

WILHELM MEINHOLD



**SIDONIA,
THE SORCERESS**

HISTORICAL NOVEL

Wilhelm Meinhold

Sidonia, the Sorceress (Historical Novel

Published by

MUSAICUM

Books

- Advanced Digital Solutions & High-Quality eBook
Formatting -

musaicumbooks@okpublishing.info

2021 OK Publishing

EAN 4064066380656

Table of Contents

[Volume 1](#)

[Volume 2](#)

VOLUME 1

Table of Contents

Table of Contents

PREFACE

BOOK I.

CHAPTER I.
CHAPTER II.
CHAPTER III.
CHAPTER IV.
CHAPTER V.
CHAPTER VI.
CHAPTER VII.
CHAPTER VIII.
CHAPTER IX.
CHAPTER X.
CHAPTER XI.
CHAPTER XII.
CHAPTER XIII.
CHAPTER XIV.
CHAPTER XV.
CHAPTER XVI.
CHAPTER XVII.
CHAPTER XVIII.

BOOK II.

CHAPTER I.
CHAPTER II.
CHAPTER III.
CHAPTER IV.
CHAPTER V.
CHAPTER VI.
CHAPTER VII.
CHAPTER VIII.
CHAPTER IX.
CHAPTER X.
CHAPTER XI.

CHAPTER XII.
CHAPTER XIII.
CHAPTER XIV.
CHAPTER XV.
CHAPTER XVI.
CHAPTER XVII.
CHAPTER XVIII.
CHAPTER XIX.
CHAPTER XX.
CHAPTER XXI.
CHAPTER XXII.
CHAPTER XXIII.

BOOK III.

CHAPTER I.
CHAPTER II.
CHAPTER III.

PREFACE

[Table of Contents](#)

Amongst all the trials for witchcraft with which we are acquainted, few have attained so great a celebrity as that of the Lady Canoness of Pomerania, Sidonia von Bork. She was accused of having by her sorceries caused sterility in many families, particularly in that of the ancient reigning house of Pomerania, and also of having destroyed the noblest scions of that house by an early and premature death. Notwithstanding the intercessions and entreaties of the Prince of Brandenburg and Saxony, and of the resident Pomeranian nobility, she was publicly executed for these crimes on the 19th of August 1620, on the public scaffold, at Stettin; the only favour granted being, that she was allowed to be beheaded first and then burned.

This terrible example caused such a panic of horror, that contemporary authors scarcely dare to mention her name, and, even then, merely by giving the initials. This forbearance arose partly from respect towards the ancient family of the Von Borks, who then, as now, were amongst the most illustrious and wealthy in the land, and also from the fear of offending the reigning ducal family, as the Sorceress, in her youth, had stood in a very near and tender relation to the young Duke Ernest Louis von Pommern-Wolgast.

These reasons will be sufficiently comprehensible to all who are familiar with the disgust and aversion in which the paramours of the evil one were held in that age, so that

even upon the rack these subjects were scarcely touched upon.

The first public, judicial, yet disconnected account of Sidonia's trial, we find in the Pomeranian Library of Dähnert, fourth volume, article 7, July number of the year 1755.

Dähnert here acknowledges, page 241, that the numbers from 302 to 1080, containing the depositions of the witnesses, were not forthcoming up to his time, but that a priest in Pansin, near Stargard, by name Justus Sagebaum, pretended to have them in his hands, and accordingly, in the fifth volume of the above-named journal (article 4, of April 1756), some very important extracts appear from them.

The records, however, again disappeared for nearly a century, until Barthold announced, some short time since, [Footnote: "History of Rugen and Pomerania," vol. iv. p. 486.] that he had at length discovered them in the Berlin Library; but he does not say which, for, according to Schwalenberg, who quotes Dähnert, there existed two or three different copies, namely, the *Protocollum Jodoci Neumarks*, the so-called *Acta Lothmanni*, and that of *Adami Moesters*, contradicting each other in the most important matters. Whether I have drawn the history of my Sidonia from one or other of the above-named sources, or from some entirely new, or, finally, from that alone which is longest known, I shall leave undecided.

Every one who has heard of the animadversions which "The Amber Witch" excited, many asserting that it was only dressed-up history, though I repeatedly assured them it was

simple fiction, will pardon me if I do not here distinctly declare whether Sidonia be history or fiction.

