



NO ONE BID HIM WELCOME OR RETURNED HIS GREETING.

as fast as he could. Bernez followed his example, but he had nothing wherein to stow away the treasure except the pockets of his linen jacket. These were soon full, and the old man had nearly filled his third sack, when a low rumbling was heard in the direction of the river. The stones had quenched their thirst and were coming back.

Turning round to see the meaning of the noise, Bernez saw them bent forward like runners hastening towards them and crushing everything that lay in their path.

"Holy Virgin!" he cried in horror, "we are lost!"  
 "Not I!" cried the sorcerer, holding out the protecting herbs. "In these is my safety! But you must die! A Christian must be sacrificed that I may retain my treasure!

Your evil angel brought us together—forget Rosine and prepare for death!"

The stones were close upon them, but as the sorcerer held out his herbs they parted on either side of him and threw themselves on Bernez. The poor young man closed his eyes and fell upon his knees.

Suddenly one of the largest stones stopped in front of him. Astonished at finding himself spared, Bernez looked up. It was the stone on which he had that day piously carried a cross. Thus baptized the monster no longer had the power of hurting a Christian. It sheltered Bernez until the last of its comrades had passed by. Then it rose and skimmed along the earth. The sorcerer tried to slip aside but it was too late.

Still he fearlessly held out his magic herbs. All in vain. The stone, now marked with the sign of salvation, cared no longer for the demon's power.

When Bernez awoke from his amazement the stone stood in its accustomed place and the sorcerer lay crushed and mangled on the ground—dead!

The old wizard's treasure now of course belonged to Bernez.

The following Christmas Eve the mangy ass and the lean ox held their usual conversation. But this time they could talk of nothing else but the wedding that had just taken place, the wealth of the young bridegroom Bernez, and the beauty of the bride—the peerless Rosine.



"HOLY VIRGIN, WE ARE LOST!"  
 "NOT I," CRIED THE SORCERER.

THE DRINKING STONES.