

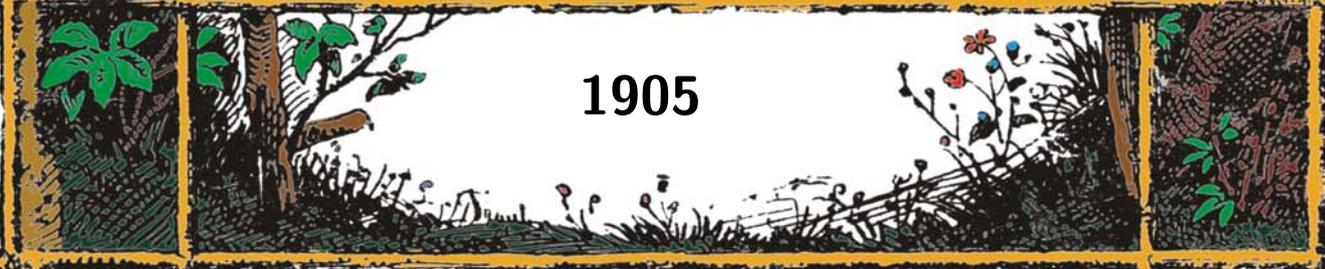


Wilhelm J. Herchenbach

The Armourer of Solingen



1905



It was late in the evening, and Peter Simmelpuss was still standing at the anvil in his father's smithy, forging a sword. He was a tall, strong, and handsome young man; and the ruddy colour of health could be seen on his face, notwithstanding the smoke and soot which begrimed it. A deep shade of disappointment and vexation could, however, be seen on his features, for he had failed several times already in the task which he had been endeavouring to perform, namely, to forge a sword of so high-tempered steel, that it could be bent round, without breaking, until the point touched the hilt. A knight had given him the commission to do this, and had promised to build a very much larger smithy for his father if he succeeded in his endeavour.

This knight, Sir John Haber, had ridden to the smithy, notwithstanding the lateness of the hour, and was gazing at Peter with an ironical and malicious smile on his lips. Haber was a thoroughly bad man; he was one of those robber-knights of the middle ages who cared neither for the laws of God nor of men. His bright armour gleamed in the light of the fire, and showed off to the greatest advantage his large and powerful frame.



Having dismounted from his horse and entered the smithy, he took the sword, at which he had been working, from Peter's hand, and said: "Let me see if you have made any progress in your work." He then bent the sword; but, long before the point touched the hilt, it broke into two pieces.

"The same old-fashioned, clumsy workmanship!" he exclaimed, with a mocking laugh; "it must bend just like my sword, or else I am not bound to my promise." Saying this, he went over to the anvil, pressed the blade of his sword round it until it formed a circle, and, when he let go the point, it sprang back and became as straight as before.

Peter took it in his hand, looked carefully at it, and then said: "I fear I shall never discover the secret."

"You must go to Damascus," said the knight, with a sneer; "that is the only place where the secret is known. I purchased this blade from an armourer in that city, who has a bleeding head as a sign over his shop."

"A bleeding head!" exclaimed Peter, much surprised.

"Just so. I suppose he wished to signify that, with the swords he made, a man's head could be cut off with one blow."

"A curious sign, indeed," said Peter, reflectively, leaning on his sledge-hammer. An extraordinary thought was passing through his brain. He then continued: "If, Sir Knight, I sought out that man, and learned his art, would you still build the smithy for my father?"

"Certainly," replied Haber, "and, in addition, furnish it with everything necessary. We want, above all things, a first-class armourer in this locality. Damascus, however, is a long way from this, far across the seas, and numerous dangers, including shipwreck, pestilence, and robbers, would most likely be encountered on the journey."

The knight seemed to throw difficulties in his way purposely. He then, with another ironical laugh, mounted his steed, and rode off into the darkness of the night. Peter then threw his hammer aside, extinguished his fire, and went straight to the kitchen, in which his father and mother awaited him. They were sitting beside the fire when he entered.

"Why have you remained so very late at your work?" asked his mother, with a tone of affection and concern, "your health will suffer for it most certainly. What a foolish craze you have got into your head! – you will never be able to make a Damascus sword-blade."

"Give up the idea!" said his father; "you will only lose time and spoil good steel."

"I am resolved to find out how to do it," replied Peter, in a resolute tone of voice, "even if I were to go to the other end of the world to find a master to teach me. Every time Sir John Haber comes to the smithy he fills me with anger and bitterness by his taunts and sneers. I feel that there is no reason why I should not be able to do what others can do."

"But you have already made such a number of useless attempts!"

"That is true, father, and I am almost in despair; but should I therefore give up? No! I am resolved to find out the secret at any cost. And, if I do so, our family will have the honour and glory of introducing into Europe the manufacture of Damascus sword-blades."

The eyes of Philip Simmelpuss, the head of the family, sparkled brightly.

"If such were possible, my son," he then said,

“I would do everything in my power to aid you, for I have also nourished the honourable ambition of being the first in my art. It is, however, foolish to run after impossibilities.”

Eva, Peter’s mother, now joined in the conversation, and said: “Why are you always wanting to do something new? Have you not made most beautiful things for our church, which are admired by every person? Are not the castles full of helmets and coats-of-mail, which have spread your fame far and wide? Be content, and thank God that you are ont; of the very best armourers in this country. Do not be led astray by Sir John Haber, who is a bad man, and who thinks only of injuring his fellow-creatures.”

The father and son remained silent, buried in thought. The church bells soon began to ring, for it was the eve of holy Christmas, in the year of our Lord, 1561.

Peter went to his bedroom, washed the smoke from his face and hands, and put on his Sunday clothes. The outer garment, fastened with a belt round his waist, with blue trimmings at the ends and round his neck, suited him admirably. The small silk cap on his head, the white ruffs and armlets improved his appearance wonderfully, and the tight hose showed the great muscular strength of his limbs.

Philip, his father, also put on his best clothes, and threw a warm mantle over his shoulders. His long, white beard gave him a most venerable appearance. Eva had made herself as respectable-looking as possible. She was fully forty years of age, but she looked very much younger.

The bells in the lofty church-tower continued their solemn peals, and the three of them set off under the pine-trees, the branches of which were laden with snow.

When they drew near to the church, they saw that people from all directions were also streaming towards it.

The armourer and his family went to their usual seats, near the high altar, and knelt down reverently. The church was lit up by numerous wax tapers, and the entire congregation had a most devout appearance.

The organ now burst forth with the melody of a fine old Christmas hymn. The priest came out of the vestry, with his acolytes, ascended the altar, and began the midnight Mass.

Peter was a good and pious youth, but on that particular occasion, when everything seemed to inspire devotion, he could not get Damascus sword-blades out of his mind. The Christmas hymn seemed to transport him to eastern lands, and, in imagination, he was wandering through palm-groves, and beholding the wonders with which Sir John Haber’s conver-

sation had filled his brain. As he really knew nothing of the East, all there appeared, in his imagination, to be glowing with brightness and beauty, Marvels, heaped on marvels, presented themselves to his mind, and he became so lost in their contemplation, that the Mass was over almost before he thought it had commenced.

He reproached himself bitterly for his abstraction and want of attention in the house of God. He waited for another Mass, and attended devoutly to it until it was finished and the organ had ceased playing.

He, with his father and mother, now left the church. The churchyard, with its venerable old trees and the ancient crosses over the graves, now lay in the white moonlight, which threw out every object into bold relief. In one corner a metal cross projected upwards through an ivy bush. The grave under that cross had always been looked on by him as a holy sanctuary; and on this night, also, it attracted him towards it. Under that cross reposed the mortal remains of his grandfather.

The old man had made the cross with his own hands, and when working at it, in his smithy, he often said: “Peter, when I am dead, let this remind you of me, and, whenever you see it, say a prayer for the repose of my soul.”

He had dearly loved that good old man, and now almost every word he had spoken to him rushed back into his mind. As, on account of his great age, he was not able to do much work, he used to sit on a bench, near the forge fire, and relate to his son and his grandson many incidents of his wanderings in different countries. At the end of his narratives he was accustomed to say: “I began at the very roughest kind of smith’s work, but I had a taste for art, and I raised myself to the position of an armourer; your father, Philip, improved much on what I was able to do, and I hope that you, my grandson, will climb to the top of the tree. If I did not think you would do so I could not rest quiet in my grave. Promise me, Peter, that you will exert yourself to the very utmost, in order to attain to the very foremost position in your art. Give me your hand on it.”

Peter had then clasped warmly the honest right hand which was stretched out to him. He now remembered the scene vividly. With sad feelings he knelt down on the snow, and prayed for his grandfather’s soul. It then seemed to him as if he heard, issuing from his grandfather’s grave, the words: “Peter, go to Damascus and learn the art of making sword-blades, such as are there made.”

“Grandfather, was that thy voice?” he asked, half in terror, and half in joyful excitement. And again, he believed that he heard the same

words distinctly repeated.

The voice was nothing but the echo of his own imagination, but he firmly believed that his grandfather had spoken. When he rose from his knees, Brother Francis, the hermit of the Wupper forest, stood beside him.

"You are speaking of Damascus," he said to Peter, "and in doing so you awaken old and almost forgotten memories in my soul. I was once there for some time, and I purchased a sword at the sign of the Bleeding Head, the excellence of which exceeded that of all swords made in our Western countries. In memory of my old campaigns I have hung it up in my cell. It shall remain there until I am laid to rest in this churchyard."

"Venerable Father," said Peter, "may I go to look at that sword?"

"Certainly," replied Brother Francis; "but you must wait until New Year's Eve. In the meantime I have to pray much, on account of an event which happened in the East."

The hermit then reached him his hand, to bid him farewell, and walked off in a northern direction. Peter, meditating deeply, quitted the graveyard, and proceeded towards his smithy. The supposed words of his grandfather were still ringing in his ears, and he felt firmly persuaded that they had issued from his grave.

His father and mother had retired to rest; he also went to his room, in order to sleep during the remainder of the night, but the command from the grave kept him awake, and it confirmed his resolution of undertaking a voyage to the East. Notwithstanding, he felt uneasy in his mind. "What will father and mother say to my undertaking so long and dangerous a journey?" he asked himself. "Perhaps I shall not be able to find my way; perhaps I shall die of hunger, pestilence, or the attacks of enemies before I arrive!"

Many self-reproaches, similar to these, passed through his mind, but, for all that, he remained firm in his resolve, even though he felt sure that his departure would cause his parents the greatest pain and anxiety. He at last fell asleep towards morning, and only awoke when his mother knocked at the bedroom door, to tell him that breakfast was ready.

It struck his mother at once that he was, on that morning, very silent and absent-minded; the same fact did not escape his father either. He answered their questions with a kind of embarrassed smile.

The Christmas holidays passed, and then work began again in the smithy; but Peter's father was astonished to see that his son had given up his sword-making, and began to work, with him, at a suit of armour, which had been

ordered from them some time before.

When Philip asked the cause of this, the answer he got was: "What good could come of it? I have tried every plan I could think of, and proceeding further would be only wasting iron and steel. If I am ever to discover the secret, I must go to Damascus, and place myself there under a good master."

Philip made no reply to this observation, but, in his heart, he thought: "If I were his age, I would strap on my knapsack and be off there; for certainly an art is learned better and more quickly from a good master than by means of experiments made by one's self. Who knows but that some peculiar substance must be mixed with the metal, before a perfectly tough and elastic sword-blade can be formed out of it? I have heard it said that, even in Damascus, there are only one or two armourers who have the secret."

Nothing more was then said on the subject, and Eva, Peter's mother, was rejoiced that what she considered the useless waste of metal had ceased. On the eve of New Year's Day Peter ceased work earlier than usual, and left the smithy. His father thought that he was going to join the young people in the town, who always celebrated the last night of the year; but it struck him as strange that he went off without removing his leathern apron, and without washing the soot and smoke from his face.

Peter, however, did not go off to his youthful companions, but walked away from the village, and proceeded at a rapid pace towards Solingen; before he came to the town he turned to one side, into the forest, and walked in the direction of the hermitage of Brother Francis, which was situated on the banks of the Wupper. The stream was covered over with thick ice; perfect silence reigned in the forest; high up on the side of the mountain lights were burning in the castle of the Duke von Berg, and he could see the figures of knights and ladies, passing and repassing the windows, enjoying themselves dancing.

"They are celebrating the departure of the old year," he said. "When I return home, after having discovered the secret, of which I am going in search, I shall, some day or other, pay a visit to that castle, and show my swords to the Duke."

He continued to advance into the forest, and soon came to a small, narrow valley, situated between high cliffs. In it, amongst the trees was situated a neat hut, well thatched with straw, and from the small windows of which came a subdued light.

Peter knocked at the door; Brother Francis called out: "Enter, unless you are an evil

spirit!”

The young man raised the latch and entered the hut. A good fire burned on the hearth, which filled the room with a comfortable warmth. Brother Francis was sitting in a leather-covered arm-chair. On his knees lay a large book, the leaves of which were covered with pictures. On the walls hung several curious articles. In one corner lay a skeleton, and over it was suspended a complete suit of armour.

Peter gazed at the skeleton, with a look of horror, and said: “Venerable Father, why do you surround yourself with things which make even the bravest afraid?”

“Why afraid, my son? If your own bones were deprived of flesh you would look just like that skeleton, and yet you are not afraid of yourself. Sit down opposite to me by the fire. You shall now see the sword, and hear how it came into my possession.”

Peter seated himself on a wooden stool; the hermit took down the sword from the wall, drew it carefully out of its scabbard, and gazed attentively at it.

“What are those streaks and curious-looking ornaments which I see on it?” asked Peter.

“I cannot answer that question,” replied Brother Francis; “all I know is that it is by these markings that genuine Damascus sword-blades are known. This is really one; for, as you see now, I can bend it in a circle, till its point touches the hilt, and then, when let go, it springs back and becomes straight as ever.”

The young man bent the blade, in both directions, several times, and the longer he examined it the more intense grew the desire in his heart to learn the noble art.

“Venerable Father,” he said, “I wish to go to Damascus, in order to endeavour to find out the way in which such swords as this are made. Describe the way thither to me.”

“Think well of what you intend to do, my son, for the hardships and dangers of such a voyage are, indeed, very great.”

“I fear them not, for I am but obeying the voice of my grandfather, which I heard from his grave.”

“If, then, you really wish to go to the East, you must, in the first place, cleanse your soul from all sin; for it is the land in which God gave his commandments to Moses on Mount Sinai, and in which Christ died on the cross for us sinners. Impress all his sufferings deeply on your mind, in order that you may worthily visit the holy scenes of his life and death.”

“Venerable Father,” answered Peter, “I hope that I am a good Christian, and, in all I do, I place my trust in my Lord and Saviour; but I

will bear your words well in my mind, and not forget them when I arrive in the land where Christ suffered and died for mankind.”

“Well, then, as you have firmly made up your mind to go there, listen attentively to me, whilst I describe the route you are to take, and whilst I give you some good advice. The Holy Land has sad memories for me, and I will mention the causes of some of them in the narrative I am about to relate to you, as doing so will, to some extent, be a relief to my soul. Up to the present I have kept my sufferings locked up in my own tortured breast; I will now entrust them to you, in order that you may pray for me when at the holy places.

Not very far from this neighbourhood, I once was the owner of a large castle; it was surrounded by extensive forests and lands, and I possessed more wealth than I required. As is the way with knights, I went about to jousts and tournaments, and took part in many conflicts, which took place from time to time, now in one place, now in another. War, martial exercises, and the chase, were not, however, my only occupations, for I was exceedingly fond of the art of painting and illuminating, and I filled countless sheets of parchment with coloured drawings, principally of scenes in the life of our Saviour.

Whilst engaged in this kind of work, an uncontrollable longing came over me to make a pilgrimage to the Holy Land. My wife, one of the best and most virtuous women that ever lived, would not let me go alone, but insisted on sharing with me the troubles and dangers of the voyage. In vain did I use all kinds of arguments in order to dissuade her from it; she declared that her determination could not be changed.

My wife had a brother, Sir John Haber, who also expressed the determination to undertake the expedition with us. His resolve did not a little surprise me, for, up to that time, he had shown no predilection whatever for holy things, but rather the contrary. He was one of the boldest and most feared robber-knights of the country, and no peasant, no merchant was safe from his attack. My wife welcomed his determination with joy, for she believed that in the future he would lead a better life. I also was deceived by his hypocritical conduct, and was happy in the belief that, henceforward, I would have a good and pious brother-in-law. I must not forget to mention that my family was poor, and that I possessed nothing but a good sword and a pair of strong arms; it was my wife who owned the castle and the adjoining land, and who lovingly shared her possessions with me. There was, however, a law in the family that, on the death of a husband, the property

of the wife should revert to the nearest relative, if she died without children. We had none, and I knew that I should again become poor if my wife died.

She often expressed a wish to arrange matters in such a way as would make some provision for me in case she should die, but I would not listen to it, as I had a kind of superstitious fear that my doing so would shorten her life.

This is her likeness, which I painted from memory; but I have done it so accurately that not a feature or expression of her face is wanting."

Tears began to run down his cheeks, and on to his beard, when he gazed on the portrait, which was on the first page of the book.

"She was an angel," he continued, "but cruel fate tore her from my side. Later on I will tell you how it came to pass. Look here! On the next page of this book is a likeness of her brother, John Haber, as he appeared in his youthful strength and beauty. He still resides in this neighbourhood, but I hold no intercourse whatsoever with him, for he cast me, in a cruel and hard-hearted manner, out of the castle in which I had lived during so many years with my wife, and which I almost looked on as my own. But let us pass that! It is now thirty years since I, with my wife and her brother John, started for the Holy Land."

Brother Francis continued: "I did not wish to fatigue my wife too much, and we therefore proceeded by short stages. We remained a considerable time in Vienna, in order to give her a good rest, as she was suffering considerably from the long journey. When there, I tried to persuade her to return home, and to let me and her brother continue the pilgrimage; but she would not hear of such a thing. In Vienna I succeeded in procuring, through friends of mine, some very useful letters of introduction to influential persons in the East. At last we left that city and journeyed on to Constantinople.

The farther we went from Vienna the greater became the difficulties of the voyage; for the languages, the manners, and the customs became more and more strange to us. I must acknowledge to you now that very little persuasion indeed would have sufficed to make me return to my home.

With God's help, however, we overcame all difficulties, and arrived in Constantinople."

Brother Francis continued to relate how, having left Constantinople, they continued their pilgrimage, and he showed Peter, in his book, numerous sketches which he had made, of scenes and incidents which he had witnessed on his journey from that city to Jerusalem; he then proceeded:

"Now, my son, I come to the saddest part of my life. After we had visited all the holy places in Jerusalem, we made up our minds to go on to Damascus, where St. Paul was converted to the faith of Christ. We arrived there safely, and saw all the places made celebrated by incidents in the life and sufferings of that holy man. We were then thinking of returning to our native land, when a terribly sad event occurred, which I shall never forget.

My brother-in-law and I had purchased real Damascus swords at the establishment with the sign of the 'Bleeding Head,' and were preparing ourselves for our homeward voyage. In order to take a last look at the city, before we left it for ever, we went out to ride round its walls, when suddenly a band of armed Turks attacked us. John Haber took to flight at once, but I stood my ground, and, with all the courage I was possessed of, defended my wife and myself. The servants who were with us also did their duty; but the superior numbers of the enemy were too much for us. All my brave companions were cut down; I then suddenly heard a cry of despair: 'Francis, come to my aid!'

I looked round and saw that several of the Turks had seized the bridle of my wife's horse, and were making her go with them at a full gallop. Despair gave me double strength; but the fight had an end very soon. My horse was killed under me, and, before I could rise, I received so many wounds that I was left senseless on the ground.

For months I lay in a small cottage, into which a good woman, who was a widow, received me and cared me, as if I were her son; when I came to myself, I found her attending to me with all the affection of a mother.

During my stay in the Holy Land I had learned a little of the language, and, as soon as I came to myself, the first question I asked, in a weak voice, was: 'Where is my wife?'

She laid her hand on my head, and, whilst tears rolled down her cheeks, she said: 'Poor man, your followers have been all killed, and your wife is either dead or sold as a slave.'

This communication was too terrible for me; I again became insensible, but soon came to myself again, and was not satisfied until I learned the full details of all that had taken place. The widow, in whose cottage I lay, was a Christian; she had seen the fight from a distance, and had been a witness of the flight of my brother-in-law, and of the carrying away of my wife.

