

VICTOR HUGO



HANS OF  
ICELAND

# Hans of Iceland

VICTOR HUGO

*Hans of Iceland, V. Hugo  
Jazzybee Verlag Jürgen Beck  
86450 Altenmünster, Loschberg 9  
Deutschland*

*ISBN: 9783849651343*

*English translation by George Burnham Ives (1856 -  
1930)*

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CONCLUSION.

## **AUTHOR'S INTRODUCTION.**

1833.

"Hans of Iceland" is the work of a young man, and of a very young man at that.

One feels on reading "Hans of Iceland" that the boy who wrote it, in a fit of desperation in 1821, had no previous experience of affairs, no previous experience of men, no previous experience of ideas, and that he was seeking to guess all that he did not know.

Three ingredients enter into every work of the imagination, be it drama, poem, or novel: what the author has felt, what he has observed, what he has surmised.

A novel, particularly, in order that it may deserve success, must contain an abundance of the author's feelings, observations, and surmises; and the surmises must follow, simply, logically, and without solution of continuity, from the observations and feelings.

Upon the application of this law to "Hans of Iceland" it will be easy to put one's finger upon the glaring fault of the book.

There is in "Hans of Iceland" but one of the author's feelings, the young man's love, — but one thing drawn from his observation, the young girl's love. All the rest is surmised, that is to say invented. For youth, which has neither deeds, nor experience, nor examples to fall back upon, has only the imagination to assist in forming surmises. And so "Hans of Iceland," assuming that it is worthy to be classed at all, is little more than a romance of the imagination.

When the first gush of enthusiasm has spent itself, when the brow begins to knit, when one feels the need of writing something better than strange tales to frighten old women

and little children, when contact with the world has worn off the rough edges of youth, one realizes that every invention, every creation, every fancy of the artist should be founded upon study, observation, contemplation, knowledge of perspective, comparison, serious meditation, constant, studious delineation of every object according to nature, and conscientious criticism of himself; and the inspiration which is evolved from these new conditions, far from losing anything of its force, finds its horizon greatly enlarged and its wings strengthened. The poet then has full knowledge of where he stands. All the visionary dreaming of his early years becomes in some sort crystallized into serious thought. The second period of life is ordinarily that in which the artist produces his greatest works. He is still young, and already mature. It is the priceless moment, the crowning medial point, the warm, brilliant noon-tide, the one instant when there is the least possible shadow and the brightest possible light.

There have been incomparable artists who have remained at that supreme height all their lives, despite their declining years. Such men are the transcendental geniuses in the world's history.

Shakespeare and Michel-Angelo left the mark of youth upon some of their works, but not one of them bears any indication of old age.

To return to the novel of which a new edition is about to appear, — this book, such as it is, with its jerky, gasping action, its inelastic characters, its clumsy diction, its pretentious but ill-conceived plot, its unblushing lapses into mere dreaming, its inartistic jumbling together of colors without regard for the eye, its crude, uneven, and offensive style, indiscriminating and inelegant, and with the thousand and one offences against good taste which it commits, quite unknowingly, in its course, — this book accurately represents the time of life at which it was written, and the condition of the mind, the imagination, and



the heart in early youth, when one is in love with one's first love, when one magnifies the commonplace disappointments of life into insuperable, poetic obstructions, when one's head is filled with heroic fantasies which make one great in one's own eyes, when one is a man in two or three respects, and a mere child in twenty others, when one has read Ducray-Duminil at eleven years, Auguste Lafontaine at thirteen, Shakespeare at sixteen, — a curious intellectual ladder, which carries one in rapid succession from the absurd to the sentimental, and from the sentimental to the sublime.

For the simple reason that, in our opinion, this book, which is ingenuous before everything, represents with some fidelity the time of life at which it was produced, we present it once more to the public in 1833, just as it was written in 1821.

Furthermore, since the author, unimportant as is the place he holds in literature, has undergone the fate common to all writers, great and small, of seeing his early works belauded at the expense of his later ones, and of hearing it said that he is a long way from having realized the moderate anticipations founded upon his first efforts, he deems it to be his duty, without venturing to put forward arguments which might lose their force in his mouth against a criticism which is perhaps judicious and well-grounded, to reprint those first efforts exactly as they were written. In that way each reader will be able to judge for himself whether the steps which separate "Hans of Iceland" from "Notre Dame de Paris" are steps forward or backward.

