

LIBUSSA

By J. H. Musæus

Deep in the Bohemian forest, of which now only a shadow remains, dwelt years ago, when it spread itself far and wide into the country, a little spiritual people, aërial, uncorporeal, and shunning the light. They were of a finer nature than mankind, which is formed out of gross clay, and were therefore imperceptible to the coarser sense; but to the more refined they were half visible by moonlight, being well known to the poets under the name of the Dryads, and to the old bards under the name of the Elves. From time immemorial they had lived undisturbed here, until the forest suddenly resounded with the tumult of war; Duke Czech, of Hungary, crossed the mountains with his Slavonic hordes, to seek a new dwelling-place in this spot. The beautiful inhabitants of the aged oaks, of rocks, caves and grottoes, as well as those of the reeds in ponds and marshes fled from the noise of weapons, and the snorting of war-horses. Even for the mighty Erl-king the tumult was too much, and he removed his court to the more remote deserts. One elf alone could not resolve to quit her beloved oak, and when the wood was hewn down in every direction to make the land arable, she alone had the courage to defend her tree against the power of the new comers, and chose its lofty top for her abode.

Among the courtiers of the duke was a young squire, named Crocus, full of courage and youthful fire, active, well made, and of noble stature. To him was entrusted the care of his master's horses, which he sometimes drove out to feed in the forest. Often he rested under the oak which the elf inhabited; she regarded the stranger with pleasure, and when at night he slumbered by the root, she whispered pleasant dreams into his ear, predicted to him in significant images the events of the coming day; or if one of his horses had strayed in the wilderness, and the keeper had lost all traces of him, and went to sleep with heavy heart, he saw in his dream the marks of the concealed path which led to the spot where the stray horse was feeding.

The farther the new settlers spread the nearer did they approach the dwelling of the elf, who by means of her faculty of divination foresaw how soon the axe threatened her tree of life, and therefore resolved to communicate her trouble to her friend. One moonlight summer's evening Crocus drove his herd later than usual into the fence, and hastened to his usual couch beneath the tall oak. His road wound about a lake well stored with fish, in the silver waves of which the golden crescent was reflected in the shape of a glittering cone. Straight over this shining part of the lake, on the opposite shore, he perceived in the vicinity of the oak a female form, that seemed to be walking on the cool bank. This apparition surprised the young warrior. "Whence," he thought to himself, "could this maiden come, so solitary in these deserts, at the time of evening twilight?" But the adventure was of such a nature, that to a young man it was more alluring than alarming to search into the affair. He doubled his pace without losing sight of the form which occupied his attention, and soon reached the place where he had first perceived her, under the oak. It now seemed to him as if what he saw was more of a shadow than a reality. He stood astounded, and a cold shuddering came over him; but he heard a soft voice, which whispered to him these words: "Come hither, dear stranger, and be not afraid; I am no deceptive form, no delusive shadow; I am the elf of this grove, the dweller in the oak, under the thick-leaved boughs of which thou hast often slumbered; I lulled thee to sweet delightful repose, foretold to thee what would befall thee, and if a mare or a colt of thy herd had strayed, I told thee of the place where it was to be found. Repay this favour by another service which I require of thee. Be the protector of this tree, which has so often protected thee against sun and rain, and prevent the murderous axe of thy brothers, who are destroying the woods, from injuring this venerable trunk."

The young warrior, whose courage revived at this soft discourse, answered thus: "Goddess or mortal, whichever thou art, ask of me whatever thou pleasest, and if I can I will accomplish it. But I am only

a humble man among my people, the servant of my lord the duke. If he says to me to-day or to-morrow, 'feed your horses here, feed them there,' how shall I be able to protect thy tree in this remote wood? But if thou commandest it I will leave the service of my prince, dwell in the shadow of thine oak, and protect it as long as my life lasts." "Do so," said the elf, "and thou wilt not repent of it." Upon this she vanished, and there was a rustling in the tree above, as if some loud evening breeze had caught itself there, and was moving the leaves. Crocus stood for awhile quite enchanted at the heavenly apparition which had appeared to him. Such a delicate, truly feminine creature, of such a slender form, and of such noble appearance he had never seen among the stunted Slavonic girls. At last he stretched him upon the soft moss, although sleep did not close his eyes; morning twilight surprised him in a tumult of delicious sensations, which were to him as strange and novel as the first beam of light to the newly opened eyes of one who has been born blind. At the break of day he hastened to the duke's palace, asked for his dismissal, packed up his baggage, and hastily started with his head filled with glowing fantasies and his burden on his back, for his delightful retreat in the forest.

During his absence, however, an artificer among the people, by trade a miller, had pitched upon the sound straight trunk of the oak as an axle for his mill-wheel, and went with his men to fell it. The trembling elf sighed when the greedy saw began with its iron teeth to gnaw the foundations of her dwelling. From the top of the tree she looked anxiously around for her faithful protector; but her glance was unable to discover him anywhere, and her consternation rendered the gift of prophecy peculiar to her race so ineffective, that she no more ventured to decipher her impending fate than the sons of Esculapius with their boasted "prognosis" are able to tell when death will knock at their own doors.

However Crocus was on his way, and so near the scene of this mournful catastrophe, that the noise of the creaking saw reached his ears. He augured no good from this noise in the forest, and setting

wings to his feet beheld--horrible sight--the impending destruction of the tree he had taken under his protection in his very presence. Like a madman he flew upon the workmen with his spear and drawn sword, and frightened them from their work; for they thought that a mountain demon was in their presence and fled in great confusion. Fortunately the tree's wound was curable, and in a few summers the scar had disappeared.

In the hours of rest in the evening, after the new-comer had selected a spot for his future dwelling, had marked out the space to be hedged in for a little garden, and had again considered in his mind the whole plan of the hermitage in which he designed to pass his days, far removed from human society, in the service of a shadowy friend, who seemed to be totally unreal, the elf appeared to him on the banks of the lake, and with graceful gestures thus accosted him: "Thanks, dear stranger, that thou hast prevented the strong arms of thy brethren from felling this tree, to which my life is attached; for know that mother nature, who has endowed my race with such various powers and faculties, has nevertheless united our life to the growth and duration of the oaks. Through us does the queen of the forest raise her venerable head above the rabble of other trees and shrubs; we promote the circulation of the sap through trunk and branches, so that she gains strength to combat with the whirlwind, and to defy for centuries the destroying power of time. On the other hand, our life is knit to hers. When the oak, to whom fate has assigned us as a partner, grows old, we grow old with it, and when it dies, we die away also, and sleep like mortals, a sleep of death, until by the eternal revolution of all things, chance or some secret arrangement of nature unites our being to a new germ, which opened by our vivifying power, sprouts up after a long time to a mighty tree, and affords us the joys of life anew. From this thou mayst perceive what a service thou hast rendered me by thy assistance, and what gratitude is due to thee. Require of me the reward of thy noble act, reveal to me the desire of thy heart, and it shall be fulfilled at once."

Crocus was silent. The sight of the charming elf had made upon him more impression than her discourse, of which he understood but little. She perceived his confusion, and to extricate him from it took a dry reed from the bank of the lake, broke it into three pieces, and said: "Choose one of these three, or take one without choice. In the first is fame and honour, in the second are riches and wise use of them, and in the third happy love is contained for thee." The young man cast his eyes to the ground and answered: "Daughter of Heaven, if thou intendest to grant the wish of my heart, know that it is not contained in the three reeds which thou offerest; my heart seeks a still greater reward. What is honour but the fuel of pride, what are riches but the root of avarice, and what is love but the trap of passion, to ensnare the noble liberty of the heart? Grant me my desire of resting beneath the shadow of thy oak, from the fatigue of the campaign, and of hearing from thy sweet mouth doctrines of wisdom, that thus I may decipher the future." "Thy wish," replied the elf, "is great, but what thou deservest at my hands is not less, and therefore let it be as thou hast requested. The bandage before thy corporeal eyes shall vanish, that thou mayst behold the secrets of hidden wisdom. With the enjoyment of the fruit take also the shell, for the wise man is also held in honour. He alone is rich, for he desires no more than he actually needs, and he tastes the nectar of love without poisoning it with impure lips." When she had said this she again presented him the three pieces of reed, and vanished.

The young hermit prepared his bed of moss under the oak, highly delighted at the reception which the elf had accorded him. Sleep overcame him like an armed man, cheerful morning dreams danced round his head, and nourished his fancy with the fragrance of happy anticipations. As soon as he woke he joyously began his day's work, built himself a commodious hut, dug his garden, and planted roses and lilies, and other sweetly-smelling flowers and vegetables, not without cabbages and kitchen herbs, besides an assortment of fruit-trees. The elf did not fail to pay him a visit in the twilight of every evening, took pleasure in the produce of his industry, walked with him hand in hand

along the reedy bank of the pond, until the waving reed murmured forth a melodious evening greeting to the friendly pair, when the breeze rustled through it. The elf initiated her docile pupil into the secrets of nature, instructed him in the origin and issue of things, taught him their natural and magical qualities and virtues, and formed the rough warrior to a thinker and a philosopher.

In the same degree as the feelings and senses of the young man became more refined by his intercourse with the fair shadow, the tender form of the elf became denser, and acquired more consistency. Her bosom was filled with animation and life, fire glistened from her hazel eyes, and with the form of a young girl, she seemed also to have acquired the feelings of one. In a few months the sighing Crocus was blessed with the happiness which the third reed had promised him, and did not regret that the freedom of his heart was ensnared by the trap of love. Although the marriage of the tender pair took place without witnesses, it was productive of as much happiness as the most obstreperous nuptials, and in due time pledges of conjugal affection were not wanting. The elf presented her husband with three daughters at one birth, and the delighted father, in the first embrace, called her who had cried in his house before the two others, Bela; the next Therba, and the youngest Libussa. All were like genii in the beauty of their form; and although they did not consist of such a delicate material as their mother, their corporeal nature was finer than the coarse earthy form of their father. They were also free from all the infirmities of children, and needed no leading strings, for, after the first nine days, they all ran like so many partridges. As they grew up, they displayed all their mother's talent for detecting hidden things, and predicting the future.

