



WILHELM MEINHOLD

A SUCCESSFUL LITERARY HOAX

ESSENTIAL NOVELISTS

TACET BOOKS

ESSENTIAL NOVELISTS

Wilhelm
Meinhold

EDITED BY

August Nemo

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Author

JOHANNES WILHELM MEINHOLD (27 February 1797 - 30 November 1851) was a Pomeranian priest and author. Meinhold was a poet, playwright, and novelist.

Meinhold was born in Lütow on the island of Usedom, where his father Georg Wilhelm Meinhold (1767-1828) was a Lutheran priest.

Growing up in the atmosphere of the Napoleonic Wars, he enrolled as a student at the University of Greifswald in Swedish Pomerania in the fall of 1813. After his theological education, he was priest in Koserow on Usedom from 1821 until 1827. For the next 17 years, he was priest in Krummin, also on Usedom, before he relocated to Farther Pomerania. He retired early on account of his insubordinate behavior and died in 1851 in Berlin-Charlottenburg.

The Amber Witch

PREFACE

IN LAYING BEFORE THE public this deeply affecting and romantic trial, which I have not without reason called on the title-page the most interesting of all trials for witchcraft ever known, I will first give some account of the history of the manuscript.

At Coserow, in the Island of Usedom, my former cure, the same which was held by our worthy author some two hundred years ago, there existed under a seat in the choir of the church a sort of niche, nearly on a level with the floor. I had, indeed, often seen a heap of various writings in this recess; but owing to my short sight, and the darkness of the place, I had taken them for antiquated hymn-books, which were lying about in great numbers. But one day, while I was teaching in the church, I looked for a paper mark in the Catechism of one of the boys, which I could not immediately find; and my old sexton, who was past eighty (and who, although called Appelmann, was thoroughly unlike his namesake in our story, being a very worthy, although a most ignorant man), stooped down to the said niche, and took from it a folio volume which I had never before observed, out of which he, without the slightest hesitation, tore a strip of paper suited to my purpose, and reached it to me. I immediately seized upon the book, and, after a few minutes' perusal, I know not which was greater, my astonishment or my vexation at this costly prize. The manuscript, which was bound in vellum, was not only

defective both at the beginning and at the end, but several leaves had even been torn out here and there in the middle. I scolded the old man as I had never done during the whole course of my life; but he excused himself, saying that one of my predecessors had given him the manuscript for waste paper, as it had lain about there ever since the memory of man, and he had often been in want of paper to twist round the altar candles, etc. The aged and half-blind pastor had mistaken the folio for old parochial accounts which could be of no more use to any one.^[1]

No sooner had I reached home than I fell to work upon my new acquisition, and after reading a bit here and there with considerable trouble, my interest was powerfully excited by the contents.

I soon felt the necessity of making myself better acquainted with the nature and conduct of these witch trials, with the proceedings, nay, even with the history of the whole period in which these events occur. But the more I read of these extraordinary stories, the more was I confounded; and neither the trivial Beeker (*die bezauberte Welt*, the enchanted world), nor the more careful Horst (*Zauberbibliothek*, the library of magic), to which, as well as to several other works on the same subject, I had flown for information, could resolve my doubts, but rather served to increase them.

Not alone is the demoniacal character, which pervades nearly all these fearful stories, so deeply marked, as to fill the attentive reader with feelings of alternate horror and dismay, but the eternal and unchangeable laws of human feeling and action are often arrested in a manner so violent and unforeseen, that the understanding is entirely baffled. For instance, one of the original trials which a friend of mine, a lawyer, discovered in our province, contains the

account of a mother, who, after she had suffered the torture, and received the holy Sacrament, and was on the point of going to the stake, so utterly lost all maternal feeling, that her conscience obliged her to accuse as a witch her only dearly-loved daughter, a girl of fifteen, against whom no one had ever entertained a suspicion, in order, as she said, to save her poor soul. The court, justly amazed at an event which probably has never since been paralleled, caused the state of the mother's mind to be examined both by clergymen and physicians, whose original testimonies are still appended to the records, and are all highly favourable to her soundness of mind. The unfortunate daughter, whose name was Elizabeth Hegel, was actually executed on the strength of her mother's accusation.^[2]

The explanation commonly received at the present day, that these phenomena were produced by means of animal magnetism, is utterly insufficient. How, for instance, could this account for the deeply demoniacal nature of old Lizzie Kolken as exhibited in the following pages? It is utterly incomprehensible, and perfectly explains why the old pastor, notwithstanding the horrible deceits practised on him in the person of his daughter, retained as firm a faith in the truth of witchcraft as in that of the Gospel.

