

German Short Stories of the Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries
Ricarda Huch (1864-1947)

The Cockerel of Quakenbruck

(From: *Der Hahn von Quakenbrück und andere Novellen*. Berlin & Leipzig: Schuster & Loeffler, 1910.)

The following is an account of what the chronicles have handed down about the trial of national importance regarding the egg-laying cockerel, which shook the Free Imperial City of Quakenbruck so fearfully in the year 1650 that it was brought very close to complete dissolution. To wit, the pastor at the Church of the Holy Spirit, who was a follower of the Reformation, had on several occasions alleged from the pulpit that the burgomaster's cockerel, against Nature and custom, as if it were a hen, laid eggs. And he had joked about this while also intimating that this sort of thing could surely not be effected without the abetment of the Devil or of devilish arts. This caused the eloquent pastor's audience to feel partly amused, partly horrified, and it was spoken about over and over in the citizens' houses, particularly in the circles of the guilded artisans, who claimed to have been ousted from the government, with which they had found many faults, by the burgomaster and the councillors. Things gradually reached the point that idle lads, when the burgomaster showed his face in the street, began to crow and to cackle, and they irreverently ran after him making such demonstrations. Even the Captain of the Civic Guard, who commanded the military force of Quakenbruck in the Emperor's name and was a powerful person, got some wind of this; and

being friends with the burgomaster and, especially, with the burgomistress, Mrs. Armida, he betook himself to his house to take him to task over it. Before the burgomaster could be served his customary pot of wine, the captain sat down on a chair, banged the table with his fist and said – “Tile Stint” – for such was the burgomaster’s name – “this business with the cockerel must stop, or you’ll see that I’m not to be trifled with!”

Tile Stint clapped the captain on the back, as if he were having a coughing fit, and said appeasingly: “If you tell me what this business with the cockerel is all about, then it can stop, for my part, as it seems to matter a great deal to you.” “What,” the captain cried, even more loudly than before, “so to the infamy of what you have done, you wish to add the audacity of denying it to me, when the riff-raff of the alleys crow after you with impunity.” These words plunged the burgomaster into thought, and he said: “I have indeed noticed the crowing of those mischievous boys, and I’d be glad to find out the actual reason for it. I did think it was some symbol used by the Protestants to mock those of us who follow the old religion, yet I shall readily acquit them of so provocative and malicious an act if that is not the case.” The captain knitted his brows and growled, “Fiddle-faddle! You *really* don’t know that it’s an allusion to your cockerel despicably laying eggs?”

At this insinuation, Tile Stine opened his dull blue eyes wide with astonishment and exclaimed: “He lay eggs! Pull the other one! Not even my hens do that as they should, which had me wanting to have him slaughtered, all the more because he’s losing his feathers and looks shabby, as if he’d just been in a scrap. But I refrained from doing so, as he

is too scrawny to promise any tasty morsels.”

The captain’s face darkened, and he barked at the burgomaster: “Don’t resort to lying to me! The filthy beast lays eggs and belongs by rights at the stake. You know that I’m inexorable in Christianity and I won’t spare my best friends if I catch them in frivolity or blasphemy. The people must be kept feeling respect and they must see those who govern them as exemplars; therefore I enjoin you to see to it that your bad reputation is washed away, and, in future, that nothing unseemly is said about your house and yard ever again, for until you do, I’ll never set foot upon your threshold.”

Severely shocked at his friend’s majestic behaviour, the burgomaster cried: “Allow me, at least, to call Mrs. Armida!” And he tugged violently at a bell-pull, the sound of which had barely arisen when the wanted woman walked into the room. She was a splendid woman, who always went around in a burgundy-coloured silk dress and wore her hair in a high-towered, wide-set style, from the peak of which a ring of white and light-blue feathers nodded down. As the result of an amiable temperament, although she was easily enkindled to great violence of temper, she also calmed down suddenly, loved social intercourse, and drove boredom and ill-humour away with a great deal of noise, for which reason she was well-liked and, to the captain, indispensable.

“It is you, Kloterjahn,” she cried upon catching sight of the eminent man, and she was about to continue with an appropriate greeting – but the burgomaster cut her short, crying out in a pitiful and tetchy tone: “Why hasn’t anyone reported to me, when such irregularities are occurring in the

henhouse? You're the lady of the house and should know who lays the eggs in our home! Or is it not considered necessary to advise me of such gross improprieties?"

"Don't get worked up!" Mrs. Armida said sternly, for she disapproved when others flew into a passion; "if you yourself don't know what you're saying, others will understand your words even less." This retort completely enraged the burgomaster, and he angrily cried: "Don't you understand that laying eggs is a matter for hens, just as bearing children is a matter for women!" He hoped to needle his wife with this personal remark, for she had not given him any children. However, she kept her self-control, only inviting the captain, with glittering eyes, to bear witness to her guiltless suffering. "I'm a simple military man, but a good Christian," said von Kloterjahn, sombrely avoiding her gaze, "until you have washed off this foul blot upon you, I cannot cross your threshold any more. What I've said, I can't take back, and so that's the end of it!" And he stood up with iron resolve and reached for the door handle. "Kloterjahn!" Mrs. Armida yelled out, and she raced after the escaping figure, ready to hold on to him with her arms, but she could not catch him up; he had slammed the garden door shut behind him and fled with strong strides from her plaintive cry.

Meanwhile, Tile von Stint was already regretting having made that sally against his wife; for he was by no means malicious, being rather gentle and easy-going. He just had weak nerves, could not stand noise, quarrels, or agitation, and flared up on occasion when everything began to get into a muddle in his head. He possessed a middling intelligence, which

idleness had always caused him to put into operation only rarely, and now, since he had aged and felt sleepy most of the time, he let it become as musty as a good room with covered sofas and chairs. The council business more or less ran itself, and at home he concerned himself only a little with the garden and the hens, but principally with the kitchen, where he liked to spend time, to push at the pots and pay sweet attentions to the blonde, rosy and plump cook, who was called Molly. After the captain and his wife had left the room, he rang his entire body of servants together and questioned them respecting the cockerel. Nothing could be got out of them other than their having heard something of the rumour; for the rest, they stuttered, rolled their eyes, and scratched behind their ears, which irritated the burgomaster so much that he sent them away again in high displeasure, threw himself into an easy-chair, and fell asleep.

Completely different was the activity of Mrs. Armida: she invited her husband's closest friends for a chat around the liberally victualled table, namely the councillors Luddeke and Druwel von Druwelstein and the jurist Engelbert von Wurmling, whom only the noblest families could win over to be their legal representative. It turned out that the nasty gossip had reached the ears of these gentleman, but they had remained silent before the burgomaster for various reasons: little Luddeke because it was a delicate business and perhaps not pleasant to Tile Stine; Druwel because it seemed to him that something was not yet entirely true if one had not spoken about it; Wurmling, on the other hand, who had visited Italian universities and was very enlightened, because it had not seemed important to him. "I do not believe that a cockerel can lay eggs," he said,

“but if it does so notwithstanding, then let it, for all I care, I have no prejudices. It is out of the ordinary; fine. It is unnatural; fine. Does it do me any harm? No. Let us leave it to old women to dispute over Heaven and Hell, virtue and vice.” “All the same, though,” Druwel timidly objected, “as the Captain of the Civic Guard has expressed his disapproval of this, it might be possible to consider the matter from another point of view.”

