



GOOD LADY BERTHA'S

HONEY BROTH





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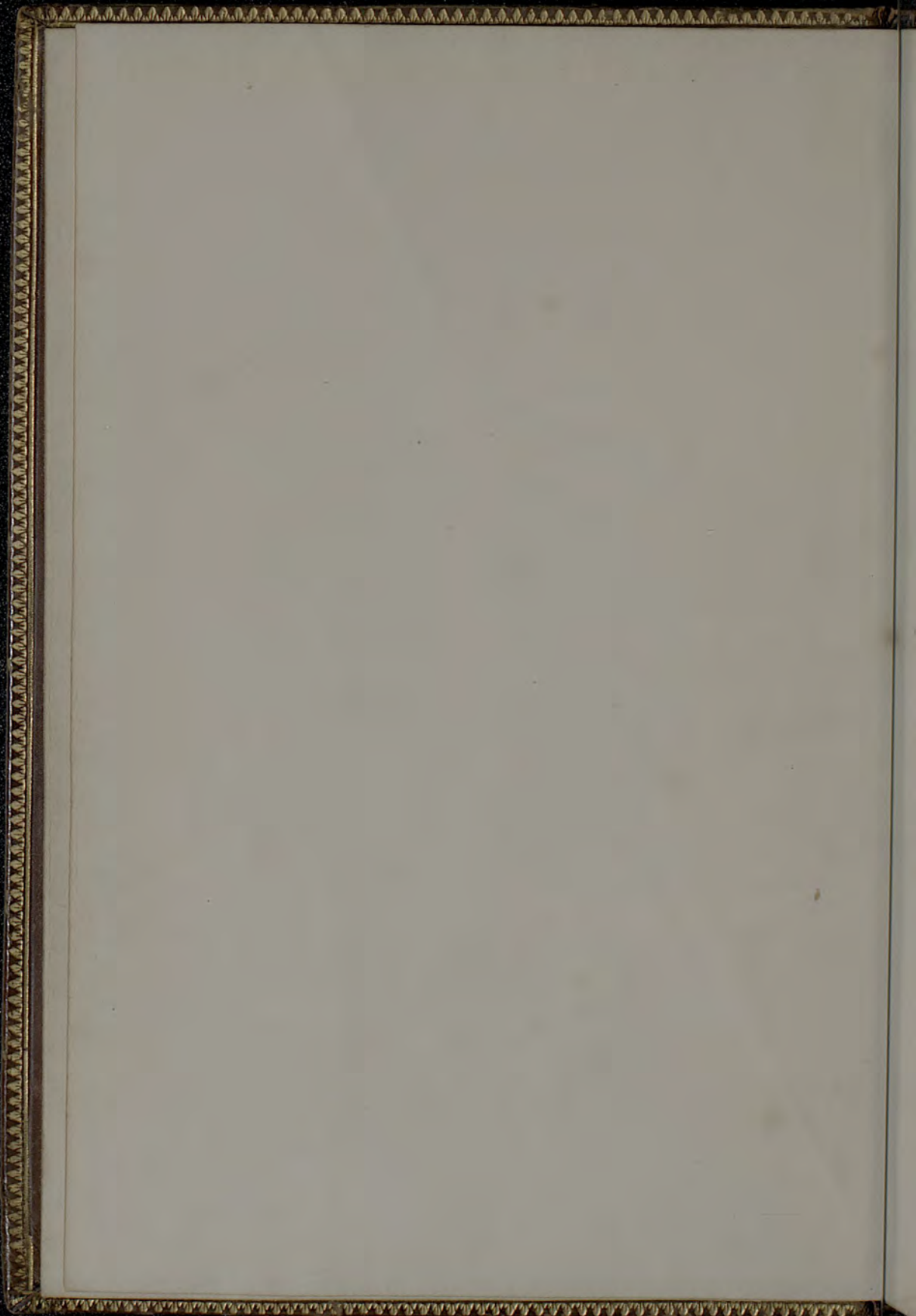
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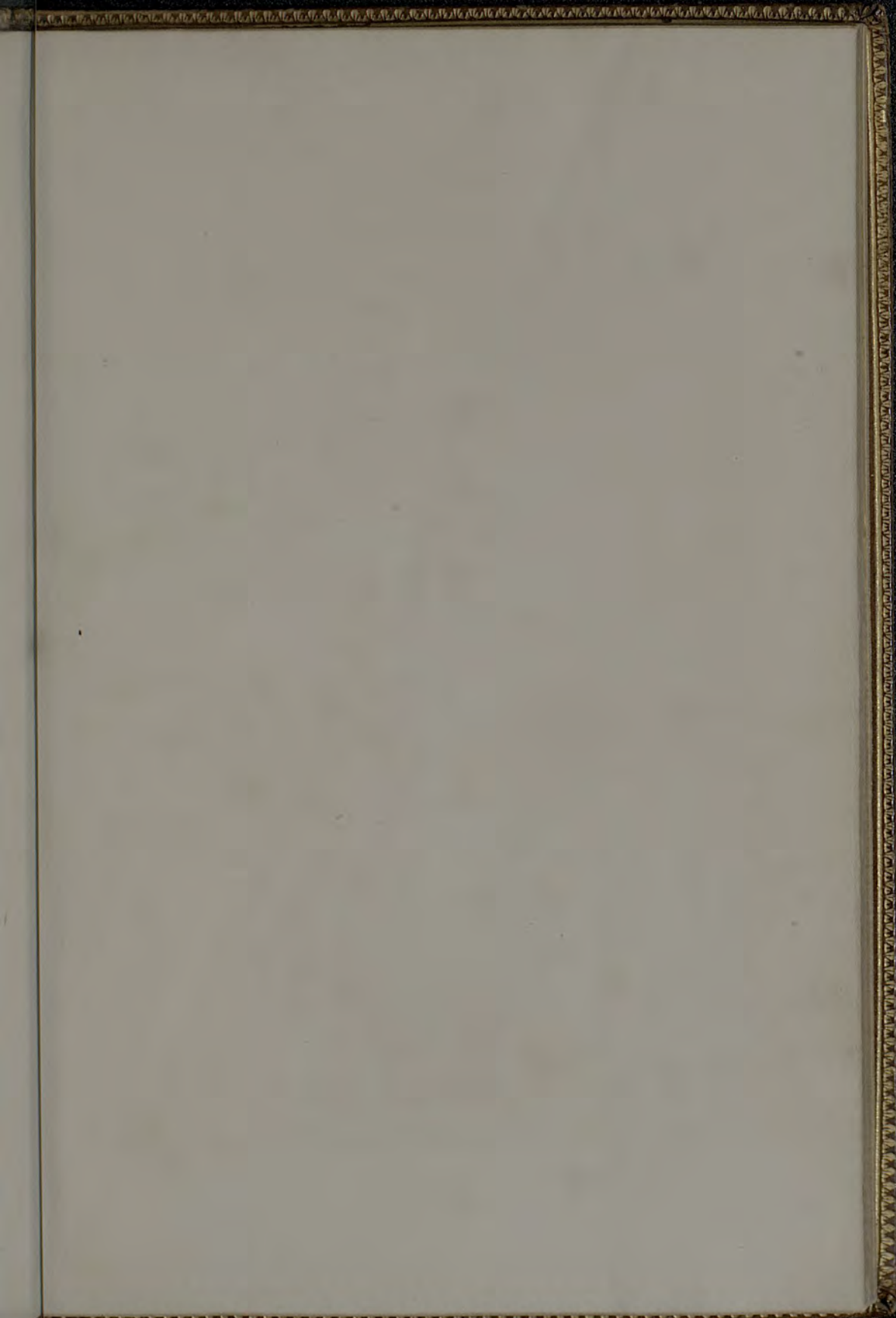
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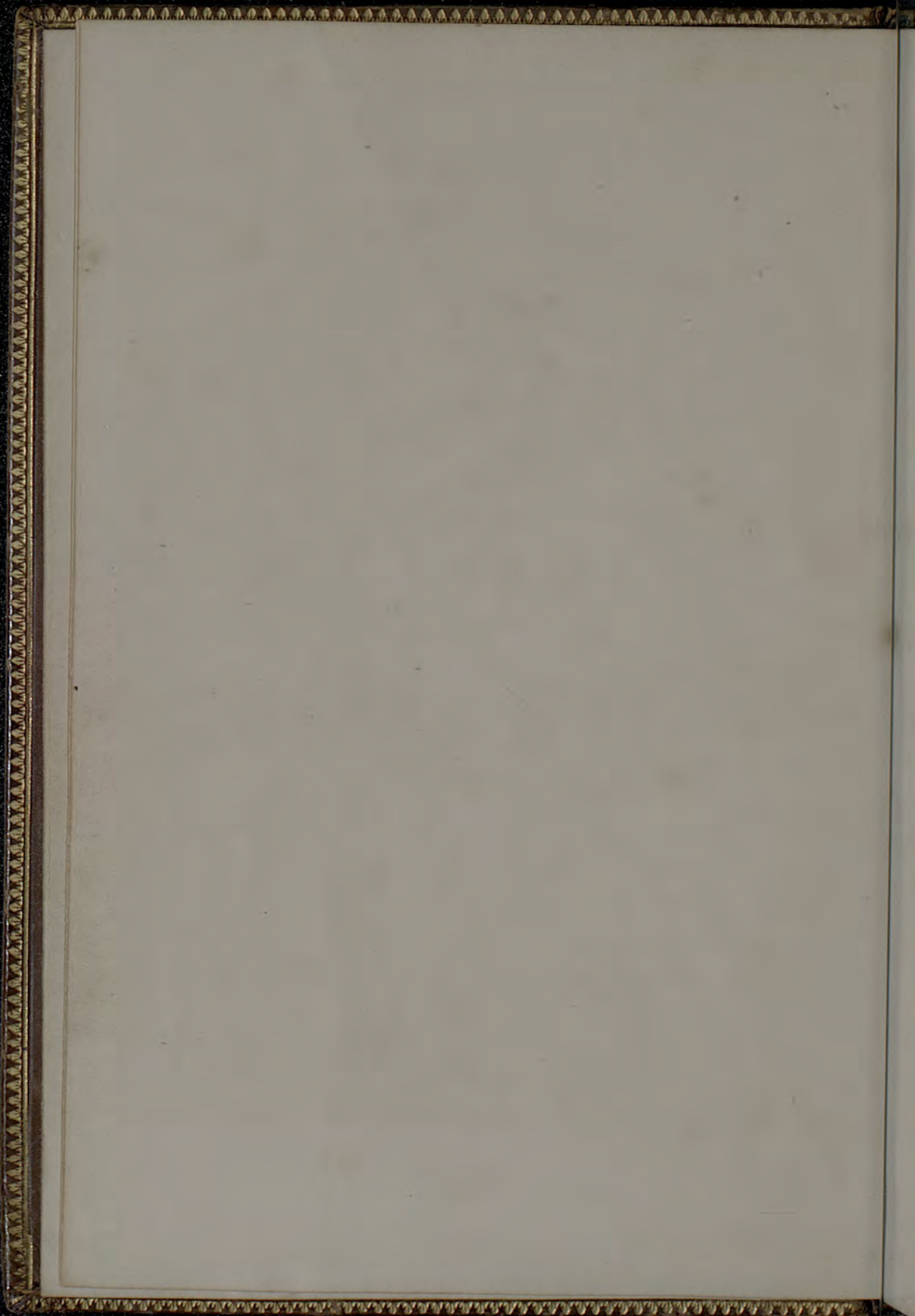