During the earlier centuries of the middle ages little was known of witchcraft. The crime of magic, when it did occur, was leniently punished. For instance, the Council of Ancyra (314) ordained the whole punishment of witches to consist in expulsion from the Christian community. The Visigoths punished them with stripes, and Charlemagne, by advice of his bishops, confined them in prison until such time as they should sincerely repent.^[3] It was not until very soon before the Reformation, that Innocent VIII. lamented that the complaints of universal Christendom against the evil practices of these women had become so general and so

loud, that the most vigorous measures must be taken against them; and towards the end of the year 1489, he caused the notorious Hammer for Witches (*Malleus Maleficarum*) to be published, according to which proceedings were set on foot with the most fanatical zeal, not only in Catholic, but, strange to say, even in Protestant Christendom, which in other respects abhorred everything belonging to Catholicism. Indeed, the Protestants far outdid the Catholics in cruelty, until, among the latter, the noble-minded Jesuit, J. Spee, and among the former, but not until seventy years later, the excellent Thomasius, by degrees put a stop to these horrors.

After careful examination into the nature and characteristics of witchcraft, I soon perceived that among all these strange and often romantic stories, not one surpassed my 'amber witch' in lively interest; and I determined to throw her adventures into the form of a romance. Fortunately, however, I was soon convinced that her story was already in itself the most interesting of all romances; and that I should do far better to leave it in its original antiquated form, omitting whatever would be uninteresting to modern readers, or so universally known as to need no repetition. I have therefore attempted, not indeed to supply what is missing at the beginning and end, but to restore those leaves which have been torn out of the middle, imitating, as accurately as I was able, the language and manner of the old biographer, in order that the difference between the original narrative and my own interpolations might not be too evident.

This I have done with much trouble, and after many ineffectual attempts; but I refrain from pointing out the particular passages which I have supplied, so as not to disturb the historical interest of the greater part of my readers. For modern criticism, which has now attained to a

degree of acuteness never before equalled, such a confession would be entirely superfluous, as critics will easily distinguish the passages where Pastor Schweidler speaks from those written by Pastor Meinhold.

I am, nevertheless, bound to give the public some account of what I have omitted, namely,—

1st. Such long prayers as were not very remarkable for Christian unction.

2d. Well-known stories out of the Thirty Years' War.

3d. Signs and wonders in the heavens, which were seen here and there, and which are recorded by other Pomeranian writers of these fearful times; for instance, by Micraelius.^[4] But when these events formed part of the tale itself, as, for instance, the cross on the Streckelberg, I, of course, allowed them to stand.

4th. The specification of the whole income of the church at Coserow, before and during the terrible times of the Thirty Years' War.

5th. The enumeration of the dwellings left standing, after the devastations made by the enemy in every village throughout the parish.

6th. The names of the districts to which this or that member of the congregation had emigrated.

7th. A ground plan and description of the old Manse.

I have likewise here and there ventured to make a few changes in the language, as my author is not always consistent in the use of his words or in his orthography. The latter I have, however, with very few exceptions, retained.

And thus I lay before the gracious reader a work, glowing with the fire of heaven, as well as with that of hell.

MEINHOLD.

INTRODUCTION

THE ORIGIN OF OUR BIOGRAPHER cannot be traced with any degree of certainty, owing to the loss of the first part of his manuscript. It is, however, pretty clear that he was not a Pomeranian, as he says he was in Silesia in his youth, and mentions relations scattered far and wide, not only at Hamburg and Cologne, but even at Antwerp; above all, his south German language betrays a foreign origin, and he makes use of words which are, I believe, peculiar to Swabia. He must, however, have been living for a long time in Pomerania at the time he wrote, as he even more frequently uses Low-German expressions, such as occur in contemporary native Pomeranian writers.

Since he sprang from an ancient noble family, as he says on several occasions, it is possible that some particulars relating to the Schweidlers might be discovered in the family records of the seventeenth century which would give a clue to his native country; but I have sought for that name in all the sources of information accessible to me, in vain, and am led to suspect that our author, like many of his contemporaries, laid aside his nobility and changed his name when he took holy orders.

