful artists, Gabrielle’s beauty shone so pre-eminent, that Sir Otto, conscious as he was of the decisive combat and glorious prize that awaited him, was dazzled, and fixed his eyes humbly on the ground. Sir Folko, on the other hand, went up to the lady, and said, “Never, methinks, should I forgive my own seeming discourtesy, in thus arriving later than a guest so noble and so lovely, were it not that it is yet undetermined which will at last be the guest, and which the stranger in these domains. If it so please you, this brave young German is now ready to fix on the conditions of our combat.”

Gabrielle threw an inquiring look on Sir Otto. It seemed as if she doubted if his youth and inexperience admitted of such an encounter; then again, by the changed expression of her

features, one could read the return of confidence, as if one so young and simple-hearted were sent like a guardian angel for her defence. “Are you not the youth,” said she, “with whom I once spoke on the banks of the Danube?” “Truly I am the same,” replied Sir Otto in a low voice; “and now stand here in order to redeem the pledge which I then called Heaven to witness.” Gabrielle looked on him kindly, yet it seemed as if she once more began to doubt and hesitate. The Knight of Montfaucon again interposed, saying, “Lady, will you then choose this noble youth for your champion? It is not my custom to propose an encounter with a young and powerless adversary, but with this knight I should willingly enter the lists.” Thereafter the Lady Gabrielle gracefully pulled off her glove from her snow-white hand, and tied it firmly to Sir Otto’s sash. “Thus,” said she, “on your sword I bind my hopes and the just rights of my inheritance!” then, in a low, half-audible tone, she added, “and Gabrielle will be the reward of the victor.” He thought of returning some answer, when near him he heard the murmuring tones of another voice, low, and yet ardent, like the melodious cooing of a turtle-dove. Looking up he beheld a form of the most exquisite grace leaning over the shoulder of Sir Folko, a form in which, from the descriptions which he had heard, he immediately recognised the Lady Blanchefleur; so that he could now well believe all that the knight had narrated to him of his mother’s matchless and imperishable beauty. In spite of death and the grave the same charms were thus renewed once more, living and smiling on the world. Blanchefleur now bent her head humbly towards Gabrielle, and whispered,—“I have but one dearly-loved brother, and must he thus, even to the very end of his life, be engaged in strife and contention, all for the sake of that trifling ring? Shall I never be enabled to call him with certainty my own? Rather, noble lady, let the present battle be decisive, so that the question may be for ever set at rest; and, if my brother falls, then the ring is yours. On the contrary, should your champion be unfortunate, let all pretensions to the ring be given up on your part; only let this contest be final. Pray you, listen to this request, for you have too much generosity to wish that this unequal contest should be kept up any longer!” It was obvious to the by-standers, that Gabrielle now underwent a

conflict with her own emotions. At last she looked up kindly, and said,—“Let it be so!” Then, turning to Sir Otto of Trautwangen, she added, with a mixture of fear and dignity of manner, “Sir Knight, my whole weal and woe are intrusted in your hands; and on your valour and generosity I have the fullest reliance.” “May we not then directly enter the lists, even within this very hour?” inquired Sir Otto anxiously, and with the fervour of inspiration. “Not so,” said Gabrielle gravely; “I have not forgotten the armour which you now wear; and perhaps it may be destined to make good on this occasion the disgrace which it sustained in the former encounter; or, perhaps, by new misfortune, to complete the measure of my distresses. But as on that fatal night I was anxious and impatient for the combat, for the present, I am, on the contrary, determined to practise self-control. To-morrow, therefore, you shall enter the lists at mid-day, in the great square of the castle. Till that hour, let us speak no more of the disputes which have led to this meeting; but rather (if it be allowed me to make one more request) let the time be spent in unrestrained mirth and jollity.”