Moved to pity, she had got her sons to lift me from the ground and to carry me to her cottage; they also found this good Damascus sword, brought it with them, and hung it over my bed. They could give me no information as

to where my beloved wife was; all they could say was, that they heard she had been sold in the slave-market.

When, after a long time, I was able to rise from my bed, I visited all the places which are held in veneration by Christians. On the spot where St. Paul was struck with blindness and fell from his horse, I prayed devoutly to that Prince of the Apostles to lend me his aid to find again my wife. I also did all that was in my own power to discover where she was. Every day I wandered through the Turkish quarters of the city and made inquiries in every direction, but all was in vain: the people either could not, or would not give me any information.

The old woman, who had so kindly and charitably received me into her house, also went through the city, making inquiries, but they were all of no avail. What use would it be to remain longer in that country? I only put poor Veronica to expense; and, as the Turks, in their attack on me, had plundered me of everything I possessed, I had nothing to give her in payment of all she spent on my account.

‘God be with you during your voyage home, Sir Knight,’ she said to me; ‘in what I did for you, I was only fulfilling my duty as a Christian, and I look for no reward for it. God will, perhaps, bless me for what I have done.’

I then bade farewell to my good benefactress, and commenced my voyage homewards. It was a sad and perilous journey, indeed, and I had to beg, wherever I came, for food and lodging. Reared up in comfort, that was very painful to me; but one slight hope buoyed me up. Perhaps Elizabeth had escaped, and, believing me dead, had made her way back to our home. This hope gave me strength to travel onwards, and I advanced towards my native land with fresh courage. But, alas! when I arrived at my castle, all these vain hopes crumbled away. My brother-in-law, John Haber, received me with the intelligence that my wife had been killed by the Turks, and that he also had narrowly escaped death.

This sad news cast me on a sick-bed; but that knight would not even await my recovery, and banished me with insults and ignominy from the castle. I might have gone and offered my services, as a knight, to some noble lord, but I preferred to withdraw into solitude, and in this forest, as a hermit, conceal my grief from the eyes of men.”

Tears were streaming from his eyes, and it was some time before he recovered his composure. At last he arose from his chair, pressed the hand of the young man, and said: “Go, in God’s name! I have described the route to you. May heaven shield you from such dangers as be-

fell me. Thank God, also, that you have not a wife accompanying you in your travels.”

II

Peter Simmelpuss left the cell of the hermit, sunk in reflection. When he got out into the forest, he stood still for some time, and reflected on what he had heard. “Going to the East is not without great danger,” he said to himself, and he began to think whether he should undertake the voyage or not. He then looked up towards the moon, which, bright and clear, in the form of a sickle, shone over the Castle of Burg.

It seemed to him as if there was a face in the inner part of it, and as if that face had a smile of encouragement on it.

“Old friend,” he whispered, “you have often shone down on my smithy, with your kindly beams; you will also travel with me over the sea and, at night, point my way out to me.” The longer, however, he gazed on the moon, the more melancholy did he become in his heart, and all kinds of weird and fantastic thoughts rushed through his brain.

At last, however, smiling at his foolish fancies, he proceeded homewards. He stopped again where the castle stood on the high crags. The windows were still lit up, and the dancers were whirling past them. He shook his head, and murmured to himself: “At one time the founders of that family journeyed to the Holy Land, in order to wrest the Sepulchre of the Saviour from the hands of the Turks; now they are dancing the old year out and the new year in. They are now celebrating their feasts in the mountain fortresses, tomorrow they will do the same on the banks of the Rhine; but the spirit of chivalry is departing, more and more every year, out of our land. If I were a knight, my sword would only be used in the service of the Lord, and I would not put it again into its scabbard, until the Holy Sepulchre was delivered out of the hands of the infidels!”

He walked on again, and soon reached his father’s smithy. He and his wife were in the principal room of the house, drinking a glass of wine, in honour of the new year.

His father filled out a glass also for Peter and invited him to join them. He took up the glass of wine in so absent-minded a manner that his father was surprised, and said to him:

“What dark clouds are those which I see on your brow, my boy? What are you thinking of?”

A sigh escaped from the young man’s breast.

“Forgive me, my good parents,” he said, “if perchance I make you sad today; but it is better

for all of us that I speak out my mind at once. The knight, John Haber, has so often jeered at me on account of our swords, that I was resolved to prove to him that I could make just as good ones here as are made in Damascus. Day and night I have worked at it and thought over it, but have not succeeded; the swords I make now are not a bit better than when I first began my experiments. They want springiness and elasticity. A hundred times I have said to myself that I must go to Damascus, in order to learn the art there, so as to gain honour and fame for you and for myself, and also, in so doing, to become a rich man. During the midnight Mass, at Christmas, I almost made a vow to do so, and afterwards I heard the voice of my grandfather, saying from his grave: 'Go to Damascus!' From that moment my decision was made, and I have been at the cell of Brother Francis, in order to learn the route from him. The good hermit has given me all the information and advice in his power, and now, in order to start on my journey, I only await the blessings of both of you, which I feel certain you will not refuse me."

Taking the hands of his father and mother in his, he gazed, beseechingly, on them; still, by his look, it could be seen that he was deeply in earnest.

Eva's eyes at once filled up with tears, and she began to sob. "Peter, my beloved son!" she cried, "will you rob me of the only other consolation, besides your father, that I have on earth? Even now I fret and grieve when you are only two or three days absent from me; but it would kill me if you went away for a long time, to live amongst strange men, and to subject yourself to all kinds of dangers. Remain at home, and get those wretched Damascus sword-blades out of your head."

Philip was not of the same way of thinking. When his son expressed his fixed determination to set out on his voyage of discovery, his eyes brightened up, and he cast a proud glance on his brave and resolute son. "Dear wife," he said, "do not regard this matter so sorrowfully. A young man, if he wants to make a name for himself, cannot remain always tied to his mother's apron. He must go out into the world, and see strange faces, and learn strange manners. In my time I travelled a good deal about the world, and, notwithstanding, came home again with a whole skin. "We were only newly married, when I had to be away from you for considerable periods, and your heart then was just as full of fear as now. Do you remember how you used to cry and sob? And yet all came right in the end."

"But you did not cross the ocean, Philip."

"If, at that time, I thought that I should

have learned anything by crossing the ocean, I would have done so. The world is always advancing, and your son will pick up many useful things which your husband passed on the way. From my knowledge of him, he will return to us with much knowledge, experience, and skill; and also with his heart as pure and good as when he set out."

"But who will help you at your work?" asked Eva.

"Don't bother your head about that, my dear wife. Thank God, I am still strong and hale enough to do the work by myself. An apprentice, to blow the bellows and help me now and then, is all I require, and I shall soon find a good one."

Eva had believed at first that her husband would have agreed with her; but when she saw he did not do so, she sunk her head and began again to weep.

"I can't help it," she sobbed; "if he goes I know I shall die of grief."

"My dear wife," replied Philip, "you must not look on things in that way. God exists in every part of the world, and holds his protecting hands over those who love Him. Misfortunes may happen to us any place, even at home, and, as far as separation is concerned, it won't last for ever. He will come to us safe and sound, and will be, for many years afterwards, the joy of his parents. However, let us not talk any more about it today, but let us sleep on it."

He then finished his glass of wine, and retired to his bedroom – Eva followed him. Peter, however, remained sitting beside the fire for a long time, and gazed, with uneasy feelings, into the flames. He felt very sad at going away against the wishes of his mother, but he could not make up his mind to remain at home. The longer he thought over his intended journey, the more necessary did it appear to him.

At length he also retired to rest, but he was still awake when the first sunshine of the new year stole in through his window. He got up and dressed himself quickly, for he heard his parents, who were getting ready to go to early Mass.

They all went together to the church. When there, Eva prayed devoutly to God, and begged of Him to direct her as to the best thing she could do. After a while peace came into her heart, and she was able to pray with a calm and resigned soul.

Breakfast was eaten almost in silence, and, when it was finished, Philip said: "Now, dear wife, what do you think of the intended voyage of our son?" She answered: "I have given myself entirely into the hands of God. May He direct me for the best"

Peter, who did not expect that she would yield to his wishes so soon, took her in his arms, kissed her, and said: "A thousand thanks, dearest mother! In whatever part of the world I may be, I shall never forget you. nor your teachings."

"When do you think of setting out?" she asked.

"As soon as possible," he answered. "The sooner I start, the sooner will I be back."

The good woman sought out the knapsack, which her husband had used in his wanderings, cleaned it well and brightened it up, inside and outside, and then asked if it was still good and strong enough for the journey.

"It is just a little old-fashioned," Philip replied; "but it is still strong, and there is not a hole in it."

"As for fashion," said Peter, "a workman, like me, need not trouble himself about it. The knapsack is quite good enough for me; I will prize it all the more, because it was the travelling companion of my father."

His mother got all his clothes together, and they made such a large heap, that Peter could not help smiling.

"Mother," he said, "if I were to carry all my possessions on my back, I should have rather unpleasant times of it on my journey. I will only take two shirts, four pairs of stockings, two pairs of shoes, and an every-day and Sunday suit of clothes; all the rest must remain here till I come back."

They then began to consult as to when he would start. In the end it was decided that he would commence his journey in three days.

On the morning of his departure, Eva took a purse from her pocket, and his father also wished to give him some money, but he refused it, and said: "No, my dear parents, you have little enough for yourselves. My own savings are sufficient for me for some time. When I get out of Germany, I shall begin to work industriously, and earn money, sufficient to pay my travelling expenses."

"That is a good resolution, my son," said Philip; "work preserves us from many evils. Keep apart from idlers, and avoid all sorts of bad companions. Have God ever before your eyes, and He will protect you from many a misfortune."

"Above all things, do not neglect your religious duties," said his mother.

He promised her that firmly and solemnly, and he then strapped his knapsack on his shoulders.

At first his parents intended to accompany him a short distance on his way, but, at the last moment, Eva said: "No it is better he should

go from this alone. Our going with him would only set the neighbours talking over and wondering at his departure, more than they otherwise would do."



They therefore bade each other good-bye, and embraced affectionately at the door. Eva went into the kitchen and began to weep and sob copiously, but Philip remained at the door, to gaze, with all a father's pride, at his brave and handsome son. Peter's heart was very melancholy; no matter how bravely he bore himself outwardly, in his soul he was deeply grieved at his departure. With his knapsack on his back, he first went straight to the churchyard. He there knelt down, at the grave of his grandfather, on the frozen snow, and took leave of him with a devout prayer. In his imagination he again thought he heard the words: "Go to Damascus!"

"I shall go, grandfather," he replied, "and I promise you that I shall return good and brave."

He gradually overcame the sadness which had seized on him, and wandered on towards the banks of the Wupper, for he also wished to take leave of Brother Francis, and to get some good advice from him. On his way he met the hermit in the wood, collecting dry branches for firewood.

"So you are really in earnest about your pilgrimage?" he asked.

"Quite in earnest, venerable father; but! did not wish to set out on my journey without having seen you again."

Brother Francis returned with him to the hut, and threw some of the dry wood on the fire; he then told Peter to sit down opposite to him, and he began to speak such good and wise words to the young man, that he gazed on him in astonishment. Everything he said evidenced vast experience in worldly matters. Peter paid the greatest attention to all he said, and made a firm resolution to be guided by his advice."

"Now go, and God be with you!" said the hermit. "When you arrive in Damascus, look for 'The Bleeding Head,' and try to obtain employment in that establishment, for its owner

understands his art better than any other man in Damascus. Also seek out the good widow, who tended me so charitably and so kindly. Her name is Veronica, and she lived in the street in which is the Christian Church. Perhaps she is dead, as she was not very young even when I knew her, but if so, you may find her children.”

Having embraced and blessed the young man, he then parted from him.

Peter walked quickly on, his head full of ideas and plans. He had not proceeded very far when he overtook another young man, evidently a mechanic like himself, and who was walking on in a lazy and careless manner. He was anxious to pass him by, but the youth called out to him: “Hallo! comrade! why do you pass people by, without even wishing them ‘Good day.’ You are an armourer, as I know by the marks on your knapsack. Let us be companions, and it will make the journey pleasant. Where are you going?”

“To Damascus!”

“Is that near this?”

“No; far away, beyond the sea.”

“Beyond the sea? Then you will wear out a good many pairs of shoes before you get there. Look over there; the door of that house is open; go to it and ask for charity for two wandering workmen. But you must try to look as if you were half-starved; and it won’t do any harm if you whinge and cry a little. People who have to ask for alms, must do so cleverly.”

“I cannot and shall not ask for alms,” said Peter.

“Oh! then your parents must be rich people.”

“Quite the contrary; but when I want anything I shall work for it, instead of begging it.”

“Hoho!” laughed the other, and he went straight over to the house. He soon returned, with a slice of bread and a piece of bacon. He offered a portion of it to Peter.

“No; I thank you,” he answered.

“Oh! you’ll lose your pride as soon as you begin to feel hunger,” retorted the young man.

Peter was quite disgusted with this lazy fellow, and took the very first opportunity he could find to get rid of him.

Before long he arrived in a small town, and went into a smithy and asked its owner if he had got any work for him.

The smith seemed much pleased, and said: “You have just come in the nick of time; a lot of work has come in, and we require an assistant; set to work at once!”

Peter at once did what he was told. The experienced smith saw directly that he was a first-class workman, and it could be easily seen that he was very well pleased with him.

“Can I also lodge and get my meals in your house?” asked Peter.

“Of course you can,” answered the smith; “a workman who does not live with his employer is not worth much. The hurried work I have on hands at present will be finished in a week, and you can then continue your journey.”

Peter set to his work so willingly, and with such skill, that his employer was quite rejoiced, and at supper that evening he did not conceal his satisfaction.

When the week was ended the smith asked Peter to remain longer with him, but he would not consent. When he had received his wages, he strapped his knapsack on his back, took leave of his employer, and set out again.

He had earned sufficient to enable him to travel a considerable time without having to work again; but whenever his money ran out he worked for a while, and then continued his journey. He proceeded in this way until he came to Vienna. This was a very important city, in which he knew that he could learn much that would be useful to him; he made up his mind to remain a considerable time in it.

The workshops and manufactories in that populous city were very different from the small ones, such as that of his father, to which he had been accustomed; and the art of iron-working had been there brought to such perfection, that the most beautiful artistic objects were made there by masters of European celebrity. The most elaborate castings and forgings were produced; but even there they had not the secret of making Damascus sword-blades.

On Sundays and holidays, when no work was doing, Peter went about, visiting the various churches. When he had performed his devotions, he carefully examined the artistic Communion rails, the door ornaments, the large candlesticks, and the hundreds of other things which were formed of iron and other metals, and he stored his mind, in that manner, with a great number of artistic ideas.

He made the acquaintance of an artist, a painter, and his friendship was of the greatest advantage to him. When he saw that Peter had such great taste for the fine arts, he advised him to learn drawing, and even offered to give him some lessons in it during his leisure hours.

After this he went almost every evening, when his work was over, to his new friend, and, notwithstanding his stiff fingers, and hands hardened with labour, he made very considerable progress in the art of drawing and designing. The painter was not only an artist, but also a practical man, and he taught him many things which he knew that he would be able to turn to good account in the future.

When he had taught him as much drawing as he required for his art, he gave him instructions in modelling in clay and wax, and also in the way of making moulds in which objects could be cast from molten metal.

A year passed in this way, when one day Peter paid a visit to this good friend, bringing him a present. It was one of his pictures, which he had so excellently reproduced in cast iron, that the painter gazed on it in astonishment.

"My friend," he said, "you would do well to settle down here in Vienna, for you are now so skilful in this kind of work, that you would be sure of doing a very large and profitable business. We want a man like you in this city, and I would aid you in every way in my power."

Peter answered, with a smile: "A considerable sum of money would be required to start in such a business, and I possess nothing but my two hands."

"With regard to that, my friend, you need not be uneasy," said the artist. "I have numerous friends who, on my recommendation, would, amongst them, lend you a sum of money quite adequate for the purpose."

"A thousand thanks for your great kindness," replied Peter; "but I regret it is out of my power to remain here; I have made a vow to perform a pilgrimage to the Holy Land."

"What? A pilgrimage?"

"Even so; but there is also a practical object connected with it; for I intend to proceed to Damascus, in order to try to learn the secret of making sword-blades, such as they manufacture in that city."

"Your endeavours will be all in vain, my dear friend," said the artist. "Very many have already made the same journey, with the same object in view, but they returned just as wise as when they set out; for the masters there keep the art so secret that any workman who betrayed them would certainly lose his head; and they all know it. Any person who could learn the art would certainly bring great honour on himself, make a large fortune, and enormously benefit his native country; but, notwithstanding all that, I strongly advise you not to attempt it. There are great dangers to be encountered on the way. As soon as a master armourer discovers your purpose, your life is not safe for a single hour. They watch over their secret with the eyes of a lynx, and there is a secret understanding amongst them, so that every traitor must die. They are all bound by the most solemn oath to carry out this agreement."

"I do not shrink before all those dangers," said Peter. "I also must carry out the vow I made at the grave of my grandfather."

As the artist persisted in trying to dissuade

him, he related to him all that had occurred at his native place, and besought him to say no more on the subject.

"Well then, go in God's name," said the artist; "but be very cautious, and, above all things, learn the Turkish language perfectly, and make yourself well acquainted with their habits and customs, for a stranger always awakens distrust, and if that happens the difficulties are very much increased. Death or imprisonment almost always follows."

Peter would not let himself be discouraged. "If I had to pass through fire," he said, "I should still go on, for I feel convinced that I shall succeed in my object."

With lively expressions of gratitude, Peter took leave of his good friend, strapped on his knapsack again, and started on his way. When he arrived at Constantinople he began to work again, and remained with his employer until he had acquired a perfect knowledge of the Turkish language.

He then joined a pilgrimage to the Holy Land, for he wished to prepare himself for his dangerous undertaking by fasting and praying at the Holy Sepulchre. We shall not minutely follow him in his journey, but only say that, when he arrived in Jerusalem, he devoutly visited and prayed at all the places made memorable by the various incidents connected with the life and death of the Saviour.

Strengthened in his soul, and full of trust in the help of God, he departed from Jerusalem, and arranged his route in such a way that, in going to Damascus, he might see many of the holy places which he had not yet visited. Thus he went steadily on, and approached nearer and nearer to the city which he so ardently desired to arrive in.

III

Peter Simmelpuss, after a very long and fatiguing voyage, was descending the slopes of the Antilibanon. He still wore the same clothes which he had brought with him from his native village, and carried the same knapsack which had accompanied his father in his travels through Europe.

He had joined a party of pilgrims, who were also going to Damascus. They were all thinking whether they would reach the end of their journey on that day or not, when, all at once, a sudden bend in the mountain path, disclosed to their delighted eyes numerous magnificent buildings on the hill-sides, and a perfect sea of houses in the plain beneath. They all broke out into a loud and long cry of joy. Even the

prophet Mahomet could not have felt greater delight when he gazed down on that earthly paradise.

The more they descended the more populous became the country, until they came to the extensive vineyards which surrounded Damascus. The villages, interspersed in them, were surrounded by high walls to protect them from enemies.

The incomparable beauty of the landscape almost intoxicated Peter Simmelpuss with ecstasy and wonder, and his thought, that all who lived in such a place must lead happy lives, was certainly a pardonable one.

They soon reached the southern gate of the city, called Bâb Allah, where the guards detained them with all kinds of pretexts; but their real object was to extort money from the pilgrims.

Peter knew, from what had been told him by Brother Francis, that the inhabitants of Damascus considered themselves superior to any other people on the globe, and that they were the sworn enemies of Christians; he therefore, at once, gave the soldiers some money and walked on, whilst the other pilgrims continued to argue and higgle with them.

Filled with wonder, he walked along the streets; all that he saw showed him that the city had had a great and glorious past, and that it was even still the Queen of the East. The magnificent mosques, with their slender minarets, towered up above the roofs of the houses. In every direction proud palaces, with sparkling fountains in their courtyards, presented a fairy-like appearance. The small houses, built of clay, which stood amidst the palaces, exhibited a most peculiar contrast to them. But that contrast did not lessen his admiration, for, wherever he cast his eyes, beautiful gardens, filled with tropical vegetation, and with trees loaded with the most luscious fruit, greeted his sight.

