

Amusing and Edifying Stories

From Ludwig Aurbacher's *Ein Volksbüchlein* (Volume II), edited by Joseph Sarreiter (Leipzig: Reclam, 1879). The original appeared in 1829, 1832, and **1835**. The order below is mine, with what I consider to be the best tales appearing first.

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1. The Triumph of Religion

In the year 1812, when the French and their confederates had retreated from Russia in the most severe cold and the uttermost wretchedness, engaged in continual skirmishes, a German officer who had taken part in the campaign was standing by the window in a Warsaw inn, from where he observed the people moving hither and thither below him, pressing and pushing, like ants; and, although saved and in good health, he nevertheless felt discontent filling every fibre of his being, and there was a dark and heavy weight, like a scorched world, upon his soul. For had he not seen, with his own eyes, endless misery, and the devastation which had

laid low half a million men? Yet it was not the battles that had been fought, not the epidemics, not hunger, misery and death, which wounded his heart so deeply, but the hideous figures of degenerate human beings who saw their fellow-men starving, dying of inanition, without sympathy for the suffering of others; and who, thinking only of saving their own hides, fled incessantly, like startled animals, from the pursuing enemy. And so, even the belief in the humanity of mankind was utterly gone from his heart, and he saw in their doings and dealings a grabbing at contemptible gain, a venturing for vain glory, nothing but egoism, meanness, and cruelty – and he could no longer find, in his heart of hearts, the God of his youth in the creator of this human rabble; and so he stood disconsolate, in cold despair, without regard for others, without hope for himself, looking down into the motley, nugatory throng.

Then he saw, quite by chance, a small, common cart driving past, accompanied by a crowd of riffraff. In it, lying on straw and under a protective roof, was a man; at his feet there sat a person whom the officer did not know what to make of, on account of her strange clothing and her surroundings. Just then the servant walked in. “What’s happening down there?” the officer asked, more from curiosity than sympathy. The servant replied: “The people outside found, a league from here, a Jew half frozen to death in a city ditch; and now a Grey Sister¹ is taking him to her convent to heal him there, if possible. That is all!”

An inner restlessness drove the officer out and down onto the street; he followed the crowd involuntarily; he glanced up at the Grey Sister, who

¹ A Sister of Charity of Montreal (founded in 1738).

looked steadfastly at the frozen Jew as at an adopted son; he too entered the convent, the halls of the ill and the dying.

And now he observed the busy care of the Sisters, how they tended to the sick, irrespective of rank and religion, with equal love; and he thought to himself of the great sacrifice these girls had made – family, fortune, freedom, all the joys that life affords – to be of help to the most forsaken, the poorest of mankind, their brothers in Christ, day and night, for the entirety of their lives; and that they could expect no earthly compensation for all this, indeed, they experienced the bitterness of failure in return for the most faithful care and, often, the yet greater bitterness of ill-judged ingratitude. He was healed. The picture of this disinterested self-sacrifice, this complete self-denial, this holy vocation in quiet loneliness for the good of suffering humanity, and all for the sake of God: this tender, pious picture effaced all at once the terrible portrait of those thousands of freezing hearts, which felt no warm sympathy and did not stir themselves to help, on the desolate wide ice-fields of death. He believed in people again – in their dignity, their compassion, in their ability to want what is great and noble and holy – and in a God who had planted this higher instinct in their hearts and will reward everyone for their good deeds. Immersed in these pious and joyful reflections, he returned to his inn. He saw once more in his mind the frozen Jew being driven past, and the Christian Sister sitting at his feet, looking at him steadfastly, as on her adoptive son whom God had sent to her; and a tear of melancholy joy welled up in his eye, and he cried out: “That is the triumph of religion!”

2. Opherus. A Christian Fable.

There lived in the land of Canaan a pagan by the name of Opherus; he was of an exceedingly large and strong build, and a bold and lively disposition; and so it was his pleasure to seek out violent adventures in all parts and places. And in the beginning, he travelled around in desert wastes and forests, and he cleaned the land of dragons and other baleful monsters. Then, whenever he met a robber, he slew him, and if anyone came brashly upon him, he threw them to the ground. At last, when he found no more resistance anywhere in the land, he had himself proclaimed King, and everyone came to him and bowed before him and received his orders. But it did not take long for him to become weary of government, and of those he had to govern; for the honour they gave him was feigned, and the fear they had of him was servile, and the mercy he showed was rewarded with ingratitude, and the justice he exercised with curses. He came to know this; and he learnt to despise the rabble who called him their lord; and the incense they donated to him, and the sacrificial gifts they brought to him, disgusted him; and he recognised the nullity of all dominion. Then he thought to himself that it would be more honourable to faithfully serve a great lord than to rule over a contemptible race. And he left the land without further ado, and he decided to seek out the mightiest lord in the world and be of service to him thenceforth.

In distant Ethiopia there ruled in those days an Emperor, the reputation of whose power and riches had spread to the ends of the earth. The giant made his way to him and offered him his services. The Emperor was willing for this companion to be his man, and he said: "If you serve me,

I shall divide my Empire between myself and you, and you shall be my equal, like a brother.” But he presently thought to put his courage and his loyalty to the test. On the borders of his Empire there reigned three Kings who refused to submit themselves to his authority, but sat in their lofty castles, well-protected, and defied the armies the Emperor sent against them. He was to break their castles and take them prisoner. The giant did this in a few weeks, and he took the captive kinglets to his lord. Hereupon the Emperor ordered him to dismantle their castles and build a large tower with the stones. And he completed the work in a few weeks. Finally, he ordered him to throttle the first King with the entrails of the second one, and to shut the third one in the tower that he might pine and starve to death. The giant was appalled at this command; however, as he had sworn loyalty to the Emperor in everything, so he executed the order as it had been given. And when the last choking rattle of the dying man in the Hunger Tower was heard, the Emperor had a great feast prepared in his palace, and the giant served him, as always. And behold! among the guests, there appeared one strange, terrible figure, who seated himself at the lower end of the table and fixed his basilisk stare on the Emperor, and did not remove it from him. The Emperor blanched at the sight of him, and trembled, and he wanted to leave, but could not; he looked around for his faithful servant, and cried with a heart full of terror: “Protect me from that one down there!” – But at that very moment the figure rose and, unfolding like a giant snake, it bent its way over the table and seized the tyrant so that his bones shattered inside his body and black blood streamed out of his mouth. The palace burst at its middle and collapsed in ruins.

Only Opherus escaped the ruin; and while he stood there on the dreadful rubble, ruefully reflecting that he had served injustice and brutality, he decided to search for the terrible avenger and to serve him as the mightiest lord on earth. As he had this thought, the Devil was suddenly standing there before him, and he said: "If you serve me, I shall share all the treasures in the world with you; and you shall be to me as a friend." This companion, with his simplicity and sincerity, would be very welcome to him. For his dominion had been destroyed since the appearance of the Lord, and he was able to corrupt human souls only through those humans who gave themselves to him. It so happened that, at this very time, the first chapel was erected for the service of the true God. The Devil now sought to obstruct this pious work in every possible way; but he himself could not put his hands to the destruction of the walls; for he was prevented by a good spirit which stood, threatening, opposite him. So he ordered the pagan to obstruct the work. Opherus was speedily at hand; and he dismantled by night what the workers had raised by day. Finally, the pious bishop, at whose behest the chapel was to be built, conjectured that the malice of the Evil One lay behind this. And he consecrated the building; and from that time on, let the pagan exert himself as much as he might to put a stop to the work, it progressed more and more, and came, in defiance of the Devil, to completion.

Now the Evil One thought to at least lead astray the people who went to the chapel as pilgrims; and he ordered the pagan to build a little house of earthly delights beside the church. This was done; and great numbers of people called in, and revelled in the things of this world, and the

food, and in dancing and gaming, and the House of the Devil was just as much frequented as the House of Our Lord. But the Devil was averse even to having Him as a neighbour; and he said to the pagan one day, "Go secretly into the chapel and steal the image that is displayed inside for veneration, and burn it." The pagan entered the chapel, in which the image of Our Lord hanging on the Cross had been put up. But just as he was going to lay his hands on it, behold! a thunderbolt flashed down, and the pagan fell stunned to the floor. But the flame caught the hostelry and consumed it, together with those who were inside. When Opherus awoke from his stupor, the pious bishop was standing before him, saying: "Unhappy man! how could you have dared to lay your impious hands on the Lord of Heaven and Earth?" Opherus asked the venerable figure: "Tell me where I can find Him, so I may serve Him for the rest of my life." The pious bishop said: "He is near all those who seek Him. And whoever serves him ingenuously and faithfully, He opens the Kingdom of His Grace to him, and that man is henceforth as a son to Him." And the pagan clapped his hand to his breast and confessed, saying: "Oh, I have sinned grievously against the Lord; I am not worthy to be received as His son." But the pious bishop said, "Do penance, to become worthy of salvation." And he continued, instructing him further: "Look, you have sinned threefold against the Lord, so you must do threefold penance, with a heart full of devotion. I say threefold: firstly, because you sinfully rose up against the only Lord, it is necessary that, from this moment on, you be humble of heart and regard yourself as the lowest of men. Next, because you helped the potentate to do violence, it is proper that, from this moment on, you be benevolent to everyone without

desiring either honour or reward. Finally, as you assisted in the malicious attempt to destroy the church and the Kingdom of God; well! so be godfearing henceforth, and encourage other souls to serve Him. Therefore, go hence and build yourself a hut by the river; and when pilgrims come thither on their journey to the chapel, then ready yourself in God's name and carry them over the water. Wait in that place for the Lord, until He comes, in prayer and in work!"

Opherus did as the pious bishop had ordered him. He bore the pilgrims who journeyed to and from the chapel over the river, and, to brace himself against the flow, and to ascertain the bottom, he made use of a withered spruce-trunk; and he waited for the Lord, until His coming, in work and prayer. Thus did a year go by. Then the pious bishop visited him, to see if he were loyally following his Lord and were steadfast in His service. But Opherus complained: how that he yearned in vain to look on the countenance of his Lord, whom he was serving. The pious bishop exhorted him to forbearance, and said to him the Word: "Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed."² – A year later, he visited him again, to see how he was discharging the duties of his vocation for the good of mankind. But Opherus complained: how that he endeavoured so much in vain, and could not expect any reward from his Lord, whom he was serving. The pious bishop encouraged him, and said to him the Word: "Blessed are the merciful; for they shall obtain mercy."³ And a year later he visited him again, to see if he had not succumbed to discontent, but was persevering in patience. But Opherus complained: "Oh, I have been praying and working

² John 20:29.

³ Matthew 5:7.

now for three long years, and no word of comfort has yet come to me from my Lord, whom I am serving.” Then the pious bishop comforted him, and he said to him the Word: “Blessed are they that mourn; for they shall be comforted.”⁴ Opherus kept these three Words in his heart, and from that hour on he complained no more, but waited patiently and faithfully, in work and prayer, for the coming of the Lord.

In the middle of one night it seemed to him that he heard someone crying from the far bank: “Ophere! wake up! bring me over!” But it sounded like the voice of a child. And he almost doubted that someone was in need of his service; but then he remembered the Word the bishop had spoken, and full of faith, he rose and strode through the river to fetch the pilgrim. But it was a little boy who asked him if he might carry him over. He almost refused to serve the little pilgrim, who had come at so unseasonable a time; then, however, he remembered the Word that the bishop had spoken, and, with a heart full of love, he set the child on his shoulders and started on his way back. But the child became ever heavier; at last, it weighed on him like a world; and the river raged ever more furiously, so he could no longer be sure of his footing; and the night became ever darker; and oh, the light from the other side had gone out, and he no longer saw his goal before him, and nowhere was help to be seen. Then he almost gave way to despair; but he remembered the Word that the pious bishop had spoken to him; and with a heart full of hope, he strode forwards, bent under his burden, in spite of the force of the flood and the terrors of the night. And he finally reached the bank and, weary, set down the little child. Behold! there then rose before

⁴ Matthew 5:4.

him a wondrously large and wondrously lovely figure all of light, its countenance shining like the sun, and a wreath of stars encircled its head, and in its right hand it carried an orb with a cross. And the Lord said: "You are blessed, for having believed, loved, and hoped, pure of heart, for you will see God. You see, Ophere, you have carried Christ, the Lord of the World. Therefore you shall be called Christophorus from now on." And the Lord baptised him on the spot. Then he said: "Because you have been found to be so true a servant you shall not be without the reward that is promised to those who wait. And as a sign that I, the Faithful One, keep my word: behold! here I stick this withered trunk into the earth, and when it greens and blossoms, then is the hour come when I shall take you into my Kingdom." And it happened even so. For when the first ray appeared in the east, it illuminated the marvellous trunk, which greened and blossomed. And Christophorus, full of joyful gratitude, prayed: "Now discharge your servant, to peace." And the angels directly bore his soul into Heaven.

3. The Ravens

Once upon a time there was a King who was famed far and wide for his wise and just judgements. Then it happened one day that, when he was returning home from a hunt, three ravens appeared over his head and flapped croaking around him, and they did not leave him alone until he had ridden into his palace. They then alighted on the guard-tower; and on the following day, when the King rode out again, they flew after him once more and harassed him with their flapping and croaking. This happened for three days. Then the King sent for a wise man, of whom the report ran that he could interpret the flight of birds and their speech. This man appeared, and

once he had examined the ravens' gestures and words, he came before the King and said: "Lord King, these three ravens desire you to pronounce judgement in a dispute they have among themselves; for they know that you are a just and wise judge. Now the case that has caused their quarrel is this: the male and female raven had a son. It so happened that, when the nest was built, the father raven flew away at once and returned no more; in like manner, when the chick had barely crept out of its egg, did the mother raven leave the nest, to feast on the carrion which lay in great quantity all around the land; for a famine had come among men and beasts, causing them to expire in their thousands. So the young raven almost perished from being forsaken, yet he managed to pull through.

"Since that time, many years have passed by; the father and mother ravens have grown old; and they both now have difficulty obtaining their food, particularly as there is abundance in the land and so, contrariwise, a lack of food for ravens. Now the mother will not leave the son in peace and demands that he feed her, as she gave birth to him. The father scolds her for having abandoned the chick, and says it is his due to be fed by the son, as he begat him. Finally, the young raven will have no truck with either father or mother, for, he said, he came out of the nest as a poor orphan and knew nor father nor mother. They are now at discord over this, and they are willing to hear your judgement, which they will accept as wise and just."

After the King had listened to these words, he said: "It seems to me that both parents have sinned against nature. For it is no matter to give a life, but supporting life and nourishing and cherishing a child – *that* is something. And so neither he nor she can justifiably require and demand

that the son feed them in their old days. However -” He was about to speak further; the young raven had already flown away, croaking with joy; the old raven and his wife sorrowfully flapped away and died shortly afterwards of debility and hunger.

“However,” the King continued his speech, turning to the people, “even if parents, like these ones, prove themselves to be unnatural parents,⁵ yet it is not permissible for the children to return like for like. For we human beings have, besides the laws of nature, also a law of God, which commands us to honour our parents; and all unnatural children are cursed to fare badly on Earth.”