I will not, however, venture on any further conjectures; the manuscript, of which six chapters are missing, begins with the words "Imperialists plundered," and evidently the previous pages must have contained an account of the breaking out of the Thirty Years' War in the island of Usedom. It goes on as follows:—

"Coffers, chests, and closets were all plundered and broken to pieces, and my surplice also was torn, so that I remained

in great distress and tribulation. But my poor little daughter they did not find, seeing that I had hidden her in the stable, which was dark, without which I doubt not they would have made my heart heavy indeed. The lewd dogs would even have been rude to my old maid Ilse, a woman hard upon fifty, if an old cornet had not forbidden them. Wherefore I gave thanks to my Maker when the wild guests were gone, that I had first saved my child from their clutches, although not one dust of flour, nor one grain of corn, one morsel of meat even of a finger's length was left, and I knew not how I should any longer support my own life, and my poor child's. *Item*, I thanked God that I had likewise secured the *vasa sacra*, which I had forthwith buried in the church in front of the altar, in presence of the two churchwardens, Hinrich Seden and Claus Bulken, of Uekeritze, commending them to the care of God. And now because, as I have already said, I was suffering the pangs of hunger, I wrote to his lordship the Sheriff Wittich V. Appelmann, at Pudgla, that for the love of God and his holy Gospel he should send me that which his highness' grace Philippus Julius had allowed me as *praestanda* from the convent at Pudgla, to wit, thirty bushels of barley and twenty-five marks of silver, which, howbeit his lordship had always withheld from me hitherto (for he was a very hard inhuman man, as he despised the holy Gospel and the preaching of the Word, and openly, without shame, reviled the servants of God, saying that they were useless feeders, and that Luther had but half cleansed the pigstye of the Church—God mend it!). But he answered me nothing, and I should have perished for want if Hinrich Seden had not begged for me in the parish. May God reward the honest fellow for it in eternity! Moreover, he was then growing old, and was sorely plagued by his wicked wife Lizzie Kolken. Methought when I married them that it would not turn out over well, seeing that she was in common report of having long lived in unchastity with Wittich Appelmann, who had ever been an arch-roogue, and

especially an arrant whoremaster, and such the Lord never blesses. This same Seden now brought me five loaves, two sausages, and a goose, which old goodwife Paal, at Loddin, had given him; also a flitch of bacon from the farmer Jack Tewert. But he said I must shield him from his wife, who would have had half for herself, and when he denied her she cursed him, and wished him gout in his head, whereupon he straightway felt a pain in his right cheek, and it was quite hard and heavy already. At such shocking news I was affrighted, as became a good pastor, and asked whether peradventure he believed that she stood in evil communication with Satan, and could bewitch folks? But he said nothing, and shrugged his shoulders. So I sent for old Lizzie to come to me, who was a tall, meagre woman of about sixty, with squinting eyes, so that she could not look any one in the face; likewise with quite red hair, and indeed her goodman had the same. But though I diligently admonished her out of God's Word, she made no answer until at last I said, 'Wilt thou unbewitch thy goodman (for I saw from the window how that he was raving in the street like a madman), or wilt thou that I should inform the magistrate of thy deeds?' Then, indeed, she gave in, and promised that he should soon be better (and so he was); moreover she begged that I would give her some bread and some bacon, inasmuch as it was three days since she had a bit of anything to put between her lips, saving always her tongue. So my daughter gave her half a loaf, and a piece of bacon about two handsbreadths large; but she did not think it enough, and muttered between her teeth; whereupon my daughter said, 'If thou art not content, thou old witch, go thy ways and help thy goodman; see how he has laid his head on Zabel's fence, and stamps with his feet for pain.' Whereupon she went away, but still kept muttering between her teeth, 'Yea, forsooth, I will help him and thee too.'"

The Seventh Chapter

HOW THE IMPERIALISTS ROBBED ME OF ALL THAT WAS LEFT, AND LIKEWISE BROKE INTO THE CHURCH AND STOLE THE *VASA SACRA*; ALSO WHAT MORE BEFELL US

AFTER A FEW DAYS, WHEN we had eaten almost all our food, my last cow fell down dead (the wolves had already devoured the others, as mentioned above), not without a strong suspicion that Lizzie had a hand in it, seeing that the poor beast had eaten heartily the day before; but I leave that to a higher judge, seeing that I would not willingly calumniate any one; and it may have been the will of God, whose wrath I have well deserved. *Summa*, I was once more in great need, and my daughter Mary pierced my heart with her sighs, when the cry was raised that another troop of Imperialists was come to Ukeritze, and was marauding there more cruelly than ever, and, moreover, had burnt half the village. Wherefore I no longer thought myself safe in my cottage; and after I had commended everything to the Lord in a fervent prayer, I went up with my daughter and old Ilse into the Streckelberg, where I already had looked out for ourselves a hole like a cavern, well grown over with brambles, against the time when the troubles should drive us thither. We therefore took with us all we had left to us for the support of our bodies, and fled into the woods, sighing and weeping, whither we soon were followed by the old men, and the women and children; these raised a great cry of hunger when they saw my daughter sitting on a log and eating a bit of bread and meat, and the little things came with their tiny hands stretched out and cried "Have some too, have some too." Therefore, being justly moved by such great distress, I hindered not my daughter from sharing all

the bread and meat that remained among the hungry children. But first I made them pray—"The eyes of all wait upon thee"; upon which words I then spake comfortably to the people, telling them that the Lord, who had now fed their little children, would find means to fill their own bellies, and that they must not be weary of trusting in him.

