

**Emily Gerard**  
**The Land Beyond the Forest, 1888**

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The Saxons: Character—Education—Religion.

Whoever has lived among these Transylvanian Saxons, and has taken the trouble to study them, must have remarked that not only seven centuries' residence in a strange land and in the midst of antagonistic races has made them lose none of their identity, but that they are, so to say, *plus catholique que le pape*—that is, more thoroughly Teutonic than the Germans living to-day in the original father-land. And it is just because of the adverse circumstances in which they were placed, and of the opposition and attacks which met them on all sides, that they have kept themselves so conservatively unchanged. Feeling that every step in another direction was a step towards the enemy, finding that every concession they made threatened to become the link of a captive's chain, no wonder they clung stubbornly, tenaciously, blindly to each peculiarity of language, dress, and custom, in a manner which has probably not got its parallel in history. Left on their native soil, and surrounded by friends and countrymen, they would undoubtedly have changed as other nations have changed. Their isolated position and the peculiar circumstances of their surroundings have kept them what they were. Like a faithful portrait taken in the prime of life, the picture still goes on showing the bloom of the cheek and the light of the eye long after Time's destroying hand, withering the original, has caused it to lose all resemblance to its former self; and it is with something of the feeling of gazing at such an old portrait that we contemplate these German people who dress like old bass-reliefs of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, and continue to hoard up provisions within the church walls, as in the days when besieged by Turk or Tartar. Such as these Saxons wandered forth from the far west to seek a home in a strange land, such we find them again to-day, seven centuries later, like a corpse frozen in a glacier which comes to light unchanged after a long lapse of years.

From an artistic point of view these Saxons are decidedly an unlovely race. There is a want of flowing lines and curves and a superfluity of angles about them, most distressing to a sensitive eye. The women may usually be described as having rather good hair, indifferent complexions, narrow shoulders, flat busts, and gigantic feet. Their features, of a sadly unfinished wooden appearance, irresistibly reminded me of the figures of Noah and his family out of a sixpenny Noah's ark. There is something Noah's-ark-like, too, about their attire, which, running entirely in hard straight lines, with nothing graceful or flowing about them, no doubt helped to produce this Scriptural impression. The Saxon peasant is stiff without dignity, just as he is honest without being frank. Were the whole world peopled by this race alone, our dictionaries might have been lightened of a good many unnecessary words, such as elegance, grace, fascination, etc.

Of course, now and then one comes across an exception to this general rule and finds a pretty girl, like a white poppy in a field of red ones; but such exceptions are few and far between, and I have remarked that on an average it takes three well populated villages to produce two bonnie lassies.

The men are on the whole pleasanter to look at than the fair sex, having often a certain ungainly picturesqueness of their own, reminding one of old Flemish paintings.

Something hard and grasping, avaricious and mistrustful characterizes the expression of most Saxon peasants. For this, however, they are scarcely to blame, any more than for their flat busts and large feet—their character, and consequently their expression, being but the natural result of circumstances, the upshot of seven centuries of stubborn resistance and warfare with those around them. “We Saxons have always been cheated or betrayed whenever we have had to do with strangers,” they say; and no doubt they are right. The habit of mistrust developed almost to an instinct cannot easily be got rid of, even if there be no longer cause to justify it.

This defensive attitude towards strangers which pervades the Saxon’s every word and action makes it, however, difficult to feel prepossessed in their favor. Taken in the sense of antiquities, they are no doubt an extremely interesting people, but viewed as living men and women, not at first sight attractive to a stranger; and while compelling our admiration by the solid virtues and independent spirit which have kept him what he is, the Saxon peasant often shows to disadvantage beside his less civilized, less educated, and also less honest neighbor, the Roumanian.

As a natural consequence of this mistrust, the spirit of speculation is here but little developed—for speculation cannot exist without some degree of confidence in one’s neighbor. They do not care to risk one Florin in order to gain ten, but are content to keep a firm grasp on what they have got. There are no beggars at all to be seen in Saxon towns, and one never hears of large fortunes gained or lost. Those who happen to be wealthy have only become so by the simple but somewhat tedious process of spending half their income only, during a period of half a century; and after they have in this manner achieved wealth, it does not seem to profit them much, for they go on living as they did before, nourishing themselves on scanty fare, and going to bed early in order to save the expense of lights.

The townsfolk are weaker and punier editions of the villagers, frequently showing marks of a race degenerated from constant intermarriage; and, stripped of their ancient Noah’s-ark costume, lose much of their attraction.

They are essentially a *bourgeois* nation, possessing neither titles nor nobility of their own, although many can boast of lengthy pedigrees. Those who happen to be *adel* (noble) have only obtained their *von* in some exceptional manner in later times, and the five-pointed crown seems somewhat of an anomaly.

Although the Saxons talk of Germany as their father-land, yet their patriotic feeling is by no means what we are accustomed to understand by that word. Their attachment to the old country would seem rather to be of prosaic than romantic sort. “We attach ourselves to the German nation and language,” they say, endeavoring to explain the complicated nature of their patriotism, “because it offers us the greatest - advantages of civilization and culture; we should equally have attached ourselves to any other nation which offered us equal advantages, whether that nation had happened to be Hungarian, French, or Chinese. If the Hungarians had happened to be more civilized than ourselves, we should have been amalgamated with them long ago.”<sup>i</sup>

Such an incomprehensible sort of patriot would probably have been condemned by Scott to go down to his grave “unwept, unhonored, and unsung.” But I suppose that allowances must be made for their peculiar position, and that it is difficult to realize what it feels like to be a grafted plant.