4. The Fiddler and his Benefactor

An old fiddler lodged with a poor cobbler. The pittance that he earned at the tavern tables where he churned out his old melodies barely sufficed to procure him a plain dinner. But every evening he sat at the cobbler’s table, and when the time came when the rent was to be paid, he did indeed lay his purse before the Master, but there was no money inside it, and the Master taking pity, gave him a few shillings that he might have his coat mended, his linen washed, and new shoes made. But this beneficence on the part of the husband displeased the lady of the house, and she often scolded him for tolerating the old ragamuffin, as she habitually called the fiddler, in the house, and feeding him, like some vermin. But the husband stood firm and continued to do as he had done, and he expressed his maxim: Give, and thou shalt be given. And that came true, in more than one

⁵ In German, “Rabeltern” (literally: raven-parents) and “Rabenkinder” (raven-children).

sense. For first of all, the old fiddler kept him company every evening, and told him the news of the town and of the day, and also often played a merry piece for him free of charge, or sang a fine secular ditty, so that the husband liked to stay at home and saved many pennies that he would otherwise have spent in the inn. And secondly, the minstrel brought him many customers from his peers, who had the money to pay; and the neighbours who heard about the cobbler's beneficent disposition readily gave him work, expecting that he, the kind-hearted man, would be all the more an honest man, and they were not proved wrong in this. And thirdly – but here the people's friend⁶ must interrupt himself to make everything clear to the reader. The fiddler was actually a sly dissembler. For he had, like Judas, a secret purse and he saved up a great deal of money. But he thought, wisely, in this way: 'So long as the Master can live on his work, so long can I live on his charity. If he dies before me, I have at least a little nest-egg which will support me thenceforth, and he may receive God's reward. But if I die earlier, well then - - ' It was the latter that occurred, and as the fiddler had thought, so did he act. He named the Master Cobbler his heir, and after his death no less than two hundred pounds – that is, two thousand and several guilders – were found in his secret purse. That was the third point. – Therefore, the benevolent reader will, firstly, beg the fiddler's pardon if he took him to be a Judas; secondly, he will allow that the Master Cobbler was right, and hold his maxim in honour; and thirdly, he will do the same thing; for the people's friend has not told him this story to no purpose.

⁶ i.e. the author.

But this story took place in the great city of London, where there are 50,000 poor people who rise up in the early morning not knowing if and where they will eat at noon and sleep the following night; and the fiddler died in 1834, according to newspaper reports.

5. Friends in Need

When need encroaches and death approaches, even enemies become friends, if they are human beings. This is shown by the following story.

In one of the earlier wars with France, when there was utter confusion in mist and storm after a battle, a Frenchman fell into a deep hole, a dried-up cistern, which he could not help himself out of, and shortly afterwards a German also fell into it with a thud, and he likewise remained stuck there. The Frenchman shouted: “Kiwi!” And the German: “Wer da!”⁷ and both of them now realised who was there before them, and they could easily run their sabres through one another’s body, like true patriots. But they thought of doing something else – both of them – and they gave each other to understand, as well as they could in broken German and French, that it would be better for the one to help the other than for the two to massacre themselves. Accordingly, now the one, now the other, shouted for help, each in his own language. At length, Germans heard the German’s cries, and they immediately set about saving their comrade. When the German had come up to the light of day, he said quite matter-of-factly: “There’s another man down there, a good comrade.” So he too was pulled

⁷ In both cases, “Who [goes/is] there?”

up. Now when they saw that he was a Frenchman, they wanted to cut him down. But the German would not allow this, saying rather: "We made a mutual promise that one would save the other; he would have done it if those scoundrels the French had got me." This treaty, which had been concluded by friends, was respected by the enemy; and although he was led away as a prisoner according to the conventions of war, he was regarded as a comrade among comrades.

6. Ehren Steffen⁸

Ehren Steffen, who celebrated his Teacher's Silver Jubilee last year, often hit upon singular ideas during the long administration of his office. But the most singular one of all was his most recent one, namely, to convert his school into a constitutional one. The philosophy of life which brought him to this thought was specious enough. The school, he said, must prepare pupils for life in every respect, and for the moral aspect of life most of all. Now, as long as the State had been a monarchical political entity, in which the Prince's will was all that mattered and demanded unconditional obedience from the subjects, for so long could and must the school have a monarchical organisation. Now, however, when the subjects were themselves called into the legislative process in the State, it was time to do the same thing in the school and introduce constitutional government into it. In this way, not only would a feeling for right and duty be aroused in the

⁸ In the first edition (1829), Aurbacher refers the reader to a "curious treatise" by the educationalist and reformer Dr. Heinrich Stephani (1761-1850) which purports to demonstrate how the "up-to-now irrational and, in part, barbaric discipline in education" can and must be remodelled to become "rational and humanitarian." ("Nachweisung, wie unsere bisherige unvernünftige und zum Theil barbarische Schulzucht endlich einmal in eine vernünftige und menschenfreundliche umgeschaffen werden könne und müsse." Erlangen, 1827.)

young citizens at a sufficiently early age, but their understanding would also be made capable of giving serious consideration to the key moments of life and forming correct judgements. Now as Ehren Steffen had the habit of directly giving an outcome to every incoming idea, i.e. of demonstrating in practice what he regarded as appropriate and important in theory, and, as it were, experimenting: so he set about it at once, without hesitation, and he first drafted a book of school-laws in a public and oral procedure; he then solemnly promulgated it in his school; and lastly, after the choice of the committee members etc. had taken place according to the regulations, he declared the Assembly to be constituted. There was great jubilation in the school, as one can imagine.

In the beginning, things went quite well; and it is difficult to decide who derived the greater pleasure from this constitutional school life, the teacher or the pupils. As no lesson passed by in which a legal question or something of a similar kind, did not arise, so debates soon became the order of the day, and the children naturally took more pleasure in this quibbling back-and-forth than in tedious Reading and Writing and Arithmetic. Ehren Steffen being very conscientious, he used every occasion to exercise the children's understanding, be it in the interpretation of the law, or in the determination of disputes, or in investigation and discussion themselves. Political Enlightenment increased perceptibly among his pupils, and he had cause to have great hopes for public life. But soon the constitutional school-citizens began, as one says, to be aware of themselves. The legislator, with his authority, retreated ever further into the background while they themselves moved forwards. They interpreted the

law itself, and, when they could not remove its tiresome components, they learned to gradually circumvent them. Respect for the teacher disappeared; disorder grew in the school; the desire to learn, to obey, had gone for a burton. Ehren Steffen had to think of new laws to put a stop to the mischief. He laid them before the constitutional body, as was proper, for deliberation and approval, and they were unanimously rejected without any debate. This hurt him somewhat; but he consoled himself with the thought that, in order to achieve so great a good as political majority and freedom, one must tolerate any disorder that might arise, and make certain sacrifices. But the mischief became worse day by day. It invariably happened that one and the other of the schoolboys set themselves up as pedagogues and led the mood and opinion of the school. As they were also the most top-notch and the sharpest of all the pupils, they organised the majority so as to formally oppose the teacher and his proposals. Thus, a guilty pupil would be acquitted without further ado; but an innocent one, who refused to consent to the conspiracy, would be accused and condemned. Ehren Steffen, as executor of the sentence, could do nothing but, in the latter case, mitigate the punishment that had been pronounced. The judges would then make up the shortcomings of his execution on the condemned boy out of school.

But he was soon to experience something even worse. It is a very short step from co-legislation to self-legislation. To wit: the pedagogues pointed out to their fellow citizens that a couple of free afternoons in the week were too few, and particularly in the season of fine weather, when one could amuse oneself better outside than in the dark schoolroom. It was

therefore unanimously resolved to make a Blue Monday⁹ and meet in the strawberry patch, everyone without exception, at risk of incurring the strongest disapproval. And this happened; and at their homes, the following lie had to serve as a pretext: The teacher allowed it. Ehren Steffen was somewhat disconcerted when he found himself so alone in the school; he looked at the clock time and time again; he looked out of the window time and time again; no one showed himself. Finally he went, and made enquiry, and then heard what had happened. He himself made his way to the strawberry patch; and after he had read the children a severe lecture on their self-willed behaviour, so unworthy of constitutional citizens, he announced to them withal that he was unfortunately compelled to punish them rigorously for it. The pedagogues, acting as spokesmen, replied: He might, at any rate, pronounce punishment, but it was their due, by virtue of the constitution, to take a vote on it. Ehren Steffen clearly perceived that he would not achieve his aim in this way. He therefore resorted to requesting and exhorting them not, after all, to abuse the freedom he had given them of his own accord; he impressed upon them what detriment would arise for them, what harm for the constitution itself, if the District School Inspector heard of this; he asked them most ardently. – The children laughed at him.

The roguery of the children was too wicked not to be noised abroad. The Inspectors, on investigating the case, discovered all of Ehren Steffen's mad plan; and as the children had simply renounced all respect for him, the

⁹ Basically, to skive off. "Blue Monday" was a day off for apprentices. The term originally applied to wool-weavers in the 14th century. When they used woad to dye wool blue, it required 12 hours dyeing on Sunday and a further 12 hours of oxygenation on Monday, thus enabling apprentices to take the Monday off. – *Till Eulenspiegel*, Trans. Paul Oppenheimer (Oxford: The World's Classics, 1995), p. 201.

civic authorities had no choice but to pension off the constitutional teacher in consideration of the infirmity occasioned by his age.

7. The Tests of Mastery

A man had three sons. When they had come of age, he sent them to apprenticeships with three of the most skilled masters. The first was to become a blacksmith, the second an archer, the third a physician. When their apprentice-time was over, he summoned them home to learn if they had indeed become proficient in their arts. And when he had made sure of this by giving them tests to complete, he took them to Court and the King and offered them their services. Now, during this time, a fourth boy had been born to him, a nescok, of a feeble body but, as later became apparent, of an extremely sharp mind. He was the mother's favourite, to whom she surreptitiously gave everything; and if he happened to get nothing, then he stole masterfully. Now when the three brothers went to Court with the father, he asked his mother if she would take him there too, that he might see the King's attire. The mother did this, without the father knowing.

The three brothers were graciously received by the King, and he proposed to immediately set them tests in which they could demonstrate their mastery. First of all, the blacksmith was to make a swallow's nest, so artful and at the same time so natural that swallows would nest inside it. The blacksmith soon fashioned the nest, and behold! a few days later, a swallow was sitting inside it and brooding the three little eggs she had laid. This gave the King great joy, and he at once appointed the blacksmith his Lord Steward. Now it was the turn of the archer and of the physician. The

King instructed the latter that the former was to shoot through the three eggs in one shot, and he was thereupon to heal the wounded chicks. They said they would do this; but the physician demanded that the eggs be taken out of the nest and then put back in without the swallow, the mother, noticing; for, he said, if the mother flew out of the nest, the chicks would have no more warmth and would perish. The King therefore had it proclaimed: Whoever could take the three eggs out of the nest and then put them back in without the swallow, the mother, noticing, would be rewarded and honoured above all others. Then Hänslein, the mummy's boy, came before the King and said: "I'll do that." And he climbed up onto the roof where the swallow's nest was, and he stole the eggs out of the nest so masterfully that the swallow, not noticing anything, sat there perfectly still. The King then placed the eggs in front of the archer, but in such a way that the third and last one, instead of lying in a straight line with the others, lay to the side. The archer shot from a great distance, and behold! All the eggs were shot through the middle by the sharp arrow, which, rebounding from the nearest tree, pierced its way through the third one as well. All the people were astounded at this, and the King at once made him his Grand Master of the Venerary. Now the physician quickly set about healing the wounded chicks; and he did it in so skilled a manner that the chicks in the eggs moved restlessly as if they had been woken unseasonably from sleep. Then the King said to the physician: "You shall be my personal physician and Privy Counsellor for evermore." Now Hänslein distinguished himself again by taking the eggs and laying them under the swallow, who still sat in the same place, so masterfully that she did not notice anything, but sat still

and continued to brood as though nothing had happened. The King was even more amazed at this feat than at the others, and he appointed Hans his Lord Chamberlain and Major-Domo. And subsequently, he had every reason to be satisfied with his choice. For when the blacksmith fashioned for him the finest and best implements of war and household articles, and the archer delivered savoury venison in abundance to his kitchen, and the physician always kept his appetite good and his body healthy, yet Häslein, his Major-Domo, did incomparably more: he stole one crown after the other from the neighbours, making his master the lord of many kingdoms. But in the end Häslein pocketed a crown for himself, and from that time on he became and was called: Hans the King.

8. Conjugal Fidelity

In the city of Sidon, a Jew had been married to his wife for ten years but had no child by her, and he therefore went with her to the Rabbi, wanting to be divorced. The Rabbi said: "Because you began your matrimony in joy, with eating and drinking, so must you also part in such a way." So the married couple returned to their house together, prepared a lavish meal, and made merry at their farewell feast. The husband said to his wife: "Dear daughter, have a good look round the house, take the most precious thing you find and go home to your father." The wife was silent, and as the husband was evidently in his cups and, having drunk copiously of wine, now fell into a deep sleep, she called her servants and had her husband, together with the bed in which he lay, brought to her father's house. Now when he woke up next morning, he said: "My dear daughter,

where am I?" For answer, she said: "At my father's." "Yes – and how did I come hither?" he asked further. Then she said, "You ordered me, last evening, to take with me the most precious thing you had in the house; well, I know of no precious thing in this world that I would rather have than you." This love and fidelity moved his heart so greatly that he forgot the letter of repudiation and took her back home with him as his wedded wife.

9. Hans, blow out t' light!

In Frankfurt there lived a wine-merchant by the name of Mauskopf (Mousehead) who understood the art of procuring himself money from poverty. That is to say, whenever he heard of a vintager whose fortune was declining towards bankruptcy, he was on the spot without delay, like a raven which circles, expectant of carrion, round the dying. On one occasion, however, he was out in his reckoning. A vintager on Bergstrasse, where good wine grows, was all set to call it a day. No sooner had our Mauskopf heard this than he rushed to visit the man, to strip him of the remainder of his wines. The vintager, on hearing his desire, did not speak much or stand upon ceremony, but simply said to his servant, who was standing close by: "Hans, light t' candle!" and he then directly led the wine-merchant to his cellar, which was already emptied for the most part, where cabbages and turnips, shovels and hoes, empty barrels and racks lay all in a jumble, so that the visitors had to laboriously thread their way through to the very back, where there was yet a full barrel. The vintager, in silence, gave the merchant a glass to taste, and he found the wine to be excellent and hoped to make a good catch. To the question what the hogshead would cost, the

vintager named his price, an extremely cheap one. But the crafty merchant, Mauskopf, offered an absurdly low price. Now what did the vintager do? ... The people's friend once knew a countryman, an honourable linen merchant from the Stauden¹⁰: when a merchant set this kind of ridiculously low price on his wares, he would turn round, stand in a corner of the room and, folding his hands and rotating his thumbs, would mutter through his teeth: "Anger, come tomorrow! Anger, come tomorrow! Anger, come tomorrow!" – quite like what Emperor Augustus did, who, to suppress his swelling rage, would recite the Greek alphabet ... Our vintager, however, did differently; he simply said, "Hans, blow out t' light!" and then he made his way, with Hans, through the cellar, which he knew very well, and did not give the merchant another thought. – Now this man had no end of trouble working his way out of the cellar through the jumble in the pitch darkness. Now he stumbled on a heap of cabbages or turnips, then he fell over an empty barrel or a rack; after that, he collided with the wall, and at last, limping with skinned hands and bumps on his head, he came, sorely vexed, out of that cursed hole of a cellar. By this time, the vintager had gone out into the fields, and Hans, standing by the coach, held out the reins to the merchant, with the whip, after inadvertently catching his face with it. And so he had to retreat empty-handed... Since that time, it has become proverbial in Frankfurt to say, when you will not agree to a contemptible deal: "Hans, blow out t' light!"

