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Clemens Brentano,
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and others

GERMAN
LITERARY
FAIRY TALES

EDITED BY FRANK G. RYDER
AND ROBERT M. BROWNING
INTRODUCTION BY GORDON BIRRELL
FOREWORD BY JOHN GARDNER

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more level. Green bushes enticed him with their refreshing shade, but he did not understand their language, indeed they seemed not to speak, and yet they filled his heart with green colors and cool stillness. Ever higher grew that sweet longing in him, broader and lusher became the leaves, louder and merrier the birds and animals, more fragrant the fruits, darker the sky, warmer the air, and more ardent his love; the time went faster and faster, as if it too were approaching its goal. One day he met a crystal spring and a crowd of flowers coming down into a valley between black pillars that rose far into the sky. They greeted him with friendly, familiar words. "Dear countrymen," he said, "do you know where I may find the sacred dwelling of Isis? It must be nearby, and perhaps you know this region better than I."

"We too are only passing through," answered the flowers; "a family of spirits is on a journey and we are preparing their way and their lodging for them, but a short time ago we came through a region where we heard her name spoken. Just keep going upwards, where we have come from, and you are sure to learn more." The flowers and the spring smiled as they said this, offered him a refreshing drink, and went on. Hyacinth followed their advice, asked again and again and finally came to that long-sought dwelling, which lay hidden beneath palms and other exquisite plants. His heart pounded in endless yearning, and the sweetest trepidation coursed through him in this abode of the eternal seasons. Amid heavenly scents he fell asleep, for only a dream could lead him into the holiest of regions. The strange dream led him through endless chambers full of curious things floating on harmonious sounds and with changing chords. Everything seemed to him so familiar and yet in such splendor as he had never seen. Then the last trace of earth disappeared, as if dissolved in air, and he stood before the heavenly maiden; he lifted the light, shimmering veil, and Rosebud sank into his arms. A distant music surrounded the mystery of the lovers' reunion, the outpourings of yearning, and excluded all that was foreign from this rapturous place. Hyacinth lived for a long time afterwards with Rosebud among his happy parents and playmates, and countless grandchildren thanked the strange old woman for her advice and her fire, for in those days people could have as many children as they wanted.

Translated by Gordon Birrell

The Runenberg

Ludwig Tieck

A young hunter sat lost in thought deep in the mountains beside his fowling nets while the rushing of waters and the rustle of the forest resounded in the solitude. He was musing on his destiny, thinking how, still so young, he had left his father and mother, his familiar home, and all the friends he had known in his native village to seek new surroundings, to escape from the round of the ever-recurrent commonplace, and he now looked up with a kind of amazement to find himself in this valley and engaged in such an occupation. Great clouds moving across the sky lost themselves behind the mountains, birds sang from the bushes and an echo answered them. He slowly descended the mountain and sat down on the bank of a brook that flowed foaming and murmuring over projecting rocks. He listened to the fitful melody of the water and it seemed as though it were telling him in language he could not understand a thousand things that were of great importance to him, and he became deeply downcast that he could not comprehend this speech. Again he looked about and it seemed to him that he was cheerful and happy; he plucked up new courage and sang in a ringing voice a hunter's song.

Gaily 'mongst the crags now climbing
Goes the huntsman to the chase,
And his game he's sure of finding
In these green and living windings,
Though he seek till it grows late.

How his faithful dogs bark, bounding
Through the lovely solitude,

Through the woods the horns resounding,
 Making hearts swell up redounding,
 Hail thee, hunter brotherhood!

In these ravines his homeland dear,
 All trees greet him as they sway;
 Blow the winds of autumn sere,
 Then he finds the stag and deer,
 Shouting loud pursues his way.

Leave the husbandman his gleanings,
 To the sailor leave the sea;
 None there is at morning's gleaming
 Sees Aurora's eyes more beaming
 When the dew begets the lea

Than he who knows the chase, the forest,
 Whom Diana smiles to see;
 Her to whom his love's addressed
 Form of fire shall manifest:
 Who is happier than he!

While he was singing, the sun had sunk deeper in the west and broad shadows fell through the narrow valley. A cooling dusk stole over the ground and only the tops of the trees and mountain peaks still lay in the golden light of evening. Christian's spirits grew ever more despondent; he had no desire to return to his fowling nets and yet he did not want to stay where he was. Everything seemed to him so lonely and he longed for human companionship. Now he wished he had the old books he had seen in his father's possession, which he had never cared to read, as often as his father had urged him to do so. He recalled the scenes of his childhood, the games with the village children, those among them who had been his special companions, the school, which had been so oppressive to him, and he longed to return to all these surroundings, which he had left of his own accord when he went to seek his fortune in unknown regions, among strange people, in a new occupation. As it grew darker and the brook rushed on more loudly and nocturnal winged creatures began their erratic wandering flight, he was

