



THE DOVE IN THE EAGLE'S NEST



They rode off in the early morning.

THE DOVE IN THE
EAGLE'S NEST

by

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AUTHOR'S INTRODUCTION TO THE FIRST EDITION, 1886

IN sending forth this little book, I am inclined to add a few explanatory words as to the use I have made of historical personages. The origin of the whole story was probably Freytag's series of pictures of German Life—probably, I say, for its commencement was a dream, dreamt some weeks after reading that most interesting collection of sketches. The return of the squire with the tidings of the death of the two knights was vividly depicted in sleep; and, though without local habitation or name, the scene was most likely to have been a reflection from the wild scenes so lately read of.

In fact, waking thoughts decided that such a catastrophe could hardly have happened anywhere but in Germany, or in Scotland; and the contrast between the cultivation in the free cities and the savagery of the independent barons made the former the more suitable region for the adventures. The time could only be before the taming and bringing into order of the empire, when the Imperial cities were in their greatest splendour, the last free nobles in course of being reduced from their lawless liberty, and the House of Austria beginning to acquire its preponderance over the other princely families.

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M. Freytag's books, and Hegewisch's *History of Maximilian*, will, I think, be found fully to bear out the picture I have tried to give of the state of things in the reign of the Emperor Friedrich III, when for want of any other law, *Faustrecht*, or first right, ruled: *i.e.* an offended nobleman, having once sent a *Fehdebrief* to his adversary, was thenceforth at liberty to revenge himself by a private war, in which, for the wrong inflicted, no justice was exacted.

Hegewisch remarks that the only benefit of this custom was, that the honour of subscribing a feud-brief was so highly esteemed that it induced the nobles to learn to write! The League of St. George and the Swabian League were the means of gradually putting down this authorized condition of deadly feud.

This was in the days of Maximilian's youth. He is a prince who seems to have been almost as inferior in his foreign to what he was in his domestic policy as was Queen Elizabeth. He is chiefly familiar to us as failing to keep up his authority in Flanders after the death of Mary of Burgundy, as lingering to fulfill his engagement with Anne of Brittany till he lost her and her duchy, as incurring ridicule by his ill-managed schemes in Italy, and the vast projects that he was always forming without either means or steadiness to carry them out, by his perpetual impecuniosity and slippery dealing; and in his old age he has become rather the laughing-stock of historians.

But there is much that is melancholy in the sight of a man endowed with genius, unbalanced by the force of

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character that secures success, and with an ardent nature whose intention overleapt obstacles that in practice he found insuperable. At home Maximilian raised the Imperial power from a mere cipher to considerable weight. We judge him as if he had been born in the purple and succeeded to a defined power like his descendants. We forget that the head of the Holy Roman Empire had been, ever since the extinction of the Swabian line, a mere mark for ambitious princes to shoot at, with everything expected from him, and no means to do anything. Maximilian's own father was an avaricious, undignified old man, not until near his death Archduke of even all Austria, and with anarchy prevailing everywhere under his nominal rule. It was in the time of Maximilian that the Empire became as compact and united a body as could be hoped of anything so unwieldy, that law was at least acknowledged, *Faustrecht* for ever abolished, and the Emperor became once more a real power.

The man under whom all this was effected could have been no fool; yet, as he said himself, he reigned over a nation of kings, who each chose to rule for himself; and the uncertainty of supplies of men or money to be gained from them made him so often fail necessarily in his engagements, that he acquired a shiftiness and callousness to breaches of promise, which became the worst flaw in his character. But of the fascination of his manner there can be no doubt. Even Henry VIII's English ambassadors, when forced to own how little they could depend on him, and how dangerous it was to let subsidies pass through his fingers, still show themselves under a sort of enchantment of devotion

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to his person, and this in his old age, and when his conduct was most inexcusable and provoking.

His variety of powers was wonderful. He was learned in many languages—in all those of his empire or hereditary states, and in many besides; and he had an ardent love of books, both classical and modern. He delighted in music, painting, architecture, and many arts of a more mechanical description; wrote treatises on all these, and on other subjects, especially gardening and gunnery. He was the inventor of an improved lock to the arquebus, and first divined how to adapt the disposition of his troops to the use of the newly discovered firearms. And in all these things his versatile head and ready hand were personally employed, not by deputy; while, coupled with so much artistic taste, was a violent passion for hunting, which carried him through many hairbreadth 'scapes. "It was plain," he used to say, "that God Almighty ruled the world, or how could things go on with a rogue like Alexander VI at the head of the Church, and a mere huntsman like himself at the head of the Empire." His *bons mots* are numerous, all thoroughly characteristic, and showing that brilliancy in conversation must have been one of his greatest charms. It seems as if only self-control and resolution were wanting to have made a Charles, or an Alfred, the Great.

The romance of his marriage with the heiress of Burgundy is one of the best known parts of his life. He was scarcely two-and-twenty when he lost her, who perhaps would have given him the stability he wanted; but his tender love for her endured through life. It is

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not improbable that it was this still abiding attachment that made him slack in overcoming difficulties in the way of other contracts, and that he may have hoped that his engagement to Bianca Sforza would come to nothing, like so many others.

The most curious record of him is, however, in two books, the materials for which he furnished, and whose composition and illustration he superintended, *Der Weisse König*, and *Theurdank*, of both of which he is well known to be the hero. The White, or the Wise, King, it is uncertain which, is a history of his education and exploits, in prose. Every alternate page has its engraving, showing how the Young White King obtains instruction in painting, architecture, language, and all arts and sciences, the latter including magic—which he learns of an old woman with a long-tailed demon sitting, like Mother Hubbard's cat, on her shoulder—and astrology. In the illustration of this study an extraordinary figure of a cross within a circle appears in the sky, which probably has some connection with his scheme of nativity, for it also appears on the breast of Ehrenhold, his constant companion in the metrical history of his career, under the name of *Theurdank*.

The poetry of *Theurdank* was composed by Maximilian's old writing-master, Melchoir Pfinznig; but the adventures were the Kaiser's own, communicated by himself, and he superintended the woodcuts. The name is explained to mean "craving glory,"—*gloriæ memor*. The Germans laugh to scorn a French translator, who rendered it "Chermerci." It was annotated very soon after its publication, and each exploit explained and

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accounted for. It is remarkable and touching in a man who married at eighteen, and was a widower at twenty-two, that, in both books, the happy union with his lady-love is placed at the end—not at the beginning of the book; and in *Theurdank*, at least, the eternal reunion is clearly meant.

In this curious book, König Romreich—by whom every contemporary understood poor Charles of Burgundy, thus posthumously made King of Rome by Maximilian, as the only honour in his power—betroths his daughter, Ehrenreich (rich in honour), to the Ritter Theurdank. Soon after, by a most mild version of Duke Charles's frightful end, König Romreich is seen on his back dying in a garden, and Ehrenreich (as Mary really did) despatches a ring to summon her betrothed.

But here Theurdank returns for answer that he means first to win honour by his exploits, and sets out with his comrade, Ehrenhold, in search thereof. Ehrenhold never appears of the smallest use to him in any of the dire adventures into which he falls, but only stands complacently by, and in effect may represent Fame, or perhaps that literary sage whom Don Quixote always supposed to be at hand to record his deeds of prowess.

Next we are presented with the German impersonation of Satan as a wise old magician, only with claws instead of feet, commissioning his three captains (*hauptleutern*), Furwitz, Umfallo, and Neidelhard, to beset and ruin Theurdank. They are interpreted as the dangers of youth, middle life, and old age—Rashness,

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Disaster, and Distress (or Envy). One at a time they encounter him,—not once, but again and again, and he has ranged under each head, in entire contempt of real order of time, the perils he thinks owing to each foe. Furwitz most justly gets the credit of Maximilian's perils on the steeple of Ulm, though, unfortunately, the artist has represented the daring climber as standing not much above the shoulders of Furwitz and Ehrenhold; and although the annotation tells us that his "hinder half foot" overhung the scaffold, the danger in the print is not appalling. Furwitz likewise inveigles him into putting the point (*schnabel*) of his shoe into the wheel of a mill for turning stone balls, where he certainly hardly deserved to lose nothing but the beak of his shoe. This enemy also brings him into numerous unpleasant predicaments on precipices, where he hangs by one hand; while the chamois stand delighted on every available peak, Furwitz grins malevolently, and Ehrenhold stands pointing at him over his shoulder. Time and place are given in the notes for all these escapes. After some twenty adventures Furwitz is beaten off, and Umfallo tries his powers. Here the misadventures do not involve so much folly on the hero's part—though, to be sure, he ventures into a lion's den unarmed, and has to beat off the inmates with a shovel. But the other adventures are more rational. He catches a jester—of admirably foolish expression—putting a match to a powder-magazine; he is wonderfully preserved in mountain avalanches and hurricanes; reins up his horse on the verge of an abyss; falls through ice in Holland and shows nothing but his head above it; cures himself of a fever by draughts of

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water, to the great disgust of his physicians; and escapes a fire bursting out of a tall stove.

