

A SAXON PROVERB.

There is a jolly Saxon proverb
That is very much like this,
That a man is half in heaven
When he has a woman's kiss;
But then the devil is in the ring,
And the sweethearts may forsake it,
So, I tell you, bashful lover,
If you want a kiss, why, take it.

Never let another fellow
Steal a march on you in this;
Never let a laughing maiden
See you spoiling for a kiss;
The jolly ones are the laughing,
And the jolly ones who do it
Have a motto that is winning,
If you want a kiss, why, take it.

Any fool may face a cannon,
Anybody wear a crown;
But a man must win a woman
If he'd have her for his own;
Would you have a woman's smile
You must climb the tree and shake it;
If the thing is worth the having
And you want a kiss, why, take it.

Who would burn upon a desert
With a forest smiling by?
Who would give his sunny summer
For a bleak and wintry sky?
Only the fool would do it,
And you cannot, cannot break it;
For the sweetest part of loving
Is to want a kiss and take it.

—Louis Post-Dispatch.

THE CURSE OF THE CASTLE.

BY EMMONS BAIRD.

It has happened again! So all the idlers said at the "Golden Dragon." "It has happened again!" So the old kelner at the Schwartzberg said, and the servants repeated it; and that was how they had the news at the "Golden Dragon" and all over the village before night.

How it happened was a mystery, but there was no denying it. If any of the mob folks at the Schwartzberg were going to die, something in the castle was sure to fall with no human hand near—no loophole for explaining why the crash should come before the death, and not at any other time. The omen had begun again in these days, after a lapse of a century. The old kelner's father, who had kept the keylong ago, had told strange tales about it. He had only heard them in his youth, but they were very strange tales, and the "Golden Dragon" and the village in general decided that they were not to be explained away. But it was much more satisfactory when at the present time the evil omen began to show itself again. It was no grandmother's story now, but a reality. The gossip and excitement went on with shudders and whispers; it was so pleasant to have something to shudder about. Why, if nobody had died after the great stag's head fell in the hall, the "Golden Dragon" would have been downright sorry.

But as it happened, the little boy—the old baron's grandson and heir—fell on the Black Mountain the very day after, and broke his neck. That was only three months ago. And now the great mirror in the tapestried drawing-room had fallen. It was certainly the old baron that was to go off this time. The village waited, breathless, to know.

Home went Fritz Hartmann with the news on the Saturday night. He was in a worse humor than usual: that is saying a great deal for Fritz Hartmann, for he was the blackest man in the village; and who he was or what he was thinking of was all a mystery.

"Flowers, father!" said the little bright-haired child, wanting to be noticed.

"Go to bed!" said Hartmann, and dropped the flowers and kicked them away.

"Any news?" his buxom, good-humored wife asked. The blackest mood Fritz could be in was never too black to stop her smile; many a gathering thunderstorm was laughed off by Martha.

"Why should there be news?" he said, savagely, flinging his coat aside, and throwing himself on a seat, with hair still on. Love in a cottage has many drawbacks, and his absence of manners is one of them.

The brisk and buxom Martha popped the child into bed, and began to make Fritz's supper hot. There was no fear in her nature, and a great deal of curiosity.

"I wanted to hear about the poor, dear old baron," said Martha. "He is dying, they say," growled Fritz.

"Oh! Poor old man!"

"Why?" said the husband. "He paid me for my bit of carving. What need we care?"

"Yes, we should care, my wicked old Fritz"—shaking him by the shoulder. "If a poor man died," said Fritz, "they would shovel him into the ground and forget him. Why should not the rich die too? He has the gout; it would be a comfort to the old fellow to die."

Martha had prayed that he might not die for many a year, gout or no gout—he had been so good to her long ago, when her parents died, and she was taken to the castle to feed the chickens and the ducks in the yard.

Fritz did a bit of wood-carving as well as his daily work. Tourists bought his carving in summer; it was bought at the castle too. He had carried his brackets and frames to the Schwartzberg Castle so often, that he was free of the servants' hall any day, and when he took the carved chair on Thursday, the baron had made him bring it into the library with his own hands. It was ungrateful of Fritz to be glad that the poor old baron was dying; but then Fritz was always growling at the castle folks, and grumbling at his own poverty.