still sitting there disconsolate and sunk in thought; he felt like weeping and was wholly undecided as to what he should do or undertake. Unthinkingly, he pulled a projecting root from the earth and started in sudden fright to hear in the ground a dull moaning, protracted subterraneously in piteous tones, which died mournfully away in the far distance. This tone penetrated his inmost heart, it seized him as though he had unwittingly touched the wound of which the moribund body of nature was painfully expiring. He sprang up and was about to flee, for he had of course heard of the mysterious mandrake root that utters piercing shrieks when it is pulled up, and drives one mad by its ceaseless moaning. As he started to leave, a strange man was suddenly standing behind him; he looked at Christian in a friendly manner and asked where he was going. Christian had wanted company; nonetheless, he was startled by this friendly presence. "Where to in such haste?" the stranger asked again. The young huntsman tried to collect himself and told him how the solitude had suddenly seemed so frightening that he had wanted to flee; the evening, he said, was so dark, the green shades of the forest so sad, the brook so resounding with plaints, the clouds in the sky were drawing his longing with them over beyond the mountains.

"You are still young," the stranger said, "and probably cannot endure the rigors of solitude; I will accompany you, for you will find no house or settlement within a league of here. On the way, we can talk and tell each other stories; that way you will rid yourself of your dismal fancies. In an hour the moon will rise behind the mountains; its light will make your heart lighter, too."

They started on their way and the stranger soon seemed to the youth an old acquaintance. "How did you happen to come to these mountains?" the stranger asked. "From your speech you're not a native of this place."

"Oh, that's a long story," the young man answered, "and yet it's hardly worth repeating. It was as though some unknown power took me away from the circle of my parents and relatives; I was not master of myself; like a bird that has been caught in a net and flutters in vain, my soul was entangled in imaginings and desires. We lived far from here in the midst of a plain, where one saw no mountains, hardly even a hill, far and wide; a few trees adorned the green level ground; meadows, fertile fields of grain, and gar-

dens stretched as far as the eye could see; a great river flowed gleaming like a mighty spirit past the fields and meadows. My father was a gardener at the castle and intended to bring me up in the same occupation. He loved plants and flowers above all else and could tirelessly spend his days tending them. He went so far as to maintain that he could almost converse with them; he drew instruction, he said, from the way they grew and prospered, as well as from the various forms and colors of their leaves and petals. But gardening was distasteful to me, and all the more when my father tried to persuade me to take it up, or even force me to it with threats. I wanted to become a fisherman and made a trial of it, but life on the water did not agree with me. I was apprenticed to a merchant in the city and soon left him to return to my father's house. Then suddenly I heard my father tell of the mountains, where he had traveled in his youth, of mines and miners, hunters, and the way they live, and there immediately awakened in me an overpowering urge, a feeling that I had now found the way of life meant for me. Day and night I pictured to myself mighty mountains, ravines, and fir forests; my imagination created towering cliffs. In my mind I heard the tumult of the hunt, the horns, the cry of the dogs and the game; all my dreams were filled with these things and I could not rest for thinking of them. The plain, the castle, my father's limited garden with its orderly flower beds, our narrow dwelling, the wide expanse of sky that spread around us and embraced no height, no sublime mountain, all this depressed me and I grew to hate it more and more. It seemed to me as though all those about me were living in the most deplorable ignorance and that all would think and feel as I did, if only they once became aware of their misery. Thus I continued restlessly until one morning I came to the decision to leave my parental home forever. In a book I had found an account of the nearest large range of mountains, together with illustrations depicting certain regions, and I laid my travel plans accordingly. It was early spring and I felt very cheerful and light of heart. I made haste to leave the plain as soon as possible, and one evening I beheld the dark outlines of the mountains lying before me. At my inn I was hardly able to sleep, I was so impatient to enter the region I looked upon as my homeland. At earliest dawn I was awake and stirring and soon on my way. That afternoon I found myself already among

my beloved mountains, and like a drunken man I walked on, then stopped for a bit, looked back, and intoxicated myself anew with the sight of all these things, so strange and yet so familiar. Soon the plain was lost to sight, mountain torrents rushed down to meet me, beeches and oaks streamed downward with agitated leaves from steep slopes; my path led me past dizzy chasms, blue mountains stood vast and venerable in the background. A new world was opened up to me, I knew no weariness. Thus it came about that some days later, after I had wandered through a good part of these mountains, I met an old forester who, at my fervent request, took me in and instructed me in the hunter's art. I have been with him for three months now. I took possession of the region of my sojourn like a kingdom to which I had fallen heir. I got to know every cliff, every ravine of this mountain range, and I was supremely happy in my occupation when early in the morning we would set out for the forest, when we felled trees, when I sharpened my eye at target practice or trained my faithful companions, the dogs, in their skills. Now I've been sitting for a week up at my fowling nets, in the mountain solitude, and this evening I grew sadder than ever in my life; I felt so lost, so terribly unhappy, and I still cannot recover from this dismal mood."

