



THE TRUMPETER
A ROMANCE OF THE RHINE

BY
JOSEPH VICTOR VON SCHEFFEL

TRANSLATED FROM THE TWO HUNDREDTH
GERMAN EDITION BY

JESSIE BECK AND LOUISE LORIMER

[...]

WILLIAM BLACKWOOD AND SONS
EDINBURGH AND LONDON
MDCCCXCIII

CONTENTS

TO J. V. VON SCHEFFEL.....	3
DEDICATION [<i>incomplete</i>].....	3
THE TRUMPETER.....	5
CANTO I. HOW YOUNG WERNER RODE INTO THE FOREST.....	5
CANTO II. YOUNG WERNER IS THE PASTOR'S GUEST.....	12
CANTO III. THE FEAST OF FRIDOLINUS.....	19
CANTO IV. YOUNG WERNER BY THE RHINE.....	27
CANTO V. THE BARON AND HIS DAUGHTER.....	34
CANTO VI. HOW YOUNG WERNER BECAME TRUMPETER TO THE BARON.....	42
CANTO VII. A MAY-DAY PILGRIMAGE.....	50
CANTO VIII. THE CONCERT IN THE GARDEN PAVILION.....	60
CANTO IX. TEACHING AND LEARNING.....	67
CANTO X. YOUNG WERNER IN THE GNOME'S GROTTO.....	72
CANTO XI. THE RISING IN HAUENSTEIN.....	81
CANTO XII. YOUNG WERNER AND MARGARETHA.....	90
CANTO XIII. HOW YOUNG WERNER LEFT THE CASTLE.....	97
CANTO XIV. THE LITTLE BOOK OF SONGS.....	104
YOUNG WERNER'S SONGS.....	104
SONGS OF THE TOM-CAT HIDDIGEIGEL.....	110
SONGS OF THE SILENT MAN.....	115
FROM MARGARETHA'S SONGS.....	118
WERNER'S SONGS FROM ITALY.....	119
CANTO XV. HOW THEY MET AGAIN IN ROME.....	125
CANTO XVI. THE BETROTHAL AND THE END.....	133

TO J. V. VON SCHEFFEL.

[XI]

O sweet, pure singer, though thy voice be still
 Thy song lives on; and by the hallowed Rhine,
 O'er Saxon hills and Austrian woods of pine
 It ringeth clear! And when fond hearts grow chill
 At parting, with the dread of coming ill,
 Their lingering farewell words are surely thine:
 "Behüet dich Gott, es hat nicht sollen sein!"
 As in one last, long look they gaze their fill.
 Now in our Northern land we sing thy song,
 In speech half other and yet half the same,
 From hearts that kindred claim with thine and thee.
 For in that lustrous realm, so wide and long,
 Where Fancy reigns, is distance but a name,
 While Song and Love join hands across the sea.

DEDICATION [*incomplete*]

[The Introduction written by Sir Theodore Martin not reproduced here contains only two excerpts from Scheffel's Dedication. Nearly 90 lines remain untranslated.]

[...]

[VI]

'Twas in Rome! Upon the seven-hill'd
 City heavy lay the winter,
 Yes, so heavy, Marcus Brutus'
 Self a cold must have contracted,
 And it rained sans intermission;
 Then the Schwarzland, as in vision,
 Rose before me, and the story
 Of the young musician Werner
 And the lovely Margaretha.
 By their grave where Rhine is flowing

[VII]

In my youth I've stood full often ...

[...]

All at once, just as a sudden
 Singing fills our ears, in token
 That at home of us they're thinking,
 In my ears rang Werner's trumpet.
 Through the Roman winter, through the
 Flower-sports of the Carnival,
 First far off, then nearer, nearer
 Rang its notes, and like the crystal,
 That from forms of filmy vapour
 Settles, flashes into radiance,
 Grew to shape my song's ideals.
 They pursued me down to Naples.
 There in the Bourbon Museum
 My old Baron stood, and smiling
 Shook his staff in menace at me;
 At the entrance of Pompeii
 Sat the tom-cat Hiddigeigei:
 Snarlingly he said, 'Your studies,

Quit them! What's all ancient lumber,
 What is even the dog mosaic
 On the tragic poet's threshold
 Match'd 'gainst me, the inly pensive
 Epic cat, for character?' "

[...]

[VIII]

O'er the bay I crossed to Capri,
 Here began my exorcising.
 Many a gold-green-yellow sea-fish,
 Polyps many, lobsters countless
 I consumed, and mercilessly
 Suck'd the red wine down, like water:
 Mercilessly poetising
 On the roof I strode, the metric
 Tones rang out, the spell succeeded;
 Fettered in four-footed trochees
 All the phantoms now are lying,
 That disturbed my dreams o' nights.

[...]

THE TRUMPETER.

CANTO I.

HOW YOUNG WERNER RODE INTO THE FOREST.

[1]

SOAR, my song, on gentle pinions,
 To the forest dark and gloomy,
 To the Feldberg, where the furthest
 Outpost of the faithful mountains
 Looks defiant toward the Southland,
 And, begirt in pine-tree armour,
 Is the young Rhine's sentinel!
 Hail, all hail, thou forest stillness!
 Hail, all hail, ye pine-trees hoary
 Who have oft within your shadow
 Welcomed me, a weary mortal!
 Cunningly together twisted
 Sink your roots in earth's embraces,
 Strength from out those depths deriving,
 Where we may not find an entrance.
 And ye envy not the fleeting
 Child of man his fleeting actions,

[2]

But with smiles ye gladly give him
 Of your twigs for Christmas garlands.
 For a proud, self-conscious being
 In your veins all-silent dwelleth,
 Resin blood flows through your pulses,
 And your thoughts go surging, surging,
 Slow and heavy, upward, downward.
 Oft I saw the tear-drops oozing
 From your bark, all clear and clammy,
 When a rude axe in the forest
 Wanton struck to earth a consort.
 Often have I heard your branches
 Ghost-like whispering together,
 And a sweet and strange foreboding
 Sank into my inmost being.
 Therefore chafe not if my carol
 Shall invade your woodland glades.

'Twas in March. The waning winter
 Still held revel; boughs still bending,
 With fantastical ice-crystals
 Heavily o'erladen, earthward.
 Here and there, low in the valley,
 Wind-flower pale or primrose yellow
 Raised his head, all coy and timid.
 As, of old, the ancient patriarch
 Sent the tender dove for tidings
 O'er the Flood's distressful waters,
 So, by winter's ice encumbered,
 Sends the Earth, in her impatience,
 Questioning, forth the earliest florets,

Questioning whether the oppressor
Lies not yet upon his deathbed.

Blustering, from the heights of Feldberg,
Hither whirled my Lord the Tempest.
And he sank, rejoicing, downward,
Once again, among the pine-woods.

[3]

Spake: "I greet ye, trusty comrades!
Whence I come ye know, and wherefore.
They believe, these foolish mortals,
When from off their heads I carry
Suddenly their rusty bonnets,
I but come to wake their terror.
Sooth, that were a pretty business!
Chimneys cracking, windows breaking,
Thatched roofs on the breezes strewing,
Tugging at old women's aprons
Till they cross themselves in horror!
But ye pine-trees know me better,
Me, the young Spring's crossing-sweeper,
Mouldy things together crashing,
Rotten things in pieces smashing,
And the old Earth freshly scouring
That its radiant young commander
With due pomp may make his entry.
And you, haughty forest comrades,
Who have oft, with brow forbidding,
Stoutly my advance resisted,
And whose trunks have often dealt me
Lusty bumps upon my forehead,
To your ears I trust my secret:
Soon the Spring himself is coming I
Then when busy sprouts are shooting,
Lark and thrush are jubilating,
And the young year's warmest sunlight
Grateful shines upon your branches,
Spare a thought for me, his servant,
Who, to-day, goes rushing past you,
As a courier of the Spring."

So he spake and shook the tree-tops
Harsh and strongly. Creaked the branches
Snapped dry twigs, and downward pattered
Finest rain of needles earthward.

But the pines received his homage

[4]

In the most ungracious fashion.

From the tree-tops came the answer –
Scolding, wellnigh might one call it –

"Most unmannerly behaviour!

We desire none of your tidings,

And deplore that courteous masters

Often have the rudest servants.

Get you gone among the mountains,

There you may seek nut for cracking,

There are bald and barren boulders.

Keep for them your pretty speeches!"

While, in this way, storm and pine-trees
 Carried on their odd discussion,
 Rang a hoof-fall, came a horseman
 O'er the snowdrift-covered woodway
 Painfully some outlet seeking.
 Merrily his long, grey mantle
 Fluttered on the wintry breezes,
 Fluttered, too, his curls of auburn,
 And, from o'er his waving hat-brim,
 Nodded bold a heron's feather.
 Round his lips there bloomed the earliest,
 Faintest beard-down, prized by ladies,
 For it tells of perfect manhood,
 Yet the kiss its wearer giveth
 Leaves no lingering sting behind it.
 But, I ween, it still was virgin,
 Innocent of maiden's kisses,
 And the snow and rime had pranked it,
 As in scorn, all white and gleaming.
 In his clear, blue eyes flamed fervour,
 Gentleness and earnest meaning,
 And it needed not the lengthy,
 Slender, basket-hilted rapier,
 Which from his black shoulder-trapping
 Almost to the ground reached downward,
 To proclaim that, on occasion,
 [5]

He could deal full lusty buffets.
 O'er his tightly fitting jerkin
 Passed a ribbon, whence, all gleaming
 Hung a richly gilded trumpet.
 To protect it from the snowflakes
 Close he slung his mantle round it.
 But when oft the wind gained entry,
 SO that notes resounded shrilly,
 Round his lips a smile would hover
 Fraught with strangest melancholy.

Silent, through the thickset forest,
 Rode he onward, often scanning
 All around him, as a pilgrim,
 Wand'ring in a distant country,
 Anxious looks for help and guidance.
 Rough the path, the palfrey often
 In the snow would sink and struggle,
 Or among the twisted network
 Of the pine-tree roots would stumble.
 And the rider muttered, grumbling:
 "'Tis, in sooth, a trifle tedious
 Lonely through the world to wander.
 There come haps and there come pine-woods
 Where a man longs for his fellows.
 Since I said farewell this morning
 To the brothers of St Blasien
 Has my road been waste and empty.

Here and there a single peasant,
 Struggling through a world of snowflakes,
 Scarcely could return my greeting.
 Or a pair of swarthy ravens
 Who together hoarsely croaking
 O'er a dead mole were disputing.
 But for two long hours since noonday
 Not a soul has crossed my vision,
 Not a single living creature.
 And in all this dreary woodland,

[6]

Where the snow-enveloped pine-trees
 Stand in grave-clothes swathed and smothered,
 Two, methinks, would ride more gaily.
 Were they rogues or were they gipsies,
 Were they even those two comrades,
 Those suspicious boon-companions,
 Who through forest gloom attended
 Once a knight of olden story,
 And, at last, stared, grinning hideous,
 In his face as Death and Devil.
 Rather, faith, with them I'd travel,
 Fight with them, or blow my trumpet
 In their ears, than thus all lonely
 Further through the pine-trees journey!"

Comes an end to all things earthly,
 E'en to riding through pine-forests.
 'Twixt the stems the light grew broader,
 Storm and snowflake ceased from troubling,
 And the sky, all blue and smiling,
 Looked upon the gloomy pine-wood.
 To the miner, upward faring,
 Glimmers thus a starlike radiance
 From the pit's mouth; 'tis the daylight,
 And with joyous shout he hails it.
 So the visage of the rider
 Beamed, in likewise, bright and joyous.
 Soon he reached the forest limit,
 And his glance, which in the woodways
 Long uneasy was imprisoned,
 Rambled, joyful, in the open.

Ha! how far lay wood and meadow!
 Smiling pastures, narrow valleys,
 Straw-thatched dwellings, low and mossy,
 And the hamlet's modest chapel.
 Deep below, where darkest woodlands
 Broadened downward toward the plateau,

[7]

Wound the Rhine, a streak of silver,
 Far away to meet the sunset.
 Further gleamed the haughty turrets
 Of the island's noble buildings,
 And the twin towers of the Minster;
 But, upon the grey horizon,
 Soared toward heaven, in the distance,

Snow-illumed, the giant mountains
 Of Helvetia's neighbour-land.
 Even as the pallid student's
 Eye will flash and cheek will redden
 When a fresh and great idea
 Mightily takes hold upon him,
 So they shone in evening glory,
 Those far-distant Alpine summits.
 (Did they dream of all the anguish
 That old Mother Nature suffered
 In the hour in which she bore them?)

From his horse light sprang the rider,
 Heedful bound him to a pine-tree,
 Scanned long time the lordly landscape,
 Spake no word, but, for a greeting,
 Flung his pointed hat toward heaven
 And began upon his trumpet
 Straight to blow a joyous sennet.
 Rang the greeting toward the river,
 Rang the greeting toward the mountains,
 Merry now and now pathetic,
 Solemn as a pious prayer;
 Then again like wanton jesting,
 And trari-trara – applauding –
 Echo gave him back his greeting
 From the forest's deepest fastness.
 Wondrous fair were hill and valley,
 And he, too, was fair to look on,
 Standing there, among the snowdrifts,
 Joyous, leaning on his palfrey.”

[8]

Here and there a straying sunbeam
 Flashed on him and on his trumpet,
 And behind were darkling pine-trees.

Yonder, in the smiling meadows,
 Was the blast not all unheeded,
 For it even reached the hearing
 Of the Pastor of the hamlet.
 He was gazing on the snowdrifts,
 Which, now melting into torrents,
 Threatened tender grass with ruin.
 And within his mind he pondered
 On some means of fit protection.
 Round him sprang, with joyous barking
 Shaggy, white, his dog companions.

Ye, who by the city's vapours,
 By stone walls and bonds of custom
 From true, simple life are severed,
 Shrug your shoulders, for my carol
 Pauses, fain to weave a garland
 For the Pastor in the country.
 Smooth his life runs; where the hamlet's
 Bounds are set, there, too, the limits
 Lie of all his power and action.
 While to God His glory, others,

In the Thirty Years' long struggle
 Broke each other's skulls in pieces,
 Here, long since, the stately pine-trees
 To his spirit peace had whispered.
 Cobwebs lay upon his book-shelves,
 And 'twas doubtful if he ever
 Of all theologic squabbles
 Had perused one single volume.
 And, in general, with dogma
 And with learning's weighty armour
 He but scantily was furnished.
 But wherever in his parish

[9]

Bitter trouble had arisen,
 Where the neighbours, spiteful, wrangled,
 Where the demon of dissension
 Wedded love disturbed or filial,
 Where the daily need and sorrow
 Grievously oppressed the peasant,
 And his sore and thirsty spirit
 Longed for sympathy and comfort,
 With the olive-branch for token,
 Came the Priest o'er hill and valley,
 Bringing each, from out the treasure
 Of his spirit, help and counsel.
 And when, in far-distant cottage,
 Some one on his bed of sickness
 Waged with death the last grim battle,
 There, at midnight, or at daybreak,
 Or whene'er the need was greatest,
 Through the snow and through the tempest,
 Dauntless would he seek the sufferer,
 Bearing the last sacred blessing.
 Lonely was he, lonely dwelt he,
 And his nearest, dearest comrades
 Were those dogs of good St Bernard.
 His reward? A child would often
 Lift his hoary hand and kiss it,
 Timid, yet with loving reverence.
 Or on some dead face would linger,
 Faint, the smile of grateful blessing
 That had flashed upon the Pastor.

Unobserved, he now drew nearer,
 Passing by the forest's border,
 To the Trumpeter, whose music
 Still was echoing in the distance,
 Clapped him friendly on the shoulder:
 "God be with you, my young master,
 You have blown a gallant sennet!
 Since the horsemen of the Kaiser
 [10]

Buried here the sergeant-major,
 To whose heart a Swedish weapon
 In the fight by Rhine had bitten,
 And, for their departed comrade
 Blew, as farewell, the Réveillé,

Heard I never in the forest –
 And that's long ago – such music.
 Scantly even on the organ
 Can my organist perform.
 'Tis not strange, then, if I marvel
 Here 'to meet with such an Orpheus.
 Is it for our wild wood creatures –
 Badger, fox, wild boar, and roe-deer –
 You prepare a treat so subtle?
 Or, perchance, it was a signal,
 Like the huntsman's bugle-horn.
 You are strange here, by the fashion
 Of your jerkin and long rapier.
 Far below you lies the township,
 And the road is scarcely open.
 Look, already from the river
 Mist is rising to our Woodlands,
 And, methinks, it were but prudent
 That you shelter in my dwelling;
 Plain it is, yet horse and horseman
 There may pass the night in comfort."

Spake the youth: "I am a stranger,
 Wand'ring in a stranger's country,
 Nor to-day have I bethought me
 Where this night I shall find shelter,
 For, if need be, in the forest,
 Free and fair, free hearts can slumber;
 Yet I prize your gracious welcome,
 I accept, and I will follow."

Straight he loosed the tethered palfrey,
 Led it heedful by the bridle,
 [11]
 And, together, Priest and Rider,
 Like old friends, went toward the village
 In the gathering dusk of evening,
 Gazing from the parlour window,
 Doubtful stood the old housekeeper.
 Then she raised her hands full sadly,
 Took a pinch of snuff full sadly:
 "Holy Agnes, holy Agnes,
 In my hour of need stand by me!
 For my all-too-kindly master
 Yet again a guest is bringing,
 Who will work a direful ravage
 Both in kitchen and in cellar I
 Now farewell, ye river troutlets,
 Which I fain had saved till Sunday,
 For the Dean of Wehren's dinner;
 Now farewell, ye fresh-cut rashers!
 Ay, I fear me, e'en the ancient
 Clucking-hen must fall a victim,
 And the summer oats be eaten
 By the stranger's hungry palfrey!"

CANTO II.
YOUNG WERNER IS THE PASTOR'S GUEST.

[12]

IN the parlour, warm and sheltered,
Sat young Werner and the Pastor
At their evening meal together.
On the board a roasted pullet
Late had steamed with tempting odours
But 'twas all undone and vanished.
Yet a sweet suggestive fragrance
On the air still lingered, grateful;
Like some strain, wherein the singer,
Dead, lives on for after ages.
And the empty platters witnessed
That a very wholesome hunger
Late had met full satisfaction.

Now the Pastor filled the goblets
From a mighty earthen tankard,
And he thus addressed young Werner:
"It is fitting, supper ended,
That the host should ask the stranger
What his name and whence he cometh,
Where his home, and who his parents.
From old Homer's lore I gather
That the King of the Phaeacians
Questioned thus the noble wand'rer.
Thou wilt also weave, I trust me,
Strangest tales of mingled fortunes
Like Odysseus in the poem.

[13]

Therefore set thee in the corner,
By the green-tiled stove, the mother
Of so many great ideas,
Which is held, by Schwartzwald usage,
Seat of honour for the teller.
I shall list with spell-bound pleasure,
For the tale of youth's wild tempests
Makes the blood of age course faster."

Quoth the youth: "No warrior am I,
Woe is me I never wasted
Fair Troy town; I never blinded
Polypheme, the giant Cyclops;
And, alas, I ne'er encountered
Any lovely Nausicaa,
Playing ball or washing linen,
Who would take compassion on me.
Yet, content to do your bidding,
I will tell you all my fortunes."

So he took the seat of honour
By the fire. The stove was mighty,
Tiled with green and polished earthenware,
And its gentle warmth caressed him.
With a friendly smile the Pastor

Bade him stretch his limbs; the stripling,
Smiling, shook his head, and quaffing
A deep draught of ruddy Rhenish,
Nerved afresh, began his story: –

“I who sit here, Werner Kirchof,
Had within the Pfalz my birthplace,
In the Pfalz at Heidelberg.

“Old Heidelberg, thou fairest
Of cities fair and free!
Nor Rhine’s nor Neckar’s rarest
Can bear the palm from thee.

[14]

“Thy student-lads are teeming
With wisdom and with wine,
Thy blue-eyed maids are dreaming,
Thy silver waters shine.

“When Springtime, softly breathing,
Comes from the Southern sea,
Her hands with flowers are wreathing
A bridal robe for thee.

“And, like a bride’s, thy beauty
Is written in my heart,
And with a lover’s duty
I breathe thy name apart.

“Then if the world shall rally,
Or scorn me as I roam,
I’ll turn toward Neckar’s valley
And spur my horse for home!

“There I dreamed, beside the Neckar,
All the long, sweet dreams of childhood.
There, too, I was taught my letters,
Learning Greek and learning Latin,
And a cherry-nosed musician
Taught me how to blow the trumpet,
When I counted eighteen summers
Spake my guardian: ‘List, young Werner!
With clear eyesight art thou gifted
And some moderate acuteness,
Art of the right stuff, I fancy.
We must make a lawyer of thee.
That brings glory, office, honours,
And, still better, golden ducats.
Why, already I can see thee
As his Grace the Palsgrave’s warden
Much respected, and my bonnet
Even I must doff before thee.

[15]

Ay, I almost dare to wager,
If thou bear thee well and bravely,
That a seat may e’en await thee
In the Court Supreme at Wetzlar.’

“Thus, then, I became a lawyer;
Bought a mighty metal inkstand,

Bought a folio, all of leather,
 And a pond'rous Corpus Juris.
 In the hall I sat, assiduous,
 Where, with mummy-yellow visage,
 Samuel Brunnquell, the Professor,
 Lectured on the Roman system.
 Roman Law, when I recall thee
 Lies upon my breast a mountain,
 Lies a millstone in my stomach,
 And my head seems changed to timber!
 All the stir and all the pother
 I must hear, when in the Forum
 Roundly they abused each other;
 How Sir Gaius this, asserted
 And Sir Ulpianus t'other;
 How the later comers bungled,
 Till the Emperor Justinian-
 He, himself, the prince of bunglers –
 With a kick stopped all their wrangling
 And, half-dazed, I oft would question:
 'Are we, then, condemned for ever
 At those dry old bones to nibble
 Which the Romans have bequeathed us
 As the leavings from their banquet?
 Shall no native flower of justice
 Blossom by Teutonic rivers,
 Fragrant of the homely forest,
 Not of fetid, Southern marshes?
 Sad the lot of Epigonians!
 They are doomed to plod, perspiring,
 Right and left the thread pursuing
 [16]
 Of a great and hopeless tangle.
 Can no sword be found to cut it?

"Oft at night, beside my candle,
 Sat I, brooding o'er the Codex.
 Read the Glossary, read Cujacius,
 Till my very hair was aching.
 Yet my plodding gained no blessing,
 And my thoughts flew ever gladly
 From the characters before me
 To the fair and lovely daughter
 Of Cujacius, who, saith legend,
 In sweet dulcet tones expounded
 To the lucky youth of Paris
 The Cathedex of her father.
 'Stead of Nexum, Usucapion
 And Novellæ, seven-and-ninety,
 Laughed a curly-headed maiden
 Coyly from the Corpus Juris.
 Fell the pen from 'twixt my fingers,
 Overturned were ink and sand-box,
 And I snatched once more my trumpet
 Usucapion and Nexum
 And Novellæ, seven-and-ninety,
 Wailing in the Adagio floated

Tuneful through my study windows,
Out upon the starry midnight.

“No, my plodding gained no blessing,
So I strode, one merry morning,
'Neath my arm the Corpus Juris
(’Twas the famous Elzevirian,
Costly, Rotterdam edition),
Through the alleys to the pawnshop.
Levi Ben Machol, the skinflint
Hebrew with the squinting peepers,
Took it in his arms paternal,
[17]

Gave me two doubloons in payment.
Let some other fool redeem it!

“So I turned a jolly fellow,
Wand’ring far o’er hill and valley,
Wand’ring nightly through the highways,
Clinking spurs and serenading.
And, if any dared to cavil,
Straight my hand was on my weapon:
‘Stand on guard! The distance measure!
Draw!’ and, whizzing through the breezes,
Over many a polished forehead
Has my sharp and nimble rapier
Traced itself a coat-of-arms.

“Also, I admit it freely,
My most cherished boon-companions
Were not always nicely chosen,
And, within the Palsgrave’s Castle,
'Twas my pleasure to sit drinking
By the wonder of our era,
By philosophy’s great offspring,
By the Tun of Heidelberg.
There a venerable toper
Dwelt, my well-loved friend Perkêo,
Court-fool to the noble Palsgrave.
Turning from the wild world’s tempests
Unto meditative drinking,
Hither had retired Perkêo,
And the cellar was his refuge.
There he lived, and, musing, tended
The great Tun and his own person.
And he loved it; love more loyal
Never has on earth been witnessed.
'Twas as if the two were wedded.
With a mighty broom he swept it,
Chased away the envious spiders,
And on every feast-day decked it,
[18]

Tenderly, with ivy garlands.
And he sang a morning greeting,
And a lullaby at even,
And he carved his portrait on it
As a bond of troth betwixt them.
But when from the ample mouthpiece

Like a kiss he sipped his wages,
 Forth he soared upon most daring
 Flights of thought, and oft I listened
 At his feet to rare discourses:

“ ‘So they take me for a noodle?
 Let them babble, my young comrade,
 Little do I heed their babbling!
 Oh, the world has grown so stupid!
 How they grope and how they fumble
 After truth, while truth sails onward
 With her topmast cloud-enveloped!
 Backward harks mankind for ever
 To the principles of all things,
 And his search for final causes
 Fain to clear results would carry,
 Thus of life to gain a doctrine.
 And I drink with like endeavour.
 Cosmical is thus my toping,
 And the universe before me
 Seems a spacious, vaulted cellar,
 Wherein, Central Tun and First Cause
 Is the glorious Sun implanted,
 And, in due array, the lesser
 Rank and file – fixed stars and planets.
 As the Tuns hold multifarious
 Wines of divers sorts and species
 So secrete the heavenly bodies
 Strangest spirits, strangely varied;
 Home-grown this, this Rudesheimer.
 But our world contains a mixture,
 And the spirit with fermenting
 [19]
 Is part lost and part grown turbid.
 Mind and matter, erst opponents,
 Reach at length, through much reflection,
 To a high organic oneness.
 And thus over wine and planets
 Hovers my creative toping.
 When the revelations riot
 Through my brain that drinking brings me,
 When my rotten carcass, reeling,
 Sinks down limp beside my mistress,
 ’Tis the triumph of the spirit,
 ’Tis the deed of self-deliv’rance
 From the numbing bonds of Being.
 So the Universal System
 Clearly spreads itself before me,
 As I ponder in my cellar.
 Other had been mankind’s story
 Had Germania’s sons and heroes
 Recognised their true vocation,
 And the flag of pensive drinking –
 The pure cultus of the wine-cup –
 As the Persian his fire-worship,
 Through the whole wide world had carried!’

“But for me, O my Perkêo,
 It were better had I never
 Leant my ear to thine instructions!
 ’Twas a bitter winter morning
 When, within the chilly cellar,
 Drank the dwarf and I, together,
 Our reflective morning potion,
 And when into mid-day sunshine
 I emerged, the world had, surely,
 Something odd in its appearance.
 Rosily the breezes shimmered,
 Angel’s music floated round me,
 And upon the Castle terrace,
 Framed in ring of noble maidens,
 [20]
 Stood their fair and gracious mistress,
 Stood the Palsgravine Lenore.
 Upward flew my daring glances,
 Upward flew my thoughts as daring,
 Blown away were all my senses.
 Languishing I neared the terrace
 And began the hare-brained ditty
 Which the gallant Palsgrave Fred’rick,
 Sick with love, long since had chanted
 To his beauteous English consort:

“ ‘Thy vassal and lover I kneel at thy feet,
 Palsgravine, lady most fair!
 I’ll battle with Kaiser and King for thy sake
 And the world in ten thousand fragments I’ll break
 At my lady’s lightest prayer!

“ ‘I’ll bring thee the sun and the moon from the sky,
 Palsgravine, lady most fair!
 And the glittering stars like frogs I’ll bring
 At my dagger’s point for an offering
 To thy feet, and lay them there!

“ ‘Folly were wisdom for love of thee,
 Palsgravine, lady most fair!
 I am blinded – dazzled through and through
 Ay, fooled, thrice fooled, by thine eyes so blue
 And the lightnings that they bear!’

* * *

“Hear you not the trumpets blaring?
 Hear you not the cannons roaring?
 There, by Prague, at Weissenberg,
 For Bohemia’s crown they wrestled,
 Palsgrave, ’twas too brief a winter!

[Frederick V., Elector Palatine, who married Elizabeth, daughter of James I. of England, was elected King of Bohemia in 1619. Six months later he was defeated by the Imperial troops at Weissenberg, and fled to Holland. In reference to the shortness of his reign he received the nickname of the “Winter King.”]

Palsgrave, thou hast lost the battle!
 Spur thy nag and seek thy fortunes.
 [21]

“O thou loveliest of ladies
 Rude awakening had my dreaming!

Down upon me strode the Beadle,
 Summoned me before the Rector.
 Awfully his brows he knitted,
 Awfully he wagged his noddle,
 Awfully pronounced my sentence,
 The Rector Magnificus:
 'For thine all unlicensed blaring,
 And yet more unlicensed singing,
 Whereby thou the peace hast broken,
 Three days hence shalt quit this college,
 Quit the city. Sterner sentence
 Is by special intercession
 Of the Palsgravine, forborne thee.'

"Quit the city? Was I dreaming?
 Nay, alas, 'twas sober earnest!
 So I paid (which in like cases
 Is, I fancy, not the custom)
 First all moneys I was owing,
 Then, as dawned the fateful morning,
 Forth I rode beyond the precincts,
 And, next day, I crossed the frontier,
 Light of heart. Although my birthplace
 May have shot her bolts behind me
 Not a whit the less I love her.
 And that cursed tool, the trumpet,
 Gay I slung across my shoulder,
 For one day – my heart divineth –
 It shall peal my path to glory.
 Certes, now, the goal I wot not
 Toward which horse and tempest bear me,
 Yet I cast no glance behind me.
 Fortune smiles upon the valiant.

[22]

Dauntless heart and dauntless bearing
 Know no doubt and no despairing.

"This is how I reached the Schwartzwald
 And if you, my honoured father,
 During all my weary story
 Have not been by sleep o'ertaken
 A11d will give me of your counsel,
 I shall be both glad and grateful."

With a smile the old man pledged him,
 Paused a space and then spake, smiling:
 "Of a truth, you came off cheaply!
 For I know another story
 Of a gay, young page-in-waiting,
 Of a Margravine most beauteous,
 And a gallows-tree full lofty.
 Here good counsel seems much needed;
 But, in all my casuistry,
 'Tis not faintly indicated
 What advice to give a stripling
 Who to Palsgravines makes music,
 To the pawnshop dares to carry
 Scientific Jurisprudence,

And by lusty trumpet-blowing
 Bravely hopes to storm the future.
 Yet when human wit is baffled
 Heaven oft sendeth gracious counsel.
 In the forest-town beneath us
 They will keep the feast to-morrow
 Of the holy Fridolinus.
 Never yet hath he forsaken
 One who turned to him for succour
 And, above all, is he gracious
 To the young who are in trouble.
 Turn you unto Fridolinus!”

