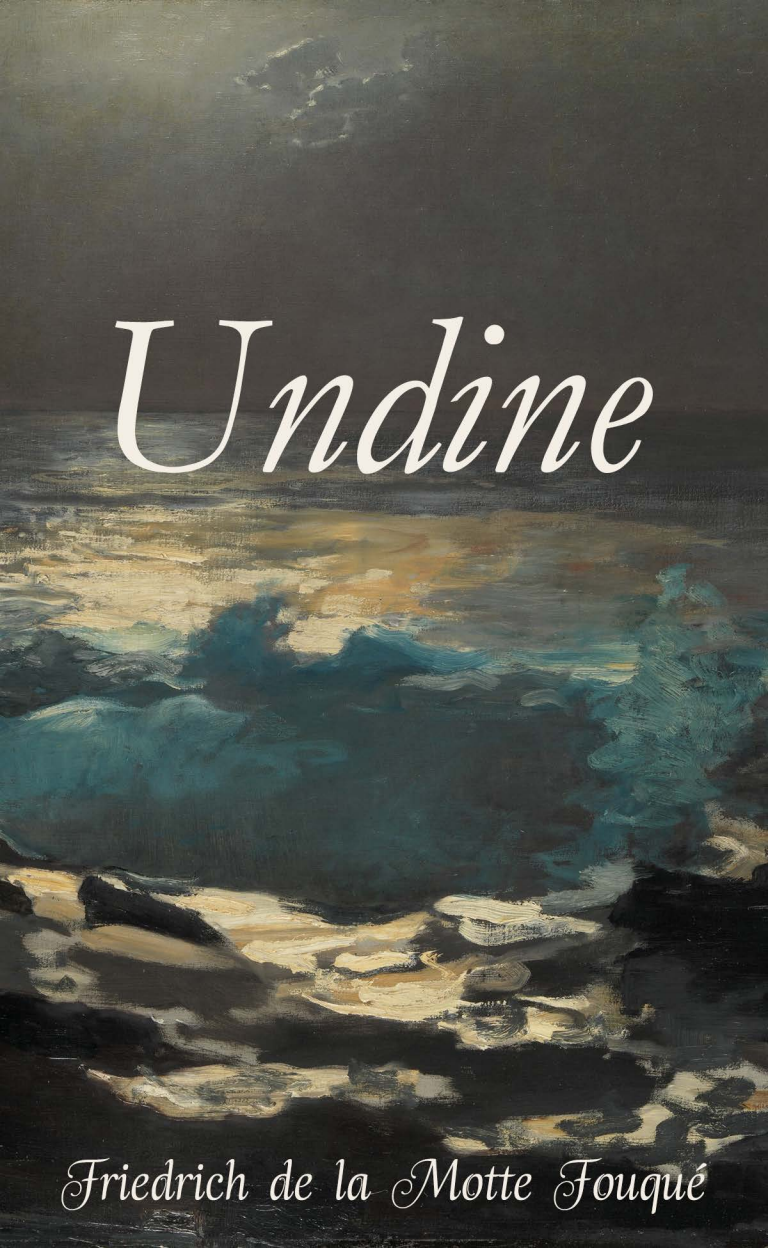
Undine
Friedrich de la Motte Fouqué

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by

Friedrich de la Motte Fouqué

translated by

Thomas Tracy

including

Preface *to* The Light Princess and
Other Fairy Tales

by

George MacDonald

Undine by Friedrich de la Motte Fouqué
translated by Thomas Tracy

This English language translation of Undine from the original German was first included in "Undine, and Sistram and His Companions," published in New York by Wiley and Putnam, 1845.
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Also includes an appendix essay by George MacDonald.

The appendix essay was first included as a preface to "The Light Princess, and Other Fairytales," published in New York and London by G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1893.
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Edition created 2025

Grace Wadholm Publishing
Coeur d'Alene, ID 83814
grace.wadholm.com

Chapter 1

How a Knight came to a Fisherman's cottage.

Once on a beautiful evening, it may now be many hundred years ago, there was a worthy old fisherman who sat before his door mending his nets.

Now the corner of the world where he dwelt was exceedingly picturesque. The green turf on which he had built his cottage ran far out into a great lake; and this slip of verdure appeared to stretch into it as much through love of its clear waters, blue and bright, as the lake, moved by a like impulse, strove to fold the meadow, with its waving grass and flowers and the cooling shade of the trees, in its fond embrace. Such were the freshness and beauty of both, that they seemed to be drawn toward each other, and the one to be visiting the other as a guest.

With respect to human beings, indeed, in this pleasant spot, excepting the fisherman and his family, there were few or rather none to be met with. For in the background of the scene, toward the west and north-west, lay a forest of extraordinary wildness, which, owing to its gloom and its being almost impassable, as well as to fear of the strange creatures

and visionary forms to be encountered there, most people avoided entering, unless in cases of extreme necessity. The pious old fisherman, however, many times passed through it without harm, when he carried the fine fish, which he caught by his beautiful strip of land, to a great city lying only a short distance beyond the extensive forest.

Now the reason he was able to go through this wood with so much ease, may have been chiefly this, because he entertained scarcely any thoughts but such as were of a religious nature; and besides, every time he crossed the evil-reported shades, he used to sing some holy song with a clear voice and from a sincere heart.

Well, while he sat by his nets this evening, neither fearing nor devising evil, a sudden terror seized him, as he heard a rushing in the darkness of the wood, that resembled the trampling of a mounted steed, and the noise continued every instant drawing nearer and nearer to his little territory.

What he had dreamed in his reveries, when abroad in many a stormy night, respecting the mysteries of the forest, now flashed through his mind in a moment; especially the figure of a man of gigantic stature and snow-white appearance, who kept nodding his head in a portentous manner. Yet, when he raised his eyes toward the wood, the form came before

him in perfect distinctness, as he saw the nodding man burst forth from the mazy web-work of leaves and branches. But he immediately felt emboldened, when he reflected that nothing to give him alarm had ever befallen him even in the forest; and moreover, that on this open neck of land the evil spirit, it was likely, would be still less daring in the exercise of its power. At the same time, he prayed aloud with the most earnest sincerity of devotion, repeating a passage of the Bible. This inspired him with fresh courage; and soon perceiving the illusion, the strange mistake into which his imagination had betrayed him, he could with difficulty refrain from laughing. The white, nodding figure he had seen, became transformed in the twinkling of an eye, to what in reality it was, a small brook, long and familiarly known to him, which ran foaming from the forest, and discharged itself into the lake.

But what had caused the startling sound was a knight, arrayed in sumptuous apparel, who beneath the shadows of the trees came riding toward the cottage. His doublet was of dark violet, embroidered with gold, and his scarlet cloak hung gracefully over it; on his cap of burnished gold waved red and violet plumes, and in his golden shoulder-belt flashed a sword, richly ornamented and extremely beautiful. The white barb that bore the knight, was more

slenderly built than war-horses usually are; and he touched the turf with a step so light and elastic, that the green and flower-woven carpet seemed hardly to receive the slightest break from his tread. The old fisherman, notwithstanding, did not feel perfectly secure in his mind, although he was forced to believe, that no evil could be feared from an appearance so prepossessing; and therefore, as good manners dictated, he took off his hat on the knight's coming near, and quietly remained by the side of his nets.

When the stranger stopped, and asked whether he with his horse could have shelter and entertainment there for the night, the fisherman returned answer: "As to your horse, fair Sir, I have no better stable for him than this shady meadow, and no better provender than the grass that is growing here. But with respect to yourself, you shall be welcome to our humble cottage, and to the best supper and lodging we are able to give you."

The knight was well contented with this reception; and alighting from his horse, which his host assisted him to relieve from saddle and bridle, he let him hasten away to the fresh pasture, and thus spoke: "Even had I found you less hospitable and kindly disposed, my worthy old friend, you would still, I suspect, hardly have got rid of me today; for here, I perceive, a broad lake lies before us, and as to riding

back into that wood of wonders, with the shades of evening deepening around me, may Heaven in its grace preserve me from the thought!"

"Pray, not a word of the wood, or of returning into it!" said the fisherman, and took his guest into the cottage.

There, beside the hearth, from which a frugal fire was diffusing its light through the clean dusky room, sat the fisherman's aged wife in a great chair. At the entrance of their noble guest, she rose and gave him a courteous welcome, but sat down again in her seat of honour, not making the slightest offer of it to the stranger. Upon this the fisherman said with a smile:

"You must not be offended with her, young gentleman, because she has not given up to you the best chair in the house: it is a custom among poor people to look upon this as the privilege of the aged."

"Why, husband!" cried the old lady with a quiet smile, "where can your wits be wandering? Our guest, to say the least of him, must belong to a Christian country, and how is it possible then, that so well-bred a young man, as he appears to be, could dream of driving old people from their chairs? Take a seat, my young master," continued she, turning to the knight; "there is still quite a snug little chair across the room there, only be careful not to shove it about

too roughly, for one of its legs, I fear, is none of the firmest."

The knight brought up the seat as carefully as she could desire, and good-humouredly sat down upon it; while it seemed to him for a moment, that he must be somehow related to this little household, and have just returned home from abroad.

These three worthy people now began to converse in the most friendly and familiar manner. In relation to the forest, indeed, concerning which the knight occasionally made some inquiries, the old man chose to know but little; at any rate he was of opinion, that slightly touching upon it, at this hour of twilight, was most suitable and safe; but of the cares and comforts of their home and their business abroad, the aged couple spoke more freely, and listened also with eager curiosity, as the knight recounted to them his travels, and how he had a castle, near one of the sources of the Danube, and that his name was Sir Huldbrand of Ringstetten.

Already had the stranger, while they were in the midst of their talk, been aware at times of a splash against the little low window, as if someone were dashing water against it. The, old man, every time he heard the noise, knit his brows with vexation; but at last, when, the whole sweep of a shower came pouring like a torrent against the panes, and bubbling

through tile decayed frame into the room, he started up indignant, rushed to the window, and cried with a threatening voice:

"Undine! will you never leave off these fooleries? not even today, when we have a stranger-knight with us in the cottage?"

All without now became still, only a low titter was just perceptible, and the fisherman said, as he came back to his seat: "You will have the goodness, my honored guest, to pardon this freak, and it may be a multitude more, but she has no thought of evil or anything improper. This mischievous Undine, to confess the truth, is our adopted daughter, and she stoutly refuses to give over this frolicsome childishness of hers although she has already entered her eighteenth year. But in spite of this, as I said before, she is at heart one of the very best children in the world."

"*You* may say so," broke in the old lady, shaking her head,—"you can give a better account of her than I can. When you return home from fishing, or from selling your fish in the city, you may think her frolics very delightful. But to have her figuring about you the whole day long, and never, from morning to night, to hear her speak one word of sense; and then, as she grows older, instead of having any help from her in the family, to find her a continual cause of anxiety, lest her wild humours should completely

ruin us,—that is quite a different affair, and enough at last to weary out the patience even of a saint."

"Well, well," replied the master of the house, with a smile, "you have your trials with Undine, and I have mine with the lake. The lake often beats down my dams, and breaks the meshes of my nets, but for all that I have a strong affection for it; and so have you, in spite of your mighty crosses and vexations, for our nice pretty little child. Is it not true?"

"One cannot be very angry with her," answered the old lady, as she gave her husband an approving smile.

That instant the door flew open, and a girl of slender form, almost a very miniature of woman, her hair flaxen and her complexion fair, in one word, a blonde-like miracle of beauty, dipped laughing in, and said: "You have only been making a mock of me, father; for where now is the guest you mentioned?"

The same moment, however, she perceived the knight also, and continued standing before the comely young man in fixed astonishment. Huldbrand was charmed with her graceful figure, and viewed her lovely features with the more intense interest, as he imagined it was only her surprise that permitted him to have the opportunity, and that she would soon turn away from his gaze with increased bashfulness. But the event was the very reverse of

what he expected. For after now regarding him quite a long while, she felt more confidence, moved nearer, knelt down before him, and, while she played with a gold medal, which he wore attached to a rich chain on his breast, exclaimed:

"Why, you beautiful, you friendly guest! how have you reached our poor cottage at last? Have you been obliged, for years and years, to wander about the world, before you could catch one glimpse of our nook? Do you come out of that wild forest, my lovely friend?"

The old woman was so prompt in her reproof, as to allow him no time to answer. She commanded the maiden to rise, show better manners, and go to her work. But Undine, without making any reply, drew a little footstool near Huldbrand's chair, sat down upon it with her netting, and said in a gentle tone: "I will work here."

The old man did as parents are apt to do with children, to whom they have been over-indulgent. He affected to observe nothing of Undine's strange behaviour, and was beginning to talk about something else. But this was what the little girl would not suffer him to do. She broke in upon him: "I have asked our kind guest, from whence he has come among us, and he has not yet answered me."

"I come out of the forest, you lovely little vision," Huldbrand returned, and she spoke again:

"You must also tell me how you came to enter that forest, so feared and shunned, and the marvellous adventures you met with there; for there is no escaping, I guess, without something of this kind."

Huldbrand felt a slight shudder, on remembering what he had witnessed, and looked involuntarily toward the window; for it seemed to him, that one of the strange shapes, which had come upon him in the forest, must be there grinning in through the glass; but he discerned nothing except the deep darkness of night, which had now enveloped the whole prospect. Upon this, he became more collected, and was just on the point of beginning his account, when the old man thus interrupted him:

"Not so, Sir knight; this is by no means a fit hour for such relations."

But Undine, in a state of high excitement, sprang up from her little cricket, braced her beautiful arms against her sides, and cried, placing herself directly before the fisherman: "He shall *not* tell his story, father? he shall not? But it is my will:—he shall!—he shall, stop him who may!"

Thus speaking, she stamped her neat little foot vehemently on the floor, but all with an air of such comic and good-humoured simplicity, that Huld-

brand now found it quite as hard to withdraw his gaze from her wild emotion, as he had before from her gentleness and beauty. The old man, on the contrary, burst out in unrestrained displeasure. He severely reproved Undine for her disobedience and her unbecoming carriage toward the stranger, and his good old wife joined him in harping on the same string.

By these rebukes Undine was only excited the more. "If you want to quarrel with me," she cried, "and will not let me hear what I so much desire, then sleep alone in your smoky old hut!"—And swift as an arrow she shot from the door, and vanished amid the darkness of the night.

Chapter 2

In what manner Undine had come to the Fisherman.

Huldbrand and the fisherman sprang from their seats, and were rushing to stop the angry girl; but before they could reach the cottage door, she had disappeared in the cloud-like obscurity without, and no sound, not so much even as that of her light foot-step, betrayed the course she had taken. Huldbrand threw a glance of inquiry toward his host: it almost seemed to him, as if his whole interview with a sweet apparition, which had so suddenly plunged again amid the night, were no other than a continuation of the wonderful forms, that had just played their mad pranks with him in the forest; but the old man muttered between his teeth:

"This is not the first time she has treated us in this manner. Now must our hearts be filled with anxiety, and our eyes find no sleep, the livelong night; for who can assure us, in spite of her past escapes, that she will not sometime or other come to harm, if she thus continue out in the dark and alone until daylight?"

"Then pray, for God's sake, father, let us follow her," cried Huldbrand anxiously.

"Wherefore should we?" replied the old man; "it would be a sin, were I to suffer you, all alone, to search after the foolish girl amid the lonesomeness of night; and my old limbs would fail to carry me to this wild rover, even if I knew to what place she has hurried off."

"Still we ought at least to call after her, and beg her to return," said Huldbrand; and he began to call in tones of earnest entreaty: "Undine! Undine! come back, pray come back!"

The old man shook his head, and said: "All your shouting, however loud and long, will be of no avail; you know not as yet, Sir knight, what a self-willed thing the little wilding is."

But still, even hoping against hope, he could not himself cease calling out every minute, amid the gloom of night: "Undine! ah, dear Undine! I beseech you, pray come back,—only this once."

It turned out, however, exactly as the fisherman had said. No Undine could they hear or see; and as the old man would on no account consent that Huldbrand should go in quest of the fugitive, they were both obliged at last to return into the cottage. There they found the fire on the hearth almost gone out, and the mistress of the house, who took Undine's flight and danger far less to heart than her husband, had already gone to rest. The old man blew up the

coals, put on dry wood, and by means of the renewed flame hunted for a jug of wine, which he brought and set between himself and his guest.

"You, Sir knight, as well as I," said he, "are anxious on the silly girl's account, and it would be better, I think, to spend part of the night in chatting and drinking, than keep turning and turning on our rush-mats, and trying in vain to sleep. What is your opinion?"

Huldbrand was well pleased with the plan; the fisherman pressed him to take the vacant seat of honor, its worthy occupant having now left it for her couch; and they relished their beverage and enjoyed their chat, as two such good men and true ever ought to do. To be sure, whenever the slightest thing moved before the windows, or at times when just nothing at all was moving, one of them would look up and exclaim, "There she comes!"—Then would they continue silent a few moments, and afterward, when nothing appeared, would shake their heads, breathe out a sigh, and go on with their talk.

But as they could neither of them think of anything except Undine, the best plan they could devise, was, that the old fisherman should relate, and the knight should hear, in what manner Undine had come to the cottage. So the fisherman began as follows:

"It is now about fifteen years, since I one day crossed the wild forest with fish for the city market. My wife had remained at home, as she was wont to do; and at this time for a reason of more than common interest; for although we were beginning to feel the advances of age, God had bestowed upon us an infant of wonderful beauty. It was a little girl, and we already began to ask ourselves the question, whether we ought not, for the advantage of the newcomer, to quit our solitude, and, the better to bring up this precious gift of Heaven, to remove to some more inhabited place. Poor people, to be sure, cannot in these cases do all you may think they ought. Sir knight; but still, gracious God! we must all do as much for our children as we possibly can.

"Well, I went on my way, and this affair would keep running in my head. This tongue of land was most dear to me, and I shrunk from the thought of leaving it, when, amidst the bustle and brawls of the city, I was obliged to reflect in this manner by myself: 'In a scene of tumult like this, or at least in one not much more quiet, I too must soon take up my abode.' But in spite of these feelings, I was far from murmuring against the kind providence of God; on the contrary, when I received this new blessing, my heart breathed a prayer of thankfulness too deep for words to express. I should also speak

an untruth, were I to say, that anything befell me, either on my passage through the forest to the city, or on my returning homeward, that gave me more alarm than usual, as at that time I had never seen any appearance there, which could terrify or annoy me. The Lord was ever with me in those awful shades."

Thus speaking, he took his cap reverently from his bald head, and continued to sit, for a considerable time, in devout thought. He then covered himself again, and went on with his relation:

"On this side the forest, alas! it was on this side, that woe burst upon me. My wife came wildly to meet me, clad in mourning apparel, and her eyes streaming with tears. 'Gracious God!' I cried with a groan; 'where's our child? Speak!"

"'With the Being on whom you have called, dear husband,' she answered; and we now entered the cottage together, weeping in silence. I looked for the little corse, almost fearing to find what I was seeking; and then it was I first learnt how all had happened.

"My wife had taken the little one in her arms, and walked out to the shore of the lake. She there sat down by its very brink; and while she was playing with the infant, as free from all fear as she was full of delight, it bent forward on a sudden, as if seeing something very beautiful in the water. My wife saw her laugh, the dear angel, and try to catch the image

in her little hands; but in a moment,—with a motion swifter than sight,—she sprung from her mother's arms, and sunk in the lake, the watery glass into which she had been gazing. I searched for our lost darling again and again; but it was all in vain; I could nowhere find the least trace of her.

"Well, we were again childless parents, and were now, on the same evening, sitting together by our cottage hearth. We had no desire to talk, even if our tears would have permitted us. As we thus sat in mournful stillness, gazing into the fire, all at once we heard something without,—a slight rustling at the door. The door flew open, and we saw a little girl, three or four years old, and more beautiful than I am able to tell you, standing on the threshold, richly dressed and smiling upon us. We were struck dumb with astonishment, and I knew not for a time, whether the tiny form were a real human being, or a mere mockery of enchantment. But I soon perceived water dripping from her golden hair and rich garments, and that the pretty child had been lying in the water, and stood in immediate need of our help.

"'Wife,' said I, 'no one has been able to save our child for us; still we doubtless ought to do for others, what would make Ourselves the happiest parents on earth, could anyone do us the same kindness.'