All the people whom he met were clad in Turkish costume; his clothes, on the other hand, looked so strange to the place, that the passers-by stopped and stared at him with astonishment. As he did not desire to draw attention on himself, he made up his mind to dress in the native costume as soon as possible; but he required, in the first place, some house to lodge in. He wished, if possible, to get into a house owned by a Christian, but as there were no special signs by which he could discover one, he did not like to bring suspicion on himself by making inquiries.

Whilst passing through a narrow street, he noticed a building which looked like a small Christian church, as, when he drew near it, he saw a cross over the door. This almost con-

vinced him that it was such; he entered and knelt down and began to pray devoutly. A man, who was dusting the altar, was evidently the sacristan of the church. Peter went up to him, and said: "Sir, I have come here from far-off lands, in order to exercise my handicraft, but, being a stranger, I know not where to find a Christian house in which I may lodge. I only require a small room and the plainest fare."

Edrisi, for that was the name of the sacristan of the little church, examined him carefully from head to foot, and, as he was pleased with the expression of the young man's countenance, he replied: "If you will be satisfied with very humble lodgings, I can take you into my house."

Peter nodded assent, and Edrisi led him, through a side door, into a garden. In it were fig-trees of such enormous size, that three men, with their hands joined, could scarcely reach round them. They were so covered with fruit, that the leaves were almost entirely hidden. From amidst the dark-green foliage of other trees gleamed the golden apples of the south, and, beneath them, bloomed flowers of indescribable beauty, so that Peter could not withhold a cry of delight and wonder.

"Come on with me now," said Edrisi; "you will often see these trees and flowers; and, if you remain here long enough, you will be convinced that Damascus is, indeed, an earthly paradise."

In the middle of the garden stood a small house, built of clay, which was the dwelling-place of the sacristan of the church. He went on before Peter and led him into the room, which was to be his future place of abode. It was simple, but quite good enough for him, and, what pleased him most, it looked directly into the beautiful fruit and flower garden.

"I will take this room from you," said Peter to the sacristan; "but charge me as little as you can, as I am but a poor mechanic, who has to earn his bread by his daily labour."

"You are a Christian," replied Edrisi, "and that is enough to make me treat you well. Come and eat something now, for you must be footsore and hungry after your long journey."

He then brought him bread and delicious fruits, and placed beside him some wine, which, in Damascus, is excellent. When Peter had ended his meal, Edrisi told him what he would charge him for board and lodging. The sum named was so moderate that the terms were at once agreed to.

"Are we near a place where I can buy some, clothes, such as are worn here, and such as are suitable for a man in my position?" asked Peter.

Edrisi told him that he would bring him at

once to the shop of a Christian merchant, where he would be able to procure everything he required; and they set out for it without delay. They proceeded through many streets and lanes, and, after a long walk, Edrisi stopped before a shop filled with ready-made clothes. Peter there purchased and put on a new suit of clothes; they then retraced their steps, the young man carrying his old clothes, made up into a bundle.

“I must now look out for an employer,” said Peter to Edrisi; “can you tell me of any place where I should be likely to be engaged as a sword-maker?”

“We cannot do any more today,” was the answer. “Tomorrow we shall try what can be done. In our beautiful city there are numerous masters in all branches of manufacture. Every art and science is practised in the Pearl of the Orient; but the masters are Mahometans, almost to a man, and it will be very difficult for a Christian to obtain work from one of them.”

“Whoever makes the best swords shall be my master,” said Peter.

“Ah! I understand. You wish to learn the art of making Damascus sword-blades,” replied Edrisi; “but that art is only known to the Turks.”

“It is nothing to me what the religion of the master may be,” said Peter.

“You speak like a child, which tries to get a knife, and then cuts itself with it. The Turks call our city, with pride, ‘the Quiver of God;’ and do you know why they do so? Because, according to their belief, Allah shoots his arrows from here for the destruction of unbelievers, especially Christians. You can, therefore, easily picture to yourself how a Christian workman would be treated. If you believe that you could learn the secret of forging Damascus sword-blades from those sons of the Prophet, you are indeed very much mistaken. They keep it a secret, even from the natives of the place. You can easily understand, therefore, that they do everything possible to guard it from strangers. Besides, my friend, you must not forget that your faith runs danger of being shipwrecked amongst the Turks.”

“In that, at all events, you are in error,” replied Peter; “my faith is quite safe, even amongst the Mahometans. The images of my father and mother are enshrined in my heart; I vowed solemnly to them that I would always keep God before my eyes, and I shall never break my vow, even if keeping it were to cost me my life.”

“Well, my young friend, that is indeed praiseworthy,” said Edrisi. “Remain firm to that resolution and all trials and sufferings will be to

your advantage.”

Edrisi then described to his new lodger all the remarkable places in Damascus. Although he was a Christian, he was, nevertheless, proud of his native city – the Pearl of the East. “My friend,” he said, “when you are here for some time, you will see wonders on wonders. Very many important events have taken place in Damascus. If you, at some time, have a leisure day, walk to Dschobar, at the North Gate, for there is the oldest synagogue, and in it is a grave, cut out of the rock, in which the Prophet Jeremias is buried. That synagogue and grave are considered most sacred by the Jews, and they assemble there, every Friday, and read the Holy Scriptures. When any Jew is in difficulties or trouble, he repairs thither, with his wife and children, and it often happens that they spend the entire night there in prayer. There is also another very wonderful thing here – the grotto in which Elias dwelt, when he was fed by ravens. The grave of that Prophet is, however, situated a half-day’s journey from our city. Go to the place where it is and get it shown to you. The Jews will do so willingly, for they are very proud and gratified at being permitted to have those graves under their care.”

Peter now interrupted him, and asked if there was not a street in Damascus called the Straight Street.

“There is one with that name,” was the reply.

“Does there reside in that street an armourer who has the head of a man, cut off and bleeding, as his sign?”

“Yes, my friend; the name of the owner of that establishment is Marsyas. He is considered the best armourer in the whole world, also a most virulent hater of Christians. I would not advise you to try and get work in his place.”

“It was his name which led me here,” said Peter; “tomorrow show me the way to his house, and do not fear for my faith, only for my bodily safety.”

Edrisi then went away, and Peter undressed himself and went to bed. Although he was much fatigued after his long walk, he could not sleep, for the new impressions which he had received on that day were running through his brain. A pleasant balsamic atmosphere came in through the open window, and filled the room with perfume. His thoughts wandered from the Pearl of the East, across the ocean, to the cold north, and to his father’s humble smithy. He saw him standing at his anvil and hammering the glowing iron, and his mother occupied with her household work in the kitchen.

Then it appeared to him that dark clouds gathered over their cottage; night covered the smithy with her dark veil, and the bright,

friendly stars twinkled over the village and over the forest. They were not large and beaming, as in the East, but they spoke to men with a thousand tongues, and promised them a better life above.

As he now turned his glance to the window he saw the crescent of the moon above the dark fig-trees, just as he saw it on that New Year's night when he visited Brother Francis in his hut on the banks of the Wupper.

"Oh, beautiful moon!" he exclaimed, "you are now shining down on my father's house, for you are so high that you can see half of the earth with one glance. Oh! bring from me a thousand greetings to my beloved ones, and tell them that their Peter, lying here, is thinking of and blessing them."

Then, again, he saw them in the kitchen, partaking of their simple supper, and he thought he heard his mother say: "Where now is our darling son? Oh! if I could only press him to my heart again, and feel convinced that he is still safe and in good health."

His father, he thought, then took her hand and said: "Be patient, Eva, God never deserts a good and brave man. He will return as safe and sound as when he left home. I feel quite certain that all will turn out well."

Early the next morning, before sunrise, Edrisi came into his room, shook him by the shoulder, and said: "Get up! Mass will shortly begin."

Peter arose, dressed himself as quickly as he could, and followed Edrisi to the little church. The sacristan lit the candles on the altar, and a considerable number of worshippers entered, who knelt down on the marble floor. Amongst them was a very old woman, whose face was so full of wrinkles that the original shape of her features could scarcely be discerned. Peter could not turn away his eyes from her, and he thought to himself: "That must certainly be the good widow, who so charitably nursed and cared for Brother Francis when he was a knight, and lay wounded in Damascus." But he drove away these thoughts from his mind, by saying to himself: "What nonsense is running through my head! There must be thousands of old women like this in the city!" He knelt and prayed devoutly until Mass was finished, and then returned to his little room. He was not there long when Edrisi's pretty little daughter, Saula, entered, and invited him to come and partake of the family breakfast. She took his hand in quite a friendly and confidential manner, and led him to her mother, whose name was Geta, and who received him cordially.

The table was laden with large bunches of grapes, and with figs, plums, melons, and olives.

There were also bread and honey on it. Edrisi soon entered, and breakfast commenced.

Peter took a large bunch of grapes, and was delighted with their juiciness and sweetness. He was also astonished at the plums. He thought that they would have had the same flavour as those in his native country, but they surpassed in every way those to which he had been accustomed at home, so that he scarcely recognised them as the same fruit. "Oh! happy land," he said, in a low voice, "if my father and mother were here with me, I would never leave you!"

"Yes, our city is indeed one of God's gardens," said Edrisi. "The entire people of the East know that, and especially the pilgrims who make their way to Mecca and Medina. Every year about sixty thousand pass through Damascus on their way to the City of the Prophet. Another name, therefore, of Damascus is the 'Door of Mecca and Medina.' At the time of the pilgrimage the streets are quite covered with camels and other beasts of burden; and, besides those we see here, immense numbers die every year in the desert, and their bones lie bleaching in the fierce heat of the sun. What a pity that the immense crowds that come on those pilgrimages are bitter enemies of Christianity. We have to be very cautious, and remain very quiet here, in order not to bring persecution down upon us."

"That is the truth," said Geta, the wife of Edrisi, "but God has been very good to us up to this, and our little church has never been injured."

The breakfast had ended. Although it was still rather early in the morning, the rays of the sun descended on Damascus with scorching heat. Large pieces of linen and other materials were stretched across the streets, from roof to roof, and afforded a grateful shade.

Edrisi led his companion through a number of narrow streets. On the way he seemed to be never tired of telling Peter all about the city, and of its great antiquity.

Thus walking and chatting to each other, they came to one of the principal gates of Damascus, at the end of a very long street. The gate, in addition to the large central arch, had two smaller side arches. The latter formed long arcades, with columns made of beautiful marble. Peter could not restrain an exclamation of delight.

"You must be careful not to exhibit your admiration so openly," said Edrisi, in a warning voice, "for, by doing so, you will soon be recognised as a foreigner, and treated as such. Be cautious and prudent; I am well acquainted with Damascus, and can give you advice as to how you should behave in it."

In the streets through which they had to pass were numerous workshops; the doors of all of them stood open, and they could observe the various handicrafts which were exercised in them. They had now arrived at the establishment which was distinguished by the sign of the Bleeding Head. Edrisi stopped and whispered: "This is the residence of Marsyas the armourer. Try your fortune, but do not on any account give my name as a reference."

He then turned round, and walked rapidly away. At the door an old man was sitting on a broken piece of a marble pillar, over whose white hair very many years seemed to have passed. He had the real Turkish type of features. Peter gazed up at the sign in order to convince himself that he was at the right place. Above him being a bleeding head, just such as Brother Francis had described to him.

He restrained an excitement, such as he had never before experienced; for he was now at the very place, to arrive at which he had undertaken his long and dangerous voyage. He then turned, as calmly as he could, to the old man, and said: "Can you tell me where I shall find the celebrated armourer, Marsyas?"

The stolid features of the old man brightened up somewhat, for his self-conceit was tickled by the stranger thus calling him a celebrated man.

"He is sitting before you," was the answer. "What is your business with him?"

"I want employment," said Peter.



"What can you do?"

"All kinds of ornamental work in iron and other metals: flowers, leaves, figures."

"Do you also know how to forge swords?"

"Not alone swords, but all other weapons, and coats of armour, also, with various kinds of ornamentation."

Whilst they were thus talking, the son of the armourer came out through the door. "Vika," said Marsyas to him, "here is a young man who wants work. He says that he is an expert in all the finest descriptions of metal work. Can you give him a trial?"

Vika told Peter to follow him, and then he

led him through several workshops, until they came into a garden. In it was a smithy, quite apart from all the others, and in which only the finest kind of metal work was made.

"If you are able to do all you say, you can have constant employment here; but many workmen come to us who, according to their own opinions of themselves, are masters in the art, but who in reality are miserable botchers. Here is a drawing of a very artistic balustrade, which is to be erected in the Mosque of Omaid. Do you feel sufficient confidence in yourself to undertake the making of it?"

Peter examined the design carefully, and then replied: "Although this, sir, is a piece of work requiring great experience and skill, I am quite ready to undertake it. I think I should be able to complete it in a month."

Vika smiled, for it appeared to him that Peter was altogether too sanguine.

"Well, then, make a beginning; in four-and-twenty hours I will tell you whether you are to remain with us or not. There is a little negro here who will blow the bellows for you. With the exception of him, however, you shall have no help."

Vika then went away. Peter turned to the black apprentice and asked: "What is your name, my boy?"

"Benhadad," answered the little negro, in a sad tone of voice.

"Why do you look so sad?"

"Why should I not be sad? I have to learn how to make Damascus sword-blades."

"And is that a reason for sadness?"

"Not, indeed, for a free man; but it is quite otherwise with regard to poor slaves, like me and my father."

"Explain yourself more clearly; I do not understand your meaning."

"Oh! it is easy enough to understand it. The making of Damascus blades is a secret which is only known to Marsyas, to his son, and to his slaves. In order that the latter may not betray it, they are always kept close prisoners in their workshops, and during the night they are kept chained up. Whilst working in the daytime the strictest watch is kept over them, so that they may not run away. You see, therefore, sir, that, when I grow older, I am doomed to perpetual imprisonment."

"That is, indeed, a sad fate," replied Peter; "but do not despair, heaven may have pity on you. I feel, indeed, the deepest compassion for your poor father, and if it were in my power, I would do something for him."

The conversation then ended, for Peter had to commence his work. He selected the pieces of iron most suited for the balustrade, and

brought them to the requisite heat in the forge fire, whilst little Benhadad worked zealously with him.

Now and then Vika came to the workshop, looked on for a short time, and then again departed. It could, however, be perceived, by the expression of his countenance, that he was pleased by the way Peter was doing his work.

After two days had passed, he said to him: "You can remain with us;" and he agreed to give him much higher wages than Peter had expected.

When, on the first evening, he returned to his lodgings, Saula, the little daughter of Edrisi, was already waiting for him at the door. She ran to meet him, seized his hand in hers, and led him into the garden, in which supper was laid out under one of the magnificent trees. The Most Reverend Father Vady, the priest of the little church, was one of the company. He was very much pleased with Peter, and when he heard that he intended to remain in Damascus, in order to practise his art, and learned that he was such an adept in it, he said that it would be a cause of great joy, both to him and to his congregation, if he made for them a handsome tabernacle for the Blessed Sacrament, as they wanted one very much for their church.

"I will make one for you with the greatest pleasure," said Peter. "If I had the metal requisite for it, and a small forge, with the necessary tools, the work would not cost you anything; for I would make it in my leisure hours."

After supper he procured a piece of parchment, and drew the design of a tabernacle on it; just such a one as he had seen in a church in Constantinople.

The priest examined the sketch, with the greatest joy depicted on his countenance. "If we had one like that," he said, "it would be one of the glories of Damascus."

"It shall be very much more beautiful than it looks in that rough design," said Peter. "Only procure for me what is necessary for its manufacture."

On the next day Father Vady went round to all the members of his congregation, and collected money from them. They contributed so liberally that, at the end of a week, he had sufficient to erect the small forge, and to purchase all the necessary materials and tools. When all was ready, Peter commenced this labour of love; every evening, when he returned from his day's work and had eaten his supper, he occupied himself with it till bedtime.

Marsyas and Vika, his employers, were so very well pleased with his work, that, although they had learned he was a Christian, they were resolved to keep him in their service. They,

therefore, left him free on the Sundays, and, in return, he agreed to work for them on the Mahometan holidays.

The balustrade for the mosque was ready by the stipulated time. Marsyas and Vika loaded their workman with compliments, and, in addition to his regular wages, they gave him, as a present, a considerable sum of money.

The day had come on which it was to be placed in its proper position in the Mosque of Omaidjade. Peter had to oversee its erection. When he went in amidst the marble columns and the glorious cupolas, the beauteous arches and the chaste inscriptions, a feeling of deep melancholy came over him; for he remembered that, on this very spot, had stood the Christian church of St. John, which had been formerly visited by thousands of worshippers.

He did his best, however, to conceal his sad feelings, for the display of them might be very dangerous, as it did not take very much to cause a Christian to be put to death by the fanatical Turks.

This balustrade added considerably to the fame of Marsyas and of his son; for all the frequenters of the mosque considered that they were the real makers of it. It caused the greatest admiration.

Just about the same time Peter had finished the tabernacle. It had almost required more time and labour than the large balustrade; but it was exquisitely finished, and Father Vady and Edrisi could scarcely find words to express their delight and astonishment. On a certain Sunday it was first exhibited to the congregation, and it met with the highest praise. Peter, however, said: "It is now only half-done; it looks simply like iron-work; but it still requires colouring and gilding to make it perfect."

Peter then drew a sketch of it, on a large scale, and painted in the colours and gilding which he thought necessary.

"I think I have sufficient money remaining for all that extra work," said Father Vady, "and I also know a man who, I believe, will be able to do it." He was summoned, and, having consulted with Peter, he agreed to undertake it. When it was completed and the Christians saw it in its finished condition, their delight was very great.

The wrinkled old woman, whom he saw in the church every morning, came, limping up to him, kissed his hand, and said: "Wherever you come from, stranger, I admire and respect you!"

"My good mother," replied Peter, "when one works for God's honour, the angels guide his hands, and he cannot take much credit to himself for what he does."

"Angels only help good people," said the old

woman; "those, therefore, whom angels help must be good!"

The other Christians also went up to him and pressed his hand. His modesty caused him to refuse all words of praise; but the priest said: "You have well deserved thanks and gratitude from us, and, when you return to your native land, the Christians of this city will never forget you. You will live in their memory, and reap the benefit of their prayers, as long as this tabernacle lasts."

Edrisi spoke in a similar manner, but he returned to the subject of Peter's employer, Marsyas, and urged him to give up working for him, and to look out for a Christian master. Peter, however, could not be persuaded to do so.

IV

Every Sunday Peter wandered through the city, in order to become thoroughly acquainted with all the remarkable things which it contained. As it was nine miles in circumference, its examination required a considerable amount of time and walking. He, however, arranged to devote a certain portion of each Sunday to the task, and, by that means, he could see, by degrees, the entire of the city.

On the day of which we are now writing, he was taking his usual walk, and he was not in a very good humour, for he had already spent two months in the workshop of Marsyas, and had not yet seen there a Damascus sword.

He had visited the tower from which the disciples had let down the Apostle Paul in a basket, and even the window, from which he had descended, had been pointed out to him; and he had also seen all the different places rendered celebrated by the conversion, to the faith of Christ, of that great saint.

On this, particular evening, having seen many things worthy of observation, he was returning home through a garden, filled with beautiful flowers and fruit, which was situated on one of the banks of the river. He was a little dazed with all he had seen during the day, but the balsamic odours, amongst which he was walking, revived him. He wandered on until he came almost to the edge of the river, and found there a small, plainly built cottage. On a bench, in front of it, sat a very old woman, surrounded by lovely flowers.

She held out her hand to him, and said: "Blessed be the hour which has led you to my cottage!" When Peter looked on her he immediately recognised the old woman whom he saw every day at Mass; he then sat down beside her

on the bench.

"Mother," he said to her, "I have often desired to speak with you, for you have lived here a great number of years, and, perhaps, can give me information respecting a lady, to whom a friend of mine has sent his kindest greetings, through me, should I chance to meet with her."

"Oh! there are so many women in Damascus! I must, at least, know her name."

"Her name is Veronica!"

"That is really very strange," replied the old woman. "That is my own name; but I cannot be the person you mean, for I have lived, during many years, a very quiet and lonely life, and do not know any person likely to send greetings to me."

"He is a man in the far west," said Peter, "a solitary hermit in a German forest, but at one time a brave knight, who came to the Holy Land in order to see the Holy Sepulchre. He also visited this city and, in it, was attacked and wounded by robbers."

