

LIFE STORIES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

HERMANN AND THUSNELDA



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HERMAN AND
THUSNELDA

*Translated from the German of
Ferdinand Schmidt*

BY

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Translator of "Memories," "Immigrants," etc.

WITH FRONTISPICE



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TIMELINE

The following is a chronological statement of the most important events in the Life of Herman:

- 18 B.C. Birth.
- 6 A.D. Entered the Roman military service.
- 8 A.D. Returned to Germany and organized a revolt against the Romans.
- 9 A.D. Defeated Varus in the Teutoburg Forest.
- 10 A.D. Married Thusnelda.
- 14 A.D. Germanicus defeated the Marsi.
- 15 A.D. Thusnelda captured and sent to Rome.
- 16 A.D. Romans driven from Germany by Herman.
- 18 A.D. Herman defeats Marbod and expels him from Germany.
- 21 A.D. Conspiracy of German chieftains. Herman assassinated.

TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE

This beautiful story of Herman (or Arminius) and Thusnelda covers only that period of his life from his youthful days to the defeat of Varus, the Roman general, in the Teutoburg Forest in the year 9 A. D., and his union with Thusnelda, daughter of Segest, who was loyal to her fatherland, notwithstanding her father's treachery. Five years later, the Romans, having recovered from their terrible defeat by Herman, again took the offensive against the Germans. Germanicus crossed the Rhine and defeated the Marsi. During the next year he again invaded Germany, and Thusnelda fell into his hands and was sent prisoner to Rome. This only served to increase Herman's anger. He influenced several tribes to join him, and another battle was fought in the Teutoburg Forest. Although Herman was not victorious, Germanicus was forced to retreat. In the following year Germanicus won fresh victories, but the Romans were finally driven from Germany. Herman was then forced to protect his country from the treacherous designs of Marbod, who is mentioned several times in the story. He declared war against him, broke up his Marcomannian Kingdom, and drove him out of Germany. Shortly after this event, some of the German chiefs conspired against Herman, and he was assassinated in his thirty-seventh year.

The story of Herman and Thusnelda, as far as it goes in this little volume, is one of extraordinary interest. The strong contrast between Herman, the German hero, and his brother Flavius, who became a degenerate and a Roman; the thrilling description of the march of Varus and his army; its defeat and his self-destruction—a defeat so overwhelming that the Emperor Augustus exclaimed in despair, "Varus, Varus, give me back my legions"; the references to the gods and Valhalla; the stirring side-story of The King's Daughter and the Dragon; the lovely romance of Euria, the water nymph; and the constant allusions to the customs and superstitions of those

days, combine to form a story which deserves the attention of every young person, and may not be without interest for the elders.

G. P. U.

CHICAGO, June, 1907.

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CHAPTER I

THE OFFERING

The sun was still high in the heavens when a band of knights emerged from a dense forest. They halted and looked around in every direction, for they had lost their way. While consulting which road they should take, they heard a dog barking in the distance and immediately proceeded in the direction from which the sound came.

There were twelve in the band, and among them rode two handsome youths, whose mien easily proclaimed them the most distinguished of them all. They wore close-fitting cloaks of brown woollen cloth, leather leggings, and shoes of brown leather. Light helmets, adorned with herons' feathers, covered their yellow locks and completed an attire which was simple but admirably suited to the wearers. Their companions, all of whom, except two gray-bearded men, were young, were similarly dressed. All were armed with bows and arrows, hunting-spears, and swords. The last four of the youths were leading pack-horses of the good old German stock; stoutly built, with long tails and manes—not large, but full of endurance. Saddles were never used by our ancestors. They regarded their enemies who rode upon them as weaklings who could be easily overcome. The horses were loaded with spoils of the chase,—two stags, two boars, three wolves, a bear, a lynx, and several mountain cocks.

The little band soon reached an open spot, where they found freshly cut horses' heads with the jaws pried wide open, impaled upon two stakes. Stakes like these were familiar to the hunting party, for they were often set up by our pagan ancestors, who called them "Neidstangen." The heads of the horses faced the hostile country, for it was believed this would secure them against sudden attack, and at the same time bring harm to their foes. Even in our time the gables of many village

farmhouses are decorated with horses' heads carved of wood; what used to be a symbol of belief, however, is now a mere ornament with no significance of any kind.

The open spot reached by the knights was arable land protected in some places by dense thorn-bushes, in others by high hedges, against the encroachment of red and black deer. Men and women were busy harvesting. As they had no scythes at that time they cut the corn with sickles.

Scarcely had the master given a signal to the laborers to rest a while,—for the work among the tall stalks with their heavy ears was tiresome,—when the knights made their appearance. The master immediately ordered his men to drop their peaceful implements and seize their spears, which were stuck in the earth in the centre of the field. With weapons in hand they awaited the knights, with their master at their head. The band, however, had hardly reached the gate in the hedge, which had no hinges but was kept shut with ropes of fibre, when the master ordered his men to lay down their weapons and retire. The knights in the meantime had entered the field.

"You have mistaken us, man, have you not?" said one of the youths. The master nodded assent.

"Well," continued the youth, "as we are not what you at first supposed, will you allow us an hour's rest here?"

"Gladly," answered the master. "You will always be welcome under my roof, gentlemen, but it must be my first duty to make offering to our Hertha. In our barns you will see the abundant gifts which the gracious mother has bestowed upon us. She gave the soil power to bear the stalks. She nourished the stalks with the dews of the sacred ash, thereby strengthening them and enabling them to bear the corn which gives us food."

"What you propose is right and proper. Let us assist in the offering," said one of the youths.

Thereupon all the knights dismounted, let their horses graze, and went with the master. Everything was soon in readiness. The offering of flesh was made in the sacred grove by the hand of the priest, but any one was allowed to make the first offering to the goddess.

In these offerings no fire from the hearth, and particularly no fire which had been used for domestic purposes, was allowed. A fresh fire was produced by friction, for even fire from flint and steel was considered profane. The fire thus secured was called the alarm fire. It had a deep significance among our forefathers. If, for instance, an animal had a contagious disease, the fire was kindled at the same time on every hearth. After this, the men repaired to the centre of the village, drove a strong stake into the earth with a hole bored through the top of it, through which a bar was placed with a wet rope attached. Stout men worked this bar back and forth until sparks flew and set fire to tow. Wood was then kindled, and the road was blocked by burning barriers. When the wood was nearly burned out the village herds were driven up, and each of the animals was forced to jump over the fiery mass. This was done not only when contagious diseases had already broken out, but also as a means of warding them off, especially on St. John's Day and May-Day.

In this manner the fire was kindled in the field, after which the master set fire to rows of corn which had been left standing, as an offering to Hertha. He raised his hands and devoutly watched the smoke rising to the sky. An altar, which had been erected in the midst of the corn, was lit. Upon this altar, which was skilfully constructed of choice pieces of wood and decorated with flowers and sweet-scented herbs, stood two vessels, one filled with milk, the other with honey.

The setting apart of offerings to the gods, the givers of so many gifts, was one of the distinctive features of the heathen religion. The firstlings of the flocks and the earliest ripe fruits were the favorite selections. The sacrifice was an evidence of their beautiful faith. It was believed that its

fragrant smoke rose to the gods and that they were well pleased with it.

The golden flames ascended, and the little band stood devoutly around them in a semicircle, watching the column of smoke as it rose higher and higher and finally disappeared. Some raised their arms; others gently moved their lips in prayer.

CHAPTER II

THE BROTHERS' QUARREL

After the altar had fallen in ruins, the master requested the strangers to follow him to the house. He was an elderly man of colossal and powerful figure, built rather to hunt the wild ox of the forest than to handle a sickle. He wore a bearskin about his shoulders, fastened at the breast by a long thorn. Like all free-born Germans of that time he was both hunter and warrior. He usually left the cultivation of his land to his men and women servants, but that day he had remained at home to make the offering.

They had now reached the house. Its gray thatched roof sloped to the ground, and its walls were made of red clay.

"I am now your host, and you are my guests," said the master. "Will you enter, or do you prefer to stay under the oaks and partake of food?" The mild, balmy forest air was so tempting in comparison with the dark house that the youths decided to remain in the open air, after having first fed and watered their horses. The host meanwhile busied himself looking after his guests. Bearskins were brought for the comfort of the young leaders of the band. Wild boar's flesh, bear hams, smoked bear's paws, black bread like that still baked by the Westphalian peasants, and a generous supply of drink made of barley and honey, called *Meth* by the Germans, were set in their midst. Lustily did they devour the good things provided for them by their generous host; for hospitality was one of the most prominent characteristics of our ancestors.

The guests begged their host to accept one of their own stags; but he declined, at the same time announcing it would give him great pleasure if they would join him in a stag hunt the next day.

Then dice were brought and distributed among the guests; but one of the leaders said: "Excuse me. I would gladly play, and indeed it is our practice after each meal, but it is time for us to leave. We have never been in this region before, and we lost our way in the forest. Tell us which road to take to reach Steinberg. Once there, we know the way home."

The host told them to follow the course of the river, which was near by, and it would lead them to Steinberg. Thereupon the brother of the youth who had first spoken imperiously declared, "You had better go with us."

The host looked sharply at him and a slight frown wrinkled his brow. After a short pause he replied: "If there were any danger on the road, or if you feared you might not find the Berg, I would send one of my men to guide you, notwithstanding I am expecting an attack this very night by a marauding rabble. They have attempted twice already to surprise me, and I have news that they have designs against me to-night. That is why you found the horses' heads, and my laborers armed, which is not our usual practice."

The youth who had thus addressed the host rose in anger. Turning pale, he said: "Notwithstanding what you have just asserted, I demand that you accompany us to Steinberg; and that you may know I have the right to make the demand, I give you my name: I am Flavius, son of Prince Sigmar."

The announcement did not seem to disturb the host in the least. His face wore the same stern expression as he looked at the Prince's son. In the meantime Flavius's brother had risen from his bear-skin, his cheeks burning with shame and anger at his brother's conduct. With all the calmness he could muster, he said:

"Brother, make no trouble with our worthy host."

"Who is making trouble?" replied Flavius. "I repeat my demand that he shall accompany us."

"Young man," said the host in a tone of bitterness, "you are mistreating your own people. Look you, these scars are honorable reminders of the battles in which I fought for that excellent prince, your father. Have you any to show? Is not fighting for one's fatherland nobler work than hunting wolves and deer in the forest? When you have done some great deed I will be quick to congratulate you; but now you are only a pretty boy who has not even learned how to treat a free-born German. I obey the laws of my country, not the demands of a youth who has yet to prove by his deeds his worthiness to be a prince's son. Now hear my last word. I will not go with you; but because of my devotion to your father I will of my own accord allow one of my people to escort his son to Steinberg." Thereupon he turned to one of his men, told him what to do, and went out of the house.

Flavius's brother rushed up to him and asked: "Will you give me lodging for the night?"

"Have you forgotten what I told you might happen to-night?" replied the host.

"It is because I remember it that I wish to stay with you," said the youth.

Flavius, who was so enraged at the refusal of the host, that he could not trust himself to reply, vented his anger upon his brother and in a fury of passion ordered him to go home with him. "But," replied his brother, "I too am son of a prince, and am called Herman."

"Are you not aware our father expects us to-day?" said Flavius.

"I know he expects us," replied Herman, "but more than all else he expects that we shall conduct ourselves like sons of a prince, help the oppressed, and assist the brave in battle. Because he expects this, I shall remain with my people to-night."

"As the first-born have I not the right to command?" said Flavius, clutching his hunting-sword.

Herman replied: "It is your right to take precedence of me in all good things, and my duty to follow. This time, however, you are in the wrong; therefore I shall not follow you." Thereupon he turned away to avoid a quarrel with his brother, and joined his host who was entering the house. Flavius left in a rage, accompanied by the host's servant. Herman and his people remained.

As night drew near, the necessary preparations for defence were made. The host's information was verified. About midnight the marauders appeared and tried to force their way in. After a show of resistance the door was opened. Then Herman and his men, who had been concealed, suddenly rushed upon them and a desperate struggle began. Those who did not surrender were cut down, and the fight was soon over. Seven of the robbers were bound and thrown into the barn; the others were killed.

Herman set out early the next morning, accompanied by his host. "Had you not remained," said the latter, "I should not now have been alive, for I could not have repelled the attack of the robbers with my five servants." Herman promised to send for the prisoners the next day. Death was their inevitable fate. Robbers in those days were killed with as little compunction as dogs or wolves.

CHAPTER III

THE GIANTS' GRAVES AND IRMINSUL

Herman several times begged his generous host to return, but he would not consent, as he desired to show him ~ some forest routes which would make his journey more comfortable. Wearing his sword suspended from a chain round his body, and carrying his spear, he strode stoutly along at the head of the band, a true son of the woods.

