The Wehrwolf

Hermann Lons

BERSERKER

BOOKS

The Wehrwolf, by Hermann Löns

The Haidbauern

In the beginning, the heath was desolate and empty. By day, the eagle was in charge, and by night, the eagle owl was in charge; bear and wolf ruled the land and had power over every animal.

No one resisted them, for the few miserable savages who lived there by hunting and fishing were happy to live and loved to avoid the beasts.

Then one evening other people arrived with bright faces and yellow hair; they arrived with horses and carts, children and cones, and with dogs and poultry.

They liked it in the Haide, because they came from a place where the ice was still standing on the ponds until May and snow was already falling again in October.

Everyone looked for a place and built a wide house with a pointed roof, covered with thatch and planks and with a few colourful wooden horse heads on the gable.

Each farm was on its own. Reineke lived at the very back of the heath; his neighbour was Hingst; after him came Marten, then Hennig, followed by Hors, and then Bock and Bolle and Otte and Katz and Duw and Specht and Petz and Ul and what they were all called, and finally Wulf, a long man with merry eyes and a bright voice, who had grown up where the quarry began.

The Wulfshof had the best grazing land of all the farms, but the farmer also had the most to do with the wolves and bears and with the black and brown people who lived at the back of the quarry. But that was

The more colourful it was, the more they liked it, and so they became fellows like the trees, with hands like bear's paws; but still everyone liked them, because they looked so brightly into the world and laughed all the time.

This suited them and their children and grandchildren well, for the Haide was wild enough at times; foreign peoples passed through and the Haid farmers had to be very careful not to be run over. But there were more and more of them from century to century in Ödringen, as the village was called; they held their ground, threw back the enemy, or kept their wives, children and cattle in the castle in the breach, and kept the foreigners off their guard by raiding and luring them away until they made themselves thin again.

The men from Wulfshofe were always at the forefront. Some of them were left with an arrow in their throat or a spear in their chest, but there was always one left to keep the name alive.

In the meantime they took more and more land under the plough and turned the quarry into meadowland and pasture; the farm had ten buildings, which lay like a castle behind a rampart and ditch in its oak grove, and in the large house there was no shortage of weapons and equipment of all kinds.

A dozen heavy silver plates stood next to the herd on the hearth by the fire wall. When the mountain farmers sent their messengers and asked the Haid farmers to help them chase the Romans out of the country, a son from Wulfshof also went with them. When he was already an old man, he still laughed when he talked about how Varus and his men went to the dogs.

"Boy," said the old man, "that was fun! How we whipped the crooked dogs! I beat about twenty of them alone in front of the beasts, so that they all had tin caps on. Well, and then I brought them the blank caps as a souvenir. Don't they look good there?"

The peasants were soon done with the Romans, but then came the Franks, and they were as tough as Aalleder. Even if he got a jacket full of blows today, he'd be back tomorrow. A Wulf had been present when Weking hacked the Frankish army into raw meat on the Süntel, but two of the Wulf farmers were also among the men whom Karl had slaughtered like cattle at the Halsbeeke near the great ferry. When everything that could hold a knife jumped at his neck, three Wulfs were among them; they had not returned.

Eventually, however, the Haidjers said to themselves: "One man alone cannot compete with a load of dung." So they paid interest, renounced the Wode and the Frigge, were baptised and in time became quite proper Christians, especially when one of them, who had slaughtered a white horse on the Hingstberg according to the custom of the old gods, had to go under the axe for it.

They became quite tame on the outside and even had a Frankish knight placed in front of them. But they remained the same on the inside; when everything went wrong in the holy Roman empire, they rode across the moors before dew and day, set the castle on fire at all four corners and beat everything with a beard over the head.

However, this did not help them in the long run; the foreign lords took one right after another from them by force and cunning, and eventually they all became feudatories liable to pay interest except for the Wulf farmer, who had a licence as a saddle farmer because a Wulf had once saved Duke Billung from his enemies. Even if today the monastery and tomorrow the knight went to great lengths to attack the Wulfshof, the Wulf farmers knew how to protect themselves.

They also had their fair share of trouble, for soon there was war in the country, soon the robber barons were stirring. When the farmer was ploughing, he had his spear and crossbow lying by his jacket, and more than once he and his men intercepted a few snapping cocks and brought them over the side. But once that was the case, he didn't bother any more.

His eyes remained bright and he never lost his laugh.

When the farmers accepted the new doctrine and recited it to the padre, the Wulf farmer had to go to him and explain it to him, because the padre was a good old man and the farmers believed that no one else could teach him the matter as gently as Harm Wulf, whose main saying was: "It's all a transition," and he beat the wolf to death in the hollow and laughed at the same time.

Afterwards there came a time when even the Wulfsbauer got a wrinkled forehead and dark eyes and no longer laughed so loudly. That was in 1519, when Hans Magerkohl, the Bishop of Hildesheim, had a comb-over with the Duke of Brunswick and the farmers had to let their hair down. In Burgdorf the red cock crowed loudly and a Wulf, who had married into a burgher's position there, came back to the Wulfshofe with the white stick and soon died of heartache, because the Brunswick warriors had ruined his young wife.

A troop of the rabble also came as far as the Wulfshof; but as there were only about twenty of them, they did not find their way back; the farmer beat them to death with his sons and servants, drove them into the quarry and rooted them up.

Later, his son also lost his laughter for some time, for when the ninth of July 1553 was written, the great meeting between the Brunswick and the Saxon on the one side and the Kalenberg and the Brandenburg on the other took place on the Vogelherde near Sievershausen.

It was terrible before and after the battle in the heath; but the Wulfsbauer had got wind in time and had saved the wives, the children and the cattle and everything of monetary value in the breach; but he himself and his people had joined up with the other farmers, and where they met a bunch of foot soldiers or horsemen,

They were in a bad way. Over two hundred of them shot and beat the farmers to death. When they dug them in, the Wulf farmer laughed and said: "All labour should be done with joy, especially if it is worthwhile"; by this he meant the weapons and the hard cash that the soldiers had with them.

No matter how hard things got, the Wulf farmers did not easily lose their fierce eyes and bright laughter; things would have to get very bad for them to change.

And so it did. In 1623, all kinds of rumours were circulating about a war that the emperor was waging with the Bohemians because of the new doctrine and which continued to rage. There had also been many strange signs. Roses had grown, from which roses came again, the bread had bled, shooting stars lay on the paddock paths, three days in a row in July masses of shillelaghs flew over the heath and after them just as many butterbirds; there were more livestock abortions than ever before, the mice bred excessively, plague and death birds could be seen, fiery men appeared in the sky and a star that looked like a sword fell down.

From this some people predicted war, famine, fire and plague. It was not long before there was a great death, especially in the towns, where people sat close together and all kinds of foreign people gathered. In order to pray to the Lord God for good weather again, whole crowds of half-naked men and women with chains around their necks marched behind a cross, howling and screaming as if they were unwise, beating their backs with ropes so that the blood spurted, and singing to God's mercy.

When Harm Wulf, the heir of Wulfshofe, was driving peat to the town, he met such a train and was very wrong, for he had young horses in front of the wagon, and they wanted to leave the road with force when the crazy people came roaring at him.

But afterwards he had to laugh about it; it had looked too silly how they all threw their arms in the air at once and sang out: "Hui hold up your hands that God may turn this death, hui stretch out your arms that God may have mercy on you!"

"What a stupid song!" he thought and whistled the hummingberry song.

The Mansfeld

When he walked through the heath the next morning, he also laughed to himself, but no longer at the Geissler, because he had long forgotten about them.

He thought of what his father had told him, that it was time for him to be free and take over the farm. And he thought of Rose Ul.

For this was to be his wife, the smoothest girl far and wide, and Ulenvater's only child, with whom he had always loved to dance at the harvest beer. So he laughed to himself.

He twisted a mayflower between his teeth, which he had torn off at the old castle in the wood, and looked over the heath, which was all green from the young birch bower and bright from the sun.

A man approached from the quarry between the tall Machangel bushes. He stopped, pointed with his finger to the flower Harm was holding in his mouth, grinned and said: "Friggeblumen, whoever breaks it will not remain a bachelor for much longer."

Harm laughed and shook his hand. He was always amazed when he saw Ulenvater, because he was so different from all the people he knew. Every word he spoke had a double meaning; he had a head full of foolishness, but also full of wisdom, and it was said of him that he could do more than eat bread.

But that was an old woman's joke; he had gone to the high school in Helmstedt for three years and had learnt there diligently, both spiritual things, as well as what was good against diseases in man and cattle; but then the heir to the farm had died and because there was no son, he had to take over the farm; and now he was called Papenbur for fun.

However, he became a farmer like no other, except that he went his own way in many things: he could never find his way to church, for he said, "He who knows how to make sausages doesn't eat any." Then he had the gift of putting everything he said into rhyme when he wanted to; no wedding was held at which Ulenvater did not say his verse, and a different one each time. He had eyes that had no colour at all; they looked like water. Very few people could withstand them, and if he looked at a dog, no matter how angry it was, he made it go away.

Now he stood there as if he couldn't count to three, grinned and said, pointing to the rifle Harm had on his back: "All after the Saufang again?" And then he laughed out loud, because the Saufang was close to the Ulenhof, and when Harm was at the Saufang, it wasn't long before Rose was busy outside the courtyard.

It was the same now. When Wulf got there and saw that the catch was still standing up, he put three fingers in his mouth and whistled like a black woodpecker. It was a while before he heard a noise behind him; when he turned round he saw something fiery red by an oak tree, and that was a red skirt, and now there was a chase round the tree and then a squeak.

"Oh, boy," the girl blew, her chest rising and falling, "you're taking my breath away! And is that a good idea?" But then she allowed herself to be dragged to where the moss was completely flat and dry, and let herself be kissed and kissed again, and counted how many times the cuckoo called, because that was how long she was supposed to live; but he only called twice and then she said:
"What a lazy dog!" and laughed.

A shout came from the court. The girl jumped up: "See you tonight! Mother is already calling. But don't come before supper, because I've got my hands full until then." She set off, and Harm watched her laughing as she walked along so swiftly that her red skirt waved to and fro like a flame, and her hair shone like vain gold under her little cap, around which the ribbons flew.

Before she climbed over the stile, she looked round once more; then she was gone, and Harm felt as if the sun no longer shone so beautifully, and as if the birds had not sung so merrily for a long time; but then he whistled the humming-berry song through his teeth, and laughed to himself again as he walked over the heath, and his eyes were as blue as the sky above him.

They stayed that way until the wedding and even more so at the wedding itself. It was a big wedding and a lot of fun was had, even though not a single man was drunk.

Some of the peasants were talking about the fact that things were looking more and more dangerous in the kingdom, but what did Harm Wulf ask about that when he and his young wife were pushed into the Dönze with laughter and jeering, and about the fiery men in the sky and the bleeding bread and the plague and dying birds? He took his rose in his arms and said, "An ule have I caught, but what a smooth ule too!" And then he laughed at his joke.

He kept on laughing till the day his rose came to rest, but then he laughed still more, only not so loudly, and more with his eyes; for there was a boy lying beside her, a boy, a state of a boy, a real bear of a boy, one of ten full pounds, and a handsome boy from the first.

"Yes," he said to his wife on the third day, who already had colour in her cheeks again, "what is it, an ulken chick or a wolf lamb?" And then he laughed out loud at his joke.

He laughed when he went to work, he laughed when he came home from it. He had had a good life in the past, but the way it was now, with such a smooth wife and such a healthy boy, it was quite different! He couldn't help being so happy, he felt so fuzzy, and every now and then Reineke or Marten or one of the other Öringers would act like a crow when the fox arrives and tell him what he had heard in Celle or Burgdorf or Peine: that war was in the world and that it would not be long before it began to stink in the heath, the Wulfsbauer whistled the hummingberry song as he sowed or ploughed, thinking of his rose and his lüttjen Hermke and how well he had done.

Hermke could already toddle towards him holding his mother's hand and "Father!" when Harm came in from the field, and it was so far advanced that he was soon to have a brother or sister, the farmer rode into town one morning to pay his farm rent at the office. It was a fine morning; the birch-trees along the roads had just opened, all the finches were beating, the dulleries were singing, and the quarry was red from top to bottom, for the post was in blossom. Harm set off at a brisk trot, so that the sand behind him was so thick that he thought, "The sooner you get to town, the sooner you'll be back at the farm."

But he didn't get home until late in the evening and he arrived on foot. When he had paid his taxes and went to the stable outside the town, where he had stabled his colt to save the gate money, there was a lot going on. A Mansfeld field captain had arrived with a troop of warriors and things were getting heated. The fellows all had red heads from beer and schnapps, and now they were shouting and bawling and grovelling and having all sorts of fun with the lost women they had with them, so that it was a shame to watch. The landlord's daughters and the maids were in a bad way; even the landlady, who certainly had no respectability left, could not hide herself from the louts.

As the farmer was going round the house to the stable, a fellow came towards him with a red feather on his hat and a dangerous jet-black moustache under his long nose. When he saw the farmer, he yipped loudly, took him in his arms, kissed him on both cheeks so that the smell of liquor hit Harm's ears, grabbed him by the shoulders, held him away from him, laughed all over his yellow face, took him in his arms again and roared: "Brudderhärz mainiges! How long have we not seen each other? But the freedom, the freedom! Let's have a drink to that!" He pulled the farmer, who didn't know what to make of it, under the window and shouted: "Mrs Wirrtinn, two Birr for my friend and me, where I haven't sown for so long."

The grandmaid brought the beer, but when the stranger pinched her arm, she made signs to Wulf with her eyes, for she was a cottager's daughter from Ödringen, and when the rider tried to take the beer, she yipped and dropped both mugs. The stranger cursed murder and fire, but then the captain shouted and he had to leave. As Harm hurried on, Trine Reineke beckoned him into the hallway: "Wulfsbauer," she said, "for the sake of Christ's blood and wounds, don't you go and tell those rascals! He who tells is enlisted. Look, there's Krischan Bolle, they've already soaped him up, the Döllmer! He's toasted brotherhood with everyone and now he's got the coloured rag around his arm and can be shot dead tomorrow for God and the Deubel."

The pretty girl, who had started at the Wulfshofe as a maid, looked him anxiously in the eye: "Just make sure you get on! The sooner you get away, the better it will be for you. They are not human beings, they are pure cattle. O God!" She flung her apron in front of her face and began to cry.

"Well, Deern," Harm reassured her, slapping her on the shoulder, "It's all a transition. But you're right, those who have no business here shouldn't stay any longer." He paid for the two mugs of beer, gave the girl some money and went to the stables. There was

It was even madder than in front of the house. Seven grooms, one looking even worse than the other, were giving an old junkie a good time, spitting in his hands, throwing his goods around and trying to force him to eat pork sausage. Three others stabbed a sow, one tampered with a Tatar girl who could have been barely twelve years old, another lay drunk on the dung heap and yet another had a cock in his hands and twisted its neck off.

"God's wonder," thought the farmer, "what a breeding and economy this is!" He pushed past the drunken people and went into the stable. His Falber was there, but he had a stately harness on and two sacks of coats strapped on. He unharnessed him, made a halter from one end of a rope and led the horse out of the stable. He was already mostly out of the yard when a rider with a red beard that hung down over his collar came towards him and snarled at him about where he was going with the horse.

"That's always been my falber!" the farmer replied.
"Ferdl, Tonio, Pitter, Wladslaw, therefore, therefore!" shouted the red-bearded man; "Whose horse is this here, this man there or Corporal Tillmann Anspach? Huh? Call him over here! Let's see whose word counts more, that of an honest man of war who fights for the pure doctrine, or that of some peasant who comes on foot and wants to go on horseback!"

Harm's head turned red and he reached for the seam of his trousers where he had stuck the knife, but he changed his mind, for he was one against a dozen and a half, and now the corporal arrived too, a man as skinny as a bean boot and with a scar from his eye to his chin, and behind him another dozen horsemen, all with faces like the God's own cousins.

When the corporal heard what was being said, he shook his head, raised two fingers and swore: "As I stand here on two legs," and at the same time he raised one foot, "I'll be damned if that's going to happen.

is not the dun I bought from Schlome Schmul in Kölle am Rhing for thirty heavy thalers and a good wine purchase. I will live and die by it, as true as I am a faithful Christian man and not a papist bastard!"

Harm Wulf looked around: he was standing among thirty or more weighed guys who didn't care about a handful of human blood.
They were all drunk, and when he was sitting on the colt and he put the irons in their teeth! But after all, the horse wasn't worth putting himself in trouble and danger for, and the animal had a stupid habit: he liked the whistle! So if one of the fellows should get it into his head to flötjen, he was the fool, and his wife could lie in wait for him until she was old and grey, for three or four of the paddock hands were already loosening their knives, and the woman with the black hair, from which the butter just ran down, poked the fellow standing next to her, the shy-eyed one with the pale scars, in the ribs in one go and made eyes like a wolf scenting a hussy.

Harm Wulf laughed with one. "Children and people," he yelled, "it's even more of a life here than at the Martensmarkt in the castle! A Haidbauer like me, who gets to see a stranger every six months, gets all dozy in his head. And that's true! I have my dun in the castle! Yes, yes, you should leave the schnapps out of the bellows before lunch. Well, no offence! To err is human, said the cockerel, so he gave in to the duck. And now let's have one so that the heather shakes!"

"Look," he shouted at the top of his voice, "there's my old friend too," and with that he took the man with the black moustache, who had the red feather stuck on his hat, under his arm and shouted across the courtyard: "Howingvater, Trine, Deern, hille, hille! Beer here!"

As the riders followed him laughing, he threw a thaler on the window sill and sang: "I've got another thaler, it's supposed to be drunk," he clinked glasses with everyone and made his jokes, but at the same time he kept to himself

his back, kept his lips dry and poured the beer and schnapps over his shoulder against the wall.

Pretty Trina didn't know where to get beer so quickly, it was so much fun. But when she returned for the eighth time, the Wulfsbauer was no longer there. He had told a joke of Ulenvater's quantest kind, and when the drunken gang didn't know where to stop laughing, and one of them explained to the other, who didn't understand the language of the country, what the farmer had said, and slapped his breeches and bellowed like an ox, Wulf put something in the landlady's ear, and suddenly she shouted: "The food is here! To eat!" Everyone stood up and Wulf ducked behind the trees.

He got away happily. He struck a farm labourer who came into his path under the heart with his fist, so that the man hit the manure without a word. The red beard asked him, "Brudder, libber Brudder, shall we have another drink?" but he gave him a blow so that the fellow shot his head into the hedge, and when the Tatern girl wanted to scream hello, he made a pair of eyes and held the knife in front of her face so that she first turned as white as a sheet, then laughed at him and said, "Ei a su a starkes Mahn, hiebsches Mahn!" But he kicked her away from him and jumped into the bush, and when he was there, he got out of the way, gritted his teeth, made a fist and cursed: "I should only, I should only, if I were still a single fellow! then you should pay me the dun for what he's worth, you swine!"

But when he was in the heath, he calmed down, and when he was mostly at court and his wife came to meet him, all white in the face and blue under the eyes, because he had never been out for so long, he was able to laugh again and tell her what had happened to him as if it had been just a silly joke.

But when he lay in the snug afterwards and thought about how he had fared, he crossed his fingers on both hands. If he hadn't thought of his wife, who was lying there next to him, sleeping as peacefully as

If there was nothing and nothing but angels in the world, then he would have loved to curse like his father-in-law did when he was all wrong: "Let the dead horse beat you!" he would have cursed.

But he lay there without moving, even though he was stiflingly hot. That morning he had been singing the humming-berry song through his teeth as he rode towards the town, and now? Now he lay there and thought of the song that the red-bearded fat bloke had shouted in his face, the same bloke to whom he had shown the hedge trimmer afterwards. He had roared like an unwise piece of cattle:

The Mansfeld is coming, the Mansfeld is coming, the Mansfeld is already here, truderiderallala, now the Mansfeld is here.

The Braunschweig

The next day, however, when little Hermke was hopping on his knees, pulling his ears and crowing merrily, he became bright-eyed again, but when he sowed afterwards, what he had revived in the jar would not leave his mind.

"It's a deubel," he thought, "that I have to let the runaway bloke have the horse for nothing, and on top of that I have to pay him one!" He thought about the matter for a long time, and as he was busy at the Ulenhof, he discussed it with his father-in-law.

"Well," said Ulenvater, spitting into the fire, "well, that's a stupid thing to do. You can bury the damage, but a horse isn't a hen's egg and it's plenty good to give away. You know what? I'm busy in Celle anyway, and that's where the peoples wanted to go, as you say. I'll see what I can do. I've been getting on quite well with the gentlemen of the court ever since our duke laughed himself sick over the wild pig song while hunting here. Perhaps it's good that you're travelling with us. I can't today, but tomorrow."

They set off the next morning. It was another beautiful day; the larks were singing over the heath and the Kolüt was playing in the brook. But the two farmers looked grumpily ahead of them, and when they saw three horsemen in front of them, Harm tightened his grip on the reins and Ulenvater laid the pistol he had taken with him beside him in the wagon straw. But the riders rode past, only just thanking them when they offered them the time of day.

There were three fellows with faces that the devil could not have bettered; one of them could not take his eyes off the team, and when Harm turned round he saw that they had stopped and were talking to each other. But then they set off at a trot and rode across the moor.

They met all sorts of people; first two tramps, then three, then Tatern, who came along in their covered wagon, teeming with naked children. One of them, a girl who was probably about thirteen years old, but as naked as a fish, jumped out of the wagon and before Harm knew it, she was sitting on the saddle horse with him and begging him, and three or four others were making themselves at home in Ulenvater's wagon.

"The rigging stuff is even tougher than deer lice," said the Wulfsbauer, when they had shaken off the naked company, and he added: "What a lot of people are now swarming around the country! It is a shame that nothing is being done! Gaudiebe and Vagelbunden are almost the masters now. If it stays like this, it can still be good."

Looking round for the gypsies, he realised that the three riders had turned round and were coming behind them. This seemed suspicious to him, so he let the horses run at a good pace and arrived outside the town earlier than the riders.

At the gate it looked colourful; a crowd of foreign warriors lay there, and when the peasants asked the watchman what it was all about, they heard that it was all kinds of riff-raff, that the Halberstadt

Bishopric administrator Christian von Braunschweig had recruited against the Imperial forces. The people behaved quite decently, for they lay under the town's cannons and a detachment of ducal soldiers under a captain made sure that they didn't get up to any mischief. But Harm thought to himself as he looked at them: "Most of them look as if they've run away with a rope around their necks."

In Celle, they stayed at the Goldene Sonne inn, where they were well known, and had breakfast with four farmers from the Flottwede district. "We will soon become aware of all sorts of things," said the Wathlingen bailiff;
"The Wienhäuser Nönnekens have already made themselves thin, otherwise they might soon have got rid of their nun meat. In Altencelle, the scoundrels of men-of-war have taken the farmers' sausages and hams by force and covered them with blows to boot. The Vollmeier Pieper in Burg is lying on his deathbed; he didn't want to suffer them attacking his daughters, so a bloke hit him over the head with a sabre and the beard came out."

He looked around and then whispered: "But the bloke who did this has also disappeared; they say the servants have taken him round the corner. Two of the brothers in Wathlingen have also got away. They have my blessing!"

"That's one thing," said a farmer from Eicklingen, "that's another. You're no longer sure of your life, and then there are the taxes. The state parliament has announced the triple exchequer and it is said that this will not be the last time, because the country now needs money for soldiers. Yes, that's probably the case, and that would be bearable, but then the foreign nations come and impose all kinds of burdens on us, that is, if they don't take what they can get.
They took a milking cow from Pohlmann's Ludjen's pasture, and when he at least wanted money, they laughed at him, and when Hein Reimers came in from the field, he got rid of two good horses that way. If it goes on like this, there will be no more justice and no more law!"

Now the Öringer told them what they had come to Celle for; but they all said they should just write the dun into the chimney, because if the authorities were to go after all such things, they would have a lot to do. Ul, however, thought he would give it a try and set off.

After two hours, he came back and hung his head like a sick chicken. He looked all waterlogged. "Yes, boy," he said, "this is a business! They snapped at me; I should leave them alone with such stupidities, because they had more important things to do than run after your horse. Well, they're not so wrong, because as the second cook told me, the world is like an anthill where the woodpecker is at work. The emperors come from one side, the Brunswick and Durlach from the other, and as for our reigning duke, he has to make sure he doesn't get his fingers caught. Well, Mertens said, Duke Georg, whom they have made head of the district and who has about twenty thousand men under him, will make sure that they don't take us alive. But you're even with the dun for that.
Let Tor's horse beat the bloke!"

He lit a fire for his pipe, spat in front of him and looked at his oathkeeper: "I don't know, I don't think there's any other way: we have to remember what your grandfather always said: Help yourself and our Lord God will help you too! Because why? The authorities will have their hands full keeping order in general, as far as that goes; the individual man has to look after himself. I do not know how we are to do this; for what are we to do, for example, if such gallows-birds as lie outside the gate, a hundred of them and more, are sent to Ödringen?"

"Come on," he said, "let's go! We've got nothing more to get here." He called the landlord and paid. "Well," he suddenly shouted, "Harm, boy, what's that?" And he quickly ran out of the door. As Harm followed him into the yard, he saw that one of the three riders they had met in the morning was pulling the saddle horse out of the stable.

"Hoho!" he shouted and loosened the knife, "what's that supposed to mean?" The stranger looked at him and laughed: "Well, I can have a look at the horse! I told the farmhand and asked him who it belonged to. I'm a horse dealer and your horse caught my eye straight away, because it's a perfect match for one I'm trading on, and it would make a fine gentleman's team. What shall it be worth?"

The Wulfsbauer shook his head: "It's not for me," he said and led it in front of the cart. "Well, don't; what isn't can still be. Perhaps you'll come to your senses." With that, the merchant left.

The Öringer looked after him with wry eyes, and the innkeeper snapped his fingers. "Well him," he growled, "him and the horse dealer! Anyone who buys so cheaply can do well in the world. He comes to my house often and he eats well, but I'd rather see him go than come, firstly because I can't like his eyes, and then because I've seen him with people from the Masch, whom every self-respecting chap avoids. His name is Hanebut, Jasper Hanebut, and he is said to be from Bothfeld near Hanover, and I don't trust those brothers either, Hänschen von Roden and Kaspar Reusche, who he usually has with him."

Just as they were about to set off, there was a great cry from the lane. A farmer was walking between two farmhands and behind him was his daughter, a pale girl of seventeen, who was crying into her apron. The farmer cursed violently: "Cursed breeding!" he shouted; "the dogs should be beaten to death! I'm really not one who can't take a joke, but what's too much is too much. Is my daughter there so that every rascal can do his cock's jollies with her? Well, the rascal won't do it again so soon; his one eye won't fit into his head again in four weeks, and I'm only sorry that it didn't come out completely. And I want to see whether there is still law and justice in the land, and whether we live in a Christian state or among Turks and heathens!"

A master craftsman whom the innkeeper knew told him what had happened. The farmer, who was from Boye and wanted to go to the doctor with his daughter, who had it on her chest, had come between the Halberstadt warriors, and they had got the girl here and pulled the trigger as if it were a Taternfrauenzimmer. Her father had then hit one of the fellows in the face with his fist, so that his eye was right in front of his head, and for the sake of order the matter had to be investigated. "But," the man added, "they'll probably let him go straight away; the castle has told the Brunswickers that if they're not on their way within the hour, the duke's men will bring them to heel." He looked at the peasants: "If I were you, I would wait a little longer before I set off; they are just leaving and they are not in a good mood."

That seemed like good advice to the Öringers, and so they went back into the parlour with the man. Just as the box clock was about to strike the second hour, Ul opened his eyes, made a face as if he saw something terrible and jumped up: "Come on," he shouted, "now it's time! We don't need to take the army road, we can take the road through the heath. I have a restlessness in my body, I don't know what it is with me. Perhaps it's because I've been too much annoyed."

So they set off. It was quiet outside the gate, except that all sorts of gypsy folk were still lying there. As they were about to turn into the meadow, there was a shout behind them; three farmers from Engensen came riding up. "Hello!" cried the eldest,
"take us with you! The way things are going these days, it's better to travel in fives than in threes and twos. Just now three men rode past here who looked as if the Deubel had lost them from his holster. It's time for Duke Georg to go over the country with his narrow comb; all sorts of vermin have accumulated." He turned round and beckoned to a young farmer who was riding along the army road: "Hinnerk, you'd better come here, so you won't be bored on the way!" So there were six of them, and as they each had a pistol and the big knife with them, they didn't need to worry.

"Wulfsbauer," said the Engenser, "we can keep our ears to the ground now, we common farmers. We've already agreed on this: Tatars and other foreigners who show up at our place will be greeted with a whip without further ado, because the gang will show the robbers, because that's all these soldiers are, just the way to get something. Last week in Ehlershausen they secretly hanged and killed two of these fellows who had taken a horse from the pasture. And that's quite right: firstly, they're not real people, and secondly, why don't they stay where they belong?"

The other farmers nodded, except Ulenvater, for he was sitting there, looking across the heath with wide eyes, mouth agape like a beast, muttering something to himself from time to time, and when Harm looked across the heath too, for he thought there was something there, he felt as if a man had jumped behind the crippled carts. He told Drewes, and the Engenser paid attention to the road and called out all at once: "It may be true: one, two, three riders have come here. I should be surprised if they are not the suspicious fellows from before. Well, let them come!
We're our six and we're doing a good number."

They now acted as if the heath was a garden of God, boasting and laughing, but had their hands on their pistols and kept a sharp lookout. But they saw nothing suspicious, only that all at once three stags came rumbling out of the carts, as if the wolves were behind them, and as they passed the spot they heard a stallion neighing in the bush, for the Öringers had a mare as a hand-horse, and she seemed to want to get in heat. They looked at each other, but then just boasted even louder and laughed as if they were unwise, except for Papenbur, for he sat very still, biting his lips and looking at where Ödringen must be.

When they had gone on for a quarter of an hour, they heard the stallion neighing again, and with one Drewes beckoned the others back, chased into the heath and it seemed to them as if something was running; but whether it was a man or an animal they could not see. All at once they heard something, like a cry, and then Drewes came riding up again

and said: "I thought it was a wolf."

Harm, next to whom he was riding, took a good look at him and found that there was fresh blood on the thick cane that the Engenser had hanging from his saddle, for he had a short leg on the right. Drewes caught his eye: "A gypsy who has been stinking along beside us for an hour. He was probably supposed to be the spy for the three bushwhackers, but I gave him a good thrashing. One less! There's no other way!"

Wulf no longer liked the Engenser so much. Of course, the Taters were half people, and they were certainly not Christians, even if they had their children baptised in a church for the sake of the godparents' guilders, but Harm didn't want to lash out at them like a wild animal. But he had to agree with Drewes when he quietly said to him: "If there was a good bloke in every village, and he got together everything that could defend itself, and one village helped the other, that would work. The thunder too, we're not here for Hans Hungerdarm and Jan's Schmachtlapp to play tricks with us! That's what I tell you, and that's what everyone should do: before I let myself and my people scratch a finger, I'd rather walk in blood until my grandchildren are dead! Well, then, adjüs too!" He rode off to the left with the three others.

Wulf and Ul had hardly travelled one end alone when they heard the stallion neighing again, and when they stopped, the three strange riders came slowly after them. "I wonder what those fellows want of us," said Ulenvater; "we will pretend that something has gone wrong with the ropes, for if they want to get at our bellows, we can hide behind the cart and greet them with a good shot." So they dismounted and set to work on the harness, while the horsemen slowly drew nearer.

When they were mostly with them, one of them, of whom the landlord in Celle had said that his name was Hanebut, called out, "Well, do you want to sell the horse now?" and he had the rifle on the saddle in front of him. Wulf shook his head and said, "It's not for sale to me," and while

he stood behind the team and had the pistol at hand, and Ul did the same. "But I must have the horse, by thunder!" cried the fellow; "so how about it?" He made round eyes and held the gun more towards Wulf.

At the same moment Wulf heard that the Engenser were riding up again, for Drewe's saddle was beeping in a very peculiar way, and then the Buschklepper wanted to get away, but now there was already a crash; one of them, who was holding behind Hanebut, fell head over heels, but still held on and chased after the other two, who were making the hares, into the heath, but soon fell out of the saddle, but was picked up by Hanebut and pulled behind him, while his horse ran wildly to and fro.
The Engenser team chased after them and scored twice more.

"We've come just in time, children!" laughed Drewes as he returned; "I turn round again and see the louts riding after you! Well, one of them must have a nice beanbag! It's a pity that such a dirty fly had to sit on my front sight just as I was pushing off; I came off a bit too high as a result! But it was still a lot of fun, and the riff-raff must have taken a good pair of trousers full of fear with them. And they got rid of the brown one too!"

He clicked his tongue and rode off on the horse: "Well, Hans, come here! So beautiful!" He held it by the halter and inspected it from all sides. "That's what I thought," he said, "look here: isn't that Tidke Rundes Marke?" He pointed to the mark on the stallion's shoulder. "Well, he certainly didn't buy it, because when I asked him for a four-year-old last week, he said he didn't have one of his own because he had a colic. So we've earned a round of beer, and we want to drink it in advance in Ehlershausen. Hunting rabbits makes your liver dry."

There was a great uproar in the Kruge when the six farmers arrived with the stallion, for Runde from Wettmar had already been there and had told them that the bay stallion had been taken from the grass garden during the night.

was stolen. There were a lot of peasants from the town and the neighbourhood who were talking about the Brunswickers. Where they had come they had made themselves useless, but as they were only a hundred strong and the peasants did not make friendly faces, it had gone off reasonably well, and many of them were drunk and could hardly stand on their feet. The last of them had only just left and you could still hear them shouting as the wind was towards the village. "Funny Brunswickers we are," they sang.

The one round was to become two, but the Öringers had no peace. Ul's eyes grew more and more glassy, and Harm wasn't feeling well either; the closer he got to his farm, the more uneasy he felt. When he could mostly see the farmyard, the farmhand came running towards him. "Well, what's the matter?" he called to him, for he realised at once that not everything was in order.