Sir Folko made a low obeisance, and in a few minutes contrived that his party were all elegantly and luxuriously placed beneath the green arcades of the beech-wood. Thereafter sparkling wine and the richest viands were handed round among the guests. This led to much gay and convivial talk; at length also to songs and music, to which various individuals contributed, every one as he was best able. Of a sudden, an earnest request was suggested, and passed from one to another, that the Lady Blanchefleur would sing the tragical fortunes of Heloise and Abelard, with some of the noble masters of minstrelsy, who were there present. For this purpose she sought out a young man from her brother’s train, who was named Master Aleard, and thereafter they began together a ballad, in alternate parts, on the story of these unfortunate lovers, and sang so sweet and mournfully, that when they had concluded, tears gleamed in many a beautiful eye, and even the boldest warriors were moved. Otto felt the sounds reverberate even to his inmost heart; it seemed to him almost as if the whole ballad had been made upon his own fortunes,

little as such a melancholy legend was suited to his present condition; and he could not help repeating to himself, in a low voice, some of the concluding stanzas. Meanwhile Sir Folko de Montfaucon looked gloomily on the ground, with an expression contrasting strangely with his usual demeanour. At last he cast a stern angry glance at the Lady Blanchefleur, who was then speaking earnestly with the minstrel Aleard; whereupon she arose, and came hastily to her brother, taking her place beside him, which she did not quit again through the evening. As if now well satisfied with her conduct, Sir Folko devoted almost his whole attention to her, contriving a thousand agreeable stories for her entertainment. It seemed, however, now and then, as if tears glittered in the beautiful mild eyes of the damsel; and the young Master Aleard retired, thoughtful and disconsolate into the deep thickets of the forest. The cool evening now settled on the woods. From the ground, densely strewed with fallen beech-leaves, there arose damp vapours, and the party at length quitted their places, and proceeded, keeping time to mirthful music, up the castle hill. During their march, it was a pleasure to see how the light of their torches and lamps gleamed along the rocky paths through the shades of the now descending night.

CHAPTER XXIII.

How Sir Otto vanquished the Knight of Montfaucon.

On the morning of the following day, at an early hour, there arose great tumult and bustle in the spacious court of the castle, which was covered with green turf, and planted on all sides with rows of tall lime-trees. There were posts driven into the ground, and rails laid upon them, as a grating, which should keep the by-standers at a proper distance, and this grating was also hung with embroidered drapery. Within the lists there were brought carts full of dry white sand, which the squires spread carefully over the turf, so that both man and horse might have firmer footing thereon, than the slippery grass would have afforded. Meanwhile, Don Hernandez and the Count de Vinciguerra were seen hastening hither and thither, giving orders, and attending to all the preparations; for, on the preceding evening, it had been agreed that they were to act as umpires and seconds at the combat. After mature deliberation, they laid down the exact dimensions for the lists, and tried how both champions might be placed with equal advantages of wind and sunlight. For the ladies they had erected a grand stage among the branches of the lime-trees; so that, sitting therein, they were at once shaded and protected, yet at the same time had a free view of the battle-field. A multitude of spectators had already collected, waiting with impatience for the knights and ladies, who were to play the principal parts at this tragic festival.

The Chevalier de Montfaucon and the Knight of Trautwangen meanwhile donned their armour in separate chambers. In the service of the latter, his friend Theobaldo was this day more zealous than ever, evincing a degree of anxiety and tenderness which was to him quite unusual. From the eagle-helmet down to the golden spurs, he examined minutely every plate, belt, and buckle, now drawing them tight, now loosening them again, and yet never found his arrangements good enough for his master and friend. Sir Otto looked at him kindly, and said,

“How is this, Theobaldo? You seem as melancholy and anxious, as if you were arming me for the last time!” “That may indeed be so,” answered the merchant; “sad feelings and sad words often turn into true prophecies!” Then, deeply moved, he bent his head over the knight’s yet unarmed right hand.