With the aid of time, Crocus also acquired much knowledge of these mysteries. When the wolf had dispersed the cattle in the wood, and the shepherds searched about for their lost sheep and oxen; when the woodmen missed an adze or a hatchet, they sought advice from the wise Crocus, who told them where to find what they had lost. If a bad

neighbour made away with any of the common property, broke at night-time into the fold or dwelling of another, robbed him, or murdered his host, and no one could guess who was the criminal, the wise Crocus was always sought for counsel. He then summoned the community to a grass-plot, made them form a circle, stepped into the midst of it, and let the infallible sieve turn, which invariably pointed out the malefactor. His fame was thus spread over all the land of Bohemia, and whoever had an affair or any business of importance, consulted the wise man as to its issue. Nay, cripples and sick persons sought from him aid and recovery; even diseased cattle were brought to him, and he knew how to cure ailing cows with his shadow, as well as the renowned St. Martin, of Schierbach. The concourse of people that sought him increased every day, just as if the tripod of the Delphic Apollo had been removed to the Bohemian forest; and although Crocus, without gain and reward, gave his information to those that questioned him, and healed the sick and crippled, the treasure of his mysterious wisdom proved very productive, and brought him great profit; for the people pressed to him with their gifts, and quite overwhelmed him with the proofs of their good-will. He first revealed the secret of washing gold out of the sand of the Elbe, and received a tenth from all who collected the gold sand. Thus his means and his wealth were increased; he built strong castles and palaces, he kept large herds of cattle, he possessed fertile lands, woods, and fields, and imperceptibly found himself in the possession of all the wealth which the liberal elf had prophetically enclosed for him, in the second piece of reed.

One fine summer evening, when Crocus, with his attendants, was returning from an excursion, where he had settled the boundary disputes of two neighbouring congregations at their request, he perceived his wife on the brink of the pond, where she had first appeared to him. She beckoned to him with her hand, so he dismissed his retinue, and hastened to embrace her. As usual, she received him with tender love, but her heart was oppressed and mournful, while from her eyes trickled ethereal tears, so fair and transient, that they

were hastily absorbed by the air, without reaching the earth. Crocus was astonished at the sight, for he had never seen the eyes of his wife look otherwise than cheerful, and with all the brilliancy of youthful joy. "What ails thee, beloved of my heart?" said he; "my soul is torn by uneasy forebodings. Tell me, what is the meaning of these tears?" The elf sighed, leaned her head mournfully on his shoulder, and said: "Dear husband, in thine absence I have read in the book of fate, that an unhappy destiny threatens my tree of life; I must leave thee for ever. Follow me to the castle, that I may bless my children, for from this day you will never see me again." "Oh, my beloved," replied Crocus, "banish these melancholy thoughts! What misfortune can threaten thy tree? Are not its roots and trunk firmly fixed? Look at its healthy branches, as, laden with fruit and leaves, they extend themselves, and see how it raises its top to the clouds. As long as this arm moves, it shall defend itself against every impious man who shall dare to injure its trunk."--"Weak is the protection," replied she, "which a mortal arm can afford! Ants can only contend with ants, gnats only with gnats, and all the worms of the earth can merely guard off their like. What can the strongest of you do against the operations of nature, or the inscrutable decrees of fate? The kings of the earth can easily overthrow the little mounds which you call your fortresses and castles, but the slightest breeze scorns their power, rustles when it pleases, and heeds not their command. Thou hast already defended this oak against the might of man, but canst thou also resist the whirlwind, when it arises to strip the leaves from its boughs; or if a concealed worm gnawed at its core, could you draw it forth and crush it?"

Discoursing thus, the affectionate pair entered the castle. The slender maidens sprang joyfully towards them, as they were accustomed to do on their mother's evening visits, gave an account of their daily occupation, brought their embroidery and needle-work as a proof of their industry and skill; but, on this occasion, the hour of domestic happiness was totally joyless. The girls soon perceived that the traces of deep sorrow were imprinted on their father's face, and saw with sympathising grief their mother's tears, without venturing to inquire

into the cause. Their mother gave them many wise instructions and good admonitions; but her discourse was like the song of a swan, as if she were about to take leave of the world. She remained with her beloved family till the morning-star arose; she then embraced her husband and children with melancholy tenderness, retired to her tree as usual, at day-break, through a secret door, and left them all to the most melancholy forebodings.

Nature was in breathless silence as the sun rose; but his beaming head was soon obscured by dark heavy clouds. It was a sultry day; the whole atmosphere was electrical. Distant thunders rolled along over the wood, and echo, with a hundred voices, repeated the fearful sound in the winding valleys. At noon, a forked flash of lightning darted down upon the oak, and shattered root and branches in one moment, with resistless force, so that the fragments lay scattered far and wide in the forest. When this was told to Crocus, he rent his clothes, and went out with his daughters to mourn over his wife's tree of life, and to collect and preserve the splinters as precious relics. The elf was no more to be seen from that day.

After some years, the tender girls grew up, their virgin form bloomed as a rose starting from the bud, and the fame of their beauty was spread all over the country. The noblest youths among the people came forward, and had all sorts of petitions to lay before Father Crocus, and ask his advice. In truth this was but a pretext, that they might ogle the lovely girls, as young fellows often feign some business with the fathers, if they wish to coax the daughters. The three daughters lived together in great ease and concord, little aware of their own talents. The gift of prophecy was possessed by them all in equal degree, and their discourses were oracles without their knowing it. Soon, however, their vanity was excited by the voice of flattery, the word-catchers snapped up every sound from their lips, the Seladons interpreted every gesture, traced the slightest smile, watched the glance of their eyes, drawing from them indications more or less favourable, fancied they would thence gather their destinies, and from

that time it has been the custom among lovers to question the good or bad star of love in the horoscope of the eyes. Scarcely had vanity insinuated itself into the virgin heart, than pride was at the door with all the rabble of his train,--self-love, self-praise, obstinacy, selfishness, and all these stole in together. The elder sisters vied with each other, to excel the younger in her arts, and secretly envied her on account of her superior charms, for although all were very beautiful, Libussa was the most beautiful of them all. The Lady Bela particularly devoted herself to the study of herbs, as Lady Medea did in the days of old. She knew their hidden virtues, and how to extract from them efficacious poisons and antidotes, as well as to prepare from them scents, pleasant and unpleasant, for the invincible powers. When her censer smoked, she charmed down the spirits from the immeasurable space of ether on the other side of the moon, and they became subject to her, that with their fine organs they might inhale these sweet perfumes, but when she flung the offensive scent into the censer, she would have forced the Zihim and Ohim out of the desert.

The Lady Therba was as ingenious as Circe in contriving magic spells of all sorts, which had force enough to sway the elements, to raise storms and whirlwinds, hail and tempest, to shake the very bowels of the earth, or to lift it out of its very hinges. She made use of these arts to terrify the people, that she might be honoured and feared as a goddess, and knew better how to accommodate the weather to the wishes and caprices of mankind, than wise nature herself. Two brothers quarrelled because they never could agree in their wishes. One was a husbandman, who always wished for rain that his seed might thrive. The other was a potter, who always wished for sunshine, that he might dry his earthen pots, which were destroyed by the rain. Because the heavens never would satisfy them, they went one day with rich presents to the house of the wise Crocus, and told their wishes to Therba. The elf's daughter smiled at the boisterous complaints of the brothers against the beneficent arrangements of nature, and satisfied the wishes of both, letting rain fall on the seed of the agriculturist, and sunshine on the field of the potter. By their

magic arts the two sisters acquired great fame and vast wealth, for they never communicated their gifts without reward; they built castles and villas out of their treasures; they laid out fine pleasure gardens; they were never weary of feasting and merry-making, and they jilted the suitors who sought their love.

Libussa had not the proud vain disposition of her sisters. Although she possessed the same faculty of penetrating into the secrets of nature and using her hidden virtues, she was satisfied with the share of miraculous power she had inherited from her mother without carrying it further, that she might make a profit of it. Her vanity did not go beyond the consciousness of her own beauty; she did not thirst after riches, and she did not, like her sisters, wish either to be feared or honoured. When these kept up a constant bustle in their villas, hurried from one exciting pleasure to another, and attached the flower of the Bohemian knighthood to their triumphal car, she remained at home in her father's dwelling, managed the household affairs, gave council to those who asked for it, kindly assisted the oppressed and distressed,--and all from mere good will without any reward. Her disposition was gentle and modest, her life chaste and virtuous such as became a noble maiden. She was, to be sure, secretly pleased at the victories which her beauty gained over the hearts of men, and she received the sighs and cooing of pining adorers, as a fitting tribute to her charms, but no one dared breathe to her a word of love, or presume to solicit her heart. Yet the wag Cupid loves better than any thing to exercise his rights with the coy, and will often throw his burning torch on a low straw-thatched shed when he intends to fire a lofty palace.