"Oh, farmer," the farmhand stuttered, "the woman, there were some of the beasts on the farm and they wanted to grab the chickens, and the woman came and tried to stop them. And then one of the blokes hit her in the body with his rifle, and there she lay, dead. And the child, it was a girl, she's dead."

"Boy," roared the farmer, "and the farmer's wife, what about her?" The farmhand backed up and stuttered even more: "It's not a matter of life and death, says Mother Griebsch; she says it's just an omnipotence from the fright!" He walked beside the farmer. "At two o'clock, that's when the drudges arrived. First they wanted beer and then schnapps, and then one of them went to the chickens, and that's how it happened."

Duwenmutter came to meet the farmers in the half-door: "Quiet! She's asleep now. Earlier she had a fever and kept calling for you, but afterwards she fell asleep and was sweating profusely." She cried: "Such a poor little girl, that little girl! That she had to die before she was born! Those dogs, those godforsaken dogs! By

I could see them burning alive! And the woman hardly said a bad word to the bloke. She just shouted: "Not the laying hen! I'd like to give you a sausage! And now she's lying there and the child is dead!" She picked up a sheet lying over two chairs that had been put together. "Look, there it is. It would have been a beautiful and healthy child."

Harm hardly looked at it. He had taken off his shoes and went to the dozen. His wife was asleep; he could hear that she was breathing quietly. He got himself a glass of water and a piece of dried bread and sat down in the oven chair next to the stove. His thoughts went back and forth in his head like swallows over the meadow. Over time, he became calmer, but he couldn't think about sleeping. "Yes, Drewes is right," he thought,
"Every man for himself. Better another man's blood on your knife than another man's knife in your own blood!"

He felt as if he must be going mad with rage. His wife had been beaten by one of those blokes, his wife, who couldn't hurt a fly. He would have liked to get back on the horse and ride off after the bloke. But that was nonsense! There was no point in thinking about how nice it would be to strangle and beat the man until there was no life left in him.

So he sat there all night with his eyes open, looking at the hut where his wife was sleeping. When the owl began to hoot loudly, the farmer's wife stirred and called softly: "Harm, man!" Then he went quickly to the bed and took her hand in his, and so he stood there until daylight. Then he sat down again in the big chair and looked in front of him until his eyes closed. But he immediately went up again and looked round wildly, and then he sighed and sat down again.

He had dreamt that he had been riding after the blokes and had come across one of them, the one he meant, staggering along and singing the Braunschweig song, and then he had grabbed him from behind and pushed him until he turned blue in the face and didn't lift a finger.

He quietly walked out of the dönze and washed himself in a bucket outside. He felt as if the blood wanted to jump out of his ears, and every hair on his head prickled. He had such evil eyes that Grieptoo turned tail when he looked at him.

But wasn't it maddening? His wife was lying there and who knows if she was still alive, and the guy, the dog, was perhaps sitting there again with a beer mug in his hand and singing:

Duke Christian has thought well of us, brought us beer and brandy, musicians to play with, beautiful girls to enjoy beer and wine with, we want to be merry Brunswickers!

The Weimaraner

From then on it was very quiet at the Wulfshof. The farmer's wife slowly regained her strength, but she was no longer the cheerful woman she used to be; she remained pale and introverted and chased herself away at every little thing.

The farmer had also changed; anger and resentment ate away at his heart. He had forgotten how to play the flute at work, and when he laughed, it was as if the autumn sun came through the clouds for a moment.

There was no time for flutes and laughter either. The taxes increased more and more, beggars of all kinds moved around the country, Westphalians, Friedlanders, Lippers, who until then had lived in peace and quiet, but now had to walk with the white stick, because the Mansfelders or the Brunswickers had taken everything from them and put the roof over their heads.

It was terrible what people had to say, more than a person can endure without going mad. Harm came across a woman in the middle of the heath who was singing and praying and praising God for his goodness. He couldn't bear to watch this and took her back to the farm, where she

halfway back to herself. She had been on a good farm; her husband had been tortured to death, her three daughters and the little boy too; then she had gone mad and run off into the world.

She ate like a wolf, and talked in between; it was dreadful to see how she kept her eyes dry, laughed and prayed incessantly, and sang praises to God. The farmer was glad when she went away, though she was heartily sorry for him, but the farmer's wife had become quite ill from what the strange woman said, and three times during the night she went up in the air and screamed, and only calmed down again when Harm took her hand and spoke to her. The next day she was so miserable that she could not get out of bed, and every time a door slammed she bolted.

From that time the farmer forbade his people to talk about what was going on in the world; as far as he could, he stayed on the farm and left the work in the fields to the servants. As sour as it made him feel, he forced himself to laugh and play the flute, for he realised that it was good for his wife, and she got better with little things. When she put the boy to bed in the evening and he talked corn and kaffir all mixed up and squealed and laughed, then she could laugh with him again; but it was no longer the laughter she used to have and which always made the farmer hot under the breastcloth. Her father, who was now often to be seen at the Wulfshof, did his best to cheer her up with his foolishness, but it was and remained half a job.

As there was no end to the squeezing and plundering and the torture and torment, the farmers around the quarry had agreed to inform each other so that the cattle and women could be rescued. Every few weeks, one of the farmhands had to chase off when bad news came from somewhere, or the Ödringers would drive their cattle head over heels into the castle mound in the middle of the quarry and leave their wives and maids in the plaggen huts until the air was clean again. The Wulf farmer had lost his best farmhand in the process. He had ridden to the next village to announce that a troop of Weimar soldiers was on its way; the next day

the grey horse was back, but with blood on his back and a graze on his neck; but Katz did not return.

Until then, the Wulfshof had suffered less from the war than the other farms in Ödringen because it was too remote. Even vagrants rarely came here. Then one autumn morning, when it had frozen overnight for the first time, a gypsy woman came begging with a half-naked child at her breast. Ulenvater wanted to let the dog loose on her, but his daughter and the farmer stopped him. "Father," said the farmer's wife, "she has a child at her breast and looks half starved!" The old man grumbled as she gave the woman warm milk, bread and worn clothes, and the old man Wulf, who hadn't said much since he'd gone to work, said, "If you don't regret it, girl!"

In the afternoon, thirty Weimaraners came to the farm under an officer. They arrived in the middle of the meadow, where there was hardly a path, and the old man said: "There we are!" They behaved quite decently, because they were not short of sausage and bread and the officer saw to it that they remained sober, because they still had a long march ahead of them. But no matter how reluctant the farmer was, he had to lend them two carts, and because the farmhand had been beaten by a horse and had a stiff knee, Harm had to go along himself, no matter how hard it was for him.

At first it was said that his horses would only be needed as far as Burgdorf; but when they were on the high heath, a gypsy came running up, spoke to the guide and the train turned off to Wettmar, where there were two wagons with oats that Wulf was to take further.

It was mostly evening when they arrived in Bissendorf. It was wild there; everything was full of Weimar troops and there was so much shouting and fussing that Wulf felt quite stupid. The landlord and landlady looked as if they had been taken from the grave; the maid's hair hung loose around her head, and her breastcloth and shirt were torn short and small, and the children were sitting in a heap behind the bakehouse

and stroked the dog that one of the lads had beaten to death. The farmhand sat with them, holding his side and spitting blood, because he had been hit in the ribs with a plunger for throwing himself on his back for the maid.

Wulf waited and waited, because the officer had told him: "He'll get his horses back." It was almost midnight when Wulf bought a mug of beer for a soldier so that the man would remind the officer of his word. He was just about to put his wallet back in his pocket when it was snatched from his hand and before he knew it, it was lying in front of the door. He reached for his knife, but pulled himself together and waited until the officer wanted to go to sleep, and when a long man, whom the others called Mr Colonel, came in his way, he took off his hat and asked if he could not get his horses now.

"Shut up!" snarled the officer; "What do I care about his horses, stupid peasant cattle!" Wulf's throat choked, but he held back:
"Colonel, the officer has promised me solemnly that I shall have my teams back," he said, and he marvelled himself that he could say it so calmly. The officer's head turned red: "Is he mad, you dirty lout?" he shouted at him; "is he mad? Is that chap getting in my way! Get out of the way!" And when the farmer didn't make way immediately, he hit him in the face with the long yellow gauntlets he was carrying in his hand so hard that it cracked, and walked past him.

Wulf stood like a stick against the wall. He hardly heard a trooper say to him: "War is war and gone is gone! Take comfort, as I did; I once had a house and farm, and now I'm glad to have bread and beer."

He went into the grassy garden and sat down on a sloping tree. It was a starry, cold night, but the farmer didn't notice the cold. He ate his bread and sausage as calmly as ever, drank his schnapps and thought about what to do. He sat there like that until it started to rumble and the house became noisy again. The maid who brought water from the courtyard

called him to eat a bowl of soup, which he did.

The servant also came into the house, and Harm told him where he was to go, and also that the man who had beaten him was a Satan in the flesh, and a man-slayer. "He can stand by and listen when they torture a girl to death," said the servant, and gave a few songs that made the other man's skin crawl.

When he was gone, the Wulfsbauer made his stupidest face and walked here and there, as if he didn't know where to stay for a long time. On a window ledge lay a powder horn and a bullet pouch; when nobody was looking, he threw both over the fence under the elder bush. Then he looked around until he found a rifle, which he also put aside. At last he met the young officer who had been with him on the farm; he asked him to get the horses back for him. The young man, who had drunk too much that evening and gambled away all his money, shrugged his shoulders and walked past him without saying a word. When Harm followed him and said, "You promised me!" he shouted, "Haven't you had enough yet? Go to hell!" and he raised his riding crop.

"If not, then not!" said the farmer to himself, and asked for another plate of bread soup and a piece of dried bread, because the landlord said: "The pigs drank your money away with me!" When the coast was clear, he pocketed the powder horn and the bullet pouch, put the rifle under his coat, looked around to make sure no one had noticed him, and then he pushed his way from one tree to another until he was far enough away from the jug to enter the meadow.

He was quite calm; he knew how he was going to pay off. He walked very slowly, always keeping under cover, in a wide arc towards the quarry and the road, and there he looked for a place where there were only peat-cuts, so that no rider could pass through. There he waited until it was time for him.

There was a shot at the back of the heath; in the moor a black grouse was bragging; a fox came across the road, got wind of the farmer and turned back; birds of prey fell in the field; mice peeped in the ell bushes; a magpie flew over him.

Then a horn blew in the village, once, twice and a third time. "Now, now!" thought Harm. It wasn't long before he heard the rumble of carts, the crack of whips, a horse neighing, a mare; a stallion answered and then all the others. The trumpeter blew a merry tune, the riders sang; it sounded nice. Wulf knew the song; he whistled the tune to himself, laughed and thought: "Same, same!"

They came; one, two, three riders, then a whole bunch, then another, the trumpeter, then the ensign, a fat man with a funny face, the young officer, next to him another; they talked a little, laughed loudly and aimed their hands at a raven, which flew across the road and immediately swerved away. Then a woman came riding up, a groom on either side of her. This was the person the colonel had with him, an exceptionally beautiful girl. She turned round and shouted something behind her.

And then came the colonel. He looked as if he had drunk little and slept well; he patted the neck of his apple grey with his right hand, which was stuck in his yellow gauntlet.

Wulf took a good look at him, because he wanted to remember the face forever. Then he took aim at the man just as the colonel turned his full face towards him. At first he aimed at the chest, but then he went lower, and just as it banged, he saw through the fire that the man threw both arms over him and folded to the side, and immediately afterwards he heard him shout: "Oh Jesus!" and the woman squealed after him.

But the farmer was already one step ahead. He had thought carefully beforehand about how he had to do it so that no one would see him. When the screaming and shouting started and a dozen shots were fired into the

When they fired the first shots from the Ellernbusch, where he had been lurking, he had already passed the tapping and a deep flatt behind him; crawling from one birch bush after another, he came to the hill from which he could look out over the road.

He had to laugh at the way they rode back and forth and chased each other, as if they were doing it for fun! And now he laughed out loud, because three riders, no, four, who were chasing into the moor were suddenly gone and the water was splashing up.

"It's actually too fresh for that this morning," he said to himself, shaking his head as three more riders rode into the quarry. Two of them sank down at once and turned back; but one of them, who was riding a piebald, almost reached the heath, but then the horse broke, the rider struck the mud with such a splash, and the horse trotted on alone.

Wulf jumped up and crawled bent over from one Machangel bush to another until he was far enough. He saw several riders dismount and walk into the quarry, but then he ran as far as he could until he came to where the pinto was standing, kicking back and forth and not quite knowing what to do to get out of the mud. When he saw the farmer, he gave a friendly snort and Wulf was able to grab him and tie him to a bush.

He stayed behind a Machangel until the train set off again. He could roughly count how many horses there were. The grey apple went unleashed and the woman was no longer mounted, because the crazy red hat she was wearing was now visible on one of the carriages.

The farmer nodded; he knew he had done a good job. He lay in wait until the train had disappeared into the forest and then for another quarter of an hour. Then he went carefully to where he had hidden the rifle, loaded it on the new one and crept to where the rider had fallen so heavily. He found him straight away. The man had his head under his chest and was no longer moving; he had broken his neck.

It wasn't a common horseman, but a constable. Wulf took off his belt, cut open his jacket and then laughed to himself: the guy had eleven ducats sewn into the back and seven on his chest, and in his pocket he had three thalers and several more shillings. He also had a very nice dagger knife next to the sabre on his belt. Harm took the knife and left the sabre, but he kept the two long pistols he found in the horse's saddlebag.

When he found white bread, a bottle of schnapps, a roast chicken and salt in the halter, he was completely satisfied. He sat down beside the horse, had a leisurely breakfast, gave the pinto the bread he had brought from Bissendorf, lit his pipe, smoked it slowly to the end and then rode home at a leisurely trot.

Even from a distance he realised that his wife looked like him. She laughed and cried in confusion when she saw him: "Oh God, Harm," she cried, "I haven't slept a wink all night! Praise and thanks be to God that you are back! How anxious I was! But where did you get the piebald? And where are our horses?"

Her husband laughed merrily: "Yes, girls, I had to let them have it; but I got well paid for it. Look!" He held out the money to her. "But now I'm as hungry as a wolf; I haven't been this hungry for a long time. Yesterday I didn't get my rights because I was so angry. What's the boy doing? And has nothing else happened? So much the better."

He was so excited and had such bright eyes that his wife was astonished at him, and the fear she had felt the day and night before turned into sheer joy. So it became a day such as had not been on the farm for a long time, so much laughter and flutes were heard. Harm carried his boy piggyback, let him ride on his knees and sang to him the song that the trumpeter had blown in the morning.

A rider came into the courtyard; it was Drewes. "Have you heard the latest news?" he asked Wulf quietly, laughing like an executioner.
"This morning the Weimar colonel, or whatever he is, was shot dead from the bush behind Bissendorf near the old Wolfskuhle. That is, he wasn't completely dead right away; they drove him as far as Hope and then he ran out of breath. I heard the story in Mellendorf. And a constable and a horseman died in the breach while chasing after the sniper. The Döllmer! should have stayed away!"

He looked at the Wulf farmer from the side: "I heard you got rid of your horses. The farmhand says you got them for a good price. That's a pure miracle! They took two from me before the plough and didn't even give me a godsend for it.
Nice weather today! But I think it's going to change overnight. Good luck too!"

He pretended to leave, but turned round again: "Well, are you still disgusted with me now that I tore my cane bloody back then? Shut up, you don't have to say anything, and I don't want to have said anything either! Business is business. We're not the kind of people who take things for free, but we don't give anything away for nothing either. And just so you know: the day after tomorrow we want to talk about how things should be here now. It has to be one for all and all for one, otherwise we'll all go to the dogs. In Wettmar the villains violently violated two farmers' daughters, in Berghof they beat a cottager so badly that the man died. That's why we want to meet on the Hingstberg, the day after tomorrow at nine o'clock, one or two from each village around the quarry. You must come for Ödringen, for the bailiff has a nasty cough.

"So, what else I wanted to say! The sulphur gang that was in Bissendorf yesterday isn't coming back here. They'll be glad to get out of here first, because the papist general, Till or something like that, is on their tail. Let's hope he doesn't come round here.
Adders and gnats are two different things, but they both have poison."

He looked at him from the side: "So you need have no fear that they will regret the deal and that you will have to give back the money and the piebald you got. But the horse looks too silly; I would colour it up a bit, otherwise people will laugh at you when you plough with it and say: the Wulf farmer is now ploughing with his black and tan cow! Well, see you the day after tomorrow!"

He left with it. Harm did as Drewes had advised him, and by the evening the piebald was a black horse. He had hardly finished his work when Engenser came back. "Man," he said, "you have to help. A message has just come from Wiekenberg that about thirty fellows are travelling through the quarry. They've set fire to a farm in Wiekenberg and beaten the people lame and crooked. We can get fifty to sixty people together. Let's go on a merry hunt!"

The Wulfsbauer made a grumpy face; he had thought he could get a good night's sleep, and now he could spend the night again, lying in the bush like a wolf. And then his wife, she hadn't been this funny for a long time. Her eyes laughed like that when she looked at him, and her cheeks were like they had been before the accident happened to her. Besides, who knows where the people Drewes was talking about were going? And finally: they hadn't done anything to him! It was something else with the colonel; he had punched him in the face!
But shooting people in the head from ambush when he had no intention of doing so was not his cup of tea.

"Do you know what, Drewes?" he said, "I can't keep my head up; I've been sitting up all night and spent the day in the moor and heath. And my wife, you know how she is! For the first time since then she is as she was before; today I can't get away from her. I've had enough worrying about her all year. And whether I'm there or not, it doesn't make the porridge any thicker, especially as I don't have a horse I can rely on. You'd better leave me out of it, at least today!"

The Engenser looked at him from the side. "It's true, you look as if your head is hanging over your bed. Well, we'll deal with them that way. Perhaps you'll join us in the morning, for we want to set off at once, so that we can get them in before dew and day.
But next time we'll be counting on you. Remember, if you don't help us, do you think someone else will lift a finger for you? You've already been through enough to wait until someone hurts you again before you strike. Dead foxes don't bite anymore!
But as you wish. And then adjüs too!"

Harm's heart sank when Drewes was gone, and as he went into the house he whistled to himself the song that the riders had sung that morning:

Nothing can please me more than when summer begins; roses bloom in the garden, yes, in the garden; trumpeters blow in the field.

The Marauders

It hadn't been a bad hunt that the farmers had been on. As the fog lifted, they had seen the gang approaching. They waited until they had them in the middle of the wet quarry, and then they shot them together like caged deer; not one escaped unharmed.
There were twenty-two of them lying there, old blokes with faces like leather, and young lads who looked like milk and blood. One of them, whom Drewes had ridden over, had shouted: "Mercy! My mother!" But that didn't help him; the Engenser beat him to death and shouted: "Young cats scratch too!"

He laughed as he told the Wulfsbauer this, as if it had just been a joke, and his broad white teeth bared like that. "Yes, it was a mess this time," he grinned. "And we didn't do the work for nothing," he added; "my share alone came to eleven hard thalers. What a pity it wasn't riders! A couple of cheap horses would have suited me. And now I want to go home, or I'll get

to do with my old lady." He shook himself and Harm laughed, because he knew that Christel Drewes had a mouth that nobody could fight.

Rose called Harm to dinner; his heart laughed as he looked at her. Life was good, in spite of everything! And at last there had to be peace again; the high lords had to get tired of playing at war, which cost them a lot of money and a lot of people. What they heard on the way was too terrible: murder and fire and plague and famine everywhere. Things were even better in the Bruche.
War is war and feathers fly when plucking geese. This is no different for once!

So the farmer thought and was happy about his smooth wife and the boy, who was getting cuter by the day and could say a few more words every moment. He thought: "Once there's another child and Rose has more work to do, she'll get on with everything sooner." And so it was. A little girl arrived, a strong and healthy child, and now the woman was back to how she used to be.

The war was still not over, but on the Wulfshofe there was almost no sign of it. From time to time troops came through the country, sometimes of one kind, sometimes of another, and then it was not clean where they came from; more than once smoke could be seen during the day and a red glow in the evening over the quarry.

From time to time, marauders and partisans also made an appearance, but they were very wary, for the quarry was notorious among all vagrants. Some went there, but none came here so easily; for Drewes had set up a real scouting service, and as soon as the horn called, the peasants ran together and God help them if they caught anyone!
The quarry could tell terrible stories, but it remained silent. Only the warning tines that the gypsies had attached to all the heaps of stones and trees of truth, and many a bright gold coin, many a hard thaler that the farmers had in their boxes, many a horse that stood in their stables, and the pistols, spears, bullet rifles, sabres and daggers,

which hung in all the dunes, spoke of the men whose property they once were and over whose bones now lay bog soil and weeds grew.

For some years the farmers did this quietly; every man knew about it, but no one spoke of it. Drewes kept a firm hand and it was said that the cottager Metjen from Ehlershausen, who was suspected of having been in league with the Tilly's by showing them the way through the quarry, and who three days later was hanging in the apple tree in front of his house with a rope round his neck, was brought there by Drewes and two other farmers.

It was a glorious pre-autumn day when the Wulfsbauer received word that he was to be at the Hingstberg at four o'clock; the triple treasury was also being advertised for the farmhands and maidservants, and he was told that this was to be negotiated. It was so hot that he was sweating profusely as he rode through the quarry.
Under the blue sky, an eagle flew around; sometimes it was silver, sometimes it looked like gold. Here and there the heather was still in bloom and every now and then a flock of small birds flew over the quarry and twittered.

Harm took a deep breath and as he rode along, he whispered his favourite song to himself and thought: "By the time the children go to sleep, you'll be back." It made him happy to think of how they would nod and squeak when he tickled them.

There were about a hundred farmers together at the Hingstberge. They stood in small clusters around the old heath grave and talked about the weather and the cattle, or sat on the ground and snacked or smoked. Drewes had made himself comfortable on one of the large stones; he held his pipe between his teeth and cut notches in his blackthorn cane. He did this as precisely as if it mattered that one was no different from the others. When he saw the Ödringer jump off, he nodded to him and said: "Fine grummet weather today! It's really too bad to be a joke, but it had to be, because we have important business."

After a quarter of an hour, he said to the servant he had with him: "I think they're all here now; shut up!" Then the boy blew the horn three times. Everyone stopped talking or eating and made their way to the old heathen grave where Drewes was standing, leaning on his stick and looking around until all talking stopped.

"Dear friends," he began, "I have something to tell you today that will go straight down your throats. We've been through some tough years and who knows what's to come. It's as if our Lord God has given up the reigns for a while and now Satan incarnate is in charge. Here at the Bruche, things are still halfway there. One or the other of us has had to shed hair, some even a piece of fur and possibly flesh and blood, but elsewhere it has been grassy. What the Mansfelder spared or the Braunschweiger, who has now received his reward, for in Westphalia Till or whatever his name is, has consecrated him, that his most people have drunk their own blood, yes, where was I? oh well: or whether it is the imperials, the papists and ligists, they are of one and the same wickedness. Neither women nor children are safe from the dogs."

He looked at man after man: "Every man, however poor he may be, is fond of his wife and children and attached to his house and farm.
We want to see to that, and as far as we can, we have already done so," and with that he pointed to the quarry and laughed, and the men all laughed quietly. "But until now we've had to defend ourselves in secret, we've had to push around like bush thieves if we wanted to get rid of the riff-raff who hang around here, and one of us couldn't look the other straight in the eye. From now on, we can do that freely."

He lifted his stick and showed the notches on it. "Look! I have cut one hundred and seventeen notches here, thirty-two on one side and the rest on the other. The eighty-five notches mean that I have helped to bring eighty-five tramps, thieves, thieves and marauders and a treacherous dog to where they belong by God and by right, among

the earth, that the worms will eat it if they are not disgusted by it. But the thirty-two notches, my friends, mean that I have taken away thirty-two people of this kind with my own hand."

He took a deep breath, wiped his forehead with his hand and said quietly: "Our Lord will forgive me for this. An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, that's what scripture teaches us. We are not robbers and murderers here, but when the wolf comes upon our grazing cattle and the marten gets at our chickens, we don't think twice. I haven't struck a blow at anyone since I took off my boy's trousers until the day the shagging started here, and I'd rather have clean fingers. But what must be, must be, and I sleep as well as I did before, and I don't think there's one of us who can't say the same for himself."

He looked at the men in turn and winked at one or two of them in particular, who looked at him blankly. "But one thing, my dear friends," he went on in his speech, "that was weighing us down. What we did, we had to do, but we didn't feel like doing it without the permission of our Lord Duke," he took off his hat and everyone followed suit. From now on," and he spoke more brightly and laughed, "it is different, for our dear Duke, whom God preserve, has let us know that we should see to it that we defend ourselves as well as we can, and shoot to death like mad dogs all the dog-foxes who do not belong here."

He laughed so hard that you could see his big teeth: "Well, we shall not lack for our Lord Duke to have his way! We'd rather live as we used to, do our work in peace and praise God. But that's the way it is, and that's why I say to you: what doesn't belong here, what roams the land and robs and steals, what harms people and sets fire to houses, that is robbery and must be treated as such. Insult for insult, blow for blow, blood for blood, let us hold fast to this, so that it may go well with us and we may live long on earth!"

He wiped the sweat from his face and concluded: "Well, now you know your turn. And I think, my dear friends, it is no more than right for me to ask you to do the same," and he took off his hat, held it up and shouted: "Long live our Duke Christian, our most gracious lord!"

The crows flying over the quarry swivelled to one side, so the men screamed. They all had blank eyes when they went to Drewes and said to him: "Drewsbur, that was quite a speech! Our pastor can't do any better than that." But then they listened again, for the Wiekenbergers told them that everywhere was swarming with men of war, Danes and Ligists and Mansfelds and Brunswicks, whom Tilly and Waldstein chased to and fro like dogs chase chickens, and who were doing worse than before with burning and killing.

Nobody really knew what was going on. Some said: "The Danes want to take our land," others: "No, it's that we should become papist again," and some said that the emperor had nothing to do with it, that he lived down there and asked the devil about what was going on elsewhere. Waldstein and Tilly just wanted to enrich themselves with land and cash; that was what it all boiled down to.

The Wulfsbauer had thought that Drewes had spoken excellently and that he was right about everything, but he was not quite so focussed; he was thinking of his wife and children and that it was time for him to ride home with Little, so that he would not miss it when the toads were put to bed. He had to laugh when he thought of how Hermken had torn his ears so badly after midday that it had hurt.

He rode home with Klaus Hennecke, the headman's son. The air was soft and warm; the lapwings were calling on the ground and the plovers were calling on the heights.

Klaus finally started to talk: "Our father is getting worse and worse; he's been lying down for eight weeks now. I think this time

he won't get through again!" He looked over the breach. "Look, what's that marvellous cloud over Ödringen? I, it usually looks like smoke! But it's probably just a cloud."

Harm was of the same opinion; but when they rounded the peat hollows and came under the wind, both horses suddenly let out a snort and became restless, so that the two farmers thought they smelt a wolf. But when they were a little further on, Hennecke stopped, sniffed and said: "That certainly and truly smells of smoke! In the end, the Lörke von Hütejungens have been up to some nonsense again." Harm had to agree with him, because it smelled of smoke, but he thought nothing more of it.

At last, however, they smelt nothing, for the wind was different under the wood. But as soon as they were in the high heath, the odour grew stronger again, and when they had passed through the ruffled rides and were at the top of the hill, they cried out as if from one mouth: "O God!" For where Ödringen lay, the whole air was black.

They looked at each other; one looked as cheesy as the other. Without saying a word, they let the horses run faster. The smell of burning grew worse and worse, and what was even heavier on their hearts was that the grass in the meadows was just as it had been after midday when they had ridden past. They chased what the horses would give, and when they came out of the forest they stopped and trembled all over. The cowherd lay dead on his back in front of them on the path and his dog was sniffing at him.

They jumped off and looked at Tönnes; he had a cut all over his neck. They pulled him aside and then listened towards the village. It was very quiet there, only the crows were making noise over the oaks. They walked closer step by step, one hand on the knife and the other on the reins. In the path lay a broken earthenware bottle, the like of which no one in the village had. They also found a bloody rag and a piece of sausage next to it. They stopped and listened: Nothing could be heard, no human voice could be heard, no cattle were bellowing, no

Rooster cackled, no dog barked.

So they arrived at the Reinkenhof. It was still standing, but the windows had been smashed, the doors were open, bedsprings were scattered everywhere, along with straw, hay and oats. Everything in the house had been smashed to bits. The yellow-coloured cat was wandering around in the fletching and was moaning miserably. The dönze looked like a pigsty; it was full of rubbish. Not a chair was intact, not a plate was whole. In the grass garden lay the head and legs and calf's down of a red-coloured calf, and beside it the spinning-wheel, but in pieces.

Klaus and Harm didn't speak a word. They came to Hingstmann's farm. There it looked exactly the same, except that the herdboy was lying dead across the floor; he had a deep hole in his forehead. It was no different at Mertens and the same at Henkenhof, except that at least there was no body to be found. The other farms had also been plundered and everything looted, but the farmers seemed to have got wind of it in time to save themselves.

All at once, the Wulfsbauer looked around wildly and shouted: "Yes, but where is the fire? Holy God!" He mounted and chased off, with Klaus Hennecke chasing after him. They rode right across the heath, and the further they got, the more it smelled of smoke, and then Harm Wulf stopped and jumped off and made a face as if he wanted to cry and looked at where his farm had stood, for it was all smoke and fumes, except that here and there a flame could be seen.

"What's that?" he stuttered. He felt as if he had no strength left in his legs, so he had to grab Klaus by the arm. And then he shouted: "Rose, Rose!" He ran round the site of the fire, into the grass garden, looked into the sod, climbed backwards and forwards on the burning beams, looked up at the sky, shook his head and said with a laugh that sent a chill down Hennecke's spine: "In the castle, she'll be in the castle!"

Klaus nodded: "Yes, I think so too. They must have all gone there together and the cattle too. And the boy from Hingstmanns and Tönnes, they must have been out alone, and they must have felt like that. They want to go to the castle, and if they are not there, then we must, yes, it is probably best that we ride to Engensen first; at the Drewshofe we will be the first to know."

They mounted up and rode across the moorland and through the fens and from there into the quarry. The eagle owl flew over them and when he was in the forest he gave a hollow cry. The fog was thick behind the peat bogs, the ducks rang in the air and the deer startled in the meadows.

No one spoke a word; now and then they stopped and listened to where the old rampart lay, and then they looked ahead of them again at the path, which showed that people and cattle had recently walked on it. It was so dark in the moorland that they had to dismount. Back and forth they went, sometimes to the right, then straight ahead, then half left, and so on. Every now and then a pigeon rumbled away in front of them, or a piece of game broke through the wood. Then they stopped and listened. But again and again they heard no voice and no cow bellowing.

At last they felt as if they saw a light in front of them, and when they stopped, they heard that a piece of cattle was bellowing opposite them. Then a can cock cracked, followed by another, and a voice, it was that of young Bolle, called out to them half aloud: "Who's that?" Harm whispered to him: "It's us, Harm and Klaus. Where's my wife?"

Atze Bolle gagged when he had something in his throat and then grumbled: "Come after the castle first! I'm on watch here and I don't know who's here. It was neck and neck today, because we had to make sure that the riff-raff didn't get us. But Ulenvater, I saw him earlier before I left."

"Well, what's that?" he said as something black jumped past him. It was Harm's dog. He behaved as if he was unwise, barked and

howled in confusion, jumped up at the farmer, licked his hands, ran forward and barked, came back again and all at once he sat down and howled so terribly that Bolle shouted: "Quiet, Teebe!"

The first person Wulf saw when he entered the rampart was the Reinkenbäuerin. As soon as she caught sight of him, she cried out: "Oh God, Wulfsbur!" and then she began to weep. "What is it?" cried Harm, "Where is Rose?" But the woman cried so hard she couldn't get a word out.

Harm looked back and forth, but wherever he saw a person, he quickly turned back. At last he found his father-in-law. "Where is Rose?" he just managed to say, for he was hoarse with fear. The old man had a face as if he had been taken from the grave. "Yes, boy," he said, taking Harm by both hands, "yes, boy," and he began to cry bitterly, "our Rose is with our Lord God!"

Harm made a movement as if he wanted to jump at his neck:
"What do you say, dead?" He started to laugh. "That's true, that may be true, but talk like that, no one will tell me where Rose is!" And then, in a voice that sounded as if it had cracked, he shouted through the whole wall: "Rose, Rose, where are you?"

Hingstmann stood next to him: "Calm down, man, Renneckenvater is dying. And Horstmann's got a little bit of a lick of paint from the excitement and she's not feeling well." He held the bottle out to him: "Drink first!" But Wulf pushed him back: "I want to know what's wrong with my wife, I want to know! And where are the children? My Hermken and the Lüttje? Children and people, someone open your mouth!"

Two more farmers arrived. "Yes, he must know for once," said Mertens. He put his hand on his shoulder: "Yes, Harm, what good is all this? Your dear wife is no longer alive; she has stayed at home. And the children too. And your father too, and the one servant and the two girls. Do you know how the dogs found you in the first place, when your farm is so remote?"

Harm looked from one to the other; he looked like a child who was afraid to move in front of the dog. His hands went up and down his trousers, his lips quivered, the cold sweat stood out on his forehead; everyone could hear how his heart was working in his body and how the air wouldn't come out of his throat. Finally he croaked out: "Yes, are they burnt or what?"

The men looked away and finally Horstmann said: "We don't know anything else about it. The only person left alive is Thedel. But he must have gone completely out of his mind; he's sitting back there by the fire, grinning and looking at the knife he's holding."

Harm rushed more than he walked to where he saw the servant sitting. When he stood before him, he laughed in his face and showed him the knife; but all at once he dropped it, flung both hands in front of his head and howled. The farmer shook him. "Boy, why don't you tell me what actually happened? Nobody wants to know anything about it." He sat down next to him and put his hand over his neck.
"Now get going!" he ordered.