Engelbert closed his eyes, as if he wished to protect himself from taking in the sight of stupid and weak people, and said in a tone of exhaustion: “The Captain of the Civic Guard’s opinion is, no doubt, intended to stop the mouths of the people, from whose folly and superstitious minds much that is unusual absolutely must remain hidden.”

Druwel was a military man and had distinguished himself in all the town’s martial exploits, and when he came along with his stiff Van Dyke beard, flashing eyes and sunburnt skin, fat and stiff-legged like an upright cannon-barrel, then everyone believed that nothing could go wrong with Quakenbruck as long as it had its Druwel. Only in moral matters did he lack courage, because although he had an inclination for them, he had no discernment, and he shaped his course, as well as he could, by some eminent man, Captain von Kloterjahn in particular. He was always afraid that he might inadvertently transgress against religion or morality, indeed, that he would see or hear something which could cause him difficulties at confession. Little Luddeke, on the other hand, a cheerful little fellow, let Christianity be, as long as he had done what the regulations required; and on going to bed in the evening, he looked forward to the news which the following day could bring. “Gracious sir,” he said, impatiently tugging at his

small beard, "seeing that we've come upon this, pray take us into the garden and show us the devil's brood, and have it, if possible, give proof of its skill." Although Druwel hesitated, with the pretext that dusk was falling and one couldn't actually see anything, Tile Stint opened the door to lead the way for the gentlemen: when Mrs. Armida came flying in and angrily cried, The gardener had given notice, as he could not stay in such a house, and Molly, the cook, had let the truffles burn in the pan so as not to harm her soul. If only they had wrung the beast's neck betimes, the cockerel, which was to blame for everything, as she had wanted to! Now, they would have to sit before empty bowls that evening, or she would have to cook, although she could not bear the heat of the stove. The entire company then betook itself into the kitchen, where Molly, with much hand-wringing, related how she had already had to throw five eggs away because the yolk inside them, instead of being yellow, had been carmine, and on top of that had almost completely filled the egg, how this had horrified her very soul, and now she believed the story, which she had not hitherto wanted to do, how she was not going to mix any more of the bewitched eggs, and consequently could not finish the truffle omelette.

"Molly," the burgomaster said gently, putting his arm around her shoulders, "as concerns the eggs, I shall break them, and if this turns out alright, I hope, from your love and loyalty, that you will assist me and complete the truffle omelette, which you know how to cook and make more flavourful than any other girl does, just as you will complete all the other dishes in the usual way." He thereupon divided an egg with tolerable skill even though his hands were trembling, partly as a result of his weak

nerves, and partly because Druwel was trying to prevent him from accomplishing this task by pulling at his robe. On seeing her master so employed, Molly softened, began to bawl, and declared she could no longer bear the sight of his egg-breaking; as, besides, the eggs he had cracked open were more or less like normal ones, she took the bowl from him and made ready to take the preparation back into her own hands with a short and fervent prayer.

During this time, Mrs. Armida had seen a large axe lying on the kitchen-table, and arming herself with it, she rushed into the garden. This gave the signal for a general departure, as the gentlemen had no doubt that she intended to go for the cockerel, and they had the feeling they would have to prevent a rash act. Little Luddeke ran as fast as his legs could carry him, and Druwel went so far as to grasp her by the tail of her red silk dress, to hold her back, while the burgomaster and Wurmling followed more slowly. The burgomistress had just seized the door of the henhouse, which was surrounded by a wooden fence, and thinking that her dress had got caught up on a lath, she angrily tried to pull it free. In doing so, she turned round and perceived Druwel, who implored her not to enter the coop, which might be a domain of the Devil. "Whoever has a good conscience does not fear the Devil," Mrs. Armida pointedly remarked, and yanking her train out of Druwel's hands with a sharp movement, she walked with dust-raising steps in among the hens, who flew in all directions in their fright. The cockerel managed both to escape her grasp for the sacrifice of a tail-feather and, flapping up to a barn which formed the back of the henhouse, to discover an open attic-window, in which it alighted.

Tile, Luddeke, and Wurmling, who had come closer in the meantime, tried to explain to the woman that the animal must not be killed, for this would be construed as the elimination of evidence that might betray her; but she was not easily amenable to instruction when her feelings were in turmoil, and she impetuously called upon the gentlemen to shoot the beast down, if she were not to hold them to be cowards. Luddeke squinted his little eyes now at Mrs. Armida, now at the cockerel, who sat in the square attic window beating his wings, crowing with wide-opened beak, and looking bigger than was natural in the falling dusk. "It has a shrill voice and repulsive shape," he said, "and it wouldn't be a shame about him; but when Mr. von Wurmling advises us not to make ourselves look suspicious by precipitate acts, then we had better rein in our justified wrath and our venturous spirit for the present."

"Well then," cried Mrs. Armida, who let the gentlemen's persuasions and reasons flow off her like water off a duck's back, "if the men have no valour in their breast, then I shall give the fowl its due." Snatching up a few large fieldstones, which formed a feeding-trough in the middle of the coop, she took a big swing and threw them at the attic-window. The gentlemen made haste to get out of the reach of the blocks which hailed down, in which they were no little hampered by the laughter they had burst into at the lady's vehemence; yet good Tile returned to draw his wife's attention to the fact that she would hit herself more easily than the cockerel. This thought having occurred to her just a moment before, she left the battlefield, on which the axe and the stones lay around in wild disorder. "Druwel," she said sternly, coming to a halt before the gentlemen, "there is

a hero in many a corset and a cissy in many a suit of armour.” “Nobody who knows you,” Druwel said humbly, “will dispute the first; as far as I’m concerned, my corporeal system is so constituted that I feel an insuperable reserve and horror inside me at secret things, such as ghosts, furies, miasmas, epidemics, visions, earthquakes, and storms, whereas an entire army does not make my heart beat a single drumroll faster.” “You forgot to mention Women in your list,” Mrs. Armida remarked, “and yet you have cause to cast your eyes down before them as well.” “To be vanquished by the eyes of a beautiful and noble lady, no man need feel shame at that,” answered Druwel, and he offered the now appeased burgomistress his arm, to lead her into the dining-room.

