

light to keep the way, and avoid the old roots and other hindrances that might have obstructed him, so he got quickly forward. He had been so often deceived that at last he became distrustful, and thought they would have to give it up altogether, when once more he listened with beating heart. Right! This cannot possibly be a deception—there is the heavy tread of the cart-horses, and the unmistakable rumble of wheels. He sprang up, and hastened back. He soon reached the corner of the wood from whence great part of the road to Bretterode was visible. He hid himself behind the bushes, whose shadow completely guarded him against discovery.

Nothing was yet to be seen. At last appeared one waggon. Max held his breath. Right! the second came,—then the third, the fourth, the fifth. No doubt these were the smugglers, who themselves seemed carelessly sauntering along by the side of the wains without the least suspicion that there were watchful eyes upon them.

No longer hesitating, Max hastened back and stood beside old John for a few moments breathless, but with beaming eyes.

"They are coming," said he; "they must be here ere another quarter of an hour has passed."

"Good!" rejoined the old man, raising the trigger of his gun. "Back to your post, Max, and remember what I told thee."

Away glided Max, took up his weapon, placed himself against the trunk of a beech tree, and awaited their approach. The blood flowed quicker through his veins, and his hand trembled; not from cowardly fear, but from excitement, which he could not overcome. He did not, however, for a moment lose his presence of mind. "This will not do," murmured he to himself. "I shall not be sure of my aim, and may be shooting men instead of horses. I must have my gun resting on something."

A dry branch close by stood him in good stead. He used it as a prop, and hoped to aim well. He was anxious that the shot might be deadly, and so the poor animals might be spared prolonged misery.

Nearer and nearer came the rumble of the wheels and the trampling of the horses. He could also distinguish the voices of the men. They were carelessly talking and laughing. Bernard drove the foremost horses; and, as the road became hilly, had warned his companions to keep a little behind, for the narrowness of the pass would not allow them to be close to one another. On they came, ever nearer and nearer, till they were in a direct line with Max. His finger was ready to draw the trigger; but, not hearing the signal, he could not venture to fire. Wherefore did John hesitate? But there it is now! The report of a gun was immediately heard; a second from the hunter opposite; and now Max delayed not another instant. His aim was sure; for, now that the moment of action had arrived, he felt no more weakness or trembling. With firm hand he fired, and the saddle-horse fell to the earth as if struck by lightning. A second time the gun was presented, and the other horse after wildly rearing, was also stretched lifeless on the ground.

For a moment or two there was a gloomy silence. The smugglers appeared stupefied by this unexpected assault. Then followed a savage shriek, a roar of anger. Bernard's voice was heard saying, "Up, and strike to the earth whoever you can come across."

A wild tumult followed these words. Some of the armed men fired at random in the direction from whence they supposed the attack to have come; others climbed the heights of the pass to search out the enemy; while the rest busied themselves with the waggons, that they might at least save a part of their precious contents.

All vain trouble!

As soon as old John saw that the smugglers were attempting to seize himself and his companions, he came coolly from his hiding-place and stood before them. The light of the moon fell brightly on his tall thin figure. Any one who once beheld that form would never forget it.

"Back, people," cried he to the smugglers with powerful voice; "whoever stirs a single step does it at his peril. We seek not your lives, as the shooting of your horses may tell you. But one step forward and certain death is your lot. I am not here alone, you people."

The greater part of the smugglers were intimidated, and drew back; but Bernard and the most audacious of his gang pressed forward with furious rage.

"Up! up!" he screamed, "fear not his threatenings; but shoot the old fox down. Down with him."

In unbridled wrath he snatched a loaded weapon from the hand of the nearest man, pointed it at old John's breast, and fired. The old man uttered a cry and fell. A second shot, and Bernard's own cap was torn from his head. A panic seemed to overcome the men, even Bernard himself could not withstand it. Terrified at the rash, bloody deed which in the madness of wild passion he had committed, he took to flight. The whole gang followed. In a few minutes the pass was clear, and the richly laden waggons alone remained to witness to the reality of the outrageous seizure, which had been frustrated by the determination of John and his two friends.

Max and the huntsman did not concern themselves about the loaded waggons or flying smugglers; but rushed from their hiding-places to where they had seen the old man fall, in order to help him, if indeed help were of any avail. Max, who loved John as a father, trembled with anxiety.

"Father John," cried he, "tell me where are you?"

"Here, boy, here!" answered the well-known voice, and immediately he stepped out from the darkness of the bushes into the full light of the moon. There he stood, resting on his gun, strong and firm, and greeted his anxious friends with a hearty laugh. "Fear not, children; it is nothing," said he. "I have not even a scratch; it was but a feint. I thought the lads would run off when they imagined a murder had been committed. Let them run; they will not come back, and the rich booty is ours without further struggle. We shall have peace for a time from these knaves."

It seemed as if a heavy stone was removed from the heart of Max when he heard these words, and he saw his old friend standing before him uninjured. "God be thanked!" cried he, joyfully, "that He has held over you His protecting hand, and turned aside the deadly bullet from its course."

With tears of joy he threw himself on the old man's neck, and held him as if he would never let him go again.

"Eh, Max, dost thou really love me so

well, when I have scolded thee right often?" asked Father John, deeply moved. "I had not thought it, my boy; but it calms and makes happy the heart which has not through life had over much joy. Now, now, quietly, young one. Thou needst not lament as if some great misfortune had happened thee. Compose thyself, my son; we have much to do, and no time for caressing. Unharness the horses that are still in life, and divide them among the five waggons, that they may be removed. It will be a tedious business; but get them off we must."

Max dashed away the remaining tears, and set himself briskly to work; and, with the assistance of old John and the huntsman, in less than half an hour they were moving slowly on their way. Before the expected help reached them from the Hallinger valley the rich booty was safely deposited in the Custom-House, and old John and Max were retracing their steps happily together to the village, hoping to enjoy some hours' sleep after their boisterous night. When they came in front of the old ranger's house he seized the hand of the youth, and pressing it heartily, said, "Max, my dear boy, from this time forth I shall ever look on thee as my son. I know thy fondest wish, and rely upon it, it shall be fulfilled. I will myself speak for thee to the Count. Thou art too good for a goat-herd; a lad who can handle a gun so cleverly ought to become a huntsman, and be rewarded for his fidelity. Good-night, boy!"

Another warm grasp of the hand, and old John had disappeared within his own cottage. Max stood as one bewitched. To be hunter, and have the charge of one of these splendid forests, had been for long his secret, inward, earnest longing. But how could he, a poor youth, dare hope that such a wish could ever be fulfilled? His mother, who possessed nothing but her little cottage and garden, could not afford to buy a gun for him, how much less the complete equipment necessary! He stood for some minutes fixed to the spot; then, full of joy, he rushed home, that he might tell the good news to his mother. When he entered the cottage, however, he could not find it in his heart to awake her from her quiet slumber. "In the morning," whispered he to himself, "she shall hear all." With these thoughts he lay himself down on his hard bed, and closed his eyes. But it was long ere he really fell asleep. Even in his dreams there followed him the lovely, bright picture of his happy future.

(To be continued.)

The Christ who prayed on earth teaches us to pray, and the Christ who intercedes in heaven helps us to pray, and presents our poor cries, acceptable through His sacrifice, and fragrant with the incense from His own golden censor.—*Maclaren.*

I know that in no other name can salvation be found than in the name of Jesus Christ, the crucified; and there is nothing loftier for mankind than the divine humanity realized in Him and the kingdom of God planted by Him.—*Dr. Wette.*

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