

Stories from Wagner

CLASSIC LIT FOR YOUNG READERS

C.E. SMITH

Stories from
Wagner

C.E. Smith

Libraries of Hope

Stories from Wagner
Classic Literature for Young Readers

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Stories from Wagner

Told to the Children by
C.E. SMITH

With Pictures by
BYAM SHAW

Preface

Dear Children,

The stories which I have retold for you in this little book are not new. They are very, very old, and were known and loved by many people, both big and little, hundreds of years before Wagner was born. In the old far-off days there were very few books, and as each book cost a great deal of money not many people could afford to buy them.

But in these days there were plenty of stories even though books were few. And the best story-tellers were the minstrels or singers who wandered from village to village singing songs of love and of life and of war. And the people welcomed

the minstrels gladly, and gave them food and lodging, and sometimes money in return for the new songs and tales they taught.

When the minstrel went away to the next village there was usually some one who could remember a great deal of what had been sung, and this he would tell over and over again in the long dark winter evenings till every grown-up man and woman knew by heart what the minstrel had sung.

And the old people told the tales to their sons and daughters, and the sons and daughters told them again to their little children, and so they were never forgotten but were handed down from father to son till the time came when they were written and put into a book.

Wagner is the latest of the minstrels, and he has told these stories once again and has written music to sing them to,

and when you are old enough I hope you will learn to sing the songs which tell the stories as Wagner wished that they should be told.

Your sincere friend,
C. E. SMITH.

CHAPTER 1
Lohengrin

PART I

Many many hundred years ago a great king called Henry the Fowler reigned in Germany; and the little country of Belgium, which lies to the west between Germany and the sea, was also a part of his big kingdom.

In these far-off days a king required to be not only a wise ruler but also a brave soldier. He usually led his soldiers to battle, and in the fight the enemy knew when they came near the king because he wore a gold crown round his iron helmet.

At the time when this story opens, nearly a thousand years ago, Henry the Fowler was getting ready to fight the

Hungarians. A wild and warlike people they were, these Hungarians, who lived on the eastern side of Henry's German kingdom. They wanted to possess some of Henry's lands, and already they had taken by force several of his towns and villages, and had murdered the people who lived in them.

To conquer such bold neighbours Henry required a large army of good soldiers, and he went himself to different parts of his kingdom asking the nobles to collect their followers and come with him to fight the enemy.

One fair summer day King Henry arrived at Antwerp, a quaint little town in Belgium, standing on the banks of a wide river which runs very slowly to the sea, and the capital of the province of Brabant.

The nobles of Antwerp, gaily dressed and carrying fluttering banners, crowded

eagerly to welcome the king. And when he told them that he needed their help, because of the evil doings of the wild Hungarians, they willingly promised their aid. For in those days men loved the art of war, and to fight under a great chief like Henry was a joy to every man who could carry a sword.

Long and merrily the king and the nobles of Antwerp feasted that evening. Next day a council was held in which King Henry sat in the royal chair, and a petition was presented to him by the people. It prayed that before he went away he would settle a dispute which had arisen amongst them as to who should be their ruler now that the young son of the brave Duke of Brabant had disappeared.

They asked permission to tell the whole story to King Henry and were ready to do whatever he advised. And the king, who was in great good humour

because so many brave soldiers had promised to follow him to battle, said he would listen to the people's tale and decide justly in their quarrel.

And this is what he heard:

Six years before this story opens the good Duke of Brabant had died. He left two children, a noble youth called Gottfried, who was heir to his father's kingdom, and a fair maiden named Elsa, beloved by the people for her beauty and gentleness.

By their father's wish the two children were placed under the care of their kinsman Count Telramund, a brave soldier who had fought in many a battle. But Count Telramund was not so good as he was brave, because in his secret heart he longed that the two children might be out of his way, and that he, as the next heir, might become the ruler of Brabant. He looked on with envious eyes

as the boy and girl grew to be strong and fair, and by day and night he wondered how he might get rid of them and take possession of the kingdom.

But the people loved the children, and Telramund was afraid to tell any one of his evil wishes.

A few months before the story opens Gottfried had just come of age. He was now ready to leave Count Telramund's care and become the ruler of the kingdom; and the people were preparing to give him a hearty welcome as their lord when some strange events took place which threw the kingdom into confusion and caused much quarrelling among the people.

Count Telramund, after much thought, had come to the conclusion that if he married Elsa his claim to the kingdom would be surer. So he asked the beautiful maiden to be his wife. But Elsa

knew that Count Telramund was neither a good man nor a true knight, though he was a brave soldier, and she refused to marry him, or to be separated from her beloved brother Gottfried. The count was very angry, and he sat in his great palace thinking over another plan by which he might gain his end.

But besides Count Telramund there was some one else who watched Elsa and Gottfried with eyes of hate. This was the Lady Ortrud, another relative of the Duke of Brabant. Just as Count Telramund believed that the kingdom would be his, she believed it would be hers if only the two children could be got out of the way, and she too sat scheming how to get rid of Gottfried and Elsa without giving the people cause to suspect that she had done anything wrong.

Ortrud could not fight and win applause like Count Telramund, but she

had other weapons, and these she used in a terrible manner. The old nurse, who had taken care of the baby Ortrud from the time her mother died, was a witch, and had taught her the art of magic. And now, by wicked spells, Ortrud could change a human being into a bird, or into a beast, and she could persuade people by her cunning tongue that all she said was true.

When Ortrud heard that Elsa had refused to marry Count Telramund she was very pleased, and she invited the count to visit her in her great castle.

Dressed in beautiful garments and surrounded by many servants, she set before him a splendid banquet with plenty of wine to drink and rare foods and fruits to eat. By her cunning talk she made him think her so rich and powerful and friendly that Telramund, who was rather a stupid man, forgot his annoy-

ance about Elsa, and believed that Ortrud would be a far more important person to marry than the gentle girl who had refused his offer with scorn.

After the banquet was over Telramund told Ortrud all about his schemes, and Ortrud listened attentively, then said:

"I wonder, noble count, that you should be cast down because a foolish maiden knows not the honour you do her in offering to make her your wife. I, too, have been scorned by Elsa of Brabant and mean to be revenged, and if you will give heed to my words she will yet be humbled before us both."

Telramund accepted with eagerness Ortrud's offer of help and suggested that they should first get married and then they could work together more easily to get rid of Gottfried and Elsa. And Ortrud agreed.

One summer day Elsa and her brother roamed together in the great forest which grows close to the little town of Antwerp. Unknown to the brother and sister the Lady Ortrud was hiding near them, and she watched with evil eyes while they walked and talked together.

From time to time Elsa stooped to gather the wild flowers which grew in great beauty in the open spaces of the forest, and Gottfried listened to the call of the birds as they flew in and out of the dark branches with no fear of the gentle youth and maiden who loved them so well.

Suddenly Gottfried started.

"Elsa, listen!" he cried; "what bird is that?" and a strange, deep, bell-like call floated across the drowsy, summer stillness. "I must find out," he added, and he left the path and crept among the thick bushes and ferns to seek the bird which

sang with so strange a note.

Elsa watched him go with no foreboding of evil, and she sat down to arrange her flowers till Gottfried should return. For a time she still heard the bell-like note of the strange bird, then it ceased, but Gottfried did not come back.

"How far he must have gone," thought Elsa. "He must now be close beside the old castle with the moat, and he cannot have noticed how long the shadows are growing. I must needs go to find him."

She called and called again, but no answer came. Then Elsa set off to walk by the path to the old ruin which was a favourite haunt of the forest birds, and where Gottfried often spent the whole afternoon watching them.

The castle stood on a small hill and was surrounded by a deep moat. Water filled the moat, and clusters of creamy-

white lilies with their flat leaves grew beyond the reeds and feathery grasses which edged the banks.

"Gottfried, Gottfried, where are you?" called Elsa, but no answer came. A beautiful white swan sailed slowly round the moat, uttering harsh cries as it floated past her. But Elsa was now too alarmed to think how strange it was that this beautiful bird should be in so solitary a spot where never before had she and Gottfried found other than the wild fowl of the forest.

Elsa turned to go home, and as she ran calling, "Gottfried, Gottfried, where are you?" she met the Lady Ortrud.

"Have you seen my brother, Lady Ortrud?" she asked breathlessly. "He left me to seek a strange bird that sang in the forest, and I cannot find him."

"Go home, Elsa," answered Lady Ortrud, "and we will inquire what means

this tale of your brother; I doubt if all is as it should be." And she followed the now weeping girl to the palace of the Dukes of Brabant.

But Lady Ortrud knew well what had become of Gottfried. It was she herself who had imitated the strange bird's cry to entice Gottfried away from Elsa, and then, by her magic arts, she had changed him into the snowy swan which Elsa had left floating in the castle moat.

The nobles were summoned to the palace, and Elsa told of the disappearance of her brother. Far and wide search was made for the young prince, but not a trace of him could be found, and Elsa wept by day and by night for the loss of her beloved brother.

After several months had passed the nobles and the people of Antwerp decided that, as Godfrey had disappeared, Elsa was now her father's heir and must

be proclaimed the ruler of Brabant, and a council was formed to make the necessary preparations for the ceremony.

But when the important day came, and the nobles and people were gathered together in the council hall, the Lady Ortrud rose and, in a loud voice, she accused Elsa of having made away with her brother in order that she might secure the kingdom for herself. She told that on the day of Gottfried's disappearance she, too, had been in the forest, and had heard cries for help coming from the old castle with the moat. When she got there she had discovered Elsa bending over the deep well which stands within the castle courtyard, but her brother was nowhere to be seen.

Elsa listened in horror to this terrible tale; then, springing to her feet, she cried:

"Thou speakest evil, Lady Ortrud,

and knowest that no truth is in thy words. My brother was dearer to me than life itself, and could I but see him alive again, most gladly would I lay down my life for his."

Then Count Telramund arose, and with many false words of regret he said that his wife's tale was true.

"Elsa has deceived us all," he said, "and many a time have I heard her wish that she might be the ruler of Brabant; little doubt is mine that she hath murdered her brother."

He then claimed that the kingdom should be taken from Elsa and given to himself as the nearest kinsman of the late Duke of Brabant. He knew himself to be a man of courage and fame, well fitted to uphold the honour and the safety of the kingdom.

The council broke up in confusion. Many believed that Elsa was innocent,

but knew not how to prove it. Some, who had been quite willing to serve under Gottfried because he was the late duke's son, were not sure that a gentle maiden, such as Elsa, could look after the safety of the kingdom in those troubled times. And others, who had fought beside Count Telramund in the wars, admired his bravery and his skill as a leader, and gave little heed to the bad side of his character.

In this way the little town was divided into several parties. Angry words and even blows had already been exchanged on that fair summer day when King Henry came to Antwerp, and much need there was that he should be asked to settle the dispute as to who should rightfully rule the people.

Meantime poor Elsa wept and prayed in the lonely palace where she and Gottfried had lived together all their

lives. She feared that her brother must now be dead, and she knew not how to prove that she had nothing to do with his death.

But the night King Henry arrived Elsa had a vision. As she knelt by the open window, praying that heaven would help her, there stood by her side a noble knight. From head to foot he was clad in armour which shone like polished silver. A golden horn hung at his waist, and his right hand rested on the hilt of a sword which flamed and flashed like the rising sun. The hilt of the sword was a shining cross.

Snow-white wings waved on each side of his helmet, and his eyes were filled with kindness as he said:

"Fear not, gentle Elsa, thy cause is the cause of heaven, and as heaven's knight I will champion thee to safety."

At noon next day the king held

council by the riverside, and around him stood the nobles, the soldiers, and the chief citizens of Antwerp. Elsa was brought before them, a lovely, sweet-faced maiden robed in white, and with deep sadness in her beautiful blue eyes.

The people shouted, "Long live our noble princess!" but the king commanded them to be silent, and turning to Elsa, he said:

"Elsa of Brabant, I have heard the tale which accuses thee of thy brother's death: what hast thou to say to me, thy king, that may prove thou didst not this evil deed?"

"Gracious Sovereign," answered Elsa, bowing humbly, "I have naught to say except that I am innocent. And I pray that heaven's knight will be my defender from the lying words of those who seek my life."

