

There were lanes of old cottages, with woodbine-covered porches, and swallows by hundreds building in their eaves. There were snug farmhouses, with all their appendages, standing in the shadow of the Gothic church, and a great old hostel, or inn, clothed with ivy from foundation to chimney-top. In the very centre there was a green, with a huge oak, under which they said St. Olaf sat, and a deep draw-well in it. The Simberts' house looked out on that green. It had been fortified and inhabited by a bishop in its day, but was now a substantial farmhouse, with an arched doorway, very small windows, and a yard enclosed by high walls, from which a ponderous timber-gate, with Episcopal arms upon it, opened into a green lane, leading through a spacious orchard to a mill among the meadows. Hard by lived the "delightful schoolmaster," Herr Rusburg, in what had been a chapter-house before the Reformation, and had still a Latin inscription over the entrance. Its great garden was separated only by a shallow stream from the Simberts' orchard. I know not if the good man had any warning of the invasion; but as our carriage stopped—by the way, every inhabitant had come out to gaze and wonder, as it passed—forth came widowed aunt, maiden sister, deserted cousin, and all, with Ethelind's father and mother, looking soberly glad to see us; and Ethelind herself up from the spinning-wheel, in her russet petticoat, crimson jacket, and smooth chestnut hair. Forth also, in high glee at the unwonted sight, poured a crowd of boys and girls from the school, under the parting surveillance of Herr Rusburg and his helpmate, a lean, gray-haired, but patient and good-natured-looking pair, on whom Madame Wesing and her daughter laid hold immediately; and the last words I heard, as the respective doors closed, were something concerning the adored Auguste, and the want of health and spirits.

If there was work, there was also abundant comfort in the Simbert's house. Their great kitchen—it had been the bishop's banquet-hall, wherein he once feasted Christian I. of Denmark—was rich in the odor of hot cakes, and radiant with scoured flagons. The oak parlor, which opened from it, shone, walls, floor, and furniture with perfect polishing: green boughs, full of the first leaves, filled up its ample fire-place; and its low windows, wreathed with the climbing rose, looked out on the orchard, now in a wealth of blossoms. Moreover, the Simberts were, to my amazement, great people in Meldorf: and, according to the etiquette established in that primitive town, their neighbours, as soon as the day's work was fairly over, came to greet us as the newly-arrived, and congratulate them on our advent. By that sensible regulation, I got at once introduced to a number of blithe and handsome girls, not to speak of their fathers, mothers, brothers, uncles, and aunts, of whom my recollections are now somewhat less interesting; but I remember that the women, young and old, were knitting as if for dear life; that the men came in their everyday trim, fresh from field and workshop; and one honest blacksmith, who was also the burgomaster, paid his compliments in a leather-apron.

The rank and fashion of Meldorf having visited our neighbour and his guests with similar solemnities—for the schoolmaster was esteemed next

in dignity to the Simberts—a series of entertainments, in honor of us and the festive season, commenced at the old bishop's mansion, and circled round the little town, with no lack of savoury cakes, cream-cheese, and all manner of country good things; besides Pace-eggs, Easter-games, and dances for the young people. At these merry-makings, Madame Wesing and Louisa were in high request. They took such an interest in country affairs, were so delighted with everything, and dispensed so much intelligence of the great world, always so dazzling to rustic minds, that almost from their first appearance, the widow and her daughter's popularity was immense with even the Simberts. I, indeed, perceived that though always civil to them, Ethelind loved not the ladies; and I cherished the conviction that she was envious and spiteful, which, kind reader, was a species of consolation; for, since my arrival, the busy girl paid me, if possible, less attention than ever.

What did a young man of my figure and accomplishments care for that? Ethelind had no sensibility, but was not I astonishing the sons of Meldorf, and making deep impressions on the hearts of its fair daughters? Scotch to say, that country visit was too much for my faith and constancy to either Louisa or the widow. To the eternal prettinesses of those ladies, the frank, merry girls, rustic, robust, and rosy as they were, presented a most agreeable contrast. Of course, they admired me vastly. No wonder, poor things, after seeing nothing in their whole lives but men who ploughed and sowed, hewed and hammered! What conquests I made among them, and how many fine things I said and did! At times, my conscience told me it was not right. Might not Katharine's, Gretchen's, or Cristine's affections be hopelessly and for ever engaged? Nay, might not a similar misfortune happen to some half-dozen of the simple souls? and then, in the utmost extent of my Christian charity, I couldn't marry them all! As for Louisa, I had an inward persuasion she would not break her heart, and the widow looked on with amazing complacency. Often in what they called our "charming strolls" through green meadows, and by blossomed orchards, did both ladies rally me on my brilliant successes; and the kind widow invariably wound up with warnings against rustic rivals, and the envy of those country bores, which she assured me was cruel as the grave, and rapidly rising against myself. After those revealings, I naturally felt inclined to hurl defiance at the foe by still more determined flirtations, though, in all sincerity, I cannot recollect that ever one of the honest, good-natured, laborious men of Meldorf noticed my triumphs with the smallest displeasure. The Easter festivities had been over for some time, but my grandmother still lingered, having taken mightily to the Simberts' dairy; while Madame Wesing declared that the country air was doing her and Louisa good, and they could not think of leaving their delightful old friends.

The widow must have meant her young friends also, for she was growing positively confidential with the girls of Meldorf, occasionally giving me to understand, in her most playful manner, that their familiar communications somehow concerned myself. There was evidently a general interest