At last they reached a river winding along between high banks. Across the stream were broad meadow lands upon which herds of swift-footed stags and deer were grazing. To the right were forests of millennial oaks, beeches, and lofty firs, and under them the ground was covered with blue-bells and anemones. The restful temptation of the scene was irresistible. Their horses were turned out upon the meadow, which was quickly forsaken by the stags and deer, and then the men rested under the oaks.

The old man, who knew nearly every bush and tree in that region, had told Herman many a story relating to it on their way. He now called his attention to a mound at the right, rising under the firs and overgrown with thorn and wild rose bushes.

"That is a giant's grave," said he. Herman asked him if he knew the story of the hero buried there.

The host replied: "You remember the story of the man who once found a snake in the woods, chilled by the frost. He placed it in his bosom under his bearskin. As it grew warm and recovered its strength it stung him with its poisonous fangs and killed him. You also know the story of the hunter who carried a young wolf home. After it grew up it strangled its master in his sleep. A king's daughter in the olden times had a like experience. She found a young dragon just hatched by the

sun. You know that the dragons guarded gold in their dreadful caves, and that the gold upon which they rested increased as they grew. The king's daughter thought this dragon would bring the blessing of gold to the castle, so she put some gold in a little chest and laid the dragon upon it. It grew rapidly, and the gold grew with it.

"After seven days it was crowded in the chest, so it changed its position and put its scaly tail into its jaws. It kept on growing. Soon it devoured doves, then hens, and then geese. Wise men warned the king's daughter that if she did not kill the dragon it would bring harm to her. But as she saw the gold increasing, her greed made her throw their warnings to the winds. After seven times seven weeks the dreadful creature took up the whole apartment. Daily it devoured a lamb, then a yearling bull, and at last a horse. It was strong enough to drag these animals out of their stalls. And still it grew, and the gold grew with it. The room being at last too small, it occupied the castle yard. One day it devoured a man, and people grew afraid to leave their dwellings. Nothing could resist the dragon's power. It daily seized a victim.

"One day it said to the king's daughter: 'I will be your king, and you shall be my wife and shall be called the Dragon Princess?'

"The king's daughter was alarmed at the proposal, but she plucked up courage and said, 'What will you bring me for the bridal gift?' The dragon asked what she desired; and she answered, 'You shall contend with seven of our heroes, and if you vanquish all seven I will be your wife.' The dragon answered, 'Let them come.'

"The king's daughter thereupon sent the following message far and wide: 'Whosoever shall fight with the dragon and slay it, him will I take for my husband, and to him shall all the dragon-gold belong.'

"There were many stout heroes in our country in those days—stouter heroes than we have now. Soon one of them

appeared. He fought a desperate fight with the dragon, but it killed and devoured him. For a long time no one ventured to give battle to the dragon again. The king's daughter shed many tears and bitterly regretted that she had allowed herself to be dazzled by the gold and that she had not killed the poisonous dragon long before. The country was being depopulated, for there was no way of escape from it; for wings had grown upon its loathsome scaly body, which carried it, swift as the wind, over mountain, valley, and sea. The last of the seven heroes finally appeared and created great surprise among the people by his heroic appearance. They had never seen such a champion before, and despair gave place to hope.

"The contest began. The hero's sword cut through the air like the lightning flash and smote the dragon's head, but only sparks flew from the stroke. The dragon emitted a hissing, poisonous stream of fire, and all grew dark before the hero's eyes. The monster instantly seized him with its claws and tried to drag him near enough to devour him. He recovered himself, however, summoned all his strength, and drove his long sword to the hilt into its breast. It sank dead upon the ground, which shook under its fall.

"The king's daughter, who had witnessed the struggle, joyfully ran toward the victor to greet him as her future husband. But he looked upon her sternly and reproachfully and said: 'You did great harm by disregarding the warnings of the wise men, and keeping the dragon in your home, thereby inflicting severe calamities upon the land. Go! I cannot accept the hand of such a foolish woman. I did not fight the dragon for your sake, but to relieve the country from its misfortunes.' Thereupon the hero took the gold, loaded it upon twelve horses, and had it carried to the sea where it was so deep no bottom had ever been found. There he sank it, saying, 'Greed for thee, thou glowing metal, has brought great disasters to my country.'

"They say that the mermaids have built themselves a golden house out of this metal, and that to-day when the water

is calm and the sun or the moon shines upon it, the glistening gold can be seen far down in the depths.

"The king's daughter was overwhelmed with grief. Pale and languishing and clad in black, she went daily to the sea, and one night did not return. Mariners afterwards often saw her sitting on the beach playing with gold. She sang to them with a voice of ravishing sweetness, hoping to entice them to her and drag them down into the sea. But all fled from her.

"After the disappearance of the king's daughter the people said to each other, 'Let us make him our king who rescued us from the curse of the dragon.' But the hero's strength waned from that day. He had inhaled the poisonous breath of the dragon in the fierce struggle, and before the moon had twice changed he died, and was buried over there under the firs whose branches extend above the mound, like the arms of a priest in benediction."

Herman and his companions had listened to the story with intense eagerness. One of the band asked the narrator if he knew aught of the giants, and whether any of them were still living.

"There are giants still," he replied, "but they are not like those of the olden time. When I was young, an old graybeard told me many wonderful stories about them."

Herman begged him to tell them the tales, whereupon he said:

"Before the heavens and the earth were created there was a great chaos, or world of mist, called *Nebelwelt*. Its two extremes were called *Muspelheim* and *Niffelheim*. From *Muspelheim* came light and warmth; from *Niffelheim*, darkness and cold. In the midst of this world of mist was a fountain whence issued twelve rivers. Far from their source they turned to rigid ice, but southward from the land of light came warm winds which melted them; and from the rising vapor sprang the wicked giant *Ymir*.' While he was sleeping, there came a man and a woman from his armpits, and from

these sprang the race of the giants. They are also called the Frost Giants, because of their frosty bodies and icy hair and beards. As they thawed there appeared the cow Audhumbla. From its udder ran four streams of milk. While it was licking the hoar-frost one day there appeared a man's hair, on the next day his head, and on the third his whole body, powerful and beautiful. He was called Burl, and his son, Bor. The son married Besetta, a giant's daughter, who was dazzling as the sun, and they produced Odin and the other gods who rule the earth, and to whom we pray and bring our offerings. The gods killed Ymir, and so great was the stream of his blood that the entire race of giants was drowned in it. From the body of this giant the gods constructed the world. They made the earth from his flesh, the seas and rivers from his blood, the mountains from his bones, and the rocks from his teeth. From his brows they built Midgard (Midearth). Then they took the skull and out of it fashioned the firmament. Of his brain they made the clouds. The sparks, flying across from Muspeiheim, they set in the firmament to light it. Each light had its own place, and the days and years were appointed for their courses.

"From the hair still remaining sprang the giants who lived on the earth at a later period. They were not so great as the Frost Giants but as much greater than men as those firs are higher than the thorn bushes.

"A giant's child once found a peasant in the fields. It carried him in its hand to its mother and asked, 'What kind of a creature is this I found digging in the ground?' The mother replied, 'Let him go; it is a man. The gods are kind to men, and we must respect them whenever we find them.'

"The giants gradually disappeared before the race of men, to whom the gods had given the earth. Many traces of them, however, still remain. That gray rock yonder on the mountain-side we could hardly move, and yet long ago it was in a giants' shoe. Feeling its pressure, he unloosed his shoe and shook it out."

Herman said, "I can well believe what you tell me of the giants; but interesting as your stories are, we must not remain here longer."

The horses were called and came running up like dogs, for in the olden days horse and rider understood each other more perfectly than now. The band resumed their journey and soon reached Steinberg, where their guide halted. Before thanking Herman and taking his leave, he said:

"You will not think me inquisitive in asking you what is the significance of that stone statue with the three arms on the Steinberg. I have heard that your father erected it in past years, but I have never asked the priests the meaning of it."

Reining up his horse, Herman replied: "I do not yet know the meaning of all our religious symbols, but I will tell you what I have learned from my father. There is a sacred ash tree whose branches reach to the sky. It is called Yggdrasil.' In its shade the gods hold their daily councils. Under one of its roots is Mimir's spring, where wisdom and understanding lie hidden. The statue is an image of the sacred ash. Its three arms signify the three roots, one of which extends to the abodes of the gods; the second into Nebelwelt (the region of cold and darkness), in which Hel, the pale goddess of death, rules; and the third to the realms of the giants."

Thereupon they parted with courteous words and handshaking. The statue described by Herman is still held in reverence by the people, and there are many of them now scattered over Germany. They are called Irminsuls, a name sometimes confused with Arminius, as if they had been erected in his memory.

CHAPTER IV

THE BANQUET

Architecture at the time of our story—the first ten years after the birth of Christ—was very crude in Germany. But we must not take the statement of the Romans too literally when they speak of the miserable huts in which our ancestors lived. We must remember that they may have seemed so to the Romans in comparison with their own elegant temples and palaces.

The abode of the old Cherusci Prince, Sigmar, was in a wild and romantic spot, near the Weser. About a hundred yards apart were two somewhat lofty red stone towers of cylindrical shape, connected by a broad strong structure, the walls of which were made of stout oaken beams, cut four-square and so closely fitted that they were almost as solid as stone. In the centre of this structure was a large room used for the entertainment of guests and the reception of those who had business with the Prince. The inside of the structure was in harmony with the outside. A banquet table of solid oak, supported upon huge feet, stood in the middle of the room, and the seats around it were made of the same wood. The Prince's chair stood upon a slightly elevated platform at the head of the table. The walls were hung with trophies of the chase and battle. Shields were suspended in long rows, some of them polished, others painted in bright colors. Flowers were pictured on some of them, and on others the animals sacred to the gods or famous for their great strength. Long swords hung between the shields, most of them old and showing the marks of many a battle.

The heroes of that time had special names for their swords as they had for their steeds. Almost every one had its story of adventures and glorious deeds. They were handed down as sacred legacies from father to son, and the son

plighted his honor to keep the record untarnished and enrich it with fresh exploits. Death alone could absolve him from that duty. Here and there hung a sword which had been in possession of brave men, and was reputed to have come from the gods. Naturally the ownership of such a sword inspired the warrior with the highest courage and prowess. The walls were also decorated with the antlers of stags and elks much larger than those now found in our forests.

The servants covered the oaken seats with bear-skins, the heads ornamented with red stripes and silver teeth, and the feet with silver claws. This was the usual preliminary of a banquet. Prince Sigmar and a train of his stout champions shortly entered and took seats. The Prince was nearly a hundred years old. His hair was snowy white, and his silvery beard covered his broad breast; but his arm was still strong, his step firm, his back unbent, and his flashing eyes betokened a vital activity still unimpaired. Dress was plain in those days; but costly furs, in the preparation of which the Germans were very skilful, and which were specially useful as outer garments, were common. Two gray-bearded men, strongly resembling the Prince in their strength and activity, sat at his right and left. Their bearing as well as their dress indicated that they were high in authority. One of them was Igomar, Sigmar's brother; the other, Segest. The rest of the guests held subordinate positions. Not one of them had an unscarred face, the god of battle having written his inscriptions upon each. Flavius and Herman, the Prince's sons, at first sight looked like men of extraordinary strength and endurance, but by the side of these heroes they appeared like children.

Many a strong word had been uttered, and many a horn of mead had been drunk in honor of the gods, when a well-known blast of the horn was heard outside. There was instant silence round the board. Six servants brought in a roasted wild boar, the animal sacred to Thor, upon a huge platter. It was placed upon its knees in the platter and held an apple in its

jaws. This custom still prevails in great feasts at which the boar's head is brought on with a lemon in its mouth.

One guest after another discoursed upon topics in which he was interested, and the conversation at last became general. "The Romans are the most warlike people in the world," said Segest.

"Why do you praise our enemies?" said the Prince.

Segest replied: "Because I think the praise is deserved. But I do not think they are now our enemies."

"Why not?" asked Sigmar.

"Because," replied Segest, "they have not made a hostile demonstration against us for two years."

Then Igomar joined in the conversation: "To ascertain the intentions of the Romans we must consider a longer period than two years. Drusus has shown his hostility to all the German nations—to the Suevi, the Chatti, the Sugambri, the Usipii, the Teutoni, the Bructeri, and ourselves. Twice he has penetrated our land—to the Ems and the Weser; yes, indeed, a third time—to the Elbe. Have we not survived them all? Have we been subdued? Each time we fell back to our forests until winter came, which forced him to retreat for lack of subsistence."

"Then," said one of the company, "we swarmed about them, and harassed them like Wotan's ravens, and many a bloody offering we made to the battle god."

