

on the mossy sward, lay his faithful companion, Mohr. The head of the dog, a noble sagacious specimen of his kind, lay resting on his glossy paws. The animal seemed disinclined to change his posture, unless it was to bestow a momentary watchful glance on a flock of goats grazing in the valley beneath, or to exchange an affectionate look with his young master.

The evening was a beautiful one; already the shadows lay below in the valley, and the mist drew its white veil here and there over the meadows; only the summits of the mountains around were lighted by the slanting golden rays: the dew fell in bright drops on the blades of grass; the air was fresh and cold. All was still, save a slight rustling in the boughs of the young oak-trees, or when a slender deer, cautiously coming forth from the thickets, crushed the dry twigs beneath his feet. The birds, whose twittering had till now filled the woods with sound and life, were already in their nests. One solitary raven, who seemed to have made a longer pilgrimage than the others in procuring food for her young, was seen sweeping along with rapid wing. From the valley there came, more and more distinctly, the sound of rushing brooks, especially that of the mill-stream that lay far away on the hill-side.

Meanwhile, the boy was all unconscious that night was approaching so rapidly, when suddenly he was startled by Mohr. The animal, springing up, uttered a short deep bark. Max arose, and tossing back his bright-brown locks, which in the eagerness of reading had fallen over his brow, he threw a rapid glance around him.

"Once again has the home-coming been forgotten over this beautiful story," murmured he to himself, "I must borrow no more books. And yet," added he, smiling, "that were indeed a loss, for here in this lonely forest there are no companions but Mohr, and the flocks, and the little birds hopping in the branches overhead; and they, poor things, could not respond to me, however much I might talk to them. Now, Mohr, we must make haste, if we wish to be home before dark; quick, gather the goats together, hearest thou what I say?"

Mohr looked at his young master, wagged his tail, and barked again, but without moving from the spot.

"Now, what dost thou wait for, stupid fellow?" asked the boy. "Hearest thou not when I tell thee to collect the goats? haste thee, haste thee, Mohr, thou knowest well enough that old John will scold, if his faithful Bess is not in the stall at the proper time; quick, Mohr."

Mohr, however, made no symptoms of stirring, but looked across wistfully to where the bushes obscured the view of the valley. Thither turned the boy also. It was not long ere he heard footsteps, and a rustling, as of some one hiding in the thickets, together with the crackling of breaking branches.

"Ah, so, there comes some one, and therefore Mohr will not leave me, faithful animal. But who may it be? neither road or path lead through this wood."

He quickly snatched his book from the ground, put it in the pocket of his linen blouse, and seized his shepherd's staff that lay at the foot of the lime-tree.

"One cannot tell who it is," said he. "Watch Mohr, dangers are about us everywhere, as old

John would say, therefore we must be on our guard."

In the next moment, a big, black-bearded man, with gun and sportsman's bag slung over his shoulders, appeared from among the bushes. When he saw the boy, he stopped, and raised his weapon threateningly. Many, with greater strength than he, would have been overcome with fear, but the boy remained calm, only saying, Leave go, "Bernard, and play not foolishly with that gun of thine."

"Is it thou, Max? What hast thou to do in the forest at this time? Thou shouldst long since have been home. Take thyself off."

"When I am ready," said the boy, boldly; "I have more business here than thou, Bernard. What doest thou here with thy gun? Let the forester once see thee, and he will quickly let thee know thou art on forbidden ground."

"Hold thy tongue, stupid boy," cried the man, angrily. "What matters my business to thee? Go, and say nothing to any man; for shouldst thou betray me, it will be at thy peril. Go or I will strike thee."

"Think not to make me fear, Bernard," rejoined the boy quickly, and without stirring from the spot. "Attempt to strike me if thou wilt, but remember we are two, and Mohr has as little fear as his master. See that he seize thee not by the throat."

"If thou dost not hold him in, I will shoot him instantly through the head," said Bernard. "Again I say, Go; and if I hear that thou hast betrayed me, lad, it shall fare ill with thee."