CANTO III. THE FEAST OF FRIDOLINUS.

[23]
 SAILS a skiff across the ocean,
 Toward the coast of far Franconia.
 Strange the rigging, strange the pennon,
 And a man sits by the rudder,
 Pale, and clad in priestly garments.
 Hollow, like sad lamentations,
 Rang the pilgrims’ alien accents –
 Prayers with sailors’ shouts were mingled –
 For they spake the Gaelic language
 Of fair Erin’s emerald island,
 And the vessel, swiftly sailing,
 Bore upon his pious mission,
 Bore the saintly Fridolinus.

“Cease thy plaint, beloved Mother!
 Not with sword and not with crossbow
 Shall the Son advance His glory;
 Other times bring other weapons.
 Faith and Love are my defences.
 To my Saviour’s cause devoted
 I must journey to the heathen,
 Keltic blood drives ever onward.
 And in visions have I seen them –
 Other lands and other mountains, –
 And an islet in a river,
 Lovely as the isle of Erin.

[24]
 Thither points the Lord His finger,
 Thither follows Fridolinus.”

So across the mighty ocean
 Fared he with his Irish brothers,
 Few, but strong in joyful ardour.
 Reached at length the Frankish kingdom
 Where at Paris sat King Chlodwig.
 Smiling spake he to the pilgrims:
 “Never have I looked with favour
 On your cowls and on your crosses.
 But of late, since those confounded,

Sharp-edged, Allemannic lances
 Whistled past my ears so closely,
 Since yon heavy fight at Zülpich,
 I have ta'en another notion.
 Need may teach e'en kings their prayers.
 My protection shall go with you.
 And, in chief, I recommend you
 Those same tribes of Upper Rhineland,
 They have thicker skulls than any,
 Make me these polite and pious."

Onward went the godly brethren,
 Reached at length Helvetia's borders.
 There began their earnest labour,
 And the Saviour's symbol holy
 Rose beside the foot of Santis,
 Shining o'er the Swabian waters.
 From the Jura downward journeyed
 Fridolin. He saw the ruins
 Of Augusta Rauracorum;
 Roman walls, whence yet projected,
 From the green slopes of the valley,
 Pillars of Serapis' temple.
 Altar high and sanctuary
 Were with downy thistles shrouded
 And some Allemannic peasant,
 [25]
 Whose grandsire, perchance, in battle,
 Slew the latest priest of Egypt,
 Had, as trophy, o'er his stable
 Placed the God's basaltic bullhead.

Fridolinus breathed a prayer,
 And pressed onward by the Rhine-stream,
 Joying in its young fresh waters.
 It was evening, and his journey
 Had that day been long and weary,
 When he watched the river's current
 In divided course sweep onward.
 In the crystal flood lay, smiling,
 At his feet a little island.
 (Like a sack the river held it,
 And the country folk, whose nicknames
 Are not over finely chosen,
 Called the isle Sacconium.)

It was evening. Larks were singing,
 Merrily the trout were leaping,
 And the heart of Fridolinus
 Thrilled with fervent, pious gladness.
 On his knees he sank in prayer,
 For he knew the little island:
 In his dreams 'twas grown familiar,
 And he praised the Lord in Heaven.

Many a one among us younger,
 Later-born of human children,
 Sees in dreams some peaceful islet

Where full gladly he would nestle,
 And in calm would lave his spirit,
 Calm of forests, peace of Sabbaths.
 Many a one sets out with longing,
 But if ever, as he wanders,
 He draws near that vision country,
 Straight it vanishes before him,

[26]

As recedes the wondrous mirrored
 Image of the Fay Morgana.

On a rudely fashioned pine-raft,
 By a wild, unwilling boatman
 Was the stranger ferried over.
 Rough the island: limes and alders
 Grew upon the marshy bottom,
 And upon the pebbly shore-edge,
 'Mid the willows old and hoary,
 Stood some low and straw-thatched hovels.
 There, in summer, when the noble
 Salmon makes his up-stream progress,
 With his ready spear fresh whetted
 Lies in wait the wary fisher.

But the holy man, undaunted,
 Set to work and built his log-house,
 'Stablished it on firm foundations,
 Raised the Crucifix before it;
 And at even, when far-reaching
 Tolloed his bell: Ave Maria!
 And he bent the knee in prayer,
 Many a one, with furtive glances,
 From the valley watched the islet.

Stubborn were those ancient Almain,
 Erst the gods of Rome they hated;
 Now they hate the God of Chlodwig,
 Who, at Zulpich, like a tempest,
 Smote and ground to dust their legions.
 When on winter nights the warrior
 Lay upon his hides in silence,
 While his women folks full briskly
 Wagged their tongues in lively chatter,
 And of this and that were prattling:
 How the milk soured in the pitcher,
 How the lightning struck the hovel,
 [27]

How the hog's sharp teeth had wounded
 Some young hopeful at the boar-hunt,
 Thoughtfully would speak the ancient
 Great-grandmother of the Almain:
 "For those things none else is guilty
 But yon pale-faced, praying stranger
 On the island in the river:
 Never trust the Franks' King Chlodwig;
 Never trust the God they worship."
 So the people feared the stranger.

Once ('twas at the summer solstice)
 They betook them to his island,
 Where, in keeping with old custom,
 They drank mead from mighty tankards,
 And the Saint might well have perished
 Had they found him in his dwelling.
 "Let us leave the pale-faced stranger
 Some memorial of our feast-day!"
 And the flames flew roaring upward,
 And they sprang exulting through them,
 Shouting: "Hail and praise to Wodan!"
 Still, but glad, the aged grandam
 Gazed from far, her wrinkled visage
 By the flames illumined weirdly.

Fridolinus, swift returning
 From a journey down the river,
 Stood beside the blackened ruins.
 And he spake, through sadness smiling:
 "Trials raise man's courage higher,
 Praised be He who sends the trial."
 And he built anew his cottage,
 And he found a way to conquer
 The rough hearts of these his neighbours.
 First the children, then the women
 Harkened to his gentle pleading;
 E'en among the men would many
 [28]

Nod approval when he showed them
 How at home, in his green Erin,
 They were wont to spear the salmon;
 When he sang them ancient legends,
 How around the cliffs of Scotia
 Dreadful roared the tide of battle
 'Gainst the Romans; and how Fingal
 Bore to earth Caraculus.
 And they said: "That God is mighty,
 Great and strong, who brought him hither,
 And a good God, for his servant
 Brings a blessing on our fishing."
 And in vain the old wife cautioned:
 "Never trust the Franks' King Chlodwig,
 Never trust the God they worship!"

Yes; those savage hearts he conquered,
 And they learnt his lessons slowly,
 But with gladness: how that giving
 Is more blessed than receiving,
 Suffering better than resenting;
 And how higher than all others
 Is that God who chose to suffer
 Shame upon the bitter cross.

Hardly had a twelvemonth ended,
 'Twas Palm Sunday, and the people
 Came from all the mountains flocking
 In their boats upon the river
 To the isle of Fridolinus.

Sword and shield and axe were peacefully
 Laid aside before they landed,
 And the happy children gathered
 Early catkins from the willows,
 Violets by the river's margin.
 From his cell, in priestly vestments
 All arrayed, came Fridolinus,
 And beside him were the brethren
 [29]

Who from far had journeyed hither:
 Gallus, from Helvetia's mountains,
 From the Boden See, Columban,
 And they guided to the river
 All the throng of eager converts,
 And in water fair baptised them
 In the name of God Almighty,
 Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
 She alone came never hither
 To the pious stranger's islet –
 She, the old, defiant grandam.
 For she said: "In my life's evening
 I desire no gods new-fangled,
 With the old I was contented:
 Good and gracious were they to me
 For they gave to me my warrior,
 My true-hearted Siegebert.
 When my day shall come for dying
 I might never find him, never,
 And to him turns all my longing.
 Lay me deep within the forest,
 Where the hemlock hides its sadness
 'Neath the branches of the pine-tree,
 Where the mistletoe is clinging;
 Let no cross my grave o'ershadow,
 Elsewhere it may bear a blessing."

Fridolinus, nothing daunted,
 Laid that very day the groundstone
 Of the cloister and the village;
 And his work was blessed with increase
 Wider, so that all the district
 Held the holy man in honour.
 And when, once again, he journeyed
 To King Chlodwig's Court at Paris,
 On his right the monarch placed him
 And made solemn presentation
 [30]

Heard ye ever of the Ordeal,
 And of what befell Graf Ursus,

[Ursus, a burger of Glarus, bequeathed to Fridolinus a rich inheritance, for behoof of his cloister. Landulf, the brother of Ursus, contested Fridolin's claim, and the judge before whom the cause was tried demanded the testimony of a living witness. Fridolinus went to the grave of Ursus, had it opened, and besought the dead man to arise. Ursus arose and accompanied Fridolin before the judge, on which Landulf, conscience-stricken, resigned his claim, as well as his own inheritance.]

As a statue by the church-door,
 Hewn in stone still tells the story?

Ay, the Saint was great and holy!
 And as patron is he honoured
 To this day in Rhenish valleys.
 On the mountain still the peasant
 Has his first-born christened Fridli.

* * *

As the sixth of March was dawning
 Werner left his friendly shelter.
 Gratefully he thanked the pastor,
 Who, with hearty farewell greeting,
 Wished him joy upon his journey.
 E'en the housekeeper was gracious,
 Smiling on the handsome stranger,
 And she cast, with modest blushes,
 Her old eyes upon the doorstep
 As young Werner, laughing gaily,
 Threw her back a kiss at parting.
 Barking sprang the good St Bernards
 Lending him their kindly convoy.

Brightly streamed the clear March sunbeams
 On the town of Fridolinus.

[31]

Solemn organ-tones were floating,
 Lingering, dying, round the Minster,
 As young Werner passed the gateway.
 Food and shelter for his palfrey
 First he sought, then, striding swiftly
 Through the gay and bustling market
 Soon he gained the grey Cathedral,
 And, with bared head, by its portal
 Stood and saw defile before him
 All the great feast-day procession.
 While the storm of war was raging
 Safely were the precious relics
 Sheltered in a distant fortress.
 But their absence was lamented,
 Oft and sorely, by the people.
 Now, when Peace again was smiling,
 Strove they with a new-born ardour
 To do honour to their patron.

Heading all the long procession
 Came the children, trooping gaily,
 But if e'er they grew too merry,
 Their old master, grey and hoary,
 Pulled their ears and spake reproving
 "Hush ye, hush ye, little people!
 If St Fridolinus listen
 To such silly idle chatter,
 Up in heaven he'll accuse you,
 And the Saint is very stern."

Next came twelve disciples, bearing
 High the shrine, all gold and silver,
 Which concealed the holy relics.
 As they went they chanted lowly:

“Thou who high in heaven dwellest,
 Gracious guard thy little city;
 Pray for her, on her have pity,
 [32]

Fridolinus! Fridolinus!
 Still thy dear protection lend us,
 And from plague and war defend us,
 Fridolinus! Fridolinus!”

Followed next the Dean and Chapter,
 Then, each one with lighted taper,
 Came the youthful Burgomeister,
 Came the Counsellors, full of wisdom,
 And the other dignitaries;
 Bailiff and Administrator,
 Syndic, Notary, and Proctor.
 Also the old forest-warden.
 (This last only for decorum,
 For with churches and processions
 He was not on terms of friendship,
 Prayed, by choice, beneath the pine-trees
 E’en the Constable and Beadle
 Had, for once, forgone their tippie,
 Which they shared on other mornings,
 And demurely walked together.
 Then, in dusky Spanish mantles
 Where a snow-white cross was broidered
 Came behind them, slowly pacing,
 Knights of the Teutonic Order.
 Yonder, by the Rhine, at Beuggen,
 Stood the great house of their Order.
 In the fresh and dewy morning
 They had ridden to the township.
 Next the ladies of the Hochstift,

[Hochstift or Stift. A species of semi-religious institution, dating from the earlier middle ages, and destined as a provision for the younger sons and daughters of the aristocracy. The members of a Hochstift are supposed to live in community, being bound by certain rules, of which obedience to their superiors is the first and foremost, but are able at any time to regain their liberty by renouncing all claim upon the income they enjoy.]

Black-robed, serious, old and stately.
 [33]

Foremost, by the azure banner,
 Came the hoary Lady Abbess,
 And she thought: “Thou, Fridolinus,
 Art a Saint both good and gracious.
 Yet one thing thou canst not bring me,-
 ’Tis the golden time of girlhood.
 Forty years ago ’twas sweetest,
 When this cheek like roses blossomed,
 Keeping prisoner many a noble
 In a web of winning glances.
 I have long done penance for it,
 And, I trust me, ’tis forgiven.
 Wrinkles furrow now my forehead,
 Lips and cheek alike are faded,
 And my jaws are gaping toothless.”

After all these noble ladies
 Came the train of burger women,
 Came the train of buxom matrons.
 Only one, in workday garments,
 Stood aloof from the procession.
 'Twas the hostess of the ancient
 Hostelry, "The Golden Button."
 So decreed the ord'nance stern.

There, too, when the land was pagan,
 Stood an inn, the legend tells us.
 Fridolinus there craved shelter,
 When he first upon the island
 Set his foot, forspent and weary,
 But mine host, a rough-tongued heathen,
 Heaped rude insults on the stranger:
 "Nay, I want no saintly fellows,
 Who despise the gods we Worship,
 And who carry for their journey
 Not one farthing in their pouches.
 Get you gone from off my threshold!"
 Fridolinus, whose exchequer,
 [34]

Truly, was but scanty furnished,
 Slumbered in the linden's shadow,
 'Neath the canopy of Heaven.
 But the angels watched above him,
 Brought him aid, and, in the morning
 Filled his empty pilgrim's wallet
 With a wealth of golden pieces.
 And the holy man, returning
 To the rude, unfriendly hostel,
 Ate, and with the angel's money
 Paid whate'er mine host demanded.
 Then, as a rebuke, he added
 Seven pieces to the guerdon.
 But, as everlasting warning
 To such heartless hostel-keepers,
 None from out "The Golden Button"
 E'er may join the great procession.

As beside the withered stubble
 Gaily blow the tender blossoms,
 So, beside the train of matrons,
 Came a lovely band of maidens,
 Draped in fair, white festal garments.
 Many a greybeard softly muttered
 As they passed in youthful beauty:
 "Turn thine eyes away from danger!
 This sweet flock is full of peril
 As a Swedish regiment."
 First they bore a sacred image
 Of Our Lady, robed in broideries,
 Robed in richest purple velvet,
 Which as offering, in thanksgiving
 For the great war's termination,
 Were presented to the statue.

As the fourth among the maidens,
 Came one, tall, and fair, and slender.
 Violets crowned her curly tresses,
 [35]

And her white veil, flowing softly,
 Half concealed her lovely features,
 Like the winter rime which glisters
 On a tender, opening rosebud.
 So she passed, with downcast eyelids,
 Just before young Werner's station.
 And he saw her. – Was't a sunbeam,
 Flashing on hi dazzled vision,
 Or the damsel's grace and beauty?

Many another passed before him,
 But he gazed, enchanted, after
 That sweet fourth among the maidens.
 Gazed until the great procession
 Down a narrow alley drew her,
 And gazed on where she had vanished,
 Gazed as if he still beheld her.

“That man's taken!” So they phrase it
 In the Rhineland when Love's magic
 Seizes on us and enthrals us;
 For the man is not the master,
 Nay, Love has him at his mercy.
 Heed thy steps, beware, young Werner!
 Joy and sorrow both await thee.
 Here I pause, for “That man's taken!”

CANTO IV. YOUNG WERNER BY THE RHINE.

[36]
 IN the township reigned high revel.
 Those who side by side this morning
 Followed in the great procession
 Sat now in “The Golden Button,”
 Sipping ruddy wine, or quaffing
 Frothy, golden barley-brew.
 Corks were springing, goblets ringing.
 Not a few prodigious bumpers
 Were that evening dedicated
 To St Fridolinus' honour.
 And mine host, with unctuous chuckle,
 Told the tale of empty barrels,
 And, with meditative glances,
 Chalked the scores upon the tablet.

From without, beside the doorway
 Where the peasant made his entry,
 Sounded strains of merry music.
 Brimstone Hans, the aged fiddler,
 Sat there, with his legs akimbo,
 And in clumsy, rustic measure
 Did the fair-haired lusty stripling

Swing the ruddy, blue-eyed maiden.
 Ominous, the floor was creaking,
 Where their vigorous feet were stamping,
 From the walls down showered the plaster
 Shaken by their mighty shouting.

[37]

Many a smart, contemptuous town-bird,
 Nose in air, beheld them, sneering,
 Yet within his heart admitting:
 "Better this rude dance than nothing!"
 But the elders in the tap-room
 Sat aloof from all the dancing,
 And, as erst their sires had emptied
 Tankards to the praise of Wodan,
 So, with like historic spirit,
 Drank the sons to Fridolinus.
 Rueful might the prudent housewife
 Pluck her goodman by the lappets,
 As the hard-earned, hard-saved thalers,
 One by one, rang on the table.
 But the husband answered calmly:
 "Dearest wife, pray spare your preaching,
 This is not a day for saving!"
 And he budged not, till, at curfew,
 Came the watchman with his halberd
 To proclaim the feast-day over.
 Grumbling, then, in zigzag fashion,
 Strode he homeward up the mountain,
 And the midnight in the pine-wood
 Witnessed many a headlong tumble.
 But the friendly darkness hid it,
 Hid the blows, too, which, at ending
 Of the feast-day, rained down thickly
 On the goodwife's patient shoulders.

Lonely, far from all the bustle,
 Strayed young Werner; some deep instinct
 Drawing him toward the river.
 Still before him floated dimly
 That sweet face, so fair and gracious.
 Surely 'twas a dream, that ever
 With his eyes he had beheld her!
 Hot his forehead, and his glances
 Roamed inconstant, now toward heaven,

[38]

Now again, with troubled wonder,
 Sinking down upon the daisies.
 And he heeded not the north wind
 Which was toying with his love-locks.
 Through his heart his glowing fancies
 In the wildest rout were coursing,
 Like the mist that, in the autumn,
 Plays in strangest, motley figures,
 Shifting, changing, round the mountains;
 And they rang, and surged, and shouted
 Like the prologue to some poem,
 Wild and sweet and uncompleted.

So, long since, in time's grey distance,
 Brooding, strayed by Arno's river
 Such another child of nature.
 And a trumpeter was he, too,
 But a sterner; for he sounded
 Thrilling trombone-tones of doomsday,
 Pealing through an age of evil.
 But when first his eyes lit on her,
 On a feast-day in old Florence,
 Her, the loadstar of his being,
 Her, his guide through heavenly pastures,
 He, too, turned him to the river,
 Wandering under oaks and myrtles,
 And to all that clanged and clamoured,
 Chimed and carolled in his spirit
 One word only gave expression:
 Beatrice! Beatrice!

And so for a thousand summers,
 And a thousand upon thousand,
 Others, thrilled by love, will wander,
 Dreaming, by the self-same river.
 And when from the Rhine the latest
 Scion of the race Teutonic
 Has been gathered to his fathers,
 [39]
 Others yet will wander, dreaming,
 And in mellow tones outlandish
 They will breathe the words, "I love thee!"
 Do you know what men I speak of?
 Men with somewhat flattened noses.
 Far by Aral and by Irtisch
 Are their grandsires drinking brandy,
 Waiting till the future find them.

O young Love, thou dainty jewel,
 Balm of human hearts afflicted,
 Anchor of life's feeble shallop,
 Amaranth on barren sandbank!
 Never dare I in thy praises
 Carol any song new-fangled.
 Ah, I am an Epigonian,
 And of gallant swains full many
 Lived and died ere Agamemnon!
 And the ages ring with love-strains,
 From the wise king's mystic singing
 To the German poetasters.
 So I muse, in modest silence,
 Muse on all thy peaceful magic.
 With a golden sheen it fuses
 All the mists of youth, revealing,
 Clear and sharp, his life in outline.
 Shows him where to turn his footsteps
 And incites his heart to wand'ring.
 Faintest yearnings, hopes the proudest,
 Doughtiest courage, thoughts the boldest,
 For all these, O Love, we thank thee.

Thine, too, is the merry spirit,
 Which, like alpenstock, upholds us
 To o'erleap our path's each hindrance.
 Happy he whose heart shall welcome
 Conquering Love within its precincts!

But to-day, methinks, young Werner
 [40]

Had not yet discovered clearly
 What had drawn him to the river.
 Pensive o'er the sand he sauntered,
 Showed no mercy on his jack-boots,
 Which the frothy waves were drenching.

Him espied, from 'neath the waters,
 Rhine himself, who there was watching
 While two veteran crabs were fighting,
 And with peals of ringing laughter
 He applauded, when in fury
 They enlaced their sharp-edged nippers.
 'Tis Sir Rhine himself. Behold him!
 See, he is a handsome fellow,
 No mere geographic abstract.
 On young Werner he took pity.
 Splashing rose he from the billows,
 Crown of rushes on his love-locks,
 In his hand a bulrush sceptre.
 Master Werner recognised him,
 For a Sunday's child was Werner,
 Seeing more than many another,
 And he greeted him with rev'rence.

Straight Sir Rhine addressed him, smiling
 "Fear me not, my youthful dreamer,
 For I know the shoe that pinches.
 Oh, you men awake my laughter!
 Each believes he bears his secret
 Through the world unguessed of any;
 And yet every beetle knows it,
 Knows it every gnat and firefly,
 Knows it by his humid glances,
 Knows it by his burning forehead,
 Knows that love is master of him.
 Have no fear, I know what love is.
 From the boats that float above me
 I have heard full many a love-vow,
 [41]

Many a false and many a true one,
 Whispered in Italian, German,
 Whispered in the speech of Holland.
 (Very temperate, those latter.)
 Also nightly, by the river,
 Many a kiss and many a courtship
 I have spied and have kept counsel.
 Many a lonely, love-sick devil,
 To whose heart despair had bitten,
 Has found comfort 'neath my billows;
 And the river maidens sang him

Softest lullaby, and gently
 Bore him to some distant country.
 'Neath the rushes, by the meadows,
 Where no angry tongues can follow,
 And no love perfidious sting him,
 Soft he sleeps and fears no waking.
 Many a one have I so tended.
 Many another deep in grottoes
 Cool, and crystal water castles
 Is my guest, and never, never,
 Longs for friends or for returning.

“Have no fear, I know what love is.
 Ah, my own heart beats more wildly
 As I greet the Schwartzwald's mountains,
 Plunging, filled with joyous tremor,
 O'er the boulders of Schaffhausen.
 Then I dash, my billows foaming,
 Through the Laufenburger narrows,
 For I know my darling hastens,
 My young Wiese of the Schwartzwald,
 Hushed and coy, to my embraces.
 In her rustic tongue she babbles
 All the gossip of the Uplands –
 Of the spectres of the midnight;
 Of the mountain flowers; of Schopfheim,
 Town of thirst, and mighty bonnets.
 [42]

And I love her; never can I
 Gaze my fill of her eyes' heaven.
 And I love her; never can I
 Kiss my fill of her cheeks' roses.
 Oft, like thee in dreams, I whirl me
 Past the bastions of old Basel,
 Mocking at her Corporation,
 Pompous, tiresome; and in passing
 Lay a piece of wall in ruins.
 And they think 'tis done in anger;
 'Tis but greeting all too tender!
 Yes, I love her. I am courted
 By full many a lovely lady.
 None, not e'en the haughty Mosel
 With her dower of vineyards, wins me
 From the memory of the Wiese,
 Dainty daughter of the Schwartzwald.
 And when through the sands of Holland
 Tired, I drag my weary billows,
 'Neath the Windmill's barren clapping,
 I am filled with tend'rest yearnings
 After Youth, and Love, and Country,
 And my hollow roaring soundeth
 Over many a placid meadow,
 Far away o'er North Sea breakers;
 Yet no mortal understands me.

“Fear me not, I know what love is.
 And I know you German dreamers,

You who dwell upon my borders.
 I am but yourselves writ larger;
 And the history of our nation,
 Storm and stress and woful ending,
 Runs before you in my current.

“In a mystic land my birthplace.
 Wondrous spirits of the mountains
 Stand around the icy cradle

[43]

Whence I first behold the daylight.
 Wild and wanton is my childhood.
 Who can count the tale of boulders
 Which with careless laugh I shatter,
 Tossing them in merry madness?
 O’er the Swabian sea I journey,
 Fresh and gay, then, all undaunted,
 In my haughty youth rush onward,
 Till there stretches wide before me
 That great river loved of poets,
 Fragrant of a thousand legends.
 Dreams of long ago float past me,
 Glowing in the evening sunlight,
 Foam and billow, stalwart cities,
 Castle, cliff, and peaceful cloister.
 On the hills the grapes are ripening,
 From the tower the warder greets me,
 While the pennons flutter joyous,
 And from yonder lofty headland
 Sounds the Loreley’s sweet singing.
 Ah, but now my end is nearing,
 And I mourn my sad condition,
 And in drinking drown my sorrows.
 At Cologne I breathe a prayer.
 Then, at last, those paltry merchants
 Make of me a beast of burden,
 And my much-enduring shoulders
 Bear the broad-beamed boats of Holland.
 Last I trail my weary current
 Through the cumbrous, lumpish sandhills
 Choking in their loathed embraces,
 And I long have breathed my latest
 Ere my ocean grave receives me.
 Ah, beware of such caresses!

“Much there is I still could tell thee,
 For to-day the mood is on me,
 And I love all gallant striplings,

[44]

Gazing eager on the future,
 Such as thou art; such as I am.
 Therefore with a friendly counsel
 Shall my long harangue be ended.
 Love, I know, hath made thee captive.
 List: her name is Margaretha,
 Beauteous daughter of the Baron,
 Master of yon haughty castle

Whose grey, weather-beaten turrets
 In my crystal flood are mirrored.
 On the terrace oft I spy her,
 And I leap for very gladness.
 Shall I bear thee nearer to her?
 There the boat, and there the paddle!
 I can trust in all that follows,
 Confident, to thy discretion!"

So he spake and shook his love-locks,
 As he dived beneath the billows.
 Hissing rushed the broken waters,
 Joining hands again above him,
 And his laugh behind him lingered.
 In the meantime had been ended
 That great fight; one crab lay lifeless
 And the other mourned a hind-claw.

Werner did as he was counselled.
 On the bank stood, square and solid,
 An old tower beside the river.
 There, where by a hidden pathway
 Through the bushes came the fisher,
 In a calm and shady inlet
 Punt and paddle both lay ready;
 And unchallenged could young Werner
 Seize on both for his own uses,
 For their owner kept the feast-day.

Evening had, by this time, fallen.

[45]

Now and then the hills would echo,
 Shripping, a cry that smote the silence.
 From some home-returning reveller.
 Yonder, o'er the darkling pine-woods,
 Sailed the moon and watched the valley,
 And the first small star was shining,
 Coyly, from the vault of heaven.

From the strand young Werner started.
 Like a horse that long imprisoned
 In the stable, gaily prances,
 Gaily whinnying, when his master
 Springs once more astride the saddle,
 And sets off in rousing gallop;
 So, adown the shimmering roadway,
 Sprang the wherry, swift and saucy,
 Tripping, dancing, onward, onward,
 Past the turrets of the township,
 On to where the wooden arches
 Of the bridge, all quaint and sturdy,
 Boldly spanned the chafing river.
 Where the third pier clove the waters
 Daring steered the youthful boatman,
 Laughing as the whirlpool fastened
 On the giddy boat, and tossed it
 Up and down in clumsy frolic.

Soon he saw the high-pitched gables

And the turrets of the castle
 Gleaming through the mighty chestnuts
 Palest moonbeams lit the garden.
 Opposite, a bank of pebbles
 Peeped right humbly from the waters.
 Bare it was, and often covered
 By the swollen winter torrent,
 And, in jest, the fishers called it
 The green field of Fridolinus.
 There the swaying boat was driven,
 [46]

There it tarried, and young Werner
 Sprang upon the crunching pebbles,
 And his hungry eyes turned upward,
 Asking, should he, could he, see her?

Naught he saw; but far above him,
 From the tower, one little candle
 Threw a gleam upon the darkness,
 And he craved no greater blessing.
 Ah, how oft some far-off lustre
 Quickens more our drooping spirit
 Than all fulness of possession!
 And my lay shall not begrudge him
 Joy so humble, as he gazes
 Upward to yon distant glimmer.

Dream-encircled, new and glorious,
 Stretched his path before his fancy.
 Sun illumed it not, nor starlight,
 Only one poor, flickering candle.
 And from yonder turret window
 Love flew down, on wings ethereal,
 Sat beside him on the pebbles,
 On the field of Fridolinus.
 And he reached for him the trumpet,
 Dear companion of his wand'rings;
 "Blow," – and "blow," – and "blow," he whispered.

So he blew, and his sweet music
 Floated, tuneful, on the breezes.
 Listened Rhine, beneath the waters,
 Listened pike and lordly salmon,
 Listened dainty water-maidens.
 And the north wind bore the echoes
 Gently upward, toward the castle.

CANTO V. THE BARON AND HIS DAUGHTER.

[47]
 UP, my song, take heart and courage!
 To the Baron fate now leads thee,
 Leads thee to his lovely daughter.
 Be thou frank, and brave, and courteous,
 For a veteran Lancer-Colonel
 Has with thee and such as thou art,

Little patience; nay, might even
 Fling thee down the castle staircase,
 Which is many-stepped and slippery
 And might work thee fatal mischief.

To the mighty castle gateway
 Mount, my song! Upon the scutcheon,
 Hewn in stone, appear three spheroids
 As the Medici erst bore them
 On their shields in ancient Florence,
 Telling us of noble lineage.
 Mount the roomy stairs of sandstone,
 At the high hall-door knock lightly,
 Enter in, and bring such tidings
 As thy nimble wit may gather.

In the great hall of the castle,
 Where the pannelled walls and wainscot
 Were adorned with many a painting
 Of his proud and gallant fathers,
 In his arm-chair by the chimney
 [48]

Near a blazing fire of billets,
 Sat at ease the aged Baron.
 Iron-grey his long moustachios.
 The revolving years had added
 Many a furrow, many a wrinkle
 To the scar a Swedish rapier
 Erst had traced upon his forehead.
 And an evil guest had settled
 In his left foot, all unbidden.
 Gout, we common people call it;
 But if any wise physician
 Podagra should please to name it
 Let him have his learned pleasure,
 It will sting him none less sharply.
 But to-day 'twas fairly passive,
 Waking seldom to full fury,
 And thus spake the Baron, smiling:

“Zounds! In all yon long-drawn conflict
 Of those thirty evil winters,
 E'en the gout has learnt a something
 Of both strategy and tactics.
 It begins the assault correctly.
 First the skirmishers sends forward,
 Reconnoitring; then a light-armed,
 Storming-party – devil take them!
 Then it makes as if a fortress
 In my heart were situated.
 Hist! I hear the cannons firing,
 And the storming-party charges.
 Piff! Paff! I capitulate.”