The farmhand first looked at him as if he had never seen him before, and then he began: "They're all dead, all of them. The wife is dead and Hinnerk is dead and Hermken is dead and Lüttje is dead and Trina is dead and the old man is dead and my sister Alheid is dead too. Everyone is dead, except me. I was in the bush cutting wood and I didn't hear anything until it was too late, because they had come out of the quarry."

He couldn't say very much, because most of it was already over when he came back. But the little he had seen was such that he had to turn away from the farmer, for he had a face and a pair of eyes in it that it made his neck cold. But the farmer said:
"Go on, go on, I want to know everything," and only now and then did he groan or chatter with his mouth so that Thedel could hear his teeth chattering.

When he had got everything out of him, he said: "Yes, Thedel, me and you, that's the whole Wulfshof now. What do you want to do now? Do you want to take another job or do you want to stay with me? For, understand me rightly, I don't want to play farmer any more; where the devil has reaped, I have no more desire to plough and sow. But," he added after a little while, "where have the murderers gone?"

The boy shrugged his shoulders. "They crossed the heath and split up at the Schirmfuhre. As for the Taters, they're heading for Berghof, and the others, they must have gone to Celle, because that's where they wanted to go, the man told me."

"What man?" the farmer interrupted. The boy laughed hideously. "The one who got so drunk on your honey beer that he couldn't leave the spot and stayed in the meadow and slept."

"Well, where is he now?" Wulf blurted out. "He might still be lying there," grinned the farmhand. "Why is he still lying there?" the farmer asked. The other laughed from ear to ear: "Well, because I tied his hands and feet together when he was lying there like a barrel, and also because when he had sobered up and I had got what I wanted to know out of him, he probably didn't have much life left in him."

The farmer laughed wickedly: "What have you done to him, Thedel?" And his laughter became even more insidious when the farmhand showed him the knife and told him what he had done to the man. "Because," he said, "It was the worst one. He was the one who killed my sister, he and the holy cross and the baby. And they have to die too, I say, or I don't want a blessed death!"

The farmer looked at him stupidly: "Holy cross? Infant? What does that mean?" Thedel said: "When everything was mostly over and most of them were drunk as pigs, I crawled on all fours behind the Hagen and there I saw a guy who was as long as I was.

and he had a very small head like a child and a voice just like that when he opened his mouth, and he had no beard either, and they called him a baby. And the other, he was as short and fat as a barrel of cabbage, and he had a foxy gag beard and two scars on his face, as thick as a finger and as red as a cock's comb, one from his forehead to his mouth and the other from one ear to the other, just so that it looked like a cross, and that's probably why they called him the Holy Cross."

He looked in front of him: "The two of them martyred my sister; I heard them making jokes about it, the two of them and the other one who was lying drunk in the heath. Well, I did it to him! I shut his mouth because I thought: if he starts banging his head and the others hear it, you'll end up looking stupid. The other two kept chasing after him for quite a while until they got bored. I'm just curious to see if he'll still be alive tomorrow morning!"

In the middle of talking, he fell asleep. The farmer put a coat over him and saw that the servant was sleeping as peacefully as ever. He had to look at him often; he looked like a child who couldn't hurt a fly. He was the only person in the whole village who could not stand to see a pig being slaughtered, and he had maltreated the murder-burner as the executioner's servant would a poor sinner.

"He was right!" thought the farmer; "scold for scold, blow for blow, blood for blood, says Drewes." He looked into the fire and saw in it a long fellow with a small head and a thin voice, and another, short and thick as a barrel, and with two scars on his face, standing crosswise. He saw them lying before him with their hands tied, old rags in their mouths and sweat of fear on their foreheads, and he stood before them, kicking them and holding his knife to their eyes.

He sat there for a long time, thinking of nothing else. But suddenly his eyes became wet. In one of the plaggen huts, a child was crying and a woman was singing:

Eia wiwi, who's going to sleep with me? We want to do it in a completely different way now, Heini should sleep in the Eia, eia wiwi.

The quarrymen

It was broad daylight when Harm Wulf woke up. He had fallen asleep sitting up, and he had slept so soundly that he couldn't rouse himself and looked around wildly because he didn't know where he was.

But then he stood up, as heavily and as slowly as if he had not twenty-four but forty-eight years behind him.
Hingstmann, who was just passing by, chased him away when he saw him, for the Wulfsbauer had a very old face and eyes that had no life in them, and his hair had turned grey at the sides.

"If only he could cry, Ulenvater!" said the Reinken farmer's wife; "That's terrible, the way the man eats it up!" But Harm didn't cry. He ate as usual, but said no more than yes and no, helped to make the entrenchments higher and build sheds and whatever other work was necessary. At about ten o'clock he went away with Thedel, and when they came back they both had completely blank eyes, and the boy was grinning so much that it was horrible to look at.

"What do you want to do now, Harm?" his father-in-law asked him in the evening as they sat by the fire; "do you want to rebuild the farm?" His oath husband shook his head. "I have other work to do. I may be away for a long time, but I may be back soon.
Just so you know: the birds of prey didn't find the money. I would have liked them to have it if everything else had remained as it was. So if you get into trouble, you'll know how to find it; it's not that little. And in the other place, as you know, there's plenty of seed corn, and there's plenty of sausage and ham, as well as cheese and honey beer. And there are also the pistols and the one rifle. Have you got any tobacco left?"

He stuffed his pipe, held a twig in the fire until it caught fire and used it to light his tobacco. "You know what?" he continued, "It's like this with me: I don't have much desire to live anymore. Let me finish! Maybe I'll get them back when I've settled accounts with the two main murderers. Because that's what I intend to do. Whoever spills human blood shall be spilled again! Thedel wants to go too; they're also in the chalk with him, for Alheid's sake. Grieptoo can stay with you; the dog could be in my way!"

A flock of birds flew in, settled in the tall fir trees and made a tremendous noise. Harm looked up: "There's that rubbish again that Hingstmann's father said signalled war and pestilence. Perhaps he was right, because I haven't seen such birds in my day. I found one lying dead in the heath; it was as red as blood and its beak was crossed. But what are you going to do now? In Ödringen you are not safe for a single day of your life, for what happened yesterday may happen again tomorrow. I think the best thing will be for you to build your farm here in the quarry on the Peerhopsberg; they won't find you there so easily and fruit will grow there if need be. And the castle here, you must make it even stronger; the moat must be deeper and every time the entrance makes a bend, there must be a wolf's den."

The old man nodded. "Yes, we said the same thing yesterday. We still have the cattle, the horses too, and the best thing will be, as long as the war lasts, we'll farm in a pot, as sour as that will be for us. But you'd better stay here; what do you want in the wide world? Look, boy, the misfortune has happened, and I'm carrying it just as hard as you are. You'll eventually get a wife again, but I won't have a daughter. You still have a whole life ahead of you, it's different with me. And yet I'm staying here, where I was born."

The other shook his head. "I'll come back as soon as I can. But I swore an oath to myself and I have to stick to it. And besides, I'd go mad here, where every step I take I have to think about how it used to be." He called the

Servant approached: "Let me see your knife!" The boy grinned and pulled it out of its sheath. "There, that's good; go to sleep, we want to set off in the morning!"

He looked at Ul. "The man who killed Alheid is no longer alive; Thedel did it to him and the wolves. This morning we buried him under the wide cart behind my farm. There are all sorts of stones lying on the spot. But there are two of the wretches still alive, and should they stray here, one quite inhumanly long with white hair, but still a young fellow, and he has an unwise little head and a voice like a child, and then another, as short and fat, and two scars on his face as broad as a finger, and all red, one from his forehead to his mouth, and the other from one ear to the other, so that it looks like a cross, and that is why the fellow is called the Holy Cross, and the other the Infant. If they show themselves here, you must not kill them; I want them alive, you hear. Because I'll be back from time to time."

But it was completely autumn before he returned. Bolles Bernd, who was on watch on the Halloberge that day, was just saying to Mertens Gerd, who was keeping him company: "How beautiful the birch trees look! like pure gold!" Then he craned his neck like a black grouse, poked Gerd in the ribs and said: "What's that in Bullenbruche? That's just like a rider on horseback! Certainly and truly, it is one. There are even two of them!"

He hid himself behind the bushes and beckoned to Gerd, and when they were near the thick carts, he took the long horn to his mouth and blew loudly, so that a hare that had been sleeping under a bush shot out like a fool and ran along the path. Three times the boy blew the horn, and each time in a different way, and after a while for the fourth time, and so loud and long that it could be heard for half a mile round.

"Watch out," Harm Wulf said to Thedel; "we have to make ourselves known, otherwise we could end up with a handful of chopped lead in our ribs before we realise it. Show them that you can do it too!" The servant took the little horn he had hanging from his saddle, wiped his mouth, smelt and spat, and then blew towards the Halloberge. A short reply came back from the mountain, which Thedel also returned.

"That sounds just like it," Bernd said, "as if that's Niehusthedel blowing; but what's he wearing? He looks like a man of war in the flesh! What do you think of that?" The other put his hand over his eyes as he looked behind the bush: "Yes, it's him, that's for sure. And the other one, that's Wulfsbur. I almost didn't recognise him, he's grown such a beard. Well, then, I must call it off again."

He picked up the horn again, but the other one refused him: "Wait a minute!" They stayed under cover until the riders were very close. Only then did he step forward and shout: "So, back from your journey, Harm? And you too, Thedel? Most of the time we wouldn't have known you from the way you look. But now blow, Gerd!" he called to the boy, who was standing a little way off and laughing all over his face, because Thedel was his good friend and the Wulfsbauer had once saved his life when he had broken through the ice on the pump. He put the horn back on and blew three times in a different way.

"So we can have breakfast," the Wulfsbauer said to Thedel when he was out of the saddle; "get the horses ready and hand over the holsters! You can keep up; we have plenty." He unpacked: there were sausages and thick slices of ham and roast meat and half a roast goose, a large piece of cheese, two kinds of bread and a large tin bottle. The others' eyes widened.

"Do you always live like this?" Harm laughed: "More than likely! But you can brazenly assume that it wasn't robbed or stolen, that is, not by us, because the three marauders we took it from yesterday probably won't

have paid with hard cash. But what is the situation in Ödringen?"

Bolle picked up the fist in which he had the knife and dropped it on the floor. "Ödringen?" he shrugged, "Ödringen, it doesn't exist anymore. It's all rubble and rubbish!" When the Wulfsbauer and Thedel looked at him, he said: "Everything was quiet for three weeks, then some people moved back, the Hingstmanns and Eickhofs and Bostelmann and Bruns too. The others dissuaded them, but they didn't want to listen. And one evening, we were just about to collect the last of the grass, when we saw a bright light over the village and soon afterwards Tidke came, you know, the shepherd boy at Hingstmann's, and he told us that two Taternweiber had led the way for a gang of murderous burners, and not a single person was left alive."

He made a wicked face, then laughed and continued: "Tidke had been awake because one of the foals was ill, so he was able to recover. The others mostly died in their sleep. All the dogs lay dead; the Tatar women must have thrown poison at them." He cut off a piece of the bread he had in his hand, put it in his mouth, put a piece of roast meat in the salt tin and also put it in his mouth, and when he had finished both, he went on:

"We rode out that night and got help from everywhere; we were our eighties and sober, and the bloodhounds were just under thirty and drunk. None of them remained alive. We shot and killed about twenty of them as soon as they crossed the Magethaide and wanted to enter the Düsterbrok, and the others, there were ten or eleven of them, we caught alive and took them to the quarry."

He looked first at Harm and then at Thedel, nodded his head and grinned: "And then we held judgement on them. Tidke had to tell everyone what was to be done with it, because he had to say something about it, because his mother, who was already over seventy, had also had her neck cut off. They all screamed like savages, and they prayed and begged when it came to taking a sip, except for

one of the Taternfrauenzimmer, the young one, who actually looked quite smooth except for her yellow skin and black hair, because she was a bit of a bitch and just cursed when we hung her up, biting around like a fox sitting in an iron. But that didn't help her, because Tidke said: "She hit Bruns lüttjen Jungen's head against the dössel! At first she was just supposed to be stripped naked and whipped, but when we heard that, we hung her from the oak tree at the very top!"

He laughed merrily: "I'll tell you what the old tree looked like when the eleven gallows birds were hanging from it! Ulenvater said: "That's as good as having a fattening year! And it was worth it too; the peoples had over two hundred ducats with them."

When they had finished breakfast, Harm set off with Thedel. They rode to Ödringen first. There was not a house left standing; all the farms had been burnt down. "I told them it would happen like this," said the farmer, "but it's terrible, the beautiful village! Come, I can't stand to see it. And all dead, all of them! Hingstmanns and Bruns and Eickhoffs and Bostelmann and Klausmutter too. How often did she not give me an apple for Hermken, because she had a tree there, we all didn't have such nice apples. It's to God's pity!"

When they were in front of the quarry, they stopped and Thedel had to blow. It took about a quarter of an hour before Klaus Henneke came out from behind the bushes with a farmhand. Both of them were armed and had a real monster of a dog with them. Harm called them by name and they came closer, but it was only when they were close that they secured their rifles and called the dog.

Klaus was genuinely happy when he saw Harm. "I thought you were no longer alive! Yes, all sorts of things have changed here. Our father is dead and our mum soon followed him. This is no life for old people like us here in the quarry; the wolves have it better.
A few of the farmhands have already gone out and mingled with the people. Nobody can blame them, because who wants to lie around here in bushes and bracken and eat bark bread and roots? An

There's no shortage of meat, because we shoot and catch many a deer and many a wild pig, but it's not life as it is now. It gives you very silly ideas. Mertensvater has hung himself!"

The Wulfsbauer, whose heart had been hardened by the wild life in the country, nevertheless felt his chest tighten when he came to the Peerhobsberg. "Dear God in heaven, what people look like!" he thought; "and they live worse than the cattle!" They had built themselves makeshift huts out of dung and ploughs and covered them with reed and thatch; they slept on hay litter and peat moss and their eating utensils were made of ell wood. The women were all pale and miserable, none of the children had red cheeks and fat legs, and the men had eyes as false as the bush cats.

But they were all happy when they saw them arrive, because it was a change in their miserable lives. The big peasants, who had only looked at Thedel from the side until then, could not question him enough. But the farmhand, who looked like a man of war in his leather jerkin and high brimmed boots, didn't say much. "Yes, what's there to tell? We've seen so much misery that it's impossible to tell. In places they have to put guards in front of the churchyards so that the starving people don't eat the dead. Near Peine we saw a fellow who had stolen children being wheeled out, and then he slaughtered and roasted them, and when we passed through Groß Goltern the Ligists had just gone through, and they had set the whole village on fire and set fire to the church tower, so that thirty-three people, young and old, perished. Mostly we fought our way through on our own mugs of beer; sometimes we joined forces with the honest farmers who were in the woods and fought against the riff-raff. In the great outdoors we brought forty-eight pieces of the world in one hour.
But the main fun was in Kalenberg; there were three hundred of us and we chased them like a dog chases a hare. That was great, I tell you!"

Just as he was about to continue, they heard him shout: "Jeduch, jeduch, jeduch!" The farmers jumped up, their eyes glazed over: "Watch out, we're hunting hares today!" And so it was. Drewes from Engensen had sent word that a train of Waldsteiners, forty men strong, was on its way; anyone who might stray was to come to Hingstberge immediately. "Are you coming with us?" the others asked Harm. "Of course!" he said and laughed; "A man wants to have some fun. And Thedel won't stay here either, you can believe that. The boy can hit, I tell you!"

There were over a hundred and a half peasants and farmhands together at the Hingstberg when the Wulf farmer arrived with the farmhand. But they were not standing there laughing and chatting, as on the day when the Marauders came across the Wulfshof; they were talking quietly to each other and looking round them with narrowed eyes. They didn't look like legal farmers either, but more like soldiers and highwaymen. They all had rifles in their hands and spears across their backs, and at least a pistol in their belt and a sabre or a long dagger. Most of them also wore beards and didn't look very righteous at all, except for Drewes, who carried himself just like before.

The Ödringer was really startled when the Engenser turned round and looked him in the face. What an old man he had become! His face was completely yellow and he had one wrinkle after another. "Nah," said a farmer from Wettmar when Wulf asked him if Drewes had been ill, "No, he wasn't ill, but he became a widower. You knew her, his Christel, her and her mouth! Well, that cost her her life, because when a couple of Danish soldiers took her sausages and hams from the Wiem, she disgraced them so much that one of them hit her over the head with a sabre and she couldn't stand that after all. We all thought Drewes would be glad to be rid of her and find himself a young and pretty girl. But how wrong one can be: in three weeks the man has grown twenty years older! It is a pity, and we realise it too, for he no longer works for the common good as he used to. The best energy has gone out of him; he's become like rainy hay."

Wulf realised this when Drewes began to talk. Even as he stood there, leaning on the thick Schlehbusch cane, you could see that he was no longer his old self; what he said had hand and foot as before, but there was not the old courage in it; it was a third cut, without vigour and strength.

"Dear friends," he began, "at this time, many of us have prayed to God: give us our daily bread today! The Lord has heard our prayer; he sends us bread. Everyone do his part so that this day may bring us prosperity! Everyone will find out from their chairman what to do in detail. One more thing I want to tell you: I see our friend from Ödringen, the Wulfsbur, among us. I think you are all satisfied that he is taking the lead in this matter; he will be happy to oblige us." The peasants nodded. "One more thing," the Engenser concluded his speech, "I give you to consider: keep strictly to the orders and make sure that the horses stay healthy! Most of them will be from the neighbourhood. And now, God command!"

The umpires and Drewes stood around Wulf. "My opinion," began Jasper Winkelmann from Fuhrberg, "is that we must get them between us, and that is best done in the high fords in front of the breach. So one part must wait until they are past, and one part must be in front of them so that they cannot get away, and the others must form the escort to the right and left of the path, and they must all be young fellows who can step quietly and hide quickly behind the bushes." He drew lines in the sand with his stick: "Look, this is what I mean! Here is the train, these are our people who are behind them, and these are those who are in front of them, and here are we who are walking alongside. As soon as they are in the middle of the high fords, we start tooting and shooting, and you there come over their necks from above and below.
Of course, every bunch has to have someone who knows exactly how to blow so that we don't get into trouble."

The general opinion was that it was best this way, and so first the older people divided into two sections and left, and then the younger ones. The Wulfsbauer took the side after the quarry, because there

knew best. First they all went in a heap and talked half aloud, then one walked behind the other and the talking stopped.

Wulf led the way, with Thedel creeping alongside him and Klaus Hennke behind him. The weather was favourable. The sun had dried out the ground, but not so much that all the brakes cracked underfoot. The wind had died down and the air was clear. If a woodpecker was working somewhere or a bird was scratching in the dry arbour, you could hear it from afar.

Harm had sat down on a litter tray and was smoking to himself. Little birds were chirping in the litter, an oak cat was running from trunk to trunk and the sun was turning the bramble as green as if it were June. Hennke was sitting on an old stump; he looked as if he had fallen asleep. The farmhand stood bolt upright in front of a trunk, had his rifle cocked and was slowly turning his head to and fro, as if he had been hunting deer.

The Wulfsbauer was just preparing a new pipe when the Markwart bragged from the right. Thedel looked at the farmer for a moment, but immediately turned his head away again. The Markwart shouted all at once, and then a woodpecker and a thrush called out at the same time. The farm labourer swayed softly with his right foot, Klaus opened his eyes a little more, Harm sat there smoking, only he kept his head tilted. A horse neighed, a whip cracked, a curse word followed. Then wheels rumbled.

Harm beckoned the farmhand next to him. "Have the horn ready!" he said to him quietly. Thedel picked up the horn. "Not until I say so!" the farmer whispered in his ear. The farmhand nodded. "Giddap!" went the sound in front of them and another "Giddap!" A horse snorted, a man blew his nose. Now came the first six men on foot, rifles ready to fire, turning their heads from right to left in one go. Every now and then they stopped and talked half aloud. Harm heard what one of them was saying:
"For fuck's sake, this is a dirty road! When we get here

would be out!" The farmer laughed behind his face and thought: "Yes, if!"

Three riders followed behind. "Nice horses!" thought Wulf. The second wagon came, again a few men on foot, behind it a rider, a long, thin chap with a very small head. The farmer stood up, his whole body trembling. But the man had a deep voice, so it wasn't him. Another cart arrived, and another, and more, and now the last. Harm was about to shout to the farmhand to blow, when he heard another cart rumbling. He got ready. Behind the cart rode a fat man with a white lace collar that hung down over his shoulders. He had a red nose and a double chin and looked morose.

"The fat end will always follow," thought the farmer and fired. The roan made a leap and threw the man off. "Now you can blow, Thedel," whispered Wulf, "but take cover!" The farmhand stood behind the throwing ground and started: "Tirrä tuut, tirrä tuut, tirrä tuut!" it went. But then Thedel picked up his rifle, ran forwards quickly, took a long aim and as he fired, he looked back and laughed, but immediately reloaded.

"Tirrä tut!" came from below and there were bangs everywhere. Now and then a curse and a cry were heard, and in between a short laugh, and a shot was fired above, and then another below. Then a man came riding up, his face white as a sheet; he remained seated for a while after Thedel had fired, until he fell to one side and the horse dragged him through the mud. Behind him, another came limping along, holding his head. Harm waited until he was within three paces, held his pistol towards him and shot him down.

The shots were less frequent, the swearing and shouting had stopped. "I think we're through with this," Wulf called to the boy. He nodded. "Let's wait a while longer!" said the farmer. Thedel loaded the rifles and pistols, while the other stuffed his pipe and lit it. "Now you can get started," he called to him. "All' uut, all' uut?"

blew Thedel. After a while, the answer came from below: "Is all ut!"

The farmer took his rifle and went out onto the logging dam. Farmers came out of the carts everywhere. They all nodded at Harm: "That went like clockwork!" He nodded: "Catch the unmarried horses first, the others won't run away!" he said and they all laughed, but they made long faces when he ordered: "And now we have to round them up and drive the wagons into the bush. The cash and valuables go to Drewes; he's to do the distribution. And whoever's horse is taken during this time comes first. Leave a good tin for me, I don't want any cash."

He looked at everyone standing around: "Are you all in one piece?" One of them shouted: "Yes, only Viekenludolf has been bloodied a bit. Well, he's got more blood than he can use as a bachelor!" Everyone laughed out loud.

They had caught sixty-six horses, a wagon full of sausage and ham and eleven wagons of oats, flour and bread, not counting the cash, clothes and weapons. A young chap shouted out, "Kids, who's going to spend one on this deal?" Everyone laughed and Harm shouted, "Drewes and me, right, Drewes?" He pretended to laugh. "It's true," cried the Wulfsbauer, "you can't work all the time. It's too late tonight and we've got all sorts of things to do, and many of us have a long way to go, but tomorrow the bachelors are to meet in the Engenser Kruge, as far as they can avoid it, and bring their girls with them, but the rifles too, and next time it will be the turn of the others who have to stay at home tomorrow. And now hush!" he urged; "we must not see here tomorrow what has happened. The wagons must go into the bush, and whatever else is lying there must go underground. After pig slaughter comes cleaning!" Again they all laughed and went happily to work. An hour later, when the moon came out, the embankment looked as clean as it had in the morning.

The next afternoon the young people met in Engensen in the Kruge and danced until the floor thundered, but the Wulfsbauer saw to it that

and that there were sentries around the jug and in all directions around the village. He himself stood by the big door and watched, smoking and occasionally taking a sip of beer from the jug he had beside him.

A girl caught his eye; she must have been barely eighteen years old, had a face like milk and blood, hair like oat straw and had grown like a fir tree. She was dancing with a long, thin farmer's son who had a face like a pot of mice. Every time she danced past Harm, she looked at him as if she wanted to lay her heart at his feet. It was Drewe's second daughter Wieschen, he heard, who was said to be as pure as nettle, and more than one of the boys in the village had taken a big mouth when he wanted a sweetie from her.

When a new dance was played, she only danced round once and when she got to the Ödringer, she broke away from her dancer and said:
"Now I can't take any more. Jesus, I'm so thirsty!" Harm held the jug out to her. She blushed all over, laughed at him and said:
"You should be thanked too!" He looked down at her and pointed his head towards her dancer: "Is that your bridegroom?" She shook her head: "No, I haven't got one yet," and she looked at him again as before.

But then the landlord shouted "It's closing time!" and in the middle of the singing the young people stopped. Wieschen shook Harm's hand and said: "You should come and see us, Wulfsbur; since mum died, dad has become so strange. And now good night and have a good journey!"

Harm still had the beer in his blood when he lay down in the hayloft, and as he was falling asleep, the song that the young people had sung last went round and round in his head:

Come on in the middle of the night, come on around the clock! Dad slaps, Mum slaps, I just slap.

The defence wolves

Harm stayed in the breach for the time being. He had sent all sorts of travellers, as far as they were not robbers and murderers, many a thaler of the booty he had made, so that they should leave word with Drewes in Engensen or elsewhere where he could find the Holy Cross and the infant, for he had said that he had a deal with them.

He now discussed with Ulenvater the life that the Öringers were leading on the Peerhobsberg. "The worst thing," he said, "is that they are waiting for the war to end and until then they are making do by starving and doing nothing. That's wrong! We have to act as if we want to stay here forever and three days. But you can't do anything by talking, and that's why we both want to build ourselves a proper house and, as far as possible, take land under the plough. You'll see, one by one we'll follow in our footsteps."

The old man nodded: "You're absolutely right; I've already said that to myself, because even if I can die today or tomorrow, it's still sinful to lay my hands in my lap and steal the day from our Lord God. And this place is not so uneven! Even in rainy years, the water doesn't come here, and the soil is good, and if a cut is later made through to the Wietze and the bush is removed, then you should see what doesn't grow here!"

There was a great uproar on the mountain when it was said: "The Wulfsbauer and Ulenvater are building themselves a solid house!" But no sooner had the stands been put in place than someone else began to do the same, and it was beautiful to see how suddenly the men left again, how wide-eyed the women became, and how the children also made out, for now they had something else to think about than their misfortune.

The Wulfsbauer did not save money; he had enough money, so he brought in carpenters and joiners from the neighbouring villages, and when the house

When it was finished, and neither the horse heads on the windboards nor the slogan above the large door were missing, everyone said: "It really is a beautiful house, everything that is right, even if it is only half as big and not as colourful as the old house."

But the slogan that Harm Wulf had carved into the gate beam read: "Help yourself and our Lord God will help you." Some people didn't like that at first. But when the Wulfsbauer gave his house judgement, they changed their minds. Everyone who lived in the Bruche was invited, as well as all kinds of friends from the Haide. Wulf had provided plenty of food and drink as well as music, but he had also told everyone to dress up as they normally would for the Burgdorf St Martin's market. So it looked colourful and cheerful in front of the house with red dresses and white and blue skirts, and everyone's faces were full of joy.

It was one of those days when sun and rain follow one another, but the sun has the most trump cards. A fresh wind was blowing so that the leaves rustled in the young oaks and the firs and firs were humming, and the wreaths of pods and the long chains of fir hedges flew to and fro; the white ribbons waved and the colourful eggshells rang and rattled so that the children did not know where to hide for joy.

When everyone was there, Ulenvater came out of the big door and behind him the farmer. He had taken off his beard and was wearing a blue skirt with a red lining and bright taler buttons. The big children lined up, Fiedelfritze from Mellendorf set the tone and the song rang out brightly: "Great God, we praise you." All the men took off their hats and sang along, as did the women, and there wasn't a single one who didn't get water in their eyes.

Then Ulenvater stood in front and said: "All of us who are gathered here, men and women, servant, maid and child, wickedness and wickedness have brought us from house and home. So hard has misfortune struck us that we are all here in the wild quarry like the

Wolves must hide us, lest the murderers discover us. In the beginning we were mostly despondent, we grieved and lamented, we thought, oh, we would be better off dead than living in fear and misery. But we came to our senses and began to build this house, and happily raised it up, because the Lord's power protected us."

Everyone standing there looked at the old man, whose eyes looked so cheerful and yet so strange, and the children stood there with their mouths open, not knowing what to say to Ulenvater. It was just like being in church! But now he took a deep breath, changed his face and continued: "And now that the house is finished and nothing is missing, as you can see, let's end the day according to the old custom in joy, eat what the Lord has given us and, as it should be, have fun afterwards with a glass of beer or brandy; and now, dear friends, come in!"

What a life and a laugh! Old Mother Horstmann, who had never seen anyone laugh again since she had been forced to leave the old village, nodded to herself and mumbled: "No, that Ulenvater, what a lot of potty-mouth he has!" and Klaus Hennke, the biggest Drögmichel of them all, laughed away brightly. There had never been such a funny house story even up in the village. And even if there hadn't been a drop of honey beer or a glass of wine on the table, it would have been great enough. Even during the meal, everyone was already very excited, and when the dancing started, even more so, and the red skirts and what was in them had never flown higher and wilder than on the Wulfsbauern's house ring.

But he had also thought of everything. There was thin beer and mead, and two barrels of spunk and tobacco such as no one had ever smoked before, and that was no wonder, for Drewes and his Haidgangers had taken it from a column some time ago and twelve barrels of Spanish wine as sweet as honey, and all the old men and women each got a glass or two of it to strengthen their hearts. "I'm now in my ninetieth year or so," said the householder from Bollenhofe, "but I've never felt so well in my life.

He nodded happily to his great-grandchildren, who had their cheeks full of the sweet sultana bread intended for the dissolute women the Waldstein officers carried around with them.

Even Drewes looked different from the time before. He stood between his two daughters, the tall, broad Lieschen, who ran the farm with her husband, and the slender Wieschen, who didn't take her eyes off the Wulfsbauer and didn't want to dance with him because, as she said, she wasn't well. But she looked like a rose in the morning dew and had eyes as blue as the sky, and when she laughed, it was as if the March thrush was about to start flapping. "No, Wulfsbur," she said, when he asked her why she wasn't dancing too, "no, I don't feel like it today. I can't get enough of seeing how funny the Öringers are after all they've been through! Just listen to what they're singing! You've earned a god's reward for that."

The dance lasted until ten, but it went on for a long time. From then on the men could be heard playing the flute again and the girls sang as they worked, even if it was work for men that they had to do. For Wulf had made it clear to the people that firstly it was now necessary to fortify the castle, that three hundred men could not storm it, and that what had been forgotten in the autumn had to be done now. So the moat was made deeper and the rampart higher, and both the bottom of the moat and the rampart wall were densely packed with long pointed stakes so that hardly a cat, let alone a man, could get through. In addition, an entanglement of thorn bushes was built around the rampart, so high and so dense that even the devil and his grandmother could not get over it. All around the castle, wolf's snares had been cut into the trees on all the access routes, which meant that the castle was a real wolf's den:
"Be true, because there is a hole in front of you, and if you fall into it, you will die!" What's more, the two roads could each be blocked four times with barriers.

Wulf had seen all this here and there on his patrols and had learnt a lesson from it, and for greater safety he had had lookouts made in the crowns of the trees on the Sandberg in the quarry, in which boys sat as sentries throughout the day, carrying horns and blowing when the air became foul.

It didn't take long for everyone who wasn't wearing a clean shirt to avoid the quarry, because word had got round that it wasn't safe there. Now and then men with black faces were seen in the bush, and in several places two cart-trees had been stripped bare and a third nailed over them, and most of the time a man was hanging by his neck, or two or three, and no one knew who it was and who had judged them, except the peasants in the circle, and when the wind blew the gallows fruit to and fro, they laughed and said, "The Bruch bells are ringing fine today!"

Because the winter was mild, all kinds of work could be done. The farmers cleared the bushes on the Peerhobsberg, divided up the land and ploughed it up, dug ditches and walls around the pasture paddocks, took the large stones from the heath and quarried the site so that they could build foundations and solid walls.

By the time the Hornung was over, the Peerhobsberg looked very different from autumn, especially as there was no shortage of food. For the quarry provided enough meat; it was full of live deer, fish were plentiful in the Wietze, and bread was provided by the Wulfsbauer. He had put together a sneak troop of thirty young lads and organised a scouting service. If it was reported that a supply train was coming here or that there were sutlers, it didn't take long before there was a bang and thirty men with black faces laughed out loud and said: "Now mum can cut bread again without having to look at her like that."

Viekenludolf from Rammlingen, greyhound for anything with a red skirt, and the wildest dancer at the harvest beer and wherever else a

A fellow who liked to be everywhere where you could get a free ride said, when they had brought three sutler wagons of the imperial army aside at the end of March, in the jug at Obbershagen: "We now have such a beautiful child out of nappies, but it doesn't have a name yet. Our captain's name is Wulf, and he's a real wolf too, for where he bites there are thirty-three holes. So I'm of the opinion that we should call ourselves the defence wolves and leave three axe blows, one back and one forth and the third in the cross, as a sign of where we've fought off the villainy. And no one shall know anything about it but we three times elves, that's what the wolves call themselves, and whoever opens his mouth about it shall hang between two mangy dogs with the scabbard around his neck until it is no longer known who stinks the most."

"That's a word that has its head in front and its cod-end aft, as it should," said the captain, "and what our wolf-brother said there, as if it were just a joke, as if it slipped out of your mouth while you were having a beer, there is understanding and insight in it. As we are here, three times eleven men, the incarnate God himself cannot frighten us, even if he now comes to stand in our midst. For what does he want to do to us, us unmarried people, none of whom have children, with the possible exception of Viekenludolf, who is supposed to be the cock of the walk."

They all laughed like the Buchhölzer stallions, except Viekenludolf, who scratched behind his ears. When it was quiet again, Wulf continued: "So we have to take care of the married couples and the widows and the old people and the orphans. But we have to be more than that, we have to have a hundred men and more, all blokes like us who can still laugh when a piece of chopped lead won't get out of their way. So everyone should find one or two or three good friends, and they should help out if necessary. But they should all be bachelors, and no one who is the only son of a widow should be present, and if someone has a girl with a child, he should think twice before he gets involved with us. But if such a man is unfortunate, let it be our first duty that the woman's husband and

the child shall not suffer want and want. And now we want to fraternise in adversity and death, property and blood, so that all stand for one, and one for all, but we all stand for everything that lives around and in the breach and is of our kind."

