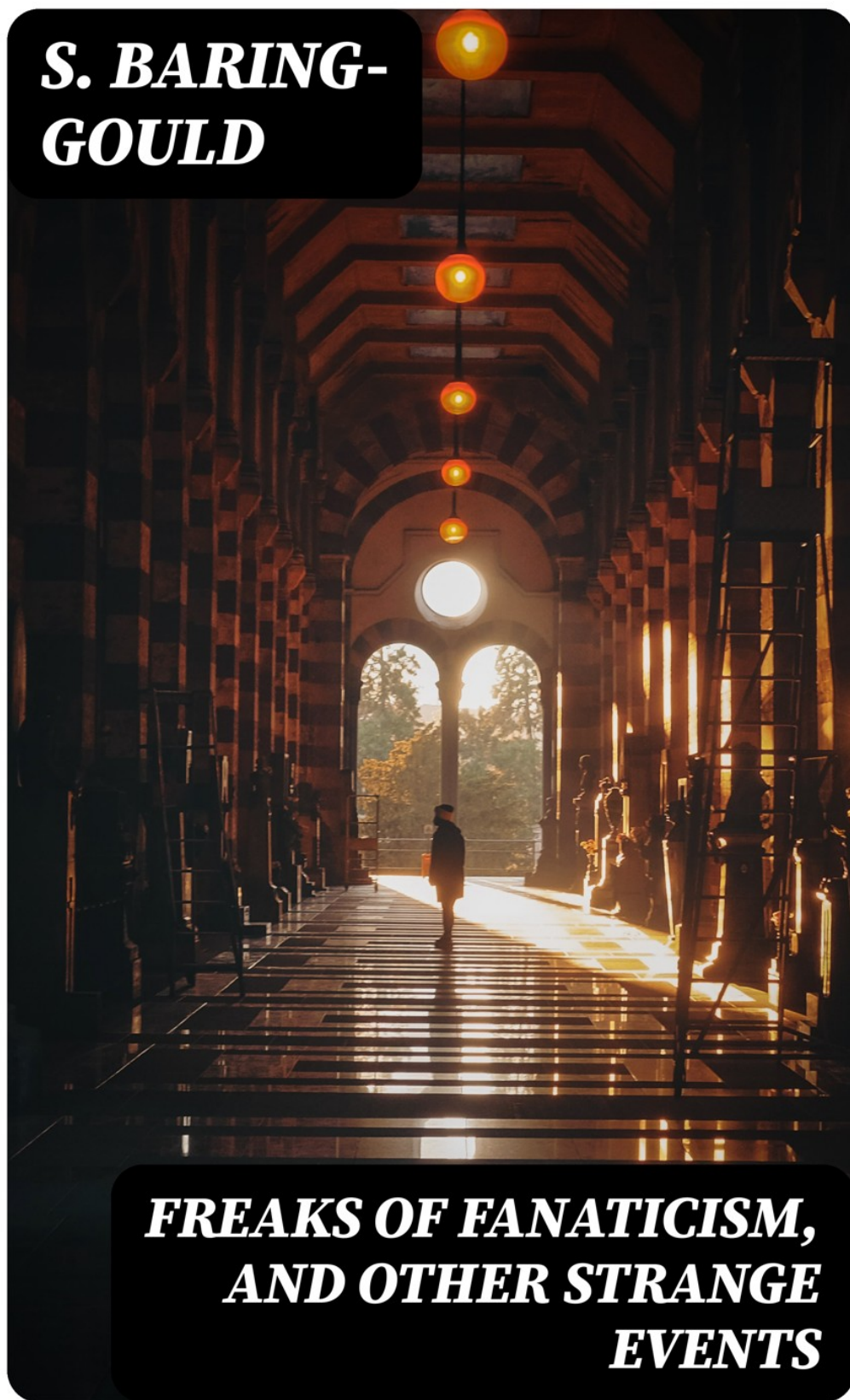


***S. BARING-
GOULD***



***FREAKS OF FANATICISM,
AND OTHER STRANGE
EVENTS***

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Freaks of Fanaticism, and Other Strange Events

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PREFACE.

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This Volume, that originally appeared as a Second Series to "Historic Oddities and Strange Events," is now issued under a new title which describes the peculiar nature of the majority of its contents. Several of the articles are concerned with the history of mysticism, a phase of human nature that deserves careful and close study. Mysticism is the outbreak in man of a spiritual element which cannot be ignored, cannot be wholly suppressed, and is man's noblest element when rightly directed and balanced. It is capable of regulation, but unregulated, it may become even a mischievous faculty.

When the Jews are being expelled from Russia, and are regarded with bitter hostility in other parts of Eastern Europe, the article on the accusations brought against them may prove not uninteresting reading.