An old knight, who had come into the land with an army of the Czechites, had settled deep in the forest. He had made the wilderness arable, and had laid out an estate, on which he intended to pass the remainder of his days in peace, living on the produce of his fields. However a powerful neighbour took possession of the property, and drove out the knight, whom a hospitable countryman took in, giving him a shelter in his own dwelling. The poor old man had a son, who

was the only prop and consolation of his age--a fine youth, who however possessed nothing but a hunting spear, and a well practised fist to support his father. The plunder by the unjust Nabal excited his revenge, and he armed himself to repel force with force. The command of the careful old man, who did not wish to expose the life of his son to any danger, disarmed the noble youth, but afterwards he was determined not to relinquish his original design. So his father called him, and said, "Go, my son, to the wise Crocus, or to the wise virgins his daughters, and ask them whether the gods approve of thine enterprise, and will grant a favourable issue to it. If so, thou mayst gird on thy sword, take thy spear in thy hand, and fight for thy patrimony. If not, remain here till thou hast closed mine eyes, and then do as seems right to thee."

The youth set out and first reached the palace of Bela, which had the appearance of a temple, inhabited by a goddess. He knocked and desired to be admitted, but the porter, as soon as he saw that the stranger appeared with empty hands, dismissed him as a beggar, and closed the door in his face. He proceeded sorrowfully, and came to the dwelling of Therba, where he knocked and desired a hearing. The porter peeped out of the window, and said, "If thou bearest gold in thy pocket so that thou canst weigh it out to my mistress, she will give thee one of her wise sayings that will tell thee thy fate. If not, go and gather on the shore of the Elbe as much of it as the tree has leaves, the sheaf has ears, and the bird has feathers, and then I will open this door for thee." The youth thus again deceived, departed quite out of heart, especially when he learned that the prophet Crocus had gone to Poland, to officiate as umpire between some Magnates, who could not agree together. He expected no better reception from the third sister, and when he saw her paternal forest-castle from a hill in the distance, he did not venture to approach it, but concealed himself in a thick bush to brood over his grief. He was soon roused from his gloomy reflections by a noise like the tramp of horses' feet. A flying roe darted through the bushes followed by a beautiful huntress and her attendants, all mounted on magnificent steeds. She hurled a javelin

which whizzed through the air without reaching the animal. The youth who watched the scene, at once caught up his cross-bow, and from the twanging string sent forth a winged arrow which darted at once through the heart of the beast, so that it fell down on the spot. The lady, surprised at this unexpected phenomena, looked round for the unknown hunter, which, when the marksman perceived, he stepped forward and bowed humbly to the ground. The Lady Libussa thought she had never seen a handsomer man. At the very first glance his frame made upon her so strong an impression that she could not help being involuntarily prepossessed in his favour, and confessing he was of a noble figure. "Tell me, dear stranger," said she, "who are thou, and what chance has conducted thee to these precincts?" The youth rightly surmised that his good fortune had allowed him to find what he sought, so he modestly communicated his wishes, not forgetting to say, how uncivilly he had been dismissed from the doors of her sisters, and how much he had been afflicted in consequence. She cheered his mind with kind words. "Follow me to my dwelling," said she, "I will question for thee the book of fate, and to-morrow at sunrise I will give thee information."

The youth obeyed her orders: here there was no churlish porter to prevent his entrance into the palace; here the lovely resident exercised the law of hospitality most liberally towards him. He was delighted with this favourable reception, but still more so with the charms of his fair hostess. The enchanting form flitted before his eyes all night, and he carefully guarded against the approach of sleep, that the events of the past day which he reflected on with delight might not leave his thoughts for a single moment. The Lady Libussa on the other hand, enjoyed a gentle slumber, for retirement from the impressions of the outward senses, which disturb the fine anticipations of the future, is indispensable to the gift of prophecy. Nevertheless the glowing fancy of the elf's sleeping daughter united the form of the young stranger to all the visionary forms that appeared to her in the night. She found him where she did not seek him, and under such circumstances that she could not understand how she should have any relation to this

stranger. When the fair prophetess, on waking early in the morning, endeavoured as usual to separate and unravel the visions of the night, she was disposed to reject them altogether as illusions that had sprung from an aberration of fancy, and to give them no more attention. But a dark feeling told her that the creation of her fancy was not a mere empty dream, but that it pointed to certain events, which the future would unfold, and that this same prophetic fancy, had in the night just passed, overheard the secret counsels of destiny better than ever, and had blabbed them out to her. In the same way, she found that the guest now under her roof was violently inflamed with ardent love, and her heart quite as unreservedly made her the same confession with respect to him; but she set the seal of secrecy upon the information, while the modest youth, on his side, had vowed that he would impose silence on his tongue and on his eyes, that he might not expose himself to contemptuous refusal: for the barrier which fortune had set up between him and the daughter of Crocus seemed to him insurmountable.

Although the fair Libussa knew perfectly well what answer to give to the young man's question, she felt it very difficult to allow him to depart so quickly. At sunrise she appointed a meeting with him in the garden and said: "The veil of darkness still hangs before my eyes; to know thy destiny wait till sunset." In the evening she said: "Wait till sunrise:" on the following morning "Wait throughout this day," and on the third, "Have patience till to-morrow." At last, on the fourth day, she dismissed him, because she had no pretext for detaining him any longer, without discovering her secret, and with kind words she gave him this information: "It is not the will of the gods that thou shouldst contend with a mighty one in the land; endurance is the lot of the weaker. Go to thy father: be the consolation of his age, and support him with the labour of thy industrious hand. Take from my herd two white bulls as a present, and take this rod to guide them. When it blooms and bears fruit the spirit of prophecy will rest upon thee." The youth considered himself unworthy of the lovely maiden's presents, and blushed to accept a gift without being able to return it. With lips

void of eloquence, but with a demeanour so much the more eloquent, he took a sorrowful farewell, and found tied up by the gate a couple of white bulls, as plump and shining as the divine bull of old, upon whose sleek back the virgin Europa swam through the blue waves. Joyfully he unloosened them, and drove them gently along. The road here seemed but a few yards in length, so completely was his soul occupied with the thoughts of the fair Libussa, and as he felt he never could share her love, he vowed he would, at any rate, never love another as long as he lived. The old knight was delighted at his son's return, and still more delighted when he learned that the advice of the wise Crocus's daughter so perfectly accorded with his own wishes. The youth being destined by the gods to follow the calling of a husbandman, did not delay to yoke his white bulls to the plough. The first attempt succeeded according to his wishes; the bulls were so strong and so spirited, that in one day they turned up more land than twelve oxen would commonly have managed.

Duke Czech, who had conducted the first expedition of his people into Bohemia, had died long ago, and his descendants inherited neither his dignity nor his principality. The Magnates, to be sure, assembled after his decease, to make a new election, but their savage, stormy temperaments did not allow them to come to any rational decision. Selfishness and arrogance turned the first state assembly of Bohemia into a Polish diet;^[1] too many hands seized the princely mantle at once, so they tore it to pieces, and it belonged to nobody. The government fell into a kind of anarchy; every one did as he pleased; the strong oppressed the weak, the rich the poor, the great the little. There was no longer any general security in the country, and nevertheless these mad caps thought their new republic was admirably constituted. "All" they cried "is in order; every thing goes its way with us as everywhere else; the wolf eats the lamb, the kite eats the pigeon, and the fox eats the fowl." However, this mad constitution had no stability; and after the intoxication of visionary freedom was dissipated, and the people had again become sober, reason once more asserted her rights, and the patriots, the honest citizens, and all in fact

in the country, who had any love for their father-land, took counsel to destroy the present idol, the many-headed hydra, and to unite the people again under a sovereign. "Let us," they said, "choose a prince who shall rule over us, according to the custom of our fathers, who shall curb licentiousness, and administer justice and the laws. Not the strongest, the bravest, nor the richest, but the wisest shall be our duke!" The people being weary of the oppressions of the petty tyrants, were on this occasion unanimous, and answered the proposition with loud applause. A general assembly was appointed, and the choice of all fell upon the wise Crocus. A deputation was sent to invite him to take possession of his dignity, and although he was not covetous of the distinguished honour, he did not delay to accord with the wishes of the people. He was dressed in the purple, and he proceeded with great pomp to Vizegrad, the princely residence, where the people met him with loud rejoicings, and swore allegiance to him as their sovereign. He now perceived that even the third slip of reed offered him by the liberal elf had bestowed its gift upon him.

His love of equity and his wise legislation extended his fame over all the countries round. The Sarmatian princes, who used incessantly to quarrel, brought their disputes from a great distance to his tribunal. He weighed, with the infallible weight and measure of natural equity, in the scales of justice, and when he opened his mouth, it was as if the venerable Solon or the wise Solomon, between the twelve lions from his throne, gave judgment. Once, when some rebels had conspired against the peace of their country, and had set all the excitable nation of Poles by the ears, he marched to Poland at the head of his army, and suppressed the civil war. There likewise was he made duke by a great part of the people, out of gratitude for the peace which he had given them. He built there the city of Cracow, which still bears his name, and has the right of crowning the Polish king to the present day. Crocus reigned with great glory to the termination of his life. When he perceived that his end was approaching, and that he should now leave this world, he ordered to be made of the remains of the oak, which his wife the elf had inhabited, a box to contain his bones. He then

departed in peace, wept over by his three daughters, who laid him in the box, and buried him as he had commanded, while the whole country mourned his loss.