"What knight is he whom thou

meanest, fair Elsa?" asked the king.

And in a sweet, clear voice Elsa told of her vision, and of the promised aid, and as she spoke, so pure was her face, and so noble and innocent her bearing, that the king in his heart felt sure she could never have done the wicked deed.

But Count Telramund sprang up angrily and demanded that Elsa should prove her innocence.

"It was she alone who last saw Gottfried alive," he cried; "let her tell us what she did to him that day when they walked together in the forest. As to this heavenly knight," he went on, "I challenge him, King Henry, or any other knight, to fight me to the death, and so prove which one of us speaketh truth."

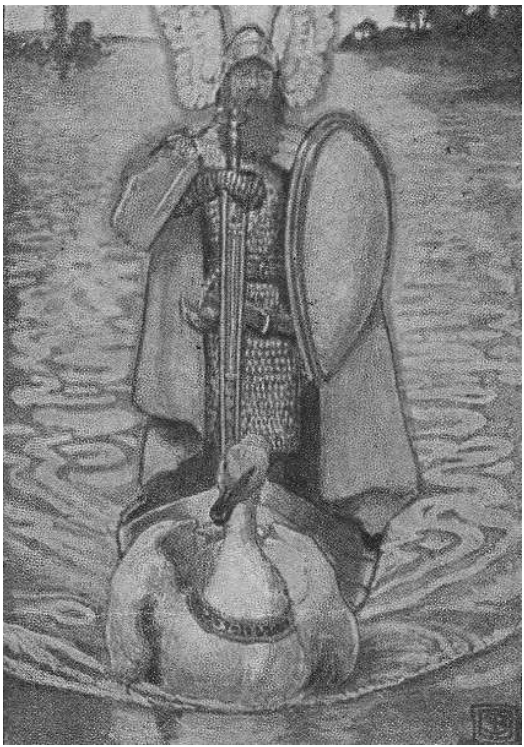
"Dost thou accept the challenge, fair Elsa?" asked the king. And in a low voice the maiden answered, "Yes, may the heavenly knight be my defender and my

champion."

"Then let the heralds sound the challenge," said the king; and, in shrill tones, the trumpets blew a loud blast, and the herald cried, "Who will do battle for Elsa of Brabant?"

The golden light of the summer sun flooded the slow running river, and fell on the crowd which stood round Elsa, Count Telramund, and the king. In silence all waited for an answer to the herald's call. But there came none.

Again the cry from the herald's brazen trumpet, "Who will do battle for Elsa of Brabant?" floated across the warm, noonday air. And in the silence which followed Elsa sank on her knees and prayed. And as she did so the faint sound of a horn was heard in the distance and a shout arose from the crowd, "The knight, the knight! Look, yonder he comes!"



A boat drawn by a snow-white swan.

All turned to face the river, for there on its smooth surface, which shone like a mirror, floated swiftly towards them a boat drawn by a snow-white swan. In it stood a knight, the knight of Elsa's vision. His silver armour glistened as he moved. The golden horn with which he had answered the herald's call hung at his waist, and he leaned on a naked sword whose blade flashed like flame beneath the golden cross which formed the hilt.

The swan stopped beside the crowd and the knight sprang ashore: then, taking off his helmet with the snow-white wings, he knelt before the king.

How Ortrud trembled with fear when she looked on the swan, for she knew by the gold chain round its neck that this swan was the missing Gottfried, and well she knew that no mortal knight now knelt before King Henry.

"Art thou come to do battle for Elsa of Brabant?" asked King Henry. And the knight replied:

"The Princess Elsa is innocent, and I am come to prove it. Count Telramund, I accept thy challenge, and am ready to fight thee to the death."

At once a space was cleared, and in silence the crowd watched the two knights as their swords rang sharp together when the fight began. Elsa was on her knees beside the king, and Ortrud stood beside her with a proud and angry look. Very much she feared the result of the fight, and well she might; for after a few blows the count's sword was struck from his hand, and he lay helpless on the ground at the mercy of the stranger knight.

"Rise, Count Telramund, I give thee thy life," he said. "Heaven grant that in the future thou mayst use it more worth-

ily." And Telramund, followed by the Lady Ortrud, slunk out of sight amid the hooting of the crowd.

As the reward of his victory the knight then asked King Henry's permission to marry Elsa, and the king gave his consent.

"I have one condition to make," said the knight, "and I ask one promise from this gentle maiden. Never must she seek to know my name, nor may she ask me whence I came. Should she lose her faith in me, and ask these questions, our union will be ended. I must then return to my own country. Wilt thou promise to observe faithfully this condition, sweet Elsa," continued the knight, "and I will serve thee truly as thy loyal husband?"

Elsa promised to remember always the knight's condition, and hand in hand they walked beside King Henry towards the duke's palace, where preparations

were at once set on foot for the wedding at which the king agreed to be present.

PART II

To atone for their unjust suspicion of Elsa, the people of Antwerp made up their minds that her wedding day should be a festival such as the oldest man or woman in the town had never seen. Every mouth sang the praises of Elsa's knight, and many of the nobles, who had kept silence when she was accused before the king, now tried which would outdo the other in sending her beautiful wedding gifts. And they all swore to serve faithfully the stranger knight and his fair bride.

In secret many wondered who this knight of the swan, as he was called, could be, and from whence he came; but, after seeing Count Telramund's defeat, all were too much afraid of him to ask

questions which might only be answered by a challenge to fight.

Very gay and pretty the little town looked on the night before Elsa's wedding. Big flags floated above the house tops, and many smaller flags of red and yellow and blue were stretched across the narrow streets. And there were many archways covered with roses and honeysuckle which filled the air with fragrance. In the market-place large casks of wine stood ready, and tables were laid where abundance of food would be supplied next day to all who chose to ask.

On every side banners fluttered, on which were written the words, "Long live the Princess Elsa and her noble knight," and in the large square which formed the centre of the town there stood beside the public fountain a swan made of fragrant white roses. Round its neck there hung a gold chain of yellow lilies.

The windows of Elsa's palace looked on to this open square, and the Princess clapped her hands with delight when she saw this lovely emblem of the knight who had been her defender.

But now the evening had come, and the short darkness of a summer night hung over the excited little town. The duke's palace was brilliantly lighted, and from the open windows sounds of music floated on the warm June air, telling of dancing and merriment within, while lords and ladies, dressed in costly silks and satins, came and went.

In a corner of the square, close beside Elsa's home, stood the Cathedral of Antwerp. Dark and silent it looked among the gaily decorated shops and palaces which surrounded the open square. But all its decorations were inside, and, when the heavy leather-padded doors were shut, no one would have guessed that the

light from many hundred wax candles made brilliant the scene within. The choicest flowers and the rarest silken hangings had been placed around the church to decorate it for the wedding which the king would honour with his presence next day.

Seated in darkness on the wide stone steps which led to the main door of the church sat a man and a woman who watched the lighted windows of Elsa's palace with faces of envy and of hate. They were Count Telramund and Lady Ortrud. Many had been the quarrels between the husband and wife since the Knight of the Swan had defeated the Count and yet spared his life. And he had not forgiven Ortrud for persuading him to swear before the king that he believed in Elsa's guilt.

Ortrud's evil brain was trying to find some new plan by which she could per-

suade her husband to believe again in her cleverness, and also do harm to Elsa and her knight, whom they both hated.

In silence they watched the guests as they left the lighted palace, and they saw the happiness in Elsa's face as she bade farewell to the Knight of the Swan, who was the last to leave.

Clad in a snow-white mantle, with his cross-hilted sword hanging by his side, the knight crossed the square. As he passed the public fountain beside which stood the swan made of white roses, he stopped for a minute and said, "Right well didst thou serve me, trusty bird, and the joy which thou didst wish me is nearly mine."

Count Telramund, unable to bear the sight of his hated rival, rose from the church steps and went home. But Ortrud sat on.

Presently the window of Elsa's bed-

room opened and the Princess stepped on to the iron balcony which overlooked the square. Very lovely she was as with clasped hands she looked up at the dark blue sky. The royal robes which she had worn at the dance were laid aside. She was clad in a soft white gown, and her sunny hair fell like a golden shower over her slender form.

In a low voice she sang a love song into the still summer night, and, as the bird-like notes and the words of gladness reached the ears of Ortrud hidden in the shadow, a wave of envious anger surged up in her heart and an evil plan rose in her mind. Now she saw how she might destroy Elsa's happiness. Even if she could not get the kingdom for herself and her husband, at least she might prevent Elsa and her knight from reigning.

Rising to her feet, she went down the steps and stood beneath the balcony.

"Elsa, Elsa," she called softly. Elsa ceased singing and looked over the balcony into the dark square, and asked, "Who calls?"

"Bend low, I would speak with thee," said Ortrud; "for the love of heaven have pity on me to-night in the midst of thy gladness and lend thine ear to what I have to tell thee."

Elsa's heart was touched with pity as she saw the proud lady at her feet clad in humble garments, and she answered:

"Thou mayst enter, Lady Ortrud. I will listen to aught thou hast to say." Then, when they were seated in her chamber, Elsa asked, "Much do I long to know what madest thou believe that I was guilty of my brother's death?"

And Ortrud answered sadly:

"I believed, because I too had a vision, most noble Elsa, a vision which seemed to me as true as the one which

showed thee thy noble knight. For in my vision I saw written on an iron scroll in letters of fire the manner in which thou hadst done the deed. Little did I guess that the vision came not from heaven, and to-night I come to ask forgiveness that I may spend the rest of my days in repentance for the mistake I made."

Elsa was much impressed by what Ortrud said. Her own vision had been so real, and its consequences so wonderful, she could not refuse to believe that Ortrud had also been guided, and she was too innocent and trusting to doubt her story. So she replied:

"I forgive thee fully, Lady Ortrud, and I invite thee now to remain in the palace this night and go with me to-morrow to my wedding."

Ortrud seemed very grateful for Elsa's forgiveness and for her kind invitation, and together they talked of the

coming day and of the wonderful deeds that the Knight of the Swan had done, till the first faint light of dawn shone in the eastern sky. Elsa had meant to pass the morning hours in prayer, but, unknown to her, there was magic in Lady Ortrud's talk, and she sat enchanted as Ortrud sang the praises of her future husband.

"Tell me, fair Elsa," she said, "for I have lived in great retirement since my husband's defeat, tell me the true name and country of him whom I only know as the Knight of the Swan?" And Ortrud looked cunningly into Elsa's face, for well she knew that Elsa could not tell her whence her champion came or what he was called.

Elsa's face clouded, but she answered, "Indeed I cannot tell what thou wishest to know, Lady Ortrud. My noble knight forbids me to ask his name and country,



On the wide stone steps
sat a man and a woman.

and I, who owe him so much, have promised never to question him."

"Strange, is it not," said Ortrud, "that the Princess Elsa of Brabant should marry an unknown wanderer? Heaven grant that the magic boat drawn by the snow-white swan has brought him from the court of heaven, and that the future may not show thee to be in league with evil as did the vision in which I too believed. Wilt thou not live in fear lest thine unknown husband should vanish from thy sight as strangely as he came, for well thou knowest the saying, 'Who came by magic can by magic go'?"

But Elsa answered warmly, "No, indeed, Lady Ortrud, I have only to look into the noble face of my knight, and then I know not fear!" and with a friendly good-night they parted to meet again at noon. But, after Ortrud had left her, Elsa sat for long thinking of her

words, and for the first time she asked herself why should the knight refuse to tell her, who was so soon to be his wife, the secret of his country and his name?

And as Elsa went on thinking, the confiding trust of the past days began to fail her, and she made up her mind to question him as soon as the wedding should be over.

Meantime Ortrud had quickly left the house and gone home to find Count Telramund and tell him her plans. He, too, had passed a sleepless night, and Ortrud found him angry and miserable at the disgrace with which they both seemed to be overwhelmed.

"Telramund, Telramund!" Ortrud called out joyfully, "put away that sullen mood; I have news, good news, to tell thee, for we will yet triumph over Elsa and her unknown knight."

