LUDWIG TIECK

THE RUNENBERG

A young hunter was sitting in the midst of the mountain-ranges, musing beside his fowling-floor, whilst the rush of waters and of the woods resounded through the solitude. He was thinking on his destiny; how he was so young, and had forsaken father and mother, and his familiar home, and all the acquaintances of his native village, to seek out for himself a new country, to escape from the circle of recurring habits; and he looked up with a kind of wonder that he now found himself in this valley, and in this employment. Great clouds were passing over the heavens and sinking behind the hills; birds were singing from the bushes, and an echo answered them. He slowly descended to the foot of the hill, and seated himself beside a stream that was rushing over rugged stones with a foamy murmur. He listened to the changeful melody of the water; and it seemed as if the waves were telling him, in unintelligible words, a thousand things that nearly concerned him, and he could not but feel inwardly troubled that he was not able to understand their speech. Then again he looked around him, and thought he was joyful and happy; so he took fresh courage, and sang with a loud voice this hunting-song:

Joyful and merry amid the height

The huntsman goes to the chase;

His booty must appear in sight

In the bright green thickets, though till night

Its path he vainly trace.

And there his faithful dogs are yelling

Through the solitude sublime;

Through the wood the horns are telling,

And all hearts with courage swelling,

O thou happy hunting-time!

His home is clefts and caves among,

The trees all greet him well:

Autumnal airs breathe round him strong;

And when he finds his prey, his song

Resounds from every dell.

Leave the landsman to his labour,

And the sailor to the sea;

None so views Aurora's favour,

None so tastes the morning's savour,

When the dew lies heavily,

As who follows wood and game,

While Diana's smile doth shew,

Till some beauteous form inflame

His heart, that he most loved can name,

Happy hunting man art thou!

Whilst he thus sang, the sun had sunk deeper, and broad shadows fell across the narrow valley. A cooling twilight stole over the earth; while only the tops of the trees and the round summits of the mountains were gilded by the evening glow. Christian's heart grew still sadder: he liked not to return to his fowling-floor, and yet he might not stay; he seemed to himself so lonely, and he longed for society. Now he wished for those old books which once he had seen at his father's house, and which he never would read, though his father had often urged him thereto; the scenes of his childhood came before him, his sports with the youth of the village, his acquaintances among the children, the school that had so often distressed him; he wished himself back again amid those scenes, which he had wilfully forsaken to seek his fortune in unknown regions, on mountains, among strange men, in a new occupation. As it grew darker, and the brook rushed louder, and the birds of night with fitful wing began their devious wanderings, he still sat dejected and disconsolate, and quite unresolved what to do or purpose. Thoughtlessly he pulled out a straggling root from the earth; when suddenly he heard a hollow moaning under ground, which wound itself onward underneath, and only died away plaintively in the distance. The sound penetrated his

inmost heart; it seized him as if he had unconsciously stirred the wound of which the dying frame of nature was expiring in agony. He started up, and would have fled away; for he had heard aforetime of the wondrous mandrake-root, which, on being torn, sends forth such heart-rending moans, that the person who has done it is fain to run away maddened by its wailings. As he was about to depart, a stranger stood behind him, and asked him, with a friendly air, whither he was going. Christian had wished for society, and yet he was terrified anew at this friendly presence.

"Whither so hastily?" asked the stranger again.

The young hunter tried to collect his thoughts, and related how the solitude had suddenly become so frightful to him, that he wished to escape from it; the evening so dark, the green shades of the wood so dreary, the brook spoke in loud lamentations, the clouds traversing the heavens, drew his longing over to the other side of the mountains.

"You are yet young," said the stranger, "and cannot well endure the rigour of solitude. I will accompany you; for you will meet with no house or hamlet within a league of this. On our way we can talk together, and tell tales to each other; so your troublous thoughts will leave you. In an hour the moon will emerge from behind the mountains; her light will also dispel the darkness from your mind."

They went on, and the stranger seemed to the youth almost as an old acquaintance.

"How came you on these mountains?" asked the former; "by your speech I perceive you are not at home here."