Neidelhard brings his real battles and perils. From this last he is in danger of shipwreck, of assassination, of poison, in single combat, or in battle; tumults of the people beset him; he is imprisoned as at Ghent. But finally Neidelhard is beaten back; and the hero is presented to Ehrenreich. Ehrenhold recounts his triumphs, and accuses the three captains. One is hung, another beheaded, the third thrown headlong from a tower; and a guardian angel then summons Theurdank to his union with his Queen. No doubt this reunion was the life-dream of the harassed, busy, inconsistent man, who flashed through the turmoils of the early sixteenth century.

The adventures of Maximilian which have been adverted to in the story are all to be found in Theurdank, and in his early life he was probably the brilliant eager person we have tried in some degree to describe. In his latter years it is well known that he was much struck by Luther's arguments; and, indeed, he had long been conscious of need of Church reform, though his plans took the grotesque form of getting himself made Pope, and taking all into his own hands.

Perhaps it was unwise to have ever so faintly sketched Ebbo's career through the ensuing troubles; but the history of the star and of the spark in the stubble seemed to need completion; and the working out of the character of the survivor was unfinished till his course had been thought over from the dawn of the Wittenberg

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teaching, which must have seemed no novelty to an heir of the doctrine of Tauler, and of the veritably Catholic divines of old times. The idea is of the supposed course of a thoughtful, refined, conscientious man, through the earlier times of the Reformation, glad of the hope of cleansing the Church, but hoping to cleanse, not to break away from her—a hope that Luther himself long cherished, and which was not entirely frustrated till the reassembly at Trent in the next generation. Justice has never been done to the men who feared to loose their hold on the Church Catholic as the one body to which the promises were made. Their loyalty has been treated as blindness, timidity, or superstition; but that there were many such persons, and those among the very highest minds of the time, no one can have any doubt after reading such lives as those of Friedrich the Wise of Saxony, of Erasmus, of Vittoria Colonna, or of Cardinal Giustiniani.

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CHAPTER I

MASTER GOTTFRIED'S WORKSHOP

THE upper lattices of a tall, narrow window were open, and admitted the view, of, first, some richly tinted vine leaves and purpling grapes, then, in dazzling freshness of new white stone, the lacework fabric of a half-built minster spire, with a mason's crane on the summit, bending as though craving for a further supply of materials; and beyond, peeping through every crevice of the exquisite open fretwork, was the intensely blue sky of early autumn.

The lower longer panes of the window were closed, and the glass, divided into circles and quarrels, made the scene less distinct; but still the huge stone tower was traceable, and, farther off, the slope of a gently

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rising hill, clothed with vineyards blushing into autumn richness. Below, the view was closed by the gray wall of a courtyard, laden with fruit trees in full bearing and inclosing paved paths that radiated from a central fountain, and left spaces between, where a few summer flowers still lingered, and the remains of others showed what their past glory had been.

The interior of the room was wainscoted, the floor paved with bright red and cream-coloured tiles and the tall stove in one corner decorated with the same. The eastern end of the apartment was adorned with an exquisite small group carved in oak representing the carpenter's shop at Nazareth, with the Holy Child instructed by Joseph in the use of tools, and the Mother sitting with her book, "pondering these things in her heart." All around were blocks of wood and carvings in varying states of progress—some scarcely shaped out, and others in perfect completion. And the subjects were equally various. Here was an adoring angel with folded wings, clasped hands, and rapt face; here a majestic head of an apostle or prophet; here a lovely virgin saint, seeming to play smilingly with the instrument of her martyrdom; here a grotesque *miserere* group, illustrating a fairy tale, or caricaturing a popular fable; here a beauteous festoon of flowers and fruit, emulating nature in all save colour; and on the work-table itself, growing under the master's hand, was a long wreath, entirely composed of leaves and seed-vessels in their quaint and beauteous forms—the heart-shaped shepherd's purse, the mask-like skull-cap, and the crowned urn of the henbane. The starred cap

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of the poppy was actually being shaped under the tool, copied from a green capsule, surmounted with purple velvety rays, which, together with its rough and wavy leaf, was held in the hand of a young maiden who knelt by the table, watching the work with eager interest.

She was not a beautiful girl—not one of those whose “bright eyes rain influence, and judge the prize.” She was too small, too slight, too retiring for such a position. If there was something lily-like in her drooping grace, it was not the queen lily of the garden that she resembled, but the retiring lily of the valley—so purely, transparently white was her skin, scarcely tinted by a roseate blush on the cheek, so tender and modest the whole effect of her slender figure, and the soft, downcast, pensive brown eyes, utterly dissimilar in hue from those of all her friends and kindred, except perhaps the bright, quick ones of her uncle, the master carver. Otherwise, his portly form, open visage, and good-natured stateliness, as well as his furred cap and gold chain, were thoroughly those of the German burgomaster of the fifteenth century; but those glittering black eyes had not ceased to betray their French, or rather Walloon, origin, though for several generations back the family had been settled at Ulm. Perhaps, too, it was Walloon quickness and readiness of wit that had made them, so soon as they became affiliated, so prominent in all the councils of the good free city, and so noted for excellence in art and learning. Indeed the present head of the family, Master Gottfried Sorel, was so much esteemed for his learning that he had once had serious thoughts of terming himself Magister

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Gothofredus Oxalicus, and might have carried it out but for the very decided objections of his wife, Dame Johanna, and his little niece, Christina, to being dubbed by any such surname.

Master Gottfried had had a scapegrace younger brother named Hugh, who had scorned both books and tools, had been the plague of the workshop, and, instead of coming back from his wandering-year of improvement, had joined a band of roving Lanzknechts. No more had been heard of him for a dozen or fifteen years, when he suddenly arrived at the paternal mansion at Ulm, half-dead with intermittent fever, and with a young, broken-hearted, and nearly expiring wife, his spoil in his Italian campaigns. His rude affection had utterly failed to console her for her desolated home and slaughtered kindred, and it had so soon turned to brutality that, when brought to comparative peace and rest in his brother's home, there was nothing left for the poor Italian but to lie down and die, commending her babe in broken German to Hausfrau Johanna, and blessing Master Gottfried for his flowing Latin assurances that the child should be to them even as the little maiden who was lying in the God's acre upon the hillside.

And verily the little Christina had been a precious gift to the bereaved couple. Her father had no sooner recovered than he returned to his roving life, and, except for a report that he had been seen among the retainers of one of the robber barons of the Swabian Alps, nothing had been heard of him; and Master

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Gottfried only hoped to be spared the actual pain and scandal of knowing when his eyes were blinded and his head swept off at a blow, or when he was tumbled headlong into a moat, suspended from a tree or broken on the wheel: a choice of fates, that was sure sooner or later to befall him. Meantime, both the burgomeister and burgomeisterinn did their utmost to forget that the gentle little girl was not their own; they set all their hopes and joys on her, and, making her supply the place at once of son and daughter, they bred her up in all the refinements and accomplishments in which the free citizens of Germany took the lead in the middle and latter part of the fifteenth century. To aid her aunt in all housewifely arts, to prepare dainty food and varied liquors, and to spin, weave and broider, was only a part of Christina's training; her uncle likewise set great store by her sweet Italian voice, and caused her to be carefully taught to sing and play on the lute, and he likewise delighted in hearing her read aloud to him from the hereditary store of Mss. and from the dark volumes that began to proceed from the press. Nay, Master Gottfried had made experiments in printing and wood-engraving on his own account, and had found no head so intelligent, no hand so desirous to aid him, as his little Christina's, who, in all that needed taste and skill rather than strength, was worth all his prentices and journeymen together. Some fine bold wood cuts had been produced by their joint efforts; but these less important occupations had of late been set aside by the engrossing interest of the interior fittings of the great "Dome Kirk," which for nearly a century had been

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rising by the united exertions of the burghers, without any assistance from without. The foundation had been laid in 1377; and at length, in the year of grace 1472, the crown of the apse had been closed in, and matters were so forward that Master Gottfried's stall work was already in requisition for the choir.

"Three cubits more," he reckoned. "Child, hast thou found me fruits enough for the completing of this border?"

"Oh, yes, mine uncle. I have the wild rosehip, and the flat shield of the moonwort, and a pea-pod, and more whose names I know not. But should they all be seed and fruit?"

"Yea, truly, my Stina, for this wreath shall speak of the goodly fruits of a completed life."

"Even as that which you carved in spring told of the blossom and fair promise of youth," returned the maiden. "Methinks the one is the most beautiful, as it ought to be;" then, after a little pause, and some reckoning, "I have scarce seed-pods enough in store, uncle; might we not seek some rarer shapes in the herb-garden of Master Gerhard, the physician? He, too, might tell me the names of some of these."

"True, child; or we might ride into the country beyond the walls, and seek them. What, little one, wouldst thou not?"