"That is true," resumed Igomar; "the gods fought for us, for when on his last expedition Drusus reached the Elbe, they sent a wonderful woman, who met him and said: 'How long wilt thou continue to invade our land, insatiable Drusus? Thou wilt never gain possession of it. Depart hence. The end of thy career and of thy life draws near.' Thereupon Drusus turned back, and a few days later he was thrown from his horse and killed."

"But what would you suggest?" asked Segest.

"I would suggest that we should not close our eyes to the designs of the Romans merely because we have had two years of rest from their arms. Up to the present time they have been discouraged because of the disastrous results of their operations, as well as by the anger of our gods. But does it follow that they will long keep the peace? The wise plan for us is to awake and prepare to meet fresh invasions."

"Are we not already prepared?" said a warrior. "Should the Romans invade us again we can fall back until winter comes. Then with our allies' help we can drive them back."

Segest answered, with a laugh: "So! It has occurred to you also that we cannot fight the Romans without the help of allies."

"Segest," said Prince Sigmar, "you are wrong. For a hundred years the Germans have been strong enough to repulse the Romans without assistance. Have you forgotten the Cimbrians and Teutons? They annihilated the armies of Rome in five victorious battles. In the last one, one hundred and twenty thousand Romans fell. Rome trembled, and even to-day shudders at the name of the Cimbrians. This proves that the Germans need no other allies than their rights and their swords."

"But supposing the Romans wished to become our allies! Would we consent in that case?" said Segest.

Greatly astonished, Igomar asked: "How! If they wished! Is invasion of the country of those whose allies they would become, the way to express such a wish?"

"I believe," replied Segest, "it is their wish. They are in a peculiar situation. They fear an attack by us as they once feared attack by the Cimbrians and Teutons, and by making a show of their real strength they hope to induce us to consent to a friendly union and alliance."

Sigmar frowned and said in a displeased tone: "Even if they did, I would never give my consent to an alliance with treacherous strangers who, outwardly professing to wish for peace, make war upon our country and plunder us. You seem to be the panegyrist of the Romans, Segest, but what you have just advised will be considered by all honorable men as degrading both in word and deed."

Segest was silent.

"We must make preparations for our safety," said Igomar. The noble Marbod has set us the example. He has gone with his people to Bohemia, founded there the Marcomannian kingdom, and raised an army of eighty thousand men."

The Prince shook his brother's hand. His face again lighted up, as he said: "I approve of all that Marbod has done. Do you know that I have been thinking much of the step he has taken, and intended before this to tell you what I think? Marbod was in Rome several years. He learned their art of war and their plans. We must send youths to Rome, so that they may find the best means of securing ourselves against Roman attacks. I have already decided to send my sons there. Herman and Flavius, what think you of it?"

Up to this time the youths had not taken part in the discussion, for in those days it was the custom of the young to keep silent when their elders were talking. Now that they were bidden to speak they courteously thanked their father for his decision.

The Prince's announcement had made their cheeks glow and their eyes glisten with delight, but what was passing through the minds of the two at that moment was as different as day and night. Flavius had heard much about the wonders of Rome, the world-city, from Segest, who was even more devoted to the Romans than he dared to admit openly. A stirring picture of the glitter and pomp of the city fascinated him. And now, suddenly and unexpectedly the door was

opened which would admit him to the pleasures he had always envied the Romans.

Herman, on the other hand, knew that Marbod, for whom he had great respect, had also been in Rome. He was eager to learn how to conduct war with the same skill and ability Marbod displayed. The Prince had often shown him that Marbod in every emergency knew how to form his plans for repulsing Roman invasions, whether they were short or long. "I will improve my opportunities in Rome to perfect myself and make myself worthy of my father." This was the thought that filled Herman's soul and inspired him.

CHAPTER V

VALHALLA AND THE SWORD DANCE

The Prince's decision was applauded by the company. Earnestly, even solemnly, he addressed his sons: "Forget not, my sons, that Odin sends the Valkyrs only to heroes who die for a sacred cause. These divine maidens ride upon steeds, with glistening shields and shining swords, and wear golden helmets. Odin sends them to the battlefield, where unseen they fight by the side of the heroes confided to their protection. If fate, which is stronger than the divine maidens, decrees the heroes shall die by the glorious death of battle, the Valkyrs bear them to Valhalla, abode of the consecrated heroes, across a glittering rainbow bridge. There the hero awakes and beholds the realm of the gods, from the abodes of the sacred ones to the shadowy realm of the death goddess, Hel; and he hears the spheric music of the stars, which as far transcends earthly music as gold does the baser metals.

"Never forget our gods and the heaven of our heroes, my sons, while you dwell among the strangers. Valhalla is bedecked with golden shields and has five hundred and forty golden doors, through each of which eight hundred heroes may enter abreast. Joyously they live there. They eat the flesh of the boar, Sarimnir, which returns to life each morning, and they drink the finest mead, which is supplied abundantly by the goat Heidrun. Odin accompanies them daily through the golden doors to a field where they have glorious combats, and those who fall are brought to life, when they return to Valhalla. Then the heroes sit at table and have a feast at which the Valkyrs serve them mead in golden cups, sing hero songs, and relate stories of glorious battles and victories.

"Never forget also, my sons, that there is an under world in which spirits who have died ingloriously live joylessly and pass each other in silence, like flitting shadows.

Those who have shunned noble strife and died the death we call ignominious go there.

"Men and youths, rise and empty your horns, with the wish that we may all meet at the golden tables of Valhalla."

When this was done Sigmar made a signal for a blast of the horn. "Now for the sword dance," said he. The guests rose and went with him down to the valley, where they seated themselves upon moss-covered stones. Twelve youths stuck fifty sharp two-edged swords into the ground just far enough apart so that one unused to it would have found great difficulty in passing among them without injury. After the necessary preparations were made, the semi-nude youths who had placed them drew gleaming swords and disposed themselves so that there were rows of swords between them and the princes, on either side of whom the guests were stationed. A number of armed men stood behind the youths. All was now ready for the sword dance, a pastime much enjoyed by our ancestors and having great significance. The keenness of the weapons had no terror for them. Where the swords were most dangerous the youths skipped about as freely as if they were having a joyous, harmless dance. The warriors struck up a song of heroes, and thereupon the real dance began. The youths turned about, rushed together from the two sides and clasped their sword hands, and then from all four sides ran to a point in the centre of the sword rows. Then, each one holding his sword firmly in his teeth, they joined hands and danced in a circle. Then they formed in a serpentine line and swift as an arrow wound in and out over the field, which at any instant might become a field of death. As the song of the warriors rose more loud, the more daring and dangerous were the movements of the youths.

The Prince at last gave the signal for the dance to close. The youths stood in a row before him. One of them held his hand upon his breast. Suddenly his head drooped, his blood crimsoned the green turf, and he fell dead. He had been mortally hurt in the sword dance, but would not leave the ranks until death summoned him. "Brave youth," said the

Prince, "thy name shall not be forgotten!" Then, turning to the other youths, he said: "Forward! Bear him to the sacred grove and there consign his body to the consecrated flames." Singing the songs of the heroes they bore the body away.

Sigmar and his guests returned to the castle. The men-at-arms followed them, and the youths appeared after they had paid the last earthly honors to the dead. The Prince bade them enter the hall and enjoy themselves with eating, drinking, and cheerful talk.

CHAPTER VI

THE PRIESTESS

The scene of the sword dance was deserted by all save Herman. He was in a peculiar mood. The events of the day had been too momentous not to impress him deeply. But more than all else the description of Valhalla by his father haunted his soul. He was devotedly attached to his father, and the latter had spoken with great earnestness upon a subject which had long engaged his own thoughts. To dwell in the companionship of heroes in the abodes of the gods was the longing of his heart, and he resolved to live so as to be worthy of that great honor. His father's sudden decision to send him to Rome also impressed him deeply. "Like the bees of our woods," he said to himself, "I will gather everything that is good and wholesome for my people, and come back with it to the hive. I will listen to the very heart-beats of the stranger people and find out whether an honorable alliance can be made with them."

In the meantime evening had come. The silver moon sailed silent and solitary through the sea of the sky and illuminated the romantic wood region. Thoughtfully looking up, he said: "I shall have thee also among the strangers, O gentle light. But will thy face be as dear to me there as here in our forests?"

The home feeling suddenly grew strong in him, and then sadness came over him as he contemplated his separation from the fatherland. The deep religious feeling of the time made him strongly sympathetic with nature. It was the vital principle. It conferred strength upon men and perfected the divine work upon earth; everything was permeated by the out-flowing of its highest manifestation as if it were some peculiar essence, and they believed that nature itself was a divine manifestation.

There was a gentle rustle among the oaks, through whose branches the moonlight fell upon Herman's noble countenance. There was a sublimity in the spectacle of these very oaks, firs, and shrubs, which sprang from the soil of an ancient battlefield, like columns aspiring to the sky as if to support it.

Everything that met his gaze tended to arouse his deep religious feeling. "Should I forget thee, thou dear land, country of my father, may Odin send me into the realm of the pale goddess of death," he whispered. In this mood he went farther into the depths of the well-known forest. He could not yet go back to the castle. The nearness of the gods, whose presence he fancied was manifest in the rustle of the tree-tops, filled his soul with holy awe. But Flavius sat at home by the side of Segest and listened to his stories of the marvels of Rome.

Herman at last came to the precincts of the sacred grove where a priestess made offerings and uttered prophecies. The moon had set behind the trees. It was dark, for the starlight could not pierce the forest gloom. He at last came to an open spot where he observed a white column of smoke rising in singular convolutions. It seemed to him he saw dark shadows, servants of the evil Loki, trying to prevent the rising smoke from reaching the throne of the gods. But with the help of powerful waves of air produced by the movements of the wings of the huge eagle, Hraefvelgr, who dwells at the end of the world, it eluded them.

Absorbed in contemplation, Herman was not aware he was near the priestess, who was approaching, torch in hand, from behind the neighboring oaks. Her figure was stately, her pale face beautiful, her dark eyes deep and mysterious. Her hair hung down upon a long white robe covering her body, and her brow was crowned with an ivy wreath.

They made a striking picture, the one a tall, noble, priestly figure, spiritual in expression, her glance at the same time serene and severe; the other, a stately youth, the type of strength and courage, and radiant in the transfiguration which

celestial reveries cause. Herman looked upon her, and a mysterious pause followed. The tree-tops rustled ominously, the glowing eyes of owls gleamed upon the pair, and far off was heard the howling of wolves. At last the priestess spoke: "I have no earthly communication to make to you, for my utterances come from another world. So, listen, Herman, son of the Cherusci Prince, to what the gods declare through me:

"They will seek to rob us of freedom; but help will come from the enemy.' "

With this the seeress turned away, went to a fountain, quenched her torch in it, and disappeared in the darkness. The sparks, shooting up from a glowing altar, showed that the priestess had been engaged in making an offering.

Herman stood long in thought and then returned to the place of the sword dance. Driving his sword into the earth with both hands, he seated himself upon a stone. Strange as the events of the day had been, a stranger one was about to happen. He leaned his head against the mossy side of a rock and fell asleep.

In his sleep a dream slid into his soul. He saw a tree with an eagle at its top. His father and several warriors were standing by watching the eagle, and one said: "That eagle is the symbol of our power; let us reverence it." As they were standing there, white eagles came in flocks and lit in the branches. They had firebrands in their talons and suddenly the whole tree was in flames. The white eagles rose, screaming exultantly, and circled about the burning tree. Before the eagle at the top could rise, its feathers were burned. It vainly tried to soar, for the golden fire enveloped it and at last it succumbed.

The men trembled as the strange eagles came lower and, flapping their wings, fanned the fire, which had almost burned the eagle to ashes. Then Herman advanced and said: "I will avenge thee! With this sacred flame I consecrate my sword, and with it I will cut off the talons of the strange eagles which brought the firebrands to the tree of freedom." As he

said this he drew his sword through the flames; and as if by magic a tall golden flame shot up out of the ashes and a mighty eagle rose majestically from the ruins. The warriors filled the air with exultant shouts as the eagle of liberty, young again and inspired with fresh strength, attacked the strange eagles. The struggle was brief; for the latter with broken wings fell dead to the earth, while the eagle of the country rose victorious to the sun.

When Herman awoke, the first rays of morning light were shining upon his face. Joyously he rose and turned toward the castle. His hair was wet with the dews of the morning, but his cheeks glowed and his eyes gleamed with the fervor of consecration to the cause of his fatherland.

CHAPTER VII

THE HIGH PRIEST

The sons now clearly understood the significance of their father's banquet and the reasons which induced him to order the sword dance at that particular time, for, as a rule, these ceremonies took place only upon extraordinary occasions. They realized that he was celebrating their departure, and that he wished their last thoughts should be of warriors and heroes and they also knew now why he had spoken so seriously about Valhalla.