10. Of Rights and Freedom

Rights and freedom are no small matter, and you may fight for them

¹⁰ An area of rolling countryside southwest of Augsburg.

like a man, and, should it be necessary, be killed for them. But it should be borne in mind that your neighbour, be he low or high or your equal, has his rights and freedom also, and that you must respect what belongs to others as that which belongs to you, in accordance with the commandment: Love thy neighbour as thyself. – I could present you with examples enough from world history. But this can also be done with a story of a house in a town.

A noble gentleman lived in rooms he rented on the first floor of a house. He was a particular lover of the chase; and when he had covered fields and woods with his dogs during the day, he held a postlude to the hunt in his rooms in the evening, setting the dogs on a stuffed hare to train them. This caused a racket that would have woken the dead. Now there lived above him, on the second floor, a learned gentleman, who also hunted – not, however, after game, but for knowledge, which will have peace and quiet. He politely gave his neighbour to understand that he might want to cease the infernal din, or he could go to Hell. Whereupon the noble gentleman replied: He had the right and the freedom to do whatever he wanted in his residence. What happens? The next day, when the squire was holding his hunt with Halloo! and Huzza! and the dogs were baying and howling as though there were no tomorrow: then our friend of the chase was surprised by a sudden shower of rain, on floors within doors. “What is that?” he asked, first himself, then his valet, then the learned gentleman on the upper floor. Who said, showing him his flooded room, “Sir, you are hunting, as I can hear, and I, as you can see, am fishing. For what is sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander, is it not?” – From that time on, the other ceased to hunt, and he to fish, in the house, and they both lived

together henceforth as friendly neighbours, with their rightful rights and their true freedom unimpaired.

11. Ulysses and his Travelling Companions (An Easter tale)

In old books we read a charming fable about a hero, called Ulysses, who, after various hardships and perils on land and at sea, came to an island where lived an enchantress by the name of Circe. She had the bad habit, from which she derived pleasure, of transforming all those who came by chance to her domain into brute beasts. Just so did the travelling companions of Ulysses fare; he alone, being a cunning man, escaped the transformation; indeed, he even contrived to win the woman's favour and friendship to such an extent that she did his every wish and will so long as he dwelt with her.

One day, when the two of them were taking a stroll together in the green meadows, in the fresh woods, by the airy sea-coasts and other pleasant places, talking of various matters, cunning Ulysses asked the enchantress that, before he part from her, she show him a particular favour, this being: that she might permit him to elicit from the brute beasts who had been his companions and fellow voyagers a reply as to whether they wished to become humans again and return with him to their homeland. The enchantress promised this, and she granted that every beast who had formerly been human should regain his speech and reason until such time as he had given his answer and consent to Ulysses's question.

Mindful of this promise and trusting in Circe's word, Ulysses goes the rounds of the enchanted island on the evening before his departure and

comes at first to the sea-shore. There he sees an oyster hanging on a rock; he asks it: "Are you by any chance one of my former travelling companions, and do you wish to become human again?" – "Yes, no!" says the oyster. "I used to be a fisherman, a truly wretched life! – Often I hung out my net, which caught but hunger, bare and wet: now my food falls my way just as I crave, my shell is my dress and my safe house my grave, in which I am plagued nor by wet nor by cold as in the detestable days of old. Go, and let me evermore an oyster remain, I will not travel with you again."

Ulysses goes and comes into the wood; there a snake is crawling along, whom he asks: "Are you not one of my former travelling companions, and do you wish to become human again?" – "Yes, no!" says the snake. "I used to be a doctor – a worrisome life! – I sought for herbs, but none came my way that could keep sickness and death at bay; now the healing herb is always near, and I get a new life with a new skin every year. Go, and let me evermore a snake remain; I will make no exchange."

Ulysses goes and comes into the open field; there he sees a mole, whom he asks: "Are you one of my former travelling companions, and do you wish to become human again?" – "Yes, no!" says the mole. "I used to be a ploughman – a toilsome life! – Then, when I sowed in the sweat of my brow, others reaped the fruits of my plough; now, when I dig, there's sure to be a table ready-laid for me. Go, and let me evermore a mole remain; I will not travel with you again."

Ulysses goes and comes back to the palace. There a cockerel crows to him from a fence; he asks it: "Are you one of my former travelling companions, and do you wish to become human again?" – "Yes, no!" says

the cockerel. “I used to be a watchman on a ship’s mast – a sad and lonely life! – on high I had to sit, not stirring at all, in hunger and frost, in wind and rainfall; now I’m sitting pretty, with a comfortable bed, with all my women and a roof over my head. Go, and let me evermore a cockerel remain; I will make no exchange.”

Ulysses goes and walks over the front-yard; there he sees a pig wallowing in mud; he asks it: “Are you one of my former travelling companions, and do you wish to become human again?” – “Yes, no!” answers the pig. “I used to be your personal cook – a joyless life! – It’s true, I never suffered a lack of food or drink, but I had my cross to bear with the smoke and the stink; now, all and everything both smells and tastes pretty good, and I can always eat my fill, though it’s not the choicest food. Go, and let me evermore a pig remain; I will not travel with you again.”

Ulysses goes into the house and enters, almost sorrowfully, his chamber. There he sees a mouse leap and run towards its hole. “Hey!” he cries, “are you one of my former travelling companions, and do you wish to become human again?” – “Yes, no!” says the mouse. “I used to be a scout – a dangerous life! – Then, when I roamed around the land, I was threatened by the archer’s hand, and I was often quite amazed, in fact, to get away with my life intact. But now I’m free from care, secure in my little lair, and if I ever follow the desire to come out, I find doors admitting danger all about. So go, and let me evermore a mouse remain; I will make no exchange.”

And so wise Ulysses, as the fable relates, had to depart from the island with his purpose unaccomplished, and return along, without his travelling companions, to his homeland.

Dearest readers! You are perhaps wondering at the blindness and obduracy of these men who had become beasts? But I say to you: If Wisdom itself were to appear on Earth in these days and ask around, saying to this one and that one: Are you not one of my creations, and do you not wish to become human again? “Yes, no!” would be the answer. “When I was still a human, I had a miserable life! each day would bring new suffering, there was no joy without annoy, I had much to avoid and abide, and I had to fight the world with the Devil at its side. Now the life I lead is free and calm, with abounding joy and no manner of harm; I may feast and fast, love and hate, scrimp and celebrate, to my heart’s delight without feeling contrite, and in this life I couldn’t care less about everlastingness. So go, and let me be; Wisdom is not for me.”

12. The Court

A pious hermit who bore great zeal for the welfare and salvation of his own and his fellow man’s souls had a singular vision one day. It seemed to him that a flock of devils were flying away over his head, like cawing ravens. So he asked the last of them, conjuring him in God’s name to give answer: Whither and wherefore were they heading? The devil said: “We are flying to the Underworld, to make Hell bigger; it has become too small for the vicious world.” This intelligence aroused the devout man’s indignation, and he said: “You are telling lies, diabolical spirit: for there have been incomparably more pious people than wicked ones since Christianity came into the world.” The devil replied with a sneering laugh: “That is not so, for the greater the grace, the more grievous the sin, and the more that are

called to their Maker, the fewer become Chosen Ones.” At these words, the hermit was filled with outraged zeal, and he summoned the devil before an angelic Court; which the Adversary was only too happy to accept. – And the angel appeared, holding a pair of scales in its hand, and people came there of every station, of every age in life and every kind, that their testimony might be heard. The hermit straightaway summoned clergymen as witnesses to give testimony on the clergy’s manner of life; and there sounded nought but praise and commendation of their reverence and retiredness and their zeal in the service of God. Then he asked the laity to testify for those of like degree, and they could make only laudatory remarks on their industriousness and modest mode of life, and their exertions and care for wife and child. And so the hermit heard, without pause, the evidence of the men and the women, the youths and the maidens, the people of all ages, stations, and trades, in fitting wise, and always nothing but veneration and eulogy were to be heard. The angel, as the appointed judge, laid every good deed and act of which he heard on the right pan of the scales, and it sank ever deeper and deeper, and at last there lay on it a weight as heavy as a whole world. – But now Satan stepped forward as the adversary and he too summoned his witnesses, first of all the clergymen, to give testimony on the laity, and then the laity to talk of the clergy; and then there came forth reports which completely contradicted those that had gone before. The same thing happened with the others, with the men testifying against the women, and the women conversely against the men, and there was neither end nor limit of censures and reproaches, of calumnies and all kinds of spiteful comments. And the angel, by virtue of his

office, laid every sin and vicious act of which he heard on the left pan of the scales, and behold! it stank ever deeper and deeper, so that in the end the right pan, as if there lay but chaff on it, rose up to the very top. – The Devil was about to triumph, and the hermit to die of grief at the universal corruption of the world; but the angel said: “There is no one able to pronounce just and true judgement, neither in Heaven nor on Earth nor in Hell, save He alone, He who is called the Judge of the World.” And the angel disappeared. The pan of scales was still however visible, as if it hung by itself in the air, and all of the guilt on the one pan, and all of the merit on the other, were cancelled and effaced; and both pans now balanced each other in perfect equilibrium, being borne by God’s grace and God’s justice. Then the hermit rejoiced, and He said: “Praised be the Lord, who does not requite us according to our sins or punish us according to our misdeeds.” – The vision had vanished. But from that time on, the hermit kept an even more careful watch upon his heart, that pride would not creep into it because of his merits, nor timorousness because of his sins and transgressions; and he henceforth strove after his salvation with utter innocence of heart and with faith in the One whose grace endures without end.

13. The Procession of Children

On the third of December 1800, in the morning, the inhabitants in the region of St. Wolfgang and Hohenlinden could not have supposed that, at midday, such a storm would rage around their quiet huts between the

Emperor's soldiers and the French,¹¹ and they therefore sent their children, as usual, to be schooled by the hermit who lived in the forest, a road of two to three leagues from their crofts. And after morning-school had been held, the children sat very peacefully in the schoolroom at midday and consumed their simple lunch, which they had brought from their homes, with a good appetite, and thought of nothing. Then all of a sudden a Bang, Bang! was heard nearby, and Pom, Pom! in the distance. And the hermit, who at once divined what this meant, went out, and he now saw and heard, to his terror, that the battle had come near, and that the children could no longer return to their homes. In the fear of his heart he made a decision which was surely the best he could make in these dire straits. Fetching the crucifix from the chapel, he lined the children up in pairs, and so he passed with the little ones, the sign of peace at the head of the procession, over the field of battle, past pandours and sans-culottes, and the savage men did the children no harm but let them pass in peace. And so they came safely to St. Wolfgang, where the poor waifs were warmly received and taken care of by the inhabitants until their parents came, around evening-time, and took them home. And the parents forgot the misery they had felt at the plundering of their huts in the joy they felt that none of their dear ones had been lost.

14. Bearskin

After the disastrous battle of Varna in Hungary,¹² in which the

¹¹ The Battle of Hohenlinden was fought between the French and the combined forces of Austria and Bavaria. It involved over 100,000 men.

¹² In 1444, in modern Bulgaria.

Christian army was all but annihilated by the Turks, one of the few to escape was a German lansquenet who fled into a thick forest. But in that place, he did not find a morsel to eat; there was no sign of a shelter anywhere and he wandered around, clad in scanty rags, in the wilderness for several days until he at last sank down in exhaustion, unable to go any further. His plight, and the thought of having to perish so far from his fatherland, drove him to despair; after the fashion of wicked lansquenets, he cursed with dreadful oaths his being born a man, and said at the last: "If the Devil doesn't help me here, I don't know who will help me." And behold! the Devil appeared to him forthwith, in human form as a hunter, and he offered him his services, insomuch that he would not only bring him to safety but would also procure for him all the money and goods that he might desire, if he pledged his soul. But this offer seemed to the lansquenet to be so abominable that he hesitated to agree. Then the Devil made the suggestion to him that he at least sign himself over to his service for seven years, whereby he had to do nothing: first of all, do nothing in the way of combing, washing, and cleaning his body, secondly, do nothing in the way of work, and thirdly, do nothing in the way of prayer, and visit no churches. He would only have to keep guard for an hour every day in front of his castle, even if he did so sleeping. For this, he would receive food and drink aplenty, and money and goods into the bargain. But he must procure his clothing himself forthwith, a bearskin, the lord's livery. – All of this was very agreeable indeed to the lansquenet; and as a female bear just happened to be passing by on her way to her den, where she had her cubs, the lansquenet shot her dead and stripped off her skin, which he clothed

himself with. Then the spirit seized him and took him away to his castle, which lay on a desert island in the middle of the sea, where he directly entered upon his service. After Bearskin had performed his guard duty for six years and some seven months – by which time his hair and beard were in such an overgrown and tangled state that there was little left of the image of God in him – then the Devil came to him saying he was no longer in need of his service, and he would now take him back among people, under the condition, however, that he appear among them during his remaining time in this savage state of his; but at the same time, he would deliver to him the hoard of money he had earned, a purse with lucky pennies which would multiply evermore; with that, he might make merry for a while, as well as he could. When it was time, he would come to him again and attend to his next berth. The lansquenet was very glad to come among people again; he was therefore overjoyed when the Devil took him over the sea to Austria, which was his homeland, and where his portrait is shown to this day. There the spirit put him down in front of an inn which lay by a road, where, every hour of every day, many people came along and called in.

At first the people there, catching sight of him, were startled, and directed him to the pigsty for his accommodation. But in return for the money that he threw to them, they gave him food and drink, as much and as good as he wished; and they soon grew so accustomed to the filthy creature that he was treated like one of the family in his sty.

Where, however, his money, which never grew less in his purse, attracted ever more people from day to day; in particular, vagrants, brawlers and dicers, and other riff-raff who called in at the inn. For he had

set aside his dignity; and he who was in the game invisibly, directed things so that Bearskin lost most of the time, which occasioned him no great annoyance as he was sure in possession of his purse. And so crowds of people flocked there, and all the crimes and vices occurred which happen at gaming and carouses, such as drunkenness, lies and deception, robbery and murder, so that this inn was a true chapel of the Devil, and Bearskin was its priest.

And so six months and seven days passed by. Then the spirit, according to its promise, returned to him in the familiar hunter's costume, and promised him help for his future through word and deed. One of these days, said the spirit, a nobleman would come to the inn and enter into play with him. Bearskin would win from him all his money but, at the last, not only offer to return what he had lost, but add a considerable sum on top, on condition that the nobleman give him one of his daughters to wife. As the Devil had said, so did it happen. The nobleman, having lost all his money at play in a short space, sold the eldest of his three daughters to Bearskin for the sum offered, and took that man back with him to his castle, so he might receive his bride and take her home. But when the young woman saw the man, her bridegroom, in the bearskin, with a long beard, uncombed hair, and grimy complexion, she was startled, and fell into such despair that she threw herself into a river. But the youngest, a wanton girl, on the second daughter's refusal, offered the filthy rich man her hand of her own free will, and Bearskin accepted it. He promised to return after seven days, by which time the preparations for the wedding should have been made.