As soon as the funeral pomp had ended, the states assembled to consider who should now occupy the vacant throne. The people were unanimous for a daughter of Crocus, only they could not agree which of the three sisters should be chosen. The Lady Bela had the fewest adherents, for her heart was not good, and she often used her magic lantern to make mischief. Nevertheless she had inspired the people with such fear, that no one ventured to object to her for fear of rousing her vengeance. When it came to the vote, all the electors were silent, there was no voice for her and none against her. At sunset the representatives broke up the meeting, and deferred the election to the following day. Then the Lady Therba was proposed, but confidence in her own magic spells had turned her head, she was proud, supercilious, and wished to be viewed as a goddess; and if incense was not always offered to her, she was peevish, wilful and ill-tempered, displaying all those qualities which deprive the fair sex of their flattering epithet. She was not so much feared as her elder sister, but then she was not more beloved. For this reason the place of election was as still as a funeral feast, and there was no voting. On the third day the Lady Libussa was proposed. As soon as this name was uttered, a familiar whispering was heard throughout the circle, the solemn faces became unwrinkled and brightened up, and every one of the electors could communicate to his neighbour some good quality of the lady. One lauded her unassuming demeanour, another her modesty, the third her wisdom, the fourth the infallibility of her predictions, the fifth her disinterested conduct to all who asked counsel, the tenth her chastity, ninety others her beauty, and the last her thriftiness. When a lover sketches such a list of his mistress's perfections, it is always a matter of doubt whether she really possesses one of them, but the public in its decisions does not easily err on the favourable side, though it often does on the unfavourable one. By reason of qualities so laudable, and so universally recognised, the

Lady Libussa was certainly the most powerful candidate for the throne, as far as the hearts of the electors were concerned; nevertheless the preference of the younger sisters to the elder one has so often, as experience testifies, disturbed domestic peace, that it was to be feared, in a more important affair, the peace of the country would be interrupted. This consideration put the wise guardians of the people to such great embarrassment, that they could not come to any decision at all. An orator was wanted who should attach the weight of his eloquence to the good will of the electors, if the affair was to make any progress, and the good wishes of the electors were to have any effect. Such an orator appeared as if called for.

Wladimir, one of the Bohemian magnates, next in rank to the duke, had long sighed for the charming Libussa, and had solicited her hand in the lifetime of her father, Crocus. He was one of his most faithful vassals, and was beloved by him as a son, and therefore had the good father wished that love might unite the pair together. The coy mind of the maiden was, however, invincible, and he would on no account force her affections. Prince Wladimir did not allow himself to be scared by this doubtful aspect of affairs, and fancied that by fidelity and perseverance he might bear up against the lady's hard disposition, and render it pliable by tenderness. He had attached himself to the duke's train, as long as he lived, without advancing one step nearer to the goal of his wishes. Now he thought he had found an opportunity of opening her closed heart, by a meritorious act, and of gaining, from magnanimous gratitude, what, it seemed, he could not obtain by love. He ventured to expose himself to the hatred and revenge of the two dreaded sisters, and to raise his beloved to the throne at the peril of his life. Marking the wavering irresolution of the assembly, he took up the discourse and said: "Brave knights and nobles of the people, I will lay a simile before you, from which you may learn how to complete this election to the advantage of your father-land." Silence having been commanded, he proceeded thus: "The bees had lost their queen, and the whole hive was melancholy and joyless. They flew out idly and sparingly, they had scarcely spirits for making honey, and their

pursuit and nourishment was on the decline. They therefore thought seriously about a new sovereign who should preside over their affairs, that all order and discipline might not be lost. The wasp then came and said: 'Make me your queen, I am strong and terrible, the stout horse fears my sting, I can defy even your hereditary foe the lion, and prick his mouth when he approaches your honey-tree. I will guard you and protect you.' This discourse was pleasing enough to the bees, but after mature deliberation the wisest among them said: 'Thou art vigorous and terrible to be sure, but we dread that very sting which is to defend us; therefore thou canst not be our queen.' Then the humble bee came up humming, and said: 'Take me for your queen! Do you not hear that the rustle of my wings announces rank and dignity? Besides, I too have a sting to protect you.' The bees answered, we are a peaceful and quiet race; the proud noise of thy wings would annoy us and disturb the pursuits of our industry; thou canst not be our queen.' Then the ant desired a hearing: 'Although I am larger and stronger than you,' she said, 'my superiority can never injure you, for see I am entirely without the dangerous sting, I am of a gentle disposition, and besides that, a friend of order, of frugality, know how to preside over the honey-tree and to encourage labour.' The bees then said: 'Thou art worthy to govern us--we will obey thee--be thou our queen!'"

Wladimir paused. The whole assembly divined the purport of the discourse, and the minds of all were favourably disposed towards the Lady Libussa. Yet at the very moment when they were about to collect the votes, a croaking raven flew over the place of election; this unfavourable omen interrupted all further deliberation, and the election was deferred to the following day. The Lady Bela had sent the ill-omened bird to disturb the proceedings, for she knew well enough the inclination of the voters, and Prince Wladimir had inspired her with the bitterest hate. She held counsel with her sister Therba, and they came to the determination that they would be revenged on the common calumniator, who had insulted both of them, and despatched a heavy nightmare, that should squeeze the soul out of his body. The bold knight suspected nothing of this danger, but went,

as was his wont, to wait upon his mistress, and received from her the first kind look, from which he promised himself a whole heaven of bliss. If any thing could increase his delight, it was the present of a rose which adorned the lady's bosom, and which she gave him with the order that he was to let it wither by his heart. To these words he gave an interpretation very different from that which was meant, since no science is more fallacious than the art of expounding in love. There mistakes are quite at home. The enamoured knight was bent on keeping the rose fresh and blooming as long as possible; he set it in fresh water in a flower-pot, and went to sleep with the most flattering hopes.

In the gloomy hour of midnight came the destroying angel, sent by the Lady Bela. He glided in; he blew open, with his gasping breath, the locks and bolts on the doors of the bed-room, and fell with immense weight on the sleeping knight, pressing him down with such suffocating force, that he thought, when he woke, a mill-stone had been rolled upon his neck. In this painful situation, while he fancied the last moment of his life was come, he fortunately thought of the rose which stood in the flower-pot by his bed, pressed it to his heart, and said: "Fade away with me, fair rose, and perish on my lifeless bosom, as a proof that my last thought was bestowed on thy lovely possessor." At once his heart became lighter, the heavy nightmare could not resist the magic power of the flower, his oppressive weight did not now exceed that of so much down; the dislike of the perfume soon drove him out of the chamber altogether, and the narcotic quality of the scent again lulled the knight into a refreshing slumber. At sunrise he rose fresh and cheerful, and rode to the place of election to ascertain what impression his simile had made on the minds of the electors, and to observe the course that the affair might take this time; intending, at all events, if any opposing gale should arise, and threaten to run aground the wavering boat of his hopes and wishes, at once to seize on the helm and steer directly against it.

This time, however, there was no danger. The solemn electoral senate had during the night so thoroughly ruminated on, and digested Wladomir's parable, that it was actually infused into their very heart and mind. A brisk knight, who perceived these favourable crises, and who in affairs of the heart sympathised with the tender Wladomir, endeavoured either to deprive the latter of the honour of placing the lady on the Bohemian throne, or at any rate to share it with him. He stepped forward, drew his sword, proclaimed with a loud voice, Libussa, Duchess of Bohemia, and desired every one who had the same opinion to draw the sword like him and defend his choice. At once several hundred swords glittered on the place of election, a loud cry of joy announced the new sovereign, and on all sides resounded the shout of the people: "Let Libussa be our duchess!" A deputation was appointed, with Prince Wladomir and the sword-drawer at the head of it, to announce to the lady her elevation to the ducal rank. With the modest blush which gives to female charms the highest expression of grace, she accepted the sovereignty over the people, and every heart was subjugated by the magic of her pleasing aspect. The people paid her homage with the greatest delight, and although the two sisters envied her, and employed their secret arts to avenge themselves both on her and their country, for the slight that had been offered them, endeavouring by the leaven of calumny and malicious interpretation of all their sister's deeds and actions, to bring about in the nation a shameful ferment, and to undermine the peace and happiness of her mild virgin dominion; yet Libussa knew how to meet these unsisterly attempts with prudence, and to annihilate all the hostile plans and spells of the unnatural pair, till at last they were tired of exercising upon her their inefficient powers.

The sighing Wladomir waited in the meanwhile with the most ardent longing for the development of his fate. More than once he ventured to foresee the end in the lovely eyes of his sovereign, but Libussa had imposed a deep silence on the inclinations of her heart, and it is always a precarious proceeding to require from a mistress a verbal declaration without a previous intercourse with the eyes and their

significant glances. The one favourable sign which still kept his hopes alive was the imperishable rose, which, though a year had elapsed, blossomed as freshly now as on the evening when he received it from the hand of the fair Libussa. A flower from a maiden's hand, a nosegay, a ribbon, or a lock of hair, is certainly more valuable than a tooth dropped out, but nevertheless all these pretty things are but doubtful pledges of love, unless some more certain expressions gives them a determined signification. Wladimir, therefore quietly played the part of a sighing swain in the court of his idol, and waited to see what time and circumstances might produce in his favour. The boisterous knight Mizisla, on the other hand, carried on his plan with far more spirit, and did all he could to make himself conspicuous on every occasion. On the day of homage he was the first vassal who made the oath of allegiance to the new princess; he followed her as inseparably as the moon follows the earth, that by unasked-for services he might show his devotion to her person, and on solemn occasions and in processions he made his sword flash in her eyes, that she might not forget what good service it had done her.

Nevertheless, following the way of the world, Libussa seemed very near to have forgotten the furtherers of her good fortune; since, when an obelisk once stands upright, we think no more of the levers and instruments that raised it--at least so did the candidates for her heart interpret the lady's coldness. Both, however, were wrong; the noble sovereign was neither insensible nor ungrateful; but her heart was no more so completely in her power, that she could do with it whatever she pleased. Love had already decided in favour of the slim hunter. The first impression which the sight of him had made on her heart was still so strong, that no second one could efface it. Three years had passed, and the colours of imagination with which the graceful youth had been sketched, were neither rubbed out, nor had they become faint, and thus her love was proved to be perfect. For the love of the fair sex is of such a nature and quality, that if it will stand the test of three moons, it will generally last three times three, and longer, according to the evidence and example of our own times. When the

heroic sons of Germany swam over distant seas, to fight out the domestic squabble of the wilful daughter of Britannia with her mother country, they tore themselves from the arms of their fair ones, with mutual protestations of truth and fidelity; but before they had passed the last buoy of the Weser, the greater part of them were forgotten by their Chloes. The fickle damsels, tired of having their hearts unoccupied, filled up the gap with new intrigues; but the faithful ones, who had had constancy enough to endure the Weser ordeal, and who, when the owners of their hearts were on the other side of the black buoy, had been guilty of no infidelity--these, they say, have kept their vow inviolate, until the return of their heroes into their German fatherland, and now merit from the hands of love the reward of their constancy.

