

nothing more than a good education; he had chosen her because she was known as the most pious, industrious and well-behaved maiden in the village. They had lived happy together. But the typhus fever broke out in the village, and her husband died. Having nursed him with the greatest tenderness, she was herself attacked with it, after his death, and barely escaped with life.

Her husband's sickness and her own had thrown her much behind hand; but now she must even part with her little cottage. Her deceased husband had long labored for the richest peasant in the country, a man by the name of Meyer. The peasant, who highly esteemed him on account of his fidelity and industry, had lent him three hundred crowns to purchase this cottage and ground belonging to it, upon the condition that he would pay off fifty crowns yearly, twenty-five in money and twenty-five in labor. Until the year that he was taken sick, her husband had faithfully performed his agreement, and the debt now amounted to but fifty crowns. Maria knew all this very well.

Meyer now died of the same disease. The heirs, a son and a daughter-in-law, found the note for three hundred crowns among the papers of the deceased. They did not know a word about the affair, as the old man had never spoken of it to them. The terrified woman assured them, called Heaven to witness, that her deceased husband had paid off the whole except fifty crowns. But all was of no avail.—The young peasant called her a shameless liar, and summoned her before a court of law. As she could not prove that anything had been paid, it was decided that the whole claim was valid. The heirs insisted upon

payment, and as poor Maria had nothing but her cottage and grounds, this little property must now be sold. She had fallen upon her knees before the heirs, and prayed them not turn her out of doors, little Ferdinand wept with her—both wept, but all was in vain. The following morning was appointed for the sale. She heard this an hour before, just as he had finished her day's work. A neighbor had called out over the hedge and told it to her.

It was for this reason that she now sat sorrowful by the open window, glancing now upward to the clear sky, now upon Ferdinand, and then gazing steadily upon the floor. There was a sad silence.

"Alas!" she said to herself, "I have to-day, raked the hay from the orchard for the last time. The early yellow plums which I picked this morning for Ferdinand are the last fruit which the poor boy will eat from the trees which his father planted for him. Yes, this may be the last night we may spend beneath this roof. By this time to-morrow, this cottage will be another's property, and who can say but we shall be turned out at once? Heaven alone knows where we shall find a shelter to-morrow. Perhaps under the open heavens!" She began to sob violently.

Little Ferdinand, who until now had not moved, came forward, and weeping, said:

"Mother, do not cry so bitterly, or else I cannot talk to you. Do you not know what father said, as he died there on the bed? 'Do not weep so,' he said; 'God is a father to the poor widow and orphans. Call upon him in thy distress, and he will aid thee.' This is what he said, and is it not true, then?"

"Yes, dear child," said the mother, "it is true."