The innkeeper's son, who was one of the three elves, had to fetch the large glass. The beer was pushed aside and fine wine, which had grown for nothing on the country road between Burgdorf and Celle, was placed on the table. They all stood up, interlocked their arms so that they formed a tight circle, and Harm took the glass, drank, gave it to Viekenludolf, and so it went round and round until it was empty. Then Grönhagekrischan from Hambühren, the quietest of them all, but a man despite his twenty years, sang the Wehrwolf verse, which he had just heard, and the captain put a white stick on the table, his long knife and a cradle and said: "So the stick breaks, so the knife stings, or the cradle will be cut!"

They then chose Viekenludolf as their second head, decided where and when they would meet regularly, and how the one was to give news to the other without having to reveal everything to the messenger, and then they parted. The Peerhobstler stayed a while longer with the innkeeper's son, for he had received a message from Wietze that the people he was looking for had turned up in Ahlden. He had not thought of them for many a day because of work and business, but now they were once again before his eyes every hour, and he had resolved not to let up until he had paid them their earned wages in pennies and nickels.

So when Thedel arrived the next afternoon with Grieptoo, he rode off. He had always had the dog with him lately, for he had discovered that he had a nose for a man and could pick out the one whose scent he was following. Without the dog, he would not have tracked down the gypsy, who was making the area unsafe with six thieves, in the cave in the Bissendorfer Holze and, as a warning to all dishonest people, he and his henchmen would have been brought to the

If it hadn't been for him, he would almost have fallen into the hands of Tilly's men, who were after him when he once again hung the bread basket higher and knocked the beer mug out of their hands in front of the mouth.

It was one of those days last year when the morning mist stays in front of the sun as long as it can. So it was usually eleven before the sun got under his feet, but then it became all the more beautiful, so that even Thedel, who was otherwise completely at work, saw with his eyes everything that lived on the ground and wove in the air, and the farmer felt no different. "Boy," he said, "this is a day on which our Lord has taken a lot of trouble! If it can be helped at all, I wouldn't like to lift a finger today, and I think you'd rather see if you can't meet Ehlers Hille in the shadows somewhere where nobody can get in your way."

Thedel rode in front of him with the sun in his face, and his ears suddenly looked like a pair of hinged roses. He said nothing, but gave a sigh that was as long and thick as a horse's tail, so that Harm had to laugh heartily.

"Well," he said, for he saw that the servant was making a face like the hedgehog when the dog barks at him, "what is not may yet be. For the present we have other work to do, and first the work, then the pleasure, said Viekenludolf, and then he knocked three teeth into Kassenkrischan's neck and went into the grass garden with his danzeschatz. But when two certain people have learnt to fly without having become holy angels, then, Niehusthedel, you shall have a house of your own with a large bed and a smooth woman in it, if you like, and I shouldn't be surprised if she is called Hille at the front and Ehlers at the back, arms like a couple of waggon trees and hair like the grass where the sun lies."

He stopped the piebald, who had forgotten over time that he was supposed to be a black: "What's wrong with that dog? He's standing there like a

He's human, because he doesn't hold his head so stupidly and stand on three legs for nothing! Let's have a look!" He rode up slowly and then said: "That's right! Just as I said: a human being! A woman, apparently, who walks barefoot, but not a Tatern woman, for her big toes are pointing inwards. But she is young, and tall, and thin, and afraid. She may also be ill, for she has bent over twice from the birch tree to here, and here she has sat down once. Let's see where she is. She can't be far, because the track is fresh as a nail in the sand, and there's no dew in it either. Grieptoo, therefore! So, Thedel, take the dog and give me Wittkopp, but keep your hand on the cock; the Deubel can have his game!"

He took the Blässen's reins in his left hand and loosened his pistols, and while Thedel kept the dog on the lead, he followed him on his heels, keeping a sharp lookout for a thorn in the grass. They had come as far as an old stone grave, which was completely overgrown with machetes and shells, when the dog stopped. Thedel took him by the scruff of the neck with his left hand, held the pistol in his right, and walked gently forward step by step.

"It's not a fence hedgehog or an Ilk or an Adder," thought the farmer, for Grieptoo was wagging his tail. But then he turned back, for just as Thedel turned aside the bushes, a female screamed out, and she screamed so terribly that it went through Harm's marrow and bones. As he rode nearer, he saw a girl lying on her knees half under the stones, with her hands folded under her mouth, her eyes open as if a knife were at her throat, trembling all over, and crying, "Oh, God, oh, God, oh, God, don't hurt me, don't hurt me! They have killed my dear father, they have killed my good mother, for the sake of our most holy Lord Jesus' suffering and death, do nothing to me and let me die here!"

The servant pulled the dog back and made a very unhappy face, and the farmer looked to and fro as if it were his own life.

should go. Then he put the pistol away, raised his oath hand in the air and shouted over the neck of the piebald to the girl: "We won't hurt anyone unless he's an arch-halun. We are honest and lawful farmers and have had enough ourselves. Have no fear!" He pointed to the dog. "Look how Grieptoo wiggles his cod-end! With whom he does that, he need have no fear of us. You see, girl, the dog wants to lick you. That's right, my dog, so good, Grieptoo! The poor girl doesn't need to scream. Thedel, let him go!"

The dog went up to the girl, wagging his tail and with little ears, licked her feet and then her face, growled and squeaked, and all at once the girl took him in her arms, pressed him to her, kissed him, cried piteously, and, looking at the two men, cried, "O God, praise and thanks! Yes, I can see it in your eyes, you are legal people and will do me no harm."

Then she fell on her face and remained lying there, and her hair, which was as red as a dry machange bush in the sun, fell long in front of her.

Wulf dismounted and gave Thedel the horses to hold. He picked up the girl and took her to where the sun had dried the Haidmoos, took off his jacket, twisted it up and put it under her neck. Then he bent down a broad machange bush, cut it off and tucked it in so that it cast its shadow on the maiden's face. For a moment he looked at her closely, kneeling by her; she had black pits under her eyes, her cheeks were sunken, all the tendons and veins were visible on her neck, and her lips were white as chalk.

He shook his head and stood up. "She's half dead of hunger and half scared." He opened the saddle holster, took out the bottle, poured some wine into his hand, knelt down and, after pouring a little on the girl's lips, rubbed her nose and temples with the rest. She opened her eyes, made the same face again as when she first saw the men, then tried to straighten up, but fell back on her jacket and said, "Me

hunger so; oh, how I hunger!"

Harm already had the holster in his hand. He sat down beside her, broke off a very small piece of bread, for he saw how the water ran out of her mouth when she smelt the bread, gave it to her and said, "Slowly! The slower you eat, the more you shall have." But she could not get it down, however much she swallowed and choked, and so he poured a little of the Spanish wine from the bottle into his hand and gave it to her, and when she had it down, she sighed deeply, smiled stupidly, and reached with both hands for the bread.

The farmer took her in his arms as if she were a little child, and held the bread so that she could not bite off more than a piece the size of a fingernail each time, and in between he gave her equally small pieces of salted meat and now and then some of the wine. It made his heart very light when she ate and drank more and more calmly and was no longer so blue under the eyes and could keep her hands still. Then he placed the bread and meat on the holster lid, put the bottle next to it, and said, "Now you're ready to finish on your own and not eat yourself sick," and he took his arm away from her shoulders.

The girl looked at him in such a way that the bandage around her neck became too tight, and then he realised what a picture of a human being she was, despite her unmade hair, and even though she was dirty in the face and battered all over. And then he also noticed that she was looking down at herself, and secretly wanted to fasten her shirt under her neck, but it was torn short and small, and the bodice hung round her in such a way that he noticed the three half-red, half-black scratches that criss-crossed her chest.

"Thedel," he called, "go to the Anberge, we have to be careful!" The servant did as he was told. Wulf untied his breastcloth and put it over the girl's shoulders and back so that he could tie it at the small of her back. "It's still fresh," he said, nodding to her; "you could get something." Then he pulled

He took off his shoes, untied his knee laces, pulled off his stockings and gave them to her with the words: "They're quite wide, but if you have a cow, you can't sell goat's milk," and he laughed.

But he got a head like a laying hen, and he felt as if he had come to sit on an anthill when she looked at him wide-eyed, folded her hands, let her eyes run over and all at once caught his hand, bent down and kissed his hand so that it became wet with her tears. He pushed her back almost roughly and asked: "Are you full too? We still have enough and the cat shouldn't drag our stomachs behind the gooseberries. But now let's see if we can find water somewhere, because I don't usually carry a looking-glass with me, whereas I have a piece of ribbon so that you can do your hair up a bit." He made a long neck. "There are bogs down there, and where they are, there is a bog, and where there is a bog, there must be water. Because that's the way we want to go!"

He took her in his arms and walked with her to the bottom. "How light she is!" he thought, and then his senses grew strange, for her breath came over his mouth, and her hair smelt so that his chest grew tight, and he felt her heart beating fast against his, and it was infected by it. So he was delighted when he was able to set her down by the Beeke, but before he left her to herself, he broke off an ell branch, took the measure of her foot, and said with a laugh, "Now I must go to cobbling! And when you're back in line, you can come forward."

Thedel didn't know what to say when the farmer told him to "Take off your boots!" But his eyes went wide when Wulf took the knife and cut off the brims, Thedel's greatest pride, and it was only when he cut them open and poked holes in them and pulled a string through them that he realised what it meant, and then he said: "At first I mostly wanted to be wrong, because I thought you were going to play a trick on me."

The girl almost laughed when Wulf gave her the stripping shoes, but she took them gladly, for she walked in her stockings on the heath like a cat over a wet Dele. "Are you all right?" the farmer asked her, and when she nodded, he took her round, lifted her onto the pinto and sat behind her. "Thedel, ride ahead," he called, "because I can't really use my eyes like this!"

The sky had brightened even more; the Dullerchen were singing out of it, the moorland creatures were rising, chirping and settling down, the post was breaking up, and here and there a willow bush was turning yellow. Harm let the piebald walk. "After all," he said, "now that we've had one stay, time is no longer of the essence!"

His heart was light. He thought it was because he had sheltered a poor human child, but when he smelt her hair, and heard her heart beat, and looked at her cheek, so lean, so pale, and yet so beautiful, and the little fine ear that the red curls now and then let loose, and the thin white neck that came out of the red cloth, and her hand that lay on his thigh, and when he felt how her left arm was round his body, he did not know whether it was beautiful or hideous. But in general, he quite liked it as it was.

"Do you see the two shark otters?" he asked her, pointing his head past her face to where two wood storks were flying in the air over a meadow, flashing and blinking. The girl nodded.
"That's where we want to go. First you should sleep it off after Lusten and then we'll make sure that you get in line. And just so you know, my name is Harm and I was a farmer on the Wulfshofe in Ödringen until one day the devil unleashed his servants on us. And now we live like the wolf on the meadow and the eagle above the quarry, except that we don't catch hares, because we're not like that, we just hunt foxes and all sorts of other things. And that's Niehusthedel, he's just like that, he's got his heart somewhere with a girl in his apron

and so he has it pretty good, because if you want something, you already have something."

He stopped, for he wondered how he came to show this girl, whom he did not know at all, and of whom he did not know where she was from or what was the matter with her, half his trumps. But then he realised that his tongue was galloping of its own accord. "What's your name?" he asked, and when she said, "Johanna," he said, "And what do you want to do now?" She turned her face to him and looked at him: "Keep me with you; I can do all sorts of things and would like to do all the work there is. What am I supposed to do if I'm not allowed to stay with you? Please, please, keep me with you! Your wife might need a maid."

"Listen," he said, and his voice sounded all at once as if it had ashes on it, "I don't have a wife. I'm a man who's like that mouse in the air. But I can see that there is no falsehood in you, and if you like it with us, you are welcome to stay with us. So you need not worry. Of course, we won't be coming home for a while, because I have some business around here. And that is such that it is better that you pass as a man for the time being. You can hold your own on horseback, I can see that. That's all you need."

"I will do anything you want," she replied, and he had to look away, for he could not stand the eyes she was giving him. "And now, so that you know who I am," she said, "my father was a preacher in Bavaria. We lived in peace until the war came. Half the village went up in flames and most of the people died. Father then looked for another job and we ended up in this area, where people were very good to us, better than anywhere else. Father wanted to go to Hanover, because he thought he might be able to get a small office there, as he had letters with him to councillors and other gentlemen of standing. Then the Tilly's caught up with us, for a Tatern girl, on whom I had opened a nasty boil, told them what sort of people we were, and they were like devils incarnate. I'll tell you about it another time; I mustn't think about it now. I have had to watch how

They beat my father so badly that blood came out of his mouth, and when my mother cursed them, they drowned her in the well before my very eyes. I still don't know how I got away. I only know that they were all drunk, and then I kept running and only came round again when I fell down in the bush. And then I ran again as far as I could and fell down again and lay there until I came round again, and ate grass and roots, and avoided everything that had a human face. And then you found me."

She threw her other arm around his neck and laid her head against his chest: "You want to keep me, you say? You're good, you're so good!" She cried so hard that the tears soaked through his trousers, and he let her cry for all she was worth, for he realised that it did her good. Only when they were close to Jeversen did he say, "Now we have to dismount. Thedel, see how the Immen fly, and whether we are below or above the wind. In the meantime, we'll stay in the bush. And see that you get man's clothes and everything that goes with them that suits the maiden, but don't talk any more about what only the Haide needs to know."

He laid his coat down for the girl, folded up his jacket, made her a pillow out of it and said: "Lie down and sleep! I want to wash up a bit. Grieptoo, there! The dog will make sure that you can sleep peacefully. I'll stay close by." He wrapped her in his coat and put her to bed. She smiled at him like a little child being put to bed, sighed and closed her eyes. The dog sat down next to her, touched her and then lay down too, but kept his head up.

Harm had already put out his second pipe when Thedel returned. He brought the stuff and everything that went with it and whispered: "The wind is blowing. Four people sit in the jug who don't belong there and have the big word. The jug has a face like a cattule, so they have beaten him, and now they are drunk and are beating the women. No one dares go near them, for they have boasted that more of their people will follow them."

Wulf tapped out his pipe. "Hm," he said, "hm, does Warnekenswibert already know and Hilmersheine? That's good, so let's not delay any longer and see what kind of guests they are." He took the stuff and went to the bush. Grieptoo wagged at him so that his tail beat loudly on the ground, and that woke the girl up. "Here!" said the Wulfsbauer, "until just now you were a Johanna, now you must make a Hans of yourself. I'm going to stay with you until you've changed your clothes; I and Thedel have things to do in the village. Would you rather stay with the dog and the horses, or would you rather come with us? But I tell you, there are dead men to see! So you want to come? Fine! A man must have armour and weapons, here's a knife and there's a pistol! It's ready. And now come! Grieptoo, don't let anyone touch my horses!"

The dog dropped his ears and watched them until they were round the corner. "Now, listen, Hans," said Harm, "there's some riff-raff in the jug again, who're bullying people. We can't stand that, and that's why we want to sweep it out with a coarse broom. You always stay behind me, you understand, and only when the branch starts to crack can you hold out your hand to me." He looked at the Machangelhagen and waved:
"Well, we must have disturbed you while you were having your snack?" he said to the two young people who were standing there looking at the girl. "That's a good friend. And now let's get going! If you want to catch ravens, you can't wait until they've fledged."

They went through an oak-bush, climbed over a stile, went right across a dell, and then Wulf said, "Now you two go each to his own and see that you can stay by the half-door, and when one of you pours water out of the big door, that is the sign that we are to come. You've got the lead truncheons, haven't you? In a proper economy you have to do a clean job!"

The two farmer's sons laughed in their throats and left; Harm, Thedel and Johanna climbed over a fence, squeezed under the windows of the jug, and then the farmer said, "So, Thedel, make your stupidest face!"

Wulf stopped behind a pile of firewood, and the girl stood behind him; he felt her breath over his collar. A crude laugh came from the jug, then a female squeaked. Harm felt the girl behind him fly all over. He turned his head towards her. "Are you frightened?" he whispered. "Not scared, but something else!" she said, and he nodded at her.

At the same moment, the landlady poured a bucket of water out of the big door. "Come!" whispered Wulf, first whistling the humming-bucket song and then laughing loudly, he went into the house, where a fellow was sitting by the fire and had the youngest daughter, a child of twelve, in his clutches, while another was pulling the maid to and fro. The other two, who had already had a good drink, stood there and drank.

"Well, that's a lot of fun here!" cried the Ödringer loudly; "'n evening together!" And then he struck the fellow sitting in front of the fire over the head with the short lead cudgel he had taken out of his left sleeve, so that the man fell dead on the fire-rods, and as soon as he lay there, the man holding the maid in his arms fell over, for Warnekenswibert had served him well. The two other riders made stupid faces; but before they had quite realised what was going on, they were lying crosswise, for Wulf had got one of them and Hilmersheine the other.

"So, now we're between us, I'll have a drink," laughed the Wulfsbauer when the flett was clean, and then he asked the girl quietly:
"You've got scared of us now, haven't you?" She looked at him with blank eyes and shook her head. "Well, let's have a snack, and then we'll need to sleep, especially you, since you haven't had a chance to do so lately. Do you have room for the three of us, Kordeskord?" The innkeeper nodded. "Mass, that is, Thedel can sleep with our servant, and you two take the guest bunk."

When Harm was alone with the girl, he said: "Now lie down, Hans; you don't need to undress much, because we have to leave early. You can sleep peacefully, there's a whole village watching over us. You will have realised who we are by now. There's no blood on our hands,

At most on our lead sticks, but that's not worth much more. You have to greet a prankster like a prankster, and the best way to get rid of wasps is to boil water in the grass garden."

Johanna had barely stretched out before she was asleep. The Wulfsbauer couldn't sleep at first because he didn't want to move so as not to wake the girl. All sorts of thoughts ran through his head, but in the end his eyes closed and he slept until the landlady came in and said, "It's five o'clock and morning time is ready." With that she went away and left the Krüsel on the stool.

Harm stood up quietly and shone a light into the snug behind his hand: "What a pity!" he thought, "she's sleeping so beautifully!" But then the girl heaved a deep sigh, raised her hands in the air, opened her eyes and when she saw the farmer in front of her, she whispered: "Oh, it's you!" And she laughed at him. "Yes, now you must get up," he said. "Stay down for a moment, I'll get you a bowl of soup and wash water first, and in the meantime I'll get you a horse, because we want to ride fast."

When it was just broad daylight, they were at a single-digit yard. "We'll stay here until midday," said Harm. "Tell me, house mate, you ride like a paddock hand." Johanna laughed: "Pastor's children learn everything except how to be pious," she said, "and I'm not bad at shooting either. But I also know how to cook and knit stockings." Wulf laughed: "I have to say that, because you can do more than I can," and then she laughed again, and he thought to himself: "If she laughs like that any more, the story will be a mustard for me."

The farm was called Wodshorn; the farmer hardly spoke a word and the farmer's wife not much more. But they did not want for anything. At nine o'clock a farmer's son arrived and told Wulf something in private, and Harm said to Johanna: "Now we have to stay until tomorrow. The best thing is for you to go back to sleep; I want to do the same. If you're clever, you eat and sleep in advance these days. You can talk to the farmer's wife openly; she knows all about it. She has a heart of gold, but she has

She has been through terrible things; that's why she doesn't speak and why she has forgotten how to laugh."

It was twelve o'clock when the girl woke up. The farmer's wife stood in front of her and said: "If you'd rather stay in bed, I'll bring you some food." Johanna shook her head: "No, then I'd be ashamed; I want to get up." The woman smiled: "Would you rather wear girl's clothes? There's something that will fit you; there are just a lot of people here in the house who don't talk more than they should. Tomorrow you can go back to being a farmhand."

She put the red skirt, the bodice, stockings and shoes and everything that belonged to it down for her, and when she came back into the dönze after a while and saw the girl standing there all ready, she nodded to her, but with one she took her in her arms, kissed her and cried on her neck. "I had two daughters, healthy, smooth girls, twins. We found them both dead in the bush a year ago. If you don't like it in Peerhobstel, come here; you shall be kept like a daughter." She wiped her eyes. "Yes, what's the use of crying! And there are more who have been like that, not least Wulfsbur. I will tell you all about it, for you must realise it once."

The girl listened and barely caught her breath as long as the woman spoke, but the tears ran down her cheeks. "Yes," said the farmer, who had also come to the Dönze, "you should have seen the Wulfsbauern earlier! He was on holiday every day. And now, he's like the greyhound that runs across the heath and is only satisfied when he can lick blood."

After lunch, when hardly a word was spoken, Johanna helped the farmer's wife in the house; then they both sat down on the bench behind the house and knitted. The sun was shining warmly, the Easter flowers were blooming on the lawn, the yellow butterbirds were flying, the magpie was looking for brushwood for its nest, the wood was beating, and two Adder's eagles were flying over the Wohld and calling loudly.

The Wulfsbauer stayed out with Thedel for two days. When he returned, he looked tired, had dark eyes and tight lips. "The business has fallen through," he said; "I'm too tired today and want to sleep in first. Tomorrow morning we want to go to Peerhobstel."

During the night a thunderstorm passed by. Johanna woke up from it and chased herself away; but when she heard the farmer's wife beside her, and Grieptoo breathing hard and deeply outside the hut, she immediately fell asleep again. In the morning, when she put on the man's clothes, the woman packed up the girl's clothes, made a bundle of them, and said, "This shall be yours, my daughter! And don't forget: there's always a bunk and a place at the table for you at Wodshorn."

It had become a beautiful morning; the moorhens were everywhere, the cranes were showing off, the lapwings were calling and the sky goats were bleating. Everywhere in the meadows the post was all red, and now and then a willow bush stood there looking like a bright flame. A herd of stags moved across the moorland, stopped when they saw three riders, and then moved faster towards the moor.

As they rode over the high heath before Fuhrberg, the wolf howled behind them. The farmer turned round and said, "Those are our people!" and he returned the wolf's cry. Soon afterwards, two riders came out of the bush; it was Viekenludolf and Grönhagenkrischan. "Well, up so early, Ludolf?" Wulf greeted him; "you haven't been to bed, have you?" The greyhound grinned: "Not in mine, though. What a pity you weren't there yesterday! We made a good move. Well, we'll come round; you can see for yourself." He looked at Johanna. "It's a friend of mine called Hans," said the Öringer. "Hm," the Rammlinger grumbled and wanted to grin, but refrained because the other man didn't invite him.

He rode ahead with Wulf and whispered something to him. Harm then let him ride ahead and asked Johanna: "Hans, can you bear to see a birch tree bearing rotten apples? There are now a few less bad apples in the world. I have to go there; if you want, you can go with me.

Thedel here waiting so long." The girl shook her head: "I would be happy if all birch trees were so richly laden; then all people with a pious heart would be better off!" The farmer nodded.

Where the Dietweg intersected the Heerstraße, there were several tall birch trees standing side by side. Five men and two women were hanging from them. Above each of them was an upright wolf's mantle carved into the bark, and the oldest man, a fellow with a black beard, had a board tied between his hands; the following words were written on it in red chalk:

We are our 3 times Elve and call ourselves the Wölwe and watch out for anyone who makes long fingers.

The reapers

Wulf and his companion stayed at the Viekenhof in Fuhrberg until the Ulenflucht and only arrived in Peerhobstel in the dark. Everyone's eyes widened when they heard that the Wulf farmer had brought a maid with him. But because she was nowhere to be seen and everyone who could help had their hands full, nobody bothered to look after her.

Over time, Johanna became acquainted with the women. At first they had to laugh at her secretly because she had red hair, spoke High German and had hands like a noblewoman. But when Wittenmutter was laid up and the maid from the Wulfshof stood by her in her difficult hour and also made sure that the twins came to their rights every day afterwards, they saw what they had in her, especially as she otherwise worked like a maid.

The children, who at first stood there with their fingers in their mouths when she ran her hand over their heads, soon got used to her, and in time she had them all around her every Sunday afternoon; then she told them all sorts of stories and taught the girls knitting, sewing and darning.

"That's what we've been missing here, Harm," said Ulenvater, who had taken the girl close to his heart; "now we have a schoolmaster like no other, even if he has long hair. It started with storytelling and now she's teaching them to read and write. Do you know what? Krackenmutter her Mieken, that would be a Lüttjemagd for us; because the other one has more time for the children and the sick, because she knows how to do that like a trained doctor."

The Wulfsbauer was very pleased. When he held her Grieptoo, who had kicked a blackthorn, which had turned into an ulcer, and she had cut it open and bandaged the dog's paw, he asked her: "Tell me, what can't you do? You can ride, you can shoot, you're up to the housework, you know how to look after the cattle, you can deal with sick people, you're a schoolmaster and a mother of sorrow, and you garden so well that it's a joy; where did you get all that, girl?"

She blushed and said: "I had to learn to ride at home because I accompanied father on his visits to the sick, and the old bailiff, God rest his soul, taught me to shoot, because he said that a woman needs it even more than a man, because she has more to lose than just her naked life. And the other thing was probably because my father wanted to be a doctor, but later got a different reputation of his own accord, and because the teacher we had was better at mending trousers than teaching the children, so my father took care of them and I had to help him. And then I learnt the other things from my mother, especially how to look after the cattle and the flowers, because she was excellent at that."

That must have been the case, otherwise the new courtyard would not have looked so smooth. Thedel had made a nice fence around the garden, and as it fitted just so, the gate was placed between two large pod bushes, which Johanna had trimmed so that they looked exactly the same, wide at the bottom and pointed at the top, and in front of the small door Thedel placed two pointed machetes.
Of all the flowers and bushes that grow in the wild gardens of Ödringen

When the flowers grew, the farmhand brought in as many as were needed, and when he had to go with the farmer across country, he looked to see where there were beautiful flowers in the gardens or grown in pots, and he had cuttings of them given to him, so that soon he was generally known as the flower shedder.

But it was also a splendour how everything flourished in the garden; although it was already too late that year for the snowdrops, the May flowers and Easter flowers and the imperial crowns and peonies and tulips, the primroses had bloomed beautifully and in June all the corners of the fence were full of wild roses. The ivy vines climbed up all over the house, the elder bush by the bakehouse was white all over and the gold lacquer bushes looked like copper jugs in the sun.
Then when Johanna was tampering with the bushes with her knife and the sun shone on her hair and bare arms, from which the white sleeves fell far back, and the red skirt swayed when she bent down to pull out a weed, old Ul:
"It's a stateswoman's man," and he poked Harm in the ribs and winked at him: "If I were half as old, I'd know what to do. Or should someone else snatch her away from you? For I've been poking you in the eye for a long time, and you won't get a better wife any time soon."

The farmer was of the same opinion, and more than once he had given himself a push to get where he wanted to go; but he always felt as if there was a gap between them. For what was he? Not that he felt inferior because she had learnt more, but he dared not approach her, and all the less so the more he was with her.
Formerly he had put his heart and soul into beating the fleas out of the heather's fur; but now, when he lurked in the moor or lay in the bush, he always thought of a face with hair as red as the evening sun on the cart-stems, and of two round arms coming out of white sleeves. For he was glad to see that Johanna had grown flesh and colour; her bodice was plump and her red skirt no longer hung so loosely round her loins.

On St John's Day, Ulenvater had travelled with Thedel to Obbershagen, where his cousin had a farm. Harm and Johanna were alone, for Mieken was at home for a few days because Krackenmutter was not quite up to it. It had been scorching hot all day, and towards evening it did not cool down at all, so that the farmer, who was sitting on the bench in the garden with Johanna, said, "We shall probably get some weather," for there were thick weather towers over the Halloberge. The weather became more and more bright, and Wulf saw that every time the cloud parted, the girl grabbed her bodice with her hand.

"Are you scared?" he asked. She shook her head: "No, it's just that I'm so sick; I'm all out." She also looked paler than usual and had the same look in her eyes as when Grieptoo had tracked her down. Harm remembered how he had held her in his arms and fed her like a child, and how afterwards, when she had sat on the pinto in front of him, her hair had smelled so bad that he had felt quite strange. He looked at her hands, which lay on her apron. They had turned brown, and so had her arms, but they were still fine and elegant, although they did not shrink from any work. "She is and always will be a fine lady," he thought, and sighed so deeply that she laughed at him.

"That sounds very dangerous!" she said, "Do you have something on your mind that's bothering you?" As she looked at him so merrily from the side, he thought: "It's now or never!" But he stopped thinking, because he didn't know: "Is it all right for you to just grab her round the waist, or is it more decent for you to tell her how you feel?"

A child came running in who had torn a splinter, and now he had missed it again. He ate little in the evenings, usually didn't know where to keep his eyes, generally felt quite miserable in his skin and was glad when it was time to sleep, because the weather had gone down.

He couldn't fall asleep for a long time. He was annoyed with himself, but knew no way to get out of the bush. He also had

He was afraid he might spoil it with the girl, and so he kept running round and round with his thoughts. At last he must have fallen asleep, for all at once he saw a blue glow and heard a hard thud; the weather had returned.

The horses beat against the wall, the cows tore at the chains. He stood up, put on his coat and went out onto the threshing floor. There he ran into Johanna, who was also coming out of her dönze in her coat. The lightning showed him that she was white as chalk. "Are you sick?" he asked. She shook her head. "It's just the weather; it was too stuffy for me in bed." But when the next flash of lightning came, followed by a huge clap of thunder, she screamed, grabbed her chest and fell against the wall. He jumped up quickly, took hold of her and led her into the large dönze, made her sit down on the stove bench and moved closer to her.

Thunder and lightning came at once. The girl tried to compose herself, but her mouth would not hold her cry, and then he took her in his arms, laid her head on his breast, and covered her face with the collar of his coat; so he held her, now and then, when it flashed and crashed again, patting her shoulders and talking to her like a young horse that wants to shy away from a mare. She lay quite still and never trembled again, and it was only when the weather was too good that he felt her hands fly.

After a little over half an hour, the thunder and lightning stopped. It poured down like a torrent and it became cool in the dunes. He took the coat from her face, and then he realised how she took him firmly in her arms, and he felt that there was no longer a wall or a ditch between them, that they belonged together in joy and sorrow, and he took what came to him.

"That was a bad night!" cried Ulenvater, as he stepped into the big dune the next afternoon. He had walked the last part of the way, for Thedel wanted to fetch some fir hedge to scatter, and as the old man had a soft step, Johanna could not get off Harm's lap as quickly as she would have liked. So she stood there with her eyes open

She was on the screed and cheeks as red as peonies, stroked her apron and finally blurted out: "Only at first". But then she slapped her hands in front of her face and laughed and Harm laughed too and Ul laughed even more, because he soon realised where it had hit.

He looked from one to the other and finally said: "Well, then I wish you all the best, my children, because that's what you've both become to me." But then he slapped the table: "That's a stupid thing to say! You don't even get a glass of wine and a piece of cake? I, that's no other way in this country!"

The young woman ran what she could, and soon there was an earthen bottle of wine on the table, over which she had laid a clean cloth, and a colourful plate of cakes and an even more colourful jug with an even more colourful bouquet of flowers, and three tall glasses of the finest kind, and three tall glasses of the finest kind, from which the Spanish officers of the Emperor's party actually wanted to drink, were placed on the table, and the wine, which had also been intended for other people, tasted no worse to those who drank it, even if Johanna only drank half a glass and then said that the Dönze was going round with her.

"Harm," said the old man as Johanna washed up, "I'll tell you one thing, though: the first paster I find must come here and do the job properly. These are wild times, and the devil can have his way. Your wife is all alone; if there is any misfortune, she can go overland on a white stick, for there will be some who do not favour her place here and will hold all sorts of things against her. Now is not the time to hold a proper wedding, for the heavens are becoming more and more involved. Tilly, the papist dog, is chasing the Danes to and fro, and the pestilence has returned. Let yourselves be blessed and holla! The main thing is that you don't have to be so grey at night anymore!"

And so it was done, and it was a good thing that the farmer had hurried with the wedding, because that way he could think back to Peerhobstel with more peace of mind when he played the wolf on the heath again.

had to.

That was not a rare occurrence now. Tilly and the Danes moved around the strongholds like dogs around bones, and wherever you listened, there was hardship and death and human cruelty. Where the warriors had harvested, the marauders followed with their rakes of hunger, and every day one heard gruesome stories of women tortured to death and slaughtered, for whatever fell into the hands of the brutes, whether a frail old man or a breast child, had to die.

The defence wolves therefore had their hands full. They now had a hundred and eleven night messengers, plus another two hundred day messengers. So the work went quickly, and some of the trees along the roads bore fruit that even the fiercest boy loved to leave hanging. However, the Wehrwölfe kept a close eye on their men and treated everyone according to their position; those with a field bandage on their arm were given a bullet and put in the ground, while the other pack was honoured with the Wiede and the crows and wolves had to do the rest.

It was a grey day in March when the Wulfsbauer had work to do on the farm. Some sleuth had discovered that the Ödringers were now called Peerhobstler and were not yet so starved that they could not be expected to pay the treasure. But that was not their place, and Harm Wulf, the headman, wanted to get rid of them. When he said to the lords of the office: "As long as you don't protect us, we won't be treasured," he was called a shameless fellow; but he held his nose and said: "I want to see if our Lord Duke Christian doesn't have a different opinion of the matter; otherwise we'd rather set fire to our houses and live from begging and stealing until we're given an office so that we can scour people who have to hide in quarries and bushes."

When he went out of the door, Thedel was standing there; he was all white around the nose, had eyes like a tomcat in the dark and said: "The baby and the Holy Cross are sitting half-drunk in the jug and Viekenludolf is doing the same.

She's even drunker." The farmer opened his eyes: "True and certain?" The farmhand nodded: "I was standing behind the red-bearded dog and already had my hand on the Metz; but luckily I remembered that it wasn't in your favour. They won't come out of the bag today, farmer, as they did in Ahlden. I've already been to Heeßel and Schillerslage, and from there I've reported to all the right people; so this time they'll have to believe it!"