The characterful Molly had not, like the rest of the servants, looked on at the scene in the garden, but had stayed with her omelettes, pies and pastries, so that nothing but delicious flavours and sumptuousness greeted the company at the table. Mrs. Armida, still breathing hard, opened the table-talk by exclaiming: “Though I have not hitherto cared about it, I am now certain that the villain lays eggs, and he must go about it slyly for us never to have caught him in the act.” Von Wurmling said, “Ma’am has withdrawn her favour from the poor thing and now considers him capable of any wicked deed: that is the way of women.” “Why, of course,” she swiftly retorted, “it is the way of women not to let themselves be dazzled, neither by a shaved chin nor by a long beard or colourful feathers, but to see through the iniquitous shenanigans and put a stop to them.” When she noticed that Luddeke was trying to enjoin her to caution through winks and all kinds of signs on account of the female servants, she looked defiantly

around and said: "Why should I keep quiet in this matter, as if I had laid the eggs? We'll get to the bottom of this, you'll see, and make such a mark that everyone will needs be satisfied with our justice." Yes, said the burgomaster, that was certainly how it should be, but the times were no longer like that, there rather prevailed pertness and insubordination among the populace, there were impudent people who puffed themselves up with impunity and sought a quarrel with better-born persons. The Captain of the Civic Guard had gravely set him the task of giving the lie to the talk of his cockerel laying eggs, but how was he to do that if his own wife cried it out as true in the street? The mention of the Captain made Mrs. Armida thoughtful and gloomy, and in her melancholy and growing anxiety she let the ball of the conversation unwind. Meanwhile, Luddeke and von Wurmling became ever merrier; now the latter, when he had drunk a bottle of good wine, began to be sociable and display wit and humour, as when a noble lucifer lit a piece of wood which had lain there mute and dumb but now crackled, provided warmth, gave out light, and spread sweet fragrance. They also tried to drag Druwel into the merrymaking; but he, after the food had cheered him up a little at first, had lapsed into cares which oppressed him so sorely that every now and then he had to wipe the sweat from his brow.

"You know, Tile," he said, "that I stick by you in the face of every danger and have always been a manful Chief Commander, but it's also known to you that I am fussy in Christianity, and when I've had to swear an oath, I'd most like not to open my mouth again, let alone tell a lie against it. So how am I to extricate myself, if I'm examined because of the cockerel?"

If I were laid on the rack and pinched with red-hot pincers, I wouldn't, by God, let anything slip out about you and the egg-laying; but if they make me swear with three fingers to the heavens, then my tongue is palsied and no untruth can pass it any longer."

Everyone was dismayed; only Engelbert smiled and said, moving his pale, slender index-finger over the table onto Druwel's chest; "Have you *seen* the cockerel laying eggs?" Druwel rolled his eyes to and fro in astonishment and said at last, heaving a great sigh of relief: "When I come to think about it, I've seen nothing at all." "Well then, you can testify whatever you like, without involving your conscience," said the jurist, "and the truth will do as little harm to us as the lie does to you." The burgomaster now expressed a misgiving, to wit, that it might perhaps have been better to kill the animal, for if it were to be screwed and turned on the rack in the examination, it might, by some unhappy chance, really lay eggs after all, which would show them, through no fault of their own, in an ugly light; but Druwel vigorously waved for silence with both arms and cried: "Don't talk to me about that execrable creature any more. Leave me in the dark about the whole business, so I know as little about it as about the Immaculate Conception! You may exhibit your learned sophistry, Engelbert, before the tribunal, but it only befuddles the mind of a simple Commander-in-Chief. Just pour my drink and fill my plate, for up to now every drop and bite has turned to gall in my mouth."

And so Druwel began the feast anew, after the others had already finished their meal, and there followed a loud hobbing and nobbing late into the night, during which the gentlemen celebrated their victory in

advance and discussed how they would bring back the old state of affairs, give the guilds something to remember them by, and kick the Reformed sect out, most preferably by fire and water, but from mercifulness and for other reasons by exile, after the ringleaders had been soundly flogged in the marketplace.

And so the gentlemen chatted over their wine, while dreadful storm clouds came driving along towards them from afar. Pastor Splitterchen was a dauntless and rash man, and now that he was formally accused of having grossly slandered His Excellency the burgomaster, as if he were so much of a sorcerer and pagan that he harboured an egg-laying cockerel in his yard, he did not show the least sign of shame or faintheartedness, but on the contrary, he behaved even more audaciously than before and carried a whole clan of like-minded souls along with him, who comported themselves as if they wanted to drive Prince Beelzebub from his throne and purify the deceived world of the stink of sulphur with incense. He was agreeable to look at, curly-haired and thin, with eyes so fiery that they made a sizzle when he cast them round, and he was also full of opprobrious words, which poured from his mouth right at their target like the jet of water used to treat infirm limbs. He too had brought with him a second who was learned in the law, whom he did not, however, allow to get a word in and could justifiably have left at home, had he not had a bilious green laugh concealed in his broad, mouldy face with sprayed forth with satirical intent every now and then and beslobbered his opponents, much to their prejudice and to the delight of the other party. In addition, a number of chairmen of the guilds and some of the merchants had come,

who proved their right to attend such a trial with old letters, whereas the councillors would rather have kept their own company.

The presiding judge, by the name of Tiberius Tonepohl, was with the Reformed Church at heart, and he rejoiced whenever anything could be laid to the Catholics' charge; but he had, so to speak, made a pact and blood brotherhood with Justice, according to which his personal inclination was so well cooped up that he did not even dare to stick his snout through the bars. Instead of this, divine Themis resided with him and prophesied out of his mouth, except for a few hours of leisure when the receptacle was opened and his heart was allowed to romp a little and have a breather. Among the sitting judges, there were also one Catholic and one Protestant priest, as the case was of a spiritual nature just as much as a worldly one. Tiberius Tonepohl may have set his brow against the encroachments of the Church, but on the other hand he let her have what was rightfully hers, and when the opportunity arose, he stressed that he, as a layman, neither knew anything nor wished to know anything about the religious mysteries, and would let each denomination burn as many heretics as they were entitled to, but not a jot more.

Tonepohl opened the trial by remarking that he did so not without regret and a sense of shame: that a highly respected man such as the burgomaster, almost the highest person in the community, could be publicly accused of such an atrocity as to possess a cockerel which laid eggs. These were disreputable things which could bring one to the stake, if he were correct in his judgement of the ecclesiastical jurisdiction, which he did not, incidentally, wish to forestall. Whatever other principles one might

have, everybody must concede that getting mixed up with the Devil was the vice to end all vices, as the Devil was the father of all sins, and the worship of those natural bodily processes ordered by God indicated an excess or monstrosity of conscience which was doubly abominable in a member of government who was supposed to light the way before his subordinates, by way of example, in immaculate virtue. But he hoped the burgomaster would succeed in exculpating himself from the painful suspicion, and if Pastor Splitterchen had perhaps begun to feel that he had gone too far in his allegations, he might retract them at once, which would be better than to be left looking like a calumniator afterwards. Slander had been reprobated by Moses in the Ten Commandments and was certainly a cardinal and fundamental vice which must be punished severely, and which men of God, in particular, should not perpetrate. Now, it was well known that anxiety for the well-being of the community had induced Splitterchen to talk of the notorious cockerel; so he could all the more easily confess that it was precisely this fiery love of the good man for his home town that had driven him to make something out to be a fact which was, for the time being, only a shakily substantiated supposition. It was certainly reprehensible simply to have given cause for so dreadful a suspicion, but one must bear in mind that a man could even, in law, be the Devil's paramour as long as it could not be proved of him, and so nobody should sacrifice himself by insisting on a truth which could not be brought to light. He therefore, in accordance with his duty, called upon the pastor to retract his imputations and freely confess to the burgomaster what was to be confessed; as otherwise, the moment had come when Justice would

