

fellow of twenty-five, who had come from the Jura Mountains in the rugged Swiss country, to work on the great church. His appearance, if not totally repulsive, was certainly far from prepossessing, while, relying upon great bodily strength, his manners were tyrannical and overbearing. He was bent on having his will in everything, and consequently deemed every one his enemy who unluckily chanced to cross his purposes, or happened to stand as an obstacle in his road. This man, whom Master Eberhard, for his wife's sake, had not only set to work and brought into the Chapter-house, but also taken to his home, no sooner cast eyes upon the Master's daughter than he resolved that, cost what it might, and in spite of the fact that they were near blood relations, she should become his wife.

Acting upon this determination, he omitted no opportunity to ingratiate himself not alone into Bertha's favor, but also into that of her parents. With the latter—simple-minded, honest and unsuspecting people as they were—he succeeded in a wonderfully short time; but Bertha he found as hard as steel. There was no magnetism about him to gain her attraction. She laughed at his protestations of love, rejected his presents, and would not suffer him to accompany her either to church or any other place. "My brother Henry gives me all I want," or "My brother Henry always goes with me," were her invariable answers, and they filled Casper's heart with bitterness and hatred toward Henry. The latter, it is true, had from the outset conceived an aversion to the young Swiss, and being high-spirited, would brook no insult at Casper's hands. With the natural impetuosity of youth, Casper and Henry managed soon to come into collision, and from that to blows. Here, however, Casper also met with a signal discomfiture—for young Eberhard, whom to overthrow he deemed an easy matter, punished him so severely that the Swiss braggart was carried home more dead than alive.

Of course, thereupon ensued a scene at Master Eberhard's usually quiet fireside, and, worse than all, a divided household. For while Bertha and the Master justified Henry's action, Frau Eberhard, always a passionate woman, called the beating of her sister's son an unparalleled outrage, and, upon Henry's remonstrating with her, she forgot herself so far as to reveal the long-kept secret, by calling Henry a "bastard" and a "foundling!"

No sooner had the unlucky words escaped her lips than she repented bitterly of having giving utterance to them, while Master Eberhard stood aghast, and Bertha and Henry were thunderstruck. The young man, however, was the first to recover himself. Turning toward the Master, he asked, with what calmness he could muster:

"Father, does she speak the truth?"

The words were spoken so piteously that Bertha's tears welled forth, while throwing her arms around Henry's neck, she exclaimed:

"Dear Henry, you will always be my brother."

Gently disengaging himself from Bertha's embrace, Henry repeated his question:

"Father, does she speak the truth?"

Master Eberhard then took the young man's hand and led him from the room. What passed between them no one knew, for the Master, when he returned late in the evening, was silent, while Henry did not come at all. He had left Cologne.

It was a sad household henceforth, this hitherto so cheerful fireside of the Eberhards. Casper Hass for many weeks could not move from his bed, and Frau Eberhard had to do all the nursing herself, for the usually so obedient Bertha had utterly refused even to look at the now hated man's countenance, while Master Eberhard, missing Henry more than he would acknowledge, could find neither comfort nor peace at home.

It was indeed hard to say which of the three—the father, the mother or the daughter, was the most unhappy; for, though none of them spoke of the past, their faces were so woe-gone that, when Casper Hass was able once more to come down stairs, he thought that his relations as well as himself had just risen from sick beds. Secretly, however, he rejoiced that his rival was now out of the way. He already flattered himself that henceforth his wooing would be more successful.

But alas, for the uncertainty of human calculations, for is it not written that "Man proposes and God disposes;" and that "The best laid plans of mice and men gang aft a-glee?" Casper Hass, as a suitor, fared doubly worse when Henry Eberhard was out of the house than before, since whenever Bertha saw him she only remembered that he was the cause of Henry's exile. Her aversion to Casper and her love for Henry increased day by day. In her prayers she hoped that God would send the one away and bring the other back, while many an hour she gazed from her chamber out upon the silverly, ribbon-like Rhine, or upon the broad highway, as if she momentarily expected her idol's return. Poor Bertha! Her bed was not a couch of roses,