At first Telramund was inclined to

doubt her, but when he heard how Ortrud had spent the night with Elsa in the palace and that she was invited to join the wedding party at noon, his belief in his wife's cleverness came back and he promised to do whatever she told him.

"I have sown suspicion in Elsa's mind," she said, "suspicion which will not rest till she question her knight, and by my magic power I know that should she break her promise and ask him whence he came, and who he is, the knight must leave her and the kingdom will be ours. There is yet one other way to gain our end, and that I must leave to thee. Let but a drop of the knight's blood be spilled and his power will depart. Surely for a brave man like thee it shall be possible to wound this proud knight even though thou couldest not kill him?"

Long and eagerly they talked together, and when noon drew near Ortrud,

dressed in splendid robes, awaited the arrival of the bridal party foremost among the nobles who thronged the steps of the church. Soon a loud peal from the herald's trumpets announced the coming of the bride, and beautiful Elsa appeared clad in a robe of shimmering satin and with a wreath of roses on her sunny hair. Behind her came six noble maidens who carried baskets of fragrant flowers to strew on the path of the bride when the wedding should be over. And the great crowd of people who filled the square shouted joyously, "Long live our noble lady, Princess Elsa of Brabant!"

When Ortrud heard the loyal cheers of the crowd, and saw how lovely Elsa looked, rage and envy overcame her, and as Elsa was about to enter the church door she threw herself in front of her and said:

"Stand back, bold maiden! It is I who am the rightful ruler of Brabant, and because of my rank I shall enter this church before thee!"

Elsa was greatly surprised at the change in Ortrud. She thought of the poorly clad woman who last night had begged so humbly for forgiveness, and who now stood before her in splendid robes uttering words of scorn and anger. But she answered gently, "Methinks that thou mistakest, Lady Ortrud. As my father's heir I claim to be ruler of this kingdom, and faithfully with my noble knight will I serve it till my death"; and she stepped forward to enter the church door.

But Ortrud stood in front of her, and with a clear voice, that all might hear, she cried, "Who is thy noble knight, I ask thee? Canst thou tell me his name or country? Well I know that the Duke of

Brabant would not have given his daughter to a nameless stranger, and I doubt if the people of Antwerp will allow one who is a sorcerer to rule over them!"

Elsa burst into tears, and loud murmurs arose from the crowd. But at that moment the bridegroom, followed by a train of nobles and soldiers, reached the church. The knight heard Ortrud's last words and saw her standing before the church door. Hastily he sprang up the steps, his noble face ablaze with anger. "Who gave this woman leave to come near thy presence?" he asked the weeping maiden as he drew her to his bosom. "Hast thou forgotten my warning, sweet Elsa, for little knowest thou the power of evil with which thou triflest?"

"She came to me in sorrow and repentance, and I forgave her," sobbed Elsa. "I knew not that she was evil."

"Begone, thou deceitful woman!"

said the knight, turning to Ortrud; and so terrible was the anger in his face, and so much she feared the power of his truth and nobleness, that she slunk among the crowd and was lost to sight.

But Count Telramund had been listening to all that his wife and Elsa had said, and as Ortrud left he stepped boldly to the front and challenged the unknown knight to fight him once again. "'Tis known to all," he said, "that not by strength or valour didst thou defeat me on the river bank, but by magic lent thee by the powers of evil. Declare now thy name and country, and let us then do battle man to man for the government of this kingdom."

Before the knight could reply the king appeared in the doorway of the church, followed by those who had been waiting impatiently with him inside for the arrival of the wedding party. The

Knight of the Swan, with Elsa still clinging to his arm, turned to King Henry and said, "Most noble Sovereign, to thee I leave it to answer to Count Telramund for my strength and valour. To none but this maiden will I tell my name or country, and her promise she gave me in presence of ye all that never would she seek to know my secret. Since that day ye all have seen the deeds which I have done, and the manner in which I have lived among ye, but should ye now no longer believe that Heaven favours my cause, at thy bidding, King Henry, I will say farewell to the Princess Elsa and ye will never see me more."

And the king, who loved the noble knight, answered loudly so that all might hear, "I doubt thee not, Sir Knight; I am well assured of thy nobility and truth. With my hearty consent the Princess Elsa promised to be thy wife, and I know

that she has vowed to respect thy secret. The priest awaits thee now to make her thine."

The king re-entered the church, and the wedding procession followed close behind, the Knight of the Swan holding Elsa's trembling hand firmly as they walked towards the altar. Soon the people heard the strains of the wedding march which pealed from the organ when the sacred words had been said, and the knight and his bride were greeted with loud cheers as they reappeared at the church door and stood bowing their thanks to the good wishes of the crowd. Elsa's face still showed signs of tears, but with the arm of the knight around her she knew no fear and smiled radiantly at the people.

In the palace a splendid banquet was spread of which the king and the principal nobles and citizens partook, and

great was the rejoicing and merriment which went on till nightfall.

In the market-place the people feasted on the abundance of good cheer provided by the generosity of the Knight of the Swan, and all were glad that the Princess Elsa had wedded such a noble husband.

PART III

When darkness fell Elsa and her husband were led to the bridal-chamber, and for the first time that day they were alone and could talk over the strange events that had happened before the wedding. The knight unbuckled his sword, then kneeling down beside Elsa he asked her, "Fair wife, dost thou doubt thy husband now, or wilt thou trust me to the end even as I vow to love and cherish thee so long as thou wilt let me?"

And Elsa looked into his eyes loving-

ly and said, "Indeed, I love thee and trust thee in everything! but, methinks thou hast little faith in thy wife when not even she may know thy rightful name and country. It is a secret none would guard more faithfully than she."

The knight looked at her sadly and said, "Why dost thou let the words of an evil woman such as Ortrud weigh more with thee than the promise I have given thee? Thou knowest that should I tell thee my secret then I must leave thee for ever."

These words awoke again in Elsa's mind the recollection of what Ortrud had said to her only the night before, and she cried pleadingly, "Surely thy secret is one that thou art ashamed to tell if so be that thy wife may never share it!"

Long and gently the knight reasoned with her. He hinted at the heavenly nature of his home, and how to save her

he had left the realms of bliss, and he spoke of the bright future which lay before them in ruling in righteousness and kindness the kingdom of Brabant. But Elsa was too excited after the great events of the day to listen to his winsome pleading. The dread of losing him she loved filled her with fears beyond the reach of reason, and she clung to his arm sobbing piteously, "Who came by magic can by magic go; tell me, oh tell me who thou art, and from what country thou comest?"

A look of great sorrow came over the knight's face, and he was about to answer her when a secret door into the room was burst open, and Count Telramund with four of his companions entered the chamber. He had hoped to find the knight and Elsa resting, when surely he might at least wound him as Ortrud had suggested.

But the knight was too quick for Telramund. He caught up his sword, and with one blow he laid the count dead at his feet. The other men fled in fear, and the knight, with his drawn sword in his hand, turned to the terrified Elsa and very gently he said:

"Thou hast asked me to tell thee my secret, and I may not refuse."

In the doorway stood a crowd of ladies and nobles who had rushed to the room on hearing the noise. The knight led Elsa to one of her maidens and said, "The dawn is breaking and I must needs go seek the king. As the Princess Elsa has so willed it, I shall tell my secret and then depart," and in haste he strode from the palace.

A few hours later the heralds once more summoned the people of Antwerp to assemble on the banks of the river. The king was there as well as all the

nobles and citizens who had gathered in haste to hear the strange news which, as the heralds had made known, was to be told. And in the front of the crowd, close beside the king, once more stood Elsa, still wearing her bridal robes, but with a face so full of sadness that it made men cry to look at her.

"The knight, he comes!" rang from the heralds' trumpets, and the crowd opened a path in its midst that he might reach the spot where the king and Elsa waited. Very noble he looked as he stood beside the king, clad in the shining armour which he had worn when first he came amongst them. His great cross-hilted sword hung at his side, and the golden horn with which he had answered Count Telramund's challenge swung at his waist, while the glittering helmet with the snow-white wings covered his head.

Elsa looked at him and saw again the

knight of her vision who had come with words of hope in the hour of her great misery, and the champion who had saved her life and given her the kingdom. All too surely her heart told her that she had broken her faith, and that after this time she would never see him more.

In a low, clear voice the knight spoke to the king, and the people listened in breathless silence while they watched his noble face.

"Thou knowest, gracious King, that the Princess Elsa has asked me to tell her who I am and from what country I am come, and by her request do I give answer to these questions. Alas! that her generous heart has given heed to evil tales, for now must I return to mine own country and leave her."

"Nay, noble knight," answered the king, "I trust this may not be. To-morrow I go back to Germany that I may make

ready to do battle with the Hungarians, and I look to thee to lead the soldiers of Antwerp who have promised to follow at my side."

"Right gladly would I have done so," answered the knight, "but to-day I travel far from Antwerp, and will never see it more." Then turning to face the crowd so that all might hear, he said:

"In a far distant land, hidden among lonely and secret ways, there stands a town called Montsalvat. It holds a shrine in which is kept one of earth's greatest treasures—a cup so sacred that whoso looks on it is cleansed from every sin. 'Twas brought from heaven by angels, and each year a dove descends to earth renewing once again the precious gift it holds. 'Tis called the Holy Grail, and we, its knights, are bound to do such service as it bids. My father is the chiefest of these knights. His name is Perceval, and

Lohengrin am I."

A murmur of great surprise rose from the crowd, but the king raised his hand to command silence, and the knight went on:

"To right the wrong, to help the helpless, to defend the ignorant, to conquer all evil, is the work for which we knights of the Holy Grail have sworn to give our lives. But none must know the name of him who does the deed of love, for should the secret be disclosed the Grail withdraws its power and homeward calls the knight, whom man has doubted, to kneel once more beside its shrine."

As he ceased a cry arose from those who stood nearest to the river, "Look yonder! The swan, it comes again and all turned to gaze on the slow, flowing water. There they saw the little boat approaching rapidly, drawn by the snow-white swan whose neck was still en-

circled by a golden chain.

When Elsa saw the boat and knew that Lohengrin was about to leave, she flung her arms around him. "Stay, oh stay with me!" she cried with bitter sobs and tears. "Now see I the evil I have done, and if thou wilt but stay to serve these people most gladly will I die for thee now."

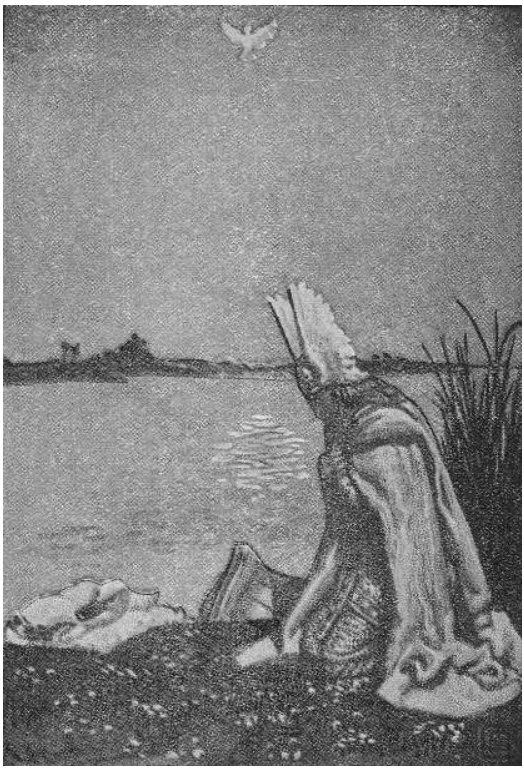
But Lohengrin gently put her from him as he said, "To me no choice is given; I must obey the Grail. But this thou too must know. Hadst thou but trusted me for one short year, thy brother Gottfried would again have stood beside thee and happiness had indeed been thine."

Gently he kissed Elsa and said good-bye. But as he turned to enter the boat Ortrud, who had been standing in the crowd, sprang forward, and looking with evil triumph at the sobbing Elsa, she

cried, "Heaven's aid, proud Elsa, can no longer succour thee, therefore I may tell thee that yonder white swan, which even now will bear thy husband to his father's kingdom, is none other than thy brother Gottfried. It was I who called him from thy side as ye walked together in the forest, and by my power I changed him into a swan. And such he shall remain until I choose to set him free. Hadst thou but been faithful to thy husband's trust, in a year my spell must have been broken, and never again would the power have been mine to do him harm."