"We undressed the little thing, put her to bed,

and gave her something warming to drink: at all this she spoke not a word, but only turned her eyes upon us,—eyes blue and bright as sea or sky,—and continued looking at us with a smile.

"Next morning, we had no reason to fear, that she had received any other harm than her wetting, and I now asked her about her parents, and how she could have come to us. But the account she gave, was both confused and incredible. She must surely have been born far from here, not only because I have been unable, for these fifteen years, to learn anything of her birth, but because she then said, and at times continues to say, many things of so very singular a nature, that we neither of us know, after all, whether she may not have dropped among us from the moon. Then her talk runs upon golden castles, crystal domes, and Heaven knows what extravagances beside. What of her story, however, she related with most distinctness was this, that while she was once taking a sail with her mother on the great lake, she fell out of the boat into the water; and that when she first recovered her senses, she was here under our trees, where the gay scenes of the shore filled her with delight.

"We now had another care weighing upon our minds, and one that caused us no small perplexity and uneasiness. We of course very soon determined

to keep and bring up the child we had found, in place of our own darling that had been drowned; but who could tell us whether she had been baptized or not? She herself could give us no light on the subject. When we asked her the question, she commonly made answer, that she well knew she was created for God's praise and glory; and that as to what might promote the praise and glory of God, she was willing to let us determine.

"My wife and I reasoned in this way: 'If she has not been baptized, there can be no use in putting off the ceremony; and if she has been, it is more dangerous to have too little of a good thing than too much.'

"Taking this view of our difficulty, we now endeavored to hit upon a good name for the child, since while she remained without one, we were often at a loss, in our familiar talk, to know what to call her. We at length decided, that Dorothea should be most suitable for her, as I had somewhere heard it said, that this name signified *a Gift of God*; and surely she had been sent to us by Providence as a gift, to comfort us in our misery. She, on the contrary, would not so much as hear Dorothea mentioned: she insisted, that as she had been named Undine by her parents, Undine she ought still to be called.

It now occurred to me, that this was a heathenish name, to be found in no calendar, and I resolved to

ask the advice of a priest in the city. He too would hear nothing of the name, Undine; and yielding to my urgent request, he came with me through the enchanted forest, in order to perform the rite of baptism here in my cottage.

"The little maid stood before us so smart in her finery, and with so winning an air of gracefulness, that the heart of the priest softened at once in her presence; and she had a way of coaxing him so adroitly, and even of braving him at times with so merry a queerness, that he at last remembered nothing of his many objections to the name of Undine.

"Thus then was she baptized Undine; and during the holy ceremony, she behaved with great propriety and gentleness, wild and wayward as at other times she invariably was. For in this my wife was quite right, when she mentioned what care and anxiety the child has occasioned us. If I should relate to you"—

At this moment the knight interrupted the fisherman, with a view to direct his attention to a deep sound, as of a rushing flood, which had caught his ear, within a few minutes, between the words of the old man. And now the waters came pouring on with redoubled fury before the cottage windows. Both sprang to the door. There they saw, by the light of the now risen moon, the brook which issued from the wood, rushing wildly over its banks, and whirling

onward with it both stones and branches of trees in its rapid course. The storm, as if awakened by the uproar, burst forth from the clouds, whose immense masses of vapour coursed over the moon with the swiftness of thought; the lake roared beneath the wind that swept the foam from its waves; while the trees of this narrow peninsula groaned from root to top-most branch, as they bowed and swung above the torrent.

"Undine! in God's name, Undine!" cried the two men in an agony. No answer was returned; and now, regardless of everything else, they hurried from the cottage, one in this direction, the other in that, searching and calling.

Chapter 3

How they found Undine again.

The longer Huldbrand sought Undine beneath the shades of night, and failed to find her, the more anxious and confused he became. The impression that she was a mere phantom of the forest gained a new ascendency over him; indeed, amid the howling of the waves and the tempest, the crashing of the trees, and so entire a change of the scene, that it bore no resemblance to its former calm beauty, he was tempted to view the whole peninsula, together with the cottage and its inhabitants, as little more than some mockery of his senses; but still he heard, afar off, the fisherman's anxious and incessant shouting, "Undine! Undine!" and also his aged wife, who, with a loud voice and a strong feeling of awe, was praying and chanting hymns amid the commotion.

At length, when he drew near to the brook which had overflowed its banks, he perceived by the moonlight, that it had taken its wild course directly in front of the haunted forest, so as to change the peninsula into an island.

"Merciful God!" he breathed to himself, "if

Undine has ventured one step within that fearful wood, what will become of her? Perhaps it was all owing to her sportive and wayward spirit, because I could give her no account of my adventures there. And now the stream is rolling between us, she may be weeping alone on the other side in the midst of spectral horrors!"

A shuddering groan escaped him, and clambering over some stones and trunks of overthrown pines, in order to step into the impetuous current, he resolved, either by wading or swimming, to seek the wanderer on the further shore. He felt, it is true, all the dread and shrinking awe creeping over him, which he had already suffered by daylight among the now tossing and roaring branches of the forest. More than all, a tall man in white, whom he knew but too well, met his view, as he stood grinning and nodding on the grass beyond the water; but even monstrous forms like this only impelled him to cross over toward them, when the thought rushed upon him that Undine might be there alone, and in the agony of death.

He had already grasped a stout branch of a pine, and stood supporting himself upon it in the whirling current, against which he could with difficulty keep himself erect; but he advanced deeper in, with a courageous spirit. That instant, a gentle voice of warning cried near him: "Do not venture, do not

venture!—that old man, the stream, is too full of tricks to be trusted!"

He knew the soft tones of the voice; and while he stood as it were entranced, beneath the shadows which now duskily veiled the moon, his head swum with the swell and rolling of the waves, as he every moment saw them foaming and dashing above his knee. Still he disdained the thought of giving up his purpose.

"If you are not really there, if you are merely gambolling round me like a mist, may I too bid farewell to life, and become a shadow like you, dear, dear Undine!" Thus calling aloud, he again moved deeper into the stream. "Look round you,—ah pray look round you, beautiful young stranger! why rush on death so madly!" cried the voice a second time close by him; and looking on one side, as the moon by glimpses unveiled its light, he perceived a little island formed by the flood, and, reclined upon its flowery turf beneath the high branches of embowering trees, he saw the smiling and lovely Undine.

O with what a thrill of delight, compared with the suspense and pause of a moment before, the young man now plied his sturdy staff! A few steps freed him from the flood that was rushing between himself and the maiden, and he stood near her on the little spot of green-sward, in secret security, covered by

the primeval trees that rustled above them. Undine had partially risen, within her tent of verdure, and she now threw her arms around his neck, so that she gently drew him down upon the soft seat by her side.

"Here you shall tell me your story, my handsome friend," she breathed in a low whisper; "here the cross old people cannot disturb us. And, besides, our roof of leaves here will make quite as good a shelter, it may be, as their poor cottage."

"It is heaven itself," cried Huldbrand; and folding her in his arms, he kissed the lovely and affectionate girl with fervour.

The old fisherman, meantime, had come to the margin of the stream, and he shouted across to the young lovers: "Why how is this, Sir knight! I received you with the welcome which one true-hearted man gives to another, and now you sit there caressing my foster-child in secret, while you suffer me in my anxiety to go roaming through the night in quest of her."

"Not till this moment did I find her myself, old father," cried the knight across the water.

"So much the better," said the fisherman; "but now make haste, and bring her over to me upon firm ground."

To this, however, Undine would by no means consent. She declared that she would rather enter the wild forest itself with the beautiful stranger than

return to the cottage, where she was so thwarted in her wishes, and from which the handsome knight would soon or late go away. Then closely embracing Huldbrand, she sung the following verse with the warbling sweetness of a bird:

"A Rill would leave its misty vale,
And fortunes wild explore;
Weary at length it reached the main,
And sought its vale no more."

The old fisherman wept bitterly at her song, but his emotion seemed to awaken little or no sympathy in her. She kissed and caressed her new friend, whom she called her darling, and who at last said to her: "Undine, if the distress of the old man does not touch your heart, it cannot but move mine. We ought to return to him."

She opened her large blue eyes upon him in perfect amazement, and spoke at last with a slow and lingering accent: "If you think so,—it is well; all is right to me, which you think right. But the old man over there must first give me his promise, that he will allow you, without objection, to relate what you saw in the wood, and—well, other things will settle themselves."

"Come, do only come!" cried the fisherman to her, unable to utter another word. At the same time,

he stretched his arms wide over the current toward her, and, to give her assurance that he would do what she required, nodded his head; this motion caused his white hair to fail strangely over his face, and Huldbrand could not but remember the nodding white man of the forest. Without allowing anything, however, to produce in him the least confusion, the young knight took the beautiful girl in his arms, and bore her across the narrow channel, which the stream had torn away between her little island and the solid shore. The old man fell upon Undine's neck, and found it impossible either to express his joy, or to kiss her enough; even the ancient dame came up, and embraced the recovered girl most cordially. Every word of censure was carefully avoided; the more so indeed, as even Undine, forgetting her waywardness, almost overwhelmed her foster-parents with caresses and the prattle of tenderness.

When at length the excess of their joy at recovering their child had subsided, and they seemed to have come to themselves, morning had already dawned, opening to view and brightening the waters of the lake. The tempest had become hushed, and small birds sung merrily on the moist branches.

As Undine now insisted upon hearing the recital of the knight's promised adventures, the aged couple, smiling with good-humour, yielded to her

wish. Breakfast was brought out beneath the trees, which stood behind the cottage toward the lake on the north, and they sat down to it with delighted hearts,—Undine lower than the rest (since she would by no means allow it to be otherwise) at the knights feet on the grass. These arrangements being made, Huldbrand began his story in the following manner.

Chapter 4

Of what had happened to the Knight in the forest.

"It is now about eight days since I rode into the free imperial city, which lies yonder on the further side of the forest. Soon after my arrival, a splendid tournament and running at the ring took place there, and I spared neither my horse nor my lance in the encounters.

"Once, while I was pausing at the lists, to rest from the brisk exercise, and was handing back my helmet to one of my attendants, a female figure of extraordinary beauty caught my attention, as, most magnificently attired, she stood looking on at one of the balconies. I learnt, on making inquiry of a person near me, that the name of the gay, young lady was Bertalda, and that she was a foster-daughter of one of the powerful dukes of this country. She too, I observed, was gazing at me, and the consequences were such, as we young knights are wont to experience: whatever success in riding I might have had before, I was now favoured with still better fortune. That evening I was Bertalda's partner in the dance,

and I enjoyed the same distinction during the remainder of the festival."

A sharp pain in his left hand, as it hung carelessly beside him, here interrupted Huldbrand's relation, and drew his eye to the part affected. Undine had fastened her pearly teeth, and not without some keenness too, upon one of his fingers, appearing at the same time very gloomy and displeased. On a sudden, however, she looked up in his eyes with an expression of tender melancholy, and whispered almost inaudibly: "You blame me, but it was all your own fault."

She then covered her face, and the knight, strangely embarrassed and thoughtful, went on with his story:

"This lady Bertalda of whom I spoke, is of a proud and wayward spirit. The second day I saw her she pleased me by no means so much as she had the first, and the third day still less. But I continued about her, because she showed me more favour than she did any other knight; and it so happened, that I playfully asked her to give me one of her gloves.

"'When you have entered the haunted forest all alone,' said she; 'when you have explored its wonders, and brought me a full account of them, the glove is yours.'

"As to getting her glove, it was of no importance

to me whatever, but the word had been spoken, and no honourable knight would permit himself to be urged to such a proof of valour a second time."

"I thought," said Undine, interrupting him, "that she loved you."

"It did appear so," replied Huldbrand.

"Well!" exclaimed the maiden laughing, "this is beyond belief; she must be very stupid and heartless. To drive from her one who was dear to her! And, worse than all, into that ill-omened wood! The wood and its mysteries, for all I should have cared, might have waited a long while."

"Yesterday morning, then," pursued the knight, smiling brightly upon Undine, "I set out from the city, my enterprise before me. The early light lay rich upon the verdant turf. It shone so rosy on the slender boles of the trees, and there was so merry a whispering among the leaves, that in my heart I could not but laugh at people, who feared meeting anything to terrify them in a spot so delicious. 'I shall soon trot through the forest, and as speedily return,' I said to myself in the overflow of joyous feeling; and ere I was well aware, I had entered deep among the green shades, while of the plain that lay behind me, I was no more able to catch a glimpse.

"Then the conviction for the first time impressed me, that in a forest of so great extent I might very

easily become bewildered, and that this perhaps might be the only danger, which was likely to threaten those who explored its recesses. So I made a halt, and turned myself in the direction of the sun, which had meantime risen somewhat higher; and while I was looking up to observe it, I saw something black among the boughs of a lofty oak. My first thought was,—'It is a bear! and I grasped my weapon of defence; the object then accosted me from above in a human voice, but in a tone most harsh and hideous: 'If I overhead here do not gnaw off these dry branches, Sir Wiseacre, what shall we have to roast you with, when midnight comes?' And with that it grinned, and made such a rattling with the branches, that my courser became mad with affright, and rushed furiously forward with me, before I had time to see distinctly what sort of a devil's beast it was."

"You must not name it," said the old fisherman, crossing himself; his wife did the same without speaking a word; and Undine, while her eye sparkled with glee, looked at her beloved knight and said: "The best of the story is, however, that as yet they have not actually roasted you. But pray make haste, my handsome young friend. I long to hear more."

The knight then went on with his adventures: "My horse was so wild, that he well-nigh rushed with me against limbs and trunks of trees. He was

dripping with sweat, through terror, heat, and the violent straining of his muscles. Still he refused to slacken his career. At last, altogether beyond my control, he took his course directly up a stony steep; when suddenly a tall white man flashed before me, and threw himself athwart the way my mad steed was taking. At this apparition he shuddered with new affright, and stopped, trembling. I took this chance of recovering my command of him, and now for the first time perceived, that my deliverer, so far from being a white man, was only a brook of silver brightness, foaming near me in its descent from the hill, while it crossed and arrested my horse's course with its rush of waters."

"Thanks, thanks, dear Brook," cried Undine, clapping her little hands. But the old man shook his head, and, deeply musing, looked vacantly down before him.

"Hardly had I well settled myself in my saddle, and got the reins in my grasp again," Huldbrand pursued, "when a wizardlike dwarf of a man was already standing at my side, diminutive and ugly beyond conception, his complexion of a brownish yellow, and his nose scarcely of less magnitude than all the rest of him. The fellow's mouth was slit almost from ear to ear, and he showed his teeth with a simpering smile of idiot courtesy, while he overwhelmed me

with bows and scrapes innumerable. The farce now becoming excessively irksome, I thanked him in the fewest words I could well use, turned about my still trembling charger, and purposed either to seek another adventure, or, should I meet with none, to pick my way back to the city; for the sun, during my wild chase, had passed the meridian, and was now hastening toward the west. But this villain of a manikin sprung at the same instant, and, with a turn as rapid as lightning, stood before my horse again. 'Clear the way there!' I fiercely shouted; 'the beast is wild, and will make nothing of running over you.'

"He will, will he!' cried the imp with a snarl, and snorting out a laugh still more frightfully idiotic; 'pay me, first pay what you owe me,—I stopped your fine little nag for you; without my help, both you and he would be now sprawling below there in that stony ravine. Hu! from what a horrible plunge I've saved you.'

"Well, pray don't stretch your mouth any wider,' said I, "but take your drink-money and be off, though every word you say is false. See, it was the kind brook there, you miserable thing, and not you, that saved me.' And at the same time I dropped a piece of gold into his wizard cap, which he had taken from his head while he was begging before me.

"I then trotted off and left him; but, to make bad

worse, he screamed after me, and on a sudden, with inconceivable quickness, he was close by my side. I started my horse into a gallop; he galloped on with me, impossible for him as it appeared; and with this strange movement, half ludicrous and half horrible, forcing at the same time every limb and feature into distortion, he kept raising the gold piece as high as he could stretch his arm, and screaming at every leap: 'Counterfeit! false! false coin! counterfeit!' and such were the croaking sounds that issued from his hollow breast, you would have supposed, that, every time he made them, he must have tumbled upon the ground dead. All this while, his disgusting red tongue hung lolling far out of his mouth.

"Discomposed at the sight, I stopped and asked him: "What do you mean by your screaming? Take another piece of gold, take two more,—but leave me.'

"He then began to make his hideous salutations of courtesy again, and snarled out as before: 'Not gold, it shall not be gold, my smart young gentleman; I have too much of that trash already, as I will show you in no-time.'

"At that moment, and thought itself could not have been more instantaneous, I seemed to have acquired new powers of sight. I could see through the solid green plain, as if it were green glass, and the smooth surface of the earth were round as a

globe; and within it I saw crowds of goblins, who were pursuing their pastime, and making themselves merry with silver and gold. They were tumbling and rolling about, heads up and heads down: they pelted one another in sport with the precious metals, and with irritating malice blew gold dust in one another's eyes. My odious companion stood half within and half without; he ordered the others to reach him up a vast quantity of gold; this he showed to me with a laugh, and then flung it again ringing and chinking down the measureless abyss.

"After this contemptuous disregard of gold, he held up the piece I had given him, showing it to his brother gnomes below, and they laughed themselves half dead at a bit so worthless, and hissed me. At last, raising their fingers all smutched with ore, they pointed them at me in scorn, and wilder and wilder, and thicker and thicker, and madder and madder, the crowd were clambering up to where I sat gazing at these wonders. Then terror seized me, as it had before seized my horse. I drove my spurs into his sides; and how far he rushed headlong with me through the forest, during this second of my wild heats, it is impossible to say.

"At last, when I had now come to a dead halt again, the cool of evening was around me. I caught the gleam of a white foot-path through the branches

of the trees; and presuming it would lead me out of the forest toward the city, I was desirous of working my way into it; but a face perfectly white and indistinct, with features forever changing, kept thrusting itself out and peering at me between the leaves. I tried to avoid it; but wherever I went, there too appeared the unearthly face. I was maddened with rage at this interruption, and drove my steed at the appearance full-tilt; when such a cloud of white foam came rushing upon me and my horse, that we were almost blinded and glad to turn about and escape. Thus from step to step it forced us on, and ever aside from the foot-path, leaving us, for the most part, only one direction open. But when we advanced in this, although it kept following close behind us, it did not occasion the smallest harm or inconvenience.

"At times, when I looked about me at the form, I perceived that the white face, which had splashed upon us its shower of foam, was resting on a body equally white and of more than gigantic size. Many a time, too, I received the impression, that the whole appearance was nothing more than a wandering stream or torrent, but respecting this I could never attain to any certainty. We both of us, horse and rider, became weary, as we shaped our course according to the movements of the white man, who continued nodding his head at us, as if he would say, 'Perfectly

right! perfectly right!'—And thus, at length, we came out here at the edge of the wood, where I saw the fresh turf, the waters of the lake, and your little cottage, and where the tall white man disappeared."

"Well, Heaven be praised that he is gone!" cried the old fisherman; and he now fell to considering how his guest could most conveniently return to his friends in the city. Upon this, Undine began tittering to herself, but so very low that the sound was hardly perceivable. Huldbrand, observing it, said: "I had hoped you would see me remain here with pleasure; why then do you now appear so happy, when our talk turns upon my going away?"

"Because you cannot go away," answered Undine. "Pray make a single attempt; try with a wherry, with your horse, or alone, as you please, to cross that forest-stream which has burst its bounds. Or rather, make no trial at all, for you would be dashed to pieces by the stones and trunks of trees, which you see driven on with such violence. And as to the lake, I am well acquainted with that; even my father dares not venture out with his wherry far enough to help you."

Huldbrand rose, smiling, in order to look about, and observe whether the state of things were such as Undine had represented it to be; the old man accompanied him, and the maiden, in mockery, went gambolling and playing her antics beside them.

They found all, in fact, just as Undine had said, and that the knight, whether willing or not willing, must submit to remain on the island, so lately a peninsula, until the flood should subside.

When the three were now returning to the cottage, after their ramble, the knight whispered in the ear of the little girl: "Well, dear Undine, how is it with you? Are you angry on account of my remaining?"

"Ah," she pettishly made answer, "not a word of that. If I had not bitten you, who knows what fine things you would have put into your story about Bertalda!"