As Wulf walked with Thedel towards the jug, he felt as if he was not as happy as he ought to be. He was thinking more of Peerhobstel and his wife than of the gallows bobbins, but that was why he walked quickly at first, until he called "Prr!" to himself and walked up the street as boringly as if he had as much time as a farmhand mucking out the stable. He also asked the cowherd's wife, who was standing at the door, about her children, but with one he could no longer listen, for he had heard a voice, a man's voice, but as bright as if a colt was starting, a voice he had never heard before and yet he knew it, for he had often heard it when he lurked alone in the bush or rode across the meadow. He thought of the afternoon on the Hingstberg and of how he had ridden through the peat bog with Henneckenklaus and had got scorching air in his nose, and of all the other things. His rose stood before him, Hermke at his apron and little Maria in his arms, and he clenched his teeth so hard that the Krüger woman chased him away.

But then he went into the farmhouse parlour without looking at who was sitting there, stood at the clay bench and had beer poured for him, listened with one ear to what the stevedore was saying to him, then put his mug on the table next to the door, took his bread and bacon out of his pocket, He pulled out his knife and ate as slowly and carefully as ever, until Viekenludolf looked up, put his right hand on the table, let his thumb, then his index finger and then his middle finger pop out of his fist, as if he wanted to recalculate the bill, and then shouted at the Holy Cross: "Another one of those, you old drunkard! then I'll buy you another one, because I like to laugh for my life."

The Peerhobstler now took a closer look at the people, and for a moment he felt as if their necks were already long and their tongues in front of their mouths; for with them sat Wulf called Schütte from Wennebostel, Harms half-brother, who had married into a farm, Münstermanns Dettmer and Grönhagenkrischan; Duwenhinrich and Flebbendiedrich stood by the stove, and Aschenkurt played with the cat that sat under the bench and pecked at his fingers; and there sat the two fiends, keeping their eyes open with difficulty and rejoicing like the snow kings when their raunchy speeches and horror stories made the men laugh.

"Have you ever been to Schillerslage, baby?" asked Viekenludolf; "there's a funny pub there. The landlord has got you a girl there, the old blokes will go crazy for her, I tell you. But the girl is like a nettle. I'd like to see the one who takes off the wreath. There's no one among us who can do that."

Harm laughed in his throat because, firstly, the landlord only had an old maid and she was a slovenly piece of work, and she also looked like a dead cat that had been lying in the rain for eight days. The infant, however, beat his rickety chest: "If anyone, it's me, because I'm outrageously lucky with people!" His ragamuffin brother agreed with him: "Yes, he has; all that's right is an Aast uff der Fiedel; that is," he continued, looking half cheeky, half anxious, "if there's no other way, he doesn't make much fuss and turns off their nip."

The infant, who had just let a large mug of honey beer slip down his long neck, laughed like a cuckoo: "Damn it, that's what I do! What are humans for? And anyway, if you're a cheeky chap with a cure, you're not going to be bleating on like a Lüning for eight days. A bit of coaxing will help," he said, opening and closing his hand like a goshawk with its claws.

Thedel stood under the door and looked down his neck. The Wulf farmer felt a chill run down his spine when he saw the look his servant was giving him.

He felt as if there was no longer a living man boasting, but a dead corpse. And now the fellow began to sing, and he laughed as he squeaked: "O gallows, you high house, you look so grassy, so grassy; I won't even look at you, for I know I'll get it, yes, I'll get it."

The farmer went into the yard, for Viekenludolf had clucked his tongue. "Soon, the cabbage will be ripe for cutting," said the Rammlinger; "He's already hanging his head." He looked up at the sky. "It's clearing up; one more layer of mead and they'll run after us like hens after a cock." He tapped out his pipe: "Tomorrow morning at seven o'clock we'll be on the heath above the second village." He stuffed his pipe and had Harm give him a crumb of fire. "It's hard work, I can tell you, driving such drunkards out of their minds!"

The Wulfsbauer smoothed his bill and went opposite to the Jew, where he traded for a breast-pin until Flebbendiedrich and the Wennebosteler Wulf and Duwenhinrich quarrelled, and then Viekenludolf and Aschenkurt rode away and had the two men between them, who did not realise that behind each of them sat his death in the flesh, for they yowled and bawled the song of the bogeyman that goes round the German Empire.

When they were already round the corner, the Peerhobstler heard them yelling: "The emperor beats the Trumm with his hands and feet", and the children shouted after them: "Duhnedier, Duhnedier!"

Then he broke off the deal, paid what the Jew had struck, for which he arched his back once over and over again, and the servant came out of the driveway with the pinto.

The farmer climbed stiffly into the saddle and rode as if he had a horse's back between his legs for the first time, but as soon as he had got rid of the gate money, he set off at a trot and was soon behind the riders. In the Schillersläger Kruge he behaved quite calmly, but as he lay on his straw hut he could not sleep much, for he had all his

Thoughts where his wife was.

So he was already five in the boots. Thedel was sitting outside the door of the stable where the two cutthroats were sleeping. He laughed: "One of them has been awake for a while and he's sobered up too, and if he didn't have an old mop in his mouth, he'd be a disgrace because I've tied his sleeves in front of his hands, and he can't get out of the attic either because there's a ring on the cellar hatch and there's a rope on it, and he's got it round his waist." He spit out his briem: "The other one drank so much honey beer yesterday that he doesn't know anything about himself, and I don't think he'll be ready for us to deal with him before tonight."

The Wulfsbauer had soup and bread served, smoked two pipes and sent six Thedel ahead. At half past six, several peasants rode up, cracked their whips until the landlord came out, pretended not to see the Peerhobstler, drank their warm beer in the saddle and rode on. Then a cart creaked, the farmhand banged three times in quick succession and four times at intervals and whistled: "Pull, mould, pull, in the dirt up to your knees." Viekenludolf called out from the house: "Jochen, can you take me with you for a while; I've got small feet from your beer!" Then Harm got up too: "I'm no different; take me with you too; I don't care about a handful of tobacco." He sat down on the Schütt and looked into the wagon straw in front of him, which flew back and forth from time to time, and from which sometimes came a sound as if a pig was lying underneath.

The fog was still hanging over the moor. "It will be a fine day," said the farm labourer; "the Wettmar musicians are blowing," for the cranes could be heard bragging loudly from the moor. A farmer's wife saw the wagon coming, nodded and said: "Well, see that you get rid of your pigs, Jochen!" A rook called out of the mist; the wagon straw went back and forth. "Did you hear the black brother?" the Rammlinger asked the farmhand; "the ravens are having a good time today!" A grunt came from the straw. A rider trotted past, another and then a third. "After the pig market?" they called to the farmhand. He nodded

and griente.

All one hundred and eleven Wehrwölfe and usually just as many messengers stood around the Haidberg. As the carriage approached, a murmur went round and round. The fog parted and began to dance, and then two cart-trees became visible, with their tops cut off and a crossbeam holding them together; a dead dog was hanging on the left and a dead pig on the right, and between them were two ropes reaching down to the ground. A ring of stones had been made round both trees, which was open in front, and the wolf's snare was carved upright in each trunk, so that it was plainly visible.

The farmhand nodded to the men, shouted "Prrr!" tied the reins, dismounted, spat, walked slowly behind the wagon, pulled away the bulk, waved to two men and then he pulled a sack from under the straw, which moved, and the men helped him put it on the ground, and with the other one too. The Wulfsbauer and Viekenludolf had dismounted and gone to where My Drewes was standing; he had two peeled willow sticks in his hand. He waved and it was as quiet as in an empty church.

All of the two hundred men looked to where the farmhands were untying the sacks, pulling out the two men and untying their shackles, setting them on their feet and bringing them to the head man after taking the rags from their mouths. Not one of them made a sound, not even Niehusthedel, who stood in front with the Wulfsbauer and made a face like a beast.
Four hundred eyes gazed coldly at the two arch-halunks, who stood there shaking like aspen leaves in agony and catcalls, but could not utter a sound.

The chief steward looked them in the face and began: "As chairman of the Wehrwölfe, I have summoned you to an open and fair affair on rough pasture and common land, because we want to do justice to these two men. Who has anything to say against them?"

The Wulf farmer took the following stand: "I am suing you for the death by fire of my wife Rose Ul, a native of Ödringen, and her and my underage children Hermke and Maria Wulf, and for arson, robbery and theft of dead and living property."

He went back and Thedel stood in his place and shouted: "I sue them for the fiery death of my sister Alheid Niehus from Ödringen, an orphan not yet fifteen years old!"

He went back and made way for Viekenludolf, and he shouted: "I accuse them in the name of honourable virgins, widows, pregnant women and women who have recently given birth, innocent girls and underage children, the sick and the weak, against whom they have committed offences. I shout hello over them and hello again and for the third time hello and hello and hello and hello, and I will swear with seven oaths that they deserve to die seven times and seventy after what they told me yesterday with their own mouths in the jug at Burgdorf in their stupid drunkenness."

The chairman looked round: "Is there anyone here who has anything to say against these men or who wants to speak in their favour? Anyone can speak freely here without being held against them."

Silence fell over the group. The sun came out and shone on the two hundred faces of the men; they were all as if made of stone. A crow flew by and squawked, and the titmice were luring merrily in the fluffy flocks.

The three times eleven sub-oblemen separated themselves and mumbled among themselves; then one of them went up to the headobman and said something to him.

"So we have decided," said the judge, "that they shall both have a cradle round their necks, and shall be hanged seven shoes higher than a common scoundrel, and between the ears of a dead cur and a fallen sow until they are dead, and it shall be

no one will dare to take them down and bury them if he does not wish to take their place!"

He broke one stick and threw it behind him and the other and gave up the cradle, and the baby fell to his knees and cried:
"Mercy," for he got no further, because he already had the cradle over his Adam's apple, and the Holy Cross had barely whimpered: "Just a moment, I'm so sick!" He was already standing with the willowy ruff around the rope between the three times eleven men under the field bell; before the crow had cried three times, the wind swung it back and forth, and with it the board that was tied between their hands and on which was written: "Wir Sind di Wölwe 1 Hundert und Elwe. There are 2 dogs and 2 pigs. They are all upper ones."

The stone circle was closed. The men walked away. The Wulfsbauer had his chin on his chest. Thedel looked back once more and Viekenludolf said, pointing towards the gallows: "Look, Thedel, your wedding bells are ringing!" But Thedel did not answer and walked after Wulf.

As they both rode through the carts, the farmer said: "Well, let's not think about it any more, Thedel! When do you want to go free? Preferably today? Well, you can start as far as I'm concerned; get everything in order! Or have you got it all?" He looked round and laughed, because the servant had the sun on his neck and that's why his ears were as red as they were that morning in the Jeverser Haide when Grieptoo found the girl.

"And now, gallop, Buntscheck!" Harm called to his horse, and they sped off so fast that the ploughs flew and the bags rumbled behind them. The farmer thought of his Johanna and the farmhand of his Hille, and an hour later the horses were standing in front of the cots.

The next day, the farmer was wide-eyed and his servant even more so. They travelled to the desert because they wanted to dig up young fruit trees and anything else that could be used for the garden. When Wulf was about

Thedel rummaged around in the rubble as he warmed his eyes behind a bush at midday. He found all sorts of crockery that was still good for use, as well as axes and other tools, and as he pulled away the black beams, on which all sorts of moss was already growing, he struck iron with his hoe. He had found the kettle-hook of the Wulfshof, a magnificent piece, the like of which could not be found anywhere else, with the Wolfsangel, the house mark of the Wulfsbauern, carved into the top of it; but underneath it read: Ao 1111 Do.

"That's worth more than if you found a hundred thalers in gold, Thedel," said the farmer, "and for that I will build you a house with everything that goes with it. Because I want to tell you something: you've been my servant long enough now. If you are willing to help me with your wife in return for the usual wages, I will be very happy. But I have thought about this for a long time: just as I do not want to be the nobleman's vassal, you should not be my house husband either. You have been more than a faithful servant to me these evil years, and it is no more than right that you should now become your own master, provided that you know how to keep your trousers in front of your mistress."

Thedel mumbled something to himself, as if the farmer had put the bed in front of his yard, but when he had gone out, he could not get to his girl fast enough, and when he came back, he whistled like a fool. Then he sat down and scrubbed the old kettle-hook with water and ashes, and had no peace until it was hanging where it belonged.

But then he took to his work like a fox to a hare, and although the farmer did not know where the servant found the time to eat and sleep, Thedel's face grew rounder with every week and his beard grew visibly longer. But his Hille was not doing badly either, so that the farmer said, "Girl, if you stay like that, you'll need twice as much for your skirt and you'll make an expensive wife for your Thedel." But Hille laughed and dug away as if the ground were pure butter.

Like her and Thedel, however, most people on the Peerhobsberg were doing the same. Even the children helped with the ploughing and digging, and what used to be considered a disgrace when a woman harnessed herself to the plough was now considered a pleasure. There were no farmers, no farm labourers, no farmers' wives and no maids in Peerhobstel, it was a community of industrious people, each working for himself and all for the whole, so that in the villages around the quarry it was said: "Unite like the Peerhobstler!" There was enough wasteland, wood and pasture grew for everyone, and anyone lacking seed or tools was helped out before he had asked for it.

The new soil was not as bad as they had thought, especially the sand, for a bank of marl was not too far away, the braised soil in the Ellernriede was as rich as a wedding soup, and where the moor was burnt and mixed with sand, it was well worth the effort. Even though there was no shortage of weeds, everything was better than they had hoped, and when the main work was done, the Wulfsbauer said to the thirty-three: "And now let's build our brother Thedel his undercroft, because I think it's time."

While many hands were helping, the house was soon ready, and Thedel did not know what to say when the bedding and crockery, and all the other things that belong to a man who goes to live by himself, arrived of their own accord, for the Hundtelfe took pleasure in helping him where they could, without arriving afterwards and eating their share again.

There was hardly any of the sworn Wehrwölfe at the wedding. The night before, the colourful stick had once again gone from village to village with a red ribbon around it, and so all the huntertelfe and all the day and night messengers had to be at the place, because two groups of marauders were confirmed. One of them disappeared in the Meitzer Busche, and the ravens and foxes alone knew where the rabble lay under the fir trees, but the other came under the wheels near Thönse, and nothing remained of it but the leader, and he hung there, where the Dietweg twisted, for so long at

a birch tree until he got bored.

Three days later, Viekenludolf made a major coup. Together with two of the thirty-three, he gave an escort of honour to some Pappenheimers who had bought horses in the villages at the price of war. The riders stopped in the Burgwedeler Holze, watered the horses and then themselves, but not with water, until they thought the heath was a feather bed. Then Viekenludolf crept up, dampened the guard until they could no longer breathe, and quickly cut all the horses' fetlocks. In the meantime, Kunrad, his servant, had ridden to the village and fetched a roan mare and a dozen people who had nothing else to do. Then Viekenludolf rode with the mare over the wind past the camp site, dragging all the horses behind him, and the young people from Burgwedel made sure that the riders didn't get blisters. So some farmers kept their horses in the stables and didn't have to plough with the last cow.

For the hardship was already great in places. Danes and imperial troops travelled through the heath, and where they had been, the soups grew longer. The people on the Peerhobsberg had it best, for the soldiers could not find their way to them and the other vermin were nowhere to be seen in the quarry.

This meant that the quarry farmers could gather their oats in peace and didn't always have to look around. The harvest crown was not missing and the harvest fire was also there and it blazed brightly when the sacrificial sheaf was thrown into it according to the old custom. Then the farmhands and girls departed; Mertenshinrich waved a long cart pole, which was all colourfully peeled, and at the top was the head of a rooster and on it the stalks of corn from the last corner of the field and colourful ribbons that the wind moved, and it was funny to listen to the young people singing:

Wode, Wode, Wode, wi halt dinen Peere Fode; in düssem Jahr Dissel un Dorn, anner Jahr beeter Korn!

The church people

There was better grain the next year, but also plenty of thistles and thorns, because the war would not and would not stop. Tilly and the Danes were still battling back and forth, and wherever they fought, everything was trampled underfoot.

Duke Christian, who did not know which side he should take, had to watch the country being devastated and the people being robbed, but he could not have all the revenues shot, and so the Diet again came up with a threefold treasury.

When the head of Peerhobstler was informed of this, he saddled the pinto and rode with Thedel to Celle. He felt sick on the way; it was obvious that hunger was everywhere around the hearth fire, and that the plague was looking in the windows. Beneath the walls of Celle were wretched huts and sheds, where the peasants from the plundered villages eked out a living by begging and stealing and also by robbery and murder.

As the two Peerhobstler, who had been joined on the way by six of the thirty-three so that the sub-chief could travel more safely, drank a schnapps in front of the Kruge, they saw a woman who had buried her child in the meadow and was looking quite content. When Wulf marvelled at this, she said: "Yes, the way things are today, you have to cry when one comes and praise God when it goes again!"

Just then a bloke came out of the jug, approached the woman and grabbed her, although the woman did not look as if she could please a man, for she had hardly a lot of flesh on her face. She struggled, but the fellow laughed and tried to push her away. Then the Wulfsbauer rode up, seized the man by the waistband of his trousers, and set him so carelessly in a bush that the lout remained there for the time being.

"That was a manly thing to do!" cried the farmer behind him, and a noblewoman nodded to him from a stately carriage as he turned round. "What's his name?" she asked, and when he revealed his name, she said:

"If he ever needs help, Countess Trutta von Merreshoffen might be able to open the door for him." The farmer tipped his hat:
"Then I am free, most gracious countess, to ask for it on the spot. I have a great desire to bring a parish matter before our most gracious sovereign, and without intercession it is probably a difficult thing for a simple peasant like me to get to him." The countess laughed: "Just let him know at eleven o'clock; he'll come round." She nodded to him, laughed again and drove on.

The farmer was in the castle. A footman asked him: "What does he want?" Wulf looked at the little man from above: "For him, I am a she and not a he," he told him; "I am registered with the most gracious Duke!" The man made a silly face, went away, and soon after another servant came and led the peasant into a room where an officer was standing guard; a number of other gentlemen were already lurking there. They all looked at the farmer, who looked like an oak tree above all the Machange bushes. First a little old gentleman was called away, who came back straight away and whispered to another: "Nice weather today!" Then the officer waved to the farmer.

At first he felt a little dazed, but when the duke shook his hand and asked him: "Well, where are the crow's eyes pressing him?" he briefly explained what he had come here with. The duke looked at him seriously:
"Can't, can't do it; they could all come. Treasure must be paid! What do you want to do to keep the roads in order?" He pinched his forehead: "I want to tell him something, but keep it to himself: in view of the special circumstances, I want to pay tax out of my pocket for five years. But then you'd have to pay like all the others. By the way, it's worthy of all honour that he held his head high and didn't let his mouth hang down like a lead dog. I've heard of him, that and," he looked at him sharply, but not unkindly, "something else too. Always be careful, don't refer to me unless you're dealing with obvious robbers and murderers? Understood?" The farmer nodded.

The duke thought for a moment, asked about the harvest and whether the plague had already taken up residence in the Bruche, and then he threw the word between Wulf's legs: "Who are the Wehrwölfe?" The Peerhobstler raised his hand: "I'm not allowed to talk about that!" The duke furrowed his brow: "Not even against me?" And when he got no other answer, he asked: "Are you one of them?" But then he laughed and said: "Well, perhaps that's better! Mustn't know everything; otherwise I'll end up paying for it. Worry enough as it is! Bad time, God be praised! Let's hope things change soon! Keep up his courage!"

When Wulf had the door at his back, he saw all round eyes round him, and on the stairs the servant who had brought him up showed him a back as crooked as a redbreast is wont to make it, and he wanted to question him; but the farmer played dumb and made for the Golden Sun, but did not stay there long either, but only ate a bite with his pint and went off again.

At the gate he met the other weirwolves, two and three of whom were standing or sitting in front of and inside the jar, pretending that one part did not know the other. There were a few other men there, including the fellow who had grabbed the woman earlier, and now Wulf knew him; it was the man who had acted so suspiciously around his horse back in the Golden Sun.

He had a proper seat and swaggered like a marchwarden, and when the farmer went up to the counter, he shouted, "Can't you offer the time of day when you come in, as you should, you lout?" The farmer went up to him: "I will fleece you," he said, and with that he struck him in the face with the back of his hand, so that the fellow suddenly had his boots where his hat had been. He immediately jumped up again: "Dog," he roared, "dog of a dirty farmer, you must die!" He pulled out the knife, but then Gödeckengustel threw a chair against his shins, so that the fellow lost the screed under him, and Scheelenludchen and Meineckenfritze grabbed him, took his pistols from him, flattened him until he was as soft as curd cheese, and threw him out of doors so that it was a mess. He limped to the

stable and fetched his horse. As he was about to mount, Wulf laid his hand on his arm: "Be true, thief, be true! Birch trees and willows grow in the heath. This is the second time you've got into my crotch. The third time is the end and you'll be hanged under the wolf's rod." He had said it very quietly, but Jasper Hahnebut lost all colour and trembled so that he could hardly get on the horse.

Scheele laughed: "We should have taught him to fly for free today!" The chairman shook his head: "Under the city ban? We'd rather leave that alone!" And when Menneke said:
"Well, at least it was a bit of fun!" the Wulfsbauer furrowed his brow and said, "I'm sick of these jokes; usually not a day goes by that you don't have to use your fist, or whatever you have in it. And just today I would have loved to go my way in peace."

But it was to get even better; when the farmers had been riding for an hour and passed a cart, there was a bang; Gödecke's black horse rose up and collapsed. "Take cover!" shouted the Wulfsbauer and lifted Gödecke, who had remained unharmed, behind him; there were three more bangs, but the bullets did not reach the riders.
"We won't take anything for nothing!" said Wulf; "ride off at once and get as many people as you can, and then we'll smoke out the foxes, the sneaky dogs, because this is more fun for me than anything else. In the meantime, I'll see where they stay."

He tied his horse to a cart and crept as close to the bush as he could with Gödecke from the rear. Both stood up to their haunches in an old peat bog and looked behind the birch bushes to where the highwaymen were sitting. It was a dozen Tilly soldiers who had built a fire under the breeze and were turning a spit back and forth over it. Every now and then one of them would get up, fetch some dry wood and throw it on the fire.

An hour might have passed when the Wulfsbauer whispered: "Watch out, Gustel, it's about to start!" With that he slung the lead truncheon over his wrist and cocked his pistols. Gödecke nodded and also fired, because at once the soldiers jumped up, looked around wildly, and you could clearly see that they didn't feel clean, because they ran back and forth, bent down and looked around like sheep in a new stable. Then Harm Wulf heard a robin ticking behind him, and when he looked round, Thedel was standing there, grinning all over his face and whispering: "We've got them in the kettle, all of them!" Then he ducked into a bush on the left.

As soon as he had gone, a cry was heard: "Holy Marriah!" followed by: "Dog's blood, damned, nidderträchtiges!" The Wulfsbauer laughed in his throat: "Yes, yes, blood for blood," he whispered and looked with blank eyes to where the soldiers were running to and fro. Then there was a bang on the other side of the bush, and then again, and it smelled of smoke, and then it got hot and all at once the bush was burning from top to bottom and the smoke was billowing back and forth and there was a scream.

"Do you hear how they beep, Gustel?" whispered Wulf, his eyes bulging. Then he took up his pistol, brushed against the tree and fired; as soon as the shot was fired, Gustel heard a cry and saw a man come out of the bush, burning brightly, and fall into the trench.

At the same moment another shot was fired behind the bush, and immediately after that another, and then another to the right and another to the left, and then a cry was heard: "Mercy!" it cried, but only once. Something burning crawled out of the bush in front of Gödecke, dragged itself up to the ditch and jumped in, remained lying there for a moment in the wet moss, turned round and round whimpering and then tried to climb out, but the farmer did not let it come to that; he hit it with the lead stick and it became quiet in front of him.

"I think that was the last one," said Wulf and Gödecke nodded. There was a shout from behind them. Hermenharm, Ottenchristoph and Plessenotte

arrived from one side and Hohlstönnes, Hassenphilipp and Hornbostelwillem from the other. The seven Fuhrberg farmers' sons were as wet as cats and had faces and hands like coal burners, but they laughed wildly.

"They're not shooting at honest people again," said Gödeckengustel. Hermenharm shook his head: "Certainly not, and they don't beat old women to death any more either. They took a sheep from Lüdecken's mother and beat her when she had no money, so that now she lies there spitting blood. Rag stuff! But now the wolf and the fox don't need a knife; they'll all be worn out enough as it is! They all had to believe it, all of them. Too bad there weren't more. And now let's put them out!"

The work was soon done, for the fire could not cross the moor ditch, there was a sandy field to the right and one peat hollow after another to the left, and behind the bush was a wet flatt. "If they had had a good look round beforehand," said Ottenchristoph, "some of them might have got away. But they were as unwise as sheep when there was a fire, and where one went, the other had to go too."

They all laughed, only the Ödringer Burvogt made a sour face.
"If it stays like this, we won't get home today, Thedel," he grumbled. "That you can't even be sure of your life in moorland and quarry! The Beisterfolk are roaming everywhere now where you wouldn't expect them. With the best will in the world, you can't ride overland now without making your hands red."

That was indeed the case. When they had dampened the fire and the Fuhrbergers had ridden home, and Wulf and Thedel and the three others were on the heights of Ödringen, the wolf howled behind them; Thedel answered, and then two farmers came riding up so that the fire blazed out of the gravel. It was Viekenludolf and Schütte.

"There was a dance festival at Tornhop," cried the Rammlinger, "and a slaughter festival at that! Well, it went halfway well; we got the wind in our noses early enough and showed the people what the local custom is in the Haide." All at once he made a different face: "Of course the riff-raff infected the beautiful farm, and Steers Wieschen, who was serving as a maid, must have run straight into them, because we found her lying dead in the bush; but the others all managed to save themselves!"

Harm's half-brother growled through his teeth and turned red and blue under his eyes. "I suppose there's no other way than that we'll all have to infect our villages and hide in the quarry. I got rid of two horses and all the poultry yesterday. What is one to do when thirty or forty such fellows arrive at once? There's no need to be afraid of what's running around in the heath. We met three of the vermin in the mast quarry the day before yesterday. Now I ask a man, what are they doing in the middle of the wilderness?" He laughed.
"Well, if you like it here so much, you should stay here too," said our Krischan, crooking his finger, "and so should I."

The Wulfsbauer had long since lost his good humour and made a face like a cat, and Thedel looked like a hedgehog. "Something always gets in the way," he spat, and Harm probably knew what he meant, because Thedel had wanted to cut grass when he got home early enough, and now it was usually evening.

A moor ox roared in the pigsty, the ducks flew around and the eagle owl could be heard calling from the Wohld. The fox brewed in the moors and over the Halloberge the sky was as red as a girl's skirt.

They rode slowly, and when they were in front of the Auskiek, Thedel made the wolf. "Can you be quiet, Thedel," it called ahead of them, and Bollenkrischan came up behind a machangel. "Well, you'll be surprised when you get to the farm, Burvogt," he laughed;
"a visitor has arrived."

The farmer opened his eyes: "Visitors?" The other nodded: "Yes, mate, a fine visitor, a visitor from Seebenspring!"

"Krischan!" cried the farmer, bending low, "Krischan, is that true? And what is it, a boy or a girl?"

Bolle opened his mouth wide: "A boy and a girl, Wulfsbauer! The boy at four o'clock and the girl an hour later. And as for the farmer's wife, she's fine so far, and the two girls too."

Wulf made a face like a Whitsun morning. "Thedel," he shouted, "did you hear that, Thedel? Two at once! Boy, I'm all over you now!
You were more fixed; well, that's why you have a wife called Hille."

"You're a big farmer too," said Thedel and laughed, "and I've got a small job and have to take it slowly."

If Harm had had to say how he had come to the farm, he wouldn't have been able to. "Deubel, girl," said Thedel, as he sat with his wife and watched her breastfeed her baby, "Deubel, the farmer has ridden! I had to shout at once: true you! for I usually felt as if he cared a cuckoo for the wolf's den."

As he told this story, the farmer was sitting in front of the hut with one arm under his wife's neck and her hands in his left hand.
"My Johanna!" he said, "my good wife! What a happiness and a blessing!" He looked at where two, three, four children's hands were busy on the bedclothes, shook his head, laughed, and gave his wife a kiss on the lips, but only so gently, for he saw that her eyes wanted to close again, and when Duwenmutter beckoned to him, he went out of the door and stood in front of the big door.

His head was spinning. Now he had two children again! And a wife, so beautiful and so clever and so good! He looked across the quarry to the Haidberge, over which the sky was still bright. A nightingale was singing in the ells, the frogs were bragging, the nightjar

whistled and flapped its wings and the air brought the scent of all kinds of flowers.

He went back into the house and ate, but afterwards he went round the yard again, for he had heard Grieptoo and Holwiß growling, but they were probably only doing so because a wolf was howling in the meadow at the back. The farmer felt strange; as he turned round he saw that the sky above the Halloberge was growing brighter and brighter, but not as if there were a fire there, but more as if the sun were about to rise again. It was becoming quite red, and brighter and brighter, and long blue streaks could be seen in it.

He shook his head. "What nonsense is this again?" he thought; "is it a good omen or a bad premonition?" Then it seemed to him as if in the red glow, and certainly and truly he could see it quite plainly, that a great black wolf's tail was forming in the sky, which remained there a long time till it parted, and the red glow alone was still over the mountain, beautiful to behold.

He did not take this as a bad sign. The Wolfsangel would have to remain in force for a while yet and the defence wolves would have to guard the breach, but then things would clear up, peace would reign on earth and instead of weeping and gnashing of teeth there would be rejoicing and gladness in the fields. So he thought as he drifted off to sleep.

For the time being, however, nothing came of it. The wolf still howled often enough in the heath, more than once the day messengers chased to and fro and the thirty-three had more work than they could handle, and the Hundtelfe did not get much rest. They were all very tired of tending the land and of the shameful defence; some of them could not quite laugh any more, except Viekenludolf, but he could not quite get it out of his heart either, for one evening he had had a pretty girl in his arms, and the next he had to stand by and watch her being buried, and it was a poor consolation to him that a dozen and a half Danes who had attacked the farm lay stiff and cold under the ground.

Things got worse than ever before. When word got round that Tilly had beaten the Danish king at Lutter and was after him, the fear of him was great in the country, but the Danes were rather worse than the emperors; wherever they went, they left ashes, rubble and misery, and when they were over, the Waldsteins came and raged like madmen. All at once it was said that there was to be peace, for Tilly was in Celle negotiating with the duke, but it only got worse; it got so bad that Viekenludolf got a completely different laugh.

"Drewes," he said, banging his fist on the table so that the dog began to bark, "up to now it was more of a joke, even if it didn't seem like it to some of the people we were trying to stop breathing; but now the cosiness is over! We were defence wolves; now we have to become biting wolves. The Wulfsbauer thinks the same way, Drewes! Anyone who doesn't bite today will be bitten. It's almost a week since I've been in a proper bed. And what a state the country is in! Famine and plague and pestilence and hunger wherever you look. Those who are not killed hang themselves or jump into the water. A thunderstorm shall strike there!"

He made sure that it hit the ground often enough, for since the Wulfsbauer had been freed, he had had to take the reins into his own hands, and he had done so gladly, for there was no point in ploughing any more. As soon as the oats were harvested, other people's horses ate them, and those who baked bread did it for other people. So Viekenludolf and his men usually lay around in the bushes and heaths, as did the other men, and when they got together they would say: "Well, who has picked the most lice?" And the best man had to give one out.

Like wolves, so they all became, the men. Woe to the one they caught. If they had enough time, then the lead was too bad for them, and the pike too mild, and terrible things happened in the woods and heaths. One mighty cold winter's day, as Wulf was riding through the heath with Shewenkasper, his new servant, they saw a number of ravens flying up and down in shifts over a hayrack, and when they saw

When they got there, they found four naked men tied between the trees. Three of them were already frozen to death, one was still yapping.

Schewenkasper had been a farmhand on Tornhope, which had been burnt down by the Danish murder dogs, and Steer's little girl Wieschen, who had served there as a maid and had had to give up her life because she had just run into the path of the villains, had been his treasure. Kasper hadn't said much before and only laughed when he had to, but now he hardly spoke at all and had forgotten how to laugh, except when he was waiting for the heir to the farm or the little girl called Rose.

"You should have become a woman's man right away," Mieken used to say, when he was busy with the children; "what kind of work is that? You're dragging yourself off with the toads all at once and other people are tending the land!" But Kasper said nothing and made a jumping jack dance in front of Bartold's and Rose's noses so that it rang and rattled, for he had hung it from top to bottom with pearls and coloured stones that he had found in a Waldstein captain's trouser bag.

"Stupid Trine!" he thought when he no longer saw Mieken's red skirt, "stupid Trine!" And while he let the jumping jack dance, he thought back to the evening when he had been on the Heerstraße with Gödeckengustel and Scheelenludjen and Bollesbernd. "Every day is hunting day, but not every day is fishing day," Ludjen had said when it was already starting to buzz. But then he had put his ear to the ground.
"The stags are moving!" he whispered and got ready. Four riders arrived at a fast gallop.

Then Bernd tore a string that was lying on the road, a white rag flew up in front of the horses so that they shied away, and then there was three bangs and then another, and Kasper made a very silly face when five blank ducats, a pair of new boots and all sorts of other things, such as the colourful necklace that the captain had in his pocket, came on his part.

"Yes, now that it's too late, Wieschen," he thought, "we've got the money! What am I supposed to do with this rubbish?" He gave it to the farmer to pick up, for he needed nothing but food and clothes, and they were cheap, for there was enough of them growing in the heath if you knew how to use them. And Schewenkasper was good at it. He really didn't care about the loot, but when he and the others had once again put aside a few Danes or imperial soldiers, or whatever else it was, he thought: "So, you won't be killing other people's girls any more!" When he played piggyback and hopscotch with the children, he looked as if he had never lifted a finger.

He didn't care much about it either, "but work is work," he thought when he had to approach again. He much preferred it when he could work properly or had to build wolf traps, because the wolves were increasing dangerously and the lynxes were also becoming more noticeable again, because nobody was defending themselves against them, as worse beasts that looked like humans but were pure devils were showing up more than necessary. The farmers got wrinkles around their mouths faster than usual, and many a son was already as grey at forty as his father had barely been at sixty.