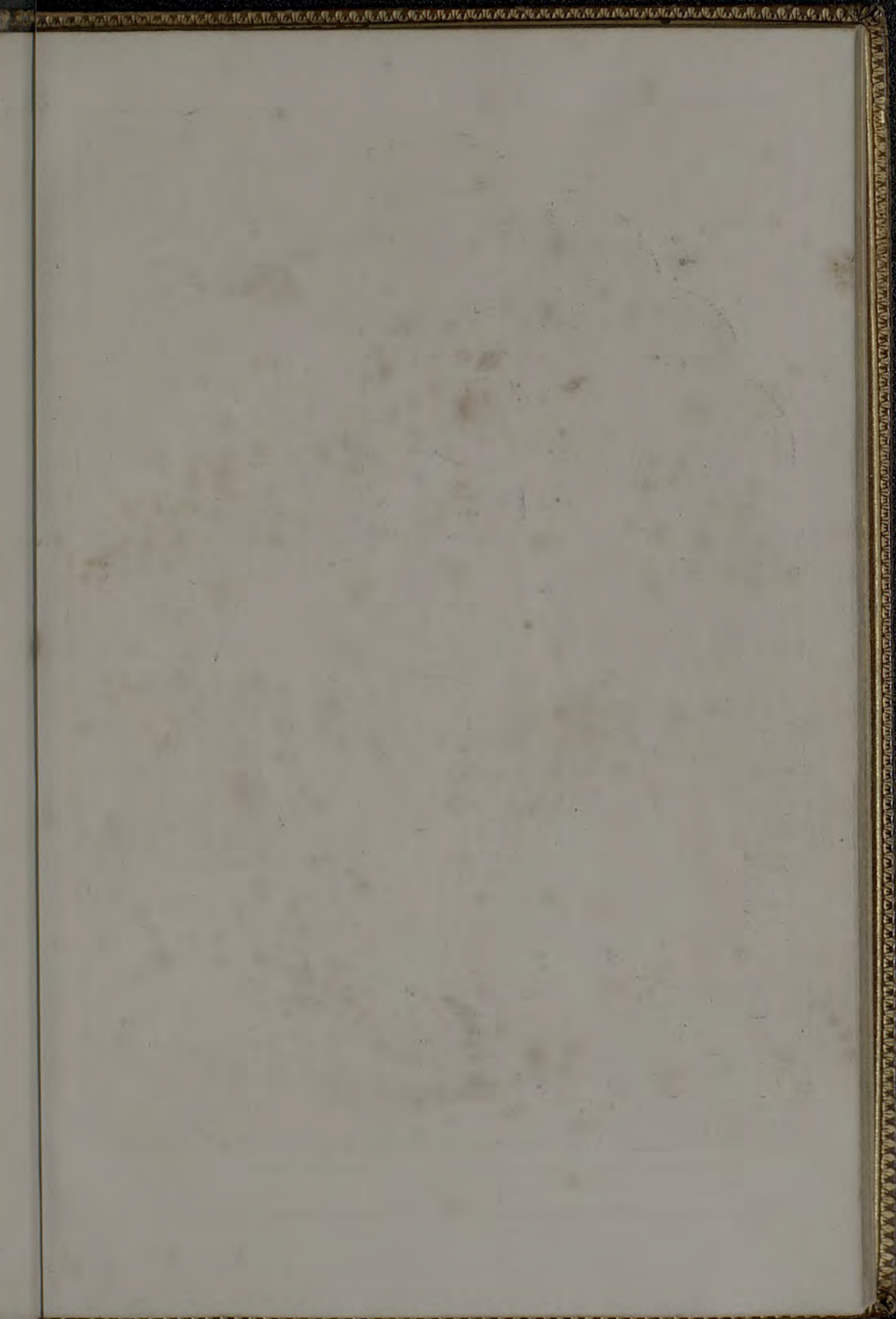
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III











The Good Lady Bertha.

PICTURE STORY BOOKS,
BY GREAT AUTHORS AND GREAT PAINTERS.



Good Lady Bertha's

HONEY **B**ROTH.

BY ALEXANDRE DUMAS.

With One Hundred and Twenty Illustrations

BY BERTALL.

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GOOD LADY BERTHA'S
HONEY BROTH.

WHO AND WHAT THE GOOD LADY
BERTHA WAS.

THERE was once upon a time a
valiant knight, called Osmond of
Rosemberg, who chose for his wife



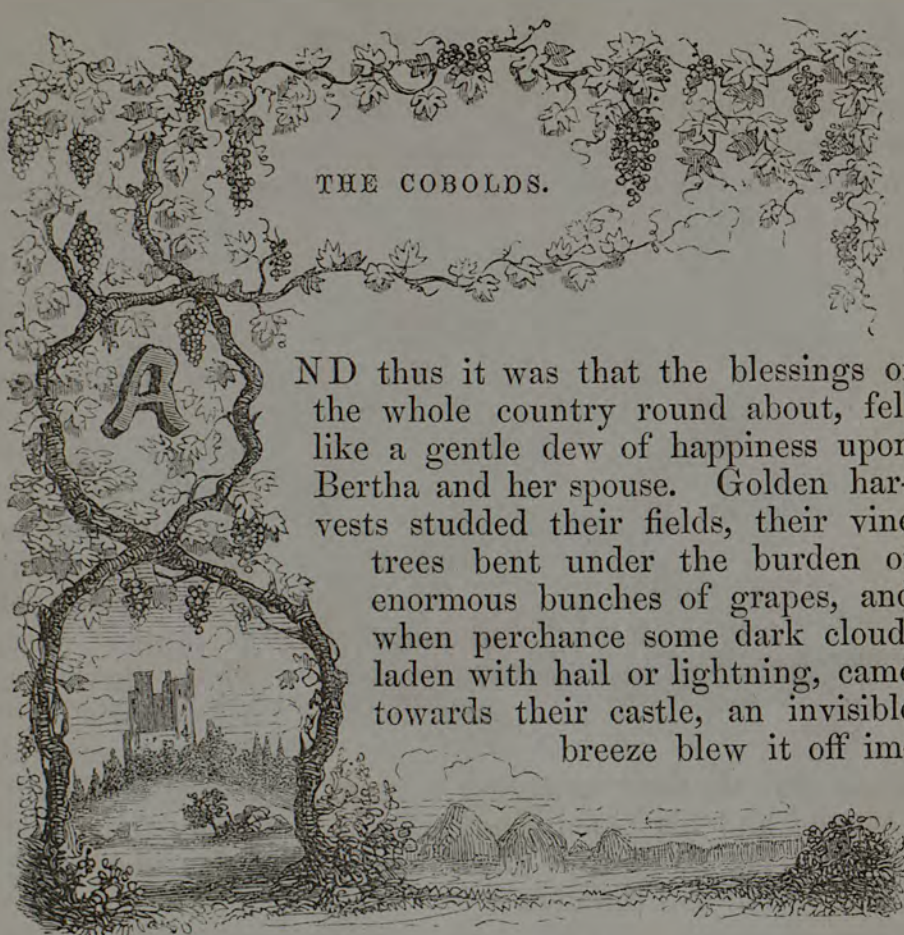
a lovely maiden named Bertha.

I know that Bertha could never have been compared with the high-born ladies of our time, though she was surely as noble as the noblest of them all; but she could only speak in good old German, she could not sing Italian songs, nor could she read French novels, nor dance the gallopade, nor waltz, nor *do the polka*; but, instead of these, she was good, gentle, full of tender pity, and careful that not even a breath should tarnish the bright mirror of her fame. And when she passed through a village, not in a fine open carriage, with a lapdog on the front seat, but on foot, with



a bag containing alms-money, "*a God reward you,*" from the old man, the widow, or the orphan, sounded more sweetly to her ear than the most melodious ballad of the most celebrated minstrel; for which ballad, however, a piece of gold has been paid by the same people who have refused a small copper coin to the beggar that stood by, half naked and shivering, with his tattered cap in his hand.





THE COBOLDS.

AND thus it was that the blessings of the whole country round about, fell like a gentle dew of happiness upon Bertha and her spouse. Golden harvests studded their fields, their vine trees bent under the burden of enormous bunches of grapes, and when perchance some dark cloud, laden with hail or lightning, came towards their castle, an invisible breeze blew it off im-

mediately towards the dwelling of some wicked noble, above which it would burst, and lay waste the land.

Now who was it blew the dark cloud away, and who protected from lightning and hail the domains of Count Osmond and Good Lady Bertha? I will tell you.

It was the dwarfs of the castle.

You must know, my good boys and girls, that, a long while ago, there was in Germany a race of good little genii, who unfortunately have since disappeared; the tallest of whom scarcely measured six inches, and who were called Cobolds. These good little genii, who were as old as the world, loved to frequent those castles above all, whose lords and masters were, after God's own heart, good

and kind themselves. They hated those who were naughty and wicked, and punished them in a proportionate degree ; whilst, on the other hand, they protected with all their



might, and this extended over the elements, one and all, those whose good nature resembled their own. This is why these little dwarfs who, time out of mind, had dwelt in the castle of Wistgaw, and who, therefore, had known their

fathers, grandfathers, and all their ancestry, were so very fond of Count Osmond and his Good Lady Bertha, and why they used to blow far away from their happy domains the black cloud of hail and thunder.

THE OLD CASTLE.

One day Lady Bertha went to her husband, and said to him : " My dear lord, our castle is growing old, and threatens to fall to pieces ; we cannot safely stay any longer in this tottering mansion, and I think if your wisdom approves of it, that we ought to build us another dwelling."

" I am of your opinion," answered the Knight ; " but one thing makes me uneasy."

" What is that ?" asked Bertha.





“Although you have never set eyes on them, you must surely have heard tell of those good Cobolds who dwell in the vaults of our castle. My father heard his grandfather, who had it from one of his ancestors, say, that these little genii were the blessing of our house; now it may be that they have grown used to this old pile; and if we were to anger them by the disturbance, who knows but they might leave us, and then, perhaps, our happiness might go along with them.”

Bertha thought these observations were very prudent, so she and her husband determined to inhabit the castle as it was, rather than to disoblige in any way the good little genii.

THE EMBASSY.

The following night, the Good Lady Bertha and Count Osmond were fast asleep in their large canopy-bed, with its four twisted posts, when they heard a noise as if a multitude of tiny steps were coming forwards from the drawing-room. At the same time the bed-room door was opened, and they beheld advancing an embassy of the little dwarfs we have been speaking of. The ambassador, who



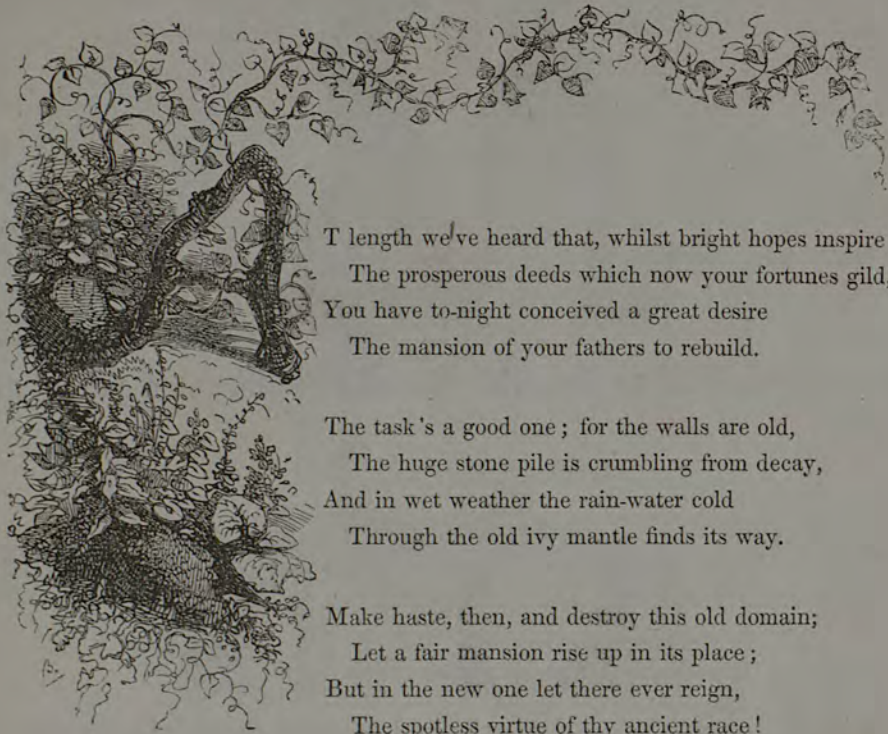
came first, was richly clad according to the fashion of the day, and wore a mantle of fur, a velvet doublet, pantaloons, and small shoes

with very long points. At his side hung a sword of the finest steel, the hilt of which consisted of a single diamond. He courteously carried in his hand his small feathered cap, and drawing near the bed on which



lay the two spouses, who looked upon him and his companions with astonishment, he spoke to them in these terms:—





T length we've heard that, whilst bright hopes inspire
 The prosperous deeds which now your fortunes gild,
 You have to-night conceived a great desire
 The mansion of your fathers to rebuild.