"I must speak the truth, come what may," answered the boy. "Should any one question me, think not that in order to please thee I would tell a lie."

The other prepared to spring on Max, but had scarcely raised his arm, when the dog, who had been growling fiercely and showing his teeth, made a leap, which, by its suddenness, brought the powerful man to the ground.

"Call the dog back, or I will shoot you both down," shrieked Bernard with trembling voice.

The boy called out, "Mohr!" Obedient to his master's voice, though much against his will, and with fiery eyes fixed on his opponent, he let go his hold, and snarlingly retired. No sooner was the man free than he bolted up, pointed his gun at the faithful dog, and fired. Happily the aim was untrue, and he was, for the time, thwarted in his purpose.

"I will have thee yet," said Bernard, seizing the powder-horn anew.

"If thou killest the dog, or dost hurt even a hair of his head, I will go straight from this to the forester's house and show him how thou, with loaded fire-arms, art wondering about the forest," said Max with great determination, placing himself between them. "I will not betray thee if I can help it. Let us go quietly home; but if this thou refuse to do, or still hold out thy cruel threat, I would rather die myself than that my true-hearted dog should suffer; so bethink thyself, Bernard."

The man cast a look full of resentment on the boy, muttered a few indistinct words, and turned away.

"Go, then," said he aloud; "but beware of me, my lad."

Max gave no heed to this threatening speech; but giving directions to Mohr to gather the scattered flock, he drove them before him down the hill-side, and along the valley towards the village. This village, where his widowed mother dwelt, was almost hidden among fruit-trees. Having watered his herd at the adjoining brook, they seemed quickly to decrease, as one after another halted at the well-known doors. At length the end of the village was reached, or rather there remained only two other cottages. Each stood in its little garden, sweet with wallflower; the porch and windows were covered with the fresh green of vines and roses, which, in their luxuriance, clambered here and there over the roof. In the first of these lived old John, the ranger, who was sitting on the stone bench at his door, smoking a short pipe, which he shook with a knowing and kindly smile as Max approached, at the same time crying out, "Well, my boy, where hast thou stopped so long to-day? No harm has come over Brown Bess I hope?"

"No, Father John, there she is, safe and sound," answered he, pointing to the goat, who came bounding up to receive the accustomed fondling.

"Now, now, not quite so eager, Bess," said he. "Thy lettuce-leaves are waiting for thee, and a goodly store thou hast to-day."

Max leaned on his staff and looked, as the goat took the food from the hand of the old man, tenderly licking the fingers which offered the closing mouthful of the day. An earnest look in general had old John, especially when some business was in hand, but good temper was also expressed in his face, spite of the grizzled moustaches, curved nose, and gray, sparkling eyes, over which hung a pair of bushy brows. Under a somewhat rough exterior he carried a kindly heart, that was large enough to embrace a whole world of sufferers; but let poacher or smuggler come within his grasp, and pity would take wings to itself. His conscience would not permit him to swerve a hair's-breadth from the path of duty. Obedient to his calling, he earnestly strove by night and day to put a stop to such unlawful practices. This was the man whom Max now smilingly contemplated, as he appeared for the time completely engrossed with his favourite.

"Good-night, then, Father John," said he at length. "My mother at home will be waiting for me, and will be angry if I am late."

"Wait a little," returned old John; "I will put Bess in her stall and come with thee."

He stood up, emptied the ashes from his pipe, and, followed by the goat, who trotted after him like a dog, passed through the cottage into the yard; and, having shut her in the stable, returned to Max. It was not more than two hundred steps to the small house where Frau Berninger lived. As Max had prophesied, she was not well pleased at his delay, although quite willing to be softened, on the old man's intercession.

"I forgive the lad, John," said she; "and he shall have his supper without delay."

The bread and milk were quickly set before him, and proved very acceptable to the hungry boy. The faithful Mohr was not forgotten. His bravery had richly merited the goodly share assigned him by his young master.

*To be continued.*

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