PARIS, May, 1833.

## **PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION.**

THE author of this work, from the day when he wrote the first page to the day when he was able to write the blessed words *The End* at the foot of the last, was the plaything of a most absurd delusion.

Having come to the conclusion that a work in four volumes was worthy of being carefully thought out, he wasted his time seeking a fundamental idea, and developing it well or ill into a plot which might or might not have some merit; in arranging the scenes, to make them as effective as possible; and in studying the manners and morals of the period as best he might: in a word, he took his work seriously.

It was not until this moment, when, in accordance with the custom of authors to end where the reader is supposed to begin, he sat down to work out a long preface, which should be a sort of buckler for the child of his imagination, and should contain, in conjunction with a statement of the moral and literary principles which underlay its conception, a more or less cursory sketch of the historical events to which it refers, and a picture, more or less complete, of the country where the action occurs, — it was not until this moment, we say, that he detected his mistake, that he realized the utter insignificance and triviality of the subject on which he had gravely soiled so much paper, and that he felt how he had, so to speak, thrown dust in his own eyes by persuading himself that this tale might, up to a certain point, be considered a literary production, and that the four volumes really formed a book.

He has therefore wisely determined, after making due apology, to say nothing at all in this preface, which his friend the publisher will consequently have to print in very large letters. He will not let the reader into the secret of his surname or baptismal names, nor whether he is young or old, married or single, nor whether he has heretofore written elegies or fables, odes or satires, nor whether he designs hereafter to write tragedies, melodramas, or comedies, nor whether he is posing as a literary patrician, as a member of some academy, nor whether he has a desk in the office of some newspaper, — all of which, however, would be interesting things to know. He will content himself with these few simple remarks: that the picturesque portion of his tale has received especial attention; that K and Y and H and W will be frequently met with there, although he has never made use of those romantic characters save with great discretion, — witness the historic name of Guldenlew, which several chroniclers write Guldenloewe, a form which he dared not adopt; that there will also be found numerous diphthongs, changed about with much taste and elegance; and, lastly, that each chapter is preceded by a mysterious epigraph which adds greatly to the interest, and tends to give more character to each division of the composition.

January, 1823.

## **PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION.**

THE author of this work has been informed that it is absolutely necessary that he should furnish a few lines by way of advertisement, preface, or introduction to this second edition. In vain did he dilate upon the fact that the four or five unlucky inane pages which led the way in the

first edition, and with which the publisher insists upon disfiguring this, have already drawn down the anathemas of one of our most honorable and illustrious critics, who accused him of adopting the bitter-sweet tone of the renowned Jedediah Cleishbotham, schoolmaster and sexton of the parish of Gandercleugh; in vain did he declare that this brilliant and judicious critic, stern as he was in rebuking the original sin, would be absolutely pitiless should it be repeated; and equally in vain did he bring forward a host of other reasons no less convincing, to avoid falling into the trap; it would seem that they must have been met by even better ones on the other side, for here he is now writing a second preface, after having so bitterly repented writing the first. As he took up his pen to carry out this bold determination, his first impulse was to place at the head of this second edition something with which he did not dare to burden the first, to wit, some general and special views upon the art of novel writing. He was meditating deeply upon this little literary and didactic treatise, and was still in the mystic intoxication of composition, a very brief instant, when the author, thinking to attain an ideal perfection which he will never attain, is hugging himself ecstatically over what he is going to write, — he was, we say, in that state of blissful self-content in which work is a pleasure, and the secret consciousness of the divine afflatus seems even sweeter than the noisy pursuit of fame, when one of his most judicious friends rudely aroused him from his self-satisfaction, from his ecstasy, from his intoxication, by assuring him that several very famous, very popular, and very influential men of letters considered that the dissertation he was preparing would be very absurd and tiresome, and in the worst possible taste; that the functions of apostles of criticism which they had undertaken to perform in divers public sheets, imposed upon them the painful duty of pitilessly hunting down the monster of romanticism, and every

variety of bad taste, and that they were engaged at that very moment in preparing for certain impartial and enlightened journals a conscientious, well-reasoned and extremely piquant criticism of the still unwritten dissertation. At this appalling intelligence, the author —