It was therefore less remarkable, that, under the circumstances, the Lady Libussa could refuse the hand of the blooming knights who solicited her heart, than that the fair Queen of Ithaca let a whole host of suitors sigh after her in vain, while her heart had only the grey-bearded Ulysses in reserve. Nevertheless, rank and high birth so very much overbalanced the attachment the lady felt for the beloved of her heart, that any thing more than a Platonic passion--that empty shade, which neither warms nor nourishes--was not to be hoped. Although, in those remote times, people cared as little about writing out genealogies, according to parchment and pedigree, as they did about arranging classes of beetles according to their wings and feelers, or flowers according to their stamens, pistils, calyx, and nectary, they knew, nevertheless, that the delicious grape alone associates with the stately elm, and not the weed that creeps along the hedge. A mésalliance caused by a difference of rank an inch wide, did not then, certainly, excite so much pedantic noise as in our classic days; but, however, a difference a yard wide, especially if rivals stood in the interval, and perceived the distance of the two ends, was observable enough. All this, and more than this, the lady maturely weighed in her prudent mind, and therefore she did not give a hearing to the deceitful prattler, passion, loud as it might speak to the advantage of the youth,

who was favoured by love. As a chaste vestal, she made an irrevocable vow that she would keep her heart locked up in virgin secrecy for the period of her life, and that she would not answer any address of her suitors, either with her eyes or with her gestures; with the reserve, however, that she might platonise as much as she pleased, by way of compensation. This monastic system pleased the two aspirants so little, that they did not know what to make of the killing coldness of their sovereign; jealousy, the companion of love, whispered into their ear; one thought the other was his rival, and their spirit of observation was unwearying, in trying to make discoveries, which both of them dreaded. But the Lady Libussa, with prudence and acuteness, weighed out her scanty favours to the two honourable knights with such an equal balance, that neither scale kicked the beam.

Tired of waiting in vain, both the knights left their princess's court, and with secret discontent retired to the estates, which Duke Crocus had granted them for military service. Both took home such a stock of ill-humour, that Prince Wladimir was a perfect pest to all his vassals and neighbours, while Prince Mizisla turned sportsman, chasing deer and foxes over the fields and enclosures of his subjects, and often treading three quarters of corn, when with his train he was following a hare. This occasioned many complaints in the country; but, however, there was no judge to remedy the evil, for no one likes to contend with the stronger, and hence this way the oppression of the people never reached the throne of the duchess. Nevertheless, through her supernatural power, no act of injustice, within the wide boundaries of her realm, remained hidden; and because her disposition corresponded to the tender character of her lovely form, she was afflicted at the wickedness of her vassals, and the wrongs committed by the strongest. She consulted with herself as to how the evil could be remedied, and prudence suggested that she should follow the example of the wise gods, who, in administering justice, never punish the offender directly the offence is committed; although slowly stepping vengeance is sure, sooner or later, to strike at last. The young princess summoned all the

knighthood and states to a general diet, and caused it to be publicly proclaimed, that whoever had a complaint to make, or a wrong to denounce, might come forward freely and without fear, and should have a safe conduct. Then the oppressed and harassed came from all parts of the country; litigious folks came besides; in fact, all who had some law affair in hand. Libussa sat on the throne, like the goddess Themis, with sword and scales, and uttered justice with unflinching judgment, and without respect of persons, for she was not led astray, and the labyrinthian courses of chicane did not mislead her, as they do the thick heads of stupid magistrates, while every body was surprised at the wisdom with which she unravelled the tangled skein of law-suits in affairs of meum and teum, and at the unwearied patience with which she found out, and wound off, the hidden thread of justice, without pulling a wrong end.

When the throng of parties who had assembled at the bar of the tribunal had gradually diminished, and the sittings were about to terminate--on the very last court-day, a settler on the borders of the wealthy Wladimir's estate, and a deputation from the subjects of the sporting Mizisla, desired a hearing, that they might bring in their complaint. They were admitted, and the settler spoke first. "An industrious planter," said he, "enclosed a little piece of ground on the bank of a broad river, the silver stream of which flowed, gently murmuring, into the pleasant valley below; for he thought that the fair stream would protect him on one side from the voracious animals that might devour his crops, and also water the roots of his fruit-trees, that they might soon ripen and grow up, and bear fruit plentifully. However, just as his fruit began to get ripe, the deceitful river became troubled, its quiet waters began to swell and roar, overwhelmed the bank, tore away one piece of the fruitful field after another, and made for themselves a bed in the middle of the cultured soil, to the great sorrow of the poor planter, who was forced to give up his property, as a sport for the malice of his powerful neighbour, whose raging flood he himself escaped with difficulty. Mighty daughter of the wise Crocus, the poor planter entreats thee to give orders to the haughty

stream, that it may cease to roll its proud waves over the field of the industrious husbandman, that it may no more thus absorb the sweat of his brow, and his hopes of a prosperous harvest, but quietly flow within the limits of its own proper bed."

During this discourse, a cloud gathered on the serene brow of the fair Libussa, a manly earnestness shone from her eyes, and those around became all ear, that they might hear her decision, which was as follows: "Thy cause is plain and right; no violence shall pervert its justice. A firm dam shall set a proper limit and measure to the wild stream, that it may not flow beyond; and I, with its fishes, will make thee a seven-fold compensation for the depredation of its waters." She then made a sign for the eldest of the deputation to speak; and, turning his head to the court, he said thus: "Wise daughter of the renowned Crocus, tell us to whom belongs the seed of the field--to the sower, who has buried it in the earth, that it may spring up and multiply, or to the hurricane who hurls it down, and scatters it?"--"To the sower," she replied. "Then," said the speaker, "give orders to the hurricane, that it may not select our fields as the spot for its wantonness, trample down our grain, and shake our fruit-trees."--

"So be it," said the duchess; "I will tame the hurricane, and banish it from your fields. It shall fight with the clouds, and scatter them, when they rise from the earth, threatening the land with hail and heavy storms."

Prince Wladimir and the knight Mizisla were both present at the general court. When they heard the complaint that had been made, and heard the solemn sentence of the princess, they grew pale, and smothering their wrath fixed their eyes upon the ground, not daring to own to themselves how much they were galled at being condemned by the sentence from the mouth of a woman. For although to shield their honour, the complainants had modestly hung an allegoric veil over their accusation, and even the just decision of the sovereign judge had shown a prudent respect for this covering, the web was,

notwithstanding, so fine and transparent, that whoever had eyes could see what stood behind it. As they did not venture to appeal from the throne of the princess to the people, the judgment just given against them having caused general exultation, they could only submit with it, although most unwillingly. Wladimir made seven-fold reparation to his neighbour the settler, for the injury that had been done, and Nimrod Mizisla was obliged to pledge his knightly word that he would not select his subject's corn fields as a place for hare-hunting. At the same time Libussa gave them a glorious employment, that they might exercise their activity, and restore the tone of knightly virtue to their name, which now sounded discordantly like a cracked vessel. She placed both at the head of her army, which she sent out against Zornebock, prince of the Salians, a giant, and moreover a powerful sorcerer, who was then about making war against Bohemia, and imposed upon them as a penance, the condition that they should not return to their court, until one brought the plume and the other the golden spurs of the monster as a trophy of victory.

The unfading rose still preserved its magic power during this expedition, rendering Prince Wladimir as invulnerable to mortal weapons, as Achilles the hero, and as nimble and active as Achilles the swift-footed. The armies met on the northern border of the territory, and the signal to fight was given. The Bohemian heroes flew through the opposing forces like storm and whirlwind, and mowed down the thick crop of lances, as the reaper's sickle mows down a field of wheat. Zornebock fell a victim to their mighty sword-cuts; they returned back to Vizegrad in triumph with the booty they had acquired, and the spots and soils which had before tainted their knightly virtue, they had washed out in the blood of the enemy. The Duchess Libussa rewarded them with all the distinctions of princely favour, dismissed them, when the army was disbanded to their own residence, and as a new mark of her esteem gave them a ruddy apple from her own garden for a keepsake, with the instructions that they were to share it peaceably without cutting it. They went their way, placed the apple on a shield, and had it carried before them, while

they consulted together how they should set about making division with proper discretion, so that they might not be mistaken in their gentle sovereign's meaning.

Before they reached the crossway that was to separate them, so that each might follow the road that led to his own residence, they adhered to the treaty of partition amicably enough, but now the point was who should keep the apple, to which they both had equal right. Only one, it was evident, could retain it, and both promised themselves such wonders that each longed to possess it. Upon this they quarrelled, and the sword nearly had to decide to whom the fortune of arms had assigned the indivisible apple. A shepherd, however, happened to be driving his flock along the same road, so they chose him for their umpire, and laid their case before him, probably because the three celebrated goddesses had applied to a shepherd to settle their affair about an apple. The man reflected a little, and said,

"In this present of an apple lies a deeply hidden signification; yet who can probe it but the wise maiden who has there concealed it? I suspect that the apple is a deceitful fruit, which grew upon the tree of discord, and the red skin of which signifies bloody contentions among you, knights,--that one shall irritate the other, and that neither shall reap any joy from the gift. For tell me how is it possible to share an apple without dividing it?" The two knights took to heart the shepherd's advice, which they thought contained great wisdom. "Thou art right," said they, "has not the base apple already kindled anger and quarrel between us? Were we not on the point of fighting for the deceptive gift of the proud maiden who hates us both? Did she not place us at the head of her army, because she thought we should be killed? And because that method did not succeed, she now arms us with the knife of discord against each other. We declare ourselves free from the deceitful gift; neither of us shall bear the apple, but it shall be the reward of thy honest decision. The fruit of the law-suit belongs to the judge, and the parings to the contending parties."