On the following day the Prince summoned them to him and said: "My sons, let us make offerings to the gods, so that their blessing may attend you on your way." The grove in which the high priest made offering was nearer the Prince's castle than that where the priestess had met Herman on the previous evening and delivered the prophetic message to him.

When they reached the entrance to the grove, which was marked by an uncut boundary stone, Sigmar and his sons bound their wrists. This was a common custom. Germans could meet mortals as free-born, invincible men, but in presence of the gods they humbly bowed and wore the emblems of dependence and submission.

Youths followed them leading the sacrificial victim—a bull, glossy black and with white face, which had never worn the yoke, and was chosen from the number set apart for the altar. It was garlanded with flowers, and its horns were tipped with solid gold. The little procession approached the centre of the grove, which was marked by a mighty oak towering above its fellows. The priest went up to the great offering-stone under the oak. On one side stood the Prince and his sons, on the other the youth who held the bull with nervous arms. The priest, a man of stately figure, earnest face, and dark eyes, took a long knife and pierced the bull in the breast. The hot blood

streamed upon the stone. The priest raised his hands, in one of which he held the gory knife. The ravens croaked in the tree-tops—a good omen. In solemn tones the priest said: "The sacred ravens, Hugin and Munin, who sit upon Odin's shoulders and tell him of the actions of mortals, are rejoicing over our offering." Raising his hands once more, he said: Odin, disposer of human destiny, send thy sacred birds also to the sons when they are far away. Look down from thy celestial golden throne upon them and protect them. Let them return like brave men to their fatherland, and prepare seats for them in the sacred hall of Valhalla."

Thereupon he took parts of the offering and placed them upon the altar with the flowers and leaves the youths had brought. As the smoke rose to the green arched dome of the oaks, the priests repaired to a dark grotto near by with a cup of the victim's blood to read the divination. He shortly returned, placed the cup upon the stone, and said to the sons:

"Odin is gracious to you, and will give undying fame to the one who remains faithful to him and to the people."

He then bade the youths carry some of the remaining flesh and blood to the castle and prepare the offering-feast. According to the custom of those times the blood was mixed with mead and drunk from horns at the feast.

CHAPTER VIII

ODIN, THOR, AND TYR

The Prince and his sons left the grove, and when crossing its limits took off their manacles. The priest, who accompanied them, turning to the youths, said: "I leave you these parting words: Honor all the gods, but pay special reverence to these three.

"Forget not Odin. He is greatest of all the gods and the All-Father. His power is absolute, and from him all gifts proceed. You have heard his ravens' cry;! also has two wolves, Geri and Freki, who attack the bodies of enemies in battle and devour them. He has appeared to the earth-born from the earliest times. A broad cloak covers his giant figure and a great helmet his noble head. When he hears the swords clash in battle he mounts his white steed, Sleipnir, which has eight feet and runs swifter than thought.

"Also forget not Thor, the mighty. He rules the flying clouds, which were made from the giant Ymir's mottled brow. His voice is the thunder, and his thought the lightning, with which he blesses or destroys. When he overspreads us with his windy garment, and darkness covers the earth; when the lightnings blaze in the pitchy darkness, let your hearts rejoice, for he is near you. When he speaks the earth shakes, cowards and evil-doers tremble; but the upright of heart rejoice at the manifestations of his power.

"Also forget not the third god, Tyr. He is the storming, fiery, sword-god, favorite son of Odin. Our youths execute the sword dance in his honor. Where the tumult of battle rages most fiercely and where the earth is fertilized by streams of blood, thither Odin sends Tyr.

"Honor the gods, who look down upon us from their golden seats and who sometimes appear among us in human

semblance to test us, and sometimes watch our actions, disguised as birds.

"Honor all the gods, but honor these three above all the others. Pray to them; make offerings unto them."

The neighing of the white steed which was kept in the sacred grove for the service of the gods was heard. "The divine ones would acquaint me with their wishes," said the priest. "I go to receive their message."

Thereupon he returned to the grove, and the prince and his sons went to the offering-feast.

CHAPTER IX

IN ROME

The Romans at this period were the rulers of the world. Italy was their mother country. Greece and Macedonia were parts of the Roman empire. The region north of Epirus, and Illyria, and Thrace with Byzantium (Constantinople), its capital, had been subdued. Augustus's generals had made important conquests in Pannonia (Hungary). North of Italy the Romans had secured a firm foothold in Helvetia (Switzerland). In the west they had subjugated Hispania (Spain and Portugal), and also a large part of Gallia (France). In Asia they dominated all the countries from the coast of the Mediterranean Sea to the Euphrates, Asia Minor, and the regions between the Caucasus and the Caspian and Black seas. In Africa the entire coast country from Egypt to the Pillars of Hercules (Gibraltar and Abyla) belonged to them.

This of itself was enough to establish the world-power of Rome. From all these subjugated countries it exacted a yearly tribute of two hundred and fifty million dollars and it possessed also the treasures which had been carried away by force in plundering-raids. The greatness of its capital corresponded to the greatness of the empire. The number of its inhabitants at this period was two millions. The capitol was one of the most imposing structures and measured, with its outlying buildings, two hundred feet in length and one hundred and eighty-five feet in width. Built upon one of the seven hills, its gilded pinnacles rose high above the magnificent city with its thousands of palaces. More than twelve thousand talents of gold (about twelve million thalers) had been expended upon the temple of Jupiter. Within it was a statue of the god seated upon a gorgeous chair of gold and ivory.

We behold the spacious area in front of the temple filled with thousands of citizens in festive attire. Before the golden doors sits Augustus, ruler of Rome, upon a snow-white horse whose bridle glistens with gems, surrounded by distinguished Senators. Though he greatly preferred simplicity of dress and manner, this prince, now nearly seventy years of age, of fine figure and bright flashing eyes, made his appearance in regal state. It was an unusual occasion. Tiberius the Emperor's son, was to enter the city with his victorious legions. The occasion of the war was as follows: Marbod's increasing power was viewed with apprehension by the Romans, and Tiberius was ordered by Augustus to make war upon him. A great army was put in the field. Then suddenly came news of a dangerous uprising in Hungary, Dalmatia, and Illyria. All the nations living along the Danube and in the mountains from the Adriatic to the Black Sea were in a conspiracy against Rome, and an army of more than two hundred thousand men was about to invade Italy. The Roman war plans were instantly changed. Peace was made with Marbod, and the Romans took the field against their new enemies.

This was just at the time Herman and Flavius entered Italy. They had not reached Rome when they met the army. They at once presented themselves to Tiberius and accepted service under him. The war which Tiberius began lasted many years and was one of the most desperate contests Rome had ever fought. At last Tiberius was victorious, and returned home with his legions. It is the day of his entrance, which accounts for the appearance of the Emperor in front of the temple.

Soon martial music was heard, and the head of the victorious troops appeared, led by the generals. Amid the enthusiastic shouts of the people the broad plaza was quickly more than half filled with soldiers. Captured princes and nobles of the conquered nations were led by, wearing heavy fetters, amid the jeers of the multitude.

At a signal from the general there was deep silence, and Augustus addressed the leaders and the army, after which he rode up to his son and placed a laurel wreath on his head. Amid the plaudits of the people a second signal was given, and a number of the subordinate officers were summoned to the Emperor, who extolled their bravery and conferred upon them the distinguished honor of Roman knighthood. Among those thus honored were Flavius and Herman. Tiberius had already conferred upon them the honor of Roman citizenship on the field. Amid popular acclamations the Emperor accompanied his laurel-crowned son, followed by the newly created knights, to the temple of Jupiter.

CHAPTER X

GERMAN AND ROMAN

The legion in which Flavius and Herman served had now been in Rome for more than a year, which gave both of them an opportunity for thorough acquaintance with the habits and the sentiments of the Roman people.

We find Herman living in a dwelling so modest that his comrades in arms often bantered him about it. He was by no means insensible to the artistic accomplishments which beautify life; on the contrary he was often deeply moved at sight of elegant statues or elaborate architecture; but he could not endure that degradation of art by which, instead of elevating the soul to noble and pure things, it drags it down into the service of the baser passions. His pure soul recognized art as the daughter of heaven, and that if it were to bless mankind it must be associated only with pure and noble things.

Herman thought of his own people. "You, my people," he thought, "still retain close fellowship with nature. What a difference between your simple and in some ways rude natural life, and the artificial life of the Romans! And yet how happy you are even in your incomplete mode of life! But you will not always remain in your present environment. Art shall some time erect its altars in your forests; and may a pure fire always flame upon them! May your art and your way of life be inseparable sisters!"

One day his reflections were interrupted by Flavius, who had come to call upon him—a rare event with Flavius. Their views and opinions steadily diverged, as well as their outward circumstances. Herman very properly wore his soldier's dress without any of the decorations which he was entitled to display; Flavius, on the other hand, had become a genuine Roman fop; he frequently spent a long time before his steel mirror, trying to decide what expression and attitudes

best became him, and how to arrange the folds of his toga most gracefully. His fatherland had lost all its hold upon him, for he was ashamed of belonging to a people who were regarded as barbarians in Rome and made sport of by its luxuriant aristocrats. He dyed his hair black and wore it short, in the Roman style, lest he should be recognized as a German. When Herman first saw him thus changed, he could hardly repress his anger. But he thought to himself, "It is my brother, my father's son. I must restrain myself." An intense desire seized him to keep his brother from going astray; but it was useless, for Flavius was too deeply sunk in the abyss of Roman life with its excesses and dissipations. Before a year had passed, the brothers were conspicuous figures in the streets of Rome—the one for his physical strength and manliness, the other for his beauty of face and figure. Herman had developed the bearing and personal qualities of the hero; but as the outcome of his excesses, Flavius's cheeks were blanched, and his eyes were dimmed. He was, however, still a handsome man and fond of pleasure, while life was a serious matter to Herman. Flavius's conduct saddened his brother. Upon the occasion of this visit Flavius, laughing, as he had seen prominent Romans laugh, asked his brother, "Herman, why do you persist in living alone in this city of pleasure?"

"Do you call those excesses pleasures, which rob the body of its strength and destroy the peace of the soul?" said Herman.

Flavius laughed again. "You are mistaken," said he. "Consider the pleasures I have; and yet, should war break out again, I will show you I am strong enough to do my part. But let that go. Tell me why you were not at the gladiatorial fight in the theatre yesterday. You were fond of the sword dance at home and often participated in it; and yet when you can enjoy a similar sport upon a grander scale than our people ever conceived, you stay away! You missed a great entertainment yesterday."

"Flavius," replied Herman, "are you so blinded by your luxurious surroundings that you have forgotten the valuable results of our sword dance, especially as compared with these Roman gladiatorial combats? Do you not understand the lofty purpose our father had in view when he introduced it? He meant to educate heroes for the battlefield. That was why he bade all our youths practise it. Look at these gladiatorial contests! In earlier times they possibly may have served some useful purpose, but as conducted to-day they only exhibit the brutality of the people."

Flavius shook his head and laughed contemptuously.

But Herman went on: "I will prove my words. Are there among these gladiators any Roman youths who voluntarily devote themselves to these contests? No! The combatants are purchased slaves, provided by their masters, and forced to contend with one another like wild beasts, which they are sometimes forced to fight! And the Romans indulge in such debasing sports for entertainment! Even their women applaud the gladiators in the circus!"

"But you utterly fail to understand the real object of the sport," replied Flavius. "It is in the circus that the warlike spirit of the Romans is still preserved. Was it not in the ranks of the Roman army we became what we are? Is not this an additional proof of their warlike spirit?"

Herman smiled bitterly. "I thoroughly understand the warlike spirit of the Romans," he replied. "It is the same spirit they display in forcing these gladiators to murder one another. Since I have become acquainted with the history of the Roman and other nations, my opinions have changed."

"I am astonished at what you say," answered Flavius. "Have we not fought for three years under the Roman eagles? Are we not held in high esteem by the leaders of the army, whose warlike spirit you question?"

"That may be," replied Herman. "In my youthful enthusiasm I did many things without a clear understanding of

what I was doing. But I fully understand the Roman policy now. Its purpose is the destruction of other nations. The victories of this policy are the slaughters of other peoples."

"Well," replied Flavius in a careless way, "since it is so, we cannot change it."

"But," said Herman, rising, "supposing the Romans should pursue the same policy toward our fatherland! Supposing the anticipation of father and Uncle Igomar should be verified! You must well remember it."

Flavius answered: "It cannot, for the Romans have more respect for the Germans than for other nations. You have told me so often enough. But if Germany, whether with or without its consent, becomes a part of the Roman empire I shall not complain. Our people then will enjoy not only the sovereignty of Rome, but the culture of Rome. They will advance and prosper, just as we have since we joined the Roman army."

