

saw it again. He dug a grave in the forest for the stranger, and together they carried him out and buried him.

After Hunta had gone back to the house Ludwig, for reasons of his own, drove a large iron spike up to its head in the tree, and rolled a stone on the grave, which he had levelled off so smoothly, and covered with sod so neatly, that none would have known the ground had been disturbed. After that, he came out one day, rubbed his fingers over the spike-head, and sat on the stone for a few minutes, chattering and mumbling in his senseless, uncanny way.

From this time, Hunta seemed changed. Not that the death of the poor gentleman made her sad, but she thought night and day of Erfurt and the hidden gold. Erfurt was her only child, and she loved him as all mothers, good and bad, love a son who is handsome and masterful. He had always been good to her, had never beaten her as many a son, that she knew of, did his mother; and when he went away, years ago, he had said in his hearty way: "Save all you can from the garden, mother, and I'll save all I can, and after a while I'll come back, and we'll put it all together, and you shall go away from this little hut, and keep house for me.

Since then she had never wasted a potato or a cabbage, or a morsel of goat's milk curd. All had been taken to market, yet she had not been able to save, in all one fiftieth part as much as she had found in the leather belt.

She began to have wicked thoughts. She knew where a plant grew in the forest that her mother had told her about. You might steep it in goat's milk and no one would know by the taste that there was anything in it; but if a man were to take even a half-cup of it at night, he would never waken in the morning.

She thought of the small sum she had been able to save. Erfurt might come back any day; and, when he saw how little money she had, he would think she had not cared to help him, or wished to live with him, when the one thing she did care for was to have a splendid boxful of good gold coins, and be able to say: "Here, Erfurt, they are yours; enough to buy a good house, and a cow, and a double acre."

In imagination, Hunta often went through the whole process of steeping the

little green leaves in milk, mixing some of it with the cakes she would be baking for some traveller's supper, and ending by pouring the rest of it into his mug of milk. Then she would picture herself waking in the morning to find him still and harmless, and her joy at the gain of another handful of beautiful gold for Erfurt.

She went through these scenes so often that at last it seemed as though she had already done the deed; and when a man stopped one night, and strode around arrogantly while he waited for his supper, it seemed almost a matter of course that she should do in reality what she had so often fancied herself doing. Many times during the night she awoke, crept to the foot of the ladder leading to the loft, and listened. Once she had heard groans and struggling breaths, and then she hurried back to bed.

In the morning she had found the stranger just as her mother had said; and sewed into his doublet, were gold pieces larger than Hunta had ever seen. When she called Ludwig up in the loft to help lift the body down, he expressed no surprise, but mumbled and laughed in his meaningless way, and afterward dug the grave, drove another spike into a tree and rolled up the stone as he had done once before.

During the next twelve years, Hunta laid aside many a handful of precious coins; and it took Ludwig some time to go the rounds in the forest, searching out the nail heads, sitting for a few moments on each stone kicking his feet about among the leaves, and muttering strange things to himself.

Hunta felt no reproaches from her conscience. Her moral nature was slow moving and ophidian, and she had been taught the harm of being found out rather than the wrong of the sin itself. Moreover, her love for her son was about as narrow and exclusive as the tiger's love for its young, and she was capable of crunching the bones of victims in her lair, with just as little reflection, if Erfurt was to gain by it. She felt perfectly secure against the danger of being found out as long as there was no one near but Ludwig, who watched whatever was going on as the blackbirds did, and was just as likely to make an intelligent report of it.

It happened that there had been no one