This comfort did not, however, last long; for after we had rested within and around the cavern for about two hours, the bells in the village began to ring so dolefully that it went nigh to break all our hearts, the more as loud firing was heard between-whiles; *item*, the cries of men and the barking of dogs resounded, so that we could easily guess that the enemy was in the village. I had enough to do to keep the women quiet, that they might not by their senseless lamentations betray our hiding-place to the cruel enemy; and more still when it began to smell smoky, and presently the bright flames gleamed through the trees. I therefore sent old Paasch up to the top of the hill, that he might look around and see how matters stood, but told him to take good care that they did not see him from the village, seeing that the twilight had but just begun.

This he promised, and soon returned with the news that about twenty horsemen had galloped out of the village towards the Damerow, but that half the village was in flames. *Item*, he told us that by a wonderful dispensation of God a great number of birds had appeared in the juniper-bushes and elsewhere, and that if we could catch them they would be excellent food for us. I therefore climbed up the hill myself, and having found everything as he had said, and also perceived that the fire had, by the help of God's mercy, abated in the village; *item*, that my cottage was left standing, far beyond my merits and deserts; I came down again and comforted the people, saying, "The Lord hath given us a sign, and he will feed us, as he fed the people of

Israel in the wilderness; for he has sent us a fine flight of fieldfares across the barren sea, so that they whirr out of every bush as ye come near it. Who will now run down into the village, and cut off the mane and tail of my dead cow which lies out behind on the common?" (for there was no horsehair in all the village, seeing that the enemy had long since carried off or stabbed all the horses). But no one would go, for fear was stronger even than hunger, till my old Ilse spoke, and said, "I will go, for I fear nothing, when I walk in the ways of God; only give me a good stick." When old Paasch had lent her his staff, she began to sing, "God the Father be with us," and was soon out of sight among the bushes. Meanwhile I exhorted the people to set to work directly, and to cut little wands for springes, and to gather berries while the moon still shone; there were a great quantity of mountain-ash and elder-bushes all about the mountain. I myself and my daughter Mary stayed to guard the little children, because it was not safe there from wolves. We therefore made a blazing fire, sat ourselves around it, and heard the little folks say the Ten Commandments, when there was a rustling and crackling behind us, and my daughter jumped up and ran into the cavern, crying, "*Proh dolor hostis!*" But it was only some of the able-bodied men who had stayed behind in the village, and who now came to bring us word how things stood there. I therefore called to her directly, "*Emergas amici!*" whereupon she came skipping joyously out, and sat down again by the fire, and forthwith my warden Hinrich Seden related all that had happened, and how his life had only been saved by means of his wife Lizzie Kolken; but that Jurgen Flatow, Chim Burse, Claus Peer, and Chim Seideritz were killed, and the last named of them left lying on the church steps. The wicked incendiaries had burned down twelve sheds, and it was not their fault that the whole village was not destroyed, but only in consequence of the wind not being in the quarter that suited their purpose.

Meanwhile they tolled the bells in mockery and scorn, to see whether any one would come and quench the fire; and that when he and the three other young fellows came forward they fired off their muskets at them, but, by God's help, none of them were hit. Hereupon his three comrades jumped over the paling and escaped; but him they caught, and had already taken aim at him with their firelocks, when his wife Lizzie Kolken came out of the church with another troop and beckoned to them to leave him in peace. But they stabbed Lene Hebers as she lay in childbed, speared the child, and flung it over Claus Peer's hedge among the nettles, where it was yet lying when they came away. There was not a living soul left in the village, and still less a morsel of bread, so that unless the Lord took pity on their need they must all die miserably of hunger.

(Now who is to believe that such people can call themselves Christians!)

I next inquired, when he had done speaking (but with many sighs, as any one may guess), after my cottage; but of that they knew nought save that it was still standing. I thanked the Lord therefore with a quiet sigh; and having asked old Seden what his wife had been doing in the church, I thought I should have died for grief when I heard that the villains came out of it with both the chalices and patens in their hands. I therefore spoke very sharply to old Lizzie, who now came slinking through the bushes; but she answered insolently that the strange soldiers had forced her to open the church, as her goodman had crept behind the hedge, and nobody else was there; that they had gone straight up to the altar, and seeing that one of the stones was not well fitted (which, truly, was an arch-lie), had begun to dig with their swords till they found the chalices and patens; or somebody else might have betrayed the spot to them, so I

need not always to lay the blame on her, and rate her so hardly.

