

"Yes," growled out Trinkvelt, "Mathias is a great deal too good to the vagabonds. He ought to have sent them packing long ago."

At this moment Martha returned from the kitchen, followed by her daughter. She brought with her the explanation of the crash they had heard. Of course, she knew she was right. Jeanne had left the kitchen window unfastened, and now every pane in it was smashed. "By the way," she added, addressing Fritz, and in a rather more placable tone, "Your gendarme is outside and wants to see you. I asked him to come in, but he wouldn't. He said it was on some matter of duty."

"Oh, I know what it is," And obeying the call of duty, the young fellow rose, threw his great coat over his shoulders and bent his steps towards the door.

"You'll not be long, Fritz!" whispered Margaret at the door.

"No, Ma'm'zelle Margaret. I'll return in a minute."

And a sound was heard at which Kobel giggled, whereupon Madame Martha rather crossly exclaimed, "Will you shut that door, or do you want us all to catch our deaths?"

The door had closed before Madame had finished speaking, and Fritz was left out in the snow. Well, he deserved his luck after all. He was a brave, manly, yes, and gentle young fellow, and the burgomaster had been fortunate in securing so good a son-in-law. But there, everything had succeeded with Mathias. Why here, this very inn, why Mathias bought it just after it had ruined George Houtte. Everybody said it never could pay,—when suddenly everybody was wrong, for the best customers kept coming there continually. Then Mathias buys—always wisely and always well. First, the great meadow by the *Bruche*; then that little wood at the bottom of the Houx valley, then his twelve arpents on the Finckemath, then his sawmill at the Three Oaks, and lastly the flour mill that he had only rented before. Then he lends out money on good sound security, and at last he is named burgomaster. His daughter, Ma'm'zelle Margaret, has grown up in the meanwhile, and all Mathias can wish for now is a son-in-law. Not some wild madcap, but a sensible, plain-dealing, honest man, one that all shall respect, and that Margaret may love. Well, who turns up but Fritz Bernard; Fritz, of whom nobody can say any ill. Assuredly, Mathias was born under a lucky star.

"And the best of it is," cried out Trinkvelt, "that you deserve it all, Madame Mathias. Nobody envies you. On the contrary, every one says, 'they are good honest people,' who have earned all they have by hard work."

At this moment footsteps were heard outside, and all looked up inquiringly.

"Perhaps it's Fritz returning, as he said he would?"

"No, Margaret, no," replied the mother. Then after a second's pause, with a loud shout of joy, she exclaimed, "It is he, your father Mathias!"

And on the word, the door flung open, and the burgomaster entered.

CHAPTER IV.

THE BURGOMASTER'S RETURN.

He was a fine man, was Mathias. Tall and commanding in appearance, with a habit of haunching up his great shoulders, that seemed to add to rather than detract from the dignity of his demeanour. It was a fine head, the forehead high but receding, the nose an eagle's, the mouth perfect, with a massive underjaw and chin like a lion's. There was danger in the look of that mouth and chin, joined to such a forehead. The fiercest passions of a beast of prey seemed to lurk there, uncontrolled by the finer feelings of the soul. Still in the prime of life, his black hair had just begun to turn grey, but this every one said was more the effect of thinking over his bargains than a sign of approaching old age. The face was likely to grow handsomer as it grew older. The dark flashing eyes, full of fire and meaning, were not of a kind to pale and fade with years. There was an indescribable brightness about them at times. Not the excitement of over-indulgence, although the burgomaster often did drink, and drink rather heavily. It was more an expression of incessant instability, a continuous search for something that was not, a restless, ceaseless inquiry that found no answer.

None could have detected anything of the sort in the burgomaster now though. In fact, you could scarcely see him, muffled as he was in an enormous *houppelande*, or driving coat of bearskin, with gloves to match, fur-lined boots reaching half-way up his thigh, his head securely protected by a mighty cap of badgerskin, with poor Grimbart's tail hanging down behind, and his face decorating the front, the glass eyes just peeping out from the midst of the snow in which the burgomaster, from head to foot was smothered.

"Ha, ha," exclaimed he joyously, still standing on the mat, and throwing open wide his arms; "here I am, safe home again!" And mother and daughter were clasped for a moment in a close embrace.

"And so you are back again, really!" cried Martha, overjoyed.

"Yes, yes, thank goodness! What a storm! Why, I was forced to leave the waggon at Waechem. Nickel can go over for it in the morning. You must have these things well dried," added Mathias, pointing to his coat, gloves and cap.