The door now opened suddenly, and in his armour of blue and gold, gleaming like the vault of heaven in a starry night, appeared at it Sir Folko de Montfaucon. He wore his golden helmet with the visor still open and a squire followed bearing his great battle-sword. “Dear brother,” said he to Sir Otto, “we have spent the time like good friends together up to this day, and interchanged many kind looks. Now, however, it may come to pass, that after we have drawn down our visors, we shall never behold each other again. Therefore have I come to you at this time, that I may once more heartily embrace you; and that, ere our meeting in the lists, we may pray together in the chapel before the altar.” Therewith he spread his arms, into which Sir Otto threw himself, and the two champions embraced with such fervour, as if the warmth of their friendship could have melted the cold iron with which they were covered. Then a trumpet sounded from the court, and they broke asunder suddenly. “It is the first signal,” said Sir Folko. “My noble adversary will now, if it so please him, gird on my sword, and I shall render him the like service.” This was accordingly done; and, as the massive glittering weapons were adjusted, they related on both sides by whom these swords had been presented to them, Sir Folko’s being the gift of his stepfather, Sir Huguenin, and that of Sir Otto, as we have already told, being received from his father, Sir Hugh von Trautwangen. Thereafter they went arm in arm down to the chapel, where they kneeled together, one on each side of the altar, and remained there in silent prayer, until the trumpets sounded another signal. Then rising up, they looked once more with great kindness on each other, drew down their visors, and came forth into the castle-court, which was now brightly illumined by the sunbeams.

The ladies were already seated in their balcony, amid the foliage of the lime-trees; and Sir Folko said to his companion,

“In those northern realms, from which our family is sprung, we have an old legend touching the golden apples of immortality. Brother, do you mark them yonder, among the branches, above us?” These words he had intended to be playful and light-hearted; but uttered, as they were, from behind the cold motionless visor, unaided by a smile or lively glance, hollow too and suppressed in tone, they sounded rather like a mournful forewarning of death. The knights now shook hands before the assembled spectators, and went severally to mount their horses. As Sir Folko, on the left of the balcony, approached his silver-grey charger, his noble falcon, which had now almost recovered from the wound inflicted by Theobaldo, flew down from a window of the castle, and took his place on the knight’s helmet, which he would not leave till he was taken thence by his master’s hand. The latter then stroked him kindly on the neck, and, pulling down the hood over the faithful creature’s eyes, gave him in charge to one of his squires, who carried him away. A deep-sounding murmur then arose through the multitude; by some it was interpreted as a sure anticipation of victory for Sir Folko; while others thought that the poor bird wished to take his last farewell, and that his master would of necessity die. Then, for the third time, the herald sounded his trumpet; all voices were hushed; and now, mounted on their war-steeds, the two champions came from opposite sides into their proper places.

Thereafter, underneath the balcony where the ladies sat, arose Don Hernandez, in magnificent armour, with his visor open; he called aloud, “Be it known to all knights and ladies, also to others of whatsoever degree, who are here present, that my friend, the Count Alessandro de Vinciguerra, who is now beside me, holds in his hands a gold casket, with the ring, which is to be the prize of this combat. The champions have the free right of contending with lances and with swords, on horseback, or on foot. Whosoever of the twain shall be able courteously to approach the Count of Vinciguerra, take the casket from his hands, bring it to the Lady Gabrielle in the balcony, and place the ring on her finger, without interruption from his adversary, shall be looked upon as the victor, and all

contentions for this cause are from henceforth at an end. Noble champions, are these conditions understood and approved?”

Both knights thereupon inclined their heads, with their long waving plumes, in token of consent; and Hernandez, with grave dignity, took his place again beside the Count. A deep stillness prevailed through the assembly, yet it lasted but for a moment; for there was heard from all sides a great flourish of trumpets; the spectators all trembled, and both knights urged forward their foaming highspirited horses. In the middle of the battle-field, they struck together with such a frightful clash, that the noise even overpowered that of the trumpets, and, like two gigantic statues, the silver-grey and the light-brown charger stood opposite to each other, both on their hind-legs, and pawing in the air with their fore-hoofs, in order to regain their equipoise after that terrible shock, by which the lances on both sides had been shivered in pieces, and strewed over the battle-ground. The riders sat firmly, both leaning forwards, and spurring their horses; but, after a brief space of uncertain motion, both of them, being unable to regain their proper position, fell backwards with a great crash upon the sand.