There is political as well as religious and racial fanaticism, and the story of the "Poisoned Parsnips" illustrates the readiness with which false accusations against political enemies are made and accepted without examination. "Jean Aymon" exhibits the same unscrupulousness where religious passions are concerned. The curious episode to "The Northern Raphael" shows the craving after notoriety that characterises so much of sentimental, hysterical piety.

S. BARING GOULD.

LEW TRENCHARD, DEVON,
September 1st, 1891.

FREAKS OF FANATICISM.

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A Swiss Passion Play.

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We are a little surprised, and perhaps a little shocked, at the illiberality of the Swiss Government, in even such Protestant cantons as Geneva, Zürich, and Berne, in forbidding the performances on their ground of the "Salvation Army," and think that such conduct is not in accordance with Protestant liberty of judgment and democratic independence. But the experiences gone through in Switzerland as in Germany of the confusion and mischief sometimes wrought by fanaticism, we will not say justify, but in a measure explain, the objection the Government has to a recrudescence of religious mysticism in its more flagrant forms. The following story exemplifies the extravagance to which such spiritual exaltation runs occasionally—fortunately only occasionally.

About eight miles from Schaffhausen, a little way on one side of the road to Winterthür, in a valley, lies the insignificant hamlet of Wildisbuch, its meadows overshadowed by leafy walnut trees. The hamlet is in the parish of Trüllikon. Here, at the beginning of this century, in a farmhouse, standing by itself, lived John Peter, a widower, with several of his children. He had but one son, Caspar, married in 1812, and divorced from his wife; he was, however, blessed with five daughters—Barbara, married to

a blacksmith in Trüllikon; Susanna, Elizabeth, Magdalena married to John Moser, a shoemaker; and Margareta, born in 1794, his youngest, and favourite child. Not long after the birth of Margareta, her mother died, and thenceforth the child was the object of the tenderest and most devoted solicitude to her sisters and to her father. Margareta grew up to be a remarkable child. At school she distinguished herself by her aptitude in learning, and in church by the devotion with which she followed the tedious Zwinglian service. The pastor who prepared her for confirmation was struck by her enthusiasm and eagerness to know about religion. She was clearly an imaginative person, and to one constituted as she was, the barnlike church, destitute of every element of beauty, studiously made as hideous as a perverse fancy could scheme, and the sacred functions reduced to utter dreariness, with every element of devotion bled out of them, were incapable of satisfying the internal spiritual fire that consumed her.

There is in every human soul a divine aspiration, a tension after the invisible and spiritual, in some more developed than in others, in certain souls existing only in that rudimentary condition in which, it is said, feet are found in the eel, and eyes in the oyster, but in others it is a predominating faculty, a veritable passion. Unless this faculty be given legitimate scope, be disciplined and guided, it breaks forth in abnormal and unhealthy manifestations. We know what is the result when the regular action of the pores of the skin is prevented, or the circulation of the blood is impeded. Fever and hallucination ensue. So is it with the spiritual life in man. If that be not given free passage for

healthy discharge of its activity, it will resolve itself into fanaticism, that is to say it will assume a diseased form of manifestation.

Margaretta was far ahead of her father, brother and sisters in intellectual culture, and in moral force of character. Susanna, the second daughter of John Peter, was an amiable, industrious, young woman, without independence of character. The third daughter, Elizabeth, was a quiet girl, rather dull in brain; Barbara was married when Margaretta was only nine, and Magdalena not long after; neither of them, however, escaped the influence of their youngest sister, who dominated over their wills almost as completely as she did over those of her two unmarried sisters, with whom she consorted daily.

How great her power over her sisters was may be judged from what they declared in after years in prison, and from what they endured for her sake.

Barbara, the eldest, professed to the prison chaplain in Zürich, in 1823, "I am satisfied that God worked in mighty power, and in grace through Margaret, up to the hour of her death." The father himself declared after the ruin of his family and the death of two of his daughters, "I am assured that my youngest daughter was set apart by God for some extraordinary purpose."

When Margaret was six, she was able to read her Bible, and would summon the family about her to listen to her lectures out of the sacred volume. She would also at the same time pray with great ardour, and exhort her father and sisters to lead God-fearing lives. When she read the narrative of the Passion, she was unable to refrain from

tears; her emotion communicated itself to all assembled round her, and the whole family sobbed and prayed aloud. She was a veritable "ministering child" to her household in all things spiritual. As she had been born at Christmas, it was thought that this very fact indicated some special privilege and grace accorded to her. In 1811, when aged seventeen, she received her first communion and edified all the church with the unction and exaltation of soul with which she presented herself at the table. In after years the pastor of Trüllikon said of her, "Unquestionably Margareta was the cleverest of the family. She often came to thank me for the instructions I had given her in spiritual things. Her promises to observe all I had taught her were most fervent. I had the best hopes for her, although I observed somewhat of extravagance in her. Margareta speedily obtained an absolute supremacy in her father's house. All must do what she ordered. Her will expressed by word of mouth, or by letter when absent, was obeyed as the will of God."