Meanwhile the old men and the women came with a good store of berries; *item*, my old maid, with the cow's tail and mane, who brought word that the whole house was turned upside down, the windows all broken, and the books and writings trampled in the dirt in the midst of the street, and the doors torn off their hinges. This, however, was a less sorrow to me than the chalices; and I only bade the people make springes and snares, in order next morning to begin our fowling, with the help of Almighty God. I therefore scraped the rods myself until near midnight; and when we had made ready a good quantity, I told old Seden to repeat the evening blessing, which we all heard on our knees; after which I wound up with a prayer, and then admonished the people to creep in under the bushes to keep them from the cold (seeing that it was now about the end of September, and the wind blew very fresh from the sea), the men apart, and the women also apart by themselves. I myself went up with my daughter and my maid into the cavern, where I had not slept long before I heard old Seden moaning bitterly because, as he said, he was seized with the colic. I therefore got up and gave him my place, and sat down again by the fire to cut springes, till I fell asleep for half an hour; and then morning broke, and by that time he had got better, and I woke the people to morning prayer. This time old Paasch had to say it, but could not get through with it properly, so that I had to help him. Whether he had forgot it, or whether he was frightened, I cannot say. *Summa*. After we had all prayed most devoutly, we presently set to work, wedging the springes into the trees, and hanging berries all around them; while my daughter took care of the children, and looked for blackberries for their breakfast. Now we wedged the snares right across the wood along the road to Uekeritze; and mark what a wondrous act of mercy befell

from gracious God! As I stepped into the road with the hatchet in my hand (it was Seden his hatchet, which he had fetched out of the village early in the morning), I caught sight of a loaf as long as my arm, which a raven was pecking, and which doubtless one of the Imperial troopers had dropped out of his knapsack the day before, for there were fresh hoofmarks in the sand by it. So I secretly buttoned the breast of my coat over it, so that none should perceive anything, although the aforesaid Paasch was close behind me; *item*, all the rest followed at no great distance. Now, having set the springes so very early, towards noon we found such a great number of birds taken in them that Katy Berow, who went beside me while I took them out, scarce could hold them all in her apron; and at the other end old Pagels pulled nearly as many out of his doublet and coat pockets. My daughter then sat down with the rest of the womankind to pluck the birds; and as there was no salt (indeed it was long since most of us had tasted any), she desired two men to go down to the sea, and to fetch a little salt-water in an iron pot borrowed from Staffer Zuter; and so they did. In this water we first dipped the birds, and then roasted them at a large fire, while our mouths watered only at the sweet savour of them, seeing it was so long since we had tasted any food.

And now when all was ready, and the people seated on the earth, I said, "Behold how the Lord still feeds his people Israel in the wilderness with fresh quails: if now he did yet more, and sent us a piece of manna bread from heaven, what think ye? Would ye then ever weary of believing in him, and not rather willingly endure all want, tribulation, hunger and thirst, which he may hereafter lay upon you according to his gracious will?" Whereupon they all answered and said, "Yea, surely!" *Ego*: "Will you then promise me this in truth?" And they said again, "Yea, that will we!" Then with tears I drew forth the loaf from my

breast, held it on high, and cried, "Behold, then, thou poor believing little flock, how sweet a manna loaf your faithful Redeemer hath sent ye through me!" Whereupon they all wept, sobbed and groaned; and the little children again came running up and held out their hands, crying, "See, bread, bread!" But as I myself could not pray for heaviness of soul, I bade Paasch his little girl say the *Gratias* the while my Mary cut up the loaf and gave to each his share. And now we all joyfully began to eat our meat from God in the wilderness.

Meanwhile I had to tell in what manner I had found the blessed manna bread, wherein I neglected not again to exhort them to lay to heart this great sign and wonder, how that God in his mercy had done to them as of old to the prophet Elijah, to whom a raven brought bread in his great need in the wilderness; as likewise this bread had been given to me by means of a raven, which showed it to me, when otherwise I might have passed it by in my heaviness without ever seeing it.