Then with triumph in her voice she laughed aloud. But Lohengrin heard all.

Well he knew that the mystic power of the Holy Grail was gone, and no longer could he himself defeat Ortrud's wicked scheme. But low he sank on his knees, and with bowed head he prayed. And as he knelt, far above him in the clear blue



In the clear blue sky appeared
a fair white dove.

sky appeared a fair white dove. Lower and lower it flew till it rested for an instant above the kneeling knight, then with its bill it raised the gold chain which hung round the neck of the swan, and instantly the beautiful bird sank beneath the water and Gottfried sprang to the bank.

Elsa threw herself into the arms of her brother, who kissed her tenderly. But the cries of the people, "Stay, oh do not leave us!" made her quickly raise her head. The little boat, drawn by the fair white dove, was gliding from sight on the slow-flowing river. With raised hands Lohengrin made the sign of the cross in token of forgiveness and farewell, then all too soon he disappeared from Elsa's sight, and with a cry of bitter sorrow she fell senseless at her brother's feet.

CHAPTER 2
The Mastersingers of Nuremberg

PART I

The clock of St. Catherine's Church, which stands in the quaint old town of Nuremberg, had just struck five. And as the familiar words and music of the evening hymn came floating through the open door, borne by the soft midsummer air, the loafers in the street knew that the service was nearly over.

It was the eve of the Feast of St. John, the night before midsummer day, and the church was crowded. For in Nuremberg the people were always in earnest whatever they did, and were quite as ready to attend the services required by the Church as they were to hold revels and

play mischievous pranks when there was a holiday.

Waiting among the beggars who sat close to the church porch stood a tall, handsome youth. His fair curly hair escaped from under a dark green cap in which an eagle's feather was fastened by a silver clasp. He was quietly dressed in a suit of dark green cloth, and a short cloak hung from his shoulders, partly concealing his tall, slender form. But in spite of the plainness of his dress there was something in his appearance which showed that he belonged to the noble and not to the burgher class, and several of the worshippers looked at him with curiosity as the crowd poured from the big doorway of the church into the street.

At last the youth's face lit up eagerly. Those whom he waited for were coming.

"Stay a moment, fair Eva. I do entreat one word with thee," he whispered

to a beautiful girl who was leaving the church accompanied by her maid, a bright-looking woman not many years older than her young mistress.

The girl turned quickly to her companion and said, "Lena, my kerchief! Wilt thou go back, for I must have left it where we knelt?"

"Forgetful girl!" said Lena; "now I shall have a hunt," and she returned to the church.

"Eva!" whispered the youth, "forgive me if I seem bold. Answer me but one word. Art thou betrothed?" But before the question was answered Lena came back carrying the missing kerchief.

"The brooch! O Lena, where is the brooch?" exclaimed her young mistress as she took the kerchief, "I fear it must have fallen under the seat."

Lena looked doubtfully at the youth who stood beside her fair young charge,

then muttering to herself, "Certes, Sir Walter van Stolzing, what may this betide?" she went back into the church.

"Speak but a single word to ease my doubt," repeated the youth when they were again alone; "tell me, is it true that thou art betrothed?"

But again before Eva could answer Lena came back, and handing her young mistress the brooch she said, "How now, Sir Knight, this is indeed a compliment thou payest us. Pray tell me did Master Pogner send thee to escort us home?"

"Indeed no," answered Sir Walter, "and many a time do I wish that I had never seen his house!"

"Heyday, Sir Walter, what meanest thou by that?" exclaimed Lena angrily; "methinks, when thou camest first to Nuremberg a stranger, poor and friendless, it was Master Pogner held out to thee a friendly hand, and many a time

hast thou eaten of his good cheer and slept under his kindly roof."

"Peace, Lena," said her young mistress, "Sir Walter's words mean not what thou thinkest. He wishes me to answer a question and I am at a loss what to say. 'Tis about my betrothal, Lena, and whether I am a free maiden or not."

"Hush, speak lower," Lena said warningly, "and come home with me directly. Think what would happen if folks should see thee and Sir Walter talking together here. Come with me at once!"

"Nay, go not yet," broke in Sir Walter;" I pray thee first to answer my question. Say but one word and I will leave thee for ever."

"O Lena, do thou answer for me!" said Eva, in confusion.

"Was ever such a troublesome youth!" Lena burst forth angrily. "The question is not so simple to answer, Sir

Knight, as it seems to thee. Of a truth my mistress is betrothed—"

"But no one yet has seen the bridegroom," interrupted Eva.

"I thought thou toldest me to give the answer!" snapped Lena, now alarmed at the long interview between Eva and the penniless young noble. "The bridegroom, Sir Walter," she went on, "will not be known until to-morrow, for then a trial is to be held before the best judges of Nuremberg, and he who is deemed the greatest singer will receive as his prize the hand of my mistress."

"And I myself am to place the silken wreath on his head," said Eva.

"The greatest singer!" exclaimed Sir Walter in amazement.

"Canst thou not sing?" asked Eva anxiously.

"To sing a song before judges," went on Sir Walter, stunned with surprise,

"and win thy hand as prize!"

"Yes, and it is thou who must win it, thou only," broke in Eva, "for I will that none other should win."

"Eva, Eva, art thou mad?" cried Lena. "Think what thou art saying. Sir Walter to win thy hand! Why, until yesterday thou hadst never seen his face!"

"Be not angry, dear Lena, but help me to gain my lover if thou carest for me. My love has grown thus fast because all my life Sir Walter's portrait has hung before my face. Tell me, Lena, is he not like David?"

"David!" shouted Lena, thinking of her own lover, who was so called, a short, stout apprentice with a freckled face and roguish, laughing eyes. "Eva, thou art mad!"

"No, no, Lena," said Eva laughing, "it was not thy David I spoke of, but the noble youth who stands with a harp at his

side and a pebble in his hand ready to overthrow the giant Goliath. Methinks that he who sang before King Saul must have been the world's first mastersinger. I see Sir Walter's face each time I look at the picture."

"David, King David!" exclaimed Lena, still angry. "Eva, come home at once! thy father will wonder why we tarry"; and she drew her young mistress's hand within her arm.

On leaving the church the trio met Lena's apprentice lover hurrying along with a measuring rod stuck in his belt, and carrying in his hand a long piece of string at the end of which dangled a lump of chalk.

"What art thou doing here, David?" asked Lena. "Important business, Lena," answered the lad. "I go to prepare the ring for the mastersingers."

"The ring!" said Eva. "Is there to be

a singing trial?"

"Yes," answered David; "the trial among the apprentices takes place this evening, and he who succeeds will be raised to the proud position of a master-singer."

"Then Sir Walter has arrived just in time," said Lena, turning to the youth. "Now is thy chance. I have told thee that only to a master-singer may my mistress be betrothed. So go thou with David and show that thou art able to win that distinction."

"But tell me, what must I do?" asked Sir Walter.

"David will show thee the rules," said Lena, "and if thou canst win, to-morrow shall we be the first to greet thee as victor. Come, Eva, I will not delay an instant longer."

The lovers said good-bye, but Lena did not hear Sir Walter's parting whisper,

"Under the linden trees to-night at moonrise," to which Eva answered, "Yes."

Sir Walter and David walked on together to the famous hall of the guilds where the singing trials were held. Each guild, or trade, had its banner floating above that part of the hall where its members sat, and Nuremberg was rich in guilds. There was the bakers' guild, and the weavers' guild, and the silk merchants' guild, and many others. But greatest of all in Nuremberg was the shoemakers' guild, for Nuremberg was famous everywhere for the good boots and shoes it made, and to be called like Hans Sachs, master of the shoemakers' guild in Nuremberg, was the same as to say that you were the best shoemaker in the world.

"Tell me, David," Sir Walter asked as he watched him measuring a ring with his chalk and string, "tell me about this

trial, and what I must do to become a mastersinger?"

"Why, thou must sing," answered David, "and if thou keepest all the rules, and if thy song is approved by the judges, why, then, they will choose thee to be one of their number. Thou must begin when the marker tells thee—"

"The marker, who is that?" asked Sir Walter.

"Dost thou not know even that?" said David. "Wert thou never at a song trial before?"

"Never," answered Sir Walter.

"Canst thou sing at all?" questioned David; "art thou a poet? Surely thou knowest what the words schoolman and scholar mean?"

"I never heard of them before," answered Sir Walter sadly, and David looked at him with pity.

"Well, I never heard the like," he

said; "thou dost not even know the beginning, and yet wouldst like all at once to reach the end!"

"But canst thou not show me the way?" said Sir Walter humbly; "surely I am able to learn!"

"Yes, indeed," replied David, "but not in an hour. For five long years I have studied under the most famous teacher in Nuremberg, Hans Sachs, our greatest mastersinger. He is master too of our shoemakers' guild, and as his apprentice I make shoes beside him all day. And while I hammer soles and sew the leather I repeat to myself, 'There is slow time and quick time, short metre and long metre,' and just as I am fitting the soles to my shoes, so I am making the time and the metre fit together too, and my master corrects both my work and my art. There are tones of many kinds which thou needest to know, and the rhymes alone

would take thee a year to learn."

"Well," said Sir Walter, "it is quite certain that to be a mastersinger such as thou meanest is beyond my power, but I will try if victory cannot be won simply by singing words and music which were born to fit each other even if they never heard of rule."

In a short time the apprentices, whose singing examination was about to take place, began to file into the hall. Each brought with him a song with which he hoped to win the approval of the judges, and be elected one of the famous company of Nuremberg mastersingers. David was a great favourite with them all, and it was no secret that if he was successful, his master, Hans Sachs, had promised to make him a journeyman, a fully-fledged workman instead of an apprentice, and, once a journeyman, then he would be able to marry Lena.

Many were the good wishes that the silken wreath of flowers which was the victor's prize might be given to him.

Following the apprentices came the mastersingers, who sat in the seats of honour and judged the singers. A square box like a pulpit was placed beside the masters' seats and this box was for the marker, who must also be a mastersinger. A curtain all round the upper part of the pulpit prevented the marker from seeing who sang, but he could hear every note, and each mistake the singer made was chalked by the marker on a large slate. Whenever seven mistakes were written down, then the market pushed the slate through the curtain so that all might see, and the singer was told that he was not good enough. Among the mastersingers Eva's father, Herr Pogner, came into the hall accompanied by Herr Beckmesser. Beckmesser was the only unmarried man

in the guild except good old Hans Sachs the shoemaker, and for long he had secretly loved the beautiful Eva. But he was a thin, cross-looking young man, and was little liked by those who had to do with him, and until now the laughing, dainty Eva had never taken the least notice of his existence.

But Beckmesser was a good musician, and to-day he was chosen as marker. Just as he was going to enter the wooden pulpit, Herr Pogner caught sight of Sir Walter, who had been waiting patiently beside him. "How now, Sir Walter," he said cheerily, "have you come to seek me in the singing school?"

"Indeed I have," answered Sir Walter. "It was love of music, and the fame of the singers of Nuremberg that tempted me to leave my native land, and I am come now to ask that I too may join this great guild and become a mastersinger of

Nuremberg."

Pogner turned to the masters who were seated in the hall, and said, "Listen, friends, here is a noble knight of Franconia who seeks admission to our company. Say, shall we let him join the singing trial or not?"

Beckmesser looked at the handsome, manly youth who stood beside Herr Pogner, and a pang of jealousy shot through his mind. "Stay a moment, good friend," he said to Pogner, "what attraction can Sir Walter van Stolzing find here that he, a stranger, should wish to join our guild?"

"I only ask for leave to take part in the singing trial," said Sir Walter, wondering who the cross-looking man could be. "To win the silken wreath and become one of the mastersingers of Nuremberg is all I seek."

"Sir Walter," said Pogner, "the rules

of the society must be carefully obeyed, but I know of nothing in them which would prevent a stranger from joining us, and I ask of this company to admit thee to the trial."