But an armistice at present
 Was in force. Content and easy
 Sat the Baron. From a tankard
 Hewn of stone, he filled his goblet.

There at Hallau, where a hillock,
 Last-born of the lofty mountains,
 [49]
 Sinks down gently toward the river,
 Where vine-dressers at their labour
 Hear, afar, the mighty rushing
 Of the Waters of Schaffhausen,
 There the sun, with loving glances,
 Had distilled the spicy nectar
 Which, as vesper-draught, the Baron
 Sipped with deep appreciation.
 As he sipped he blew around him
 Heavy clouds of strong tobacco.
 In a red clay-pipe uncarven,
 Burnt the weed from o'er the ocean,
 But the stem, the smoke's slim pathway
 Was of cherry-wood, all fragrant.

Stretched beside the Baron's footstool
 Dainty lay the gallant tom-cat,
 Hiddigeigei, with the sable
 Velvet coat and tail majestic.
 Heirloom he, left to the Baron
 By his sainted, well-loved lady,
 Leonor Montfort du Plessys.
 Far in Hungary Hiddigeigei
 Saw the light, for he was borne there
 By a daughter of Angora
 To a wildcat of the Puszta.
 To fair Paris, as a kitten,
 Was he sent, in sign of homage,
 By a brave Hungarian noble,
 Who in Debreczin, far distant,
 Cherished still, in recollection,
 Leonor's clear eyes of azure
 And the rats who, like an army,
 Overran her father's castle.
 Hiddigeigei to the Rhineland
 Came with haughty Leanora,
 Loyal and trusted. Somewhat lonely
 Ran the thread of his existence,
 [50]
 For he hated all communion
 With the vulgar German cat-folk.
 "Certes," he reflected proudly,
 In his feline self-reliance,
 "They may have good hearts, these creatures,
 And a fund of kindly feeling,
 All these native cats untutored,
 Aboriginal and common,
 In these wilds brought up and nurtured.
 But in style they're sadly lacking,
 They want breeding, manners, finish.
 One who gained his spurs at Paris,
 Following the chase full boldly
 In the salons of Montfaucon,
 Cannot, certes, in the country

Look to find congenial spirits,
Fit companions for his leisure.”

Dignified, though isolated,
Always dignified and stately,
Dwelt he in the Baron’s castle,
Paced its halls with measured footsteps.
Deeply tuneful was his purring,
And, in anger, when indignant
He would arch his supple backbone,
When each hair rose bristling upward,
Gentleness he still would study
To unite with dignity.
But when over roof and gable
He would clamber, agile, daring,
Sallying forth upon a mouse-hunt,
When mysterious in the moonlight
Flashed his emerald eyes and sparkled,
Then, e’en envy must acknowledge,
Hiddigeigei was imposing.

Pensive sat the white-haired Baron.
From his eyes a light shot often
[51]

Like a flash, oft like a kindly
Ray from out the glowing sunset,
As on days of yore he pondered.
’Tis, in truth, the sweetest cordial
Of old age from out its watch-tower
To gaze back on all that has been,
And the old are never lonely.
Troops of shadows hover round him,
Whilom friends, long since departed,
Dressed in faded, yellowed doublets,
In old-fashioned, stately garments.
But the memory knows no mildew,
Freshest youth, unfading beauty,
Rise again from bones and ashes,
And they prate of days forgotten
Till the old man’s heart throbs faster,
And his fist is clenched unwitting.
On the balcony he sees her,
Smiling, once again, upon him,
Hears again the trumpets blaring,
And his swarthy charger, neighing,
Bears him where the battle rages.

Well contented sat the Baron
While these mem’ries passed before him.
And when oft-times toward the goblet
He would reach his hand, and quickly
Quaff a lengthy draught of Rhenish,
Then would rise, in tend’rest colours,
One fair image, prized and cherished.
But at times his mind would offer
Some less pleasant recollection;
Then, in lieu of further utterance,
Hiddigeigei’s back would suffer,

And the Baron's foot was heavy.
 Then the cat judicious deemed it,
 For the nonce, to shift his quarters.

[52]

Through the hall, sedately tripping,
 Came the Baron's lovely daughter,
 Margaretha, and her father
 Smiled approval as she entered.
 Hiddigeigei's patient visage
 Beamed, likewise, with feline welcome.
 She had changed her snowy raiment
 For a robe of dusky velvet.
 On her curly, flaxen tresses
 Saucy sat a pointed wimple,
 And with matronly demureness
 Her blue eyes surveyed the world.
 Ponderous keys and leathern pocket,
 German housewife's badge of honour,
 From her girdle were suspended.
 And she kissed the Baron's forehead,
 Saying: "Pray, my father, chide not
 That I long have left you lonely.
 But the gracious Lady Abbess
 Held me close in earnest converse,
 While she told me wondrous stories;
 Taught me, too, how age comes creeping,
 And how winter follows summer.
 There, too, was the Knight Commander,
 Full of sugar-baker's phrases,
 So that I was glad to leave him.
 Now unto your sternest censure
 Am I waiting to submit me,
 And am ready now to read you
 Out of Theuerdank's mighty volume.
 For you love his bluff adventures,
 And his hunting-tales, I wot me,
 Better than the sentimental
 Pastoral poets of our era.

"But, O Father, why for ever
 Must you smoke that evil-smelling,
 Hurtful, poisonous tobacco!

[53]

I am frightened when you sit there
 Deep in rolling clouds enveloped,
 As in morning mists Mont Eggberg.
 And I grieve me for the golden
 Picture-frames that hang above us,
 And the whiteness of the curtains.
 Hear you not their low lamenting,
 That the smoke from out your clay-pipe
 Makes them pale and grey and tarnished!
 Doubtless 'tis a wondrous country,
 Yon America, discovered
 Erstwhile by the gallant Spaniard.
 And I, too, rejoice at thought of
 Paroquets all gaily painted,

And of strings of rosy coral.
 Through my dreams come floating, sometimes,
 Lofty palmwoods, silent bowers,
 Cocoa-nuts and mighty flowers,
 And wild monkeys, full of mischief.
 Yet I almost wish it rested
 Undiscovered in the ocean,
 All because of that tobacco,
 Which has come to us from thither.
 Sooth, a man I gladly pardon
 Though he oft, with scant occasion,
 Draw the red wine from the barrel;
 Even might, if need were pressing,
 With a red nose reconcile me,
 Never with tobacco smoking.”

Smilingly the Baron heard her,
 Smiling blew fresh clouds around him
 From his clay-pipe, as he answered:
 “Dear my child, you women daily
 Prate of many things full lightly
 Which surpass your understanding.
 True, a soldier oft possesses
 Many rough, unpolished habits
 [54]

For withdrawing-rooms unfitted,
 But my child, above all others,
 Should not gibe, methinks, at smoking,
 Since through that I won her mother.
 And because old battle-stories
 Through my head to-night are buzzing,
 Sit thee down; instead of reading,
 I myself will tell thee somewhat
 Of the weed which thou misprizest,
 Somewhat of thy sainted mother.”

Wondering Margaretha scanned him,
 With her eyes of deepest azure,
 Fetched her tapestry and needle
 And her wools of motley colours,
 By the arm-chair of her father
 Placed a footstool, and right graceful
 Set her by him. In the forest
 Springs the wild rose, young and lovely,
 Thus beside the gnarled oak-tree.
 With a steady draught the Baron
 Drained his goblet, and continued:

“It was in the evil war-time.
 Once, with some few German troopers
 Into Alsace I made inroad.
 Hans von Weerth was then our Colonel.
 Swedes and French were camped by Breisach,
 And with many a deed of daring
 Soon we made their camp re-echo.
 But the fleetest hare may perish.
 One black day they loosed upon us
 All their yelping pack – confound them!

And, with bleeding gashes covered,
 We were forced to yield our rapiers.
 So, as prisoners, were we carried
 By the Frenchmen to fair Paris,
 To the prison of Vincennes.

[55]

'Zounds!' So spake our gallant Colonel,
 Hans von Weerth, 'Sure, 'twere more lively
 With a naked sword to gallop
 Leading on a storming-party,
 Than in Vincennes here to moulder,
 Tilting with the heavy moments.
 'Gainst such foes no weapon helps us,
 Wine and dice alike are powerless,
 Only smoking – that I've tested
 In the Promised Land of Boredom,
 'Mong the Mynheers. Let us try it
 Here, too, it may do good service.'

"So the Governor procured us
 From a Netherlandish merchant
 Straight a barrel of tobacco,
 And of burnt clay-pipes abundance.
 Soon from all the German captives
 There arose a monstrous smoking,
 Puffing, fuming, cloud-creating,
 Such as erst in polished Paris
 Never mortal eye had witnessed.
 All amazed our warders saw it,
 To the King the news was carried,
 And he came himself in splendour
 To behold the cloudy marvel.

"Soon the whole of Paris gossiped
 Of the savage bears of Germans
 And of their extraordinary,
 Quite unheard-of trick of smoking.
 Up drove coaches; down sprang pages
 Cavaliers and stately ladies
 Crowded to our narrow guard-room.
 And she, too, came; she, the haughty
 Leanor Montfort du Plessys.
 Still to-day, methinks, I see her
 On the earth floor coyly stepping,

[56]

Hear her train of satin rustle.
 And my heart beat as aforetime
 In the roaring tide of battle,
 And the smoke from out my clay-pipe
 Rose as from a row of cannons.
 And 'twas well. Upon the cloudlet
 Which I blew aloft so stoutly,
 Cupid sat and shot his arrows,
 And his aim was sure and steady.
 Wonder shortly changed to interest,
 Interest changed to something dearer,
 And she found the German bruin

Nobler, in his honest roughness,
Than the gilded Paris lions.

“When our prison-gates were opened,
And the joyous news of freedom
Brought us by the welcome herald,
Then I first became a captive,
Bound in softest silken traces,
Hopeless of release. Our marriage
And the happy homeward journey
Did but draw them closer, closer.
Thinking on it all, the tear-drops
Fall upon my grey moustachios.
What remains of all my glory?
Her sweet memory, ever with me;
The black cat, old Hiddigeigei;
And my Leonor’s sweet image,
Thou, my child, – God keep thee ever!”

Thus he spake and knocked the ashes
From his pipe, and meditative
Stroked the cat, old Hiddigeigei.
But, half-laughingly, his daughter
Fell upon her knees before him,
Saying: “Father, of your goodness,
Grant me general absolution.

[57]

Mortal syllable shall never
O’er my lips get leave to wander,
Henceforth, in dispraise of smoking.”

Smiled benignly the old Baron,
Spake: “Hast also ta’en some licence
In thy scoffing as to drinking.
Almost I incline to tell thee,
For thy further education,
Yet another old-world story;
How at Rheinau in the convent,
With the Abbot, I once wagered
Heavily in wine of Hallau.
But – – ” the Baron paused, and turning
To the window: “Heaven save us!
Do I hear a trumpet blowing?”

Sweet and clear soared Werner’s music
Through the twilight to the castle,
Craving entrance, as a ring-dove,
Swift returning to his mistress,
At her fast-barred window-sashes
With his beak will peck and hammer.
On the terrace stepped the Baron,
Stepped his daughter. Sad and solemn,
Hiddigeigei came behind them.
Through his cat’s heart shot a presage,
Presage of the pregnant future.
Down they gazed, but vainly, vainly,
For the shadow of the castle
Hid young Werner on the pebbles.

Gladsome as a hunting chorus,
 Stirring as a charge of horsemen,
 Pealed the blasts up toward the terrace.
 Silence then; a dusky shallop
 Swiftly clove the dusky river.
 Backward strode the Baron; quickly
 Struck the bell and called his servant.

[58]

At his call came Anton hast'ning.
 "With all speed, go, bring me tidings
 Who at such an hour is blowing
 Sennets upward from the river.
 Is't a ghost, then three times cross thee,
 Is't a man, then greet him fairly,
 And invite him to the castle.
 Some few words I fain would say him."
 "Noble sir, I do your bidding."
 And saluting, soldier-fashion,
 Right about old Anton turned him.

Midnight silently had settled,
 Meantime, over hill and valley,
 And a wondrous dream came flying
 Through the air to Margaretha:
 Yet again in festal garment
 She was pacing toward the Minster.
 Fridolinus came to meet her.
 By his side a man was walking,
 But 'twas not the corpse which followed
 To the Ordeal at Glarus,
 'Twas a slender, handsome stripling.
 Like a Trumpeter's his bearing,
 And he greeted her with reverence,
 While the Saint looked on approving.

CANTO VI.

HOW YOUNG WERNER BECAME TRUMPETER TO THE BARON.

[59]

THROUGH the town, the morning after,
 In hot haste strode Master Anton,
 On his errand of inquiry,
 And beside the grey, old Minster
 Dived into a narrow alley,
 From the other side, the fisher
 Martin came with hurrying footsteps,
 And they ran against each other,
 At the corner, with a crash!

"By my soul," quoth honest Anton,
 As he rueful rubbed his forehead,
 "Troth, your skull is of the hardest!"
 "Yours is even such another,
 Not with sea-weed stuffed, nor lamb's-wool,"
 Was the fisher Martin's answer;
 "And what takes you thus careering

Through the town at peep of morning?"

"Nay, I ask the like!" quoth Anton.

"Him I seek who, yestereven,
From its moorings loosed my shallop,"

Thus replied the fisher Martin.

"Troth, I seek the same," quoth Anton.

"When I reached the tower this morning,
Bottom upwards lay my shallop
On the bank; one oar was missing
And the other in two pieces.

[60]

Lightning strike such idle varlets,

Who on misty nights go sailing

In the boats of other people – "

"And blow trumpets," added Anton.

"Let me find him! He shall answer

To the Burgomeister for it.

He shall rue it! E'en the blue bump

You have made upon my forehead

Shall be entered in the reckoning.

'Tis a scandal that this scapegrace

Through the streets should keep me racing!"

Grumbling strode the fisher onward.

"Troth, I, likewise, fail to fathom

Why for such an unknown vagrant

I should be thus plagued and pestered.

And, I ween, 'tis e'en the moment

When a man of sense and judgment

Looks to drink his morning potion."

Toward the cool and stone-flagged tap-room

Of "The Golden Button," turning,

Anton came, but deemed it wiser

By a side-door to make entry,

Thus to veil before the public,

In some sort, such early visits.

Many a worthy had already

Noiselessly arrived before him,

And beside each frothing rummer

Something gleamed like ruddy rosebud,

Gleamed like radish young and tender.

"Large?" inquired the knowing maiden.

"By all means!" said Anton, nodding;

"It is warm, and in the morning,

When I rose, I felt already

In my throat a curious dryness."

So the faithful Anton sat there,

Drinking from a great, green goblet

[61]

Of Bohemian glass, and pond'ring

How to farther speed his errand.

Sat mine host beside the table,

And – by strange and wondrous fortune –

Talking with our friend young Werner.

For his breakfast he had served him

With a slice of red, smoked salmon,

And upon discourse instructive
 With his stranger guest had entered;
 What had been the vintage fortunes;
 What the price of hops at present;
 What the havoc of the war-time.
 Now and then he threw in, slyly,
 As by chance, some passing question,
 Asking of the stranger's country,
 Of his calling and position,
 Of the object of his journey.
 Yet his knowledge gained no increase,
 And he thus reflected shrewdly:

“Writer? No, for that his bearing
 Is too soldierly. Nor soldier;
 No, for that he is too modest.
 But, perchance, is he a student
 Learned in alchemy and magic,
 Seeks the stone which, wise men tell us,
 Turns to gold all other metals.
 Wait! I have it”– and he guided
 The discourse toward buried treasure,
 And to conjuring up of spirits
 At the witching hour of midnight:
 “Ay, my friend, and by this township
 Lies a sandbank in the river
 Where a treasure has been buried
 Since the days of Fridolinus.
 If one knew – some clever fellow,
 Certes, there could make his fortune.”

[62]

“Ay, I know the spot,” quoth Werner
 “Yestreen, rowing in the moonlight
 On the Rhine, I found the sandbank.”

“What, you know it?” Full of wonder
 Stared mine host, and cogitating
 “Have I got thee?” looked inquiring
 Toward the wallet of young Werner.
 Heard he not the golden ducats
 Dancing merry measures in it?

“Have I got thee?” thus old Anton,
 On his side, reflected gladly;
 “There is luck in’t, when one swallows
 In good time one’s morning potion!”
 From the place where he was sitting
 He had heard the conversation,
 And, as further confirmation,
 Spied the trumpet on the table
 By the stranger’s hat and rapier.

To the pair he stepped demurely:
 “By your leave, if you’re no spirit
 (And it seems not, since your breakfast
 Has gone comfortably downward),
 My Lord Baron to his castle
 Now invites you. I present you

With his greeting, and am ready,
 At your pleasure, to conduct you.”
 So he spoke, and, somewhat startled,
 Werner heard, then rose and followed.

Chuckling, spake the “Button’s” landlord
 “Lack-a-day, my fine young master!
 So you thought you could go roving
 On the Rhine, as fancy led you,
 Smelling round for buried treasure!
 But the Baron is not napping,
 [63]

He’ll soon stop your pretty doings.
 Lack-a-day! if he should fetch you
 From his store-room just a couple
 Good, round, strongly pickled curses,
 How your head upon your shoulders
 Straight will shake, your ears will tingle!
 But right well are all things ordered.
 Should he clap you in his dungeon,
 In my hands remains your palfrey:
 He shall pay the reckoning for you.”

In the hall again the Baron
 Sat beside his lovely daughter,
 And again his pipe was smoking
 When the lofty, folding portals
 Opened, and, with modest greeting,
 Werner entered. “Untold labour,
 Gracious sir,” cried faithful Anton,
 “Untold weariness and labour
 Has it cost me to unearth him!”

With keen eye the Baron glances
 At young Werner, judging of him;
 And beside him, nestling closely
 By his seat, sweet Margaretha
 Cast shy glances toward the stranger.
 And on both the first impression
 Was a happy one and pleasant.

“You it was, who yestereven
 Startled us with sudden music?”
 Quoth the Baron; “then, I pray you,
 Grant me now a little converse.”
 “Fine beginning!” thought young Werner,
 And, embarrassed, on his jack-boots
 Dropped his eyes, until the Baron,
 Smiling, his discourse continued.

[64]
 “To account you think I call you,
 Asking you with stern displeasure
 Why you brought your music hither?
 Wrong! I bear no grudge against you:
 All are welcome on the river.
 He who goes, on chill March evenings,
 Trumpeting and ague-hunting
 Undisturbed may gain his object.

Nay, I only wished to ask you
 Whether it would be your pleasure
 Often here upon the river,
 As yestreen, to sound a sennet?
 But, methinks, I am in error.
 You are no musician, surely?
 One of these confounded scribblers
 You may be, or else an envoy
 Sent here by some foreign country,
 Such as through the land go lolling,
 Nowadays, in coaches, bungling
 What of yore the soldier's rapier
 Settled well and settled surely."

"Not bad either," thought young Werner;
 Yet the worthy Baron pleased him.
 "No musician I," he answered,
 "Still less to the quill devoted.
 And, for aught I'd say against it,
 All the quills and all the ink-pots
 In the holy Roman Empire
 Might become as dry as mummies.
 And I dwell in no man's service;
 But, as my own lord and master,
 Through the world I ride for pastime,
 Seeking only such fair fortune
 As beside my path may blossom."

"Bravely spoken!" quoth the Baron;
 "Then, perchance, I may unfold you
 [65]
 Of my scheme some further portion.
 But I hold it good we season
 With a draught of wine our speaking."
 Swift her father's mind divining,
 From the cellar Margaretha
 Fetched two long-necked, dusty flagons,
 That with cobwebs were encrusted,
 And had lain in sand half-buried;
 Fetched two goblets, deeply graven,
 Proffring them with graceful gesture.
 "This grew ere the weary war-time
 Our fair fatherland had wasted,"
 Said the Baron; "'tis from Grenzach.
 How it sparkles in the goblet,
 Like to gold, pure, sterling, heavy!
 And it breathes a fragrance rarer
 Than the rarest hothouse blossom.
 Master Trumpeter, I pledge you!"

Clear and merry rang the goblets.
 Having emptied his, the Baron
 Spun his thread of meaning further.
 "Lo! so long as lasts the world,
 Men, my friend, will all continue
 Riding upon hobby-horses.
 Mysticism or aesthetics
 Some may love, some cherry brandy;

Queer antiquities some seek for,
 Others love to eat cockchafers,
 Others still make halting verses.
 But the gods must laugh the loudest
 That each man pursues most keenly
 That for which he least is fitted.
 So I also ride a hobby,
 And its noble name is Music:
 Subtlest art, which cheers and strengthens.
 And as Saul, through David's harping,
 Chased away his cares and sorrows,
 [66]
 So with sweetest chiming, jingling,
 All the woes of age I banish,
 And forget e'en gouty twinges.
 When I stand with lifted baton,
 All the orchestra beneath me,
 I could deem that I were riding
 Once again before my squadron.
 'Charge there, right wing! Up, and at them!
 Now stand firm, ye keen-edged fiddles!
 Kettle-drums load; fire a volley!'

In this township can I muster
 Not a few well-skilled musicians;
 But in fine artistic feeling
 And in culture they are lacking.
 Yet their zeal knows naught of languor,
 And that covers many failings.
 Violin and flute and viol
 Passably are represented,
 And the double-bass is famous;
 But one thing is wanting – one thing.
 What, my friend, is a commander
 Wanting troops? or what an army
 Wanting leaders? What, I ask you,
 Orchestra with ne'er a trumpet'?

"Once 'twas otherwise. I hear him
 Still, methinks, the trumpet-major
 Rassmann, brave and true and loyal.
 Ah! how proudly rang his sennet!
 Wherefore didst thou die, friend Rassmann?

"Yet e'en now, methinks, I see him
 On that day which was his latest:
 'Twas the festival of shooters
 Yearly held at Laufenburg.
 Fierce were his moustachios pointed,
 Brightly gleaming shone his trumpet,
 And his riding-boots were burnished
 [67]
 Like a mirror. And I quizzed him.
 'Sir, it is a point of honour!
 Quoth he, 'and these Swiss must learn
 What befits a trumpet-major.'

"Clear and joyous sounded yonder
 Hunting-horns and lusty trumpets.

Yet, as o'er the choir of songsters
 In the wood, the notes soar shrilly
 Of the nightingale's sweet warbling;
 So, above all, soared the blowing
 Of the trumpet-major Rassmann.
 But I marked his face was crimson,
 And his lungs were labouring hardly.
 'Sirr, it is a point of honour!'
 Quoth he, as he blew yet louder.
 Soon the trumpeter was silenced
 From far Frickthal; he of Aarau,
 Ay, and he of Solothurn,
 By the trumpet-major Rassmann.

"When I saw him next, 'twas even.
 Like a giant 'mong the pigmies,
 Sat he in 'The Golden Dragon,'
 'Midst the throng that he had vanquished
 There the trumpeters of Frickthal,
 Those of Solothurn and Aarau,
 Swallowed many a mighty bumper;
 But the trumpet-major Rassmann
 Drank the deepest draughts of any;
 With full-bodied Castelberger
 (On the Aar it grew, by Schinznach)
 Caused mine host to fill his trumpet.
 'Sirr, it is a point of honour!'
 Quoth he. At a draught he drained it:
 'To your health, my fellow-players,
 Drinks the trumpet-major Rassmann!'
 [68]

"Midnight long had waned toward morning
 Many snored beneath the table,
 But with steady gait and upright
 From the township he strode homeward.
 On the bridge he turned, and, mocking,
 Blew, in sport, a farewell flourish.
 Then a false step – Ah, poor Rassmann!
 Headlong into space he tumbled.
 And the river's fearful whirlpool
 Rushed above the grave, in torrents,
 Of the prince of trumpet-majors.
 Ah, how proudly rang his sonnets!
 Wherefore didst thou die, friend Rassmann?"

Somewhat moved, the Baron ended,
 Paused a space and then continued.
 "Ay, my friend, and yestereven
 From the Rhine there rose a flourish
 Like a greeting from the spirit
 Of the honoured trumpet-major.
 And a fugue came soaring toward me,
 A true fugue, a web of music,
 As from palmiest days of Rassmann.
 Could I but enrol that trumpet,
 Were that breach repaired, then, joyful,
 A full orchestra in triumph

I could lead to tuneful warfare.
 So to you I make my offer:
 Dwell amongst us in the castle.
 Crippled in our forest township
 Is Dame Music, weak and halting.
 Oh, infuse new life and vigour
 Into those dry bones and sinews!"

Musing, answered him young Werner:
 "Noble sir, you do me honour,
 Yet I cherish certain scruples.
 I was bred full straight and upright,
 [69]
 Never taught the art of stooping,
 Bending in a stranger's service."

Quoth the Baron: "Be not troubled,
 Yours is but the artist's service,
 Thus to bend is no dishonour,
 Only our own heart's imprudence
 Can our self-respect imperil.
 Far from me the thought of claiming
 Aught but merry music-making.
 But if, in your leisure moments,
 You would frame a letter for me,
 Or with adding figures aid me,
 I would thank you. An old soldier
 Makes but an indifferent scholar."

Still young Werner stood uncertain,
 But one glance at Margaretha
 And the clouds of doubt had vanished.
 "Noble Lord, I stay," he answered.
 "Be my home beside your river!"
 "Bravo!" spake the old man kindly;
 "Oft the heart makes best decision
 On the impulse of the moment.
 Master Trumpeter, I pledge you!
 In the golden wine of Grenzach,
 And with hearty German hand-clasp,
 Let us ratify the compact!"
 Then, to Margaretha turning:
 "Dear my daughter, I present you
 This new inmate of our dwelling."
 And young Werner bent him mutely,
 Mutely Margaretha curtseyed.

"Follow me, now, through the chambers
 Of the castle. I will show you
 Your new quarters, my young comrade.
 In the airy, eastern turret
 [70]

You will find, or I mistake me,
 Fit abode for a musician.
 Toward the Rhine and toward the mountains
 You may gaze. The morning sunbeams
 Will arouse you from your slumbers,
 And your music will float freely

From your blithesome nest up yonder.”

From the hall they passed together.
 From the hall, too, Margaretha
 Lightly passed toward the garden.
 Daffodils she plucked, and cowslips,
 And a wealth of fragrant wallflower.
 For she thought: “The fair, young stranger
 May be lonely here, I fear me,
 In a strange and unknown dwelling.
 And the turret makes me shiver
 With its walls all white and empty.
 It will look more bright and friendly
 If I put a posy in it.”

[71]

CANTO VII. A MAY-DAY PILGRIMAGE

BLUEST heaven, warmest sunshine,
 Larks rejoicing, bees a-humming,
 Crystal-clear the river’s current.
 From the hills the snow is fleeting,
 In the vale the fruit-trees blossom;
 May is moving through the land.

By the door, in lazy comfort,
 Hiddigeigei on the gravel
 Lay and basked, while May’s sweet sunshine
 Warm upon his fur was shining.
 Through the garden strolled the Baron
 With his daughter. Well contented
 Did he mark the bursting blossoms:
 “Were I doomed on earth to linger
 Yet another hundred winters,
 Every year my heart would gladden,
 Rendered young and rendered joyous
 By the May and all its wonders.
 True, I have no faith in May-dew
 Wherewith womankind must dabble
 All their cheeks and lips and foreheads.
 Never have I met a lady
 Whom its use has made more lovely.
 Nor do I believe on witchcraft,
 On Walpurga’s night of glamour,
 Nor the besom-riding squadron.

[72]

Yet a wondrous magic lieth,
 Nathless, in young May’s possession.
 Through the storms of wayward April
 Sorely were my bones tormented
 With the gout’s attacks and charges.
 Now all that is clean forgotten,
 And I feel my ancient vigour
 Once again; can almost fancy
 Me a dapper, beardless ensign,

As when with the Swedish troopers
 I crossed swords at Nördlingen.
 Let us hold to-day a feast-day,
 Even though we may not find it
 In the Calendar red-lettered.
 Up and off! Among the pine-trees
 Fain I'd breathe the spicy breezes,
 And the youngsters may make trial
 Of their luck in catching fishes.
 This day I devote to pleasure:
 Anton, have the horses saddled!"

And the Baron's will was followed.
 In the court, prepared for starting,
 Pawed the horses, neighing gaily.
 Eager to set off, the young folk
 From the township mustered strongly,
 And, in fishing arts full learned,
 Brought the great net from the river.
 Meantime, faithful Anton summoned
 Many of the Baron's neighbours,
 Took a message to the Hochstift,
 To the Abbess and the ladies,
 While, the joyous rumour spreading,
 Not a few came uninvited.
 When "The Golden Button's" landlord
 Heard the news, he thus addressed him
 To his spouse: "In thy possession
 Leave I now both house and servants,
 [73]

And the keys of stores and cellar
 Trust, to-day, to thy good keeping,
 I myself must go a-fishing."
 Slyly spake he, for his presence
 Never failed at hunt or fishing.

Stoutly on his sorrel charger
 Sat the Baron, square and upright,
 Moulded like a brazen statue.
 By him, on her snowy palfrey,
 Rode the lovely Margaretha.
 Graceful round her slender figure
 Clung the long folds of her habit;
 Graceful, from her hat of velvet,
 On the breeze her blue veil floated.
 Boldly could she ride and surely
 Rein her palfrey, proudly prancing
 'Neath his light and gentle burden.
 Faithful Anton followed closely
 Near his mistress; and young Werner,
 Trotting blithely with the party,
 Watched his lady from a distance.

In the rear discreet and stately,
 Lumbered, slow, the old-world carriage
 Of the Reverend Lady Abbess,
 Wherein sat three noble ladies
 Of an age as venerable

As its own. By it, as escort,
 Rode young Werner, and directed
 Many civil, pretty speeches
 To the ancient dames within it.
 And, in riding by, he deftly
 Pluckt a branch of fragrant hawthorn
 Which he courteously presented
 To the inmates of the carriage,
 So that, low in well-bred whisper,
 [74]

Said one lady to another:
 "Pity 'tis, he is not noble!"

Steep uphill the roadway led them,
 And the forest's shady darkness
 Now received them. Yet a moment
 And there glimmered through the pine-trees,
 Silver-clear, the flashing waters.
 And a merry shout resounded
 Through the air, for, by a footpath,
 Had the youngsters from the township
 Reached the mountain-lake already.

On the summit, where the roadway
 Turns to seek a new direction,
 Cavaliers and carriage halted.
 There the coach and horses rested
 Under charge of the retainers.
 Where the wood slopes toward the water
 Nimbly strode the Baron downward,
 Nimbly followed him the ladies,
 For with moss as soft as velvet
 All the ground was thickly covered,
 And the path was safe and pleasant.
 There, its shoulders warm with sunshine,
 O'er the lake a hillock watches,
 Thickly strewn with mossy boulders.
 Thence the Baron watched the fishing
 And the ladies sat beside him.