The stranger had listened attentively while they were passing through a dark part of the forest. Now they stepped out into the open and the light of the moon, whose horns stood in the sky above a peak, greeted them like a friend. In unrecognizable shapes and many separate masses, which the pale moonlight again mysteriously united into one, the cleft range lay before them. In the distance rose a steep mountain on whose top age-old weather-beaten ruins awesomely revealed themselves in the white light. "Our paths part here," said the stranger. "I go down into this gorge, there beside that old mine shaft is my dwelling; the ores are my neighbors, the waters trickling in the mine tell me wondrous things in the night. To that place you cannot follow me. But see the Runenberg there with its precipitous walls, how beautiful and tempting the ancient masonry looks! Have you ever been there?"

"Never," said young Christian, "but I once heard the forester tell strange things about that mountain, things that I have foolishly forgotten; but I do remember that on the evening he told

them to me I was full of dread. I'd like to climb that height, for there the light is more beautiful than elsewhere, the grass there must be green as an emerald, the world that lies about most strange, and one might also chance to find up there some wonder from times gone by."

"Almost beyond a doubt," the man replied, "if one only knows how to seek, if one's heart is inwardly drawn there, he will find age-old friends and great splendors, everything he most fervently desires."

With these words the stranger descended rapidly into the gorge without bidding his companion farewell. Soon he was lost to sight in the thicket and shortly afterwards the sound of his footfall also faded away. The young hunter was not surprised, he merely redoubled his pace toward the Runenberg. Everything beckoned him thither: the stars seemed to cast their light that way, the moonlight made a bright road towards the ruins, light clouds rose toward them, and out of the depths the streams and the rustling woods spoke to him, inspiring him with courage. His feet were as though winged, his heart pounded, he felt such deep inward joy that it became anguish.

He came into regions where he had never been before; the cliffs grew steeper, the verdure disappeared, the bare mountainsides called to him as though in angry tones, and a wind drove him before it with a lonely moan. Thus he hastened onward without pause and came late after midnight upon a narrow footpath that ran close beside a chasm. He paid no attention to the depths that yawned beneath him, threatening to swallow him, so ardently was he spurred on by confused imaginings and incomprehensible desires. The perilous path now led him beside a lofty wall that seemed to lose itself in the clouds. The ledge grew narrower with every step and the youth had to cling to projecting rocks to keep from plunging downward. At last he could go no farther; the path ended beneath a window. He had to come to a standstill and was at a loss whether to turn back or remain where he was. Suddenly he saw a light that seemed to be moving behind the ancient masonry. He followed the beam and discovered that he could see into a spacious ancient hall which, strangely adorned with various minerals and crystals, sparkled with manifold rays that shot mysteriously through each other when crossed by a wandering light car-

ried by a tall female figure who was walking pensively back and forth within the room. She did not seem to belong to mortal kind, so tall was she, so mighty of limb, so severe her features, and yet it seemed to the enraptured youth that he had never seen such beauty or even dreamt of it. He trembled, but secretly wished that she would step to the window and notice him. Finally she ceased her wandering, set the light down on a crystal table, and gazing upward sang in a penetrating voice:

Where do the ancients tarry,
Why do they not appear?
Crystals all are weeping,
From the diamond columns
Flow downward streams of tears;
Plangent tones resound;
In the waters bright
Form of moving light
Leading souls its way
Bends hearts to its sway.
Come, you spirits all,
To the golden hall,
Heads that give forth sparks
Raise from out the dark!
Make yourselves the masters
Of the hearts and spirits
Thirsting in their yearning
With their gleaming, streaming tears!

When she had ended her song, she began to undress and to lay her garments in a costly wardrobe. First, she took a golden veil from her head, and long black hair flowed in curly abundance down over her loins; then she loosened the garment covering her bosom, and the youth forgot himself and everything around him at the sight of her supernal beauty. He hardly dared breathe as she removed one garment after another; finally she strode naked up and down the room, and her thick, flowing locks formed about her a dark swelling sea out of which the gleaming limbs of her pure body shone at intervals like marble. After a while she approached another golden chest, took from it a tablet blazing with

inlaid stones, rubies, diamonds, and all kinds of jewels, and gazed at it critically for a long time. With its various lines and colors the tablet seemed to form some strange, incomprehensible pattern; now and then, when the gleam was reflected toward him, the youth was painfully blinded, then colors that played in green and blue would again soothe his eyes. He stood consuming the sight with his gaze and at the same time was deeply abstracted. Within him an abyss of figures and harmonies, of yearning and voluptuousness had opened up, multitudes of winged tones and nostalgic and joyful melodies passed through his heart and mind and he was moved to the depths of his being. He saw a world of pain and hope unfold within him, wondrous mighty crags of trust and defiant confidence, great rivers, flowing as though brimming with nostalgia. He knew himself no longer, and was startled when the beauteous female figure opened the window, handed him the magical stone tablet and said, "Take this in memory of me!" He grasped the tablet and ran his fingers over the pattern, which at once passed over invisibly into him, and the light and the overpowering beauty and the mysterious hall were gone. A dark night with lowering clouds seemed to descend over his inward being; he searched for his former feelings, for that exaltation and unutterable love, he gazed upon the precious tablet, in which the setting moon was reflected with a weak, bluish light.