Harm Wulf was still a young lad, but when his farm had burnt down, ashes had flown onto his head and soot had got into his eyes and smoke into his mouth. When he looked at his beautiful wife and his two healthy children, his eyes became bright again and his lips parted; but his hair was and remained grey at the sides, and he no longer often sang the humming-berry song.

One July evening, however, the farmer's wife heard him whistling as he gave the fox to the farmhand. He went up to her, embraced her and said: "Rejoice, Johanna, there will be peace! The Danes are leaving. I have heard it in Burgdorf as firm and certain." The woman made her happiest face, but then she clasped her breast with her hand, and lost all the blood from her cheeks; but immediately afterwards she laughed again, and said, "It was great joy, Harm. Peace! Yes, that's what everyone wants. Praise and thanks be to God!"

It was a beautiful evening. The sky over the Haidberge was red, the roses smelled strong and a bird was singing beautifully in the risch by the Beeke. The farmer and the farmer's wife sat on the garden bench and gazed into the evening. Every now and then an owl would call in the wood, or a duck would quack by the brook and young swallows would cheep under the roof. The farmer's wife had laid her head on her husband's shoulder and had a face like a church angel. "Peace, peace!" she whispered, her eyes getting wet.

But the lords did not get along so quickly. The Danes left, but the others stayed, and many a time the sky was red with something other than the evening sun, and in the midst of the harvest the soldiers had to abandon their scythes and carry their shotguns behind the scabbard, for the imperial forces were pressing the country too hard, even though the duke was loyal to the emperor, however much he was suspected of being so. The hunger and need became so great in the country that the most righteous peasants could no longer live any other way than by resorting to murder and robbery. That was the worst thing of all, when the military co-operative had to lay hands on people who had previously shed no other blood than that of cattle and poultry.

It was an April evening when the Wulfsbauer was called out. A band of robbers had been reported from Mellendorf and were heading for the quarry. They were farmers from the Kalenberg region, the Neustadt area and from Hildesheim Abbey, who had long since lost the roof under which they could sleep. "I don't like this piece," Drewes said to Wulf; "foreign peoples, if they were still there, a few more or fewer wouldn't matter! But these people there, who have only been brought this far by hunger, it's like having to shoot your best dog in the head when he has rabies.
They are people just like us!"

The Peerhobstler nodded. "You know," he said, "the best thing we can do is to give them another way; perhaps to make them see sense. I want to tell them that. I hardly think that any of them

has a rifle, and if he does, he'll fall over if he gets up a head of steam. There's nobody there who can hold a calf when it wants to get away. I saw them pass close by me on the Dietberge; it made me really miserable!"

The Engenser shook his head: "It's better if I do it. If something happens to me, it's no big deal; my children are big enough to help themselves, but not yours. What's more, it's more my responsibility as the head of the team."

The boy he had with him crawled after the curly carts and told the wolves. "That's the purest scent again," growled Viekenludolf; "Drewes is getting old and he's no longer fit to be chairman with a small one. I wonder what will come of it; it certainly won't be good!"

He was proved right. Drewes had hardly got out from behind the bush and had just shouted: "People, I advise you to do good; stay out of here, the world is big enough!" when a long fellow with a red woman's skirt for a coat pulled out a pistol, shouted: "So make way for us!" and shot the Engenser over the top.

He and six others lay there almost at the same moment, colouring the sand red, and a quarter of an hour later two-thirds of the gang ran back the way they had come, without looking round for those who remained in the heath; but this did not make Drewes better; he lay with his back against a machangele bush, groaning and holding his abdomen, for that was where he had got the shot.

The Wulfsbauer examined the bullet hole. "You know what, Drewes," he said, "what's best? We'll carry you to me. For one thing, it's the flattest way to get there and then you'll lie there most quietly, and you'll also have the best care, because my wife is excellent at that sort of thing."

Drewes was satisfied, provided that his little meadow came the next day, for he could not do without her around him, he said. She came too. The Wulfsbauer's eyes widened when he saw her, for he had not seen her for a long time, even though he had been to the Dreweshof often enough. "What a picture of a girl she's become!" he thought as she stood in front of him, turning white and red in colour. "What's wrong with her?" he thought when he saw this, but then he paid no further attention to her.

Things were better for her father than they seemed at first. The Wulf farmer's wife had found the bullet straight away and taken it out, but told Engenser that he would not be allowed out of bed for less than two weeks. "Well, you shouldn't be bored," she said, "first of all, you have Wieschen, and when I have time, I always want to read to you."

Drewes was very pleased with this, as he had become increasingly pious in recent times. "Wieschen, you can sit there too!" he called out when the farmer's wife came with the Bible; "it won't do you any harm if you listen." But most of the time Wieschen had this or that to do, and when she finally came, she turned white and red when the woman looked at her, so that she could not make sense of her, especially as the girl did not like to look up once while eating and choked on every bite.

One morning the farmer's wife stood in the dune and watched Wieschen playing with the children in the garden, for that was what she did as soon as it began. Then the farmer came and nodded kindly to the girl, and the woman saw that her breast went up and down, and that she first turned white in the face, and then flushed red. The farmer laughed when he saw her sitting there like that: "You must see that you get some soon," he cried merrily; "I'm surprised that you're still unshouted. The boys of Engens must all have no eyes!" With that he went round the corner of the house.

Then the farmer's wife suddenly realised that the girl was looking after the farmer as if he had done her a great injustice,

kissed the boy she had on her lap, who was the spitting image of his father, how unwise, and then she held her hand in front of her eyes and wept so that she was shaken.

The woman took hold of her bodice with her hand, stepped back from the window, and sat down in the eared chair; she drew a deep breath and clutched her breast once and again. But then she got up, went into the garden, took her hand away from the girl's eyes, and said, "Are you anxious for your court? In three or four days, I think your father will be able to go again." And she stroked her cheek.

After midday she was alone with her in the house, Drewes was asleep, the farmer had gone to the paddocks with Ul and the farmhand and Mieken had been sent into the bush for firewood.

"Now," said the woman, pulling the girl onto the bench next to her, "let's make ourselves comfortable for once. The children are sleeping like a log."

The girl turned white and red and could not look the woman in the eye. She took her by the hand: "I'm surprised that a girl like you hasn't got one on her hand. Do you care nothing for men? Because nobody tells me that they shouldn't care for you!"

The girl's chest was heaving up and down; she didn't know where to keep her eyes and choked as if something was stuck in her throat.
"Wieschen," said the woman, putting her arm around her shoulder, "I know more than you think. Sit still, we need to talk openly for once."

She took the girl's hand and placed it on her bodice: "Do you feel my heart working?" She pulled the girl's head to her chest:
"Now you can hear it very clearly." Wieschen jumped up and looked at the woman in horror.

"Yes, girl," she then said, "now it's working like crazy, and at times it's as if I don't have any at all. It was just like that with my twin brother; he fell over in the middle of laughing and stayed away from us. And that's how it will be with me too. Since I had to witness such terrible things, it's become really bad. If I'm just a little bit upset, or if I have to be very happy, then my heart stops and afterwards it's as if it wants to come out of my throat."

She sighed deeply: "Well, it's better now. But that could be today or tomorrow, because it won't be long before I die and then," she hugged the girl tightly, "my children won't have a mother to look after them. And now," she said, wiping her eyes, "I know a girl, a faithful and good girl, who loves my children dearly, and her father too, and that is why she has remained single to this day, even though she is the most beautiful of them all."

At first Wieschen gasped for breath, and then all at once she threw her arms round the farmer's wife's neck and wept. "Yes, but I can't help it, and it's bad of me not to let you have him, when you're three times better for him than I am!" She tried to smile: "But it won't be that bad with you. I will take my thoughts to bed, for, for," she buried her head anew against the woman's breast,
"you're so good and he doesn't care a jot about me!"

The farmer's wife smiled: "Why, do you think a woman like me, who has been through so much, enjoys such things? I have had my share, misery and hardship enough, and afterwards more happiness and blessings than a woman can ask for in these times, and if I know that you will take care of the children one day, then my last hour will not be so sour. Will you promise me that?" The girl nodded without saying a word, and the tears ran down her cheeks.

When the farmer came back, he looked at his wife and then at the girl and said, "You both look as if you've had supper!" The farmer's wife smiled at him, but Wieschen quickly went into the

Flett.

On the morning of the day Drewes was due to go back to Engensen, the farmer's wife sat down with him. "Drewes," she said, taking him by the hand, and his eyes, which had not been the same for a long time, lit up as she looked at him: "Drewes, I want to tell you something now, but you mustn't interfere. So listen to me! You told me yourself that you can't make sense of Wieschen because she doesn't care about the men. Since last Friggetag I know why that is; she has had one for a long time, but one who has a wife and children and who looks past her."

She threatened the farmer with her finger, for he made his most evil eyes: "First wait and then make crooked eyes! The woman I am talking about knows that, and she is heartily glad of it, for she is aware that she may die today or tomorrow, because she has a weak heart; and now she can wish for no better second mother for her children, and for her husband," here her eyes welled up, "no better wife than your little meadow, for the wife, that is me, Drewsbur!"

She grabbed her chest, took a deep breath and looked at him kindly: "So, now you know, and I think Wulfsbur will suit you as a husband. And I've already spoken to Wieschen. Of course, she feels a bit stupid now, but she can look me straight in the eye because she knows how I feel about her."

Drewes shook his head; he did not know what to say to that. Then he nodded: "You may be right about that, Wulfsbäuerin, you are certainly right that the girl has her thoughts where you think they are; now I realise all sorts of things that were bushes and herbs to me until this hour. But the other thing, get it out of your head! You look like eternal life, and if I were thirty years younger and you a single girl, you should see who would care for you the most!"

He laughed merrily, at least he pretended to do so, but at once he cried, "Wieschen, Wieschen, Mieken Mieken!" for the farmer's wife had fallen over in front and was lying with her face on his lap, and when Wieschen came in, she saw for the first time in her life that her father could be afraid too, really, really afraid, for he had some very unhappy eyes in his head.

The farmer's wife came round again in a little while, and looked as fresh and healthy as ever at dinner, but before Drewes got into the cart he took her by the hand and said, "I'll be back soon, keep well!" and then he turned round, for nobody needed to see that his eyes were getting wet. Wieschen, however, took the farmer's wife round the neck, and wept away brightly, so that Harm shook his head afterwards, and said, "A marvellous girl, that Wieschen; at first I thought she could not bear you before death, and now she has acted as if she wanted to eat you up for joy!" Then he mounted the black horse and rode after the cart with Thedel. But he couldn't get a sensible word out of Wieschen, and he didn't know what to make of her.

It was a marvellous day; for as Wulf rode back with Thedel towards evening, they heard some singing, and as they stood in the stirrups they saw a man sitting behind a machicolation, holding a knee between his hands and singing at the top of his voice: "Gird them, O God, with strength in their office, profession and station, whom your gracious call has sent to the business of preaching."

The two farmers looked at each other and shook their heads; but when the verse was over, they rode up close, for it was as clear as a burnt heath that they need not make sharp points to this man. "Good evening," cried the farmer; "well, what are you doing here?"

The young man nodded, then slowly stood up and said: "I wish him the same, and what am I doing here? I'm waiting to see what the Lord sends me. But allow me: since I am a preacher, even if I have not held office since

some time, I should probably be addressed as "Your Honour" and "Sir"."

Niehus grinned and the farmer laughed: "No offence, Your Honour, but I couldn't tell from your nose that you are a spiritual gentleman. But where do you come from and where are you going? Don't take my curiosity amiss, but things aren't exactly clean in the world now, and anyone who shows up here has to answer our questions."

The stranger looked at him with clear eyes: "So let him know that I am the chaplain James Jeremias Josephus Puttfarkenius. Since the Lord gave the Jebusites power over the righteous and, as punishment for our sins, bestowed on them the chastisement rods of the Edict of Restitution, I have been left without my chapel post and am like a leaf blown by the wind."

The farmer laughed: "You don't look much different. But since we want to have a snack and have more with us than we need, and you don't look like you've had your fill today, you can join us if you're in the mood."

The young clergyman looked up at the sky: "Lord," he cried, "your goodness lasts forever!" He shook the farmer's hand. "It was yesterday morning in the village of Fuhrbergen when I ate the last piece of bread. Since then, the bark of the birch trees has been my food, but I am not used to this food and would almost despair if I had not comforted myself with the saying: He who feeds the young ravens will not forget me."

He ate like a thresher and afterwards he looked completely different and his trousers no longer hung so baggy in front of his body. He looked gratefully at the farmer and then asked: "In Fuhrberg I made the acquaintance of a farmer called Ludolf Vieken, a native of Rammlingen. I had confidence in this man, although he did not seem to me to walk in the way of the Lord, because he let curses and useless oaths come out of his mouth. But the Lord will

He has already enlightened me, for he has rescued me from the hands of the pagans, as they are called, and shared his bread with me without being asked, and his beer when he heard that I was sober, like a child treading the wall for the first time."

He looked at the farmer with his large, bright eyes: "Does he know a man called Harm Wulf in this neighbourhood? The Rammlinger pointed him out to me, because he told me that he could perhaps use a preacher in his village, whose name escapes me. And this man's wife, I was told, is the daughter of an exiled preacher?"

The farmer smiled: "Didn't Viekenludolf give you a sign?" The other nodded: "He did, but it seems to me to be meagre and I almost did it myself. Look here!" He pulled a rag from his pocket and unwrapped a raven's feather, which had been bent twice and the ends twisted together in a secret way.

"So that's right," said the farmer; "I am the bailiff Harm Wulf from Peerhobstel, and it may be that you can find a place with us, for we men can hardly trust each other after church these days, and the women certainly not at all. I can see that you are a righteous man. It is an evil time; we generally do not trust strangers, and therefore you must promise me on oath not to betray anything you hear or see, whether you stay with us or not."

Puttfarken looked at him gravely: "I have seen a sample of the kind of man he seems to be; the three thugs who threw me into the street to rob me are hanging from three birch trees. If the fools had known that I only own what I carry on my body, and that hardly any Jew would take it as anything other than a gift, they might still be alive. I have seen much abomination in my ways, and I believe that he who resists evil does not act contrary to the Lord's commandment. And so I will vow what he demands of me."

The farmer waited until it went quiet, and in the meantime he asked the preacher what he wanted. The man pleased him and Thedel too, and Grieptoo no less, and so he was allowed to mount in front of Niehus and ride to the Wohld.

"Girl," said Thedel afterwards to his Hille, who was already looking as if there would soon be another little Niehus, "we've picked up a chap for you on the heath, a very cute little fellow! He sits there in the sand and sings a spiritual song after a difficult task, doesn't have a knife or a gun with him and makes a face as if there were nothing but angels in the world, and yet only yesterday the Taters had him among them. It is usually as if he were too stupid to be afraid; he did not even run away when we were called by the guards."

Thedel was right; Ehren Puttfarken had no fear, at least no fear of man. Viekenludolf must have sensed this when he rode up to the new farm four weeks later and caught Mieken on the dele: "Deubel too, Deern!" he shouted and squeezed her so hard that her ribs cracked; "you're really making a fuss of yourself."

But what round eyes did he make when the preacher stepped out of the dönze and said to him: "The Lord bless his entrance, Viekenbur! But tell me, is it necessary to call the devil as a witness because God has allowed this virgin to flourish and prosper? And is it fitting in an honourable peasant's house, and is it fitting for a legal peasant to treat a proper widow's daughter like a dissolute woman?"

Viekenludolf's eyes were as wide as a dog's when an adder snorts at it, but then he laughed: "Is that the thanks I get for saving you from the Taters?"

The preacher nodded: "Yes, that's the thanks. He has saved me from the deceivers and pagans and I will save his soul from hellfire.
And now he enters and takes a seat until the farmer's wife comes; the maid

shall call them."

From that day on, he had two great friends; one was Schewenkasper, for he said to Thedel afterwards: "He's given Viekenbur a good hiding, I tell you. But is that also a way of behaving, the way he does? No girl can hide from him!" But the other was Viekenludolf himself, for when he let out another thunderbolt, the preacher washed his head again, and that pleased Dausenddeubel, for it was something new to him. "You," he said to the Wulf farmer, "keep him; he's good!"

The Peerhobstler thought so too, for after Puttfarken had been properly fed by the farmer's wife, he looked like a righteous preacher, and although he was still quite young, he was still a good preacher and, despite his idioms, a man who fitted into the world.

He didn't shy away from any work as far as it suited him, and more than once the Wulfsbauer said to him: "You don't need to work like a farm labourer." But then he was always told: "Does he think, Wulfsbauer, that it won't do me any good with the people if I dig and clear like them? And besides, it gives me pleasure; after all, I'm a farmer's son."

He was as good on horseback as the Peerhobstler themselves, and in time he learnt to handle a rifle like a skilled hunter, and he brought back many a roast from the bush. He could also make eel baskets, knit nets and set fishing rods, because his father's farm, which the Mansfelds had burnt down along with everything on it, had been located down there on the Weser.

Wulf's farmer thought he had not done a bad business in picking up this man on the heath, if only because the farmer's wife always had one of her kind at hand when Wulf had to cross the country, which was more and more often the case; for that with peace, that was like the

Rauhfrost had been on the heath and long forgotten, and things were worse than ever. The Swedes had come, and the duke, who had long since ceased to care for the papists' affairs, had gone over to them, and now the Pappenheimers were scorching and burning in his country.

More often than not, the farmer came home with a furrowed brow, and then it was a comfort to him when the preacher helped him overcome his worries with courageous words and a spiritual song, because Puttfarken had organised evening services on the farm, to which anyone who wanted to could come. It was a great comfort, especially for the old people who had not been to church for years, to be able to honour God together again with prayer and song.

Things had always been orderly and sensible on the new farm, but since the preacher had arrived, the evenings were even cosier than usual, for the young man had all kinds of knowledge and could tell them like a book about how things had gone in the world from Adam to the last times; Since the farmer had brought every book he had come across on his military expeditions over the years, because he knew that his wife enjoyed them, the preacher read the best of them to them on the long winter evenings and knew how to explain everything so well that even Schewenkasper learnt more in one winter than in his whole life.

Since the farmer's wife had children of her own, she could no longer look after the others as much as at first, and so it was quite natural that the preacher held school, first for the children and then also for the farmhands and maidservants, and the farmers were also happy to come, for anything that took their minds off the bad times was a comfort and refreshment to them.

Things were getting more and more terrible in the world. As remote as the village was, there was enough talk up to it and the peasants got the cold chills when Grönhagenkrischan brought a flyer with him, on which was printed what the Tilly and the Pappenheimer had done.

with Magdeburg.

The next Sunday there was a sermon on the new farm. Schewenkasper and Thedel had erected rows of seats from blocks and poles in front of the house and built a kind of pulpit in front of the large door, which was decorated by the farmer's wife and Mieken with fir hedges and maypoles, and a white cloth with a red cross was pinned over it.

At half past nine the Peerhobstler were in the yard; everyone was there except the chest children and the guards. It was a morning that could not have been more beautiful; the sun was bright in the sky, the chaffinches were flapping, the swallows were playing in the air and the roosters were crowing on all the dung heaps.

They were all there in their best clothes, the men and the women, and they had all dressed up their children as well as they could. They bumped into each other and pointed to the pulpit, whispering quietly to each other, and Old Mother Horstmann's eyes got wet when she saw the red cross on the white sheet.

The Wulfsbauer sang the song: "To God alone in the highest be honour and thanks for his grace," and everyone joined in. Meanwhile, the preacher climbed into the pulpit and prayed to himself. He was wearing a black frock coat that the farmer's wife had made, and he looked different to the farmers than before, when he had worn blue trousers and doublets.

It was quiet in the courtyard when the verse was finished and the people had stood up, except that the young swallows could be heard chirping. "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all," the preacher began and continued: "Hear with devotion the word of the Holy Scriptures, which is written in Psalm one hundred and thirty-seven: By the waters of Babylon we sat and wept when we remembered Zion." He closed his book and began to speak.

The people listened attentively because they had never heard a sermon like this before. It was as if they were talking to each other themselves, so clear and yet so completely different. He spoke of how things had been around the quarry before and how they looked now. He revived Ödringen and let it go up in smoke and ashes, recalling death and hardship and all the other suffering and misery that the years had brought. All the women wept in their aprons and the men looked on.

The preacher had spoken calmly and evenly, but then he let lightning and thunder come out of his mouth. With a voice that sounded like a thunderstorm, he read the flying leaf and hung words on it that came down like an axe on a tree. "The Lord's hand will strike them, the bloodhounds who did not spare the little children in the cradle and had no mercy on innocent blood," he cried; "he will crush them in his wrath and scatter them so that their enemies will trample them underfoot, and when they then cry, 'Lord, O Lord, oh, oh, oh,' he will close his ears, for their shameful deeds cannot be blotted out, and their abominations will endure forever."

Then the women stopped weeping, and the men looked at him with clear eyes; all faces became clear as he found comforting words and sayings to refresh hearts and nourish souls with hope for better times and confidence in the goodness of the merciful God, and there was no one there who did not vow to persevere faithfully in the fear of the Lord, come what may.

It sounded like the weather rolling as the congregation repeated the creed after their preacher, and it resounded to the heavens as they sang:

Let them leave the word and have no thanks for it; he is well on the plan with us with his spirit and gifts; let them take our body, honour, child and wife, let them go, they have no profit: the kingdom must remain with us!

The wedding guests

The preacher was proved right. A year and a half later, at the time when the oats were being cut in Peerhobstel, Tilly's army came under the scythe of the Swedish king.

It didn't take long for the news to reach the Bruch. The Wulfsbauer had heard it in Burgdorf, where he was busy. "Boy," said Thedel to Bollenatze, "today we rode as if the evil enemy was behind us, that's how it went!"

Three days later it was harvest festival on the new farm. Never before had the pulpit been so beautifully decorated with wreaths and flowers, and never before had the people had such bright eyes since they had to live in the quarry, and it seemed to them as if the sky had never been so bright.

But they had never heard a sermon like the one they heard that day. The farmers' eyes widened: this was something else than the old pastor in Wettmar could offer them, it was like the trumpet of judgement, and then again as if an angel of God was speaking to them, and if there was one thing they didn't like about the sermon, it was that they had to listen to it in the open air.

"Well," said old Horstmann, "we have to have a church, that's for sure. And even if there's no tower and it's made of beams and bricks, it's still different from having roosters singing along and dogs barking in the middle of the sermon. That's my opinion and I'm sticking to it!"

The others thought no differently, and so they told the preacher.
"My dear children," he said, and no one grinned when the young man spoke to them like that, "that has always been my dearest wish, but I didn't want to put the burden on you. But since you've come up with it yourselves, I'll just say: May the Lord reward you and your children and grandchildren for the joy you've given me!"

The building was not completed quickly, because the work in the fields could not be left undone, and more than once the young people had to mount up and ride across the heath when the horn called or the coloured stick went round. It was not a proud church, but more of a chapel, but the stone walls were strong enough and the roof of oak beams thick enough, and in the wooden bell tower that stood next to it hung only a very small bell, for it could not be heard much further than any farmyard.

For it got worse and worse from day to day. Ever since the duke had become Swedish, the emperor had sent one bull-biter after another into the country, and there was no end to the hardship. So far, the worst weather had always passed the village by, but soon it hit close to home: the Pappenheimers stormed Burgdorf; half a thousand citizens perished, and the others had become beggars, for whatever money and goods were not looted were devoured by fire. As soon as that was over, the Waldstein bloodhounds arrived, and the Burgdorfers had to abandon their homes and farms and watch as they eked out a living in the wild forest.

Things were now so bad in the country that the people despaired of life and all discipline and custom ceased. The wolves no longer gave much thought to the arrival of whole groups of foreign, half-starved peasants, but were quick to get their hands dirty.
They caught thirty marauders at once on the Magethaide and hung them on a single gallows across the Dietweg, and the leader was given a board in front of his body, and on it was written: "We are the Wolves three times one hundred and Elwe, be true, we do not bark, but bite immediately." A band of a hundred men, coming along the path under the green Johann, were so frightened that they turned round rashly.

Their leader was so scolded because he was dressed in green from head to toe. There was more blood on his hands than on those of all the men who followed him, each of whom had plenty of it.

was worthy of being cycled alive from the bottom up.

He used to swear: "So help me the devil, my dear friend!" He did the same when he and his gang were lying in front of a fir bush that day and made a dreadful disgrace of themselves: "You're beautiful ragamuffins," he scolded, "running away from men who hang by their necks! The devil, my good friend, shall take you by the lot!"

The pipe fell from his hand, for a voice could be heard that no one knew whether it was here or there: "He's behind you and he'll get you before the sun goes down!" she cried, and then came a laugh that made the women scream like pigs, and the men jumped up head over heels and staggered through the heath.

The Wulfsbauer and Thedel had to stifle their laughter. There were now about sixty blokes and about forty women, and one old man chased them wherever he wanted them to go. "Yes, I can still do it well enough," said Ulenvater, "and I'm glad that I learnt the art from that mad Thesel von Rabitze, who used to make people's hair stand on end in the pub in Helmstedt." He raised his finger: "You're all blowing! Well, see you later! I can't help you any further, old man."

The head officer and Thedel pressed themselves into the front of the bush. They blew in four or five places, then a shot was fired. The women screamed, and then there were bangs everywhere, and Wulf and Thedel jumped from one muzzle to the other, fired, reloaded, jumped again and waited until one of the gang approached, then took a long aim, and when there was a bang, he did a cartwheel. They were shot up like rabbits in a cauldron, regardless of whether they were wearing trousers or skirts.

"So they don't hedge, the Betzen," said Grönhagen, as he shot a tall woman with black hair, who was trying to hide behind the green Johann, through the head. Then he jumped from behind and pulled the man to the ground by his beard, twisted his arms behind his back, and

Gödeckengustel tied his thumbs together. Then they put him on a cart and he had to watch his fellow murderers go to ground, and when that was over he was hanged before the sun went down.

Even if such events intervened more than necessary, the chapel was finished except for the keystone above the large door, and a cross was carved into it, formed from two wolf's claws lying one on top of the other. The churchyard wall was also finished; it was high and solid, for there were enough large stones lying around in the heath, and behind the wall a fence of pointed posts was made and hawthorn bushes planted between them, and a ditch was dug around the wall, deep enough for the groundwater to come out, so that in the greatest need the chapel could serve as a last resort for the farmers.

On the eighteenth of Nebelung in 1632, the first grave was made in the churchyard, and when the preacher gave the funeral oration, everyone's eyes were wet, including the men's, for it was the Wulf farmer's wife who buried them. She had probably had one of her fits now and then, but she always looked so fresh and red, as if nothing was wrong with her, and only the preacher knew how she was, because she had confided in him.

He looked pale and miserable as he sat in the evening in his dozen by the little iron oil lamp, for his heart, which had never turned to a woman before, had always beaten fast when he saw the woman from a distance. But he had never let her know how he felt with a glance, let alone a word. When Mieken came and said, "The woman has just stayed away from us," he was probably as white as a sheet when he entered the dönze, and his hands trembled as he covered her eyes, but no one could tell how he felt.

But when he laid the church register on the table the evening after the funeral and put the goose quill in the heavy silver inkwell that one of Green John's gang had had in his dwarf bag, two tears fell on the rough paper on which he wrote the words in his beautiful large script: "Ao. Dnj 1632 den 18. Novembris

the Wulf farmer's wife and wife of the bailiff Harm Wulf Johanna Maria Elissabeth bürtigke Neugebauerin/the exiled Bavarian Praedicatoris Bartoldi Neugebaueri/Ehren/marital daughter/was buried here. She was a light to all women. Lord, grant her eternal rest and let the eternal light shine upon her!" A month later, he wrote underneath: "She died the same day that the Swedish King Gustavus Adolfus / GOD rest his soul! / died at the town of Lüttzen," two more tears fell on the page.

The preacher sat over this book many an evening, for he had asked the peasants about all the important things that had happened in Ödringen and later in Peerhobstel, and he had written them down on all sorts of notes. In addition to a silver cross and a golden altar chalice, Renneckenklaus had brought back the book from a military campaign, which the marauders had dragged with them because it was bound in expensive leather and had three silver-gilt locks, and now the preacher sat over it as often as he had time and wrote down everything he had learnt.

On the first page, a black cross was painted coming out of a red heart; underneath it read: "Our beginning and our end is in the name of the Lord who made heaven and earth." The second page, however, read: "=HISTORIA PEERHOBSTELIANA OEDRINGENSIS que= / that is: Gründlicher Wahrhaftiger Vnd Bestendiger bericht Von dem anjetzt wüsten Dorfe Oedringen vnd der Nohtkirche vnd Gemeinde Peerhobstel/sowohl, was sich unter seinen Zeiten begeben als waß ehr Veber di früheren heraußbekomen/der posteritet Vnd Nachkommen zu gut Vnd besten/ durch J. J. Josefum Puttfarkstel. J. Josefum Puttfarkenium, Praedicatorem Ao. Dnj 1632."

The very next month the preacher had to register another death, and although no tears ran from his eyes, he did not write as calmly as usual, for once again someone to whom he was more devoted than to any other member of the congregation had been taken from him. It was old Ul; he had had it on his chest for some time, and when the Wulf farmer's wife slipped from under his hands and did not

When he regained consciousness, he became like a shadow on the wall, because anyone who didn't know what it was like would have thought they were father and daughter when they saw them together. Before he came to his senses, he had said: "I'm coming to my daughters Rose and Johanna."

A quarter of a year later, when the first duller lark was singing over the heath and the smoke was calling over the Wohld, the preacher rode to Engensen with Schewenkasper, who, in addition to his work on the new farm, served him as sexton for God's wages, and with Mertensgergerd, who was also one of the quiet ones around him, who did not take strong drinks or utter unchristian words. The Wulf farmer's wife had entrusted him with everything that had been agreed between her, Wieschen and Drewesvater, because she didn't want to cause her husband any trouble. The preacher had had to promise her that he would see to it that the girl would come to the new farm as a farmer's wife.

"So this is what the famous Oberobmann Meine Drewes looks like!" thought the preacher as he shook hands with the bailiff. He had never imagined him to be so old, with such white hair and so many wrinkles around his mouth and eyes. Even if the man still stood there like an oak tree, the worm was in him and under the bark he was rotten and rotten.

He knew well what was troubling the man who had said one day: "Before I let myself and my people scratch even one finger, I would rather walk in blood until my grandchildren are dead." But who among the men who had stayed on their farms did not feel the same way?

When he had spoken to the farmer about Wieschen and the Wulfsbauer and was alone with him, for the girl had gone to milk with the maid, and the old man revealed to him what was on his mind, he comforted him as best he could. "Whoever defends himself and his own against outrage and abomination and protects widows and orphans, Drewsbur," he said, "will be welcomed by our Lord God, even if his hands are red all over." Then the old man sighed deeply and said: "So I won't worry about it any more, your honour."

Afterwards the preacher spoke to Wieschen. The girl grew quieter and quieter the more he spoke, and finally she said, "I thought I was over it, but I'm not. I keep my word, and I would keep it if I had learnt in time to like another. That is not so, however: the Wulfsbauer does not think of me in any way, and it would be terrible for me to think that he believed I had been lying in wait for his wife's death. I have not been to church once without asking God to give her a long life, for since the day she spoke to me she has been as dear to me as a sister. And if he finds another whom he prefers, and who is good to the children, no one should be more pleased than me, because for all the world I don't want him to think that I want to force him, because his blessed wife once had this wish."

The preacher shook her hand: "Such an answer is fitting for a Christian virgin. Let her rely entirely on me! My dear friend should think nothing of her that is not pleasant to her. And now, as her father wishes, I will gladly hold a short evening service, for it is time for us to prepare for departure."

During the prayer, he saw a girl kneeling beside the daughter of the house, who had a face that reminded him of his blessed mother. She looked as if she had endured much evil; but when she looked at him once, he realised that her heart had remained pure and good. He saw afterwards that it was the maid; he did not know why he had to look after her when she put the chairs aside, and he would have liked to know what was the end of her, but he did not ask about it.

It was already dusk when he rode through the moorland with the others. The mist was rising in the moors, the frogs were growling in the pools, the wolves were howling at the moon from the moorland and the cranes were showing off on the moor. In the direction of Mellendorf the sky was red; there was a farm or a village on fire. "Save them, Lord," the preacher prayed to himself, "from the evil people; protect them from the wicked people!"

They were usually at the Brehloh when a couple of crows rumbled out of the fir trees, screaming at the top of their voices. "Prrr!" shouted Mertensgerd and pulled his horse back, and the others did the same and took up their pistols. At the same moment a red glare came from the bush, and a bullet flew over the preacher, but immediately he fired too, and heard a man cry out, and then he saw that another was charging at the sexton; he rode him over the heap, and as he turned round he heard a shot, and the fellow, who was just getting up again, fell down; Mertensgergerd had shot him.

When they were in the bare heath, the preacher stopped: "Let us thank the Lord for his goodness," he said, taking off his cap;
"Let us pray: Lord, Lord, my strong help, you shield my head in time of strife." When he had covered himself again, he said: "It is written: Whoever sheds human blood, his blood shall be shed again. This does not apply to us; he who seeks his brother's life from ambush is like the wolf; his blood does not stain the one who kills him. Our hands are clean before the Lord."

The next day, Thedel, Renneckenklaus and Mertensgerd searched the Brehloh. The wolves had done a good job, but they had left a handful of thalers and a few good pistols. "I must say," said Thedel to the wolf farmer, "that's a preacher that suits us. I thought: he can only shoot with the Scriptures; but what do you think of a man before you have eaten three bushels of salt with him. I simply say: our preacher! You should look for someone like that again. Who would have thought it when he spent the day sitting behind the Machangel bush and singing at the top of his voice!"

Since that day, Puttfarken's position was even more different than before, and when he offered to go on guard duty of his own accord, and did so as often as his turn came, he did not have to ask for it, and a house was built for him opposite the chapel, just as it should be, and everything that belonged in it arrived of its own accord. "Now all you need is a smooth woman," said the bailiff, "then you'll have everything in line." But

Puttfarken closed his eyes and said, "There's still time, Wulfsbur." But as he sat over his book in the evening, he had to think of the maid from Dreweshof.