"Never fear," answered Martha, folding them

together, ready for Jeanne to take into the kitchen. Then, turning to Mathias and embracing him, she added in a softer tone, "It was very kind of you to come home to us through the snow; we were getting so frightened about you."

"So I thought, my dear Martha, so I thought; and that was why I determined to reach home if I possibly could." And Mathias embraced his wife and daughter again, shook hands with old Trinkvelt and Kobel, and again turned to his own loved ones. How full of gentleness and affection was this hard man of the world. Could he have anything on his mind, any secret remorse hidden in the inmost recesses of his soul? Impossible!

Margaret was kneeling at his feet with his house shoes.

"Don't touch those, dear," remarked he, as she was about to unfasten the buckles of his great jack-boots; "don't touch those, dear, they're nasty and wet." Then turning to old Trinkvelt and Kobel, "You'll have nice weather to go home in. Why, by the side of the river the snow's at least six feet deep!"

"Poor dear father," ejaculated Margaret. "To think of your coming over from Waechem such a night as this! and all to please us too!"

"We thought your cousin Block would not let you go away soon in the storm."

"Oh, I finished my business with him yesterday morning. In fact, I wanted to start away then, but he would make me stay to see a sort of performance."

"A performance!" cried Margaret, and the round girlish face lighted up with joy at the thought; "is Hans Wurst at Ribeauville then?"

Hans Wurst is a sort of travelling Punch that we have in Alsace.

"No, it wasn't Hans Wurst," answered Mathias, drawing off his great boots, and looking lovingly first at his daughter, then at his wife, as both knelt at his feet with his house shoes. "No, it wasn't Hans Wurst. No, it was some fellow who came all the way from Paris. He certainly did do the most astonishing things. Why, he positively sent our cousin to sleep."

"What!" re-echoed Martha, "sent him to sleep?"

"Yes."

"Oh," cried Martha with a merry laugh.

"He gave Block some new liquor to drink. Block's ready enough for that. That would send him to sleep fast enough."

"No," answered Mathias, merrily; "no, it wasn't that. It was certainly a most remarkable thing. Assuredly if I had not seen it, I should never have believed it. He did nothing but look steadily at him, and make a few signs, and off he went fast asleep." And the burgomaster bent down to fasten the strings of his house shoes.

"Yes," struck in Kobel. "The Brigadier Stenger was telling me about that the other day. He saw exactly the same kind of thing done at Saverne,—perhaps by the same man. At all events, it was, as you say, a Parisian, who sent people to sleep, and when they were asleep, he made them tell all they had upon their conscience."

Why did the burgomaster look up? And what was the meaning of that curious uneasy expression in his eyes? Whatever it was it was soon gone, for turning to Margaret, he exclaimed, in a voice so cheery that it seemed almost unnatural, "My darling, look in the big pocket of my coat. Ah, Jeanne," he continued, as the smiling little maid entered to carry off the burgomaster's boots, "how are you? You must have those spurs scoured, and then Nickel can hang them with the harness."

"Yes, burgomaster," and Jeanne vanished into the depths of the kitchen to see to her master's supper. In the meanwhile, Margaret had followed her father's advice, searched in the pocket and drew thence a box of cardboard.

"What is it, father?"

"Open the box, child, open the box," exclaimed Mathias, playfully. The box was opened, and from it there issued an Alsatian cap of crimson velvet, trimmed with ermine, and decorated all over with glittering gold and silver spangles.

"Oh, how lovely it is! Is it for me, father?"

"Well, I should think so! It's scarcely for Jeanne, eh?"

And Margaret ran to her father to kiss him, and so more than repay the present. Then off to the glass, with the happy mother to put on the cap, first undoing the silk bow; while Kobel and Trinkvelt left their pipes and jogged over to the other side of the *Gastube* to admire the belle of the village in her new finery.

"How well it fits you, and how beautiful! why one would think it had been made for you."

"What will Fritz say when he sees it?"

"Say, child? Why, he'll say you are the prettiest girl in the village." And the burgomaster folded his daughter in his arms as if his whole soul were bound up in her, and as if, without her, life would not be worth the living. And that was strange, for was he not rich and the burgomaster?

"That is my wedding present to you, Margaret," he added, taking the blooming girl on his knee; "I want you to wear it on your marriage-day, and then to keep it as long as you live. Do you believe, my darling, do you believe that in fifteen or twenty years from now you will remember that it was your father who gave it you?"