raise her iron feet and start to march and crush the guilty without respect of persons. The pastor rose at once with a gesture to his legal representative, Augustus Zirbeldruse, signifying that he need not trouble himself over such a trifle, and said frankly that hitherto he had only alluded lightly to the heathen mischief in the burgomaster's henhouse, so that the burgomaster could yield and cover up the beastly conduct and the community would not be contaminated thereby. He was not looking to offend the Catholic Church and undermine the authorities, partly from natural peaceableness, and then not to disgruntle the Captain of the Civic Guard, to whom he, like everyone, was loyally devoted, and about whom it was known that he had cordially intimate relations with the burgomaster and his family, to such a degree that he was to a certain extent related to him by marriage. For these reasons he had set his indignation aside and delicately kept silent, so far as it was compatible with his duty. Should he have calmly looked on at those who, treading God's commandments into the dust, indeed, into the dirt, sat in power at the helm, while the good artisans and citizens, who consumed the eggs they had earned modestly and in simple piety, had to hold their tongues and duck under every despotic act? He had nevertheless remained silent for as long as he was able; but now that the burgomaster would not understand him, but defiantly advanced to lay a snare for him, who had dealt with him openly and honestly, he would tear off the leaf of piety and consideration that was stuck on his mouth and let out the truth.

At the pastor's words concerning the Captain's relations to the burgomaster's house, his legal representative Augustus Zirbeldruse broke

into a smile which made his face resemble a melting cheese and gave a quiet whistle that brought titters from the audience and spread an expectant silence in the courtroom. Tile Stint, who had not noticed where the whistle had come from, looked around startled and somewhat embarrassed, in the opinion that it had inadvertently slipped out of someone's mouth and was a disagreeable impropriety, and he cleared his throat to simultaneously answer and cover up the small incident. But von Wurmling turned his head slightly towards him and said, without raising his eyelids, that he as well as the burgomaster were very curious to learn the truth which was now to be brought forward. She was known to be an aloof lady who had been wooed by many prophets and potentates, so Mr. Splitterchen should in justice be proud that so particular a person had fallen for him. He was certainly a meticulous man in the prime of life and, as a member of the Reformed Church, did not need to worry about celibacy.

“First of all,” the pastor contumeliously replied, “the bridesmaids and bride's men should just take their place, then at the end I shall lead the bride to the altar.”

Then the witnesses began to pour forth; it was as if the floodgates of a large river had been opened. The cook Molly came first, pressing her hanky to her eyes and unable to speak for sobbing, whereupon Tiberius Tonepohl let her cry for several minutes before softly comforting her, and he subsequently began to gently ask her what her name was, how long she had been in the burgomaster's service, and if she had ever had anything to do with his cockerel. At the mention of the cockerel, Molly, who

had just rallied a little, began to cry again; and after renewed comforting, said that she had wanted to cut the beast's throat several times, but the burgomaster had prevented this because it would be tough and not tasty. Here the examination was interrupted by Augustus Zirbeldruse, who noted that the cockerel, being tough, was presumably very old, and asked Molly how long it had been in the burgomaster's house. At the presiding judge's question of why she had wanted to cut the beast's throat, she reflected a while and said, it was the custom to slaughter the poultry from time to time before it became too old, for that was what they were there for, after all, and there were always young ones to take their place. But she was enjoined to keep to the truth and also reminded of her oath, as an underlying reason must undoubtedly have moved her to this uncharacteristic apparent thirst for blood. This admonition alarmed the cook, and she blushingly admitted that she had indeed borne ill-will towards the cockerel, as it had a nastily squawking voice, by which she had often been woken before dawn. Concerning the eggs, she testified that recently, several eggs had indeed caused her anxiety through a particularly red colour and elongation of the yoke, but that she had never caught the cockerel in the act of laying eggs, and that there were quite a few hens in the chicken yard, to whom the eggs which had appeared, judging from their number and nature, could no doubt be ascribed.

The presiding judge moved on to ask Molly if many eggs were consumed in the burgomaster's household, and if they were partaken of in the family circle or with guests, and when she affirmed the latter, who the guests were and how they behaved. That made Molly angry and she said

that the Captain of the Civic Guard and Mr. Druwel of Druwelstein were amongst the guests, and that they did not need to take lessons on their behaviour from anybody, and that she, although she was only a cook, had education enough to know that it was unbecoming to ask such questions, which she was not going to answer. Tonepohl, who never became agitated, owing to his justness, said: "Dear child, you must answer to me as if I were your Father Confessor, and should I ask you about matters more indecorous than these," whereupon Augustus Zirbeldruse, in a squeaky voice, broke in: The right to ask appertained to him no less, and so he would like to know forthwith how long the company had generally sat at table, in what way Molly had prepared the dishes, the egg dishes in particular, and if the burgomistress had lent a helping hand. Molly, overawed, told how the burgomaster had once cracked the eggs with his own hands one time; generally, he came to the kitchen every now and then and watched her. At these words, Zirbeldruse raised his fat head a little from his shoulders and cock-a-doodle-dooed, which he accomplished, half crowing, half warbling, in an exceedingly jocular manner, all the more so as he hardly moved his face in the process and it seemed as if the cockcrow were rising of its own will out of his mouth like a living being. After the pastor had asked if the burgomaster said grace, and if there were holy images standing or hanging in his chambers, Molly was excused, accompanied by benevolent looks from Tonepohl and Zirbeldruse.

The rest of Tile Stint's servants testified that they had not admittedly seen the cockerel laying eggs, but that there was something revolting about it and they certainly supposed it capable of all kinds of abnormal

acts; further, how often the Captain of the Civic Guard had come to visit, how often the burgomaster and burgomistress had gone to church, that they had no children and what the reason for that might be, what style they lived in, how many skirts, petticoats, furs and bonnets the burgomistress had, that they themselves all received ample and punctual payment, and furthermore, what came into the house was paid to the last farthing.

After that, there came the friends of the house, Druwel first, who had given himself Dutch courage with a goblet of strong wine beforehand and therefore came along with glassy eyes and purple cheeks, causing a murmur of displeasure to run through the assembled chairmen of the guilds. He had, however, actually drunk too little, and he could not get the oath right at all; sweat appeared, drop by drop, on his temples, and he had to ask for a chair, putting forward his age, the gout, and the campaigns he had undergone as pretexts. Concerning the cockerel, he would ask to be excused from the outset, he knew and understood absolutely nothing about it, was really a simple soldier; but the presiding judge explained to him with a smile that he only had to answer every single question in accordance with the truth, and then he was certainly more sorely pressed than he could have dreamt of being. In a short time, he had admitted that Mrs. Armida had wanted to kill the cockerel, that she had been spurred on by an insuperable aversion, and that the burgomaster had prevented her. But everyone found it particularly suspicious that Mrs. Armida, in spite of her resolute intention, had not managed to kill the cockerel, which, according to the testimony of several experts who were immediately summoned, was no hard task, but could be achieved by wringing its neck,

something any child could do. On this occasion, Zirbeldruse rose and requested that Molly the cook be summoned once again, so one could learn if it had been the custom among burgomasters to kill poultry by throwing stones; if this were not the case, it was very striking and incriminating that Mrs. Armida had decided upon such an arduous and circuitous means of dispatch.