When we were satisfied with food, I said the thanksgiving from Luke xii. 24, where the Lord saith, "Consider the ravens: for they neither sow nor reap; which neither have storehouse nor barn; and God feedeth them: how much more are ye better than the fowls?" But our sins stank before the Lord. For old Lizzie, as I afterwards heard, would not eat her birds because she thought them unsavoury, but threw them among the juniper-bushes; whereupon the wrath of the Lord was kindled against us as of old against the people of Israel, and at night we found but seven birds in the snares, and next morning but two. Neither did any raven come again to give us bread. Wherefore I rebuked old Lizzie, and admonished the people to take upon themselves willingly the righteous chastisement of the Most High God, to pray without ceasing, to return to their desolate

dwellings, and to see whether the all-merciful God would peradventure give them more on the sea. That I also would call upon him with prayer night and day, remaining for a time in the cavern with my daughter and the maid to watch the springes, and see whether his wrath might be turned from us. That they should meanwhile put my manse to rights to the best of their power, seeing that the cold was become very irksome to me. This they promised me, and departed with many sighs. What a little flock! I counted but twenty-five souls where there used to be above eighty: all the rest had been slain by hunger, pestilence, or the sword. I then abode a while alone and sorrowing in the cave, praying to God, and sent my daughter with the maid into the village to see how things stood at the manse; *item*, to gather together the books and papers, and also to bring me word whether Hinze the carpenter, whom I had straightway sent back to the village, had knocked together some coffins for the poor corpses, so that I might bury them next day. I then went to look at the springes, but found only one single little bird, whereby I saw that the wrath of God had not yet passed away. Howbeit, I found a fine blackberry bush, from which I gathered nearly a pint of berries, and put them, together with the bird, in Staffer Zuter his pot, which the honest fellow had left with us for a while, and set them on the fire for supper against my child and the maid should return. It was not long before they came through the coppice and told me of the fearful devastation which Satan had made in the village and manse by the permission of all-righteous God. My child had gathered together a few books, which she brought with her, above all, a *Virgilius* and a Greek Bible. And after she had told me that the carpenter would not have done till next day, and we had satisfied the cravings of hunger, I made her read to me again, for the greater strengthening of my faith, the *locus* about the blessed raven from the Greek of Luke, at the twelfth chapter; also, the beautiful *locus parallelus*, Matt. vi. After

which the maid said the evening blessing, and we all went into the cave to rest for the night. When I awoke next morning, just as the blessed sun rose out the sea and peeped over the mountain, I heard my poor hungry child already standing outside the cave reciting the beautiful verses about the joys of paradise which St. Augustine wrote and I had taught her. She sobbed for grief as she spoke the words:—

Uno pane vivunt cives utriusque patriae;

Avidi et semper pleni, quod habent desiderant.

Non sacietas fastidit, neque fames cruciat;

Inhiantes semper edunt, et edentes inhiant.

Flos perpetuus rosarum ver agit perpetuum;

Candent lilia, rubescit crocus, sudat balsamum,

Virent prata, vernant sata, rivi mellis influunt;

Pigmentorum spirat odor liquor et aromatum,

Pendent poma floridorum non lapsura nemorum.

Non alternat luna vices, sol vel cursus syderum.

Agnus est faelicis urbis lumen inocciduum.

At these words my own heart was melted; and when she ceased from speaking, I asked, "What art thou doing, my child?" Whereupon she answered, "Father, I am eating." Thereat my tears now indeed began to flow, and I praised her for feeding her soul, as she had no meat for her body. I had not, however, spoken long, before she cried to me to come and look at the great wonder that had risen out of the sea, and already appeared over the cave. For behold a cloud, in shape just like a cross, came over us, and let great

heavy drops, as big or bigger than large peas, fall on our heads, after which it sank behind the coppice. I presently arose and ran up the mountain with my daughter to look after it. It floated on towards the Achterwater, where it spread itself out into a long blue streak, whereon the sun shone so brightly that it seemed like a golden bridge on which, as my child said, the blessed angels danced. I fell on my knees with her and thanked the Lord that our cross had passed away from us; but, alas! our cross was yet to come, as will be told hereafter.