In personal appearance Margareta was engaging. She was finely moulded, had a well-proportioned body, a long neck on which her head was held very upright; large, grey-blue eyes, fair hair, a lofty, well-arched brow. The nose was well-shaped, but the chin and mouth were somewhat coarse.

In 1816, her mother's brother, a small farmer at Rudolfingen, invited her to come and manage his house for him. She went, and was of the utmost assistance. Everything prospered under her hand. Her uncle thought that she had brought the blessing of the Almighty on both his house and his land.

Whilst at Rudolfingen, the holy maiden was brought in contact with the Pietists of Schaffhausen. She attended their prayer-meetings and expositions of Scripture. This deepened her religious convictions, and produced a depression in her manner that struck her sisters when she visited them. In answer to their inquiries why she was reserved and melancholy, she replied that God was revealing Himself to her more and more every day, so that she became daily more conscious of her own sinfulness. If this had really been the case it would have saved her from what ensued, but this sense of her own sinfulness was a mere phrase, that meant actually an overweening self-consciousness. She endured only about a twelve month of the pietistic exercises at Schaffhausen, and then felt a call to preach, testify and prophesy herself, instead of sitting at the feet of others. Accordingly, she threw up her place with her uncle, and returned to Wildisbuch, in March, 1817, when she began operations as a revivalist.

The paternal household was now somewhat enlarged. The old farmer had taken on a hand to help him in field and stable, called Heinrich Ernst, and a young woman as maid called Margaret Jäggli. Ernst was a faithful, amiable young fellow whom old Peters thoroughly trusted, and he became devoted heart and soul to the family. Margaret Jäggli was a person of very indifferent character, who, for her immoralities, had been turned out of her native village. She was subject to epileptic fits, which she supposed were possession by the devil, and she came to the farm of the Peter's family in hopes of being there cured by the prayers of the saintly Margareta.

Another inmate of the house was Ursula Kündig, who entered it at the age of nineteen, and lived there as a veritable maid-of-all-work, though paid no wages. This damsel was of the sweetest, gentlest disposition. Her parish pastor gave testimony to her, "She was always so good that even scandal-mongers were unable to find occasion for slander in her conduct." Her countenance was full of intelligence, purity, and had in it a nobility above her birth and education. Her home had been unhappy; she had been engaged to be married to a young man, but finding that he did not care for her, and sought only her small property, she broke off the engagement, to her father's great annoyance. It was owing to a quarrel at home relative to this, that she went to Wildisbuch to entreat Margareta Peter to be "her spiritual guide through life into eternity." Ursula had at first only paid occasional visits to Wildisbuch, but gradually these visits became long, and finally she took up her residence in the house. The soul of the unhappy girl was as wax in the hands of the saint, whom she venerated with intensest admiration as the Elect of the Lord; and she professed her unshaken conviction "that Christ revealed Himself in the flesh through her, and that through her many thousands of souls were saved." The house at Wildisbuch became thenceforth a great gathering place for all the spiritually-minded in the neighbourhood, who desired instruction, guidance, enlightenment, and Margareta, the high priestess of mysticism to all such as could find no satisfaction for the deepest hunger of their souls in the Zwinglian services of their parish church.

Man is composed of two parts; he has a spiritual nature which he shares with the angels, and an animal nature that he possesses in common with the beasts. There is in him, consequently, a double tendency, one to the indefinite, unconfined, spiritual; the other to the limited, sensible and material. The religious history of all times shows us this higher nature striving after emancipation from the law of the body, and never succeeding in accomplishing the escape, always falling back, like Dædalus, into destruction, when attempting to defy the laws of nature and soar too near to the ineffable light. The mysticism of the old heathen world, the mysticism of the Gnostic sects, the mysticism of mediæval heretics, almost invariably resolved itself into orgies of licentiousness. God has bound soul and body together, and an attempt to dissociate them in religion is fatally doomed to ruin.

The incarnation of the Son of God was the indissoluble union of Spirit with form as the basis of true religion. Thenceforth, Spirit was no more to be dissociated from matter, authority from a visible Church, grace from a sacramental sign, morality from a fixed law. All the great revolts against Catholicism in the middle-ages, were more or less revolts against this principle and were reversions to pure spiritualism. The Reformation was taken advantage of for the mystic aspirations of men to run riot. Individual emotion became the supreme and sole criticism of right and wrong, of truth and falsehood, and sole authority to which submission must be tendered.

In the autumn of 1817, Margaretta of Wildisbuch met a woman who was also remarkable in her way, and the head

of another revivalist movement. This was Julianne von Krüdner; about whom a word must now be said.