The truth of the material, as well as of the formal contents, can be tested by any one by referring to the authorities I have named; and in connection with these, I must just remark, that in order to spare the reader any difficulties which might present themselves to eye and ear, in consequence of the old-fashioned mode of writing, I have modernised the orthography, and amended the grammar and structure of the phrases. And lastly, I trust that all just thinkers of every party will pardon me for having here and there introduced my supernatural views of Christianity. A man's principles, as put forward in his philosophical writings, are in general only read by his own party, and not by that of his adversaries. A Rationalist will fly from a book by a Supernaturalist as rapidly as this latter from one by a Friend of Light. But by introducing my views in the manner I have adopted, in place of publishing them in a distinct volume, I trust that all parties will be induced to peruse them, and that many will find, not only what is worthy their particular attention, but matter for deep and serious reflection.

I must now give an account of those portraits of Sidonia which are extant.

As far as I know, three of these (besides innumerable sketches) exist, one in Stettin, the other in the lower Pomeranian town Plathe, and a third at Stargard, near Regenwalde, in the castle of the Count von Bork. I am acquainted only with the last-named picture, and agree with many in thinking that it is the only original.

Sidonia is here represented in the prime of mature beauty—a gold net is drawn over her almost golden yellow hair, and her neck, arms, and hands are profusely covered with jewels. Her bodice of bright purple is trimmed with costly fur, and the robe is of azure velvet. In her hand she carries a sort of pompadour of brown leather, of the most elegant form and finish. Her eyes and mouth are not pleasing, notwithstanding their great beauty—in the mouth, particularly, one can discover an expression of cold malignity.

The painting is beautifully executed, and is evidently of the school of Louis Kranach.

Immediately behind this form there is another looking over the shoulder of Sidonia, like a terrible spectre (a highly poetical idea), for this spectre is Sidonia herself painted as a Sorceress. It must have been added, after a lapse of many years, to the youthful portrait, which belongs, as I have said, to the school of Kranach, whereas the second figure portrays unmistakably the school of Rubens. It is a fearfully characteristic painting, and no imagination could conceive a contrast more shudderingly awful. The Sorceress is arrayed in her death garments—white with black stripes; and round her thin white locks is bound a narrow band of black velvet spotted with gold. In her hand is a kind of a work-basket, but of the simplest workmanship and form.

Of the other portraits I cannot speak from my own personal inspection; but to judge by the drawings taken from them to which I have had access, they appear to differ completely, not only in costume, but in the character of the countenance, from the one I have described, which there is

no doubt must be the original, not only because it bears all the characteristics of that school of painting which approached nearest to the age in which Sidonia lived—namely, from 1540 to 1620—but also by the fact that a sheet of paper bearing an inscription was found behind the painting, betraying evident marks of age in its blackened colour, the form of the letters, and the expressions employed. The inscription is as follows:—

"This Sidonia von Bork was in her youth the most beautiful and the richest of the maidens of Pomerania. She inherited many estates from her parents, and thus was in her own right a possessor almost of a county. So her pride increased, and many noble gentlemen who sought her in marriage were rejected with disdain, as she considered that a count or prince alone could be worthy of her hand. For these reasons she attended the Duke's court frequently, in the hopes of winning over one of the seven young princes to her love. At length she was successful; Duke Ernest Louis von Wolgast, aged about twenty, and the handsomest youth in Pomerania, became her lover, and even promised her his hand in marriage. This promise he would faithfully have kept if the Stettin princes, who were displeased at the prospect of this unequal alliance, had not induced him to abandon Sidonia, by means of the portrait of the Princess Hedwig of Brunswick, the most beautiful princess in all Germany. Sidonia thereupon fell into such despair, that she resolved to renounce marriage for ever, and bury the remainder of her life in the convent of Marienfliess, and thus she did. But the wrong done to her by the Stettin princes lay heavy upon her heart, and the desire for revenge increased with years;

besides, in place of reading the Bible, her private hours were passed studying the *Amadis*, wherein she found many examples of how forsaken maidens have avenged themselves upon their false lovers by means of magic. So she at last yielded to the temptations of Satan, and after some years learned the secrets of witchcraft from an old woman. By means of this unholy knowledge, along with several other evil deeds, she so bewitched the whole princely race that the six young princes, who were each wedded to a young wife, remained childless; but no public notice was taken until Duke Francis succeeded to the duchy in 1618. He was a ruthless enemy to witches; all in the land were sought out with great diligence and burned, and as they unanimously named the Abbess of Marienfliess [Footnote: Sidonia never attained this dignity, though Micraelius and others gave her the title.] upon the rack, she was brought to Stettin by command of the Duke, where she freely confessed all the evil wrought by her sorceries upon the princely race.