He was still holding the tablet pressed tightly in his hands when the gray dawn came, and he rushed down the steep height, exhausted, dizzy, and only half awake.—

The sun was shining in the face of the benumbed sleeper, who found himself lying on a pleasant hill when he awoke. He looked about and saw far behind him, hardly recognizable on the distant horizon, the ruins of the Runenberg. He looked for his tablet but could find it nowhere. Astounded and confused, he tried to collect his thoughts and recall what had happened, but his memory was as though filled with a murky fog in which unrecognizable amorphous shapes stirred in wild confusion.

His whole former life seemed a great distance behind him; the strange and the ordinary were so inextricably mingled that he could not distinguish them. After a long inward struggle he was finally ready to believe that a dream or sudden madness had come over him during the night, but he still could not understand how he could have wandered so far astray into a remote, unknown region.

Still drunk with sleep, he descended the hill and came upon a well-traveled road that led from the mountains into the plain. Everything was strange to him; at first he thought he would reach his native village, but he saw about him a quite different region and at last decided that he must be beyond the southern edge of the mountain range he had entered in spring from the north. Towards noon he was standing above a village from whose cottages peaceful plumes of smoke arose; children in their Sunday best were playing in a grassy square and from the small church resounded the tones of an organ and the singing of the congregation. All this seized him with indescribably sweet nostalgia and touched his heart to weeping. The narrow gardens, the tiny cottages with their smoking chimneys, the neatly divided fields of grain—all reminded him of human needs, of man's dependence upon the kindly soil, in whose generosity he must put his trust. At the same time, the hymn and the sound of the organ filled his heart with a piety he had never before felt. The sensations and desires of the night past now seemed to him wicked and sacrilegious. Recognizing his own needs, he wanted once more to join his fellows in a humble, childlike, and needful way, to call other men his brothers and cast out his godless feelings and ambitions. The plain, with its little river embracing the meadows and gardens in its twistings and turnings, seemed to him charming and inviting; with fear he recalled his sojourn in the lonely mountains among the cliffs and rocks. He longed to be allowed to live in this peaceful village, and with these feelings he entered the crowded church.

The singing was just over and the pastor had begun his sermon on the Lord's bounty in the harvest: how His kindness feeds and appeases the hunger of all living things, how miraculously He provides for the preservation of mankind in the grain, how divine love is ceaselessly imparted in the bread we eat, and how the humble believer can thus celebrate an imperishable communion. The congregation was edified, and while the huntsman's gaze rested on the pious speaker, he noticed close by the pulpit a young girl, who appeared more reverent and attentive than all the rest. She was slender and blond, her blue eyes shone with the most pervasive gentleness, her face was as though transparent and blooming in the tenderest colors. The stranger had never before been so aware of himself and his heart as he was at this moment, so full of love, so given over to the calmest and most comforting feelings. He

bowed his head in tears when the pastor finally pronounced the blessing; at the sacred words he felt himself pervaded by an invisible power and the shadowy vision of the night retreated into the deepest distance, like a ghost. He left the church, tarrying under the great linden tree to thank God in a fervent prayer for freeing him by His grace from the toils of the evil spirit.

On this day the village was celebrating its harvest festival and all were in a joyous mood. The children in their finery were looking forward to the cakes and dancing; on the village green, which was surrounded by young trees, young lads were busy arranging everything for their autumnal festivities: the musicians were already seated and tuning their instruments. Christian walked out into the fields once more to collect his thoughts and ponder his situation, then returned to the village, where everyone was already assembled for the merrymaking. Blonde-haired Elizabeth was also present, together with her parents, and the stranger mingled with the joyful crowd. While Elizabeth was dancing, Christian began a conversation with her father, who was a landowner and one of the richest persons in the community. The latter seemed to find pleasure in conversing with the foreign guest and so it was that they had shortly agreed that Christian should move into his house as gardener. The youth ventured to undertake this, for he hoped that now the skills and knowledge he had so despised at home would stand him in good stead.

