

## GIVING THE BASKET.

A HOLSTEINER'S STORY.

My grandmother was a wonderful woman. She lived from her first birthday seventy-five years in the same old street of Hamburg—changed her name three times, with the help of as many weddings—had seven sons and five daughters, all prosperously settled along the Lower Elbe; and one proverb, which was at once her creed and consolation: "What is to be, will be."

A quiet life had my grandmother passed in the faith of that maxim, notwithstanding her numerous family and successive spouses. She was reckoned rich, too, each of the three dear departed having in turn endowed her with a comfortable jointure. There was, consequently, an earnest strife among her kindred as to who should be her heir; but my grandmother almost settled the question, by taking me home in my seventh year, to keep her in occupation in the old house. What moved her to that step, nobody ever knew; unless that I was the youngest of nine boys belonging to her eldest daughter—extremely unwelcome, because I was not a little girl—and said to resemble her first husband, my grandfather, who had died at twenty-nine, and then rested some forty years in St. Michael's Cemetery. I was born within the liberties of Altona, and therefore counted as a Holsteiner. Readers, most of you know that there are not two miles between the two good cities; but the rest of our relations in the Hamburg territory, besides uniting their voices to warn the old lady that I would have a will of my own, were liberal in the suggestion of difficulties which might arise in case of future war in my drawing for the burgh militia. My grandmother replied to all their warnings with her wonted proverb, and nothing daunted, took me home to Alsterstrasse. It was the oldest street of the new town, curving down from the ancient rampart to the river. Its houses had been built before the Thirty Years' War, when straight lines were yet unthought of, and had all projecting storeys in front, and gardens, with right ancient summer-houses in them, behind. Nothing had ever gone out of repair in that street; trade, with all its dust and wear, had passed it by; low poverty had never found an entrance; and nobody inhabited its peaceful precincts but well-to-do, old-fashioned burghers, whose business-days were over; discreet spinsters, who managed their own portions; and prudent, comfortably-jointed widows like my grandmother.

Peaceful years leave little to relate; and of mine, under her administration, I can only say that there were boys in the neighbourhood with whom I played—that they grew to be young men with whom I had frolics, controversies, and friendships—that my grandmother sent me from her house to school, from school to college, and from college to a notary, because my grandfather had been such, and it was a genteel profession—that I was neither overworked nor very idle; and at twenty-three, all the judicious in Alsterstrasse, and they were many, gave me the character of a handsome steady young man, in much request for dances, and doubtless a great comfort to my grandmother, to which I once overheard a spiteful old maid add, that I was growing more conceited

every day, and thought myself quite a beau among the girls.

My father and mother had grown old, my brothers had grown up, and some of them were married, but I was never reckoned among them. Indeed, it was in my recollection, that the honest man whose name I bore, when his memory grew short with settling the senior eight, occasionally called me "nephew." It was allowed on all hands, however, that I was to be my grandmother's heir. Quietly kind had the old lady been to me from childhood upwards; and her house, with its corner rooms and carved-wood ceilings, was no cheerless abode. It had descended to her through a line of Hanseatic merchants. She was an only daughter, and having dwelt there all her maiden and married life—I had almost said lives—my grandmother held that it should be the high place of festivity to her remote descendants, and kept all the holidays that were ever known in Hamburg. Company was never wanting on such occasions; but there was one household whose members came particularly often, and were always welcome. They were Holsteiners, and lived far away in the little old town of Meldorf, from which my grandfather had come. How they came together, I never found out, but their home was a house of representatives for all civilised society, containing two bachelor brothers, and a maiden sister, a widowed aunt, a cousin whose husband had deserted, a sober married pair far on the shady side of life, and their girl, my grandmother's god-daughter, Ethelind. I early perceived that they were old-fashioned people, with ways and notions long out of date in our rich and thriving city. Down to Ethelind, they had each and all a strong inclination to stout home-made stuffs, thick-soled shoes, and nothing at all that could be called finery. They were, moreover, wonderful workers, and every one notable for some branch of domestic industry, concerning which they talked, questioned, and, I am sure, dreamed. Play and idleness were a reproach to my boyhood in their presence; and my youth discovered still further cause of dissatisfaction. There were none of them at all astonishing by either grandeur, or accomplishment—a fine air was lost on them, waltzing had no power, and tailors of the first fashion cut in vain for that household. In short, my dear readers, I did not like the Simberts, though, to do them justice, they were always friendly to me, and great favorites with my grandmother, especially Ethelind. It may seem less gallant than candid, but I did not like Ethelind either: why, most men would have found it hard to guess, for besides having a substantial portion, she was fair and rosy, neither large nor small, but of good solid figure, as became a Holstein girl, with a stock of good sense, good temper, and homely wit—a first-rate housewife, and a worthy daughter. Nevertheless, Ethelind had paid so little attention to my gifts and graces, appeared so unimpressible with my glory as a young man of fashion, and my grandmother's heir, and was so perseveringly set before me by all her relations as a fit and proper partner, that I was at length conscious of positively disliking the girl. She had laughed at me twice in the course of our acquaintance, and once told me that driving the plough was much more creditable