"So we go not far," faltered Christina, colouring.

"Ha, thou hast not forgotten the fright thy companions had from the Schlangenwald Reitern when

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gathering Maydew? Fear not, little coward; if we go beyond the suburbs we will take Hans and Peter with their halberts. But I believe thy silly little heart can scarce be free for enjoyment, if it can fancy a Reiter within a dozen leagues of thee.”

“At your side I would not fear. That is, I would not vex thee by my folly, and I might forget it,” replied Christina, looking down.

“My gentle child!” the old man said approvingly. “Moreover, if our good Kaiser has his way, we shall soon be free of the Reitern of Schlangenwald, and Adlerstein, and all the rest of the mouse-trap barons. He is hoping to form a league of us free Imperial cities with all the more reasonable and honest nobles, to preserve the peace of the country. Even now a letter from him was read in the Town Hall to that effect; and, when all are united against them, my lords-mouser must needs become pledged to the league, or go down before it.”

“Ah! that will be well,” cried Christina. “Then will our waggons be no longer set upon at the Debateable Ford by Schlangenwald or Adlerstein; and our wares will come safely, and there will be wealth enough to raise our spire! O uncle, what a day of joy will that be when Our Lady’s great statue will be set on the summit!”

“A day that I shall scarce see, and it will be well if thou dost,” returned her uncle, “unless the hearts of the burghers of Ulm return to the liberality of their fathers, who devised that spire! But what trampling do I hear?”

There was indeed a sudden confusion in the house, and, before the uncle and niece could rise, the door was

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opened by a prosperous apple-faced dame, exclaiming in a hasty whisper, "Housefather, oh, housefather, there are a troop of Reitern at the door, dismounting already;" and, as the master came forward, brushing from his furred vest the shavings and dust of his work, she added in a more furtive, startled accent, "and, if I mistake not, one is thy brother!"

"He is welcome," replied Master Gottfried, in his cheery fearless voice; "he brought us a choice gift last time he came; and it may be he is ready to seek peace among us after his wanderings. Come hither, Christina, my little one; it is well to be abashed, but thou art not a child who need fear to meet a father."

Christina's extreme timidity, however, made her pale and crimson by turns, perhaps by the infection of anxiety from her aunt, who could not conceal a certain dissatisfaction and alarm, as the maiden, led on either side by her adopted parents, thus advanced from the little studio into a handsomely carved wooden gallery, projecting into a great wainscoted room, with a broad carved stair leading down into it. Down this stair the three proceeded, and reached the stone hall that lay beyond it, just as there entered from the trellised porch that covered the steps into the street, a thin wiry man, in a worn and greasy buff suit, guarded on the breast and arms with rusty steel, and a battered helmet with the vizor up, disclosing a weather-beaten bronzed face, with somewhat wild dark eyes, and a huge grizzled moustache forming a straight line over his lips. Altogether he was a complete model of the lawless Reiter or Lanzknecht,

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the terror of Swabia, and the bugbear of Christina's imagination. The poor child's heart died within her as she perceived the mutual recognition between her uncle and the newcomer; and, while Master Gottfried held out his hands with a cordial greeting of, "Welcome home, brother Hugh," she trembled from head to foot, as she sank on her knees, and murmured, "Your blessing, honoured father."

"Ha? What, this is my girl? What says she? My blessing, eh? There then, thou hast it, child, such as I have to give, though they'll tell thee at Adlerstein that I am more wont to give the other sort of blessing! Now, give me a kiss, girl, and let me see thee! How now!" as he folded her in his rough arms; "thou art a mere feather, as slight as our sick Jungfrau herself." And then, regarding her, as she stood drooping, "Thou art not half the woman thy mother was—she was stately and straight as a column, and tall withal."

"True!" replied Hausfrau Johanna, in a marked tone; "but both she and her poor babe had been so harassed and wasted with long journeys and hardships that with all our care of our Christina, she has never been strong or well-grown. The marvel is that she lived at all."

"Our Christina is not beautiful, we know," added her uncle, reassuringly taking her hand; "but she is a good and meek maiden."

"Well, well," returned the Lanzknecht, "she will answer the purpose well enough, or better than if she were fair enough to set all our fellows together by

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the ears for her. Camilla, I say—no, what's her name, Christina?—put up thy gear and be ready to start with me to-morrow morning for Adlerstein.”

“For Adlerstein?” re-echoed the housemother, in a tone of horrified dismay; and Christina would have dropped on the floor but for her uncle's sustaining hand, and the cheering glance with which he met her imploring look.

“Let us come up to the gallery, and understand what you desire, brother,” said Master Gottfried, gravely. “Fill the cup of greeting, Hans. Your followers shall be entertained in the hall,” he added.

“Ay, ay,” quoth Hugh, “I will show you reason over a goblet of the old Rosenburg. Is it all gone yet, brother Goetz? No? I reckon there would not be the scouring of a glass left of it in a week if it were at Adlerstein.”

So saying, the trooper crossed the lower room, which contained a huge tiled baking oven, various brilliantly burnished cooking utensils, and a great carved cupboard like a wooden bedstead, and, passing the door of the bath room, clanked up the oaken stairs to the gallery, the reception room of the house. It had tapestry hanging to the wall, and cushions both to the carved chairs and deep windows, which looked out into the street, the whole storey projecting into close proximity with the corresponding apartment of the Syndic Moritz, the goldsmith on the opposite side. An oaken table stood in the center and the gallery was adorned with a dresser, displaying not only bright pewter, but goblets and drinking cups of beautifully

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shaped and coloured glass, and saltcellars, tankards, and so forth, of gold and silver.

“Just as it was in the old man’s time,” said the soldier, throwing himself into the housefather’s chair. “A handful of Lanzknechts would make short work with your pots and pans, good sister Johanna.”

“Heaven forbid!” said poor Johanna under her breath.

“Much good they do you, up in a row there, making you a slave to furbishing them. There’s more sense in a chair like this—that does rest a man’s bones. Here, Camilla, girl, unlace my helmet! What, know’st not how? What is a woman made for but to let a soldier free of his trappings? Thou hast done it! There! Now my boots,” stretching out his legs.

“Hans shall draw off your boots, fair brother,” began the dame; but poor Christina, the more anxious to propitiate him in little things, because of the horror and dread with which his main purpose inspired her, was already on her knees, pulling with her small quivering hands at the long steel-guarded boot—a task to which she would have been utterly inadequate, but for some lazy assistance from her father’s other foot. She further brought a pair of her uncle’s furred slippers, while Reiter Hugh proceeded to dangle one of the boots in the air, expatiating on its frail condition, and expressing his intention of getting a new pair from Master Matthias, the sutor, ere he should leave Ulm on the morrow. Then, again, came the dreaded subject; his daughter must go with him.

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“What would you with Christina, brother?” gravely asked Master Gottfried, seating himself on the opposite side of the stove, while out of sight the frightened girl herself knelt on the floor, her head on her aunt’s knees, trying to derive comfort from Dame Johanna’s clasp hands, and vehement murmurs that they would not let their child be taken from them. Alas! these assurances were little in accordance with Hugh’s rough reply, “And what is it to you what I do with mine own?”

“Only this, that, having bred her up as my child and intended heiress, I might have some voice.”

“Oh! in choosing her mate! Some mincing artificer, I trow, fiddling away with wood and wire to make gauds for the fair day! Hast got him here? If I like him, and she likes him, I’ll bring her back when her work is done.”

“There is no such person as yet in the case,” said Gottfried. “Christina is not yet seventeen, and I would take my time to find an honest, pious burgher, who will value this precious jewel of mine.”

“And let her polish his flagons to the end of her days,” laughed Hugh grimly, but manifestly somewhat influenced by the notion of his brother’s wealth. “What, hast no child of thine own?” he added.

“None, save in Paradise,” answered Gottfried, crossing himself. “And thus, if Christina should remain with me, and be such as I would have her, then, brother, my wealth, after myself and my good housewife, shall be hers, with due provision for thee, if thou shouldst weary of thy wild life. Otherwise,” he added, looking

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down, and speaking in an undertone, "my poor savings should go to the completion of the Dome Kirk." "And who told thee, Goetz, that I would do ought with the girl that should hinder her from being the very same fat, sauerkraut-cooking, pewter-scrubbing housewife of thy mind's eye?"

"I have heard nothing of thy designs as yet, brother Hugh, save that thou wouldst take her to Adlerstein, which men greatly belie if it be not a nest of robbers."

"Aha! thou hast heard of Adlerstein! We have made the backs of your jolly merchants tingle as well as they could through their well-lined doublets! Ulm knows of Adlerstein, and the Debateable Ford!"

"It knows little to its credit," said Gottfried, gravely; "and it knows also that the Emperor is about to make a combination against all the Swabian robber-holds, and that such as join not in it will fare the worse."