Tonepohl, the presiding judge, was dissatisfied with this turn of events, because he had noticed that Zirbeldruse had taken as strong a liking as he himself, and he did not wish to give any opportunity for such a feeling to grow, particularly as he also found that the court, in its dignity, was not the place for such amorous contrivances. He therefore refused the request on the grounds that everyone had been sufficiently able to form an opinion from the facts which Druwel von Druwelstein had supplied; for if the burgomistress had oftentimes killed hens by throwing stones, or had wanted to kill them, then either she would have enjoyed better success with the cockerel, or she would have desisted from this habitude on account of its lack of success a long time before. Whereas everyone reacted to Tonepohl's perspicacity with surprise and pleasure, Zirbeldruse became so angry that he turned green, and a furious enmity covertly formed between the two of them, who now recognised each other as rivals.

Druwel was questioned for several more hours, firstly about the relationship between the captain and the burgomaster, about the latter's church habits, if he observed fasts, if he bought indulgences from time to time, but then also about his own way of life, how much wine he had in his cellar, if he had ever played the lottery or played at dice and more such

questions, in consequence of which he, on arriving back home, went to bed straight away and could not be induced to get up. After all of the burgomaster's friends as well as all the traders who delivered wares to him and all the officers of the council had been examined, there came last of all a nightwatchman, who had quite often heard the cockerel crow at the wrong time, namely at midnight instead of at three o'clock, and a thief, who had intended to burgle a house neighbouring the burgomaster's around a year before and was now serving his punishment in prison. This man testified as follows: on that night, all the windows in the burgomaster's house had been lit, and a loud sound of banqueting had reached the garden and the street; it had made a really blasphemous impression on him and he had fallen into doubt whether he should carry out his intention, there being so many people awake next door. He would, however, have stuck to his guns, because he told himself that nobody at such a frenzied witches' sabbath would notice his quiet movement, and this would indeed have been the case, and all would have turned out well, had the people in the house that was his intended not been made aware of him by a screaming baby. Herewith, said the presiding judge, one could close the examination of the witnesses. Although about a hundred more had presented themselves, promising to bring forth remarkable things about the burgomaster and matters concerning him, he believed that more than enough material was now collected to enable the formation of a verdict, and he wished to leave it at that so the trial could actually come to an end and, moreover, justice could be administered. There might still be a question of summoning the Captain of the Civic Guard, which he would do,

as a stouthearted and justice-loving man, without further ado, if this would bring more light into the present darkness. But he, for his part, saw clearly enough – whereby he did not, however, wish to forestall the other judges or the plaintiff and the Accused. As nobody wished, wanted or intended anything with regard to the captain, on the following day the presiding judge gave von Wurmling the floor so he could substantiate his client's plaint briefly and comprehensibly.

Engelbert, who had mostly sat through the witness examinations with his pale goateed face resting in his slender hand, as if he were asleep or his thoughts were elsewhere, opened his eyes a little and explained that the pastor had actually far overstepped his authority by making an allegation against the burgomaster in the pulpit, as members of the Reformed Church were permitted to preach only under the condition that they kept quiet and remained obedient in every way and did not, either in deed or in word, show themselves rebellious towards a higher authority, to prove which he read out several decrees from past times. He also gave a handsome summary of the constitution and the rights of burgomasters and councillors, which obliged subjects to nothing other than due obedience, an obedience that had been grossly violated by the pastor; and he gave various examples of how, in past times, impertinent fellows had been beheaded or quartered for scurrilous words, to prove which he again read out some sections from the town books. Now, as subjects, and reformed priests in particular, were forbidden to reproach the authorities for any ignominious behaviour or accuse them of such, even if it were true, so it was inexpressibly criminal and dangerous to the community when it was a

fiction and a fabrication, and that was just the case here. The burgomaster was over sixty years of age and grown grey in honour, had often gone to Communion and Confession, had never trespassed against church discipline, and was tottering towards his grave, a sight that must move everyone; and it was nonsensical from the outset to associate such a man with dubious diabolical doings. But the most important thing was this: that the fact of the cockerel laying eggs would never be adjudged to have been proven, as it had neither been caught in the act by anybody or given proof of its unnaturalness before the assembled court of justice.

“Hey,” cried the pastor, jumping to his feet, “then every desecrator and matricide could get off scot-free, if the judge did not believe in his evil deed until he had performed it as a play before them in assembly! Is the nature of this basilisk not sufficiently demonstrated by the hundredfold testimony of so many guileless people? Did a pure maiden, Molly the Cook, whose tearful eyes made it plain for all to see how reluctantly she gave evidence against her master, not confess her insurmountable abhorrence of the unholy beast? Did everyone who came into contact with it, whatever their age, station, or sex, not have the same inexplicable feeling of horror, as it were an inner warning voice, in their heart? Did the burgomistress herself not pursue the infernal fiend with antagonistic feelings, which corrupted themselves into a thirst for blood otherwise foreign to female nature? Even if the satanic bird had never, by your leave, laid eggs, it must still have become clear to everyone that it is capable of this and much more besides, in accordance with its origin and connections, which I shall not describe in more detail.” At this juncture, August

Zirbeldruse roared so loudly that general laughter and applause arose and the speaker could not continue for several minutes.

“Oh, let us not speak,” he cried with noble emphasis, “of these unspeakable, unchaste and unsavoury things, as we have already muddied the snow of innocence of the popular soul all too much! How reluctantly have I raised my voice in this matter! How easy and pleasant it is to avert one’s nose when there is a stink in the air. But God has called preachers to protect parishioners from evil, and filled us with miraculous armour so we can fearlessly approach the mighty on this earth as smiters and unmaskers. Dear friends, I know that the best among you have, for a long time now, grumbled as you watched the public weal, hanging unregarded on the cart of government, being dragged through the mud. We have enough capable men who could step in and restore order, the laudable masters of the guilds, the bakers, furriers, coppersmiths and spicers, with hands and hearts, who have been purified by privation and honest work to take the helm; but they shy away from revolt and wait until the measure is full. Dear friends, we have heard what kind of extravagance goes on in the burgomaster’s house. We know how superfluously his table is filled both at midday and in the evening. I shall not talk of the exorbitant egg-consumption; but let us imagine once again all the dishes which the servants, compelled to come together in large numbers, had to produce from dawn to dusk, sweating in their bitter soilage: there appear, in succession, soup seasoned with wine and cloves, a pasty filled with truffles, a fatted goose heavily larded with apples and raisins, a sumptuous capon, tender-leaved lettuce, almond biscuits, and stomach lozenges