"Ah!" replied the youth, "much might be said on that subject; and yet it is not worth the talk, not worth relating. I was forced away by a singular impulse from my parents and relations; my spirit was not master of itself; like a bird which is taken in a net, and vainly struggles, so was my soul ensnared in strange imaginations and wishes. We dwelt far from hence, in a plain where all around, you see no hill, scarcely a height: few trees adorned the green level; but meadows, fruitful corn-fields, and gardens, extended far as the eye could reach; and a broad river glided like a mighty spirit by them. My father was gardener to the castle, and wished to bring me up to the same employment. He loved plants and flowers beyond every thing, and could devote himself the entire day long to the watching and tending of them. Indeed he went so far as to maintain he could almost converse with them; that he learnt from their growth and thriving, as well as from the varied form and colour of their leaves. I, however, was averse to the gardening occupation; and the more, as my father tried to persuade me thereto, and even with threats to compel me. I wished to be a fisherman, and made the attempt; but neither did a life upon the waters suit me: I was then apprenticed to a tradesman in the town; but soon came home from him also. Once on a time my father was telling of the mountains, which, in his youth, he had travelled over; of the

subterranean mines and their workmen; of hunters and their occupation; and suddenly there awoke in me the most decisive impulse, the feeling that now I had found my destined way of life. Day and night I mused thereon, and imagined high mountains, caves, and pine-forests, before me: my fancy created for itself immense rocks; I heard, in thought, the din of the chase, the horns, the cry of the hounds and of the game; all my dreams were filled with these things, and therefore I had no longer any rest or peace. The plains, the castle, my father's little contracted garden with the prim flower-beds; the confined dwelling; the wide heaven extended all around so dreary, and embracing no heights, no lofty mountains,—all became more and more melancholy and odious to me. It seemed to me as if all men about me were living in deplorable ignorance, and that they would all feel and think as I did, if once the feeling of their misery could arise within their souls. Thus I harassed myself: till one morning I formed the resolution to leave my parents' house for ever. I had found in a book some descriptions of the nearest mountains, with pictures of the neighbouring districts, and thereafter I directed my way. It was in the early spring, and I felt myself quite light and joyful. I hastened with all speed to leave the plain; and, one evening, I saw in the distance the dim outline of the mountain-chains lying before me. I could scarcely sleep in the inn, so impatient was I to tread the region which I regarded as my home: with the earliest dawn I was awake, and again upon my journey. In the afternoon, I found myself already below my much-loved hills; and, as a drunkard, I went on, then stopped awhile, looked backward, and felt as if intoxicated with the strange and yet familiar objects. Soon the plain behind me was lost to my sight; the forest-streams were rushing to meet me; beech-trees and oaks sounded down to me from steep precipices, with waving boughs; my path led me past giddy abysses; and blue hills were standing high and solemn in the distance. A new world was unlocked to me. I was not weary. So I came, after certain days, having traversed a great part of the mountains, to an old forester, who, at my earnest request, took me to instruct me in the arts of the chase. I have now been three months in his service. I took possession of the district in which I was to have my abode, as of a kingdom. I made myself acquainted with every cliff and cleft of the mountains; in my occupation, when at early dawn we went to the woods, or felled trees in the forest, or exercised my eye and my fowling-piece, or trained our faithful companions, the dogs, to their duty, I was completely happy. But now I have been sitting here for eight days upon my fowling-floor, in the loneliest part of the mountains; and this evening my mind grew so sad as never in my life before; I seemed so lost, so utterly unhappy; and even now I cannot rid myself of that melancholy humour."

The stranger listened attentively, as they both wandered through a dark alley of the wood. They now came into the open country; and the light of the moon, which above them was standing with its horns over the mountain top, greeted them friendly. In undistinguishable forms, and many sundered masses, which the pale glimmer again deceptively united, the cleft mountain-range lay before them; in the background was a steep hill, on which an ancient weather-worn ruin shewed ghastly in the white light. "Our way parts here," said the stranger; "I am going down into this hollow; there, by

that old mineshaft, is my dwelling: the metal ores are my neighbours; the mountain-streams tell me wonderful things in the night-season; thither, however, thou canst not follow me. But see there, the Runenberg, with its rugged walls, how beautiful and alluring the old stone-work looks down to us! Wert thou never there?"

"Never," replied young Christian. "I once heard my old forester relate strange things of this mountain, which, foolishly enough, I have forgotten; but I remember my mind was horror-struck that evening. I should like at some time to ascend the height; for the lights are there most beautiful; the grass must there be very green, the world around very strange; and, perhaps, one might find up there many a wonder of the ancient time."