"Let Kaiser Fritz catch his bear ere he sells its hide! He has never tried to mount the Eagle's Ladder! Why, man, Adlerstein might be held against five hundred men by sister Johanna with her rock and spindle! 'Tis a free barony, Master Gottfried, I tell thee—has never sworn allegiance to Kaiser or Duke of Swabia either! Freiherr Eberhard is as much a king on his own rock as Kaiser Fritz ever was of the Romans, and more too, for I never could find out that they thought much of our King at Rome; and, as to gainsaying our old Freiherr, one might as well leap over the abyss at once."

"Yes, those old free barons are pitiless tyrants," said

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Gottfried, "and I scarce think I can understand thee aright when I hear thee say thou wouldst carry thy daughter to such an abode."

"It is the Freiherr's command," returned Hugh. "Look you, they have had wondrous ill-luck with their children; the Freiherrinn Kunigunde has had a dozen at least, and only two are alive, my young Freiherr and my young Lady Ermentrude; and no wonder, you would say, if you could see the gracious Freiherrinn, for surely Dame Holda made a blunder when she fished her out of the fountain, woman instead of man. She is Adlerstein herself by birth, married her cousin, and is prouder and more dour than our old Freiherr himself—fitter far to handle shield than swaddled babe. And now our Jungfrau has fallen into a pining waste, that 'tis a pity to see how her cheeks have fallen away, and how she mopes and fades. Now, the old Freiherr and her brother, they both dote on her, and would do anything for her. They thought she was bewitched, so we took old Mother Ilsebill and tried her with the ordeal of water; but, look you, she sank as innocent as a puppy dog, and Ursel was at fault to fix on any one else. Then one day, when I looked into the chamber, I saw the poor maiden sitting, with her head hanging down, as if 'twas too heavy for her, on a high-backed chair, no rest for her feet, and the wind blowing keen all around her, and nothing to taste but scorched beef, or black bread and sour wine, and her mother rating her for foolish fancies that gave trouble. And, when my young Freiherr was bemoaning himself that we could not hear of a Jew physician passing our way to

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catch and bring up to cure her, I said to him at last that no doctor could do for her what gentle tendance and nursing would, for what the poor maiden needed was to be cosseted and laid down softly, and fed with broths and possets, and all that women know how to do with one another. A proper scowl and hard words I got from my gracious lady, for wanting to put burgher softness into an Adlerstein; but my old lord and his son opened on the scent at once. 'Thou hast a daughter?' quoth the Freiherr. 'So please your gracious lordship,' quoth I; 'that is, if she still lives, for I left her a puny infant.' 'Well,' said my lord, 'if thou wilt bring her here, and her care restores my daughter to health and strength, then will I make thee my body squire, with a right to a fourth part of all the spoil, and feed for two horses in my stable.' And young Freiherr Eberhard gave his word upon it."

Gottfried suggested that a sick nurse was the person required rather than a child like Christina; but, as Hugh truly observed, no nurse would voluntarily go to Adlerstein, and it was no use to wait for the hopes of capturing one by raid or foray. His daughter was at his own disposal, and her services would be repaid by personal advantages to himself which he was not disposed to forego; in effect these were the only means that the Baron had of requiting any attendance upon his daughter.

The citizens of old Germany had the strongest and most stringent ideas of parental authority, and regarded daughters as absolute chattels of their father; and Master Gottfried Sorel, though he alone had done the part of a parent to his niece, felt entirely unable to withstand

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the nearer claim, except by representations; and these fell utterly disregarded, as in truth every counsel had hitherto done, upon the ears of Reiter Hugh, ever since he had emerged from his swaddling clothes. The plentiful supper, full cup of wine, the confections, the soft chair, together perhaps with his brother's grave speech, soon, however, had the effect of sending him into a doze, whence he started to accept civilly the proposal of being installed in the stranger's room, where he was speedily snoring between two feather beds.

Then there could be freedom of speech in the gallery, where the uncle and aunt held anxious counsel over the poor little dark-tressed head that still lay upon good Johanna's knees. The dame was indignant and resolute: "Take the child back with him into a very nest of robbers!—her own innocent dove whom they had shielded from all evil like a very nun in a cloister! She should as soon think of yielding her up to be borne off by the great Satan himself with his horns and hoofs."

"Hugh is her father, housewife," said the master-carver.

"The right of parents is with those that have done the duty of parents," returned Johanna. "What said the kid in the fable to the goat that claimed her from the sheep that bred her up? I am ashamed of you, housefather, for not better loving your own niece."

"Heaven knows how I love her," said Gottfried, as the sweet face was raised up to him with a look acquitting him of the charge, and he bent to smooth back the

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silken hair, and kiss the ivory brow; "but Heaven also knows that I see no means of withholding her from one whose claim is closer than my own—none save one; and to that even thou, housemother, wouldst not have me resort."

"What is it?" asked the dame, sharply, yet with some fear.

"To denounce him to the burgomasters as one of the Adlerstein retainers who robbed Philip der Schmidt, and have him fast laid by the heels."

Christina shuddered, and Dame Johanna herself recoiled; but presently exclaimed, "Nay, you could not do that, good man, but wherefore not threaten him therewith? Stand at his bedside in early dawn, and tell him that, if he be not off ere daylight with both his cut-throats, the halberdiers will be upon him."

"Threaten what I neither could nor would perform, mother? That were a shrewish resource."

"Yet would it save the child," muttered Johanna. But, in the meantime, Christina was rising from the floor, and stood before them with loose hair, tearful eyes, and wet, flushed cheeks. "It must be thus," she said, in a low, but not unsteady voice. "I can bear it better since I have heard of the poor young lady, sick and with none to care for her. I will go with my father; it is my duty. I will do my best; but oh uncle, so work with him that he may bring me back again."

"This from thee, Stina!" exclaimed her aunt; "from thee who art sick for fear of a Lanzknecht!"

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"The saints will be with me, and you will pray for me," said Christina, still trembling.

"I tell thee, child, thou knowst not what these vile dens are. Heaven forbend thou shouldst!" exclaimed her aunt. "Go only to Father Balthazar, housefather, and see if he doth not call it a sending of a lamb among wolves."

"Mindst thou the carving I did for Father Balthazar's own oratory?" replied Master Gottfried.

"I talk not of carving! I talk of our child!" said the dame, petulantly.

"*Ut agnus inter lupos,*" softly said Gottfried, looking tenderly, though sadly, at his niece, who not only understood the quotation, but well remembered the carving of the cross-marked lamb going forth from its fold among the howling wolves.

"Alas! I am not an apostle," said she.

"Nay, but, in the path of duty, 'tis the same hand that sends thee forth," answered her uncle, "and the same will guard thee."

"Duty, indeed!" exclaimed Johanna. "As if any duty could lead that silly helpless child among that herd of evil men, and women yet worse, with a good-for-nothing father, who would sell her for a good horse to the first dissolute Junker who fell in his way."

"I will take care that he knows it is worth his while to restore her safe to us. Nor do I think so ill of Hugh as thou dost, mother. And, for the rest, Heaven and the saints and her own discretion must be her guard till she shall return to us."

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“How can Heaven be expected to protect her when you are flying in its face by not taking counsel with Father Balthazar?”

“That shalt thou do,” replied Gottfried, readily, secure that Father Balthazar would see the matter in the same light as himself, and tranquillize the good woman. It was not yet so late but that a servant could be despatched with a request that Father Balthazar, who lived not many houses off in the same street, would favour the Burgomeisterinn Sorel by coming to speak with her. In a few minutes he appeared,—an aged man, with a sensible face, of the fresh pure bloom preserved by a temperate life. He was a secular parish-priest, and, as well as his friend Master Gottfried, held greatly by the views left by the famous Strasburg preacher, Master John Tauler. After the good housemother had, in strong terms, laid the case before him, she expected a trenchant decision on her own side, but, to her surprise and disappointment, he declared that Master Gottfried was right, and that, unless Hugh Sorel demanded anything absolutely sinful of his daughter, it was needful that she should submit. He repeated, in stronger terms, the assurance that she would be protected in the endeavour to do right, and the Divine promises which he quoted from the Latin Scriptures, gave some comfort to the niece, who understood them, while they impressed the aunt, who did not. There was always the hope that, whether the young lady died or recovered, the conclusion of her illness would be the term of Christina's stay at Adlerstein, and with this trust Johanna must content herself. The priest took

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leave, after appointing with Christina to meet her in the confessional early in the morning before mass; and half the night was spent by the aunt and niece in preparing Christina's wardrobe for her sudden journey.