The task's a good one; for the walls are old,
 The huge stone pile is crumbling from decay,
 And in wet weather the rain-water cold
 Through the old ivy mantle finds its way.

Make haste, then, and destroy this old domain;
 Let a fair mansion rise up in its place;
 But in the new one let there ever reign,
 The spotless virtue of thy ancient race!

Count Osmond was too much amazed at what he witnessed to make any other answer beyond waving his hand; but this courtesy was all the ambassador required, and, after making a formal bow to the Count and Lady Bertha, he withdrew.

The next morning the count and his lady awoke very much relieved; the great difficulty was removed: and, encouraged by the assent of his good little friends, Osmond sent for a skilful architect, who, the same day,





having resolved to demolish the old castle, set a parcel of



his men to work, whilst others brought fresh stones from



the quarry, hewed down the large oaks to make beams,

and the fir trees to make rafters. In less than a month the old mansion was levelled to the ground, and as the new castle could not be built, as the archi-



tect asserted, in less than three years, the count and his lady retired in the meantime to a small farm which stood near to the old castle.

THE HONEY BROTH.

Meanwhile the new castle rose rapidly up, for the bricklayers worked at it by day, and the little dwarfs worked at it by night.



At first the men were very much alarmed when they saw every morning, on returning to their labour, that the castle had increased by several layers of stones. They told the architect of it, who spoke to the count; and the latter confessed that, without being quite sure, he was inclined to believe it was his little friends the dwarfs, who, knowing how anxious he was to go to his new



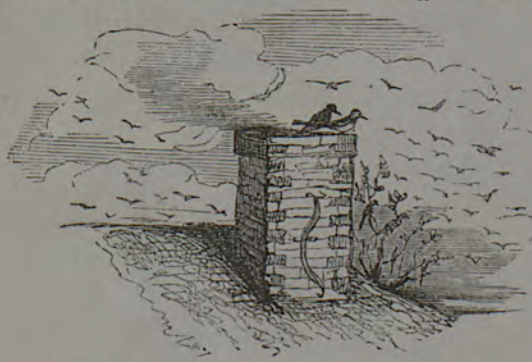
manor, had betaken themselves to this nightly toil. Now, one day, they found on the scaffolding a small wheelbarrow, no bigger than your hand, but so beautifully wrought in

ebony and bound with silver, that it looked like a pretty plaything intended for a little prince. The mason who found the wheelbarrow showed it to his fellow workmen, and, at night, took it home for his little boy to play with; but the moment the lad offered to touch it, the wheelbarrow rolled off by itself, and ran away so fast, that, although the poor mason ran after it as fast as his



legs would carry him, it disappeared in a trice. At the same instant he could hear short, sharp, strident, and lengthened peals of laughter; but this was only the Cobolds making game of him.

However, it was very lucky that the little dwarfs had undertaken the work; for if they had not done a good part of it, the castle would not have been completed in six years. It is true, that was precisely what the architect had



reckoned; for these honourable jobbers in bricks and mortar are accustomed (and I trust my little readers will never learn it at their expense) to leave out one half of the truth in their calculations. So then, towards the close of the third year, just when the swallow, after taking leave of us, was departing for another clime—at

that season when the birds who are forced to remain in our chilly country were becoming dull and scarce—the new castle began to assume a certain shape, but was still very far from being completed. Which the Good Lady Bertha perceiving, one day that she was overlooking the workmen she said to them in her sweet voice:—

“Well, my worthy men, does the work proceed as fast as you can make it? Here is winter knocking at our doors, and the count and I are so badly off in the little farm, that we long to leave it for the fine castle you are building for us. Come, my good men, will you make haste, and try to let us move into it within a month, and I promise you, that on the day you shall have laid the last stone on the topmost turret, to treat you all to a HONEY BROTH, better than any thing you have ever tasted yet;

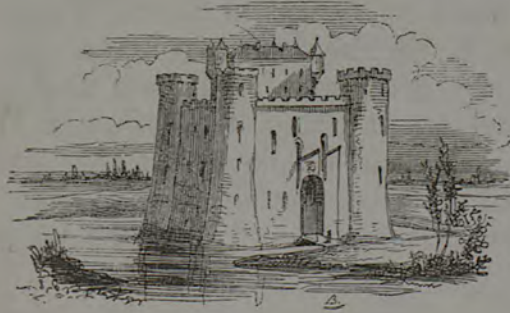


and, more than that, I pledge my word that on the same day in every year, you, your children, and your grandchildren, shall continue ever after to receive the same favour from me, from my children, and my grandchildren.”

Now you must know, that in old times an invitation to eat a “*Honey Broth*” was not a thing to be despised; for

it was the same as inviting you to a very nice dinner. At that period people used to say, Come to-morrow and take your honey broth with me, as people now say, Come to-morrow, and take potluck with us; in both cases a good dinner being understood.

Therefore, on hearing this promise, the mouths of the workmen began to water; they wrought with double energy, and got on so speedily, that on the 1st of October the Castle of Wistgaw was completed.



The Good Lady Bertha, faithful to her promise, ordered her servants to prepare, for every man who had set his hand

to the work, a sumptuous repast; which, owing to the number of the guests, was served up in the open air.



At the beginning, when the soup was served, the weather was perfectly fine, and not one had bethought him of the inconvenience of dining without shelter; but afterwards, when, in fifty enormous tureens, the smoking Honey Broth was brought to table, flakes of snow fell down thick and frosty into every dish.

This accident, which disturbed the dinner at its close, so greatly annoyed the Good Lady Bertha, that she resolved for the future to celebrate this festival in the month when the roses bloom; and the anniversary of this famous Honey Broth was henceforward fixed for the 1st of June.

Moreover Bertha confirmed the establishment of this pious solemnity by a deed, in which she bound herself, her descendants, and successors,—by whatever title the castle might revert to them,—to give, on every 1st of June, a Honey Broth to her vassals, declaring that she should not rest peaceably in her grave unless this observance were strictly adhered to.

This deed, engrossed by a notary on parchment, was signed by Bertha, sealed with the count's coat of arms, and deposited among the records of the family.



THE APPARITION.

For the next twenty years Lady Bertha presided with the same goodness and magnificence at the festival which she had founded; but at length, in the course of the twenty-first year, she died in holiness and purity, and was buried in the vault of her ancestors to the grief of her husband and the regret of the whole country. Two years



later, Count Osmond, after faithfully observing the custom which his wife had established, died in his turn, leaving behind him but one successor, his son, Count Ulrick de



Rosemberg, who, inheriting both the courage of Osmond and the virtues of Bertha, made no change in the happy condition of his peasantry, or rather did his best to improve it.

But all of a sudden a great war was declared, and numerous bands of the enemy sailed up the Rhine, and took possession of the different castles which stood on its banks.

These soldiers came from the further end of Germany, for it was their Emperor who was then at war with the Burgraves.

Ulrick was not strong enough to resist the enemy; still, as he was a bold and brave knight, he would have



buried himself beneath the ruins of his castle, had he not reflected on the cruel misfortunes which a resistance so desperate would bring upon the country. For the sake of his vassals he retired into Alsatia, leaving old Fritz, his steward, to watch over the estates and

domains which were about to pass over into the hands of the enemy.

The general who conducted the troops marching upon this point was called Dominick. He took up his abode in the castle, which he thought very comfortable, and quartered his soldiers about the neighbourhood.

This general was a man of low origin, who had started as a private soldier, and who, rather by the favour of his prince than by his own bravery and good qualities, had risen to be a commander.

I tell you this, my good boys and girls, for fear you should suppose I am condemning those who from low beginnings contrive to make their way upwards: now I myself very much esteem such men, when they have deserved the change in their fortunes. But there are two sorts of soldiers of fortune; those who attain rank by their bravery, and those who are preferred to it through favour.

Now, this General Dominick was no better than a



brutal and ignorant favourite, brought up to eat the barrack bread and drink plain water; but he now feasted abundantly on the most delicate viands, and drank the



most costly wines, feeding his dogs on the remnants from his table, instead of giving them to the poor and hungry.

Well, the very first day of his arrival at the castle, he sent for old Fritz, and handed to him a list of the exactions he purposed to charge the country with—a list so very exorbitant, that the steward fell on his knees, and implored him not to lean in so heavy a manner upon the poor country people. But the general only replied, that as nothing was so vexatious to him as to hear people murmur, that he would double his demands on hearing the first complaint. Now the general was the strongest party, he had the conqueror's right, and as there was no help for it, the people were forced to obey.



It will be easy to guess, from the character of Domi-



nick, what sort of reception he gave to Fritz when he came to speak of the festival established by the Good Lady



Bertha. The general burst into a contemptuous fit of laughter, and answered, that it was the duty of the vassals

to feed their lords, and not the duty of the lords to feed their vassals; that therefore he requested the customary guests of Lady Bertha to go and dine on the 1st of June wherever they thought proper, telling them for certain it should not be with him.

This solemn day consequently passed off for the first time since twenty-five years, without beholding round the hospitable board the jovial vassals of the house of Rosenberg; but so great was the terror in which Dominick was held, that nobody dared complain. Besides, Fritz had obeyed his instructions, and so the peasants already knew that their cruel master did not intend to abide by the old custom.

As for Dominick, he supped and got drunk as usual, and then retiring to his bed-room, after having posted his sentinels in the passages and at the gates of the castle, he went to bed and fell asleep.

Contrary to custom, the general awoke in the dead of the night; and as it was his practice to make but one slumber till morning, he at first believed the next day had arrived, but he was mistaken, it was not yet light, and through a chink in the shutter, lo, the stars were seen shining in the sky!

Moreover, something unusual was passing in his mind; an indistinct kind of fear, a presentiment of something strange which was about to happen. He thought the air floated around him as if beaten by the wings of the spirits of night; his favourite dog, which was tied up in the yard beneath his windows, yelled piteously; and when he heard that



mournful cry, the new lord of the castle felt a cold sweat trickle from his forehead in huge bead drops.



The clock began to strike twelve slowly and heavily, and at every stroke the terror of this man, who was

however reputed brave, increased to such a degree, that at the tenth stroke he could rest no longer; he sat up on his elbow, and prepared to open his door and call the sentinel. But at the last stroke, and just as his feet reached the floor, he heard the door, which he remembered to have fastened, open of itself, and turn upon its hinges as if it had neither lock nor bolt. Then a



pale light gleamed over the chamber, whilst a soft step, which made his very blood run cold, appeared to draw

towards him. Finally, at the foot of his bed there stood a lady all in white, holding in one hand a brass lamp, and in the other a roll of parchment, inscribed, signed, and sealed. She came slowly on, with fixed eyes and immovable features, her hair hanging down over her back; and when she had come close up to the bedside of the general, turning the lamp to the parchment, so that the light fell full upon it, she said, "Do what is here inscribed!"