Chapter 5

How the Knight lived on the point of land, now encircled by the lake.

At some period of your life, my dear reader, after being much driven to and fro in the world, you may have reached a situation where all was well with you; that love for the calm security of our own fireside, which we all feel as an affection born with us, again rose within you; you imagined that your home would again bloom forth, as from a cherished grave, with all the flowers of childhood, the purest and most impassioned love; and that, in such a spot, it must be delightful to take up your abode, and build your tabernacle for life. Whether you were mistaken in this, and afterward made a severe expiation for your error, it suits not my purpose to inquire, and you would be unwilling yourself, it may be, to be saddened by a recollection so ungrateful. But again awake within you that foretaste of bliss, so inexpressibly sweet, that angelic salutation of peace, and you will be able, perchance, to understand something of the knight Huldbrand's happiness, while he remained on the point of land, now surrounded by the lake.

He frequently observed, and no doubt with heartfelt satisfaction, that the forest-stream continued every day to swell and roll on with a more impetuous sweep; that, by tearing away the earth, it scooped out a broader and broader channel; and that the time of his seclusion on the island became, in consequence, more and more extended. Part of the day he wandered about with an old cross-bow, which he found in a corner of the cottage, and had repaired, in order to shoot the waterfowl that flew over; and all that he was lucky enough to hit, he brought home for a good roast in the kitchen. When he came in with his booty, Undine seldom failed to greet him with a scolding, because he had cruelly deprived her dear merry friends of life, as they were sporting above in the blue ocean of the air; nay more, she often wept bitterly, when she viewed the water-fowl dead in his hand. But at other times, when he returned without having shot any, she gave him a scolding equally serious, since, owing to his indolent strolling and awkward handling of the bow, they must now put up with a dinner of pickerel and crawfish. Her playful taunts ever touched his heart with delight; the more so, as she afterwards strove to make up for her pretended ill-humour with the most endearing of caresses.

In this familiarity of the young people, their aged

friends saw a resemblance to the feelings of their own youth: they appeared to look upon them as betrothed, or even as a young married pair, that lived with them in their age, to afford them assistance on their island, now torn off from the mainland. The loneliness of his situation strongly impressed also young Huldbrand with the feeling, that he was already Undine's bridegroom. It seemed to him, as if, beyond those encompassing floods, there were no other world in existence, or at any rate as if he could never cross them, and again associate with the world of other men; and when at times his grazing steed raised his head and neighed to him, seemingly inquiring after his nightly achievements and reminding him of them, or when his coat of arms sternly shone upon him from the embroidery of his saddle, and the caparisons of his horse, or when his sword happened to fall from the nail on which it was hanging in the cottage, and flashed on his eye as it slipped from the scabbard in its fall,—he quieted the doubts of his mind by saying to himself: "Undine cannot be a fisherman's daughter; she is, in all probability, a native of some remote region, and a member of some illustrious family."

There was one thing, indeed, to which he had a strong aversion: this was to hear the old dame reproving Undine. The wild girl, it is true, commonly laughed at the reproof making no attempt to conceal

the extravagance of her mirth; but it appeared to him like touching his own honour; and still he found it impossible to blame the aged wife of the fisherman, since Undine always deserved at least ten times as many reproofs as she received: so he continued to feel in his heart an affectionate tenderness for them all, even for the ancient mistress of the house, and his whole life flowed on in the calm stream of contentment.

There came, however, an interruption at last. The fisherman and the knight had been accustomed at dinner, and also in the evening, when the wind roared without, as it rarely failed to do toward night, to enjoy together a flask of wine. But now their whole stock, which the fisherman had from time to time brought with him from the city, was at last exhausted, and they were both quite out of humour at the circumstance. That day Undine laughed at them excessively, but they were not disposed to join in her jests with the same gaiety as usual. Toward evening she went out of the cottage, to escape, as she said, the sight of two such long and tiresome faces.

While it was yet twilight, some appearances of a tempest seemed to be again mustering in the sky, and the waves already rushed and roared around them: the knight and the fisherman sprung to the door in terror, to bring home the maiden, remembering the

anguish of that night, when Huldbrand had first entered the cottage. But Undine met them at the same moment, clapping her little hands in high glee.

"What will you give me," she cried, "to provide you with wine? or rather, you need not give me anything," she continued; "for I am already satisfied, if you look more cheerful, and are in better spirits, than throughout this last most wearisome day. Do only come with me one minute; the forest stream has driven ashore a cask; and I will be condemned to sleep a whole week, if it is not a wine-cask."

The men followed her, and actually found, in a bushy cove of the shore, a cask, which inspired them with as much joy, as if they were sure it contained the generous old wine, for which they were thirsting. They first of all, and with as much expedition as possible rolled it toward the cottage; for heavy clouds were again rising in the west, and they could discern the waves of the lake, in the fading light, lifting their white foaming heads, as if looking out for the rain, which threatened every instant to pour upon them. Undine helped the men, as much as she was able; and as the shower, with a roar of wind, came suddenly sweeping on in rapid pursuit, she raised her finger with a merry menace toward the dark mass of clouds, and cried: "You cloud, you cloud, have

a care!—beware how you wet us; we are some way from shelter yet."

The old man reproved her for this sally, as a sinful presumption; but she laughed to herself with a low tittering, and no mischief came from her wild behaviour. Nay more, what was beyond their expectation, they all three reached their comfortable hearth unwet, with their prize secured; but the moment the cask had been broached, and proved to contain wine of a remarkably fine flavour, then the rain first poured unrestrained from the black cloud, the tempest raved through the tops of the trees, and swept far over the billows of the deep.

Having immediately filled several bottles from the large cask, which promised them a supply for a long time, they drew round the glowing hearth; and comfortably secured from the violence of the storm, they sat tasting the flavour of their wine, and bandying their quips and pleasantries.

As reflection returned upon him, the old fisherman all at once became very grave, and said: "Ah, great God! here we sit, rejoicing over this rich gift, while he to whom it first belonged, and from whom it was wrested by the fury of the stream, must there also, it is more than probable, have lost his life."

"His fate, I trust, was not quite so melancholy

as that," said Undine, while, smiling, she filled the knight's cup to the brim.

But he exclaimed: "By my unsullied honour, old father, if I knew where to find and rescue him, no fear of exposure to the night, nor any peril, should deter me from making the attempt. But I give you all the assurance I am able to give, that if I ever reach an inhabited country again, I will find out the owner of this wine or his heirs, and make double and triple reimbursement."

The old man was gratified with this assurance; he gave the knight a nod of approbation, and now drained his cup with an easier conscience and more relish.

Undine, however, said to Huldbrand: "As to the repayment and your gold, you may do whatever you like. But what you said about your venturing out, and searching, and exposing yourself to danger, appears to me far from wise. I should cry my very eyes out, should you perish there on such a wild jaunt; and is it not true, that you would prefer staying here with me and the good wine?"

"Most assuredly," answered Huldbrand, smiling.

"Well, then," replied Undine, "you see you spoke unwisely. For charity begins at home; our neighbour ought not to be our first thought; and whatever is a calamity to him, would be one in our own case also."

The mistress of the house turned away from her, sighing and shaking her head, while the fisherman forgot his wonted indulgence toward the graceful little girl, and thus reproved her:

"That sounds exactly as if you had been brought up by heathens and Turks;" and he finished his reproof by adding: "May God forgive both me and you,—unfeeling child!"

"Well, say what you will, this is what I think and feel," replied Undine, "whoever brought me up,—and how can a thousand of your words help it?"

"Silence!" exclaimed the fisherman in a voice of stern rebuke; and she, who with all her wild spirit was at the same time extremely alive to fear, shrunk from him, moved close up to Huldbrand, trembling, and said very softly:

"Are you also angry, dear friend?"

The knight pressed her soft hand, and tenderly stroked her locks. He was unable to utter a word; for his vexation, arising from the old man's severity toward Undine, closed his lips; and thus the two couple sat opposite to each other, at once heated with anger and in embarrassed silence.

Chapter 6

A Wedding.

In the midst of this painful stillness, a low knocking was heard at the door, which struck all in the cottage with dismay; for there are times when a slight circumstance, coming unexpectedly upon us, startles us like something supernatural. But here it was a further source of alarm, that the enchanted forest lay so near them, and that their place of abode seemed at present inaccessible to the visit of any human being. While they were looking upon one another in doubt, the knocking was again heard, accompanied with a deep groan. The knight sprang to seize his sword. But the old man said in a low whisper: "If it be what I fear it is, no weapon of yours can protect us."

Undine, in the meanwhile, went to the door, and cried with the firm voice of fearless displeasure: "Spirits of the earth! if mischief be your aim, Kühleborn shall teach you better manners."

The terror of the rest was increased by this wild speech; they looked fearfully upon the girl, and Huldbrand was just recovering presence of mind enough

to ask what she meant, when a voice reached them from without:

"I am no spirit of the earth, though a spirit still in its earthly body. You that are within the cottage there, if you fear God and would afford me assistance, open your door to me."

By the time these words were spoken, Undine had already opened it; and the lamp throwing a strong light upon the stormy night, they perceived an aged priest without, who stepped back in terror, when his eye fell on the unexpected sight of a little damsel of such exquisite beauty. Well might he think there must be magic in the wind, and witchcraft at work, where a form of such surpassing loveliness appeared at the door of so humble a dwelling. So he lifted up his voice in prayer:

"Let all good spirits praise the Lord God!"

"I am no spectre," said Undine with a smile. "Do you think, indeed, I look so very frightful? And more,—you cannot but bear me witness yourself, that I am far from shrinking terrified at your holy words. I too have knowledge of God, and understand the duty of praising him; everyone, to be sure, has his own way of doing this, and this privilege he meant we should enjoy, when he gave us being. Walk in, father; you will find none but worthy people here."

The holy man came bowing in, and cast round a

glance of scrutiny, wearing at the same time a very placid and venerable air. But water was dropping from every fold of his dark garments, from his long white beard, and the white locks of his hair. The fisherman and the knight took him to another apartment, and furnished him with a change of raiment, while they handed his own clothes into the room they had left, for the females to dry. The aged stranger thanked them in a manner the most humble and courteous, but on the knight's offering him his splendid cloak to wrap round him, he could not be persuaded to take it, but chose instead an old gray overcoat that belonged to the fisherman.

They then returned to the common apartment The mistress of the house immediately offered her great chair to the priest, and continued urging it upon him, till she saw him fairly in possession of it. "You are old and exhausted," said she, "and are moreover a man of God."

Undine shoved under the stranger's feet her little cricket, on which at other times she used to sit near to Huldbrand, and showed herself, in thus promoting the comfort of the worthy old man, in the highest degree gentle and amiable. On her paying him these little attentions, Huldbrand whispered some raillery in her ear, but she replied gravely:

"He is a minister of that Being, who created us all, and holy things are not to be treated with lightness."

The knight and the fisherman now refreshed the priest with food and wine; and when he had somewhat recovered his strength and spirits, he began to relate how he had the day before set out from his cloister, which was situated afar off beyond the great lake, in order to visit the bishop, and acquaint him with the distress, into which the cloister and its tributary villages had fallen, owing to the extraordinary floods. After a long and wearisome wandering, on account of the same rise of the waters, he had been this day compelled toward evening to procure the aid of a couple of stout boatmen, and cross over an arm of the lake which had burst its usual boundary.

"But hardly," continued he, "had our small ferry-boat touched the waves, when that furious tempest burst forth, which is still raging over our heads. It seemed as if the billows had been waiting our approach, only to rush upon us with a madness the more wild. The oars were wrested from the grasp of my men in an instant; and shivered by the resistless force, they drove further and further out before us upon the waves. Unable to direct our course, we yielded to the blind power of nature, and seemed to fly over the surges toward your remote shore, which we already saw looming through the mist and foam

of the deep. Then it was at last, that our boat turned short from its course, and rocked with a motion that became more and more wild and dizzy: I know not whether it was overset, or the violence of the motion threw me overboard. In my agony and struggle at the thought of a near and terrible death, the waves bore me onward, till one of them cast me ashore here beneath the trees of your island."

"Yes, an island!" cried the fisherman. "A short time ago it was only a point of land. But now, since the forest-stream and lake have become all but mad, it appears to be entirely changed."

"I observed something of it," replied the priest, "as I stole along the shore in the obscurity; and hearing nothing around me but a sort of wild uproar, I perceived at last, that the noise came from a point, exactly where a beaten foot-path disappeared. I now caught the light in your cottage, and ventured hither, where I cannot sufficiently thank my Father in heaven, that, after preserving me from the waters, he has also conducted me to such pious people as you are; and the more so, as it is difficult to say, whether I shall ever behold any other persons in this world except you four."

"What mean you by those words?" asked the fisherman.

"Can you tell me, then, how long this commotion

of the elements will last?" returned the holy man. "And the years of my pilgrimage are many. The stream of my life may easily sink into the ground and vanish, before the overflowing of that forest-stream shall subside. Indeed, taking a general view of things, it is not impossible, that more and more of the foaming waters may rush in between you and yonder forest, until you are so far removed from the rest of the world, that your small fishing-canoe may be incapable of passing over, and the inhabitants of the continent entirely forget you in your old age amid the dissipation and diversions of life."

At this melancholy foreboding, the old lady shrank back with a feeling of alarm, crossed herself, and cried: "May God forbid!"

But the fisherman looked upon her with a smile, and said: "What a strange being is man! Suppose the worst to happen: our state would not be different, at any rate your own would not, dear wife, from what it is at present. For have you, these many years, been further from home than the border of the forest? And have you seen a single human being besides Undine and myself?—It is now only a short time since the coming of the knight and the priest. They will remain with us, even if we do become a forgotten island; so after all you will derive the best advantage from the disaster."

"I know not," replied the ancient dame, "it is a dismal thought, when brought fairly home to the mind, that we are forever separated from mankind, even though, in fact, we never do know nor see them,"

"Then *you* will remain with us, then you will remain with us!" whispered Undine in a voice scarcely audible and half singing, while with the intense fervour of the heart she nestled more and more closely to Huldbrand's side. But he was absorbed in the deep and strange musings of his own mind. The region, on the other side of the forest-river, seemed, since the last words of the priest, to have been withdrawing further and further, in dim perspective, from his view; and the blooming island on which he lived, grew green and smiled more freshly before the eye of his mind. His bride glowed like the fairest rose,—not of this obscure nook only, but even of the whole wide world, and the priest was now present.

Beside these hopes and reveries of love, another circumstance influenced him: the mistress of the family was directing an angry glance at the fair girl, because, even in the presence of the priest, she was leaning so fondly on her darling knight; and it seemed as if she was on the point of breaking out in harsh reproof. Then was the resolution of Huldbrand taken; his heart and mouth were opened; and turning toward the priest, he said, "Father, you here see before you an

affianced pair, and if this maiden and these worthy people of the island have no objection, you shall unite us this very evening."

The aged couple were both exceedingly surprised. They had oft, it is true, thought of this, but as yet they had never mentioned it; and now when the knight made the attachment known, it came upon them like something wholly new and unexpected. Undine became suddenly grave, and cast her eyes upon the floor in a deep reverie, while the priest made inquiries respecting the circumstances of their acquaintance, and asked the old people whether they gave their consent to the union. After a great number of questions and answers, the affair was arranged to the satisfaction of all; and the mistress of the house went to prepare the bridal apartment for the young couple, and also, with a view to grace the nuptial solemnity to seek for two consecrated tapers, which she had for a long time kept by her for this occasion.

The knight in the meanwhile busied himself about his gold chain, for the purpose of disengaging two of its links, that he might make an exchange of rings with his bride. But when she saw his object, she started from her trance of musing, and exclaimed:

"Not so! my parents were far from sending me into the world so perfectly destitute; on the contrary,

they must have foreseen, even at so early a period, that such a night as this would come."

Thus speaking, she was out of the room in a moment, and a moment after returned with two costly rings, of which she gave one to her bridegroom, and kept the other for herself. The old fisherman was beyond measure astonished at this; and his wife, who was just re-entering the room, was even more surprised than he, that neither of them had ever seen these jewels in the child's possession,

"My parents," said Undine, "made me sew these trinkets to that beautiful raiment, which I wore the very day I came to you. They also charged me on no account whatever, to mention them to anyone before the evening I should be married. At the time of my coming, therefore, I took them off in secret and have kept them concealed to the present hour."

The priest now cut short all further questioning and wondering, while he lighted the consecrated tapers, placed them on a table, and ordered the bridal pair to stand directly before him. He then pronounced the few solemn words of the ceremony, and made them one; the elder couple gave the younger their blessing; and the bride, slightly trembling and thoughtful, leaned upon the knight.

The priest then spoke plainly and at once: "You are strange people after all; for why did you tell me you

were the only inhabitants of the island? So far is this from being true, I have seen, the whole time I have been performing the ceremony, a tall, stately man, in a white mantle, stand opposite to me, looking in at the window. He must be still waiting before the door, if peradventure you would invite him to come in."

"God forbid!" cried the old lady, shrinking back; the fisherman shook his head without opening his lips, and Huldbrand sprang to the window. It appeared to him, that he could still discern some vestige of a form, white and indistinct as a vapour, but it soon wholly disappeared in the gloom. He convinced the priest that he must have been quite mistaken in his impression; and now, inspired with the freedom and familiarity of perfect confidence, they all sat down together round a bright and comfortable hearth.

Chapter 7

What further happened on the evening of the wedding.

Before the nuptial ceremony, and during its performance, Undine had shown a modest gentleness and maidenly reserve; but it now seemed as if all the wayward freaks that effervesced within her, were foaming and bursting forth with an extravagance only the more bold and unrestrained. She teased her bridegroom, her foster-parents, and even the priest, whom she had just now revered so highly, with all sorts of childish tricks and vagaries; and when the ancient dame was about to reprove her too frolicsome spirit, the knight, by a few serious and expressive words, imposed silence upon *her* by calling Undine his wife.

The knight was himself, indeed, just as little pleased with Undine's childish behaviour as the rest; but still, all his winking, hemming, and expressions of censure were to no purpose. It is true, whenever the bride observed the dissatisfaction of her husband,—and this occasionally happened,—she became more quiet, placed herself beside him, stroked his face with caressing fondness, whispered something smilingly in his ear, and in this manner smoothed the wrinkles

that were gathering on his brow. But the moment after, some wild whim would make her resume her antic movements, and all went worse than before.

The priest then spoke in a kind, although serious tone: "My pleasant young friend, surely no one can witness your playful spirit without being diverted; but remember betimes so to attune your soul, that it may produce a harmony ever in accordance with the soul of your wedded bridegroom."

"Soul!" cried Undine, with a laugh, nearly allied to one of derision; "what you say has a remarkably pretty sound, and for most people, too, it may be a very instructive rule and profitable caution. But when a person has no soul at all, how, I pray you, can such attuning be possible? And this in truth is just my condition."

The priest was much hurt, but continued silent in holy displeasure, and tamed away his face from the maiden in sorrow. She, however, went up to him with the most winning sweetness, and said:

"Nay, I entreat you, first listen to some particulars, before you frown upon me in anger; for your frown of anger is painful to me, and you ought not to give pain to a creature, that has itself done nothing injurious to you. Only have patience with me, and I will explain to you every word of what I meant."

She had come, to the resolution, it was evident,

to give a full account of herself, when she suddenly faltered, as if seized with an inward shuddering, and burst into a passion of tears. They were none of them able to understand the intenseness of her feelings, and with mingled emotions of fear and anxiety, they gazed on her in silence. Then wiping away her tears, and looking earnestly at the priest, she at last said:

"There must be something lovely, but at the same time something most awful, about a soul. In the name of God, holy man, were it not better that we never shared a gift so mysterious?"

Again she paused and restrained her tears, as if waiting for an answer. All in the cottage had risen from their seats, and stepped back from her with horror. She, however, seemed to have eyes for no one but the holy man; a fearful curiosity was painted on her features, and this made her emotion appear terrible to the others.

"Heavily must the soul weigh down its possessor," she pursued, when no one returned her any answer, "very heavily! for already its approaching image overshadows me with anguish and mourning. And, alas! I have till now been so merry and light-hearted!"—And she burst into another flood of tears, and covered her face with her veil.