Many a tear was shed over the tokens of the little services she was wont to render, her half-done works, and pleasant studies so suddenly broken off, and all the time Hausfrau Johanna was running on with a lecture on the diligent preservation of her maiden discretion, with plentiful warnings against swaggering men-at-arms, drunken Lanzknechts, and, above all, against young barons, who most assuredly could mean no good by any burgher maiden. The good aunt blessed the saints that her Stina was likely only to be lovely in affectionate home eyes; but, for that matter, idle men, shut up in a castle, with nothing but mischief to think of, would be dangerous to Little Three Eyes herself, and Christina had best never stir a yard from her lady's chair, when forced to meet them. All this was interspersed with motherly advice how to treat the sick lady, and receipts for cordials and possets; for Johanna began to regard the case as a sort of second-hand one of her own. Nay, she even turned it over in her mind whether she should not offer herself as the Lady Ermentrude's sick-nurse, as being a less dangerous commodity than her little niece; but fears for the well-being of the master-carver, and his *Wirthschaft*, and still more the notion of gossip Gertrude Grundt hearing that she had ridden off with a wild Lanzknecht, made her at once reject the plan, without even mentioning it to her husband or his niece.

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By the time Hugh Sorel rolled out from between his feather beds, and was about to don his greasy buff, a handsome new suit, finished point device, and a pair of huge boots to correspond, had been laid by his bedside.

“Ho, ho! Master Goetz,” said he, as he stumbled into the Stube, “I see thy game. Thou wouldst make it worth my while to visit the father-house at Ulm?”

“It shall be worth thy while, indeed, if thou bringest me back my white dove,” was Gottfried’s answer.

“And how if I bring her back with a strapping Reiter son-in-law?” laughed Hugh. “What welcome should the fellow receive?”

“That would depend on what he might be,” replied Gottfried; and Hugh, his love of tormenting a little allayed by satisfaction in his buff suit, and by an eye to a heavy purse that lay by his brother’s hand on the table, added, “Little fear of that. Our fellows would look for lustier brides than yon little pale face. ’Tis whiter than ever this morning,—but no tears. That is my brave girl.”

“Yes, father, I am ready to do your bidding,” replied Christina, meekly.

“That is well, child. Mark me, no tears. Thy mother wept day and night, and, when she had wept out her tears, she was sullen, when I would have been friendly towards her. It was the worse for her. But, so long as thou art good daughter to me, thou shalt find me good father to thee;” and for a moment there was a kindness in his eye which made it sufficiently like that of his brother to give some consolation to the shrinking heart

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that he was rending from all it loved; and she steadied her voice for another gentle profession of obedience, for which she felt strengthened by the morning's orisons.

"Well said, child. Now canst sit on old Nibelung's croup? His backbone is somewhat sharper than if he had battened in a citizen's stall; but, if thine aunt can find thee some sort of pillion, I'll promise thee the best ride thou hast had since we came from Innspruck, ere thou canst remember."

"Christina has her own mule," replied her uncle, "without troubling Nibelung to carry double."

"Ho! her own! An overfed burgomaster sort of a beast, that will turn restive at the first sight of the Eagle's Ladder! However, he may carry her so far, and, if we cannot get him up the mountain, I shall know what to do with him," he muttered to himself.

But Hugh, like many a gentleman after him, was recusant at the sight of his daughter's luggage; and yet it only loaded one sumpter mule, besides forming a few bundles which could be easily bestowed upon the saddles of his two knappen, while her lute hung by a silken string on her arm. Both she and her aunt thought she had been extremely moderate; but his cry was, What could she want with so much? Her mother had never been allowed more than would go into a pair of saddlebags; and his own Jungfrau—she had never seen so much gear together in her life; he would be laughed to scorn for his presumption in bringing such a fine lady into the castle; it would be well if Freiherr Eberhard's bride brought half as much.

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Still he had a certain pride in it—he was, after all, by birth and breeding a burgher—and there had been evidently a softening and civilizing influence in the night spent beneath his paternal roof, amid old habits, and perhaps likewise in the submission he had met with from his daughter. The attendants, too, who had been pleased with their quarters, readily undertook to carry their share of the burthen, and, though he growled and muttered a little, he at length was won over to consent, chiefly, as it seemed, by Christina's obliging readiness to leave behind the bundle that contained her holiday kirtle.

He had been spared all needless irritation. Before his waking, Christina had been at the priest's cell, and had received his last blessings and counsels, and she had, on the way back, exchanged her farewells and tears with her two dearest friends, Barbara Schmidt, and Regina Grundt, confiding to the former her cage of doves, and to the latter the myrtle, which, like every German maiden, she cherished in her window, to supply her future bridal wreath. Now pale as death, but so resolutely composed as to be almost disappointing to her demonstrative aunt, she quietly went through her home partings; while Hausfrau Johanna adjured her father by all that was sacred to be a true guardian and protector of the child, and he could not forbear from a few tormenting auguries about the Lanzknecht son-in-law. Their effect was to make the good dame more passionate in her embraces and admonitions to Christina to take care of herself. She would have a mass said every day that Heaven might have a care of her!

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Master Gottfried was going to ride as far as the confines of the free city's territory, and his round, sleek, cream-coloured palfrey, used to ambling in civic processions, was as great a contrast to raw-boned, wild-eyed Nibelung, all dappled with misty gray, as was the stately, substantial burgher to his lean, hungry-looking brother; or Dame Johanna's dignified, curled, white poodle, which was forcibly withheld from following Christina, to the coarse-bristled, wolfish-looking hound who glared at the household pet with angry and contemptuous eyes, and made poor Christina's heart throb with terror whenever it bounded near her.

Close to her uncle she kept, as, beneath the trellised porches that came down from the projecting gables of the burghers' houses, many a well-known face gazed and nodded, as they took their way through the crooked streets, many a beggar or poor widow waved her a blessing. Out into the market place, with its clear fountain adorned with arches and statues, past the rising Dome Kirk, where the swarms of workmen unbonneted to the master-carver, and the Reiter paused with an irreverent sneer at the small progress made since he could first remember the building. How poor little Christina's soul clung to every cusp of the lacework spire, every arch of the window, each of which she had hailed as an achievement! The tears had well-nigh blinded her in a gush of feeling that came on her unawares, and her mule had his own way as he carried her under the arch of the tall and beautifully sculptured bridge tower, and over the noble bridge across the Danube.

Her uncle spoke much, low and earnestly, to his

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brother. She knew it was in commendation of her to his care, and an endeavour to impress him with a sense of the kind of protection she would require, and she kept out of earshot. It was enough for her to see her uncle still, and feel that his tenderness was with her, and around her. But at last he drew his rein. "And now, my little one, the daughter of my heart, I must bid thee farewell," he said.

Christina could not be restrained from springing from her mule, and kneeling on the grass to receive his blessing, her face hidden in her hands, that her father might not see her tears.

"The good God bless thee, my child," said Gottfried, who seldom invoked the saints; "bless thee, and bring thee back in His own good time. Thou hast been a good child to us; be so to thine own father. Do thy work, and come back to us again."

The tears rained down his cheeks, as Christina's head lay on his bosom, and then with a last kiss he lifted her again on her mule, mounted his horse, and turned back to the city, with his servant.

Hugh was merciful enough to let his daughter gaze long after the retreating figure ere he summoned her on. All day they rode, at first through meadow lands and then through more broken, open ground, where at midday they halted, and dined upon the plentiful fare with which the housemother had provided them, over which Hugh smacked his lips, and owned that they did live well in the old town! Could Christina make such sausages?

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“Not as well as my aunt.”

“Well, do thy best, and thou wilt win favour with the baron.”

The evening began to advance, and Christina was very weary, as the purple mountains that she had long watched with a mixture of fear and hope began to look more distinct, and the ground was often in abrupt ascents. Her father, without giving space for complaints, hurried her on. He must reach the Debateable Ford ere dark. It was, however, twilight when they came to an open space, where, at the foot of thickly forest-clad rising ground, lay an expanse of turf and rich grass, through which a stream made its way, standing in a wide tranquil pool as if to rest after its rough course from the mountains. Above rose, like a dark wall, crag upon crag, peak on peak, in purple masses blending with the sky; and Hugh, pointing upwards to a turreted point, apparently close above their heads, where a star of light was burning, told her that there was Adlerstein, and this was the Debateable Ford.

In fact, as he explained, while splashing through the shallow expanse, the stream had changed its course. It was the boundary between the lands of Schlangenwald and Adlerstein, but it had within the last sixty years burst forth in a flood, and had then declined to return to its own bed, but had flowed in a fresh channel to the right of the former one. The Freiherren von Adlerstein claimed the ground to the old channel, the Graffen von Schlangenwald held that the river was the landmark; and the dispute had a greater importance than seemed

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explained from the worth of the rushy space of ground in question, for this was the passage of the Italian merchants on their way from Constance, and every load that was overthrown in the river was regarded as the lawful prey of the noble on whose banks the catastrophe befell.

Any freight of goods was anxiously watched by both nobles, and it was not their fault if no disaster befell the travellers. Hugh talked of the Schlangenwald marauders with the bitterness of a deadly feud, but manifestly did not breathe freely till his whole convoy were safe across both the wet and the dry channel.