After supper he went out to the "Golden Dragon," and loitered with the idlers on the benches outside the inn. He was not a man for speaking to the others; he had the name of being as proud as Satan, but he listened with his arms folded, and the corners of his dark eyes watching everything. There was no reason that the baron should die because the mirror fell, he said. It was all nonsense. He was the only man in the village that disbelieved in the omen of the Schwartzberg Castle.

When the notary passed—the old man with long black hair—he bowed to Hartmann. It was a queer thing that the notary always bowed to Hartmann, the working man. Sometimes Hartmann even went to supper with him—which was a queerer thing still.

II.

tapestried drawing-room was dimly lighted, and the great, round, broken mirror lay untouched upon the floor. The granddaughter of the baron was there with a friend from Geneva, the young lawyer, Ludwig Schmidt—a friend, and more than a friend. Bertha was in the first blush and beauty of girlhood, fair and pink, with soft blue German eyes, and curly hair rich to be flaxen. She was letting Ludwig cut one little curl, with her pretty head bent for the robbery. The shadow of death loomed over her home again, while she was still wearing a mourning gown for her boy brother; so, though they were lovers, even to the sweet folly of giving a love-lock, they could not be very light-hearted to-night.

"And why not have the broken mirror taken away?" the young lawyer of Leipzig asked. There is no room for superstition in the legal and logical mind.

"It is ill-luck for whoever touches it," said Bertha, with a blush; but she could not get him to believe such foolishness. He put the love-lock in the innermost recess of his pocket-book, and then with his own hands gathered the ruins of the mirror on to a table, rang for a servant to take them away out of everybody's sight.

"You picked them up, sir?" said the servant, nervously.

"I did," said Ludwig, with a laugh. "There's no fear of ill-luck for you, my good fellow, you are so cautious."

"It would have been wise, sir, to have left it as it fell until after the change of the moon."

Ludwig gave a growl of contempt.

"My good man, I would not be such a moonstruck lunatic. Take the pieces away."

Bertha admired him more than ever, as every girl admires a brave man. It seemed such a daring deed to be the one to pick up that mirror; she mistook his common sense for bravery.

"Your grandfather is dying of sheer fright," the young man went on, stepping out on the terrace, and leading the girl with him. "The omen will come true if the fear of it kills him."

"But, dear Ludwig," said the girl, leaning on the balustrade, and feeling helplessly ignorant as she looked up at her wise lover, and loved him the more for the man's superior wisdom, "we should all like not to believe in the omen; but what could have knocked the mirror down."

It was indeed puzzling. The nails that had held that mirror were as long as a man's hand. They had been buried in the wall like shafts of iron, and out of the wall they had dragged themselves, after being for fifty years safe and firm. Bertha herself had been in the drawing-room, singing Gounod's "Serenade," with her fiance leaning against the piano, watching the light from the candles making a halo about her fair hair, and the old baron was dozing in his chair with the dog at his feet; when all at once, with no hand near it, the great mirror had dragged its nails out of the opposite wall, and crashed down upon the floor. The dog had howled and barked, the servants had rushed in, and in the midst of the confusion the old man's voice had said, with a tremble:

"My hour has come!"

His strength had failed; he had been confined to his room; he was dying.

When Ludwig and Bertha walked along the terrace, they hushed their steps near those open windows farther on than the old drawing-room.

"He is awake again," said Ludwig, looking into the curtained gloom. "Go to him, Bertha, if you like, and I can have a smoke in the garden. You might ask him about the will."

"But I don't want him to die, Ludwig."

"My poor little Bertha, what strange things they have taught you! He won't die a moment sooner because he makes a will. It is the right thing to do."

Whatever Ludwig said was right, was supremely right, always to the lonely, half-taught girl; so as she sat beside the death-bed that evening, she tenderly and gently coaxed the old man to leave his last wishes written down. Ludwig was called in from the garden, where his cigar had been glimmering under the lindens, and they sent for the village notary, and the butler was the witness.