The knights then went their way, while the shepherd devoured the subject of the suit with that ease, which is peculiar to judges. The duchess's equivocal gift annoyed them greatly, and when on returning home, they found that they could not lord it over their vassals and subjects so arbitrarily as before, but were forced to obey the laws, their indignation increased still more. They entered into an alliance offensive and defensive, made for themselves a faction in the country, and the numerous rebels who joined them they despatched to all the districts around, that they might cry down female government. "Oh, shame!" cried they, "that we are subject to a woman who gathers our laurels that she may twine them round her distaff. A man ought to be master of the house, not a woman,--that is man's peculiar right,--that is the custom among all people. What is an army without a duke to march in front of his warriors, but a helpless trunk without a head? Let us appoint a prince who may rule over us, and whom we may obey."

Discourses of this kind did not remain concealed from the vigilant princess. She knew, besides, whence the wind came, and what the sound of it signified; and, therefore, she called a select assembly of the deputies, stepped into the midst of them with the dignity and splendour of an earthly goddess, while her speech flowed like honey from her virgin lips. "There is a rumour in the country," said she to the assembly, "that you desire a duke, who will lead you to battle, and that you consider it inglorious to show further obedience to me. Nevertheless, from your own free and unconfined desire, you chose from the midst of you, not a man, but one of the daughters of the people, and clothed her with the purple that she might rule over you according to the usage and custom of the country. Now, whoever can convict me of a fault in my government, let him come forward freely and openly and bear witness against me. If, however, I have administered justice after the manner of my father Crocus; if I have made the hills straight, the crooked places even, the abysses passable; if I have secured your harvests, rescued your herds from the wolf, and guarded your fruit-trees; if I have bowed the stiff-neck of the violent, aided the oppressed, and given a staff to support the weak, then, I say,

it becomes you to adhere to your promise, and, according to your oath of fealty, to be faithful and true to me, and to do me good service. If you think it inglorious to serve a woman, you should have considered that before you appointed me to be your princess. If there was any thing wrong in that choice, it reverts to yourselves. However, this proceeding on your part shows that you do not understand your own interest. The female hand is soft and gentle, accustomed to raise only gentle breezes with the fan; but man's arm is sinewy and rough, heavy and oppressive, when he holds the weight of authority. Besides, do you know, that when a woman rules, the sovereignty is still in the hand of man? For she gives hearing to wise councillors; but when the distaff excludes from the throne, there is female government; for the girls, who please the king's eyes, have possession of his heart. Reflect well, then, on what you do, that you may not repent too late of your fickleness."

The speaker from the throne was silent, a deep reverential silence prevailed in the hall of assembly, and no one ventured to utter a word against her. Nevertheless Prince Wladimir and his party did not abandon their project, but whispered among themselves: "The cunning chamois is striving not to leave the rich pasture; but the hunter's horn shall sound still louder, and scare it away." The next day they stirred up the body of knights, loudly to request the queen to choose a husband within three days, and by the choice of her heart to give the people a prince, who should share the government with her. At this sudden demand, which seemed to be the voice of the people, a virgin blush tinged the cheeks of the charming Libussa, and her bright eye saw all the rocks beneath the water, that threatened her on this occasion. Even if, according to the custom of the great world, she attempted to bring her inclinations under the sway of policy, she could, at any rate, only give her hand to one suitor, and then she saw that all the rest would regard their rejection as an insult and meditate revenge. Besides the secret vow of her heart was to her sacred and inviolable, and therefore she prudently endeavoured to avoid the pressing request of the deputies, and to make one attempt more to

dissuade them altogether from having a duke. "After the death of the eagle," she said, "the feathered tribe chose the wood-pigeon for their queen, and all the birds were obedient to her soft cooing voice. Yet, being light and airy, as is the nature of birds, they soon altered this resolution, and began to repent. The haughty peacock thought that he was more qualified to rule; the greedy hawk accustomed to chase the small birds considered it disgraceful to be subject to a dove. They therefore made for themselves a faction, and appointed the purblind owl as their spokesman to propose a new election for a king. The dull bustard, the unwieldy mountain-cock, the lazy stork, the lack-brain heron, and all the larger birds chattered and cackled loud applause, and the host of little birds from foolishness twittered, in the same manner, from hedge and bush. Then the warlike kite rose boldly into the air, and all the birds cried out, 'What a majestic flight! What a lightning glance in those rolling eyes of fire, what an expression of superiority in the hooked beak, and the widely-grasping claws! The bold, hardy kite shall be our ruler.' Scarcely had the bird of prey ascended the throne, than he displayed his activity and strength to his fellow-subjects with great tyranny and arrogance. From the larger birds he plucked their feathers, and the little singing birds he tore to pieces."

Plain as the meaning of this discourse was, it made but little impression on the minds of those who were anxious for a change of government, and the popular decision that the Lady Libussa should choose a husband within three days, remained valid. At this Prince Wladomir much rejoiced in his heart, for he now thought he should gain the lovely prize for which he had so long striven in vain. Love and ambition fired his wishes, and made eloquent his mouth, which had hitherto only allowed itself secret sighs. He went to the court and solicited a hearing of the duchess. "Gracious sovereign of thy people and of my heart," he said, "from thee no secret is concealed, thou knowest the flames that glow in this bosom, as purely and holily as those upon the altar of the gods, and thou knowest the celestial fire that has kindled them. The time is at hand when thou must give a

prince to the land, at the bidding of thy people. Can'st thou slight a heart which only lives and beats for thee? To be worthy of thee I have ventured my life and blood in raising thee to the throne of thy father. Let me have the merit of maintaining thee there by the tie of tender love; let us share the possession of the throne and of thy heart. The former shall be thine, the latter mine, and then will my happiness be exalted above the lot of mortals." The Lady Libussa departed herself in a very maiden-like manner on hearing this address, and covered her face with a veil that she might conceal the gentle blush that gave a deeper colour to her cheek. With her hand she made a sign for Prince Wladimir to withdraw, without opening her mouth, as if to consider how she should answer him with respect to his suit.

The bold knight Mizisla then announced himself and desired to be admitted. "Loveliest of the daughters of princes," he said, as he entered the audience-chamber, "the beautiful dove, the queen of the realms of air shall, as thou knowest, no more coo alone, but seek for herself a mate. The proud peacock, as the story goes, makes his varied feathers glitter in her eyes, and imagines that he will dazzle her with their brilliancy, but she is modest and wise, and will not unite herself to the haughty peacock. The greedy hawk, once a bird of prey, has quite cast off his nature; he is good and gentle, nay without guile, for he loves the fair dove, and hopes that she will espouse him. His crooked beak and sharp claws should not mislead thee. These he needs to protect his beloved dove, that no other bird may injure her or endeavour to overthrow the seat of her dominion, for he is faithful and true, and first vowed fealty to her on the day of her elevation. Tell me then, wise princess, if the gentle dove will deign to bestow on her faithful hawk the love to which he aspires?"

The Lady Libussa did as before, made a sign for the knight also to retire, and after she had let him wait awhile called in the two suitors and said, "I owe you a debt of gratitude, noble knights, inasmuch as you both assisted me in succeeding to the Bohemian crown, which my father Crocus wore with glory. And I have not forgotten that zeal in

my cause, of which you remind me. Moreover, it is not hidden from me that you virtuously love me, for your looks and actions have long expressed the feelings of your hearts. That my heart has remained closed to you, and has not given love for love, do not ascribe that to mere coyness; I did not mean to insult you, but merely to come to a right decision of a dubious matter. I weighed your merits, and the index of the balance stood still. Therefore I resolved to leave the decision of your fate to yourselves, and offered you the possession of my heart by the enigmatical apple, that I might see who had the greatest share of wisdom and intelligence, so as to appropriate to himself the indivisible gift. Now tell me, without delay, in whose hand is the apple. Whoever has gained it from the other, let him from this hour take my throne and my heart for his prize." The two suitors looked upon each other with wonder, grew pale and were dumb. At last Prince Wladimir after a long pause broke silence and said, "The enigmas of the wise are to the foolish, a nut in a toothless mouth; a pearl which the fowl rakes out of the sand, a light in the hand of the blind. Therefore, oh, princess! be not angry that we knew neither how to use nor how to prize thy gift. Thy design, which we did not know we misinterpreted, and we thought thou hadst cast between us an apple of discord, which should incite us to feuds and combat, and therefore each of us abandoned participation in thy gift, and got rid of the fruit of contention, a sole possession of which neither of us would have left to the other."

"You have yourself uttered the judgment," said the lady; "if an apple was enough to arouse your jealousy, what battle would you have waged for a myrtle wreath that encircles a crown." With this decision she dismissed the knights, who were greatly annoyed that they had listened to the senseless arbitrator, and had thoughtlessly flung away the pledge of love, that was to have gained them the bride. They now considered, each one by himself, how they might yet carry out their plans, and by force or cunning obtain the Bohemian throne with its charming possessor.