patterned like a mosaic from pistachios, almonds, and other foreign ingredients. And all these delicacies are paid for! Paid for are the muscatel and malmsey, the Bohemian glass and the Russian ermine! From what? That would remain a mystery, did the solution not lie in another disagreeable question: Why does the North Tower of the Church of the Hundred Virgins not rise, when collections have been made among the citizens for its completion for years now? Yes, a master-builder brags about his plans, bricklayers climb up and down the ladders, the main portal has been obstructed with scaffolding for years – but nothing about the tower changes, except that, year after year, a new stone coronet is added to the old ones. Allow me to remark, by the by, that the Church of the Hundred Virgins, as can be seen from its idolatrous name, is reserved for the Catholic denomination, and so we cannot have any selfish goal regarding its completion and are only concerned, from impartial love of justice, about the neglect and misappropriation relating to this. Those who accuse me of factional hatred but are no doubt full of it themselves, will be sure that I laugh maliciously or gloatingly to myself when I see the papists' cathedral towers beheaded by lightning or fallen victim to ruin like stalks charred by frost. No, my dearly beloved, wherever I espy abuses and faithlessness which the community suffers under, I stir myself, comparable to the doctor who, when his little bell rings, even be it at midnight and in wintertime, leaps out of his feather-bed and hurries down the dark streets through puddles and pools after Duty, who lights the way with a humble little lamp to the lying-in bed, to the death-bed, and sometimes to the possessed, who, under the compulsion of their diabolical parasite, defend

themselves against the one who means well by them, and wishes to drive out the evil, by biting and scratching..." The pastor was not able to continue; for the jubilant shouts and three cheers of the guild masters and other members of the audience caused such a noise that his brave voice was no longer able to penetrate to anyone's ears. When he was able to make himself heard again, he repeated his last sentence and added several more full of laudable sentiments, whereupon he concluded with the words: From all of this, it was surely evident to everyone that the burgomaster's cockerel laid eggs against Divine Order, which he had claimed before, to which claim, it being true to a certain extent, he had been not only justified, but even obliged, and through which he believed he had deserved well of the burgomaster, for whom there was perhaps still time to save his soul.

Even before the pastor had come to the end of his speech, he was congratulated with applause from all sides, as there was nobody who doubted his success any longer. The presiding judge had just called upon the other judges to withdraw with him in order to arrive at a verdict, which would, he meaningfully let drop, not take them much more time, when something unexpected occurred which gave another direction to the course of the affair.

And it was this: under the mollifying influence of yearning love, the Captain of the Civic Guard soon came to think that he had been all too cruel to Mrs. Armida; however, as he had to hold unwaveringly to his word, in which a certain sanctity was immanent, he became furious with the pastor who had caused the whole pointless fuss. When it became

apparent during the course of the trial that the burgomaster's accusation had made no impression, but on the contrary, he himself, and perhaps Mrs. Armida as well, had become involved in a dangerous capital case, his fury was unbridled, and he secretly cursed himself for the forbearance with which he had allowed the spirit of rebellion to spread among the people instead of keeping them in humility and obedience by severe methods from the outset. As he had, in any case, business to settle with the Bishop of Osnabruck, a man of exceptional excellence, he travelled to the city and represented the matter to this worthy, casually mentioning how important it was to him that the burgomaster be freed from the trap while the reformed priest and his followers be taught an unmistakable lesson for the future. For this reason, it happened that the bishop walked into the courtroom at Quakenbruck all of a sudden and desired to be examined, as he had something of importance to testify in the burgomaster's case.

The sudden appearance of this prince of the Church had such an edifying effect that some people fell to their knees, while others at least made a deep and zealous bow; Pastor Splitterchen was the sole person to stay standing erect, and von Wurmling only inclined his eyelids. Because of his freedom from prejudice and love of justice, Tonepohl did not hesitate to call upon the bishop, in courteous words, to speak, indeed, even to thank him in advance for having come, if he could furnish this difficult affair with something conducive to its resolution. After the bishop, who was a portly man, had looked around to the right and to the left, an armchair was rolled over to him, in which he sat down with grace, and from which he now contentedly cast his eyes about him and smiled at this and that person

who looked familiar. In the meantime, he pulled out a glittering snuff-box and said with a smile: "Your streets are bumpy. I left my coach at the gate and had myself carried here in a sedan-chair, so I have entered here in a respectable state, but the good men who carried me, their tongues are hanging out of their mouths fit to evaporate, for they had to run so I could arrive in good time. Moreover, the calendar still shows us being in the dog-days." After he had looked round to the right and to the left a few more times, he was brought a bottle of wine with a glass on a tray, which was placed on a little table beside him, so he was now comfortably and satisfactorily settled. "It happens luckily," he said, taking the glass in his hand, "that today is no fast-day, or I would have to deny myself this refreshing draught," and then he gradually moved on to the unresolved matter by relating the following: A year before, he had been in Quakenbruck to proclaim an indulgence for the construction of the tower, and on that occasion he had consecrated the burgomaster's house and yard along with all the inhabitants, man and beast, and this blessing also covered the cockerel in question, which would either have been freed of its devilish character thereby, or never have had such a character, or else it would have avoided the benediction, as was the habit, or vice, of evil spirits.

Tonepohl suppressed a slight feeling of embarrassment and said, as a layman, he was better informed about worldly things than about ecclesiastical ones, but he did respect the latter, and nothing was further from his thoughts than a wish to encroach upon anything that rightfully pertained to the Church. His Reverence might care to expressly state

whether it were really the cockerel in question, the one accused of egg-laying, and not another one, which had been among the poultry on whom the bishop had most graciously bestowed his benediction. A cockerel had been there, the bishop said affably, a handsome animal of stately bearing, who had caught his eye on account of its excessively swollen comb; at the time, he had likened this comb to the Papal tiara and jokingly called the cockerel His Holiness, which the burgomistress in particular would certainly remember.

The bishop jesting about such mighty matters made a considerable impression on Tonepohl, who was a freethinker but had never dared to do the like, and he began to admire the bishop as one of his kind. He smiled a little and said: The Court would like to hear the burgomistress, if it should please her to add her glosses to the bishop's account. When the lady then came sweeping up in her burgundy dress like a whistling wind, he signalled for another armchair, as the bishop made shift to stand up and offer her his seat, although his movement was somewhat on the slow and ponderous side.

Mrs. Armida gave brief thanks with a nod of her head and said there could be no doubt that the cockerel which had received her bishop's benediction was the same one which was now being disgracefully besmirched by slanderous tongues; for they had had it for two years and there had been no other in the meantime. The best thing to do would probably be to fetch the cockerel itself so the bishop could identify it and, moreover, the judges could take a close look at the fowl to see if there were anything suspicious to be noted. "I shall be glad to see the good

creature again," the bishop amiably remarked. "And how about," he said, "inviting a few hens from Mr. Splitterchen's yard to gain his trust and for the sake of comparison? It would be curious to see how these hens, who are undoubtedly conformable to Nature and the order of things, behave with the cockerel of ill repute, whether they scent something disreputable about him, or admit him as a suitable cockerel and master." Splitterchen replied with cutting congeniality that he would not withhold his hens, but he was of the opinion that it was a bad appeal, from human reason to that of animals.

"Well," the Bishop countered, "there really is nothing demanded of them other than that they scent the Evil One, for which, I believe, neither intelligence nor reason are necessary, but simple instinct, which animals especially possess."