The priest, going up to her with a solemn look, now addressed himself to her, and conjured her in

the name of God most holy, if any evil or spirit of evil possessed her, to remove the light covering from her face. But she sunk before him on her knees, and repeated after him every sacred expression he uttered giving praise to God, and protesting that she wished well to the whole world.

The priest then spoke to the knight: "Sir bridegroom, I leave you alone with her, whom I have united to you in marriage. So far as I can discover, there is nothing of evil in her, but of a truth much that is wonderful. What I recommend to you in domestic life, is prudence, love, and fidelity."

Thus speaking, he left the apartment, and the fisherman with his wife followed him, crossing themselves.

Undine had sunk upon her knees; she uncovered her face and exclaimed, while she looked fearfully round upon Huldbrand: "Alas, you will now refuse to look upon me as your own; and still I have done nothing evil, poor unhappy child that I am!" She spoke these words with a look so infinitely sweet and touching, that her bridegroom forgot both the confession that had shocked, and the mystery that had perplexed him; and hastening to her, he raised her in his arms. She smiled through her tears, and that smile was like the rosy morning-light playing upon a small stream. "You cannot desert me!" she

whispered with a confiding assurance, and stroked the knight's cheeks with her little soft hands. He was thus in some degree withdrawn from those terrible apprehensions, that still lay lurking in the recesses of his soul, and were persuading him that he had been married to a fairy, or some spiteful and mischievous being of the spirit-world; but, after all, only this single question, and that almost unawares, escaped from his lips:

"Dearest Undine, pray tell me this one thing; what was it you meant by 'spirits of the earth' and 'Kühle-born,' when the priest stood knocking at the door?"

"Mere fictions! mere tales of children!" answered Undine, laughing, now quite restored to her wonted gaiety. "I first awoke your anxiety with them, and you finally awoke mine. This is the end of the story and of our nuptial evening."

"Nay, not exactly that," replied the enamoured knight, extinguishing the tapers, and a thousand times kissing his beautiful and beloved bride, while, lighted by the moon that shone brightly through the windows, he bore her into their bridal apartment.

Chapter 8

The Day after the Wedding.

The fresh light of morning awoke the young married pair. Undine bashfully hid her face beneath their covering, and Huldbrand lay lost in silent reflection. Whenever during the night he had fallen asleep, strange and horrible dreams of spectres had disturbed him; and these shapes, grinning at him by stealth, strove to disguise themselves as beautiful females; and from beautiful females they all at once assumed the appearance of dragons. And when he started up, aroused by the intrusion of these hideous forms, the moonlight shone pale and cold before the windows without; he looked affrighted at Undine, in whose arms he had fallen asleep, and she was reposing in unaltered beauty and sweetness beside him. Then pressing her rosy lips with a light kiss, he again fell into a slumber, only to be awakened by new terrors.

When he had now perfectly awoke, and well considered all the circumstances of this connection, he reproached himself for any doubt that could lead him into error in regard to his lovely wife. He also earnestly begged her to pardon the injustice he had

done her, but she only gave him her fair hand, heaved a sigh from the depth of her heart, and remained silent. Yet a glance of fervent tenderness, an expression of the soul beaming in her eyes, such as he had never witnessed there before, left him in undoubting assurance, that Undine was innocent of any evil against him whatever.

He then rose with a serene mind, and leaving her, went to the common apartment, where the inmates of the house had already met. The three were sitting round the hearth with an air of anxiety about them, as if they feared trusting themselves to raise their voice above a low apprehensive undertone. The priest appeared to be praying in his inmost spirit, with a view to avert some fatal calamity. But when they observed the young husband come forth so cheerful, a brighter hope rose within them, and dispelled the cloudy traces that remained upon their brows; yes, the old fisherman began to be facetious with the knight, but in a manner so perfectly becoming, that his aged wife herself could not help smiling with great good humour.

Undine had in the meantime got ready, and now entered the door, when they were all on the point of rushing to meet her, and yet all remained fixed in perfect admiration, so changed and at the same time so familiar was the young woman's appearance.

The priest with paternal affection beaming from his countenance, first went up to her, and as he raised his hand to pronounce a blessing, the beautiful bride, trembling with religious awe, sunk on her knees before him; she begged his pardon, in terms both respectful and submissive, for any foolish things she might have uttered the evening before, and entreated him, in a very pathetic tone, to pray for the welfare of her soul. She then rose, kissed her foster-parents, and, after thanking them for all the kindness they had shown her, said: "O, I now feel in my inmost heart, how great, how infinitely great, is what you have done for me, you dear, dear friends of my childhood!"

At first she was wholly unable to tear herself away from their affectionate caresses; but the moment she saw the good old mother busy in getting breakfast, she went to the hearth, applied herself to cooking the food and putting it on the table, and would not suffer her to take the least share in the work.

She continued in this frame of spirit the whole day; calm, kind, attentive;—at the same time a little mistress of a family, and a tender, modest young woman. The three, who had been longest acquainted with her, expected every instant to see her capricious spirit break out in some whimsical change or sportive vagary. But their fears were quite unnecessary. Undine continued as mild and gentle as an angel. The priest

found it all but impossible to remove his eyes from her, and he often said to the bridegroom:

"The bounty of Heaven, Sir, through me its unworthy instrument, entrusted to you last evening an invaluable treasure; regard and cherish it as you ought to do, and it will promote your temporal and eternal welfare."

Toward evening, Undine was hanging upon the knight's arm with lowly tenderness, while she drew him gently out before the door, where the setting sun shone richly over the fresh grass and upon the high, slender boles of the trees. Her emotion was visible: the dew of sadness and love swam in her eyes, while a tender and fearful secret seemed to hover upon her lips; but sighs, and those scarcely perceptible, were all that made known the wish of her heart. She led her husband further and further onward without speaking. When he asked her questions she replied only with looks in which, it is true, there appeared to be no immediate answer to his inquiries, but yet a whole heaven of love and timid attachment. Thus they reached the margin of the swollen forest-stream, and the knight was astonished to see it gliding away with so gentle a murmuring of its waves, that no vestige of its former swell and wildness was now discernible.

"By morning it will be wholly drained off," said

the beautiful woman, almost weeping, "and you will then be able to travel, without anything to hinder you, whithersoever you will."

"Not without you, dear Undine," replied the knight, laughing; "for pray remember, even were I disposed to leave you both the church and the spiritual powers, the emperor and the laws of the realm, would require the fugitive to be seized and restored to you."

"All this depends on you,—all depends on you;" whispered his little companion, half weeping and half smiling. "But I still feel sure, that you will not leave me; I love you too deeply to fear that misery. Now bear me over to that little island, which lies before us. There shall the decision be made. I could easily, indeed, glide through that mere rippling of the water without your aid, but it is so grateful to rest in your arms; and should you determine to put me away, I shall have sweetly rested in them once more,—for the last time."

Huldbrand was so full of strange anxiety and emotion, that he knew not what answer to make her. He took her in his arms and carried her over, now first realizing the fact, that this was the same little island, from which he had borne her back to the old fisherman, the first night of his arrival. On the further side, he placed her upon the soft grass, and was

throwing himself lovingly near his beautiful burden; but she said to him, "Not here, but there, opposite to me. I shall read my doom in your eyes, even before your lips pronounce it; now listen very attentively to what I shall relate to you." And she began:

"You must know, my own love, that there are beings in the elements, which bear the strongest resemblance to the human race, and which, at the same time, but seldom become visible to you. The wonderful salamanders sparkle and sport amid the flames; deep in the earth the meagre and malicious gnomes pursue their revels; the forest-spirits belong to the air, and wander in the woods; while in the seas, rivers, and streams live the widespread race of water-spirits. These last, beneath resounding domes of crystal, through which the sky appears with sun and stars, inhabit a region of light and beauty; lofty coral trees glow with blue and crimson fruits in their gardens; they walk over the pure sand of the sea, among infinitely variegated shells, and amid whatever of beauty the old world possessed, such as the present is no more worthy to enjoy;—creations, which the floods covered with their secret veils of silver; and now these noble monuments glimmer below stately and solemn, and bedewed by the water which loves them, and calls forth from their crevices exquisite moss-flowers and enwreathing tufts of sedge.

"Now the nation that dwell there, are very fair and lovely to behold, for the most part more beautiful than human beings. Many a fisherman has been so fortunate, as to catch a view of a delicate maiden of the waters, while she was floating and flinging upon the deep. He then spread to remotest shores the fame of her beauty; and to such wonderful females men are wont to give the name of Undines. But what need of saying more? You, my dear husband, now actually behold an Undine before you."

The knight would have persuaded himself, that his lovely wife was under the influence of one of her odd whims, and that she was only amusing herself and him with her extravagant inventions. He wished it might be so. But with whatever power of words he *said* this to himself, he still could not credit the hope for a moment; a strange shivering shot through his soul; unable to utter a word, he gazed upon the sweet speaker with a fixed eye. She shook her head in distress, heaved a sigh from her full heart, and then proceeded in the following manner:

"In respect to the circumstances of our life, we should be far superior to yourselves, who are another race of the human family,—for we also call ourselves human beings, as we resemble them in form and features,—had we not one great evil peculiar to ourselves. Both we, and the beings I have mentioned

as inhabiting the other elements, vanish into air at death, and go out of existence, spirit and body, so that no vestige of us remains; and when you hereafter awake to a purer state of being, we shall remain where sand, and sparks, and wind, and waves remain. We of course have no souls; the element moves us, and, again, is obedient to our will, while we live, though it scatters us like dust, when we die; and as we have nothing to trouble us, we are as merry as nightingales, little goldfishes, and other pretty children of nature.

"But all beings aspire to rise in the scale of existence higher than they are. It was therefore the wish of my father, who is a powerful water-prince in the Mediterranean Sea, that his only daughter should become possessed of a soul, although she should have to endure many of the sufferings of those who share that gift.

"Now the race to which I belong, have no other means of obtaining a soul, than by forming with an individual of your own the most intimate union of love. I am now possessed of a soul, and I, the very soul itself, thank you, dear Huldbrand, with a warmth of heart beyond expression, and never shall I cease to thank you, unless you render my whole future life miserable. For what will become of me, if you avoid and reject me? Still I would not keep you as my own by artifice. And should you decide to cast me

off, then do it now, . . . leave me here, and return to the shore alone. I will plunge into this brook, where my uncle will receive me; my uncle, who here in the forest, far removed from his other friends, passes his strange and solitary existence. But he is powerful, as well as revered and beloved by many great rivers; and as he brought me hither to our friends of the lake, a light-hearted and laughing child, he will also restore me to the home of my parents, a woman, gifted with a soul, full of affection, and heir to suffering."

She was about to add something more, when Huldbrand, with the most heartfelt tenderness and love, clasped her in his arms, and again bore her back to the shore. There, amid tears and kisses, he first swore never to forsake his affectionate wife, and esteemed himself even more happy than the Grecian sculptor, Pygmalion, for whom Venus gave life to his beautiful statue, and thus changed it into a beloved wife. Supported by his arm, and in the sweet confidence of affection, Undine returned to the cottage; and now she first realized with her whole heart how little cause she had for regretting what she had left, the crystal palaces of her mysterious father.

Chapter 9

How the Knight took his young wife with him.

Next morning, when Huldbrand awoke from slumber, and perceived that his beautiful wife was not by his side, he began to give way again to his wild imaginations: these represented to him his marriage, and even the charming Undine herself, as only a shadow without substance, a mere illusion of enchantment. But she entered the door at the same moment, kissed him, seated herself on the bed by his side, and said:

"I have been out somewhat early this morning, to see whether my uncle keeps his word. He has already restored the waters of the flood to his own calm channel, and he now flows through the forest, a rivulet as before, in a lonely and dreamlike current. His friends too, both of the water and the air, have resumed their usual peaceful tenor; all in this region will again proceed with order and tranquility; and you can travel homeward without fear of the flood, whenever you choose."

It seemed to the mind of Huldbrand, that he must be wrapped in some reverie or waking dream, so little was he able to understand the nature of his wife's

strange relative. Notwithstanding this, he made no remark upon what she had told him, and the infinite charm of her beauty, gentleness, and affection soon lulled every misgiving to rest.

Sometime afterward, while he was standing with her before the door, and surveying the verdant point of land with its boundary of bright waters, such a feeling of bliss came over him in this cradle of his love, that he exclaimed:

"Shall we then, so early as today, begin our journey? Why should we? It is probable, that abroad in the world we shall find no days more delightful, than those we have spent in this little green isle, so secret and so secure. Let us remain here, and see the sun go down two or three times more."

"Just as my lord shall command," replied Undine meekly. "Only we must remember, that our aged friends will, at all events, see me depart with pain; and should they now, for the first time, discover the true soul in me, and how fervently I can now love and honour them, their feeble eyes would surely become blind with weeping. As yet, they consider my present calm and exemplary conduct as of no better promise than my former occasional quietness,—merely the calm of the lake—just while the air remains tranquil,—and they will soon learn to cherish a little tree or flower, as they have cherished

me. Let me not, then, make known to them this newly bestowed, this love-inspired heart, at the very moment they must lose it for this world; and how could I conceal what I have gained, if we continued longer together?"

Huldbrand yielded to her representation, and went to the aged couple to confer with them respecting his journey, on which he proposed to set out that very hour. The priest offered himself as a companion of the young married pair; and, after their taking a short farewell, he held the bridle, while the knight lifted his beautiful wife upon his horse; and with rapid step they crossed the dry channel with her toward the forest Undine wept in silent but intense emotion; the old people, as she moved away, were more clamorous in the expression of their grief. They appeared to feel, at the moment of separation, all that they were losing in their affectionate foster daughter.

The three travellers reached the thickest shades of the forest without interchanging a word. It must have been a picturesque sight, in that hall of leafy verdure, to see this lovely woman's form sitting on the noble and richly ornamented steed, on her right hand the venerable priest in the white garb of his order, on her left the blooming young knight, clad in splendid raiment of scarlet, gold, and violet, girt with a sword that flashed in the sun, and attentively

walking beside her. Huldbrand had no eyes but for his fair wife; Undine, who had dried her tears of tenderness, had no eyes but for him; and they soon entered into the still and voiceless converse of looks and gestures, from which after some time they were awakened by the low discourse, which the priest was holding with a fourth traveller, who had meanwhile joined them unobserved.

He wore a white gown, resembling in form the dress of the priest's order, except that his hood hung very low over his face, and that the whole drapery floated in such wide folds around him, as obliged him every moment to gather it up and throw it over his arm, or by some management of this sort to get it out of his way, and still it did not seem in the least to impede his movement. When the young couple became aware of his presence, he was saying:

"And so, venerable Sir, many as have been the years I have dwelt here in this forest, I have never received the name of hermit in your sense of the word. For, as I said before, I know nothing of penance, and I think too, that I have no particular need of it. Do you ask me why I am so attached to the forest? It is because its scenery is so peculiarly picturesque, and affords me so much pastime, when, in my floating white garments, I pass through its world of leaves

and dusky shadows;—and then a sweet sunbeam glances down upon me, at times, before I think of it."

"You are a very singular man," replied the priest, "and I should like to have a more intimate acquaintance with you."

"And who then may you be yourself, to pass from one thing to another?" inquired the stranger.

"I am called father Heilmann," answered the holy man, "and I am from the cloister of our Lady of the Salutation, beyond the lake."

"Well, well," replied the stranger, "my name is Kühleborn, and were I a stickler for the nice distinctions of rank, I might with equal propriety require you to give me the title of noble lord of Kühleborn, or free lord of Kühleborn; for I am as free as a bird in the forest, and, it may be, a trifle more so. For example, I now have something to tell that young lady there." And before they were aware of his purpose, he was on the other side of the priest, close to Undine, and stretching himself high into the air, in order to whisper something in her ear. But she shrunk from him in terror, and exclaimed:

"I have nothing more to do with you."

"Ho, ho," cried the stranger, with a laugh, "you have made a grand marriage indeed, since you no longer know your own relations! Have you no rec-

ollection of your uncle Kühleborn, who so faithfully bore you on his back to this region?"

"However that may be," replied Undine, "I entreat you never to appear in my presence again. I am now afraid of you; and will not my husband fear and forsake me, if he sees me associate with such strange company and kindred?"

"You must not forget, my little niece," said Kühleborn, "that I am with you here as a guide; otherwise those madcap spirits of the earth, the gnomes that haunt this forest, would play you some of their mischievous pranks. Let me therefore still accompany you in peace; even the old priest there had a better recollection of me, than you appear to have; for he just now assured me, that I seemed to be very familiar to him, and that I must have been with him in the ferry-boat, out of which he tumbled into the waves. He certainly did see me there, for I was no other than the water-spout that tore him out of it, and kept him from inking, while I safely wafted him ashore to your wedding."

Undine and the knight turned their eyes upon father Heilmann; but he appeared to be moving forward, just as if he were dreaming or walking in his sleep, and no longer to be conscious of a word that was spoken. Undine then said to Kühleborn: "I already see yonder the end of the forest. We have

no further need of your assistance, and nothing now gives us alarm but yourself. I therefore beseech you by our mutual love and good will, to vanish and allow us to proceed in peace."

Kühleborn seemed to be transported with fury at this: he darted a frightful look at Undine, and grinned fiercely upon her. She shrieked aloud, and called her husband to protect her. The knight sprung round the horse as quick as lightning, and, brandishing his sword, struck at Kühleborn's head. But instead of severing it from his body, the sword merely flashed through a torrent, which rushed foaming near them from a lofty cliff; and with a splash, which much resembled in sound a burst of laughter, the stream all at once poured upon them, and gave them a thorough wetting. The priest, as if suddenly awaking from a trance, coolly observed: "This is what I have been some time expecting, because the brook has descended from the steep so close beside us,—though at first sight, indeed, it appeared to look just like a man, and to possess the power of speech."

As the water came rushing from its crag, it distinctly uttered these words in Huldbrand's ear: "Rash knight! valiant knight! I am not angry with you; I have no quarrel with you; only continue to defend your charming little wife with the same spirit, you bold knight! you rash blade!"

After advancing a few steps farther, the travellers came out upon open ground. The imperial city lay bright before them; and the evening sun, which gilded its towers with gold, kindly dried their garments that had been so completely drenched.

Chapter 10

How they lived in the city.

The sadden disappearance of the young knight, Huldbrand of Ringstetten, had occasioned much remark in the imperial city, and no small concern among those of the people, who, as well on account of his expertness in tourney and dance as of his mild and amiable manners, had become greatly attached to him. His attendants were unwilling to quit the place without their master, although not a soul of them had been courageous enough to follow him into the fearful recesses of the forest. They remained therefore at their public house, idly hoping, as men are wont to do, and, by the expression of their fears, keeping the fate of their lost lord fresh in remembrance.

Now when the violent storms and floods had been observed, immediately after his departure, the destruction of the handsome stranger became all but certain: even Bertalda had quite openly discovered her sorrow, and detested herself for having induced him to take that fatal excursion into the forest. Her foster-parents, the duke and dutchess, had meanwhile come to take her away, but Bertalda persuaded them

to remain with her until some certain news of Huldbrand should be obtained, whether he were living or dead. She endeavored also to prevail upon several young knights, who were assiduous in courting her favour, to go in quest of the noble adventurer in the forest. But she refused to pledge her hand as the reward of the enterprise, because she still cherished, it might be, a hope of being claimed by the returning knight; and no one would consent, for a glove, a ribband, or even a kiss, to expose his life to bring back so very dangerous a rival.

When Huldbrand now made his sudden and unexpected appearance, his attendants, the inhabitants of the city, and almost everyone rejoiced: we must acknowledge, indeed, that this was not the case with Bertalda; for although it might be quite a welcome event to others, that he brought with him a wife of such exquisite loveliness, and father Heilmann as a witness of their marriage, Bertalda could not but view the affair with grief and vexation. She had in truth become attached to the young knight with her whole soul, and then her mourning for his absence, or supposed death, had shown this more than she could now have wished.

But notwithstanding all this, she conducted herself like a prudent woman in circumstances of such delicacy, and lived on the most friendly terms with

Undine, whom the whole city looked upon as a princess, that Huldbrand had rescued in the forest from some evil enchantment. Whenever anyone questioned either herself or her husband relative to surmises of this nature, they had wisdom enough to remain silent, or wit enough to evade the inquiries. The lips of father Heilmann had been sealed in regard to idle gossip of every kind; and besides, on Huldbrand's arrival, he had immediately returned to his cloister, so that people were obliged to rest contented with their own wild conjectures, and even Bertalda herself ascertained nothing more of the truth than others.