And thereupon she held the lamp over the deed, near enough for Dominick, with his haggard eyes, to read the bond, which so strongly established the custom he had refused to submit to.

Then, when this frightful reading was over, the phantom, so gloomy, so silent, and so cold, retired as it had come; the door shut behind it, the light vanished, and the rebellious successor of Count Osmond fell back upon the



bed; where he lay till the next morning in an agony of terror which, although he was ashamed of, he vainly strove to overcome.

THE BARRACK BREAD AND WATER.

But at the first dawn of day the charm was broken. Dominick leapt out of bed, the more enraged that he could not inwardly deny the alarm he had felt; he ordered the sentinels to be summoned, who at midnight had to mount guard in the passages and at the gates. The poor fellows shook and trembled as they drew near him, for just as the clock was striking twelve, a sleep they could not shake off had stolen over them, and they had awoke some time after without being able to tell how long they had slept. But luckily they met at the door, and agreed to say they

had kept a good watch; and as they were fully awake when they were relieved, they hoped no one had detected their breach of discipline. In short, to every question their general put to them, they replied they did not know what woman he meant, and that they had not seen any thing at all; but then the steward, who was present, declared to Dominick that it was not a woman but a spirit that had visited him, and



that this spirit was that of the Good Lady Bertha. Dominick knit his brows; but struck, however, with what Fritz told him, he spoke with him apart, and having learned from him that this festival



had become an obligation on the part of her successors and castle, whoever they of a deed attested that this deed was he ordered Fritz to the moment he cast his eyes upon it, he recognised the parchment which the spirit had held before him. Until

then, Dominick had never heard of the bond; for although he was very exact in looking after the deeds which bound other people to him, he was not quite so strict as to those deeds which bound him to other people.

Nevertheless, in spite of the deed so perfect and precise, though he had read it atten-



tively, and in spite of old Fritz's entreaties and cautions not to disregard the warning he had received, Dominick took no heed of what had occurred, and that same day invited his whole staff to a grand dinner. This entertainment was to have been one of the most splendid he had ever given.



Indeed, the terror of Dominick's name was so great, that at the appointed hour, though his instructions had

been given only since the morning, the board was crowded with a bountiful repast. The most delicate dishes, the finest and most expensive wines—Rhenish, French and Hungarian—had been collected for the company, who sat down to table loudly praising the magnificent bounty of their general. But on taking his seat, the latter grew suddenly pale with wrath, and roared out with a dreadful



oath: "What ass is it has laid before me this barrack bread?"

And, truly, there beside the general lay a loaf of bread like those which are given out to soldiers, and such as often and often this very man had been used to eat in his youth.

The company stared at each other in amazement, unwilling to believe that there could be any body alive who would dare to put such a joke upon a man so haughty, passionate, and revengeful as their commander.

"Rascal, come hither," said the general to the servant who stood behind him, "and remove this loaf."

The valet obeyed with the alacrity that fear always inspires; but it was in vain that he attempted to remove the loaf.

"My lord," said he, after several repeated but useless exertions, "this loaf must be fastened to the table, for I cannot lift it."

Then the general, whose bodily strength was known to be equal to that of four common men, set both his hands to the loaf and tried himself to remove it; but in vain, he only lifted up the table with the loaf, and, after a



struggle of five minutes' continuance, he fell back in his chair, exhausted with fatigue and covered with perspiration.



“Wine, rascal! wine, and the very best! Mind,” said he, in a gruff voice, holding out his glass, “I shall find out,



depend upon it, who has played me this strange trick; and rely upon me he shall be rewarded as he deserves. So

eat, gentlemen; eat, I say. I drink health and good appetite to all." He then raised his glass to his mouth, but the next moment he spit out what he had taken, exclaiming:—

"What villain poured me out this wretched beverage?"

"It was I, sir," said one of the servants trembling, and who held a bottle in his hand.

"And what does that bottle contain, you vile fellow?"

"Tokay, sir."

"You speak falsely, you rascal; it was water you gave me."

"The wine must have turned into water as it passed into your lordship's glass," said the valet; "for I poured out two glasses from the same bottle to the gentlemen on your right and left, and those gentlemen can bear me out that it was real Tokay."

The general turned to the two officers, who confirmed what the servant had protested.

Then Dominick knit his brow, for he began to understand that the joke was possibly more serious than it had at first appeared; for he thought that the jest had come from the living, whereas, in all likelihood, it really came from the dead.



Then, resolving to arrive at the truth by his own observation, he took the bottle out of the servant's hand, and poured out some of the Tokay wine to his neighbour. The wine showed its usual colour, appearing like liquid topaz; immediately he poured from the same bottle into his own glass; but, as fast as it fell into his glass, the wine assumed the clear transparent colour and the taste of water.



Dominick smiled most bitterly at this tacit allusion to the lowness of his origin, and unwilling to sit near that black loaf, which seemed to be riveted there to humble him, he signed to his aid-de-camp, a young man belonging



to one of the noblest families in Germany, to change places with him. The young officer obeyed, and the general then took his seat on the opposite side of the board.

But he was not a whit more fortunate in his new post; for, whilst the aide-de-camp easily loosened the black bread from the table and it became white and delicate, every morsel of bread that Dominick lifted to his mouth was instantly converted into barrack bread, and all the wine he poured out kept changing into water.



At length Dominick grew so impatient, that he stretched his hand towards a dish of roasted larks, but as soon as he touched the dish, the larks opened their wings, and away they all flew, until they began to drop again into the large open mouths of the peasants, who had been watching this sumptuous repast at a distance.

You may guess how astonished they were when they saw their good luck. Such a miracle was a rare event; and therefore it made so great a noise in the world, that people still say, when speaking of a man whose expectations are too big—“*He expects the larks to fall into his mouth ready cooked.*”



As for Dominick, who had the honour to give rise to this proverb, he was raging mad; but as he felt it would be vain for him to attempt to resist a supernatural power, he declared he was neither hungry nor thirsty, and would do the honours of the feast, which, in spite of its splendour, had become very dull and irksome, for the guests were quite at a loss what faces to put on.



The same evening, Dominick gave out that he had just received a letter from the Emperor, ordering him to remove his head quarters to some other place. Now, as the letter, according to his statement was very urgent, he started off directly.



I need hardly tell you, my dear children, that the Emperor's letter was a pretext; and if this illustrious champion was so eager to set out, it was not from respect to his majesty's commands, but through fear, not only to receive the following night a second visit from Lady Bertha, but lest all the time he should remain in this haunted castle, he might be reduced to spring water and barrack bread.

Scarcely was he gone, when the steward found in one of the cupboards, which the previous day had been quite



empty, a heavy bag of money on which was pasted a label with these words written upon it—

“To pay for the Honey Broth.”

Old Fritz was very much frightened, and stared at the bag with all his eyes; but as he remembered the writing of the Good Lady Bertha, he lost no time in laying out the money for the annual dinner, which, though it had been delayed this year for a day or two, was more sumptuous than ever.

The same thing was repeated every 1st of June; the money was constantly provided by Lady Bertha, until the imperial soldiers having left the country, Waldemar de Rosenberg, the son of Ulric, returned to occupy the castle of his forefathers, twenty-five years after the time his father had left it.

WALDEMAR DE ROSEMBERG.



Count Waldemar had not inherited the benevolent disposition of his ancestors; possibly his long exile from his native home had soured his character; but fortunately he had a wife whose gentleness and goodness atoned for the bitter and morbid spirit of her husband; so that, all things considered, the poor country people, wasted and wearied by twenty years' war, rejoiced at the return of Count Osmond's grand-son.

That was not all: as, in spite of the exile, the pledge of Good Lady Bertha had been kept alive by tradition



from heir to heir, when the first of June had arrived—that day which the vassals, at every new change, awaited impa-

tiently to judge their new lords and masters—the Lady Wilhelmina obtained her husband's leave to superintend the festival; and as she was a charming creature all passed off very well, and the peasantry thought the golden

age of Count Osmond and Lady Bertha, so often quoted by their fathers, had returned again.

The following year the feast was celebrated as usual; but this time Count Waldemar was not present, as he considered it was not proper for a nobleman to sit at the same table with his vassals. Consequently, Wilhelmina alone had to do the honours of the Honey Broth; and we are bound to admit that, although deprived of



the presence of the lordly owner of the castle, the entertainment was as lively as ever. The peasants had already noted that the pleasure they enjoyed was due to the lady's own kind heart, as well as to the influence she possessed over her husband.

Two or three years elapsed, during which the vassals became more and more sensible that the pious goodness of Lady Wilhelmina was absolutely needed to atone to them for her husband's fits of passion. Her fervent goodness and gentleness were for ever extended, like shields, between his vassals and himself; but, unhappily for them, heaven

soon deprived them of their protectress, who died in giving birth to a lovely little boy, named Hermann.

It would have required a heart of stone not to regret that angel of paradise, whom the people of this world had



christened Wilhelmina; and therefore Count Waldemar really wept for several days, and mourned the loss of his excellent mate. But his heart was not accustomed to such tender sentiments, and when, by chance, he did experience them, he could not retain them long. Oblivion grows over the grave faster than the grass does; and six months after Count Waldemar had forgotten Wilhelmina, and taken a second wife.

Now, who was the sufferer by this second marriage? Alas! who should it be but poor little Hermann: he had made his entrance into life through mourning; and before he knew what it was to



have a mother, he felt what it was to be an orphan. His step-mother, shrinking from the cares which were to be lavished on a strange child, who, as the first-born, would inherit the family estates, committed him to a careless nurse, who would leave little Hermann by himself for hours and hours to cry in his cradle, whilst

she went gadding about to fairs, and card parties, and village dances.



THE CRADLE ROCKER.



One evening, thinking perhaps it was not really so late, the nurse had continued in the garden, leaning on the gardener's arm, when she suddenly heard the clock strike twelve; and recollecting that ever since seven o'clock she had left little Hermann by himself, she hurried home, and stealing along

in the dark, she crossed the yard unnoticed, went up stairs, looking around her with uneasiness, stepping onwards without making the least noise, and holding in her breath; for although the count's indifference and his lady's hatred saved her from reproach, her very conscience upbraided her with her cruel neglect. However, she grew more composed, when, on reaching his chamber door, she could hear no cries; doubtless, by dint of crying, the poor child had gone to sleep; so she felt relieved as she took the key out of her pocket, inserted it



softly in the lock, and after turning it very gently, she pushed the door gradually open.