Hail, all hail, ye crystal waters!
 Hail, all hail, ye darkling pine-woods!
 I, too, who in later ages
 Sing my strain, have cause to love ye.
 For new life ye oft have lent me
 When escaping from the city's
 Petty cares and petty troubles,
 Hither have my footsteps led me.
 [75]

On a stone I oft would seat me,
 That with wayward roots a pine-tree
 Fast embraced; the waters rippling
 At my feet in baby billows.
 On the bank the shadow rested
 Of the forest, but the sunbeams
 Danced a wanton, merry measure,
 Far athwart the glistening waters.
 Holy, utter stillness round me,

Save that, hammering a tree-stem,
 I could hear the lone woodpecker;
 Or, through moss and withered bracken,
 Lightly would a lizard rustle,
 Lifting knowing eyes of wonder,
 Scanning keen the dreaming stranger.
 Ay, strange dreams have I had yonder!
 Often, when the night was falling,
 Through the reeds would pass a ripple,
 And I heard the water-lilies
 Lowly whispering together,
 And from out the depths rose softly
 Water-maidens, their pale faces
 Gleaming lovely 'neath the moonbeams.
 Heart entrancing, head bewitching,
 On the tide their music floated,
 And they beckoned me toward them.
 But the pine withheld and warned me:
 "Cling to earth, the sure and steady;
 Hast no business in the water!"

Crystal waters, darkling pine-woods,
 Thinking on ye I am saddened!
 I have been, since then, a wanderer.
 I have climbed o'er many mountains,
 And have marched through many countries.
 Seen the ocean's endless rollers,
 Heard the Sirens' mystic singing;
 And yet oft, among these mem'ries,
 [76]
 There intrudes a gentle rustling,
 As of rippling waters, rushes,
 Water-lilies, tips of pine-trees,
 As of youth and love and home.

Now arose a lively bustle,
 Running, calling, laughing, jesting,
 Down below, beside the water.
 There among a troop of striplings,
 Like a general, stood the landlord
 Of the "Button," skilled in fishing,
 And to right and left he issued
 His instructions and directed
 Effort to the best advantage.

Near a rock, deep-laid in rushes,
 Lay a boat bedeckt with brushwood,
 And with chains attached securely,
 Lest some bold, officious poacher
 Should unloose it, and at midnight
 On the lake should go a-fishing.
 From its hiding-place they dragged it
 Down athwart the crunching pebbles,
 And the heavy net they lifted,
 Twined with skill of strongest netting,
 Many-meshed, while round it, dangling,
 Leaden weights hung down in plenty.
 Next their dext'rous hands made trial

If the boat were all seaworthy,
And they found it safe, though mildewed.

Stepped on board the honest landlord,
Merrily five others followed,
Gave one corner of the fish-net
To the men upon the margin,
Who should hold it fast and heedful.
From the land they straightway started,
Rowing stoutly; in half circle
[77]

Warily they sunk the fish-net,
Then came dropping, slowly, backward,
Trailing still the heavy meshes
Of the net with care behind them,
That the fishes might securely
Be ensnared, nor find an outlet.
On the shore again they landed,
Gently drew the meshes toward them,
Till they could approach more nearly
Those who on the bank were standing.
Then, with steady pull together,
Drew the net from out the water,
Confident of richest booty.
But, within itself entangled,
See, it rises, slowly, slowly –
Empty – for an awkward oarsman
Had prevented it from sinking.
Mocking laughed the little fishes;
This time they had 'scaped the danger!

Keenest glance the landlord fastened
On each mesh, but only water
Met his eye where'er he cast it,
Not a fin could he discover.
Only one time-honoured jack-boot,
And a toad, all squat and slimy,
Blinking as it gazed, and wondering
At the sun-enhaloed forest
And the people; thinking inly:
"Truly, 'tis the strangest business,
How 'neath such a sun and heaven,
They can taste the joys of living.
Have they, then, no faintest vision
Of the marsh and all its glories?
Oh that I again were sitting
In the elemental quagmire!"

Now arose from all beholders
[78]

Inextinguishable laughter
O'er the harvest of the waters.
But, with rage enflamed, the landlord
Raised his voice above the tumult:
"Stupid youngsters – bunglers – blockheads!"
With an angry kick the booty
Forth he hurled, and in sweet union
Boot and toad flew toward the billows

Which rose splashing high to greet them.

Now again the merry-makers
 Tempted fate and tried their fortune,
 Loosed the sorely tangled meshes,
 Sunk the net with heedful caution
 In the lake, then raised it slowly.
 Many a sinewy arm and shoulder
 Were, this time, required to draw it,
 Shrill hurrahs and shouts of triumph
 Greeting the successful venture.

From the hillock came the Baron
 To the fishers, and the ladies
 Also sought a nearer prospect.
 To the beach they found a pathway
 Over rocks and briars and bushes.
 Margaretha, too, descended,
 Cumbered by her floating habit,
 And young Werner saw and ventured,
 Timidly, his arm to offer,
 All aghast at his own daring.
 So Sir Walter Raleigh's bosom
 May have throbbled, when, as a carpet
 For his queenly mistress' footsteps,
 He laid down his velvet mantle.
 Smiling grateful thanks on Werner
 Margaretha leant upon him.
 There, among the bursting leaf-buds,
 Many useless scruples vanish
 [79]

Which to masters of the revels,
 Otherwhere, cause grievous heartbreak;
 And the path, in truth, was stony,
 And no other arm was near her.

By the lake they gazed, admiring,
 On the fish-draught's plenteous harvest.
 There, within the net's close meshes,
 Flapped and gleamed the silvery captives.
 Many a one, by lusty leaping,
 Strove once more to reach the water,
 But he fell upon the pebbles,
 All in vain his hopes of freedom.
 There, together, lay a-writhing,
 By a common fate o'ertaken,
 They who in the clear, cool waters,
 Had been bitter foes and rivals.
 Eels like serpents, smooth and shining;
 Broad-nosed carp, well-fed and brawny;
 And the cruel pike, the pirate
 Of the lake, with teeth voracious.
 As a bloody death in war-time
 Oft befalls the guiltless peasant,
 So, as comrades in misfortune,
 Here were many strange companions.
 Barbels young and clumsy gudgeons,
 Lean, unsatisfying blay-fish;

While the brown lake-crab unwieldy,
 Crawling through the swarm of fishes,
 'Twixt his teeth was sadly grumbling:
 "Hooked together; cooked together!"

Well-contented spake the Baron:
 "After labour comes refreshment,
 And, methinks, this fresh-caught booty
 Will taste best beneath the pine-trees,
 On the moss. Be then made ready
 Here a simple, rustic banquet."

[80]

His proposal pleased the others,
 And "The Golden Button's" landlord
 Sent two light, swift-footed youngsters
 To the town, with these instructions:
 "Of the largest pans for frying,
 Bring me two. Of yellow butter
 Bring a plentiful provision.
 Bring of bread and salt abundance,
 And of good old wine a puncheon.
 Bring me lemons, too, and sugar;
 Something in my bosom whispers
 That, ere sunset reddens, May-cup
 Will be quaffed beneath these pine-trees."

Off they hastened. At the cliff-foot,
 Where the pines gave friendly shelter,
 Some a gipsy-fire were building,
 Piling withered twigs and brushwood,
 Moss and leaves, in heaps together.
 Others made the fishes ready
 For the feast. Meanwhile the ladies
 Many fragrant herbs collected;
 Culled ground-vine and strawberry-blossom,
 Gathered, too, the spicy woodruff,
 Chief of all the May-cup treasures.
 He rejoiced, a willing victim,
 In the gentle hands that bore him:
 "Sweet it was, in dusky pine-wood,
 'Twixt the rocks to bloom in silence,
 But 'tis sweeter far to perish
 On the altar of the May-day,
 Spicing with a sigh the nectar
 For those joy an-hungered mortals.
 Other death is but corruption,
 But the woodruff dies in beauty,
 Like the dew in flowery chalice,
 Sweets exhaling, uncomplaining."

[81]

From the township, hasting breathless,
 Reached the lake again the runners
 Bringing all mine host had ordered;
 And, ere long, the fire was crackling
 Gaily on the rustic hearthstone,
 While the fish, which had been swimming
 In the lake that very morning,

Hissed amid the flames and sputtered.

Proudly from his woodland kitchen
 Came mine host, and, as a sample
 Of his skill, before the ladies
 Set a mighty pike, all steaming.
 And a ceremonious silence
 Soon informed the listening forest
 That all present had applied them
 To the finny tribe's undoing.
 Only sounds confused, suggestive,
 Fish-bones crunching, crab-shells cracking,
 Fell upon the woodland stillness.

Meantime there had been compounded
 Fragrant nectar, rarely seasoned.
 In a mighty, ancient tankard
 Had sweet Margaretha brewed it
 With a skill beyond all question.
 Mellow was it, mild yet spicy,
 As the young May-blossoms round her,
 And she deftly filled the glasses,
 And with gracious smile she served it.
 None went empty out, and gaily
 Drank the group beside the bonfire.

Hard at hand, among the daisies,
 Lay the schoolmaster. Escaping
 From his classes, he had turned him
 Toward the lake and toward the forest.
 And he bore a precious secret
 [82]

In his heart: that self-same morning
 He with toil a song had written.

May-cup, May-cup, magic potion!
 Suddenly with cheeks all glowing,
 And with eyes that brightly sparkled,
 Light he sprang upon a boulder:
 "Lend your ears," he cried, "my masters!"
 Laughingly the others listened,
 And young Werner stepped beside him,
 Tuned his gleaming trumpet softly,
 Softly blew an airy prelude.
 Then the man upon the boulder,
 Raised his voice, and sang with fervour.
 Him accompanied young Werner,
 Clear and joyous, and the others
 Sang the chorus. Clear and joyous
 Through the forest rang the

May-song.

Behold a fair and wondrous youth!
 Through all the world he goes.
 Where'er he steps, in sober sooth,
 A strange new beauty glows.
 In freshest green the woods are drest,

The birds are glad and sing their best,
 A rain of snowy flowers,
 Falls over us in showers.
 And through the woods and fields we sing
 Sing ho, and trala-lay!
 For all the world is blossoming,
 To welcome in the May!

May dearly loves a, hum and stir,
 So joyous is his mood.
 Hark, how the great, brown cockchafer
 Goes buzzing through the wood!

[83]

And 'midst the moss, so soft and green,
 The sweetest flowers of spring are seen,
 With snow-white bells a-swing,
 To welcome in the spring.
 So through the fields and woods we sing,
 Sing ho, and trala-lay!
 For all the world is blossoming,
 To welcome in the May!

Now each and all must turn his mind
 To sport and jest and song;
 And many a greybeard still will find
 His heart within him young.
 Hark, how it rings across the Rhine,
 "I prithee open, sweetheart mine!"
 It rings around, above,
 For May's the time to love.
 Then through the woods and fields we sing
 Sing ho, and trala-lay!
 For all the world is blossoming,
 To welcome in the May!

Loud applause and hearty clapping
 Burst out when the song was ended.
 E'en the ladies, one might fancy,
 Had not found it all unpleasing,
 For sweet women's voices sounded,
 Mellow, in the merry chorus.
 Margaretha wove a garland
 Of the hazel-twigs and holly
 Blent with violets and king-cups,
 And she cried, with roguish laughter:
 "For the worthiest be this chaplet!
 Yet I know not which should have it.
 Shall it be the dulcet singer,
 Shall it be the skilful blower
 Of the trumpet obligato?"

[84]

Spake the Baron: "This hard question
 I must solve, as lawful umpire:
 It is meet, the chiefest honour
 To the bard should be awarded.
 Yet, I ask, what is a garland?
 What is e'en a crown of laurels?"

With the ancient Hellenes hold I
 Who awarded to the singer
 Rump and ham, the choicest portion
 Of the victim in requital.
 And, I wot, the schoolhouse kitchen
 Is not so profusely furnished
 That it will disdain such tribute.
 From the surplus of our fishing
 Be the largest pike, the largest
 Carp devoted to its uses.
 But my young knight of the trumpet
 Is a man whose mind goes floating
 More on Fancy's wings; to him, then,
 You may give the Crown of Honour,
 For he did not blow so badly."

Chuckling did the bard of May-day
 Rub his hands and bless his ditty.
 With prophetic ear, already,
 He could hear the fishes frying.
 Somewhat shyly did young Werner
 Near the maiden; somewhat shyly
 Did he bend the knee before her,
 And he dared no glance to venture
 Upward, to her blue eyes' heaven.
 Graciously did Margaretha
 On his fair head place the chaplet,
 While with sudden, ghostly lustre
 Was the group illuminated
 By a dazzling glare and glimmer.
 For the embers of the bonfire
 Had set fire to an old pine-tree,
 [85]

And the tongues of flame were playing
 Through the branches, rich in rosin,
 And the sparks flew, crackling wildly,
 Upward toward the evening heaven.

Margaretha, Margaretha!
 Could it be a magic firework,
 Gallant, lighting all the forest?
 Was it Cupid, flitting gaily
 Through the wood, with torch aflaming?

But the fire was soon extinguished,
 And the Baron issued orders
 For retreat; and fishers, riders,
 Noble ladies, started blithely
 Homeward in the evening twilight.
 And from out the pine-tree's branches
 Sank one spark, still faintly twinkling,
 Sank among the darkling waters.

[86]

CANTO VIII.
THE CONCERT IN THE GARDEN PAVILION.

IN the garden of the castle
Stands a row of mighty chestnuts
Stands an elegant pavilion.
The foundations of the terrace
Sink far downward toward the river.
'Tis a sweet secluded precinct,
Framed in leafy walls of verdure.
Far below, the waters whisper.

What is this mysterious bustle
That, of late, hath reigned within it?
Jars of paint and artists' brushes,
Lime and plaster, masons' trowels,
Lofty scaffolding upsoaring
To the dome of the pavilion.
Is't some evil spirit's workshop?
Nay, no evil spirit's workshop.
Frescoes here are being painted,
And those legs which, far above us,
On that plank we see coquetting,
They are his (so great their honour!),
Fludribus, the fresco-painter's.

From Italia homeward wand'ring
Long beside the Rhine he'd tarried,
For he loved the dainty landscape,
And the pretty, red-cheeked maidens,
[87]

And the good wine in the barrel.
All the simple country-people
Looked on him as on a wizard,
For he told them wondrous stories.
In his youthful days he journeyed
To Bologna's fair, old city,
To Bologna's famous Art School.
There in great Albano's studio
He became a colour-grinder,
And from that so graceful master
Learnt full many weighty secrets;
How to paint both Gods and Heroes,
And the lighter Amoretti,
Ay, at times he even aided,
Filling in some airy corner,
Laying on some tints for background.

Far and wide beside the river
Fludribus had ne'er a rival.
And he painted many a signboard,
Painted many a church and chapel,
Many a peasant bride he painted.
And his fame stood all unquestioned.
For if any squint-eyed critic
In his works dared find a blemish:
"But, methinks, yon nose is crooked

And this cheek is surely swollen –
 Fludribus would overwhelm him
 With an avalanche of phrases
 From the richly furnished storehouse
 Of his theoretic knowledge;
 Shading, moulding, and foreshortening,
 Tone and colour and perspective,
 Till the critic grew bewildered
 And his wits forsook him wholly.

Margaretha, who had pondered
 Long within her loving bosom
 [88]

What surprise she could make ready
 For her father on his birthday,
 Spake to Master Fludribus:
 “I have often heard related
 How in France they make their castles
 Beautiful with rare wall-paintings.
 And, methinks, I long for something
 In that sort on our pavilion.
 Here, secluded, I know nothing
 Of material or subject,
 Those I leave to your discretion,
 Only, be it done in secret,
 That the Baron wot not of it.”

Slapped Sir Fludribus his bosom:
 “Modest, truly, the commission!
 But I hold with Julius Caesar,
 In a hamlet be the leader,
 Rather than in Rome the second.
 Here, at any rate, is only
 Honest whitewash waiting for me.
 In the Holy Father’s castle
 Found I all the best ideas
 Which within me long I’d fostered
 Painted on the walls already,
 By a certain Master Raphael.
 But I shall do something greater.
 After Buffalmaco’s manner
 I shall paint, who with good Rhine wine
 Passion in cold fresco colours
 Could infuse. I pray you, firstly,
 Send me that; but send me also
 Plenty of all other good things.
 Further payment crave I little;
 For the thought brings keenest pleasure
 That my brush will live immortal
 In the creatures of my fancy.

[89]

So I almost paint for nothing –
 By the square foot, seven gulden.”

So for two long months he painted
 On the four walls of the chamber,
 After Buffalmaco’s manner,
 For himself drank all the Rhine wine.

Elegant his compositions,
 Very full of modern spirit
 And of rare imagination.

In the first compartment figured
 Perseus and Andromeda.
 Dead, beside their feet, the dragon
 Lay extended. He was painted
 With a handsome human visage,
 And coquetted, e'en in dying,
 With the beautiful, rescued maiden.
 Next the judgment came of Paris.
 To the end one's eyes should tarry
 On the hero, nor be dazzled
 By, the goddesses' rare beauty,
 These gazed inward on the landscape,
 And their faces were averted.
 With like spirit all the others
 Were pervaded. Fair Diana,
 With her stag and with Actaeon;
 Orpheus and Eurydice;
 For in mythologic legend
 Found our artist all his subjects.
 Beauty's perfect revelation
 Only in the nude is plastic.

Now the mighty work was finished,
 And the master gazed with feeling
 On the creatures of his genius.
 "Peaceful, now, I sink to Hades,
 [90]

For my works are my memorial.
 In the culture of this province
 Be a new art epoch dated
 From the time of Fludribus!"

It was Margaretha's project
 That this decorated chamber
 Should be gloriously opened
 With a concert of sweet music.
 Ah, how throbbed young Werner's pulses
 When she shared her purpose with him!
 Off he rode to Basel, seeking
 What was newest in the region
 Of orchestral composition,
 And he brought the scores in triumph
 Of the great Venetian master
 Claudio of Monteverde,
 Who for pastoral tones melodious
 Had received the crown of merit.
 Now arose a lively bustle
 In the art world of the township;
 Such a red-hot zeal for study,
 Such a practising, rehearsing,
 All unnoted by the Baron!

Now, at length, the sun had risen
 On the long-awaited birthday,

And the Baron sat at dinner
 Chatting with his friend beloved,
 With the Prelate of St Blasien,
 Who with his felicitations
 Had come sailing down the river.
 In the garden, preparations
 Went on gaily. The pavilion
 Was bedeckt with flowers and garlands,
 And the music-stands were planted
 In a most imposing phalanx.
 One by one, came, softly slipping
 [91]
 Through the side-door by the river,
 All the brotherhood of music.
 Came the youthful Burgomeister
 Panting 'neath the goodly burden
 Of his double-bass, whose music
 Oft would cleanse his troubled spirit
 From the cares and woes of office,
 And his Senate's weary prosing.
 Came the chubby Capellanus
 With his violin, which adroitly
 He could play full shrill and piercing,
 E'en as though the wordless longings
 Of his celibate existence
 Would reveal themselves in music.
 Bugle-horn beneath his armpit
 Came the Clerk of the Exchequer,
 Who, at cost of his superiors,
 Vivified the dull addition
 And the desert of subtraction
 By the winding of his bugle.
 Came the haggard undermaster
 In his rusty, threadbare doublet,
 In his shabby, ancient bonnet;
 He, whom music compensated
 Richly for his lack of lucre,
 Who, instead of wine and roast meat,
 Sweetly fed himself on flute-notes.
 Came – but who can tell the legion
 Of the instruments and players?
 All the tale of tuneful talent
 Of the township was assembled –
 Ay, from far-off Eisenhammer,
 From Albbbruck, there came the bailiff,
 Who alone could play the viol.

As a troop of mounted soldiers
 Who, the enemy expecting,
 Place themselves secure in ambush,
 [92]

So the coming of the Baron
 They awaited; and as marksmen,
 Ere the tide of battle rises,
 Carefully will test their weapons,
 Fearful lest the dews of morning
 Should have soaked their precious powder,

So by blowing, tuning, toning,
All the instruments were tested.

Margaretha led the Baron
And his guest toward the garden.
Never is a pretext wanting
To a woman, when a project,
Or a jest, is in the question.
And she praised the lovely prospect
From the arbour, and its coolness,
Till the reverend seignors, tempted,
Unsuspecting turned them thither.

On their entry there resounded,
Like a salvo of artillery,
A prodigious trumpet-flourish,
A triumphant, frantic fanfare.
As from out the opened flood-gates
Dash the waters, blust'ring, roaring,
So the waves of sound came rushing
Through the overture's glad gateway,
Toward these much-astounded seignors.

Skilfully young Werner led them,
And, obedient to his baton,
Close his tuneful forces followed.
Ha! but that was dext'rous bowing!
What a shrilling, what a scraping!
How the clarionet went skipping,
Like a cricket, through the tumult,
While the double-bass was groaning
Like a soul in Purgatory.

[93]

On the brow of him who played it
Shone the sweat of hard-done duty.

In the orchestra was present
Fludribus, though in the background;
Beat the kettle-drums, and also,
As a man of diverse culture,
On the triangle he sounded
Shrill, sweet notes in all the pauses.
Discontent inflamed his bosom,
And the hollow drum-beats echoed
His complainings, grim and hollow:
"Dilettanti, lucky beings!
Suck the honey from the flowers
Gaily, which with bitter labour
From the master's heart have sprouted.
And they season their enjoyment
Laughing at each other's blunders.
Real art is, sure, a Titan,
Heavenward striving, struggling, wrestling,
Toward an ever-distant beauty,
While the soul is wrung for ever
By an unattained ideal.
Only bunglers are contented!"
Slowly sank to rest the tempest.

After storms of wind and lightning,
 When the thunder ceases pealing,
 As from out the rifted heavens,
 Peacefully the rainbow rises,
 So the unison was followed
 By a tender trumpet solo.
 Werner blew it; softly melting
 Flew the notes from out his trumpet,
 But the others stared, astounded,
 At their music-books, and, wond'ring
 Did the Chaplain pull the Teacher
 By the sleeve, and whispered to him:
 [94]

“Listen how he blows; so stands it
 Never written in the music.
 Ah, perchance his notes he readeth
 In the eyes of Margaretha!”

Gloriously at length the concert
 Reached its end, and much exhausted
 Sat the players, but rewarded
 By the consciousness of triumph.
 And in gracious tones the Prelate
 Of St Blasien's now addressed them.
 Courteously he spake, the critic
 Blending with the skilful statesman:
 “Bitter war has on our country
 Many bitter wounds inflicted,
 And within our German borders
 Rudeness all too long has flourished.
 It is good, then, to repose us
 In the Muses' peaceful grottoes.
 These revive, refresh, ennoble,
 While they tame our savage spirits.
 What upon the walls is painted
 Tells me of no common effort.
 What my ears have been regaled with
 Causes me to think most highly
 Of the men who have performed it.
 Memories rose up before me
 Of my young days, long forgotten,
 When, in Rome, I loved to listen
 To Cavalieri's 'Daphne,'
 And in soft, Arcadian longings
 To expand my melting spirit.
 Lay your offerings, good my masters,
 Ever on Dame Music's altar.
 Let your notes ring fair together,
 Hold aloof from brawls politic.
 Would that such harmonious spirit
 Over all the land would settle!”

[95]

So he spake, and, greatly flattered,
 The musicians made obeisance,
 Greatly flattered by the praises
 Of so highly skilled a critic.
 And the Baron strode, contented,

Through the ranks with hearty hand-clasp.
 And, in gratitude, he ordered
 (Words are not a Baron's guerdon)
 That a lordly cask of home-brewed
 Should be rolled to the pavilion:
 "Bravely done, my tried musicians!
 Bravely done, my concert-master!
 Young in years, but old in knowledge.
 Where the devil did you find them,
 All those pretty shakes and quavers?
 Bravely done, you, too, Sir Painter!
 Just my taste, these classic subjects.
 Days may certainly be coming
 When upon these winsome ladies
 We shall have to paint an apron,
 But their nakedness can hardly
 Scandalise an ancient soldier.
 Now then, let us drink a bumper
 To our noble guest's best welfare,
 To the doughty music-makers,
 Ay, and to the welfare, also,
 Of the goddesses around us,
 That our winter of the Rhineland
 May not freeze their taper fingers."

Margaretha left the party
 Swiftly now, for she suspected
 That the mirth would soon grow boist'rous.
 On the threshold, to young Werner
 Gratefully her hand she offered.
 Haply in that tender hand-clasp
 Something lay of deepest import
 Yet we have no certain knowledge.
 [96]

Was it for the Artist only,
 Had the Man no portion in it?

Foamed the goblets, rang the glasses,
 And the work began in earnest.
 And my song had best be silent,
 Silent over tardy partings,
 Silent o'er the swift undoing
 Which the Teacher's ancient bonnet
 Met, that night, within the river.

But, at midnight, when the revellers
 Had, long since, beta'en them homeward,
 Whispered low the lofty chestnuts.
 Said the one: "O fresco paintings!"
 Said the other: "O sweet music!"
 Said the one: "I see the future;
 See two stony-hearted workmen,
 See two mighty painting-brushes,
 See a caldronful of whitewash,
 See them hide, in stolid silence,
 'Neath a coat of ruthless whitewash,
 Muses, Heroes, Fludribus.
 Other ages – other pictures."

Said the other: "In the future
 I can hear, from that same chamber,
 A quartette of manly voices
 Singing homely German music,
 Floating, soaring through our branches.
 Other ages – other ditties."
 "Ay, but love" – said both together –
 "Ay, but love outlives all ages!"

[97]

CANTO IX. TEACHING AND LEARNING.

WIND and waves had hardly swallowed
 All the lingering, long-drawn echoes
 Of the gifted Claudio's music,
 When, already, in the township
 Rumour with its hundred voices
 Busily was prating, talking.
 Never of the soul and essence
 Of the swift expiring concords,
 Nor of sweetest notes resounding
 Still within the hearers' spirits
 Did they speak. But they disputed
 Whom, at close, the noble Baron
 First had thanked, and in what phrases;
 Whom the Abbot on his playing
 Had most choicely complimented;
 Last, from kitchen and from cellar
 What there had been furnished forth.
 As the tail of a dead lizard
 Will convulsive thrill and quiver,
 E'en when life has long since left him,
 So a space these bygone glories
 Lingered in the township's gossip.

Far from all such quibbling trifles
 Margaretha wandered lonely,
 In the dewy, early morning,
 Toward the honeysuckle arbour,

[98]

There to dream again the music,
 And to dream of Werner's solo,
 Which through all her soul was thrilling
 Like some softest word of passion.
 What was here? Within the arbour,
 On the knotty, rustic table,
 Lay that very self-same trumpet.
 Like the magic horn of Hüon,

(Hüon, the principal character in Wieland's 'Oberon.' When he blew softly upon his horn, all who heard
 it were forced to dance; when loudly, Oberon came to his aid.)

Sheltering such wondrous secret,
 Dumb, and yet so full of language:
 Shining like a star she saw it.

Margaretha stood arrested

In the arbour's leafy entrance.
 "Was he here? then whither vanished?
 Wherefore hath he left his trumpet
 All so carelessly forsaken?
 Why, a worm might creep within it,
 Or a thief might come and steal it!
 Shall I bring it to the castle,
 Where it may be put in safety?
 Nay, I'll go and leave it lying;
 Should already have been gone."

Yet she went not. By the trumpet
 Still her eyes were fascinated,
 As the salmon by the angle.
 "How I wonder," she reflected,
 "Whether I, myself, could waken
 With a breath some sort of music?
 I should dearly love to try it!
 No one sees what I am doing,
 Near me is no living creature.
 Only dear old Hiddigeigei
 [99]

Licks the dewdrop from the boxwood,
 In the sand the merry beetles
 Carry on their wonted bustle,
 And the hairy caterpillars
 Silently creep o'er the trellis."

Timidly the maiden entered,
 Timid, lifted up the trumpet.
 To her rosy lips she pressed it.
 But 'twas almost terror thrilled her,
 For, within its golden chalice,
 Lo! her sweet breath was transmuted
 To a peal, loud, harsh, and shrilling,
 Which the breezes carried onward;
 Onward, ay! but who knows whither?
 Now she cannot cease from blowing,
 And unlicensed shrieks of horror,
 Hideous discords, rough and piercing,
 Desecrate the morning stillness,
 Till the worthy Hiddigeigei
 Felt his coat of long Angora
 Bristle like a hedgehog's prickles,
 And his ear he softly covered
 With his paw, and spake as follows:
 "Suffer, gallant heart within me
 Which already much hath suffered;
 Suffer, eke, this maiden's blaring!
 We, we know the laws unchanging,
 Answer to creation's riddle,
 Which beneath all sound are hidden.
 And we know full well the magic
 Which, unseen, through space is floating,
 That, as subtle as a shadow,
 Through the hearing's gateway passeth,
 And in beast hearts, as in human,

Love and longing and enchantment,
 Madness and delirium wakens.
 None the less, 'tis ours to suffer
 [100]
 That when cat love finds expression
 In the night, in sweetest numbers,
 Men accord to us but scorning,
 And they brand as 'caterwauling'
 All our choicest compositions.
 Yet, alas! 'tis ours to suffer
 That these same contemptuous mortals
 Call such sounds into existence
 As I have been forced to hear.
 Sounds like these are, surely, garlands
 Bound of briars, straw, and thistles,
 Where the stinging nettle flaunteth.
 And in view of yonder damsel,
 Grasping yon abhorrent trumpet,
 Can a man, with front unblushing,
 Jeer when cats are making music?
 Suffer, gallant heart within me,
 Suffer! Times are surely coming
 When the sapient human being
 Will from us acquire the method
 Of high feeling's right expression.
 When the rude world, struggling upward
 Toward the climax of all culture,
 Will appreciate 'caterwauling.'
 History, in the main, is righteous,
 All injustice is atoned for."

But, besides old Hiddigeigei,
 There had been another listener,
 Who, far down beside the river,
 Was by Margaretha's music
 Moved to wrath much more than rapture.

It was Werner. He had sauntered
 With his trumpet to the garden,
 Meaning to compose a ditty
 In the morning solitude.
 First upon the arbour table
 [101]
 Down he laid his dear companion,
 Musing, gazed upon the river
 From the garden-wall embattled.
 "Still the self-same loadstar draws ye,
 Still the same, ye whisp'ring billows!
 Toward the sea ye strain impetuous,
 As my heart toward its beloved.
 Which is furthest from its haven,
 Thou or I, O crystal river?"

Suchlike thoughts were interrupted
 By the stork from off the gable;
 Who, just then, with pride paternal,
 Led his brood to their first outing
 By the cool, refreshing waters.