"You can scarcely fail," replied the other; "whoever only understands how to seek, whose heart is right inwardly moved thereto, will find there old friends, and all that he most ardently desires." With these words the stranger rapidly descended the hill, without bidding his companion farewell; he soon vanished in the thicket, and shortly after the sound of his footsteps also died away. The young hunter was not surprised, but only quickened his footsteps towards the Runenberg, whereto every thing beckoned him: thither the stars seemed to shine, the moon pointed out a bright path towards the ruins; light clouds rose up in that direction; and out of the depths the waters and rushing woods persuaded him, and spoke to him new courage. His steps were as if winged; his heart beat; he felt within a joy so great, that it almost rose to anguish. He came into places he had never seen before, where the rocks became steeper, the foliage disappeared, and the naked walls called out to him as with angry voices, while a lonesome moaning wind drove him on. Thus he hastened on without stopping, and came late after midnight upon a narrow footpath which ran along by the side of an abyss. He heeded not the chasm which yawned beneath, and which threatened to devour him, so impelled was he by wild imaginings and unintelligible desires. Now his perilous way drew nigh a high wall, which appeared to lose itself in the clouds; the path grew narrower at every step, so that the youth was obliged to hold fast by the projecting stones to avoid plunging into the gulf below.

At length he could proceed no further; the path ended under a window; he was obliged to come to a stand, and knew not whether to turn or stay. Suddenly he saw a light, which behind the ancient wall appeared to be moving. He looked after the gleam, and discovered that he could see into an antique spacious hall, strangely adorned with various kinds of precious stones and crystals, that sparkled in manifold splendour, and mysteriously reflected each other from the wandering light, which was borne in the hand of a tall female form, who, in a thoughtful mood, was pacing up and down the apartment. She seemed not to belong to mortals, so large, so powerful were her limbs, so firm her countenance; but the enraptured youth thought he had never before seen or imagined such beauty. He trembled, and yet secretly wished that she might come to the window and perceive him. At last she stopped, set down the light upon a crystal table, and sang with a thrilling voice:

Where can the Ancients keep,

That they do not appear?

From diamond pillars weep

The crystals, many a tear,

In full fountain falling round;

And within sad tones resound.

In the waves so clear and bright,

And transparent as the light,

There is form'd the beauteous glance,

That doth the raptur'd soul entrance,

And moves the heart in glowing dance.

Come, ye spirits all,

To the golden hall;

Raise, from out the depths of gloom,

Heads that sparkle; quickly come,

Ye that are of wondrous power,

Be of hearts the masters now,

Where bright tears with passion glow;

Be the rulers of the hour.

As soon as she had ended, she began to undress, laying aside her garments in a splendid wardrobe. First, she took from her head a golden veil, and her long black hair flowed in full ringlets down to her waist; then she loosed her bosom-dress, and the youth forgot himself and the world in gazing at the superterrestrial beauty. After some time, she went to another golden cabinet, took thereout a tablet that glittered with

inlaid stones, rubies, diamonds, and all kinds of jewels, and stood contemplating it with scrutinising look. The tablet seemed to form a strange unintelligible figure, with its several lines and colours; one while, as its brightness glanced towards him, he was painfully dazzled; then, again, a soft green and blue playing over it, refreshed his eye; but he stood devouring the objects with his looks, and at the same time absorbed in deep thoughts. In his inmost heart there was opened up an abyss of forms and harmony, of longing and desire; troops of winged tones and sad and joyful melodies passed through his spirit, that was moved to the very foundation: he saw a world of pain and hope arise within himself, mighty wondrous rocks of trust and daring confidence, deep torrents as of melancholy flowing by. He no longer knew himself; and he was terrified as the fair one opened the window, and reaching forth to him the magic tablet, spoke to him these few words: "Take this in remembrance of me!" He grasped the tablet, and felt the figure; the invisible within him immediately passed away, and the light, and the potent beauty, and the strange hall, had vanished. As it were, a dark night, with cloud-curtains, fell within his inmost soul; he searched after his former feelings, after that inspiration and incomprehensible love; he gazed at the costly tablet, in which the sinking moon was mirrored faint and bluish.

He still held the tablet fast pressed within his hands, when the morning dawned; and he, exhausted, giddy, and half-asleep, fell headlong down the steep mountain-side.

The sun shone on the face of the stupified sleeper; who, on awaking, found himself again upon a pleasant hill. He looked around, and beheld far behind him, and scarcely discernible at the extreme horizon, the ruins of the Runenberg; he searched for the tablet, and could no where find it. Astonished and perplexed, he tried to collect his thoughts and unite his recollections; but his memory was as if filled with a confused mist, in which shapeless and unknown forms were wildly contending with one another. His entire former life lay behind him, as in a far distance; the strangest and the most familiar were so mingled together, that he found it impossible to sever them. After long struggle with himself, he at last thought that a dream, or sudden madness, must have befallen him that night; but still he could not understand how he had wandered so far into a strange and remote region.