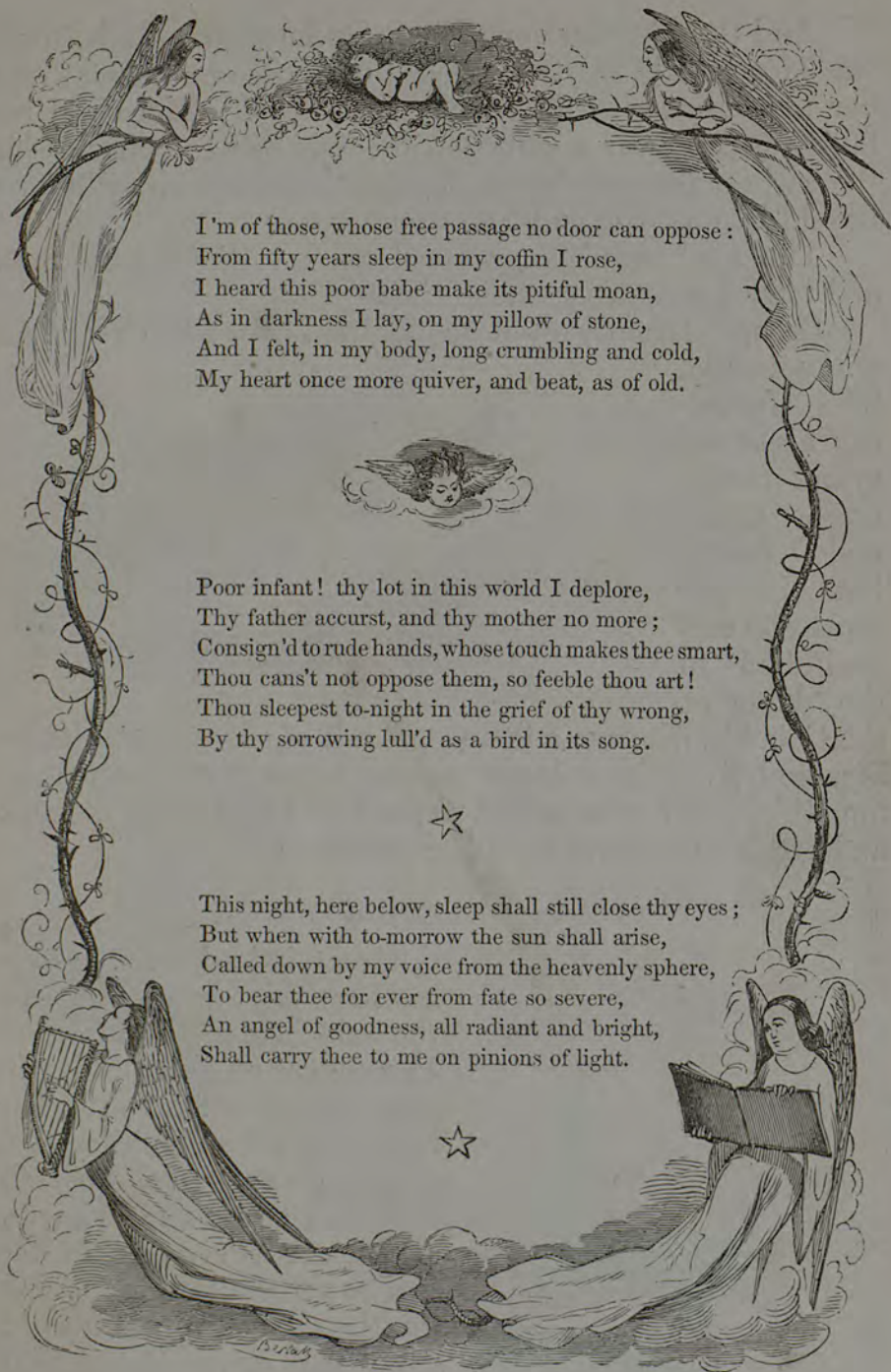
But as fast as she opened the door and looked into the room, the wicked nurse turned paler and paler, and her body shook, for she saw there a something she could not comprehend. Although, as we have explained, she had her key in her pocket, and was quite positive there was no other key, a woman had entered her room during her absence; and that woman, who was ghastly pale and sullen, was standing by the cradle of little Hermann, softly and slowly rocking it, whilst her white marble lips were repeating a song which seemed not to be human speech.

Nevertheless, in spite of the alarm she felt, believing she had to do with a creature belonging like herself to the living, the nurse stepped forward a little towards the strange rocker, who seemed not to perceive her, and who, without moving, continued her monotonous and awful tune.



“Who are you?” inquired the nurse; “whence did you come? and how did you manage to make your way into this chamber, the key of which was in my pocket?”

Thereupon the stranger extended her arm with a grave and solemn look, and answered:—



I'm of those, whose free passage no door can oppose :
 From fifty years sleep in my coffin I rose,
 I heard this poor babe make its pitiful moan,
 As in darkness I lay, on my pillow of stone,
 And I felt, in my body, long crumbling and cold,
 My heart once more quiver, and beat, as of old.

Poor infant! thy lot in this world I deplore,
 Thy father accurst, and thy mother no more ;
 Consign'd to rude hands, whose touch makes thee smart,
 Thou canst not oppose them, so feeble thou art !
 Thou sleepest to-night in the grief of thy wrong,
 By thy sorrowing lull'd as a bird in its song.

This night, here below, sleep shall still close thy eyes ;
 But when with to-morrow the sun shall arise,
 Called down by my voice from the heavenly sphere,
 To bear thee for ever from fate so severe,
 An angel of goodness, all radiant and bright,
 Shall carry thee to me on pinions of light.

And thus having sung, the grandmother's shade, for it was Good Lady Bertha, stooped over the cradle and kissed her grandson with an angel's tenderness. The child had fallen asleep with a smile on his rosy lips and cheeks, but the earliest peep of day as it pierced through the windows, beheld him as pale and cold as a corpse.

The next day he was let down into the family vault, and buried near his grandmother.

Be not alarmed, my dear children, poor little Hermann was not dead.

The following night the grand-mother arose again, and taking him in her arms, she carried him to the King of

the Cobolds, who was a little geni full of courage and learning, and lived in a large cavern beneath the waters of the Rhine, and who, at the request of Good Lady Bertha, undertook to educate her little grandson.



WILBOLD OF EISENFELD.



Great, indeed, was the step-mother's joy, when she saw the sole heir to the house of Rosenberg removed by death; but God soon frustrated her hopes, she had neither son nor daughter, and she herself died three years afterwards. Waldemar survived her for two or three years more, and was then killed while hunting; some said it was by a wild boar that he had wounded,



others said it was by a peasant whom he had cruelly flogged.

The castle of Wistgaw, and the adjacent lands, then fell to the possession of a distant relation, named Wilbold, of Eisenfeld. He was not a bad man, but he was something much worse; he was one of those men careless of their destiny, who are neither good nor bad, who do both good and evil without any motive of love or hatred, merely listening to what is told them, and who always give credit to the last speaker. For the rest, he was brave, and esteemed bravery in others; but he was easily duped by pretenders to courage, as he was by pretenders to wit and virtue.

So Baron Wilbold came and fixed his abode in the castle of Count Osmond and Lady Bertha, bringing with him a lovely little girl, an infant as the steward was to lord the state of in-connected with the



girl, an infant as The first care of explain to his new come and outlay property; and among

the expenses, the Honey Broth was put down, the custom of giving which had endured, for better or worse, until that time.

Now, as the steward told the baron that his predecessors had laid great stress on this custom, and that for his own part, he firmly believed the blessing of God went with it, Wilbold not only abstained from



finding fault with it, but even gave orders that, on every 1st of June, the ceremony should be observed with all its ancient pomp.

Several years passed away, and the baron every year continued to give a Honey Broth, so good and abundant that the peasantry, grateful for this compliance with Lady Bertha's commands, forgave him all his other faults,—and his other faults were many in number. Nor is that all; some other nobles, either through good-nature or policy, adopted the custom of the castle of Wistgaw, and likewise established, on their saint days or birthdays, Honey Broths, more or less flavoured. But among these nobles, there was one, who not only disdained this example, but likewise strove to prevent other lords from following it. This man, who was one of the most intimate friends of the baron, one of his most assiduous guests, and one of his most influential advisers, was called the Chevalier Hans of Warburg.

THE CHEVALIER
HANS OF WARBURG.

The Chevalier Hans of Warburg, was personally a sort of giant, six feet three inches in height, prodigiously strong, always armed on one side with a long sword, which, at each word of defiance that he used, he kept beating against his leg,—and with a dagger, which he would continually draw to give effect to his words whilst speaking.

Morally, he was the greatest coward in the world; and when the geese on his own lands ran cackling behind him,

he would run away as if a lion was at his heels.



Now, we have already said, that this Chevalier Hans not only refused to adopt the custom of the Honey Broth, but that he had used his influence to prevent several of his neighbours from doing so; and, delighted with his former successes of this kind, he even undertook to induce Wilbold to abjure this time-honoured custom.

"Zounds!" said he, "my dear Wilbold, it must be confessed, you are very good-natured to spend your money in feasting a number of idlers, who laugh at you as soon as they have eaten and digested your feast."

"My dear Hans," returned Wilbold, "believe me, I have more than once ruminated on this matter; for, al-



though this dinner is given but once a-year, it costs, for all that, as much as fifty ordinary meals. But what can I do? It is a confirmed custom, on which they say the prosperity of the house depends."

"And pray, who is it deludes you with these foolish stories? Your old steward, I suppose? I know what that

means; as he contrives to scrape ten gold crowns out of the treat, it is a point of interest with him to keep it up for ever."

"Besides," observed the baron, "there is another reason."

"What reason?"

"Why, the threats of the Lady Bertha."

"Can you put any faith in such nursery tales, eh?"

“Indeed, they are genuine; and among the records, there are certain documents.”

“So you are afraid of an old woman?”

“My dear chevalier,” said the baron, “I am not afraid of any living creature—neither you nor any one else—but still, I confess I am very fearful of these creatures, who have neither flesh nor blood, and who take the trouble of coming from the world below expressly to visit us.”

Hans burst into a laugh.

“If you were me, then,” said the baron, “you would not be afraid?”

“I fear neither good nor

bad spirits!” replied Hans, raising himself up to his utmost height.

“Well, be it so,” said the baron. “The next anniversary is not far off, for it only wants a fortnight to the 1st of June; I will put it to the test.”

But as between that day and the 1st of June the baron saw his steward again, he broke his first resolution, which was to give no Honey Broth; and gave orders that a very sorry repast should be prepared, instead of the customary feast.

The tenantry, when they witnessed this unusual parsimony, were surprised, but they did not grumble; for they supposed, that their lord, in general so liberal on these occasions, must have some reason for this economy.





But it was otherwise with those who knew all, and who, we are bound to believe, presided over the destiny of each owner of the castle of Wistgaw; during the night which succeeded this frugal feast they made such a clatter that nobody could sleep in the castle, and every one kept opening the doors and windows to see who it was that was



knocking at them; but nobody could see any thing, not even the baron. It is, however, true that the baron pulled the sheet up over his head, as perhaps you do when you

are frightened, my dear children, and lay still, and cuddled up in bed.



HILDA.

Wilbold, like all weak-minded people, was naturally obstinate on certain points; besides, it must be admitted, he had been encouraged by his easy escape; for the punishment of losing one night's rest was not a great one. And if he had saved thereby a matter of a thousand crowns, he had also made a good bargain.

Thus, then, it happened that, encouraged by the representations of Hans, and unwilling to appear to swerve too suddenly from a custom so honoured, on the next 1st of June he invited his tenants as usual; but this time, abiding by the very letter of the bond which ordained a Honey Broth, but did not mention the preliminary dinner, he laid before them a Honey Broth, alone, without any other dish, and without even wine; moreover,



those who had a practised palate fancied they could taste that it was not so nicely flavoured as the preceding year. So, on this occasion, Baron Wilbold had not only withdrawn all the appendages to the feast, but had stingily doled out the honey.

Consequently this time the spirits of the night were angry in good earnest; there was a dreadful tumult heard during the night all through the house, and the



next morning they found the windows broken, and likewise the lustres and china. The steward drew up an account of the damage, which was found to amount precisely to the sum which the lord of the manor usually expended at the festival.

The steward guessed the meaning of this influence, and did not fail to set before the baron's eyes a correctly balanced account.

Now this time Wilbold was really and truly angry. Besides, although he had heard the dreadful caterwauling, which had turned the whole castle topsyturvy all night long, he had as yet seen nothing. He therefore hoped that



the lady, who had never again appeared since the night she came to rock little Hermann's cradle, had now been

too long in her grave to leave it; and since, after all, he must expend a certain sum every year, he had just as soon lay it out in refitting his house as in feasting his vassals. So next year he determined to give no treat at all, not even the Honey Broth; and, as he foresaw that so absolute a breach of the old custom would excite the anger of Good Lady Bertha, he resolved to quit the castle on the 28th of May, and not to return to it until the 5th of June.