"*Obstupuit; steteruntque comae; et vox faucibus haesit.*"  
(*Was dumfounded; his hair stood on end; and his voice stuck in his throat*)

that is to say that he could see no other possible course than to leave in the limbo whence he was preparing to bring it forth that most excellent treatise ("a virgin still unborn," as Jean-Baptiste Rousseau has it) which was to be reproved in advance by so judicious and harsh a criticism. His friend advised him to replace it simply by a sort of "publishers' preface," in which he could very properly make those gentlemen say all the pleasant things which tickle an author's ear. He even furnished him with several specimens culled from divers works which are in high favor. Some begin with these words: — "The extraordinary popular success of this work," etc.

Others with these: — "The European celebrity which this novel has acquired," etc.; or: — "It is mere supererogation now to praise this work, since it is the universal verdict that any possible praise falls far short of its merit," etc.

Although these various formulae, as his judicious adviser called them, were somewhat tempting, the author did not feel sufficient humility or paternal indifference to expose his work to the unreasonable demands and probable disenchantment of the reader who should have seen these magniloquent apologies, nor sufficient effrontery to imitate the showmen at public fairs, who exhibit, as a fillip to the curiosity of the public, a huge crocodile painted on a canvas, behind which, after you have paid your money, you find there is nothing but a lizard. He therefore discarded all thought of sounding his own praises through the obliging mouths of his publishers. His friend then suggested to him

to put in the mouth of his Icelandic villain some sentiments which would make him fashionable, and put him in sympathy with the present age, — such, for instance, as sly and cutting witticisms against marchionesses, bitter sarcasms against the priests, or ingenious innuendoes against nuns, capuchins, and other monsters of the social regime. The author would have liked nothing better; but, to tell the truth, it did not seem to him that there was any very close connection between marchionesses and capuchins and the work he is putting forth. He might, indeed, have borrowed some other colors from the same palette, and have thrown together here a few pages, running over with philanthropy, wherein — giving a wide berth all the while to a certain dangerous reef which lies just.

beneath the surface of the sea of philosophy, and is known as the Correctional Tribunal — he could have put forward some of the truths discovered by our wise men for the glory of mankind, and the consolation of the dying; to wit, that man is only a brute, that the soul is only a bit of gas of varying density, and that God is nothing at all. But he reflected that these incontrovertible truths were already very trite and worn, and that he would add scarcely a drop of water to the deluge of moral apothegms, atheistical scruples, maxims, doctrines, and principles which have been poured out upon us for our good, these thirty years past, in such prodigious quantity that one might, were it not for the irreverence, apply to them Régnier's lines upon a shower: —

"Des nuages en eau tomboit nn tel dègoust,  
Que les chiens altérés pouvoient boire debout."

*(The water poured down so from the clouds that the thirsty dogs could drink standing erect)*

However, these lofty subjects have no very evident relation to the work in hand, and the author would have been much embarrassed to find a way to lead up to them, although the art of transition has been greatly simplified since so many great men have learned the secret of passing without winking from a hovel to a palace, and of exchanging, without noticing the incongruity, the foraging cap for the civic crown.

Realizing, therefore, that neither his talent nor his knowledge — neither his wings nor his beak, as the ingenious Arab poet sings — will furnish him with an interesting preface for his readers, the author decided to offer simply a serious, frank statement of the improvements made in this second edition.

In the first place, he takes the liberty of observing that the phrase second edition, is not at all appropriate, and that the title of first edition really belongs to this republication, because the four rough bundles of grayish paper covered with black and white spots, which the indulgent public has hitherto been content to look upon as the four volumes of "Hans of Iceland," were so disfigured by typographical absurdities — the work of an uncivilized printer — that the wretched author, as he cast his eye over his unrecognizable production, suffered constantly the agony that a father might feel, to receive back his beloved child, mutilated and tattooed by the Iroquois of Lake Ontario.