For the rest, Undine daily regarded this fair girl with increasing fondness. "We must have been heretofore acquainted with each other," she often used to say to her, "or else there must be some mysterious connection between us; for it is incredible that anyone so perfectly without cause,—I mean without some deep and secret cause,—should be so fondly attached to another, as I have been to you from the first moment of our meeting."

Even Bertalda could not deny, that she felt a confiding impulse, an attraction of tenderness, toward Undine, much as she deemed this fortunate rival the cause of her bitterest disappointment. Under the influence of this mutual regard, they found means to persuade, the one her foster-parents, and the other

her husband, to defer the day of separation to a period more and more remote; nay more, they had already begun to talk of a plan for Bertalda's sometime accompanying Undine to Castle Ringstetten, near one of the sources of the Danube.

Once on a fine evening, while they were promenading the city by starlight, they happened to be talking over their scheme just as they passed the high trees that bordered the public walk. The young married pair, though it was somewhat late, had called upon Bertalda to invite her to share their enjoyment; and all three now proceeded familiarly up and down beneath the dark-blue heaven, not seldom interrupted in their converse by the admiration, which they could not but bestow upon the magnificent fountain in the middle of the square, and upon the wonderful rush and shooting upward of its water. All was sweet and soothing to their minds; among the shadows of the trees stole in glimmerings of light from the adjacent houses; a low murmur as of children at play, and of other persons who were enjoying their walk, floated around them; they were so alone, and yet sharing so much of social happiness in the bright and stirring world, that whatever had appeared difficult by day, now became smooth and easy of its own accord, and the three friends could no longer see the slightest

cause for hesitation in regard to Bertalda's taking the journey.

At that instant, just as they were fixing the day of their departure, a tall man approached them from the middle of the square, bowed respectfully to the company, and spoke something in the young bride's ear. Though displeased with the interruption and its cause, she walked aside a few steps with the stranger, and both began to whisper, as it seemed, in a foreign tongue. Huldbrand thought he recognized the strange man of the forest; and he gazed upon him so fixedly, that he neither heard nor answered the astonished inquiries of Bertalda. All at once Undine clapped her hands with delight, and turned back from the stranger, laughing: he, frequently shaking his head, retired with a hasty step and discontented air, and descended into the fountain. Huldbrand now felt perfectly certain, that his conjecture was correct. But Bertalda asked: "And what, my dear Undine, did the master of the fountain wish to say to you?"

The young wife laughed within herself and made answer: "The day after tomorrow, my dear child, when the anniversary of your name-day returns, you shall be informed." And this was all she could be prevailed upon to disclose. She merely asked Bertalda to dinner on the appointed day, and requested

her to invite her foster-parents; and soon afterward they separated.

"Kühleborn?" said Huldbrand to his lovely wife with an inward shudder, when they had taken leave of Bertalda, and were now going home through the darkening streets.

"Yes, it was he," answered Undine, "and he would have wearied me with foolish warnings without end. But in the midst of them, quite contrary to his intention, he delighted me with a most welcome piece of news. If you, my dear lord and husband, wish me to acquaint you with it now, you need only command me, and I will freely, and from my heart, tell you all without reserve. But would you confer upon your Undine a very, very great pleasure, only wait till the day after tomorrow, and then you too shall have your share of the surprise."

The knight was quite willing to gratify his wife, in regard to what she had asked with so beautiful a spirit; and this spirit she discovered yet more, for while she was that night falling asleep, she murmured to herself with a smile: "How she will rejoice and be astonished at what her master of the fountain has told me,—the dear, happy Bertalda!"

Chapter II

Festival of Bertalda's name-day.

The company were sitting at dinner; Bertalda, adorned with jewels and flowers without number, the presents of her foster-parents and friends, and looking like some goddess of Spring, sat beside Undine and Huldbrand at the head of the table. When the sumptuous repast was ended, and the dessert was placed before them, permission was given that the doors should be left open: this was in accordance with the good old custom in Germany, that the common people might see and rejoice in the festivity of their superiors. Among these spectators the servants carried round cake and wine.

Huldbrand and Bertalda waited with secret impatience for the promised explanation, and never, except when they could not well help it, moved their eyes from Undine. But she still continued silent, and merely smiled to herself with secret and heartfelt satisfaction. All who were made acquainted with the promise she had given, could perceive that she was every moment on the point of revealing a happy secret; and yet, as children sometimes delay tasting

their choicest dainties, she still withheld the communication, with a denial that made it the more desired. Bertalda and Huldbrand shared the same delightful feeling, while in anxious hope they were expecting the unknown disclosure, which they were to receive from the lips of their friend.

At this moment, several of the company pressed Undine to give them a song. This appeared to her to be quite a well-timed request, and, immediately ordering her lute to be brought, she sung the following words:

"Morning so bright,
Wildflowers so gay,
Where high grass so dewy
Crowns the wavy lake's border.

"On the meadow's verdant bosom,
What glimmers there so white?
Have wreaths of snowy blossoms,
Soft-floating, fallen from heaven?

"Ah, see! a tender infant!—
It plays with flowers, unwitting;
It strives to grasp morn's golden beams.—
O where, sweet stranger, where's your home?
Afar from unknown shores,
The waves have wafted hither

This helpless little one.

"Nay, clasp not, tender darling,
With tiny hand the flowers;
No hand returns the pressure,
The flowers are strange and mute.
They clothe themselves in beauty,
They breathe a rich perfume,
But cannot fold around you
A mother's loving arms;—
Far, far away that mother's fond embrace.

"Life's early dawn just opening faint,
Your eye yet beaming Heaven's own smile;
So soon your first, best guardians gone;—
Severe, poor child, your fate,—
All, all to you unknown.

"A noble duke has cross'd the mead,
And near you check'd his steed's career:
Wonder and pity touch his heart;
With knowledge high and manners pure
He rears you,—makes his castle-home your own.

"How great, how infinite, your gain!
Of all the land you bloom the loveliest,
Yet, ah! that first, best blessing,
The bliss of parents' fondness,
You left on strands unknown."

Undine let fall her lute and paused with a melancholy smile; the eyes of Bertalda's noble foster-parents were filled with tears.

"Ah yes, it was so,—such *was* the morning on which I found you, poor orphan," cried the duke with deep emotion; "the beautiful singer is certainly right; still

'The first, best blessing,
The bliss of parents' fondness,'

It was beyond our power to give you."—

"But we must hear also, what happened to the poor parents," said Undine, as she struck the chords, and sung:

"Through her chambers roams the mother,
Searching, searching everywhere;
Seeks, and knows not what, with yearning,
Childless home still finding there.

"Childless home!—O sound of anguish!
She alone the anguish knows,
There by day who led her dear one.
There who rock'd its night repose.

"Beechen buds again are swelling,
Sunshine warms again the shore,
Ah, fond mother, cease your searching,

Comes the loved and lost no more.

"Then when airs of eve are fresh'ning,
Home the father wends his way.
While with smiles his woe he's veiling,
Gushing tears his heart betray.

"Well he knows, within his dwelling,
Still as death he'll find the gloom,
Only hear the mother moaning,—
No sweet babe *smile* to him home."

"O tell me, in the name of Heaven tell me, Undine, where are my parents?" cried the weeping Bertalda. "You certainly know; you must have discovered them, all wonderful as you are, for otherwise you would never have thus torn my heart. Can they be already here? May I believe it possible?" Her eye glanced rapidly over the brilliant company, and rested upon a lady of high rank, who was sitting next to her foster-father.

Then, inclining her head, Undine beckoned toward the door, while her eyes overflowed with the sweetest emotion. "Where are the poor parents waiting?" she asked; and the old fisherman, diffident and hesitating, advanced with his wife from the crowd of spectators. Swift as the rush of hope within them, they threw a look of inquiry, now at Undine, and

now at the beautiful lady, who was said to be their daughter.

"It is she! it is she there, before you!" exclaimed the restorer of their child, her voice half choked with rapture; and both the aged parents embraced their recovered daughter, weeping aloud and praising God.

But, shocked and indignant, Bertalda tore herself from their arms. Such a discovery was too much for her proud spirit to bear,—especially at the moment when she had doubtless expected to see her former splendour increased, and when hope was picturing to her nothing less brilliant than a royal canopy and a crown. It seemed to her as if her rival had contrived all this, and with the special view to humble her before Huldbrand and the whole world. She reproached Undine; she reviled the old people; and even such offensive words as "deceiver, bribed and perjured imposters," burst from her lips.

The aged wife of the fisherman then said to herself, but in a very low voice: "Ah, my God! what a wicked vixen of a woman she has grown! and yet I feel in my heart, that she is my child."

The old fisherman, however, had meanwhile folded his hands, and offered up a silent prayer, that she might *not* be his daughter.

Undine, faint and pale as death, turned from the parents to Bertalda, from Bertalda to the parents;

she was suddenly cast down from all that heaven of happiness, of which she had been dreaming, and plunged into an agony of terror and disappointment, which she had never known even in dreams.

"Have you a soul? Can you really have a soul, Bertalda?" she cried again and again to her angry friend, as if with vehement effort she would rouse her from a sudden delirium or some distracting dream, and restore her to recollection.

But when Bertalda became every moment only more and more enraged, as the disappointed parents began to weep aloud, and the company with much warmth of dispute, were espousing opposite sides, she begged with such earnestness and dignity, for the liberty of speaking in this her husband's dining-hall, that all around her were in an instant hushed to silence. She then advanced to the upper end of the table, where, both humbled and haughty, Bertalda had seated herself, and, while every eye was fastened upon her, spoke in the following manner:

"My friends, you appear dissatisfied and disturbed; and you are interrupting with your strife a festivity, that I had hoped would bring joy both to you and myself. Ah, my God! I knew nothing of these your heartless maxims, these your unnatural ways of thinking, and never so long as I live, I fear, shall I become reconciled to them. The disclosure

I have made, it seems, is unwelcome to you; but I am not to blame for such a result. Believe me, little as you may imagine this to be the case, it is wholly owing to yourselves. One word more, therefore, is all I have to add, but this is one that must be spoken:—I have uttered nothing but truth. Of the certainty of the fact I give you the strongest assurance; no other proof can I or will I produce, but this I will affirm in the presence of God. The person who gave me this information, was the very same who decoyed the infant Bertalda into the water, and who, after thus taking her from her parents, placed her on the green grass of the meadow, where he knew the duke was to pass."

"She is an enchantress," cried Bertalda, "a witch, that has intercourse with evil spirits. This she acknowledges herself."

"Never! I deny it," replied Undine, while a whole heaven of innocence and truth beamed from her eyes. "I am no witch; look upon me, and say if I am."

"Then she utters both falsehood and folly," cried Bertalda, "and she is unable to prove that I am the child of these low people. My noble parents, I entreat you to take me from this company, and out of this city, where they do nothing but expose me to shame."

But the aged duke, a man of honourable feeling, remained unmoved, and his lady remarked: "We must

thoroughly examine into this matter. God forbid, that we should move a step from this hall, before we do so."

Encouraged by this kind word, the aged wife of the fisherman drew near, made a low obeisance to the dutchess, and said: "Exalted and pious lady, you have opened my heart. Permit me to tell you, that if this evil-disposed maiden is my daughter, she has a mark, like a violet, between her shoulders, and another of the same kind on the instep of her left foot. If she will only consent to go out of the hall with me—"

"I will not consent to uncover myself before the peasant woman," interrupted Bertalda, haughtily turning her back upon her.

"But before me you certainly will," replied the dutchess, gravely. "You will follow me into that room, young woman, and the worthy old lady shall go with us."

The three disappeared, and the rest continued where they were, in the hush of breathless expectation. In a few minutes the females returned, Bertalda pale, as death, and the dutchess said: "Justice must be done; I therefore declare, that our lady hostess has spoken the exact truth. Bertalda is the fisherman's daughter; no further proof is required; and this is all, of which on the present occasion you need to be informed."

The princely pair went out with their adopted daughter; the fisherman, at a sign from the duke, followed them with his wife. The other guests retired in silence, or but half suppressing their murmurs, while Undine, weeping as if her heart would break, sunk into the arms of Huldbrand.

Chapter 12

How they departed from the city.

The lord of Ringstetten would certainly have been more gratified, had the events of this day been different; but even such as they now were, he could by no means look upon them as unwelcome, since his fair wife had discovered so much natural feeling, kindness of spirit, and cordial affection.

"If I have given her a soul," he could not help saying to himself, "I have assuredly given her a better one than my own;" and now what chiefly occupied his mind, was to soothe and comfort his weeping wife, and even so early as the morrow to remove her from a place, which, after this cross accident, could not fail to be distasteful to her. Yet it is certain, that the opinion of the public concerning her was not changed. As something extraordinary had long before been expected of her, the mysterious discovery of Bertalda's parentage had occasioned little or no surprise; and everyone who became acquainted with Bertalda's story, and with the violence of her behaviour on that occasion, was only disgusted and set against her. Of this state of things, however, the

knight and his lady were as yet ignorant; besides, whether the public condemned Bertalda or herself the one view of the affair would have been as distressing to Undine as the other; and thus they came to the conclusion, that the wisest course they could take, was to leave behind them the walls of the old city with all the speed in their power.

With the earliest beams of morning, a brilliant carriage for Undine, drove up to the door of the ins; the horses of Huldbrand and his attendants stood near stamping the pavement impatient to proceed. The knight was leading his beautiful wife from the door, when a fisher-girl came up and met them in the way.

"We have no occasion for your fish," said Huldbrand, accosting her, "we are this moment setting out on a journey."

Upon this the fisher-girl began to weep bitterly, and then it was that the young couple first knew her to be Bertalda. They immediately returned with her to their apartment, where she informed them, that, owing to her unfeeling and violent conduct of the preceding day, the duke and dutchess had been so displeased with her, as entirely to withdraw from her their protection, though not before giving her a generous portion. The fisherman, too, had received

a handsome gift, and had, the evening before, set out with his wife for their peninsula.

"I would have gone with them," she pursued, "but the old fisherman, who is said to be my father,"—

"He certainly is your father, Bertalda," said Undine, interrupting her. "Pray consider what I tell you: the stranger, whom you took for the master of the water-works, gave me all the particulars. He wished to dissuade me from taking you with me to Castle Ringstetten, and therefore disclosed to me the whole mystery."

"Well then," continued Bertalda, "my father,—if it must needs be so,—my father said: 'I will not take you with me, until you are changed. If you will leave your home here in the city, and venture to come to us alone through the ill-omened forest, that shall be a proof of your having some regard for us. But come not to me as a lady; come merely as a fisher-girl.'—I will do, therefore, just what he commanded me; for since I am abandoned by all the word, I will live and die in solitude, a poor fisher-girl with parents equally poor. The forest, indeed, appears very terrible to me. Horrible spectres make it their haunt, and I am so timorous. But how can I help it?—I have only come here at this early hour, to beg the noble lady of Ringstetten to pardon my unbecoming behaviour of yesterday. Dear madam, I have the fullest persuasion,

that you meant to do me a kindness, but you were not aware, how severely you would wound and injure me; and this was the reason, that, in my agony and surprise, so many rash and frantic expressions burst from my lips.—Forgive me, ah forgive me! I am in truth so unhappy already. Do but consider what I was only yesterday morning, what I was even at the beginning of your yesterday's festival, and what I am at the present moment!"—

Her words now became inarticulate, lost in a passionate flow of tears, while Undine, bitterly weeping with her, fell upon her neck. So powerful was her emotion, that it was a long time before she could utter a word. But at length she said:

"You shall still go with us to Ringstetten; all shall remain just as we lately arranged it; only, in speaking to me, pray continue to use the familiar and affectionate terms, that we have been wont to use, and do not pain me with the sound of 'madam' and 'noble lady,' anymore. Consider, we were changed for each other, when we were children; even then we were united by a like fate, and we will strengthen this union with such close affection, as no human power shall dissolve. Only first of all you must go with us to Ringstetten. In what manner we shall share our sisterly enjoyments there, we will leave to be talked over after we arrive."

Bertalda looked up to Huldbrand with timid inquiry. He pitied the fair girl in her affliction, took her hand, and begged her, tenderly, to entrust herself to him and his wife.

"We will send a message to your parents," continued he, "giving them the reason why you have not come;—and he would have added much more about his worthy friends of the peninsula, when, perceiving that Bertalda shrunk in distress at the mention of them, he refrained. Then taking her under the arm, as they left the room, he lifted her first into the carnage, after her Undine, and was soon riding blithely beside them; so persevering was he, too, in urging forward their driver, that in a short time they had left behind them the limits of the city, and with these a crowd of painful recollections; and now the ladies experienced a satisfaction, more and more exquisite, as their carriage rolled on through the picturesque scenes, which their progress was continually presenting.

After a journey of some days, they arrived, on a fine evening, at Castle Ringstetten. The young knight being much engaged with the overseers and menials of his establishment, Undine and Bertalda were left alone. Eager for novelty, they took a walk upon the high rampart of the fortress, and were charmed with the delightful landscape, which fertile

Suabia spread around them. While they were viewing the scene, a tall man drew near, who greeted them with respectful civility, and who seemed to Bertalda much to resemble the director of the city fountain. Still less was the resemblance to be mistaken, when Undine, indignant at his intrusion, waved him off with an air of menace; while he, shaking his head, retreated with rapid strides, as he had formerly done, then glided among the trees of a neighbouring grove, and disappeared.

"Do not be terrified, dear Bertalda," said Undine; "the 'hateful master of the fountain shall do you no harm this time." And then she related to her the particulars of her history, and who she was herself,—how Bertalda had been taken away from the people of the peninsula, and Undine left in her place. This relation, at first, filled the young maiden with amazement and alarm; she imagined her friend must be seized with a sudden madness. But, from the consistency of her story, she became more and more convinced that all was true, it so well agreed with former occurrences, and still more convinced from that inward feeling, with which truth never fails to make itself known to us. She could not but view it as an extraordinary circumstance, that she was herself now living, as it were, in the midst of one of those wild fictions of romance, which she had formerly heard related for

mere amusement. She gazed upon Undine with awe, but could not avoid feeling a shudder, which seemed to separate her from her friend; and she could not but wonder when the knight, at their evening repast, showed himself so kind and full of love toward a being, who appeared, after the discoveries just made, more like a phantom of the spirit-world than one of the human race.

Chapter 13

How they lived at Castle Ringstetten.

The writer of this history, because it moves his own heart, and he wishes it may equally move the hearts of others, begs you, dear reader, to grant him a single favour. Excuse him, if he now passes over a considerable period of time, and gives you only a general account of its events. He is well aware, that, perfectly conforming to the rules of art and step by step, he might delineate the process by which Huldbrand's warmth of attachment for Undine began to decline, and to be transferred to Bertalda; how Bertalda gradually became more and more attached, and met the young man's glance with the glow of love; how they both seemed rather to fear the poor wife, as a being of another species, than to sympathize with her; how Undine wept, and her tears produced remorse in the knight's heart, yet without awakening his former tenderness, so that his treatment of her would discover occasional impulses of kindness, but a cold shuddering would soon drive him from her side, and he would hasten to the society of Bertalda, as a more congenial being of his own race;—all this, the

writer is aware, he could describe with the minute touches of truth, and perhaps this is the course that he ought to pursue. But his heart would feel the task to be too melancholy; for, having suffered calamities of this nature, he is impressed with terror even at the remembrance of their shadows.

You have probably experienced a similar feeling yourself my dear reader, for such is the inevitable allotment of mortal man. Happy are you, if you have rather endured than inflicted this misery, since, in matters of this kind, more blessed is he that receives than he that gives. For when *you* have been the suffering party, and such remembrances come over the mind, only a soft pensiveness steals into the soul, and perhaps a tender tear trickles down your cheek, while you regret the fading of the flowers, in which you once took a delight so exquisite. But of this no more; we would not linger over the evil, and pierce our hearts with pangs a thousand-fold repeated, but just briefly hint the course of events, as I said before.

Poor Undine was extremely distressed, and the other two were far from being happy; Bertalda in particular, whenever she was in the slightest degree opposed in her wishes, attributed the cause to the jealousy and oppression of the injured wife. In consequence of this suspicious temper, she was daily in the habit of discovering a haughty and imperious

demeanour, to which Undine submitted in sad and painful self-denial; and, such was the blind delusion of Huldbrand, he usually supported the impropriety in the most decisive terms.

