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THE BLACKSMITH OF GRUNDERWALD.

CHAPTER II.

The brilliant tints that beautify the fading year were glowing on the woods and hills of the Tyrol under the mellow sunshine of St. Martin's summer, that gracious season which gives the mountain people time to gather in the last of their late harvest, and prepare against their cold and stormy winter. They were turning it to good account in house and farm throughout the country, yet on one of its finest mornings the village homes of Grunderwald and the fields around showed no signs of life or labor. Almost the entire population were crowded in their ancient church, at one of the special services introduced by Father Felix.

It was the first Friday before the feast of St. Martin, a day kept in honor of Ste. Cunagunde, a recluse who lived in the seventh century, and of whom it was recorded that having made a vow never to come out of her cell, she refused to leave it when the wooden church of which it formed a part was on fire and perished in the flames, for which dreadful suicide the lady was duly canonized.

All the village were at church except Ludwig Estermann and his daughter; even the faithful apprentice had gone with the multitude. Contrary to his custom, the smith himself sat idle that morning, on a rustic seat in his garden. His strong hands were unemployed, but his mind was busy with sad and vexing thoughts: the feast of St. Martin would fall on the following Wednesday, an twenty-five thalers were yet wanting of the instalment that must be paid to Adam Finkler on that day, or his house and home were forfeited.

The financial state of Grunderwald, in the latter half of the eighteenth century, would seem an improbable case to most English people in the wane of the nineteenth, but so it was that twenty-five thalers could only be raised

by one expedient that Estermann could devise. The few that had money to lend in the neighborhood were among the fiercest of his adversaries on the saints'-day business, and would have nothing to do with the affairs of a man whose difficulties they believed to be a special judgment on his heinous sin of working on the holy days. Adam Finkler was of the same opinion; nobody espoused the cause of the saints with more ardor than the rich old man, who having no work to do, did not care for the loss of time it brought to his poorer neighbors, and

hoped to make up by superstitious observances for the sins of a usurious life, and a heart set upon gain.

Moreover, Adam had cast a covetous eye on the house so much improved by Ludwig Estermann. He had sold it too cheap; it was too good for a blacksmith to live in, and would make a nice home for himself in his declining days; in short, the chance of repossessing the place by Ludwig's failing to pay the last instalment was a temptation too strong to be resisted. Adam would hear of

than the unlucky bargain had been, but it would avert the immediate loss of his house and home, with all the hard earnings and laborious days he had spent upon it, and after long consideration Ludwig made up his mind to accept it.

"It will stave off the loss for a year at any rate," he said, "and may be the Lord will send me some help in that time. I deserve to lose for making such a foolish bargain, but blessed be His name, it is His goodness, and not our own deservings, we

regarding the saints' days had somewhat cooled their friendship. They had given a cordial consent to the engagement between Ernest and Margaret when everything went well at the forge, and the best house in the village was looked on as the future home of the pair; but as Ludwig's trade declined and it was rumored that Adam Finkler was waiting for re-possession of the house he had sold on such remarkable terms, the Mullers found out that their son might do better and finally withdrew their consent to his marriage with Margaret Estermann till she had a better prospect or he had realized some means wherewith to begin the world.

Paternal authority in the matter of weddings stood high in the Tyrol at that time, and had law and custom been less strict on the subject neither of the young people would have taken the all-important step without the full approbation of parents on both sides.

"We must wait, Margaret," said Ernest, "may be the old people are right, may be this hinderance has been sent for a trial of our truth and affection to each other; but I have been thinking that your father has made a good blacksmith of me; they say there is plenty of work to be had in the Austrian states. I could go there, hard as it would be to part from you, for a year to come, and earn something handsome to pay the Swiss he means to borrow from, and redeem the house for us all."

She was thinking of that project; it was a good and a wise one, and promised real help to her father out of his difficulties, but its execution would take Ernest far away among strangers, and who could tell but some stranger's face would make him forget her? The village around lay silent and deserted, there was not an eye to see, or an ear to hear her regrets, which in the safety of solitude came in deep sobs from the young girl's breast and heavy tears from her eyes. Absorbed by her sorrow she saw or heard nothing, till a

voice almost at her side said: "Fraulein, can you tell me where the blacksmith is?" Margaret started up with a very red face; there stood a man whom she had never seen before; his dress though plain was not of her country; his countenance was grave and dignified, and his age seemed to be in the meridian of life.

"My father is in the garden, sir," said Margaret, hastily drying her eyes, and scarcely knowing what to say in her confusion; "but I will fetch him in a moment," and she moved away.



THE KAISER JOSEPH.

no extension of time; it was contrary to his principles to let a bargain be broken, though people who worked on holy days might wish to do so. The one expedient which Ludwig thought of under those circumstances, was to borrow the money he needed from a certain Swiss, residing in his native village on the frontier, a money-lender by trade, usurer by repute, who would advance the twenty-five thalers at an interest of something like fifty percent, to be paid within a year, and secured by a mortgage on the house. The mode of escape so offered was even more dangerous

have to depend on, for this world and the next."

While Ludwig thus pondered on his prospect of paying one usurer by getting into the clutches of another, his daughter sat spinning in the porch, but her thoughts were occupied with the same subject or rather with a part of it which more immediately concerned herself.

The Mullers had been familiar friends of the Estermanns when they apprenticed their eldest son to the blacksmith and for some years after, but the difference of opinion