In that unlucky venture the esclavage (slavery) of suicide, replaced the usage (custom) of suicide; furthermore, the typographical bungler gave to a lien the voice which belonged to a lion; in another place he took away its pics (summit) from the mountain of Dofre-Fjeld, and ascribed to it the possession of pieds (feet); and when the Norwegian fishermen were expecting to come to anchor in the criques (inlets), he forced them into briques (bricks).

Rather than weary the reader, the author passes over in silence innumerable other outrages of this description which his resentful memory recalls: —

"Manet alto in pectore vulnus." (*Wound remains deep in the breast*)

Suffice it to say that there is no absurd, incomprehensible thought, no grotesque, hieroglyphic figure which this riddle-making printer did not make him express. Alas! whoever has had the misfortune to print a dozen lines in his life, though it were no more than a marriage or death certificate, will appreciate the bitterness of the pang.

The proofs of this new impression have been read and reread with the most painstaking care, and now the author, in common with one or two of his close friends, ventures to believe that this restored novel is worthy to figure among those brilliant writings in the presence of which *the eleven stars bow down as before the moon and the sun?*

If Messieurs the newspaper men accuse him of not having made the proper corrections, he will take the liberty of sending them the proofs of the regenerated works, blackened by the careful revision to which they have been subjected; for it is said that there is more than one "doubting Thomas" among these gentlemen.

The indulgent reader will observe, further, that several dates have been rectified, some few historical notes added, and that one or two chapters have been embellished with new epigraphs; in a word, he will find on every page changes whose importance is proportioned to the importance of the work itself.

An impertinent, though friendly adviser, desired the author to place in footnotes translations of all the Latin phrases scattered through these pages by Spiagudry, — for the benefit (added this person) of the masons and boiler-makers and hair-dressers who conduct certain journals wherein "Hans of Iceland"



might possibly be taken up for judgment. Imagine how indignantly the author received this disingenuous advice. He instantly begged the wretched joker to understand that all newspaper men, without distinction, are perfect sons of urbanity, knowledge, and good faith, and not to insult him by imagining that he was one of those ungrateful citizens, always ready to apply to the arbiters of taste and genius the malicious verse of an old poet: —

"Tenez-vous dans vos peaux, et ne jugez personne."(*Keep to your shells, and criticise nobody*)

He averred that, for his own part, he was very far from thinking that the lion's skin was not the skin which really belonged to these popular worthies.

Again, someone exhorted him — he feels that he owes it to his readers to tell them everything without concealment — to place his name beneath the title of this romance, which has hitherto been the abandoned child of an unknown father. It must be owned that, over and above the pleasure of seeing the seven or eight Roman characters which go to make up what is called his name, standing out in fine black letters on fine white paper, there is a certain charm in the thought of having it glitter by itself on the back of the printed cover, as if the work which that cover encloses, far from being the sole monument of the author's genius, were but one of the pillars of the imposing temple which is some day to be raised to his immortal renown, — but a paltry specimen of his hidden talent and his unpublished glory. This proves, at the very least, that one proposes at some future day to be an illustrious and prolific writer. To triumph over this new temptation required all the author's dread of his inability to make his way through the crowd of blackeners of paper, who, although they cease to write anonymously, always remain unknown.

As to the suggestions which have been submitted to him by several amateurs with delicate ears, touching the barbarous harshness of the Norwegian names, he considers

them extremely apt; and so he proposes, as soon as he shall be chosen a member of the Royal Society of Stockholm, or of the Academy of Bergen, to request Messieurs the Norwegians to change their language, considering that the villainous jargon which they are whimsical enough to use wounds the tympana of our Parisian ladies, and that their outlandish names, which are as rugged as their cliffs, produce upon the sensitive tongue which pronounces them the same effect which their bear's-oil and bark bread would undoubtedly produce upon the sensitive nerve-centers of our palates.

It remains for him to thank the eight or ten persons who have been kind enough to read his work throughout, — its prodigious success proves that that number must have done so; he also extends his heartfelt gratitude to those of his fair readers of the gentler sex, who, as he is assured, have tried to form from the book an ideal of the author of "Hans of Iceland." He is infinitely flattered to learn that they give him red hair, a curly beard, and haggard eyes; he is embarrassed that they deign to do him the honor to believe that he never cuts his nails; but he begs them on his knees to be convinced that he does not carry his ferocity so far as to devour little children alive; however, all these points will be settled when his fame shall have risen to the level of that of the authors of "Lolotte et Fan-fan," or "Monsieur Botte," those transcendent intellects, twin brothers in genius and taste, Arcades ambo, and when at the beginning of each of his works his portrait shall be placed, *terribiles visu formae*, with a sketch of his life, *domestica facia*.