A new life now began for him. He moved in with the rich landowner and was accounted one of the family. With his occupation, he also changed his style of dress. He was so kind, so helpful, and always so friendly, he worked with such a will, that soon the whole household, but especially the daughter, was fond of him. Whenever he saw her set out for church on Sunday, he always had a fine bouquet ready for her, for which she thanked him with blushing friendliness. He missed her if a day went by without his seeing her. In the evenings she would tell him fairy tales and amusing stories. They grew to be more and more necessary to each other, and the parents, who were well aware of this, seemed to have no objections, for Christian was the most diligent and handsomest lad in the village; they themselves had felt kindly disposed toward him from the very first. After half a year Elizabeth became his wife. Spring had come again, the swallows and songbirds had re-

turned, the garden shone like a jewel. The wedding was celebrated with great joy; bride and groom seemed drunk with happiness. Late in the evening, when they retired to their bedchamber, the young husband said to his beloved, "No, you are not that vision that once enraptured me in a dream and that I can never wholly forget; but still I am happy when I am near you and blessed in your arms."

How delighted was the family when within a year it was increased by the birth of a little daughter, who was baptized Leonora. Christian, it is true, sometimes became rather solemn when he gazed on the child, but his youthful serenity always returned. He hardly thought any more of his former way of life, for he felt himself thoroughly at home and content. After some months, however, his parents came to his mind again and he thought how much his father, in particular, would rejoice at his calm happiness, his position as gardener and husbandman; it perturbed him that he had been capable of completely forgetting his father and mother for so long. His own child reminded him what a joy children are to their parents, and so he finally determined to undertake a journey to visit his old home again.

Unwillingly he took leave of his wife; everyone wished him luck, and in fine fall weather he set out on his way on foot. In a few hours, he already felt how this leavetaking pained him. For the first time in his life, he knew the pangs of separation; strange sights seemed to him almost wild, and he felt as though he were lost in a hostile solitude. Then the thought came to him that his youth was over, that he had found a place where he belonged, where his heart had taken root. He was almost beginning to regret the lost lightheartedness of his earlier years, and was extremely downcast when the time came to turn in for the night at a village inn. He could not understand why he had left his loving wife and her cherished parents, and set out again the next morning depressed and ill-humored.

His anxiety increased as he neared the mountains; the distant ruins were already becoming visible and gradually appeared more and more recognizable, round peaks rose up defined and clear out of the bluish mists. His step became hesitant; he often stopped, surprised at the fear and horror that, with every step, came over him ever more penetratingly.

"Madness, I know you well," he cried out, "you and your perilous temptations, but I will resist you manfully! Elizabeth is no empty dream, I know she is thinking of me now, that she is waiting for me and lovingly counting the hours until my return. Do I not already see the forest like a head of black hair before me? Do not shining eyes gaze up at me out of the stream? Do not great limbs stride toward me out of the mountain?"

With these words he was about to lie down to rest under a tree, when in its shade he saw an old man sitting and examining a flower with utmost attention, holding it now against the light, now shading it with his hand, counting the petals, and taking all pains to impress it exactly in his memory. When he came nearer, the figure seemed familiar to him and soon there was no doubt that the old man with the flower was his father. He threw himself in his arms with a cry of passionate joy; the former was pleased but not surprised to see him again so suddenly.

"Did you come to meet me, my son?" the old man asked. "I knew that I would soon find you, but I did not think I would have that pleasure this very day."

"How did you know, father, that you would find me?"

"By this flower," returned the old gardener. "All my life I have wanted to see it one day, but never had such good fortune, for it is very rare and grows only in the mountains. I set out to seek you, because your mother has died and the loneliness at home was oppressive and dismal. I did not know in what direction I should turn my steps, but finally I took my way through the mountains, sad as such a journey seemed to me. I kept a lookout for this flower, but could discover it nowhere, and now I've found it quite unexpectedly, where the fair plain extends. That is how I knew that I would soon find you, and look how justly this sweet flower has prophesied!"

They embraced each other again and Christian shed tears for his dead mother; the old man grasped his hand and said, "Let us go, so that we may soon lose sight of the shadows of these mountains; their steep, wild shapes, the horrible ravines, the sobbing streams always distress my soul. Let us return to the good, God-fearing flatland."

They began the return journey and Christian became more cheerful again. He told his father of his new-found happiness, of his child and his home; he himself grew as though drunk with the

telling, and as he talked he felt how truly contented he was. Contrasting thus sadly and cheerfully, they reached the village. All were pleased at the early conclusion of the journey, Elizabeth most of all. Christian's old father moved in with them and contributed his modest wealth to their household; they formed a contented, harmonious circle. The crops prospered, the livestock increased, and in a few years Christian's family was one of the most notable in the community. In addition, he soon found himself the father of several more children.