Julianne was born in 1766, at Riga, the daughter of a noble and wealthy family. Her father visited Paris and took the child with him, where she made the acquaintance of the rationalistic and speculative spirits of French society, before the Revolution. In a Voltairean atmosphere, the little Julianne grew up without religious faith or moral principle. At the age of fourteen she was married to a man much older than herself, the Baron von Krüdner, Russian Ambassador at Venice. There her notorious immoralities resulted in a separation, and Julianne was obliged to return to her father's house at Riga. This did not satisfy her love of pleasure and vanity, and she went to St. Petersburg and then to Paris, where she threw herself into every sort of dissipation. She wrote a novel, "Valérie," in which she frankly admitted that woman, when young, must give herself up to pleasure, then take up with art, and finally, when nothing else was left her, devote herself to religion. At the age of forty she had already entered on this final phase. She went to Berlin, was admitted to companionship with the Queen, Louise, and endeavoured to "convert" her. The sweet, holy queen required no conversion, and the Baroness von Krüdner was obliged to leave Berlin. She wandered thenceforth from place to place, was now in Paris, then in Geneva, and then in Germany. At Karlsruhe she met Jung-Stilling; and thenceforth threw herself heart and soul into the pietistic revival. Her mission now was—so she conceived—to preach the Gospel to the poor. In 1814 she obtained access to the Russian Court, where her prophecies and

exhortations produced such an effect on the spirit of the Czar, Alexander I., that he entreated her to accompany him to Paris. She did so, and held spiritual conferences and prayer meetings in the French capital. Alexander soon tired of her, and she departed to Basel, where she won to her the Genevan Pastor Empeytaz and the Basel Professor Lachenal. Her meetings for revival, which were largely attended, caused general excitement, but led to many domestic quarrels, so that the city council gave her notice to leave the town. She then made a pilgrimage along the Rhine, but her proceedings were everywhere objected to by the police and town authorities, and she was sent back under police supervision first to Leipzig, and thence into Russia.

Thence in 1824 she departed for the Crimea, where she had resolved to start a colony on the plan of the Moravian settlements, and there died before accomplishing her intention.

It was in 1817, when she was conducting her apostolic progress along the Rhine, that she and Margareta of Wildisbuch met. Apparently the latter made a deeper impression on the excitable baroness than had the holy Julianne on Margareta. The two aruspices did not laugh when they met, for they were both in deadly earnest, and had not the smallest suspicion that they were deluding themselves first, and then others.

The meeting with the Krüdner had a double effect. In the first place, the holy Julianne, when forced to leave the neighbourhood by the unregenerate police, commended her disciples to the blessed Margaret; and, in the second place, the latter had the shrewdness to perceive, that, if she was

to play anything like the part of her fellow-apostle, she must acquire a little more education. Consequently Margaret took pains to write grammatically, and to spell correctly.

The result of the commendation by Saint Julianne of her disciples to Margaret was that thenceforth a regular pilgrimage set in to Wildisbuch of devout persons in landaus and buggies, on horse and on foot.

Some additional actors in the drama must now be introduced.

Magdalena Peter, the fourth daughter of John Peter, was married to the cobbler, John Moser. The influence of Margaret speedily made itself felt in their house. At first Moser's old mother lived with the couple, along with Conrad, John Moser's younger brother. The first token of the conversion of Moser and his wife was that they kicked the old mother out of the house, because she was worldly and void of "saving grace." Conrad was a plodding, hard-working lad, very useful, and therefore not to be dispensed with. The chosen vessels finding he did not sympathise with them, and finding him too valuable to be done without, starved him till he yielded to their fancies, saw visions, and professed himself "saved." Barbara, also, married to the blacksmith Baumann, was next converted, and brought all her spiritual artillery to bear on the blacksmith, but in vain. He let her go her own way, but he would have nothing himself to say to the great spiritual revival in the house of the Peters. Barbara, not finding a kindred soul in her husband, had taken up with a man of like soaring piety, a tailor, named Hablützel.

Another person who comes into this story is Jacob Ganz, a tailor, who had been mixed up with the movement at Basel under Julianne the Holy.

Margaret's brother Caspar was a man of infamous character; he was separated from his wife, whom he had treated with brutality; had become the father of an illegitimate child, and now loafed about the country preaching the Gospel.

Ganz, the tailor, had thrown aside his shears, and constituted himself a roving preacher. In one of his apostolic tours he had made the acquaintance of Saint Margaret, and had been deeply impressed by her. He had an elect disciple at Illnau, in the Kempthal, south of Winterthür. This was a shoemaker named Jacob Morf, a married man, aged thirty; small, with a head like a pumpkin. To this shoemaker Ganz spoke with enthusiasm of the spiritual elevation of the holy Margaret, and Morf was filled with a lively desire of seeing and hearing her.