"The Duke promised her life and pardon if she would free the other princes from the ban; but her answer was that she had enclosed the spell in a padlock, and flung it into the sea, and having asked the devil if he could restore the padlock again to her, he replied, 'No; that was forbidden to him;' by which every one can perceive that the destiny of God was in the matter.

"And so it was that, notwithstanding the intercession of all the neighbouring courts, Sidonia was brought to the scaffold at Stettin, there beheaded, and afterwards burned.

"Before her death the Prince ordered her portrait to be painted, in her old age and prison garb, behind that which represented her in the prime of youth. After his death, Bogislaff XIV., the last Duke, gave this picture to my grandmother, whose husband had also been killed by the Sorceress. My father received it from her, and I from him, along with the story which is here written down.

"HENRY GUSTAVUS SCHWALENBERG."

[Footnote: The style of this "Inscription" proves it to have been written in the beginning of the preceding century, but it is first noticed by Dähnert. I have had his version compared with the original in Stargord—through the kindness of a friend, who assures me that the transcription is perfectly correct, and yet can he be mistaken? for Horst (Magic Library, vol. ii. p. 246), gives the conclusion thus: "From whom my father received it, and I from him, along with the story precisely as given here by H. G. Schwalenberg." By this reading, which must have escaped my friend, a different sense is given to the passage; by the last reading it would appear that the "I" was a Bork, who had taken the tale from Schwalenberg's history of the Pomeranian Dukes, a work which exists only in manuscript, and to which I have had no access; but if we admit the first reading, then the writer must be a Schwalenberg. Even the "grandmother" will not clear up the matter, for Sidonia, when put to the torture, confessed, at the seventh question, that she had caused the death of Doctor Schwalenberg (he was counsellor in Stettin then), and at the eleventh question, that her brother's son, Otto Bork, had died also by

her means. Who then is this "I"? Even Sidonia's picture, we see, utters mysteries.

In my opinion the writer was Schwalenberg, and Horst seems to have taken his version from Paulis's "General History of Pomerania," vol. iv. p. 396, and not from the original of Dähnert.

For the picture at that early period was not in the possession of a Bork, but belonged to the Count von Mellin in Schillersdorf, as passages from many authors can testify. This is confirmed by another paper found along with that containing the tradition, but of much more modern appearance, which states that the picture was removed by successive inheritors, first from Schillersdorf to Stargord, from thence to Heinrichsberg (there are three towns in Pomerania of this name), and finally from Heinrichsberg, in the year 1834, was a second time removed to Stargord by the last inheritor.

This Schillersdorf lies between Gartz and Stettin on the Oder.

WILLIAM MEINHOLD.]

LETTER OF DR. THEODORE PLÖNNIES

TO BOGISLAFF THE FOURTEENTH, THE LAST DUKE OF
POMERANIA.

MOST EMINENT PRINCE AND GRACIOUS LORD—Serene Prince, your Highness gave me a commission in past years to travel through all Pomerania, and if I met with any persons who could give me certain "information" respecting the notorious and accursed witch Sidonia von Bork, to set down carefully all they stated, and bring it afterwards into *connexum* for your Highness. It is well known that Duke Francis, of blessed memory, never would permit the accursed deeds of this woman to be made public, or her confession upon the rack, fearing to bring scandal upon the princely house. But your Serene Highness viewed the subject differently, and said that it was good for every one, but especially princes, to look into the clear mirror of history, and behold there the faults and follies of their race. For this reason may no truth be omitted here.

To such princely commands I have proved myself obedient, collecting all information, whether good or evil, and concealing nothing. But the greater number who related these things to me could scarcely speak for tears, for wherever I travelled throughout Pomerania, as the faithful servant of your Highness, nothing was heard but lamentations from old and young, rich and poor, that this execrable Sorceress, out of Satanic wickedness, had destroyed this illustrious race, who had held their lands from

no emperor, in feudal tenure, like other German princes, but in their own right, as absolute lords, since five hundred years, and though for twenty years it seemed to rest upon five goodly princes, yet by permission of the incomprehensible God, it has now melted away until your Highness stands the last of his race, and no prospect is before us that it will ever be restored, but with your Highness (God have mercy upon us!) will be utterly extinguished, and for ever. "Woe to us, how have we sinned!" (Lament, v. 16).¹

I pray therefore the all-merciful God, that He will remove me before your Highness from this vale of tears, that I may not behold the last hour of your Highness or of my poor fatherland. Rather than witness these things, I would a thousand times sooner lie quiet in my grave.