The next day, when he found the farmer digging a ditch and was having a meal with him, he began: "Burvogt, yesterday he told me that a wife was missing in my house, and I said that there was still time. But now I want to tell him something: there is a woman missing in his house.
Let him finish talking to me first! I don't say that because I think he may have already forgotten his blessed wife and cast his eyes on another, I know him far too well for that; but it is for the sake of the children and also because, what he doesn't know, there is a girl who has loved him from the first day she saw him and who will be the best second mother imaginable for his children."

The farmer first shook his head when the preacher spoke like that, but when he explained that the farmer's wife had told him to make sure that Wieschen kept her promise, he simply said, "The young, smooth girl is much too bad for me. Look here!" and he took off his hat; "I'm already half grey, because I've had to pick up all sorts of things in these years, and half of the best I had to offer lies under the ashes in Ödringen and half under the grass at the church. The girl deserves a man who has more to offer her than I do."

For the day the preacher kept silent about the matter; but after he had been back to Engensen, he returned to it from time to time and did not let up until the farmer said: "If the year has turned since my Johanna had to leave, and Wieschen still thinks as she said to you, then it shall be as she agreed with my blessed wife. For the sake of the children, I would prefer her to come tomorrow, but that would be against the rules, and besides, I won't touch a woman until the year is behind me.
It took me long enough to do it the first time, even if I couldn't do it any other way."

A week later, Wieschen was there. But she did not come alone, for her father was with her. The preacher had made it clear to them that the sooner the two children were under her care, the better, and the old man had said: "And me? nobody thinks of me! What am I when Wieschen is gone? Lieschen, she has her husband and children, she has no time for me. If you take me into the deal, I'll go along with it; otherwise nothing can come of it."

But he had ulterior motives when he said this; for although he did not want to miss his daughter, the main thing was that he wanted to be with the preacher; for when he looked into the preacher's eyes he forgot the foolish thoughts he now so often had, and did not see the many white faces with the red holes in their foreheads, and was not afraid of the men who walked to and fro in front of a birch tree with a cradle round their necks, and whom he had to think of every time he saw a birch tree or the pendulum in the box clock.

"That is just right for me," said the preacher, who realised where the old man wanted to go; "and if it is not suitable for him on the new farm, he is very welcome to me, for in my house I am as alone as the badger in his hole, and every beaten evening I cannot possibly sit with the Wulfsbauer!"

But he was not satisfied with that; he gave Drewes and Wieschen the big dormitory. They now lived like brother and sister, the farmer and the girl, and it was not until the July moon that they were married in Engensen; but although they were thus considered husband and wife according to the old custom even before the whole friendship, they did not enter into marriage until the preacher had given them together, for he had stipulated that they were to be married.

"You know," he said to the farmer, "I am a farmer's son myself and I know well that the löft was considered a full marriage before the church wedding came into being. But now that we have this, it should be so that a Christian marriage only begins with it, especially in his case, where he is already

and then also because the bailiff should be an example to the village in these matters, and finally because he is not a bachelor who can't wait for time to pass." He was very pleased when the farmer immediately intervened and said: "That's exactly my opinion."

It was merely a quiet wedding, for the bridegroom was not in the mood for dancing and drinking and the bride even less so, and besides, there was national mourning, as Duke Christian had died shortly before, and in the end the times were not favourable. But it was a beautiful wedding speech that the preacher gave, and there were many a person in the village who said: "In a way, a wedding ceremony like this is more decent than when there is drinking and eating at one end."

The bride had been very quiet all the days before, and during the ceremony she looked like the lime on the church wall, for she was too much afraid that the farmer would just take her by force. But the next day she looked as usual again, for when she was alone with her husband he had taken her by the hand and said to her, "I have found out in the time you have been here that I am not yet old and cold inside, and that I have not shown you how fond I am of you, because I have vowed not to touch you to this day. But now, Wieschen," and at this he embraced her and gave her a kiss, "you are my wife, and as far as I am concerned, you shall not regret that you have become so." Then the young woman cried so much that he felt quite frightened; but when he took her hands from her face, he saw that it was sunshine, and his wife laughed and threw her arms round his neck.

It was a good thing that there had only been a table drink at the Wulf farmer's wedding, for the next morning half the young men were called away from Peerhobstberg; loose bands of Swedes appeared in the neighbourhood and lived worse than cattle. Since their king had fallen, they knew no more discipline, and ravishing women and abusing children was nothing but a little fun for them. But the one group that wanted to go through the quarry,

soon learnt that there were also gnats on winter days. As they plodded through the snow and mire with their nags, the leaden goats began to bite so hard that the blood ran after them. "Well," said Viekenludolf, "if you don't know what the custom of the country is, you'll often run into trouble."

On Epiphany Sunday, the Peerhobstler had sung again: "And if the world were full of devils!" It was then: what they heard was murder and fire. If there was no red light in the sky for a week after the sun had set, then people almost missed something, and a corpse on the roadside was no more looked at than a dead cat before. The preacher had a hard time keeping his congregation in Christ's word and teaching, for as the bodies perished in the plague, so the souls perished in the dreadful time.

His heart wanted to stop in his throat when he heard how the peasants took revenge on their tormentors, and he chased himself away when Schewenkasper calmly told him: "In Brelingen, a single farmer who lives in the bush has had one of the Pappenheimers lying on a chain in the barn for half a year, so that he has to eat from the trough. The man is quite right; the dogs have ruined his wife, and whoever pretends to be a dog must have it like a dog."

Today the Imperial troops, tomorrow the Swedes; it was always in shifts. One day it was said: "Wienhausen has been robbed," and afterwards: "In Altencelle the pastor has been beaten to death." The longer it went on, the worse it got. The flat land was swarming with buccaneers and bear skinners. "If it stays like this," growled Schütte, "then we'll run out of woodland and have to replant," and Viekenludolf laughed: "We haven't gone to this much trouble for a long time, because otherwise all the birch trees will end up full and it's really not a nice sight in the long run. It's quicker with the stay angel anyway."

But things only got really bad when Duke Georg, the sovereign's brother, went over to the emperor again because the Swedes wanted to buy him for a peasant. It was as if hell had unleashed all its devils at once, and the preacher said nothing more when he heard how the peasants treated like with like. The fields had mostly ceased to be tilled; the stables stood empty; the people dug for wild roots and ate mice and rats, snails and frogs, dogs and cats, and many a piece of meat that went into the pot or on the grill was not from cattle, nor was it venison. Many a man who went only a hundred paces from his village came back, but in pieces that were carried under his coat, and parents had to be careful if they wanted to keep their children.

The preacher was not yet thirty years old when he already had grey hair over his ears and the wrinkles around his mouth were as deep as those of an old man. But it was still bearable on the Peerhobsberg. Even if the harvest was bad, even if they had to bake tree bark in the bread or acorn meal in every house, they always had enough to eat, because all sorts of things grew in the Wohld that could be eaten, and there was never a shortage of venison and fish. But the worst thing for the people was that they had to fear forever that one day such a large band of warriors might find their way to the village that they could not defend themselves against them.

The preacher also often felt sick under the breastcloth. He was not worried about himself. But ever since the Croats had had a pretty bad time in Engensen, but had had to leave as quickly as possible because the Wehrwölfe were three times as strong as they were, so that none of the rigging people could find their way back, he could not sleep peacefully at night, for he could not stop thinking about how Thormann's Grete, who served as a maid at the Dreweshof, might have fared on such an occasion.

He had seen from the girl's face that she had been through something difficult, and he had asked old Drewes what the

was. She was the youngest daughter of the Tornhof, from which her parents ran away when a band of robbers set upon it and Steers Wieschen, Schewenkasper's treasure, died a miserable death. The farm went up in flames and the Thormanns moved to another farm outside Wettmar, which also belonged to them and which they had leased out; but eight weeks later none of the whole family was alive except Grete, and that only because she had hired herself out to the young Drewes, where she was kept like a daughter, for Witte, the Drewesbur, was her cousin.

"I just want to know what our preacher has always and always to do in Engensen," said Thedel to his wife, who by now had her fourth child at her breast, but was becoming more and more full; "there's hardly a week that he doesn't ride there." His wife laughed:
"He'll probably have a deal with someone who wears a red skirt and his hair in a bun," she said. "Him? He thinks about everything but women," said Thedel; "no, girl; you've lost your way this time."

Before a month had passed, Grete Thormann moved to the new farm with everything she had, which was not much, and from then on the preacher was there more than in his own house, and the next Sunday he threw himself and Grete out of the pulpit, and two weeks later the pastor in Wettmar married them quietly. From that time on, the preacher no longer looked so gloomy, and his wife also changed her face, especially ten months later, when she was given something else to do besides baking bread and milking the cow; after two months, her red skirt was sticking out all the way from the back of her heels, she had become so round, and the preacher also began to look like a goose coming from the stubble into the barn.

But the outdoor Schewenkasper got the best of it. The whole time, he had been messing about with Mieken. One stood in the way of the other. Every now and then you could hear Mieken's voice: "Oller Stoffel! dötscher Hammel!" or something similar, and then there was a growl behind her:
"Stupid Trine! olle Gaffelzange!" Finally the farmer's wife became too

She was stupid about it, and when the two of them barked at each other in the stable again, she slammed the door shut, hooked the wooden lock and shouted: "Now, don't come out until you've become good friends!"

Now the back wall of the barn was made of flats, and the farmer's wife crept up there and listened. "Harm," she said in the evening and laughed so hard that the bed cracked, "it's a pity you didn't hear that too! At first everything was quiet. Then Mieken began: "Get along? with such a fat little potato? Don't think about it! What a lazy dog! I wonder what I'm going to ask him to do to me! Not as much as the cock can carry on his tail! I'd rather look for another job! That's all I need! Who was there first? Let him go where he came from." And then suddenly: "Before that, I always sewed his footcloths and knitted his stockings and mended his tins and that's the thanks I get!" And then she howled at the top of her voice. And then I heard Kasper growling like that, and then everything was quiet. Well, when I let her out, Mieken's eyes were under her and Kasper grinned like a honeycomb horse and said: "You should also be thanked a lot, farmer's wife, and in four weeks' time, we want to go free."

So they did, and for eight months there was a little Kasper and a little Mieken, and suddenly Schewenkasper could open his mouth and learnt to laugh. "I don't know, Your Honour, what it is now," said the Wulfsbauer; "it's like a pure appointment: wherever you look, it's raining twins, if not triplets. If it stays that way, our children will be able to build a church five times as big, and they'll have to plough more land than they do today. My little meadow brings me another couple, your dear wife doesn't want to be left behind either, four children have arrived at Bolles in two years, Schewenkasper doesn't let himself get carried away either; it wasn't like that in the past! Well, if I give up the colourful stick and the big horn, then whoever comes after me will get double the work."

But it was not only like this on the Peerhobsberg; it was as if the people wanted to fill the holes again with double and triple births,

that war, plague and famine had torn and continued to tear. Whole villages were deserted, others had barely a quarter of their inhabitants left; those who were not dead roamed the countryside or lay half starved under the walls of Celle, where the cannons at least offered some protection from the gangs of murderers that the Emperor set upon the country today, the Swede tomorrow, and with whom there was no end in sight. For ten years and more they had been playing tricks with it, and when the children who had grown up during this time were told that there was a time when you could eat your fill every day, they laughed and said: "But he can lie!" It became so terrible that people ate plague corpses and parents killed their children because they couldn't give them another bite of bread.

The Wulfsbauer told the preacher some grisly tales of what he had witnessed on the road when he had been busy in Celle. The assembly of the estates had granted Duke Augustus the means for his brother Georg Eisenhand to wage war against everything that was sucking the blood of the country. Bounty after bounty was called for and farmhand and maid had to give their last penny. By then the Wulfsbauer had ridden to the capital. Countess Merreshoffen, who had already grown grey hair, for her three brothers had been devoured by the war and her sister had been horribly killed with her servants under the gates of Lüneburg, gave him a letter, and so he was admitted to the minister.

He kept the farmer with him for an hour and then took him to the duke, and there Wulf told him how he and the others had helped themselves, for the minister already knew half of it. The duke, who was rather anxious, turned white in the face when the farmer said:
"Most gracious sir, we have not counted them, but it may be as many as a few thousand, whose necks we have lengthened." But the minister said: "If they were all like that, if they were all like that! Then our poor country would be better off." He spoke confidentially with the duke for a while and then said to Wulf: "The most gracious lord will waive all tribute to Peerhobstel as long as the war lasts, in return for the fact that you have proved yourselves to be brave men and loyal subjects."

Two days later, the farmer was back in Celle with twelve of the thirty-three sub-oblemen and placed a bag containing a thousand thalers in gold on the minister's table as a voluntary gift. "I got this stuck in my fingers while I was on defence," he said, "and I think our Lord Duke has a use for it." The minister slapped him on the shoulder and shook his hand. "He's quite a chap, Burvogt, would to God we had more of his kind! How much longer is he staying in Celle and where has he turned in?" When the farmer had told him that, he said, "I'll send him something in two hours."

It was not yet an hour and a half when a ducal carriage pulled up in front of the Golden Sun and a chamberlain and a servant got out. They went into the lord's room and immediately afterwards the landlord came and beckoned to the farmer: "You should come over here!"

The chamberlain rolled up a piece of paper and read out what it said, and the farmer's eyes darkened, for it was more than he had expected: freedom of the treasury for Peerhobstel for as long as the war lasted, official recognition of the parish of Peerhobstel while leaving the parish priest Puttfarken in place, exemption of the new farm from all burdens for all eternity with the exception of the provision of a rider on horseback for every case of war.

"That's too much, Your Grace," said the peasant, "that's too much." But the chamberlain smiled and took the box from the servant's hand, opened it and, pointing to a small picture in a golden frame, said that it showed the duke as he lived and breathed:
"Our most gracious Lord sends him this and a big thank you, and he says that if he has another request, he should come to us."

The preacher was most pleased when that very evening the bailiff had the colourful cane go round and announced Bauernmal; he couldn't help it, he had to run home first and call out to his wife:
"The duke has recognised the community, Margarete! And me too! And so we will stay here until the Lord calls us to Himself!" At this, the

Tears streamed down his face and he had to sit down, his legs were so weak.

But he was also in dire need of the joy, because he was increasingly depressed by the way the war was casting its shadow over Peerhobstel and making people hard and cold. But now he had a text for the following Sunday. He made it clear to the congregation how well off they were against what other people had to endure, and so they should not complain and despair, but live in the fear of the Lord and hold their heads high.

The people shuddered when they heard how things were going elsewhere, and thanked God that it was not so with them as in the region reported in the flyer which the bailiff had brought from Celle and which the preacher read to them, for at the end it said:

From hunger for bread in forests much frozen, chased from house and farm: two children one found with pain, gnawed from their mother's heart from famine.

The imperials

It was a hard winter and the snow remained. The Peerhobstler were afraid that their footprints would draw enemies into the village, and so they had to give themselves up after every fresh snowfall and make false tracks through the heath past the village.

So at least they had something to do and didn't fall into a gloom of boredom. To keep the work going, the Wulfsbauer went about building a solid log cabin in the Wallburg once the cold subsided and the ground became soft, for he told himself that a bunch of murderous scum might find their way to the Peerhobsberge, and then it would be bad.

Thedel immediately copied him, and then Bolle and Henke and Duwe and Rennecke, and finally everyone in the castle wanted a house with a stable. They built the houses close to the rampart and covered them with

Plaggen so that they could not catch fire so easily. To make the castle even safer, they channelled a spring into the moat, having previously made it even deeper and steeper.

Finally, the access road was dug up and a drawbridge was built in its place. A well was also dug, and finally all the powder and lead that could be spared was moved into the log cabins and all the surplus rifles and other weapons, including pans and pots, firewood, clothing and all kinds of food and fodder for the cattle were stored there. When everything was ready, the bailiff gave a speech at the farmers' market and said:
"Now they can come if they like; we want to serve them well!"

Then the farmers held their heads high again. What could happen to them? If the enemy put the red rooster on their roof, let them go! There was enough wood growing in the Wohld, all the valuables and cash were in the rampart, and before the enemy had reached the village, the guards had already spotted him and reported him. After the harvest, the guard service was even better organised than during the summer. The hollows in the trees were so strong and tightly made that the guards could easily live in them, especially as there was no shortage of warm clothes and furs, as the wolves had taken enough of them. In addition, mounted guards roamed the heath all day long.

To ensure that the evenings were not too long for the people, the preacher organised all kinds of entertainment. He organised meetings in the parsonage where the Holy Scriptures were read out, and on some days he read from other books so that people could laugh from the heart again. He told them what life was like in the marshes on the Lower Weser, where he lived, and what he had experienced at the high school, and one after the other, their tongues would melt and everyone would tell something or other. Even Schewenkasper did so, and he was very proud that everyone laughed so hard; but they did so because no one could make out from what he said: what is head and what is codpiece?

Every fortnight there was a dance for the young people at the new farm, because Wittenfritze played the fiddle and Duwenhinrich was a great player of the pickle flute. It was fun at these dance evenings, fun, but still sensible, because apart from a drink of beer there was nothing else, and even if there wasn't as much joking and the red skirts didn't fly up quite as high as usual, there was no bickering and quarrelling and no big heads the next day. But the liberated people also danced along. There was a big cheer when even the preacher showed that he and his wife could dance as well as one another, and when the girls had a free hand, every one of them wanted to dance with him. "Yes, our preacher, that's one!" said Thedel, as he pushed home with his Hille.

So the winter passed more quickly than anyone expected, and it did not bring any particular trouble. Once, however, a large band of Swedes had come quite close to the village when the Wulfsbauer and his two servants, who had been riding on patrol, caught sight of them. Then Schewenkasper showed that he was not as stupid as he pretended to be, and made such a play that he suddenly became a famous man, even with his wife, who teased him every day about his laziness and stubbornness. Eight days later, when he was sitting in the Kruge in Engensen, he was very proud when Viekenludolf said to him: "If you weren't a married man, you would actually have to become head of the board. But now tell us what it was like!"

"Well," said Shewenkasper, "well, that was the morning after the night, well, the same morning that Duwes Wittkopp got the calf with the two heads. Well, I immediately thought: if that doesn't mean anything, I thought. Well, that's how it was. At about eight o'clock, but it could have been nine already, the farmer said to me and Gird: we want to go for a walk in the meadows, maybe we'll notice something new. So off we went! Well, and when we were mostly at the Bullenbruch, that is, we were still at the Höltkebrunnen, what do you think, riders arrived and there were about forty of them. Gird, said the farmer there, get to the Peerhobsberg and let the horns blow! Let us see if we can get help. Well, and then a thought occurred to me, truly, and I said, "Wulfsbur," said I, "if we are now in

I'll ride through the bush where we're above the wind, and I'll make like a cow or two or three and like a calf, and I've got rid of the pig's braying too, well, I have, maybe that we'll drive them off the track with it. And the farmer was satisfied. Punch, he said, that's a thought! So we went into the bush until we were above the wind, and then I set off. Very gently at first: meow, meow, like such strength. And after that: muuh, and more and more dangerous, and in between nöff, nöff, nöff and wit, wit, wit, like a pig, and every now and then I let a mare or a filly go, well, and what do you think, they really fall for it, the Döllmer, and we'd drag them from the Bullenbruche to the Osterhohl and from there to the Nienwohle, and from there to the Düsterbrook, and from there to the Neegenbarkenbusch, and then 'e didn't see, klabuster, klabuster rode to Rammlingen and got help, well. Well, and the other thing, you know that better than I do."

That was also quite funny. There were about eighty of the three hundred and thirty-three together in Rammlingen, and when the two Peerhobstler came riding up and made their report, Schütte shouted: "That suits us just fine! And now I want to tell you something: we want to do things differently than before. The old lurking behind the bushes is boring in the long run, I think. We'll get another twenty men or more and then we'll ride right over them. It's got to be a bit of a mess if we don't get them underfoot!"

The head officer had a different opinion, but the others were all in favour and so they set off. They got about thirty of their men together on the way, so that there were a hundred and ten of them, all made their faces black and rode off. Gödeckengustel and two others rode ahead. The Swedes travelled through the Jammertal, where there was nothing but sand and curly tracks. When they were in the middle of the Haidberge, the peasants attacked them from two sides. The boys blew their horns and cracked their long whips. The Swedes had a lot of stolen horses, and they went mad when they heard the hissing and clapping, ran over each other and broke out in all directions. And then the pistols, the lead clubs and the baleen did their duty until the last rider was out of the saddle.

But seven of the Wehrwölfe had also taken a good beating, and Schütte was the worst hit; he had a shot right through the chest and died after a quarter of an hour. But his last word was:
"Kids, that was fun!"

There was a hollow in the middle of the Jammertal valley, where the Swedes all came in, and since then the place has been called the Schwedenloch. Not far from there was a flat, which they called the big dog bite. In the Hornung there was another troop of Swedes, fifteen strong, and the farmers were just about to go and get them out of the way, when Thedel and Gird rode up and reported that a dozen imperial troops had arrived from the other side. Then the head nobleman said, "Well, let one dog bite the other!" He rode to the castle, dressed like an imperial, and then rode so close to the Swedes that they could see his colours. They were after him at once, but they did not know how to ride on the high heath, and so the Wulfsbauer gouged them in the neck and then made himself thin. The peasants waited until everything was over and under, and then they swept the dwelling off the dell.

That was always enough to talk about in the village, and so it was spring before anyone knew what had happened. It didn't get any better with the war, but the work in the fields began and the people knew what they were in the world for, even if they had to hide like wolves in the quarry, because on the one hand the warriors were travelling back and forth day after day and on the other hand the Black Death was going around again. So the Peerhobstler kept to themselves so as not to bring the plague into the quarry. As they were used to keeping themselves and their houses clean, did not suffer from hunger and lived moderately, the plague might have had an eye on the village, but had to leave it alone.

Work was the best way for people to get over their fears and worries. They cared little about what was going on outside. "Are we Swedish or are we imperial?" the bailiff asked the preacher;
"I can't find my way through it any more. Viekenludolf says the regent doesn't know how to do it either, and that's why he's got in touch with the Hessians.

and tackles everything that doesn't belong here, just like us, and that's the only true thing!"

By now he was mostly grey; the chasing back and forth in the heath and everything else had bleached his head, made his forehead wrinkled and his mouth tight. But otherwise he was still his old self, and being in the saddle for twelve hours didn't bother him much. He was now back in charge of all the important things, because Viekenludolf was too much of a hound dog and couldn't bear to wait. If it had not been for Wulf, the Rammlinger would have lain in the ground for a long time, for when his hand began to itch again before the time was up, he came between four Swedish horsemen, and they covered him up so that it was mostly over with him; But then the Peerhobstler came thundering up and struck off the neck of the man who was trying to get Vieken out of the saddle, and he struck off the arm of another, and the third got one in the forehead; but he got the sabre right through the face of the fourth before he threw him into the heath. "That's only on the outside, old girl," he said, and struck his wife on the loin; "tie a rag round me and give me a honeyed loaf, and I won't cry any more."

The farmer's wife laughed. She was quite a different woman, but even more beautiful than when she was a girl; she was the shiniest woman far and wide and the funniest too, and that was the main thing for the farmer, because he often had his dark times. He felt like Drewes, who was now playing the grandfather, because his daughter had her fourth child. When he was with the children, he could still laugh so that you could see all his teeth, but when they were asleep, he often saw the many white faces with the red holes in their foreheads and birch trees in front of which dead men walked to and fro like the pendulum on the box clock. Then he would go to the preacher and have him chase away the gnats.

His oath-keeper also had to deal with such thoughts, but what worried him most was what lay ahead. For eighteen years now he had had to play the wolf; he had gone even deeper through human blood than Drewes; but if it had been up to his neck, he would not have minded if it had finally been a

would have been the end of it. But the heath was teeming and teeming with rigging; Swedes and Wälsche, Krabatten and Slovaks, who ate what the farmer sowed and drank what the farmer's wife milked; the robbing and plundering, singeing and burning, scolding and raping, murdering and torturing, that was the end of it.

Many a time the farmer had the thought: "If only we hadn't defended ourselves, then we'd all be in the ground and wouldn't have to worry!" But as soon as the bugle called and the Hillebillen reported that there were strange dogs on the road, he reached for the rifle behind the shed, got the lead cudgel from the deer antlers, threw his legs over the black horse, and when he came back, often only after days, hungry, tired, wet from rain or sweat, smelling of pine, post and heather like a horseherd, he said, and he laughed a little: "We've got them over the hill for this time!" Then he fell on the bed and slept like a dead man for a whole day. The next day, however, he washed himself from top to toe, put on fresh underwear and other clothes, and only then did he play with the children and take his little meadow in his arms. Whoever saw him then could not have imagined that it was the same man who two days before had shouted to an imperial officer who was begging for mercy, "Yes, but of this kind!" and with that he beat him to death.

What could he do? Whether Swede or emperor, what one was cooked with, the other was scalded with; here people were tortured to death in the name of St Mary and elsewhere they were maltreated for the sake of pure doctrine. In addition to all this misery, Georg Eisenhand died of poison, as it was rumoured, which he was supposed to have received in Hildesheim when he negotiated with the Swedish general, and now it was as if the country was drowning in blood. In the end, the peasants could no longer stand the drudgery; they openly banded together and helped each other as best they could, and if things went wrong, it was no big deal; those who were dead could no longer break their hearts over their agonising lives.

Viekenludolf had howled like a mad dog when it was reported to him that two hundred peasants had been killed by the imperial troops at Dachtmissen, for he had had more than one friend there and something else he was even more interested in. He rode off with his men, but he was too late, and only got twenty men under his knee, and six of them alive, and one was an officer. He had them all hanged in the middle of the bush, as if they were common riff-raff, and when the captain tried to object, he shouted, "Then treat the gentleman like an officer, and hang him by his sabre-hitch and not by a cradle!" Yes, it was said that he had spat in his face first.

That must have been true, because soon afterwards he was punished and had to go free. So far he had always been lucky; but as it happened, Gödeckengustel's sister Trina, he should have kept his hands off her, for the wolves had fun with each other in everything but such things. So he let his mouth hang open like a roebuck looking for a doe when Gödecke said to him one evening: "Our Trina thinks it's about time you two got married." Two weeks later the wedding took place; it was a fun wedding, except for the groom, who said to Grönhagenkrischan: "Yes, the women's people, you have to be careful; they take everything literally!"

He also remained second chairman afterwards, because he was happy when there was something to do outside. "This eternal smooching!" he moaned; "good heavens, climbing only makes sense until you get the appel from the tree; after that it's cock's nest." So he and his brown dog were usually on the road, because every day it rained vermin down on the land: today Sweden, tomorrow Weimaraner, then Hesse and then it started all over again. But he enjoyed such a life, and when he came home he would throw a handful of thalers on the table with a few gold foxes in between and say: "If it stays like this, Trina, you'll have to knit your thrift stockings as long as you can!" But when he came home once and told her quite happily that every man could now take two wives or three, because the war and the plague had swallowed up so many people that

Trina made a few eyes like a cat in a hole in the hearth, lionised Weesemann's Lotte, a pretty girl, on the spot and took a maid who looked like a scarecrow. But he said to Grönhagen: "A porcupine is like a child's hand against my Trina. Oh yes, the top of the beer always tastes the best!"

But he didn't have much time to feel sorry for himself. Today the imperial colonel Heister had come crawling along, tomorrow Torstenson and his Swedes would be grumbling around the country; all around Celle the peasants lay with their wives and children, starving and waiting for death, arguing about which tasted better, a Swedish rib or a good imperial sirloin roast, for it had already come to the point where people were apparently eating human flesh and going out on a manhunt by appointment. The Peerhobstler, however, had no need for this; they still had all kinds of livestock and there was plenty of venison, but they did eat horse meat here and there when a bullet accidentally hit a horse instead of the rider during defence work in the heath, and then they said: "Mare calves taste good too."

One morning in May, all three of them were sitting on the bench in the garden in front of the new courtyard, the three chairmen, Drewes, Wulf and Vieken. The peonies were blossoming, the swallows were flying from time to time, the buntings were busy and the children were singing: "May beetle fly, father is at war, mother is in Pomerania, Pomerania has burnt down, may beetle fly!" They sang and cried and crawled and jumped after the beetle, which flew through the sun so that its wings looked like gold.

"That's a new song," said the Engenser; "we didn't sing that as children. Yes, the world is new every day." The Peerhobstler nodded: "But no better, Drewes; I don't think I'm reviving it yet, that there's peace." The Rammlinger said: "I'm of the same opinion. So far I've found it quite amusing, but I don't know whether it's because I'm getting older or because I have a little boy now; I don't really enjoy these stories any more.

At the end of the day, you get tired of it when you have to take the stay off the hook one day after the other."

In the heath, a guard began to blow, and then another, and a hillebille could be heard, and another. Harm and Ludolf stood up: "Well, that won't help; the work has to be done. Adjüs, Drewsbur; I'm just curious what's going on now! And the stupidest thing is: my Trina, she doesn't believe when I'm lying outside that I'm just doing it to please the Swedes and the others; they always say every day: well, the Swede, he'll probably be wearing a red skirt, and I shouldn't be surprised if he's called Weesemannslotte!" He scratched behind his ears: "Yes, the women's people! They're quite cute so far; if only they didn't have such a big mouth!"

He let out a sigh like the length of an arm. But Drewes laughed: "That doesn't hurt you at all, Viekenbur, it's even all right for you, you mongrel! If you had a wife like other people, the poor animal could take one. A stone pot has a lid like that, that's the natural order, and a Katteeker and a Lork, that makes a bad team. But now see that we don't get any flea bites!"

And so they did. The guards had kept a good lookout and the Hillebillen had had a long breath; the imperials made silly faces when the tooting and blowing and ringing started all around them, and even more so when there was banging everywhere and yet no one was to be seen, for the Wohld was thick and the quarry was wet. So they were very happy when they were back in the bright heath, and even there they did not stay long, for between the curly foothills and the machangels, soon a horse's head with a face above it could be seen here, soon one there, and there were more and more, just like in front of an immense basket when the woodpecker is working on it.

"That's more than a hundred men," said the officer, who had been listening with his ear to the ground; "Satan knows where these fellows come from. Onwards, march!" So they marched along, their faces behind them every moment, and behind them rode the peasants, here three, there ten, there

a few again and some everywhere.

"Their breath shall be short today and it shall cost them horseflesh too," laughed Wulf; but Viekenludolf rode ahead at a gallop until he was within a hundred paces, and then he stood in the stirrups, looked away over the Machangel bush, cracked his whip and shouted: "Kiejuh, kiejuh! Schlah doot, schlah doot, all doot, all doot, all dooot!"

It was as if the wasps had got among the people in front. The officer cursed and struck two fellows over the heads with his sabre so that they shot to the ground, but there was no stopping them; from behind and from in front, and to the right hand and to the left, everywhere "kiejuh!" and in one end "kiejuh!" and in between the cracking of the whip and the hideous cries: "Schlah doot, schlah doot, all doot, all doot, all dooot!" Then the officer screamed, throwing both arms up in the air:
"Holy Mary!" and wanted to go behind him, but the chief constable's lead cudgel hit him in the neck; he fell forwards, and only when the grey horse plunged into a hollow did the dead man also fall down.

"Well, how did it go?" asked Drewes when Wulf and Ludolf came back in the afternoon, wet as frogs and hungry as herdboys. "Fine," cried the Rammlinger, "they're still running and will probably still be running tomorrow. We've given them something to run on, but something that's about to break through. They probably won't come back as soon as that, and twenty of them at most at midnight to see where they actually are. Children, I am hungry and thirsty! Wulf farmer's wife, every labour is worth its reward and threshing makes for a long stomach. But you mustn't look at me today when I kneel behind the ham, Wieschen, otherwise you might think I'm half-fed with my Trina."

Father Drewes laughed and thought how often he too had come home with such a hunger for slaughter. "Boy," he said and poured the mug of mead to the top, "boy, you really come back to life when I hear you bragging like that! And as it is, it's fun, and even if you feel a bit grey afterwards when you're in

lies in his bed; all that is right: we have shown that we are not lambs, and we want to toast to that: high every man who does not let the bellows get to him!"

He let the jug, on which was written: "Fifat, es läbe die Vreundschaft", go round, but when he gave it to his oath husband, he had to toast it first, because Harm listened to the grass garden, where the children were playing a new game and singing:

The Swede came, took everything; smashed the windows, dug out lead, poured bullets, shot everything; shot everything up.

The Swedes

What the children had sung was soon to come true. The Swede came; fear went before him, misery behind him and the plague beside him.

"Pray, children, pray, tomorrow the Swede will come, tomorrow comes the Eastern Star, he will teach the children to pray", with this the little ones were brought to bed; they learnt it and sang it in the same funny way as they taught the cockchafer and the sun calves to fly, so that it sent a chill down the spines of the grown-ups.

There was talk of peace everywhere, but no one believed that it would come, not even when Oxenstierna took up residence in Celle and travelled from there to Osnabrück, where the others were who were drinking away the empire's furs. Rather, people believed in the end of the world and everywhere people ran around shouting: "Fear God and give him the glory, for the time of his judgement has come!"

Even the preacher sometimes hung his head and said to his wife: "Margaret, it's hard not to doubt God when you have to hear how things are going. The cattle farmer has told me that the Swedes torture children for fun, and in the troop train he recently attacked there were

eight young girls of standing as porters and the Swedes beat them with their whips like cattle. But that's the least they had to endure. God, my God, why did you let this happen!"

He had a very hard time, for the peasants grumbled against the master. "What good is all this goodness," Schewenkasper had said, "if you have nothing from it but fears and worries!" But he had remained silent when the preacher said to him: "Shame on you, Kasper! You have healthy children and a healthy wife and enough to eat every day!"

But the spiritual master was often no different from the householder and the Wulf farmer and all the others, even the Rammlinger, for he had arrived one day and said: "I've had it! I want to walk behind the plough and play with the Lütjen in the evening, but not kill living people every few days!"