Christina supposed they should now ascend to the castle; but her father laughed, saying that the castle was not such a step off as she fancied, and that they must have daylight for the Eagle's Stairs. He led the way through the trees, up ground that she thought mountain already and finally arrived at a miserable little hut, which served the purpose of an inn.

He was received there with much obsequiousness, and was plainly a great authority there. Christina, weary and frightened, descended from her mule, and was put under the protection of a wild, rough-looking peasant woman, who stared at her like something from another world, but at length showed her a nook behind a mud partition, where she could spread her mantle, and at least lie down and tell her beads unseen, if she could not sleep in the stifling, smoky atmosphere, amid the sounds of carousal among her father and his fellows.

The great hound came up and smelt at her. His

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outline was so wolfish, that she had nearly screamed: but, more in terror at the men who might have helped her than even at the beast, she tried to smooth him with her trembling hand, whispered his name of "Festhold," and found him licking her hand and wagging his long rough tail. And he finally lay down at her feet, as though to protect her.

"Is it a sign that good angels will not let me be hurt?" she thought, and, wearied out, she slept.

CHAPTER II

THE EYRIE

CHRISTINA SOREL awoke to a scene most unlike that which had been wont to meet her eyes in her own little wainscoted chamber high in the gabled front of her uncle's house. It was a time when the Imperial free towns of Germany had advanced nearly as far as those of Italy in civilization, and had reached a point whence they retrograded grievously during the Thirty Years' War, even to an extent that they have never entirely recovered. The country immediately around them shared the benefits of their civilization, and the free peasant-proprietors lived in great ease and prosperity, in beautiful and picturesque farmsteads, enjoying a careless abundance, and keeping numerous rural or religious feasts, where old Teutonic mythological observations had received a Christian colouring and adaptation.

In the mountains, or around the castles, it was usually very different. The elective constitution of the Empire, the frequent change of dynasty, the many disputed successions, had combined to render the sovereign authority uncertain and feeble, and it was seldom really felt save in the

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hereditary dominions of the Kaisar for the time being. Thus, while the cities advanced in the power of self-government, and the education it conveyed, the nobles, especially those whose abodes were not easily accessible, were often practically under no government at all, and felt themselves accountable to no man. The old wild freedom of the Suevi, and other Teutonic tribes, still technically, and in many cases practically, existed. The Heretogen, Heerzogen, or, as we call them, dukes, had indeed accepted employment from the Kaisar as his generals, and had received rewards from him; the Gerefen, or Grafen, of all kinds were his judges, the titles of both being proof of their holding commissions from, and being thus dependent on, the court. But the Freiherren, a word very inadequately represented by our French term of baron, were absolutely free, "never in bondage to any man," holding their own, and owing no duty, no office; poorer, because unendowed by the royal authority, but holding themselves infinitely higher, than the pensioners of the court. Left behind, however, by their neighbours, who did their part by society, and advanced with it, the Freiherren had been for the most part obliged to give up their independence and fall into the system, but so far in the rear, that they ranked, like the barons of France and England, as the last order of nobility.

Still, however, in the wilder and more mountainous parts of the country, some of the old families of un-reduced, truly free Freiherren lingered, their hand against every man, every man's hand against them, and ever becoming more savage, both positively and, still

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more, proportionately, as their isolation and the general progress around them became greater. The House of Austria, by gradually absorbing hereditary states into its own possessions, was, however, in the fifteenth century, acquiring a preponderance that rendered its possession of the Imperial throne almost a matter of inheritance, and moreover rendered the supreme power far more effective than it had ever previously been. Friedrich III, a man still in full vigour, and with an able and enterprising son already elected to the succession, was making his rule felt, and it was fast becoming apparent that the days of the independent baronies were numbered, and that the only choice that would soon be left them would be between making terms and being forcibly reduced. Von Adlerstein was one of the oldest of these free families. If the lords of the Eagle's Stone had ever followed the great Konrads and Friedrichs of Swabia in their Imperial days, their descendants had taken care to forget the weakness, and believed themselves absolutely free from all allegiance.

And the wildness of their territory was what might be expected from their hostility to all outward influences. The hostel, if it deserved the name, was little more than a charcoal burner's hut, hidden in the woods at the foot of the mountain, serving as a halting place for the Freiherren's retainers ere they attempted the ascent. The inhabitants were allowed to ply their trade of charring wood in the forest on condition of supplying the castle with charcoal, and of affording a lodging to the followers on occasions like the present.

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Grimy, half-clad, and brawny, with the whites of his eyes gleaming out of his black face, Jobst, the Kohler, startled Christina terribly when she came into the outer room, and met him returning from his night's work, with his long stoking pole in his hand. Her father shouted with laughter at her alarm.

"Thou thinkest thyself in the land of the kobolds and dwarfs, my girl! Never mind, thou wilt see worse than honest Jobst before thou hast done. Now, eat a morsel and be ready—mountain air will make thee hungry ere thou art at the castle. And, hark thee, Jobst, thou must give stable-room to yon sumpter-mule for the present, and let some of my daughter's gear lie in the shed."

"O father!" exclaimed Christina, in dismay.

"We'll bring it up, child, by piecemeal," he said in a low voice, "as we can; but if such a freight came to the castle at once, my lady would have her claws on it, and little more wouldst thou ever see thereof. Moreover, I shall have enough to do to look after thee up the ascent, without another of these city-bred beasts."

"I hope the poor mule will be well cared for. I can pay for—" began Christina; but her father squeezed her arm, and drowned her soft voice in his loud tones.

"Jobst will take care of the beast, as belonging to me. Woe betide him, if I find it the worse!"—and his added imprecations seemed unnecessary, so earnest were the asseverations of both the man and his wife that the animal should be well cared for. "Look you, Christina," said Hugh Sorel, as soon as he had placed her on her mule, and led her out of hearing, "if thou

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hast any gold about thee, let it be the last thing thou ownest to any living creature up there.” Then, as she was about to speak—“Do not even tell me. I *will* not know.” The caution did not add much to Christina’s comfort; but she presently asked, “Where is thy steed, father?”

“I sent him up to the castle with the Schneiderlein and Yellow Lorentz,” answered the father. “I shall have ado enough on foot with thee before we are up the Ladder.”

The father and daughter were meantime proceeding along a dark path through oak and birch woods, constantly ascending, until the oak grew stunted and disappeared, and the opening glades showed steep, stony, torrent-furrowed ramparts of hillside above them, looking to Christina’s eyes as if she were set to climb up the cathedral side like a snail or a fly. She quite gasped for breath at the very sight, and was told in return to wait and see what she would yet say to the *Adlerstreppe*, or Eagle’s Ladder. Poor child! she had no raptures for romantic scenery; she knew that jagged peaks made very pretty backgrounds in illuminations, but she had much rather have been in the smooth meadows of the environs of Ulm. The Danube looked much more agreeable to her, silver-winding between its green banks, than did the same waters leaping down with noisy voices in their stony, worn beds to feed the river that she only knew in his grave breadth and majesty. Yet, alarmed as she was, there was something in the exhilaration and elasticity of the mountain air that gave her an entirely new sensation of enjoyment and life, and seemed to brace her limbs and spirits for whatever might be before

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her; and, willing to show herself ready to be gratified, she observed on the freshness and sweetness of the air.

“Thou findest it out, child? Ay, 'tis worth all the feather beds and pouncet-boxes in Ulm; is it not? That accursed Italian fever never left me till I came up here. A man can scarce draw breath in your foggy meadows below there. Now then, here is the view open. What think you of the Eagle's Nest?”

For, having passed beyond the region of wood they had come forth upon the mountainside. A not immoderately steep slope of boggy, mossy-looking ground covered with bilberries, and cranberries, with bare rocks here and there rising, went away above out of her ken; but the path she was upon turned round the shoulder of the mountain, and to the left, on a ledge of rock cut off apparently on their side by a deep ravine, and with a sheer precipice above and below it, stood a red stone pile, with one turret far above the rest.

“And this is Schloss Adlerstein?” she exclaimed.

“That is Schloss Adlerstein; and there shalt thou be in two hours' time, unless the devil be more than usually busy, or thou makst a fool of thyself. If so, not Satan himself could save thee.”

It was well that Christina had resolution to prevent her making a fool of herself on the spot, for the thought of the pathway turned her so dizzy that she could only shut her eyes, trusting that her father did not see her terror. Soon the turn round to the side of the mountain was made, and the road became a mere track worn out

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on the turf on the hillside, with an abyss beneath, close to the edge of which the mule, of course, walked.

When she ventured to look again, she perceived that the ravine was like an enormous crack open on the mountainside, and that the stream that formed the Debateable Ford flowed down the bottom of it. The ravine itself went probably all the way up the mountain, growing shallower as it ascended higher; but here, where Christina beheld it, it was extremely deep, and savagely desolate and bare. She now saw that the Eagle's Ladder was a succession of bare gigantic terraces of rock, of which the opposite side of the ravine was composed, and on one of which stood the castle. It was no small mystery to her how it had ever been built, or how she was ever to get there. She saw in the opening of the ravine the green meadows and woods far below; and, when her father pointed out to her the Debateable Ford, apparently much nearer to the castle than they themselves were at present, she asked why they had so far overpassed the castle, and come by this circuitous course.