The Lady Libussa was not inactive during the three days that were left her for deliberation, but was constantly considering how she might meet the pressing wishes of her people, give the nation a duke, and herself a husband, according to the choice of her heart. She feared that Prince Wladimir would urge his pretensions with force, or at any rate deprive her of the throne. Necessity assisted love, and inspired her with the resolution of carrying out the plan, with which, as with a pleasant dream, she had often amused herself; for, indeed, what mortal is there, whose head is not haunted by some phantom or other, at which he grasps in a vacant hour, that he may play with it as with a doll? The gift of prophecy has always been associated with a glowing fancy; consequently the fair Libussa readily listened at times to this pleasant playmate, and the agreeable confidant always entertained her with the image of the young hunter, who had made so permanent an impression on her heart. A thousand projects came into her head, which her imagination flattered her were easy and practicable. Now she had a plan of rescuing the dear youth from obscurity, placing him in the army, and advancing him from one post of honour to another; fancy would then at once fling a wreath of laurel on his brow, and lead him crowned with victory and glory to the throne, which she shared with him, delighted. Now she gave the romance another turn; she armed her favourite as a knight-errant out upon adventures, conducted him to her court, turned him into a Huon of Bordeaux, and was in no want of wonderful apparatus to endow him as friend Oberon did his protégé. But when cool reflection again took possession of her maiden mind, and the variegated figures of the magic lantern grew pale at the bright ray of prudence, the lovely dream had vanished. She thought how great would be the risk of such a proceeding, and what mischief might befall her land and people, if jealousy and envy incited against her the hearts of the Magnates, and the alarm of discord give the signal for rebellion. She therefore carefully concealed the inclinations and wishes of her heart from the keen eye of the observer, and allowed nothing to be perceived.

However, now the people were desirous for a prince, the affair had taken another turn, and she had only to make her own wishes accord with those of the nation. She fortified her courage with manly resolution, and when the third day dawned she put on all her jewels, placing on her head the chaste crown of myrtle. Attended by her maidens, who were all adorned with wreaths of flowers, she ascended the throne full of high courage and gentle dignity. The assembly of knights and vassals around her was all ear, that it might catch from her lovely mouth the name of the fortunate prince with whom she had resolved to share her heart and throne. "Nobles of my people," said she to the assembly, "the lot of your destiny still lies untouched in the urn of concealment, and you are still as free as my horses that feed in the meadow, before bridle and bit have curbed them, and the weight of the rider and the burden of the saddle have pressed their slender back. It now behoves you to tell me, whether the time which you have granted me for the choice of a husband has cooled the warm desire of seeing a prince ruling over you, and prompted you quietly to examine your project, or whether you still adhere unchangeably to your intention." For a moment she was silent, but the tumult among the people, the noise and whispering together with the gestures of the assembled senators, did not leave her long in uncertainty, and the speaker confirmed the ultimatum, that the decision was left to the choice of her heart. "Well!" she said, "the lot is cast; I answer for nothing. The gods have selected for the kingdom of Bohemia a prince who will wield his sceptre with wisdom and justice. The young cedar tree does not raise its head above the strong oaks; concealed among the trees of the forest it grows, surrounded by ignoble brushwood, but soon it will extend its branches so as to shade the root, and its crown will touch the clouds. Nobles of the people, select from among you a deputation of twelve honest men, to seek the prince and accompany him to the throne. My horse shall show them the path, trotting before you free and unburdened; and as a sign that you have found that which you are sent out to seek, observe that the man whom the gods have selected for your prince, will at the time when you approach him, be taking his meal at an iron table, beneath the open sky, and in the

shadow of a lonely tree. To him must you pay homage, and adorn him with the signs of princely dignity. The white horse will allow him to mount his back, and bring him here to court that he may be my husband and your sovereign."

She then dismissed the assembly with the cheerful, but bashful mien, which is customary with brides when they expect the arrival of the bridegroom. All were astonished at her speech, and the prophetic spirit which peered from it rushed upon their minds like an utterance of the gods, to which the mob blindly attaches belief, and about which none but thinkers indulge in sapient opinions. The deputation was appointed, and the white horse stood in readiness, bridled and adorned with Asiatic magnificence, as if it was to bear the Grand Seignior to the mosque. The cavalcade was soon in motion, amid the concourse of curious people, who were shouting with joy, and the white horse proudly led the way. Soon, however, the train disappeared from the eyes of the spectators, and nothing was to be seen but a cloud of dust rising in the distance, for the spirited horse as soon as he came into the open country began to run as swiftly as a British racer, indeed so swiftly, that the deputation had a difficulty in following him. Although the rapid courser seemed left entirely to himself, an invisible power directed his course, guided his bridle, and spurred his sides. The Lady Libussa by the magic she had inherited from her mother, had been able so to train the horse that he neither deviated to the right or the left of his path, but with great speed hurried at once to his destination, and now when all seemed arranged so as to fulfil her wishes, she awaited with tender longing the arrival of the comer.

The deputies in the meanwhile had had a fine chase; they had already performed a journey of several miles, uphill and downhill, they had swam through the Moldau and the Elbe, and because their stomachs reminded them of meal-time, they thought again of the wondrous table, at which their new prince, according to the words of the lady, was to be seated. On this subject they made all sorts of remarks and comments. One inconsiderate knight said to his fellows: "Methinks

our lady duchess has sent us to make April fools of us, for who ever heard of a man in Bohemia that dined at an iron table. What do you lay that our rash undertaking will bring us any thing besides jeering and mockery?" But another, who was more intelligent, thought that the iron table might have a symbolical meaning, and that they would perhaps meet with some knight-errant reposing under a tree, after the fashion of the wandering brotherhood, and serving up his frugal meal on his brazen shield. A third said jestingly:

"I fear that our way will take us straight down to the workshop of the Cyclops, and that we shall have to take back to our Venus the lame Vulcan or one of his mates, who makes a table of his anvil."

Discussing in this fashion they saw their leader, the white horse, which had considerably the start of them, trot across a newly ploughed field, and, to their surprise, stop by a ploughman. They flew at once to the spot, and found a peasant sitting on a plough, which had been turned upside down, beneath the shade of a wild pear tree, and eating his black bread from an iron ploughshare, which he used as a table. He seemed pleased with the beautiful horse, treated him kindly, and offered him a bit of his meal, and which he eat out of his hand. The ambassadors were very much astonished at this sight, but nevertheless none of them doubted that they had found their man. They approached him with reverence, and the eldest taking up the discourse said:

"The Duchess of Bohemia has sent us to thee, and bids us announce to thee that it is the will and decree of the gods that thou shalt exchange that plough for the throne of this territory, and that goad for the sceptre. She chooses thee for her husband, that with her thou mayst rule over Bohemia."

The young peasant thought they were making game of him, which seemed to him very mal-à-propos, especially as he thought they had fathomed the secret of his heart, and were come to scoff at his

weakness. He, therefore, answered somewhat haughtily, in order to return scorn for scorn:

"Let us see whether your duchy is worthy of this plough? If the prince cannot satisfy his hunger, drink more merrily, nor sleep more soundly than the peasant, it is certainly not worth the trouble to change this fruitful field for the land of Bohemia, or this smooth ox-goad for a sceptre;--for tell me, will not a salt-cellar as well season my morsel as a bushel?"

Upon this one of the twelve remarked: "The mole shunning the light, grovels for the worms under ground, that he may support himself, for he has not eyes that can endure the beam of day, nor feet that are made to run like those of the swift roe; the scaly crab crawls in the mud of the lakes and marshes, loves best to dwell among the roots of the trees and brushwood on the river side, for he lacks fins to swim; and the domestic cock, kept in the poultry-yard, does not venture to fly over the low wall, for he is too timid to trust himself to his wings, like the up-soaring kite. Now if eyes are given for seeing, feet for walking, fins for swimming, and wings for flying, thou wilt not grovel in the earth like a mole, hide in the marsh like an unwieldy crab, or, like the lord of poultry, be content to crow on a dunghill, but thou wilt come forward into the light of day, run, swim, or fly to the clouds, accordingly as nature has endowed thee with her gifts. For an active man is not content with being what he is, but strives to become what he can be. Therefore try to be that which the gods have appointed thee, and then thou wilt be able to judge whether or not the land of Bohemia is worth a field in exchange."

This serious discourse of the delegate, in which nothing of a jesting nature was to be perceived, and still more the insignia of princely dignity--the purple raiment, the staff of government, and the golden sword, which the ambassadors produced as vouchers and testimonials of their true mission--at last overcame the mistrust of the doubting ploughman. At once his soul became enlightened; and the transporting

thought was awakened in him, that the Lady Libussa had divined the feelings of his heart, had perceived his constancy and fidelity, by the aid of her faculty to discover what was hidden, and had determined to reward them in a manner which he would never have hoped for even in a dream. The gift of prophecy promised to him by his oracle came again into his mind, and he reflected that this promise must be accomplished now or never. He quickly seized his hazel staff, set it deep in the field, heaped loose earth about it, as one does when one plants trees, and behold, the staff was immediately decked with buds, and shot forth sprouts and branches covered with leaves and flowers. Two of the verdant boughs faded, and their dry foliage became a sport for the winds, but the third grew with so much the greater strength, and its fruits ripened. The spirit of prophecy then descended on the rapt ploughman, and, opening his lips, he spoke thus:

"Messengers of the Princess Libussa and of the Bohemian people, hear the words of Premislas, the son of Mnatha, the honourable knight, to whom, touched by the spirit of prophecy, the clouds of the future are opened. You call upon the man who was guiding his plough to take the management of your principality before his daily work is finished. Ah, would that the plough had surrounded the field with its furrows as far as the boundary stone, for then Bohemia would have been an independent land for ever! Now that you have too soon disturbed the work of the ploughman, the boundaries of your land will be the portion and inheritance of a neighbour, and your remote posterity will cleave to him in indissoluble union. The three branches of the verdant staff promise your princess three sons. Two of them will fade away as immature shoots, but the third will inherit the throne, and through him will the fruit of later descendants be ripened, until the eagle shall fly over the mountains and nestle in the land, and then fly away to return as unto his own possession. If then the son of the gods[2] shall come forth, who is a friend to the ploughman, and frees him from his slavish chains--then mark him, posterity, for thou wilt have cause to bless thy fate. He, when he has trodden under foot the serpent of superstition, will stretch out his hand towards the

increasing moon to pluck it from the heavens, that he himself may illumine the world as a beneficent star."