After some further words of this kind had been exchanged between the parties, Tonepohl decided that the accused cockerel was to be confronted or brought face to face with the Splitterchenian hens, however, not until the following day, as the midday hour was in fact over and it was to be supposed that everyone, but particularly the bishop, who had travelled without a halt, was in need of some refreshment.

In the meantime, Molly had cooked and baked so a proper repast would be put before the bishop. During the meal a letter from Mr. von Kloterjahn was brought to the highly venerable man, which was of a very confidential nature, and after the perusal of which he said that the captain would soon be glad to tarry in this house again, his just indignation having now cooled somewhat, and he would bestow all of his love and full favour on the burgomaster once more when the latter's Christianity could shine

forth, cleansed, before all eyes. After the Bishop had irrefutably commented on the captain's splendid religious zeal, on the insubordinate spirit of the subjects, of those of the Reformed Church in particular, and the necessity of subduing them, he turned his attention to the choice dishes which orbited the table in a wise and fixed formation like the stars in the firmament, inquired of the lady of the house how this one or that one was made, and uttered the wish to personally express his satisfaction to the commendable cook, Molly, in the kitchen.

When everyone betook themselves thither at the conclusion of the feast, the servants were standing lined up on the way and they desired the blessing of the bishop, who was known for his affability; he was fat and handsome as well, with sure blue eyes and a distinguished nose and the social manner of a man who was accustomed to speaking with people down from a throne. Molly received the exalted guest in the kitchen on bended knee and kissed his hand, whereupon she was kissed on the brow by him and praised both for her cooking and for having shown herself during the trial to be a brave, clever girl who was devoted to her master and mistress. Molly gave a bashful smile and said, she certainly was not one of those who deserted a good master in misfortune. She had at first, it was true, been startled by the indecent things which people had rumoured about the burgomaster, and then when the carmine egg-yolks had come into her hands, she had lost her head, but later, she regained her composure all the more and resolved to stay with her master, who was, after all, a figure of authority and remained in the good Catholic religion. The gentlemen of the court had, it was true, made a strong effort to get her

on their side, only the previous day she had received prettily written letters from Mr. Tiberius Tonepohl as well as Mr. Augustus Zirbeldruse, in which they had courteously requested the pleasure of being allowed to bring her into their house as cook, if the burgomaster, as surely could not fail to happen, were to plunge from his office and dignities into disgrace, perhaps even with loss of life; but she had not made any reply, as she had first wanted to wait and see if the burgomaster really were in such deep trouble, and also, from the looks of the two gentlemen, she had drawn the suspicion that their real intent was only to lay a snare for an innocent virgin's honour. These last words transitioned into a sensitive sobbing, which only kind and consoling words from the burgomaster and the bishop, as well as a monetary donation from them both, were finally able to stop.

Towards evening, Tiberius Tonepohl presented himself at the burgomaster's for a consultation and stated that it seemed unbecoming to him for the poultry to be introduced into the council chamber, which would thereby be filled with squawks and filth like a henhouse. One could use the burgomaster's garden to oblige him; but Pastor Splitterchen could see this as putting him at a disadvantage, which he was not by all appearances willing to shoulder. His suggestion was therefore to the effect that the session be held on the meadow before Linden Gate, where, following the ancient custom, the town's troops were drilled and markets and festivals were held. Concerning the light repast to which Tile Stint invited the judge, Tonepohl asked to be excused, as his office prevented him from subjecting himself to the soft emotion which familiar intercourse at table aroused; he must rather have the image of justice constantly before his eyes, like the

navel, as it were, at which the Indian monks direct their unswerving attention to stiffen themselves into insensitivity.

On the following morning, pedestrians, carriages and carts poured out of the gate towards the town meadow, which was bordered on all four sides by old lime trees now in blossom. As a stellar body floats in a region of light which it has radiated, so did the meadow float in billows of linden-scent, as if an Elysian Land of the Blessed had bloomed forth from the earth's hard crust or wafted over it. Whoever approached the Enchanted Isle felt a charming stupefaction and was drawn into the heart of a magical realm of sweet scents where there was nothing but jokes and love and living in bliss. Only Pastor Splitterchen and his legal representative Zirbeldruse walked around in this summery intoxication as if their earthly senses were stopped up with wax, as two just souls among a crowd of fools and rogues, who know for certain that they must, because of their superiority and virtue, from which they simply cannot and will not abstain, be first laughed at and then crucified. The pastor ground his teeth in contempt and impatience from time to time, or he laughed to indicate that he knew fine well he was acting in a comedy; Zirbeldruse's face no longer resembled a melting cheese, but rather one that has gone hard and cannot be cut, only ground to a greenish powder. His mouth looked like a rope with a heavy weight hanging at each end, and every now and then he would invariably squint around like a dog looking for a hole in the fence through which it could steal away, were it not too full in the belly and too indolent to make use of any hole it might actually find. Some bailiffs stood between the lime trees to keep the people who were streaming in at a

distance, but they were not very particular and let old and young stroll as far as the old trees were able to cast shade, just as long as they did not venture into the Court's ring in the middle of the meadow.

Upon the news of the Bishop's helpful appearance, Druwel von Druwelstein had risen from his bed, and coming to Linden Meadow with a festively radiant face, he was not to be disconcerted by Mrs. Armida's mockery and waggery. "There I was," he cried, "fallen under my horse in the tumult, and my bones were badly crushed; but I worked my way free and sit erect again, ready for a new attack." "So you were lying under your horse when people were looking for you here, there, and everywhere?" replied Mrs. Armida, "one is certainly safer from stabs and bullets under there than up above; but a cavalier aims for honour, and that cannot be got under a horse's carcass!" "Why not!" Druwel cried jovially, "when one has come under it honourably. I'd like to see the man who will not find Druwel von Druwelstein there, where the Lord is, and right is, no matter whether one is fearful or flourishing. Do not lose heart, gracious friend, as long as you see my banner flapping, your cause is not lost." "Fiddlesticks, I do not need any friends for the Lord, but against the Devil," Mrs. Armida said impatiently but not harshly; for she rather made a consolatory smile flicker across Druwel's brownly gleaming cheek and his stiff Van Dyke beard.

The presiding judge busied himself in the meantime with the setting-up of the table and with the poultry, which was brought in baskets. Councillor Luddeke, the burgomaster, and the burgomistress themselves lent a hand to unwrap the cockerel from the wadding in which he was packed because of his recent frailty. When nothing was left of it on or

around him, he resembled a mummy from which the coat of plaster that had covered it for centuries had just been scraped off; little Luddeke, who had not expected this, became rather embarrassed and looked at the burgomaster from the side, who likewise cast his eyes down; for here, outside, where the pure sunshine sparkled doubly, as it were, in a crystal bath, the abraded, wretched skeleton stood out more disagreeably than it would have showed itself at home. The pitiful beast, on that evening when the burgomistress, after its blood, had been throwing stones, had hidden itself between the roof-timbers of the barn. Only on the previous day had it been found and forcefully brought to the light. During this time, it had been fed and otherwise cared for insufficiently: it looked just as if the Evil One had taken it, ruffled its feathers with his sooty hands, and wrung its neck. While little Luddeke and the burgomaster regarded it indecisively, and Druwel cleared his throat, Mrs. Armida cried in a clear voice: "So reduced has the poor thing become in the time of persecution! Should it, which Heaven forbid, shuffle off its mortal coil, then we shall sue for compensation for our loss, as we will have lost in him not only a good old house-cockerel but our favourite as well!" The bishop had also appeared on the scene by this time, and he said: "In what condition do I see His Highness again! Thus can it please God to humble the mighty of this earth. At any rate, he still wears the tiara, by which I can recognise him, although it is too heavy for his current state of strength and hangs woefully down from his head like a nightcap!"