Still, almost overcome with sleep, he descended the hill, and came upon a beaten path, which led him down from the mountains on to the open country. All was strange to him; he at first thought that he should find his native home, but he saw before him quite a different region, and at length conjectured that he must be on the southern side of the mountains, which in the spring he had trodden from the north. Towards noon he stood over a village from whose cottages a peaceful smoke was ascending; children clad in festal dress were playing on the green, and from the little church came the sound of the organ and the chant of the congregation. All seized him with a sweet, indescribable melancholy; all so stirred his heart, that he was forced to weep. The narrow gardens, the little cottages with their smoking chimneys, the neatly parted cornfields, reminded him of the wants of poor human nature, of its dependence on the

friendly earth, in whose beneficence it is obliged to trust; while the singing and the tones of the organ filled his heart with a devoutness he had never felt before. His feelings and wishes of the previous night appeared to him reckless and wicked; he wished again, in a childlike, dependent, and humble spirit, to unite himself to men as his brethren, and to withdraw from his ungodly purposes and opinions. The plain, with its little river that wound itself in manifold turnings about the gardens and meadows, seemed charming and alluring to him; he thought with fear on his abode in the solitary mountains amid the desolate rocks; he longed that he might dwell in this peaceful village; and with these feelings he entered the crowded church.

The singing was just ended, and the priest had begun his sermon, which was on the kindness of God in the harvest; how His goodness feeds all, and satisfies every living thing; how wonderfully in the corn He has provided for the support of the human race; how the love of God is incessantly communicating itself in bread; and therefore the devout Christian may, with thankfulness, perpetually celebrate a holy supper. The congregation was edified. The young hunter's looks were fixed on the pious preacher, and observed close by the pulpit a young maiden, who seemed, beyond all others, resigned to devotion and attention. She was slim and fair, her blue eye gleamed with the most piercing softness, her countenance was as if transparent, and blooming with the tenderest colours. The stranger youth had never felt himself and his heart so before; so full of love and so calm, so resigned to the stillest and the most enlivening feelings. He bowed himself in tears, when the priest at last spoke the blessing; he felt penetrated by the holy words, as by an invisible power; and the shadowy image of the night sank down behind him, like a spectre, into the deepest distance. He left the church, stopped a while under a tall lime-tree, and thanked God in a fervent prayer, that, without his deserving, He had freed him from the snares of the evil spirit. The village was that day celebrating the harvest-feast, and all men were determined to be joyful; the children gaily dressed were rejoicing in cakes and dances; the young men on the village square, which was encircled with young trees, were preparing all things for the festival, where also the musicians were sitting and trying their instruments. Christian went again into the fields, in order to collect his thoughts and fix his contemplations, and then returned to the village, where now all were united in joyfulness and celebration of the festival. The fair Elizabeth was also there with her parents; and the stranger joined himself to the joyful throng. Elizabeth was dancing; and he had, in the mean time, entered into conversation with the father, who was a farmer, and one of the richest men in the village. The youth and speech of the stranger seemed to please him, and so in a short time it was agreed that Christian should remain with him as gardener. This he was able to undertake; for he hoped that now the knowledge and occupations he had so much despised at home would stand him in good stead.

From this time a new life began for him. He went to live with the farmer, and was reckoned with his family. With his station also he changed his dress. He was so good, so serviceable, and ever kind; so diligent at his labour, that soon all in the house, but

especially the daughter, became friendly to him. So often as on Sunday he saw her going to church, he held for her in readiness a beautiful nosegay, which she received from him with blushing thankfulness: he missed her when the day passed without his seeing her; and then in the evening she would relate to him legends and pleasant stories. They became ever more needful to each other; and the old people, who observed it, seemed not to have any thing against it; for Christian was the handsomest and most industrious youth in the village. They themselves, from the first moment, had felt a constraint of love and friendship towards him. After half a year, Elizabeth was his wife. It was again spring; the swallows and birds of song had come into the land; the garden stood in its gayest attire; the marriage was celebrated with all joyfulness; bride and bridegroom appeared as if intoxicated with their happiness. Late in the evening, as they went to their chamber, the young husband said to his beloved: "No, thou art not that form which once charmed me in a dream, and which I never can quite forget; yet am I happy in thy presence, and blest in thine embrace."

How joyful was the family, when, after a year, it was increased by a little daughter, that was named Leonora. It is true that Christian was at times somewhat more serious as he contemplated the child; but yet his youthful sprightliness always again returned to him. He scarcely ever thought of his former way of life, for he felt himself quite at home and contented. After some months, however, the thought of his parents occurred to him, and especially how his father would rejoice at his peaceful lot, at his condition as gardener and husbandman; it pained him that he had been able for so long a time to forget father and mother; his own child reminded him of what joy children are to parents; and so he at length resolved to put himself on the journey, and revisit his native home.