"Agreed, agreed!" called out most of the members, and Sir Walter took his seat beside Hans Sachs' apprentice David.

The secretary now read over the names of all the members, and when each had answered he announced that the meeting was quite full, and that the singing should now begin.

But Herr Pogner got up and said that he wished to speak about a matter which concerned the festival to-morrow, and which he thought had better come before the singing; and the masters at once agreed to hear him.

"To-morrow, as you all know, is the Feast of St. John," began Herr Pogner,

"and according to our Nuremberg custom we hope to spend it on the meadows in games, and music, and dancing, putting aside all care, and enjoying a true holiday. And we as mastersingers will with our songs add our share to the merry-making. Long have I considered what prize I could offer as a reward to him whose song best pleases us. Last winter, when I travelled in foreign lands, it pained me much to hear our burghers of Germany called mean and close-fisted by those of other nations, and I resolved that no one should again be able to say such a thing about Nuremberg.

"You all know that heaven has prospered my business as a merchant, and tomorrow I offer as a prize, to the singer whom all agree shall have sung the best, my only daughter Eva as bride, with a dowry of gold, and much of my goods beside."

Loud cheers greeted Pogner's words, but he was not yet finished.

"Listen, friends," he said, "for I must make my meaning clear to all. Our mastersingers' guild will decide whose song is best, but 'tis only fair that my daughter should also have a say in the choice of her husband."

"I cannot see how the prize is to be decided by us," broke in one of the masters, "if the maiden herself is to choose."

"It were better to let your daughter choose as her heart wishes, and leave the singing apart," said Beckmesser, who flattered himself that Eva liked him, and was afraid lest he might not be first in the singing.

"No, no!" said Pogner, "you misunderstand me. If my daughter will not marry the singer whom we all choose as the best, then a handsome gift of money

shall I bestow on him still. But my mind is made up that no one but a master-singer may she ever accept, and only one whom you have all crowned. And, until she agrees, must my daughter remain unwed."

At this point Hans Sachs, the shoemaker, who was the greatest master-singer in Nuremberg, rose and said, "Surely, if the maiden is to decide, it will not be on account of art that her choice will be made. For maidens' minds look to other things just as do the minds of most folk. I would suggest that instead of the singer being chosen by us mastersingers only, the approval of all who listen should be the test of his success. It can do our guild no harm if once a year, on the festival of St. John, we let the people join with us in deciding whose song is best. Notwithstanding their lack of skill and learning, there are some points in

which the people have always showed good judgment in their choice."

A great deal of talk followed Hans Sachs' suggestion. One said he was quite right, and that the people should have a say; and another said he was all wrong, as only those who had studied the art of music could tell whether a song was good or bad. At last Pogner got up again and proposed that the offer he had made should be accepted, and that the people, and the mastersingers, and Eva should all be invited to decide who had won the prize. And in the end every one agreed.

All this time Sir Walter and the apprentice had been waiting patiently, and now the secretary asked for the names of those who were ready to sing trial songs before the masters. Pogner then led Sir Walter forward and asked that he might be allowed to sing first; and the members clapped their hands. Sir

Walter's eyes gleamed with joy. He had listened carefully to all that Pogner had proposed, and now he thought that his chance of winning Eva was beginning to come nearer. Beckmesser took his place in the marker's box, and Sir Walter entered the ring which David had drawn with his chalk on the floor.

"Tell us, Sir Walter," said the president, "who taught thee to sing?" And Sir Walter answered:

"In the quiet hours of the silent winter, when snow lay deep on the hills and moors, and man and beast and bird dreamt of the coming of spring, my father read to me, again and yet again, the songs of Sir Walter of the Vogelweld: from him did I learn my songs."

"Truly, an excellent master," answered the president. "But say, Sir Walter, in what school didst thou master thine art, for the laws of singing are many

and cannot be learned save by diligent study?"

And Sir Walter answered, "At the first deep breath of spring, when the whole land felt the new life stirring in its veins, then I sang in the woodlands with the returning birds, and the spirit of Sir Walter of the Vogelweld taught me the art of song."

"Was ever heard the like!" broke forth Beckmesser. "Are we to believe that the finch and the blackbird taught him all in a minute!"

The president looked round uneasily. Here was surely a very unusual kind of singer, and he did not quite know what to do with him. But Hans Sachs rose up and said, "Good friends, what does it matter who taught Sir Walter? The world is wide and there are many masters. Let him go on with his song, and soon we shall be able to decide whether

he can sing or no." And all agreed.

"But one question more," said the president. "Thy song, Sir Walter, is it sacred or not?"

"I sing of the coming of love," answered Sir Walter, and with soft voice, rich and full as the wood-pigeon's note, he sang to them all. And at first his song was the song of spring. "Look!" he cried, "how the woodlands are waking with a long-drawn breath from their winter sleep! How the sound of that deep breath reaches to the very edge of the forest, and the birds and the beasts and the trees know that it tells of the return of spring. And the robin chirrups to his mate, 'Listen, for I hear the spring returning.' And the dry leaves on the beech-trees dance together with a rustling noise as they whisper, 'Listen, for I know that spring is near.' And the squirrel wakens from his four months' sleep, because he

dreams that the voice of spring is calling him to arise.

"Look now at the forest that lay this morning so silent and still. It is alive, alive. All nature is stirring, and eagerly she is singing, 'I am awake! See, see, I am awake!' and the cry of the spring-time rises in every throat.

"But in the hedgerow winter still sits. On his head is a crown of withered leaves, and he holds a few red berries in his skinny hands. 'Is it true,' he asks the raven, 'that the spring is coming?' And the great bird flaps his heavy wings as he answers, 'Yes, it is true; thy reign is over, King Winter, and the coming of spring will sweep thee from her land.' And sad winter fled before the gladness that told of the return of spring."

At this point Beckmesser, the marker, was heard to groan in his box, and Pogner and some of the masters looked

uneasily at each other. But, unheeding, Sir Walter sang on. And he sang of the coming of love, of love that sweeps like the breath of spring through the heart of a man. And his voice was alive with music as he sang of the gladness and beauty of day and the bliss of the dream-world of night, of the glories of earth and sea and sky when the heart is filled with the coming of love. And he told how the whole world seems but a background of sunshine for the face of the maiden he loves.

But the song was rudely interrupted by the marker, who threw aside the curtains of his box and held out his slate, which was covered with chalk marks on both sides. "Art thou nearly finished?" he asked Sir Walter. "Finished?" said the knight, "indeed no! I have yet to sing my lady's praise."

"Well," answered Beckmesser, "my

slate is now filled, and as to thy song, the like of it I have never heard. Not a single line was sung according to rule, and I should like to find the man who could admire such music."

"Agreed, agreed!" cried several of the masters, "it certainly was shockingly wrong, and I think we shall have no difficulty in deciding who is not to be our new master."

"Nay, my friends, not so fast," said Hans Sachs. "It is true that the song is new, and the singer's rules are not those which we of Nuremberg have learnt. But we must not forget that in the world there are other cities and other rules, and we must be careful not to judge by one law only. I propose that we hear the young knight to the end."

But Beckmesser went on angrily: "Hans Sachs, what meanest thou? The rhymes were wrong, and the melody was

interrupted, and the words were too free, and the singer raised his voice too high. If this kind of singer is to join our guild, then our singing-school will come to shame. We all know why Sir Walter van Stolzing has come here to-day, for love, and not art, is the inspiration of his song."

"Well, well, let him finish it," said Sachs, "and I will then accept the decision of this company as loyally as any of you."

The masters signed to Sir Walter to go on. And he sang of the owls which hoot in the darkness before the day appears, of the ravens which croak and the magpies which chatter, because they feel not that a new dawn is coming. Then his voice took on a richer note, and he sang of the bird of love which rose with golden wings from among the croaking night birds. Into the darkness it soared,

till the sunrise gleamed on its lovely wings as it floated towards the dawn, and with a ring of triumph in his voice Sir Walter ended with the words, "'Tis the bird of love that I see, and it calls my spirit to arise from this land of the dead and soar to the heaven of song and of love."

Sir Walter sat down beside Hans Sachs, who had risen to make room for him, and they listened while Beckmesser's shrill voice called out, "Now masters, say, what think ye of the trial?" And a chorus of voices shouted, "We reject the song and the singer," which was followed by loud applause.

The masters then left the hall. As the apprentices were about to follow, David turned to Sir Walter and said, "Sir Knight, we like well your singing, and we hope that to-morrow, by the voice of the people, the silken wreath may yet be

thine."

"Sir Walter, be not down-hearted," said Hans Sachs, as they stood alone in the empty hall, "for truly as there is a heaven above us do I know thee to be a poet and a mastersinger as surely as thou art a belted knight."

PART II

When David got back to the shoemaker's shop evening had come, and the apprentices were chattering idly together till it was time to put up the shutters.

"Midsummer day, Midsummer day, Flowers and ribbons and feasting and fun, Would that to-morrow were but begun," they sang, and many were the jests made to David about the number of hours he would be free to spend with his beloved Lena. And David was as merry as any of them, for he hoped that to-morrow would be the greatest day of his

life, when he would be made a journeyman by his master and might then ask Lena to be his wife.

"David, David, art thou there?" he heard a voice say softly outside, and going to the shop door he saw Lena. In her hand she carried a basket which David knew well. Many a time had Lena brought him pastries and cakes and comfits in that very basket, and at once he pictured to himself the good supper he and the other apprentices would have that evening.

"Look, David!" said Lena. "Look what I have made for my dear sweetheart," and she lifted the cover and showed the tempting good things. "But tell me, David, what of Sir Walter? How sped the singing trial, and has he won the crown?"

"In truth no," David answered absently, while his eyes gloated over the

pies and pastry in Lena's basket. "The song was rejected by all the masters. But tell me, Lena," he went on, "at what hour shall we meet to-morrow to spend our holiday?"

But Lena, instead of answering, whisked the basket out of David's hand and abruptly left him. David was greatly surprised and not a little angry, and the laughter of the apprentices, who were peeping through the doorway, made him still angrier.

"Be off, all of ye!" he said, "'tis time to close the shop." And the apprentices trooped out, calling, "Good luck to thy wooing, David," as they left.

"How now, David, hast thou and Lena been quarrelling again that thou lookest so glum?" asked Sachs, who arrived shortly after the apprentices were gone. "Shut up the shop and get thee to bed, for I have work to do and I need

thee not."

"Am I not to sing my trial song to-night?" asked David. "No, not to-night," said Sachs, "leave me the light and get thee to bed."

David went off very much surprised. Lena had been so strange, and now the usually good-tempered master was as cross as a bear and he knew no reason for either.

For a time Sachs stood in deep thought before his shoemaker's bench. Sir Walter's song was still ringing in his ears, and it had roused in him many strange thoughts. Was a new voice of spring singing again to his wintry soul? he wondered. Surely the singer had sung as the birds do, because he felt that he must, and though no rules could be found to fit the singing, Sachs was a true artist and knew that that might be the fault of the rules and not of the singer.

Why could the others not hear what he heard?

"But I will teach one of them a lesson this night," he muttered briskly as he began to put his tools and work on a bench which he carried to the open door. And there in the darkening summer night he sat, still dreaming of Sir Walter's song.

Presently he heard voices, and Pogner, with his daughter Eva, came along the street. Pogner's house stood nearly opposite that of Sachs, close beside a grove of noble linden trees, and many and many a time Eva had stood for hours beside the shoemaker's bench listening to the tales he told her while he worked. The shoemaker loved the beautiful girl and very great friends they had always been, and now Hans Sachs knew without being told that it was Sir Walter and not Beckmesser whom the maiden

hoped would sing the prize song and win her hand.

"A lovely night, Eva," said Pogner, "gives hope of a lovely morrow. Much do I think of the great event that St. John's festival holds in store for thee. To see my dearest child rise and place the silken wreath on the head of the mastersinger will be the crowning joy of my life, for I trust that he will also be the man whom I can proudly greet as my future son-in-law."

"Dear father, must I indeed wed none but a mastersinger?" Eva asked feebly.