[¹: Marginal note of Duke Bogislaff XIV.-"In tuas manus commendo spiritum meum, quia tu me redemisti fide deus,"]

BOOK I.

FROM THE RECEPTION OF SIDONIA AT THE DUCAL COURT OF WOLGAST UNTIL HER BANISHMENT THEREFROM.

[Table of Contents](#)

CHAPTER I.

Table of Contents

Of the education of Sidonia.

The illustrious and high-born prince and lord, Bogislaff, fourteenth Duke of Pomerania, Prince of Cassuben, Wenden, and Rugen, Count of Güzkow, Lord of the lands of Lauenburg and Butow, and my gracious feudal seigneur, having commanded me, Dr. Theodore Plönnies, formerly bailiff at the ducal court, to make search throughout all the land for information respecting the world-famed sorceress, Sidonia von Bork, and write down the same in a book, I set out for Stargard, accompanied by a servant, early one Friday after the *Visitationis Mariæ*, 1629; for, in my opinion, in order to form a just judgment respecting the character of any one, it is necessary to make one's self acquainted with the circumstances of their early life; the future man lies enshrined in the child, and the peculiar development of each individual nature is the result entirely of education. Sidonia's history is a remarkable proof of this. I visited first, therefore, the scenes of her early years; but almost all who had known her were long since in their graves, seeing that ninety years had passed since the time of her birth. However, the old inn-keeper at Stargard, Zabel Wiese, himself very far advanced in years (whom I can recommend to all travellers—he lives in the Pelzerstrasse), told me that the old bachelor, Claude Uckermann of Dalow, an aged man of ninety-two years old, was the only person who could give me the information I desired, as in his youth he had been

one of the many followers of Sidonia. His memory was certainly well nigh gone from age, still all that had happened in the early period of his life lay as fresh as the Lord's Prayer upon his tongue. Mine host also related some important circumstances to me myself, which shall appear in their proper place.

I accordingly proceeded to Dalow, a little town half a mile from Stargard, and visited Claude Uckermann. I found him seated by the chimney corner, his hair as white as snow. "What did I want? He was too old to receive strangers; I must go on to his son Wedig's house, and leave him in quiet," &c. &c. But when I said that I brought him a greeting from his Highness, his manner changed, and he pushed the seat over for me beside the fire, and began to chat first about the fine pine-trees, from which he cut his firewood—they were so full of resin; and how his son, a year before, had found an iron pot in the turf moor under a tree, full of bracelets and earrings, which his little grand-daughter now wore.

When he had tired himself out, I communicated what his Highness had so nobly commanded to be done, and prayed him to relate all he knew and could remember of this detestable sorceress, Sidonia von Bork. He sighed deeply, and then went on talking for about two hours, giving me all his recollections just as they started to his memory. I have arranged what he then related, in proper order. It was to the following effect:—

Whenever his father, Philip Uckermann, attended the fair at Stramehl, a town belonging to the Bork family, he was in the habit of visiting Otto von Bork at his castle, who, being

very rich, gave free quarters to all the young noblemen of the vicinity, so that from thirty to forty of them were generally assembled at his castle while the fair lasted; but after some time his father discontinued these visits, his conscience not permitting him further intercourse. The reason was this. Otto von Bork, during his residence in Poland, had joined the sect of the enthusiasts, [Footnote: Probably the sect afterwards named Socinians; for we find that Laelius Socinus taught in Poland, even before Melancthon's death (1560).] and had lost his faith there, as a young maiden might her honour. He made no secret of his new opinions, but openly at Martinmas fair, 1560, told the young nobles at dinner that Christ was but a man like other people, and ignorance alone had elevated Him to a God; which notion had been encouraged by the greed and avarice of the clergy. They should therefore not credit what the hypocritical priests chattered to them every Sunday, but believe only what reason and their five senses told them was truth, and that, in fine, if he had his will, he would send every priest to the devil.