But he met with a slight resistance to this fatal resolution. Fifteen years had elapsed since Baron Wilbold, of Eisenfeld, had taken up his abode in the castle, during which fifteen years the pretty little child, we then saw in the cradle, had grown up, and was now a charming girl; gentle, pious, and benevolent, to whom the continual



seclusion of her chamber had imparted a soft habitual melancholy, which wonderfully became her countenance, as it likewise suited her sweet name, Hilda. So that merely to see her by day walking in the garden, as she seemed listening to the songs of the birds as if she understood them, or at night seated at the casement, looking through the fleeting clouds, which sometimes shaded it, at the moon

which she appeared to commune with, the most flinty hearts felt that they could one day love her, whilst hearts which were sensitive felt they loved her already.

Now, when Hilda learned that her father had determined this time to omit giving the Honey Broth, she urged

upon him every injunction she could think of, strictly keeping, however, within the bounds of filial respect. But neither her sweet voice, nor her gentle looks, could reach the heart of the baron, hardened as it had become through the bad counsels of his friend Hans.

On the appointed day, therefore, he left the castle, telling the steward that this silly custom of the Honey Broth had lasted long enough, and that from and after the next 1st of June he was determined to abolish the feast, which was not only a heavy expense to him, but a bad example to others.

Then Hilda, having found that she could not influence her father's better feelings, collected together all her own little savings, which amounted to the very sum the baron was to have disbursed; and she wended her way among the tenantry of the barony, and gave it out, that her father, obliged

to absent himself, had been unable this year to bestow the Honey Broth, but had sent her to distribute the money which the festival would cost among the sick and the aged.

The tenantry all believed, or pretended to believe her;



and as on the last occasion the entertainment had not left behind it any pleasant recollections, they were delighted to exchange the poor dinner for a large gift of money, and blessed the hand through which Baron Wilbold was pleased to deliver his bounty.

There remained none to deceive but the spirits of the castle, who, however, were by no means the dupes of the lovely Hilda's pious artifice.



THE HAND OF FIRE.

On the 4th of June, Wilbold returned to the castle. His first anxiety was to know if any thing had happened during his absence; but on being informed that all had been quiet and peaceable, that his tenants had not grumbled, that the Cobolds had made no clatter, he became convinced that his obstinacy had wearied them out, and that he was now rid of them for ever. Consequently, after tenderly embracing his daughter, and having given his orders for the morrow, he went quietly to bed.



But he was hardly got to bed before there was heard, both in the castle and all about it, a loud din and so awful an uproar, that human ears had never heard the like before. Outside the castle, the dogs were howling, the rooks cawing, and the owls hooting; the cats mewed, the thunder groaned; inside the castle, chains were rattled and dragged along, furniture was falling down, stones were rolled about: it was a noise, a tumult, a general upset, to make one believe that all the witches in the country, summoned by the great evil spirit, had changed their usual place of meeting, and instead of assembling at the Brocken as formerly, had now congregated at the Castle of Wistgaw.

At midnight all was hushed, and the deepest silence prevailed, so that every body could hear the twelve strokes



of the clock as they sounded in turn. At the last stroke Wilbold, partly encouraged, put his head up out of the bed-clothes, and boldly looked about him. Instantly his hair stood an end, a cold perspiration streamed down his face,

'a hand of fire' issued from the wall, and with the point of its finger, as if it had been a pen, wrote the following words on the dark wainscot:—

“ To obey the good Lady Bertha's vow,
 Seven days are allotted thee, Baron Wilbold;
 Be warn'd, then, in time, for should'st thou fail now,
 The Castle of Wistgaw will slip from thy hold.”

Then 'the hand of fire' vanished, and one by one, as they had been drawn, every letter disappeared; and, finally, the chamber, which for a moment was lighted up by this verse of flame, sunk into utter darkness.

The following day, all the baron's servants, from the highest down to the lowest, gave him warning, declaring they would stay no longer in the castle.



The baron, who in his heart desired as eagerly to leave the castle as they did, assured them, that, unwilling to lose such good servants, he was determined to dwell in another mansion, and to abandon Wistgaw to the spirits, who seemed bent upon claiming the possession of it.

On the same day, in spite of Hilda's tears, they forsook the old towers to go and live at the Castle of Eisenfeld, which the baron had inherited from his father, and which stood at half a day's journey from Wistgaw.

THE CHEVALIER TORALD.

At this time there were two things which caused a great noise in the domain of Rosemberg: one was the departure of Baron Wilbold, of Eisenfeld; the other was the arrival of the Chevalier Torald.

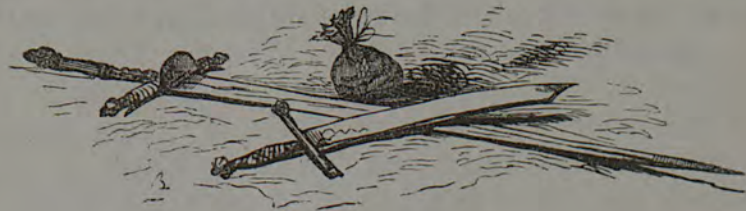
The Chevalier Torald was a fine young man, between twenty-one and twenty-two years of age, who had already despite his youth visited the principal courts in Europe; in

all of which he had gained a great reputation for his valour and courtly breeding; a most accomplished and wonderful stories were told of his education; it was said that, when quite an infant, he had been of the Dwarfs, who prince very learned sworn to make him a nobleman. Thus he had



the oldest manuscripts, to speak all the living languages, nay, even the dead ones,—to paint also, to play upon the lute, to sing, to ride on horseback, to tilt and fence; after which, when he had reached the age of eighteen, and when his royal tutor saw he had attained that perfection in every point which he had desired to bring him to, he had given him the famous horse Bucephalus, which never was tired, the famous spear of Astolphus, which threw out of the saddle every knight who was touched with its diamond point, and, finally, the renowned sword of Durandal,

ing. In truth he was knight, and wondrously told of his education, that, when quite an infant, he had been carried to the King himself, being a prince in all subjects, had an accomplished nobleman taught him to read



which smashed like glass the strongest steel armour. Besides all these precious gifts he had bestowed one which was yet more valuable,—this was a purse, wherein there was at all times twenty-five pieces of gold.

It is easy to imagine the impression which the arrival of so good and brave a knight would make in the country; but almost immediately after he had ridden through the village of Rosemberg mounted on his good steed, armed with his good lance, and girt with his trusty sword, he had disappeared again, and none knew what had become of him.



Of course this mystery had only served to increase the curiosity awakened by the knight in the neighbourhood.

It was asserted by some that he had been seen one night before the Castle of Wistgaw in a boat, which, in spite of the quick current of the Rhine, stood still as if at anchor. Others said, he was observed with a lute in his



hand on the summit of a rock, which rose opposite to Hilda's casement; on which rock hitherto none had been seen to stand save the falcon, the hawk, and the eagle. But all these stories were but vague reports, and nobody could say for certain that he had met the Chevalier Torald since the day when,

completely armed and mounted on his steed, he had passed through the village of Roseberg.

THE SPIRIT CONJURERS.

'The hand of fire,' as you have seen, my dear friends, had allowed Baron Wilbold seven days for repentance; but he, still guided by the bad counsels of Chevalier Hans, of Warburg, was perfectly resolved not to retrace his steps; and, the better to keep his resolution, he had determined to spend the three last days in riot and feasting.



What afforded him an excuse was the celebration of his daughter's birth-day, which occurred precisely on the 8th of June; Hilda having been born in the month of roses.

On the other hand, the Chevalier Hans had a motive in visiting his friend Baron Wilbold more frequently than he used to do; for he had fallen in love with the beautiful Hilda, and, although he was at least forty-five years old, that is to say, three times the age of the young lady, he did not scruple to open his mind to his friend on this projected alliance.



The baron had never rightly understood those delicate sentiments of the heart, on which young ladies for the most part base their hopes and fears, their dreams of joy or sorrow. He had



chosen a wife without loving her, and yet he had been fortunate, for his lady was a holy woman. So he did not think that Hilda required to love her husband very much in order to live happy with him. To these reflections were joined the admiration he felt for the courage of Hans, his perfect

knowledge of the extent of his fortune, which was at least equal to the baron's, and, finally, the habit which had grown upon him of having for a guest the merry talkative knight, who greatly diverted him with his constant tales of battle, tournaments, and duels, in which, of course, he had always come off victorious.

So then he had neither accepted nor refused the knight's offer; but still he had let him perceive that he would gladly see him endeavouring to please Hilda, which would probably be an easy matter to one so brave, gallant, and entertaining as he was.

From that time forth the Chevalier Hans had multiplied his attentions towards the gracious lady of his affections, who had received all his proofs of regard with her wonted reserve and modesty, as if she were quite at a loss to divine through what motive Hans directed all these compliments to her.

The fifth day after the apparition of 'the hand of fire,



was Hilda's birthday; and, according to his project of spending the three following days in festivity, Baron Wilbold had invited all his friends to a grand dinner; and, as will be supposed, he had not left out his inseparable companion, the Chevalier Hans, of Warburg.

The guests were all come, the company had all passed into the dining-hall, and each was preparing to take his



seat, when the blast of a horn was heard, and the major-domo announced, that a knight had just presented himself at the castle gate, demanding hospitality.

“By Saint Hildebrand!” said the baron, “the gallant must have a good nose; tell him he is welcome, and that we bide his coming to sit down to our repast.”



Five minutes later, in came the knight. He was a fine young man, with dark hair and blue eyes, and his easy manners evidently proved that in the course of his travels he had been used to receive the hospitality of the greatest princes. His noble bearing instantly struck the whole company, and Baron Wilbold, discerning his

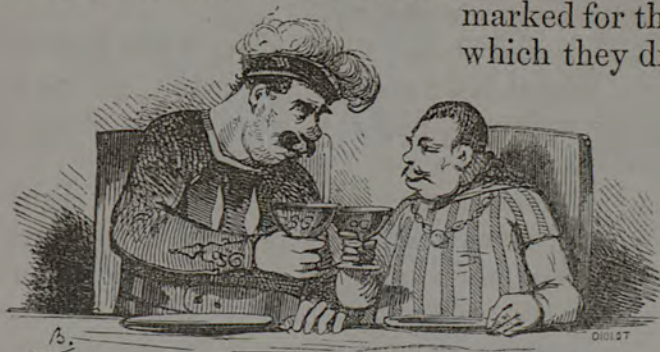
merit, offered as his host to give up his own place to him. But the stranger declined the honour, and, after replying



to the baron's invitation with a most courteous compliment, he took one of the lower seats at the table.

Nobody knew this knight, and every one looked at him with curiosity. Hilda alone cast her eyes down, and had any person looked at her when the knight appeared at the door, he might have observed that she blushed.

The dinner was magnificent and uproarious; the wine flowed without limit; Baron Wilbold and Hans were remarked for the cordiality with which they drank each other's



healths. The dinner could hardly begin and end without some reference being made to the apparitions at the

Castle of Wistgaw. The Chevalier Hans began to rally the baron on the alarm he had felt at these visitations, an alarm which he avowed with all the openness of a man of genuine spirit.

"Zounds! my dear chevalier," said he, "I should like to have seen you in my place, when that terrible 'hand of fire' drew upon the wall that famous verse, of which I have not forgotten a single syllable."

"Mere fancies," replied Hans; "the dreams of a disordered mind; for my part I do not believe in phantoms."

"You do not believe in them because you have never yet seen any; but if you were to see one what would you say?"

"I would conjure it," said Hans, striking his huge sword, and making it ring on the floor, "so as to prevent its ever again appearing before me, I promise you."

"Well," said the baron, "here, Hans, I make you an offer."

"What is it?"

"Conjure the spirit of Lady Bertha, so as to prevent its appearing again at the castle, and ask what you will of me it shall be granted."



"Whatever I choose?"

"Yes," returned the baron.

"Take care," said the chevalier, laughing.

"Conjure the spirit of Lady Bertha, and ask freely."