"None other mayst thou ever wed, for so I have sworn," said Pogner, and they went indoors together. In a few minutes Eva knew from Lena of her lover's failure at the singing trial, and in floods of tears she sat, wondering what was to be done.

Just then the gentle *tap, tap* of a hammer was heard outside, and Lena said, "Hans Sachs works late to-night: go thou and ask his advice, for well he loves both thee and Sir Walter." And while Pogner sat smoking his pipe till supper should be ready Eva stole downstairs and crossed the narrow street.

"Good evening, dear Sachs; how late thou workest!"

"Yes," answered Sachs, "I have to finish these shoes for a lover who needs must wear them to-morrow when he woos."

"A lover!" said Eva. "Pray what is he called?"

"A lover and a master too," said Sachs. "Beckmesser has scolded me to-day because his shoes are not ready, and this night I shall work here till they are finished, and who knows whether it is on the feet of thy betrothed I shall see them

again to-morrow."

"That will never be!" said Eva. "My father may say that none but a master-singer may I wed, but he promised that I may reject a master who pleases me not, and that sour-faced, cross-looking Beckmesser I cannot bear. But, Sachs, if that is the only reason that thou workest late, pray leave off the shoes, they will not be needed, and I want thee to talk to me."

"It was not the only reason, sweet Eva. This evening I have been so vexed and worried that I work to soothe my brain."

"Tell me what worried thee, dear Sachs?" said Eva, sitting down beside him. And the old man went on:

"I have been at the song school where we masters listened to a trial song from a knight who sought to join our guild."

"And was the song not good

enough?" asked Eva, glad that in the darkness Sachs could not see how rosy her face had grown.

"Not good enough!" answered Sachs, "it was far too good, that was its only fault. The song was the song of a master, great and lovely it was beyond our knowing; but our masters rejected it because they felt not the beauty for its strangeness."

"Eva, Eva, where art thou?" came Lena's voice softly. "Thy father is calling for thee."

"Tell him I have gone to bed," said Eva, stealing across the street. "My head aches and I will eat no supper."

"Nay, Eva, but what dost thou think hath happened? Beckmesser hath told me that this night he will sing beneath thy window the song he hath written for the prize to-morrow. Think of it!"

"I will not listen," said Eva, "for I hate

the man! Good Lena, do thou stand at the window instead of me, for I have promised to meet Sir Walter at moonrise beneath the linden trees."

"To meet Sir Walter beneath the linden trees! Thy father would kill the knight were he to know, and David would kill Beckmesser did he awake and see me standing at thy window while Beckmesser sang."

"Be not foolish, dear, good Lena, and help me if thou lovest me. My father will think I am in bed if thou sayest nought but what I told thee. And thou knowest that David sleeps at the other side of Sachs' house, and will neither hear Beckmesser singing nor yet see thee at my window." And with kisses and threats she got Lena to agree.

When the silver light of the moon rose above the treetops, Eva slipped quietly from the house, and among the

linden trees she found Sir Walter awaiting her.

"My hero poet, how glad I am to see thee," she whispered when they were safely hidden among the shadows. "Tell me of thy song, and what thou thinkest of the singing trial."

"Indeed, no hero-poet am I," said Sir Walter sadly. "The company liked not my song, and as a mastersinger I fear I may never hope to win thy hand."

"Thou art wrong!" replied Eva. "Remember that I alone can award the prize, and that on thy head I shall yet place the silken wreath that proclaims thee as my betrothed."

"But, Eva, thou forgettest thy father's vow that only a mastersinger may marry thee. He hath sworn to the guild that none but the man they crown may win thy hand, and a promise such as that may not be broken. I sang of love and I sang

of thee. My song was of spring, and joy, and sunshine, and I strove to make the masters feel the life that throbbed in my veins. But little did I know them. They have their rules and their rhymes and their fixed ideas as to what a song must be, and I cannot sing by rule. My art must be free as the flight of the birds, and I cannot rise from the earth if my wings are weighted as these masters would have them. Let us leave the masters to find a prize-winner for to-morrow, and flee thou with me to my own country where I will prove to thee that a mastersinger I may indeed claim to be."

Before Eva could answer, a loud blast from a cow-horn was heard at the end of the street. The night watchman was going his rounds to see that all the fires were out and no robbers lurking around, and Lena, in terror lest Eva should be discovered, called softly to her:

"Eva, Eva, come in this minute, it grows late, and I will rouse thy father if thou tarry longer."

Eva whispered to her lover, "Wait for me"; then she followed Lena into the house.

Down the street marched the sturdy watchman, carrying in his hand a lantern and singing as he walked:

"Listen, good people, to what I say,
Ten is striking from every steeple. Out with your fires and out with your light,
That no harm may come to the town this night. Then praise we the Lord of Heaven."

All this time Sachs had been hiding in the shadow of Pogner's house, and he heard Sir Walter ask Eva to run off with him.

"I must put a stop to that foolish plan," he said; "there must be no running away if old Sachs can arrange better.

How impatient these young people are!"

When the sound of the watchman's horn had died away in the distance, the door of Pogner's house opened softly, and Eva, dressed in Lena's shawl and gown, stole out quietly.

"I am ready to fly with thee now," she said to Sir Walter, "but let us wait for a little till the light in Sachs' window is out. He might chance to see us and ask questions."

"Is there no other road by which to reach the north gate where a man waits with horses for us?" asked Sir Walter.

"We cannot go by the other road," answered Eva, "for the watchman is there now and would give the alarm at once. Let us stay here for a little."

In silence they watched the open door of Sachs' house, from which a strong beam of light shone. Presently, to their great surprise, the shoemaker



The sturdy watchman carrying
in his hand a lantern.

appeared, carrying a large glass lantern which he hung on a nail right above his door, whence it cast a strong light both up and down the street. He then brought out his shoemaker's bench and tools and sat down with a hammer in his hand to finish a pair of shoes.

"What can the old man mean?" said Sir Walter; "he looks as if he meant to sit there all night and we shall never get away?

Before Eva could answer, the sound of a lute was heard, and Beckmesser came along the street and stood in front of Pogner's house in order to serenade Eva with the song he meant to sing next day. But no sooner had he taken up his post than Sachs' hammer began *tap, tapping* on the sole of the new shoe.

"Thou workest late, Hans Sachs," said Beckmesser. "Surely the order is of great importance which keeps thee from

rest on the eve of St. John's Day?"

"Indeed it is," said Sachs. "No other than the finishing of a pair of shoes for thyself that thou mayst not appear at the singing to-morrow with holes in thy soles such as thou showedst us all to-day." And *tap, tap* went the hammer while Sachs sang cheerily to himself as he worked.

"Old dotard," said Beckmesser to himself, but he answered pleasantly, "Indeed I only jested, friend Sachs. I have other shoes at home and need not for many a day those thou makest. I have come hither to sing under fair Eva's window a song which I trust she will deign to honour to-morrow, and if thou wilt listen and tell me what thou thinkest of it I will value thy good opinion highly."

"Well," said Sachs, "I will do so if thou wish, and I shall be the marker and will beat on the sole of thy shoe, instead

of chalking on the slate, every fault thou makest in thy song."

Beckmesser gently touched the strings of his lute and began to sing, and to his joy a figure wrapped in a light shawl appeared at the bedroom window. "'Tis Eva," he thought, and louder he raised his voice to drown the very frequent *tap, tapping* of Sachs' hammer, while Sir Walter and Eva waited impatiently among the linden trees.

The song was all wrong as Sachs very soon heard, for Beckmesser was not really a good singer although he knew a great deal about music. Presently Sachs stood up. "There, there," he said, "that will do. Thy shoes are finished and thou must hie away home. To-morrow Mistress Eva will tell thee what she thinketh of thy song."

But Beckmesser was not going to be sent away by an old shoemaker like

Sachs. He took no notice and began a third verse, with his eyes fixed on the window where a head was dimly seen, and louder and louder he sang to drown Sachs' remonstrances.

Now David had sunk into a sound sleep after his master had dismissed him to bed. But in his dreams he heard a lute *twang, twanging*, and then words seemed to reach his ears, and at last he sat up in bed wide awake and listened. Whatever could be the matter? There was music and singing outside, and Sachs' voice could be heard in angry tones. David slipped on his clothes and ran to Sachs' bedroom which overlooked the front of the house.

The first thing he saw was Lena's face looking out of the window opposite, while Beckmesser with his lute sang a song which was evidently meant for her ears.

"Deceitful woman!" he burst out angrily, "can it be that she likes him best after all? That sneaking, sour-faced marker. I'll break every bone in his body." And David seized a thick cudgel and ran downstairs. He rushed past Sachs and, catching Beckmesser by the shoulder, he struck the lute from his hands, exclaiming, "Thou wouldst dare to serenade my sweetheart, wouldst thou? Take that, and that, and that," and with each word he gave Beckmesser a whack with his cudgel.

Beckmesser shouted with pain and anger, and at once returned the blows. Lena saw what had happened and, afraid that David might kill Beckmesser before she could explain his mistake, she called for help.

Downstairs came Pogner and the servants. Out flew the neighbours, and soon a crowd of people in night attire were

asking excitedly, "What is it? Is there a fire? Shall we call the watchman? Has any one gone for the guard?" And the whole place was in an uproar.

In those days to be found in the streets after dark was a serious offence, and in Nuremberg street fighting was severely punished.

"David, David, it is all a mistake," called Lena; "come here and I will explain everything." David loosened his hold of Beckmesser, who had stopped fighting the instant he heard Lena's voice.

"Lena, Lena!" he exclaimed, "is it thou? Where is thy mistress?"

Just then the watchman's horn was heard and his lantern was faintly seen at the far end of the street. The crowd hastily separated, and Beckmesser, without waiting for Lena's explanation, made haste out of the way like all the other

people.

While the confusion was at its height Hans Sachs had crossed the street to Eva and Sir Walter, who were still standing among the linden trees. He made no remark as to the strangeness of finding them there together, but took for granted that they had met accidentally, having come out to see what caused all the uproar.

And as the watchman was drawing nearer he said to Eva, "Thy father must now be looking for thee. Come, I will see thee safely home. As to Sir Walter, I invite him to come back with me, and together we can discuss the strange events of this day."

Eva and Sir Walter separated, and by the time that the watchman reached Pogner's door not a soul was to be seen. "How strange," he said, "I could almost have sworn I heard voices and fighting.

How the night sounds deceive my old ears!" Then as he walked along the narrow street he sang:

"Hark, good people, to what I say,
Midnight is striking the close of day.
May spectre and spright no more offend ye,
From powers of evil may heaven defend ye.
And praise we the Lord of Heaven."

PART III

Next morning David stole downstairs very quietly to open the shutters of Sachs' shop and unbar the door. He was very much ashamed of his last night's folly which Lena had explained to him, and he was a good deal afraid of what his master would say. He feared that his chances of being made a journeyman and marrying Lena would suffer because of

his last night's doings.

To his surprise the shop door was open, and his master sat by the window reading a book, and did not hear his footstep. David went quietly to the door, where he found a basket. It was covered with ribbons and flowers, and inside were hidden a cake and a tasty sausage. But when he looked across at his good old master he felt utterly ashamed, and, hastily crossing the room, he held the basket before Hans Sachs and said, "Look, master, what Lena sends me."

Sachs looked up dreamily and said, "Flowers and ribbons in my dark room! Is it a feast, and how came they here?"

"Why, master, what ails thee?" said David. "Knowest thou not that this is St. John's Day, our midsummer holiday?"

"Ay, and last night was folly eve: yes, well I remember," said Sachs, rousing himself. "Thou young rascal, I have a

mind to punch thy head for thy folly of last night."

"Good master, forgive me," pleaded David, and he explained the mistake he had made and how his love for Lena had led him astray.

"Well, well, I forgive thee," said Sachs. "Away and dress thyself in thy best, for to-day thou goest with me to the meadow." And David withdrew.

"Good-day, Sir Walter," said Sachs to his guest, who came down the little stair from Sachs' bedroom where he had slept since midnight. "I trust thou hast rested well, and hast forgiven the old shoemaker who captured thee last night?"

"Sachs, I thank thee," said Sir Walter, "and I want thee to listen to a wonderful dream—a dream in which I heard a song so lovely that could I but recapture the words and air, even the

masters would say it was worthy."