The Eighth Chapter

HOW OUR NEED WAXED SORER AND SORER, AND HOW I
SENT OLD ILSE WITH ANOTHER LETTER TO PUDGLA, AND
HOW HEAVY A MISFORTUNE THIS BROUGHT UPON ME

NEXT DAY, WHEN I HAD buried the poor corpses amid the lamentations of the whole village (by the same token that they were all buried under where the lime-tree overhangs the wall), I heard with many sighs that neither the sea nor the Achterwater would yield anything. It was now ten days since the poor people had caught a single fish. I therefore went out into the field, musing how the wrath of the just God might be turned from us, seeing that the cruel winter was now at hand, and neither corn, apples, fish nor flesh to be found in the village, nor even throughout all the parish. There was indeed plenty of game in the forests of Coserow and Uekeritze; but the old forest ranger, Zabel Nehring, had died last year of the plague, and there was no new one in his place. Nor was there a musket nor a grain of powder to be found in all the parish; the enemy had robbed and broken everything: we were therefore forced, day after day, to see how the stags and the roes, the hares and the wild boars, *et cet.*, ran past us, when we would so gladly have had them in our bellies, but had no means of getting at them: for they were too cunning to let themselves be caught in pit-falls. Nevertheless, Claus Peer succeeded in trapping a roe, and gave me a piece of it, for which may God reward him. *Item*, of domestic cattle there was not a head left; neither was there a dog, nor a cat, which the people had not either eaten in their extreme hunger, or knocked on the head or drowned long since. Albeit old farmer Paasch still owned two cows; *item*, an old man in

Uekeritze was said to have one little pig:—this was all. Thus, then, nearly all the people lived on blackberries and other wild fruits: the which also soon grew to be scarce, as may easily be guessed. Besides all this, a boy of fourteen was missing (old Labahn his son) and was never more heard of, so that I shrewdly think that the wolves devoured him.

And now let any Christian judge by his own heart in what sorrow and heaviness I took my staff in my hand, seeing that my child fell away like a shadow from pinching hunger; although I myself, being old, did not, by the help of God's mercy, find any great failing in my strength. While I thus went continually weeping before the Lord, on the way to Uekeritze, I fell in with an old beggar with his wallet, sitting on a stone, and eating a piece of God's rare gift, to wit, a bit of bread. Then truly did my poor mouth so fill with water that I was forced to bow my head and let it run upon the earth before I could ask, "Who art thou? and whence comest thou? seeing that thou hast bread." Whereupon he answered that he was a poor man of Bannemin, from whom the enemy had taken all; and as he had heard that the Lieper Winkel had long been in peace, he had travelled thither to beg. I straightway answered him, "Oh, poor beggar-man, spare to me, a sorrowful servant of Christ, who is poorer even than thyself, one little slice of bread for his wretched child; for thou must know that I am the pastor of this village, and that my daughter is dying of hunger. I beseech thee by the living God not to let me depart without taking pity on me, as pity also hath been shown to thee!" But the beggar-man would give me none, saying that he himself had a wife and four children, who were likewise staggering towards death's door under the bitter pangs of hunger; that the famine was sorer far in Bannemin than here, where we still had berries; whether I had not heard that but a few days ago a woman (he told me her name, but horror made me forget it) had there killed her own child, and

devoured it from hunger? That he could not therefore help me, and I might go to the Lieper Winkel myself.

I was horror-stricken at his tale, as is easy to guess, for we in our own trouble had not yet heard of it, there being little or no traffic between one village and another; and thinking on Jerusalem, and sheer despairing because the Lord had visited us, as of old that ungodly city, although we had not betrayed or crucified him, I almost forgot all my necessities, and took my staff in my hand to depart. But I had not gone more than a few yards when the beggar called me to stop, and when I turned myself round he came towards me with a good hunch of bread which he had taken out of his wallet, and said, "There! but pray for me also, so that I may reach my home; for if on the road they smell that I have bread, my own brother would strike me dead, I believe." This I promised with joy, and instantly turned back to take to my child the gift hidden in my pocket. And behold, when I came to the road which leads to Loddin, I could scarce trust my eyes (before I had overlooked it in my distress) when I saw my glebe, which could produce seven bushels, ploughed, sown, and in stalk; the blessed crop of rye had already shot lustily out of the earth a finger's length in height. I could not choose but think that the Evil One had deceived me with a false show, yet, however hard I rubbed my eyes, rye it was and rye it remained. And seeing that old Paasch his piece of land which joined mine was in like manner sown, and that the blades had shot up to the same height, I soon guessed that the good fellow had done this deed, seeing that all the other land lay waste. Wherefore, I readily forgave him for not knowing the morning prayer; and thanking the Lord for so much love from my flock, and earnestly beseeching him to grant me strength and faith to bear with them steadfastly and patiently all the troubles and adversities which it might please him henceforward to lay upon us, according to his divine pleasure, I ran rather than walked back into the