What disturbed the inmates of the castle still more, was the endless variety of wonderful apparitions, which assailed Huldbrand and Bertalda in the vaulted passages of the building, and of which nothing had ever been heard before within the memory of man. The tall white man, in whom Huldbrand but too well recognized Undine's uncle Kühleborn and Bertalda the spectral master of the water-works, often passed before them with threatening aspect and gestures; more especially, however, before Bertalda, so that she had already several times fainted or fallen ill through terror, and had in consequence frequently thought of quitting the castle. But partly owing to her excessive fondness for Huldbrand, as well as to a reliance on what she termed her innocence, since no declaration of mutual attachment had ever been distinctly made, and partly also because she knew not whither to direct her steps, she lingered where she was.

The old fisherman, on receiving the message from the lord of Ringstetten, that Bertalda was his guest, returned answer in some lines almost too illegible

to be deciphered, but still the best his advanced life and long disuse of writing permitted him to form.

"I have now become," he wrote, "a poor old widower, for my beloved and faithful wife is dead. But lonely as I now sit in my cottage, I prefer Bertalda's remaining where she is, to her living with me. Only let her do nothing to hurt my dear Undine,—otherwise she will have my curse."

The last words of this letter Bertalda flung to the winds; but the permission to remain from home, which her father had granted her, she remembered and clung to, just as we are all of us wont to do in like circumstances.

One day, a few moments after Huldbrand had ridden out, Undine called together the domestics of the family, and ordered them to bring a large stone, and carefully to cover with it a magnificent fountain, that was situated in the middle of the castle court. The servants ventured to hint as an objection, that it would oblige them to bring their water from the valley below, which was at an inconvenient distance. Undine smiled with an expression of melancholy.

"I am sorry, dear children," replied she, "to increase your labour; I would rather bring up the water-vessels myself; but this fountain must indeed be closed. Believe me when I say, that it must be done, and that only by doing it can we avoid a greater evil."

The domestics were all rejoiced to gratify their gentle mistress; and making no further inquiry, they seized the enormous stone. While they were raising it in their hands, and were now on the point of adjusting it over the fountain, Bertalda came running to the place, and cried with an air of command, that they must stop; that the water she used, so improving to her complexion, she was wont to have brought from this fountain, and that she would by no means allow it to be closed.

This time, however, while Undine showed her usual gentleness, she showed more than her usual resolution, and remained firm to her purpose: she said it belonged to her, as mistress of the castle, to direct the regulations of the household according to her own best judgment, and that she was accountable in this to no one but her lord and husband.

"See, O pray, see!" exclaimed the dissatisfied and indignant Bertalda, "how the beautiful water is curling and curving, winding and waving there, as if disturbed at being shut out from the bright sunshine, and from the cheerful view of the human countenance, for whose mirror it was created."

In truth, the water of the fountain was agitated, and foaming, and hissing in a surprising manner; it seemed as if there were something within, possessing life and will, that was struggling to free itself from

confinement. But Undine only the more earnestly urged on the accomplishment of her commands. This earnestness was scarcely required. The servants of the castle were as happy in obeying their sweet-tempered lady, as in opposing the haughty spirit of Bertalda; and with whatever rudeness the latter might scold and threaten, still the stone was in a few minutes lying firm over the opening of the fountain. Undine leaned thoughtfully over it, and wrote with her beautiful fingers on the flat surface. She must, however, have had something very acrid and corrosive in her hand; for when she retired, and the domestics went up to examine the stone, they discovered various strange characters upon it, which none of them had seen there before.

When the knight returned home toward evening, Bertalda received him with tears and complaints of Undine's conduct. He threw a severe look at his poor wife, and she cast down her eyes in distress. Still she spoke with great firmness: "My lord and husband, you never reprove even a bond-slave, before you hear his defence,—how much less then your wedded wife!"

"Speak, what moved you to this singular conduct?" said the knight, with a gloomy countenance.

"I could wish to tell you, when we are entirely alone," said Undine, with a sigh.

"You can tell me equally well in the presence of Bertalda," he replied.

"Yes, if you command me," said Undine, "but do not command me. Pray, pray, do not!"

She looked so humble, affectionate, and obedient, that the heart of the knight was touched and softened, as if he felt the influence of a ray from better times. He kindly took her arm within his, and led her to his apartment, where she spoke as follows:

"You already know something, my beloved lord, of Kühleborn, my evil-disposed uncle, and have often felt displeasure at meeting him in the passages of this castle. Several times has he terrified Bertalda even to swooning. He does this, because he possesses no soul, being a mere elementary mirror of the outward world, while of the world within he can give no reflection. Then, too, he sometimes observes, that you are displeased with me, that in my childish weakness I weep at this, and that Bertalda, it may be, is laughing at the same moment. Hence it is, that he conceives every sort of wrong and unkindness to exist, and in various ways mixes with our circle unbidden. What do I gain by reproving him? by showing displeasure, and sending him away? He does not believe a word I say. His poor imperfect nature affords him no conception, that the pains and pleasures of love have so mysterious a resemblance and are so intimately

connected, that no power on earth is able to separate them. Even in the midst of tears, a smile is dawning on the cheek, and smiles call forth tears from their secret recesses."

She looked up at Huldbrand, smiling and weeping; and he again felt within his heart all the magic of his former love. She perceived it, and pressed him more tenderly to her, while with tears of joy she went on thus:

"When the disturber of our peace would not be dismissed with words, I was obliged to shut the door upon him; and the only entrance by which he has access to us, is that fountain. His connection with the other water-spirits, here in this region, is cut off by the valleys that border upon us, and his kingdom first commences further off on the Danube, in whose tributary streams some of his good friends have their abode. For this reason I caused the stone to be placed over the opening of the fountain, and inscribed characters upon it, which baffle all the efforts of my suspicious and passionate uncle, so that he now has no power of intruding either upon you, or me, or Bertalda. Human beings, it is true, notwithstanding the characters I have inscribed there, are able to raise the stone without any extraordinary trouble; there is nothing to prevent them. If you choose, therefore, remove it according to Bertalda's desire, but she assur-

edly knows not what she asks. The rude Kühleborn looks with peculiar ill-will upon her; and should much come to pass that he has imperfectly predicted to me, and which may well happen without your meaning any evil,—I fear, I fear, my dear husband, that you yourself would be exposed to peril."

Huldbrand felt the generosity of his amiable wife in the depth of his heart, since she had been so active in confining her formidable defender, and even at the very moment she was reproached for it by Bertalda. Influenced by this feeling, he pressed her in his arms with the tenderest affection, and said with emotion: "The stone shall remain unmoved; all remains and ever shall remain, just as you choose to have it, my dear, very dear Undine!"

At these long withheld expressions of tenderness, she returned his caresses with lowly delight, and at length said: "My dearest husband, since you are so very kind and indulgent today, may I venture to ask a favour of you? Pray observe, it is with you as with Summer. Even amid its highest splendour, Summer puts on the flaming and thundering crown of glorious tempests, in which it strongly resembles a king and god on earth. You too are sometimes terrible in your rebukes; your eyes flash lightning, while thunder resounds in your voice; and although this may be quite becoming to you, I in my folly cannot but

sometimes weep at it. But never, I entreat you, behave thus toward me on a river, or even when we are near a piece of water. For if you should, pray consider what the consequences will be: my relations would acquire a right to exercise authority over me. They would tear me from you in their fury with inexorable force, because they would conceive that one of their race was injured; and I should be compelled, as long as I lived, to dwell below in the crystal palaces, and never dare ascend to you again; or should *they send* me up to you,—O God! that would be infinitely more deplorable still. No, no, my beloved husband, let it not come to that, if your poor Undine is dear to you."

He solemnly promised to do as she desired, and, inexpressibly happy and full of affection, the married pair returned from the apartment At this very moment, Bertalda came with some work-people, whom she had meanwhile ordered to attend her, and said with a fretful air, which she had assumed of late:—

"Well, now the secret consultation is at an end, it is to be hoped the stone may come down. Go out, workmen, and execute your business."

The knight, however, highly resenting her impertinence, said in brief and very decisive terms: "The stone remains where it is." He reproved Bertalda also for the vehemence that she had shown toward his

wife. Whereupon the workmen, smiling with secret satisfaction, withdrew; while Bertalda, pale with rage, hurried away to her room.

When the hour of supper came, Bertalda was waited for in vain. They sent for her; but the domestic found her apartments empty, and brought back with him only a sealed billet, addressed to the knight. Trembling with alarm, he tore it open, and read:

"I feel with shame, that I am only the daughter of a poor fisherman. That I for one moment forgot this, I will make expiation in the miserable hut of my parents. Farewell to you and your beautiful wife."

Undine was troubled at heart. Most earnestly she entreated Huldbrand to hasten after their friend, who had flown, and bring her back with him. Alas! she had no occasion to urge him. His passion for Bertalda again burst forth with vehemence. He hurried round the castle, inquiring whether anyone had seen which way the fair fugitive had gone. He could gain no information, and was already in the court on his horse, determining to take at a venture the road by which he had conducted Bertalda to the castle; when there appeared a shieldboy, who assured him, that he had met the lady on the path to the Black Valley. Swift as an arrow, the knight sprung through the gate in the direction pointed out, without hearing

Undine's voice of agony, as she cried after him from the window:

"To the Black Valley? O not there! Huldbrand, not there! or if you will go, for Heaven's sake take me with you!"

But when she perceived that all her calling was of no avail, she ordered her white palfrey to be instantly saddled, and followed the knight without permitting a single servant to accompany her.

Chapter 14

How Bertalda returned with the Knight.

The Black Valley lies secluded far among the mountains. What its present name may be, I am unable to say. At the time of which I am speaking, the country-people gave it this appellation from the deep obscurity produced by the shadows of lofty trees, more especially by a crowded growth of firs, that covered this region of moor-land. Even the brook, which gushed out among the crags, and wound its way down a ravine into the valley, assumed there the same dark hue, and showed nothing of that cheerful aspect which streams are wont to wear, that have the blue sky immediately over them.

It was now the dusk of evening, and the view between the heights had become extremely wild and gloomy. The knight, in great anxiety, skirted the border of the brook; he was at one time fearful, that by delay he should allow the fugitive to advance too far before him; and then again, in his too eager rapidity, he was afraid he might somewhere overlook and pass by her, should she be desirous of concealing herself from his search. He had in the meantime penetrated

pretty far into the valley, and might hope soon to overtake the maiden, provided he were pursuing the right track. The fear, indeed that he might not as yet have gained this track, made his heart beat with more and more of anxiety. In the stormy night, which was now impending, and which always hovered more fearfully over this valley, where would the delicate Bertalda shelter herself should he fail to find her? At last, while these thoughts were darting across his mind, he saw something white glimmer through the branches on the ascent of the mountain. He felt quite certain, that the object he discerned was Bertalda's robe, and he directed his course toward it. But his horse refused to go forward; he reared with a fury so uncontrollable, and his master was so unwilling to lose a moment, that (especially as he saw the thickets were altogether impassable on horseback) he dismounted, and, having fastened his snorting steed to an elm, worked his way with caution through the matted underwood. The branches, moistened by the cold drops of the evening dew, keenly smote his forehead and cheeks; thunder muttered remotely from the further side of the mountains; and everything put on so strange and mystic an appearance, that he began to feel a dread of the white figure, which now lay only a short distance from him upon the ground. Still he could see with perfect clearness, that it was

a female, either asleep or in a swoon, and dressed in long white garments, such as Bertalda had worn the past day. Approaching quite near to her, he made a rustling with the branches and a ringing with his sword,—but she did not move.

"Bertalda!" he cried; at first low, then louder and louder; still she heard him not. At last, when he uttered the dear name with an energy yet more powerful, a hollow echo, from the mountain-summits around the valley, returned the deadened sound, "Bertalda!" Still the sleeper continued insensible. He stooped low, with a view to examine her countenance, but the duskiness of the valley and the obscurity of twilight would not allow him to distinguish her features. While with painful uncertainty he was bending over her, a flash of lightning suddenly shot across the valley. By this stream of light, he saw a frightfully distorted visage close to his own, and a hoarse voice struck him with startling abruptness: "You enamoured shepherd, give me a kiss!"

Huldbrand sprang upon his feet with a cry of horror, and the hideous figure rose with him.

"Home!" it cried with a deep murmur; "the fiends are abroad. Home! or I have you!" And it stretched toward him its long white arms.

"Malicious Kühleborn," exclaimed the knight with restored energy, "if Kühleborn you are, what

business have you here?—what's your will, you goblin!—There, take your kiss!"—And in fury he flashed his sword at the form. But the form vanished like vapour; and a rush of water, giving the knight as good a drenching as wetting him to the skin could make it, left him in no doubt with what foe he had been engaged.

"He wishes to frighten me back from my pursuit of Bertalda," said he to himself; "he imagines, that I shall be terrified at his senseless enchantments, and resign the poor distressed girl to his power, so that he can wreak his vengeance upon her at will. But, impotent spirit of the flood! he shall find himself mistaken. What the heart of man can do, when it exerts the full force of its will, the strong energy of its noblest powers, of this the feeble enchanter has no comprehension."

He felt the truth of his words, and that, in thus giving utterance to his thoughts, he had inspired his heart with fresh courage. Fortune too appeared to favour him; for, before reaching his fastened steed, he distinctly heard the voice of Bertalda, where she was now weeping and now moaning not far before him, amid the roar of the thunder and the tempest, which every moment increased. He flew swiftly toward the sound, and found the trembling maiden, just as she was attempting to climb the steep, and striving, to

the extent of her power, to escape from the dreadful darkness of this valley. He stepped before her, while he spoke in tones of the most soothing tenderness; and bold and proud as her resolution had so lately been, she now felt nothing but the liveliest joy, that the man, whom she so passionately loved, would rescue her from this frightful solitude, and extending to her his arms of welcome, would still cast a brightness over her existence in their reunion at the castle. She followed almost unresisting, but so spent with fatigue, that the knight was glad to support her to his horse, which he now hastily unfastened from the elm: his intention was to lift the fair wanderer upon him, and then to lead him carefully by the reins through the uncertain shades of this lowland tract.

But, owing to the mad appearance of Kühleborn, the horse had become altogether unmanageable. Rearing and wildly snorting as he was, the knight must have used uncommon effort to mount the beast himself; to place the trembling Bertalda upon him was impossible. They were compelled, therefore, to return home on foot. While with one hand the knight drew the steed after him by the bridle, he supported the tottering Bertalda with the other. She exerted all the strength she had remaining, in order to escape from this vale of terrors as speedily as possible; but weariness weighed her down like lead, and a universal

trembling seized her limbs, partly in consequence of what she had suffered from the extreme harassment with which Kühleborn had pursued her, and in part from her continual fear, arising from the roar of the tempest and thunder amid the mountain forest.

At last she slid from the aim of her conductor; and, sinking upon the moss, she said: "I can no more; let me lie here, my noble lord. I suffer the punishment due to my folly, and nothing can save me now; I must perish here through faintness and dismay."

"Never, my sweet friend, will I leave you," cried Huldbrand, vainly trying to restrain the furious animal he was leading; for the horse was all in a foam, and began to chafe more ungovernably than before, till the knight was glad merely to keep him at such a distance from the exhausted maiden, as would secure her from still greater fear and alarm. But hardly had he withdrawn five steps with the frantic steed, when she began to call after him in the most sorrowful accents, fearful that he would actually leave her in this horrible wilderness. He was wholly at a loss what course to take. Gladly would he have given the enraged beast his liberty,—he would have let him rush away amid the night, and exhaust his fury,—had he not shuddered at the thought, that in this narrow defile his iron-shod hoofs might come trampling and thundering over the very spot where Bertalda lay.

While he was in this extreme peril and embarrassment, a feeling of delight, not to be expressed, shot through him, when he heard the rumbling wheels of a wagon, as it came slowly descending the stony slope behind them. He called out for help: answer was returned in the deep voice of a man, bidding them have patience, but promising assistance; and two horses of grayish white soon after shone through the bushes, and near them their driver in the white frock of a carter; and next appeared a great sheet of white linen, with which the goods he seemed to be conveying, were covered. The whitish grays, in obedience to a shout from their master, stood still. He came up to the knight, and aided him in checking the fury of the foaming charger.

"I know well enough," said he, "what is the matter with the brute. The first time I travelled this way, my horses were just as willful and headstrong as yours. The reason is there is a water-spirit haunts this valley, and a wicked wight they say he is, who takes delight in mischief and witcheries of this sort. But I have learned a charm; and if you will let me whisper it in your horse's ear, he will stand just as quiet as my silver grays there."

"Try your luck, then, and help us as quick as possible!" said the impatient knight.

Upon this the wagoner drew down the head of

the rearing courser close to his own, and spoke some half-dozen words in his ear. The animal instantly stood still and subdued; only his quick panting and smoking sweat showed his recent violence.

Huldbrand had little time to inquire, by what means this had been effected. He agreed with the man, that he should take Bertalda in his wagon, where, as he said, a quantity of soft cotton was stowed, and he might in this way convey her to Castle Ringstetten; the knight could accompany them on horseback. But the horse appeared to be too much exhausted to carry his master so far. Seeing this, the man advised him to mount the wagon with Bertalda. The horse could be tied to it behind.

"It is downhill," said he, "and the load for my grays will therefore be light."

The knight accepted his offer, and entered the wagon with Bertalda; the horse followed quietly after, while the wagoner, sturdy and attentive, walked beside them.

Amid the silence and deepening obscurity of the night, the tempest became more and more remote and hushed; in the comfortable feeling of their security and their commodious passage, a confidential conversation arose between Huldbrand and Bertalda. He reproved her in the most gentle and affectionate terms for her resentful flight; she excused herself with

humility and feeling; and from every tone of her voice it was evident,—just as a lamp guides a lover amid the secrecy of night to his waiting mistress,—that she still cherished her former affection for him. The knight felt the sense of what she said far more than the words themselves, and he answered simply to this sense,—to the feeling and not the confession of love.

In the midst of this interchange of murmured feelings, the wagoner suddenly shouted with a startling voice: "Up, my grays, up with your feet! Hey, my hearts, now together, show your spirit! Do it handsomely! remember who you are!"

The knight bent over the side of the wagon, and saw that the horses had dashed into the midst of a foaming stream, and were, indeed, almost swimming, while the wheels of the wagon were rushing round and flashing like mill-wheels, and the teamster had got on before to avoid the swell of the flood.

"What sort of a road is this? It leads into the middle of the stream!" cried Huldbrand to his guide.

"Not at all, Sir," returned he with a laugh, "it is just the contrary. The stream is running in the middle of our road. Only look about you, and see how all is overflowed."

The whole valley, in fact, was covered and in commotion, as the waters, suddenly raised and visibly rising, swept over it.

"It is Kühleborn, that devil of a water-spirit, who wishes to drown us!" exclaimed the knight. "Have you no charm of protection against him, companion?"

"Charm! to be sure I have one," answered the wagoner, "but I cannot and must not make use of it, before you know who I am."

"Is this a time for riddles?" cried the knight. "The flood is every moment rising higher and higher, and what does it concern me to know who *you* are?"

"But mayhap it does concern you though," said the guide, "for I am Kühleborn."

Thus speaking, he thrust his face into the wagon, and laughed with every feature distorted; but the wagon remained a wagon no longer, the grayish white horses were horses no longer; all was transformed to foam,—all sunk into the waves that rushed and hissed around them,—while the wagoner himself, rising in the form of a gigantic surge, dragged the vainly struggling courser under the waters, then rose again huge as a liquid tower, burst over the heads of the floating pair, and was on the point of burying them irrecoverably beneath it.

At that instant, the soft voice of Undine was heard through the uproar; the moon emerged through the clouds, and by its light Undine became visible on the heights above the valley. She rebuked, she threatened the flood below her: the menacing and

tower-like billow vanished muttering and murmuring; the waters gently flowed away under the beams of the moon; while Undine, like a hovering white dove, came sweeping down from the hill, raised the knight and Bertalda, and supported them to a green spot of turf, where, by her earnest efforts, she soon restored them, and dispelled their terrors. She then assisted Bertalda to mount the white palfrey, on which she had herself been borne to the valley, and thus all three returned homeward to Castle Ringstetten.