A cry of horror now sounded from the balcony, and was echoed by all the spectators. But ere the cry had ceased, and before the horses had risen from the ground, both knights had disengaged themselves, and ran with swords drawn towards the place where the Count Alessandro de Vinciguerra was stationed with the ring. Each perceiving, however, that his opponent was ready to prevent him from obtaining it, they stood looking for a space at each other, then grasped their swords firmly, and went, with measured steps, back to the place where they had fallen, and where their shields yet lay upon the ground. At the same moment each had seized on his glittering targe; while their horses, having now raised themselves up, watchfully followed every movement. It was mournful, however, to behold how Sir Folko’s silver-grey charger, severely wounded on the shoulder, struggled vainly with his lameness; snorting and neighing as he had done at the commencement of the battle, and thus proving, that though his activity were lost, he retained yet all his courage and attachment. Observing this, Sir Otto, who would by no means

take advantage of his adversary, said, with a look of compassion for the poor steed,—“Noble Sir, shall we not rather desire our horses to be led away?” With a courteous and thankful salutation, Sir Folko replied,—“Be it according to your pleasure. Your conduct here is indeed such as from the beginning I had expected of you.” So the horses were led out of the lists.

But scarcely had the knights, with their raised shields and gleaming swords, come up against each other; scarcely had their first blows sounded on their armour, when, behold! Sir Otto’s light-brown steed, which, in spite of their utmost efforts, had broken from the squires, sprung over the rails, and would have immediately attacked his master’s opponent. Sir Otto, however, seized him by the bridle, and led him back to the gateway of the lists, giving him again in charge to the squires, while, with threatening gestures and a stern voice, he commanded him to stand quiet; so that the noble steed remained motionless, nor did the by-standers even require the reins to hold him.

On Sir Otto’s return, the Chevalier de Montfaucon made him a kind and courteous salutation with his sword; then raised it for a vehement attack, and the frightful combat began anew. Ere long, the blows on both sides fell thick as hail, till oftentimes the combatants stood with their shields pressed together, watching their opportunity to strike, and then again flew suddenly asunder. At length Sir Folko’s sword descended, with the rapidity of lightning, on his opponent’s left arm, in such manner, that his shield was cleft in twain, and one half fell rattling on the ground. “Hold, hold!” cried the chevalier; and Sir Otto lowered his weapon, which he had just then upraised, asking, at the same time,—“Are you wounded, brother? otherwise there is no need of a pause.” “Not so; your shield is wanting,” said Sir Folko, “while mine is yet uninjured; on which account I shall lay it aside; for the conditions of an honourable combat require that our means of defence and attack should, on both sides, be the same.” Thereupon he made a sign that his squire should draw near, and gave him his blue and gold shield; but Sir Otto interfered, and would by no means allow that it should be carried away. Sir Folko then

said, in a grave determined tone,—“Sir Knight, young as you now are in years and experience, methinks you must, for this once, bear with a lesson from me. I have worn armour some twelve years longer than you have done, and I know perchance as well as another what is or is not fitting. Since I have respectfully and thankfully accepted from you the favour, that when my horse was wounded, yours should be led out of the lists, methinks it is not too much to expect that you should receive some like grace at the hands of Sir Folko de Montfaucon.” “You are in the right, my noble brother,” answered Sir Otto; “I bow to the judgment of one who is indeed a mirror and pattern of knighthood.” With these words, he made a humble obeisance, and an attendant squire bore away the bright-gleaming shield. Thereafter the battle was renewed with fresh spirit and vigour; but had not continued long, ere one of Sir Otto’s blows came with such force on the left arm of the chevalier, that the weapon made its way between the corslet and cuirass; whereupon a stream of blood followed the wound. Sir Folko began to totter, with difficulty supporting himself on his sword, and ere the Knight of Trautwangen could catch him in his arms, fell to the ground. Then Sir Otto kneeled down beside him, after such manner, that the by-standers at first believed he too was wounded, and could not support himself; but ere long they perceived that he was busily employed in loosening the helmet, corslet, and cuirass, of his fallen adversary. Blanchefleur soon hastened from the balcony to assist in the same services, knelt on the other side beside her brother, and wept bitterly. Otto perceiving this, looked at her kindly. “God be praised,” said he, “your brother yet lives; and the wound, though on the left side, has not reached his heart!” At this moment Sir Folko opened his eyes, and the Lady Blanchefleur held her hand across to his opponent, with a smile of thanks for the kind words that he had spoken. Having respectfully kissed the beautiful hand thus offered him, Sir Otto at length arose, and went to the Count de Vinciguerra to receive the casket with the ring. Thereafter, when he made his appearance under the green leaves of the balcony,—when Gabrielle, with a sweet smile, came forward to meet him,—when the trumpets flourished, and all the people called out “Long live Sir Otto von