When the bishop had got out of his sedan chair near the lime trees, the strolling crowd had gathered around him and rolled along after him like

a colourful and boisterous train in the shelter of his affable smile. He was accustomed to drag such a train along behind him, and would have felt incompletely clad without it; and the bailiffs had just as little intention of tearing his tail of homage off from behind. As a consequence, the cockerel was surrounded in no time by many women and children who stroked it and tried to give it all kinds of feed, and finally it took some and apprehensively gulped it down. The observing crowd greeted this and other signs of returning life with shouts of joy; for the fowl now closed its eyes tightly several times and opened them again, as if it wanted to test if the machine were still working. When it even thrust its beak, although feebly, into the grains which were scattered before it, and endeavoured to scrape its wobbling legs backwards and give out hoarse croaks, the hens, which nobody had bothered about, came running up, shyly at first, then more speedily, and began to pick and eat around the monster. This gave rise to continuous cheers which stirred the scent of the linden trees with lightly beating wings, so that balm and sound waved to and fro around people's heads in a blissful sweep and hovered above the enraptured crowd like a baldachin of joy.

The burgomaster began to cry with emotion, and Druwel's eyes also became moist when he vigorously shook the hands of his friend and Mrs. Armida.

"Well," said the bishop, pointing to the hens, "the little people have congregated in harmony, which could not be the case if Hell nested among them."

Tonepohl respectfully let the bishop finish his sentence, but then he

quickly broke in so he would not beat him to the chase, and got ready, with smiling earnestness, to make a speech. "If it is said that the voice of the people is the voice of God, then one can apply this saying with no less justice to animals, who speak, even more than the people, from the depths of infallible fundamental feelings. Here, we have now heard both, the people and the beasts. A divine judgement has taken place before our eyes, bone-shuddering and yet, at the same time, charming in its innocence. If today we have deviated from the strict course of justice, it has happened with good reason and with well-weighed intention, as freedom can on occasion be wisdom. May everyone now be convinced how unjustified the complaint is that the common people are excluded from government in our community; where it is beneficial, we give a floor and an ear to its judgement."

Here Tonepohl was interrupted by an incident which occurred with some noise. To be precise, a loud squawking or croaking sounded from amidst the hens, to be instantly followed by the burgomistress yelling out that one of the pastor's hens had cried cock-a-doodle-doo. She indicated the hen to which she imputed the cockcrow with pointing finger and said, red with indignation: So impropriety and unnaturalness were found among the hens of the man who had accused their cockerel of diabolical machinations. The pastor came up with rapid steps and derisively observed: "When there is a cry of cock-a-doodle-doo somewhere, then one infers therefrom that a cockerel is present, and as in fact the burgomaster's cockerel is here, so every sensible person will be of the opinion that it did this." "Certainly, certainly," cried Mrs. Armida, "and so people also think

when eggs are laid somewhere, that it was hens who did it. However, I saw with my own eyes that the cock-a-doodle-doo came out of the thin throat of that hen, and moreover, I leave it to all those present to decide if our poor, tottering cockerel could be capable of crowing in so loud and penetrating a way as has just happened.” “I did not see anything, but there having been an audible and clear crowing just now, I can confirm to be true,” said Tonepohl. “Anyone can do that,” Zirbeldruse spitefully objected. “I say that there was a cockerel’s crow,” repeated Tonepohl, incensed, yet speaking measuredly, “and it was from a cockerel in the form of an actual cockerel or a real hen.” Men, women and children now came forward all at once to bear witness that the hen pointed out by the burgomistress really had perpetrated the cockcrow. At the order of Tonepohl, the hen was seized and placed on the table, where it desperately stumbled around attempting to escape, as if it were ashamed of its ugly appearance. For the beast’s neck had been, perhaps through the work of vermin, entirely denuded of feathers, and so it seemed to have been plucked alive by a cruel cook but to have got away before the completion of the job. “The beast is an abomination!” cried Druwel von Druwelstein, breaking through the breathlessly gazing and gaping crowd. “Let it be induced to utter another sound,” the bishop serenely said, “so that everyone can be convinced of its character.” This suggestion was immediately found to be so reasonable that the judges grasped their goose-quills and used them to prick and harass the hen the best they could, the consequence of which was the horrified bird flapping hither and thither and finally bursting out into discordant croaks, which were followed by an echo, no weaker, but

thunderingly amplified, from the assembly. When the shouts of triumph had died away, Tonepohl said: "I hereby deem it proven that the hen can crow," and the other judges cast their votes in concurrence with this sentiment; and then, at a sign from the presiding judge, the whole body of poultry was packed into the baskets and carried away.

The pastor, who had hitherto listened gnashing his teeth and throwing his head back from time to time, as if he were calling God to witness such stupidity, now hastily stepped forward and cried: "And what would be the consequence of that, if it were proven, which I do not accept? There are pigeons which laugh, peacocks which trumpet, parrots which talk like humans. Why should a hen not crow? It all depends on the fortuitous formation of the throat, does it not!"

"Crowing," Tonepohl continued with emphatic calm, which was meant to make the pastor shamefully aware of his indecent passion, "crowing is a mark of masculinity and cannot be successfully imitated by a hen in a natural way. Several years ago, we publicly flogged a woman who went about in men's clothes but whose real sex was detected, and then banished her the land, as a woman should not presume to wear the garb of a man, who is a person of superior birth. What judgement is then to be passed if one of the female sex even wants to imitate or acquire the characteristics innate to males, as it were, the natural garb which distinguishes the man? With such a mingling, what will happen to the necessary discipline and compliance which must rule in the home as in the hencoop?" Now, upon the pastor, in his sheer anger, letting fall the words, "How could I be so foolish to wish to fight against popish superstition!" an

indignant grumbling arose in the crowd, and they would without doubt have made him pay for this, had not the bishop made pacifying signs and called upon Tonepohl to arrest the pastor for his own good and take him to a safe prison, to prevent the people, who were agitated from understandable and estimable cause, it was true, yet in an excessive degree nonetheless, from inflicting any harm on him.

Eating hastily after long abstinence agreed so ill with the cockerel that Molly thought it proper to slaughter the fowl, and she skilfully made its meagre and tough flesh into a mouth-watering pie; and this was consumed at the banquet of victory and reconciliation which took place at the burgomaster's house with the Captain of the Civic Guard among those present.