Margaretta seems after a while to have wearied of the monotony of life in her father's house, or else the spirit within her drove her abroad to carry her light into the many dark corners of her native canton. She resolved to be like Ganz, a roving apostle. Sometimes she started on her missionary journeys alone, sometimes along with her sister Elizabeth, who submitted to her with blind and stanch obedience, or else with Ursula Kündig. These journeys began in 1820, and extended as far Zürich and along the shores of that lovely lake. In May of the same year she visited Illnau, where she was received with enthusiasm by the faithful, who assembled in the house of a certain Ruegg,

and there for the first time she met with Jacob Morf. The acquaintance then begun soon quickened into friendship. When a few weeks later he went to Schaffhausen to purchase leather, he turned aside to Wildisbuch. After this his visits there became not only frequent, but were protracted.

Margaret was the greatest comfort to him in his troubled state of soul. She described to him the searchings and anxieties she had undergone, so that he cried "for very joy that he had encountered one who had gone through the same experience as himself."

In November, 1820, Margaret took up her abode for some time in the house of a disciple, Caspar Notz, near Zürich, and made it the centre whence she started on a series of missionary excursions. Here also gathered the elect out of Zürich to hear her expound Scripture, and pray. And hither also came the cobbler Morf seeking ease for his troubled soul, and on occasions stayed in the house there with her for a week at a time. At last his wife, the worthy Regula Morf, came from Illnau to find her husband, and persuaded him to return with her to his cobbling at home.

At the end of January in 1821, Margaret visited Illnau again, and drew away after her the bewitched Jacob, who followed her all the way home, to Wildisbuch, and remained at her father's house ten days further.

On Ascension Day following, he was again with her, and then she revealed to him that it was the will of heaven that they should ascend together, without tasting death, into the mansions of the blessed, and were to occupy one throne together for all eternity. Throughout this year, when the

cobbler, Jacob, was not at Wildisbuch, or Saint Margaretta at Illnau, the pair were writing incessantly to each other, and their correspondence is still preserved in the archives of Zürich. Here is a specimen of the style of the holy Margaret. "My dear child! your dear letter filled me with joy. O, my dear child, how gladly would I tell you how it fares with me! When we parted, I was forced to go aside where none might see, to relieve my heart with tears. O, my heart, I cannot describe to you the distress into which I fell. I lay as one senseless for an hour. For anguish of heart I could not go home, such unspeakable pains did I suffer! My former separation from you was but a shadow of this parting. O, why are you so unutterably dear to me, &c.," and then a flow of sickly, pious twaddle that makes the gorge rise.

Regula Morf read this letter and shook her head over it. She had shaken her head over another letter received by her husband a month earlier, in which the holy damsel had written: "O, how great is my love! It is stronger than death. O, how dear are you to me. I could hug you to my heart a thousand times." And had scribbled on the margin, "These words are for your eye alone." However, Regula saw them, shook her head and told her husband that the letter seemed to her unenlightened mind to be very much like a love-letter. "Nothing of the sort," answered the cobbler, "it speaks of spiritual affection only."

We must now pass over a trait in the life of the holy maid which is to the last degree unedifying, but which is merely another exemplification of that truth which the history of mysticism enforces in every age, that spiritual exaltation runs naturally, inevitably, into licentiousness, unless held in

the iron bands of discipline to the moral law. A mystic is a law to himself. He bows before no exterior authority. However much he may transgress the code laid down by religion, he feels no compunction, no scruples, for his heart condemns him not. It was so with the holy Margaret. Her lapse or lapses in no way roused her to a sense of sin, but served only to drive her further forward on the mad career of self-righteous exaltation.

She had disappeared for many months from her father's house, along with her sister Elizabeth. The police had inquired as to their whereabouts of old John Peter, but he had given them no information as to where his daughters were. He professed not to know. He was threatened unless they were produced by a certain day that he would be fined. The police were sent in search in every direction but the right one.

Suddenly in the night of January 11th, 1823, the sisters re-appeared, Margaret, white, weak, and prostrate with sickness.

A fortnight after her return, Jacob Morf was again at Wildisbuch, as he said afterwards before court, "led thither because assured by Margaret that they were to ascend together to heaven without dying."

From this time forward, Margareta's conduct went into another phase. Instead of resuming her pilgrim's staff and travelling round the country preaching the Gospel, she remained all day in one room with her sister Elizabeth, the shutters closed, reading the Bible, meditating, and praying, and writing letters to her "dear child" Jacob. The transgressions she had committed were crosses laid on her

shoulder by God. "Oh! why," she wrote in one of her epistles, "did my Heavenly Father choose *that* from all eternity in His providence for me? There were thousands upon thousands of other crosses He might have laid on me. But He elected that one which would be heaviest for me, heavier than all the persecutions to which I am subjected by the devil, and which all but overthrow me. From the foundation of the world He has never so tried any of His saints as He has us. It gives joy to all the host of heaven when we suffer to the end." Again, "the greater the humiliation and shame we undergo, and have to endure from our enemies here below"—consider, brought on herself by her own scandalous conduct—"the more unspeakable our glorification in heaven."