Chapter 15

Passage down the Danube to Vienna.

After this last adventure, they lived at the castle undisturbed and in peaceful enjoyment. The knight was more and more impressed with the heavenly goodness of his wife, which she had so nobly shown by her instant pursuit, and by the rescue she had effected in the Black Valley, where the power of Kühleborn again commenced. Undine herself felt that peace and security which the mind never fails to experience, so long as it has the consciousness of being in the path of rectitude; and she had this additional comfort, that, in the newly awakened love and regard of her husband, Hope and Joy were rising upon her with their myriad beams of promise.

Bertalda, on the other hand, showed herself grateful, humble, and timid, without taking to herself any merit for so doing. Whenever Huldbrand or Undine began to explain to her their reason for covering the fountain, or their adventures in the Black Valley, she would earnestly entreat them to spare her the recital, since the fountain had occasioned her too much shame, and the Black Valley too much terror, to be

made topics of conversation. With respect to these, therefore, she learnt nothing further from either of them; and why was it necessary that she should be informed? Peace and Happiness had visibly taken up their abode at Castle Ringstetten. They enjoyed their present blessings in perfect security; and in relation to the future, they now imagined it impossible, that life could produce anything but pleasant flowers and fruits.

In this grateful union of friendship and affection, winter came and passed away; and spring, with its foliage of tender green and its heaven of softest blue, succeeded to gladden the hearts of the inmates of the castle. The season was in harmony with their minds, and their minds imparted their own hue and tone to the season. What wonder, then, that its storks and swallows inspired them also with a disposition to travel! On a bright morning, while they were taking a walk down to one of the sources of the Danube, Huldbrand spoke of the magnificence of this noble stream, how it continued swelling as it flowed through countries enriched by its waters, with what splendour Vienna rose and sparkled on its banks, and how it grew lovelier and more imposing almost the whole of its progress.

"It must be glorious to trace its course down to Vienna!" Bertalda exclaimed with warmth; but,

immediately resuming the humble and modest demeanour she had recently shown, she paused and blushed in silence.

This slight circumstance was extremely touching to Undine; and with the liveliest wish to gratify her friend, she said: "And who or what shall prevent our taking this little voyage?"

Bertalda leapt up with delight, and the two females the same moment began painting this enchanting trip on the Danube in the most brilliant colours. Huldbrand, too, agreed to the project with pleasure; only he once whispered with something of alarm in Undine's ear: "But, at that distance, Kühleborn becomes possessed of his power again?"

"Let him come, let him come," she answered with a laugh; "I shall be there, and he dares do none of his mischief in my presence."

Thus was the last impediment removed; they prepared for the expedition, and soon set out upon it with lively spirits and the brightest hopes.

But be not surprised, O man, if events almost always happen very differently from what you expect. That malign power, which lies in ambush for our destruction, delights to lull its chosen victim asleep with sweet songs and golden delusions; while, on the other hand, the messenger of Heaven, sent to rescue

us from peril, often thunders at our door with the violence of alarm and terror.

During the first days of their passage down the Danube, they were unusually gratified. The further they advanced upon the waters of this proud river, the views became more and more picturesque and attractive. But here, amid scenes otherwise most delicious, and from which they had promised themselves the purest delight, here again the stubborn Kühleborn, dropping all disguise, began to show his power of annoying them. He had no other means of doing this, indeed, than mere tricks and illusions, for Undine often rebuked the swelling waves or the contrary winds, and then the insolence of the enemy was instantly humbled and subdued; but his attacks were renewed, and Undine's reproofs again became necessary, so that the pleasure of this little water-party was completely destroyed. The boatmen, too, were continually whispering to one another in dismay, and eyeing their three superiors with distrust; while even the servants began more and more to form dismal surmises, and to watch their master and mistress with looks of suspicion.

Huldbrand often said to himself in the silence of his soul: "This comes to pass, when like marries not like,—when a man forms an unnatural union with a female of the sea." Still, excusing himself as we are

most of us so fond of doing, he frequently pursued a train of thought like this: "I did not in fact know that she *was* a maid of the sea. It is my misfortune, that all my steps are haunted and disturbed by the wild humours of her kindred, but it is not my crime."

Making reflections like these, he felt himself in some measure strengthened; but, on the other hand, he only the more entertained a feeling of ill-humour against Undine, almost amounting to malevolence. He cast upon her glances of fretfulness and ill-nature, and the unhappy wife but too well understood their meaning.

One day, grieved by this unkindness, as well as exhausted by her continual exertions to foil the artifices of Kühleborn, while rocked and soothed by the gentle motion of the bark, she toward evening fell into a deep slumber. But hardly had she closed her eyes, when every person in the boat, in whatever direction he might look upon the water, saw the head of a man, beyond imagination frightful: each head rose out of the waves, and not like that of a person swimming, but quite perpendicular, as if firmly fastened to the watery mirror, and yet moving on with the bark. Everyone wished to show to his companion what terrified himself, and each perceived the same expression of horror on the face of the other, only his hand and eye were directed to a different quarter,

as if to a point where the monster, half laughing and half threatening, rose opposite to himself.

When, however, they wished to make one another understand the sight, and all cried out, "Look there!" "No, there!" the frightful heads all became visible to each, and the whole river around the boat swarmed with the most horrible faces. All raised a scream of terror at the sight, and Undine started from sleep. The moment she opened her eyes upon the mad group, the deformed visages disappeared. But Huldbrand was made furious by so many hideous visions. He would have burst out in wild imprecations, had not Undine, with the most submissive air, and in the gentlest tone of supplication, thus entreated him:

"For God sake, my husband, do not express displeasure against me here,—we are on the water."

The knight was silent and sat down, absorbed in deep thought. Undine whispered in his ear: "Would it not be better, my love, to give up this foolish voyage, and return to Castle Ringstetten in peace?"

But Huldbrand murmured wrathfully: "So I must become a prisoner in my own castle? and not be allowed to breathe a moment but while the fountain is covered? Would to Heaven that your cursed kindred"—

At these fatal words, Undine pressed her fair hand on his lips with the most touching tenderness. He

said no more, but, assuming an air of composure, pondered on all that Undine had lately warned him to avoid.

Bertalda, meanwhile had given herself up to a crowd of wild and wandering thoughts. Of Undine's origin she knew a good deal, but not the whole; and the terrible Kühleborn especially remained to her an awful, an impenetrable mystery; never, indeed had she once heard his name. Musing upon this series of wonders, she unclasped, without being fully conscious of what she was doing, a gold necklace, which Huldbrand, on one of the preceding days of their passage, had bought for her of a travelling trader; and she was now letting it swing in sport just over the surface of the stream, while, in her dreamy mood, she enjoyed the bright reflection it threw on the water, so clear beneath the glow of evening. That instant, a huge hand flashed suddenly up from the Danube, seized the necklace in its grasp, and vanished with it beneath the flood. Bertalda shrieked aloud, and a laugh of mockery and contempt came pealing up from the depth of the river.

The knight could now restrain his wrath no longer. He started up, gazed fiercely upon the deep, poured forth a torrent of reproaches, heaped curses upon all who interfered with his friends or troubled

his life, and dared them all, water-spirits or mermaids, to come within the sweep of his sword.

Bertalda, meantime, wept for the loss of the ornament so very dear to her heart, and her tears were to Huldbrand as oil poured upon the flame of his fury; while Undine held her hand over the side of the boat, dipping it in the waves, softly murmuring to herself, and only at times interrupting her strange mysterious whisper, when she addressed her husband in a voice of entreaty: "Do not reprove me here, beloved; blame all others, as you will, but here, do not reprove me here. Surely you know the reason!" And, in truth, though he was trembling with excess of passion, he with strong effort kept himself from uttering a single word against her.

She then brought up in her wet hand, which she had been holding under the waves, a coral necklace of such exquisite beauty, such sparkling brilliancy, as dazzled the eyes of all who beheld it. "Take this," said she, holding it out kindly to Bertalda; "I have ordered it to be brought, to make some amends for your loss, and do not, dear heart, be troubled anymore."

But the knight rushed between them, and, snatching the beautiful ornament out of Undine's hand, hurled it back into the flood, and in a flame of rage exclaimed: "So then, you have a connexion with them forever. In the name of all witches and enchanters,

go and remain among them with your presents, you sorceress, and leave us human beings in peace!"

But poor Undine, with a look of mute amazement and eyes streaming with tears, gazed on him, her hand still stretched out, just as it was when she had so lovingly offered her brilliant gift to Bertalda. She then began to weep more and more, as if her heart would break, like a tender, innocent child, very bitterly grieved. At last, all wearied out, she said:

"Alas, dearest, all is over now,—farewell! They shall do you no harm; only remain true, that I may have power to keep them from you. But I, alas, must go away, I must go away, even in this early dawn of youth and bliss. O woe, woe, what have you done! O woe, woe!"

And she vanished over the side of the boat.—Whether she plunged into the stream, or whether, like water melting into water, she flowed away with it, they knew not, her disappearance so much resembled both united, and neither by itself. But she was gone, gliding on with the Danube, instantly and completely; only little waves were yet whispering and sobbing around the boat, and they seemed almost distinctly to say: "O woe, woe! Ah, remain true! O woe!"

But Huldbrand, in a passion of burning tears, threw himself upon the deck of the bark, and a deep

swoon soon wrapped the wretched man in a blessed forgetfulness of misery.

Chapter 16

What further happened to Huldbrand.

The brief period of our mourning,—ought we to view it as a misfortune, or as a blessing? I mean that deep mourning of the heart, which gushes up from the very well-springs of our being; that mourning, which becomes so perfectly one with the lost object of our affection, that this even ceases to be a lost thing to the sorrowing heart; and which desires to make the whole life a holy office dedicated to the image of the departed, until we too pass that bourne which separates it from our view.

Some men there are, indeed, who have this profound tenderness of spirit, and who thus consecrate their affections to the memory of the departed; but still their mourning softens into an emotion of gentle melancholy, having none of the intenseness of the first agony of separation. Other and foreign images intervene, and impress themselves upon the mind; we learn at last the transitory nature of everything earthly, even from that of our affliction; and I cannot therefore but view it as a misfortune, that the period of our mourning is so brief.

The lord of Ringstetten learnt the truth of this by experience; but whether he derived any advantage from the knowledge, we shall discover in the sequel of this history. At first he could do nothing but weep, weep as bitterly as the poor amiable Undine had wept, when he snatched out of her hand that brilliant ornament, with which she so beautifully wished to make amends for Bertalda's loss. And then he stretched his hand out as she had done, and wept again like her with renewed violence. He cherished a secret hope, that even the springs of life would at last become exhausted by weeping; and when we have been severely afflicted, has not a similar thought passed through the minds of many of us with a painful pleasure? Bertalda wept with him; and they lived together a long while at Castle Ringstetten in undisturbed quiet, honouring the memory of Undine, and having almost wholly forgotten their former attachment.

Owing to this tender remembrance of Huldbrand, and to encourage him in conduct so exemplary, the good Undine, about this time, often visited his dreams; she soothed him with soft and affectionate caresses, and then went away again, weeping in silence; so that when he awoke, he sometimes knew not how his cheeks came to be so wet,—whether it was caused by her tears, or only by his own.

But as time advanced, these visions became less frequent, and the severity of the knight's sorrow was softened; still he might never while he lived, it may be, have entertained any other wish than thus to think of Undine in silence, and to speak of her in conversation, had not the old fisherman arrived unexpectedly at the castle, and earnestly insisted on Bertalda's returning with him, as his child. He had received information of Undine's disappearance, and he was not willing to allow Bertalda to continue longer at the castle with the now unmarried knight. "For," said he, "whether my daughter loves me or not, is at present what I care not to know, but her good name is at stake, and where that commands or forbids, not a word more need be said."

This resolution of the old fisherman, and the fearful solitude, that, on Bertalda's departure, threatened to oppress the knight in every hall and passage of the deserted castle, brought a circumstance into distinct consciousness, which, owing to his sorrow for Undine, had of late been slumbering and completely forgotten,—I mean his attachment to the fair Bertalda, and this he made known to her father.

The fisherman had many objections to make to the proposed marriage. The old man had loved Undine with exceeding tenderness, and it was doubtful to his mind, whether the mere disappearance

of his beloved child could be properly viewed as her death. But were it even granted, that her corse were lying stiff and cold at the bottom of the Danube, or swept away by the current to the ocean, still Bertalda would not be guiltless in her death; and it was unfitting for her to step into the place of the poor banished wife. The fisherman, however, had felt a strong regard also for the knight: this, and the entreaties of his daughter, who had become much more gentle and respectful, as well as her tears for Undine, all exerted their influence; and he must at last have been forced to give up his opposition, for he remained at the castle without objection, and a courier was sent off express to father Heilmann, who in former and happier days had united Undine and Huldbrand, requesting him to come and perform the ceremony at the knight's second marriage.

But hardly had the holy man read through the letter from the lord of Ringstetten, ere he set out upon the journey, and made much greater dispatch on his way to the castle, than the messenger from there had made in reaching him. Whenever his breath failed him in his rapid progress, or his old limbs ached with fatigue, he would say to himself: "Perhaps I may still be in season to prevent a sin; then sink not, weak and withered body, before I arrive at the end of my journey!" And with renewed vigour he pressed for-

ward, hurrying on without rest or repose, until, late one evening, he entered the embowered court-yard of Castle Ringstetten.

The betrothed pair were sitting arm-in-arm under the trees, and the aged fisherman in a thoughtful mood sat near them. The moment they saw father Heilmann, they rose with a spring of joy, and pressed round him with eager welcome. But he, in few words, urged the bridegroom to accompany him into the castle; and when Huldbrand stood mute with surprise, and delayed complying with his earnest request, the pious priest said to him:

"Why do I then defer speaking, my lord of Ringstetten, until I can address you in private? There is no occasion for the delay of a moment. What I have to say, as much concerns Bertalda and the fisherman as yourself; and what we cannot avoid hearing at some time, it is best to hear as soon as possible. Are you then so very certain, knight Huldbrand, that your first wife is actually dead? It hardly appears so to me. I will say nothing, indeed, of the mysterious state in which she may be now existing; in truth, I know nothing of it with certainty. But that she was a most devoted and faithful wife, so much is beyond all dispute. And for fourteen nights past, she has appeared to me in a dream, standing at my bed-side, wringing her tender hands in anguish, and imploring

me with deep sighs: "Ah, prevent him, dear father! I am still living! Ah! save his life! ah! save his soul!"

"What this vision of the night could mean, I was at first unable to divine; then came your messenger, and I have now hastened hither, not to unite, but, as I hope, to separate, what ought not to be joined together. Leave her, Huldbrand! Leave him, Bertalda! He still belongs to another; and do you not see on his pale cheek the traces of that grief, which the disappearance of his wife has produced there? That is not the look of a bridegroom, and the spirit breathes the presage on my soul: "If you do not leave him, you will never, never be happy."

The three felt in their inmost hearts, that father Heilmann spoke the truth; but still they affected not to believe him, or they strove rather to resist their conviction. Even the old fisherman had become so infatuated, that he conceived the marriage to be now indispensable, as they had so often, during the time he had been with them, mutually agreed to the arrangement. They all, therefore, with a determined and gloomy eagerness, struggled against the representations and warnings of the holy man, until, shaking his head and oppressed with sorrow, he finally quitted the castle, not choosing to accept their offered shelter even for a single night, or indeed so much as to taste a morsel of the refreshment they brought him.

Huldbrand persuaded himself, however, that the priest was a mere visionary, and sent at daybreak to a monk of the nearest monastery, who, without scruple, promised to perform the ceremony in a few days.

Chapter 17

The Knight's dream.

It was at the earliest moment of dawn, when night begins faintly to brighten into morning twilight, that Huldbrand was lying on his couch, half waking and half sleeping. Whenever he attempted to compose himself to sleep, he was seized with an undefined terror, that made him shrink back from the enjoyment, as if his slumber were crowded with spectres. But whenever he made an effort to rouse himself, the wings of a swan seemed to be waving around him, and soothing him with the music of their motion, and thus in a soft delusion of the senses he sunk back into his state of imperfect repose.

At last, however, he must have fallen perfectly asleep; for, while the sound of the swan-wings was murmuring around him, he seemed to be lifted by their regular strokes, and to be wafted far away over land and sea, and still their music swelled on his ear most sweetly. "The music of the swan! the song of the swan!" he could not but repeat to himself every moment; "is it not a sure foreboding of death?" Probably, however, it had yet another meaning. All at

once he seemed to be hovering over the Mediterranean Sea. A swan with her loud melody sung in his ear, that this *was* the Mediterranean Sea; and while he was looking down upon the waves, they became transparent as crystal, so that he could see through them to the very bottom.

At this a thrill of delight shot through him, for he could see Undine, where she was sitting beneath the clear domes of crystal. It is true, she was weeping very bitterly, and such was the excess of her grief, that she bore only a faint resemblance to the bright and joyous being she had been, during those happy days they had lived together at Castle Ringstetten, both on their arrival there and afterward, a short time before they set out upon their fatal passage down the Danube. The knight could not avoid dwelling upon all this with deep emotion, but it did not appear that Undine was aware of his presence.

Kühleborn had meanwhile approached her, and was about to reprove her for weeping, when she assumed the boldness of superiority, and looked upon him with an air so majestic and commanding, that he was well-nigh terrified and confounded by it.

"Although I too now dwell here beneath the waters," said she, "yet I have brought my soul with me; and therefore I may well be allowed to weep, little as you may conceive the meaning of such tears. They

are even a blessed privilege, as everything is such a privilege, to one gifted with the true soul."

He shook his head with disbelief of what she said, and, after musing a moment or two, replied: "And yet, niece, you are subject to our laws of the element, as a being of the same nature with ourselves; and, should he prove unfaithful to you and marry again, you are obliged to take away his life."

"He remains a widower to this very hour," replied Undine, "and he still loves me with the passion of a sorrowful heart."

"He is, however, a bridegroom withal," said Kühleborn, with a chuckle of scorn; "and let only a few days wear away, and anon comes the priest with his nuptial blessing, and then you must go up and execute your share of the business, the death of the husband with two wives."

"I have not the power," returned Undine, with a smile. "Do you not remember? I have sealed up the fountain securely, not only against myself but all of the same race."

"Still, should he leave his castle," said Kühleborn, "or should he once allow the fountain to be uncovered, what then? for doubtless he thinks there is no great murder in such trifles."

"For that very reason," said Undine, still smiling amid her tears, "for that very reason he is this moment

hovering in spirit here over the Mediterranean Sea, and dreaming of this voice of warning which our conversation affords him. With a view to give him this warning, I have studiously disposed the whole vision."

That instant Kühleborn, inflamed with rage, looked up at the knight, wrathfully threatened him, stamped upon the ground, and then, swift as the passion that possessed him, sprang up from beneath the waves. He seemed to swell in his fury to the size of a whale. Again the swans began to sing, to wave their wings, to fly; the knight seemed to be soaring away over mountains and streams, and at last to alight at Castle Ringstetten, where he awoke upon his couch.

Upon his couch he actually did awake, and his attendant, entering at the same moment, informed him that father Heilmann was still lingering in the neighbourhood; that he had, the evening before, met with him in the forest, where he was sheltering himself under a booth, which he had formed by interweaving the branches of trees, and covering them with moss and fine brush-wood; and that to the question, 'What he was doing there, since he had so firmly refused to perform the nuptial ceremony?' his answer was:

"There are yet other ceremonies to perform, beside those at the altar of marriage; and though I did not

come to officiate at the wedding, I can still officiate at a very different solemnity. All things have their season, and we must be ready for them all. Besides, marrying and mourning are by no means very far from each other, as everyone, not willfully blinded, must know full well."

In consequence of these words and of his dream, the knight made a variety of reflections, some wild and some not unmixed with alarm. But a man is apt to consider it very disagreeable to give over an affair, which he has once settled in his mind as certain, and therefore all went on just according to the old arrangement.

Chapter 18

How the Knight Huldbrand solemnized his vows.

Should I relate to you the events of the marriage festival at Castle Ringstetten, it would seem as if you were viewing a crowded assemblage of bright and joyous things, but all overspread with a black mourning crepe, through whose darkening veil the whole splendour appeared less to resemble pleasure than a mockery of the nothingness of all earthly joys.