Herman's eyes blazed with anger. "Traitor! you are no brother of mine," he cried. "Loki, the evil god, must have stolen my real brother from my mother's side when she slept, and taken you from among the enemy to fill his place. Do you suppose Roman sovereignty would not dishonor our people because you enjoy it? In your infatuation you have absorbed the poisonous atmosphere of Roman life, and now you would introduce its pestilential vapor among our people for their destruction. But, I say to you, a union between Rome and Germany will never take place. They will always remain separated, just as Nature has separated them by her great barriers."

Saying this, he turned and went into another apartment. Flavius, crimson with shame and anger, left the house.

CHAPTER XI

VARUS

The most lucrative office under the Roman administration was that of governor. When a nation was robbed of its liberty, its soldiers slaughtered in wars of conquest, and its most distinguished men sent into captivity, it was proclaimed a Roman province and handed over to Roman authorities, who levied tribute and seized upon its treasures by force and sent them to Rome. As a fixed sum was exacted, a governor could enrich himself by additional levies to any extent he pleased. Varus was governor of Syria for many years. He was a favorite of Augustus, and was appointed to the office that he might have a chance to repair his personal fortune, which had been wasted in dissipation. He succeeded so well in his spoliation that, as Tacitus says, he entered the rich country poor; and when he left, it was poor and he was rich. He was a master in the art of keeping a people quiet by an affectation of paternal solicitude for them, thus gradually accustoming them to servitude, and at the same time destroying their ability to free themselves.

The subjugation of Germany was more seriously considered in Rome now than it ever had been before. The Romans were satisfied it would not be an easy task to effect it by force, and for that reason the Emperor for some time had adopted a policy of persuasion by gifts and bribes. As Varus was an expert in this direction, he was recalled from Syria and entrusted with full powers to carry out this policy toward Germany. At the same time the Emperor placed a strong army at his disposal and made him its general. Behold Varus in a marble hall filled with elegant statues, its floor made of artistic mosaic. Upon a long marble table supported by finely carved figures, are golden vessels filled with delicious wines. Leading Romans, civil and military, wearing togas with broad purple stripes indicating their rank, are reposing upon billowy

cushions. On either side of the table and behind each guest stands a slave, clad in most extravagant style, and watchful of every sign.

"We have here," said Varus, opening a papyrus scroll, "the names of Germans upon whose sympathy and support we can depend. I am told that Segest has almost as much influence among the Cherusci as Sigmar himself. I hope with his aid to prevent them from making any serious resistance. Messengers have already been sent to him with the offer of governorship over the united German nations in case he carries out what he has promised. To what extent he can keep his word remains to be seen. But how about these sons of Sigmar, Flavius and Herman? Can we depend upon them?"

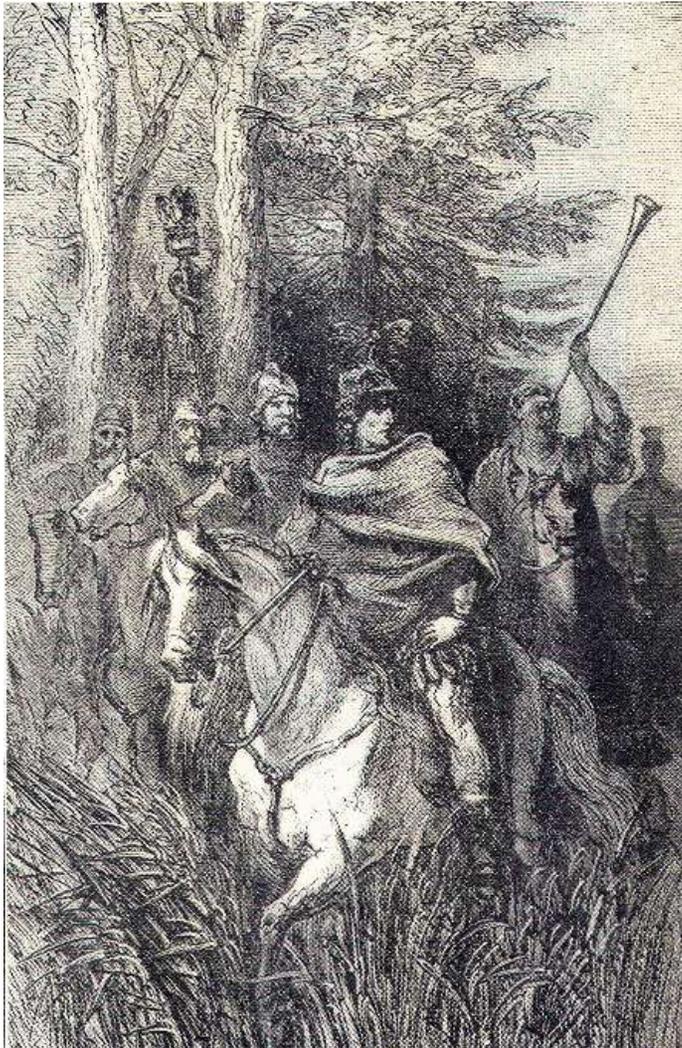
"Flavius," interposed a senator, "is with us heart and soul. He says he will not return to the forests of the barbarians until Roman culture has been introduced among them. Herman, on the other hand, is still an untamed German bear, and resists all our influence."

"We must have him," said Varus. "I have seen him. He is a man and a hero in every sense. You can see that at the first glance."

"It is far more important to secure him than Segest," said a tribune, "for no one else can inspire the Germans to stubborn resistance like him. I am not saying there is any occasion for alarm, for what people can withstand us? But I think it a wise policy to use persuasion before we enforce authority by the sword."

"You are right," said Varus. "What we secure by persuasion and money we shall not have to secure by force. I have spoken with Augustus about Herman and have received from him full permission to carry out my plans. You will see how quickly this bear will learn to dance when I put on the golden muzzle. I have requested his presence here. Possibly he is now in the antechamber." Turning to a slave, he said: "See if he is there, and bring him into the trap immediately."

In a few minutes Herman appeared. He was greeted by the guests with many expressions of respect and with a special display of friendliness by Varus, who seated him at table by his side.



VARUS INVADING GERMANY.

"Soldiers and citizens of Rome," said Varus, rising and turning toward Herman, I am pleased to announce a special proof the Emperor's favor. I would gladly have retained you in the army, for our soldiers have told me of your heroic deeds, but, reluctant as I am to lose you, it gives me the highest pleasure to notify that the Emperor has chosen you as governor of Illyria and that he has selected for your bride the charming Lydia, daughter of Balbus the Senator, and celebrated in the verses of our leading poets. Balbus himself is wealthy, but as a mark of special favor, the Emperor will make your future consort a wedding gift of a thousand talents."

With these words, Varus and the others rose to congratulate Herman. But the latter had already risen, and without paying any attention to the scroll which Varus offered him, replied: "Wait, men of Rome. I cannot accept the honors tendered me, nor enter into any alliance with a Roman lady. I came to Rome of my own accord; I intend to leave it of my own accord."

Varus grew pale with anger. "Why," said he, after a pause, "do you so foolishly reject such good fortune and happiness?"

"Because I shall live in Germany," said Herman, quietly but firmly.

"And you purpose to return to Germany?"

"I do."

"There to engage in hostile operations against us?"

"Have you hostile designs against my father-land?" said Herman, with a penetrating glance at Varus.

The direct question disconcerted Varus for an instant, but he quickly recovered himself, and replied: "We had no hostile designs, but your conduct indicates hostile designs against us. We would like to have an alliance with the Germans, but we will exterminate them if we find they are hostile to us. We were also mistaken in you when we made

you the object of our favor and graciousness. Reject the honors and gifts if you will. You are unworthy of them. Go back to your barbarians and live with them upon acorns and bear's claws. Go at once, but perhaps we shall meet again sometime."

Herman remained calm and undisturbed. "Yes," he answered with significant emphasis, "perchance we shall meet again." Then he left the hall with firm step. Some time elapsed before Varus and his guests could discuss the occurrence calmly. Rome had subdued half the world and was now at the very summit of its power. Why should it fear because one German was going home? But Varus could not rid himself of the extraordinary impression Herman had made upon him, and he finally ordered his arrest. His minions were speedily on the way to Herman's abode.

CHAPTER XII

THE WATER NYMPH

When Tacitus says the Germans did not know of gold, he probably means they did not know anything of that use or misuse of gold for which the Romans, who thought everything could be purchased with it, were notorious. It is evident from other authorities that many golden ornaments were in use in the homes of the leading Germans. Noble maidens, for instance, frequently wore golden circlets round the head. Thus adorned we behold Thusnelda, daughter of Segest. A white robe with narrow purple bands enveloped her stately beautiful figure. The garment was sleeveless and was fastened above by a silver clasp, so that her shoulders and arms were bare. She sat in front of a polished shield hanging on the wall, which reflected her face, glowing like a fresh rose, while a maid was arranging her golden tresses.

"Shall I not fasten in your hair the string of pearls the distinguished Roman sent you by your father?" asked the maid.

"No, no," cried Thusnelda, pushing it away. "Lay it in that box by the side of the gold-embroidered cloak which also came from Rome. The gifts of those strangers bring no blessings with them. Listen while I tell what happened because of that cloak. Yesterday I put it on and went to make offering in the sacred grove. But, lo, the offering-fire was extinguished three times. When at last the fire burned upon the altar, dark clouds gathered and almost touched the tops of the trees. The column of smoke, however, did not rise, but crawled along the ground like a snake and disappeared among the bushes. I trembled, for I saw that Hertha had rejected my offering, and up to that time the goddess had always been gracious to me. Sorrowfully, I cast down my eyes; but a voice in the very depths of my soul said, 'Thou art Thusnelda no longer.' I

hastened back, took off the stranger's garment, and was relieved at once. Thereupon I returned to the grove, offered anew to the goddess, and behold the divinity was appeased and graciously accepted my offering. I firmly resolved to wear in the future what my mother wore when she was a maiden, and that nothing should induce me to appear in any other dress before gods or men."

"Then I will take this rose," said her maid, "and decorate thy hair with it."

This done, both took their spindles and sat before the house upon a stone bench under the elder bushes and began spinning. The morning sun poured a flood of golden light through the trees, and the birds sang joyously as they hunted for acorns in the oaks nearby.

"You were going to tell me the story of the beautiful water nymph," said the maid.

"I will do so," replied Thusnelda. "Listen. Two great nations, the Cimbrians and the Teutons, came from the north a hundred years ago. That huge world-serpent, the ocean, which coils itself about the earth, had swallowed part of their country, and Hertha bade them go to the region of the midday sun and seek for new homes. The priests led the way with Hertha's wagon, hung with sumptuous draperies. The warriors came next, followed by the women and children, the servants and herds bringing up the rear. They reached at last the region between the Danube and the Alps, and there they found extensive unoccupied plains which furnished excellent pasturage for their herds."

As Thusnelda reached this point in her story she suddenly noticed a powerfully built man approaching among the trees. His hair and beard were shaggy, and his strong limbs were covered with a bearskin. A great dog lying at Thusnelda's feet rose and barked at the stranger, but crawled under the stone bench when he directed a piercing glance at him. Thusnelda's cheeks reddened, but not from fear at sight of the

man. It seemed to her that one of the old heroes of whom she had just been speaking had risen from his grave. In a gentle and friendly manner the stranger begged that although his appearance was against him he might have a brief rest under her roof. It has already been said that hospitality was a sacred duty among the Germans. Thusnelda kindly bade him enter, and set before him the best of food and drink the house afforded. Then she went out again with the maid and they resumed their work. After a little the maid went back to see if the guest needed anything. She returned with the news that he evidently needed rest more than food, for he had eaten very little and was in deep sleep. Thereupon she begged Thusnelda to go on with the story.

"I told you," said Thusnelda, "that the Cimbrians and Teutons found a fruitful and unoccupied region between the Danube and the Alps, whose meadows offered abundant subsistence for the cattle. They sent messengers to the Romans with the tidings that they had taken possession of these lands and hoped they should be good neighbors. The Romans, however, conspired against them and invaded the region with large armies to drive them away. The Cimbrians and Teutons, however, like all German nations, were brave and heroic. They rushed to their own defence and destroyed four Roman armies. Their success made them so arrogant that they forgot they could not have conquered the enemy without the help of the gods. They were neither grateful for what had happened nor did they make offering. Thereupon the gods deserted them. At the very height of their vain-gloriousness they were annihilated by a fifth Roman army.

"Among them was a maiden named Euria, the daughter of a general. She was the most beautiful among the daughters of her race. When the battle began she brought an offering to the gods, knelt at the altar, and besought them to give her people the victory; but Hertha would not intercede for them and the enemy won the battle. The great green plain was drenched with blood. Of all the men, women, and children,

Euria alone was spared. A noble Roman youth found her at the altar and made her prisoner. They were about to kill her, but he protected her with his sword, placed her in a litter at night, and bore her away. The next morning they halted on the slope of a beautiful hill, and the youth accosted the maiden. He was slender and handsome. His helmet and armor shone with their gold adornments. His hands were white, and his whole bearing betokened gentleness.