In the evening, Margaretta would come downstairs and receive visitors, and preach and prophesy to them. The entire house was given over to religious ecstasy that intensified as Easter approached. Every now and then the saint assembled the household and exhorted them to watch and pray, for a great trial of their faith was at hand. Once she asked them whether they were ready to lay down their lives for Christ. One day she said, in the spirit of prophecy, "Behold! I see the host of Satan drawing nearer and nearer to encompass me. He strives to overcome me. Let me alone that I may fight him." Then she flung her arms about and struck in the air with her open hands.

The idea grew in her that the world was in danger, that the devil was gaining supremacy over it, and would carry all souls into captivity once more, and that she—and almost

only she—stood in his way and was protecting the world of men against his power.

For years she had exercised her authority, that grew with every year, over everyone in the house, and not a soul there had thought of resisting her, of evading the commands she laid on them, of questioning her word.

The house was closed against all but the very elect. The pastor of the parish, as "worldly," was not suffered to cross the threshold. At a tap, the door was opened, and those deemed worthy were admitted, and the door hastily barred and bolted behind them. Everything was viewed in a spiritual light. One evening Ursula Kündig and Margareta Jäggli were sitting spinning near the stove. Suddenly there was a pop. A knot in the pine-logs in the stove had exploded. But up sprang Jäggli, threw over her spinning-wheel, and shrieked out—"Hearken! Satan is banging at the window. He wants me. He will fetch me!" She fell convulsed on the floor, foaming at the mouth. Margaret, the saint, was summoned. The writhing girl shrieked out, "Pray for me! Save me! Fight for my soul!" and Margareta at once began her spiritual exercises to ban the evil spirit from the afflicted and possessed servant maid. She beat with her hands in the air, cried out, "Depart, thou murderer of souls, accursed one, to hell-fire. Wilt thou try to rob me of my sheep that was lost? My sheep—whom I have pledged myself to save?"

One day, the maid had a specially bad epileptic fit. Around her bed stood old John Peter, Elizabeth and Susanna, Ursula Kündig, and John Moser, as well as the saint. Margaret was fighting with the Evil One with her fists and her cries, when John Moser fell into ecstasy and saw a

vision. His account shall be given in his own words: "I saw Christ and Satan, and the latter held a book open before Christ and bade Him see how many claims he had on the soul of Jäggli. The book was scored diagonally with red lines on all the pages. I saw this distinctly, and therefore concluded that the account was cancelled. Then I saw all the saints in heaven snatch the book away, and tear it into a thousand pieces that fell down in a rain."

But Satan was not to be defeated and driven away so easily. He had made himself a nest, so Margaret stated, under the roof of the house, and only a desperate effort of faith and contest with spiritual arms could expel him. For this Armageddon she bade all prepare. It is hardly necessary to add that it could not be fought without the presence of the dearly beloved Jacob. She wrote to him and invited him to come to the great and final struggle with the devil and all his host, and the obedient cobbler girded his loins and hastened to Wildisbuch, where he arrived on Saturday the 8th March, 1823.

On Monday, in answer, probably, to her summons, came also John Moser and his brother Conrad. Then also Margaret's own and only brother, Caspar.

Before proceeding to the climax of this story we may well pause to ask whether the heroine was in her senses or not; whether she set the avalanche in motion that overwhelmed herself and her house, with deliberation and consciousness as to the end to which she was aiming. The woman was no vulgar impostor; she deceived herself to her own destruction. In her senses, so far, she had set plainly before her the object to which she was about to hurry her dupes,

but her reason and intelligence were smothered under her overweening self-esteem, that had grown like a great spiritual cancer, till it had sapped common-sense, and all natural affection, even the very instinct of self-preservation. Before her diseased eyes, the salvation of the whole world depended on herself. If she failed in her struggle with the evil principle, all mankind fell under the bondage of Satan; but she could not fail—she was all-powerful, exalted above every chance of failure in the battle, just as she was exalted above every lapse in virtue, do what she might, which to the ordinary sense of mankind is immoral. Every mystic does not go as far as Margaret Peter, happily, but all take some strides along that road that leads to self-deification and *anomia*. In Margaret's conduct, in preparation for the final tragedy, there was a good deal of shrewd calculation; she led up to it by a long isolation and envelopment of herself and her doings in mystery; and she called her chosen disciples to witness it. Each stage in the drama was calculated to produce a certain effect, and she measured her influence over her creatures before she advanced another step. On Monday all were assembled and in expectation; Armageddon was to be fought, but when the battle would begin, and how it would be carried through, were unknown. Tuesday arrived; some of the household went about their daily work, the rest were gathered together in the room where Margaret was, lost in silent prayer. Every now and then the hush in the darkened room was broken by a wail of the saint: "I am sore straitened! I am in anguish!—but I refresh my soul at the prospect of the coming exaltation!" or, "My struggle with Satan is severe. He strives

to retain the souls which I will wrest from his hold; some have been for two hundred, even three hundred years in his power."