"And whatever I may ask for, you will grant me?"

"On my knightly word, I will."

"Even the hand of the lovely Hilda?"

"Even my daughter's hand."

"Father!" cried the young lady, in a slightly reproving tone.

"Upon my word, my dear Hilda," resumed the baron, heated by sundry glasses of Tokay and Braunberger, "I have said the word now. Chevalier Hans, my word is my bond; appease the spirit of Lady Bertha, and my daughter is yours."

"And will you grant the like reward, Sir Baron," inquired the young stranger, "to the man who shall accomplish the undertaking when Chevalier Hans shall have failed?"

"When I shall have failed!" cried Hans. "How now! suppose you then I shall fail?"

"I do not suppose it, chevalier," answered the stranger, in a tone of voice so perfectly gentle that the words seemed to come from a woman's mouth.

"You mean to say you are sure of it. Zounds! sir stranger," said the chevalier, raising his voice, "do you know that what you say is very impertinent?"

"At all events the question I have put to Baron Wilbold of Eisenfeld can in no way interfere with your projects of marriage, sir knight, since it is only to be after your failure that a new candidate is to offer himself."

"And who is he will venture to attempt an enterprise in which Chevalier Hans shall have failed?"

"I am he!" said the stranger.

"But sir," said the baron, "before I can accept your offer, gracious as it is, I must first know, my dear guest, who you are."

"I am the Chevalier Torald," said the young man. This name had spread so favourably through the coun-



BAULANT

try, that on hearing it pronounced, the company rose up at once to greet the knight who had just made himself known to them; Baron Wilbold felt it his duty to pay a handsome compliment to the young chevalier.

"Chevalier," said he, "in spite of your youth, your name is already so favourably spoken of, that an alliance with you would do honour to the very noblest of houses: but I have known the Chevalier Hans these twenty years, whilst I now see you for the first time; I can therefore only so far accept your offer as to submit it to my daughter's approbation."

Hilda was suffused with blushes.

"I have always resolved in my own mind," said Torald, "never to take to wife any woman without being assured of her love."

Since the young knight had mentioned his name, Hans had preserved the strictest silence.

"Well, sir knight," said the baron, "since you submit the matter to my daughter, and since you leave the first trial to my friend Hans, I see no reason why, saving a more deliberate inquiry as to your family, I should not give you the same pledge as to him."

"My family vies with the first houses in Germany, Baron Wilbold; more than that," added Chevalier Torald, smiling, "I am going to tell you a piece of news you do not suspect, and that is, that we are in some degree related."

"Related!" cried the baron, astonished.

"Yes, sir," returned Torald; "and we will clear up that mystery by and by. At present, there is only one matter in hand, and that is, to appease the spirit of Lady Bertha."

"Yes," resumed Wilbold, "I own it is the thing I chiefly wish to have settled."

"Well," said Torald, "let Chevalier Hans try the business to-night, and I will make my attempt to-morrow."

"Egad," said Wilbold, "that is what we may call speaking to the point, and I love to see business done as promptly as you set about it. Chevalier Torald, you are a brave young man; here's my hand." So saying, Wilbold gave



his hand to the knight, who bowed as he pressed it in his own.

Hans preserved the most rigid silence. Wilbold turned round to him, and was surprised to see that he looked very pale.

"Well, comrade Hans," said he, "there is an offer calculated to please you just now felt meet the spirits may thank Chehas given you an ing them this very



"Yes, certainly, Hans; "but it and my time will be lost; your spirits will not come."

"You are mistaken, Chevalier Hans," answered Torald, in the tone of one who is convinced of what he says; "they will come, depend upon it."

Hans became ghastly pale.

"After all," said Torald, "if you will give up your turn to me, Chevalier Hans, I will accept it with gratitude, and will stand the first brunt of these phantoms; perhaps they may be less terrible at the second trial than at the first."

"Faith! sir knight," said Hans, "to go first or second is all one to me, and if you desire to go first——"

"Not so; not so," said Wilbold; "I will keep the terms as they were agreed upon. Keep your turns, gentlemen; friend Hans to-night; the Chevalier Torald to-morrow; and, therefore,—" he filled his glass, and held it up, "To the health of the spirit-conjurors!"

The whole company followed the baron's example; but the latter, to his great surprise, perceived that the hand of Chevalier Hans shook as he raised his glass to his lips.



"Very good," said Wilbold; "after dinner we shall set out for the Castle of Wistgaw."

Poor Chevalier Hans was caught like a mouse in a trap.

At first, when he engaged to undertake the thing, he had hoped to slip out by one of his customary tricks: he meant to make believe that he had gone into the castle, and to spend the night in the neighbourhood, and the next day to relate at his ease the dreadful battle he had fought with the spirits. But that was no longer possible; the matter, thanks to Chevalier Torald's challenge, had now assumed a serious aspect, which made him sensible, that,

either by his friend or his rival, he would be closely watched. And indeed, after dinner, Baron Wilbold stood up, declaring his intention to accompany Chevalier Hans in

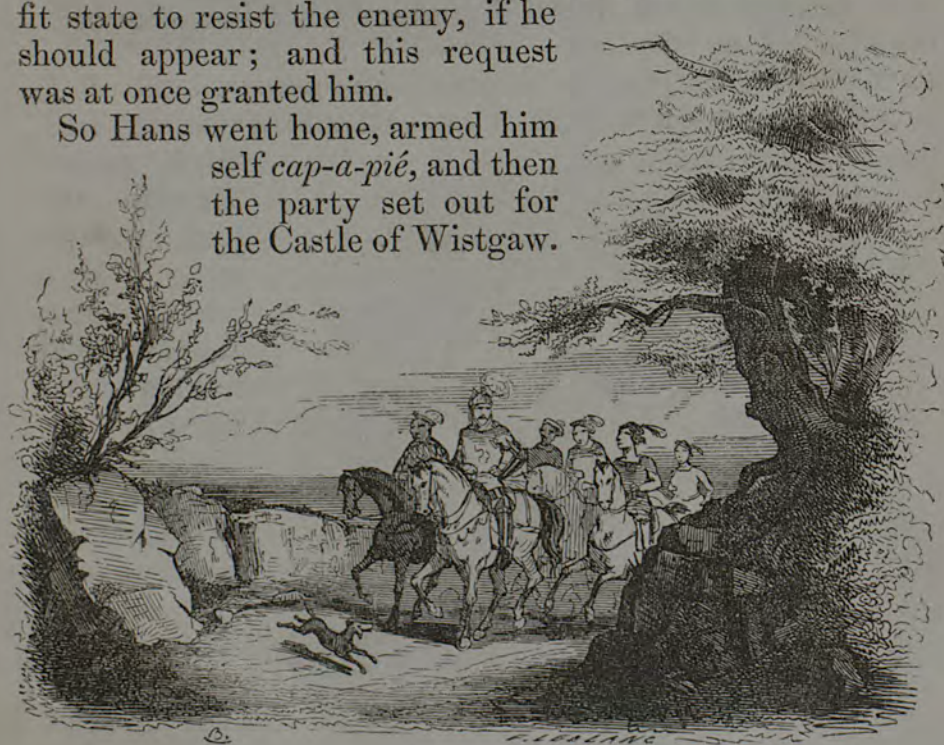


person, and that, in order to afford no room for any complaint, either on his own part, or on that of Chevalier Torald, he would lock him up in the bedroom, and put his seal upon the door.

There was no escaping; Hans only asked leave to fetch his helmet and cuirass, in order to be in a

fit state to resist the enemy, if he should appear; and this request was at once granted him.

So Hans went home, armed himself *cap-a-pié*, and then the party set out for the Castle of Wistgaw.



The cavalcade consisted of Baron Wilbold, of Eisenfeld, the Chevalier Hans, the Chevalier Torald, and three or four other guests, who took an interest in this event, whatever might be the end of it, and who were to await the result at a farm belonging to the baron, half a league distant from the castle.

They reached Wistgaw about nine in the evening: it was the most favourable time to undertake the business.

Hans was very uneasy within himself, but he assumed a bold countenance, and appeared tolerably firm. The most profound darkness prevailed all round, and as the



silence was not broken by the least noise or sound, the castle looked a very spectre itself. They entered the deserted hall,

they passed through the long saloons hung with dark tapestry, and the never-ending passages; and, finally, the door of the bed-chamber was reached, and opened. This room was cold and silent like the rest of the castle.



They lighted the lustre and candelabra, made a brisk fire

on the hearth, and then wished Chevalier Hans good night; and the Baron, having locked the door, applied his seals to a paper band at both ends. After which they all wished the prisoner good night, and then retired to sleep at the farm.

When Hans found himself alone, his first thought was, to get out by the window; but that was impossible, for the window looked over a precipice, which seemed all the steeper in the darkness of the night.

He tapped against the walls: they returned a dull heavy sound, proving that no secret passages lay concealed within them.

Whether for good or ill, he found he must stay. Chevalier Hans tried all the points of his armour to see that they were perfectly fast; he felt that his sword was at his side, that his poniard was in its sheath, that the visor of his helmet was sufficiently loose; after which, seeing all was in good order, he sat down in the large elbow-chair opposite the fireplace.

Meanwhile the hours glided by without any thing having appeared, and Hans began to recover his spirits; besides, he had reflected that, since there was no private door in the wall, and since the principal door was shut, the ghosts would have as much trouble to get in as he found to get out. It is true, he had heard that ghosts did not care much about such hindrances, and were apt to make their way in, without much trouble, through locks and doors; but still it was a sort of security to him.

We must even admit to the honour of Chevalier Hans, that he was beginning to fall asleep, when he fancied he heard a loud noise in the chimney; he threw directly a log of wood into the fire, which had begun to sink, hoping to roast the legs of the spirits, if they meant to appear by



that way. So the fire once more rose into a flame, and climbed up against the back of the chimney, singing and sparkling, when all at once Chevalier Hans saw issue from the chimney the end of a board, about a foot wide, which moved forward and grew longer every moment, without any one being seen to move it. The board descended slowly in a sloping position, and, on touching the floor, stood like a bridge above the flames. At the same



instant a host of tiny dwarfs came sliding down this bridge, led by their king, who, armed from head to foot like Chevalier Hans, appeared to be guiding them to battle. As fast as they came



on Hans wheeled his chair backwards; so that when the king and his army were drawn up in battle array before



the hearth, Hans had withdrawn to the other side of the apartment, prevented by the wall from going any further, and leaving a wide space between him and the enemy.

Then the King of the Dwarfs, after having conferred in a low voice with his general officers, came forward by himself.

“Chevalier Hans,” said he, in a tone of irony, “I have heard your courage boasted of repeatedly. True, it was by yourself; but as a true knight cannot speak falsely I credit your assertions. Consequently, I have long had a mind to challenge you to single combat, and having heard that you had bravely offered Baron Wilbold to conjure the spirit who haunts this castle, I have prevailed upon the spirit, who is my intimate friend, to allow me to take its place to-night. If you conquer me, the spirit, by my voice, engages to forsake the castle and never to appear again; if you are conquered, you must confess your defeat candidly, and give up your place to the Chevalier Torald, whom I shall probably overcome without any trouble, for I never heard him boast of having cut any body in two. Therefore, and nothing doubting your will, accept this challenge—behold my glove!”

So saying the King of the Dwarfs threw his glove proudly at the chevalier's feet.

Whilst the King of the Dwarfs was delivering his speech, in a small, clear voice, Chevalier Hans had considered him attentively, and finding, indeed, that he was scarcely more than six inches and a half high, his courage began to return, for such an adversary did not appear to him very formidable; so he picked up the glove with a certain degree of assurance, and set it on the tip of his little finger to examine it.

It was a neat little glove, formed of rat skin, and





scented with musk, upon which had been sewn, very skilfully, a number of small steel scales.