"Suppose thou triest now," said Sachs, "and I will write down the words as thou singest them."

And Sir Walter sang in his sweet rich voice a verse so lovely that Sachs clapped his hands. "'Twill do, 'twill do!" he cried. "Go on!" And Sir Walter sang a second verse which Sachs liked quite as well.

"Now a third stanza!" he cried, and Sir Walter finished the song with a thrill of triumph, as he told of the fair face of a maiden who in his dream had come from among the stars to crown him with her love.

"Truly, a noble song!" said Sachs, "and if thou canst sing it to the people as thou hast sung it to me, I have little doubt of the result. Now away and dress thyself bravely. This morning thy servant hath brought here thy boxes, and thou must be ready to come with me to the

meadow at noon."

Sir Walter left the room, and Sachs went too to put on his best suit to do honour to the holiday.

While Sachs was dressing, Beckmesser stepped into the little shop, and he soon spied the song lying on the table where Hans had left it. He saw that the writing was Sachs', and at once he imagined that Sachs had composed it and was going to sing it at the trial and try to win Eva for himself. He read over the words, and though some of them seemed strange, still the rhymes and the metre were correct, and he knew that whatever Sachs wrote was far better than anything he himself could do. So he put the paper in his pocket.

"Good-morning, Beckmesser," said Sachs, "hast recovered from the cudgelling my rascally apprentice gave thee last night?"

And Beckmesser's anger rose again fiercely as he blamed Sachs for disturbing his serenade with his noisy hammering and so awaking David.

"I am still black and blue," he said sourly, "and I know not whether the fair Eva ever heard my song. But I see thou too hast been writing songs, Hans Sachs. Art thou going to sing at the meadow to-day?"

Sachs saw at once what Beckmesser was afraid of. "How dost thou know I have written a song?" he asked. Then, noticing that the paper was gone, he turned to Beckmesser and said, "Thou mayst keep the song and use it as thou wilt." Well he knew that Beckmesser would never find the tune to which alone such a song could be sung.

Beckmesser looked suspiciously at Sachs. "Thou art very kind, Hans Sachs," he said, "but wilt thou promise to tell no

one that thou composedst this song?" he asked.

And Sachs, with a twinkle in his eyes, replied, "I promise thee that I shall never say to any one I composed that song." And Beckmesser went off delighted.

Soon after he left, Eva tripped into the shop, little guessing how much Sachs knew of her last night's doings. "I have come to ask thee to do something to my new shoes, dear Sachs," she said, holding up a dainty little foot. What she really hoped to hear was about Sir Walter: whether he had gone away last night, or was still in the town.

Hans looked very gravely at the little foot, then he said, "Yes, yes, I see, it is the sole that hurts: wait but a minute and I will put it right," and he drew off the tiny shoe.

"I wonder if some one could sing us a song while I alter this shoe?" Hans Sachs

asked in a loud voice, and Eva's face beamed with joy as she heard Sir Walter approach. And he sang over again the lovely third verse of his dream-song in which the lady crowns him with her love.

"Listen, child!" said Sachs. "Is not that a master-song, and we who listen are but as pupils beside him?"

"It is true, it is true!" said Eva, hastily slipping on her shoe as Sir Walter entered. He was closely followed by David and Lena, and all three were bravely dressed in holiday attire.

As Sachs saw Lena and David standing side by side, his kind old heart overflowed. "David," he said, "kneel down; this day an apprentice dies and a journeyman is born."

Then giving the kneeling youth a smart box on the ear, he said, "Arise, my journeyman, for now art thou free to marry her thou lovest."

With grateful looks and fervent thanks David and Lena left the cottage.

"Sir Walter," said Eva, as she was about to follow Lena, "thy song is in truth a master-song, and on the meadow to-day I shall tell to the whole world what I think of it."

And Sir Walter, as he kissed her hand, said gently, "It was a dream I dreamed last night; Heaven grant that the day may prove it true."

All Nuremberg flocked on that beautiful midsummer noon-day to the meadows which lay outside the town walls beside the river. There were signs of merriment everywhere. Boats filled with gaily dressed people floated on the river. Tents with food of all kinds invited the people to rest from the heat of the blazing sun. And a stand gaily decorated with flags and flowers stood ready to receive the guild of the mastersingers, one at



"I have come to ask thee to do something to my new shoes dear Sachs."

least of whom hoped to win the silken wreath, and it might be along with it the hand of Pogner's lovely daughter.

Many merry jests were made by the crowd as the masters took their places. Rounds of applause greeted Hans Sachs, who was loved and honoured by all. And when it became known that David had been made a journeyman and would also sing a trial song for the mastership, he was given an extra volley of cheers.

Beckmesser came early, and the crowd did not scruple to jest at his appearance. "How thin he is! How cross he looks! He is far too old to think of marrying a young bride," was heard on all sides.

Sir Walter stood near Hans Sachs, but he was little noticed by the people, most of whom had never heard of him.

The president took his seat and called for silence. Then in a clear voice

he explained the rules of the contest. This was not, he said, an ordinary singing trial to become one of the Nuremberg mastersingers. To-day the prize was to be not only the silken wreath that showed the approval of their guild, but Herr Pogner had promised that he would give the hand of his lovely daughter, with a handsome dowry of gold and much of his worldly goods, to the greatest singer of the day.

And as the prize was so great, the judges had decided that all might try to win it, and to the singer whom both the people and the masters chose, would the prize be given.

Loud cheers followed this speech, and when silence had been restored the president called for the singing to begin.

Many were the songs sung that day on the sunny meadow. There were gay songs and sad songs, love songs and

drinking songs, and the people and judges listened eagerly, for they dearly loved music and were proud of the fame of their noble guild.

Beckmesser had been waiting impatiently till his time should come. He had taken great pains to learn the words of the song Sachs had given him, but it was very different from anything he had ever seen before, and he had not found it easy to get a tune to fit the words.

At last the president called on him to sing, and he stood up. What a jumble he made! Neither Sir Walter nor Hans Sachs recognised the song. The rhymes were all topsy turvy. He mixed up the lines and the words, and the whole song sounded just like nonsense.

The president looked surprised, and the people began to laugh.

"What is this, Master Beckmesser?" the former asked; "we understand not

what thou singest. Wilt thou repeat thy song?" And Beckmesser tried again. But this attempt was no better.

"'Tis not a song of my composing," he said. "It was written by Hans Sachs, whom ye all know to be a good musician, and now I begin to think it is some trash he has given me, in order that I might spoil my chance in this day's contest."

"Is this true, Hans Sachs?" asked the president. "Hast thou written this song?"

"The song I certainly wrote," answered Sachs, "but it was not I who composed it. A great and lovely song I hold it to be if only the singer knows how to sing it. And that I may prove my words to be true, I ask permission of the masters and the people here present to call on the poet who wrote it to sing us his song."

"'Tis a fair request!" cried the people. "Let us hear the singer," and the president nodded his consent.

"Stand forth, Sir Walter van Stolzing," said Hans Sachs, and the people cheered as the handsome youth entered the singer's stand. Then in a rich, sweet voice Sir Walter sang, and his song was the song of his love.

And he sang of his lady's face as it floated before him in the rosy light of morning, and how the gladness of her coming seemed borne to him on the scent of the dewy air, while the world still lay in sleep.

And he sang of the glories of the day, when the sunshine of her presence flooded all his world, and the radiance of her smile made that world his heaven.

And he sang of the starry night and the love-light flashing from her shining eyes, making beautiful the darkness in which he walked. And he sang of his dream in which his lady crowned him with the jewel of her love.

And the hearts of the people knew as he sang that every word was true, and they listened in breathless silence.

Long and loud was the applause from the people that followed the song. But the masters too had listened in amazement. Could this be the song Beckmesser had sung, this music so great and simple with its words of noble meaning? And they saw that this was art, a great and lovely art through which a new and wider world of music was dawning that day for the mastersingers of Nuremberg.

And the president turned to the mastersingers and said, "The song is a great and a lovely song as Hans Sachs told us, and I ask ye all, shall we admit as master the singer who composed it?"

And the masters shouted, "Agreed, agreed!"

"He has won both prizes!" cried the people, and they threw their caps into

the air and danced with joy, while the president led Sir Walter to where Eva sat beside her father.

"Herr Pogner," he said, "I bring you the singer who has won by his singing the silken wreath which is the prize of our guild. We greet Sir Walter van Stolzing as a mastersinger of Nuremberg, and we leave it to thee to award thy promised prize."

And Pogner, turning to the singer, said, "Sir Walter, I hail thee as the greatest singer in Nuremberg, and a master who will do honour to our guild. And, in accordance with my promise, I call on my daughter Eva to crown thee with the silken wreath of our guild, and at the same time, if she be willing, to give thee her hand."

The knight bent low to receive the crown, and he kissed the fair hand which placed it on his head. Then drawing



The knight bent low to
receive the crown.

Eva's hand within his own, he turned to the delighted people and said:

"Ye have bestowed on me the two greatest treasures in Nuremberg, the crown of art and the hand of the lady I love, and I pray that Heaven may make me worthy to devote my life to the service of both."

CHAPTER 3
The Flying Dutchman

Many many years ago a Norwegian skipper named Daland was sailing homeward one evening after a long and successful voyage.

His heart was filled with longing for the sight of his only child, the beautiful dark-eyed Senta. And as he walked back and forward on the narrow deck of his swift sailing ship, he thought joyfully, "To-night I shall be home, and shall hold in my arms once more, my beloved daughter."

As night fell, the wind began to sing and hum among the snowy sails; dark clouds scudded across the starry sky, and every now and again heavy rain fell with

a hissing noise on the deck.

"It is only a squall," the captain shouted to his crew, "and will go as suddenly as it has come." But by midnight the singing of the wind had risen to an angry shriek. The masts swayed and bent beneath the burden of the wind-filled sails, and huge waves crested with foam raced madly onward, lashed by the fury of the rising wind.

Daland soon knew that this was no passing squall, but a storm in which it would be dangerous if not impossible to sail past the rocky headland, beyond which lay the sandy bay he had hoped to reach that night. With a disappointed heart he gave orders that the sails should be closely reefed. He then altered the vessel's course and steered for the shelter of a rocky cove. Under its lee he could wait till the storm was past.

"Never do I remember a storm so

sudden and so fierce," he said to the sailors. "Heaven help all those who are on the open sea this night."

Scarcely had he spoken when a flash of lightning, closely followed by a loud peal of thunder, lit up for an instant the angry sea, and from the helmsman came the cry, "Ship ahoy, ship ahoy!"

Daland rushed to his vessel's side and saw the lights of another ship entering the cove. He heard a clear voice of command ring from the stranger's deck. A heavy anchor was let down, and soon the new corner swayed on the heaving waters close beside the Norwegian vessel. Worn and battered the stranger's ship appeared—a gloomy ship with blood-red sails, which the sailors were silently lowering.

No sound of voices was heard on board, no laughter to tell of rejoicing over deliverance from the terrors of the

storm. In silence the vessel lay, and the Norwegian sailors, who had been eager to offer words of question and of welcome, turned away from a crew which appeared so unfriendly.

But presently the captain hailed Daland and invited him to come aboard, and in the stranger's cabin they spent the long night hours. Then, as the sun rose, the storm slowly died away.

"I have wandered much," said the stranger to Daland, "over unknown and distant seas. Wealth of gold and silver and pearls is mine safely hidden in secret coffers within these cabin walls. But now I long for rest and home. How gladly would I give half my treasure could I find a maiden who would love me truly, and be my wife. In Norway I mean to seek her, for they tell me that the maidens of Norway are loving and fair. What sayest thou who knowest them, noble Daland?"

Daland was greatly attracted by the stranger's noble look and manner. His face was very handsome, with delicate, clear-cut features that looked as if they were carved in ivory, so colourless was the skin. But it was the stranger's eyes that fascinated Daland most; dark, beautiful eyes that Daland felt were the saddest he had ever seen.

Daland's own eyes shone with eagerness when he heard of the treasures of gold and pearls hidden so close beside him, and his thoughts flew to Senta.