He was about to bring this too long note to a close, when his bookseller, just as the work was to be sent to the newspapers, came to him and asked him to write for them a few complimentary words concerning his own book, adding, to dissipate the author's scruples, that "his handwriting would not betray him, for he would copy them himself." This last touch seemed to him very affecting. As it

would seem that in this enlightened age everyone considers it his duty to inform his neighbor as to his personal qualities and perfections (a subject on which nobody is so well posted as their proprietor); and, furthermore, as this last temptation is somewhat hard to resist, and as he may succumb to it, the author thinks it his duty to warn the public that they must never believe half of what the newspapers say of his work.

APRIL, 1823.

## I.

*Did you see it? did you see it? did you see it? Oh! did you see it? Who saw it? Who did see it? For mercy's sake, who saw it? —*

*Sterne: Tristram Shandy.*

"Look ye what love leads to, neighbor Niels: poor Guth Stersen wouldn't be stretched out on that great black stone yonder, like a star-fish forgotten by the tide, if she had never thought of anything but patching up the old boat and mending nets for her father, our old comrade, St. Usuph, the fisherman, comfort him in his affliction!"

"And her lover," chimed in a shrill quavering voice, " Gill Stadt, that fine young fellow lying there beside her, wouldn't be where he is if he had passed his youth rocking his little brother's cradle under the smoky rafters of his cabin, instead of making love to Guth, and seeking his fortune in those cursed mines of Roeraas."

Neighbor Niels, whom the first speaker addressed, interrupted at this point: — "Your memory keeps pace with your years, and is growing old with you, Mother Olly. Gill never had a brother, and that makes poor widow Stadt's grief all the more bitter, for her cabin is quite deserted now. If she tries to look up to heaven for comfort, she will find her old roof in the way, where her baby's empty cradle still hangs, — her baby, who grew to manhood, and now is dead."

"Poor mother!" rejoined old Olly; "for the young man has nobody to blame but himself; why did he go to the mines at Roeraas?"

"I really believe," said Niels, " that those infernal mines rob us of a man for every copper farthing they yield. What do you think, neighbor Braal?"

"Miners are fools!" replied the fisherman. "If a fish would live he must not leave the water; no more must a man go into the bowels of the earth."

"But suppose Gill Stadt had to go to work in the mines in order to win his bride?" asked a young man in the crowd.

"He shouldn't have risked his life," interposed Olly, "for a mere sentiment which isn't worth it, and will never make up for its loss. A fine marriage bed Gill has provided for his Guth!"

"Pray, did the young woman drown herself in despair at the death of the young man?" queried another bystander.

"Who says she did?" shouted a soldier, pushing his way to the front. "This girl — I knew her well — was betrothed to a young miner who was recently crashed by a blast in the underground galleries of Storwaadsgrube, near Roeraas: but she was also the mistress of one of my comrades, and day before yesterday she undertook to get into Munckholm secretly to celebrate the death of her betrothed with her lover; the boat she was on was wrecked on a reef, and she was drowned."

A confused murmur of voices greeted this speech.

"Impossible, master soldier," cried the old women; the younger ones held their peace, and neighbor Niels maliciously reminded Braal, the fisherman, of his solemn sentence: "Look ye, what love leads to!"

The warrior was on the point of losing his temper in good earnest with his female contradictors; he had already called them "old witches from Quiragoth Cave," and they were little disposed to submit patiently to so bitter an insult, when the discussion was suddenly brought to an end by a sharp, commanding voice, crying, " Peace, peace, ye drivellers!"

Every tongue was hushed, as when the sudden crowing of a cock imposes silence on the clucking of the hens.