When Bearskin had thus finished his courtship, the Devil came again

and said to him: Now it was time that he present himself in a different outfit, get himself steeds and a carriage, together with a body of servants, and generally assume aristocratic habits and behaviour. And he did as he had been advised; and now, when he entered the nobleman's castle so equipped, everyone was astonished that filthy Bearskin had become so handsome and rich a cavalier. The bride, the youngest daughter, was particularly delighted at this transformation. But her sister, from envy and resentment, grieved so sorely that she hanged herself on the wedding-day. And so Bearskin had, in the end, delivered two sacrifices to the Devil, his master, besides which the third one could not escape him. After several years, which she had spent in wanton living with her husband, the youngest daughter also became a corpse. As for Bearskin, the Devil himself fetched him at the last.

15. The House-Ghost

There are house-ghosts; so rumour has it. – In Untermeier's¹³ house, after the grandmother died, there were spooky goings-on both night and day, and the ghost gave the people no peace unless they were at work or at prayer. Early in the morning, even before the church-bell had rung out, the carry-on began in the house. The farmer and his wife often thought they heard a cock crowing down from the tester of their bed. Lene, the maid, who liked her sleep, was often awoken by an ice-cold hand passing over her face. And Kunz, the lazy farmhand, lost his blanket, the spectre whipping it away so he lay there naked, making him wake up. During work,

¹³ A kind of deputy steward of farmlands.

whenever anyone rested or reposed without need, the ghost was there on the instant and played all manner of pranks on the people. The farmer's wife liked to sit and gossip with her neighbour on the bench before the house; at that time, small stones would suddenly fall down from the roof and walls, driving her away and into the house. Meanwhile, the farmer was quick to seek the parlour, where he smoked his pipe to kill the time; but suddenly a leg of his chair came off and he fell down, or a bumble-bee buzzed around him so persistently, giving him no peace, that he stood up and went back to work. The farmhand, when he would keep looking out of the dormer window from idleness while cutting chaff in the loft, received something on his nose from a horrible bird which flew past; and the maid, when she was standing at the well washing the linen and chewing the cud with other maids, was suddenly drenched with water, but where it came from, she did not know. In short: if the people wished to be left in peace by the ghost, they just had to get down to work. For then, the blessings that fell to their share, without doubt also the work of the house-ghost, were visible and palpable.

Farmhand and maid could often not understand how they were able to do their work so effortlessly. If the farmhand, for example, had wood to load and unload, it almost seemed to him that the logs stirred and shifted and formed themselves into piles. And when the maid sat at her distaff, it was a delight to see how the spindle whirred and the thread span, and she had the reputation of being the best spinstress in the village. But the blessing of the house-ghost was felt most strongly by the farming couple themselves. The barn was full all year round; the cattle gave enormous

yields; and there was always more money in the chest than they needed. Moreover, the people were healthy and stayed so, they ate and drank with indescribable relish, and, best of all, they preserved peace and unity among themselves. – Thus did several years pass in Untermeier's house. Afterwards, however, their situation changed, and at last became dire. The women were to blame for this, the wife and the maid. The wife, seeing so much money in the chest, wanted to have more handsome clothes, a richer farm, and higher standing in the village. The maid, in her turn, had her eyes on the farmhand and wished to get him for a husband, and, with him, a home as well. So the two of them colluded. The men walked into the trap; they were enticed, like mice by the smell of bacon. The wife now became Obermeier (Chief Stewardess) and the maid Untermeier. But that proved to be their undoing. The house-ghost, it seems, did not like this deal; from this time on, there was no further sign of it. Now as there was no longer anyone to exhort and punish them, they gave themselves up to idleness and luxurious living, and soon fell so heavily into debt that their farm estates were brought under the hammer. – Therefore, whoever has a house-ghost, let him thank God for it; and he may bear in mind that he cannot drive the ghost away without, at the same time, running the risk of having to leave the house himself as well.

16. The Master and the Servant

The master sat in the coach, the servant on the box-seat. The journey was towards the Würmsee, several hours distant from Munich, whither the principal citizens are in the habit of making an excursion on

leisure days. In the beginning, as long as they drove through the familiar, busy area, the master asked many questions, to which the servant gave short and sensible replies; the conversation treated horses, their faults and virtues, agricultural implements, what needed to be replaced and bought, and fodder becoming dearer year by year. Now they arrived at the Electoral Park; the coachman alighted to open the gate, and after he had carefully led the steeds through, he closed the barrier, as the law required. Now while the carriage rolled over the straight and smooth road through the park for a long stretch, the learned master took out a book and read, and the servant gave way to his thoughts, which had been weighing heavily on him for a long time. The benevolent reader shall learn the secret directly. A respectable widow, of the Fuchsbräu brewery, had offered her hand to the honest fellow. The woman was not unpleasing to him; her business would feed the husband; everything would be just right. But on the other hand, when he considered that he would be leaving such a good, gracious master, who had been satisfied with him, as he himself had been with *him*, for so long a time now, then a great weight seemed to burden his breast; and troubled by these reflections, he sighed out loud. The master heard it; he bent forwards to see if the servant were asleep and dreaming; but when he observed that he was only lost in thought, he let the horses and coachman go as slowly as they pleased. By this time, they were approaching the far gate, which kept the park closed on the other side. The coachman was still too absorbed in his own thoughts to notice the barrier. Behold! A man appeared from behind and opened the gate while the horses stood still of their own accord. Now the servant awoke from his reverie; and presuming

that it was a beggar who had hurried over to perform this service, he benevolently threw him a kreutzer as reward, without looking round at him. Then he drove quickly through the opening and further on his way. But suddenly he heard a cry of "Stop!" behind him, and when he looked round, he descried his master coming after him on foot. He collected his thoughts; he gave a start. "This is how it goes, in the world turned upside-down," said the master, after he had taken his seat again, - "the servant sits still, and the master must alight to open the gate." Thus did the master jest. But the servant took him to be in earnest, and he said, "Gracious master, be patient with me but for today, I'll pull myself together as well as I can; but tomorrow, drive me from your service, if you like, for I deserve nothing else." "What's wrong with you?" the master asked sympathetically. "What's wrong with me?" the other replied, "I'm a fool, I'm in love, I'm no use for anything!" And now he explained the whole business, and poured out his overflowing heart to his gracious master. Who became thoughtful: he loved the fellow as a loyal and diligent man and was loth to lose him; on the other hand, he did not want to stand in the way of his advancement, indeed, it delighted him whenever he could help his people to their fortune. After some reflection, he said: "We shall give this further consideration and speak of it again when it is time. Drive on!" So the servant drove on in good spirits, and he now paid assiduous attention to the carriage and the horses; and in the evening, when they returned the same way, he remembered to open the gate both times. – Roughly eight days had passed since that time, when the master summoned his servant and said to him: "Listen! All is settled for your marriage, if it's alright by you. The widow, whom I have come to know, is an

honest, industrious housewife; she will bring you a home and a trade, and you can lie down in a made bed. Thus have I concerted with her, and the match is arranged.” The servant was moved to gratitude by his master’s graciousness; the proposal was accepted, and the wedding consummated four weeks later.

That is a story from the good old days. Both men, the master and the servant, are to this day held in good and glorious remembrance by high and low. Still today, when in Munich the talk turns to honourable citizens, old Fuchsbräu is spoken of as a paragon of activity, honesty, and friendly and convivial society and nature. But if the talk turns to highborn, insightful officials, level-headed and thoughtful scholars, worthy and affable noble gentlemen, then *one* name is named before all others: the Chancellor Baron von Kreittmayr,¹⁴ the Bavarian legislator.

17. French is learned here

During the long time when the French lived in Germany every one of us had opportunity enough to learn French, and even every peasant well knew what Buger (=bougez / move), tutswit (=tout suite / at once), l’arschan (=l’argent / money) etc. meant. But one should not be surprised at this – for even animals learned it, as the following story proves. A Frenchman had stayed a little late in an inn, and he went home to his quarter, quite drunk, after time was called. On the way, he wanted to know what o’clock it was, and he knocked at a hut and asked in French: What time? But the hut was a pigsty. The sow inside answered in French (in proper fashion, through the

¹⁴ Wiguläus Xaverius Aloysius Freiherr von Kreittmayr, 1705-1790.

nose): ons! ons! which in English means: Eleven. The Frenchman further asked if it was long since the hour had struck? Then the piglets inside answered, likewise in French: wui! wui! which in English means: Yes. The French said: Schwuremersi (=Je vous remercie / I thank you) and continued on his way. When he came home, he saw by the house-clock that they had been perfectly correct, those people in the hut.

18. An Apology for the Peasants

It is commonly said that peasants are stupid and uncouth. How wrong this is will be shown by the following story, as one of many. – A peasant had honey for sale in the market of a small town. But when he opened the honey-pot, a swarm of flies flew over and completely covered the container, and no attempts to fend them off or scare them away did any good, and the people who would have bought turned away in disgust and walked on. Then the peasant, angry as he was, decided to bring an action against the flies with the Mayor, and he did it. Was that stupid? No. It would have been stupid if he had brought an action against the Mayor for not having had the town cleaned of filth, and so feeding and breeding vermin like flies, to the injury of the vendors, who did, after all, have to pay their market tax. – And so the Mayor had to give the peasant justice, whether he wished to or no. And he said: “I hereby proclaim all flies in the town to be outlaws, and you may strike them dead wherever you find them.” The peasant was satisfied with the judgement, and as a fly had just that moment landed on the Mayor’s nose, the peasant immediately struck it, as was his right. Was that uncouth? No. It would have been uncouth if he had intended

to hit the Mayor's nose and not the fly. So he was able to beg forgiveness, which he did. And as he had received, he said, the right of life and death over all flies, so he would now set about cleaning the guildhall of the vermin. And that same moment the clerk, who had laughed at him, also received a blow to the chops. – In short, if they did not all wish to feel the peasant's fist, they had to buy his honey to get rid of him. The peasant wanted nothing more than this, and he thanked them for their custom.

19. On the Inequality of the Classes

Under the village lime-tree, after divine service, a seigneurial mandate was read out to the peasants, its content being: They had to pay. The peasants did not like this; but some of them, the more sensible and upright ones, accepted it, thinking it was just and customary, and there was no escape from taxes or death; but others muttered and grumbled all at once, and spoke of common folk's burdens, and of the luxurious lifestyles of noblemen, and of the difference of the classes, and of the equality of all men; and the tinker, who had to pay the least, ran his mouth the most. Meanwhile, the priest came out of the church and past the lime-tree, and the tinker, the worst and the most audacious man there, walked up to him and said, "Father, be so good as to explain to us the saying: 'When Adam ploughed and Eve span, where was then the nobleman?' and tell us how it finally came to be that men have become so very unequal in standing, means, rights and duties." The priest, who knew his man and understood his drift, said: "I shall tell you." And the peasants stepped up closer to him. "When Adam ploughed and Eve span," the priest began, "then Eve begat

many children. There came a time when Our Lord wished to visit Eve and see how she kept house. Now just then, she had all her children with her and she was washing them and dressing them neatly. But when Eve saw Our Lord approaching her, she hid some of them in the straw, some in the hay, and some in the mouth of the stove, but she kept the most handsome of all with her. Our Lord looked at the spruce children and spoke to one of them thus: 'You shall be a king'; to a second one: 'You shall be a prince'; to a third one, He said: 'You shall be a nobleman'; to a fourth one: 'You shall be a mayor'; to a fifth one: 'You shall be chief magistrate, governor, or magistrate.' Now when Eve saw her children who were out in plain sight being so richly endowed, she said: 'Lord! I have more children than this; I shall bring them here too.' Now when they came, they were dirty, black, and ill-favoured; their hair hung down full of straw and hay. Then Our Lord looked at them and said to them: 'You shall stay as peasants, cowherds, and swineherds, ploughmen; several of you shall follow trades in towns, brewing, baking, and serving the great lords.' Finally one more child came forth, who had been lounging behind the stove, the filthiest of all; to him, Our Lord said: 'You shall be a tinker.'" The priest's words delighted the peasants, and they laughed at the tinker. Then the priest turned to an old, honourable man and said: "What I have told you is a fable, and is not in the Bible; but it is in the Bible that all classes come from God, and they should be held in honour; as it is written: Render therefore to all their dues; tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom is due; fear to whom fear is due; honour, to whom honour is due."¹⁵

¹⁵ Romans 13:7.

20. A Cruel Joke

In England, where scoundrels are given short shrift as a rule, there exists among its laws one which states that, when a criminal condemned to death names another as his accessory, his evidence is accepted as conclusive and the indicated accomplice is also hanged without further ado. Once, such a criminal took the liberty of playing a cruel joke. As he was led to the gallows, he heard one of the spectators who were standing by the road say out loud: "I wonder how he feels!" There was not exactly any mockery in these words, but no particular pity either; rather, it was simply an expression of that stupid, staring curiosity which, in our land as well, drives not only the lower orders but also educated ladies and gentlemen out of their homes when a blood-offering of such a criminal is made to justice. "I wonder how he feels!" said the Englishman. The scoundrel heard this; and he looked at the man who had spoken the words; and he saw that he had spoken so from anything but pity. Then the thief turned to the justice who accompanied him and said: "That man, standing there among the spectators, was my helper in the theft, and so he must suffer death." The man indicated was immediately seized and detained. At his hearing, all his denials availed him nought; for a condemned criminal had testified that he was the man, and he could not prove that he had not been. So he was condemned by the jury to death as a thief. On the following day, the two of them sat on the cart which had the gallows as its destination, and the road was well-nigh empty of curious spectators as the vehicle rolled by. After they had reached the place of execution, the first man asked the second:

“Do you know now, comrade, how a man feels when he is led to the gallows?” “Yes indeed! More’s the pity!” said the other. Then the first man turned to the justice and said: “I retract my testimony. He is innocent of the crime of which I accused him. I only wished to have my fun and provide him with the opportunity of experiencing how a dead man feels.” So the accused was – set free? The people’s friend does not know; but he hopes so. For whoever is once delivered, according to the laws of England, into the hands of the executioner – who has to write out a personal certificate of receipt to the gaoler – he is a doomed man with no hope of being saved. Therefore let us thank God that we are judged according to German laws – I do not mean the scoundrels, but the rest of us, we honest folk.

21. A Brave Priest

In the year 1809, when there began to be rumblings among the peasants of the Tyrol, a District Magistrate summoned all the priests of his district before him to impress upon them that they, in conformity with the duties incumbent upon them, should exhort the people to obedience towards authority, and gravely admonish them against all mutiny. Then a priest spoke the words: There would certainly not be anyone among his fellow clergymen who would not consider this duty to be his and perform it conscientiously; but they, the pastors, could only preach the words *peace* and *justice*; the authorities must give weight to their words through deeds, mainly by ensuring that right and justice were administered to everyone.

