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THE CHARCOAL BURNER.

One of the most celebrated forests in the world is the Schwarzwald, or Black Forest, a range of woody mountains which traverses the territories of Baden and Wurtemberg. It extends a distance of eighty miles, and varies in breadth from eighteen to thirty miles. Its mountains, for the most part, display a growth of pine, beech and maple, and the middle and lower part of the range is covered with majestic firs, which supply most of the timber of Europe. Out of these mountains open valleys, green with soft, close grass; odoriferous with sweet herbs; touched to a chastened beauty by the white narcissus, the snowy oxalis, and the delicate gentian; shadowy with the broad wings of the walnut; and bright with shimmering brooks which go shimmering along the levels, curve smoothly over the slopes, or with a dash and laugh leap down the mimic precipices.

In their depths, at a date not certainly known, but before historians had grown scarce, and ere the dawn of a new era, stood Berthold Zahring. Quite early in life he had put, in the warm season, on a coat of red and blue, but as he advanced in age he was promoted to his father's old bear-skin jacket and breeches, which he felt fit to stand before kings—during a large part of the year he fed like the beasts and birds, upon fruit and nuts. But this utter want of culture was not without its modicum of good, in that it gave him fully back to nature. The sun, and wind, and falling rain shaped his form to magnificent proportions, and built it to firmness and strength. For him the earth unrolled her choicest treasures and smote her rarest harmonies. He was familiar with every growth of wood and glen, of hillside and meadow, far and wide. In the little germ, just lifting itself from the brown mould there lay, outlined to his view, its whole future of stem and leaf, of bloom and fruit. To his trained ear the foliage of each different tree, rustling and tossing in the breeze, pronounced, with curious certainty, its name, and age and history. Every wandering scent, whether it were exhaled from the green roof above, or softly yielding from tinted flower-cups, or shaken from the coat of the wild beast as he crept hungrily and stealthily from his lair, wood or warned him. He could track his prey by mysterious but certain signs, and in the longest chase neither foot, nor eye, nor hand ever failed him. Added to these accomplishments of the skilled woodsman, was his treasure of proverbs, and proverbial sayings, which, handed down from parent to child, supplied in part the want of books and experience. Grown into a youth, Berthold became a charcoal-burner, like his father; but with a much clearer outlook for possible improvement than the latter possessed.

"Fortune comes to him who expects as well as seeks her," he thought. "I expect her always. I shall seek her when the hour comes." Meantime he was not idle. He straightened the clay walls of the hovel, put on a new roof of leaves and boughs, and bought a new pot for the chimney's hearth. This he kept also well supplied with game, saying the while: "Fortune is cunning, it catches even a fox." But when his father urged him to get a wife, he replied, "No no, better alone than in bad company. Who knows? I may yet marry a queen."

"Who lives on hope dies," his father said. "I am going to see him," said Berthold, one evening.

"What thought of the way?" asked his father abruptly, although he would have sworn at his own question.

"I have foreseen them, provided for them, and forgotten them," said the son, drawing from his belt a long, heavy knife.

"It is a dear honey that must be tasted from them," still remonstrated the old bear, or the goat of the mountains?" replied the son.

"Hast thought of the gibes and jeers of the townfolk?" asked the father.

"They love to sharpen their wits on the hill people."

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