It was not that any spectral visitation disturbed the scene of festivity; for the castle, as we well know, had been secured against the mischief and menaces of water-spirits. But the knight, the fisherman, and all the guests, were unable to banish the feeling, that the chief personage of the feast was still wanting and that this chief personage could be no other than the amiable Undine, so dear to them all.

Whenever a door was heard to open, all eyes were involuntarily turned in that direction; and if it was nothing but the steward with new dishes, or the cup-bearer with a supply of wine of higher flavour than the last, they again looked down in sadness and disappointment; while the flashes of wit and

merriment that had been passing at times from one to another, eased, and were succeeded by tears of mournful remembrance.

The bride was the least thoughtful of the company, and therefore the most happy; but even she, occasionally, found it difficult to realize the fact that she was sitting at the head of the table, wearing a green garland and gold-embroidered garments, while Undine was lying a corse, stiff and cold, at the bottom of the Danube, or carried out by the current into the ocean. For, ever since her father had suggested something of this sort, his words were continually sounding in her ear; and this day, in particular, they would neither fade from her memory nor yield to other thoughts.

Evening had scarcely arrived, when the company returned to their homes; not dismissed by the impatience of the bridegroom, as wedding parties are sometimes broken up, but constrained solely by painful associations, joyless melancholy, and forebodings of evil. Bertalda retired with her maidens, and the knight with his attendants, to undress; but these young bridemaids and bridemen, such was the gloomy tenor of this festival, made no attempt to amuse bride or bridegroom with the usual pleasantry and frolicsome good-humour of the occasion.

Bertalda willed to awake a livelier spirit; she

ordered them to spread before her a brilliant set of jewels, a present from Huldbrand, together with rich apparel and veils, that she might select from among them the brightest and most beautiful for her dress in the morning. The attendants rejoiced at this opportunity of pouring forth good wishes and promises of happiness to their young mistress, and failed not to extol the beauty of the bride with their liveliest eloquence. They became more and more absorbed in this admiration and flattery, until Bertalda at last, looking in a mirror, said with a sigh:

"Ah, but do you not see plainly how freckled I am growing? Look here on the side of my neck."

They looked at the place, and found the freckles, indeed, as their fair mistress had said; but they called them mere beauty-spots, the faintest touches of the sun, such as would only heighten the whiteness of her delicate complexion. Bertalda shook her head, and still viewed them as a blemish.

"And I could remove them," she said at last, sighing. "But the castle-fountain is covered, from which I formerly used to have that precious water, so purifying to the skin. O, had I this evening only a single flagon of it!"

"Is that all?" cried an alert waiting-maid, laughing, as she glided out of the apartment.

"She will not be so frantic," said Bertalda, in a

voice of inquiry and agreeably surprised, "as to cause the stone cover of the fountain to be taken off this very evening?"

That instant they heard the tread of men already passing along the court-yard, and could see from the window where the officious girl was leading them directly up to the fountain, and that they carried levers and other instruments on their shoulders.

"It is certainly my will," said Bertalda with a smile, "if it does not take them too long." And, pleased with the thought, that the merest hint from her was now sufficient to accomplish what had formerly been refused with a painful reproof she looked down upon their operations in the bright moonlight of the castle court.

The men seized the enormous stone, as if they must exert all their strength in raising it; some one of their number indeed would occasionally sigh, when he recollected they were destroying the work of their former beloved mistress. Their labour, however, was much lighter than they had expected. It seemed as if some power, from within the fountain itself, aided them in raising the stone.

"It certainly appears," said the workmen to one another in astonishment, "as if the confined water were become a jet or spouting fountain." And the stone rose more and more, and, almost without the

assistance of the work-people, rolled slowly away upon the pavement with a hollow sound. But an appearance, from the opening of the fountain, filled them with awe, as it rose like a white column of water: at first they imagined it to be a spouting fountain in good earnest, until they perceived the rising form to be a pale female, veiled in white. She wept bitterly, raised her hands above her head, and wrung them with anguish, as with slow and solemn step she moved toward the castle. The servants shrunk back, and fled from the fountain; while the bride, pale and motionless with horror, stood with her maidens at the window from which she had been viewing what passed without. When the figure had now come close beneath their room, it looked up to them and uttered the low moaning of misery, and Bertalda thought she recognized through the veil the pale features of Undine. But the mourning form passed on as sad, reluctant, and lingering, as if going to the place of execution. Bertalda screamed to her maids to call the knight; not one of them dared to stir from her place; and even the bride herself became again mute, as if trembling at the sound of her own voice.

While they continued standing at the window, overpowered with terror and motionless as statues, the mysterious wanderer entered the castle, ascended the well-known stairs, and traversed the well-known

halls, her tears ever flowing in silent woe. Alas, with what different emotions had she once passed through these rooms!

The knight had in the mean time dismissed his attendants. Half undressed and in deep dejection, he was standing before a large mirror; a wax taper burned dimly beside him. At this moment he heard a low tapping at his door, the least perceptible touch of a finger. Undine had formerly tapped in this way, when she wished to amuse him with her endearing sportiveness.

"It is all illusion! a mere freak of fancy!" said he to himself. "I must to my nuptial bed."

"You must, indeed, but to a cold one!" he heard a voice, choked with sobs, repeat from without; and then he saw in the mirror, that the door of his room was slowly, slowly opened, and the white wanderer entered, and gently secured it behind her.

"They have opened the fountain," said she in a low tone, "and now I am here and you must die."

He felt in the shock and death-pause of his heart, that this must indeed be his doom; but, covering his eyes with his hands, he cried: "Do not, in my death-hour, do not drive me to distraction with terror. If you have a visage of horror behind that veil, do not lift it! Take my life, but let me not see you."

"Alas!" replied the wanderer, "will you not then

look upon me once more? I am as beautiful now as when you wooed me on the peninsula!"

"O would to God it were so!" sighed Huldbrand, "and that I might die by a kiss from you!"

"Most willingly do I grant your wish, my dearest love," said she. And as she threw back her veil, her dear eye met his view, smiling with celestial beauty. Trembling with love and the awe of approaching death, the knight stooped to give and receive the embrace. She kissed him with the holy kiss of Heaven; but she relaxed not her hold, pressing him more passionately in her arms, and weeping as if she would weep away her soul. Tears rushed into the knight's eyes, while a thrill both of bliss and agony shot through his heart, until he at last expired, sinking softly back from her fair arms, and resting upon the pillow of his couch, a corse.

"I have wept him to death!" said she to some domestics, who met her in the anti-chamber; and passing through the terrified group, she went slowly out and disappeared in the fountain.

Chapter 19

How the Knight Huldbrand was buried.

Father Heilmann had returned to the castle, as soon as the death of the lord of Ringstetten was made known in the neighbourhood; and he arrived at the very hour when the monk, who had married the unfortunate couple, was hurrying from the door, overcome with dismay and horror.

When father Heilmann was informed of this, he replied; "It is all well; and now come the duties of my office, in which I have no need of an assistant."

He then began to console the bride, now become a widow, small as was the advantage her worldly and light-minded spirit derived from his kindness.

The old fisherman, on the other hand, though severely afflicted, was far more resigned in regard to the fate of his son-in-law and the calamity of his daughter; and while Bertalda could not refrain from accusing Undine as a murderess and sorceress, the old man calmly said: "The event, after all, could not have happened otherwise. I see nothing in it but the judgment of God; and no one, I am sure, could have his heart more pierced by the death of Huldbrand,

than she who was obliged to accomplish his doom, the poor forsaken Undine!"

He then assisted in arranging the funeral solemnities, as suited the rank of the deceased. The knight was to be interred in a village church-yard, in whose consecrated ground were the graves of his ancestors: a place which they, as well as himself, had endowed with rich privileges and gifts. His shield and helmet lay upon his coffin, ready to be lowered with it into the grave, for lord Huldbrand of Ringstetten had died the last of his race; the mourners began their sorrowful march, lifting the melancholy wail of their dirges amid the calm unclouded heaven; father Heilmann preceded the procession, bearing a lofty crucifix, while Bertalda followed in her misery, supported by her aged father.

While proceeding in this manner, they suddenly saw, in the midst of the dark-habited mourning females in the widow's train, a snow-white figure, closely veiled, and wringing its hands in the wild vehemence of sorrow. Those next to whom it moved, seized with a secret dread, started back or on one side; and owing to their movements, the others, next to whom the white stranger now came, were terrified still more, so as to produce almost a complete disarrangement of the funeral train. Some of the military escort ventured to address the figure,

and attempt to remove it from the procession, but it seemed to vanish from under their hands, and yet was immediately seen advancing again, with slow and solemn step, among the followers of the body. At last, in consequence of the shrinking away of the attendants, it came close behind Bertalda. It now moved so slowly, that the widow was not aware of its presence, and it walked meekly on behind, neither suffering nor creating disturbance.

This continued until they came to the churchyard, where the procession formed a circle round the open grave. Then it was that Bertalda perceived her unbidden companion, and prompted half by anger and half by terror, she commanded her to depart from the knight's place of final rest. But the veiled female, shaking her head with a gentle refusal, raised her hands toward Bertalda, in lowly supplication, by which she was greatly moved, and could not but remember with tears, how Undine had shown such sweetness of spirit on the Danube, when she held out to her the coral necklace.

Father Heilmann now motioned with his hand, and gave order for all to observe perfect stillness, that over the body, whose mound was well-nigh formed, they might breathe a prayer of silent devotion. Bertalda knelt without speaking; and all knelt, even the grave diggers who had now finished their work. But

when they rose from this breathing of the heart, the white stranger had disappeared. On the spot where she had kneeled, a little spring, of silver brightness, was gushing out from the green turf, and it kept swelling and flowing onward with a low murmur, till it almost encircled the mound of the knight's grave; it then continued its course, and emptied itself into a calm lake, which lay by the side of the consecrated ground. Even to this day, the inhabitants of the village point out the spring;—and they cannot but cherish the belief, that it is the poor deserted Undine, who in this manner still fondly encircles her beloved in her arms.

Preface *to* The Light Princess and Other Fairy Tales

by

George MacDonald

On Fairytales

That we have in English no word corresponding to the German *Märchen*, drives us to use the word *Fairytale*, regardless of the fact that the tale may have nothing to do with any sort of fairy. The old use of the word *Fairy*, by Spenser at least, might, however, well be adduced, were justification or excuse necessary where *need must*.

Were I asked, what is a fairytale? I should reply, *Read Undine: that is a fairytale; then read this and that as well, and you will see what is a fairytale*. Were I further begged to describe the *fairytale*, or define what it is, I would make answer, that I should as soon think of describing the abstract human face, or stating what must go to constitute a human being. A fairytale is just a fairytale, as a face is just a face; and of all fairytales I know, I think Undine the most beautiful.

Many a man, however, who would not attempt to define *a man*, might venture to say something as to what a man ought to be: even so much I will not in this place venture with regard to the fairytale, for my long past work in that kind might but poorly instance or illustrate my now more matured judgment. I will

but say some things helpful to the reading, in right-minded fashion, of such tales as follow.

Some thinkers would feel sorely hampered if at liberty to use no forms but such as existed in nature, or to invent nothing save in accordance with the laws of the world of the senses; but it must not therefore be imagined that they desire escape from the region of law. Nothing lawless can show the least reason why it should exist, or could at best have more than an appearance of life.

The natural world has its laws, and no man must interfere with them in the way of presentment any more than in the way of use; but they themselves may suggest laws of other kinds, and man may, if he pleases, invent a little world of his own, with its own laws; for there is that in him which delights in calling up new forms—which is the nearest, perhaps, he can come to creation. When such forms are new embodiments of old truths, we call them products of the Imagination; when they are mere inventions, however lovely, I should call them the work of the Fancy: in either case, Law has been diligently at work.

His world once invented, the highest law that comes next into play is, that there shall be harmony between the laws by which the new world has begun to exist; and in the process of his creation, the inventor must hold by those laws. The moment he forgets

one of them, he makes the story, by its own postulates, incredible. To be able to live a moment in an imagined world, we must see the laws of its existence obeyed. Those broken, we fall out of it. The imagination in us, whose exercise is essential to the most temporary submission to the imagination of another, immediately, with the disappearance of Law, ceases to act. Suppose the gracious creatures of some childlike region of Fairyland talking either cockney or Gascon! Would not the tale, however lovelily begun, sink once to the level of the Burlesque—of all forms of literature the least worthy? A man's inventions may be stupid or clever, but if he do not hold by the laws of them, or if he makes one law jar with another, he contradicts himself as an inventor, he is no artist. He does not rightly consort his instruments, or he tunes them in different keys. The mind of man is the product of live Law; it thinks by law, it dwells in the midst of law, it gathers from law its growth; with law, therefore, can it alone work to any result. Inharmonious, unconsorting ideas will come to a man, but if he try to use one of such, his work will grow dull, and he will drop it from mere lack of interest. Law is the soil in which alone beauty will grow; beauty is the only stuff in which Truth can be clothed; and you may, if you will, call Imagination the tailor that cuts her garments to fit her, and Fancy his journeyman that

puts the pieces of them together, or perhaps at most works their button-holes. Obeying law, the maker works like his creator; not obeying law, he is such a fool as heaps a pile of stones and calls it a church.

In the moral world it is different: there a man may clothe in new forms, and for this employ his imagination freely, but he must invent nothing. He may not, for any purpose, turn its laws upside down. He must not meddle with the relations of live souls. The laws of the spirit of man must hold, alike in this world and in any world he may invent. It were no offence to suppose a world in which everything repelled instead of attracted the things around it; it would be wicked to write a tale representing a man it called good as always doing bad things, or a man it called bad as always doing good things: the notion itself is absolutely lawless. In physical things a man may invent; in moral things he must obey—and take their laws with him into his invented world as well.

"You write as if a fairytale were a thing of importance: must it have meaning?"

It cannot help having some meaning; if it have proportion and harmony it has vitality, and vitality is truth. The beauty may be plainer in it than the truth, but without the truth the beauty could not be, and the fairytale would give no delight. Everyone, however, who feels the story, will read its meaning

after his own nature and development: one man will read one meaning in it, another will read another.

"If so, how am I to assure myself that I am not reading my own meaning into it, but yours out of it?"

Why should you be so assured? It may be better that you should read your meaning into it. That may be a higher operation of your intellect than the mere reading of mine out of it: your meaning may be superior to mine.

"Suppose my child ask me what the fairytale means, what am I to say?"

If you do not know what it means, what is easier than to say so? If you do see a meaning in it, there it is for you to give him. A genuine work of art must mean many things; the truer its art, the more things it will mean. If my drawing, on the other hand, is so far from being a work of art that it needs THIS IS A HORSE written under it, what can it matter that neither you nor your child should know what it means? It is there not so much to convey a meaning as to wake a meaning. If it do not even wake an interest, throw it aside. A meaning may be there, but it is not for you. If, again, you do not know a horse when you see it, the name written under it will not serve you much. At all events, the business of the painter is not to teach zoology.

But indeed your children are not likely to trouble

you about the meaning. They find what they are capable of finding, and more would be too much. For my part, I do not write for children, but for the childlike, whether of five, or fifty, or seventy-five.

A fairytale is not an allegory. There may be allegory in it, but it not an allegory. He must be an artist indeed who can, in any mode, produce a strict allegory that is not a weariness to the spirit. An allegory must be Mastery or Moorditch.

A fairytale, like a butterfly or a bee, helps itself on all sides, sips every wholesome flower, and spoils not one. The true fairytale is, to my mind, very like the sonata. We all know that a sonata means something; and where there is the faculty of talking with suitable vagueness, and choosing metaphor sufficiently loose, mind may approach mind, in the interpretation of a sonata, with the result of a more or less contenting consciousness of sympathy. But if two or three men sat down to write each what the sonata meant to him, what approximation to definite idea would be the result? Little enough—and that little more than needful. We should find it had roused related, if not identical, feelings, but probably not one common thought. Has the sonata therefore failed? Had it undertaken to convey, or ought it to be expected to impart anything defined, anything notionally recognisable?

"But words are not music; words at least are meant and fitted to carry a precise meaning!"

It is very seldom indeed that they carry the exact meaning of any user of them! And if they can be so used as to convey definite meaning, it does not follow that they ought never to carry anything else. Words are live things that may be variously employed to various ends. They can convey a scientific fact, or throw a shadow of her child's dream on the heart of a mother. They are things to put together like the pieces of dissected map, or to arrange like the notes on a stave. Is the music in them to go for nothing? It can hardly help the definiteness of a meaning: is it therefore to be disregarded? They have length, and breadth, and outline: have they nothing to do with depth? Have they only to describe, never to impress? Has nothing any claim to their use but definite? The cause of a child's tears may be altogether undefinable: has the mother therefore no word for his vague misery? That may be strong in colour which has no evident outline. A fairytale, a sonata, a gathering storm, a limitless night, seizes you and sweeps you away: do you begin at once to wrestle with it and ask whence its power over you, whither it is carrying you? The law of each is in the mind of its composer; that law makes one man feel this way, another man feel that way. To one the sonata is a

world of odour and beauty, to another of soothing only and sweetness. To one, the cloudy rendezvous is a wild dance, with a terror at its heart; to another, a majestic march of heavenly hosts, with Truth in their centre pointing their course, but as yet restraining her voice. The greatest forces lie in the region of the uncomprehended.

I will go farther.—The best thing you can do for your fellow, next to rousing his conscience, is—not to give him things to think about, but to wake things up that are in him; or say, to make him think things for himself. The best Nature does for us is to work in us such moods in which thoughts of high import arise. Does any aspect of Nature wake but one thought? Does she ever suggest only one definite thing? Does she make any two men in the same place at the same moment think the same thing? Is she therefore a failure, because she is not definite? Is it nothing that she rouses the something deeper than the understanding—the power that underlies thoughts? Does she not set feeling, and so thinking at work? Would it be better that she did this after one fashion and not after many fashions? Nature is mood-engendering, thought-provoking: such ought the sonata, such ought the fairytale to be.

"But a man may then imagine in your work what he pleases, what you never meant!"

Not what he pleases, but what he can. If he be not a true man, he will draw evil out of the best; we need not mind how he treats any work of art! If he be a true man, he will imagine true things; what matter whether I meant them or not? They are there none the less that I cannot claim putting them there! One difference between God's work and man's is, that, while God's work cannot mean more than he meant, man's must mean more than he meant. For in everything that God has made, there is a layer upon layer of ascending significance; also he expresses the same thought in higher and higher kinds of that thought: it is God's things, his embodied thoughts, which alone a man has to use, modified and adapted to his own purposes, for the expression of his thoughts; therefore he cannot help his words and figures falling into such combinations in the mind of another as he had himself not foreseen, so many are the thoughts allied to every other thought, so many are the relations involved in every figure, so many the facts hinted in every symbol. A man may well himself discover truth in what he wrote; for he was dealing all the time things that came from thoughts beyond his own.

"But surely you would explain your idea to one who asked you?"

I say again, if I cannot draw a horse, I will not

write THIS IS A HORSE under what I foolishly meant for one. Any key to a work of imagination would be nearly, if not quite, as absurd. The tale is there not to hide, but to show: if it show nothing at your window, do not open your door to it; leave it out in the cold. To ask me to explain, is to say, "Roses! Boil them, or we won't have them!" My tales may not be roses, but I will not boil them.

So long as I think my dog can bark, I will not sit up to bark for him.

If a writer's aim be logical conviction, he must spare no logical pains, not merely to be understood, but to escape being misunderstood; where his object is to move by suggestion, to cause to imagine, then let him assail the soul of his reader as the wind assails an aeolian harp. If there be music in my reader, I would gladly wake it. Let fairytale of mine go for a firefly that now flashes, now is dark, but may flash again. Caught in a hand which does not love its kind, it will turn to an insignificant ugly thing, that can neither flash nor fly.

The best way with music, I imagine, is not to bring the forces of our intellect to bear upon it, but to be still and let it work on that part of us for whose sake it exists. We spoil countless precious things by intellectual greed. He who will be a man, and will not be a child, must, he cannot help himself, become

a little man, that is, a dwarf. He will, however need no consolation, for he is sure to think himself a very large creature indeed.

If any strain of my "broken music" make a child's eyes flash, or his mother's grow for a moment dim, my labour will not have been in vain.