This remark displeased the District Magistrate, and when he at last dismissed the clergymen, he said to that priest: “I shall keep a particularly

close eye on you.” “And I on you, Your Honour,” replied the priest in a soft yet meaningful tone. And he soon had the opportunity to fulfil his promise. For on the way back to his house, he met, in a narrow pass, several men armed with carbines, whom he straightaway recognised to be people from his parish. Suspecting no good, he asked them: “Whither so late, you men?” “We want to say hello to the District Magistrate,” replied one of them, pointing to his carbine. From the words and behaviour of the others, he anticipated only the worst. “Men,” he said, “I ask you, go back! You are on a dark road; it does not lead to salvation.” Their words became louder, more disorderly, more furious. “Men,” the priest said again, “I command you in the name of the Lord, whose word it is given me to preach: go back!” Initially, all was quiet; then a man stepped forward out of the back row and said: “Father, if you wish to preach, then do it down from the pulpit; this isn’t the place.” And he was about to shove him to one side. But the priest took a couple of steps back, tore open his coat and vest, and cried: “If you wish to do me violence, then do it! Shoot a bullet through my breast and then stride away over my dead body, I will not yield the way!” The peasants stood motionless. “Do it, I tell you, and then cut out my tongue and nail it to the pulpit, where I have preached to you so often, in vain; and hack off my hand, which so often blessed and fed you at the altar, in vain! And tear the heart from my body - - ” A murmur of approval went through the ranks. Then the oldest among them, acting as speaker, said: “Men, the Father is right; let us go back.” And they did that, and they dragged the worst man in their number away with them. Thus did the priest fulfil the promise he had made the District Magistrate: he would keep a particularly close eye on him.

Afterwards, the District Magistrate, who had in the meantime been transferred to another jurisdiction, learned what danger had threatened him, and to whom he owed his life; and, so the people's friend has heard, he thanked his saviour in writing, as did his wife, in the name of her unweaned baby.

22. The Loan¹⁶

Who does right and good is pleasing to God, whatever his race... A young scholar, a Jew, who wished to prepare himself for the office of Rabbi, appeared one day before a very rich man, who was his co-religionist, to request a loan from him. He wanted, however, no monies – for he had no need of them with his very modest manner of life – but only a few rare and precious books, which he needed for his studies and which, as he knew, the rich Jew possessed among his treasures. – After the young man had expressed his request in a humble manner, the old man said: “What’s the point of begging and beseeching? I’m a merchant and give money, but only for wares, and make loans, but only, indeed, for good percentages.” The supplicant hereupon replied: Unfortunately, he could not exactly give percentages, for he was penniless, and had barely enough to supply the necessities of life. “Well, what of that?” replied the old man. “I’ll make a deal. The gentleman will make over to me a third of God’s reward, which will be his one day for his labours in God’s service.” The young scholar consented, and the old man at once took him to his library and let him search and choose at his own discretion. Hereupon an exact list of the loaned books was drawn up (the columns for the prices remaining blank),

¹⁶ Called “The Jewish Loan” in Aurbacher’s editions. This is Sarreiter’s title.

then signed with that stipulation by the receiver, and finally deposited among the notes of hand by the lender. – And here the benevolent reader will doubtless think: To desire a third of God’s reward from the future income of a young man, as a Rabbi, as a scholar, as a husband, that is truly something more than Jewish. And this is how the young man interpreted it, and yet he agreed to the treaty, because he wanted, at any price, to make himself capable of the office that he sought to earn and to receive. – But the event, as just happens to be the way of the world, turned out quite differently. The young man died a few years later, before he had attained office and money and wife. – The father of the deceased directly brought the precious and rare books back to the rich old Jew with the politest expressions of gratitude. He well knew – he said in a shy, hesitant voice – that his son had received these books as a loan for a percentage of a third of God’s reward. But he, for his part, was unable to pay the interest, and he, who had borrowed them, was even less able, as he had acquired nothing in life, and was completely undone by his death. “What?” said the old Jew, “acquired nothing? Completely undone? Did he not live and strive to seek God’s wisdom in the Books of the Fathers, to teach God’s wisdom one day in the community of the Chosen? Truly! The Lord will reward him for that, and that part for which I stipulated will come my way, for God is just in His reckoning.” He immediately tore the letter to pieces and declared that he considered himself to have been paid the capital and interest; and the father could consequently regard the books as his property and realise their value the best he could, as he saw fit.

This story took place in Munich many years ago; and the man who

told it to the people's friend is a grandson of the man who did it. Do you wish to know what the old Jew was called? God knows his name!

23. The Sacks

A poor farmer was driving one day out the town from the corn-exchange, on his way home, and during the journey he counted the few guilders he had got from selling grain, and he calculated that, once he had paid the due taxes, and paid for household essentials, he would have nothing left over with which to treat himself and his wife and his children even for a day. While he sat with these sad thoughts, driving slowly down the road, superb coaches rattled and splendid horses stamped past; and those who sat in the coaches and who rode the horses were hurrying towards a nearby village located nearby, where they spent the evenings in revel and riot; and he recognised them to be so many noblemen and merchants and innkeepers and tailors and shoemakers, all gentlemen of note. At this sight, resentment and anger stirred in his heart, and he ruminated over how very unequally and unjustly honours to wear and crosses to bear are divided on Earth among men. Then he lay down in the body of the cart in an ill humour, and taking a byway off the main road, he let the horses trot slowly onwards while he himself fell asleep. Then he had the following dream. It seemed to him that he was entering a large, magnificent hall, and on the walls all around there lay sacks of various shapes and sizes, and on the sacks were various symbols: on the one, a crown, on a second, a coat of arms, on a third, a chalice, etc. While he looked around, filled with wonder, it seemed to him that he heard someone

say: "Help yourself!" He did not need to be told twice, and he instantly attempted to carry away the sack which bore the sign of a golden crown, richly adorned with pearls. But oh! The sack was so heavy that he could not lift it. He now attempted to carry off the second and the third, but they too were so heavy that he sank down under their weight after a few steps. And he tried this with the following ones also, which were likewise too heavy for him. "Hm!" he thought to himself, "*one* of them will be right for me; and even if it contains less of value, it's something all the same, and I can be satisfied anyhow." He tried and tried further sacks; and at last, he found one that he thought would be easy to carry away. But when he observed it more closely, he saw that it bore the sign of a plough; and he said: "That is suited to me, a farmer, and the Lord has surely determined it for me." And he lifted it up and walked away, happy with the – albeit slight – treasure that the sack concealed. At this he awoke – and the cart with the little horses had just halted before his hut, and his wife and children came over and greeted him. He rubbed his eyes and thought upon the strange dream he had had, and what kind of meaning lay in it. Meanwhile, the mother came closer to him and said, "Father, I suppose you've drunk a pot too many, that's why you look so troubled?" But his countenance lightened, and he reached his purse to the mother, saying, "There, take it! It's not heavy, by any means; but God be thanked! It's just as much as we need; and what more could we want?" Then he got down from the cart, and he pressed his wife's hand, and took his two little children in his arms and carried them into the parlour. Then, when the mother had brought in a bowl full of milk, he took out the white roll he had brought with him and crumbled it in, and they all ate. And he told the

mother about his strange dream, and said what was to be learned from it; and they enjoyed, in their poor hut, a happiness which those gentlemen in their coaches, and on their horses, and at their beer and wine and hams and pies, most probably did not have that evening.

24. The Choice of Station

A father had three sons. When they had come of age, he gave serious thought to allocating each one of them a station in which they might find their fortune and contentment. But as he, being a wise man, clearly perceived that a man is the maker of his own fortune, he wished before all else to test their disposition and mentality, in order to learn which skill they would actually be able to use in the world and how they could serve their fellow men. To this end, he summoned them to him one day and proffered an apple to the eldest son, saying: "Share this with your brothers!" The son cut the apple up and gave a part to each of his brothers, but as for the biggest part, he kept that for himself. Then the father thought to himself: "He will make a good burgher and merchant; for such a one seeks a small profit for himself in all things, that he may have a secure income and good living." On the next day, when the sons had appeared again, the father handed an apple to the second son with the direction to share it with his brothers. He cut it into three equal parts and readily gave his brothers their share. Then the father thought: "He will make a good soldier and adventurer; for it is necessary in the field and on the road that good comrades are at hand to help at all times, and share their table and bed with one another as brothers." Finally, on the third day, he bid his sons

come to him once again, and this time he gave the youngest son an apple, with the instruction to share it with his brothers. He cut it into three parts and kept the smallest part for himself. Then the father thought: "He will make a good labourer and farmer; for such a one must always make do with the slightest and worst morsels, while the others may live in comfort and leisure off the work of his hands." And so the wise man fixed his resolution accordingly, and directed each son to the station for which he held him to be suited. And later on, he learned that he had judged and chosen perfectly correctly; for the eldest son acquired, as a merchant, much money and many goods; the second won fame and standing in the world; and the third, who was very modest in his wants, led a life of content in his hut with his wife and child.

25. The Clocks

In the city of Basle, all the clocks ran an hour late in former days; so, for example, when it was eleven o'clock in Liestal, the bells in Basle struck full twelve. This peculiar habit had arisen at a time of great trouble, as the chronicle relates, namely: the common citizens of Basle once intended to revolt, and the next midnight, at the twelfth stroke, had been fixed for the launch. The council, informed of this in good time, thereupon ordered all the clock bells in the city to skip the arranged hour on the night in question and strike one o'clock instead of twelve. The insurrectionists were thereby thrown into confusion. Each one imagined that he had missed the hour; and because all had remained quiet and peaceful in that hour gone by, every one of them believed that his fellow conspirators had had second thoughts;

he therefore sat still likewise, and nothing came of the intended revolt. But in remembrance of this event, and as a reminder that the authorities are constantly vigilant, the gentlemen of the Council had the clock bells continue to run as they had been set on that night.

A long time later – the inhabitants had grown accustomed to the singular arrangement, as though it had to be so – the decision was made by the Council that, to keep in step with the spirit of the age, the clock bells of Basle would be brought back into conformity with those in the rest of the world. And so, one night all the clocks were put back by one hour. Then you should have seen the confusion this gave rise to throughout the city! On the next morning, the journeymen and other workers came to work an hour too late, the buyers and sellers came too late to the market, the children and other people came to church and to school too late. There were quarrels and strife everywhere, in all families. Certainly, at eleven in the morning, everyone sat down to table at the right time (hunger knows no hours); but all the more lethargically did they go to work at twelve o'clock, they who were used to beginning work at one o'clock. The afternoon ran by peacefully and in orderly fashion in general, except that some aunts and gossips who had been invited for three o'clock (old style) arrived at three o'clock on the dot (new style), thus an hour too late, so the coffee had evaporated and the milk had turned, causing great disgruntlement. But it was in the evening that the rumpus began. A great number of countrypeople who were in the city, and many townspeople who were out in the country, failed to observe the time at which the gates were closed, which had formerly been fixed at seven o'clock but was now set for six

o'clock. Much grumbling was occasioned by the penny fines which the gatekeepers demanded. But it was at ten o'clock that the discontent came to a head and burst out, the hour of closing time in the inns. The citizens, already infuriated by the innovation, as they called it, and heated by the drinks they had imbibed, refused to leave the drinking-parlours. "It is the custom," they said, "that the inns are not closed, and their guests not shown the door, until eleven o'clock. That is what's written. The esteemed Council had no authority to arbitrarily make new ordinances and curtail the ancient rights of the citizenry. Obedience is due from those below to their superiors only as long as those above do justice to their subordinates." When the counsellors heard this, and later received the news that there was the danger of an organised revolt by the common citizenry, then they assembled at that same hour at the parish house, and after short deliberation they came to the conclusion that, regarding the matter of the hours, things should remain as they had been of old. So at the time when the hour should have struck twelve, it struck one; and the citizens, when they heard this news, returned contented to their homes. From that time on there was peace once again in the city of Basle.

Readers who wish to draw a moral from every story can here take these: First of all, the purpose of every appointment in a house and in a town is order and peace. Secondly, custom, habit, one's own will, are the heaven of society, as of the individual. Thirdly, and lastly: if a people are a century too late, or a century too early, it is no matter – if, under the prevailing circumstances, the people are what they can and should be: good, through order, and happy, through peace.

26. The Hare-Hunt

I don't know if it was a Swabian or a German from another region who was once led a merry song and dance by a hare. Now, a long and continuous spell of rainfall had so inundated the region that almost all the wild animals living on low ground had perished. In this calamity, a hare had saved itself by swimming to a willow-tree which still rose up above the water. A peasant saw this from his lonely hut, and he thought to himself: The hare would be safer in his kitchen than there on the tree, where it would eventually have to drown or starve to death anyhow. So he nailed a few boards together and rowed towards the willow-tree, to fish the hare. But it perhaps had its own thoughts and plans in its head, as what ensued would seem to confirm. For when the peasant arrived and lifted himself up onto the branches, the hare seized the moment and leapt over the peasant onto the wooden vessel, which, set in motion by the leap, now floated away whither the water took it. At the next hill it came to, the hare leapt onto dry land and thanked its saviour, so it seemed, with a most charming caper. But the peasant would no doubt still be sitting up the tree if his neighbours had not fetched him home, and they laughed their fill at him and his hare-hunt.

27. The Mastership

In days of yore, executioners were, as a rule, called Masters. How far they developed their bloody trade can be read in the following story from the Regensburg Chronicle. When the executioner there died in 1601, three headsmen from the neighbourhood applied for this post. They were

informed that three malefactors who had been sentenced to death were sitting in prison; each of them should attempt his masterpiece on one of these, and whoever wielded the sword of justice best, that man would receive the position. – Now hear how very masterfully they acquitted themselves. The first one marked a ring around his criminal's bare neck with ruddle, and when decapitating him, he cut through the ring exactly. The second one placed two threads around his condemned criminal's neck, and he executed the stroke so well that he did not damage a thread in the slightest. Now it was the turn of the third headsman, who was a big, strong man; the people thought he could not possibly outdo the first two. He cried in a loud voice from the scaffold: "How should I go about it, so he proves me to be the best?" Now when everyone had run up, wishing to see how he would manage it, if he too would make a circle or ring around the neck; and when the other two headsman, who stood beside the condemned man, and, wishing to pay particular attention, clumsily and inquisitively stuck their heads forward: then the Master hurriedly struck out, and cut off, with one stroke, the heads of the criminal and the other two headsman, and thus did he prove his masterpiece to be the best and become the executioner.

28. The Test of Nobility

It means something for a man to be a member of the nobility, and so he may well boast of his ancient lineage and name, as did these four: The Baron von Riedesel (Ride Donkey), the Baron von Gebattel (Give Saddle), the Baron von Aufsess (Mount), and the Baron von Palm. They were sitting together feasting, and when they had drunk their fair share of wine, and so

become merry, von Gebstattel said to von Riedesel: “You really have a curious name; who were your forebears?” Von Riedesel said: “My ancestors and my nobility are as old as the Christian calendar. When Christ the Lord was about to ride in glory into Jerusalem, my ancestors gave him their donkey, for there was no horse available; and in commemoration of these we are named Riedesel.”

Then von Gebstattel said: “Our lineage is no younger, and our merit no less; for my ancestors gave Lord Jesus a saddle, that he might ride the more comfortably on the donkey. For that reason, we are called Gebstattel, and we rightly pride ourselves on the name.”