"You are fettered,' he said, 'but I will unloose your fetters if you will be my wife. I will take you to a land which will astonish you, for our people have learned to build dwellings and temples like those of the gods. I have an abundance of gold, and you shall live like a queen. I have left the army and will take you to my home, where I will ever be at your side, so that your every wish shall be gratified.'

"The maiden answered: 'I can never be your wife. Kill me, or take me back to my people!'

"Then said the youth: 'You will seek your people in vain the wide world over, for you are the last of your race. All the others have been killed.'

"Then will I die also,' replied Euria.

"No!' resumed the youth. 'You must live and be my wife. I will take you to my home and your sorrow shall turn to joy.' Saying this, he placed food and drink before her.

"At that instant Hertha's favorite messenger, the little black butterfly, flew to her; and Euria told her sad plight to it, and besought it to go to Hertha and beg her to secure help from the gods. The insect spread its dark, spotted wings and disappeared.

"As Hertha was sitting in the hall of the gods upon a golden seat, lamenting the hard fate which had overtaken Euria's people, the butterfly lit upon her white hand. The goddess asked: 'Have you anything beautiful or lovely to tell me?' The butterfly told her of Euria's sad plight. At that the

goddess looked down and saw her favorite, whom she had forgotten. She rose and went to Thor, who rules the lightnings and rides upon the tempest, and counselled with him. The little butterfly flew down and consoled Euria.

"Suddenly the sky darkened and Thor's fearful glances shot forth from behind the black clouds. The din of his hammer was heard in the tempest and the god's voice resounded terribly. The youth and his attendants were dashed to the ground, and a lightning flash loosed Euria's fetters. She fled and sought to find her home again. All day and all night she wandered, but she could not discover the battlefield. Again she cried to Hertha, and while looking upward she saw an eagle in the distance flying lower and lower, in wide circles. Then she knew where the battlefield was, and she soon reached it. What a spectacle met her gaze! Men and beasts, husbands and wives, old and young, were lying by thousands on the great plain. But lo, here and there a head rose out of the piles of dead, a hand moved, or a feeble moan was uttered. An overburdening pain filled the maiden's heart as she thought how they must be suffering from thirst. She took two helmets, rushed to a pool near by, and brought its refreshing water to the unfortunates. She received a gentle pressure of the hand here, and the last grateful glance of the dying there. The sun blazed down upon her, but she did not weary in her beneficent task. Her exertions at last became too arduous, and pity and sympathy overpowered her. But she made another effort, for the sun was setting. As if on wings, Euria flew over the plain, and how many there were who died blessing her! At last there was not a visible movement on the field, but she went once more to the pool, for some victim might possibly be alive. And then, she said to herself, 'I will dig a grave for my own loved ones, so that the eagles shall not pick those eyes which were like stars to me, nor tear the hearts which loved me.'

"But she could not return to the field. Her strength gave out, and she sank down upon a hillock. There Hertha changed her into a spring, and lo, a clear little brook flowed from it

down the hillside. Larger and larger it grew, its wavelets sparkling like silver, and far away it wound over the plain to the right of the battlefield. At the very instant she fell, the Roman youth appeared upon the plain. Awakening from the shock of the lightning and impelled by his strong love for Euria, he had sought the fugitive everywhere and at last came to the battlefield. He rushed to the spot where he had seen her from the distance, when she disappeared so suddenly. He found only a brook, flowing at his feet, making gentle music and tinged with the red glow of the evening sky. 'Thou art Euria,' he said, 'and thou livest in these sacred waters.' He cried to the goddess who had changed her to a water nymph, imploring her to unite them. Hertha heard him and changed him into a weeping willow, whose roots were nourished by the cool, clear water of the brook. Those who were separated in life were thus united in death. The brook made the land fruitful everywhere about it. Fragrant flowers lined its banks, and never sang birds as sweetly as there. But when the moon shines brightest Euria rises from the water, sits under the weeping willow, whose drooping twigs caress her cheek, and combs her hair with a golden comb. Then the nightingale sings in the rustling branches, and drops fall into the lap of the pale, beautiful water nymph. And of the drops, which become pearls, Euria makes a chain, which she winds in her beautiful hair and then again disappears in the waves."

CHAPTER XIII

THE RETURN

When Thusnelda had finished her story, the wild-looking guest came out of the house and seated himself opposite her.

"Noble maiden," said he, "do you not think Euria should have gone to Rome with the youth?"

"If brief and perishable happiness is more to be desired than blessed and eternal life, then it would have been better," replied Thusnelda. "But do you not know Euria's good fortune? She died in the service of her people, and Hertha rewarded her by making her a demi-goddess."

"Maiden, would you have done as Euria did?"

"How could I have done otherwise than she whose glorious deeds I envy?" replied Thusnelda.

"Oh, that all the youth of our people thought thus!" said the stranger. "But I am told that even a prince's son may forget his people. Have you heard aught of the sons of Sigmar?"

The maiden's face grew pale and she lowered her eyes.

"What troubles you?" said the stranger gently. "Am I not at Segest's house, and art thou not his daughter Thusnelda, who is betrothed to Herman? The people say their parents chose them for each other and consecrated their betrothal even when they were children."

"It is true," said the maiden, as the tears rolled down her cheeks.

"Tell me," said the stranger with much earnestness, "what know you of Herman? I fear you have bad tidings. I implore you to tell me what you have heard."

The maiden folded her hands and said with deep emotion: "I will not curse him though he has forsaken his gods, his people, and me. He has become a Roman and taken a Roman lady for his wife."

Then up sprang the stranger, his eyes blazing with fury. In angry tones he asked: "Who has said this? May Thor crush him with his great hammer!"

"Man," said Thusnelda, with great dignity, "do not insult me. He who said it is my father."

"Ha!" cried the stranger, clenching his fist, "now I understand all."

An armed attendant appeared at the door and the stranger went to meet him. Alarmed at the latter's violent outburst, the attendant barred his way, but after the stranger had whispered a few words to him, he lowered his spear, and his manner changed to one of joyful surprise. Thereupon both went in.

A great dread seized Thusnelda. She feared the stranger was seeking her father for the purpose of killing him. It was a great consolation to her therefore that he was away and would not be back for two days.

The maiden was absorbed in thought for some time, but was suddenly aroused when she beheld the stranger at the door again. How different he appeared! It seemed to her that it was one of the gods come down to mortal abodes.

"Thusnelda," he exclaimed, as he advanced with outspread arms. "Thusnelda, do you not know your Herman?"

Thusnelda wept for joy as he held her in his embrace.

"Look," said he, "I have not become a Roman. Loki sent the evil spirit disguised in divine form, who sought to turn me from my people by their seductive allurements. But Odin saved me from their wiles, and blinded those who tried to arrest me, because I had remained faithful. What dangers I had

to overcome on my long and secret flight through the enemy's country you shall learn later. But I forgot all troubles when my feet once more touched the soil of the fatherland. O Thusnelda, it is an augury of victory that you have remained faithful to our people!"

"What! is war so near? Are you going to consign our fate to the hands of the battle-gods?"

Yes, dear one. As soon as the people hear my call, the flames of a holy war will be kindled which will either free us or consume us. I ask you in the presence of the gods, whose blessing our parents once invoked upon our union, will you be mine in life and in death?"

"I will," replied Thusnelda, with radiant eyes and glowing cheeks. They raised their hands together and promised the gods to be faithful to each other.

"But you must promise me one more thing in this sacred hour," said Thusnelda. "Spare my father."

"So, what I inferred from your words is true, then," said Herman. "He is friendly to the enemy, as I suspected before my departure."

Thusnelda made no reply to this, but raising her hands once more, said: "Whatever may happen, spare my father."

"I promise you to do so because of your loyalty," said Herman.

Then the maiden's face brightened, and she joyously cried, "Now all is well, let come what will."

"Now leave me," she continued. "Go away lest my father should unexpectedly return to-day and find you here. A quarrel might ensue, and I could not bear to see my father and my future husband quarrelling, either with word or sword. I implore you to go."

"Let us first make a thank-offering to the gods," said Herman, "and implore their aid in the great work."

Thusnelda gathered fruits and flowers, and they went to the altar in the sacred grove.

CHAPTER XIV

THE VOICE OF THE PEOPLE

The proverbial German honesty and fair dealing were specially characteristic of our ancestors in those days. They who are honest themselves are likely to be deceived many times before they will believe that others are dishonest or are cherishing evil designs against them. While this attitude is commendable it ought, however, to go hand in hand with wisdom. As the old saying goes: "Be wise as a serpent and harmless as a dove." Many another people under the same circumstances would have divined the purposes of Rome much sooner; but years passed before the Germans really perceived the net of deceit which Roman cunning and Roman power were weaving about them. In their invasions the Romans always pretended they were seeking their own security, so that if an alliance were made they could guarantee its security also.

But one occurrence at last opened the eyes of the majority of the German people. The Sigambrians, one of the strongest nations on the Rhine, were requested by the Roman general to send a delegation to meet him and arrange conditions of peace, as he treacherously asserted. Depending upon his honor, a large number of the princes and leaders of the people met him, but instead of making peaceful negotiations with them, he overpowered them with a strong force, and distributed them as captives among the cities of Gallia. Before the people, robbed of their leaders, could decide upon any plan of action, they too were driven over the Rhine in great numbers and forced to remain in Gallia. It is estimated that nearly forty thousand Sigambrians were thus dispossessed of their country. The captive princes, knowing there was no hope of rescue, killed themselves.

If such an event had happened in these times it would have been known all over Germany in a few days. It was different then. Months might elapse before news could travel a circuit of one hundred and fifty miles.

This treacherous act aroused a bitter feeling of resentment in the breast of every free German. The Romans now seldom met a German with a joyous face. Had not the enemy been blinded by its own egregious conceit it would have noted the fact that behind those dark clouds of wrath, which were growing more and more threatening every day, the lightnings were flashing, which sooner or later would smite the heads of the oppressors.

The spirit which animated the people was unprecedented. In some places longing for united resistance seized upon men like a sacred fire; in others, impatience and longing for war were so intense that they bitterly complained of the slowness of their princes and leaders.

It was in such moods as these that Herman found the people, and it inspired him with a feeling of certainty that their cause would be successful. His father received him with open arms, and by his advice an assembly of the leading men of the people was ordered, but Segest was not invited to it. All were animated by the one thought that the time had arrived to wage a decisive war with the Romans. The sacred work was enthusiastically inaugurated. The leaders hurried to their nearest people. The Runic wands, signals for the convocation of the people, were sent out. To many a German it seemed as if the sun were rising after a long, dark night. All hearts beat stronger, for the spirit of freedom was abroad in the land. One circumstance added greatly to the enthusiasm. When Herman met the priestess in the forest and she uttered her mysterious prophecy he was not alone. Some hunters were nearby and heard her words:

"They will seek to rob us of freedom; but help will come from the enemy."

These words ran from mouth to mouth. The people said to each other: "It is he whom the gods meant. They are seeking to rob us of freedom, and behold, Herman, at whose call we are to assemble, has come from the enemy." An old legend of his childhood was also revived and circulated among the people. The Norns, it was said, appeared by his cradle at night, placed the oldest sword in the castle, which came from the gods, at his side, bent over him, and said some mysterious words. Half waking, half dreaming, his mother saw the apparitions and heard these words:

"A rock of freedom shalt thou be, And thy name shall be immortal."

CHAPTER XV

THE PEOPLE'S ASSEMBLY

The decisions of the princes and others in authority were laid before the popular assembly, called the "Volksthing" and trustworthy delegates from each nation were sent to it. There was a valley in the country of the Cherusci which in those days was always used for this purpose, in the centre of which were stone seats for the princes and leaders.

The day of the assembly arrived. From every direction armed men poured in as if they were on the march to the field. The German nations were homogeneous. The men were broad-chested and tall. Blue eyes and blond hair were national types. Their principal weapons were the spear, shield, and club. The shields were mostly of wood or woven-work, covered with hides, which made them almost impenetrable. The leaders used iron shields. The favorite dress of men was made from the hides of animals, such as the buffalo, bear, and elk they had killed in the chase. The skins of the animals' heads often were used for their own head coverings, and those of buffaloes and elks, with the horns attached, frequently caused consternation among their enemies.

The German of those days thought it unmanly to appear without weapons. They were indispensable to him. What he said he was ready to maintain with his sword; and he said nothing that was not true, and that was not the result of careful consideration. He was incapable of the duplicity of later times, so the consciousness of his physical strength gave him earnestness, equanimity, discretion, and dignity.

The princes and other leaders were already seated in the centre of the place, their view commanding gently rising terraces, upon which were assembled rows upon rows of warriors, without crowding or confusion. To the very tops of the hills was a solid mass of shield upon shield, spear upon

spear. It was an extraordinary assemblage of heroes, the like of which is hardly possible now.