One can imagine the scene—the effect produced on those assembled about the pale, striving ecstatic. All who were present afterwards testified that on the Tuesday and the following days they hardly left the room, hardly allowed themselves time to snatch a hasty meal, so full of expectation were they that some great and awful event was about to take place. The holy enthusiasm was general, and if one or two, such as old Peter and his son, Caspar, were less magnetised than the rest, they were far removed from the thought of in any way contesting the will of the prophetess, or putting the smallest impediment in the way of her accomplishing what she desired.

When evening came, she ascended to an upper room, followed by the whole company, and there she declared, "Lo! I see Satan and his first-born floating in the air. They are dispersing their emissaries to all corners of the earth to summon their armies together." Elizabeth, somewhat tired of playing a passive part, added, "Yes—I see them also." Then the holy maid relapsed into her mysterious silence. After waiting another hour, all went to bed, seeing that nothing further would happen that night. Next day, Wednesday, she summoned the household into her bedroom; seated on her bed, she bade them all kneel down and pray to the Lord to strengthen her hands for the great contest. They continued striving in prayer till noon, and then, feeling hungry, all went downstairs to get some food. When they had stilled their appetites, Margaret was again

seized by the spirit of prophecy, and declared, "The Lord has revealed to me what will happen in the latter days. The son of Napoleon" (that poor, feeble mortal the Duke of Reichstadt) "will appear before the world as anti-Christ, and will strive to bring the world over to his side. He will undergo a great conflict; but what will be the result is not shown me at the present moment; but I am promised a spiritual token of this revelation." And the token followed. The dearly-loved Jacob, John Moser, and Ursula Kündig cried out that they saw two evil spirits, one in the form of Napoleon, pass into Margaret Jäggli, and the other, in that of his son, enter into Elizabeth. Whereupon Elizabeth, possessed by the spirit of that poor, little, sickly Duke of Reichstadt, began to march about the room and assume a haughty, military air. Thereupon the prophetess wrestled in spirit and overcame these devils and expelled them. Thereat Elizabeth gave up her military flourishes.

From daybreak on the following day the blessed Margaret "had again a desperate struggle," but without the assistance of the household, which was summoned to take their share in the battle in the afternoon only. She bade them follow her to the upper chamber, and a procession ascended the steep stairs, consisting of Margaret, followed by Elizabeth and Susanna Peter, Ursula Kündig and Jäggli, the old father and his son, Caspar, the serving-man, Heinrich Ernst, then Jacob Morf, John Moser, and the rear was brought up by the young Conrad. As soon as the prophetess had taken her seat on the bed, she declared, "Last night it was revealed to me that you are all of you to unite with me in the battle with the devil, lest he should

conquer Christ. I must strive, lest your souls and those of so many, many others should be lost. Come, then! strive with me; but first of all, kneel down, lay your faces in the dust and pray." Thereupon, all prostrated themselves on the floor and prayed in silence. Presently the prophetess exclaimed from her throne on the bed, "The hour is come in which the conflict must take place, so that Christ may gather together His Church, and contend with anti-Christ. After Christ has assembled His Church, 1260 days will elapse, and then anti-Christ will appear in human form, and with sweet and enticing words will strive to seduce the elect; but all true Christians will hold aloof." After a pause, she said solemnly, "In verity, anti-Christ is already among us."

Then with a leap she was off the bed, turning her eyes about, throwing up her hands, rushing about the room, striking the chairs and clothes-boxes with her fists, crying, "The scoundrel, the murderer of souls!" And, finding a hammer, she began to beat the wall with it.

The company looked on in breathless amaze. But the epileptic Jäggli went into convulsions, writhed on the ground, groaned, shrieked and wrung her hands. Then the holy Margareta cried, "I see in spirit the old Napoleon gathering a mighty host, and marching against me. The contest will be terrible. You must wrestle unto blood. Go! fly! fetch me axes, clubs, whatever you can find. Bar the doors, curtain all the windows in the house, and close every shutter."

Whilst her commands were being fulfilled in all haste, and the required weapons were sought out, John Moser, who remained behind, saw the room "filled with a dazzling glory,

such as no tongue could describe," and wept for joy. The excitement had already mounted to visionary ecstasy. It was five o'clock when the weapons were brought upstairs. The holy Margareta was then seated on her bed, wringing her hands, and crying to all to pray, "Help! help! all of you, that Christ may not be overcome in me. Strike, smite, cleave—everywhere, on all sides—the floor, the walls! It is the will of God! smite on till I bid you stay. Smite and lose your lives if need be."