Unwillingly he left his wife; all wished him happiness; and in the fine season of the year, on foot he took his way. Already, after a few miles, he felt how painful was the parting; for the first time in his life he felt the smart of separation; the strange objects around seemed almost savage to him; he felt as if he were lost in a hostile solitude. Then the thought occurred to him that his youth was over; that he had found a home to which he belonged, in which his heart had taken root; he could almost lament the lost levity of former years; and he felt the extremest dejection of spirit as at a village he turned into the inn to pass the night. He could not comprehend why he had left his affectionate wife and acquired parents; and peevish and discontented, he next morning set forth to continue his journey.

His anguish increased as he came near the chain of mountains; the distant ruins were already visible, and gradually became more distinguishable; while numerous hill-tops rose round and clear from out the blue mist. He went timidly on; often stopping and wondering with himself at the fear, at the horror, which more and more oppressed him at every step. "Madness!" he exclaimed, "I know thee well, and thy perilous allurement; but I will manfully withstand thee. Elizabeth is no idle dream; I know that she now thinks on me, that she is expecting me, and, full of love, counts the hours of

my absence. Do I not already see forests as black hair before me? Do not the lightening eyes look towards me from the brook? The giant forms, are they not advancing to me from the mountains?"

With these words, he was about to lay himself down to rest beneath a tree, when he saw an old man sitting under its shadow, who was, with the greatest attention, contemplating a flower, now holding it towards the sun, then again shading it with his hand, counting its leaves, and striving in all ways to impress it strictly on his memory. As he approached nearer, the form seemed known to him, and soon no doubt remained that the old man with the flower was his father. He rushed into his arms with an expression of the most vehement joy; the other was delighted, but not astonished, at meeting him so suddenly.

"Art thou come to meet me already, my son?" said the old man; "I knew that I should soon find thee, but I did not think that to-day such joy would happen to me."

"How came you to know, father, that you would meet with me?"

"By this flower," replied the old gardener; "all my life I have been wishing to be able once to find it, but never had the fortune; for it is very rare, and grows only on the mountains. I set out in quest of thee, because thy mother is dead, and the solitude at home was too oppressive and afflicting to me. I knew not whither to direct my way. At last I wandered through the mountains, dreary as the journey seemed to me. By the way, I sought for this flower, but could nowhere discover it; and now, quite unexpected, I find it here, where the beautiful plain lies stretched before me; thereby I knew that I should find thee soon; and, see! how truly the dear flower has prophesied!"

They embraced each other again, and Christian wept for his mother; but the old man grasped his hand, and said: "Let us be going, that we may soon lose sight of the mountain shadows. My heart is always sad at the steep wild shapes, the horrid chasms, the gurgling waterfalls. Let us again visit the kind, harmless level country."

They wandered back; and Christian became more cheerful. He told his father of his new fortune, of his child and of his home: his speech made him as if intoxicated; and, in talking, he now for the first time felt truly how nothing more was wanting to his happiness. Thus, amid tales joyful and melancholy, they arrived at the village. All were rejoiced at the speedy termination of the journey; most of all, Elizabeth. The old man took up his abode with them, joined his little fortune to their estate, and they formed, together, the most contented and united circle among men. The field increased; the cattle throve; Christian's house became in a few years one of the most considerable in the village; and he soon saw himself the father of several children.

Five years had in this manner passed away, when a stranger, on his journey, stopped,

and took up his abode in Christian's house, as being the most respectable in the village. He was a friendly, communicative man, who related many things of his journey, played with and gave presents to the children, and, in short, was kind to every one. He was so pleased with the neighbourhood, that he was resolved to spend some days there; but the days grew to weeks, and at length to months. His sojourn surprised no one, for all had already been accustomed to regard him as belonging to the family. Only Christian often sat musing; for it occurred to him that he had already aforetime known the traveller, and yet he could not recollect the occasion when he could have seen him.

At last, after three months, the stranger took his leave, and said, "My dear friends, a wonderful destiny and strange expectations impel me forward into the nearest mountains; a magical form, which I cannot withstand, allures me. I now leave you, and know not whether I shall return to you. I have a sum of money by me, which is safer in your hands than in mine, and therefore I pray you to take charge of it: should I not come back in a year's time, then keep it, and take it as a thank-offering for your kindness shewn to me."

So the stranger departed; and Christian took the money into his keeping. He carefully locked it up; and at times, in the excess of anxiety, looked over it, counted it to see that none was missing, and made himself much ado with it.