"I'm sure I shall, father," replied Margaret,

touched, and she buried her head on the burgomaster's shoulder.

"Don't cry, my pet, don't cry. Don't you know that I ask nothing better than to see you happy with Fritz, and living here with your little ones about you, and the old grandfather sitting behind the stove. And now," he added cheerily, "let me have something to eat, and tell Jeanne to fetch a bottle of white wine."

And Martha hurried off to the kitchen to hasten the supper. Meanwhile, Mathias turned towards the two old foresters. "Well, Kobel and Trinkvelt, you'll have another glass of wine with me before you go?"

"Oh, with pleasure, burgomaster; with pleasure," and Father Trinkvelt's old eyes twinkled as he spoke.

"Yes, burgomaster," added Kobel the facetious, "for your sake, we'll try and make that last little effort."

"Ah, here's the supper," cried Mathias, and he settled himself to the table, where Martha proceeded to spread forth a tempting repast. There was a ham than which Westphalia could boast no better, and steaming hot sausages, with potatoes half-baked, half-fried in the gravy. Jeanne came at last with the bottle and glass. Mathias fell to, nothing loth, and seemed to eat, drink, and be merry. Where was the furtive look of uneasiness that just now peered forth at his eyes? Had it ever lurked there? Surely not; it was but our fancy,—the burgomaster could have no secret weighing on his conscience. Rich, respected, happy, what more could he wish for in this world? what cause could he have to hazard losing the world's regard?

(To be continued.)

SNAKE FASCINATION.

The phenomenon of snake fascination has never been satisfactorily explained, though many explanations of it have been attempted. One of the most recent and most plausible of these has just appeared in a scientific paper, and is given.

"In 1859," says the writer, "I followed in the rocks of Avon, close by the Park of Fontainebleau, the fairy paths of Denecourt, when the approach of a storm induced me to leave the blue arrows, indicating the right path, for a short cut. I soon lost my way, and found myself in a maze of brambles and rocks, when I was startled by seeing on my left hand, at a distance of about ten yards, a snake, whose body, lifted up from the ground, at a height of about a yard, was swinging to and fro. I remained motionless, hesitating whether to advance or to retreat, but soon perceived that the snake did not mind me, but kept on maintaining its swinging motion, and some plaintive shrieks attracted my attention to a greenfinch perched on a branch of a young pine overhanging the snake, with his feathers ruffled, following by a nod of his head on each side of the branch the motions of the snake. He tottered, spread his wings, alighted on a lower branch, and so on until the last branch was reached. I flung my stick at the snake, but the point of a rock broke it, and the snake disappeared with the rapidity of an arrow."

"On approaching the spot—a real abode of vipers—which I did with the greatest precaution, knowing by observation that death may be the result of the bite of a viper, I saw the greenfinch on the ground agitated by convulsive and spasmodic motion, opening and shutting his eyes. I put him in my bosom to try the effect of heat, and hastened to reach the park of Fontainebleau. The little claws of the bird, opening and shutting, perhaps as an effect of heat, made me think that he might be able to stand on my finger, and he did clutch it, and held on with spasmodic squeezes. In the park I got some water, and made him drink it. In short, he revived, and finally flew off in the lime-trees of the park."

"Now, while following the motions of the snake and bird, I experienced a singular sensation. I felt giddy; a squeezing like an iron hoop pressed in my temples, and the ground seemed to me to be heaving up and down. In fact, the sensation was quite analogous to that experienced on a beginning of sea sickness. From these facts, would it not seem probable that fascination is nothing more or less than extreme fatigue of the optic nerve, produced by a rapid gyratory motion of a shining object, and resulting in a nervous attack and a coma. Curiosity rivets at first the attention of the bird, unconscious of any danger, and when giddiness warns him of his peril it is too late."

ECHOES FROM LONDON.

THE pronunciation of the Derby winner's name is being aggrued. "Iro-quaw" seems to be the favourite way, but how is it to be justified, for Iroquois is the name of a tribe of North American Indians, not of a French town or statesmen. Yankee friends say Iro-quoise—the last syllable to rhyme with our word "poise." But it will always remain a vexed question.

THE phenomenal success of Mr. Irving's management of the Lyceum Theatre is strikingly illustrated by a fact that has just been made public. The period of which Mr. Irving took the theatre on lease is drawing to a close, and the question of renewing the tenancy has been raised. Mr. Irving propose to settle the matter in a most effective manner. He is going to buy the freehold of the theatre. The sum named is £123,000, and this he will be able to pay out of the net earnings of his manage-

ment during the few years that have elapsed since he became lessee and manager.