It was well the will was made that night. The old baron was dead before morning.

Then how the idlers at the "Golden Dragon" talked, and how all the village whispered and shuddered! Well, a few months after, Ludwig Schmidt owned the castle, and Bertha was his wife, and it was to be hoped nothing more would jump down from the walls to give mortals a warning.

III.

The gloomy Fritz Hartmann was more gloomy than ever. Martha swept the cottage and played with the child; but he grumbled at his poverty, and the child shrank from his black looks. He was at the old notary's house every night now.

"Are you selling him carving, Fritz?" said Martha. "Why, we shall be rich!"

Fritz Hartmann was going out of the notary's before he had even tasted it after his work.

"I am doing some carving there—at the house, of a night. We may be rich—if we are, it is only my just right, and thanks to nobody."

This was a strange way of talking of wood-carving. Martha wondered and puzzled while she was taking off bright-haired Gretchen's strong little shoes, and putting her to bed. Well, after all, it was the just right of a workman to get the value of his work; perhaps that was what Fritz meant. But Fritz must be making a great deal of money now. Why, he had gone up to the castle in the middle of the day to mend a broken part of the Swiss clock-case.

When Fritz Hartmann reached the notary's house, he forgot that there was any such thing as carving in the world, unless it be carving out a fortune. Yet there was some carving to be done, and he might be rich. The old notary and Hartmann walked in the garden with the colored spires of hollyhock flowers. They smoked and talked of the time of Hartmann's father, and how the old notary knew him well, and how there had been a quarrel.

"No one in the village knows?" asked the old lawyer keenly.

"No—one—I am a good gaele to keep secrets fast."

"But it is time," said the notary. "Your case is safe. The old baron was almost dead. I was called in to make the will by the man to whom the property was willed. His defense would not have a leg to stand on."

It was a very strange thing that while those two men were talking by the hollyhocks, considering the future law-suit which was to make the castle itself the evil omen came again. In the old tapestried drawing-room young Schmidt was telling his tale, leaning over the back of his little wife's chair, after a day's shooting. On the wall opposite to the windows there was only the softly-shaded tapestry; but at one end of the room there was the portrait of Bertha, in white and pearls, as a bride; it had been hung there instead of the broken mirror.

At once the portrait dragged the long nails from the wall, and fell face downward on the polished floor.

Even Ludwig Schmidt, man as he was, turned pale, and stood unable to stir in the dead silence after the crash. Then seeing his young wife's head sink forward, he turned to her in panic. Was she already dead? No, it was only a faint. The faint passed off, and the servants were gathered round her where she lay in the cool air on the terrace. Her eyes sought her husband's face, and the only words she spoke were, "I am to die!"

Now, to a dead certainty—and Ludwig was dead certainly indeed—Bertha would die if she sank as she was sinking during the month or two that followed the falling of the great picture. All the neighborhood had the tale; the "Golden Dragon" had sent it round—the bride at the castle was wasting away and dying. The doctors found no disease, but she was fading as a flower fades whose life is done.

IV.

The Schwartzberg case began to fill the papers of Geneva. Two brothers had quarreled long ago, and the younger of the two had incurred his father's anger, and gone away an exile from his home and country. He ran through his portion in a wild life, and never came back like the prodigal.

But his son came back, as a stranger and a peasant, to live gloomy and discontented under the shadow of the castle, where his father had lived as a boy. His father's brother was there, grown old now, and the heir was the grandson—a boy with an elder sister just in the flower of girlhood. The young heir had been killed by a fall on the rocks. The old baron had died, and a man with the name but Schmidt was in the place of the barons of Schwartzberg. The great case dragged on as a nine-days' wonder. There were two wills; one produced from the old notary of Schwartzberg; it was written after the boy's untimely death, and gave the property to the next heir of the Schwartzberg barons, the male descendant of the absent brother; the other will was written on the night of the baron's death. It was disputed because it had been drawn up on the will of the testator was weak in mind, on the brink of death, and it had been done at the instigation of Schmidt himself.