Sigmar presided over the assembly. Herman, tall and powerful, with a countenance indicating prudence and confidence of victory, and a brow denoting inflexible firmness, stood behind him. Just as the proceedings were about to begin there was an opening at one side of the circle, and Segest, whom Sigmar and Herman had not expected, suddenly appeared. Many eyes were turned toward him; many a finger pointed at him in scorn, and low mutterings of growing anger were heard, for his duplicity of conduct had not escaped the notice of the people.

The old Germans were far from that knowledge of God which Christianity has brought to us, but they devoted themselves with all their souls to the worship of those whom they held most sacred. Indeed, in their way, they showed a religious fervor which has not been surpassed in any age. They performed every action of life, and engaged in their own work only after making prayer and offering. The high priest stood in the midst of the princes. The smoke of the offering rose, and prayers ascended to the gods from devout hearts. After the offering was consumed, a horn was sounded as a signal for opening the proceedings.

Sigmar rose. "Men," he said, with a loud voice, "listen to what your princes and leaders will submit to you. The Romans have invaded our country by deceit and force. It is now a question whether we shall offer them our hands for the fetters, or whether we shall with our united strength break the chains which have been fastened upon some of our people. Men, now is the time to speak. Let every one say what his heart bids, and then let us retire." Thereupon Sigmar resumed his seat. Next spoke Igomar, Herman's uncle:

"Brothers in arms! The time is at hand when we must unite for battle against the strangers who are seeking to subdue us, one nation after another, by trickery and force. It is still possible for us to save our freedom; but if we do not speedily

unite in a life-and-death resistance, our gods will forsake us as a degenerate race, and permit us to sink into the shame of servitude. You know, brothers in arms, how the sun is pursued by the sun-wolf, and that if the wolf ever shall devour it, it will be the end of all things. There have been several fearful occasions when the wolf has fastened its teeth into the sun. A part of it disappeared from view, and the golden light of day was obscured. What did we do then, brothers in arms? We rushed for our horses, sounded our thunderous war-cry, and smote our shields heavy blows with our swords; and the din of the battle cries, and the clang of our weapons, made the wolf tremble, so that his power was overcome, and he was scared away. The golden globe escaped from its jaws, and it rolled on with renewed force, and blessed us with its flood of light.

"Oh, men, men! The sun of our freedom has been assailed by the fierce wolf of tyranny which is preparing to devour it. Need I tell you where our safety lies? No! You yourselves well know well. I hear your hearts beat. I see your eyes flash. I know you will shout with me, 'To arms, to arms!'"

It seemed as if Thor's chariot of thunder were rolling through the valley, so mighty was the shout of battle, and so loudly resounded the clang of sword on shield. Igomar, who had gone back to his seat had voiced the feelings in their hearts. Segest grew pale. He was eager to prevent a war and had not anticipated such an emphatic approval of it. At last he ventured to appear before the assembly.

"Men," said he, as soon as the outcries had ceased, "I ask you if it is not an old and favorite custom of ours to allow the expression of opinions though they may be contrary to what the majority believe. Conceding this, will you give me your attention for a short time?"

A muttered reluctant "Yes" was the reply.

"Then listen attentively to me and decide whether, because I advocate peace, I am lacking in devotion to my fatherland more than those who counsel war. Think what a

struggle it is they would have you undertake! I have no doubt of your heroic purpose and determination, but we have as little prospect of victory; over a nation which has conquered half the world as a bear has of overcoming a hundred trained hounds. Even if we should we succeed, after tremendous exertions in defeating the Roman army, how shall we gain fresh strength to overcome those new armies which the world-conqueror will place in the field?' No, men, do not rush into a hazardous undertaking. Were there the slightest hope of success, I would draw my sword and joyfully raise the battle-cry; but after carefully and calmly weighing the situation I counsel peace and union.

"Listen to my advice: send a delegation to Varus, who is now in the Rhine country, and ask the Romans in such manner as shall convince them of our sincerity, for a true friendly alliance, and you will find you have followed a course which will make for your advantage. But, you will say, did not the Sigambri also send a delegation of their princes to the Roman camp, and did not the Roman general make them prisoners? Certainly he did. But you may not know that those who were sent were haughty and insolent and wished neither for peace nor for an alliance. This explains the apparent severity with which the Romans treated them. But if you convince them that you really wish them as peaceful neighbors, and send those to them who wish for peace, I am sure they will gladly and even honorably receive them. I will offer to head the delegation. If you will make such an expression of sentiment, how it will promote the interests of the fatherland! The Germans, after the Romans, will be leaders of the world. The two nations will assist each other in foreign wars. Art and learning will thrive and beautify German life. Trade and commerce will develop and enrich the land.

"Again, consider the fate which inevitably awaits us if we take up arms! Even if we fight like heroes we shall have to succumb to superior numbers, and then we shall hear nothing more about an alliance. Germany will belong to the Romans

by right of conquest. Those who survive, with their wives and children, will be forced into captivity. Think of Marbod! He has an army larger than we can raise, and yet he does not dare meet the Romans in the field. Brothers, there is but one alternative: on the one hand, peace and prosperity; on the other, war and its certain result—everlasting servitude."

Segest ceased. After a brief silence low mutterings of discontent were heard. "Traitor," said a voice. This was the signal for a fearful outburst of indignation. Imprecations were heard on all sides, swords were drawn, and spears were levelled at him. A warrior, brandishing his club, rushed at him, but before he could strike the fatal blow Herman interposed with his drawn sword. "Forbear, rash man," he cried, "would you dishonor this assembly of free men with blood-shedding? It was agreed that speech should be free in the Volksting and that every one should be allowed to express his opinion without personal harm. If we break our word we shall deserve to lose all our freedom. Men," he shouted in mighty tones, "this has always been the custom, as our fathers have told us. Shall it not continue to be?"

"Yes, yes!" was heard on every side.

"Let? the traitor live," said he who first spoke.

"Now hear me also," said Herman. An exultant shout and ringing clash of weapons followed these words. When silence was restored, he said:

"Peace, messenger of light from Balder, the gentle god, would that thou couldst abide with us! But the time is not yet ready for thy earthly coming. We must still serve the battle-gods, Odin and Tyr, with manly courage and heroic deed. The Romans would meet our offer of peace with the drawn sword, and that would destroy our power and force us into hopeless bondage. Can there be any union between day and night, fire and water, virtue and vice, honor and shame? He who counsels peace, his soul has been darkened by Loki's evil spirit. Peace? Can the noble horse consort with the wolf? Would not the wolf

strangle it in sleep? Do you not remember that Rome drank the milk of the she-wolf? This wolf has laid waste the earth and has already fastened its teeth into our body. Shall we hesitate to reply with the sword? No, men, rush to the defence and hunt the beast from our land.

"Segest points to Marbod as a warning. Well, if Marbod has not the courage to fight for his fatherland, then we will redeem the honor of the German name, which he has sullied. Segest says we shall be overpowered by superior numbers. I reply that the outcome of battle rests with the gods; no mortal can determine it. Where circumstances are favorable any hero will go into battle exultantly; but woe to him if he cowardly shuns battle for the best interests of his people, for freedom, for the gods, for the preservation of the rights handed down by the fathers, because circumstances seem unfavorable! When captivity threatens us it is the gods' desire that we shall risk our lives. To fall in such a struggle is the highest happiness. A noble man cannot live disgraced. Brothers in arms, there is but one choice. Peace with Rome means slavery. Our only hope lies in war. It will secure us our freedom, or it will translate us to Valhalla, the blest abode of those who give their lives for their fatherland."

Herman had hardly finished speaking when an eagle screamed above the mountain_ heights, which was regarded as a favorable omen. Greater applause followed Herman's speech even than that of Igomar. His name was on the lips of every one.

"Lead us to the sacred war!" "Be thou our leader!" "Thou knowest the ways of the enemy, thou must be our leader!" and other such exclamations came from every side.

Sigmar again arose. He asked whether they would have peace or war. A clash of arms and the war-cry were the answer. Then he asked who should lead them. Thousands of voices shouted "Herman!"

Herman arose. It was an impressive sight, as he stood there with his sword raised toward heaven, addressing the multitude: "Swear with me to be true in the sacred war! Swear with me to live and die for the fatherland!"

Swords were raised and the oath was taken by all but Segest. He had vanished. Herman bade them hold themselves in readiness to meet at his call any day. The offering and prayer by the high priest closed the work of the assembly.

The vast camp of the Romans stretched over a plain on the right bank, of the Rhine. As far as the eye could reach, tent upon tent could be seen. In the centre of the camp was the general's tent, decorated with imperial gorgeousness. The golden Roman eagles stood in front of it upon artistic pillars. The sun was setting and tingeing the water of the neighboring Rhine. Varus, the general, was sitting in front of his tent, in full uniform, with several of his officers. Some of the older officers were seated, like him, upon elegant camp stools. Some of the younger ones stood in a semicircle about him. At some distance away were groups of warriors, some watching their officers, others quietly stretched upon the grass. Between the lines of tents, sentinels paced back and forth with drawn swords.

"The lower Rhine is ours," said Varus. "We have made ourselves secure here. The nearest nations have already become accustomed to our rule, pay the tribute levied upon them, and have recognized the rods and axe as emblems of Roman authority.' Our jurisdiction has been introduced in many localities, and the Roman language is rapidly becoming the national speech in Germany. But an event has occurred which has necessitated an invasion of the country. I am informed that the northern Germans have taken up arms against us. It is a wise policy to quell this uprising at once by armed force. And besides this, we must look to our own advantage by destroying this German national union at a blow and making the nations our subjects. This is all I have to say. See that the army is ready to move as speedily as possible."

Hardly had Varus spoken when a captain came up and announced that a messenger had arrived from Segest, bringing important news. He was ordered to appear.

"Segest bids me tell you," said the messenger, "that Herman has suddenly reached home and has induced the Germans to take the field. His appeals have kindled a dangerous spirit of bitter resentment in all hearts. The people are devoted to him and have made him their leader. One distant nation has already risen in revolt at his command. His plan is to surround the Romans and then make an attack. Keep on the watch against Herman."

Varus laughed contemptuously, as he said: "I send greeting to your master and thank him for this fresh proof of his fidelity. But he need not be alarmed. Herman will soon disappear before the Romans." Saying this, he dismissed the messenger.

"So," resumed Varus, "Herman has actually succeeded in escaping us. Believe me, however, he will not stay at home long now that we have learned of this uprising. He undoubtedly purposes to divide our forces, and may cherish the hope of defeating us in detail. But we will anticipate his fine scheme, by pursuing him with the entire army. He will not be foolish enough to attack us at the head of his barbarians, for his people would desert him. Do you suppose they would risk a battle with an army of forty thousand men? If they should, all the better will it be for us. The greater their foolhardiness the more complete will be their ruin. They will be swept away like the leaves of the oak before the autumn gale."

Thereupon Varus dismissed his officers, and hardly had they disappeared among the adjacent tents when the blast of a trumpet rang through the camp. It was the signal summoning the various divisions of the legions to receive their orders.

Varus watched the scene with proud satisfaction. The golden glow of evening irradiated the mountains and the castle

which the Romans had built on the Rhine, called Colonia Agrippina, and which stood on the site of the present city of Cologne. His proud breast swelled with assurance of victory. He saw, in visions, the Germans defeated, and Herman in chains. He saw his triumphal progress through Rome to the temple of Jupiter, and already felt the laurel wreath upon his brow. All eyes were gazing upon him. Fanfares were sounding, and the multitude were shouting, "Welcome the conqueror of the Germans!"

While he sat thus, lost in reverie, he heard above his head the cry of a raven. It aroused him, and he shuddered. It seemed to him he saw a corpse on the ground before him, covered with blood and dust; and its features were his own.

Varus grew pale, but his agitation soon passed away. Springing up so quickly that his sword and armor clashed, his gaze swept over the almost boundless plain. Everywhere weapons glistened in the evening light. Trumpet tones filled the air. It was a spectacle to inspire any one who had not the heart of a dove. A smile took the place of his momentary weakness and spread over his stern visage. Fiercely his eyes gleamed, and resolutely he spoke: "With such an army as this I can conquer the world."

CHAPTER XVI

THE ATTACK

It was in the year 9 after Christ, in the month of September, that Varus undertook to conquer the Germans. In eight days the army began its march and moved forward from the Rhine in proud array. On the morning of the ninth day no enemy had yet appeared. Here and there a wild ox stared at the strange and brilliant sight with startled eyes and then plunged wildly into the thickets; or a bear disputed the way until Roman arrows and spears had despatched it.