Five years had passed in this fashion when a stranger in his travels appeared in their village and took lodging at Christian's house because it was the most imposing. He was a friendly, talkative man who liked to tell about his travels, who played with the children and gave them presents, and who soon won everyone's good will. He liked the region so well that he decided to stay for several days; but the days became weeks and, finally, months. No one was surprised at his delay, for everyone had already grown accustomed to regard him as one of the family. Only Christian sometimes sat lost in thought; it seemed to him he had known the traveler somewhere before, and yet he could not recall any occasion when he might have seen him. After three months, the stranger at last took his leave and said, "My dear friends, a wondrous fate and strange expectations drive me into the nearby mountains; an enchanting vision, which I cannot resist, is luring me. I leave you now and I do not know whether I shall return. I have a sum of money with me, which is safer in your hands than mine, and therefore beg you to keep it for me. If I am not back in a year's time, keep it, and consider it my thanks for the kindness you have shown me."

The stranger departed and Christian took the money in keeping. He carefully locked it away and out of exaggerated solicitude looked at it from time to time, counting it to be sure that none was missing, and busied himself with it a great deal.

"This sum could make us very happy," he said once to his father. "If the stranger shouldn't return, we and our children would be taken care of for the rest of our lives."

"Don't worry about the gold," the old man replied; "happiness does not lie in that. Up to now, thank goodness, we have not wanted for anything; dismiss all such ideas from your mind."

Christian often rose at night to awaken the servants for work

and to look after everything himself. His father was concerned that he might harm his youthful health through such excess, and it was for that reason he too got up one night to warn him to limit such intemperate activity and found him, to his astonishment, sitting at a table with a small lamp counting the gold pieces with utmost zeal.

"My son," the old man said sadly, "is this what is to become of you? Has this accursed metal been brought under our roof only for our misfortune? BETHINK YOURSELF, my boy, for in this way Satan is bound to consume you leg and limb."

"Yes," said Christian, "I don't understand myself any more. I have no rest by day or night. See how it is looking at me again, till the red sheen enters deep into my heart! Hear how it rings, this golden blood! It calls me when I'm asleep, I hear it when music plays, when the wind blows, when people are talking in the street. If the sun shines, I see only its yellow eyes, how it winks at me and tries to whisper words of love in my ear. That is why I have to get up in the night and satisfy its urgent desire; then I feel myself inwardly shouting and exulting. When I touch it with my fingers, it grows redder and more splendid for joy. See for yourself its glow of rapture!"

Shuddering and weeping, the old man took his son in his arms, prayed, and then said, "Christian, my boy, you must turn again to the word of God, you must go to church oftener and pray more devoutly, otherwise you will languish and consume yourself in misery."

The money was locked away again, Christian promised to take thought and change his ways, and his father felt easier. A year and more had already passed and they had not been able to find out anything further about the stranger. The old man finally yielded to the pleas of his son, and the money the stranger had left behind was invested in land and other properties. In the village there was soon talk of the wealth of the young landowner, and Christian seemed extraordinarily contented and happy, so that his father considered himself fortunate to see him so cheerful and well; all anxiety had now vanished from his mind.

He was therefore much astonished when one evening Elizabeth took him aside and tearfully told him how she no longer understood her husband, that he talked wildly, especially at night, that he had bad dreams, often walked up and down in the bedchamber

in his sleep, and spoke of uncanny things that often made her shudder. The most frightening part was his gaiety during the day: his laughter was so wild and insolent, his look so lunatic and strange. Her father-in-law was much taken aback, and the sorrowing wife continued.

"He constantly talks about the traveler and claims that he knew him before, for this stranger was really a marvelously beautiful woman. He also does not want to go out to the fields any more or work in the garden, for he says he hears a fearful groaning in the ground whenever he pulls out a root; he starts back and seems horrified in the presence of plants and herbs, as though they were ghosts."

"Merciful God!" cried the father, "has that frightful hunger already taken such a hold of him that it has reached this pass? Then his bewitched heart is no longer human, but cold metal; he who cannot love a flower, has lost all love and the fear of God."

The following day, the father went for a walk with his son and repeated to him a number of the things he had heard from Elizabeth; he exhorted him to piety and religious contemplation.

Christian said, "Gladly, father, and oftentimes I do feel at peace, everything goes well for me; I am able for long periods of time, for years, to forget the true form of my inward being and easily live a life that is, as it were, foreign to me. But suddenly the ruling constellation, that is myself, rises like a new moon in my heart and conquers the foreign power. I could be quite happy, were it not that once, in a strange night, a mysterious sign passed through my hand and imprinted itself in my mind and heart; this magical figure often lies in calm sleep, and I think it has passed away, but then it suddenly revives again, like a poison, and all its lines begin to move. Then I can think and feel nothing but it, and everything about me is transformed, or rather, swallowed up by this constellation. Like the victim of hydrophobia, who is terrified by the sight of water and feels the poison in his body grow more venomous, so it is with me at the sight of any angular figure, any line, any ray or beam; everything then strives to deliver the form that lives within me and aid its birth, and my spirit and body feel fear. Since my mind conceived it from an external sensation, so does it tortuously struggle to again make it an external sensation, in order to be rid of it and find peace."