"It is not for me, noble stranger, to say whether our maidens are as thou believest, but I have a daughter at home, and if thou wilt come with me tomorrow, for thyself thou canst judge if she be fair, and well can I vouch that she is loving."

The stranger readily agreed to sail with Daland next day, and they parted.



Presently the captain hailed Daland.

But Daland could not sleep for thinking of the riches that might so soon be his. How often he had longed to find a noble and wealthy husband who would be worthy of Senta. Surely never had a storm brought such good fortune to any captain.

At sunrise the two ships weighed anchor, and in the golden light of dawn they left the shelter of the little cove, and steered for the rocky headland beyond which lay the sandy bay where Daland lived.

High on the rocky cliffs, which rose like a wall on two sides of the sandy bay, stood Daland's home. It was a low white house, standing back from the edge of the cliff in a garden, and well sheltered by the pine trees which clothed the steep hill slopes for many and many a mile.

Senta's mother had died when she was a baby, leaving the little dark-eyed

daughter to keep her memory green in the heart of her sailor husband. And Daland, as he looked now on his daughter, saw again the fair young maiden whom he had loved and wooed eighteen years ago. The love of both husband and father he now lavished on his child.

During his long absences at sea Dame Mary, his mother's old nurse, kept Senta company and looked after the house. In the long winter evenings the village maidens would gather in the big kitchen beside the open fireplace where pine logs blazed with a cheery sputter. Then, while their spinning wheels hummed busily, Dame Mary told tale after tale of fairy and witch and wanderer whose doings had been the delight of her own youthful days. Many a ballad she had taught to Senta.

"The child is over fond of these old-world songs," she would say to Daland,

half complainingly, "and her wheel stands idle while she sings, which is not the way my mother taught me should the hours be spent."

But the father always met these complaints with a smile.

"Let be, let be, Dame Mary," he would say, "Senta is still but a child. There will be time enough to spin when she has outgrown this love of childish tale and ballad."

And indeed, few could have found it in their heart to scold the lovely, dream-eyed maiden. Except in song her voice was rarely heard, and her slender, graceful form moved silently about the house and garden. But Senta's favourite haunt was the edge of the rocky cliff at the foot of which rolled the sea.

Here she would sit hour after hour watching for the first glimpse of her father's ship, she told Dame Mary; for

Senta knew that her old nurse would not understand if she spoke of the fascination which drew her again and again to watch the play of light and shadow on the face of the silent sea.

And when the storm winds blew, and the roar of the great waves as they hurled themselves against the rocky cliffs was heard in the low white house in its sheltered garden, then the tumult of the wind and sea seemed to enter Senta's blood. She would roam from room to room in a fever of unrest, longing to be like the sea-gulls that floated on airy wings in the heart of the hurricane.

On the wall of the kitchen there hung a portrait which was noticed by every visitor and which Daland thought was strangely out of keeping with the simple furniture in the big old room. No one could be quite sure whence it had come; but Dame Mary, who knew most

old tales connected with the family, believed that Daland's grandfather had brought it home as his share of the spoil from a wrecked ship that had drifted into the bay. "And a sad-faced, wicked-looking man I think he is," she used to add. "I feel sure he has had dealings with the Evil One." Then Dame Mary would make the sign of the cross and mutter a prayer that Heaven would keep her from such a sin.

But Senta loved the picture. To her the man's face was filled with deep sadness and longing without any sign of evil, and there welled up in her heart a great pity for the sorrow which was graven so deeply, and a longing that by her love she might in some way have lessened it.

Many a time when Dame Mary was busy at the other end of the house Senta would sit with folded hands gazing at the picture, her eyes filled with dreams. For

long she had wondered what sorrow there could be so great as to bring that look of sadness into a man's face. But now she knew.

One wintry evening, when the storm raged more fiercely than usual, and shook the walls of the low white house, Dame Mary had told a tale of one whose face, Senta thought, might have looked like the portrait on the wall.

It was a tale of the sea, of a night of tempest and hurricane long, long ago, when a ship with close-reefed sails and anxious crew was struggling to round the Cape of Good Hope, that cape of storms so dreaded by all who sail the sea. Again and again the howling wind and the angry sea drove the vessel back, but with each defeat the captain's anger rose, and again he would renew his efforts to round the point. All night they battled, and when morning drew near a worn and

weary sailor ventured to ask the captain, "Shall we not give in and run for the shelter of the bay?"

But with blazing eyes and angry voice the captain shouted with a terrible oath, "May I double the Cape this night even if afterwards I must sail for ever."

And the wish was heard. An evil voice spoke mockingly in the captain's ear, "In winter and summer, in storm and sunshine shalt thou sail, ever longing for rest, even the rest of death, and ever condemned to fare onward. Only one hope is thine. Each time that seven years pass thou mayst land, and shouldst thou find a maiden who will love thee unto death and join her lot with thine, then shalt thou be free."

Many and many a time had the seven years' truce arrived, and with hopeful heart the captain had sought for the maiden who should free him from his

fate, but the search had always been in vain.

By sailors the "Flying Dutchman," as the captain came to be called, was dreaded, as bad luck and storms were sure to follow in his track.

And so shunned by man, and under the curse of heaven, he wandered from age to age across the homeless sea.

Senta loved this tale better than all others, and in her heart she wished that hers had been the chance to offer her love and her life to save the wanderer.

But besides Dame Mary there was one who little liked the maiden's dreamy fancies. Erick, the young huntsman, had loved Senta since they had played together as children. He was poor, and Daland, he knew, had higher hopes for the future of his only child than to wed her to a penniless hunter. But Senta liked well the handsome, fearless youth, and

only three days before, Erick had drawn from her the avowal that no living person came nearer in her regard than he. Filled with hope, he now longed for Daland's homecoming that he might ask his leave to woo his daughter.

Great were the joy and excitement when word was brought that Daland's ship and another were entering the bay. The village maidens ran to the beach to welcome the travellers, while Senta and Dame Mary made ready a plentiful meal in the big old kitchen.

"Daughter, I bring thee a good friend whom I hope thou wilt heartily welcome," was Daland's greeting to Senta as he clasped her in his arms.

And when Senta raised her head from her father's bosom the colour fled from her cheeks, and surprise and fear filled her heart. Before her there stood the living image of the portrait on the

wall. The man with the saddest of sad faces was by her side, and a low, tired voice was begging for welcome.

"It seems to me as if I had known him all my life," said Senta to Daland, giving her hand to the stranger, who gazed with eager eyes at the fair young face so steadfast and loving.

Right happy was the meal that sunny morning. Daland was overjoyed to be once more at home, and he had noticed with pleasure how heartily the shy Senta had welcomed his new friend.

"I shall let him tell his own tale," he said to himself. "With a young girl like Senta that handsome face will more quickly win approval than mention of gold or jewels." And his eyes sparkled as he thought of the good fortune that lay before his child.

Dame Mary was always tearfully thankful to see her master safe home

again. During her long life she had seen many ships sail bravely from the harbour away to the crimson west, but she could never forget that not always had they come back again, and the fishing village held many homes where wives and daughters mourned for those gone down in the great waters.

To the stranger the sight of this peaceful home life was like a glimpse of heaven, and as he looked on Senta's sweet face once more a gleam of hope stole into his heart, and he made up his mind to tell her his pitiful tale. And for Senta the whole world thrilled with happiness. The hero of her dreams sat by her side, and she knew in her heart that behind the beautiful face of her father's guest lay hidden a depth of sorrow which she alone could sound.

In the garden, alone with the stranger, she listened while he told the

tale of his weary wanderings under the evil spirit's curse, and his voice faltered as he said, "Senta, couldest thou love me with a love faithful even unto death, that deliverance might be mine?" And the sadness in his face gave place to a look of joy and hope as the maiden answered, "I have loved thee for long with the strongest love of my heart, and faithfully will I follow thee even unto death."

By evening it was known in all the village that Senta was betrothed to the captain of the stranger ship, and that Daland had found a noble and wealthy son-in-law for his only child. By his orders the villagers carried food and wine to the sailors of both ships, that they might feast and drink good luck to the coming bridal.

With right goodwill the men on Daland's ship made merry, and sounds of song and laughter floated across the bay.

But presently it was noticed that silence reigned among the stranger crew. Not a rope was moved, not a voice was heard till after the sun had set. Then strange mutterings as of a coming storm filled the air; the blood-red sails of the gloomy ship fluttered as with wind in the still evening, and blue flames were seen to flicker round the bows of the mysterious vessel. No sailors were seen, but harsh voices sang songs of murder and hate and wickedness, while hideous laughter followed each cruel verse.

The sailors in Daland's ship grew silent, and fear struck a chill to their hearts.

"I know that ship," whispered an old sailor, who had come from the village to welcome his grandson; "it is the Flying Dutchman, and her captain and crew are under the power of the Evil One. God send that no ill-gotten treasure will

tempt Daland to give his daughter to one so doomed." And the sailors crossed themselves and went below in fear. Erick the huntsman, who had been on the hills all day, and had just come on board to join the merry-makers, heard all that was said by the old sailor. In great misery he went ashore to seek for Daland, and warn him of the true nature of his guest.

On the cliffs he saw Senta gazing seaward with dreamy, unseeing eyes.

"Is it true, Senta," he asked, "that thou hast promised to marry the stranger captain?"

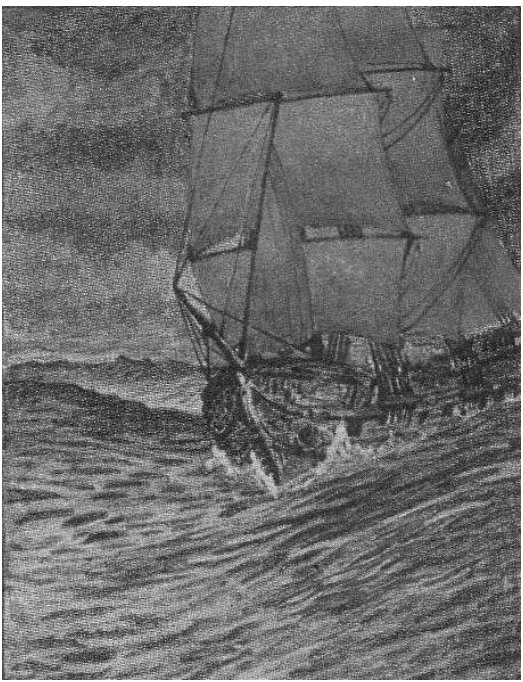
"Erick, it had to be," answered Senta. "All my life have I been waiting for him, and now my heart calls me to follow him throughout the world."

"And what of thy promise to me, false maiden?" burst from Erick angrily. "Knowest thou that this man is under a curse, and that earth and sea alike refuse

shelter to him who hath made a vow to the Evil One? Thy love is mine! But three days have passed since thou toldest me that no living person came nearer to thy heart than I. As my promised bride I claim thee now."

Erick seized Senta's hands to draw her to him. As he did so a dark shadow came from a corner of the rocky cliff, and a voice of deepest sadness was heard to say, "Thou too art false, and I am lost, lost, lost." It was the voice of the stranger, who now ran down to the beach calling, "To ship, to ship! Once more to sea we go!" and as the captain sprang on board, the blood-red sails of the gloomy boat were hoisted by the ghostly crew, and the vessel put out to sea.

Senta stood for a minute, spellbound by the stranger's sad words, then she cried, "Stay, O "stay! I am thine and thine only, I will go with thee even unto



Already the blood-red sails of the ship were stiffening to the breeze.

death!"

But the captain heard her not, already the blood-red sails of the ship were stiffening to the breeze, and the white foam flew from the vessel's bow.

Senta cast a farewell look at the low white house and garden, and at the brave young huntsman lover who stood by her side. Then she ran along the cliff to where it overhung the sea, and crying, "I come, I come!" she threw herself down into the restless waves. As she fell a beam of light shot from the rosy clouds which still lingered in the sunset sky, and those who were watching saw the vessel disappear, while the forms of Senta and the Flying Dutchman, with hands closely clasped, ascended on the golden pathway towards the glories of the West. And all knew that Senta's faithful love had set the wanderer free, and he might now find rest.