The King of the Dwarfs suffered Hans to examine the glove at his leisure; then, after a short silence, "Well, chevalier," said he, "I await your answer. Do you accept or refuse my challenge?"

Chevalier Hans again cast his eyes on the champion who offered to oppose him, and who did not reach half way up the calf of his leg. Encouraged by his

small dimensions, the chevalier said, "But what are we to fight with, my little mannikin?"

"We will both fight with our usual weapons, you with your sword, and I with my whip."

"How! with your whip?"

"Yes, it is my ordinary weapon; for as I am a small man I require a long reach." Hans burst out a laughing.

"And do you mean to fight against me," said he, "with a whip?"

"To be sure I do. Have I not told you it is my weapon?"

"And you will take no other?"

"No."

"You promise me?"

"On the word of a knight and king."

"In that case," said Hans, "I accept the combat. Thereupon he threw down his glove also at the king's foot.



At the same time, twelve trumpeters, who were elevated upon a small stool, sounded a warlike flourish; and then they brought the King of the Dwarfs the weapon he was to use in the combat. It was a small whip, the handle of which was cut out of a single emerald. To the



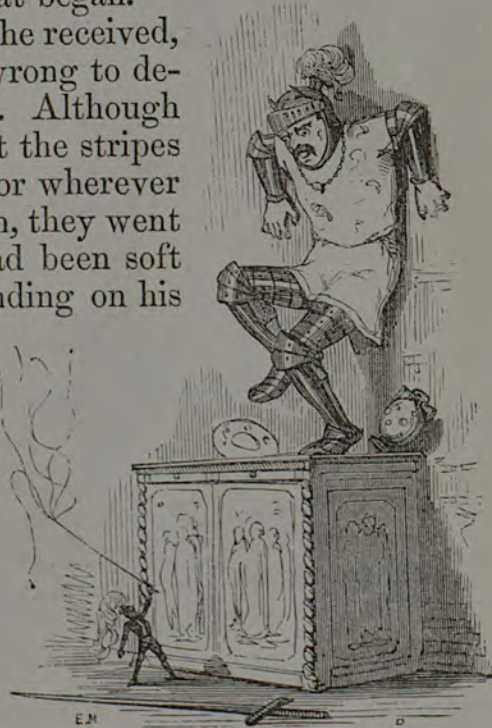
extremity of this handle were bound five chains of steel, three feet long, at the ends of which glittered five diamonds as large as peas. Chevalier Hans, on his part, confident of his strength, drew his sword.

"Whenever you please," said the king to the chevalier.

"At your service, sire," said Hans.

Then the trumpet sounded a still more warlike flourish than the first, and the combat began.

Now, at the first strokes he received, the chevalier found he was wrong to despise his adversary's weapon. Although covered with armour, he felt the stripes as if he had been naked; for wherever the five diamonds struck him, they went through the iron as if it had been soft paste. Hans, far from standing on his defence, began to cry and howl, and run about the room, leaping on the bed and movables, pursued on every side by the whip of the implacable King of the Dwarfs, whilst the martial air played by the trumpeters, changing with the incidents of the battle, rose up to a loud and lively measure.





This was the very same gallopade, my dear little children, which the great musician Aubert discovered and employed in his opera of Gustavus.

When this exercise had lasted five minutes, Chevalier Hans fell on his knees and supplicated for pardon.



Then the King of the Dwarfs delivered his whip to his equerry, and, taking his sceptre into his hand, "Che-



valier Hans," said he, "you are no better than a woman; a sword and a poniard do not suit you, it is a distaff and spindle that you should use."

Having spoken thus, he

touched him with his sceptre. Hans felt that a great change was coming over him; the dwarfs burst into a loud fit of laughter, and then the whole vanished like a vision.



THE KNIGHT OF THE DISTAFF.



Hans began by looking about him — he found himself alone. Then he looked at his person, and great was his astonishment.

He was dressed like an old woman: his armour had become a striped petticoat; his helmet was turned into a cap; his sword was replaced by a distaff; and his dagger by a spindle. You may judge, my dear readers, whether or not Chevalier Hans looked very odd and very ugly in this new costume, especially as he still retained his

beard and mustaches. When he saw himself thus strangely accoutred, Chevalier Hans made a face which rendered him still more singular and ugly; but he thought he would undress and go to bed, so that no trace would remain of all that had happened. So he went to the elbow-chair, and putting on his cap; but just then the distaff chair, and dealt him such heavy raps on his knuckles, as forced him to turn round, and face his new enemy.



Hans first offered to resist; but the distaff proved so skilful a fencer, that he was obliged, a moment after, to stuff his hands into his pockets. Then the distaff returned quietly to its place by his side, and gave the chevalier a moment's respite. He took advantage of this truce to examine his enemy.



The distaff was a plain honest distaff enough; just like any other, except that, more elegantly shaped than common distaffs, it terminated at the point with a small grinning head, which appeared to be making game of the chevalier.

Hans pretended to smile upon the distaff, and drew towards the hearth; then, choosing his



time, he seized the distaff by the middle and threw it into the fire. But the distaff was no sooner on the hearth, than it stood up erect all on fire, and began running after the chevalier, who, this time, was not only beaten, but was about to be burned

as well, when he loudly begged for pardon. Immediately the flame went out, and the distaff resumed its place in his girdle.

The matter now grew serious, day began to dawn, and Baron Wilbold, the Chevalier Torald, and the rest, would shortly appear. Hans was reflecting in his mind how to rid himself of this cursed distaff, when he conceived the idea of throwing it out of the window. So he began to hum a tune to lull the distaff's suspicions, stole up to the casement, and having opened it to look at the landscape and breathe the fresh morning air, he suddenly caught up his whimsical antagonist, flung him into the moat, and shut the window again; but instantly he heard the smash of a pane of glass, and, turning towards



the other casement, saw the distaff he hurled from one window, had returned by the other.

But this time the distaff, which had been twice treacherously dealt with, was perfectly enraged; it fell upon Hans, and bruised him all over. Hans now howled in good earnest. Finally, Hans having sunk exhausted into the elbow-chair, the distaff took pity on him, and once more returned to his girdle.



Then Hans thought he might perhaps disarm the anger of his foe by doing something for it, so he began to spin.

Thereupon the distaff looked very much pleased; its little head brightened up, it winked gaily at him, and began to hum a little tune.

Just then Hans heard a noise in the gallery, and wanted to leave off spinning; but this did not suit the distaff, who gave him such hard raps on the knuckles, that he could not help working on.

And now the steps drew nearer, and ceased outside the door; Hans was vexed to be caught in such

a dress and such an employment, but he could not avoid it.



In fact, the door was opened the next moment, and Baron Wilbold, Chevalier Torald, and the other gentlemen who were in their company, stood petrified with wonder at the singular sight they beheld. Hans, whom they had left

invested in knightly armour was now dressed like an old woman, and held in his hands a distaff and spindle.

The company laughed outright. Hans did not know where to hide



himself. "Egad!" said Baron Wilbold, "it seems that the spirits who have haunted you are merrily inclined, friend Hans, tell us then what has befallen you."

"This is the fact," answered Hans, hoping to get off by means of a falsehood; "this is the fact, I have laid a wager——"

But here the distaff, who saw he was going to tell a story, gave him so sharp a rap over his nails, that he screamed out. "Cursed distaff!" he muttered to himself; then he resumed: "It is a wager I have laid; for I thought as the ghost was a woman, a distaff and spindle were the fittest weapons with which to meet her."

But just then, in spite of the imploring look which Hans gave the distaff, it again rapped his nails so fiercely that Wilbold said to him:

"Hold, comrade Hans, I see you deceive us, and that is the reason the distaff keeps beating you. Tell us the truth, and the distaff will let you alone."



And, as if it had understood what the baron had said, the distaff bowed to him, and then nodded to signify that he spoke the truth. So, after all, Hans was obliged to relate all that had past. He did, indeed, strive from time to time to wander from the point, and introduce some episode to prove his courage; but then the distaff, who kept quiet so long as he desisted from falsehood,

fell upon him so heartily, that he was instantly driven back to the path of truth from which he had just strayed.

The story having been related from end to end, the distaff made an ironical salutation to Hans, and a very polite obeisance to the rest of the company, and retired through the doorway, skipping on its tail, and carrying off the spindle, who followed as a child follows



its parent. As for Chevalier Hans, as soon as he was sure the distaff was really gone, he fled by the same door, and went off, amidst the shouts and hisses of the little boys, who mistook him for a madman, and shut himself up in his castle.



THE TREASURE.

The following night, it was Chevalier Torald's turn to watch; but he prepared himself for this nocturnal enterprise with as much humility and reflection, as Hans had exhibited bombast and levity.

Like Chevalier Hans, he was conducted to the apartment, locked in and sealed up; but had declined taking any arms, observing, that all resistance to spirits was vain, as spirits came through God. Accordingly, when he was left alone, he devoutly prayed, and sat down in the elbow-chair, and waited till the spirit would deign to appear. He had been waiting several hours with his eyes riveted on the door, and without

seeing any thing unusual, when all at once he heard a soft step, and felt, from behind, a light touch on his shoulder.

He turned round, and beheld the shade of Lady Bertha.

But the young man, far from betraying any fear, smiled upon her as upon an old friend.



“Torald,” said she to him, “you have fulfilled all my hopes; a good, brave, and pious young man have you proved to be; and now take the reward due to your merit.” So saying, and signing to him to follow her, she moved towards the wall, and having touched it with her finger, it opened and discovered a large treasure, which Count Osmond had formerly hidden there when he had been compelled to leave his castle in time of the war.

“This treasure is yours, my son,” said the countess; “and to prevent any other disputing your title to it, none but you shall be able to open the wall; and the word by which it shall open is the name of your beloved—‘HILDA!’”

Then the wall closed again so tightly that no eye could distinguish it. After which the shade, having smiled once more upon the knight, and graciously bowed to him, vanished like a thin mist.

The next day Wilbold and his companions entered the



chamber, and found Chevalier Torald sleeping peacefully in the elbow-chair.

The baron awoke the young man, who smiled as he opened his eyes.

“Friend Torald,” said Wilbold, “I have had a dream this night.”

"What dream?" inquired he.

"I dreamt that your name was not Torald, but Hermann; that you were grandson to Count Osmond; that you had passed for dead, although living; and that your grandmother Bertha had appeared to you last night to disclose to you a treasure."

Torald felt that this dream had been imparted to the Baron of Eisenfeld to remove every doubt from his mind. So he stood up without replying, and making also a sign to the baron to follow him, he stopped opposite the wall.

"Your dream did not deceive you, Sir Wilbold, I am truly that Hermann who was thought to be dead. My grandmother Bertha has appeared to me this night, and disclosed the treasure. Here is the proof."

So having said, Hermann—for indeed it was the poor child whom Lady Bertha had taken up out of his tomb, and committed to the care of the King of the Cobolds—Hermann uttered the name of 'HILDA!' and, as the spirit had promised, the wall did open.

Wilbold remained at the sight of this

sisted not only of wise of rubies, emeralds,
"Come," said he, I see you spoke the Wistgaw and my



yours, but on one condition."

"Name it," said Hermann anxiously.

"That on every 1st of June you will undertake to give the tenantry of Rosemberg, and to all the country people round the castle, THE HONEY BROTH OF GOOD LADY BERTHA!"

Hermann, as you will readily believe, accepted this condition.

amazed and dazzled treasure, which consisted not only of gold coin, but like rubies, emeralds, and diamonds. "cousin Hermann, truth. The Castle of daughter Hilda are



CONCLUSION.

On that day week, Hermann de Rosemberg espoused Hilda de Eisenfeld; and, as long as the Castle of Wistgaw continued standing, his descendants gave generously and without interruption, on the 1st of June in every year, to the inhabitants of Rosemberg and its vicinity,
The Honey Broth of
Good Lady
Bertha.