Trautwangen!” the knight, as if lost in a fairy dream, knelt down, and in this attitude he placed the ring on the snow-white finger of the Lady Gabrielle; while, at the same moment, the too happy youth felt a soft kiss breathed on his forehead.

CHAPTER XXIV.

How Theobaldo departed, and a messenger announced the coming of the sea-monarch, Arinbiorn.

Sir Otto had retired to his chamber, that he might lay aside his armour, and array himself in a garb suited to the brilliant festival of his betrothment, after which the Lady Gabrielle would make her public appearance as his bride. His apartment was ere long crowded by squires of high and low degree, who were sent by the damsel to attend him, bearing rich presents of gold chains, rings, plumes of variegated feathers, and other adornments. In the confusion of his triumph and happiness, which seemed, as it were, reflected by the glittering apparel and cheerful looks of all around him, he did not think of Theobaldo's absence, till he found himself alone at the entrance of another chamber, in which the Lady Gabrielle had appointed him to meet her, in order that they might walk from thence together into the magnificent banquet-hall. With his heart full of the delights which were so richly poured out around him, he could willingly have had some confidential friend with whom he could share his emotions, and was lost in surprise at Theobaldo's long absence. At length the merchant made his appearance; but dressed so strangely, and in such gay and varied colours, that Sir Otto scarcely knew him at his first entrance. Perceiving this, "You are in the right," said Theobaldo; "I am, indeed, changed in my outward garb; but in this world all is changeable. Look here, for example, whether you could recognise the knight of the black and silver armour in the figure which is now before you." With these words he had placed Sir Otto before a great mirror; wherein, for the first time, he beheld his own person arrayed in a style of such glittering magnificence, that he blushed and was confounded. His blooming youthful countenance was half lost in the folds of a rich embroidered ruff;—under a green barret cap, clustered his golden hair, richly perfumed, and shining almost as brightly as the magnificent *agratte* which held together the waving plumes of his head-gear. Moreover, he had a white

velvet doublet, of which the slashes were adorned with green and gold; it was fitted tight to his shape; and round his waist was a golden sword-belt; while from his shoulders hung, in graceful folds, a short green mantle, trimmed with ermine and pearls. “Well,” said Theobaldo, with somewhat of irony in his smile, “that is, methinks, no dress fitted for a pilgrimage into the Holy Land.” “As little could’st thou say,” answered Sir Otto, “that the dress which thou now wearest is that of a crusader.” “Pardon me, noble sir,” said Theobaldo; “mine is still a travelling garb; and though, indeed, I shall take a circuitous route, I shall yet wear this mantle on my voyage into the Holy Land. I now bear the colours of the Count de Vinciguerra, which, as you know, are, according to Italian fashion, somewhat over gay and motley, and with him I shall in a few minutes set out on our journey homewards to my native land, where, at Naples, I shall take shipping for Palestine, in order to fight there under the banners of King Richard Cœur de Lion.” “What then have I done to offend you?” said Sir Otto; “and wherefore would you thus wound my heart, that was even now so happy and buoyant?” “You have by no means offended me,” answered Theobaldo; “but you already know that I love the sports of the battle-field, and am discontented with the luxuries of a peaceful home. Therefore you spoke but the truth, when you said this morning, that I was attending you perhaps for the last time. Not only the love of warlike adventure, but other feelings, also draw me from hence. I would wish once more to kneel on that church-yard mound, with its sheltering flowers, wherein Lisberta sleeps. Heaven knows wherefore, as a child, I was so often led thither; but it now seems to me as if my life’s best treasures were buried there, and I must by times revisit the spot. But, noble Sir, touching what you have just now said, of wounding your heart in the midst of its rejoicing, you should rather be thankful to me if I have indeed done so; for if trees are too flourishing and luxuriant, are not wounds cut into their bark? Or have you forgot the story of Polycrates, who, in order to reconcile himself with fortune, threw his ring into the water? Let me then in like manner be your ring; and Heaven grant that no fish may be on the watch in order to bring me again into your possession!” “But wherefore,” said Sir Otto, “should you