It will perhaps shock many to hear that Sunday dances are spreading, and threaten to become a regular social institution. Sunday has long been a fashionable day for quiet dinners, especially among artistic, literary, and theatrical sets, because it is the only day that many of them seem to have quite free; but three or four years ago everybody began to give dinners on Sunday, and now Sunday dances are spreading. In the suburbs people play tennis—you may hear it going on in all the gardens around town, and in two or three of the big squares. Think what people will, it is done in spite of comment or even protest. Recently the fact being discussed in the presence of a clergyman, he said he and many fellow clergymen approved of lawn tennis and cricket on Sunday!

AN Ojibway chief has appeared among us as a clergyman and is a somewhat remarkable man. His name is Pahtahquahong Chase, hereditary Chief of the Ojibway tribe. He wears on his breast two medals, one given to his grandfather by George III, the other presented to himself on behalf of Queen Victoria by the Prince of Wales during his visit to Canada in 1860, when the chief was selected by the Indian tribes to present an address to his Royal Highness. He is about sixty years of age, of middle height, and of the dark reddish brown hue which marks his race. His conversion to Christianity arose from an attendance at Divine service, in which he was deeply impressed with the solemnity of Christian worship, and having been ordained by an English bishop in Canada, he has for about eighteen years been employed as a missionary in connection with the Colonial and Continental Church Society.

THE satirists of the day are loud in the depreciation of the shortened petticoats and lengthened stockings of the little maidens who, sometimes even up to the age of fourteen, are seen fluttering about the park like so many sylphides displaying almost indelicate bareness of limb. The censors of modern manners declare that all the fast habits, carelessness of language, and bold address of the young English ladies have their origin in this baring of the legs up to the very knee, which is observed in the school-girls of the middle class. The French, whose watchfulness of their young girls was once proverbial, were at first most indignant at such exposure, but have ended by adopting the fashion, although without the exaggeration which offends all taste in the case of the English girls. They call the mode *a la ralet de pied*, because lackeys alone display the shape of their legs to the knees. *Les demoiselles en mollets* have become a favourite subject of caricature in the comic journals, the *laquais en mollets* being the familiar appellation of the footmen in Paris. The Princess of Wales, whose exquisite simplicity of taste is exhibited in the attire of her daughters, has never adopted this immodest fashion. The dresses of the young Princesses are made to reach just above the ankle for convenience sake—never to show the calf of the leg, as sometimes seen even in the case of otherwise well-dressed children in the Park.

THE fashion of wearing natural flowers in the hair has received a terrible check in the accident which befel a certain distinguished lady, the other evening at a large dinner party given in Portman-square. The lady's brow was crowned with a wreath of roses—pink, white and crimson. It became her exceedingly, softening the usually stern expression of her beautiful countenance, for she is considered in the world as a *femme forte*, fearing nothing, investigating the cause of all effects without shrinking, in short a kind of moral amazon, always ready to place herself at the head of every kind of reform, and proclaiming aloud the rights of woman to every one willing to listen. The lady was seated next to a gentleman whose opinions on social matters differ entirely from those which were emanating with extreme and decisive volubility from the lips of his fair neighbour. Her idea of the sovereignty in all matters of domestic policy had just been submitted to the consideration of her listener, who was opposing it with all his eloquence. At some objection made by him the lady shook her head in resolute defiance, declaring that women, although not possessed of the physical strength of men, were endowed with far more courage, which aphorism she was about to prove by quotation of facts, when suddenly turning deadly pale she uttered a terrible shriek and began tearing the roses from her head, flinging the wreath to the other side of the room in the most frantic manner, as she rose and stamped about as if in agony, exclaiming all the while, "Help me, help me, for Heaven's sake! An earwig! an earwig!" And sure enough, as she jumped away from the table, upsetting soup plate and wine glasses in her sudden movement, the poor miserable insect was seen running across the snow-white tablecloth towards the ladies opposite, who in equal dismay began to shriek and scream with equal vehemence. The tumult was complete, and it was some time before quiet was restored. The earwig meanwhile had travelled no one knew whither, and the conversation grew cold. The anxiety manifested by every one of the fair guests concerning the destination of the insect put a stop at once to the feast of reason and the flow of soul which had been promised by the host through the brilliant arguments to be uttered by the beautiful *femme forte*.