All the young nobles remained silent but Claude Zastrow, a feudal retainer of the Borks, who rose up (it was an evil moment to him) and made answer: "Most powerful feudal lord, were the holy apostles then filled with greed and covetousness, who were the first to proclaim that Christ was God, and who left all for His sake? Or the early Christians who, with one accord, sold their possessions, and gave the price to the poor?" Claude had before this displeased the knight, who now grew red with anger at the insolence of his vassal in thus answering him, and replied: "If they were not

preachers for gain, they were at least stupid fellows." Hereupon a great murmur arose in the hall, but the aforesaid Zastrow is not silenced, and answered: "It is surprising, then, that the twelve stupid apostles performed more than twelve times twelve Greek or Roman philosophers. The knight might rage until he was black in the face, and strike the table. But he had better hold his tongue and use his understanding; though, after all, the intellect of a man who believed nothing but what he received through his five senses was not worth much; for the brute beasts were his equals, inasmuch as they received no evidence either but from the senses."

Then Otto sprang up raging, and asked him what he meant; to which the other answered: "Nothing more than to express his opinion that man differed from the brute, not through his understanding, but by his faith, for that animals had evidently understanding, but no trace of faith had ever yet been discovered in them." [Footnote: This axiom is certainly opposed to modern ontology, which denies all ideas to the brute creation, and explains each proof of their intellectual activity by the unintelligible word "instinct." The ancients held very different opinions, particularly the new Platonists, one of whom (Porphyry, liber ii. *De abstinentia*) treats largely of the intellect and language of animals. Since Cartesius, however, who denied not only understanding, but even feeling, to animals, and represented them as mere animated machines (*De passionib. Pars i. Artic. iv. et de Methodo*, No. 5, page 29, &c.), these views upon the psychology of animals produced the most mischievous results; for they were carried out until if not feeling, at least

intellect, was denied to all animals more or less; and modern philosophy at length arrived at denying intelligence even to God, in whom and by whom, as formerly, man no longer attains to consciousness, but it is by man and through man that God arrives to a conscious intelligent existence. Some philosophers of our time, indeed, are condescending enough to ascribe *Understanding* to animals and *Reason* to man as the generic difference between the two. But I cannot comprehend these new-fashioned distinctions; for it seems to me absurd to split into the two portions of reason and understanding one and the same spiritual power, according as the object on which it acts is higher or lower; just as if we adopted two names for the same hand that digs up the earth and directs the telescope to heaven, or maintained that the latter was quite a different hand from the former. No. There is but one understanding for man and beasts, as but one common substance for their material forms. The more perfect the form, so much the more perfect is the intellect; and human and animal intellects are only dynamically different in human and animal bodies.

And even if, among animals of the more perfect form, understanding has been discovered, yet in man alone has been found the innate feeling of connection with the supernatural, or *Faith*. If this, as the generic sign of difference, be called *Reason*, I have nothing to object, except that the word generally conveys a different meaning. But *Faith* is, in fact, the pure Reason, and is found in all men, existing alike in the lowest superstitions as well as in the highest natures.]

Otto's rage now knew no bounds, and he drew his dagger, roaring, "What! thou insolent knave, dost thou dare to compare thy feudal lord to a brute?" And before the other had time to draw his poignard to defend himself, or the guests could in any way interfere to prevent him, Otto stabbed him to the heart as he sat there by the table. (It was a blessed death, I think, to die for his Lord Christ.) And so he fell down upon the floor with contorted features, and hands and feet quivering with agony. Every one was struck dumb with horror at such a death; but the knight laughed loudly, and cried, "Ha! thou base-born serf, I shall teach thee how to liken thy feudal lord to a brute," and striding over his quivering limbs, he spat upon his face.

Then the murmuring and whispering increased in the hall, and those nearest the door rushed out and sprang upon their horses; and finally all the guests, even old Uckermann, fled away, no one venturing to take up the quarrel with Otto Bork. After that, he fell into disrepute with the old nobility, for which he cared little, seeing that his riches and magnificence always secured him companions enough, who were willing to listen to his wisdom, and were consoled by his wine.

And when I, Dr. Theodore Plönnies, inquired from the old bachelor if his Serene Highness had not punished the noble for his shameful crime, he replied that his wealth and powerful influence protected him. At least it was whispered that justice had been blinded with gold; and the matter was probably related to the prince in quite a different manner from the truth; for I have heard that a few years after, his

Highness even visited this godless knight at his castle in Stramehl.

