

95 Old Hildebrand

Once upon a time lived a peasant and his wife, and the parson of the village had a fancy for the wife, and had wished for a long while to spend a whole day happily with her. The peasant woman, too, was quite willing. One day, therefore, he said to the woman, "Listen, my dear friend, I have now thought of a way by which we can for once spend a whole day happily together. I'll tell you what; on Wednesday, you must take to your bed, and tell your husband you are ill, and if you only complain and act being ill properly, and go on doing so until Sunday when I have to preach, I will then say in my sermon that whosoever has at home a sick child, a sick husband, a sick wife, a sick father, a sick mother, a sick brother or whosoever else it may be, and makes a pilgrimage to the Göckerli hill in Italy, where you can get a peck of laurel-leaves for a kreuzer, the sick child, the sick husband, the sick wife, the sick father, or sick mother, the sick sister, or whosoever else it may be, will be restored to health immediately."

"I will manage it," said the woman promptly. Now therefore on the Wednesday, the peasant woman took to her bed, and complained and lamented as agreed on, and her husband did everything for her that he could think of, but nothing did her any good, and when Sunday came the woman said, "I feel as ill as if I were going to die at once, but there is one thing I should like to do before my end I should like to hear the parson's sermon that he is going to preach to-day." On that the peasant said, "Ah, my child, do not do it---thou mightest make thyself worse if thou wert to get up. Look, I will go to the sermon, and will attend to it

very carefully, and will tell thee everything the parson says."

"Well," said the woman, "go, then, and pay great attention, and repeat to me all that thou hearest." So the peasant went to the sermon, and the parson began to preach and said, if any one had at home a sick child, a sick husband, a sick wife, a sick father a sick mother, a sick sister, brother or any one else, and would make a pilgrimage to the Göckerli hill in Italy, where a peck of laurel-leaves costs a kreuzer, the sick child, sick husband, sick wife, sick father, sick mother, sick sister, brother, or whosoever else it might be, would be restored to health instantly, and whosoever wished to undertake the journey was to go to him after the service was over, and he would give him the sack for the laurel-leaves and the kreuzer.

Then no one was more rejoiced than the peasant, and after the service was over, he went at once to the parson, who gave him the bag for the laurel-leaves and the kreuzer. After that he went home, and even at the house door he cried, "Hurrah! dear wife, it is now almost the same thing as if thou wert well! The parson has preached to-day that whosoever had at home a sick child, a sick husband, a sick wife, a sick father, a sick mother, a sick sister, brother or whoever it might be, and would make a pilgrimage to the Göckerli hill in Italy, where a peck of laurel-leaves costs a kreuzer, the sick child, sick husband, sick wife, sick father, sick mother, sick sister, brother, or whosoever else it was, would be cured immediately, and now I have already got the bag and the kreuzer from the parson, and will at once begin my journey so that thou mayst get well the faster," and thereupon he went away. He was, however,

hardly gone before the woman got up, and the parson was there directly.

But now we will leave these two for a while, and follow the peasant, who walked on quickly without stopping, in order to get the sooner to the Göckerli hill, and on his way he met his gossip. His gossip was an egg-merchant, and was just coming from the market, where he had sold his eggs. "May you be blessed," said the gossip, "where are you off to so fast?"

"To all eternity, my friend," said the peasant, "my wife is ill, and I have been to-day to hear the parson's sermon, and he preached that if any one had in his house a sick child, a sick husband, a sick wife, a sick father, a sick mother, a sick sister, brother or any one else, and made a pilgrimage to the Göckerli hill in Italy, where a peck of laurel-leaves costs a kreuzer, the sick child, the sick husband, the sick wife, the sick father, the sick mother, the sick sister, brother or whosoever else it was, would be cured immediately, and so I have got the bag for the laurel-leaves and the kreuzer from the parson, and now I am beginning my pilgrimage." "But listen, gossip," said the egg-merchant to the peasant, "are you, then, stupid enough to believe such a thing as that? Don't you know what it means? The parson wants to spend a whole day alone with your wife in peace, so he has given you this job to do to get you out of the way."

"My word!" said the peasant. "How I'd like to know if that's true!"

"Come, then," said the gossip, "I'll tell you what to do. Get into

my egg-basket and I will carry you home, and then you will see for yourself." So that was settled, and the gossip put the peasant into his egg-basket and carried him home.

When they got to the house, hurrah! but all was going merry there! The woman had already had nearly everything killed that was in the farmyard, and had made pancakes, and the parson was there, and had brought his fiddle with him. The gossip knocked at the door, and woman asked who was there. "It is I, gossip," said the egg-merchant, "give me shelter this night; I have not sold my eggs at the market, so now I have to carry them home again, and they are so heavy that I shall never be able to do it, for it is dark already."

"Indeed, my friend," said the woman, "thou comest at a very inconvenient time for me, but as thou art here it can't be helped, come in, and take a seat there on the bench by the stove." Then she placed the gossip and the basket which he carried on his back on the bench by the stove. The parson, however, and the woman, were as merry as possible. At length the parson said, "Listen, my dear friend, thou canst sing beautifully; sing something to me." "Oh," said the woman, "I cannot sing now, in my young days indeed I could sing well enough, but that's all over now."

"Come," said the parson once more, "do sing some little song."

On that the woman began and sang,

"I've sent my husband away from me
To the Göckerli hill in Italy."

Thereupon the parson sang,

"I wish 'twas a year before he came back,
I'd never ask him for the laurel-leaf sack."

Hallelujah.

Then the gossip who was in the background began to sing (but I ought to
tell you the peasant was called Hildebrand), so the gossip sang,

"What art thou doing, my Hildebrand dear,
There on the bench by the stove so near?"

Hallelujah.

And then the peasant sang from his basket,

"All singing I ever shall hate from this day,
And here in this basket no longer I'll stay."

Hallelujah.

And he got out of the basket, and cudgelled the parson out of the house.