He had got used to his Trina when he was little, especially when a girl arrived behind the boy, because, being the apron fool that he once was, he got all twisted up with joy about it, and when he had time, he dragged himself off with the child. He had nothing more to say to his Trina. She had once caught him holding the Lütjemagd in his arms, shamed him terribly and shouted: "One more time and I'll go into the water with the Lütjen!" Then he had been scared stiff and vowed to her that he would take off his boy's shoes and act like a man. As far as his farm and the village were concerned, he kept his word, but he travelled a lot, and as there was a shortage of men in the villages, he found it difficult to keep his promise.

One fine May morning, he rode through the Bullenbruch with one of the wildest of the younger Wehrwolves, Schierhorn's Helmke. He was in a mood like a snow king because he had had a good time with Weesemann's Lotte. "Nice air of days, Helmke," he said and lit his pipe. As it lit, he looked out over the heath. "Helmke, look, two foreign riders, Swedes or something! Let's have a little

and offer them the time of day! What do you think? Always polite, said the crow, and made a servant every time she took an egg from Piewitt."

Schierhorn was right there with them. They hung their lead cudgels over their wrists, drew their pistols and rode in good cover towards the riders. Rammlinger shot the first one out of the saddle, but then he saw that he had not two, but a whole dozen Swedes in front of him, and now it was time to make the hare and get what was inside out of the nags. There were a few bangs behind them, but apart from Helmke's grey horse, which had to miss half its codend, they remained intact. But when they were mostly at the Wohld, ten other Swedes came into their path, and they had no choice but to hide in the bush.

The Swedes searched around for a while, but then left. On the way they met two Tatar women and learnt from them that there was a village in the Wohld. "Beeses Leit live there, Mr Hiebsches," said the old woman, and the young one interjected: "Make everything dead that is good Leit, Suldatten un Zigeiner!" The constable said: "Oh ha! So that's where the brothers are! Well, let's get them out of here!" He took the women with him and rode on horseback to Fuhrberg, where Count Königsmark was lying with many people, and made a report.
In the middle of the night, one hundred and fifty men were sent out and had to camp in the Magethaide until it got dark.

It was still quite grey when Gird, who was on watch with Bolles Atze in front of the Bullenbruche, heard them approaching; he blew his horn, but then he already heard the tooting at the Kohlenberg, and at the Dornkuhle it started too; the Swedes had come from three sides at once. The Peerhobstler were barely able to save themselves and their cattle in the ditch; the last one was the Wulfsbauer and Schewenkasper came staggering after him; he had quickly taken the picture of the duke from the Dönze and the yellow-coloured cat. "So that the children have something to play with while we're at it," he said.

The Swedes cautiously approached the village. Everything was quiet, except for the chickens clucking and the swallows chirping. Rifles in hand, the soldiers approached the houses; not a soul was to be found. They searched sheds and cellars; everything was empty. They felt uneasy. But then a horseman came running up with a Swedish coat that he had found on Horstmann's farm, and now they searched thoroughly and found a whole lot of weapons and clothes that had obviously belonged to Swedes who had been shot to death. "And if I have to search forever and three days," cursed the captain, "I want to find them, and then you can have a little joke with them, people!" The soldiers laughed, but not quite heartily.

It took them about three hours to find the ring wall, and eleven men fell to their deaths in the wolf caves. The others got there safely, but couldn't see anything because the thorns were as high as a house and were firmly entangled. "Two men up into the trees; see what it is!" ordered the leader. Two men climbed into the fir trees. As soon as they were high enough to open their mouths, there was a double bang and they both fell like sacks.

"Gang of pigs!" scolded the captain; "away with that stuff!" The soldiers pulled the thorns away, but had to break them off piece by piece, they were so firmly stuck together. But then they listened; a horn was being blown. It sounded uncanny, as if the cats were screeching and the wolves howling after them, and then the bells began to ring, slowly at first and then faster and faster, and behind the wood the tooting and ringing began in three places at once. The soldiers looked round; they didn't like the sound very much.

"Well, it'll be soon!" shouted the officer, and struck the people who were at the thorn-covering with the whip across the backs so that it cracked. "Thirty men here, but a bit fast." The soldiers worked so hard that it cracked. A raven flew over the rampart, calling loudly and making a bow, the black woodpecker laughed and the marsh wardens grumbled at the noise. "Firmly, firmly!" cried the captain; "in an hour we must

they have! They want to show the bushwhackers what it means to shoot down pious Swedish warriors like roebucks. Keep on having fun! The sooner we're done here, the sooner you'll get to your girls!"

Viekenludolf laughed: "Or not!" he said and looked at the Wulf farmer from the side. It was a bad day for him: "You're hanging around with the women," he said, "and we can take the rap for it. It's worth a shame! But I always thought you'd make us a nice soup again. But what good is all that? Now it means: not a bullet wasted, not an inch of fur shown, and everything I say done. And whoever doesn't do as I say shall have it the way he deserves!"

Viekenludolf's skin crawled when he saw the man standing there, his rifle in his fist, his face all yellow, his eyes blue, and his mouth like a line. But then he felt better, because the chairman ordered: "Make sure the men are on hand! And tell the women's men to make some hot pitch and water. But come right back! Wait a minute: the boys should also each have a rifle; today everyone has to help. It's neck and neck and more, because if they catch us, they'll let us die for a long time!"

The thorns became transparent; you could see the faces of the soldiers and Viekenludolf wanted to shoot. "Are you mad?" Wulf snarled at him quietly; "First the head has to fall, then the other one gets it!" He looked through the shooting hole, went back, pushed his rifle through, took a long aim and fired. A roar came from over there: "He's not bragging for a while," he whispered to the Rammlinger; "Leaf shot! He was off like a weasel." He nudged a boy: "Let them toot and tinkle as much as they can; we must have help, do you hear? And when the blood spurts out of their ears, let them blow or I'll blow something for them!"

The Swedes were standing around their captain, who was lying in the grass with his back against a cart, and every time he breathed, bright blood leapt from his chest. A very young officer, mostly still a boy, knelt by him and wiped the deathly sweat from his forehead. The

Dying moved his lips; the young man bent low, nodded and jumped up: "We must avenge our Captain. Volunteers forward!" Only a dozen came forward, led by the old constable. "Rag pack!" shouted the officer; "you're heroes with the women, but here you're in your trousers." He pointed to some people who were trying to push their way to the back. "You there, in front, and woe betide anyone who goes back an inch!" He held the pistol in front of their eyes.

The men grumbled; they were all bloodhounds of the worst kind, but this eerie castle in the middle of the wet bush, the snipers in it, the strange tooting and ringing in the round, that made their necks cringe. The officer called out twenty by name: "I'll count one, two, three, and whoever isn't in the trench will swallow his own blood. Remember Gustav Adolf, remember Breitenfelde, remember that you are Swedes and not Krabatten! So: two pistols each in the breastplate and the Finn knife between your teeth! And now with God for Sweden!
One, two, three!" He grabbed his chest and fell to the grass; the Wulfsbauer had shot him right through the heart.

The constable shot a single glance at him; then he shouted, "Forward march!" and jumped into the ditch with one leap, and all at once the water was full of Swedes; but it was as if it were boiling, so they all cried out at once, for as they were there, every one of them had jumped into the sharp stakes.

"At least shoot them dead, that's terrible!" shouted the preacher, but the chairman shook his head: "No, Your Honour, we don't have time for that, and the longer they squeal there, the later the others will dare to approach. But go and tell them to take good care everywhere and to blow and ring the bells, and then stick to the women and children, you're more necessary there!"

It was suddenly very quiet. You could hear the finches flapping and the tits chirping and every now and then a cow bellowed in the barns. It soon sounded as if the Swedes had left. But after a while you could hear axe blows. "Hold the goats at hand!" said the chairman to

Kasper, "and the hot water and the tar! They'll probably want to make a bridge. Well, that shouldn't help them much either, I don't think."

He had breakfast, but kept his eyes on the cuckoo hole, and then he lit a pipe. He had put the trouble about the Rammlinger behind him, and besides, the guards had reported that an answer had come from two sides, so he thought, "It'll be all right!"

But then he was annoyed that he had done something very stupid. He should have had a bulletproof tower erected in the castle, then he could see what was being done over there. "Well, I'm not going to get any dumber from this," he thought.

He had been sitting there like that for two hours when the hacking over there subsided. You could hear the people dragging and moaning. The Wulfsbauer sent the boy over: "They should make themselves immense and bring the baskets over here! And then everything to the holes, but around the whole rampart, and here," he turned to Viekenludolf, "the snipers here, but don't shoot until I say, and not even then, if I shoot once!"

After a while, there were twenty popanzees standing to his right and left. The peasants had put on their Immen masks, wrapped scarves around their necks, put on thick skirts and three pairs of trousers and tied them up at the bottom. They were all wearing thick gloves and each had his rifle in front of him. Behind the headman and Viekenludolf were the immense baskets; they were tied to long poles and it hummed in them like a kettle, because the exits were barricaded.

The man from Fuhrberg whispered: "I've got one free!" The umpire nodded: "Because you can!" There was a bang; a shout came from over there, then loud swearing.
You could hear the thorn bushes cracking. A bridge made of carriage poles bore through and came across the water, first slowly, then faster. The bailiff turned his rifle to the side, took aim and fired. There was more swearing over there. "Whoever has one free, shoot him dead," he ordered; "but be careful! we haven't a man to spare!" There were five bangs, the

The bridge fell into the water, but went up again and had a wide and high protective wall of fir hedges and carriage branches.

"Who wants to throw the Immen?" asked Wulf; "it can't be a married bloke, not even you, Ludolf. But Helmke, you!" Schierhorn came and stood next to the chief steward. "Now," he ordered, "as I call, you six there, as quickly as you can, open the baskets, put the poles in Helmke's hand, and you others watch out and make sure that no one can hurt him. And if he has bad luck, you take his place, Hinrich, and then you, Jochen. And by all means don't throw the lambs into the water; all of them into the thorns! We'll get the people on the bridge down that way!"

A mare neighed in the castle; over there the stallions answered. From the heath you could hear a toot and then a tinkle, and the castle answered. The cuckoo called. A yellow butterfly flew over the water, perched on the head of one of the dead men in the ditch and flew over the thorn bushes. "He wants to get the others too," whispered the Rammlinger and grinned.

No sound was heard from over there. Then the thorns cracked and all at once the bridge shot across the water and got stuck in the water. "Watch out, shoot calmly!" whispered the umpire. Six Swedes ran like mad along the bridge; it banged a few times and only one reached the top, a young fellow with hair as light as a child's. "Don't shoot!" shouted Wulf; "take him alive!" Just as the young man was about to cross the shelter, Schierhorn pulled him over and threw him to the cattle farmer. "Tie him up and put him down, but don't do anything!" shouted the umpire and fired, and then he called out: "The Immen!"

Schierhorn, who looked like Satan incarnate with his mask and all that stuff, stood bent over behind the protective wall, his lead truncheon on his wrist, squinting above him. One hand gripped the pine hedge. The farmer struck it with the club, there was a scream, the hand disappeared, the water chattered and then it screamed for a long time. A shot was fired; the water splashed up again. Very gently, as if he did it every day,

Schewenkasper stood behind the Ehlershäuser, had an immense basket handed to him, tore off the floor, raised the bar and handed it to Schierhorn. He took it, weighed it and then shouted:
"Watch out, you there!" and tipped over the pole and then another one, and the third, the fourth, the fifth and the sixth.

Swedes ran over the bridge again. Three got bullets, four climbed over the protective roof, but Schierhorn and Kasper threw them into the ditch. Then you could hear swearing over there, then shouting, then a buzzing and humming started. There was no end to the swearing and shouting, it got worse and worse, you could hear the horses thrashing about and tearing themselves loose, dogs howling, the humming became more and more dangerous, the whole air was full of immen and behind the rampart stood Viekenludolf, bent over with laughter, hitting himself on the ham so hard that it banged, and shouting: "I'm going dot, I'm going dot!"

The Wulfsbauer had to laugh too. Then he went over, untied the Swede's hands and said, "Get up!" The young man stood there, his nose white as chalk. The farmer grabbed him by the chest: "Can you speak German?" The boy trembled all over: "Yes!" he uttered.
"Are you a German yourself in the end?" The human nodded. "Where from?" He choked: "From Saxony!" The farmer took a deep breath: "Bastard!
Actually, you should die. But run along and tell them to get away. We still have enough Immen and our friends are all coming. And if anyone asks you where you've been, tell them: with the Wehrwolves! You're the first one we'll let go alive." The soldier trembled so that he could hardly cross the bridge, and when he reached the bank he fell down.

The Wulfsbauer held up his hand: "Shh! They're tooting together again! What's that? Those are our people! Listen, a shot! Boy, that's good, I'm half thirsty!" He drank the whole mug of thin beer that the boy handed him and then he said: "Now we have to make sure that our Immen forget their anger. They'll be all wrong! Well, they'll probably all have Brägenschülpen. And now run along and tell the women's men, but they mustn't

if they want to keep their smooth faces, otherwise they'll get mouths like tree monkeys. So now half of them can go and see what our mum has cooked for him. But leave some for me!"

He listened for the Wohld and nodded. More and more shots rang out and the tooting and blowing didn't stop. The farmer stood there like a tree. Then he laughed. "Do you hear them, Ludolf?" He nodded: "Yes, we're cooling off their cubes now," he said; "with a lead cudgel, that's good for them!" The Wulfsbauer raised his finger: "Ours have them between them. Silence! Do you hear it? Boy, boy, it's a pity we're not with them!" He trembled with excitement: "Just listen to them barking: Schlah dooot!" He put his hands next to his mouth and shouted across the ditch: "Slah doot, slah doot, all doot, all doot, all dooot!"

And then it came out of the log cabins like singing; the two farmers listened; the women and children sang: "Now give thanks to God with your hearts, mouths and hands!"

It didn't take long for the Wehrwölfe to arrive. They laughed and shouted across the ditch: "Well, the main work was already done; we could have stayed at home! Now let's take this stupid thing away and turn it into firewood!" The Wulfsbauer shouted: "No, we can use that here quite well, take it to the bridge! But first one of you can come here and tell us how it turned out, because you can imagine that we hellishly curious!"

Jasper Winkelmann from Fuhrberg and Ehlershinnerk from Engensen came over the bridge. "Boy," said the man from Fuhrberg, slapping the man from Rammlingen on the shoulder, "you've done yourself up! You want to go fründjen again! What a pity you weren't there! Most of us couldn't stop laughing. I don't think any of them will eat another honey bread in their whole life. You should have seen how the horses wedged out, and the blokes, I tell you, it was a real riot! They were fleeing like young dogs, and I

I think there's someone sitting behind every Machangel in the Haide and picking the Immenangeln out of his skin. What a laugh we had!"

The Wulfsbauer took off his mask. "Usually it's work first, pleasure second," he said, "but with us it's the other way round. Get a few more men and nails and beards; we want to make a tower here quickly so that when they come back, we can greet them from above, because it's too expensive in the long run with the immen. And what will the children say if we make honey like this!"

But the Swedes didn't come back, neither these nor others. What no one had thought possible seemed to be coming true. Word spread to the Haide that peace was now definitely, but also very definitely, to come. There were all sorts of signs: the storks were breeding on the roofs again and no longer in the woods; the winter crows left earlier than before; the mice stopped eating; there were no more shooting stars; the fiery men in the sky did not return; the plague and death birds were as if blown away.

The marauders and partisans were still moving around the country, but their good time was over. Wherever they showed themselves, the people ran together and beat them to death, and the Tatars and whatever else was without house and hearth did the same. The farmers slowly crawled out of the bushes and hung the kettle hooks over the herds again, if the houses were still there, or built new ones as best they could. Here and there they ploughed and sowed again, and the dead were buried in the ground, as was proper, and not buried in an old sack.

But they didn't quite trust the peace. It was not even conceivable. Peace? Working and eating and sleeping without fear and anxiety? No more firelight in the sky? No more wailing and crying? To be allowed to laugh and sing again? And play and dance? And rejoice when a child is born? Anyone who believes that is unwise! The war has driven them crazy! It's time for him to be looked after! For it will soon be time again

go! You know how it is! After the Peace of Lübeck in 1629, things only got worse! And that was sixteen years ago, no, seventeen. And four years ago, hadn't the duke made peace with the emperor? And what good did it do? Nothing, it just got worse again!

But in the end they had to believe it. Things had really changed in the world. There was still plenty of misery and hardship everywhere, but the murder and torture was no longer so rampant. There were also many more flowers in bloom, the birds were singing more beautifully than ever and the air was so different, not at all like when it always smelled of smoke and blood. So it must be true what the preacher in the chapel said, that the emperor and the princes were serious about it. Otherwise old Drewes would not suddenly hold his head so high again. "I want to revive that, but then it's time for me," he said.

He lived to see it. It was the beginning of November when Viekenludolf came chasing after him, screaming like a monster, jumping off his horse like a boy, turning the Wulf farmer's wife round so that you could see half her legs, laughing like a fool and shouting: "You think I'm drunk? Not a bit of it! I'm as sober as an unhorned calf. But it is peace, peace for ever, sure and true, and if you won't believe me, read it here, or let the preacher read it! I bought this from a man who brought more such sheets from Celle. Our duke's seal is underneath. There, your honour!" He fell onto the bench and gasped, and suddenly the water ran out of his eyes.

But he immediately jumped up again, because the Wulfsbauer came running. He had been in the grass garden and had heard the screaming and crying and laughing. And now he was standing there, shaking all over and looking like a freshly whitewashed wall in the face. "What's wrong?" he stuttered. The preacher raised his hand. "I will read aloud." Everyone folded their hands, except the bailiff, who had no strength. He was standing against the wall of the house, looking quite miserable, with his mouth open and his eyes very unhappy, and he was breathing as deeply as if he were suffocating.

The preacher had finished reading. Everyone laughed and cried like crazy. All at once, everyone turned round. What was that? The Wulfsbauer had cried out terribly, and now he was standing with his head against the big door, his hands in front of his face and crying like a child. Then he turned round, went to his wife like a man who was sick to death, took her by the arm and said, "Mother, take me to bed; I'm so tired!"

The woman grabbed him by the arm, wiped away his tears and said: "Yes, yes, I'll put you to bed, my boy. You shall have a good night's sleep now." Then none of the people laughed any more; it became quite quiet, except that in the meadow the children sang the new song they had learnt at school:

The joyful summertime makes me glad, all my blood is renewed, May rejoices in delight; the lark sings with its bright sound, the birds sing sweetly to the nightingale.

The Haidbauern

The Wulfsbauer got a good night's sleep; he slept for three and a half weeks, and he probably wouldn't have woken up at all if he hadn't had such a bear nature.

Because he had caught the nervous fever. It had been too much for him. He had also had to go too deep through blood; first up to his grandchildren, then up to his knees, until he was standing in it up to his loins and it rose higher and higher so that it finally reached his mouth. It didn't take much for it to run into his mouth and he had to choke.

He hadn't been able to watch a pig being slaughtered for a long time. He hadn't eaten sausage made from blood for years, and he felt sick when one of the children cut his finger.

But he had kept it all to himself; he had never spoken about it to anyone, neither to Drewes, nor to the farmer, nor to the preacher, let alone to the farmer's wife. He had swallowed all his disgust every day like a dog eats its dirt, and it had made his eyes hard and his mouth tight and his hair grey with time.

Now they had turned snow-white, when he was barely fifty years old. But the twenty-five years of war had double the weight; he felt as if he already had eighty on the puck. He was quite well again, he walked along like a young man, he could work like a servant of twenty-five, he still held a full scythe with one hand, he hadn't lost a bit of his face and hearing, he could still shout over the whole village, he rode like a boy, he ate like a thresher, but that's why he was old.

Not that he was slacking off at work; it was rather the other way round. As soon as he was on his feet again, he had timber cut in the desert, for he had intended the Wulfshof for his second son. He did not prefer one to the other, but Johanna, even if she had been the favourite of his wives, had been from a foreign country, and that was why he had her son baptised Bartold, for that was her father's name; but the boy he got first from Wieschen he called Harm, as every eldest Wulf was called. So he got the old farm and the old kettle hook, which read: Ao 1111 Do. Bartold, however, stayed on the new farm and was soon no longer called Wulf, but Niehoff, and as a house marker he took two wolfs standing crosswise.

The bailiff also took a keen interest in parish affairs. The first thing he did was to arrange for a church, because the people of Peerhobst were used to having their own church. There was a lot of running around and scribbling, but Wulf finally got it through, and when the preacher asked, "Yes, but the money?" the farmer said, "I'll give five thousand thalers in gold, because I want to be rid of it," and then Puttfarken knew what that money was. There was also the necklace of coloured

Shewenkasper had taken from the imperial captain's trouser sack, and most of them were worth just as much, and the other peasants gave no little either, for the spoils were weighing heavily on their chests. Last of all came the cattle farmer, who counted out a thousand blank thalers to the preacher and said:
"That's before the fright I gave you all with my stupidity, and Trina thinks: such money, that's no blessing!" And so Ödringen got the church.

Even when the duke had to scrape together funds for the Swedes and the heavy treasuries came, the Wulfsbauer had to work hard and rode to Celle several times until he managed to ensure that the little people were not overburdened with burdens. Countess Merreshoffen was still alive, even though she was already white and thin and had a face like wax.

She listened to the Peerhobstler talk a lot, nodded and said: "Yes, there was a bad wind back then. Here we sit, not yet sixty years old and looking like eighty over the ears. But at least he has his health and his wife and children, and I have nothing but a little money and all sorts of stupid memories. But he can depend on it: things will be all right; he has my hand on that!" When he left, she said to her niece: "I have only known two men in my life, Georg Eisenhand and that one, Brigitta!"

Harm had to prove more than once that he was still his old self. He had left the small job to the cattle farmer and Schierhornhelmke, and they soaped the heath so thoroughly that no vermin wanted to stay there. He lived for a good many years and was able to let four grandchildren ride on his knee.

But when his wife died, he didn't really feel like living anymore. He had done his share of work in life and more than that; he was no longer needed in the world. His eyes had become a little brighter again, but his mouth looked as if he was afraid that blood might run into it. He died very gently, however, and all his children

and children's children were with him, and the cattle farmer, who still had to look after every smooth girl, even if that was no longer of much use, and Thedel and the preacher, who looked like a very old man.

It was a corpse the likes of which had never been revived around the Bruch. All the Wehrwolves who were still alive went along, as well as anyone who had time, so that the Wulfshof was black with people. It was a gloomy late autumn day when Harm Wulf went to sleep for good, and during the funeral service on the Deele it was drizzling. But when, after the funeral, the preacher delivered the obituary for the dead man from the pulpit, in which he compared him to Samson and Judas the Maccabee, who had saved their nations from their enemies, had been red to the neck with blood and yet pleasing to God, the sun came through and all faces looked bright, and even the weirwolves became bright-eyed and thought of the terrible and yet so beautiful days when they had the lead cudgel hanging over their hands one day after the other.

In the best parlour of the Wulfshof in Ödringen, the lead truncheon still hangs on the sofa wall under the small picture with the old gold frame. A museum went to great lengths to acquire the truncheon, but the headman and member of parliament Herman Wulff did not give it away for money or good words. "If it hadn't been there, we wouldn't be here either," he said. When strangers ask what that thing is, he shrugs his shoulders and says: "It's from the old days!" But he has told his sons what he and they owe to the old club with the leather sling, and why there is nothing more to be seen on the Wulffs' oldest gravestone than an upright wolf's mace.

Every time one of the boys took communion for the first time, he had him read in the old church book what the old preacher Puttfarken had written about Harm Wulf when he died; and so the passage reads: "Ehr was a hero before his people and faithfully protected them from the Philistines and Amalekites for over twenty years.

Years since the great war has ended. Honour rest in the peace of GOD!"

They got their bright eyes back, the Wulfsbauern, but they kept their tight lips as an inheritance from Harm Wulf. They are not as funny as he was as a young lad, but he left them his iron head. One of them became a high-ranking officer in the wars of liberation and was to receive the nobility: "My name is just fine for me," he said.

Above the missal door of the Wulfshof you can still see the saying in the beam:
"Help yourself and our Lord God will help you!" All the Wulfsbauern have now done the same.

Herman Wulff is a serious man who doesn't laugh often and hardly ever plays the flute. But on the day when the quarrymen got their man through in the Reichstag election, Herman Wulff laughed and when he went home, he played the Brummelbeer song.

Explanation of words

In order to achieve complete uniformity between the material and the form, in this book, both for the narrative part and for the conversations, the present-day expression of the farmers of the Lüneburger Haide has been chosen, which in the main coincides with the way of speaking of the rural people of the whole of north-west Germany. Readers from East and South Germany may find the following explanations of some expressions pleasant.

1. The Haidbauern p. 1

Pump, pond, pond. -- *Reed*, reed. -- *Plagge*, Haidscholle. -- *grall*, fresh, clear. -- *Weifen*, beat. -- *Brägen*, brain, also skull. -- *Weking*, Wittekind. -- *raw mince*, chopped meat. -- *Halsbeeke*, Halsbach. -- *Die grofie Fähre*, Verden an der Aller. -- *Haidjer*, Haidbauer. -- *koppheister*, upside down. -- *Sattelmeier*, farmer who has to provide a horse in times of war.
-- to make *a* lean. -- *pit*, pit. -- To *dig* in. -- *Koppelweg*, field path. -- *Shooting star*, gelatinous mass,

either gelatinous lichens or the oviducts of frogs regurgitated by polecats or herons. -- *Schillebold*, damselfly. -- *Butterbird*, butterfly. -- *Plague and death birds*, irregularly appearing northern birds, such as crossbills, waxwings, nutcrackers. -- *Hummingberry*, blackberry. -- Hummingberry *song*, a well-known old song that begins as follows: A girl wants to get up early, probably three or four hours before daylight.

2. The Mansfelds p. 8

smooth, pretty. -- *Machangel*, juniper. -- *grienen*, grin. -- *Stegel*, step in the fence. -- *Dönze*, parlour. -- *Ule*, owl. -- *Wählig*, overconfident. -- *Dullerche*, Haidlerche. -- *Post*, a shrub, porst or gagel, also called tanner's myrtle, =Myrica gale L=. -- *mülmen*, to dust. -- *bölken*, roar. -- *kriejöhlen*, screech. -- *Döllmer*, fool. --*Lütjemagd*, little maid. -- *Tater*, gypsy. -- *Koppelknecht*, *groom*. -- *hille*, fast. -- *quant*, coarse. -- *clarify*, explain. -- to *come into the moor*, to meet. -- *Butze*, alcove.

3. The Braunschweiger p. 20

bören, lift. -- *Kolüt*, the great curlew. -- *Vagelbund*, vagabond. --*Ludjen*, Ludwig. -- *Masch*, the marsh near Celle. -- *Hahnjökel*, mischief. --*Dietweg*, Volksweg, unpaved road. -- *Holster*, shoulder bag, hunting bag. -- *Crippled* jaw, crippled jaw. -- *boast*, talk too loudly. -- *tangled*, entangled. -- *Brägenschülpen*, skull hum. --*Beist*, beast. -- *Mother Griebsch*, jokingly for midwife. -- *Half-door*, side door, from half-page. -- *dümpen*, dampen, choke. -- *Grieptoo*, Greifzu, an old dog name.

4. The Weimaraner p. 36

to chase away, to frighten. -- *Chaff*, chaff. -- *Old father*, grandfather. --*corporal* residence, retirement home. --*dawn*, dawn. -- *elder*, elderberry. --*Eller*, alder. -- *Tapping*, peat pit. -- *Flatt*, swamp. -- *Anberg*, hill. -- *Adder*, adder. -- *Snake*, adder.

5. The Marauder Brothers p. 50

schlumpen, glücken. -- *Warning tine*, secret sign. -- *Wahrbaum*, large tree visible from afar. -- *Wiede*, twisted willow branch. -- to *nod*, giggle. -- To *gossip*, chatter. -- *Lork*, toad. --*crow*, jackdaw. --*Sod*, draw well. -- *Wohld*, unspoilt forest. -- *Teebe*, dog. -- *Thedel*, Theodor.

6. The quarrymen p. 68

Pattweg, footpath. -- *gremstern*, to clear the throat. -- *Dössel*, the tree to which the halves of the gate are connected. -- *Braken*, dry branches. --*Risch*, Riedgras. -- *The Great Free*, a district between Hanover and Burgdorf. -- *However*, a wake-up call. -- *Wiem*, soil. -- *Bröddel*, patch. --Thrown soil, the roots of a tree thrown by a storm.
--*Stuken*, tree stump. -- *Markwart*, jay. -- *Deele*, hallway, the main room in the house.

7. The defence wolves p. 87

Wietze, a moorland river. -- *Stand*, main beam. -- *House judgement*, judgement feast. -- *Friendship*, kinship. -- *Pod*, holly. -- *Kneepe*, jokes. -- *Drögmichel*, sour pot. -- *Mumm*, heavy beer. *Wolfsangel*, a sign that was often used as a house mark and had the following form: '----, or '--/--,. -- *Auskiek*, Luginsland. -- *Ort* or *Ortstein*, Raseneisenstein. -- *Hornung*, February. -- *Steert*, tail. -- *aft*, behind. -- *Buchholzer Hengst*, green woodpecker. -- *Widow*, widow. -- *in turn*, in order. -- *Krischan*, Christian. -- *Metz*, knife. -- *previous year*, spring. -- *Hille*, maiden name. -- *Folding rose*, gossip rose, field poppy. -- *Danzeschatz*, dancer. -- *Halsung*, collar. -- *Ilk*, polecat. -- *fiepen*, beep.
-- to *drool*, greed. -- *Beeke*, brook. -- *moorland male*, tree pipit, a bird. -- *Hainotter*, stork. -- *Bee*, bee. -- *The wind kisses*, it turns, is not constant. -- *Fire rod*, the iron rods on which the burning tree stumps lie. -- *Morning time*, breakfast. -- *Krüsel*, oil lamp. -- *Greyhound*, wolf. -- *Adder eagle*, snake eagle.
-- *grouse*, black grouse. -- *Sky goat*, black-tailed godwit, snipe.

8. The reapers p. 116

Ulenflucht, twilight. -- *Easter flower*, daffodil. --*dry*, dry. --*Löft*, engagement. -- *Bushcat*, wildcat. -- *clay bench*, bar table. --*Snow* king, wren. -- *Lüning*, sparrow. -- *Schütt*, wagon board. --*Rawk*, Raven. --*Hello*, raven call. -- *Strosse*, gurgle. -- *Bag*, golden plover, a bird. -- To *twig*, to fork.

9. The church people p. 140

benaud, trembling. -- *Crow's eyes*, chicken's eyes. -- *redbreast*, robin. -- *Kattule*, tawny owl. -- *Moorochs*, bittern. -- *The fox brews*, i.e. the fog rises. -- *Holwifi*, Haltfest, old dog name. --*freed*, married. -- *Schapp*, cupboard. -- *Duffsinn*, nonsense. --*described*, married. -- *Ear chair*, armchair with headrests. --*Friggetag*, day of Frigga, Friday. -- *Burvogt*, head of the community. --*Manure*, piles of fertiliser.

10. The wedding guests p. 176

Atze, Adolf. -- *The coloured stick*, the signalling stick, by which the peasants were called to the assembly, the peasants' meeting. -- *rashly*, without thinking. -- *bake*, glue. -- *Betze*, vixen, also used like Metze for dissolute woman. -- *tremble*, tremble. -- To *stay away*, to faint -- *Gerd*, Gerhard. -- *olmig*, mulmig, worm-eaten. -- To *hitch up*, to take on one's back. -- *Brutlacht*, wedding. -- *Gnitte, gnat*, tiny mosquito. -- *Bleibengel*, lead stick. -- To *buy for a farmer*, to have for a fool. -- *Dutten*, knot. -- *Dötsch*, stupid. --*Flachtenwerk*, wickerwork. -- *Pottekel*, disgusting person. --*faulmäulsch*, lazy. -- *Tachs*, badger. -- To *play trash with someone*, to treat them meanly. -- *Shudder*, shudder.

11. The imperials p. 201

to lure *away*. -- *Starch*, heifer, young cow. -- *Beard*, hatchet. --*blank*, beautiful, said by women. -- *Rigging*, suspicious people. --

Hillebille, a board suspended on two ropes, which is struck with two hammers and makes a sound that can be heard from afar. -- To *smooch*, to squeeze tenderly. -- *Katteeker*, oak cat. -- *Sohl*, waterhole.

12. The Swedes p. 217

to disgrace you, to scold you - *Piewitt*, Kiebitz.
--*wrick*, weave together, intertwine. -- *Immenquaddeln*, blisters from bee stings. -- *fründjen gehen*, to go on a love affair. --*Immenangel*, bee sting. -- *revitalise*, experience. -- *unborn*, sober.

13. The Haidbauern p. 235

Staircase, row. -- *corpse*, funeral. -- *drizzle*, thin rain. -- *Missentür*, entrance gate.

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Transcription note: error corrected in the text Kerl

entgegen, der eine rote Feder In the original: entgegegen

und im Bruche flötete der Kolüt. In the original: Kalüt

when she gave the woman warm milk, bread and worn clothes, In the original: clothes off

It was mostly midnight when Wulf gave up for a In the original:

midnight he had crashed his neck. In the original: crashed

and that it was time for him to ride home, in the original: that he

only that across the deele the shepherd boy In the original: Hüttejunge

And the boy from Hingstmanns and Tönnes Im Original: Hinstmanns

was not doing well, but she looked like In the original: But trembled all

over In the original: whole

That must have been the case in the original: That so

that he soon generally no longer In the original: the

my sister Alheid Niehus In the original: Niehues when you

come to the farm, Burvogt

I am the Burgvogt Harm Wulf from Peerhobstel In the original in each case Burgvogt

As remote as the village was In the original: that

The other day, Thedel, Renneckenklaus and Mertensgerd were looking for

and it wasn't venison either In the original: Wildpret Then

Mieken began In the original: Daun

The Rammlinger shot the first one out of the saddle In the original: out of the saddle

had to be stored in the Magethaide for so long In the original: in the Magerhaide

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