Now it was von Aufsess who spoke: “But the merit of your ancestors would have come to nought without mine; for, stirrups not yet being in use at that time, my ancestors helped the Lord Jesus up with their hands, for which reason we have been called Aufsess ever since that day.”

Now it was the turn of von Palm. He said: “And my ancestors distributed palm-branches among the people, to make the entry of Christ the Lord a truly ceremonious one; consequently, our name and our merit are rightly praised just as much as yours.”

Thus did the four talk together, and they clinked their glasses, and toasted their nobility. And they were right to do so; for it means something, as we have said, to be a member of the nobility. Although, it must be admitted, when a noble is an ignoble man, then – he and his nobility mean nothing.

29. Folk-Legends from Franconia

1. In Rothenburg an der Tauber, there is an alley called the Freudengässchen (Alley of Joy). There, in days gone by, the executioner had his residence. To explain how the alley came to have this name, the following story is told. When, after the Battle of Nördlingen, Tilly entered Rothenburg,¹⁷ a sumptuous repast had been prepared for him and his people at the guildhall. At this feast, they were proffered wine of Rothenburg vintage, and of the best, in a large tankard which can still be seen today. But when Tilly put it to his lips, he found the wine to be quite abominable; and thinking that the Rothenburgers had given him this drink to mock him, his blood boiled, and he said to the Mayor and the councillors: "This wine of yours shall not prosper you. For I tell you this: if one of you does not empty this tankard in one draught, then you are all dead men." And he had the executioner fetched without delay, that he stand ready with his sword to strike off their heads one after another. Then one of the younger councillors, moved by patriotic feeling, took pity on the rest, and stepped up and drank all the wine in one draught, as fell Tilly had demanded. Thus did the Mayor and councillors escape with their lives, and the executioner withdrew without having performed his duty. This occasioned great joy in Rothenburg. And because of this event, the alley in which the executioner had his residence was named the Freudengässchen from that time on.

¹⁷ General Tilly, one of the leading Catholic commanders in the Thirty Years' War, captured Rothenburg in 1631, three years before the First Battle of Nördlingen.

2. Near Rothenburg an der Tauber there is a rough, wild path, called the Knee-breaker on account of its steepness. There, in ages past, a dreadful deed took place, and all who walk this way shudder as they think of it. The story goes as follows. At that time, three men were sent from Rothenburg to the Emperor's Court to take the lord a request from their town. The Emperor received the envoys affably, and he began by asking one after the other for their names. The first said his name was Vetter (Cousin), to which the Emperor: "that is a very fine, friendly, neighbourly name." The second one, when asked, said his name was Bruder (Brother). The Emperor: "that is an even finer name, which really warms one's heart. And what is your name?" the Emperor finally asked the third one. After some hesitation, he replied, somewhat sheepishly, "My name is Mörder" (Murderer). "O fie!" said the Emperor, "that is a nasty, a bad name, it's enough to make one's skin shiver." The Emperor said this in jest. But that man took his words to be in earnest, and envy and resentment stole into his heart, and because the others twitted him about it, so there also stole in, at length, hatred and revenge. So as they were returning home, he attacked the other men, in sight of their native town, on the Knee-breaker, and slew them. The murderer was caught and executed for his deed; and he was the last of his line at Rothenburg an der Tauber.

30. Folk-Legends from Upper Bavaria

1. The miller of Pfaffendorf was walking one winter's night from the inn at Brunnen through the graveyard, the shortest way to his village. It was biting cold, and he had on a fur coat. Now as he walked by the

burial-place of unbaptised children, he called teasingly into their little home: "Children, aren't you cold?" before continuing on his way. But he had not taken a hundred paces when he heard a rustling and rushing behind him, and when he looked around, he saw countless little lights flitting towards him. In the anguish of his heart, he cast off his fur coat that he might run all the faster. So he arrived, utterly exhausted and frozen, in Pfaffendorf.

On the next day, he wished to fetch his fur coat; but he did not find it in the same place. He did, however, see, as he walked through the graveyard, a little ball of fur lying on every grave, and he fell into musing.

2. A peasant lad from Pfaffendorf, who had caroused and danced in the inn at Brunnen late into the night, was walking homewards through the graveyard at the midnight hour. Then he saw that a sheet was hanging on each cross, and he quickly supposed that, as he had often heard people say, the spirits had risen from their graves to perform a dance in the moonlight. Now he had also often heard: When a living person stands astraddle a grave, the spirit cannot go back into that grave. In his drunken bravado he wished to try this, and he did it. At the last stroke of twelve, all the sheets on the other graves disappeared; only on the one where he stood did it remain hanging. He took this as a sign that he had banished the spirit. But his schadenfreude did not last long. For a tremendous fear came over him, which grew ever stronger, until he almost passed out. Furthermore, he could not move from the grave, no matter how hard he strained himself or how many times he tried. Early in the morning, when the sacristan came to toll the Angelus, he heard a moaning and groaning from

this grave; he walked towards it and carried the half-dead lad away, who soon afterwards, having barely finished his confession, left this life. The ghost, it seems, came into its grave before the Angelus; for no sheet could any longer be seen on the cross.

31:1. Folk-Legends from Lower Bavaria: I. The Little Clock.

Not far from Reischach, in the district of Oetting, there stands a secluded chapel, dedicated to the Mother of God. From its tower, the sound of its little bell often rings out; one might think that it was pulled by ghostly hands, for there is no hour of the day or night when it does not, now and then, make itself heard. The story of this chapel and the bell is told as follows: Many, many years ago, when the region round about was yet wood and wilderness far and wide, a pilgrim, walking on the road to Oetting and its wonder-working image, was attacked by robbers, who robbed him of all he possessed and beat him close to death. In the fear of his heart, he vowed to build a small church on the spot if he, through the grace of God and His mother, came away with his life. The robbers left him for dead; but he made a miraculous recovery. He therefore fulfilled his vow; he built the chapel and provided it with a small bell. On the votive tablet he had hung up in the chapel, he placed the request that every pilgrim who came this road would ring the bell to honour the Virgin Mary and pray for his poor soul. And that happens still, up to the present day.

31:2. Folk-Tales from Lower Bavaria: II. The Little Spring.

Not far from Roding, in the valley of Rosental, there lies a mountain, and on this stands a church called 'At the Little Spring.' Even in ancient times a fresh, clear spring flowed there, whose water collected in a basin further down. The grass around was so lush and the fount so refreshing that a herdsman liked to drive his herd there, where it found sufficient food and cool shade under beeches and fir-trees. One evening, when dusk was exhorting him that it was time to return, he wished to first quench his thirst at the spring. Then, as he walks to the edge of the basin, he sees a beautiful statue of the Virgin floating on the water. With joyful longing he tries to grab it; but the more he reaches for it, the deeper the statue sinks, until it at last disappears from his sight completely. When he came home, he told the priest about the miraculous apparition. On the next day the priest, accompanied by many of the Faithful, went to the place, and behold! the statue of the Virgin appeared again, as the herdsman had reported, on the surface of the water. The priest lifted it out without any difficulty and carried it into the village church. From that time on, great miracles took place at the spring. Many people, who suffered with their eyes, or had lame limbs, or were otherwise debilitated, retrieved their health. Therefore, to honour the Virgin Mary, a House of God was built on the spot, and the statute transported thither. In the present day, the spring still flows through the middle of the church, and many who are sick still find alleviation and healing at the place of divine grace 'At the Little Spring.'

32. Abbas the Wise

A king kept at his court a wise man by the name of Abbas, that he might avail himself of his counsel every day, and learn from him much that was useful besides. One day he asked him: "What could this world and the life of man be compared to?" The sage requested time to contemplate this; at first one day, then three, and finally seven. And when he came before the king again, he said: Next to the question, What is God? there is nothing more difficult to answer; the more he thought about it, the less could he find the answer. He therefore asked the king for leave, that he might seek out other wise men and ask their opinions.

Abbas came first into a distant, large city, where, as he had heard, another wise man resided. When he had found him – he lived in a magnificent palace and was the house-friend and table-companion of a king, and himself lived like a prince – Abbas put his question to him. He said: "The world is to be compared to a large and splendid hall in which open table is always held. There, anyone who so wishes may sit himself down, and the stars in the heavens will shine for him, and the birds make music for him, and fragrant flowers emit their scent for him; and the table is laid with manifold dishes of every kind, and the wine gladdens his heart, and everything beckons him to sensual gratification; and guests sit there continually, affording agreeable conversation, and maids perform merry roundelays; and – when you have partaken of this for a good while, and have finally had your fill of the sport and the pleasure, well, you stand up and go and lay you down to rest."

When Abbas had heard this, he parted from that place in sadness;

for, he thought to himself, that was no true, complete picture of the world, in which there is so much of wretchedness and misery, without end. And he walked on, and he wended his way to a distant desert where, as he had heard, a hermit lived, a wise and pious man. When he had found him – he lived in a cave and wore a hairshirt, and roots were his food, and water his drink – Abbas proposed his question. The hermit said: “The life of man is to be compared to a narrow pass which a man goes through. On the one side, precipitous, barren cliffs rise up, from which boulders break loose every now and then; on the other, a deep abyss opens up, in which a torrent rushes from cliff to cliff; and between them there stretches a narrow, slippery path, and the sun burns fiercely on the crown of the wanderer’s head, and his feet are cut by the sharp stones, and he cannot still his hunger with the fruits which hang from the steep cliffs high above, nor quench his thirst with the water that rushes in the abyss deep below. And when he looks behind him, he perceives a snake following him and threatening his heels with death, and when he looks ahead, he sees a lion with open jaws wishing to devour him. And nowhere does any sign of rescue or help appear, but there is only despair and death all around.”

When Abbas had heard this, he once again left in sadness; for he well knew that this also was no true, complete picture of the world, in which there is so much joyfulness and such abundance of good deeds. And he walked on, seeking the length and breadth of the land for another wise man from whom he might receive the true answer. One day, he met a man who then bore him company. As he heard much wisdom in his words – he wore ragged clothes and went barefoot, yet his mood was cheerful and

light-hearted, and his beggar's knapsack was chock-full of foods and other choice things, – so he asked him on the off-chance if he could not possibly tell him what the world could best be compared to. The beggar said: “Listen to the following story. A dumb man asked a blind man, if he happened to see a harper he might point him towards him, that he might cheer up his melancholy son with music. The blind man said: ‘I have seen such a splendid musician only recently, I shall at once send my crooked son, who cannot walk, to go and fetch him.’ And the boy found the harper, who had, however, no hands; yet he let himself be persuaded to make the melancholy one merry through silent music. Then the blind man looked on in amazement, the dumb man praised the minstrel beyond measure, and the crooked man danced around with the greatest delight. Now, when this was noised through the house, a fool also came along, who was so tickled by this farce that he burst out in loud jubilation. In the meantime, Wisdom was passing by the house, and looking in at the window, and seeing the spectacle, she said gravely: ‘Look there at a true sketch of the childish, foolish, and fatuous world!’”

Abbas heard this with an even sadder mind; he himself knew fine well that life, even if accompanied by much folly and many lies at moments of its course, yet contains a deeper earnestness and sacred truth. And he left the beggar and now turned his steps homewards, asking God that He might yet reveal to him the secret of life.

Now when he came before the King, in a joyful mood, he reported to him what he had learned from the other wise men; and the King felt, with him, that none of their answers was the true one. “And now,” asked the King,

“what do you make of it?” Abbas replied: “Lord, allow me to tell you everything that happened to me on the journey. I undertook it, as you know, at your behest, and your favour supported and accompanied me. Of the good and the bad I experienced during that time, I shall remain silent; neither the one nor the other is comparable to the pleasure with which the man who serves you is rewarded. I thought only to fulfil your will, that I seek for the truth among mankind and then return home to you, to render you an account of my exertions. Now judge for yourself whether I am worthy of your grace or no.”

The King kept silent and reached him his right hand as a token of his favour. Abbas, deeply moved, continued with the words: “So I thought to myself, when I descried your palace in the distance, and my heart was heavy, that I would be coming before you with no personal merit. And behold! then the scales fell from my eyes, and I now saw that the life of man is itself just such a journey, a wandering through the world, to do the will of the King of Kings.”

Then the King embraced him, and he placed a valuable ring on his finger, and he said: “From this moment on, you shall be to me as a father.”

33. The Tailor on the Moon

A tailor who was wandering in the other world lost his way and ended up on the Moon. To the Moon, such a man was welcome. “I am always so terribly cold,” said the Moon, “particularly in the freezing winter nights; and a warm coat would do me no end of good.” Whether the tailor liked it or not, he had to stay where he was, and he took the Moon’s measurements

straightaway. But he had a very big back and a thin, thin stomach, and he looked rather like a tailor who is sitting on his stool. Meanwhile, the coat was soon ready, and it suited the Moon as nicely as could be, in spite of his misshapen figure. But look! now the customer swelled from day to day, and his stomach became ever fatter, and the coat ever narrower. So now the tailor had his work cut out with retouching, undoing, and adding. In the end, the Moon became big and fat and as round as a ball, and the tailor could only just roll out enough cloth, and had only just enough time to finish the job, night after night. Now, the tailor finally believed he would be able to rest and be given leave to go. But what happens? Now the Moon began to shrivel up good and proper from day to day, so that his clothes became ever wider on him and hung loose on his body. Indeed, what was even worse, he now waned, like a real changeling, at the back, while at the front he kept his paunch, and at last he looked like a tumbler who arches his body backwards until his hands press the ground. Then there was never-ending work for the poor tailor: again and again he had to retouch and undo and take away until it was right. Finally, after three weeks, he got to rest; for the Moon lay down to sleep and was not seen again for several days. Now our tailor, who was sick of the heavy workload and the long labour, secretly left the Moon and continued his wanderings. But whether he came into Heaven in the end – that is not known.