"What is his name?" asked Veronica, in the greatest excitement.

"Francis von Hasbeck!"

The eyes of the old woman filled up with tears of joy. "Francis von Hasbeck!" she said, in a low tone! "He was, indeed, a good and a brave man, and my soul still rejoices on account of the slight service I was able, at that time, to render him. Is he still alive?"

"I have already told you that he still lives; but he is no longer a knight – only a poor hermit."

"How, then, did that change take place?"

"Here, in Damascus, he lost his beloved wife; and when, having passed through a thousand difficulties and dangers, he again arrived home, his brother-in-law, John Haber, drove him from his castle. Through grief for the loss of his wife and the cruelty of her brother, he retired to the forest, and built there a solitary hut, in order to devote the remainder of his life to the service of the Lord in it. He, however, never forgot you, and, having learned that I was journeying hither, commissioned me to seek you out and to tell you that he will remain grateful to you to the end of his life."

"Why have you not spoken to me sooner?" asked Veronica.

"How could I have known that you were the person of whom I was in search?" replied Peter.

"That is, indeed, true; but, heaven be thanked! we have now come across each other. Will you not often visit me, and tell me of the good knight, Francis von Hasbeck?"

"Most willingly, Mother Veronica," answered Peter; "for nothing can afford me greater pleasure than to speak of my native land, and of the loved ones that I have left in it."

Just then a young man, about his own age, came up to the bank of the river in a boat. He jumped on shore at once, fastened the boat, by means of a chain, to a pole which was firmly fixed in the ground, and walked up to the old woman, with a joyous expression of countenance. "This is my grandson, Balduin," said Veronica, introducing the young man to Peter; "he is the only one left to me of my family. He is as good as gold, and supports himself and his poor old grandmother, by ferrying people across the river."

She then turned to her grandson, and said: "Balduin, this is a young man who has come from a far-off land. His name is Peter; he brings us news of, and greetings from, the good knight of whom I have often spoken to you."

Balduin was a good and open-hearted youth; he and Peter were soon excellent friends, and numerous questions were asked and answered. Some of the questions were with regard to the different ways in which people lived in the West and in the East, and also about Peter's family.

Peter described everything to him as accurately as he could. Balduin then shook his head, and said: "How can you be happy in such a land? Never return there again; but remain with us. We will row and fish together. Our cottage is large enough for the three of us, as we can easily put up a partition, and make one of the rooms into two."

"Your city is, indeed, an earthly paradise, Balduin," replied Peter, "and I would willingly remain in it as long as I lived; but I have a father and mother at home, who would grieve themselves to death, if I did not return to them."

"You are right, Peter; I also could not leave my dear old grandmother. But could you not induce them to come here also to live with you?"

"It is an enormously long distance, and there are very many dangers on the way. My parents are no longer young, and their health and strength, I am sure, would not suffice for so long and fatiguing a journey."

Balduin had no idea of the hardships and dangers of such a voyage, for he had never been more than a few leagues distant from his native city, and, therefore, had seen nothing whatever of the world. They wandered about, chatting, beneath the splendid apricot and almond-trees, which, in Damascus, attain to a growth equal to that of the largest trees in our forests. Although the air was perfectly still, the fruits, on account of their ripeness, were falling from the branches, but neither Peter nor Balduin stooped to lift them from the ground, for there was a superfluity of them.

When evening came on, and it was time for

Peter to return to his lodgings, Balduin insisted on accompanying him part of the way, so that there might be no danger of his going a wrong road. When they came to the top of a little hill, which they had to cross, Balduin stopped and said: "Look there! that is the place where the Crusaders fought against the Saracens, and where much blood was shed. At that time Saladin was only eleven years old; he looked down on the combat from this very spot, and afterwards he himself became a renowned general."

They took leave of each other not far from the Christian Church, and Balduin made Peter promise that he would soon come to see him and his grandmother again.

When Peter Simmelpuss arrived at his workshop the next morning he found Benhadad, the black boy, who worked with him, in a flood of tears. When he asked him what he was crying for, he answered: "Yesterday they again beat my poor father very severely."

"Why did they do so; what did he do wrong?"

"He did nothing wrong; but the want of fresh air made him sick, and because, on account of his illness, he was unable to work, they scourged him in a savage manner. Alas! when I grow big, they will torture me also to death in the same way."

"As long as I am here they will do you no harm."

"Oh! remain with us always; I love you so much. I have told my father about you, and what a good and kind heart you have. He says I should kneel down and kiss your feet in gratitude."

Vika entered, just then, and interrupted the conversation. Behind him walked three or four men, loaded with swords, about half finished. "My friend," said Vika, "we have so many orders on hand, just at present, that all the workmen in our sword factory cannot complete them in time. I have brought you a good smith, who can help you well. Here is a finished model, and now quick to the work."

Peter examined one of the swords. It looked very strange to him, for it almost seemed as if the metal consisted of single threads.

"How curious it looks," he said to the new assistant, whom Vika had brought to him.

"That is the way the swords always look when they come down to us from the upper workshops," answered the man. "Slaves, who are always chained securely, work up there, and they know the secret. They are not, however, allowed to have the slightest intercourse with anybody; and if, by chance, one of them were discovered to have given a hint of the secret, his head would be immediately cut off."

They began to work, and behold! what had

appeared like threads or fibres of metal, by degrees changed into the strange ornamentation which he had noticed on the swords of Brother Francis and Sir John Haber.

In vain did he puzzle his brain to discover what was the cause of it. His assistant was unable to tell him. At last he made up his mind to speak to the black boy, Benhadad, on the subject. When dinner-time came, and he was alone with him, he bent his mouth down to his ear, and asked, in a whisper, if his father would give much to regain his freedom.

"He would do anything he possibly could, with delight, and would be grateful to you as long as he lived," answered Benhadad.

"Would he teach me the secret of making Damascus sword-blades?"

"In return for his freedom? Oh! most willingly, I am sure."

"Tell him that there is a man here who will free him if he teaches him the art of making those swords; but be exceedingly careful and cautious, my son, for, if it were discovered that I gave you such a commission, it would cost all of us our lives, including your father."

Benhadad, as a promise that he would preserve great silence on the subject, placed his finger on his lips; he then made a motion with his hand, as a sign that they should, just then, cease their conversation.

When evening came Peter quitted the forge, and Benhadad mounted a ladder, which was just outside of the door, and which had been placed there for him by one of the overseers of the workshops. As soon as he got to the top the ladder was removed, so that none of the slaves who were in the upper part of the establishment could have any intercourse with the workmen below. Benhadad had opened a trap-door, by pushing it up with his head, which fell down again into its place as soon as he had entered. He was now in a small forge, which was well furnished with all necessary implements; but it was a sad and gloomy place – a workshop and prison at the same time – for he who was once condemned to it never left it. Death alone opened his cell for him.

At a small anvil stood a tall and muscular negro. His ankles were fastened to the wall by means of a chain, but it was so long that he could move about all through the small apartment. His black face had so sad and painful an expression, that one could not but be at once struck by it; despair and a desire for death were clearly written on it.

There were several workshops, forming similar prisons, in the factory of Marsyas. They were all in a row, separated from each other by doors, which were always kept locked, and were

only opened once a day, for a very short time.

Benhadad went up to the anvil, threw his arms round the negro and kissed him, sobbing a little at the same time.

"Benhadad, my son," said the negro, "when is this torture to finish? If there is not an end to it very soon, I shall fall into despair and kill myself. I have often been tempted, already, to dash my head against the anvil, or to burn myself to death in the forge fire, but I have refrained for your sake; for what would become of you if I were gone? I know that I am not in a position to make your lot easier, but the very thought of being near you has often saved me from committing suicide."

"Father," whispered the boy, "do not yield to despair yet awhile. My mother died of a broken heart, caused by her sufferings. If you also were dead, my fate would be, indeed, a terrible one!"

"I know that, my son, and I would wish, therefore, that we should die at the same time. Have you the courage to become free, by the blow of a dagger, from the tortures which I fear are in store for you if you remain a slave like me?"

Benhadad started back, terrified. "Oh, father I!" he said, "it is a terrible thing to kill one's self!"

"It is indeed terrible, my son; but I see no other way of escaping from this horrible slavery."

"Perhaps there is, father – and nearer than you imagine!"

The negro suddenly raised his head; his eyes, which had habitually a dull and wearied appearance, began to sparkle, and he cried out, almost too loud for such a place: "Tell me the way and I will try it, even if I had to go through fire!"

"Father," whispered Benhadad into his ear, "the man with whom I work, down below, wants to learn the secret of making Damascus blades. He says that he will free you if you disclose it to him."

The negro stood as motionless as a statue. At last he said, slowly: "If he could do that I would teach him everything I know; but how can he do it? How can he baffle the vigilance of those who keep guard on me?"

"He is wise and cunning, father, and I feel sure he will be able to carry out whatever he sets his mind on. You may place the greatest trust in him."

"Well, then, tell him that I am quite willing to teach him the art."

The door, between the workshop in which they were and the next one now opened, and a white woman, in the costume of a slave, entered. She brought in a tray, on which were food

and water, laid it down before Benhadad and his father, and said: "Eat now, unhappy ones, and renew your strength for further sufferings."

She sat down on the coarse bed of the negro, bent down her head between her hands, and began to sob bitterly.



"Miriam," said the negro, "your sufferings and mine are indeed heavy; but you, at least, have the advantage of not being in chains."

"Whether in chains or not, I can never leave those dismal rooms. During more than thirty years I have been a close prisoner in these upper workshops, and the only occupation I have is to bring food, once a day, to the wretched slaves who work in them. I spend days and nights in thinking how I can escape, but I fear that I must die in this horrible imprisonment. Would to God it were soon! I have nothing to hope for or to love on this earth, since he, for whose sake alone I could desire to live, is dead."

"What is your native country, Miriam?"

"What use is there in telling you? It would do you no good to know it, and even thinking of it makes my heart bleed."

The negro was reflecting whether it would not be well to acquaint Miriam of the hopes of escape which he had; but he decided on not doing so, just then, fearing that, either by word or glance, she might unintentionally betray them.

The meal was ended; Miriam took up the tray, and said: "Poor man, I have another unpleasant piece of news to tell you. Marsyas has given orders that the slaves are to work during the next three nights, as he has more commissions on hand than can be executed during the daytime."

She expected that he would have received this communication with a curse, but, to her great astonishment, he smiled, and said: "When the master commands the slave must obey; I shall do my duty."

Miriam left the forge by the same door through which she had entered, and locked it. She had scarcely departed when the negro whispered to his son: "Tell your master that I have to work during the next three nights; perhaps

during that time an opportunity may be found to teach him the secret of our art. Recommend to him, however, the most extreme caution, for even a look or a word might betray us to the overseers."

Benhadad promised that he would be exceedingly careful, and then went down again to the lower workshops, in which Peter soon appeared. Benhadad looked carefully around, and, when he had made certain that they were alone, he whispered: "Master, during this night and the two next ones, the slaves must work. If you can manage to get up to my father, he will teach you the art of making Damascus swords."

Peter almost let the hammer fall from his hand, so great was his joy; but he restrained himself, and said in a low tone, expressive of discouragement: "How could it be possible to get up to him, as Hassan, every evening, locks the trap-door, by means of a strong chain which is attached to it, to a large stone in the floor beneath."

"Hassan is fond of spending his nights in pleasure and jollity," said Benhadad, "reflect as to what can be done, for your happiness and ours depend on it."

They had to stop their conversation, as Vika appeared and requested Peter to get on with his work as quickly as he could. "We have a very large order for Persia," he said, "to be completed in a certain time, and we shall have to pay a heavy fine for every hour's delay."

Such a request came upon Peter at a very inconvenient time, for the communication of Benhadad had almost set his head swimming, and he wished to have a little leisure to think of some plan, by means of which he could get to the slaves' workshops. Every hour seemed an age to him till evening came.

"Benhadad," he whispered, "if Hassan comes, ascend the ladder as usual, but pay particular attention to what takes place below. If I can get him away, by any pretence, I will go up to your father."

He looked for and found a piece of bent iron, suitable for picking a lock. He had just concealed it in his pocket when Hassan arrived in the forge, and said: "It is now time to leave off work, Benhadad; up the ladder with you, so that I may lock the trap-door."

Hassan had taken a great fancy to Peter, and reposed great confidence in him; for he sometimes gave him small presents. "Master," he said, "kindly tell Benhadad to hurry off."

Peter made a sign to the boy, who at once quitted the forge and mounted the ladder, which had been placed in its proper position by Hassan, and who then fixed the chain and locked it. Peter, who had followed them from

the workshop, then said to the Turk, with a smile: "Hassan, Hassan, mind yourself, lest Marsyas finds out how you pass your nights."

The Turk became suddenly terrified, fell on his knees, and exclaimed: "Oh! master, do not betray me!"

"I certainly will not betray you; but you must tell me where you go every night, when you ought to be on duty here."

"Except being absent from my duty, I assure you, master, that I do nothing wrong. I spend the nights with my wife and children. Marsyas, if he wished, could easily let me do so; but he has not the heart for it. Although he knows that the slaves are kept in such a way that it is impossible for them to escape, he requires, nevertheless, that I should sleep every night beside the chain. No person ever comes here at night, and my absence cannot be discovered unless you betray me."

"Do you consider me a savage, Hassan? As long as I work in this forge, you can spend your nights with your family, undisturbed; a syllable about it shall never issue from my lips."

Hassan kissed his hand, and said in a low voice: "May the blessing of Allah be upon your head!"

Peter then extinguished the forge fire, and quitted it. In going out he designedly passed by Marsyas and Vika, who were in the verandah before the door, enjoying the cool evening breeze. Old Marsyas stopped him and entered into a conversation with him. In order not to excite any suspicion, he sat down beside them. Vika began to speak about his work, and said: "My friend, I have good cause to be satisfied with you. You are a skilled and quick workman, and for that reason I shall soon increase your wages considerably. When the present order for swords is completed, I shall entrust to you a small, but very artistic piece of work. I believe that there is no one in my employment, except yourself, who could execute it."

"Sir," said Peter, "your confidence in me does me honour; but it comes at a very awkward time."

"How so, my friend?"

"I came to this city with the object of learning how to make Damascus sword-blades; as, however, I see that the art is kept a strict secret, I have given up the idea of discovering it, and am thinking of travelling on into Persia. However, I shall remain here until I finish the piece of work which you have just mentioned to me."

On ordinary occasions Vika and Marsyas would not have let him go away without an effort to retain his services. When, however, they learned what had brought him to Damas-

cus, they thought it was better not to urge him to remain there, lest, later on, the desire to discover their secret might spring up again in his mind.

"Perhaps you act wisely in thinking of going on to Persia," said Marsyas to him; "there are many branches of the art of working in metals which have been brought to great perfection there, and which we do not know much of in this country. When the work I want you to execute for me is finished, we can speak further on the subject."

Peter then arose from his seat, walked quickly away, and proceeded along the main street until he came to a lane which branched off from it. He turned into it, and was soon in a labyrinth of narrow streets and alleys.

V

Peter Simmelpuss was in the neighbourhood of the Seraglio, when the streets, which during the night were usually so still and quiet, presented a strange appearance. A great crowd of men and women was passing through them, uttering loud cries. Negroes and other slaves were walking beside the procession, carrying blazing torches. Behind them walked a number of men carrying hallibards, gilt javelins, and other weapons, such as had been used in Europe very many years before.

As the street side of the houses in Damascus have, as a rule, only a gate or a door and no windows, there were few spectators, and Peter found it difficult to discover any person who could tell him the meaning of the procession. At last he went up to a Turk, who was standing at one of the public fountains and looking on with evident satisfaction. Curiosity, as to how ancient European weapons had found their way into Damascus, urged Peter to ask what it all meant.

"I believe that the people themselves do not know the meaning of it," answered the Turk; "they are only keeping up an old custom, which is repeated every year on this particular day. In the year 1147 the German Emperor came to Damascus, in order to conquer the Pearl of the East; but he and his army were beaten, the rich tents, embroidered with gold, were taken, and all the weapons fell into the hands of the inhabitants of Damascus. In memory of this victory the people form a procession through the city once a year, carrying the tents and weapons which were taken from the enemy; but I do not believe that there are two amongst the entire throng who know why they are doing so."

Peter then walked on rapidly, and carefully

avoided the sentries, who were walking up and down, fearing that, if he fell into their hands, he might be sent to spend the night in the guard-house, as a suspicious character, and thus be prevented from going to the father of Benhadad. He soon reached a corner where he had to make a detour, in order to get to the rear portion of the premises belonging to Marsyas.

In a short time he arrived at them; he climbed over the garden wall, without being seen, and walked onwards. An exquisite perfume from the flowers and blossoms surrounded him. The mild beams of the moon lighted up the beautiful garden, which was full of fruit-trees and sparkling fountains. He felt almost sorry when he thought that he should soon quit that land, which was like an earthly paradise; but just now he had no time to think – he must act.

Looking about cautiously in all directions, to see if there was anyone about who might betray him, he crept stealthily along under the shadow of the trees, and came at length, with a beating heart, to the workshops, in which the slaves were confined. He cast another glance around, bent down to the ground, took the bent piece of iron from his pocket, and, with some difficulty, opened the padlock which fastened the chain, that hung from the trap-door, to the flags beneath. He then put the ladder in its place, and ascended. Benhadad, who was watching above, in anxious expectation, had heard the slight noise that Peter had made; he pulled up the trap-door and held out his hand to him, to help him to ascend.

“Benhadad,” whispered Peter, “you must go down; remove the ladder and lock the chain again, for it might happen that, during the night, someone might come to examine the trap-door. Conceal yourself behind a bush, but do not fall asleep. Before morning dawns you must let me out of this.”

Benhadad was a smart and intelligent boy; he nodded assent, and descended the ladder. When Peter turned round, the negro was standing opposite to him, and said: “Master, I hope that everything is such as my son has represented to me.”

“I have arranged with him,” replied Peter, “that you are to impart to me the secret art of manufacturing Damascus sword-blades, and that I, in return, am to set you free.”

“And my son also; is it not so?”

“Certainly.”

“I am satisfied. Here is my hand on it.” He placed his large black hand in the white hand of Peter, and the agreement was sealed.

The negro then looked cautiously around the forge, and said: “I do not think that we shall be disturbed during the night. If, however,

such happens, I must arrange a hiding-place that you can slip into. If it becomes necessary, go quickly into the chimney-corner, and keep as close to the wall as possible. I shall then take such a position that you will be concealed. Now, pay attention to what I do, and see how I weld thin rods of steel and iron together; how I first make them hard and brittle, and afterwards pliant and elastic. A good Damascus sword must cut a piece of iron across, without receiving a notch itself, and must also be able to cut through a piece of suspended parchment. It must also bend, without breaking, until the point touches the hilt, and then spring back again quite straight. The lines and markings must go right through the metal, so that they cannot be removed by a file or grinding-stone.”

He then took up several very slender rods, like thick wire, some of them of iron and some of steel, and fastened them together, at both ends, by means of pieces of wire, and then put them into the forge-fire, whilst Peter worked the bellows. He paid the greatest attention to every movement of the negro, and the slightest detail did not escape his notice.

The negro removed the bundle of thin rods from the fire, took hold of them with a large pincers, and began to hammer one end of the glowing metal in a peculiar manner, until all the separate pieces were forged into a solid mass, and he then acted in the same way with the other end, and threw the metal, still red-hot, into water.

“That is the first part of the process,” said the negro. “If you have observed me well, I think you can do it yourself. Try, now.”

Peter selected the thin rods and proceeded just as he had seen the negro operating.

“You can perform that part of the work perfectly. Now for the second part of the process!”

He then explained everything in the minutest detail, so that Peter could not fail in understanding him. Midnight, in the meantime, was quickly approaching, when, suddenly, a noise was heard at the door. Frightened almost to death, Peter hastily ran into the recess beside the chimney; the negro took a position so as to hide him, and continued his hammering. Things were scarcely arranged thus when the door opened. It was Miriam, who brought bread and fruit in a basket.

“How is this?” asked the negro. “Marsyas appears to have become quite amiable.”

“Marsyas and Vika have been, for a considerable time, in a peaceful slumber; I have taken these things from the provision room, and bring them to you. Those who work at night should have abundance of food.”