As to Otto, no one observed any sign of repentance in him. On the contrary, he seemed to glory in his crime, and the neighbouring nobles related that he frequently brought in his little daughter Sidonia, whom he adored for her beauty, to the assembled guests, magnificently attired; and when she was bowing to the company, he would say, "Who art thou, my little daughter?" Then she would cease the salutations which she had learned from her mother, and drawing herself up, proudly exclaim, "I am a noble maiden, dowered with towns and castles!" Then he would ask, if the conversation turned upon his enemies—and half the nobles were so—"Sidonia, how does thy father treat his enemies?" Upon which the child would straighten her finger, and running at her father, strike it into his heart, saying, "*Thus* he treats them." At which Otto would laugh loudly, and tell her to show him how the knave looked when he was dying. Then Sidonia would fall down, twist her face, and writhe her little hands and feet in horrible contortions. Upon which Otto would lift her up, and kiss her upon the mouth. But it will be seen how the just God punished him for all this, and how the words of the Scriptures were fulfilled: "Err not, God is not mocked; for what a man soweth, that shall he also reap."

The parson of Stramehl, David Dilavius, related also to old Uckermann another fact, which, though it hardly seems credible, the bachelor reported thus to me:—

This Dilavius was a learned man whom Otto had selected as instructor to his young daughter; "but only teach her," he said, "to read and write, and the first article of the Ten

Commandments. The other Christian doctrines I can teach her myself; besides, I do not wish the child to learn so many dogmas."

Dilavius, who was a worthy, matter-of-fact, good, simple character, did as he was ordered, and gave himself no further trouble until he came to ask the child to recite the first article of the creed out of the catechism for him. There was nothing wrong in that; but when he came to the second article, he crossed himself, not because it concerned the Lord Christ, but her own father, Otto von Bork, and ran somewhat thus:—

"And I believe in my earthly father, Otto von Bork, a distinguished son of God, born of Anna von Kleist, who sitteth in his castle at Stramehl, from whence he will come to help his children and friends, but to slay his enemies and tread them in the dust."

The third article was much in the same style, but he had partly forgotten it, neither could he remember if Dilavius had called the father to any account for his profanity, or taught the daughter some better Christian doctrine. In fine, this was all the old bachelor could tell me of Sidonia's education. Yes—he remembered one anecdote more. Her father had asked her one day, when she was about ten or twelve years old, "What kind of a husband she would like?" and she replied, "One of equal birth." *Ille*: [Footnote: In dialogue the author makes use of the Latin pronouns, *Ille*, he; *Ille*, she, to denote the different characters taking part in it; and sometimes *Hic* and *Hæc*, for the same purposes. *Summa* he employs in the sense of "to sum up," or "in short."] "Who is her equal in the whole of Pomerania?" *Ille*:

"Only the Duke of Pomerania, or the Count von Ebersburg."
Ille: "Right! therefore she must never marry any other but one of these."

It happened soon after, old Philip Uckermann, his father, riding one day through the fields near Stramehl, saw a country girl seated by the roadside, weeping bitterly. "Why do you weep?" he asked. "Has any one injured you?" "Sidonia has injured me," she replied. "What could she have done? Come dry your tears, and tell me." Whereupon the little girl related that Sidonia, who was then about fourteen, had besought her to tell her what marriage was, because her father was always talking to her about it. The girl had told her to the best of her ability; but the young lady beat her, and said it was not so, that long Dorothy had told her quite differently about marriage, and there she went on tormenting her for several days; but upon this evening Sidonia, with long Dorothy, and some of the milkmaids of the neighbourhood, had taken away one of the fine geese which the peasants had given her in payment of her labour. They picked it alive, all except the head and neck, then built up a large fire in a circle, and put the goose and a vessel of water in the centre. So the fat dripped down from the poor creature alive, and was fried in a pan as it fell, just as the girls eat it on their bread for supper. And the goose, having no means of escape, still went on drinking the water as the fat dripped down, whilst they kept cooling its head and heart with a sponge dipped in cold water, fastened to a stick, until at last the goose fell down when quite roasted, though it still screamed, and then Sidonia and her companions cut it up for their amusement, living as it was,

and ate it for their supper, in proof of which, the girl showed him the bones and the remains of the fire, and the drops of fat still lying on the grass.