It was pleasant to contemplate
 How the storks of old experience
 In the sand would take position,
 Lying for the eel in ambush,
 Who all kinds and sorts of reptiles
 Swallowed there in high contentment.
 But he who his rights asserted
 Thus among the lesser creatures,
 Soon himself must be a breakfast –
 For the big devour the little
 And are gobbled by the bigger,
 And thus Nature solves quite simply
 For herself the social problem.
 Neither did his sleekness help him,
 Nor yet writhing his fat body,
 Neither the heart-rending beating
 Of his tail, all slim and shining.
 In the ruthless beak squeezed tightly
 Of the resolute stork father,
 He was brought to be divided
 'Twixt his flock of gay young hopefuls,
 And, with all due pomp and clapping,
 They discussed their morning banquet.
 [102]

All these strange and wondrous doings,
 At his ease to view more nearly,
 Strode young Werner from the garden
 Toward the river, for his business
 Made no pressing calls upon him.
 Down he sat himself full gently
 On the beetle-peopled moss-bank,
 Underneath the grey-green willows.
 And it gave him genuine pleasure
 Silently the joy to witness
 Of that family of storks.

But the span of every pleasure
 Is but short on this our planet.
 Spiteful Fate oft throws a bomb-shell
 In the soup a man is supping
 With the most supreme contentment.
 Scarce absorbed in this stork drama
 Was young Werner ere he started,
 Hearing blasts from his own trumpet,
 That, like Pandour's jagged dagger,
 Roughly through his heart went sawing.
 "'Tis that gardener's boy, the rascal,
 Who has seized upon my trumpet!"
 Fumed young Werner, straight upspringing
 So irately from his moss-bank
 That the storks who were beside him
 Fluttered quickly to the gable,
 Not delaying e'en a moment
 To bear off their luscious booty.
 There he lay, a wretched torso,
 Piteous stretched upon the pebbles,
 And the chroniclers reveal not

If the cunning, old stork father
E'er returned again to fetch him.

Meanwhile Werner reached the garden.
Toward the honeysuckle arbour
[103]

Swift he turned him, treading softly,
Ever on the velvet turf-plots,
Lest the groaning of the gravel
Haply should betray his coming.
Fain would he that youth audacious
In the very act discover,
And perform upon his shoulders
The last number on the programme.
So he stepped within the arbour
With his hand upraised in anger.
But, as if 'twere struck by lightning,
By his side it sank, all helpless,
And the blow, like German Union,

(Written in 1853.)

And much else, remained for ever
Only a fair-seeming project.
For he saw sweet Margaretha,
At her lips the glancing trumpet,
With her dainty cheeks distended
Like the little carven angels
Who are blowing trumps and trombones
In the church of Fridolinus.
Like a guilty thief she started,
Caught within her neighbour's orchard,
And the trumpet fell abruptly
From her lips' fair, blooming circlet.

Werner softened her confusion
By a sapient dissertation.
As a long experienced master
Straightway he began expounding
The first grounds of trumpet-blowing,
Seriously the rules explaining.
Showed the finger-key, the mouthpiece,
How of both one must be master
Ere the tone can sound out clearly.
Heedful, Margaretha listened,
[104]

And her breath, before she knew it,
Sounds was waking from the trumpet,
Which, with graceful inclination,
Werner once again had given her.
And, in jest, she learnt the flourish
Which had erstwhile rent the battle
When her father with his troopers
Onward to the charge went dashing.
Easy notes, nor many of them,
But right martial, strong and nervous.

Cupid is, of all the teachers
Over all the earth, most skilful.
What oft years of earnest study

Cannot compass, he attaineth
 By the charm of an entreaty,
 By the urging of a glance.
 Once, through Cupid's artful teaching,
 E'en a Netherlandish blacksmith,
 (Quintin Matsys.)
 Though in years already wealthy,
 Grew into a famous painter.
 Lightsome teaching, lightsome learning,
 In the honeysuckle arbour!
 'Twas as if Germania's welfare
 Had been staked on the acquiring
 Of yon ancient trumpet-flourish.
 Yet through both their souls was thrilling
 Quite another melody.
 Sweetest song, old as creation,
 Sweetest song of first young love.
 'Tis a song, though words are wanting.
 Faintly they divined its purport,
 And they hid, 'neath happy jesting,
 Their half-guessed-at blessedness.

Much disturbed by these strange noises
 Came the Baron, reconnoitring,
 [105]
 Would have chidden, but soon altered
 Into laughter was his anger,
 For his daughter blew the fanfare
 Of his old, beloved troopers.
 Laughing spake he to young Werner:
 "You display in your vocation
 A most burning, fiery ardour.
 We may look, should this continue,
 Many wondrous things to meet with.
 E'en the stable-door which hoarsely
 Creaks and groans when blow the breezes,
 E'en the frogs who croak so loudly
 By the pond across the meadow,
 Will, I trust me, by the puissance
 Of your blowing be converted."

But his trumpet Werner honoured,
 Henceforth, as a priceless treasure,
 Which of Basle the richest merchant,
 With his heaviest bag of money,
 Would have had no chance to purchase.
 Had it not been consecrated
 By the lips of Margaretha?

[106]

CANTO X. YOUNG WERNER IN THE GNOME'S GROTTTO.

FOAMING, chafing, from the Feldberg
 Toward the Rhine, a mountain torrent
 Bears its billows. 'Tis the Wehra.

In its valley stands a pine-tree,
 Lonely, 'twixt the rock and torrent.
 Deeply bowered amid its branches
 Sate the wood-elf, Meysenhartus,
 Lean of frame, of heart malicious.
 Wayward was to-day his humour.
 Grinning till his sharp teeth glittered,
 From the stem a branch he twisted,
 And began to gnaw a pine-cone;
 Restlessly went climbing, clamb'ring,
 Upward, downward like a squirrel;
 From an inoffensive screech-owl
 Plucked a pair of long, grey feathers;
 Lastly, on its summit rocking,
 Mocked and flouted at the pine-tree:

“Lofty pine-tree, verdant pine-tree,
 How I scorn thy wretched fortune!
 Rooted to the ground thou standest,
 Must await whoever cometh,
 Canst not stir from thy position.
 And, whene'er thy fate decrees it,
 And 'tis thine afar to wander,
 Cruel men will come with hatchets,
 [107]

Hew and mangle all thy body,
 Till to earth thou sinkest swooning.
 All thy bark they tear from off thee,
 Throw thee helpless in the river,
 And the Rhine will bear thee downward
 All the weary way to Holland.
 In a frigate, then, they plant thee,
 And a mast they proudly call thee.
 Mast, forsooth! – Thou art not altered,
 Art a naked, shivering pine-tree,
 Robbed of all thy roots and branches!
 And thou wand'rest o'er the ocean,
 Sore tormented with home-sickness,
 Till a lightning-flash from heaven
 Strike the whole concern in pieces,
 Man and mouse and mast and mainsail.
 Lofty pine-tree, verdant pine-tree,
 How I scorn thy wretched fortune!”

Quoth the pine-tree: “Let each creature
 Keep the place allotted to him,
 And fulfil his special duty!
 This our doctrine in the forest.
 Good it is; and better, truly,
 Than by night to skip and caper
 Bringing man and beast in trouble,
 And misguided travellers curses
 Bearing homeward as the guerdon
 That your impish meddling earns you.
 Who concerns himself about you?
 At the most, some peasant mutters:
 ‘Devil take that Meysenhartus!’

While the learned write vast folios
 Proving that, in all creation,
 Never was and never could be
 Such a thing as Meysenhartus.
 That of straying and of wandering
 Wine and mist are all the reason.

[108]

Spirit credit, at this epoch,
 Stands but poorly. I had rather
 Be a stone to pave the highway,
 Than a paltry, third-rate spirit,
 Such as thou, O Meysenhartus!”

Spake the gnome: “Thou comprehendest
 Of the case no whit, my pine-tree!
 Meysenhartus and his fellows
 Are the rulers of this planet.
 Wheresoe’er, the wide world over,
 Life hath roadways, rough and rugged,
 Where poor mortal feet must wander,
 And where’er a man is treading,
 Sad or merry, such a pathway,
 He is in our jurisdiction.
 They may question our existence,
 All the same, they are our vassals!
 And this very day I purpose
 Somewhat to mislead a stripling,
 And to teach him as he wanders,
 All the puissance of the spirits.”

From the mountain came young Werner
 Who his new-born love had carried
 Far within the leafy forest.
 And such happiness as mortals
 Here below may taste, he tasted.
 Joyous hope heaved high his bosom.
 Through his brain were coursing, coursing,
 Wondrous thoughts and wondrous fancies,
 That to love-songs were transmuted,
 As the caterpillars turn them
 Into butterflies most dainty.
 Now he fain would wend him homewards,
 But the wood-imp, Meysenhartus,
 Hid in dust the rightful pathway,
 And, confused, in place of turning

[109]

Toward the Rhine, he wandered inland.
 Once again the wood-imp clambered,
 Chuckling, to the pine-tree’s summit,
 Chuckling, swung upon the branches,
 Mocking murmured: “That man’s taken!”

Werner, heeding not the pathway,
 Gained, at length, a copse of hazels
 Where a wall of rock towered o’er him.
 All was cool, and green, and shady.
 Holly, sloe, and ivy bourgeoned,
 Nestling by the barren rock-face;

Close at hand a spring was purling.
 Through the bushes Werner hastened,
 Fain to drink the limpid water.
 Dense the brushwood grew, and twisted,
 And he stepped with sturdy footfall.
 Suddenly he heard an outcry,
 Shrillest squeaking, such as rises
 When a mole within his dwelling
 In a snare is taken captive,
 And to daylight swiftly hurried.
 From the grass a little being,
 Grumbling, rose, and stood before him.
 Scarcely three feet did he measure,
 Grey he was, and somewhat hunchbacked,
 But his features were full dainty
 And his shrewd, green eyes flashed rarely.
 Heedfully he smoothed his garment
 Till its folds fell trimly downward,
 Stammering spake: "Sir, you have trodden
 On my toe, and that ungently."
 Said young Werner: "I regret it."
 Said the pigmy: "And what seek you,
 May I ask, in this our valley?"
 Said young Werner: "No wise seek I
 The acquaintance of such futile,
 Contradictions little beings,
 [110]

Who, like locusts in the clover,
 Hop, and chatter senseless questions."
 "So you speak," the pigmy answered,
 "All you stupid, clumsy creatures!
 With your monstrous feet a-stamping
 Till the ground beneath you trembles.
 Yet you only to the surface
 Cleave, as cleave the shining beetles
 To the bark, their fragile dwelling.
 Ah! ye deem ye are the masters
 Of the world. Ye will not listen
 To the beings who are working,
 Deep below and far above ye,
 Still and silent, yet all-powerful.
 O you stupid, clumsy creatures!
 By stone walls you live surrounded,
 Where with toil within the hotbed
 Of your brains you raise exotics
 And you call them Art and Science.
 Sooth, by Mica, Quartz, and Felspar,
 Many things you've still to study,
 Ere for you the true light rises!"

Quoth young Werner: "You are lucky
 That to-day my humour's placid,
 Else I might have ta'en a fancy,
 As reward for this your sermon,
 By your long, grey beard to knit you
 To the bush of holly yonder!
 But to-day my heart is glowing,

Basking in love's genial sunshine,
 Whereof you have got no notion –
 'Spite of all your Quartz and Felspar.
 And to-day to my embraces
 All creation fain I'd welcome,
 Largess rain on every creature.
 Say, then, who you are and whether
 I can render you a service.”

[111]

Quoth the greybeard: “That sounds better
 I will hold some converse with you.
 Gnomes, you men are pleased to call us.
 Deep we dwell in clefts and fissures,
 Deep we dwell in caves and grottos,
 Guarding gold and silver treasures,
 Polishing the clear rock-crystals,
 Bearing coals to feed the furnace
 Glowing in the old earth's centre.
 And without our careful stoking
 Had you all, long since, been frozen.
 You may see our chimneys smoking
 At Vesuvius and Ætna.
 And we watch in silence o'er you,
 You ungrateful human beings.
 Cradle-songs from out our caverns
 Sing we to the brawling rivers,
 Lest they any hurt should do you.
 And we prop the crumbling boulders,
 Fettering fast the wicked glaciers.
 And we cook the acrid rock-salt,
 Mixing sanative ingredients
 In the springs, that you may drink them.
 Measureless and never ceasing
 Is the greybeard pigmy's labour
 In the workshop of creation.
 Time was when you mortals knew us,
 When old priests and cunning women
 Sought us out in lone, deep places,
 And they listened when they heard us
 At our toil, and then they told you:
 'In the caves the gods are dwelling.'
 Now you are grown strangers to us,
 Though we fain would open for you
 Peeping-holes beneath the surface.
 And we welcome, in especial,
 Every honest German scholar,
 For their hearts are true and loyal

[112]

And they see far more than others.
 Such, I ween, are you; then, follow.
 In this valley is my grotto.
 Bend your haughty head a little,
 And I straight will show the entry.”

Quoth young Werner: “At your service.”
 Whereupon, the pigmy, heedful,
 Pushed aside a bush of holly

Which against the rock was growing,
 And revealed a lowly passage.
 "For your eyes a light is needful,"
 Spake the gnome, rubbed flints together,
 From the sparks a pine-torch kindled,
 And strode onward with his flambeau.
 Werner followed, bent half double,
 And, at places, wellnigh creeping,
 For the rock hung low above him.
 But, at last, the passage broadened,
 Opening in a lofty grotto.
 Vaulted was the roof of limestone,
 Sheer the slender, spiral columns
 From above sank graceful downward.
 Stalactites, in motley pattern,
 Wove a strange, unearthly texture
 O'er the walls, that gleamed and glistened.
 Here the rock seemed weeping tear-drops,
 There lay wealth of deep-hewn carving,
 Or of giant boughs of coral.
 Faintest subterranean shimmer,
 Faintly tinted, filled the chamber,
 While the torchlight smote the stonework
 Glittering, dazzling on its edges.
 From the depths a rushing sounded,
 As of far-off mountain torrents.
 Sore amazed, on all this splendour
 Gazed young Werner, half believing
 That he dreamt of some fair temple,
 [113]
 Mystic, lofty; and his spirit
 Turned to solemn thoughts and holy.

Spake his leader: "Now, young master,
 Say, what think you of the grotto,
 Silent, secret, of the wood-gnome?
 This is but a work-day cottage.
 In the north are many fairer,
 Fairer, too, in Alpine chasms;
 But the fairest may be sought for
 Where the blue Mediterranean
 Laves the wondrous cliffs of Capri.
 There, athwart the blue sea-pavement
 Soaring, rise the lofty arches.
 Through the gloom, comes flashing, sparkling,
 Fire from out the dancing billows,
 And the waves the inlet cover.
 There our gay Italian brothers
 Sport and splash with dainty Nereids,
 Daughters of the hoary ocean.
 And the fisher shuns the grotto.
 Some day shall a highly favoured
 German Sunday's child behold it,
 Such as thou, a wandering minstrel,
 Or a merry-hearted painter.
 But now, come. Our way lies onward."

Forward, with the torch, he hastened.
 In dark depths could be discovered,
 Bristling one beyond another,
 Rugged rocks, in wild confusion.
 O'er them hastened, foaming, frothing,
 Toward th' abyss a hidden torrent.
 Clambering over lofty boulders
 Came they to another chamber.
 'Twas more homelike here; four-cornered
 Rose the rocky walls above them,
 Like a natural hermitage.

[114]

All around stood slender pillars,
 From the vaulted roof down dropping.
 Slowly, through uncounted ages
 Of a growth as sure as silent,
 These great stalactites were fashioned.
 While still others hung unfinished.
 On the pillars knocked the pigmy,
 And in deepest, strangest, fullest,
 Rhythmic unison, they answered.
 "They are tuned," he told young Werner,
 "To the music of the spheres."

In the chamber lay a boulder,
 Smooth and rounded like a table.
 There beside it, silent, rigid,
 Sat a man, and, as in slumber,
 On his hand his head he rested.
 Stony were his haughty features,
 By the fire of life no longer
 Lighted up. Full many a tear-drop
 From his darkened eyes had fallen.
 Changed to stone, they now were cleaving
 To his beard and to his garments.
 Shuddering, Werner gazed upon him,
 Shuddering asked: "Is he a statue,
 Or a man of blood and sinew?"

"'Tis the Silent Man," his leader
 Made him answer. "'Tis my comrade,
 'Tis my guest, my friend most trusted,
 Whom I here long years have sheltered.
 Erst was he a haughty mortal,
 And I met him in the valley
 And the pathway would have shown him,
 To the hamlet, to his brethren.
 But he shook his head, and scoffing,
 Rang upon my ear his laughter.
 Strange and potent words he uttered,

[115]

Now like prayers devout and pious,
 Like a psalm, such as we chant them
 Nestling in the old Earth's bosom,
 Now like curses hurled toward Heaven.
 Much there was I understood not.
 Yet it woke a memory in me

Of the old, creative ages
 When the Titans, fell and furious,
 From the ground tore rocks and mountains
 O'er our heads, and we, in terror,
 Deep in caves were fain to hide us.
 On the man I had compassion
 And I brought him to my grotto,
 Where he dwelt contented with me.
 Much he loved to watch and listen
 To our multifarious doings.
 Soon of all our gnomish customs
 He was master. Oft, together,
 Would we sit and, silent, listen
 How the stalactites were growing.
 Many an evening, too, we chatted,
 Talking subterranean gossip.
 Only if I turned our converse
 On mankind, his mood grew angry.
 Stern he looked, and once, in fury,
 Broke to fragments seven pillars.
 When the sun and fair, blue heaven
 I would praise, he made me answer:
 'Prate no more of sun and heaven!
 In the sun's bright rays above us
 Serpents crawl, and serpents sting;
 Mortals live, and mortals hate.
 And across the starry heavens
 Questions stand for ever waiting
 For an answer, – Who can give it?'
 So he dwelt within my grotto.
 And the grief which raged within him
 Waned into a tranquil sadness.
 [116]
 Oft I saw him softly weeping;
 Oft when tuneful notes were rippling
 Through the slender, hollow columns,
 In sweet songs his voice was lifted.
 Ages passed, and he grew stiller.
 If I asked what ailed him, smiling
 He would take my hand and answer:
 'Many sweet songs could I sing thee,
 But the sweetest have I never
 Sung thee yet; its name is Silence.
 Silence – Silence: oh most rarely
 Is it learnt in this thy grotto,
 And I grow devoutly humble.
 But the cold, – the cold is bitter:
 Gnome! my weary heart is freezing.
 Gnome, dost thou, too, know what Love is?
 If, in digging after diamonds,
 Thou shouldst find it, take it with thee,
 Keep it safe within thy grotto,
 And thou nevermore shalt shiver!'
 "'Twas the latest word he said me.
 Now, for years, has he sat silent
 By yon rock. He is not living,

Is not dead, but slowly, slowly,
 Into stone he, too, is changing.
 And I tend my silent comrade,
 Deep compassion in my bosom.
 Oft I cause the echoing pillars
 To resound, to cheer his silence,
 For I wot he loves to hear them.
 Pardon me, if I'm in error
 When I take you for a player,
 And now claim your proffered service:
 Make my silent man some music."

So he spake, and sadly Werner
 Grasped his trumpet. Sad and wistful
 [117]

Rang his blowing through the grotto,
 All instinct with deepest pity.
 But, eftsoons, his love flashed o'er him,
 And, like strains of gladness hasting
 From afar, came joyous pealings,
 Ever fresher, fuller, truer,
 Till, at length, they soared triumphant,
 Like a hymn on Easter morning.
 And the silent man who sat there
 Nodded with his head approval.
 "Fare thee well. Dream on all peaceful,
 Silent man in silent grotto,
 Till thy stony doom is cancelled
 By the fulness of thy knowledge,
 And the fulness of thy love."

Through the cavern backward hastened
 Werner and his grizzled leader.
 When the hall they once more entered
 Raised the gnome a block of limestone
 And disclosed a niche where, glistening,
 Precious stones were heaped together.
 Writings lay there, too, and parchments.
 First an amethyst he singled,
 Wanly gleaming, then a handful
 From among the yellowing papers,
 And gave both to Werner, saying:
 "Take these gifts as a remembrance.
 If, above, life grows too checkered
 Know that here a shelter waits thee.
 But if wicked men should tell thee
 That we gnomes have feet like goslings,
 Then, by Mica, Quartz, and Felspar,
 Tell them 'tis the vilest slander!
 Sooth to say, our soles are flattened
 Just the merest trifling hair's-breadth;
 But there's none would hint at goslings
 Save some thick-skulled, boorish peasant.
 [118]

Now, farewell; there lies the outlet.
 Take the torch and light thy footsteps,
 I have other things to think of,"

And he crept into a crevice.

Pensive, through the lowly passage,
Went young Werner, three times roundly
Struck his head against the boulders,
Ere he gained the light of heaven.
Soft the evening chimes were ringing
As he turned his footsteps homeward.

[119]

CANTO XI. THE RISING IN HAUENSTEIN.

FROM the Schwartzwald rose a humming
Humming as of bees a-swariming,
Humming as of gathering tempest.
In the alehouse desperate fellows
Sat, and struck upon the table:
“Bring us wine, and bring it quickly!
Better times are surely coming
For the folk of Hauenstein.”
From his granary the peasant
Fetched his rusty firelock, hidden
'Neath the flooring, fetched his halberd,
Long and fit for sturdy service.
From the walnut-tree the raven
Croaked: “’Tis long that I have fasted.
Peasant’s flesh is sweet and juicy!”

Now, from every holt and hollow
Fared they toward the place of trysting,
Toward the fair at Herrischried.
But they came not, as aforetime,
In their jerkins of black velvet,
In their belts of gayest crimson,
In their ruffles, high and snowy,
These good folk of Hauenstein;
But in harness closely buckled,
Each man wore a leathern doublet.
On the breeze their banner floated
[120]

Graceful, and the morning sunshine
Flashed on pikes and glanced on halberds.
By the market-cross the elders
Of the district stood together,
And the peasants thronged around them.
“Silence, men!” the sergeant shouted.
Silence fell. Upon the church steps
Rose the spokesman of the people,
Holding in his hands a writing,
Stroked his hoary beard and spoke:

“Seeing that the evil war-time
Town and country sore hath ravaged
And the treasury hath emptied,
To provide for these requirements
'Tis our honoured rulers’ pleasure

This new tax to lay upon us:
 For each household seven gulden,
 Two for every man unmarried,
 And the chamberlain is coming,
 Shortly, to enforce its payment.
 Thus the forest-prefect writes us.”

“Blast the chamberlain! Confound him!
 May God damn him!” came in chorus.

“And because the war us also
 Sorely scourged, and much affliction
 Brought on every house and homestead,
 And because among our statutes
 It is written that, excepting
 Those which use and custom sanction,
 We are bound to pay no taxes,
 Many men of great discretion
 Hold such claim to be unlawful,
 Urging us to stand with firmness
 On our rights and ancient charters,
 And to give them *not one kreutzer*.”
 [121]

“*Not one kreutzer!*” came in chorus.

“Therefore are we called together
 That the general voice be taken.”

Like the roar of distant breakers
 Rang the wild, tumultuous voices:
 “Forward, Fridli! Speak up! Silence!
 We will hear what Fridli counsels.
 He sees through it; all we others
 Are of his opinion.” Straightway
 Spake the man whom they had called on.
 Spake, with eyes that glittered slyly,
 Spake, upraised upon a trestle:

“Do you see, ye stupid peasants,
 Now, at last, what all this bodes you?
 Erst your sires their little fingers
 Gave, and now your hand they clutch at.
 Well and good! Eftsoons will follow
 All the skin from off your bodies!
 Whose the right to claim this from us?
 Free, the peasant in the forest
 Dwells, with but the sun above him.
 So ’tis written in our statutes.
 Nought stands there of rent and tribute,
 Nor of vassalage and bondage.
 Yet ’twill come, if you resist not.
 Know you what can give protection?
 Ask the men of Schwytz to tell you,
 Ask the rocks of Appenzell:
 Only this!” He brandished grimly
 O’er his head a flashing halberd.
 “Ah! a snow-white bird was piping
 From a pine-tree, yester midnight:
 ‘Bygone ages, golden ages,

Liberty throughout the forest.’
 If with pike ye seek and firelock
 [122]
 Surely once more ye shall find it.
 Now, amen! My say is spoken.”

From the crowd rose wildest clamour.
 “Bravely spoken!” many shouted;
 “To the devil with our rulers!
 Throw the tax lists in the flames.
 Let these writers make endeavour
 Whether with their largest ink-pots
 They can quench our little bonfire!”
 Quoth another: “Bailiff, Bailiff,
 Late in prison didst thou fling me,
 Scanty fare and cold spring-water!
 Wine, methinks, is in thy cellar,
 Presently we’ll test its flavour.
 Now’s the time to pay old grudges!”
 Shouts a third: “Hast shot already
 Many a grouse, my trusty firelock,
 Now, hurrah, for nobler booty!
 Take good aim; thy shot’s directed
 At the swarthy Double Eagle.”
 Through the crowd such grumblings echoed.
 As, when plague is swiftly spreading,
 All the self-same fever seizes,
 So in every peasant bosom
 Bitter anger now was brewing.
 Vainly spake the hoary Balthes,
 Called the Sage of Willaringen:
 “When a nag’s tail-end is bridled,
 Then no man can ride upon him.
 When the peasant by uprising
 Justice seeks, he goes hind-foremost
 And gets whipping-cheer for supper.
 So the saying went in old times:
 Be obedient to your betters,
 And I think –” but all unwilling
 Here found end his peaceful counsel.
 “Strike him down! Away, old Balthes!
 [123]
 May God damn him! Hoary traitor,
 Faithless to his country’s interests ” –
 Roared around him. Stones were flying,
 Pikes were threatening, and scanty
 His retreat by friends was covered.

“Briefly, then, what boots more speaking?
 Shouted Fridli, o’er the tumult;
 “He who holds our customs sacred,
 And to take the field is ready,
 Let him raise his hand!” And, cheering,
 Every peasant did his bidding.
 Weapons clashed and banners fluttered,
 Warlike shouts awoke the echoes.
 Soon the martial drum was beating,

And they marched, that self-same morning,
 In full force along the river
 To invest the forest townships.

From his pine-tree in the forest
 Looked the wood-elf, Meysenhartus,
 Jeering, on the peasant army.
 “Prosperous journey, good my masters!
 You, methinks, need no misleading,
 You have found a pretty pathway!”

Horsemen riding, Warders blaring,
 Women weeping, children wailing,
 The alarm-bell sounding wildly;
 Through the streets the burghers running:
 “Close the gates and guard the ramparts!
 Plant the cannons on the tower!”

Gazed the Baron from the terrace,
 Marked the movement in the forest, –
 How, by every mountain pathway,
 Dusky masses were descending.

“Do I wake, or am I dreaming?

[124]

Have these peasants, then, forgotten
 That 'tis nigh two hundred summers
 Since such sports have been forbidden?
 Sooth, betwixt the pine-stems, gleaming,
 I can see both pikes and helmets.
 Do ye deem, my forest masters,
 While below us, on the Danube,
 Now the great Imperial Eagle
 Lets the Moslems feel his talons,
 Do ye deem that by the Rhine here
 You may lightly pluck a feather?
 Have a care that this your reckoning
 Prove not false. There are not lacking
 Veteran warriors, such as I am,
 Who can cook you bitter pottage.”

Thus he spake, and swift descending
 To the hall, he donned his buff-coat,
 Donned his mighty trooper's broadsword.
 Then he called his household to him:
 “Get the weapons into order.
 Set a watch upon the ramparts.
 Raise the drawbridge, and give entrance
 To no guest who comes unbidden!
 Master Werner, you must order
 All the rest, must guard my castle,
 And my dearer self, my daughter.
 Do not fear, sweet Margaretha,
 Show yourself a soldier's child.
 'Tis but some few swarthy ravens,
 Hither flown from out the forest,
 Who are doomed their brains to shatter
 'Gainst the bulwarks of our city.
 God protect you! I must leave you,

Duty calls me to the Rathhaus.”

Weeping, sank fair Margaretha
In her father’s arms. He kissed her
[125]

Tenderly upon the forehead.
By the hand he shook young Werner,
Then hied downward to the Market.

Wailing, wended toward the Minster,
All the ladies of the Hochstift:
“Oh be gracious, Fridolinus!”
From his door the “Button’s” landlord
Spake: “And is it time, Sir Baron,
Deep within our deepest cellars
Now to bury all our treasures?”
Quoth the Baron: “Shame upon you!
Time it is to take your weapon
From its nail, and hold the gateway.
Forward, wise and valiant fisher!”

In the Rathhaus sat in council
All the elders of the township.
Many of the white-haired fathers
Pulled a sorry face, as deeming
That the Judgment-day was on them.
Many a one could feel his failings
Lying heavy on his conscience.
“God be with us in this trial.
And, henceforth, I promise never
To lend money at high interest,
Orphans’ goods to give unjustly,
Sand to mix among the spices.”
And already one had counselled:
“Send the peasant, at the gateway,
Of both meat and wine in plenty.
Send of gold doubloons a handful,
That in peace he may go onward
To the worthy Waldshut burghers.
Let them strike a bargain with him.”

Here the Baron joined the Council:
“Why, good sirs, I almost fancy
[126]
That you hang your heads a trifle!
Let us stoutly to the business.
When the Swedes were camped before us
Things looked somewhat black, I grant ye.
This is but a feast-day’s frolic.
Ye have late relaxed your leisure
With sweet music; ye are skilful
Nimbly to discourse and rarely.
Courage, then, my brave musicians!
Let us play a merry measure.
Those who now approach the gateway
Will, I trow, dance briskly homeward,
Ere the Kaiser sends his troopers,
Who shall blare a stern Finale.”

Thus he spake. In times distracted
 Oft a bracing word works wonders,
 Uttered on the right occasion.
 With another's courage many
 Nerve their own. A hundred weaklings
 By one steadfast will are strengthened.
 At the Baron's grey moustachios
 Stared the fathers, courage mustering.
 "Ay, that is our own opinion!
 We will hold the city bravely,
 And the Baron shall command us,
 For he knows the way to do it.
 Lightning strike these cursed peasants!"

Through the streets the alarm was ringing.
 To the gateway, where a bulwark
 Led toward a low intrenchment
 Hied the young men, armed completely.
 On the bastion stood, portentous,
 Fludribus, the fresco-painter.
 Some few striplings had he gathered
 Round him, who were dragging upward,
 Valiantly, an ancient cannon.

[127]

Laughingly the Baron marked them,
 But Sir Fludribus spake proudly:
 "He whom Art has consecrated
 Is enhaloed with the radiance
 Of a universal culture.
 Give him scope, and as a Statesman,
 He will shine, or as Field-Marshal.
 Here I saw the point of danger,
 With that glance which all comprises.
 And, as erst the famed Cellini
 At the siege of Rome's fair city,
 Shot, himself, the valiant Bourbon,
 Ay, and eke the Prince of Orange,
 So – alas! on foes less worthy –
 Fludribus will fire this cannon!"