The negro tasted the provisions, and Miriam

sat down on a heap of iron, and began to talk to him. "My friend," she said, "my slavery has never been so terrible to me as just at present. I often lie awake all night on my bed, thinking how I can effect my escape; but I can see no possibility of doing so, for guards are kept on all sides; strong bars are on all the windows; there is no way to get away."

"Miriam," replied the negro, "is my imprisonment easier to bear than yours? You go about, comparatively free, whilst I am fastened to the wall with chains, and am also bitterly afflicted with the thoughts as to what the fate of my son shall be. If I had not that boy to think of, I should have killed myself long ago; but since this morning, Miriam, my reflections are less sad; I look forward to a brighter future than I formerly hoped for."

"Fool!" exclaimed Miriam; "in this house there is no better future. If a special providence does not aid us, we shall all die slaves. Oh! why has God been so hard on us? I once lived in comfort, even in luxury. I could have everything that my heart desired; I possessed large estates and a magnificent castle; I had a beloved husband and a brother, and, during thirty long years, I have seen neither of them. The Turks killed my husband, and my brother —"

She stopped abruptly, and her cheeks became wet with tears. Although his own fate was so sad, the negro could not help feeling deep pity for Miriam.

"Miriam, my dear and good friend," he said to her, "if I ever should succeed in procuring my own liberty, I would do all in my power to free you also."

She raised her head quickly, and said: "You speak as if you were already half free. In the name of God, conceal nothing from me!"

"Be calm, Miriam; as yet I know nothing for certain; but Benhadad has a white master. The man appears to have a noble heart, and to feel pity for us."

"A white master? Oh! if I could only see him and speak with him for a few moments, I would beseech him, on my knees, to set us free."

"Can you keep a secret, Miriam?"

"I can be as silent as the grave."

"Will you be calm if I make a certain communication to you?"

"I shall be as firm as steel."

"Well, then, prepare yourself to hear a secret. The white man, whom I have mentioned to you, has promised to free Benhadad and me, if I teach him the art of making Damascus swords."

"Oh! do so, then; liberty is life!"

"I have already promised him to do so. If Allah be not against us, we shall soon be free."

"And I," sobbed Miriam, "must still remain a wretched slave. No! a thousand times, no! He must set me, also, at liberty. During thirty years I have kept concealed about me a purse, containing several valuable diamonds. They shall belong to him who shall set me free. Speak to the white man; tell him that my jewels shall belong to him. I shall die of grief if I remain much longer enclosed within those gloomy walls."

"Restrain yourself and be calm, Miriam; I will call the white man."

He stepped to one side, and said: "Come forward, my friend, and show yourself to unfortunate Miriam!"

Peter came forth from his place of concealment, and stood before her. She fell on her knees before him, stretched out her arms, and cried: "Oh! deliver me also! Here are diamonds; take them, and free me from this wretched slavery!"

"Miriam," replied Peter, "do not risk the success of our escape by your loud exclamations. Rest secure that I shall do my best to save you also. I do not, however, require your precious stones; they will be useful to pay the expenses of our journey home."

"Oh! excellent man! Let us then fly at once!"

"We must not be too hasty, Miriam. In the first place, I must secure a safe hiding-place; and it is not time yet to do that. We must await an opportunity, when supervision shall be less exact, and when it will not be noticed that the noise of the anvil ceases for a short space of time. The feast of Ramadan is not far distant; let us wait till it comes."

"Still so long?" said the negro, with a sad expression of countenance. "It will seem almost an eternity to me."

Miriam also complained about the length of time that should elapse; but Peter explained to them that some time was necessary for him to mature his plans, as they could not escape from the city of Damascus suddenly, but should remain concealed in the neighbourhood for some time, as, otherwise, they should be followed and taken prisoners again.

With heavy hearts they at last yielded to his arguments; but they urgently besought him not to allow the Ramadan festival to pass without making the attempt to procure their freedom.

"For the present we must separate," said the negro; "come again tomorrow night, and after that as long as you like; for I shall teach you all that I know myself."

Miriam conquered her excitement as well as she could, and then went noiselessly away through the door by which she had come. Peter then lifted the trap-door and descended. Ben-

hadad crept cautiously from amidst the shrubs in which he had been concealed, so that nothing occurred which could give rise to suspicion.

"Go up now," said Peter, to him "and help your father to make up for the time which he has lost in talking with me."

Benhadad hastened up the ladder; Peter then pulled the chain tight, locked it to the stone, placed the ladder in its usual place and hurried off, through the garden, to his dwelling-place, in order to get a few hours' rest before beginning another day's work.

The following morning, as soon as he had breakfasted and attended Mass, he hurried off, in order to look out for a safe hiding-place for his friends. There were several amongst the ruins of towers and palaces, which were plentiful in this place; but all of them were not suitable. In order to go some distance from the city, he hired a mule, and proceeded to a village named Maquom Ibrahim. Bathed in perspiration he arrived there; but he had not chosen a propitious day, for the Turks were streaming in, from all directions, to the small mosque. Curious to know what was taking place there, he went in amongst the worshippers. He then saw a spectacle which astonished him by its novelty. In the interior of the mosque a number of Dervishes had assembled, who wore long-pointed hats, and were indulging in all kinds of strange dances. They were swallowing red-hot coals, were scourging their naked bodies, so that the blood was running, and sticking swords into different parts of their bodies. In order not to be late at his work, he quitted the mosque and mounted his mule, in order to return to Damascus. Before the mosque, in the meantime, several men had assembled. Outside of it lambs were being killed and roasted. Amidst the sound of cymbals, trumpets, and drums, numerous persons were feasting. All about, corpulent and long-bearded Turks were eagerly swallowing savoury pieces of meat. Even the high officials of the mosque were amongst them.

Work had already commenced when he got to his forge. Vika cast a rather discontented glance at him, and said: "We are over head and ears in work, and you are very late this morning."

"I ask forgiveness, sir," replied Peter; "I acknowledge that I am a little late, and I regret it. I shall, however, endeavour to make up for it by working hard during the day, and by remaining a little later than usual this evening."

He faithfully fulfilled what he promised, so that Marsyas and Vika were well satisfied with him. He spent the night in the same way as the preceding one, and the negro assured him that it would only require another night to perfect him in the art of forging a Damascus sword.

In the evening, before he left the workshop, Vika came to him and showed him a design of an artistic tabernacle. "This is for the sanctuary of the principal mosque," he said to him, "and as we hope, by means of it, to add greater glory to our house, we are most particular that it should be worked out with most extreme care, and in the most perfect manner. Can you undertake to make it?"

"Certainly," replied Peter; "but leisure and reflection are absolutely essential in order to work it out properly. Let me give up, for the present, the making of swords, so that I may be able to devote my entire time and attention to it."

"When do you think you could have it finished?"

He reflected for a short time, and then said: "Three days after the feast of Beiram; I could not possibly do it in a shorter period."

"I did not calculate even on so short a time as that. Do your best with it. If it comes up to my expectations you shall receive, in addition to your wages, a special gratuity, which will be useful to you during your voyage to Persia."

We shall not describe minutely what took place during the next few days. The reader can easily picture to himself how things went on in the negro's forge.

On the following Sunday Peter visited Veronica and his young friend, Balduin. The conversation turned on the knight, Francis von Hasbeck. "When you return to your home," said Veronica, "bring him a thousand greetings from his old friend."

"I shall not fail to do so, Veronica. Would that I could also bring him news of his wife! The Turks must have killed her; but neither Edrisi, the sacristan, nor Father Vady know anything of her grave."

"The knight, Francis, sought for her, in vain, for a considerable time before he left this city," answered Veronica; "how, then, could you hope to discover anything, when so many years have elapsed? Give up the vain hope to discover any tidings of her; you will never succeed."

"My good friends," continued Peter, "I have a secret to entrust to you, and I require your assistance in carrying out the object of it. Can I depend on both of you to preserve the strictest silence with regard to it? Otherwise I might get into great trouble and danger."

"How can you doubt of our fidelity?" said Veronica; "whatever you confide to us shall remain buried in our hearts; and all assistance which is in our power to give shall be willingly rendered."

"Listen then. I came to this city in order to discover the secret art of making Damas-

cus sword-blades, but I had almost given up all hopes of succeeding in my design when, in the establishment of Marsyas, I found a black slave, who, during the night-time, taught me the art. In return for his doing so, I have promised to set him, his son Benhadad, and the white slave, Miriam, at liberty; and now I am searching for a safe place in which they could remain concealed for some time."

Veronica's countenance assumed an anxious expression. "I fear," she said, "that you have embarked in an enterprise which may bring great trouble and danger on you."

Balduin also became very serious; but he soon brightened up again, and said: "Mother, do not make too much of this matter. Peter must keep his word, and we shall be able to find, without much difficulty a secure hiding-place. Come, Peter, we shall set out to look for one at once!"

They then started on their voyage of discovery. On their way they had to pass the great bazaar, or mart, of the city, and as Peter had never visited it before, they went into it and examined all its wonders and curiosities.

When they quitted it Balduin led Peter to the walls which surrounded the city. They were, to a great extent, in ruins. Balduin passed through a gap, which was in a portion of them, and wandered on until they came to a very large meadow, situated on one of the banks of the river. In it there were numerous ruins. It seemed as if several palaces had formerly stood in it.

"Come, my friend," said Balduin, "I will be able to find a hiding-place for you here, into which no person will dare to enter; for it is the current belief amongst the Mahometans of this city that these ruins are haunted by the souls of unjust judges, of murderers, of bloodstained sultans, and such like evil spirits."

A flight of stairs, in ruins, led down between two towers into a series of rooms, leading one into the other, and which, at one time, must have been very magnificent. There were the remains of sculpture on the walls, and the floors were formed of mosaics, still in a fair state of preservation. The ceilings were supported by pillars, made of marble of various colours.

"This place of concealment is quite safe," said Balduin; "no inhabitant of Damascus would be daring enough to come here. For a long time I avoided these ruins myself, until, one Sunday afternoon, curiosity led me to visit them. When I once came, and saw no ghosts, I often returned. Your friends can hide themselves here in perfect security until an opportunity to leave the city presents itself."

Peter was quite satisfied that the ruins would

make an excellent hiding-place; and as Balduin assured him, over and over again, that there was not the slightest chance of any person coming to search for the fugitives in them, he resolved not to wait for the feast of Beiram, but to free them from their slavery on the earliest possible night.

They wandered about, until evening, in the delightful gardens; Peter then said to his young friend: "If no unexpected impediment offers itself, I will endeavour to set them at liberty tomorrow night; but I shall require your assistance. As you know, the environs, during the night, are guarded by soldiers, and if anyone is found walking about without a lantern, he will be put in prison. From the river, however, a small canal runs just behind the garden of Marsyas; it is broad enough to admit of a boat being steered through it. Will you undertake to bring one there and take us into it?"

"Most assuredly, my friend; and with the greatest pleasure," replied Balduin.

They then returned together to Veronica, who had supper prepared for them. Peter was too much excited to eat much, and soon proceeded to his lodgings, and went to bed. Early in the morning he arose and went to his work. Vika praised him for his zeal, for he was anxious that the tabernacle should be finished as soon as possible.

Peter worked until midday with the greatest industry. "Benhadad," he then whispered to the black boy, "tell your father and Miriam that they are to have everything prepared for tonight."

"This night; so soon?" asked the boy.

"Yes; I have changed my mind. Be very cautious, however, and do not betray us by word or look. The lives of all of us depend on you."

The boy trembled with joy; but he controlled himself, kissed the hand of his master, and hurried away. He mounted the ladder very rapidly, and when he entered his father's forge, he fell on his neck, sobbing and smiling at the same time.

"What is the matter with you, Benhadad?" asked his father. "What has excited you so much?"

Benhadad then whispered into his ear: "You and Miriam are to be prepared; this very night Peter Simmelpuss will make the attempt to deliver us!"

The hammer fell from the negro's hand. "This night?" he said, and shook his head doubtfully, as if he could not believe the good news.

"This very night, father!" replied Benhadad.

The negro did not reply; he stood motionless as a statue, but fiery glances flashed from his

eyes; he was thinking of the many years he had spent in chains and slavery, deprived of fresh air, and all the comforts and pleasures of life. "And now I shall be free!" he at last murmured. "Allah be praised for such happiness! And I shall take you, my darling son, away with me, and preserve you, at least, from the terrible fate to which I have been so long condemned. I say again: Allah be praised for it!"

He suddenly remembered that he had spoken louder than he ought to have done, and gazed, terrified, towards the door leading into the next workshop. He heard, however, the uninterrupted sounds of the hammers of the other slaves, whom he had never seen, but who, he knew, longed for liberty just as ardently as he himself and his son yearned for it.

After a short time the noise within there ceased; evidently Miriam had come with the midday meal of the captives. In a short time she also came into the forge occupied by the negro. Almost more sorrowfully than ever, she gazed on him, and said: "When is our slavery to end? I fear that Peter has imposed a task on himself which he will not be able to carry out. If it turns out thus, it would be far better for us if our hopes were never excited."

"Miriam," replied the negro, "I have good news to impart to you; but be cautious and silent: keep your joy locked up in your heart."

"What news have you?"

"We are to be prepared for this very night; for which Peter has made his arrangements to set us at liberty."

The communication had been made too suddenly; she fainted and fell down. The negro lifted her from the ground and placed her sitting on a heap of iron bars. She came to her senses, however, much sooner than he expected. "Is it true?" she asked in a dazed kind of way. "Can it be true that, after thirty years of slavery, I shall see again my native land? O my God! what happiness, what mercy is this!"

"Miriam," said the negro, "restrain your feelings, for it would be terrible if we, now so near our freedom, should betray ourselves."

"Do not be afraid. I have learned how to keep my words and looks in check. In the early period of my imprisonment I could not restrain the expression of my anger; but the scourge, which often made my flesh bleed, taught me silence. Let you two be on your guard, however. At the same hour at which I came the last two nights, with food for you, I shall come also tonight, and prepared for flight."

She then arose and left the forge. When Peter, on that evening, left his workshop, Damascus seemed to him more silent and tranquil than usual. He had, indeed, been accustomed,

in the evenings, to find only a few people in the streets and lanes; and he had gone about the city, after dark, without a lantern, because he had found out nooks and corners into which he could rapidly run and hide himself if guards made their appearance. On this particular evening, however, there were more sentinels making their rounds than usual, and the long, windowless houses, which were handsome only in the interior, presented themselves to him with a spectral kind of appearance.

"O my God!" he prayed to himself, "grant that no impediment may arise! How terrible would it be to those poor captives, if they had to wait for me, but in vain, all the night!"

He walked on rapidly and soon reached his lodgings. Edrisi, Guta, and little Saula, were waiting for him, and led him into the family room, where supper was spread out.

"A gentleman has been here," said Edrisi, "who wants you to undertake an artistic piece of metal-work for him. You will be able to earn a considerable sum of money by it."

"He has come too late," answered Peter. "The work I have in hand for Marsyas will occupy every hour I can devote to it until the feast of Beiram; and when it is finished I must leave Damascus."

This communication grieved them all very much, for they had conceived a great affection for the young man, and had nourished the hope that he would make their city his permanent dwelling-place.

"During the short time that I shall remain here I am compelled to take another lodging," continued Peter; "but I shall not bid you farewell as yet. Before I depart I shall come to you again, and, in the meantime, I shall leave all my things here."

This piece of news was even more unpleasant to them than what he had said before, and they besought him not to depart from their house until he was actually leaving Damascus; they could not, however, get him to change his mind. Little Saula wept, and Edrisi and Guta were sorely afflicted.

"If you must go out now," said Edrisi, "take, at least, a lantern with you, for a report is spread about that a band of robbers has made its way into the city. All the guards are on the alert, looking out for them. You might easily be taken for one of them if you are not provided with a light."

He hastily bade them farewell, and issued out into the darkness of the night. The fears of Edrisi were not without good cause; almost every minute he met a troop of armed soldiers, who stopped him, and held a light up to this face, in order to examine him; he feared, every

moment, that he should be taken into custody, and that his friends should await him, in vain, all the night; but he was more fortunate than he expected. When he came to the spot where, through a gap in the wall, he could enter the gardens, he blew out the lantern, and walked rapidly to the residence of his friend, Balduin. Veronica and he were at supper.

The old woman, on that evening, was fatigued and excited. When their meal was ended, she arose and said: "Excuse me today, my old limbs require rest. Sit down for a while on the bench outside the door, and enjoy the freshness of the evening air and the perfume of the flowers."

Having thus addressed Peter and her son, she retired into her bedroom. Peter then whispered to his friend: "We must make the attempt this night; it is very dark, and we, therefore, shall be the more likely to succeed. Besides, I do not wish to keep the poor people in suspense until the feast of Beiram."

"As you wish, my friend," replied Balduin; "you know that I am ready to serve you at any moment. Let us act with all necessary caution, so that we may not be surprised and pursued."

They remained seated outside on the bench until they thought that Veronica had fallen asleep, and then they proceeded towards the bank of the river.

VI

The moon was not visible, but the stars shone over the dark streets of the Pearl of the East, but the light they gave was not sufficient to betray the two young men. Balduin let his friend get into the boat first; he then loosened the chain from the post, and got into it himself. "Lie down in the bottom," he said to Peter; "I can manage the boat by myself."

Peter then lay down on his back, and gazed up at the star-lit firmament. With a silent prayer to Him, who created all those stars, he besought that his enterprise might succeed. The more they advanced into the city, the louder became the barking of the dogs, owned by no person, who, during the night, prowled about the streets, seeking for food. The inhabitants of Damascus have the rather disagreeable custom of throwing the carcasses of dead animals into the streets, and if a camel, horse, or ass, falls dead, no one troubles himself any more about it, but lets it lie where it has fallen. Large packs of those dogs quickly assemble and tear the flesh from the bones, so that, in a short time, the bloody carcass of the animal forms a disgusting spectacle.

Peter had often been obliged to guard himself from those half-savage animals, for even the Turkish costume is not a perfect protection against them; by their sense of smell they can discover whether a person is a native or a foreigner.

After some time Balduin turned into a side canal, which branched off from the main one, and shortly afterwards into another smaller still. Peter then ventured to raise his head and gaze out into the darkness. At last he stretched out his arm, and whispered: "We are now at the place."

Balduin drew in his oars as silently as possible, laid them down in the boat, took hold of the branch of a shrub, which hung over the canal, and drew himself over to the bank

"Wait here," said Peter, in a low tone, "perhaps the delay will be longer than you should like, but you must be patient and forbearing with us."

"Do not trouble yourself about me, but go on now, in the name of God!" replied Balduin.

Peter then got out of the boat and crept, on his hands and feet, through a gap in the fence. He then selected the darkest pathway, and arrived, without being seen, at the spot, under the slaves' workshops, where the chain, fastening the trap-door, was secured to the large stone. Hassan was not there, and Peter's heart bounded with joy. He then quietly opened the door of his smithy, took from it a large pair of pincers, which, during the day, he had placed so that he could easily find them in the dark, and then locked the door again. Having acted thus, he opened the lock, which secured the chain, and ascended the ladder.

When he entered through the trap-door the negro began to tremble in every limb, and laid his hammer aside.

"In the name of God!" whispered Peter, "continue your hammering; we cannot go until Miriam comes."

He then concealed himself in the chimney-corner and awaited, with considerable impatience, the coming of Miriam. She, in the meantime, was going from workshop to workshop with her basket, giving their usual food to all the slaves. She found the last slave, whom she visited, asleep, worn out by the hard and unceasing work of the last few days.

"I hope he will not remain asleep too long," she said to herself, in a pitying voice; "if Vika comes and finds him still slumbering, he shall pay dearly for it."

She then placed his food and drink on the anvil, and opened the last door, which she quickly locked again behind her.

"My friends," she said, "everything is in our

favour; Marsyas and Vika are sleeping and, besides the slaves, there is not a single person awake in the house.”

Peter then came forth from his hiding-place and cut the chains of the negro with the powerful pincers which he had brought with him. Benhadad held the ends of the chains, whilst he was cutting them, so that they might not fall on the floor and make a noise. When the negro felt his limbs free he could scarcely control his great joy.

Peter then hastily descended the ladder, and his friends followed him.

He had intended to bring the pincers back to the place from which he had taken them, but he thought it better not to run the risk of doing so. He therefore urged his companions to follow him with the greatest speed. In order that none of them might miss their way; they all held each other's hands, Peter going first. They had scarcely crept out through the gap in the fence when footsteps were heard. Peter motioned to them to lie down flat on the ground.