be in such vehement haste?" "It is the Count de Vinciguerra's fault," said Theobaldo; "I have promised that I shall travel when and whither he is pleased to appoint." "And so then the Count——," said Otto, doubtfully. "Ay," resumed Theobaldo, "he is, in truth, not altogether satisfied with you, being unable to forget the severe lessons which he received from one so young and inexperienced, when he related the story of Master Donatello. For, in confidence, he has since unfolded to me, that he himself was the hero of that adventure; so that he cannot well bear to look upon you now as the chief in this festival; and was indeed ready to sink into the earth with vexation, when he was obliged to deliver up to you the casket with the ring. I could laugh still to think of his looks at that moment; and in this humour, noble Sir, it is best that I should take my departure. Sad thoughts should not at such times be uttered."—Otto replied mournfully, "You have then forgotten how you were once moved by the thoughts of parting, after you had wounded the falcon in the forest?" "Ay truly, because we should then have separated in anger," said Theobaldo; "now, however, there is perfect friendship betwixt us, and I leave you with your beautiful bride, and surrounded by all possible blessings. So fare you well." With these words he nodded kindly, and straightway left the room. After a few moments, Sir Otto, having gone thoughtfully to the window, saw the two Italians, in their motley glittering dresses, already riding down the steep descent that led from the castle.

The young German knight continued to gaze after them with surprise and melancholy, till he felt a light touch on his shoulder, and, turning round, beheld Gabrielle in all the splendour of dress and dazzling beauty. If the damsel had already appeared lovely and attractive in her distress on the battle-field, yet now, as a smiling triumphant bride, she was yet more angelic, and indeed surpassed herself. The coronet of jewels that adorned her hair, and the graceful folds of her costly attire, were but foils to the matchless charms of her features, and her every gesture. And in all this pomp and magnificence she yet bowed humbly to Sir Otto, and said, —"Why then is the Knight of Trautwangen so discontented and thoughtful? Is Gabrielle's hand no adequate compensation

for the departure of two fantastic comrades like those who have just left us? Come, our guests are waiting; clear up those clouded looks, and lead me to the banquet-hall." When Gabrielle pronounced the words, "our guests," Sir Otto seemed for the first time suddenly awake to the full measure of his good fortunes. He kissed the damsel's hand, which was courteously offered him; he kissed also her rosy lips; for a kind look said to him that this was not forbidden;—then, full of delight and triumph, such as he had never before known, he led her, leaning on his arm, into the brilliant hall, which was already filled with company.

All the noble guests who were there assembled made room and bowed respectfully; the hautboys and flutes played a cheering march; flower-wreaths were thrown lavishly on the heads of the happy and blushing pair. Having arrived at the upper end of the table, Gabrielle pointed out to her betrothed husband the noble Chevalier de Montfaucon, who lay there upon a sofa, attended and supported by his sister Blanchefleur. "I well knew," said she, "that there was no sight which would be to you more welcome than that of your valiant adversary now so much recovered, and able to join in the festivities of our circle." "This, indeed, I had not expected," said Sir Otto; "yet I might have been well aware, that for your powers, beautiful enchantress, nothing could be too difficult." "Hush, hush, speak not of my enchantments," said Gabrielle; "my best influence is derived from the Ring, of which your valour has again won for me the possession." Meanwhile Sir Folko, with the help of Blanchefleur, had raised himself on the couch. Pale indeed in complexion, but smiling kindly, he proffered his right hand to the victorious Knight of Trautwangen, which the latter took with as much emotion as if it had been that of a kind-hearted elder brother, and could scarcely refrain from pressing it to his lips. The whole party now sat down to table, and thereafter every one admired the fine figure of De Montfaucon, as he lay there in his light-blue mantle embroidered with gold; while his falcon, wounded like himself, sat on his pillow, sipping now and then out of the knight's golden cup. "I am treated here like a sick child," said Sir Folko, "who, wherever he goes, must have his toys along

with him.” There were minstrels in attendance, who compared the knight to the wounded Adonis, of whom we read in the ancient fables; and every one allowed, that, from his graceful figure, as well as heroic courage, he might well have been the favourite of the goddess Cytherea.