"Show some mercy on the wretches!"
 Quoth the Baron! "but make ready
 Store of cannon-balls and powder,
 For your field-piece, e'en if planted,
 Will not charge itself, I fancy."

Swift approaching by the river
 Onward came the host of peasants.
 Grumbling gazed they, as they neared them,
 On the township's lofty ramparts,
 On the stoutly bolted gateway.
 "Reynard's run to earth, old rascal!
 Ay, but we can dig out Reynard!"
 Shouted Fridli to the others.
 "Forward! follow where I lead you."
 Rolling drums now beat the onset,
 Clumsy firelocks crashed a volley,
 Through the smoke, with shouts ferocious,

Charged a troop against the gateway.
 All around the city's ramparts
 Had the Baron, cool and careful,
 To each man his place allotted.

[128]

All were ready, and in silence
 Each the savage herd awaited.
 "Pity that such splendid vigour,"
 Thought the Baron, "should be wasted.
 One could drill these clumsy lubbers
 Into very flowers of soldiers."

"Now then! Fire!" his voice resounded
 Toward the stormers flew a greeting,
 Made of sharp and well-aimed bullets.
 Quick to left and right they scattered,
 As the crows do, when a sportsman,
 Lurking, sends a shot among them.

Prone upon the daisied greensward
 Many lay. Beneath a pear-tree
 Growing close beside the river,
 Spake a youth, in accents feeble,
 To his swiftly flying comrades:
 "Greet for me my good, old mother.
 Greet my love, Verena Frommherz.
 Tell her she may wed in comfort
 Long-legged Hans of Solothurn,
 For her Seppli's heart's-blood reddens
 Now the white sand by the river."

While before the gate they skirmished
 Others, meanwhile, were espying
 Whether they could seize the city
 By the rear. Upon the river,
 Hard at hand, there lay a hamlet,
 Where, beside some huts of wattles,
 Lay great boats for salmon-fishing.
 Hither hied another party.
 One audacious youth from Karsau
 Led them on. He knew each pathway
 By the Rhine, and many a salmon
 In the darkness had he taken

[129]

From the nets of other people.
 In three well-manned crafts they started,
 Rowing stoutly up the river.
 Shimmering willows, densest copsewood,
 And the Rhine's capricious windings
 Hid them from all eyes suspicious.
 Where the garden of the castle
 Jutted out above the water,
 On its buttressed wall supported,
 Did they find an easy landing.

On the roof of the pavilion
 Where Sir Fludribus had painted,
 Sat the tom-cat Hiddigeigei.

All astounded, marked that worthy
 Pikeheads flashing far beneath him,
 Marked how one, his naked rapier
 'Twixt his teeth was scrambling upward;
 Then another and another.
 And in wrath, quoth Hiddigeigei:
 "Certes, it were only justice
 That a sapient cat should hold him
 Neutral in such stupid squabbles.
 Yet I hate these base-born peasants,
 Hate the savour of the cow-stalls;
 And their victory would ruin
 All the delicate aroma
 Of our European culture.
 Have a care, sirs! Since the moment
 When the Capitol resounded
 To the shrill and warning cackle
 Rising o'er the storm barbaric,
 Has the animal creation
 Ta'en its serious part and portion
 In the history of the world."

Wrathfully he held his head up,
 Wrathfully he curved his backbone,
 [130]
 And gave vent to an appalling,
 To a fell, ear-piercing mewing.
 From the tower where he was stationed
 Anton heard his caterwauling,
 Cast a glance involuntary
 Toward the spot whence it proceeded.
 "Gracious Heaven! Saints defend us!
 Enemies within the garden!"
 Quick his signal-shot gave warning
 To the castle's other guardians.
 Werner came, and, swift as lightning,
 He disposed his slender forces.
 "Go thou here – thou there – be ready!
 See ye do not fire too early!"
 Loud and high his heart was beating:
 "Now, my sword, acquit thee bravely!"

Wellnigh dry and very shallow
 Was the moat, and 'mong the rushes
 Rose a grove of pikes and broadswords.
 Desperate fellows clambered upward,
 O'er the weather-beaten stonework.
 Firelocks cracking, arrows whizzing,
 Hatchets ringing on the gateway,
 Tumult, crashing, shouts defiant:
 "Yield thee, yield thee, haughty castle!"
 Meantime many a fall resounded,
 Hollow, in the moat's dull waters,
 And the waves with gore were reddened.
 Clear, above the uproar rising,
 Werner's voice rang by the gateway:
 "Well done, Anton! Aim with caution

At yon fellow on the left, there.
Him upon the right I'll manage.
Sure and steady! They are flying!"

Thus the first assault was parried,
And with bleeding heads, the peasants
[131]

Backward drew within the shelter
Of the lofty, spreading chestnuts.
Jeeringly they hailed the castle.
"Coward men and coward masters
Love behind stone walls to shelter.
Come to honourable combat,
If ye have a stomach for it!"

"Death and Hell! Let down the drawbridge!"
Werner shouted. "Forward! Cowards?!
Drive the dogs into the river!"
Down the heavy drawbridge clattered,
Out burst Werner, like a tempest,
'Mong the rustic troop, outrunning
E'en the stripling who had led them.
"If thy sword be blunt, thou varlet,
Never heed! My fist is ready!"

Head and shoulders o'er the others
Towered a lusty warrior; boldly
Did his eye flash forth defiance,
From his weather-beaten visage.
One of Wallenstein's old troopers,
Who for sport and love of fighting
Had come forth among the peasants.
"Here, my friend, is steel to swallow!"
Cried young Werner, and his rapier
Whistled, whizzing through the breezes.
But the halberd of the trooper
Turned the blow. "Not bad, my youngster!
Take thy answer." Werner's love-locks
Dripped with blood. Across his forehead
Clove its way the sharp-edged halberd.
But he who the stroke had given
Gave no second. Where his harness
Left his brawny throat uncovered,
Deeply Werner sheathed his rapier.
Yet three steps he staggered bravely,
[132]

Heavily down sank his arm:
"Devil, rake thy fires," he muttered;
"I am coming," and lay lifeless.

Guard thy precious life, young Werner!
Blind with rage the peasants flung them
On the small but dauntless phalanx.
Leaning 'gainst a mighty chestnut
Werner stood, still feebly striving
With his sword himself to cover,
While the Baron's people round him
Bravely fought a losing battle.

Grace of God! His wound was burning,
 From his hand his rapier falling,
 Dim his eyes, the while a foeman
 Toward his breast his steel was pointing,
 When – in time to change our story –
 From the castle rang a flourish,
 And a trumpet blew the onset.
 Then a shot – one fell – a volley –
 “Charge!” the Baron's voice commanded,
 And in wildest flight the peasants
 Scattered headlong toward the river.

Courage, Werner! Friends are coming,
 In their midst comes Margaretha.
 While the fight raged in the garden
 She had climbed the castle ramparts,
 And she blew – herself unwitting
 Why she did it – blew as solace
 To her anguish-laden spirit
 That old battle-charge imperial,
 Which she learnt, 'mid jest and laughter,
 In the honeysuckle arbour.
 And the Baron's men, returning
 From the city-gate, had heard it.
 Wings were added to their footsteps
 By the maiden's call to battle,
 [133]

And they brought much-needed succour
 To their fellows in the garden.
 Woman's heart so soft, so timid,
 What has power to steel thee thus?

“God, he lives!” She bent her gently
 O'er him where upon the greensward
 'Neath the chestnuts, he was lying,
 Stroked the fair, blood-dappled love-locks
 From his forehead: “Hast fought bravely!”
 Feebly Werner raised his eyelids,
 Does he gaze upon vision?
 Then they sank, and, on two weapons,
 He was carried to the castle.

[134]

CANTO XII. YOUNG WERNER AND MARGARETHA.

IN the dim, sweet castle chapel
 Burnt a single lamp that flickered,
 Throwing tender light uncertain
 On the picture o'er the altar,
 Whence the Virgin Queen of Heaven
 Full of grace and love looked down.
 Dewy roses and geraniums
 Had been set before the picture,
 And in prayer knelt Margaretha.

“Mary Mother, full of sorrows,

Mary Mother, rich in graces,
 Thou who all our house hast guarded,
 Guard him, too, whose wounds full grievous
 Have upon a sick-bed laid him.
 And, if it be wrong, forgive me
 That my thoughts unceasing toward him
 Turn them, every heavy moment.”

Hope and trust her spirit flooded
 As she prayed, and Margaretha
 Cheerful climbed the great, stone staircase.
 On the threshold of the sick-room
 Stood the snowy-haired physician,
 Silent beckoning her toward him,
 [135]

And she came, with lightest footfall.
 Well he guessed the anxious question
 Which upon her lips was trembling,
 And he spake in muffled accents:
 “Take good comfort, fair my mistress
 Blood so fresh and youth so lusty
 Take small count of such a trifle,
 And the harbinger of healing,
 Gentle slumber, now enfolds him.
 Later, he may seek the garden.”
 And he passed. His care awaited
 Many a wound by gun or rapier,
 And he shunned all useless talking.

Lightly, in young Werner’s chamber
 Margaretha stepped, half frightened
 By her daring, shy yet eager
 To confirm the leech’s tidings.
 Softly sleeping lay young Werner.
 Pale, and like a marble statue
 In his beauty, and in dreaming
 Laid his right hand o’er his forehead
 Freshly scarred, as one might lay it
 In whose eyes the sun is dazzling.
 Round his lips a smile was playing.

Margaretha stood beside him,
 Gazing long, and ever longer.
 So in Ida’s leafy forest
 Gazed, erstwhile, divine Diana,
 On Endymion, fairest sleeper.
 Pity held her eyes enchanted,
 And a fruitful soil is pity
 For young love, that plant capricious.
 From minutest seeds it springeth,
 All the fertile soil, sun heated,
 Interlacing with a thousand
 Finest, densest roots and fibres.

[136]

Three times did sweet Margaretha
 Turn her steps toward the doorway.
 Three times she came back, and softly
 Stepped again beside his pallet.

Physic stood upon the table
 And a cool and healing potion,
 Yet she did not pour the physic,
 Did not mix the cooling potion.
 Shyly, bending low above him,
 Shyly – scarce to breathe she ventured,
 Fearing to disturb his slumbers –
 Gazing long on his closed eyelids
 Till her head bent low and lower,
 Drooping all involuntary
 Toward his lips. Ah! who shall tell me
 All the wondrous wild vagaries
 Of a young poetic passion?
 Wellnigh had my song conjectured
 That she was about to kiss him!
 Nay, she kissed him not. She started,
 All possessed with sudden terror,
 Sighed, and like a deer affrighted,
 Breathlessly she fled the chamber.

As he who in murky dungeon
 Long on mouldering straw has languished
 Gazes round him, stunned and dazzled,
 When once more he walks unfettered:
 “Sun, methinks thy rays are warmer!
 Heaven, sure, thy azure’s deeper!”
 And his eyes are wellnigh blinded
 By the unaccustomed glory.
 So the convalescent enters
 On the life of health, and sees it
 Open to his gaze enchanted
 Fresh and warm and filled with promise,
 Pregnant of a joyous future,
 And he greets it, all exulting.

[137]

“World, how fair thou art!” cried Werner,
 Slowly from the castle stairway
 Toward the flowery garden moving.
 Leaning on his staff he rested,
 Drinking deep the golden sun-rays,
 Drinking deep the blossom’s fragrance,
 In long breaths, then wandered slowly
 To the terrace o’er the river,
 Where he sat in warmest sunshine
 On the stone seat. Bees were humming,
 Butterflies were flitting, dancing
 In and out the chestnut blossoms,
 Fragrant inn for summer wand’ers.
 Green and limpid, softly rippling,
 Bore the Rhine its billows onward.
 Well-equipped, a pine-raft floated,
 Serpent-like, down-stream to Basel.
 By the bank a fisher waded,
 Knee-deep, as he hummed a ditty:
 “Hans he comes with pike and firelock,
 Hans he fain will storm our city,
 Hans his war with Austria wages.

Hans, my friend, thou'lt surely find
 Heavy reckoning comes behind:
 Loose thy pouch and pay thy sport!
 Seven gulden were too many,
 Now they've grown to one-and-twenty.
 Quartered guests are ever costly,
 And the plaster from the surgeon.
 Hans, my friend, thou'lt surely find
 Heavy reckoning comes behind:
 Loose thy pouch and pay thy sport!"

Joyous, Werner gazed around him
 On the river and the landscape.
 But his musing soon was ended.
 On the wall, where glanced the sunlight,
 There was cast a sudden shadow,
 [138]

Shadow as of waving tresses,
 Shadow as of flowing garments,
 And young Werner's heart beat faster.
 Smiling, 'neath the lacing branches,
 See, she cometh, watching gaily
 Hiddigeigeis graceful sporting.
 He had made a white mouse captive
 On the floor of the pavilion,
 And devoured it not, but held it
 With his paw, still gazing on it
 With a lordly condescension.

From his seat arose young Werner
 Greeting her with modest reverence,
 And a fleeting wave of crimson
 Flooded Margaretha's forehead.
 "God be with you, Master Werner!
 Say, how goes it? Still and speechless
 Long I've grieved to see you lying.
 Gladly would I hear your tidings."

"Since my forehead made acquaintance
 With the halberd of the foeman,
 I can scarcely tell," spake Werner,
 "Whither all my thoughts and senses
 Fled away, for clouds and darkness
 Hemmed me in, until, this morning,
 Through my dreams a shining angel
 Came, dispelling all the shadows.
 And it bent itself above me,
 And it spake: 'Arise, young Werner,
 Taste again the joys of living!'
 This is why, with steady footsteps,
 I am hither come this evening."

Margaretha's cheeks were glowing
 Like the rosy dawn of morning
 As he told her of the angel,
 [139]

And she looked aside, then, jesting,
 She broke in: "And are you dreaming

Of the bitter field of battle?
 Somewhat hot the work was, truly.
 Through my memory go surging,
 Still, the shots and shouts and crashing.
 Wot you, 'twas beside yon chestnut
 That you stood, and where the lilac
 Gaily blows, a man lay dying.
 Where yon gossamer is floating
 Lightly on the summer breezes,
 Glanced the pikes and shone the firelocks,
 There, where yet the fresh, white mortar
 Shows the breach but late rebuilt,
 Broke the savage rout a passage.
 And, Sir Werner, in the castle
 Has my father sorely chidden
 Those who with so wanton boldness
 Plunged into such needless danger.”

“Death and – pardon me, fair mistress,
 That my tongue is blunt,” quoth Werner.
 “Some among them dared insult us.
 Could we bear their taunts in silence?
 When I hear such dastard speeches
 Boils my blood, my fist makes ready.
 Fight! No middle course I wot of.
 Fight! Although the world in fragments
 Crashing fall about our ears.
 In my veins no fish-blood courseth.
 E'en to-day, though faint and feeble,
 If need were, I'd take my station
 By yon chestnut-tree again.”

“Wicked man!” chid Margaretha.
 “Would you have a second halberd
 Plough athwart the first its passage?
 Did you know to whom your peril
 [140]
 Brought a weary, heavy heartache;
 Did you know who suffered for you
 Would you still shout: ‘Drop the drawbridge!’
 Though I should with tears entreat you;
 ‘Werner, stay’? Think, Master Werner,
 Also on poor Margaretha,
 Though I –” but she spoke no further.
 All her words impassioned failed her,
 Spake her eyes where lips were speechless.
 Spake her heart where eyes were silent.
 Querying, wondering, gazed young Werner
 In her eyes to read her meaning:
 “Is this death? or find I doubly
 Here to-day my life’s renewing?”
 Margaret to his heart was gathered,
 And their lips were pressed together,
 And the first sweet kiss burned on them,
 Earliest kiss of love, and deepest.

Through the chestnut’s leafy branches
 Golden fell the straying sunbeams

On young Werner's pallid features,
On the joy-illumined maiden.

Earliest kiss of love and sweetest!
Thinking on thee, joy and sadness
Steal upon me; joy that I, too,
Long since tasted of thy sweetness,
Sadness that the hour is over.
And my spirit fain would pluck thee
Of the flowers of song a posy,
Weaving thee a fragrant chaplet.
But in lieu of words rise pictures
To my mind. As I behold them
Flies my soul o'er time and distance.
Far away I see before me,
Fair, the old primeval garden,
And the world, all young and tender
[141]

'Neath the breath of new creation,
For its age by days is numbered.
It is evening, and in heaven
Glances rosy light. The streamlet
Gaily woos the dancing sunbeams;
On its banks the beasts are playing,
Sporting joyously together.
Through the shady palm-tree alleys
Come the earliest pair of lovers,
Gazing, silent, on the distance,
On the young world's evening stillness,
In the eyes of one another.
Then they kiss --
Yet again I look, and sadly
Is unrolled a gloomy prospect.
Night and darkness, storm and tempest,
Mountains rent and mighty waters
From the depths wild surging upward.
The old earth is crushed and conquered,
And this hour will be her latest.
Toward the crag the waves are leaping,
Toward the white-haired man and woman
Toward the last of human beings.
Comes a flash! I see them smiling,
See them kiss, with mute endearments,
Silent kiss; then, darkly roaring,
For its prey the torrent takes them.
And I learn, in this my vision,
That a kiss is more than language,
Is of love the noblest music.
And where words are all too feeble,
Silence best befits the singer.
Wherefore my poor song returneth,
Silent, to the castle garden.

There, upon the terrace staircase,
Lay the worthy Hiddigeigei.
And he marked, with fitting wonder,

[142]

How young Werner wrapped his mistress
 In his arms, and how she kissed him.
 Grumbling, thus he spake within him:
 "In my heart, with deepest wisdom,
 Many a problem have I pondered,
 Sifted throughly and unravelled.
 But yet one remains unfathomed,
 Neither solved nor comprehended:
 Why do people kiss each other?
 'Tis not hate, nor is it hunger.
 They nor bite nor eat each other.
 'Tis not blind and bootless nonsense,
 For they act, in other matters,
 Shrewdly, and with wit and prudence.
 Why then, all in vain I query,
 Why do people kiss each other?
 Why especially the young ones?
 Why these specially in spring-time?
 On this knotty point, to-morrow,
 Will I, on the roof's high gable,
 Make my earnest meditation."

Margaretha culled some roses,
 Gaily seized on Werner's bonnet,
 And with fragrant flowers bedeckt it.
 "Wan-faced man, until they blossom
 On thy cheeks, I charge thee wear them
 In default upon thy bonnet.
 But, now, tell me whence it cometh
 That so dearly I should love thee?
 By no single word hast hinted
 That thy heart was in my keeping,
 Only many a time full shyly
 To my face thine eyes were lifted,
 And for me thou mad'st thy music.
 In thy country, is't the custom
 That instead of words with trumpets,
 Men should storm the hearts of maidens?"

[143]

"Sweet my life, my Margaretha,
 Could I speak?" young Werner answered.
 "Thou wast like some holy picture
 In thy snowy festal garment,
 On the day of Fridolinus.
 And thy glance it was that led me
 To thy noble father's service.
 And thy goodness was the sunshine
 Which illumined all my being.
 By the lake thy hand had woven
 For my head a flowery chaplet,
 But with thorns love's hand had filled it,
 And in silence I have worn it.
 Could I speak? A poor musician,
 Landless, homeless, boldly venture
 To make suit to Margaretha!
 As a pure and gracious angel

Sent to earth for man's protection
 I revered thee; in thy service
 I would fain have died, that morning,
 In the shadow of the chestnuts.
 But my life thou didst restore me,
 Doubly hopeful, doubly precious,
 With thy sacred love emblazoned.
 Take me, then! For since thy kisses
 Burned my lips, my life, my being,
 Dwells in thee. Thine only am I,
 Margaretha, thine for ever."

"Thine, aye thine," said Margaretha.
 "Thine for ever. So love whispers,
 Thou and I, two hearts together,
 Mouth to mouth is sweetest language.
 Wherefore, Master Werner, kiss me
 Once again." She bent toward him.

When the moon has climbed the heaven
 Follow swift the stars uncounted.

[144]

So, upon their lips' first chirrup,
 Followed fast a flight of kisses.
 But the number that were stolen,
 And returned with tender jesting,
 That my song could never tell you.
 Poesy and cold statistics
 Stand in sadly strained relations.

But across the garden hastening
 Anton comes, announcing gravely:
 "Hearty greetings to my mistress
 From the ladies of the Hochstift,
 Who on May-day to the forest
 With us fared, to see the fishing.
 And they hope for better tidings
 Of the health of Master Werner."

[145]

CANTO XIII. HOW YOUNG WERNER LEFT THE CASTLE.

NIGHT, how long, how fearful art thou,
 When upon the weary eyelids
 Slumber falls not with the shadows,
 Falls no peaceful dream oblivious!
 Restless thoughts go sadly mining
 In the ashes of the bygone,
 Raking 'mid its crumbling ruins,
 Never lingering in gladness
 On its joys, but dwelling only
 On its gloomy, mournful pictures,
 Where the light of day falls never.
 Unrefreshed, the sleepless spirit
 Ranging far, alert and dauntless,
 Forges plans and resolutions,

Building gorgeous, airy castles;
 But like owls and bats ill-omened,
 Swarms of doubts flit round about them,
 Scaring feeble hope and courage.

Midnight struck upon the belfry.
 Sleepless in his turret-chamber
 Werner sat upon his pallet.
 Through the casement glimmered faintly,
 Pale and wan, the rays of moonlight,
 And far off the Rhine was rushing.
 Softly on his vision floated
 Dreamlike figures, shifting ever.

[146]

First, he deemed it was a Feast-day.
 Bells were ringing, horses neighing,
 Upwards, through the leafy forest,
 Came a bridal train resplendent,
 He in front, in festal garments,
 By his side sweet Margaretha,
 Myrtle in her golden tresses.
 In the hamlet reigned rejoicings,
 And each narrow path and alley
 Had been strewn with fragrant blossoms.
 At the church door, in his vestments,
 Stood his aged pastor, beckoning,
 With his hand upraised in blessing.

But the vision found no ending,
 And he fancied, as it vanished,
 At the door he heard a knocking,
 And with lurching gait there entered
 His old tippling friend, Perkêo.
 Bright, athwart the dusky chamber,
 Gleamed his nose, all red and shining,
 And he spake, in hoarsest accents:
 "Fool, thrice fool, with love to meddle!
 Love is but a fire deceitful
 Burning him who blows upon it.
 Thou art not a charcoal-burner!
 Come where flows the limpid Neckar,
 Where the mighty Tun awaits thee,
 In my philosophic cellar.
 Stuff enough is left within it
 All thy glowing love to quench!"

Then again it changed. To battle
 He had ridden 'gainst the Moslem.
 Sabres rang, 'mid shouts of "Allah!"
 And he slew a gallant Pasha,
 Bore the Crescent from his standard
 To the General, Prince Eugene.

[147]

And he clapped him on the shoulder:
 "Bravely done, my gallant Captain!
 From the field his thoughts flew backward
 To the far-off days of childhood,
 And his nurse sang in the garden:

“Squirrel clambered up the blackthorn,
 Squirrel fain would reach the top,
 Squirrel tumbled on the daisies.
 If so high he had not clambered,
 Then so far he had not tumbled,
 And his leg he ne'er had broken!”

Thus all sleepless sat young Werner.
 Sprang, at last, from off his pallet,
 Paced the room with restless footsteps,
 Up and down, while still before him
 Threatening stood the self-same question:
 “Dare I face the Baron’s anger?”
 Love itself seemed joy unlawful,
 Stolen joy, himself a robber
 Who should fly before the dawning
 Far away. But, while he pondered,
 Through the dusk of early morning,
 In his ancient, youthful beauty
 Rose the sun in all his glory.
 “Shame on thee, faint heart!” cried Werner.
 “I will dare and I shall win her!”

At his morning meal the Baron
 Sat, deep poring o’er a letter
 Which the day before had reached him.
 From afar a post had ridden,
 From the Danube, deep in Swabia,
 Where the baby river ripples,
 Gleeful, through a narrow valley.
 Lofty crags jut sharply o’er it
 And its limpid waters mirror,
 Clear and bright, their rugged outlines,
 [148]
 And the tender green of beech-woods.
 Thence the messenger had ridden.
 This the purport of the letter:

“My old comrade, do you ever
 Think of Hans von Wildenstein?
 Down the Rhine and down the Danube
 Many drops of clearest water
 Must have run to reach the ocean,
 Since we lay beside our watch-fires,
 In our last campaign together.
 And I mark it by my youngster,
 Who has grown a lusty fellow,
 And his years count four-and-twenty.
 First, as page, he went to Stuttgart,
 To the Duke, and then to College
 To old Tübingen, I sent him.
 If I reckon by the money
 That he squandered, it is certain
 He must be a mighty scholar.
 Now by me at home he tarries,
 Chasing deer and hares and foxes,
 And, when other sport is lacking,
 Chasing pretty peasant maidens.

And 'tis time that he were broken
 To the wholesome yoke of marriage.
 Now, methinks, you have a daughter
 Who a fitting bride would make him.
 'Twixt old comrades, such as we are,
 Many words are surely needless,
 So, Sir Baron, I would ask you
 Would it please you if my Damian
 To your castle rode a-wooing,
 Rode a-wooing to the Rhineland?
 Send me speedy answer. Greetings
 From old Hans von Wildenstein.
 Postscript. – Do you still remember
 That great fray we fought at Augsburg
 [149]
 With the horsemen of Bavaria?
 And the rage of yon rich miser;
 And his most ungracious lady?
 Why, 'tis two-and-thirty years since!"

Toilsomely the Baron laboured
 At his comrade's crabbed writing,
 And a full half-hour he puzzled,
 Ere he mastered all its import.
 Laughing then he spake: "These Swabians
 Are, in sooth, most knowing devils!
 They are lacking in refinement,
 Somewhat coarse in grain and fibre,
 Yet of wit and prudence plenty
 In their rugged pates is garnered.
 Many a brainless coxcomb's noddle
 They could stock, and never miss it.
 And my valiant Hans manœuvres
 Rarely, like a veteran statesman.
 His poor, mortgaged, mouldering owl's nest
 By the Danube would be bolstered
 Bravely by a handsome dowry.
 Yet the scheme deserves a hearing.
 Far and wide throughout the kingdom
 Are the Wildensteins respected,
 Since with Kaiser Barbarossa
 To the Holy Land they journeyed.
 Let the varlet try his fortune!"

To the Baron entered Werner.
 Slow his gait and black his jerkin,
 As on feast-days. Melancholy
 Sat upon his pallid features.
 Jestingly the other hailed him:
 "I was in the act of sending
 Honest Anton out to seek you.
 Pray you, mend your pen and write me,
 As my trusty scribe, a letter,
 [150]
 Letter of most weighty import.
 For a knight has written asking
 Tidings of my lady daughter,

And he seeks her hand in marriage
 For his son, the young Sir Damian.
 Tell him, then, how Margaretha
 Has grown tall and fair and stately.
 Tell him – but you need no prompting.
 Fancy you a painter – paint him,
 Black on white, her living image,
 Fairly, and forget no detail.
 Say, if 'tis the youngster's pleasure,
 I shall make no opposition
 If he saddle and ride hither."

"If he saddle and ride hither –"
 Spake young Werner, as if dreaming,
 To himself; and somewhat sharply
 Quoth the Baron: "But what ails you
 That you wear a face as lengthy
 As a Calvinistic preacher's
 On Good Friday? Has the fever
 Once more taken hold upon you?"

Gravely made reply young Werner:
 "Sire, I cannot write the letter,
 You must seek another penman,
 Since I come myself to ask you
 For your daughter's hand in marriage."

"For my – daughter's – hand in marriage?"
 Gasp'd the Baron, sore bewildered
 In his turn; and wryly twitching
 Worked his mouth, as his who playeth
 On a Jew's harp. Through his left foot
 Shot a bitter throb of anguish.

"My young friend, the fever blazes
 In your brain-pan like a furnace.

[151]

Go, I rede you, to the garden
 Where there plays a shady fountain.
 If you dip your head beneath it
 Thrice, the fever straight will vanish."

"Noble sir," rejoined young Werner,
 "Spare your gibes. You may require them,
 Peradventure, when the wooer
 Out of Swabia rideth hither.
 Sober come I, free from fever,
 On a very sober errand,
 And of Margaretha's father
 Ask, once more, her hand in marriage."

Darkly frowning spake the Baron:
 "Do you force me, then, to tell you
 What your own wit should have taught you?
 Sore averse am I to meet you
 With harsh earnest, for the pike-thrust
 That so late your forehead suffered,
 Have I not forgotten, neither
 In whose service you received it.
 Yet he only may look upward

To my child, whose noble lineage
 Makes such union meet and fitting.
 For each one of us has Nature
 Limits strait and wise appointed,
 Where, within our proper circle,
 We may fitly thrive and prosper.
 From the Holy Roman Empire
 Has come down the social order
 Threefold, Noble, Burgess, Peasant;
 Each within itself included,
 From itself itself renewing,
 Full of health abides and hearty.
 Each is thus a sturdy pillar
 Which the whole supports, but never
 Prospers any intermixture.
 [152]

Wot ye what that has for issue?
 Grandsons who of all have something
 Yet are altogether nothing.
 Shallow, empty, feeble mongrels,
 Tottering, unloosed and shaken
 From tradition's steadfast foothold.
 Sharp-edged, perfect must each man be.
 And within his veins, as heirloom
 From the foregone generations,
 He should bear his life's direction.
 Therefore equal rank in marriage
 Is demanded by our usage,
 Which, by me, as law is honoured.
 And across its fast-fixed ramparts
 I will have no stranger scramble.
 Item: shall no trumpet-blower
 Dare to court a noble maiden!"

Thus the Baron. Sorely troubled
 By such serious and unwonted
 Theoretic disquisition,
 Had he pieced his words together.
 By the stove the cat was lying,
 Hiddigeigei, listening heedful,
 With his head approval nodding
 At the close. Yet, musing, pressed he
 With his paw upon his forehead,
 Deep within himself reflecting:
 "Why do people kiss each other?
 Ancient question, new misgiving!
 For I thought that I had solved it,
 Thought a kiss was an expedient
 Swift another's lips to padlock,
 That no word of cruel candour
 Issue forth. But this solution
 Is, I fear me, quite fallacious.
 Else my youthful friend, most surely,
 Would, long since, have kissed my master."
 [153]

To the Baron spake young Werner,
 And his voice was low and muffled:

"Sire, I thank you for your lesson.
 In the glamour of the pine-woods,
 In the May month's radiant sunshine,
 By the river's crystal billows
 Did mine eyes o'erlook the ramparts
 Raised by men, which lay between us.
 Thanks for this reminder timely.
 Thanks, too, for the hours so joyous
 I have spent beneath your roof-tree.
 But my span is run; the order
 'Right about!' your words have given me.
 And, in sooth, I make no murmur.
 As a suitor worthy of her
 One day I return, or never.
 Fare you well! Think kindly of me."
 So he said, and left the chamber,
 Knowing well what lay before him.