34. The Cock of the Walk

In the days when it was still the custom to have Fools at Court, a Prince had such a wag, who was well-known and liked for his merry tricks

and wise conceits. At noon one day, when those at Court went to table, but the Fool was yet to appear, the Prince said to the invited gentlemen: To punish the Fool with a good grace, he had a prank in mind: every one of them should conceal an egg about his person and, when he gave the order, produce it. Now when they were all sitting at table, and there was a babel of voices that had grown overloud, the Prince cried out, in apparent annoyance: "There's a cackling and clucking as if a covey of hens were gathered here! But now I want to see the eggs they'll lay, and be quick about it!" And he turned to the next man, who was sitting beside him. This man ducked and stooped forthwith, and strained, and laid the egg before him on the table. The next man, then the third one, then the rest, did the same, as their turn came around. Finally, it was the Fool's turn to lay an egg. But he stood up on his seat and beat his arms, as if they were wings, and crowed: "Cock-a-doodle-do!" "What's all this?" asked the Prince. "Well," the Fool replied, "in a place where there are so many hens, I suppose there must be a cock as well, don't you think?" This conceit delighted the lord, and the Fool not only avoided the intended punishment but also remained what he had been up to that time: the cock of the walk.,

35. The Fruit-Tree

A King had a beautiful tree in his garden which bore the most exquisite fruit. But it so happened, year after year, that the fruits no sooner became ripe than they were taken from the tree in one night, without anyone being able to catch sight or hold of the thief. Finally, the King commanded his own sons to supervise the fruit in turn. The eldest one,

whose turn it was in the first year, thought to himself: "Am I not a King's son with power over my servants to make them keep watch instead of me!" And he straightaway summoned many men, equipped them with weapons, and posted them all around the garden every evening, that no thief might be able to approach and strip the tree unseen and unpunished. But notwithstanding this, all the fruit was fetched away in one night without the robber having been observed by the guards. In the following year, the care of the tree and its fruit was assigned to the second son. This one thought to himself: "Why should I take the weary trouble to keep watch, where all force is actually in vain? It takes artifice to catch the cunning." He therefore summoned skilled men and instructed them to make an artful hedge of iron around the tree, of such a kind that nobody could force their way in and anybody who climbed over it would not be able to come out again. The hedge was fabricated in good time. But the tree was picked clean of fruit in one night, without any trace of the robber being perceived. Now it was the turn of the King's youngest son, who was considered by the people to be an idiot. Ready and willing, he made his way to the tree and slept during the day when other people kept watch, and kept watch by night when other people slept. Now when the decisive night arrived, he saw a white dove fly up, pick one apple after another, and carry them away. He could not scare it away, and he did not wish to kill it; but he was curious to see whither the little creature was taking the fruit. So he took the direction in which the dove flew away each time; and just as she carried the last apple past him, he found himself before a mountain crevice, into which the dove disappeared. He at once descended, and when he came deeper into the cleft, he espied

the white dove ensnared in a spider's web and struggling frantically. He instantly tore the threads asunder, and when he had detached the last one, behold! a beautiful maiden was standing before him, a Princess who had been enchanted and whom he had now set free. He took her home and married her. And with the fruit, which lay heaped up in the rocky crevice and consisted entirely of precious jewels, he possessed a treasure such as no King on Earth could call his own, for which his brothers envied him not a little. But the tree itself, in the palace garden, bore no more fruit from that time on, and in the end it withered and died.

36. The House-friend

Once, a handsome youth served at a King's Court, and he was friends with a noble in the city who had a young wife. Now when he was not required to serve, he went to his friend's house and ate with him and his wife, for he held him very dear. As this happened often, the wife became inflamed with love for him, yet in such a way that her husband did not know nor suspect it. However, she was chaste and did not reveal her love to the youth in any way, but bore her sorrow in secret.

It happened, nonetheless, that the house-friend had to set out on a journey, as he was wont to do; then she took to her bed, sick with longing, and her husband called doctors to her side. They examined her and said to her husband: Whether she had some trouble of the soul, they could not discern; they had found no bodily affliction in her. Then her husband implored her to reveal to him what ailed her. But she blushed bashfully and confessed nothing to him at first. Later, however, she opened her heart and

said: "You know, my lord and husband, how you, moved by love and ingenuousness, have brought young men into your house; and I, a wife, suffer for the youth, your friend." When the husband heard this, he kept silent and let the matter be. But when the friend returned, he walked out of his house towards him and said: "You know, my friend and brother, how I have always loved you, and that, for this love, I liked to see you in my house; you ate with me and my wife." And the other replied, "Indeed sir, that is so." Then the husband continued, "Now look, my wife has conceived an amorous passion for you and is in danger." – When the youth heard this, he became very sorrowful for the sake of the love he bore his friend, and he said to him: "Do not be mournful, dear friend! God will help her." And he went away and shaved off his hair, and coloured his head and face, and had his eyelashes and eyebrows removed, and utterly debeautified himself, so that he looked as though he had long been leprous. And clothing himself in sackcloth, he entered his friend's house and walked, in this condition, up to the sick woman's bed, by which her husband was standing. And he uncovered his head and countenance, and said: "Oh, what has God done to me!" – The wife, when she saw that he had sunk from such beauty to such contemptibleness, was greatly surprised and shocked. But God, who knew what the youth had done, took the struggle with temptation from her, and she straightaway stood up, and all evil inclination had left her. Then the youth took his friend by the hand and said: "You see how God has helped so that your wife shall suffer no injury to her soul; but she shall not see my face again."

37. The Housewives

1. A good wife is worth her weight in gold. A man from Weitmoser, a simple and sincere countryman in the Gastein Valley, learned the truth of this. He came upon the notion of seeking gold by the nearest way, namely in the mountains themselves; and he knew what he was doing and that there would be a good yield with time. But while he was digging ever deeper and deeper to come to the gold-bearing depth, his money ran out, it all having gone on this work, and nobody was willing to lend him money against an uncertain outcome. So he sat there one day – it was the joyous feast of Easter – sunk in melancholy thoughts, at a loss what to do and where to turn. And there was so little money in the house that he could not even procure a piece of meat for himself and his family to put on the table at this holy festival. When his wife saw her husband's sorrow and heard his laments, she went out and secretly sold her veil; and with the money she received, she was able to bring meat into the house, and there was a penny surplus so her husband could drink a pint to drive his grief away and cheer up his spirits. The story of the veil was bruited about the village that same day, and the entire valley that same week, and it came to the ears of His Eminence the Archbishop of Salzburg that same month; and he extolled the love and fidelity of the wife, and the sincerity and industry of the husband. So the good bishop bid the Weitmoser come to him, and he advanced him a substantial sum, that he might proceed with the work he had begun to its completion. And the mine was reopened and worked further, and before the borrowed money was used up, precious metal came to light; and there was gold after gold, ever more and more; and in the end, the Weitmoser

became so rich that he was able to give each one of his daughters a dowry of many, many thousand guilders.

2. Wealth begets haughtiness, haughtiness begets poverty. A woman of Weitmoser, of whom legend makes mention, learned the truth of this. Resplendent in sumptuous clothes and adorned with jewels, she was passing one day through the Klamm, a mountain pass which leads into the Gastein Valley. There she met an old woman who asked her for alms. The rich, proud woman refused to make her a donation and called her an impertinent beggar-woman. “Ah,” said the poor woman, “no person knows today if he will not have to go begging other people’s charity tomorrow.” Then the woman from Weitmoser pulled a valuable ring from her finger and threw it into the River Ache, which rushes down through the Klamm, and said: “Sooner will this ring be found again than a woman of Weitmoser will have to go begging.” – But, just look! on the next day a fisherman brought a fish whose stomach contained the ring. – So tells the legend. The House of Weitmoser did indeed fall into decline, and nowadays only the house in which they lived is shown, and tales are told of the wealth they had. But the line has died out.

38. Poor Misery

Adam and Eve had, besides many other children, one of a truly ugly appearance, wherefore they drove him away and named him Misery. Poor Misery would certainly have perished in the desert if the good Lord had not taken pity on him. He came, in His benevolence, to Misery and said: He

was to make three wishes, which He would grant. Then Misery wished first for a wild pear-tree, whose fruits would give him the nourishment he needed; secondly, Misery wished that everyone who climbed the pear-tree would not be able to come back down without his permission; thirdly, Misery wished Heaven for himself after death. God granted him all of these. And so Misery lived a long while in a wretched manner. At last, he fell ill and suffered great pains. Then God thought to take pity on him again, and He sent Death to release poor Misery from his troubles for evermore. But when Misery saw Death standing before him, he was shocked, and he asked Death: If he could just fetch him a few pears down from the tree, that he might eat of them one more time before he left this life. Death did this; he climbed up the tree, cut off a whole branch with his scythe, and threw it down to starving Misery. Once Misery had eaten of the fruit, he recovered his health. Now Death wished to come down from the tree; but Misery, who had discovered new lust for life, would not allow this, saying: He would release him from the spell only if he promised never to return. And Death gave this promise. So poor Misery lives among us to this day, and he will continue to live on Earth until the Day of Judgement.

39. Consolation in Suffering

A man who had lived in great wealth, in luxury and idleness, lost all he possessed and was cast into dejection. To divert himself and to recover his spirits, he left the town and walked around the countryside. He came first to a village; there he saw a peasant turning over the corn with a shovel in his barn. He asked him why he was doing that; the peasant replied: So

the corn would not suffer damage and fall into corruption. After that, he came out into open country, and he saw a peasant ploughing. He also asked him: Why was he doing that? The peasant replied: So the earth would become loose and take in rain and sunshine. He walked on and came into a vineyard, where he saw a peasant pruning the vines. He asked him likewise why he was doing that; the peasant replied: He pruned the vines so they would bear plentiful and good fruit.

Then the dejected man looked into his soul, and he said: “Why is my heart filled with such bitter anguish? I am the wheat that must be winnowed so it does not rot. I am the earth that is torn up so it can receive blessings from Heaven. I am the vine that must be pruned so it bears good fruit for eternity.”

And from that time on, he bore his troubles humbly, as a correction from Heaven.

40. On Temptation in Faith

If they are called blessed who do not see and yet believe, so they must be called holy who doubt and yet do not give way, in their doubt, to despair. Listen to an example of this.

One day a great scribe came to a pious bishop, to whom he wished to confess; but he could not utter a word for weeping. The bishop spoke encouragement to him, saying: No man could sin so much that God, the Merciful, would not forgive him. The scribe said: “Then I say, that I cannot help but weep, for I regard myself as a heretic, because I cannot bring myself to believe that God became man; I also know fine well that this

comes from the temptation of the Evil One.” The pious bishop replied: “Master, pray tell me, when the Evil One sends you such a temptation, does it please you?” “Your Grace,” the scribe replied, “it is as disagreeable to me as it possibly could be.” “Now I shall ask you further,” added the bishop, “if you would not take either gold or silver to let words pass your lips that denied the divinity of Christ or his other divine properties?” “Well, Your Grace,” the scribe averred, “you should know that there is nothing in the world which I would take to do that; I would rather have all the limbs ripped from my body than let such words pass my lips.” “Now,” the bishop continued, “I shall speak to you of a different matter. Listen! If the King, in the war he is waging, were to entrust you with a fortress that lay next to the border with the enemy, but he were to entrust me with another one that lay in the centre of the land and far distant from the theatre of war: which of us two would the King, after the end of the war, have to thank most, you, when you had defended the threatened border fortress for him, or me, who had kept for him a castle in no danger?” “By God!” answered the scribe, “me, who had defended the border fortress for him.” “Master,” the bishop hereupon replied, “I say to you, my heart is like the unendangered, safe castle that lies in the centre of the land; no temptation and no doubt as to the divinity of Christ disquiets me. I therefore assure you: if God is once pleased in regard of me, who believes in Christ steadfastly and in peace of spirit, then He will be thrice pleased by you, because you have kept your heart intact in the feud of temptation and are so devoted to Him that you will not deny Him for the sake of any earthly goods or the fear of any bodily suffering. I say to you therefore: be at peace; for in this matter, your

condition better pleases the Lord than mine.” The scribe now left that place consoled, and he afterwards learned that the temptation to unbelief had served to confirm his faith.

41. Saint Augustine and the Little Boy

Saint Augustine, the pious bishop and enlightened Church Father, went for a stroll one day on the seashore, reflecting and pondering how he might penetrate the great mystery of the Triune God. Now, when he had walked along the shore, engrossed in these thoughts, for some time, he noticed a little boy sitting on the strand, assiduously scooping water out of the sea into a little pit. The holy man at once walked up to the little boy and asked him: What was his intention, why was he scooping water with such assiduity? The boy replied: “I want to scoop all of the sea into this little pit.” Augustine smiled at this and said: “How may you hope to scoop all of the wide and deep sea into this tiny little pit?” Hereupon the boy replied: “And how may you be so foolish as to expect that you will penetrate the great and deep mystery of the Triune God with your tiny understanding?” This answer confounded the holy Church Father, and when, recovering from his astonishment, he saw the little boy no more, the latter having disappeared; so he clearly perceived that God had warned and instructed him through an angel that Man should not try to lift the veil before the Holy of Holies, which remains hidden for adoration, even to the angels.

42. A Domestic Scene, or: Our Old God is Still Alive

It was morning on a Sunday. The Sun shone bright and warm in the parlour, soft, refreshing breezes passed through the open windows, and outside under the blue sky birds sang for joy; and the entire landscape, dressed in green and adorned with flowers, was like a bride on her special day. But while joy reigned everywhere outside, in the house, in that parlour, misery and sorrow brooded. Even the housewife, who was habitually happy and high-spirited, sat at breakfast today with a clouded countenance and despondent looks, and at last she stood up from her seat, not having eaten anything, and, wiping a tear from her eye, hurried for the door.

But it did indeed seem that a curse was hanging heavy on this house. There was a dearth in the land; trade was a bad way; taxes had become ever more oppressive; the state of the household declined from year to year, and in the end there was no other prospect than poverty and contempt. This had made the husband, normally an industrious and methodical citizen melancholy for a long time now; to the extent that he despaired of being able to earn a living in future, and sometimes even expressed the desire to make away with himself and put an end to his miserable, disconsolate life. And no amount of persuasion on the part of his wife, who was habitually light-hearted, was any help, and all the grounds of comfort advanced by his friends, both laity and clergy, effected nothing, but only make him more silent and gloomy. The benevolent reader will think it no surprise that, at last, the wife also lost all her high spirits and joyfulness. But there was a quite particular story behind her sadness, as we shall soon hear.

When the husband saw that his wife was mournful also, and hurrying

away, he stopped her and said: "I won't let you out of the room until you've told me what's wrong with you." She kept silent for a while, then opening her mouth, and fetching a deep sigh, she said: "Ah, dear husband! Last night I dreamed our dear Lord had died, and the dear angels had attended His funeral." "Simpleton!" said the husband, "how could you possibly take something so foolish to be true, or even think it? Dearest, do but consider that God *cannot* die." Then the good woman's face suddenly brightened, and grasping and tenderly squeezing both her husband's hands, she said: "So He is still alive, our old God?" "Yes, certainly!" said the husband. "Who on earth could doubt it?" Then she embraced him, and looked at him with her lovely eyes which radiated assurance and peace and joyfulness, and she said: "Well then, beloved husband, if our old God is still alive, why don't we believe and trust in Him – He who has counted the hairs on our head and will not allow one to fall out without His knowing, who bedecks the lilies of the field and feeds the sparrows and the young ravens who cry for food?" With these words, the man felt the scales suddenly falling from his eyes, and the ice which had lain around his heart breaking up. And he smiled for the first time in a long while; and he thanked his dear, devout wife for the artifice she had employed to bring his dead faith in God back to life, and for calling forth his confidence in Him. And the Sun now shone even more genially in the parlour on the countenances of contented people, and the breezes wafted more refreshingly around their transfigured cheeks, and the birds sang for joy more loudly, in the gratitude their hearts felt to God.