"It was an evil star," said the old man, "that drew you away

from us. You were born for a peaceful life, your disposition was inclined to quietude and to the care of plants, but your impatience led you in another direction, into the society of savage stones; the rocks, the wild cliffs with their rugged forms have deranged your mind and planted in you this devastating hunger for metals. You should always have been on your guard before the sight of mountains, and it was thus that I meant to raise you up, but it was not to be. Your humility, your calm, your childlike disposition has been overwhelmed by defiance, savagery and arrogance."

"No," said the son, "I remember quite clearly that it was a plant that first revealed to me the misery of all the earth; only since then do I understand the sighs and moans to be heard everywhere in nature, if one will only listen; in the plants, herbs, flowers, and trees there moves and stirs in pain *one* great wound. They are the living corpses of earlier magnificent worlds of stone, they offer to our sight the most shocking putrefaction. Now I understand that this is what that root wanted to tell me with its deep groans; in its pain it forgot itself and betrayed everything to me. That is why all green growths are so angry with me and seek my life; they want to erase that beloved form in my heart, and every springtime seek to win back my soul with their distorted corpse-like look. Shocking and malicious is the way they have deceived you, old man, for they have completely taken possession of your soul. Just ask the stones, you will be astonished when you hear them speak."

The father gave him a long look and was incapable of answer. They returned home in silence, and now the old man was also frightened at his son's gaiety, for it seemed to him very odd and as though another being were playing from within his son, clumsily and unskillfully, as through a machine.

The harvest festival was to be celebrated again, the people were going to church, and Elizabeth had dressed herself and her children to attend divine service; her husband also seemed to be preparing to accompany her, but in front of the church door he turned around and walked out of the village, lost in thought. He sat down on a hill and saw again the smoking chimneys beneath him; the children, dressed for Sunday, were playing on the green.

"How I have frittered away my life in a dream!" he said to

himself. "Years have passed since I descended this hill and mingled with the children; those who were playing there then are to-day sitting solemnly in church. I also entered that building, but Elizabeth is no longer a childlike creature in the bloom of youth, her youth is fled, I cannot seek her glance with yearning as in those days. Thus I have wantonly neglected a high eternal happiness for sake of one that is temporal and transitory."

Full of longing, he took his way into the nearby woods and entered deep into its thickest shadows. An awesome silence surrounded him, not a breeze stirred in the leaves. Then he saw approaching him from afar a man whom he recognized as the stranger. He was startled, and his first thought was that he would demand the return of his money. When the figure came somewhat closer, he saw how mistaken he had been, for the outlines he had thought he perceived dissolved as though into themselves. An old woman of the utmost hideousness came towards him, dressed in dirty rags. A torn kerchief kept her few straggling grey hairs in place, and she was limping along on a crutch. She addressed Christian in a terrifying voice and asked his name and station.

He gave a detailed answer and then said, "But who are you?"

"They call me the Woman of the Woods," she replied. "Every child knows who I am; didn't you ever know me?" With these words, she turned around, and Christian thought he recognized between the trees the golden veil, the majestic gait, the mighty limbs. He was about to hasten after her, but she had disappeared from his sight.

Meanwhile, some gleaming object drew his glance down into the grass. He picked it up and beheld again the magic tablet with the bright gems, with the strange design, that he had lost so many years before. The figure and the gay gleams pressed in upon his senses with instant power. He grasped the tablet firmly in order to convince himself that he again held it in his hands, then hastened with it back to the village. His father met him.

"Look," he called out to him, "that which I have so often told you about, what I thought I saw only in a dream, is now really and truly mine."

The old man contemplated the tablet for a long time and said, "My son, I shudder in my very heart when I gaze upon the contours of these stones and guess with foreboding what the sense of

the words written here may be. Only see how coldly they sparkle, what dreadful glances they cast, bloodthirsty as the red eye of a tiger. Throw this writing away, it makes you cold and cruel, it is bound to petrify your heart:

See the tender blossoms gleaming,
How from out themselves they waken,
And like children roused from dreaming
Smile at us until we're taken.

In their play they turn their faces
Ever toward the sun so golden,
To its kisses' heated traces
Is their highest bliss beholden.

From its kisses quickly fading,
Soon they die in love and longing;
Thus they stand who smiled persuading,
Stand now wilted, feel no wronging.

And this is their highest pleasure:
Love's destruction their salvation,
Death for them transfiguration,
Vanishing their sweetest treasure.

Then they issue forth their fragrance,
Send forth spirits filled with rapture,
Ambient airs are all entranced,
Yielding to such fragrant capture.