Long, with troubled mien, the Baron
 Scanned the door through which he vanished.
 "Sooth, it grieves me sore," he muttered.
 "If the brave lad's name were only
 Damian von Wildenstein!"

Parting, bitter hour of parting!
 Ah, who was it first conceived thee?
 Sure, some chilly-hearted mortal
 By the distant Arctic Ocean.
 Freezing blew the North Pole zephyrs
 Bound his nose; sore pestered was he
 By his wife, unkempt and jealous.
 E'en the whale's delicious blubber
 Tickled not his jaded palate.
 O'er his ears a yellow sealskin
 Drew he; in his fur-gloved right hand
 Grasped his staff, and nodding curtly
 [154]
 To his stolid Ylaleyka,
 Uttered first those words ill-omened:
 "Fare thee well, for I must leave thee!"

Parting, bitter hour of parting!
 In his turret chamber, Werner
 Girded up his few belongings,
 Girded up his slender knapsack.
 Threw a last regretful greeting
 To the whitewashed walls familiar,
 Loth to part, as from old comrades.
 Farewell spake he to none other.
 Margaretha's eyes of azure
 Dared he never more encounter.
 To the castle court descending
 Saddled swift his faithful palfrey.
 Then there rang an iron hoof-fall,
 And a drooping, joyless rider
 Left the castle's peace behind him.

In the lowland by the river

Grows a walnut-tree. Beneath it
 Once again he reined his palfrey,
 Once again he grasped his trumpet.
 From his sorrow-laden spirit
 Upward soared, his farewell greeting,
 Winged with saddest love and longing.
 Soared – ah, dost thou know the fable
 Of the song the swan sang dying?
 At her heart was chill foreboding,
 But she sought the lake's clear waters
 Yet once more, and through the roses,
 Through the glistening water-lilies,
 Rose her plaintive song regretful:
 "Fairest world, 'tis mine to leave thee,
 Fairest world, I die unwilling!"
 [155]

Thus he blew. Was that a tear-drop
 Falling, glancing, on the trumpet?
 Was it but a summer rain-drop?
 Onwards now! His spurs relentless
 In his palfrey's flanks he buried,
 And was borne in rousing gallop
 To the outskirts of the forest.

[156]

CANTO XIV.
 THE LITTLE BOOK OF SONGS.

WERNER'S ridden far away,
 Margaret dwells at home with grief;
 They shall meet again one day –
 Love is strong, and years are brief.

So, lest fissures deep and long
 Break the sequence of my rhyme,
 Let the pause be filled with song,
 Bright as roses, sweet as thyme.

[157]

YOUNG WERNER'S SONGS.

I.
 O LOVE, when first I saw thy face,
 My tongue was dumb in me,
 But all my thoughts flowed out apace
 In swelling harmony.

In trumpet-blasts my heart I show,
 As o'er the grass I move;
 Poor trumpeter, I can but blow –
 I may not speak my love.

II.

Upon the sixth of March, the day
 When first I saw thy face,
 A bolt from heaven cleft its way
 To my heart's hiding-place.

Now all I was is burnt and dead
 But 'mid the ruins there,
 My love's dear name is garlanded,
 Like ivy green and fair.

III.

Ah, dearest, never shrink and fly
 Nor turn thine eyes away!
 Come out upon the balcony
 And listen to my lay.

[158]

To flee from me is all in vain,
 My music fills the air,
 And ere I pause, the flowing strain
 Turns to a wondrous stair.

The mounting chords are steps for Love,
 He scales them airily,
 And through thy bolts and bars above,
 Once more he sings to thee.

Then, dearest, never shrink and fly,
 Nor turn thine eyes away;
 Come out upon the balcony,
 And listen to my lay!

IV.

I stood in the storm on the river-bank,
 And a merry blast I blew;
 The trumpet-notes rang wild and sweet,
 O'er the castle walls they flew.

The Water Witch she heard the notes,
 Far down in the depths so clear;
 Up through the flood she rose in haste,
 These strange, new sounds to hear.

Down to the fishes she dived once more,
 And her laughter flowed like wine:
 "O what strange things one lives to see,
 Ye children of the Rhine!

"What do you think he is doing up there,
 As he sits in the pouring rain?
 He is blowing one tune, the tune of his love,
 And, he blows it again and again!"

[159]

V.

O Madam Music, take my thanks,
I praise thee, nothing loth:
For thou hast given me of thy skill,
In voice and fingers both.

Great gift is speech, yet helpless oft
And weak she stands confessed;
For never can we clothe in words
Our deepest thoughts and best.

I care not though my words be few,
And speech in terror flies,
For in my heart who lists may hear
A wondrous murmur rise.

It whispers low, it rings, it grows,
My heart seems cramped and bound,
Till breaking loose they rise and float
The spirit-swarms of sound.

And oft a fool before my love,
I had been forced to stand,
Save for a love-song in my mouth,
My trumpet in my hand.

Then, Madam Music, take my thanks,
I praise thee, nothing loth:
For thou hast given me of thy skill,
In voice and fingers both.

[160]

VI.

No bird's less like another
Than raven to the lark;
My joy I cannot smother
That I'm no raven-clerk.

The world's not made of leather,
In woods no law-books grow;
With heart light as a feather,
My merry notes I blow.

And let them ring and roister
In triumph round and round;
His place is, sure, the cloister,
Who hates the jolly sound.

When ink shall rain in showers,
And sand shall fall like snow,
I'll mourn my ill-spent hours
And let the trumpet go!

VII.

Below the bridge swims Madam Trout,
Her Cousin Salmon too;
Gaily she greets him: "Well, old friend,
How goes the world with you?"

“There's just one thing spoils all my peace,”
 She hears her cousin speak; –
 “May lightning strike that Trumpeter,
 Him and his yellow beak!

[161]

“The whole day long upon the bank
 My gentleman must run,
 And up the Rhine and down the Rhine
 His music's never done!”

But Madam Trout she smiled and said,
 “Dear Cousin, don't be vexed!
 We must excuse the Trumpeter
 For harping on one text.

“Fair Margaret bends in love to him,
 And had she bent to you,
 Yourself, I ween, would, long ere this
 Have learned the trumpet too!”

VIII.

Ah, never give me roses, dear,
 Thy tender faith to prove;
 But be the holly, ever green,
 The emblem of our love.

Her shining leaves, in serried ranks
 Like silent watchmen stand,
 Protect the ripening scarlet fruit,
 But tear the stranger's hand.

The fairest rose at autumn's breath
 Must fade, and fall, and die;
 The holly's modest green will live
 Beneath a winter sky.

[162]

IX.

Softly the fragrant summer night
 Embraces hill and valley;
 Up to the castle, soft and light,
 Through bush and briar I sally.
 I climb up in the linden-tree,
 And in its branches clinging,
 From those green depths I sing to thee,
 The castle hears my singing.

“Young Werner he's the happiest man
 In all the world of story;
 But none shall know, do all they can,
 Who crowns his head with glory.
 Sing ho! sing hey! is all he'll say, –
 How fair and lovely is the May!
 Dear love, I bring thee greeting.”

High in the boughs the nightingale
 Joins sweetly in my singing,
 Her notes fly out o'er hill and dale,
 Their echoes faintly ringing.

And all the birds look out and hear,
 In bush and briar awaking,
 Their little voices, sweet and clear,
 Soon gladsome part are taking:
 "Young Werner he's the happiest man
 In all the world of story;
 But none shall know, do all they can,
 Who crowns his head with glory.
 Sing ho! sing hey! is all he'll say, –
 How fair and lovely is the May!
 Dear love, I bring thee greeting."

[163]

The river hears, and bears it down,
 Through town, and grove, and meadows,
 And faintly now 'tis backward blown,
 Through dim and distant shadows.
 And far above, where breaks the morn,
 Behold two angels flying,
 Hark to their voices through the dawn,
 Like harp-strains softly dying!
 "Young Werner he's the happiest man
 In all the world of story;
 But none shall know, do all they can,
 Who crowns his head with glory.
 Sing ho! sing hey! is all he'll say, –
 How fair and lovely is the May!
 Dear love, I bring thee greeting."

X.

Hark, 'tis my dear old comrade,
 The stork upon his tower!
 He clatters me a greeting,
 The kindest in his power.

See, he is making ready,
 O'er land and sea to fly;
 For when the leaves are falling,
 He bids us all good-bye.

Thou'rt right, old friend, to leave us,
 When all is cold and bare;
 Take Father Nile my greeting,
 And Italy the fair!

There in the South thy dinner
 Is better, I confess,
 Than German frogs and lizards
 And German dreariness!

[164]

God be thy guard, old fellow,
 Where'er thou mayst alight!
 Hast often heard my singing,
 All in the quiet night.

And if thou wert not sleeping,
 Thy nest is built so near,
 Thou surely must have seen it –
 How once she kissed me here.

But hold thy tongue, old comrade,
 The secret's none of thine:
 And, what have Africans to do
 With love beside the Rhine?

XI.

A settled life I laughed to scorn,
 Through all the world would roam;
 When suddenly, one sweet spring morn,
 I found a pleasant home.

But as I thought in peace to dwell,
 The thunder rolled above,
 The lightning chased me as it fell,
 And onward I must rove.

Yet in my heart new flowers are rife,
 Up through the earth they press: –
 Ah, what a dance of fools were life,
 Save for its bitterness!

[165]

XII.

This is the bitterness of life's long story,
 That ever near the rose the thorns are set;
 Poor heart, that dwells at first in dreams of glory,
 The parting comes, and eyes with tears are wet.
 Ah, once I read thine eyes, thy spirit's prison,
 And love and joy in their clear depths could see:
 May God protect thee! 'twas too fair a vision,
 May God protect thee! it was not to be.

Long had I borne with envy, hate and sorrow,
 Weary and worn, by many a tempest tried;
 I dreamed of peace and of a bright to-morrow,
 And lo! my pathway led me to thy side.
 I longed within thine arms to rest, then, risen
 In strength and gladness, give my life to thee:
 May God protect thee! 'twas too fair a vision,
 May God protect thee! it was not to be.

Winds whirl the leaves, the clouds are driven together
 Through wood and meadow beats a storm of rain;
 To say farewell 'tis just the fitting weather,
 For like the sky, the world seems grey with pain.
 Yet good nor ill shall shake my heart's decision,
 Thou slender maid, I still must dream of thee!
 May God protect thee! 'twas too fair a vision,
 May God protect thee! it was not to be.

[166]

SONGS OF THE TOM-CAT HIDDIGEIGEL.

I.

ART is grown a common treasure,
 Far and wide her votaries roam;
 Every man can make at pleasure
 All the songs he needs, at home.

So my skill I fain would try it,
 Spread the poet's wings of flame:
 Who so bold as dare deny it,
 Or despise the Tom-Cat's claim?

It is cheaper, poet-brothers,
 Than 'midst book-shops forth to fare,
 Buying feeble songs by others,
 Bound in gilt and vellum there.

II.

When the storm o'er hill and valley
 Howls, at midnight's darkest hour,
 Clamb'ring over ridge and chimney,
 Hiddigeigei seeks the tower.

Mounts in triumph, like a spirit,
 Stands in all his beauty there,
 Sparks from out his eyes are flashing,
 Flashing from his bristling hair.

[167]

And he sings in wildest measure,
 His old feline battle-song,
 That like distant peals of thunder,
 Through the night is borne along.

Human creatures cannot hear him,
 Each asleep within his house;
 But far down in deepest cellar,
 Hears and straight turns pale the mouse.

Well she knew his awful singing,
 Sore she trembled as she sat:
 Fearful in his wrath and grimness
 Is the ancient Hero-Cat.

III.

Here I sit, with clearest vision
 Gazing on the world and life,
 Gazing from my proud position
 On that scene of party strife.

Smiling from the tower or steeple,
 Lo, the Cat all scornful stares
 At the foolish pigmy people,
 Busied with their trifling cares.

Vain my thoughts – I cannot give them
 Access to my point of sight;
 To their ignorance I leave them –
 Verily my loss is slight!

Warped and poor the human spirit,
 Human deeds of small behoof:
 Calm, in consciousness of merit,
 Sits the Cat upon the roof.

[168]

IV.

O, men do us vast injustice,
 And we look for thanks in vain;
 They misunderstand completely
 All our nature's finer strain.

Waking from a drunken slumber,
 Hark, the mortal, lying flat,
 Mutters, with a throbbing forehead,
 "I'm as nervous as a cat!"

Nervous as a cat – O insult!
 Gentle are our tones and soft;
 Human cries are harsh and boist'rous,
 In the streets I've heard them oft.

Ay, they do us sore injustice;
 Little do their rude hearts know
 All that cats can bear of anguish,
 Fierce and deep, and bitter woe!

V.

O Hiddigeigei hath longed and yearned
 For the True and the Good and the Fair;
 O Hiddigeigei hath wept and mourned,
 With tears and passionate prayer!

O Hiddigeigei with love hath glowed
 For the fairest of feline race;
 And his midnight mewings in melody flowed,
 With all a troubadour's grace.

[169]

O Hiddigeigei his deeds of might
 Hath wrought, like Roland in wrath!
 But mortals put him with blows to flight
 And misfortune dogged his path.

O Hiddigeigei discovered too late
 How false his love could be,
 With a pitiful fellow she linked her fate,
 In contemptible misery.

Thus Hiddigeigei is wofully wise,
 And his languishing dreams are o'er;
 Reserved, defiant, with scornful eyes,
 He values the world no more.

VI.

To the Cat thine hours are hateful,
 Month of May, so fair and green;
 For the torments of thy singing
 Never hath he known so keen.

From the twigs and from the bushes
 All the birds are twittering;
 Far and wide, as for a wager,
 Human throats with music ring.

Hark, the cook sings in the kitchen!
 Is she, too, by love befooled?
 And her strains, in high falsetto,
 Stir my wrath that else had cooled.

Upward still I flee; – in safety
 On the balcony rejoice:
 Woe is me! from out the garden,
 Pierces my blond neighbour's voice.

[170]

E'en the roof, affords no refuge,
 Even there my rest's betrayed;
 In the garret dwells a poet,
 Sings the songs himself hath made.

In despair I seek the cellar,
 Surely there the air is mute!
 Hark! above me they are dancing
 To the bagpipe and the flute.

Senseless race! in self-delusion
 Even thus ye'd sing and feast,
 Though ye heard destroying thunders
 Rolling, tragic, from the East!

VII.

It is May; nor doth he marvel,
 He, the Thinker, who can fathom
 The Phenomena of Being.
 In the Centre of Creation
 Stand two Cats, snow-white and aged,
 Turn the Earth's enormous axis;
 And the System of the Seasons
 Is the outcome of their turning.

Ah, but wherefore in the May-time
 Are my eyes so often moistened,
 Are my heart-strings stirred so quickly
 Wherefore must I, with no respite,
 All the sixteen hours of daylight,
 Toward the balcony be gazing;
 Toward the golden Apollonia,
 Toward the jet-black Jewess, Rachel?

[171]

VIII.

By the storms of fierce temptation
 Undisturbed I long have dwelt;
 Yet e'en pattern stars of virtue
 Unexpected pangs have felt.

Hotter than in youth's hot furnace
 Dreams of yore steal in apace,
 And the Cat's winged yearnings journey,
 Unrestrained, o'er Time and Space.

Naples, land of light and wonder,
 Cup of nectar never dry!
 To Sorrento I would hasten,
 On its topmost roof to lie.

Greets me dark Vesuvius, greets me
 The white sail upon the sea;
 Birds of spring make sweetest concert
 In the budding olive-tree.

Toward the loggia steals Carmela,
 Fairest of the feline race,
 And she softly pulls my Whiskers,
 And she gazes in my face, –

And my paw she gently presses:
 Hark! I hear a growling noise;
 Can it be the Bay's hoarse murmur,
 Or Vesuvius' distant voice?

Nay, Vesuvius' voice is silent,
 For to-day he takes his rest,
 In the yard, destruction breathing,
 Bays the dog of fiendish breast, –

[172]

Bays Francesco the Betrayer,
 Worst of all his evil race;
 And I see my dream dissolving,
 Melting in the sky's embrace.

IX.

Clear is Hiddigeigei's conscience,
 Strict his walk, his conduct wise;
 Yet when neighbour cats are flirting,
 He, indulgent, shuts his eyes.

Lo, he lives for his vocation,
 For the slaughter of the mouse:
 Yet he is not wroth though others
 Live for singing and carouse.

Hiddigeigei speaks, the Ancient: –
 "Pluck the fruits before they fall;
 Should the years of famine follow
 Memory's joys will never pall."

X.

E'en an earnest life and godly
 Cannot shield us from old age,
 And my coat is turning silver,
 As I see with fruitless rage.

Time destroys, relentless, steady,
 All that effort brave hath wrought,
 And against that sharp-toothed foeman
 Weapons fail us – bitter thought!

All unhonoured and forgotten
 Fall we victims to his power: –
 O, in wrath I'd fain devour them,
 Both the clock-hands on the tower!

[173]

XI.

Earth once was untroubled by man, they say,
 Those days are over and fled,
 When the forest primeval crackling lay
 'Neath the mammoth's mighty tread.

Ye may search throughout all the land in vain
 For the lion, the desert's own;
 In sooth we are settled now, 'tis plain,
 In a truly temperate zone.

The palm is borne, in life and in verse,
 By neither the Great nor the Few;
 The world grows weaker and ever worse,
 'Tis the day of the Small and the New.

When we Cats are silenced ariseth the Mouse,
 But she, too, must pack and begone,
 And the Infusoria's Royal House
 Shall triumph, at last, alone.

XII.

Near the close of his existence
 Hiddigeigei stands and sighs;
 Death draws nigh with fell insistence,
 Ruthlessly to close his eyes.

Fain from out his wisdom's treasure,
 Counsels for his race he'd draw,
 That amid life's changeful measure
 They might find some settled law.

Fain their path through life he'd soften,
 Rough it lies and strewn with stones;
 E'en the old and wise may often
 Stumble there, and break their bones.

[174]

Life with many brawls is cumbered,
 Useless wounds and useless pain;
 Oats both black and brave unnumbered
 Have for nought been foully slain.

Ah, in vain our tales of sorrow!
 Hark! I hear the laugh of youth.
 Fools to-day and fools to-morrow,
 Woe alone will teach them truth.

All in vain is history's teaching;
 Listen how they laugh again!
 Hiddigeigei's lore and preaching
 Locked in silence must remain.

XIII.

Soon life's thread must break and ravel,
 Weak this arm, once strong and brave: –
 In the scene of all my travail,
 In the granary, dig my grave.

Warlike glory there I won me,
 All the fight's fierce joy was mine;
 Lay my shield and lance upon me,
 As the last of all my line.

Ay, the last! The children's merit
 Like their sires' can never grow;
 Nought they know of strife of spirit;
 Upright are they, dull and slow.

Dull and meagre; stiffly, slowly,
 Move their minds, of force bereft;
 Few indeed will keep as holy
 The bequest their sires have left.

[175]

Yet once more, in days far distant,
 When at rest I long have lain,
 One fierce caterwaul insistent
 Through your ranks shall ring again: –

“Flee, ye fools, from worse than ruin!”
 Hark to Hiddigeigei's cry;
 Hark, his wrathful ghostly mewing: –
 “Flee from mediocrity!”

[176]

SONGS OF THE SILENT MAN.

(FROM THE GNOME'S CAVERN.)

I.

WANDER lonely, wander fearless,
 Silent heart, upon thy way!
 Seeing things most fair and peerless,
 Hearing things that none can say.

While, for petty projects pressing,
 Petty mortals shout and crowd,
 Thou, the mighty world possessing,
 Hearest songs more sweet than loud.

Dusty streets, let others take them,
 Keep thy fancies pure and bright;
 Like the sea, a mirror make them
 Where the sun has sunk from sight.

From the earth the eagle lonely
 Shoots toward heaven's farthest height;
 Stork and crane in flocks can only
 Near the ground pursue their flight.

Wander lonely, wander fearless,
 Silent heart, along thy way!
 Seeing things most fair and peerless,
 Hearing things that none can say.

II.

Leave the path of common pleasures,
 Search the depths, and mount on high;
 Richest store of faëry treasures,
 All untouched, around thee lie.

[177]

Lake and shore will greet thy vision,
 From the hill-top, faint yet clear;
 Far below, from dwarfs in prison,
 Muffled hammerings thou wilt hear.

Angels' fare shall feed thy fancies,
 Manna, sweet and strong and fine;
 Clear, before thy piercing glances,
 Shall the ancient secret shine: –

How the web of fate collecteth
 All the threads, both fine and coarse;
 How one changeless law directeth
 Great and small with equal force.

Yet at last – O hard confession!
 Human wisdom folds her hands:
 Bow thy head! – in dark possession
 A portentous Silence stands.

III.

Pallid mortals, roaming weary,
 Everywhere lament and moan: –
 "All our deeds are stale and dreary,
 Old and sick our souls are grown!"

Will ye never heed the story
 For your need through ages sung,
 Of the well whose magic glory
 Maketh aged bones grow young?

'Tis no fancy of the poet,
 Near your door its waters rise;
 But the way to find and know it,
 That is hidden from your eyes.

[178]

In the woods, so green and quiet,
 Where no human voices ring,
 Where at night, with dance and riot,
 Elves on scented fern-leaves swing, –

There, by moss and pebbles hidden,
 There the wondrous fountain lies;
 From the old Earth's breast, unbidden,
 Ever young, its waters rise.

There the woodland peace will nourish
 Ailing souls to health once more,
 And the sweet spring blossoms flourish
 Over all the wounds of yore.

IV.

Wouldst thou see the world aright,
 Ponder what before thee lies;
 How from Matter and from Might
 All its wondrous fabrics rise.

From th' irrevocable Past
 Learn the secret of To-day;
 Guessing, grasping, what shall last
 In the scenes that pass away.

If thy gaze be turned within,
 Seed will never come to flower;
 Ponder Nature; – thus thou'lt win
 For thy soul creative power.

[179]

V.

Long since, with the Eagle's piercing sight,
 And my heart with hope aglow,
 'Mid the mounted troops, so brave and light,
 To the War of Thought did I go.

Up with the banner – out with the spear –
 Back, back the enemy drew;
 And O what a jest, as they fled in fear,
 To belabour them black and blue!

Yet we also reached the end of our course,
 And learnt that our knowledge was nought;
 And slowly, slowly, I turned my horse,
 And betook me to silence and thought.

Too proud to believe – I clambered down
 'Mid the caverns, steep and steeper,
 Superficial the upper world was grown,
 The kernel must, sure, lie deeper.

Now my sword is useless, although unharmed,
 In a cobwebbed corner it lies;
 But no man shall mock me as all unarmed,
 Be his Highness never so wise.

For still the owls and the bats, as I pass,
 At a look will flee amain;
 And still with the old jawbone of an ass
 The Philistine host may be slain.

[180]

VI.

Ah, wipe away these idle tears,
 And be too proud to mourn;
 To woes like thine, through countless years,
 Shall other men be born.

For in this world the riddles lie
 Dark and unanswered aye;
 And though for thee the night be nigh
 For others dawns the day.

Ah, smooth the wrinkles from thy brow,
 And make it calm and fair;
 They are the battle-scars, I trow,
 That Thoughts have graven there.

And though no laurel-wreath be wrought
 For thee, nor praise be loud,
 He who without reward hath fought
 For Truth, may well be proud!

[181]

FROM MARGARETHA'S SONGS.

I.

How proud he looks and knightly,
 Nobler than words can tell!
 The world esteems him lightly,
 And yet I love him well.

And had he castles seven
 No fairer could he seem;
 Alas, alas, sweet Heaven,
 Would it were all a dream!

Ah, could I see him glitter,
 Knight's spurs upon his feet!
 O Love, but thou art bitter;
 O Love, but thou art sweet!

II.

Ah, scarce two days are over,
 Since I kissed him and held him fast,
 And surely that evil moment
 Bewitched me as it passed.

My chamber was once so dainty,
 So spotless each drawer and shelf;
 'Tis all in such wild confusion now
 That I shudder at myself.

My roses and my carnations
 They wither there and they pine,
 And indeed I fear that yesternight
 For water I gave them wine.

[182]

My pigeon, so white and gentle,
 Has neither water nor bread;
 And my pretty, piping bullfinch,
 He lies in his cage half dead.

I've spoiled my fair, white knitting
 With blue and crimson wool;
 And the bright flowers in my 'broidery
 Of snow-white threads are full.

And where are the stately volumes
 Of Sir Percival and his feats?
 I almost believe I flung them
 In the larder among the meats.

And the kitchen plates are standing
 On the book-shelf's carven frame;
 And for all this trouble and sorrow,
 'Tis Love, 'tis Love's to blame!

III.

He's gone with never a farewell word,
 Through the world to wander free:
 Thou happy musician of field and wood,
 Thou Sun, my Daylight, my only good,
 When wilt thou return to me?

Scarce had I learnt to read his eyes
 When the dream was over and done:
 O Love, why bring us together unsought?
 O Love, why fan thy sweet flame for nought
 So sorrowful-swift to be gone?

Where will he wander? The world is so wide
 And filled with peril and spite.
 He will go to the South and linger there,
 And Italy's maids are so false and so fair!
 Heaven keep him and lead him aright!

[183]

FIVE YEARS LATER.

WERNER'S SONGS FROM ITALY.

I.

MY lot grew bright and brighter;
 So bright must needs be brief:
 And now my cheek is whiter,
 For Fate hath turned the leaf.

The violet and clover
 Are frozen and laid low;
 My days of love are over,
 I wander in the snow.

For joy is ever flying,
 Not captured easily;
 Daring and self-denying
 Her hunter sure must be.

II.

A lonely rock is lying
 Upon the cliff-bound strand;
 The waves have gnawed a passage
 Between it and the land.

Half sunk in green sea-water
 It proudly rears its head;
 The white sea-gulls are flapping,
 And screaming round its bed.

[184]

On the dark waste of waters
 A bark is dancing free;
 And strangest sounds of singing
 Are borne from off the sea: –

“O for the Rhine’s sweet waters,
 Where thou, my darling, art!
 O home, dear home and country,
 How heavy is my heart!”

III.

The summer night hath enchanted me,
 Lonely and silent I ride:
 The fireflies flit through the dusky night,
 Like dreams that came when my days were bright
 In my yearning heart to hide.

The summer night hath enchanted me,
 Lonely and silent I ride:
 The great stars shine, so bright and so far,
 And mirrored in ocean lies every star,
 As Love in Time’s depths doth abide.

The summer night hath enchanted me,
 Lonely and silent I ride:
 The nightingale sings from the myrtle-tree,
 So melting, so soft, so tenderly,
 Like sorrow in music sighed.

The summer night hath enchanted me,
 Lonely and silent I ride:
 The sea is rising, her crest she rears;
 What cares the sea for the rider's tears,
 That are lost in her mounting tide?

[185]

IV.

In the sea the sun is dying,
 Flecked with gold the heavens are lying,
 Day her slow farewell is sealing,
 Distant evening bells are pealing:
 Margaret, I think of thee.

Lonely by these stranger billows,
 Lo, a rock my forehead pillows,
 At my feet the waves are breaking,
 In my soul a dream is waking:
 Margaret, I think of thee.

V.

O Roman girl, in vain thy glance,
 In vain its burning snare!
 The stranger thou canst never win,
 Although thine eyes be fair.

Beyond the Alps, where flows the Rhine,
 A quiet grave is made,
 And three wild roses o'er it blow;
 'Tis there his love is laid.

O Roman girl, in vain thy glance,
 In vain its burning snare!
 The stranger thou canst never win,
 Although thine eyes be fair.

VI.

O'er the wide, desert country
 I roam, beyond the gate,
 Where lies the mighty graveyard
 Of Rome's imperial state.

[186]

In massive tombs of marble,
 Here on the Appian Way,
 They rest from love and hatred
 From war, and fame, and play.

And here thy tower salutes me
 Gilded by evening's smile,
 Cecilia Metella,
 Thy proud memorial pile!

I stand among its ruins,
 Still gazing to the North;
 And leaving fair Italia,
 How swift my thoughts fly forth, –

Fly to another castle,
 Buildded of slighter stone,
 'Where by her vine-clad window,
 My darling sits alone.

VII.

This bitter night of winter
 Hath grasped the frozen earth:
 What boots it that of bygone love
 I dream beside the hearth?

Here, by the dying embers,
 The last, dim brand I tend;
 The flame will turn to ashes
 The song is at an end.

My heart can learn none other,
 Save one, that Fate hath set –
 In silence to forget thee:
 And when shall I forget?

[187]

VIII.

They press through all Rome's buzzing ways,
 The laughing, singing rout,
 For Folly high her banner sways
 And swarms of maskers shout.

And up and down the Corso roll
 The troops of coaches gay;
 The Carnival attains its goal,
 The Fight of Flowers, to-day.

Roses and violets fall like rain,
 Ha, how the garlands fly!
 She's hit, – thou'lt conquer, – throw again!
 Dost mark her sparkling eye?

Thou too, my heart, be glad and sing,
 Forget thy bitter hours:
 Let old, sad days of suffering
 Be covered o'er with flowers!

IX.

By the green lake of Nemi
 An ancient maple grows,
 And through its leafy branches
 A mournful whisper goes.

By the green lake of Nemi
 A young musician lies;
 He hums a song, yet, surely,
 The tears are in his eyes.

By the green lake of Nemi
 How softly laps the wave!
 And maple and musician
 They know not what they crave.

[188]

By the green lake of Nemi
 Standeth a tavern rare,
 And best of macaroni
 And best of wines are there.

The maple and musician
 Their wits are sure astray,
 Else would they cross the water
 And drink their woes away!

X.

Old wrath disturbs my bosom,
 The storm howls down the street.
 "All hail, Italian rascal!
 A lucky hour to meet.

"Thy dagger's thrust is parried,
 Good friend, thou'rt over-rash;
 Now learn how on Italian skulls
 A German blade can crash!"

Far off, behind St Peter's,
 The sun had sunk his head.
 On a dead man, at daybreak,
 His rising rays were shed.

XI.

O Ponte Molle, thou bridge most fair,
 Full many a straw-bound flask, I swear,
 I've drained by these stones of thine!
 O Ponte Molle, what ails me now,
 That I sit, sad toper with troubled brow,
 And hardly taste the wine?

[189]

O Ponte Molle, 'tis strange to-day:
 Youth's sweet years that are passed away
 Rise up, with the old love's ache;
 A burning scirocco blows through the land,
 In my bosom the old, old flame is fanned,
 In my soul old songs awake.

O Tiber stream! O St Peter's Dome!
 O wondrous, mighty, omnipotent Rome!
 Ye are all so little worth.
 Wherever my homeless foot may rove,
 My silent and gracious Northern love
 Is still the fairest on earth.