“Because,” said Hugh, “we are not eagles outright. Seest thou not, just beyond the castle court, this whole crag of ours breaks off short, falls like the town wall straight down into the plain? Even this cleft that we are crossing by, the only road a horse can pass, breaks off short and sudden too, so that the river is obliged to take leaps which nought else but a chamois could compass. A footpath there is, and Freiherr Eberhard takes it at all times, being born to it; but even I am too

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stiff for the like. Ha! ha! Thy uncle may talk of the Kaisar and his League, but he would change his note if we had him here.”

“Yet castles have been taken by hunger,” said Christina.

“What, knowest thou so much?—True! But look you,” pointing to a white foamy thread that descended the opposite steeps, “yonder beck dashes through the castle court, and it never dries; and see you the ledge the castle stands on? It winds on out of your sight, and forms a path which leads to the village of Adlerstein, out on the other slope of the mountains; and ill were it for the serfs if they victualled not the castle well.”

The fearful steepness of the ground absorbed all Christina’s attention. The road, or rather stairs, came down to the stream at the bottom of the fissure, and then went again on the other side up still more tremendous steeps, which Hugh climbed with a staff, sometimes with his hand on the bridle, but more often only keeping a watchful eye on the sure-footed mule, and an arm to steady his daughter in the saddle when she grew absolutely faint with giddiness at the abyss around her. She was too much in awe of him to utter cry or complaint, and, when he saw her effort to subdue her mortal terror, he was far from unkind, and let her feel his protecting strength.

Presently a voice was heard above—“What, Sorel, hast brought her! Trudchen is wearying for her.”

The words were in the most boorish dialect and pronunciation, the stranger to Christina’s ears, because

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intercourse with foreign merchants, and a growing affectation of Latinism, had much refined the city language to which she was accustomed; and she was surprised to perceive by her father's gesture and address that the speaker must be one of the lords of the castle. She looked up, and saw on the pathway above her a tall, large-framed young man, his skin dyed red with sun and wind, in odd contrast with his pale shaggy hair, moustache, and beard, as though the weather had tanned the one and bleached the other. His dress was a still shabbier buff suit than her father had worn, but with a richly embroidered belt sustaining a hunting horn with finely chased ornaments of tarnished silver; and an eagle's plume was fastened into his cap with a large gold Italian coin. He stared hard at the maiden, but vouchsafed her no token of greeting—only distressed her considerably by distracting her father's attention from her mule by his questions about the journey, all in the same rude, coarse tone and phraseology. Some amount of illusion was dispelled. Christina was quite prepared to find the mountain lords dangerous ruffians, but she had expected the graces of courtesy and high birth; but, though there was certainly an air of command and freedom of bearing about the present specimen, his manners and speech were more uncouth than those of any newly caught apprentice of her uncle, and she could not help thinking that her good aunt Johanna need not have troubled herself about the danger of her taking a liking to any such young Freiherr as she here beheld.

By this time, with a last effort, the mule had climbed to the level of the castle. As her father had shown her,

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there was precipice on two sides of the building; on the third, a sheer wall of rock going up to a huge height before it reached another of the Eagle's Steps; and on the fourth, where the gateway was, the little beck had been made to flow in a deep channel that had been hollowed out to serve as a moat, before it bounded down to swell the larger watercourse in the ravine. A temporary bridge had been laid across; the drawbridge was out of order, and part of Hugh's business had been to procure materials for mending its apparatus. Christina was told to dismount and cross on foot. The unrailed board, so close to the abyss, and with the wild water foaming above and below, was dreadful to her; and, though she durst not speak, she hung back with an involuntary shudder, as her father, occupied with the mule, did not think of giving her a hand. The young baron burst out into an unrestrained laugh—a still greater shock to her feelings; but at the same time he roughly took her hand, and almost dragged her across, saying, "City bred—ho, ho!" "Thanks, sir," she strove to say, but she was very near weeping with the terror and strangeness of all around.

The low-browed gateway, barely high enough to admit a man on horseback, opened before her, almost to her feelings like the gate of the grave, and she could not help crossing herself, with a silent prayer for protection, as she stepped under it, and came into the castle court—not such a court as gave its name to fair courtesy, but, if truth must be told, far more resembling an ill-kept, ill-savoured stableyard, with the piggeries opening into it. In unpleasantly close quarters, the Schneiderlein,

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or little tailor, *i.e.* the biggest and fiercest of all the knappen, was grooming Nibelung; three long-backed, long-legged, frightful swine were grubbing in a heap of refuse; four or five gaunt ferocious-looking dogs came bounding up to greet their comrade, Festhold; and a great old long-bearded goat stood on the top of the mixen, looking much disposed to butt at any newcomer. The Sorel family had brought cleanliness from Flanders, and Hausfrau Johanna was scrupulously dainty in all her appointments. Christina scarcely knew how she conveyed herself and her blue kirtle across the bemired stones to the next and still darker portal, under which a wide but rough ill-hewn stair ascended. The stables, in fact, occupied the lower floor of the main building, and not till these stairs had ascended above them did they lead out into the castle hall. Here were voices—voices rude and harsh, like those Christina had shrunk from in passing drinking booths. There was a long table, with rough men-at-arms lounging about, and staring rudely at her; and at the upper end, by a great open chimney, sat, half dozing, an elderly man, more rugged in feature than his son; and yet, when he roused himself and spoke to Hugh, there was a shade more of breeding, and less of clownishness, in his voice and deportment, as if he had been less entirely devoid of training. A tall darkly robed woman stood beside him—it was her harsh tone of reproof and command that had so startled Christina as she entered—and her huge towering cap made her look gigantic in the dim light of the smoky hall. Her features had been handsome, but had become hardened into a grim wooden aspect; and with sinking spirits

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Christina paused at the step of the daïs, and made her reverence, wishing she could sink beneath the stones of the pavement out of sight of these terrible personages.

“So that’s the wench you have taken all this trouble for,” was Freiherrinn Kunigunde’s greeting. “She looks like another sick baby to nurse; but I’ll have no trouble about her;—that is all. Take her up to Ermentrude; and thou, girl, have a care thou dost her will, and puttest none of thy city fancies into her head.”

“And hark thee, girl,” added the old Freiherr, sitting up. “So thou canst nurse her well, thou shalt have a new gown and a stout husband.”

“That way,” pointed the lady towards one of the four corner towers; and Christina moved doubtfully towards it, reluctant to quit her father, her only protector, and afraid to introduce herself. The younger Freiherr, however, stepped before her, went striding two or three steps at a time up the turret stair, and, before Christina had wound her way up, she heard a thin, impatient voice say, “Thou saidst she was come, Ebbo.”

“Yes, even so,” she heard Freiherr Eberhard return; “but she is slow and town bred. She was afraid of crossing the moat.” And then both laughed, so that Christina’s cheeks tingled as she emerged from the turret into another vaulted room. “Here she is,” quoth the brother; “now will she make thee quite well.”

It was a very bare and desolate room, with no hangings to the rough stone walls, and scarcely any furniture, except a great carved bedstead, one wooden chair, a table, and some stools. On the bare floor, in front

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of the fire, her arm under her head, and a profusion of long hair falling round her like flax from a distaff, lay wearily a little figure, beside whom Sir Eberhard was kneeling on one knee.

“Here is my sisterling,” said he, looking up to the newcomer. “They say you burgher women have ways of healing the sick. Look at her. Think you you can heal her?”

In an excess of dumb shyness Ermentrude half rose, and effectually hindered any observations on her looks by hiding her face away upon her brother’s knee. It was the gesture of a child of five years old, but Ermentrude’s length of limb forbade Christina to suppose her less than fourteen or fifteen. “What, wilt not look at her?” he said, trying to raise her head; and then, holding out one of her wasted, feverish hands to Christina, he again asked, with a wistfulness that had a strange effect from the large, tall man, almost ten years her elder, “Canst thou cure her, maiden?”

“I am no doctor, sir,” replied Christina; “but I could, at least, make her more comfortable. The stone is too hard for her.”

“I will not go away; I want the fire,” murmured the sick girl, holding out her hands towards it, and shivering.

Christina quickly took off her own thick cloth mantle, well lined with dressed lambskins, laid it on the floor, rolled the collar of it over a small log of wood—the only substitute she could see for a pillow—and showed an inviting couch in an instant. Ermentrude let her

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brother lay her down, and then was covered with the ample fold. She smiled as she turned up her thin, wasted face, faded into the same whitey-brown tint as her hair. "That is good," she said, but without thanks; and, feeling the soft lambswool: "Is that what you burgher-women wear? Father is to give me a furred mantle, if only some court dame would pass the Debateable Ford. But the Schlangenwaldern got the last before ever we could get down. Jobst was so stupid. He did not give us warning in time; but he is to be hanged next time if he does not."