Just at that moment Hassan got into the garden through another part of the fence. “By Allah!” he said, in an audible tone, as if speaking to himself, “that is a curious rumour which has gone through the city. People are all saying that the band of robbers has come into Damascus for the purpose of freeing all the slaves in it. I must keep a very close watch, from this time forward, over those that have been placed under my charge! Vika and Marsyas won't stand any nonsense; my head and body would quickly part company if any of them were to escape!”

Let us now follow Hassan. Running quickly, he got through the garden and came to the door of the smithy. Feeling about – for it was now very dark – he discovered, to his amazement, that the ladder was standing upright, and that the chain was unlocked. He hastily ascended, and discovered, to his horror, that Benhadad and his father had fled. The chains, cut through, lay on the floor.

He immediately began to roar out so loudly and to make such a clamour that all the inhabitants of the place must be awake very soon.

The fugitives had, in the meantime, got quickly into the boat, and laid themselves down flat in it. Balduin rowed with his full strength and skill, and the little vessel shot forward like an arrow.

Vika and Marsyas were awakened from their slumbers by the loud and prolonged cries of Hassan, and came in hastily, crying out: “What is the matter? – what has happened?”

Hassan had quickly made up his mind what to say. “Sir,” he answered, “I was at my post, and was suspecting nothing evil, when,

suddenly, I was attacked by a dozen robbers. ‘Where are the slaves?’ they roared out at me.

‘We have no slaves here,’ I answered; but three men seized on me and held me fast; the others mounted the ladder, having first unfastened the chain. They soon returned, one of them carrying the negro boy, and his father following. One of them then gave me a blow on the head, so that I fell on the ground, unconscious, and only came to myself when the robbers and the slaves must have been a considerable distance away.”

Vika uttered loud curses. He awakened his attendants from their sleep, and examined the garden carefully. The fugitives could see, from a distance, how they went through the garden, in all directions, with lanterns. Balduin exerted his utmost strength, in order to row quickly forward.

“Do not be uneasy,” he said, “we shall get to our hiding-place in good time.”

He rowed as rapidly as possible for some time; he then guided his boat to the river bank, and told them to get out of it. They did so, and followed him, at a rapid pace, over the fields. After some time he halted, and said: “We are now at the ruins. Get into them as quickly as you can!”

They lost no time in doing as he directed. “Remain here,” he then said; “I shall soon return with food and lights.”

He then hurried away. The fugitives had not the courage to speak a word, for they were not yet convinced that they were in a place of safety. They strained their ears in order to detect any sound, but outside all remained still; they began to breathe freely, believing that they were not followed.

Half an hour later, Balduin again returned; he brought with him a large basket of provisions, a vessel containing oil, and a lamp. He then went on before them through the ruins, until they came to a vault, situated so that a light could not possibly be seen from outside.

They all sat down in it and partook of their meal; Balduin then left them, having promised that he would soon return. Benhadad asked if they could leave the ruins the next morning.

“No, my boy,” answered Peter. “We cannot depart until I have the work finished which I have promised to do. Besides, it would not be prudent to try to get out of the city at present; for you may be quite sure that Vika will arrange to have all the gates carefully watched during the next eight or ten days, and will keep spies going about the streets, into whose hands we might fall. For these reasons it is best to be patient. When the month of Ramasan and the feast of Beiram come, the pilgrims, going to

Mecca, arrive in the city in very great crowds. The looking after foreigners then becomes exceedingly difficult, and we shall easily find an opportunity to escape.”

They all saw the force of his argument; but a second question then arose, namely, the direction in which they should go. Benhadad and his father ardently desired to go to Africa, whilst Peter was resolved to return to Germany. “Miriam,” he asked, “what is your native land?”

“I am a German,” she answered; “but, during thirty years, I have suffered under a miserable and unmerited slavery.”

“A German!” exclaimed Peter, highly rejoiced, in his native tongue. “I also am a German. Relate to me how you came hither.” “I came on a pilgrimage, my good friend! My husband and I had formed a firm resolution to visit the Holy Land. My brother accompanied us, and we came across the seas. We visited all the places which have been made celebrated by the Holy Scriptures. At last we came across the Anti-Lebanon, to Damascus. When we had examined everything that was worth seeing in the city, we were preparing to start for our home – but we were attacked by a band of Turks. My husband and his attendants defended themselves with the greatest bravery; but my brother at once took to flight. I remained as near as I could to my dear husband. I shall never forget the terrible moment, when he was thrown from his horse and cut and hacked with naked swords. Being but a poor, feeble woman I could not render him any aid. Notwithstanding, I rushed forward, determined to at least die with him, when some of the Turks darted forward, seized the reins of my horse, and dragged it off with them in a rapid gallop. My cries and shrieks were all in vain; no person had any pity on me. We did not stop till we came to an old ruin, where, to my amazement, I found my brother. I reproached him bitterly for having acted in so cowardly and treacherous a manner towards me and my husband.

“Your husband is dead,” he said to me. “I have just come from the spot where he fell, and have convinced myself that the last spark of life has departed.”

Miriam, after a few moments’ pause, continued: “Although I had almost come to the conclusion, in my own mind, that such must have been the case, the information, thus ruthlessly given, was too much for me, and I lost my consciousness. When I again came to my senses my wicked brother said to me: ‘It is not meet that a woman should be the possessor of large estates. When you return home you will have to put on widow’s weeds and spend the remainder

of your life in mourning; sign your name, therefore, to this covenant, which is an acknowledgment, on your part, that I have purchased all your landed property, and paid you the entire purchase-money.’

These words were spoken with such tearful coolness that I could not doubt for a moment of his evil intentions. Horrified and indignant, I replied: ‘Brother, how can you dare to propose such a thing to me?’ I had already suspected, from various things which I noticed, that he coveted my property; but I never believed that he would endeavour to get it from me in a wicked and dishonest manner.

I firmly refused to do what he required. He drew his sword and threatened to kill me; but, evidently, the idea of shedding his sister’s blood, terrified him, for he placed it again in its scabbard. He then clapped his hands, and immediately two Turks approached, with fierce and cruel faces. ‘Here is the woman, of whom I have spoken to you,’ he said to them, ‘and here, also, is your promised reward. Take her away and kill her!’

He threw a purse to them, containing gold pieces, spurred his horse, and galloped off. I was struck dumb and paralysed, but still I could not believe that it was his intention that my life should be taken.

Weeping, I fell on my knees and besought the Turks not to kill me. At first they paid no attention to my tears and prayers, and were preparing to pierce my breast with their daggers.

They suddenly, however, whispered something to each other, and then one of them said: ‘What benefit shall we reap by killing her? – we can sell her as a slave, and divide the price we get for her between us.’

The other nodded assent. In that fearful moment, if my life only were spared, all else was indifferent to me. They tore my gold chain and some other ornaments from my neck, and dragged me off to the slave-market in the bazaar. Many people collected around me, for the sight of a white woman excited their curiosity. ‘A golden chain and a cross set with diamonds; how much for them?’ called out one of the robbers. Some goldsmiths approached, examined the articles, and purchased them. My horse, also, easily found a purchaser. Then my own turn came.

I did not tremble, for, in my breast, I had a small purse concealed, which was full of diamonds. With it I thought I should be able to purchase my freedom again.

Amongst the purchasers around me was Marsyas; I did not then know him, and I believed, from his looks, that he was a mild and benevolent man. He bought me for a small sum,

and then led me away to his residence, where I was securely locked up. I, at first, was haughty and indignant; but, in a short time, Marsyas and Vika forced me, by repeated blows, to do the most servile work. In my despair, I was about to offer them my diamonds in return for my liberty; but it suddenly struck me that they would say: 'You are our slave; everything you have is our property;' and would take the jewels from me by force.

I therefore said nothing about them, and sought some opportunity for flight. Twice I succeeded in getting away, but was soon taken prisoner again, on both occasions, and savagely scourged. When I tried to fly a third time they shut me up in the workshops of the slaves. 'Your business, in future, will be to bring their provisions to them, and you shall never see the streets of Damascus again,' said Vika, who was then but a young lad. That is my history."

During this brief narrative, Peter had got into an indescribable state of excitement. "Miriam," he cried out, when she had ended, "your real name is not Miriam, but Elizabeth!"

She became deadly pale. "How do you know my name?" she asked, in amazement.

"Elizabeth von Haber, lady of the good knight, Francis von Hasbeck," cried Peter, and he went down on one knee before her.

"I am, indeed, she whom you name," said Miriam, trembling; "but how can you know anything about me; or how can you have learned the name of my dead husband?"

"He is not dead, noble lady," replied Peter; "he is living, as a hermit, under the name of 'Brother Francis', in the Wupper forest."

Miriam, or Elizabeth, as we must henceforth call her, almost fainted with joy; she seized a broken column, beside which she was standing, in order to keep herself from falling, and then said, in a voice broken by tears and emotion: "He lives, then, still! O my God, I thank Thee! Tell me, my dear friend, all you can about him."

Peter then related to her all he knew of the hermit. Elizabeth became more and more excited as he proceeded, and, when he had finished, she fell on her knees, and exclaimed: "O my God! I give Thee praise and thanks! I have not, then, suffered in vain for thirty years; I shall again see my beloved husband, and spend the remainder of my days with him. What unspeakable happiness! Oh! let us depart from hence this very night!"

Peter found the greatest difficulty in calming her, and making her understand that it was absolutely necessary to remain where they were, until all risk of being pursued had passed away. After a long struggle with herself she yielded, but could not help saying: "Oh! the time be-

tween this and the feast of Beiram will seem to me almost as long as the thirty years of my imprisonment!" She then took from her breast the purse containing the diamonds, and said: "Bring these to some jeweller and obtain money for them; we shall want it for our travelling expenses."

Peter took a few diamonds from the purse, and said: "I shall go to the bazaar and sell these by degrees. Having too many at one time would only arouse suspicion; besides, the weight of too much coin would be inconvenient to us during our flight. If God is propitious to us we shall get to other cities, where we can sell the remainder of the precious stones, according as we require money."

Benhadad and his father had noticed the joyous excitement of their former companion in misfortune; but as the conversation had been carried on in the German language, they did not know what it was all about. When Peter interpreted it to them, and when they learned that Miriam, or rather Elizabeth, was the wife of a Christian knight, and that her husband, whom she had long thought dead, was still alive in his native country, they also expressed their joy at it, and congratulated her sincerely.

Peter now advised that they should all lie down and take some rest, as he wished to be at his work early in the morning, and make some progress with the artistic piece of iron-work which had been entrusted to him. He led Lady Elizabeth to the most comfortable apartment he could find amongst the ruins, kissed her hand, and bade her goodnight.

Early the following morning, before sunrise, Balduin came with the intelligence that Vika and his father had employed a party of twenty men, in order to endeavour to discover the fugitives. When he heard the wonderful story of Elizabeth and her husband, he was so sincerely and heartily rejoiced, that he found it difficult to express his joy. "Noble lady," he said, "I would only be too glad to bring you to the cottage of my mother, but the neighbourhood is too frequented, and there would be too much risk in your staying there. Let me, however, bring her here to you this evening, as soon as it is dark, for I know that nothing could give her greater pleasure than to see the wife of Francis von Hasbeck, and kiss her hand."

"Oh! do bring your good mother here," said Elizabeth; "I owe her a great debt of gratitude, indeed!"

Balduin hastened away in order to accomplish her wishes before morning came. Peter went with him; but in a short time they separated, and he went in the direction of the residence of Marsyas. Day was just dawning when

he reached his workshop. Vika received him, in a great state of excitement, and related to him that robbers had come during the night and had carried off his best sword-maker, together with his son and a female slave named Miriam. Peter had to exercise great caution in order not to betray himself; but he found it very difficult to dissemble, and he was very much relieved, indeed, when he found himself alone in his forge. He amused himself very much, however, with Hassan. That unscrupulous individual told lies in such a barefaced manner, that Peter could only, with the greatest difficulty, keep himself from laughing. "If the robbers had not bound me so fast, that I could not move a limb," he said, in an arrogant and boasting tone of voice, "I should not let one of them get away alive. Afterwards, twelve more of them came and wanted to carry off more of the slaves, but I seized a bar of iron, and belaboured them to such an extent that they soon ran away."

"Yes, Hassan," said Peter, "during the past night you have shown a splendid example of heroism to the city of Damascus; I feel convinced that it will not soon be forgotten. It will not be long before you shall be given some important office."

Hassan was quite rejoiced at these words; for the foolish man thought that he was speaking quite in earnest.

Peter soon, however, got rid of him, and commenced his work with great zeal. Vika came to him from time to time; he could not master his annoyance and vexation, and told him that he had despatched several horse soldiers in every direction, in order to discover the fugitives and take them prisoners again.

Balduin had led his old mother to the ruins before the break of day, and introduced her to Elizabeth. The lady had received her with the greatest marks of gratitude and veneration. She made Veronica relate to her, in the minutest details, what had happened to her husband, what they had said to one another, how she had tended him, and, in the end, how they had parted.

She remained with them the entire day. When Peter returned, in the evening, to the ruins, he brought with him three purses, full of money, which he had received for the diamonds. He handed them to Elizabeth.

"Veronica," said the noble lady, "my husband, I know, left you, without being able to repay all the care and kindness you lavished on him. Accept from his wife what he could not give you. Take this purse; for a long time the contents of it will provide you with many comforts."

"No, no," cried Veronica, "charity and mercy

induced me to receive your husband into my house; and I shall accept no reward for so doing. There would be an end of Christian charity, if everything were to be paid for."

Elizabeth, however, pressed her so earnestly that, in the end, she accepted the purse. "I will keep this money for my grandson," she said; "for, as far as I am concerned, I want for nothing."

All happened just as Balduin had foretold; none of the natives ventured to come near the ruins; and they were in such security there that they could have spent their entire lives in them without being disturbed.

Nevertheless, the hours passed very slowly, indeed, until the time came when the fugitives could leave Damascus; and scarcely a day passed without Peter being asked if his work was nearly finished. He proceeded with it as fast as he possibly could; but it required much time and patience; and, although he often spent portions of the night at it, he had not yet completed it at the commencement of the month of Ramasan. Everything, however, has an end.

On the day before the beginning of the festival he went to Vika, and said: "Master, my work is finished; be so good as to come now and examine it."

Vika went with him at once to his workshop. When he saw the work of art complete, he was delighted with the workmanship, and when Peter showed him a sketch of it, with all the colouring and gilding carefully painted in, he pressed his hand warmly, and again made an attempt to keep him in his employment. Peter, however, shook his head, and said: "I cannot remain any longer in Damascus; I must again take up my pilgrim's staff and depart."

"Well, then," replied Vika, "come into our dwelling-house. You must take a parting meal with me, and receive the wages which is due to you."

Peter had never before been in the residence of his employers; his astonishment, therefore, was very great when he saw its magnificence. It was certainly no small honour for the workman, about to depart, when Vika's wife made her appearance, in order to tell him how hard her husband felt it to part with him. She wore a dress, richly embroidered with silver, and had a golden belt around her waist. The lace veil, which covered her face, was fastened on her forehead by a magnificent diamond, and fell down behind to the ground. Pearls and diamonds adorned her neck, and all her garments were made of the most costly materials.

Peter did not waste much time in admiring all this magnificence. When he had eaten a little he arose, shook hands with both of them,

and went away. Although it was still early in the day, all business places and workshops were closed. This happened always on the festival day of Beiram.

In the city it could easily be seen that the pilgrims, bound for Mecca had begun to arrive, for large and small caravans were entering, by all the gates, which were to form one enormous one for the journey through the desert. Pilgrims came from all parts of Turkey in Europe, from Asia Minor, Russia, Syria, Mesopotamia, Kurdistan, Persia, Tartary, Mongolia, and even from India. Some were mounted on horses, others on mules and asses; but all were making their way to the great bazaar, in order to exchange their various animals for camels; for those are the only beasts of burden which can go a long journey through the sandy deserts.

The pilgrimage from Damascus to Mecca and back requires one hundred days. The hire of a camel for the pilgrimage costs from two to three thousand piastres. Peter had never before seen such a throng of men and beasts. The Turks, however, told him that it was only the beginning, and that, in a few days, it would be enormously greater.

He had regularly every day converted one of Lady Elizabeth's diamonds into money; on that day he sold the last he had of them. He then went to the house of his friend Edrisi, in order to take leave of him. Guta and her little daughter, Saula, could scarcely realise that he was parting from them for ever, and that they would never see him again in this world. Edrisi used all the arguments he could think of to induce him to remain in Damascus, but, of course, they were of no avail. Father Vady, the venerable priest, whose Masses he had so often attended, blessed him, and prayed to God to protect him in his travels. At last he tore himself away from those good people, packed all his things together, and hurried off to his companions in the ruins. "I am now free," he said, "and we shall set out in a few days."

This communication was received by all of them with the greatest joy, but the second question was: "When we start, in what direction are we to go?"

"My opinion is," said Peter, "that it would be best to join the caravan, for, in that way, we shall have safe escort, and need not be uneasy during the voyage. We will stop at Cairo. Then we shall have time to consider as to what Benhadad and his father are to do. This noble lady and I can take a ship there, to bring us to our native land."

They were all satisfied with this arrangement, and Peter was commissioned to make arrangements with the conductor of the caravan.

He then went off again to the bazaar. He there found the conductor of the caravan, around whom hundreds of men were assembled, who all wished to take part in the pilgrimage. Peter had to wait a considerable time before his turn came.

"What brings you here? What is your business with me?" asked the conductor of the caravan. "Do you also wish to join the pilgrimage to the holy city of Mecca?"

"There are four in our party, and we want to go as far as Cairo," answered Peter.

"Then you are not pilgrims," replied the conductor, in a contemptuous tone. "It is against my principles to allow such persons to join my caravan, but I will permit it on this occasion. I cannot hire camels to you; you must buy them. How many of them do you want?"

Peter did not wish to make the journey too expensive for Lady Elizabeth, and therefore said: "Two will be sufficient for us, but we must have two panniers in which the travellers can lie down."

The Turk took out his tablets, calculated on them the expense of the journey and the price of the camels, and said: "Pay me that amount, and I will give you a receipt; you will then be here in the bazaar, with your party, in three days from this. I have marked the number 11,000 on this card; you will find cards, with the same number on them, attached to the camels intended for you. You must take care to find them before the caravan starts."

Peter paid the required sum in gold pieces, took the receipt for them, and departed.

When Peter's friends, in their hiding-place, learned how near the day of their deliverance was at hand, they were rejoiced beyond measure; but to escape observation, at the time of their departure, was a matter of considerable difficulty. Damascus was still care fully watched by paid spies, with a view to discover and arrest the escaped slaves. The fugitives, therefore, consulted amongst themselves as to the best plan they should adopt, but several, that were proposed, were rejected, on account of the difficulty and danger that would be experienced in carrying them out. Balduin suggested, at last, that Elizabeth should assume male attire, such as was worn in Damascus, and that a false white beard should be attached to her face, so that very little of her features could be seen. This experiment was soon made, with the result that no person could possibly recognise her.

As for Peter, no disguise was absolutely necessary, but Elizabeth insisted that his appearance should be changed, as seeing him might give Marsyas and Vika a clue to the discovery of his companions. He yielded at once, and

assumed the same kind of disguise as Elizabeth. But what was to be done with regard to the negro and his son? They would surely be betrayed by their black faces and curly hair. Balduin's cleverness was sufficient to overcome this difficulty also. "When the time comes," he said, "I shall provide a covering for their faces and hands, which will last until their arrival in Cairo. As soon as you halt there and the caravan has again started, you can all lay your disguises aside and appear in your real characters."

When everything respecting the disguises was arranged, Peter returned again to the city to purchase the necessary provisions for the journey. He purchased them from a shopkeeper in the immediate vicinity of the bazaar, and arranged with him that they should be called for on the morning of their departure.

The last night of their sojourn in the ruins had come. Balduin and his mother arrived, in order to spend the last few hours with them. Whilst they were affectionately conversing together, Balduin was busily occupied in transforming the two negroes into citizens of Damascus. He succeeded beyond his expectations, but their hair was his great difficulty. Notwithstanding all the trouble he took with it, he could not change its crisp, curly nature. At last he put the cloak of a Bedouin Arab on each of them, and fitted snow-white turbans on them, which came down over their ears, and left only their faces visible, quite covering the obnoxious hair.