"This sum would make us right happy," he once said to his father, "should the stranger not return; we and our children would then be for ever provided for."

"Let alone the gold," said the old man; "therein lies no blessing: hitherto, praise God, we have wanted nothing, and by all means put this thought away from thee."

Christian often arose in the night to waken the servants to their labour, and himself to look after every thing. The father was anxious lest, through excessive diligence, he should injure his youth and health; therefore, one night, he arose in order to admonish him on the subject, when, to his astonishment, he saw him sitting at a table, and with the greatest eagerness counting over the gold.

"My son," said the old man, in sadness, "shall it come to this with thee? has this cursed metal been brought under the roof only to our unhappiness? Bethink thyself, my son, or the wicked fiend will consume thy blood and life."

"Yes," said Christian, "I no longer comprehend myself; neither by night nor by day have I any rest; see now how it looks at me, till the ruddy glow goes deep into my heart. Listen how it clinks, this golden blood; it calls me when asleep; I hear it when music sounds, when the wind blows, when people are talking in the street. If the sun shines, I see only these yellow eyes, with which it blinks at me, and wishes to whisper secretly a word of love into my ear: so I am obliged nightly to get up, though only to

satisfy its strong desire, and then I feel it inwardly exulting and rejoicing; when I touch it with my fingers, it grows ruddier and more glorious in its joy. Only look yourself now at the glow of its rapture!"

The grey-haired man, shuddering and weeping, took his son in his arms, prayed, and then said, "Christel, thou must turn again to the word of God; thou must more diligently and devoutly go to church: otherwise thou wilt languish, and in the saddest misery pine thyself away."

The money was again locked up. Christian promised to betake himself to other subjects; and the old man was composed. A year and more had already passed, and no tidings heard of the stranger: the old man at last yielded to the entreaties of his son; and the relinquished money was laid out in lands and other ways. The young farmer's wealth was soon talked of in the village; and Christian seemed extremely contented and joyful, so that his father thought himself happy at seeing him so well and cheerful; all fear had now vanished from his soul. What, then, must have been his astonishment when, one evening, Elizabeth took him aside, and told him, with tears, that she could no longer understand her husband; he spoke so wildly, especially at night; he had perplexing dreams; would often in his sleep for a long time walk about the room without knowing it, and tell of wondrous things which oft made her shudder. But most frightful to her was his merriment in the daytime; his laugh was wild and boisterous, his look strange and wandering. The father stood terror-struck; and the troubled wife continued: "He is always speaking of the stranger, and maintains that otherwise he has long known him, for that this stranger-man is really none other than a woman of wondrous beauty; he also will no longer go out into the field, nor work in the garden, for he says that he hears underground a fearful groaning when he only pulls up a root; he starts and seems terrified at the plant and herbs, as if they were spectres."

"Merciful God!" exclaimed the father, "is the frightful hunger so fast grown within him that it has come to this? Then is his enchanted heart no longer human, but of cold metal; he who loves not flowers, has lost all love and fear of God."

The following day the father went for a walk with his son, and repeated to him much of what he had heard from Elizabeth; he exhorted him to piety, and to devote his spirit to holy contemplations.

Christian replied, "Willingly, my father; and often I feel quite happy, and every thing succeeds well with me: for a long time, for years, I can forget the true form of my inward being, and lead, as it were, a strange life with cheerfulness: but then suddenly, like a new moon, the ruling star, which I myself am, arises on my heart, and vanquishes the foreign influence. I could be quite happy, but that once, on an extraordinary night, a mysterious sign was impressed through my hand deeply within my soul; often the magic figure sleeps and is at rest; I think it has passed away, when suddenly it springs forth again as a poison, and makes its way in all directions. Then I

can think and feel nothing else; all around me is changed, or, rather, is by this form swallowed up. As the madman shudders at the water, and the infused poison within him becomes more venomous, so it happens to me with every cornered figure, every line, every beam; all will then unbind the form that dwells within me, and promote its birth; and my body and soul feel the anguish; as my spirit received it by a feeling from without, so into an outward feeling she desires, with agonising throes, to work it forth again, that she may be free from it and at rest."

"It was an unlucky star," said the old man, "that drew thee away from us. Thou wert born for a still life; thy mind tended to quietness and plants; then thy impatience led thee away into the society of savage stones; the rocks, the rent cliffs, with their rugged shapes, have overset thy spirit, and planted within thee the desolating hunger after metal. Thou oughtest ever to have been on thy guard, and kept thy view from the mountains. So I thought to bring thee up; but it was not so to be. Thy humility, thy calmness, thy childlike feelings, have been all overturned by obstinacy, wildness, and overbearing."