village to old Paasch his farm, where I found him just about to kill his cow, which he was slaughtering from grim hunger. "God bless thee," said I, "worthy friend, for sowing my field; how shall I reward thee?" But the old man answered, "Let that be, and do you pray for us"; and when I gladly promised this and asked him how he had kept his corn safe from the savage enemy, he told me that he had hidden it secretly in the caves of the Streckelberg, but that now all his store was used up. Meanwhile he cut a fine large piece of meat from the top of the loin, and said, "There is something for you, and when that is gone you can come again for more." As I was then about to go with many thanks, his little Mary, a child nearly seven years old, the same who had said the *Gratias* on the Streckelberg, seized me by the hand and wanted to go to school to my daughter; for since my *Custos*, as above mentioned, departed this life in the plague, she had to teach the few little ones there were in the village; this, however, had long been abandoned. I could not, therefore, deny her, although I feared that my child would share her bread with her, seeing that she dearly loved the little maid, who was her godchild; and so indeed it happened; for when the child saw me take out the bread, she shrieked for joy, and began to scramble up on the bench. Thus she also got a piece of the slice, our maid got another, and my child put the third piece into her own mouth, as I wished for none, but said that I felt no signs of hunger and would wait until the meat was boiled, the which I now threw upon the bench. It was a goodly sight to see the joy which my poor child felt when I then also told her about the rye. She fell upon my neck, wept, sobbed, then took the little one up in her arms, danced about the room with her, and recited as she was wont, all manner of Latin *versus*, which she knew by heart. Then she would prepare a right good supper for us, as a little salt was still left in the bottom of a barrel of meat which the Imperialists had broken up. I let her take her own way, and having scraped some soot

from the chimney and mixed it with water, I tore a blank leaf out of *Virgilius*, and wrote to the *Pastor Liepensis*, his reverence Abraham Tiburtius, praying that for God his sake he would take our necessities to heart, and would exhort his parishioners to save us from dying of grim hunger, and charitably to spare to us some meat and drink, according as the all-merciful God had still left some to them, seeing that a beggar had told me that they had long been in peace from the terrible enemy. I knew not, however, wherewithal to seal the letter, until I found in the church a little wax still sticking to a wooden altar-candlestick, which the Imperialists had not thought it worth their while to steal, for they had only taken the brass ones. I sent three fellows in a boat with Hinrich Seden, the churchwarden, with this letter to Liepe.

First, however, I asked my old Ilse, who was born in Liepe, whether she would not rather return home, seeing how matters stood, and that I, for the present at least, could not give her a stiver of her wages (mark that she had already saved up a small sum, seeing that she had lived in my service above twenty years, but the soldiers had taken it all). Howbeit, I could nowise persuade her to this, but she wept bitterly, and besought me only to let her stay with the good damsel whom she had rocked in her cradle. She would cheerfully hunger with us if it needs must be, so that she were not turned away. Whereupon I yielded to her, and the others went alone.

Meanwhile the broth was ready, but scarce had we said the *Gratias*, and were about to begin our meal, when all the children of the village, seven in number, came to the door, and wanted bread, as they had heard we had some from my daughter her little godchild. Her heart again melted, and notwithstanding I besought her to harden herself against them, she comforted me with the message to Liepe, and poured out for each child a portion of broth on a wooden

platter (for these also had been despised by the enemy), and put into their little hands a bit of meat, so that all our store was eaten up at once. We were, therefore, left fasting next morning, till towards mid-day, when the whole village gathered together in a meadow on the banks of the river to see the boat return. But, God be merciful to us, we had cherished vain hopes! six loaves and a sheep, *item*, a quarter of apples, was all they had brought. His reverence Abraham Tiburtius wrote to me that after the cry of their wealth had spread throughout the island, so many beggars had flocked thither that it was impossible to be just to all, seeing that they themselves did not know how it might fare with them in these heavy troublous times. Meanwhile he would see whether he could raise any more. I therefore with many sighs had the small pittance carried to the manse, and though two loaves were, as *Pastor Liepensiss* said in his letter, for me alone, I gave them up to be shared among all alike, whereat all were content save Seden his squint-eyed wife, who would have had somewhat *extra* on the score of her husband's journey, which, however, as may be easily guessed, she did not get; wherefore she again muttered certain words between her teeth as she went away, which, however, no one understood. Truly she was an ill woman, and not to be moved by the word of God.

Any one may judge for himself that such a store could not last long; and as all my parishioners felt an ardent longing after spiritual food, and as I and the churchwardens could only get together about sixteen farthings in the whole parish, which was not enough to buy bread and wine, the thought struck me once more to inform my lord the Sheriff of our need. With how heavy a heart I did this may be easily guessed, but necessity knows no law. I therefore tore the last blank leaf out of *Virgilius*, and begged that, for the sake of the Holy Trinity, his lordship would mercifully consider mine own distress and that of the whole parish, and bestow