In spite of the dangerous position in which they all were, they could not prevent themselves from laughing heartily. About midnight Veronica arose, kissed the hand of Lady Elizabeth, and said: "Depart now, in the name of God, and, when you arrive home, tell the good knight, Francis, that old Veronica will not be much longer on this earth. It is, however, a great joy to her, that the wife, whom he has believed to be dead, during so many years, is still alive."

When she and her son had departed, the travellers lay down to rest, so as to be ready to make preparations for their journey very early in the morning.

VII

On the following morning, before day dawned, three cannons were fired. It was the signal arranged for the pilgrims to assemble. Peter quickly arose, and the others also issued from their sleeping places. "Let us start at once," said Peter to them, "we must be at some dis-

tance from the ruins before the sun rises."

They followed him at a rapid pace, and were soon in the streets of the city, in which there were enormous crowds of human beings. Many of the pilgrims could not find their way; for that reason the streets and lanes resounded with cries and shoutings, the uproar of which was intensified by the howls and barks of the half savage dogs.

Peter, however, was well acquainted with the locality through which they had to find their way. With his hands and elbows he made a passage for himself and his companions, and safely arrived with them to the neighbourhood of the bazaar.

The camels were arranged in long rows around that building; the sun arose and lighted up the noisy throng of human beings, but it was not an easy matter to find the right camels.

"Remain at this column," he said to his travelling companions; "as soon as I shall have found our camels, I will return to guide you to them."

He searched about for a considerable time, often pushed by the crowds from one side to another. The drivers and guides, who had not yet found the persons for whom they were engaged, kept continually roaring out their numbers. Peter soon perceived, with a feeling of relief and joy, that the animals were arranged according to the order of the numbers that were attached to them.

All the difficulties of his search then vanished. He ran quickly along the rows and soon found his two camels. As soon as he made sure that the panniers, which he had ordered, were all right, he showed the driver his order, and then ran back and led thither Lady Elizabeth, Benhadad, and his father. He and the negro called at the merchant's shop, where he had bought them, for the provisions and other articles, and laid them down beside the animals.

The uproar lasted fully an hour, and then there was a sudden quietude and silence. "The Pasha is coming!" was called out in all directions.

Such was the fact. He was riding leisurely between the almost endless rows of camels. A troop of armed soldiers accompanied him, and a large crowd of the citizens of Damascus followed, who were attracted from their homes in order to witness the curious spectacle. Apparently, the Pasha examined each individual pilgrim, but it was only in appearance, for he wished to appear very watchful. When he came to the place where Peter and his companions were standing, Elizabeth felt a thrill of fear passing through her, for he stopped and seemed to gaze intently on them. Her fear increased

enormously when Vika also came up, and actually addressed some words to her. She did not answer, as she feared that the sound of her voice might betray her. The others also remained silent. The Pasha and his suite then passed onward, believing that they came from some distant part of the country, where they had a peculiar dialect of their own, and did not understand the language spoken in Damascus.

When the Pasha had finished his inspection a cannon was fired in the citadel; this was a signal for their various burdens to be placed on the camels. At the command of their drivers they knelt down, and now the loading began. The negro and Peter took that work upon them. When they had finished, they all lay down in the panniers, and the camels arose. In a short time everything was ready for the start. The cannon shots then sounded the signal for the departure. On all the minarets of the mosques dervishes now made their appearance, and called out aloud that prayers to the prophet were being offered up within for a happy pilgrimage.

The caravan then began to move, and went on towards the small southern gate of the city, where a mosque is erected over the spot where Mahomet is said to have left his footprints in the rock. Thousands of the inhabitants of Damascus followed the cavalcade, right and left, considering it a great piece of good fortune for those who could go to Mecca, which, they believe, every good Mussulman should visit at least once in his lifetime. Of the great army of pilgrims – more than a hundred thousand often set out – a very great number never return; for, amongst such multitudes, terrible epidemics often break out, which kill hundreds and even thousands; great numbers also die in the desert from privation, thirst, and excessive heat. The route from Damascus to Mecca is literally sown with the bones of men and beasts. Oftentimes, also, the pilgrims have to engage in a regular battle with the wandering and plundering tribes through which they must pass, and numerous lives are lost on both sides. Those who return to their homes safe from a pilgrimage are, ever after, looked on as people of superior rank in the community in which they live.

When they had got about a mile from the city, the Pasha of Damascus took leave of the caravan and returned.

We will not describe the journey through the desert, nor dwell on all the privations and sufferings which they had to endure. When the caravan came to the nearest spot to Cairo, which it had to pass, Peter and his friends detached themselves from it, with light hearts, for now all fear and necessity for disguise was at an

end.

With joyful feelings they rode on towards that city, the beautiful towers and minarets of which they could already perceive in the distance. They hoped to soon find ships there that would take both the Germans and the negroes to their native lands.

In the principal square, in which were situated the magnificent palaces and mosques, they went into a hotel. There Benhadad and his father took off their disguises and became negroes again; Lady Elizabeth put on female garments again, and experienced great joy when she felt herself quite free. Peter sold the camels at the public market, and went down to the harbour in order to discover if any ships were about to sail. To his great disappointment he learned that no ship was bound for Europe in less than a month.

There were opportunities, almost every day, for Benhadad and his father to set out for their home. Elizabeth, therefore, laid aside a certain sum, from the money which they had for their travelling expenses, in order to give it to the negro, and the following day was arranged for his departure for his native country.

They were told in the hotel that, on the same evening, they could enjoy a beautiful spectacle. They went out, therefore, as soon as it began to grow dark. They had not been long in the public streets when a procession began. Great numbers of banners were carried by those who took part in it. Men, playing cymbals, drums, and pipes, were at the head of it; people carrying torches followed; and numbers of the inhabitants issued from almost every house, in order to join in it.

They were all going to celebrate, in the principal mosque of the city, the anniversary of the birth of the two Mahometan saints, Hassan and Husein. Its exterior was kept brilliantly illuminated for eight nights, and in its interior numberless wax tapers, of unusual length and thickness, were kept constantly lighted.

This was, for our friends, a most peculiar sight, but they could not see it very well, for the crowding and crushing increased every minute, and they were constantly shoved about from one side to the other. The uproar became greater and greater in the enormous concourse of spectators. Drums and trumpets gave forth their loudest sounds, and dirty and ill-clad dervishes whirled about, with wild gestures, amongst the people. In this uproar and confusion many evil-disposed persons went about, in order to commit robberies, even if they were to murder people in so doing. One of those wretches snatched suddenly at a precious stone which adorned the turban of a respectable in-

habitant who was looking on.

Benhadad's father, who saw the fellow stretching out his hand, wished to prevent the robbery, and seized it firmly; the thief, however, who did not like such an opportunity for enriching himself to slip away, quickly drew out a knife and plunged it into the body of the negro.

He fell to the ground with an agonising cry, and cried out: "I am stabbed!" Peter, terrified, bent down over him, and saw that blood was flowing from his breast. "Noble lady," he said, "our poor friend is wounded. Let us get him out of this crowd into the hotel as quickly as we can."

He took up the wounded man on his shoulders, and bore him away as quickly as possible. Elizabeth and Benhadad followed.

When they arrived in the hotel, Peter laid the wounded man on his bed and examined his wound. "You need not take any trouble with me," said the negro, in a calm and sad tone of voice, "I have received my death blow."

Peter, notwithstanding, bound up the wound as well as he could, whilst Elizabeth knelt beside the couch, praying to heaven that his life might be spared. Benhadad was standing over his father, in floods of tears, and could not be consoled.

The negro lay there, for a considerable time, without speaking, and with closed eyes; it appeared almost as if his spirit had already flown. At last he opened his eyes, and murmured: "It was not the will of Allah that I should see my native land again. Let it be done as He wishes. This earthly life has only given me misery and suffering; I trust I shall be happy in Paradise. I am, however, leaving my poor boy behind me, unprovided for, and that is the only thing now which makes me feel unhappy at the hour of my death."

Lady Elizabeth arose, took his limp, black hand in hers, and said: "Entrust Benhadad to my care, and he shall want for nothing."

A grateful smile played on the lips of the poor negro; he felt happy. A few minutes after he breathed his last. Benhadad lay, weeping and sobbing bitterly, across the dead body of his father. He had lost the only relative he had ever known and loved, and was now thrown on the charity of others. From time to time a convulsive trembling went through his body, and he gave vent to piteous sobs. Lady Elizabeth and Peter thought it best to let him exhaust his great grief in tears. At last he fell asleep. When he awoke and his glance fell again on his beloved dead father, he turned to Elizabeth and said: "Will you now drive me away from you into the wilderness?"

"Far be it from me to do so, Benhadad," was the answer. "If you wish to return to your native land, I shall provide a safe escort for you, and give you the money which I intended for your poor father."

"I have no native land," replied the boy, "for I was born in slavery, and my mother died in Damascus. In the native place of my parents I do not know a single human being, and, most likely, if I went there they would sell me as a slave."

"Well, then, come with me to Germany, and live with me and my husband. You shall be as kindly treated as if you were our own child."

Benhadad pressed her hand gratefully; but he looked over towards the corpse of his father, and said: "I should prefer to earn my daily bread, and, if it is pleasing to my master, I would rather remain with him at the anvil, and help him to make Damascus swords."

"Bravo, my boy," said Peter; "choose whichever way you will. You shall always experience affection and help both from this good lady and from me."

Thus it was arranged. The dead man was buried, and as they returned from the graveyard, the mosque of Hassan, the largest of the three hundred which were in the city, was surrounded by a great crowd. Benhadad entered it, in order to pray for his father; Peter, also, carried on by the stream of human beings, found himself inside of it, against his will. He knew that he was in danger, for the fanatical Mahometans took a pride in killing any unbelievers who made their way into their sanctuaries.

Peter cast his eyes, with astonishment, over the large quadrangle. At the entrance a large heap of over-shoes, made of vegetable fibre, was piled up. These were worn by the Mahometans over their ordinary foot-coverings, and removed at the entrances of the mosques, so that the pavements might not be contaminated by the dirt from the streets. Peter had passed by the entrance when he remarked his sin of omission, which might have dangerous consequences for him. He quickly took his position under the shadow of a column, where he could not be easily seen.

His glances fell on the magnificent Mihrab, the sanctuary which is in every mosque. An Iman, or priest, with a wooden sword in his hand, appeared, and went up to it. He chanted the "Psalms of Vengeance", in which are the following terrible words: "O God! destroy the infidels and the idolaters, thy enemies, and the enemies of religion! Oh, God! overturn their standards, destroy their dwellings, and deliver up them, and all their possessions, as a prey to thy true believers, the Moslems!"

Peter listened with great attention and saw everything that took place. The Iman spoke of the two sweet smelling flowers of the Prophet, Hassan and Husein, of their mother and grandmother, and of various other things.

On the reading-desk, near the Mihrab, lay an open copy of the Koran. At both sides of the place for prayer, were the entrances to the dome, which was erected, one hundred and fifty feet high, over the mausoleum of the builder, the Sultan Hassan. Around the walls were painted, in large letters, numerous texts from the Koran. The building was so enormous that Peter was amazed at its size. The legend, which was often repeated in Cairo, came into his mind. It was to the effect that, when the building was completed, Hassan ordered the hands of the architect to be cut off, so that he might not be able to design a second mosque of such great beauty. Legends similar to this, are very plentiful in Eastern countries. It is also related that Naaman, King of Hira, who erected the palace of Chavernack, through the skill of his architect, Senamar, as a reward for his genius and labour, caused him to be thrown from its loftiest towers as soon as it was completed.

Peter was so absorbed in his reflections that he did not, after a short time, hear a single word of what the Iman said, but occupied himself with the examination of the building. It was only when the worshippers began to stream forth from the mosque and select their overshoes from the heap of them which lay at the entrance, that he awoke from his reverie and followed the crowd of human beings out into the open air. Lady Elizabeth was waiting for him and Benhadad, in a state of great anxiety, in the hotel, and was very much rejoiced when they again made their appearance.

Peter went regularly, every day, to the harbour, in order to see if any ship was about to sail that would bring them homewards, but he always returned disappointed. One day, however, he was told that the captain of a ship was thinking of undertaking a voyage to Naples. He immediately found out where he resided. His place of abode was in a remote part of Cairo. Peter made his way towards it through streets and alleys, and at last, with considerable difficulty, found the house.

On the exterior it had almost the appearance of a stronghold. On the street side it had only a narrow door, and no windows. At the door stood a guard, with a long lance in his hand. "Whither do you want to go?" he inquired of Peter, at the same time barring the way with his lance.

"I wish to see the master of this house," was the reply.

"You cannot see him just at present," said the guard, "for he is taking his afternoon sleep; go into the courtyard and wait awhile."

Peter entered, through the arched doorway, into the court-yard. It was laid out as a charming little garden. In the middle of it played a beautiful fountain, which threw its water high up into the air, which then fell down again, with a pleasant, splashing sound, into the marble basin. Water plants, with wonderfully lovely flowers, floated on the ever agitated water, and beneath them swam fishes, glittering with the brightest colours. High palm trees, laden with fruit, rose around the fountain.

Peter sat down on a marble bench and waited. Negroes and other servants came and asked him what he required.

"I wish to speak to the master of the house," he answered, and, each time, he was told that he was taking his afternoon sleep.

After an hour his sleep was ended. A stout Turk, who had a fez, or cap, with a golden tassel, on his head, and who wore a long cloak and embroidered shoes, came into the garden and asked what business he had with him.

"Sir," answered Peter, "I hear that you have a ship about to sail for Europe. My mistress, a negro boy, and I wish to make that voyage. If you can take us on board, tell me the price we shall have to pay you and the day you intend to set sail."

The Turk at first did not seem very willing to enter into the arrangement and take them as passengers, but when he learned that Peter was a smith, he became more friendly, and said: "I require a man experienced in your handicraft. If you prove to me that you are a master in your art, I will give you and your companions a free passage. Come with me to the ship and I shall put you to the test."

After a walk of considerable length they arrived at the harbour. A great number of porters were busily engaged in loading the vessel with Egyptian merchandise. The Turk conducted Peter into a small forge, erected on board. A smith was standing at the anvil, whose want of skill was made manifest by every stroke of his hammer.

Peter replaced him at the anvil, and when he had worked a short time, the Turk said: "By the Beard of the Prophet, you are the very man I want. You and your friends shall be brought to Europe without any charge whatsoever."

The day for the departure at length came. The travellers went on board with feelings of unspeakable joy. Lady Elizabeth and Benhadad had two separate cabins allotted to them. Peter, however, had to sleep, the best way he could, in the forge, for the ship was very old

and in bad condition, and it required repairs almost every hour. On more than one occasion, afterwards, during the voyage, he had to get up in the middle of the night and continue working hard for several hours, in order to repair leaks which she suddenly sprung, and which, if not attended to on the instant, would have sent them all to the bottom of the sea.

The sailors raised the anchor and set all the sails; the vessel took a long time to get free from the enormous forest of masts, and sailed out of the harbour at last. They then got quickly out into the great sea, which stretches itself out between Europe, Asia, and Africa. Elizabeth remained, the most of her time, on deck, for the immensity and majesty of the great ocean made a powerful impression on her heart, and she saw in it one of the greatest proofs of the wisdom and omnipotence of God.

The first land they steered for was Candia, where they were to leave a large quantity of their lading, and take in fresh merchandise in its stead. As they were blessed with a favourable wind, they reached that island on the sixth day after they had set sail. The ship cast anchor in the harbour, and the crew began at once to get the goods on shore. The captain informed Lady Elizabeth that they would be delayed there at least eight days. She therefore went on shore and took rooms in an inn. Accompanied by Benhadad, she roamed about every day to see the beauties of that lovely island.

It was, indeed, a pleasure to spend some time in such a place, for God had lavished his richest gifts on the place. After her long imprisonment in the workshops of Marsyas, in Damascus, she felt doubly the joys of liberty, and was as happy on that island, which seemed an earthly paradise, as it was possible for any human being to be. But she still yearned to see her native home and her dear husband. She spoke constantly of them, and was ardently awaiting the hour when she would see them once more.

The time passed, and the ship was again put in motion, and Malta was to be her next halting place, for the owner had large business transactions also with that port. They had not sailed far from Candia when the weather became very bad and stormy. This delayed them very much, and, more than once, all on board the vessel were in great danger of losing their lives.

The ship was in a very bad condition, indeed, when she reached Malta, where it was necessary that she should be thoroughly repaired. Unfortunately, Peter had engaged himself until his arrival at Naples, otherwise he would have taken passage on another ship, as several were in that place. One day he told Lady Elizabeth that it would be better for her to go on before

with Benhadad, and leave him to follow them afterwards. She would not, however, on any conditions consent to such an arrangement, for she knew that she should require the assistance of a brave and good man, such as he was, during the long journey which still lay between her and her native land; and her gratitude, moreover, would not allow her to leave her deliverer alone in a foreign land.

She wandered about every day with the negro boy as her companion. In their rambles they visited several of the churches. Benhadad was so well pleased with what he saw of Christian worship, that in a short time he expressed a wish to become a Catholic.

Elizabeth was much rejoiced at this; but she advised him to wait till they should arrive in Rome. In the meantime she promised to teach him all she could of the doctrines of the Catholic faith. He agreed to this, and listened to her lessons with the most earnest attention. When, having sailed from Malta, they arrived at Tunis, he was so well prepared that he could have been baptized then and there, but she still resolved to postpone the ceremony until their arrival at Rome.

After a few days the vessel weighed anchor again and set sail for Palermo. Here Lady Elizabeth, after so many years, placed her feet again on European soil. It would not be easy to describe the joy she felt when she and her companions disembarked. They spent eight days there, and then, on a beautiful evening, when the Gulf of Palermo glistened with the golden rays of a lovely sunset, the ship set sail for Naples, and, in a few days, arrived at that city.

Peter had now faithfully carried out his contract with the owner of the ship. They then purchased horses, loaded them with their luggage, and commenced the journey to Rome by land. Elizabeth, when in that city before, on her pilgrimage to Jerusalem, had knelt at the feet of the Holy Father. Another Pope now sat in the Chair of St. Peter, and she wished to obtain his blessing also before she returned to her home. He received her with great kindness, and listened, filled with pity, to the story of her sufferings and travels. "Now, depart in peace," he said to her, "and I pray to God that you may find your husband still living when you get home. I will take care that Benhadad shall be quickly received into the bosom of the Church."

That took place during the same week. After a short sojourn in the Eternal City they again mounted their horses and proceeded towards the Alps. Their road lay across the Brenner pass. At that time the crossing of it was very dangerous, and the path was very bad, but God was with them. They reached safely the town of

Innsbruck, in the Tyrol, where they remained a short time, in order to rest after their fatiguing mountain journey, and then they proceeded towards Munich.

When they arrived in that city the horses were so worn out that they could use them no longer, and had to sell them. When they came to the Rhine, Elizabeth's joy was so great that she burst into tears. She dropped down on her knees and kissed the earth.

As quickly as they could they went down the river Rhine until they reached Cologne. When they had engaged rooms in an inn and stabled their horses, they went to the cathedral, in order to thank God for his protection during their long journey.

They started early the next morning, and rode, by a well-known path, into the mountains. They went on with joyful hearts. The country people, who met them, stopped and gazed on them in amazement, for the Oriental costumes of the travellers were perfectly strange to them. What excited their astonishment most, however, was the black boy, and many of the simple people actually believed that he was an imp out of hell.

The path lay through thick forests and narrow mountain gorges, until they came to a very short distance from their native place. Peter then said to Elizabeth: "Noble lady, we are now very near home. Let me go on a little in advance of you, in order to break the joyous news of your return to your husband."

"Go," she replied, "but make your interview with him as short as possible, for I am burning with anxiety to see him again."

Peter sprang from his horse, fastened the bridle to a tree, and advanced on foot into the forest.

VIII

In his joy Peter Simmelpuss did not take the trouble to knock very long at the hermit's door, but opened it with a strong push. Brother Francis was sitting at the fire, with his face buried between his hands; his countenance was overspread by a sad, resigned expression, for he was thinking, just then, of the past and of his dead wife.