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For a single passage to the westward, the *Etruria*, with 547 cabin passengers and a crew of 287 persons, had, when leaving Liverpool, on the following quantities of provisions: 12,500 pounds fresh beef, 760 pounds corned beef, 5,320 pounds mutton, 850 pounds lamb, 350 pounds veal, 350 pounds of pork, 2,000 pounds fresh fish, 600 fowls, 300 chickens, 100 ducks, 50 geese, 80 turkeys, 200 brace grouse, 15 tons peacock feathers, 60 hamper vegetables, 220 quarts ice cream, 1,000 quarts milk, and 11,500 eggs. In groceries alone, there were over 200 different articles, including (for the round voyage of 22 days) 650 pounds tea, 1,200 pounds coffee, 1,600 pounds white sugar, 2,800 pounds moist sugar, 750 pounds pulverized sugar, 1,500 pounds cheese, 2,000 pounds butter, 3,500 pounds ham, and 1,000 pounds bacon. The foregoing seem enormous quantities, but very little was left upon the ship's arrival in port. The quantities of wines, spirits, beer, etc., put on board for consumption on the round voyage comprise 1,100 bottles of champagne, 850 bottles claret, 6,000 bottles of ale, 2,500 bottles of porter, 4,500 bottles mineral waters, 650 bottles of various spirits. As regards the consumption on board the Cunard fleet for one year, Mr. Burns says: "We consume no less than 4,656 sheep, 1,800 lambs, and 2,474 oxen."

the wall and leave them loose. If the young bride had died of superstition and fear, there would have been no heir but the man who had tried by legal means and lost his chance.

The lady of the castle bloomed into health; she comforted the peasant-widow, and sent little Gretchen a marriage portion in time to come. But the evil omen of the Schwartzberg never happened again; and the folks at the "Golden Dragon" refused the explanation, as credulous folks always do.

"The outcast died by the omen itself at the castle gate," they said. "The stone eagle killed him."

"The wound was made by a fall," said the surgeon positively.

And yet at the "Golden Dragon" the tale was told for many a year as the finest and most "creepy" instance of the Schwartzberg omen. For if men will enjoy a shudder, they won't have an explanation.

Facts About Ocean Steamships.

Mr. John Burns contributes to *Good Words* a paper which contains some interesting facts with regard to the equipment and working of ocean steamships. He begins by making a comparison between the pioneer vessels of the Cunard Line and the latest addition to its fleet. The *Britannia*, built in 1839, took 600 tons of coal, leaving Liverpool for her outward voyage. She burned 44 tons per day; while her steam pressure was 9 pounds per square inch, and her speed a little over 8 knots per hour. The *Etruria*, built in 1855, has averaged a speed of 18 knots in nine consecutive voyages between Queenstown and New York, which is equal to nearly 21 statute miles per hour, or somewhat greater than the average speed of the ordinary train service on any railroad in the world. Her engines indicate 14,000-horse power. The total consumption of coal is 300 tons per day, or 12 tons per hour. Besides the coal, 130 gallons of oil are used daily for journals, bearings, etc. Her crew is made up as follows: The captain, 6 officers, surgeon and purser, 46 seamen, carpenter and joiner, boatswain and mate, 2 masters-at-arms, 12 engineers, 112 firemen and trimmers, 72 stewards, 6 stewardesses, 24 cooks, bakers, and assistants; in all, 287 hands.

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Cheating the Law.

A family recently moved into a central Dakota county from the East. Three or four mornings after a lumber wagon drove up and a man got out and rapped at the door. The woman appeared and the man said:

"Good mornin', ma'am, I hope you haint fished him out yet?"

"What is it, sir?"

"I say I hope everything remains just as it was—that's the law in cases of this kind, ye know."

"I don't understand you."

"I can't see why you don't—you must know what's happened an' what the law requires in such cases. This is the jury out'n the wagon an' I'm coroner—don't delay us cause we're all anxious to earn our fee an' git back an' git in a day's work harvestin'—grain's powerful ripe, ma'am."

"H'm, this hasn't been any death here, sir."

"There haint? Didn't yer husband fall down the well?"

"