Then she wept afresh, for Sidonia had promised to take away a goose every day, and destroy it as she had done the first. So my father consoled her by giving her a piece of gold, and said, "If she does so again, run by night and cloud, and come to Dalow by Stargard, where I will make thee keeper of my geese." But she never came to him, and he never heard more of the maiden and her geese.

So far old Uckermann related to me the first evening, promising to tell me of many more strange doings upon the following morning, which he would try to think over during the night.

CHAPTER II.

Table of Contents

Of the bear-hunt at Stramehl, and the strange things that befell there.

The following morning, by seven o'clock, the old man summoned me to him, and on entering I found him seated at breakfast by the fire. He invited me to join him, and pushed a seat over for me with his crutch, for walking was now difficult to him. He was very friendly, and the eyes of the old man burned as clear as those of a white dove. He had slept little during the night, for Sidonia's form kept floating before his eyes, just as she had looked in the days when he paid court to her. Alas! he had once loved her deeply, like all the other young nobles who approached her, from the time she was of an age to marry. In her youth she had been beautiful; and old and young declared that for figure, eyes, bosom, walk, and enchanting smile, there never had been seen her equal in all Pomerania.

"Nothing shall be concealed from you," he said, "of all that concerns my foolish infatuation, that you and your children may learn how the all-wise God deals best with His servants when He uses the rod and denies that for which they clamour as silly children for a glittering knife." Here he folded his withered hands, murmured a short prayer, and proceeded with his story.

"You must know that I was once a proud and stately youth, upon whom a maiden's glance in no wise rested indifferently, trained in all knightly exercise, and only two

years older than Sidonia. It happened in the September of 1566, that I was invited by Caspar Roden to see his eel-nets, as my father intended laying down some also at Krampehl [Footnote: A little river near Dalow] and along the coast. When we returned home weary enough in the evening, a letter arrived from Otto von Bork, inviting him the following day to a bear-hunt; as he intended, in honour of the nuptials of his eldest daughter Clara, to lay bears' heads and bears' paws before his guests, which even in Pomerania would have been a rarity, and desiring him to bring as many good huntsmen with him as he pleased. So I accompanied Caspar Roden, who told me on the way that Count Otto had at first looked very high for his daughter Clara, and scorned many a good suitor, but that she was now getting rather old, and ready, like a ripe burr, to hang on the first that came by. Her bridegroom was Vidante von Meseritz, a feudal vassal of her father's, upon whom, ten years before, she would not have looked at from a window. Not that she was as proud as her young sister Sidonia. However, their mother was to blame for much of this; but she was dead now, poor lady, let her rest in peace.

So in good time we reached the castle of Stramehl, where thirty huntsmen were already assembled, all noblemen, and we joined them in the grand state hall, where the morning meal was laid out. Count Otto sat at the head of the table, like a prince of Pomerania, upon a throne whereon his family arms were both carved and embroidered. He wore a doublet of elk-skin, and a cap with a heron's plume upon his head. He did not rise as we entered, but called to us to be seated and join the feast, as

the party must move off soon. Costly wines were sent round; and I observed that on each of the glasses the family arms were cut. They were also painted upon the window of the great hall, and along the walls, under the horns of all the different wild animals killed by Otto in the chase—bucks, deers, harts, roes, stags, and elks—which were arranged in fantastical groups.

After a little while his two daughters, Clara and Sidonia, entered. They wore green hunting-dresses, trimmed with beaver-skin, and each had a gold net thrown over her hair. They bowed, and bid the knights welcome. But we all remained breathless gazing upon Sidonia, as she lifted her beautiful eyes first on one, and then on another, inviting us to eat and drink; and she even filled a small wine-glass herself, and prayed us to pledge her. As for me, unfortunate youth, from the moment I beheld her I breathed no more through my lungs, but through my eyes alone, and, springing up, gave her health publicly. A storm of loud, animated, passionate voices soon responded to my words with loud vivas. The guests then rose, for the ladies were impatient for the hunt, and found the time hang heavily.

So we set off with all our implements and our dogs, and a hundred beaters went before us. It happened that my host, Caspar Roden, and I found an excellent sheltered position for a shot near a quarry, and we had not long been there (the beaters had not even yet begun their work) when I spied a large bear coming down to drink at a small stream not twenty paces from me. I fired; but she retired quickly behind an oak, and, growling fiercely, disappeared amongst the bushes. Not long after, I heard the cries of women