"No," said the son; "I remember quite distinctly that it was a plant which first made known to me the misery of the whole earth; only then I understood the sighs and lamentations which are every where perceptible in all nature, if only one will listen. In plants, herbs, flowers, and trees, there moves and stirs painfully only one general wound; they are the corpse of former glorious worlds of rock, they present to our eye the frightfullest corruption. Now I well understand that it was this which that root with its deep-fetched moaning wished to say to me; in its agony it forgot itself, and told me all. Therefore are all green plants so angry with me, and wait for my life; they desire to obliterate the loved figure in my heart; and every spring, with their distorted deathly looks, to win my soul. With unpermitted and malicious art have they deceived thee, old man; for they have gained complete possession of thy soul. Only ask the rocks, thou wilt be astonished when thou hearest them speak."

The father looked at him a long while, but could answer him no more. They went silently back to the house, and the old man was likewise horrified at his son's mirth; for it seemed quite foreign to him, and as if another being was, as from a machine, sporting and awkwardly labouring within him.

The harvest-feast was again to be celebrated; the people went to church, and Elizabeth, with her children, set out to be present at the service; her husband also prepared to accompany them; but at the church-door he turned aside, and, deep in thought, went forth out of the village. He seated himself on the height, and looked down on the smoking cottages beneath him; heard the singing and organ-tones coming from the church; and saw children gaily clad dancing and sporting upon the village-green. "How have I lost my life in a dream!" said he to himself: "years have passed away since I went down this hill among the children; those who then were playing are to-day serious in the church; I also went into the sacred building; but

Elizabeth is now no more a blooming child-like maiden; her youth is gone by; I cannot with the longing of that time seek for the glance of her eyes: thus have I wantonly neglected a high eternal happiness, to gain one that is only passing and transitory."

Full of strange desires, he walked to the neighbouring wood, and buried himself in its thickest shades. A shuddering stillness encompassed him; no breeze stirred amid the leaves. Meanwhile he saw a man approaching him from the distance, whom he imagined to be the stranger; he was struck with terror, and his first thought was, that he would demand back his money. But as the form came nearer, he saw how greatly he had been mistaken; for the features which he had fancied, dissolved away as into one another, and an old woman of the extremest ugliness came up to him. She was clad in dirty rags; a tattered cloth bound together some grey hairs; and she hobbled on a crutch. With frightful voice she spoke to Christian, and asked after his name and station. He answered her minutely, and added, "But who art thou?"

"I am called the Woodwoman," said she; "and every child can tell of me. Hast thou never known me?" With the last words she turned herself about, and Christian thought he again recognised among the trees the golden veil, the lofty gait, the majestic limbs. He wished to hasten after her, but he had sight of her no more.

Meanwhile something glittering drew his eye down to the grass. He took it up, and saw again the magic tablet with its coloured precious stones and remarkable figure, that he had lost so many years before. The form and its varied light pressed all his senses with a sudden power. He grasped it firmly, to assure himself that he had it once more in his hands, and then hastened back with it to the village. His father met him.

"See," cried he to him, "that of which I have so often told you, and which I thought only to have seen in a dream, is now truly and surely mine."

The old man contemplated the tablet a long while, and said: "My son, my heart quite shudders as I view the aspect of these stones, and foreboding guess the meaning of this inscription. See here, how cold they sparkle, what cruel looks they cast up, bloodthirsty, like the red eye of the tiger! Throw away this writing, which makes thee cold and cruel, which will turn thy heart to stone.

See the tender flowers beaming,

As from out themselves they waken;

Like as children from their dreaming,

In smiling loveliness are taken.

Their various hues in playful bliss

All turn they to the golden sun;

And when they feel his burning kiss,

'Tis then their happiness is won.

And on his kisses so to languish,

To pine in love and melancholy;

Then smiling in their dearest anguish,

Soon fade in soft tranquillity.

This is to them the highest joy,

The fond delight they love to cherish;

Themselves in death to glorify,

Beneath their lover's glance to perish.

Then all around their perfum'd treasure

They profluent pour in raptur'd calm;

Until the air grows drunk with pleasure,

Enliven'd with the odorous balm.

Love comes all human hearts approving,

Responsive touching every chord;

Well may the conscious soul record,

'Now I know the due reward,

The gladness, sadness, pain of loving.'"