43. A Virtuous Merchant

A poor day-labourer was working for a rich merchant in Munich; and the merchant lives yet. He appeared before him in his writing-room one day and said: "Sir, I have a big request. My wife has been ill full eight weeks, and doctors and apothecaries cost money. And I need that right now. I don't want it given, but loaned – some four to six crown dollars." The merchant looked at him for a while, and then said very solemnly: "Hansel, the man who wants to borrow money from me is my enemy, and wants to become that." Although Hans did not understand this, he realised at least that the merchant would not give him any money. So he went, scratching behind his ears, back out the door. When the man had gone, the merchant summoned the house-servant and said to him: "Do you know where Hansel lives?" The house-servant replied: "Yes sir, behind the pigsties, not far from the cavalry barracks." "Here," said the merchant, giving him eight crown dollars, "take this to his house and give it to his wife, and there's really no need for you to say whom it comes from. Do you understand?" The house-servant duly took the money to its designated place and did not say whom it came from, but only that he was so-and-so and served such-and-such. And the day-labourer, when his wife told him this, knew what to do. The next day, on a Sunday, he came to the merchant in company with his wife and said: "Sir, we are just come from Church, and - - May God recompense you a hundred thousand times!" He said no more. The merchant drew the bill of exchange on Our Lord, and He pays him abundantly in goods and honour, and in his many beloved grandchildren.

44. Folk-legends from Upper Swabia. 2: The Fiddler

One day a fiddler left Blonhofen late in the evening to go home. On the way, he came upon an inn that he had never seen there before; and inside lights were still burning, and people were dancing and making a great deal of noise. Thinking that he had lost his way, he went in. He was bidden to play, and he did, and those who danced paid him with gold coins. Towards morning, one couple after another left the inn; and when the church-bell in Blonhofen rang to prayer, all of a sudden everything vanished, the inn included. The fiddler was sitting on the gallows. And when he looked about him for his gold coins, they were nothing but shards of glass. He threw them peevishly away. But later, after arriving home, he found a coin in his pocket, and it was a gold coin. He then went back to the gallows to search for the coins he had cast away; but he could not find a single one.

45. The Lady of the Castle (A Legend)

“Now we have a quarter of an hour to Kaufbeuren; we have reached the Märzenburg,” said the master-weaver to his chum, who had come to pay a visit. “You’ll look for the castle in vain,” said the master, “it has been swallowed up since time out of mind; but the remains of walls are still found down in the depths, and the Lady still walks, up to the present day. If you were a Sunday’s child and a bachelor, you would be able to hear her and free her. She whizzes, whoosh! whoosh! around you and suddenly sits herself on your back. Now whoever carried her into the town, and three times around St. Martin’s Church, would free her, and he would receive all the treasures which lie hidden there in the Märzenburg. But God protect us!

The ghost, who is initially as light as a feather, becomes heavier step by step, and at last weighs on your back like a load of lead. Nobody who has tried it has survived as of yet, and all of them succumbed miserably.” – “You are full of merry tales,” his chum then said, “and the road does not – I’ll say! – seem long beside you. What you relate there is something many men have certainly encountered elsewhere as well; in the beginning, they are all as light as feathers, the women; but they become heavier year by year, and at last the husband succumbs under the burden of the wife, without having found either release or a treasure.” “You are a wag,” the master remarked, “and you know the real meaning of the story. But it is true, as I told it to you, believe you me.” “I have to,” said his chum, “because, sad to say, I’ve experienced it myself.” With this edifying conversation, they arrived in the town.

46. The Basketmaker and his Wife

When the first basket was finished, the basketmaker said to his wife, who was just walking in the door: “Praise God! the basket is finished.” The woman, who had long had her fill of the lengthy endeavour, said pertly: It was about time. That vexed the basketmaker; he lifted a bundle of twigs up from the ground, very deliberately, and spoke: “Dear wife! Say it with a good will: ‘Praise God, the basket is finished.’” But his wife said: “That’s what I won’t do.” “Then I’ll teach you to,” said the basketmaker, and he fetched her a couple of blows about the back; the woman screamed blue murder; and at the noise, their neighbour came in and asked what was wrong. The basketmaker told him the story truthfully, and the neighbour thought that

one should not be so fast to weigh in with one's fists because of some few little words. After he had thus brought the husband to reason, he went home and told his beloved other half about the business. "Our neighbour's wife was right," the woman said, "and if I were in her place, I wouldn't do it either." These words rather annoyed the husband; and here, as there, it came first to bandying words and then to fisticuffs. The wife told the story to her female neighbour that same hour, and so was it passed on, from one to the other, in the village that same day; and the women, chatterboxes that they are, told it to their husbands, and every one of them appended: And she wouldn't have done it either, if she had been in the basketmaker's wife's place. As a result, all the husbands did to their wives what the basketmaker had done to his wife. The report of this then passed from village to village, from town to town, and in the space of one year almost every wife in the entire Holy Roman Empire received blows from her husband. And still today, any wife who agrees with the basketmaker's wife is taken to task by her husband, and that according to rights.

47. Should I? Or shouldn't I? A schwank

An old widow, 70 years of age, came upon the notion of marrying once again. However, before deciding to take this step, she wished to first ask the Mother of God, Our Lady of Good Counsel, what she would say to this, whether yes or no. She therefore went into the church in an afternoon hour, kneeled and prayed before the altar of the Mother of God, Our Lady of Good Counsel, and spoke out loud, so she might hear: "Tell me, should I marry again, or shouldn't I?" But the Mother of God was silent, and said

neither yes nor no. Over the next few days, she came again at this hour, when she believed nobody to be in the church, and prayed and asked, but still she did not receive an answer. In the meantime, the sexton, who was a roguish fellow, had been eavesdropping on her. After she had gone, he walked over to the Christ-Child that the Mother of God had in her lap and made a mechanism in it which allowed him to turn its head any way he wished. On the following day, the marriage-minded old woman came into the church and before the altar again, and said: "Tell me, should I marry, or shouldn't I?" And look – the child's head moved, as though it would say: No. The woman stared and gaped and rubbed her eyes; but when she looked over again and asked once more, "Should I or shouldn't I?" the child shook its head once again, as though it would say: You shouldn't. This made the woman angry, and she said to the child, "What's it have to do with you, you saucy nipper! As long as it's fine by the mother!"

48. The Bavarian Diogenes

Only the contented man is happy, and only the man of simple needs is contented. But people of this sort are very rare in our days; and so the people's friend must cast around in earlier ages to find an example for his point of doctrine.

One day, when the Elector of Bavaria, Max III,¹⁸ was amusing himself on a wild boar hunt, which is a dangerous amusement, a boar which had been shot and wounded burst into the path and ran full of fury straight at the Elector, who was the nearest person to him. The lord would

¹⁸ Maximilian III Joseph, the "much beloved" (1727-1777),

without doubt have come to harm or even lost his life if a beater, a vigorous and level-headed countryman, had not possessed his fair share of courage and presence of mind. He swiftly ran over, seized the wild boar by one of its hindlegs, and wrested it with a jerk to the left, so that the savage beast ran straight off to the right, where it was finally finished off by the pursuing hunters. The man, however, had disappeared among the crowd of beaters in the meantime, and that would have been the end of the matter.

But Max, the Benevolent, when he was taking his midday meal in a nearby lodge, asked particularly after the brave countryman, and he commanded that the man be sought for and brought to the castle. This duly happened; and the beater appeared, in his torn jacket, with a tanned face, and tangled hair, and barefoot. When he entered the hall where the Elector was with his retinue, he pushed his cap to the side, very firmly, down over his ear, and looked in awe at the laced gentlemen who were standing around the Elector. But the Lord himself, who was simply dressed, he did not see, and his heart became uneasy. Meanwhile the Elector walked towards him, and with that affable manner that is peculiar to good Princes, he said to the man: "You saved my life today. I thank you. And now ask for a favour."

The benevolent reader will now be racking his brains over what favour the valiant man requested of the gracious Elector. A hundred Bavarian dollars would certainly have been something, a pretty sum indeed; even better, some kind of serving-position at Court, e.g. that of an electoral oven-heater or hound-feeder or even Groom of the Stable – all highly respectable and lucrative appointments. None of these occurred to

our countryman and compatriot; he rather thought something completely different, and all the while he turned his cap between his hands, and stared before him, and kept silent. The gracious Elector now repeated his words, and said in a louder voice: He was to ask for a favour. Then the man opened his lips at last, saying, while his eyes once again wandered over the laced gentlemen: "I'd like t' be outside." And without waiting to be given leave, he turned around and hurried out of door and gate.

In the evening, the man was sitting back in his hut, and refreshing himself with black bread and a jug of beer; and he thought of the forest, and of the Court, and that it was less nerve-racking to be among the wild bears than to be among the laced gentlemen. And he felt just champion. Then, late that evening, one of the Elector's hunters walked into the room, saying: "Our gracious Elector sends you his greetings, and he sends you this by way of thanks, you know what for." And he gave him a roulette of Bavarian dollars. The man said, "There was really no need for't; but ah'll accept it; an' I thank him kindly." And he brought out a little bottle of brandy, and poured for the hunter, and he drank with him to the health of the most gracious Father of their country.

49. Master and Apprentice

The master sat in his workshop chiselling at a Hercules. Then one day his little son came to him and asked: "Father, what are you making there?" The father replied: "I'm fashioning a Hercules." And then he told him what a very big and powerful man he had been, and how he had slain lions and snakes and giants, and done many wondrous, heroic deeds. The boy

said: "Father, I want to make a Hercules too." – "Do that, my child," the master replied with a smile. And he gave him a lump of clay, out of which he could make the Hercules. Some time later, the father asked: "How are you getting on with your Hercules?" The boy replied: "It's not going right, I'd rather make a trooper." The father nodded and said: "Then make a trooper." After a while spent in silent work, the boy cried: "Father, it won't go right with the trooper either; I think I'll just make a clown." And now he first kneaded a big paunch from the clay; then he added hands and feet to it, and finally he placed a pointed hat on it, under which there was a head with a big nose. And so the clown was finished. The little son clapped his hands with delight; but the father shook his head, and thought – what can easily be imagined.

50. The Merry Cobbler

Who was invited by all parties to all the fairs, yearly Guild Festivals, and others feast and carousels? Why, Fips, the merry cobbler. He admittedly knew nothing about the Seven Liberal Arts and precious little about his trade, but he had a great deal of natural good sense and an inexhaustible fund of jokes and jests, and, in particular, of riddles. Therefore his company was eagerly sought after, and he turned down no invitation where there was good food and drink, for free and for nothing.

One day he was invited to the table of a wealthy merchant who wished to entertain several good friends at his home. Fips appeared, as was proper, in a holiday coat, and if sitting down were a race, he would not have taken last place. The soup and beef were to his taste, one could see;

but he opened his mouth only to eat. The guests waited, in vain, for the jokes and jests and for the riddles. The host poured him out a glass of wine, hoping the spirit would raise his spirit. The cobbler drained one glass after the other, and ate a great deal, but not a squeak came out of him. Finally, the host asked him to unleash his jests. Fips replied: "Pray let me prepare the ground first; then the jests will be sure to shoot up, like mushrooms. But above all, the ground must be wet." And he continued drinking and eating. At last, being allowed no more peace, he wiped his mouth, drank one more little glass, and began at once to tell the following tale: "A King sent his Fool out into the world one day with the instruction that he was to inquire after three things and not return to Court until he had found them. And he proposed three questions to him: 'First, which meat is fatter than pork? Second, which bread is whiter than Ulm bread? Third, which wood is harder than hornbeam?' After this, the Fool departed."

No sooner had Fips said these words than he pitched into the dishes again, indulging in one after the other. Meanwhile, the guests had begun to think about the riddles that the Fool had been given. And one of them conjectured this, and another that. But Fips shook his head at everything they suggested, and kept on eating and drinking, as long as there was food and drink on the table. Finally, the guests grew sick and weary of guessing, and they called upon the cobbler to tell them: What was fatter than pork, and so on. Fips, without reflecting for long, said: He for one did not actually know it either, and so they would just have to wait until the Fool was back from his journey around the world; he would give the answer then, granted that he knew it. The master of the house and the guests now realised that

the joke was on them; yet they did not hide this awareness from the merry cobbler, but laughed heartily at one another. Fips, having become full, made up to them with his comic tales and jests from that time on, so that in the end everything was satisfied... And if the reader is not, he may be as the Fool and himself ask around in the world.

51. Why Marry?

One man marries for this reason, and the second one for that reason, and a third one has no idea why – like that nincompoop who said: he would marry so he could do just as other people did. But a day-labourer knew why he would marry; for although he himself could not save much more! throughout the livelong week than would give him a little meat in his bowl and a half measure of beer in his jug on Sunday, yet he would rather go hungry with another than have sufficiency and his fill alone. “I must have a woman” – he said to those who wanted to talk him out of marriage – “I must have a woman, to whom I can say: Wife, this is for you, and she: Husband, God give you good health of it.” – Those are simple words, but they contain much meaning; and any man who has a beloved wife, he’ll understand.

52. The Vices

In an old book it is written: The Devil once made up his mind to wed and beget children, that he might establish them in the world and befriend all the more people to their destruction. Then a woman came before him, and her name was Godlessness. He joined with her in matrimony and begat seven daughters, whom he raised at home and finally distributed in

the world, and bestowed in marriage on the sons of men. The first and eldest daughter was called Damsel Pride, and he bound her in wedlock to those of blue blood and people of high rank. The second was called Damsel Avarice, and he gave her in marriage to the merchants, tradesmen, and hawkers in the towns. The third was called Damsel Untruth and he married her to the peasants and the common folk. The fourth was called Damsel Envy, and he endowed the craftsmen with her. The fifth was called Damsel Hypocrisy, and he espoused her to the priests, who appear in sheep's clothing but are ravening wolves underneath. The sixth was called Damsel Vanity, and he committed her to the female sex. The seventh and youngest daughter was called Damsel Lechery; and she being the youngest and dearest child, he did not want to bestow her in marriage, but kept her at home, and permitted everyone, from all ranks, to make love to her.

53. The Household Counsellors

“But how do you manage it, dear neighbour, that your household is in such good order, even though there is nothing particularly different to be seen about you, or about what takes place in your home? We others work also, and pay attention to what we have, and practise economy, as well as we may, and yet we do not prosper.” The neighbour replied: “I don't know what the cause of it might be, unless it were simply my three household counsellors, to whom I probably owe everything.” “Your three household counsellors? And who are they?” “The house-dog, the house-cock, and the house-cat.” “You're pulling my leg!” “I'm in deadly earnest, for look! the

house-dog barks when an enemy slinks near, and then it's a case of: Look up! The house-cock crows when the day breaks, and then it's a case of: Get up! And the house-cat preens herself when a worthy guest approaches, and then it's a case of: Serve up! "I understand, neighbour, what you mean by that! You mean that three things are necessary to improve the household: precaution against everything that can be harmful, activity in everything that can be useful, and friendliness towards all who wish us well and do us good." "If you wish to take it that way, that's fine by me; but I praise my house-counsellors because they always remind me what's to be done; I could easily forget it otherwise."

54. The Three Looks

A pious man was once asked: How did it come about that he, in spite of all the hardships of life, was able to preserve such serenity of mind? He replied: "It comes from my paying careful attention to my eyes; for all evil comes to the heart through the senses, as does all good." To the further question how he did this, he said: "Every morning, before I go about my affairs and among people, I carefully direct my eyes to three things: first of all, I lift them to the heavens, and remember that the main business and the aim of my life and my endeavours lies up there. Secondly, I lower them to the ground, and reflect on how little room I shall need to find my grave in it one day. Thirdly, I at last look around me and regard the great number of those who fare worse than I do. In this way, I console myself for all that I suffer, and live in the world and among people, content in God."