Christina's blood curdled as she heard this speech in a weak little complaining tone, that otherwise put her sadly in mind of Barbara Schmidt's little sister, who had pined and wasted to death. "Never mind, Trudchen," answered the brother kindly; "meantime I have kept all the wild catskins for thee, and maybe this—this—she could sew them up into a mantle for thee."

"Oh, let me see," cried the young lady eagerly; and Sir Eberhard, walking off, presently returned with an armful of the beautiful brindled furs of the mountain cat, reminding Christina of her aunt's gentle domestic favourite. Ermentrude sat up, and regarded the placing out of them with great interest; and thus her brother left her employed, and so much delighted that she had not flagged, when a great bell proclaimed that it was the time for the noontide meal, for which Christina, in spite of all her fears of the company belowstairs, had been constrained by mountain air to look forward with satisfaction.

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Ermentrude, she found, meant to go down, but with no notion of the personal arrangements that Christina had been wont to think a needful preliminary. With all her hair streaming, down she went, and was so gladly welcomed by her father that it was plain that her presence was regarded as an unusual advance towards recovery, and Christina feared lest he might already be looking out for the stout husband. She had much to tell him about the catskin cloak, and then she was seized with eager curiosity at the sight of Christina's bundles, and especially at her lute, which she must hear at once.

“Not now,” said her mother, “there will be jangling and jingling enough by and by—meat now.”

The whole establishment were taking their places—or rather tumbling into them. A battered, shapeless metal vessel seemed to represent the saltcellar, and next to it Hugh Sorel seated himself, and kept a place for her beside him. Otherwise she would hardly have had seat or food. She was now able to survey the inmates of the castle. Besides the family themselves, there were about a dozen men, all ruffianly-looking, and of much lower grade than her father, and three women. One, old Ursel, the wife of Hatto the forester, was a bent, worn, but not ill-looking woman, with a motherly face; the younger ones were hard, bold creatures, from whom Christina felt a shrinking recoil. The meal was dressed by Ursel and her kitchen boy. From a great cauldron, goat's flesh and broth together were ladled out into wooden bowls. That every one provided his own spoon and knife—no

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fork—was only what Christina was used to in the most refined society, and she had the implements in a pouch hanging to her girdle; but she was not prepared for the unwashed condition of the bowls, nor for being obliged to share that of her father—far less for the absence of all blessing on the meal, and the coarse boisterousness of manners prevailing thereat. Hungry as she was, she did not find it easy to take food under these circumstances, and she was relieved when Ermentrude, overcome by the turmoil, grew giddy, and was carried upstairs by her father, who laid her down upon her great bed, and left her to the attendance of Christina. Ursel had followed, but was petulantly repulsed by her young lady in favour of the newcomer, and went away grumbling.

Nestled on her bed, Ermentrude insisted on hearing the lute, and Christina had to creep down to fetch it, with some other of her goods, in trembling haste, and redoubled disgust at the aspect of the meal, which looked even more repulsive in this later stage, and to one who was no longer partaking of it.

Low and softly, with a voice whence she could scarcely banish tears, and in dread of attracting attention, Christina sang to the sick girl, who listened with a sort of rude wonder, and finally was lulled to sleep. Christina ventured to lay down her instrument and move towards the window, heavily mullioned with stone, barred with iron, and glazed with thick glass; being in fact the only glazed window in the castle. To her great satisfaction it did not look out over the loathsome court, but over the opening of the ravine. The apartment occupied the whole floor of the keep; it was stone-paved, but the roof

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was boarded, and there was a round turret at each angle. One contained the staircase, and was that which ran up above the keep, served as a watch-tower, and supported the Eagle banner. The other three were empty, and one of these, which had a strong door, and a long loophole window looking out over the open country, Christina hoped that she might appropriate. The turret was immediately over the perpendicular cliff that descended into the plain. A stone thrown from the window would have gone straight down, she knew not where. Close to her ears rushed the descending waterfall in its leap over the rock side, and her eyes could rest themselves on the green meadow land below, and the smooth water of the Debateable Ford; nay—far, far away beyond retreating ridges of wood and field—she thought she could track a silver line and, guided by it, a something that might be a city. Her heart leapt towards it, but she was recalled by Ermentrude's fretfully imperious voice.

"I was only looking forth from the window, lady," she said, returning.

"Ah! thou sawst no travellers at the ford?" cried Ermentrude, starting up with lively interest.

"No, lady; I was gazing at the far distance. Know you if it be indeed Ulm that we see from these windows?"

"Ulm? That is where thou comest from?" said Ermentrude languidly.

"My happy home, with my dear uncle and aunt! Oh, if I can but see it hence, it will be joy!"

"I do not know. Let me see," said Ermentrude, rising;

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but at the window her pale blue eyes gazed vacantly as if she did not know what she was looking at or for.

“Ah! if the steeple of the Dome Kirk were but finished, I could not mistake it,” said Christina. “How beautiful the white spire will look from hence!”

“Dome Kirk?” repeated Ermentrude; “what is that?”

Such an entire blank as the poor child's mind seemed to be was inconceivable to the maiden, who had been bred up in the busy hum of men, where the constant resort of strange merchants, the daily interests of a self-governing municipality, and the numerous festivals, both secular and religious, were an unconscious education, even without that which had been bestowed upon her by teachers, as well as by her companionship with her uncle, and participation in his studies, taste and arts.

Ermentrude von Adlerstein had, on the contrary, not only never gone beyond the Kohler's hut on the one side, and the mountain village on the other, but she had never seen more of life than the festival at the wake at the hermitage chapel there on Midsummer-day. The only strangers who ever came to the castle were disbanded Lanzknechts who took service with her father, or now and then a captive whom he put to ransom. She knew absolutely nothing of the world, except for a general belief that Freiherren lived there to do what they chose with other people, and that the House of Adlerstein was the freest and noblest in existence. Also there was a very positive hatred to the house of Schlangenwald, and no less to that of Adlerstein Wildschloss, for no

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reason that Christina could discover, save that, being a younger branch of the family, they had submitted to the Emperor. To destroy either the Graf von Schlangenwald, or her Wildschloss cousin, was evidently the highest gratification Ermentrude could conceive; and, for the rest, that her father and brother should make successful captures at the Debateable Ford was the more abiding, because more practicable hope. She had no further ideas, except perhaps to elude her mother's severity, and to desire her brother's success in chamois hunting. The only mental culture she had ever received was that old Ursel had taught her the Credo, Pater Noster, and Ave, as correctly as might be expected from a long course of traditionary repetitions of an incomprehensible language. And she knew besides a few German rhymes and jingles, half Christian, half heathen, with a legend or two which, if the names were Christian, ran grossly wild from all Christian meaning or morality. As to the amenities, nay, almost the proprieties, of life, they were less known in that baronial castle than in any artisan's house at Ulm. So little had the sick girl figured them to herself, that she did not even desire any greater means of ease than she possessed. She moaned and fretted indeed, with aching limbs and blank weariness, but without the slightest formed desire for anything to remove her discomfort, except the few ameliorations she knew, such as sitting on her brother's knee, with her head on his shoulder, or tasting the mountain berries that he gathered for her. Any other desire she exerted herself to frame was for finery to be gained from the spoils of travellers.

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And this was Christina's charge, whom she must look upon as the least alien spirit in this dreadful castle of banishment! The young and old lords seemed to her savage bandits, who frightened her only less than did the proud sinister expression of the old lady, for she had not even the merit of showing any tenderness towards the sickly girl, of whom she was ashamed, and who evidently regarded the town-bred attendant as a contemptible interloper.

Long, long did the maiden weep and pray that night after Ermentrude had sunk to sleep. She strained her eyes with homesick longings to detect lights where she thought Ulm might be; and, as she thought of her uncle and aunt, the poodle and the cat round the stove, the maids spinning and the prentices knitting as her uncle read aloud some grave good book, most probably the legend of the saint of the day, and contrasted it with the rude gruff sounds of revelry that found their way up the turret stairs, she could hardly restrain her sobs from awakening the young lady whose bed she was to share. She thought almost with envy of her own patroness, who was cast into the lake of Bolsena with a millstone about her neck—a better fate, thought she, than to live on in such an abode of loathsomeness and peril.

But then had not St. Christina floated up alive, bearing up her millstone with her? And had not she been put into a dungeon full of venomous reptiles who, when they approached her, had all been changed to harmless doves? Christina had once asked Father Balthazar how this could be; and had he not replied that the Church did not teach these miracles as matters of faith, but that

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she might there discern in figure how meek Christian holiness rose above all crushing burthens, and transformed the rudest natures. This poor maiden—dying, perhaps; and oh! how unfit to live or die!—might it be her part to do some good work by her, and infuse some Christian hope, some godly fear? Could it be for this that the saints had led her hither?