"Wonderful incalculable treasures," answered the son, "must there still be in the depths of the earth! Could some one but explore them, raise them up, and snatch them to himself! Could he but so press to his bosom the earth as a beloved bride, that in

anguish and love she would willingly grant to him what she had most precious! The Woodwoman has called me; I go to seek her. Close by is an old ruined shaft, which centuries ago some miner has dug open; perhaps there I shall find her."

He hastened forward. In vain the old man strove to detain him; he soon vanished from his sight. Some hours afterwards, the father, with much exertion, arrived at the old shaft: he saw footsteps impressed on the sand at the entrance; and returned in tears, convinced that his son had, in his madness, gone in, and been drowned in the depths of the old collected waters.

From that time he was always melancholy and in tears. The whole village mourned for the young farmer. Elizabeth was inconsolable; the children lamented aloud. Half a year after the old father died; Elizabeth's parents soon followed him, and she was obliged to take the sole management of the large estate. Her many avocations removed her somewhat from her sorrow; the education of her children, the superintendence of her property, left her no time for care and grief. So after two years she resolved on a new marriage, and gave her hand to a young sprightly man, who had loved her from his youth. But soon all things in the house assumed another form. The cattle died; men and maid-servants were unfaithful; the barns filled with grain were consumed by fire; people in the town who owed them various sums fled away with the money. The landlord soon found himself compelled to sell some fields and meadows; but a failure in the crops, and a year of scarcity, only brought him into new embarrassments. It seemed nought else than as if the gold, so wondrously obtained, were in all ways seeking a speedy flight.

Meanwhile the family increased; and Elizabeth, as well as her husband, became careless and dilatory from despair. He endeavoured to drown his cares by drinking much of intoxicating wine, which made him irritable and passionate, so that Elizabeth often bewailed her misery with bitter tears.

As soon as their fortune declined, their friends in the village kept aloof; so that in a few years, they found themselves quite forsaken, and with the greatest difficulty could struggle on from week to week.

They had only a few sheep and one cow remaining; which Elizabeth herself often tended with her children. She was once sitting thus with her work on the grass, Leonora by her side, and a child at her breast, when they saw from the distance a strange form coming towards them. It was a man in a coat all in tatters, barefoot, his countenance sunburnt to a dark-brown, and still more disfigured by a long rough beard; he wore no covering on his head, but had a garland of green leaves twisted through his hair, which made his wild appearance still more strange and incomprehensible. On his back he carried in a fast-bound sack a heavy burden; in walking he supported himself on a young fir-tree.

When he came nearer, he set down his load, and heavily fetched his breath. He wished the lady good-day; she was terrified at his presence, the child clung closely to her mother. When he had rested a while, he said: "I have just come from a very fatiguing journey among the roughest mountains upon earth; but have, at last, succeeded in bringing with me the most precious treasures which imagination can conceive or heart can wish. Look here and wonder!" Hereupon he opened his sack, and emptied it; it was full of pebbles, mixed with large pieces of flint and other stones. "It is only," he continued, "that these jewels are not yet ground and polished, that they fail to take the eye. The outward fire, with its brightness, is yet too deeply buried in their inmost heart; but one has only to strike it out, and make them feel that no dissimulation will any more serve them, then you will see of what spirit they are the offspring." With these words, he took one of the hard stones and struck it vehemently against another, so that red sparks sprang forth between them, "Did you see the glance?" he cried. "Thus are they all fire and light; they illuminate the darkness with their laughter, but as yet they do it not willingly." So saying, he again packed all up carefully in his sack, which he tied fast together. "I know thee very well," he then said sadly; "thou art Elizabeth." She started with terror.

"How earnest thou to know my name?" she asked, with foreboding shudder.

"Ah, good God!" said the unhappy one; "I am indeed Christian, who once came to thee as a hunter. Dost thou, then, know me no more?"

She knew not, in her horror and deepest compassion, what to say. He fell upon her neck and kissed her. Elizabeth exclaimed, "O God! my husband is coming!"

"Be tranquil," said he; "I am as good as dead to thee. There in the forest my fair one awaits me; the powerful one, she that is adorned with the golden veil. This is my dearest child Leonora. Come hither, my dear, beloved heart; give me too a kiss,—one only,—that I may once again feel thy mouth upon my lips, then I will leave you."

Leonora wept; she clasped close to her mother, who, in sobs and tears, half turned her towards the wanderer; he half drew her to himself, took her in his arms, and pressed her to his bosom. Then he went silently away, and in the wood they saw him speaking with the frightful Woodwoman.

"What is the matter?" asked the husband, as he found mother and daughter pale and dissolved in tears. Neither would answer him.

But the unhappy one was from that day never again seen.