O Ponte Molle, how fair she was!
 Though thousands of maidens before me pass,
 I praise one maid alone.
 And if she should come along the way,
 Thou too, thou mass of granite and clay,
 Wouldst tremble through marrow and bone.

In vain my yearning, my grief so strong,
 The sun is burning, the way is too long,
 And I have no wings to fly.
 Another bottle, good host of mine!
 This richly pearling Orvieto wine
 May make a sad heart beat high.

O Ponte Molle, thou bridge most fair,
 Hast bargained with evil spirits there,
 To bewitch me with dreams of home?
 Lo, a cloud of dust on the highway blows,
 And a herd of oxen and buffaloes
 Bar my backward path to Rome!

[190]

XII.

(MONTE TESTACCIO.)

I know not, I, how the lots will fall:
 The earth grows damp in the gleaming,
 The bat flits dark round the city wall,
 Like a strange, portentous omen;
 On the Hill of Potsherds 'tis dark and still:
 The withered hostess stands at the sill,
 To close the tavern already.

An owlet is shrieking above my head,
 Where the solemn cypresses lower;
 The misty Campagna-vapours spread,
 Veiling both gateway and tower:
 Like an army of ghosts, half-seen, half-hid,
 They float around Cestius' pyramid:
 What is the dead men's mission?

A pale light breaks o'er the hilly place,
 The cloudy vapours surprising;
 And now with her envious, yellow face,
 See the full moon slowly rising!
 She shines so baleful, she shines so bright,
 Down in my wine-cup she casts her light;
 This surely forebodes some evil!

He who from his dearest is parted by Fate
 Will love her the more, though he leave her;
 And he who sits out of doors too late,
 In Rome, will catch a fever.
 Already the hostess puts out the lamp:
 "Felice Notte!" I needs must decamp.
 The score I'll settle to-morrow.

[191]

XIII.

The skylark's joyous trilling
 My dreams hath chased away.
 At morning's earliest glimmer
 He greets the young spring day.

The palm-tree in the garden
 Whispers her secret sweet;
 And on the distant sea-coast
 The surges foam and beat.

How golden is the sunshine!
 Blue skies like days of yore.
 Rejoice with all creation,
 My heart; what ask ye more?

To thine old Lord and Master
 Loud let thy praises be;
 'Tis thou forsook His presence,
 He ne'er deserted thee.

XIV.

To serve! the bitter word is said,
 It rings so stiff and cold;
 And Love is gone, and Spring is fled, –
 My heart grow not so old!

All hung with crape my trumpet lies,
 'Tis worn with grief and age;
 They've caught the fiddler as a prize
 And shut him in a cage.

[192]

For heavy care and lonely days
 Have bowed his weary head:
 His songs are silent now – he plays
 To earn his daily bread.

The singer by the Rhine's sweet flow,
 Whose zither helped his rhyme,
 Within the Sistine Chapel now, –
 Heaven save him! – beats the time.

[193]

CANTO XV. HOW THEY MET AGAIN IN ROME.

SCORCHING lay the glare of summer
 Over Rome, the Mother-City.
 Sluggishly the ancient Tiber
 Rolled his pallid billows onward
 (Rolled them more from sense of duty,
 More because 'twas his vocation,
 Than from any inward passion)
 Through the air, all warm and trembling,
 To the sea. Beneath the waters
 Father Tiber sat and grumbled:

“Oh how wearily time passeth!
 I am tired, and never ending
 Is this dull and irksome bustle.
 When will rise th' avenging ocean
 This poor strip of earth o'erwhelming,
 And the streamlets and the rivers,
 And myself, the rivers' Grandsire,
 Each and all together merging,
 All in one wide flood embracing?
 E'en to wash these Roman bulwarks

Warieth my soul profoundly.
 And what boots it that the city
 And myself are oft called classic!
 Passed and vanished, dust and ashes
 Are the gladsome Roman singers,
 Who, with laurel-circled foreheads,
 [194]
 And with hearts deep tuned to music,
 Once were wont to sing my praises.
 Others came and sang and vanished,
 Like the first, and still endureth
 This same long-drawn dance of shadows
 Little boots it all; but wherefore
 May those men above annoy me?
 What have not those careless mortals,
 All regardless of my comfort,
 Cast among my depths so peaceful?
 Where my nymphs were wont to strew me
 Sacred rushes for a pillow
 For my afternoon siesta,
 Now lies naught but ruined rubbish.
 Roman helmets, Gaulish broadswords,
 Fragments of Etrurian riches,
 And the lovely marble statues
 From the tomb of Emperor Hadrian,
 Which, long since, came crashing downward
 On the thick-skulled Gothic coxcombs.
 And together, there, are mould'ring
 Bones of stormers and defenders.
 Men might deem, beneath my current
 I had kept a lumber-chamber
 For the history of the world.
 I am sated, I am weary,
 When, old Earth, will all be over?"

Whilst the worthy Tiber vented
 Thus, all querulous, his rancour,
 Motley life was surging o'er him,
 And the crowd, in festal garments,
 Toward the Vatican was thronging.
 Scarcely could they all find footing
 On the Angel's Bridge. Proud signors,
 Wearing flowing, Spanish mantles,
 Wearing periwigs and rapiers,
 Jostled in the narrow roadway.
 [195]
 Rope-girt brothers of St Francis;
 Hooded, brown-robed Capuchins;
 Roman burghers; stalwart herdsmen,
 Here and there, from the Campagna,
 Wild and sun-tanned, wrapping round them
 With an antique pride their tatters;
 And among them, treading; lightly,
 Tripped old Rome's bewitching daughters,
 Veiled in black; yet veils were useless
 To conceal their saucy glances.
 (What were summer's utmost ardour,

Were it e'en by skilled magician
 In a burning-glass collected,
 Set against those Roman glances?
 Peace, my heart! Thou'rt but a cinder!)

From St Angelo the banners
 Fluttered, floated on the breezes,
 'Broidered with the Pope's insignia,
 With the cross-keys and tiara,
 Making known the solemn Feast-day
 Of the great Apostle Peter.

Near St Peter's proud Cathedral
 Sparkling played the fountain's waters,
 Gorgeous rainbow colours shedding
 O'er the sombre granite basins.
 And the obelisk of Rameses,
 Gazing down, like some strange giant,
 On the human swarm beneath it,
 Grumbled in the tongue of Egypt:
 "Muddle-headed folk, these Romans!
 Scarcely did I understand them
 In the days of Emperor Nero,
 Now, still more, I fail to grasp them.
 But this much I know, that dreary
 Is this Italy, and chilly.

Amen-Ra, O God of Sunlight,
 [196]

Come and bear me hence for ever,
 Bear me homeward to thy temple
 In the sunny Theban desert!
 Amen-Ra! O God of Sunlight,
 Bear me hence to mine old comrade,
 To the Sphinx, and let me listen,
 Once again, across the desert,
 To the stony prayers of Memnon!"

Up the Vatican's great staircase,
 Through the colonnades majestic,
 Paced the halberdiers Helvetian,
 Back and forth, their watches keeping.
 Echoing through the spacious chambers
 Loudly rang their heavy footsteps.
 Sadly to the grey-haired corporal
 Spake a young and handsome lancer:
 "Proud we are, of goodly presence,
 All we Swiss. No other warriors
 Half so stately tread the causeway,
 As we in our woven corselets,
 In our gaily coloured doublets.
 Many a glance is darted coyly
 Toward us, through the curtained casements.
 But my heart is ever yearning,
 As at Strasburg, on the ramparts,
 When the Alp-horns softly sounded,
 For my home among the mountains.
 Gladly would I all surrender,
 Largess, guerdon, silver scudi,

E'en the Holy Father's blessing,
 E'en the wine of Orvieto,
 Pearling sweetly in the goblets,
 Might I once more on Pilatus,
 As a bold and hardy huntsman,
 O'er the rugged rocks and glaciers
 Follow fleet the nimble chamois;
 Might I once more in the moonlight
 [197]
 Steal across the spicy meadows,
 Lighted by a twinkling candle
 To the cowherd's lonely cottage,
 To the fair-haired Kunigundis,
 Sweetest maid of Appenzell;
 Might I hail the morning sunlight,
 Jodelling gladsome o'er the mountains.
 E'en the all-seraphic music
 Of thy churches, O St Peter,
 I'd forego, might I but listen
 To the shrill but homelike whistle
 Of the lonely Alpine marmot!"

On the great steps of St Peter's,
 Lounged, close-thronged, a herd of dandies,
 Taking muster of the coaches
 And the stately gilded chariots
 Driving up in settled order.
 "Hist, his Eminence is coming!
 He with yon full-moon-like visage,
 With the double chin – there – leaning
 On yon gay-galooned retainer.
 'Tis the Cardinal Borghese.
 Fainer, far, would he be sitting
 In his breezy villa, looking
 O'er the Sabine Hills and dallying
 With the lovely Donna Baldi.
 'Tis a man of taste; what's classic
 That he loves, and, in especial
 Worships everything bucolic."

"Who is, pray," another questioned,
 "Yonder awe-inspiring signor?
 See ye not? A chain of honour,
 Golden-linked, adorns his bosom.
 And his periwig he waggles
 Like to Jupiter Olympius."
 "What! you do not know him?" answered
 [198]
 Garrulous, another speaker,
 "Him, the Cavalier Bernini,
 Who the Pantheon decorated,
 Round St Peter's proud Piazza
 Raised the colonnades majestic,
 And the golden Baldachino
 O'er th' Apostle's tomb erected,
 Which has cost, it is reported,

Full one hundred thousand scudi.
 Doff your hat! Since wagged the world
 Has it seen no greater master,
 Seen—" the speaker paused, astonished
 For a man with grey moustachios
 Tapped him quickly on the shoulder,
 As he spake, with smile sarcastic:
 "Sir, you're wrong. Since wagged the world
 Has it seen no greater bungler.
 Thus say I: Salvator Rosa!"

Coaches rumbled. Trim outriders
 Cleared the way, their liv'ries glancing,
 And with retinue full princely
 Passed a tall and stately lady
 Onward to St Peter's portal.
 "She grows old," one spake who saw her,
 "Does her Majesty of Sweden.
 Ah, how fair she was to look on
 At her first triumphal entry!
 Like a wall of fragrant blossoms
 Was the great Gate of the People,
 And the folk, to give her welcome,
 Streamed beyond the Ponte Molle.
 Far adown the spacious Corso,
 To the old Venetian palace,
 Rang their shouts of joy untiring.
 Do you see yon little fellow,
 With the hunchback? Him that's sneezing?
 I have heard that Queen Christina
 [199]
 Looks on him with mighty favour,
 And, though small, he's deeply learned,
 The philologist Naudäaus
 He can talk of ancient doings,
 And in the Corsini palace,
 Lately, for the due instruction
 Of a throng of lords and ladies,
 Danced a genuine salterello.
 It is said, their laughter echoed
 Even to the river's margin!"

All unheeded in the bustle
 Lumbering came a clumsy chariot.
 In it sat two black-robed ladies,
 And our friend, the faithful Anton,
 Held the reins and shouted loudly,
 Shouted in good Rhenish German:
 "Room, sirs, for the Lady Abbess!
 Room, sirs, for my noble mistress!"
 And the Romans laughed to hear him.
 He beheld, with eyes astonished,
 All this strange, new world, and noted
 All the Swedish Queen's attendants
 And her stately grey-haired coachman.
 Gruffly, from his box, he muttered:
 "Ah, old Swede, methinks I know thee!"

I have seen thee, or I'm dreaming,
 In the ranks of yon blue phalanx,
 'Mongst the men of Sudermania.
 And, perchance, I have to thank thee
 For the gash upon my elbow,
 Which thou, in the fight of Nürnberg,
 Hadst the charity to give me.
 O, but 'tis a wondrous city,
 Is this Rome, and long-forgotten
 Friends and foes here meet together!"

On Italia's soil my ditty

[200]

Greets the lovely Margaretha.
 And it fain would strew the pathway
 Of the slender, wan-faced maiden
 With the Southland's fairest blossoms,
 If her sweet, sad eyes would brighten
 With a fleeting smile of pleasure.
 But since forth the castle gateway
 Werner rode, have joy and jesting
 Paid her few and flying visits.
 Only once her laugh resounded,
 When the Swabian youth dismounted,
 And it was but jangling laughter,
 Jarring, as a string that's broken
 Jars the mandoline's sweet music.
 And the youth went riding homeward,
 Single, as he thence had started.

Still and silent grieved the maiden,
 Grieved through weary months and years.
 And full kindly to the Baron
 Spake the good, old Lady Abbess:
 "Margaretha thrives no longer
 On our soil, and slowly withers
 Her poor heart in speechless sorrow.
 Wholesome were a change of climate.
 Let your daughter visit with me
 Italy; for I must journey
 In old age to Rome's fair city.
 Since that wicked Bishop threatens
 To annex, for his own uses,
 All the Hochstift's best possessions
 Which in Chur are situated.
 I will make complaint against him
 To the Holy Father, saying:
 Hear my suit and deign to punish
 Yon load Bishop of Graubünden."
 Spake the Baron: "I am willing.
 And may heaven grant its blessing,
 [201]

That once more red-cheeked and blithesome,
 You may bring me back my daughter."
 So for Italy they started,
 And the faithful Anton drove them.

Now the carriage-door he opened,

Bowing low; and toward St Peter's
 Passed the aged Lady Abbess,
 And, beside her, Margaretha.
 All amazed they saw the splendour
 Of those vast, world-famous buildings,
 Where mankind seemed small as midges;
 Saw the soaring, marble pillars,
 And the dome, with gold emblazoned.
 In the nave, beside a pillar,
 Stood St Peter's brazen statue,
 Which to-day bore all the vestments
 Of a Pope, the heavy gold stuff
 Stiffly lying on the metal,
 On the head a mitre resting.
 And they saw how many, kneeling,
 Kissed the brazen foot extended.

To the dais beside the altar,
 Place reserved for honoured strangers,
 Papal chamberlains conducted,
 Courteously, the German ladies.
 Music sounded. Through the side-door,
 Whence the Vatican is entered,
 Came the Holy Father, making
 Solemn entry to St Peter's.
 Stalwart halberdiers Helvetian
 Headed all the long procession.
 Next in order came the singers
 Of the famous Papal Chorus.
 Cumbrous music-books the choir-boys
 Were embracing, bent half-double
 'Neath the weighty folio volumes.

[202]

Then in motley ranks came thronging
 Violet-vested Monsignori,
 Abbots, Prelates, Prebendaries
 Of the Church, whose portly bearing
 And whose outward aspect witnessed
 That their livings were not scanty.
 Trembling, on his staff supported,
 Came the General of the Order
 Of the Capuchins. A burden
 Of full ninety winters rested
 Heavy on his stooping shoulders,
 But within his head was hidden
 Many a scheme of youthful daring.
 With the brethren of St Francis,
 From the Convent Ara Coeli,
 Came the Prior of Palazzuola.
 By Albano's lake his cloister
 'Neath the Wooded slope is nestled,
 In the shade of Monte Cavo.
 There the heart may dream, unending,
 Peaceful dreams that know no waking.
 And his murmurs, who knows wherefore?
 Sounded not like prayers, they sounded
 Like the oft-repeated whisper:

"Fare thee well, Amalia!"
 Next, a rare and priceless cluster,
 All the Cardinals came trooping.
 Far athwart the marble pavement
 Swept their glowing robes majestic.
 "Heart, possess thyself in patience,"
 So thought Cardinal Ottoboni,
 "Now, 'tis mine to be the second,
 But ere seven years are over,
 I shall fill the Chair of Peter!"
 Swords unsheathed and mien full martial
 Came a train of Cavalieri,
 Came the Pope's own guard of nobles,
 Moving on, in ranks close serried,
 [203]
 Just before the Holy Father.
 Slow he neared, on throne resplendent
 Borne aloft by eight retainers.
 O'er his head his pages carried
 Fans of shimmering peacocks' feathers.
 Snow-white were his linen vestments,
 And he raised the hand in blessing
 Whence St Peter's ring was flashing,
 And the people knelt in silence.

At the steps of the High Altar
 They made halt. The Pope, alighting,
 Said himself the solemn Office,
 O'er the grave of the Apostle.
 Solemn rose the sacred music
 Of the anthem, long since written
 By the Master Palestrina
 Of the pure, unsullied spirit.
 And the aged Lady Abbess
 Prayed with pious recollection.

But her eyes sweet Margaretha
 Lifted up. She deemed the singing
 Was an angel's voice; some impulse
 Made her glance aloft toward heaven.
 But upon the singers' places
 Stayed her eyes, and straight she trembled.
 In the midst of all the singers,
 By a marble shaft half hidden,
 One was standing, fair and stately.
 And again her glance flew upward,
 Seeing not the Holy Father,
 Nor the Cardinals around him,
 Nor the lamps, the nine-and-eighty,
 O'er the grave of the Apostle.
 "Bygone dream, why com'st thou hither?
 Bygone dream, why dost thou haunt me,
 Even in this spot so sacred?"

[204]
 Softly died the lingering echoes
 And the Function was concluded.
 "Child, thou art as pale as ashes,"

Said the aged Lady Abbess.
 "Take my vial; 'twill refresh thee,
 For it holds rare-smelling essence
 From the famous laboratory
 Of the monks of old San Marco."

By the place where sat the ladies,
 Now there passed the train of singers.
 "God in Heaven, have mercy on me!
 Ay, 'tis he. Upon his forehead
 Is the scar. It is my Werner!"
 Darkness fell round Margaretha,
 Beat her heart in wildest measure,
 While her feet refused to bear her,
 And the maiden sank unconscious
 On the chilly marble pavement.

[205]

CANTO XVI. THE BETROTHAL AND THE END.

INNOCENTIUS the Eleventh
 Was a man of kindly feeling,
 And his dinner, too, had pleased him.
 At dessert he sat enjoying,
 Leisurely, a pine full juicy.
 Spake to Cardinal Albani:
 "Who was yonder pale-faced maiden
 Who, this morning, in St Peter's
 With a fainting-fit was taken?"

Spake the Cardinal Albani:
 "For the moment, I possess not
 Information, but will straightway
 Send to Monsignor Venusto.
 He knows everything that passes
 In all Rome, by dark or daylight;
 What's reported in the Salons,
 What the Senators are doing,
 What the Flemish painters tipple,
 What the prime donne warble,
 What the marionnettes are playing
 On the ancient Place Navona.
 There is nothing spun so finely
 That our Monsignor ignores it."

Ere was served the fragrant coffee
 (Then a new, luxurious beverage,
 [206]

Only tasted by the wealthy
 On the very highest feast-days),
 Was the Cardinal already
 Primed with fullest information:
 "This pale lady is a maiden
 Of high birth, who is come hither
 With the German Lady Abbess.

And she saw – by strangest fortune –
 'Neath St Peter's dome this morning,
 One she loved in bygone years,
 And who yet – by strangest fortune –
 In her heart dwells unforgotten,
 Notwithstanding that the youngster,
 Having neither name nor 'scutcheon,
 Hopelessly his leave had taken.
 And the cause involuntary
 Of this swoon – by strangest fortune –
 Is your Holiness' Choirmaster,
 Signor Werner, and none other.
 This the Abbess has confided
 To the Monsignor, 'neath promise
 Of the very strictest silence.”

Smiling spake the Pope: “Why, truly,
 'Tis a most pathetic story.
 Were the subject not too modern,
 Were it not concerned with Germans,
 Half-barbarians, I could fancy
 One of our Arcadian singers
 Might glean sweet, poetic laurels
 Did he sing this strange reunion.
 But I take a kindly interest
 In yon grave-faced Signor Werner.
 Faithfully and well he orders
 All my Choir's affairs, diffusing
 Taste for grave and solemn numbers,
 Whilst my gay Italians lightly
 Turn to bright and trifling music.
 [207]

Silently he does his duty,
 Speaks no word without occasion,
 Never seeks for any favour.
 Nor is e'er his hand extended,
 Itching for the gifts of bribery,
 And his opposites are rifer,
 Here in Rome, than fleas in summer.
 Is't not so, my good Albani?
 It may be, this grief unuttered
 Weighs on Master Werner's spirits.
 'Twould be curious to fathom
 If his thoughts, too, centre ever
 In this love of bygone years.”

Spake the Cardinal Albani:
 “That can I wellnigh assure you.
 In the books of information,
 Kept anent both high and lowly
 Who of State and Church are servants,
 It stands noted as eccentric
 That he sternly shuns all women.
 Whilom had we our suspicions
 That the pretty tavern hostess
 Hard beside Egeria's fountain,
 In his heart a flame had kindled.

Nightly was he seen to wander
 By the Gate Sebastiano,
 Where there is no other dwelling
 Than the little inn aforesaid;
 And conjectures are not wanting
 When a man of Werner's summers
 Makes such promenades nocturnal.
 Spies we, therefore, caused to follow
 On his footsteps, but they found him
 All among the crumbling ruins
 Of the classic Via Appia,
 Where, long since, a proud patrician
 Raised a tomb full fair and lofty
 [208]
 To the beautiful Hebrew mistress
 Whom he brought as a reminder
 Of the burning of the Temple
 Of Jerusalem – they called her,
 Err I not, Zatcha Achyba.
 There he sat. Our spies reported
 That the scene was truly striking:
 Darkness brooding o'er the landscape,
 He, his mantle slung around him,
 Moonshine on the marble columns.
 Plaintively his trumpet sounded
 Through the night's distressful shadows.
 Many a jest he heard next evening,
 On that score. The wits protested
 Signor Werner was composing
 The dead Jewess' Requiem."

Smiled at this Pope Innocentius,
 Smiled the Cardinals in concert;
 Following such high example
 Smiled the Chamberlains officious.
 E'en the brooding visage brightened
 Of the gloomy Carlo Dolci.
 Spake his Holiness: "My masters,
 Honour to the German singer.
 I could wish that many another
 Who by stealth creeps out at nightfall
 Also sought the Via. Appia.
 In my highest grace and favour
 Werner stands, and he shall learn it
 In the morning. In the morning
 I have granted, if I err not,
 Audience to the Lady Abbess."

Early on July's first morning,
 Sixteen hundred nine-and-seventy,
 Rose the sun o'er Roman house-tops
 With benevolence especial.
 [209]
 Cooling blew the tramontana
 Through the cypresses and myrtles
 Of the Vatican's famed garden,
 And the flowers exhaled sweet odours,

Raising, glad, their drooping petals.
 Snapping at the gnats that flitted
 In the radiant morning sunshine
 To and fro the lizards darted
 O'er the pine-apple gigantic,
 Wrought of bronze, which once adorned
 Hadrian's tomb, but now lies smothered
 In a wealth of rose and jasmine,
 Like a pensioner contented.
 E'en the pallid marble statues
 Felt the glow of life within them,
 And the old, flute-playing Satyr
 Raised his foot, as though he'd gladly
 Quit his pedestal and caper
 Once more round the dewy garden.
 But Apollo signed in warning:
 "Friend, those times are past for ever,
 Thou wouldst only cause a scandal!"
 Rome, beyond, looked smiling over
 To the Vatican, and proudly
 O'er the sea of houses, churches,
 Palaces, the Quirinalio
 Soared in state, and, in the distance,
 Rose the hill Capitolino,
 Violet-veiled in mystic vapours.

Through the green and shady alley
 Of the Boscareccio, shimmered,
 Fair, the pure and snowy raiment
 Of the Pope, who there had granted,
 Of his grace, a special audience
 To the Abbess and the maiden.
 To the former gave he promise
 That her suit should be considered
 [210]

With due speed, and justice done her.
 Then, to Margaretha turning,
 Spake the Holy Father: "Cheerless
 Must no pilgrim wend him homeward.
 I, as leech of souls, must guard you
 From such fainting-fits in future."
 To a servant, soft he whispered:
 "Fetch me hither my Choirmaster!"

Werner came. To manly beauty
 Had he ripened in the Southland.
 Since he rode, a hopeless suitor,
 From the castle by the river,
 Life's wild billows had gone o'er him.
 Gladly would I tell the story
 How through many lands he wandered,
 How he fared across the ocean
 And with Knights of Malta battled
 'Gainst the wild Corsairs of Turkey.
 Till, at last, a wondrous fortune
 Led to Rome his errant footsteps.
 But my song brooks no delaying.

Like a charioteer kept waiting,
Cracks its whip and cries impatient:
“Forward, forward, to the finish!”

Werner came. He saw, astounded,
Margaretha; twice and three times
Dumbly did he look toward her.
But that look held more within it
Than a printed folio volume.
'Twas the look with which Odysseus,
By the Wooers' corpses sitting,
Gazed upon his wife beloved,
Whom long years of bitter wand'ring,
Bitter labours parted from him.

Innocentius the Eleventh

[211]

Was a kindly man; a student
Deeply read in human nature.
And he spake in friendly accents:

“Those whom Providence hath guided
Here and graciously united,
Life shall no more put asunder.
Yester morning in St Peter's,
And to-day, within this garden,
Have I thoroughly convinced me
That a case is here before me
Needing Papal intervention.
'Tis a potent factor, truly,
That which men call Love, and subtler
E'en than light; through every crevice
Every rift, its way it findeth
Of the world. The Chair of Peter
Even is by it illumined
And it asks us for our succour.
And it is a pleasant function
For the head of Christendom
Many a let and many a hindrance
To remove from true love's pathway.
And, of every nation, Germans
Cause herein the greatest labour.
So erst came the Graf von Gleichen
From the Holy Land escorting,
As his bride, a Turkish maiden,
Notwithstanding that already
Long at home his wife had waited.
And our annals still apprise us
How, thereby, our predecessor
Found him in a strange quandary.
So came, too, the bold Tannhäuser,
Of all knights the most unhappy:
'Pope Urbanus, Pope Urbanus,
Shrive a sinner, whom Dame Venus
Seven long years has held enchanted
[212]
In her magic mountain palace!
But to-day the case is other,

And more pleasant, nor impeded
 By ecclesiastic hindrance,
 Only by a trifling scruple
 (If I have been well instructed)
 Cherished by the maiden's father.
 You, Sir Werner, well have served me,
 Heedful have fulfilled your duty
 With a silent resignation,
 Whence I read how, like a song-bird
 In a cage, you sang unwilling.
 Oft you begged me for dismissal.
 I as oft denied, nor would I
 E'en to-day vouchsafe it to you,
 If but usage had permitted
 My Choirmaster to be married.
 But in Rome, you wot, 'tis needful
 We should hold tradition sacred.
 E'en the Master Palestrina
 For this reason had to leave us.
 Of my grace, then, I dismiss you.
 And because the maiden's father
 Found the name of Werner Kirchhof
 Far too simple, I appoint you
 Knight of my most noble Order.
 'Tis not your desire, I know it.
 He whom Art ennobles, truly,
 Finds such titles useless baubles;
 But to Mistress Margaretha
 It may seem more fitting, haply,
 To bestow her hand in wedlock
 On the Marquis Camposanto
 Than on plain Musician Werner.
 By that power to bind and loosen
 Which is mine, I clasp together
 Now your hands and so betroth you.
 Even loveless Eld rejoices
 [213]
 To behold true love so faithful
 As is yours. May you be happy,
 And my blessing rest upon you."

So he spake, with some emotion.
 Full of thanks they could not utter
 Werner and his Margaretha
 Knelt before the Holy Father,
 While the Abbess wept behind them,
 Wept until the grass, astonished,
 Glanced up anxiously to question
 If the rain from heaven were falling.
 And the story of the fortunes
 Of the young Musician Werner
 And the lovely Margaretha
 Ends amid the happy tear-drops
 Of the gentle Lady Abbess.

But who roameth, late at even,
 Through the Corso; who goes stealing

Through the dark, back-lying alleys?
 'Tis the faithful Jehu, Anton.
 Joy within his heart is surging
 And such joy finds right expression
 Only in the Osteria,
 Osteria del Facchino.
 And to-day he quaffs no longer
 The light wine in foglietti,
 Quaffs instead from wicker bottles,
 Straw-swathed, wine of Orvieto,
 And of sunny Monte Porzio.
 Panes were smashing, splinters crashing,
 For each bottle, quickly emptied,
 Through the casement straight he flung it.
 Much indignant at the oil-drops
 Swimming on the wine, as comets
 Swim in space, but yet enraptured
 Drank and drank again the worthy.
 [214]

Only in a pause, ensuing
 While mine host the seventh bottle
 Fetched from out the cellar, quoth he:
 "Leap for joy, old heart of leather!
 Soon shalt thou the horses harness,
 Soon shalt thou be driving homeward.
 From the standpoint of a coachman
 Is this Italy a wretched,
 A barbaric, backward country.
 Ill-made roads and heavy road-dues,
 Musty stables, mouldy fodder,
 Clumsy carts! My eyes are outraged
 Every time they light in passing
 On their wretched, ox-drawn tumbrils.
 And the first condition's wanting
 Of a better state, the presence
 Of the honest German hostler.
 O how sorely do I miss him!
 How shall I salute with rapture
 The first man in leather apron
 And in pointed cap who meets me!
 I shall long to hug and kiss him.
 Homewards! homewards! Strange and wondrous!
 Ne'er before as at this moment
 Have I been impressed so hugely
 With the glory of my office.
 In a trot, a trot more stately
 Than a Roman coachman dreams of,
 I shall drive my noble ladies
 And Sir Werner, proudly Rhineward,
 Through Milan, Siena, Florence.
 We shall tarry in Schaffhausen
 The last night, and thence a herald
 Shall precede us to the township.
 He shall cry: 'Hang out your banners,
 Load your cannons, and of blossoms
 Quickly build an arch of triumph!'

We shall drive, the following evening,
 [215]
 Stately through our city's portals.
 Stately, throned upon the coach-box,
 I shall sit, my whip a-cracking
 Till the Rath-haus windows rattle.
 I can hear the noble Baron
 Asking testily: 'What meaneth
 All this bustle in the township,
 All these flags, and shots, and shouting?
 From afar I give him answer:
 'Joy has met us on our journey,
 And I drive a loving couple.
 Sire, I bring you back your children!
 None shall e'er forget that evening.
 As memento shall the tom-cat,
 Hiddigeigei, eat a sausage
 Highly smoked, from old Bologna.
 And to mark the great occasion
 Shall the Schoolmaster compose me
 Such a finely measured ditty –
 I'll not grudge though it should cost me
 Two good, heavy Brabant thalers!
 And the end must run as follows:

 Faithful Love and Trumpet-blowing
 Lead to ends of rarest worth;
 Faithful Love and Trumpet-blowing
 Won a wife of noble birth;
 Faithful Love and Trumpet-blowing
 May they bring to all on earth,
 As they brought to Master Werner,
 Honour, Riches, Home and Hearth!"

Transcription from the original:

*Scheffel-Freunde Bad Säckingen e. V.
 Bernd Crössmann, 10.12.2020*

<https://scheffel-freunde.de>