Love may come to human heart,
Stir the golden lyre to zeal,
And the soul then says, "I feel
What's most beautiful, know my seal
Must be longing, sadness, and love's smart."

"Marvelous, immeasurable treasures," the son replied, "there must be in the depths of the earth. O, to find them, raise them, take them for oneself! O, to press the earth to one's bosom like a

beloved bride until she gladly yields her most precious possessions in love and trembling! The Woman of the Woods has summoned me. I go to seek her. Nearby is an old abandoned mine shaft, dug centuries ago by some miner; perhaps I shall find her there!"

He hastened away. In vain the old man strove to detain him; he had soon disappeared from view. After a number of hours and great effort the father succeeded in reaching the abandoned shaft; he saw footprints impressed in the sand at the entrance and turned back weeping, convinced that his son in his madness had entered here and drowned in the ancient waters accumulated in the depths.

Since that hour his heart seemed broken; he was incessantly in tears. The whole village mourned the young landowner, Elizabeth was inconsolable, the children wailed loudly. After half a year the old father died, Elizabeth's parents soon followed him, and she was forced to look after the large undertaking alone. Her numerous duties distracted her somewhat from her sorrow; the education of her children, the management of the estate left her no time for grief and worry. So it was that after two years she decided to enter upon a second marriage; she gave her hand to a cheerful young man who had loved her from youth. But soon everything in the household began to take on a different aspect. The cattle died, the servants proved dishonest, barns full of hay and grain burned down, persons in the city who had borrowed money left without repaying. Soon the young husbandman saw himself forced to sell several fields and meadows; but bad crops and drought only brought him new misfortune. It was just as though the money that had been so strangely acquired were rapidly seeking to make its escape by every possible route. Meanwhile, the children were growing more numerous, and Elizabeth as well as her husband became careless and indifferent in their despair. He sought to distract himself, and drank a great deal of heavy wine, which made him ill-humored and choleric, so that Elizabeth in her misery often wept hot tears. As their fortunes declined, the people in the village began to avoid them, and in a few years they found themselves wholly friendless, barely eking out a meager living from one week to the next.

A cow and a few sheep, which Elizabeth and the children tended

themselves, were all they had left. As she was sitting with her knitting one day in the pasture, Leonora at her side, and a nursing infant at her breast, she saw in the distance a bizarre figure approaching. It was a man in a tattered coat, barefoot, his face blackened by the sun and disfigured still more by a long, matted beard; he wore nothing on his head, but had twined a wreath of green foliage through his hair, which rendered his wild look even stranger and more outlandish. On his back he bore in a sack closed with a cord some heavy burden. As he walked, he supported himself on a young spruce.

When he came nearer, he put down his load, breathing heavily. He bade the woman, who was terrified at the sight of him, good day. The girl crept closer to her mother's skirts.

When he had rested a bit, he said, "I come from a very arduous journey out of the most rugged mountains on earth, but I have at last brought with me the most precious treasures the imagination can conceive or the heart wish. Behold and wonder!"

Hereupon he opened his sack and emptied the contents on the ground. Among the pile of pebbles lay large chunks of quartz and other stones. "It is only that these jewels are not yet cut and polished," he continued; "that's why they have no eyes and no fiery look. The outward fire that causes them to gleam is still buried in their inward hearts, but one only has to knock it out of them, then they will be afraid and realize that no dissembling can avail. Then one sees what their true nature is!"

With these words, he picked up one stone and struck it violently against another, so that red sparks sprang forth. "Did you see the flash?" he cried; "they are all that way, full of fire and light, they light up the dark with their laughter, but they still won't do it of their own accord."

He then carefully packed everything again into his sack and tied it securely. "I know you right well," he said in a melancholy tone, "you are Elizabeth."

The woman started. "How do you know my name?" she asked, trembling with foreboding.

"O, dear God!" said the unhappy man. "I am Christian, who once came to you as a huntsman; don't you know me any more?"

In her horror and compassion, she was at a loss what to say. He fell about her neck and kissed her. Elizabeth cried, "O God, my husband will come!"

"Be calm," he said, "I am as good as dead so far as you are concerned; there in the forest my beautiful one is already waiting for me, she of the mighty limbs, adorned with a golden veil. This is my favorite child, Leonora. Come here, my sweet, and give me a kiss too, only one, that I may once more feel your mouth upon my lips, then I will leave you."

Leonora wept; she crept close to her mother, who, with sobs and tears, half pushed her toward the wanderer, while he half drew her to himself. He took her in his arms and pressed her to his breast. Then he quietly departed, and in the forest they saw him speaking with the terrifying Woman of the Woods.

"What is the matter with the two of you?" asked Elizabeth's husband when he found mother and daughter pale and dissolved in tears. Neither would give him an answer.

The unhappy wanderer was never seen again.

Translated by Robert M. Browning