Aroused by the sudden noise, caused by the opening of the door, he quickly raised his head, and when he saw, as he thought, a Turk suddenly standing before him, it seemed as if he were again in Damascus, and involuntarily uttered a greeting in the Oriental speech, which he had there learned long years before.

Peter approached, with a joyful mien, and ex-

claimed: "Here I am, back again, Brother Francis; and now I can make Damascus swords as good as Marsyas and his son Vika ever made them. Old Veronica is still alive, and sends you her warmest greetings."

The hermit gazed at him for some time, without answering; tears then gushed from his eyes, and he said: "Oh! happy man! you have trodden the soil in which the body of my dear wife Elizabeth is laid. Were you able to discover her grave?"

"Not her grave, Brother Francis; but I have found traces of her, which make me think that she is still alive."

The eyes of the hermit brightened up, his mouth quivered, and he reeled almost like a man who was about to faint. At last he recovered himself, and cried out: "Tomorrow I shall quit this cell, and start for Damascus, in order to search for her."

Elizabeth could not restrain herself any longer. She had dismounted from her horse, and followed Peter. She was now standing at the entrance, and had heard, with beating heart, the exclamation of her husband. It was but the work of a moment to push the door open, rush over to him, and cry out: "Oh! Francis! my beloved Francis!"

This sudden and joyous surprise was almost too much for him. Whilst he was stretching out his arms towards her, he sank down upon the ground; but quickly recovering himself, he uttered a loud cry of joy, which re-echoed through the forest. The husband and wife, who, during so many long and sad years, had believed each other dead, were now clasped in a loving embrace.

Peter Simmelpuss stood looking on with feelings of the deepest joy and contentment. After a short time he said: "Now give me permission to go and see my parents. Tomorrow I shall return hither."

Without waiting for a reply, he hastened away, mounted his horse, and made a sign to Benhadad to follow him. Their horses set off, in a rapid gallop, along the road which led through Solingen, to his native village. The people who met them were rather terrified, for the little black man was beyond their comprehension, and the Turkish costume of the large man was a thing which they had never before seen.

Philip Simmelpuss and his wife, Eva, had just returned from vespers, for it was Sunday. They were sitting at the open window, and chatting of past times. Eva's face had a very sad expression on it, when she said: "We have not received any tidings of him whatever since he left us, and I fear that he has found a grave in

some foreign land.

For a long time Philip had feared the same. He therefore could find no better answer than: "Do not let your courage sink, Eva. Trust in God!"

At that moment the noise of the trotting of a horse was heard coming along the road shaded by fir trees. When they looked out they saw the two curious-looking horsemen, and did not know what it could all mean. Peter, however, sprang from his horse, rushed up to the window, and cried out: "Father, mother! God be praised that I find you again, both alive!"

That was almost too much for Philip and Eva. Do their best they could not keep in their tears of joy. They seized the Turk so roughly by the head that his turban came off. Peter, however, jumped into the house through the open window, and then the embracing and kissing went on in downright earnest.

"You see, Eva, that God did guard and assist him," cried Philip, in a triumphant tone of voice. "I knew right well that he would come home safe and sound. But I say, Peter, what kind of a black imp is it that you have brought with you? He looks like an evil spirit."

"He is Benhadad, my apprentice, whom I have brought with me from Damascus." He then went to the window and cried out: "Benhadad, unload the luggage from the horses and bring it into the house."

He spoke those words in the Turkish language, of which his father and mother, of course, did not understand a word. The little negro obeyed at once with alacrity. On the backs of the two horses there were regular mountains of packages. He carried them, one after the other, into the cottage. In the beginning Philip and Eva were afraid of the black boy, as they had never seen one before; when they saw, however, that he was really a human being, and not a demon, they looked on him with increasing interest and wished to talk to him, but that could not be done. He only shook his head, smiling, but Peter said: "In good time he will be able to speak German."

They then began to unpack all the things. The old knapsack, in which were still the everyday and Sunday clothes that he had brought away with him, first made its appearance.

"Do me a great favour and change your clothes," said his mother, "for I can hardly believe that you are my son as long as you remain in that outlandish dress."

Peter laughed, and went into the bedroom. He there put on his old working dress. The black Sunday clothes would have to be hung up for some time, in order to get all the creases out of them.

In the meantime Eva had covered the table with eatables and was pressing them to take share of them.

"And how have you succeeded with the Damascus sword-blades?" asked old Philip.

"First-rate, father," answered Peter; "I can now make them as well as the best master in Damascus, and we shall soon gain a reputation greater than that of the most celebrated armourers in Europe."

"Now tell us all that happened to you on your long voyage," said Eva.

"With pleasure, dearest mother," he replied; "and, that all may be in order, I will begin with my departure from here, and finish with my return."

How their eyes opened when he told them of all he had seen in Jerusalem, Damascus, and in other places in the Holy Land. And when he related to them how he had discovered the wife of Brother Francis, in the condition of a slave, in the workshops of Marsyas, they could not find words to express their astonishment.

"Some one must go to him at once with the good news. I shall go myself."

He was just about putting on his cap, when Peter laid his hand on his arm, and said: "It is not necessary, father. Lady Elizabeth is, at the present moment, with her husband; I have freed her from her slavery, and she returned with me to her native land."

"That is quite a different thing," said Philip, with an air of content and joy, and he sank down again into his easy-chair. He then asked Peter to go on with the narration of his adventures.

Their astonishment at all they heard increased more and more. At last their old heads began to get bewildered with all the extraordinary things they were listening to, and Philip at last said: "My dear Peter, I am becoming quite dazed, listening to so many wonderful things, and I think we had now better go to bed and put off the conclusion of your adventures till tomorrow."

Eva's next care was to get ready the bedroom of her son. As he and Benhadad helped her, that was soon done.

"Is the black boy really to remain with us?" she asked.

"Certainly, mother; he is my apprentice. Moreover, Lady Elizabeth and I promised his poor father, when he was dying, that we would treat him in the kindest manner."

"But we have no bed for him."

"That makes no matter, mother; he is not particular. He can sleep on a heap of straw for a few days, and in the meantime I will procure a bed for him. He shall remain with me. It is my desire and his most ardent wish that he

should become a first-class armourer."

Scarcely had the news spread in the neighbourhood that Peter Simmelpuss was home again, and had brought a little black demon with him, but the neighbours streamed into the village, in crowds, to find out if it was really true. One party had scarcely departed when another arrived, so that Eva was at last compelled to bolt the door and not let any person in. She thought, rightly, that the father and mother should have their son to themselves, for a day or two at least, after his return.

Our readers can easily understand that Peter's narrative was far from being finished yet, for both Eva and Philip had crowds of questions to put to him, and the answer to one always gave occasion for another, so that midnight, at the end of the following day, came before he had quite finished. Peter, therefore, had not time to unpack the presents for them, and the other things which he had brought home with him, and had to postpone the doing of that until the next day.

Early the next morning, however, he did that, and, after breakfast, he put on his smith's leathern apron, and went to the forge with his father and Benhadad, who was to work the bellows. Just as they were fully at work, Sir John Haber rode up to the smithy.

"So, Peter, you are home again!" he cried out. "Well, have you succeeded in learning to make a real Damascus sword?"

"I have, Sir Knight," was the reply.

"You are surely joking; where did you learn?"

"I am not joking, Sir Knight; I learned the secret art in the workshops of Marsyas, over whose door hangs the sign of 'The Bleeding Head'."

"Hem," said the knight; "I never should have thought that you could have succeeded, or even have found your way to Damascus; otherwise I certainly never would have promised to build a new smithy for your father. I suppose, however, I must take your word as to your having been there. I see, moreover, that you have brought home a black boy with you."

"Not only a black boy, but also a white woman."

"A white woman, no less? Then I suppose you have brought a wife home with you?"

"No, Sir Knight; she had been already married and was living in Damascus in a state of slavery. I think what I have done will afford you pleasure."

"Pleasure to me? What have I to do with slaves?"

"This particular one has much to do with you; she is your sister, Elizabeth!"

The Knight suddenly became excited, and

exclaimed: "You are romancing; my sister was killed, long years ago, in Damascus."

"Such was your desire and your command, Sir Knight; but the assassins, whom you employed for the hellish deed, preferred to sell her in the bazaar. She has spent thirty years in horrible slavery, in the workshops of Marsyas, but I restored her to freedom. She is now with her noble husband, who has long been known by the name of 'Brother Francis'."

"Hell and the devil!" roared the knight, "you are a liar and a trickster!"

"Convince yourself," replied Peter, "there she is, coming hither."

The knight turned on his horse and became deadly pale; for he saw his sister, whom he had so long believed dead, riding towards them. He shrank backwards, as if struck by lightning, but, recovering himself again in an instant, he put spurs to his horse and fled from thence in a rapid gallop.

Brother Francis and Elizabeth had, indeed, seen John Haber, but they did not wish to cause any excitement in the village.

"Throw aside your hammers," said Brother Francis to Peter and his father, "and come inside the house, for we have many things to speak about."

Philip and Peter went into the house with them, where Eva kissed the hand of Lady Elizabeth, and could not find words to express her joy at her restoration to freedom and her native land.

"It is on that account we come here," said Brother Francis; "for, as long as we live, we cannot find sufficient means to testify our gratitude to your son for all he has done for my dear wife and for me."

Peter protested that he had done nothing but what was his actual duty. That, however, was of no avail with the hermit, and he continued: "Say what you will, we owe an immense debt of gratitude to you, and a Hasbeck never forgets a service rendered him. My living as a hermit has, henceforth, no meaning; I shall now resume my old life as a knight, and compel my false and treacherous brother-in-law to restore the property which rightly belongs to his sister. The laws of chivalry shall decide between us, and if a combat is necessary, I shall be prepared for it. Set to, therefore, and make me a suit of armour, such as was never before seen in this country.

I purchased, yesterday, in Solingen, a large and handsome house, and I have given orders to change, without delay, the extensive out-houses attached to it into smithies. They are very spacious, and there will be room in them for twenty anvils, at least, and the necessary forge fires.

The house is now yours; let me, however, reside in it until I again get my castle out of the hands of John Haber."

They at first protested that they would not receive so valuable a gift; but the knight said, in a determined tone of voice: "You must take it; so do not utter another word on the subject."

When they saw that there was no use in refusing, they gratefully kissed his hand, and then Elizabeth related to them, until dark, the entire story of her slavery, and of her delivery from it. They then went to Solingen, but soon returned to their friends.

Let us now return to Sir John Haber and see what befel him. With rage in his soul, he had made up his mind to return at once to his castle and barricade and arm it in such a way that it would be impossible for his brother-in-law to gain possession of it. He had many friends, knights who were quite as wicked and unscrupulous as himself; and he knew that he could depend on their assistance in a fight with Sir Francis von Hasbeck. "He and Elizabeth, his wife, shall fall into our hands," he said to himself, "and I shall let them die of starvation in the dungeons of my castle."

His thoughts became more and more gloomy as he rode on in the darkness. He galloped through the narrow mountain pass, spurring his steed until the blood trickled down its sides, in order to reach his castle quickly, so that he might, without delay, summon the other robber-knights to his aid.

The sky became darker and darker, as black clouds were rolling over it, until at last the obscurity was such that he could scarcely see a few yards before him. The rain began to fall in torrents, and vivid lightning, followed by loud claps of thunder, darted across the heavens. The flashes became more vivid, and the thunder louder every minute, and the horse was so terrified that he stopped and refused to proceed. The knight plunged his spurs in his sides, and his maledictions were so loud that they could be heard even above the din of the thunder. The horse darted on again. The path was narrow, and, at the outer side, which was unprotected, a rapid declivity descended into a deep ravine. Just then a flash of lightning, brighter than those that had preceded it, showed a stone cross erected at the edge of the road, and surrounded by shrubs. A defenceless man had once been robbed and murdered at that spot. His relations had erected the cross where the foul deed was done, and had engraved upon it the words: "Oh, Lord! let thy justice overtake the murderer!"

The cross again shone out in the brightness of another lightning flash; the horse shied

and would not proceed; but the knight again plunged his sharp spurs into him. Instead of going straight forward, the terrified animal swerved to one side, and, with a wild spring, reached the very edge of the road. Another lightning flash showed the knight the deep ravine. With a cry of terror he endeavoured to check and pull back his steed, but it was no longer obedient to the bridle. In another instant it had plunged into the abyss. One agonizing, despairing cry rent the air, and then all was again silent, except the rolling of the thunder, and the beating of the rain.

When, on the next morning, some peasants were proceeding to their work, in the fields which bordered the small stream that flowed through the narrow valley that lay beneath the mountain-path, they found the horse and his rider, lying dead, between two rocks. When they recognised him they only said: "It is the corpse of the robber-knight, John Haber; the just vengeance of God overtook him in the thunderstorm last night. It was strongly suspected that he had committed the murder, on account of which the stone cross was erected."

None of them felt any pity for him; none of them said a prayer for him. The same feeling pervaded nearly all the inhabitants of the neighbourhood when his death became known.

Francis and Elizabeth had more reason to curse his memory than anyone else; but the terrible circumstances of his death cast a softening influence over them. They caused his bruised and disfigured body to be removed from amongst the rocks, where it had fallen, and to be laid in the sepulchre of his ancestors. They could now enter into peaceable possession of the castle and estates, which he had deprived them of by his diabolical treachery and wickedness. They made, however, a better use of their wealth than John Haber had, for they began to spend it for charitable purposes, and endowed many benevolent institutions with it.

Peter Simmelpuss, and his father and mother, quitted their native village and went to Solingen, to live in the house which Sir Francis von Hasbeck had presented to them. The out-houses had been changed into smithies, and, as he had promised, twenty anvils were placed in them. In addition to these there was a private smithy, into which no person, except Peter, his father, and Benhadad, ever entered. What took place in it no one knew; the swords issued from it in a rough state, and their manufacture was completed in the outer workshops. Benhadad, on account of his colour, made the common people think that Peter was in league with the devil, and that it was only through his help that he was able to make Damascus blades.

Nevertheless, the fame of his swords spread far and wide, and very high prices were paid for them. Towards the end of the year the Grand Duke, together with his court, came from Dusseldorf for a hunting expedition in the mountains, which were in the neighbourhood of Solingen. He was informed that an armourer resided in the town who knew the secret of making Damascus swords.

The Duke was very much rejoiced when he heard that, and sent orders to Peter Simmelpuss to appear before him on New Year's Eve, in the castle, and to bring with him six real Damascus swords.

Peter set out at the appointed time, and arrived when the Duke and his courtiers were all at supper. He was asked to come into the great supper-room, and bring his swords with him. They were examined, and put to the most severe tests by all the knights who were present. They acknowledged that they were fully equal to, if not better, than the best Damascus sword-blades that they had ever seen. The result of this visit was the appointment of Peter as Court-armourer, and that nearly all the knights in the surrounding country ordered swords from him at high prices.

That incident was of the greatest advantage to his business. He had to engage workman after workman, until, in a very short time, his twenty anvils were kept going with plentiful orders. He then built a new and much larger manufactory in the valley, at the edge of the stream, in which he erected a hammer, worked by water-power, by means of which he did all the rough forgings required in his art.

The name of Peter Simmelpuss soon became celebrated all over Europe, and orders came in such abundance, that it was only with the greatest difficulty he could execute a small portion of them. He was, therefore, in a position to charge as much as he wished, and his wealth increased rapidly. He was soon rich enough to give up his business, if he so desired, and live in comfort, even in luxury, during the remainder of his life.

Every year, on the anniversary of the day on which Lady Elizabeth had returned to her home, a great festival was celebrated in the castle of Sir Francis von Hasbeck, to which all the knights of the surrounding country were invited. As a matter of course, Peter, his father and mother, and Benhadad, were honoured guests. Sir Francis never omitted to express publicly, before the noble knights and their ladies, the gratitude that he and his wife owed to Peter.

After several years had thus passed, the sad news came to Solingen that Sir Francis von Has-

beck lay on his death-bed. Immediately, on hearing it, Peter mounted his horse and proceeded to the castle as rapidly as possible. Deep silence and foreboding stillness pervaded the entire building when he arrived. All the vassals and servants were standing about, with sad visages, many of them with tears in their eyes.

Knowing that he was an intimate friend of their master they allowed him to go, without hindrance, to the chamber of the dying man. The knight lay on his bed, pale and worn away; Elizabeth was kneeling beside it, praying and weeping.

Sir Francis at last opened his eyes and gazed on Peter with a smile of recognition and affection. "You have just come in time," he said, "to bid me a last farewell in this world, and if I were not leaving my dear wife Elizabeth behind me, alone, I would die with joy and gladness. Be her good friend, and comfort and assist her by every means in your power, for she is now old and feeble."

Peter's grief and emotion were so great that he could not utter a word; but he bowed his head in token of assent, and pressed lovingly the old man's hand, who then said, in a low voice: "The dark hour is approaching; pray with me, in order that my departure may be happy."

The armourer then knelt down beside the noble lady, and, whilst they were praying, the soul of the good old man, who had suffered so long and patiently on earth, went to its reward. Peter reverently closed his eyes, and then persuaded the sorely afflicted widow to go into another apartment.

She went with him without opposition, and, when she had sunk down into a chair, she ordered the old seneschal of the castle, and all the guards and domestics, to be brought into her presence.

"My dear friends," she said to them, when they were all assembled, "since I returned again to my home, after my long and bitter slavery, I have daily prayed to God to let me die at the same time as my husband, for I am only a weak woman, and my long sufferings, as a slave, have made me old and feeble before my time. Life, now that my dear husband is gone, would be only a burden to me. I feel that God is about to grant my prayer, for I am now so extremely weak that I know I cannot live much longer. When I die let me be laid in the same grave with my husband.

For some time Sir Francis and I thought over the best way of disposing of our property, so that, after our deaths, there might be no strife or contention about it. We then, in the presence of a notary and witnesses, made a will, by which all who served us and showed friend-

ship to us are left something, according to their deserts. As we have no children or other relatives, we considered as to who deserved to be left the balance of our possessions, and we both made up our minds that no person was so worthy of it as Peter Simmelpuss; for, but for him, I should have died in slavery, and never again seen my husband. We, therefore, left him all the remainder of our property.”

The idea had never even entered Peter’s mind that his services to Sir Francis and his wife would have been so richly rewarded, and he did not even desire to possess such wealth. He besought, therefore, the good lady to change her will at once, but she firmly refused to do so.

From that moment her condition became worse and worse, and, before night, her dead body lay beside that of her beloved husband. Three days later the bodies of Sir Francis and Lady Elizabeth were laid in one grave, in the presence of an enormous number of knights and other persons from the surrounding neighbourhood. Peter and his father and mother were amongst the chief mourners.

Benhadad was also at the funeral, and wept over the corpse of her who had been, during so’ many years, his poor father’s companion in slavery. Notwithstanding his dark colour he had grown up to be rather a good-looking young fellow, and his piety, amiability and good humour made him a general favourite in the locality. We may now dismiss him from our story by saying that Peter made him his confidential steward and friend; and, in a few years, he even succeeded in finding a good wife, in spite of his swarthy colour.

When Peter and his father returned from the funeral they made up their minds to give up their business, as the property left to Peter by the old knight was much more than sufficient to satisfy all their desires.

They determined, therefore, to confide their secret to a few of the best of their workmen – those who had been conspicuous for zeal and fidelity in their service – and they did not wait long to carry out their project.

One day Peter summoned the men he thus intended to reward into his private smithy. Having first bound them, by a solemn promise of secrecy and fidelity, one to the other, he disclosed to them the entire process of the manufacture of Damascus sword-blades. He then said to them: “My friends, the demand for those articles has increased to such an extent that even a dozen master-armourers could earn a respectable livelihood in the making of them. I shall advance you, as a loan, money enough to start with, and you can pay it off by degrees out of your earnings, which, I know, will be large.”

The men, on whom he had thus virtually conferred riches, could scarcely find words to express their gratitude; they silently knelt down and kissed his hands.

Within the next few years a wonderful change had taken place in Solingen. From being a place of no importance whatever, it had become a rich and important town, in which numbers of people found employment.

Old Philip and Eva lived long enough to see this happy change, and Peter himself reached the patriarchal age of nearly ninety years.

His testament was his monument. He left no children after him, and, therefore, bequeathed all his riches for the purpose of founding benevolent establishments, by means of which innumerable tears were dried up and thousands of persons made happy after his death.

All honour to the memory of men who do their duty, bravely and nobly, like Peter Simmelpuss.

The End.