It was a wonder that lives were not lost in the extraordinary scene that ensued; the room was full of men and women; there were ten of them armed with hatchets, crowbars, clubs, pick-axes, raining blows on walls and floors, on chairs, tables, cupboards and chests. This lasted for three hours. Margaret remained on the bed, encouraging the party to continue; when any arm flagged she singled out the weary person, and exhorted him, as he loved his soul, to fight more valiantly and utterly defeat and destroy the devil. "Strike him! cut him down! the old adversary! the arch-fiend! whoso loseth his life shall find it. Fear nothing! smite till your blood runs down as sweat. There he is in yonder corner; now at him," and Elizabeth served as her echo, "Smite! strike on! He is a murderer, he is the young Napoleon, the coming anti-Christ, who entered into me and almost destroyed me."

This lasted, as already said, for three hours. The room was full of dust. The warriors steamed with their exertions, and the sweat rolled off them. Never had men and women fought with greater enthusiasm. The battle of Don Quixote against the wind-mills was nothing to this. What blows and

wounds the devil and the young Duke of Reichstadt obtained is unrecorded, but walls and floor and furniture in the room were wrecked; indeed pitchfork and axe had broken down one wall of the house and exposed what went on inside to the eyes of a gaping crowd that had assembled without, amazed at the riot that went on in the house that was regarded as a very sanctuary of religion.

No sooner did the saint behold the faces of the crowd outside than she shrieked forth, "Behold them! the enemies of God! the host of Satan, coming on! But fear them not, we shall overcome."

At last the combatants were no longer able to raise their arms or maintain themselves on their feet. Then Margaret exclaimed, "The victory is won! follow me!" She led them downstairs into the common sitting-room, where close-drawn curtains and fastened shutters excluded the rude gaze of the profane. Here a rushlight was kindled, and by its light the battle continued with an alteration in the tactics.

In complete indifference to the mob that surrounded the house and clamoured at the door for admission, the saint ordered all to throw themselves on the ground and thank heaven for the victory they had won. Then, after a pause of more than an hour the same scene began again, and that it could recommence is evidence how much a man can do and endure, when possessed by a holy craze.

It was afterwards supposed that the whole pious community was drunk with schnaps; but with injustice. Their stomachs were empty; it was their brains that were drunk.

The holy Margaret, standing in the midst of the prostrate worshippers, now ordered them to beat themselves with

their fists on their heads and breasts, and they obeyed. Elizabeth yelled, "O, Margaret! Do thou strike me! Let me die for Christ."

Thereupon the holy one struck her sister repeatedly with her fists, so that Elizabeth cried out with pain, "Bear it!" exclaimed Margaret; "It is the wrath of God!"

The prima-donna of the whole comedy in the meanwhile looked well about her to see that none of the actors spared themselves. When she saw anyone slack in his self-chastisement, she called to him to redouble his blows. As the old man did not exhibit quite sufficient enthusiasm in self-torture, she cried, "Father, you do not beat yourself sufficiently!" and then began to batter him with her own fists. The ill-treated old man groaned under her blows, but she cheered him with, "I am only driving out the old Adam, father! It does not hurt you," and redoubled her pommelling of his head and back. Then out went the light.

All this while the crowd listened and passed remarks outside. No one would interfere, as it was no one's duty to interfere. Tidings of what was going on did, however, reach the amtmann of the parish, but he was an underling, and did not care to meddle without higher authority, so sent word to the amtmann of the district. This latter called to him his secretary, his constable and a policeman, and reached the house of the Peter's family at ten o'clock. In his report to the police at Zürich he says: "On the 13th about 10 o'clock at night I reached Wildisbuch, and then heard that the noise in the house of the Peter's family had ceased, that all lights were out, and that no one was stirring. I thought it advisable not to disturb this tranquillity, so left orders that the house

should be watched," and then he went into the house of a neighbour. At midnight, the policeman who had been left on guard came to announce that there was a renewal of disturbance in the house of the Peters. The amtmann went to the spot and heard muffled cries of "Save us! have mercy on us! Strike away! he is a murderer! spare him not!" and a trampling, and a sound of blows, "as though falling on soft bodies." The amtmann knocked at the window and ordered those within to admit him. As no attention was paid to his commands, he bade the constable break open the house door. This was done, but the sitting-room door was now found to be fast barred. The constable then ascended to the upper room and saw in what a condition of wreckage it was. He descended and informed the amtmann of what he had seen. Again the window was knocked at, and orders were repeated that the door should be opened. No notice was taken of this; whereupon the worthy magistrate broke in a pane of glass, and thrust a candle through the window into the room.

"I now went to the opened window, and observed four or five men standing with their backs against the door. Another lay as dead on the floor. At a little distance was a coil of human beings, men and women, lying in a heap on the floor, beside them a woman on her knees beating the rest, and crying out at every blow, 'Lord, have mercy!' Finally, near the stove was another similar group."

The amtmann now ordered the sitting-room door to be broken open. Conrad Moser, who had offered to open to the magistrate, was rebuked by the saint, who cried out to him: "What, will you give admission to the devil?"