Before describing the remainder of the scene, it may not be amiss to describe the spot where it took place. It was, as the reader doubtless has guessed ere this, one of those dismal structures which public compassion and social foresight consecrate to the reception of unidentified bodies; the last abiding-place of a certain class of deceased persons, most of whom have lived unhappy lives; a place to which resort the indifferent sight-seer, the morbid or philanthropic observer, and frequently, weeping kinsfolk and friends, whose long and unendurable anxiety has left them but the one sad hope. At the period, already long past, and in the partially civilized country, to which I have taken my reader, no one had as yet dreamed, as in our cities of luxury and filth, of making these temporary resting-places the ornate and ingeniously gloomy structures we see to-day. There was no tomb-like opening, through which the sun's rays entered obliquely, lighting up arches artistically carved, and resting upon a row of stone beds, with pillows fashioned at the head, as if with the purpose to provide the dead with some of the conveniences of life. And if, by chance, the keeper's door stood ajar, the eye, wearied by gazing at the naked, hideous bodies, had not, as it may have to-day, the welcome relief of cheerful rooms and happy children. No; there death was displayed in all its ugliness, in all its horror; and there had been as yet no attempt to deck it out with finery and ribbons.

The apartment in which our friends were standing was large and dark, the darkness making it appear larger than it really was; it received light through the low square door which opened upon the quay of Drontheim, and through an irregular opening in the roof, through which a pale, sickly light came in with the rain or hail or snow, as the case might be, upon the bodies which lay directly beneath it. The room was divided across the middle by an iron railing

waist high. The public were admitted into the outer section through the square door; on the other side of the rail were six long slabs of black granite, arranged side by side. A small side door in each section was used by the keeper and his assistant, whose living apartments were in the rear, extending back to the sea. The miner and his betrothed were lying upon two of these granite couches. Decomposition had already begun in the young woman's body, and was evidenced by the broad blue and purple streaks which marked the location of the blood vessels in her arms and legs. Gill's features seemed harsh and forbidding; but his body was so horribly mutilated that it was impossible to say whether he was really as handsome as Mother Olly said.

The conversation which we have faithfully recounted took place among the awe-struck crowd, who were standing in front of the disfigured remains.

A tall, spare old man, who was sitting with folded arms and bent head upon a dilapidated stool in the darkest corner of the room, seemed to be utterly unmindful of what was said, until he suddenly rose to his feet, crying: "Peace, peace, drivellers!" and seized the soldier's arm.

Every voice was hushed; the soldier turned around, and burst into a great roar of laughter at the extraordinary aspect of the speaker, whose haggard face, sparse, unkempt hair, long, bony fingers, and complete outfit of reindeer-skin fully justified his boisterous greeting. But the women, who were struck dumb for a moment, soon began to grumble: "It's the keeper of the Spladgest! (*The name given to the morgue at Drontheim*, the Editor) It's that infernal dead man's porter. It's that devil Spiagudry, the cursed wizard!"

"Peace, drivellers, peace! If this is your witches' Sabbath, go quick and look out for your brooms, or they'll fly away all alone. Leave this worthy descendant of the god Thor in peace."

Thereupon Spiagudry, forcing his features to assume an amiable grin, addressed the soldier: — "You were saying, my good fellow, that this wretched woman —"

"The old rascal!" muttered Olly; "yes, we are 'wretched women' in his eyes, because our bodies, if they fall into his clutches, bring him in only thirty ascalins each, while he receives forty for the carcass of a good-for-nothing man."

"Silence, old hags!" exclaimed Spiagudry.

"Upon my soul, these daughters of the devil are like their kettles; when they are warm they can't help sputtering. Tell me, my gallant king of the sword, doubtless your comrade, whose mistress this Guth was, proposes to kill himself, in despair at having lost her?"

At that the long-delayed explosion broke forth.

"Do you hear the miscreant, the old heathen?"

cried twenty shrill discordant voices; "he would like to know that there is one man less among the living, just because of the forty ascalins a death will bring him in."

"Suppose that's true," rejoined the keeper of the Spladgest, "has not our gracious lord the king, Christian V., whom St. Hospitius bless, declared himself to be the born guardian of all miners, so that when they die he can enrich the royal treasury with their paltry savings?"

"You do the king great honor," retorted the fisherman Braal, "to compare the royal treasury to the strong-box of this charnel-house of yours, and him to yourself, neighbor Spiagudry."