While they were now all happily seated round the table, fragrant with the richest viands and rarest wines, there was heard at the gate a loud and terrific blast from a warhorn, or trumpet. In a few moments thereafter, a gigantic man, completely equipt in a heavy rattling coat of mail, with a great towering halbert in his hand, made his appearance in the hall, looked round inquiringly for some time at the astonished party, and then with a courteous bow drew near to the Chevalier de Montfaucon. “Noble sir,” said he, “I have been sent hither by the great sea-monarch, Arinbiorn, your friend and cousin. He is now waiting before your gates, and has travelled thus far into the land for the sole purpose of visiting you. He now wishes to learn, whether it may be your will and pleasure to receive him at this time within your castle, along with some noble damsels and giants by whom he is accompanied. Be it known to you also, that one of these damsels is in conduct and character somewhat mysterious.” “If I had still the right of commanding here,” answered Sir Folko, “the wound by which I now suffer would scarcely prevent me from coming to the gate, to welcome your royal master. Yet now,”——Gabrielle here interrupted him, kindly counterfeiting a tone of anger: “Noble Chevalier,” said she, “if you should not here conduct yourself as the lord and owner of the mansion, it follows, that we and our guests must immediately take our departure.”—“That indeed must be listened to,” said Sir Folko, turning to the stranger: “Go then, and tell the king that he and all his train are heartily welcome. I too shall come forth to receive him.”—Hereupon he endeavoured to rise from his couch; but, reading fear and anxiety in the beautiful eyes of Blanchefleur, the gigantic messenger interposed. “In the name of King Arinbiorn,” said he, “I forbid you to leave this apartment. Though indeed a powerful champion might not die of such exertion, yet it is enough that the beautiful damsel beside you would feel terror for your sake,—and a valiant

knight should never inflict pain on a female heart. Therefore, so truly as I know and respect my royal master's will, so earnestly do I beg that you will remain here. He will come to you forthwith." Then he shook the knight's right hand heartily, like an old friend, and with a courtly salutation retired. "The sea-monarch, Arinbiorn," said Sir Folko, "is a brave Norman, who now represents that family tree, from which, in old times, the branch to which I myself belong was divided, and removed from Norway's frozen hills to plant itself in these fertile fields under the warm sun of France. The ties of relationship have ever since then been acknowledged as unbroken betwixt us, and our friendship has been proved in many stern and warlike encounters against mutual foes, wherein the sea-monarch has rendered us no little service. This title has been given to such of the northern heroes as have perchance few or no possessions on shore, but who in their fleet vessels, accompanied by brave and faithful soldiers, sail about through all quarters of the world, from the distant icebergs of the north to the brilliant city of Constantinople, or even to the shores of Asia and Africa, with their mines of gold. In truth, there are scarcely any mariners that know their way so well, and where, on account of their great excellence in the arts of warfare, they can exercise unlimited power."

Sir Folko might have narrated still farther, and the party listened to him willingly; but they already heard the steps of the wonderful stranger on the staircase, and the eyes of every one were fixed on the portal.

END OF VOL. I.

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TRANSCRIBER'S NOTE:

Punctuation errors and printing mistakes such as obviously missing letters have been silently fixed. Spelling and hyphenation in common use at the time of publication have been kept as is. Instances of the same word differing in hyphenation have in most cases been changed to match the majority variant, or using information from other sources.

Volume number added under “The Magic Ring”, before the first chapter. The footnote has been relocated to the end of the chapter to better fit the ebook format.

In addition, the following changes have been made:

p.xiii: FOUQUE to FOUQUÉ
p.75: Mountfaucon to Montfaucon
p.226: chesnut to chestnut
P.242: humilitud to humilitude
P.247, 277, and 282: Allessandro to Alessandro

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