The venerable deputation stood in silent reverence, staring at the prophet like so many dunces; it seemed as though a god was speaking in him. But he turned away from the deputies to the companions of his wearisome toil--the two white oxen, loosened them from the yoke, and set them at liberty, upon which they bounded merrily about the grassy field, then visibly faded away, as light clouds melt into air, and finally vanished completely. Premislas now took off his rustic wooden shoes, and went to wash himself in the neighbouring brook. Costly garments were put on him, he girded himself with the sword in knightly fashion, and had the golden spurs fastened. He then sprang upon the white horse which allowed him to mount with docility. As he was just on the point of quitting the estate he had hitherto possessed, he told the deputies to carry after him the wooden shoes, which he had now put off, and preserve them as a testimony that the humblest of the people had once been raised to the highest rank in Bohemia, and as a memento that he and his posterity might not presume upon the rank he had acquired, but, mindful of their origin, might honour and protect the peasant class from which they had sprung. Hence arose the old custom of exhibiting to the kings of Bohemia a pair of shoes on the day of their coronation--a custom which was observed until the race of Premislas became extinct. The hazel itself, which had been planted, grew and bore fruit, spreading its roots widely around, and sending forth new shoots until at last the whole field was turned into a wood of hazel trees, which proved most advantageous to the neighbouring village in whose land this district was included. For, in commemoration of this wonderful planting, the kings of Bohemia granted a charter to this community, that they should never be obliged to contribute more in the way of taxes than one pint of hazel-nuts. This important privilege, according to report, their descendants enjoy to the present day.

Although the horse, which now bore the bridegroom to his fair owner, seemed to outstrip the winds, Premislas made him sometimes feel the golden spurs to accelerate him still more. The speed of the courser, swift as it was, did not appear to him more so than the pace of a tortoise, so anxious was he to look once more on the face of the fair Libussa, whose form, though seven years had elapsed, still floated before him fresh and charming. He now looked forward, not to gaze vainly upon her, as upon a rare anemone in the varied garden of a florist, but to a happy union of victorious love. He thought only of the myrtle crown, which, in the estimation of lovers, stands far above the crown of kings, and if he had weighed dignity and love one against the other, the land of Bohemia without the Lady Libussa would have kicked the beam like a clipped ducat in a money-changer's balance.

The sun was just setting when the new prince was led in triumph into Vizegrad. The Lady Libussa was in her garden, where she had filled a little basket with ripe plums, when the arrival of her future husband was announced. She approached modestly with all the maidens of her court, received him as a bridegroom bestowed upon her by the gods, and concealed the choice of her heart by an apparent resignation to the will of the invisible powers. The eyes of all the court were directed with great curiosity towards the newcomer, but they saw nothing in him more than a handsome slender young man. As for his external appearance there were several courtiers who could vie with him in their thoughts, and who could not understand why the gods had despised the anti-chamber and had not rather selected from themselves a rosy-cheeked champion instead of the sun-burnt ploughman, as a husband and partner in dominion for the young princess. With Prince Wladomir and the knight Mizisla it was especially obvious that they gave up their claims unwillingly. Hence it was now the care of the princess to justify the work of the gods, and to declare that Squire Premislas made amends for his deficiency on the score of brilliant extraction by his intellect and acuteness. She had caused a noble meal to be prepared, not in the least inferior to that with which the hospitable Queen Dido formerly entertained the pious

Eneas. After the cup of welcome had passed readily from mouth to mouth, the gifts of the joy-bestirring Bacchus had inspired cheerfulness and good humour, and part of the night had already past in jest and pastime, she suggested a game at riddles, and because the divination of things concealed was her peculiar forte, she resolved the riddles that were proposed to the satisfaction of all present.

When it was her turn to propose, she called Prince Wladimir, the Knight Mizisla, and Squire Premislas to her, and said: "Now, my friends, set about solving a riddle, which I will propose, that it may be apparent which is the wisest and cleverest among you. I have destined for each of you, out of this basket, a gift of the plums, which I have picked in my garden. One of you shall have half of them and one more, the second shall again have half and one more, and the third shall again have half and three more. Supposing now that the basket is thus emptied, tell me how many plums are in it now."

The hasty knight, Mizisla, measured the fruit-basket with his eyes--not the sense of the problem with his understanding--and said: "That which can be solved by the sword I will solve readily, but thy riddles, gracious princess, are rather too subtle for me. Nevertheless, in accordance with thy wishes, I will make a venture at random. I guess that if the plums be well counted, they will be found to amount to three score."

"Thou hast made a mistake, dear knight," answered the Lady Libussa. "If there were as many more, half as many more, and a third as many more, as the basket contains now and five more added to that, the number would by so much exceed three score as it is now short of it."

Prince Wladimir calculated slowly and laboriously, as if the post of general controller of the finances were the reward for solving the riddle, and at last gave out five-and-forty as the value of the renowned number. The lady then said:

"If there were a third as many more, half as many more, and a sixth as many more as there are now, there would then be in my basket as much more than forty-five as there now are under that number."

Although the very commonest hand at figures, would have deciphered the problem without trouble; nevertheless, for a bad calculation the gift of divination is absolutely indispensable, if he would come off with honour, and not appear ridiculous. Now as this gift had been fortunately communicated to the wise Premislas, it cost him neither ingenuity nor exertion to discover the solution of the riddle.

"Intimate associate of the heavenly powers," he said, "whoever undertakes to discover thy high-soaring and divine meaning, ventures to fly after the eagle, when he hides himself in the clouds. Nevertheless, I will follow thy secret flight as far as the eye, which is illumined by thee, can reach. I decide that the plums thou hast concealed in the basket are thirty in number,--neither more nor less."

The lady looked at him kindly and said; "Thou hast traced the glimmering spark that lies deep in the ashes, and light gleams upon thee out of mist and darkness; thou hast guessed my riddle."

She then opened the basket, counted out fifteen plums into Prince Wladimir's hat with one more, and there remained fourteen. Of these she gave seven to the Knight Mizisla with one more, and six remained in the basket. The half of these she awarded to the wise Premislas, then gave him the three others, and the basket was empty. The whole court was amazed at the arithmetical wisdom of the fair Libussa, and the acuteness of her clever bridegroom. No one could comprehend how human intellect was able on the one hand to bind a common number so enigmatically in words, and on the other to pick out such an ingenious mystery with such perfect confidence. The lady awarded the empty basket to the two knights, who could not obtain her love, as a memorial of a terminated amour. Hence arises the custom, which

exists to the present time, of saying that a rejected lover has received a basket from his mistress.[3]

When all was in readiness for the homage, and the nuptials, both these ceremonies were celebrated with great pomp. The Bohemian people had now a duke, and the fair Libussa a husband, both to their heart's content, and what was most surprising this result was brought about by trickery, which does not generally bear the reputation of being the most skilful negotiator. If one of the two parties had been deceived, certainly it was not the sage Libussa, but the people, as indeed is frequently the case. The land of Bohemia had nominally a duke, but in point of fact the government remained in a female hand as before. Premislas was a perfect pattern of a docile obedient husband, who did not dispute the rule of his wife, either in the household or the state. His thoughts and wishes sympathised as perfectly with her own, as two similarly tuned strings, of which the untouched one spontaneously repeats the sound, which the louder one has uttered. Libussa had not, however, the proud, vain disposition of those ladies who wish to pass for great matches, and are always superciliously reminding the poor wight, whose fortune they think they have made, of his wooden shoes; but she imitated the celebrated Queen of Palmyra, and governed by the superiority of her talents, as Zenobia managed her good-natured Odenatus.

The happy pair lived in the enjoyment of unchanging love, according to the fashion of that time, when the instinct which unites hearts was as firm and durable as the cement and mortar which renders the walls of the old world so firm and indestructible. Duke Premislas now became one of the most doughty knights of his age, and the Bohemian court one of the most brilliant in Germany. A large number of knights and nobles, as well as a great concourse of common people gradually assembled from all parts of the territory. The consequence was, that the court-city became too narrow for the inhabitants, and therefore Libussa called her people in office to her, and ordered them to build a city on the spot where they should find a man who knew how to make

the wisest use of teeth at noon. They went out and found at the appointed time a man who was busied in sawing a block asunder. They decided that this industrious person made an incomparably better use of the teeth of his saw at noon than the parasite made of the teeth in his jaws at the table of the great, and they did not doubt that they had found the place which the princess had appointed for the foundation of the new city. They therefore drew the ploughshare round the field to mark the compass of the city wall. On asking the working man what he intended to make out of the piece of wood he was cutting, he answered: "Prah," which in the Bohemian tongue signifies the threshold of a door. Libussa therefore called the new city Praha, that is Prague, the well-known royal city on the Moldau in Bohemia. The prediction of Premislas concerning his posterity was punctually fulfilled. His wife became mother of three princes, two of whom died in their youth, while the third grew to man's estate, and from him sprung a brilliant race of kings, who flourished on the Bohemian throne for ages.

[1] A proverbial expression in Germany for a scene of riot, on account of the disturbances that usually took place at Polish elections.

[2] An allusion to the Emperor Joseph II.

[3] The expression "Einen Korb bekommen," to meet with a refusal, is familiar to every reader of German.