"Neighbor!" ejaculated the keeper, annoyed at such familiarity: "your neighbor! Say, your host rather, for it may very well be, my dear toiler of the sea, that someday I shall loan you one of my six stone beds for a week or so. However," he added with a laugh, "I spoke of this soldier's possible death, simply from a desire to see the practice of committing suicide kept up in connection with the tragic passions these ladies are wont to inspire."



"Well, well, you lanky corpse in charge of corpses!" said the soldier, "tell me, pray, what you are driving at, with that amiable grin, which resembles nothing so much as a hanged man's last smile."

"Very good, very good, my popinjay," rejoined Spiagudry, "I always thought there was more real wit under the helmet of Private Thurn, who whips the devil with sword and tongue, than under the miter of Bishop Isleif, who wrote the History of Iceland, or the square cap of Professor Shaenning, who described our cathedral."

"In that case, if you take my advice, my old bag of leather, you will abandon your charnel-house income, and sell yourself to the viceroy at Bergen for his cabinet of curiosities. I swear by St. Belphegor that he pays their weight in gold for rare species of animals. But tell me, what do you want of me?"

"When the bodies which are brought to us are found in the water, we are obliged to turn over half of our fees to the fishermen. I simply wanted to beg you therefore, O illustrious descendant of Private Thurn, to induce your unhappy comrade not to drown himself, but to select some other variety of death.

It ought not to make any difference to him, and he would not care to wrong the poor Christian who will entertain his dead body, assuming, that is, that the loss of Guth will drive him to commit this deed of desperation."

"You are very much mistaken, my kindly and hospitable keeper: my comrade will not have the gratification of becoming a guest of your inviting inn with six beds. Do you fancy he has not already consoled himself with another valkyrie for the death of this one? By my beard! he was tired of your Guth long ago."

At these words the tempest, which Spiagudry had deflected for a moment to his own head, broke more fiercely than ever upon the ill-starred man of war.

"What, you miserable villain," shrieked the old women; "that's the way you forget us, is it? Bah! who would love such carrion!"

The younger women still held their peace; some of them, truth to tell, could not avoid the thought that this black sheep was not by any means an unattractive youth.

"Oho!" said he, "is this the Witches' Sabbath over again? Beelzebub's punishment is a fearful one indeed, if he has to listen to such choruses as this once a week."

Nobody knows what would have been the result of this latest squall, if general attention had not been altogether engrossed at that moment by a noise without. It grew louder as it approached, and soon a swarm of half-naked boys, running along beside a covered litter carried by two men, rushed shouting into the Spladgest.' "Where does that come from?" the keeper asked the bearers.

"From the beach at Urchtal."

"Oglypiglap!" shouted Spiagudry.

One of the doors at the side opened, and a little Laplander, dressed in a suit of leather, appeared and signed to the bearers to follow him. Spiagudry went with them, and the door closed upon them before the inquisitive multitude had time to guess from the length of the body on the litter whether it was a man or a woman.

This subject was still furnishing food for conjecture, when Spiagudry and his assistant reappeared in the inner section of the room, carrying the body of a man, which they laid on one of the granite beds.

"It's a long time since I handled such beautiful clothes," said Oglypiglap. As he spoke he stood on tiptoe and hung a captain's handsome uniform over the dead man's head.

The head was disfigured, and the rest of the body covered with blood; the keeper washed it several times with water from an old leaky pail.

"By St. Beelzebub!" exclaimed the soldier, "it's an officer of my regiment! Let me see: can it be Captain Bollar, dead

of grief for his uncle's death?

Bah! he's his heir. Baron Randmer? he staked his estate at cards yesterday, but to-morrow he will win it back, and his opponent's castle to boot. Can it be Captain Lory, whose dog was drowned? or Treasurer Stunck, whose wife is unfaithful to him? Upon my word I don't see any cause for blowing out one's brains in either of those cases."

The crowd was momentarily increasing in size.

At that moment a young man who was riding along the quay, noticed the throng; he alighted from his horse, threw the rein to the servant who followed him, and entered the Spladgest. He was dressed in a modest traveling suit, armed with a sword, and wrapped in a green cloak of ample proportions; a black plume, fastened to his hat by a diamond buckle, fell down over his noble face, and waved to and fro above his high forehead, crowned with long chestnut hair; his boots and spurs were covered with mud, as if he had traveled far.