The soldiers were in high spirits. They had confidence in the strength of the army, which had been proven so many times. The vanguard placed the head of a huge bear they had killed upon a stake, for the amusement of those following after. Some of them greeted it derisively as a German Bruin; others called it "Herman" and regarded it as a good omen. The higher the sun rose, the higher rose their spirits. The woods rang with their shouts and war-songs. At noon a halt was ordered. Fires were lighted and camp kettles swung. Refreshed with food and drink, they resumed the march, and all around them the forest resounded with the martial din.

An hour or so later the sky was overcast with a cloudy veil, which finally became so dense that the sun could hardly pierce the dull, milk-white vapor. At last it passed off and was followed by heavy rain. The war-songs gradually ceased. Only here and there a voice was heard. The rain grew heavier, and the cold wind drove it into their faces. They plodded along in silence, and bitter execrations took the place of songs. It was hardly two o'clock in the afternoon, according to our time, and yet the dense cloud-masses, driven by the furious north wind, so darkened the air that they could see only a little distance ahead. Suddenly they observed moving figures upon a height nearby, but they could not make out whether they were men or

bears or apparitions. The vanguard watched them anxiously. They longed for an open place where they could halt. Varus longed for it also and signaled a more rapid advance; but their progress was already hindered, and the hindrance grew worse every moment. The spongy soil was soaked with the rain, and the march grew more and more difficult.

At last they came to a morass which compelled them to stop. Trees were cut down, and a rude bridge of branches and stones was constructed. The advance became still harder. The soldiers, weighed down by their heavy armor, sank deep into the soft earth. The cavalry had to lead their horses by the bridles. The wind swept savagely through the tops of the century-old oaks, sounding to many a one like the voices of the angry gods of that land.

At last a somewhat higher spot, encircled by rocky heights, was reached. They breathed more freely at the prospect of finding a place where they could warm themselves by the camp-fires and dry their wet clothes. Suddenly arrows from the heights flew into the wings of the army. Some of them were well aimed, and soldiers fell. Horses reared and trampled upon foot soldiers. Other arrows struck helmets and armor and fell harmless to the ground. The Romans scanned the heights, but they could discern only a dark figure here and there. Some watched the tree-tops, imagining the German war-gods were attacking them from above. They were soon to learn who their assailants were.

Suddenly a thousand voices raised the war-cry on the neighboring hillsides. It sounded in Roman ears like the roar and rush of the sea. Many a heart trembled, and even the stoutest were disturbed in spirit.

When the lion has terrified the creatures of the wild with its fearful roar, and they stand trembling and looking about for their enemy, knowing that escape is impossible, it rushes from its lair with mighty leaps and seizes its prey. So rushed the Germans. As the Romans were standing in confusion, trying vainly to come to some decision, a swarm of

powerful figures brandishing huge swords, iron-spiked clubs, and battle-axes, swept down the slopes and hurled themselves upon the enemy's ranks. Many Romans were killed in the onset, and some Germans also fell. The Romans, however, speedily rallied, charged the Germans in close order, and after a desperate struggle forced them back to the heights.

For the moment the Romans were greatly alarmed by the sudden attack, but their successful resistance re-encouraged them. They shouted the name of Herman derisively to the retreating Germans, for they thought they had encountered and vanquished his army. In this they were mistaken, for Herman was deep in the forest with a much larger force and had sent only a detachment against the Romans for the purpose, not only of deceiving them, but with orders to harass them on their march. These orders were faithfully executed, and the Romans soon ceased their taunts and insults, as one attack swiftly followed another. The attacking force could not break through the iron wall of the enemy, but it did much damage with comparatively little loss to itself, as the Romans stumbled along over the marshy ground. After almost incredible effort and repeated attacks the Romans reached an open spot just as evening was coming on. They were so exhausted that they entrenched themselves in order to get some rest, at least until the next morning.

A council of war was held that night. Some of the under officers advised falling back the next morning in view of the unfavorable weather. Others objected because the Germans would call it a flight, which would make them all the bolder and more confident. Varus would not hear of retreat. "We have met Herman's force and have seen it can be broken. One battle in the open," he said haughtily, "and his army will be annihilated."

CHAPTER XVII

THE BATTLE

As already said, Herman was farther inland, in the vicinity of the Lippe and the Weser, longing for the decisive moment. He was thoroughly convinced of the sacredness of his cause and ready to sacrifice himself for his people rather than wear the captive's fetters. The instant destruction of his whole nation seemed to him a happy fate as compared with the result which would inevitably follow their subjugation by the Romans, and his soldiers were animated by the same spirit. Youths who could almost overtake the stag in its flight sped to all parts of his army with his orders, and also fetched him news from the detachment which was executing his instructions in close proximity to the Romans.

The weather cleared in the morning. The Romans burned their superfluous baggage so as to go into battle with as few impediments as possible. They got into motion and awaited attack with the utmost confidence. The day passed much like the previous one and an anxious night followed. About noon of the second day they reached a tolerably open spot, and the army was drawn up in complete battle order. Swords, shields, and armor glistened in the sunlight, and the imposing spectacle roused many a sinking spirit.

Varus awaited the Germans, but they seemed to have disappeared. The army again advanced and again found itself in a pathless wooded region. An hour later the sky was once more overclouded. A heavy rain fell. They were in the vicinity of what is now the principality of Lippe-Detmold. The German detachment attacked them more furiously than ever. The Romans deemed themselves fortunate when they again found an open spot. Making great exertions, and exposed to constant attacks, they sought to entrench themselves, while

heavy showers fell, lightnings pierced the gloom, and the thunder rolled above them.

At this time Herman suddenly appeared at the head of his army on the surrounding heights, and a battle-cry rose which drowned the thunder. The Germans exulted at every flash of the lightning, for they believed not only that Odin and Tyr were helping them, but also Thor, who usually kept remote from battles.

Herman turned the mountain streams and rolled huge masses of rock down the mountain side into the Roman camp, carrying death and destruction before them. The rain at last ceased and the moon shone brightly through the riven clouds. Then the war-cry was sounded for general attack, and more mightily than the storm, the streams, and the rocks, the Germans hurled themselves from every side upon the camp. The earth shook under the tread of the rushing host; the air trembled with battle-cries and clash of arms.

The Romans fought bravely, but the entrenchments were carried by storm. The whole camp was thrown at once into utter confusion. There was no unity of action. Every man fought for himself, and cavalry and infantry were mixed together. A troop of the Germans, with Herman at its head, advanced upon the centre of the enemy. His flashing sword seemed aflame with divine fire. As the waving corn goes down before the reaper, the ranks of the enemy fell before these warriors. Ever nearer they approached the high tent in the centre of the camp in front of which the golden eagles glistened in the moonlight.

Herman soon perceived Varus, who was vainly endeavoring to restore order in his army. He was anxious to capture him, for he knew that if he could take him prisoner the victory would be certain. Varus also saw Herman. He stood for an instant as if transfixed with astonishment. "We meet again!" shouted Herman to him with the voice of a lion. Then Varus, placing his sword with the hilt upon the earth, threw himself upon its point and fell dead.

The death of Varus struck the Roman ranks like a thunderbolt. A panic ensued. Those who continued fighting were killed, and but few escaped by flight. The others were either taken prisoners or were slain.

Thus was one of the largest and most powerful of the Roman armies destroyed, and a deed was done that proved the invincibility of the Germans when united in a just cause.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE OFFERING AND THE UNION

There was a sacred grove near the battlefield, where the victory was celebrated three days later. A great host of German heroes assembled on an open spot near the grove, and Herman was in their midst. There was a new spirit among them all. Their eyes shone with a new light, and the joy of victory irradiated their faces. But the gods were not forgotten. The heroes had assembled there to pray and make offering to them. Fires shot up everywhere, for they were also met to pay the last honors to the dead, and all around were groups burning the bodies of relatives who had fallen on the field.

"Igomar," said Herman to the warriors about him, "has gone with a force to the Rhine to destroy the castles and possessions of the Romans which have encircled us like a brazen girdle. But where is the body of my father? Oh, that you could have seen the old hero as he lay under the sacred oaks with his sword in his hand, as we found him on the morning after the victory! The blood-rose of battle glowed on that breast, which was faithful to liberty to the last moment. Gloriously shone his face, pale in death, as he lay among the fresh flowers brought by the forest birds."

"They are bringing the prince," said one.

All eyes turned at these words to a group of youths approaching from the right. They were carrying a bier, made of twisted twigs, upon which reposed the body of Sigmar. Warriors with drawn swords walked behind it. Herman quickly advanced to meet them. The youths bowed their heads in sincere grief, and lowered the bier. Herman knelt by the dead, took the cold hand and kissed it, while tears streamed down his face. "My father, thou hast redeemed thy word. Think of me on the sacred heights of Valhalla. Forgive me that I mourn when I should be joyous of heart. I envy thee,

companion of gods and heroes; and yet how hard it is so suddenly to lose thee!"

Rising, Herman said: "Preserved in costliest urn, thy ashes shall rest in the sacred grove. The mound which covers thee shall outlast thy people, and thy name shall shine like a star for all time."

At that instant the Roman prisoners were led by from the left, and following them came a band of priests in gray garments, carrying stone knives. One of them approached Herman. Pale was his countenance, sinister his expression. "We are the priests of Tyr, the bloody god of battle," he said, in a low tone. "Hearken to what he announces through us. Our soil must not cover the bodies of the enemy. Let them lie where they drew the sword. Let them be the food of the wolves and ravens of our forests."

It is the decree of the gods," replied Herman. "Let it show the enemies of the Germans what awaits them, and dissuade them from the folly of undertaking to enslave us."

The priest resumed: "The god of battle also demands his offering. Give us the prisoners! Then shall the smoke of their blood on Tyr's altars rise to his golden throne."

"Believe me," replied Herman, "the gods are appeased. Every hill and valley have drunk sufficiently of the blood of the enemy."

"Alas for thee," exclaimed the priest, raising his hands, "if thou do not give to us the prisoners! Woe to him who lets a serpent live! He is the murderer of those who are stung by it and its brood. Give the god of battle the offering which our ancestors never refused him."

Herman's refusal had already caused alarm, not only among the priests, but among the soldiers also. Realizing that this alarm might become dangerous if he should adhere to his refusal, he said, "Take them."

Herman longed for the high priest of Balder, the gentle god, so that he might make offering upon his altar, and also supplicate him to bring Thusnelda, the beloved of his heart; for a band of youths had attacked her father's castle. He was glad they did not find Segest, but Thusnelda's disappearance greatly troubled him. At this moment a soldier approached, with his naked sword in one hand and the head of Varus in the other.

"Do not expose it," said Herman. "Wrap the head in a cloth to protect it, and send it in the morning to Marbod in care of three of your best warriors, so that at sight of it he may know that we have conquered the enemy who would have enslaved us. It may arouse a feeling of shame in his breast that he, either from cowardice or from dishonorable intention, has not participated in this sacred struggle."

The arrival of the high priest was suddenly announced. Herman approached the edge of the sacred grove. Youths and many warriors followed with the bier. At the high priest's side walked a stately maiden, carrying in her white hand an oak wreath made from branches cut by the high priest with his golden sickle from the consecrated oak.

The warriors looked with sacred awe upon the figure of the maiden. They thought one of the celestial Valkyrs had come from the abode of the gods to crown the brow of their hero with an unfading wreath of victory. But Herman knew her. It was Thusnelda. With beaming eyes and cheeks glowing with joy she approached her beloved Herman and placed the green wreath on his head.

The priest raised his hands and said: "Blessed be the people! So long as they have princes like thee, they will be invincible."

Herman removed his crown, and pointing to the body of his father, said: "Through him I am what I am. To him, not to me, belongs the honor." Saying this, he stepped to the bier and placed the green wreath upon the prince's silver hair.

"Thusnelda," he said, "I implored the gods in the grove to bring you to me, and, lo, my prayer is granted even before the smoke of offering has reached their abodes. Tell me, how comest thou here?"

Thusnelda answered: "As becomes a maiden when men are in strife, I flew to the gods, and my prayers rose to them while the heroes were engaged on the field of death. But tell me, dear one, where is my father?"

"Fear not for him," said Herman; "he has escaped."

Thusnelda covered her face and wept; but Herman took her hand and said: "Thou art mine in life and in death. Our lives are consecrated to the fatherland. Thy name shall be blessed and thou shalt be held in remembrance as is Euria of the brook, whose story thou didst once relate. Even to the latest time shalt thou be the sacred ideal of a German maiden, and thy deeds will bear witness that faithfulness is a beautiful ornament, like gold or a costly jewel. They will also show that women are not surpassed by men in devotion to the fatherland when its welfare is at stake."

"Enter now the sacred grove," said the priest; "that I may invoke the blessing of Balder, the gentle god, upon your union. And you, heroes and champions of the freedom of our people, follow me to make ready the offering."

With joyful hearts the procession entered the sacred grove.