As he entered, a little thickset man, wrapped, as he was, in a cloak, and with enormous gloves on his hands, was saying to the soldier: "How do you know that he killed himself? This man no more committed suicide, my word for it, than the roof of your cathedral set itself on fire."

As the twibil makes two wounds at once, so did this sentence call forth two retorts.

"Our cathedral!" said Niels; "they are roofing it now with copper. It's that rascal Hans, they say, who set fire to it, so as to make work for his miners, among whom was his protege Gill Stadt, whom you see here."

"What the devil!" cried the soldier, "you dare to tell me, — me, second arquebusier of the garrison of Munckholm, — that that man didn't blow his brains out?"

"That man was murdered," coolly replied the little man.

"Pray, listen to the oracle! Go to, your little gray eyes have no better sight than your hands in the great gloves you wear on them in midsummer."

The little man's eyes shot fire.

"Soldier, pray to your patron saint that these same hands do not someday leave their mark on your face."

"Oho! let us go out!" cried the soldier, beside himself with rage. But suddenly he checked himself: "No," he said, "one must not speak of duels in presence of the dead."

The little man muttered some words in a foreign tongue, and disappeared.

"They found him on the beach at Urchtal," said a voice.

"On the beach at Urchtal?" the soldier repeated; "Captain Dispolsen was to come ashore there this morning, from Copenhagen."

"Captain Dispolsen hasn't yet reached Munckholm," said another voice.

"They say that Hans of Iceland is wandering about in that neighborhood at present," added a fourth.

"In that case, this man may be the captain," said the soldier, "if Hans is the assassin; for every one knows that the Icelfander does his murdering in such a diabolical way that his victims seem to have committed suicide."

"What sort of man is this Hans, pray?" someone inquired.

"He's a giant," said one.

"He's a dwarf," said another.

"Has no one ever seen him?"

"The first time that any one sees him is also the last."

"Hush!" said old Olly; "they say that only three persons ever exchanged human words with him, — this wretch of a Spiagudry, the widow Stadt, and — but he had an unhappy life, and an unhappy death — poor Gill there. Hush!"

"Hush'!" the word was echoed on all sides.

"Now," cried the soldier suddenly, "I am sure that it really is Captain Dispolsen; I recognize the steel chain which our prisoner, old Schumacker, presented to him when he left the castle."

The young man with the black plume abruptly broke the silence.

"You are sure that it's Captain Dispolsen?"

"Sure, by the worth of St. Beelzebub!" the soldier replied.

The young man went hurriedly out.

"Order a boat for Munckholm," he said to his servant.

"But, my lord, the general —"

"You will take the horses to him. I will go tomorrow. Am I, or am I not, my own master? Come, night is approaching, and I am in haste; a boat."

The servant obeyed, and then stood for some time watching his young master as "he glided away from the shore.

## II.

*I will sit by the while, so thou wilt tell  
Some moving story to beguile the time.  
Maturin: Bertram.*

The reader already knows that we are at Drontheim, one of the four principal cities of Norway, but not the residence of the viceroy. At the time when the action of the story takes place, in 1699, the kingdom of Norway was still united to Denmark, and governed by viceroys, who resided at Bergen, a larger city than Drontheim and farther to the south; a finer city, too, notwithstanding the uncomplimentary cognomen bestowed upon it by the illustrious Admiral Van Tromp. Drontheim presents a very attractive appearance as one approaches it up the fiord to which it gives its name. The harbor is reasonably wide, although vessels cannot easily enter in all weathers; but it resembles a long canal, bordered on the right by Danish and Norwegian ships, and on the left by those of foreign nations, that distinction being prescribed by the municipal regulations. In the background lies the city in the midst of a fertile plain, surmounted by the needle-like spires of its cathedral.

This cathedral, one of the most beautiful examples of Gothic architecture, as one may judge from Professor Shoening's book, — cited so familiarly by Spiagudry, — which describes it as it appeared before its beauty had been marred by frequent fires, bore upon its central spire the episcopal cross, which indicated that it was the cathedral church of the Lutheran bishopric of Drontheim.