There is one village in Transylvania which, isolated in the midst of a Hungarian population, offers an instance of a more complex species of nationality than any I have yet heard of. This is the village of Szass Lona, near Klausenburg, which used to be Saxon, but where the people have gradually forgotten their own mother-tongue and can only speak Hungarian. There is, however, no drop of Hungarian blood in their veins, as they marry exclusively among themselves; and they have retained alike the German type of feature and the national Saxon dress intact in all its characteristics. Also the family names throughout the village are German ones—as Hindrik, Tod, Jäger, Hubert, etc.

Though none of these people can speak a word of German, and no one can remember the time when German was spoken in the village, yet during the revolution of 1848 these Hungarian speaking Germans rose to a man to fight against the Magyars.

The Saxon dialect—totally distinct from modern German—has, I am told, most resemblance to the patois spoken by the peasants near Luxemburg. It is harsh and unpleasant to the ear, but has in some far-off and indefinable way a certain caricatured likeness to English. Often have I been surprised into turning round sharply in the street to see who could be speaking English behind me, only to discover two Saxon peasants comparing notes as to the result of their marketing.

The language, however, differs considerably in different neighborhoods; and a story is told of natives of two different Saxon villages, who, being unable to understand one another, were reduced to conversing in Roumanian.

The *Sachsegraf* (Count), or Comes, was formerly the head of the nation, chosen by the people, and acknowledging no other authority but that of the King. He was at once the judge and the leader of his people, and had alone the power of pronouncing sentence of death, in token of which four fir-trees were planted in front of his house. The original meaning of this I take to be, that in olden times the malefactors were executed on the spot, and suspended on these very trees, in full sight of the windows — a pleasant sight, truly, for the ladies of the family.

Nowadays the Saxon Comes has shrunk to a mere shadow of his former self; for though there is still nominally a Comes who resides at Hermanstadt, his position is as unlike what it used to be as those four trumpery-looking little Christmas trees stuck before his door resemble the portentous gallows of which they are the emblem. It is, in fact, merely as a harmless concession to Saxon national feeling that the title has been preserved at all—a mere meaningless appendage tacked on to the person of the Hungarian *obergespan*, or sheriff.

The principal strength of these Saxon colonists has always lain in their schools, whose conservation they jealously guard, supporting the entirely from their own resources, and stubbornly refusing all help from the Government. They do not wish to accept favors, they say, and there by incur obligations. These schools had formerly the name of being among the very best in Austria; and I have heard of many people who from a distance used to send their children to study there, some twenty to thirty years ago. That this reputation is, however, highly overrated is an undoubted fact, as I know from sad experience with my own children, though it is not easy to determine where the fault exactly lies. The Saxons declare their schools to have suffered from Hungarian interference, which limits their program in some respects, while insisting on the Hungarian language being taught in every class; but many people consider the Saxons themselves quite as much to blame for the bad results of their teaching. Doubtless, in this as in

other respects, it is their exaggerated conservatism which is at fault; and, keeping no account of the age we live in, what was reckoned good some thirty years ago may be called bad to-day.

Anyhow, between the reforming Hungarians and the conservative Saxons, unfortunate stranger boys have a very hard time of it indeed at the Hermanstadt Gymnasium, and it is a fact beginning to be generally acknowledged that children coming to Austria from Transylvanian schools are thrown two classes back.

But the whole question of education in Austria is such a provoking and unsatisfactory one that it is hardly possible to speak of it with either patience or politeness; and by none are its evil effects more disastrously felt than by hapless military families, who, compelled to shift about in restless fashion from land to land, are alternately obliged to conform their children to the most opposite requirements of utterly different systems.

Thus the son of an officer serving in the Austrian army may be able to study half a dozen different languages (in addition to Latin, Greek, German, and French) during a hardly greater number of years he must learn Italian because his father is serving at Trieste, and may be getting on fairly well with that language when he is abruptly called upon to change it for Polish, since Cracow is henceforth the town where he is to pursue his studies. But hardly has he got familiar with the soft Slav tongue when, ten to one, his accent will be ruined for life by an untimely transition to Bohemia, where the hideous Czech language has become *de rigueur*. Slavonian and Ruthenian may very likely have their turn at the unfortunate infant before he has attained the age of twelve, unless the distracted father be reduced to sacrifice his military career to the education of his son.

It is not of our own individual case that I would speak thus strongly, for our boys, being burdened with only seven languages (to wit, Polish, English, German, French, Greek, Latin, and Hungarian), would scarcely be counted ill-used, as Austrian boys go, having escaped Bohemian, Slavonian, Ruthenian, and Italian; yet assuredly to us it was a very happy day indeed when we made a bonfire of the Magyar school-books, and ceased quaking at sight of the formidable individual who taught Hungarian at the Hermanstadt Gymnasium.

O happy English school-boys, you know not how much you have to be thankful for!—your own noble language, adorned with a superficial layer of Greek and Latin, and at most supplemented by a little atrocious French, being sufficient to set you up for life. Think of those others who are pining in a complicated net-work of Bohemian, Polish, Hungarian, Slavonian, Italian, Croatian, and Ruthenian fetters; think of them, and drop a sympathizing tear over their mournful lot

That the Saxon school-professors are well-educated, intelligent men is no proof in favor of the schools themselves, for here another motive is at work, namely, no man can aspire to be pastor without passing through the university, and then practising for several years at a public gymnasium; and as these places are very lucrative, there is a great run upon them. Now, as formerly, most young men are sent to complete their studies at some German university town—Heidelberg, Göttingen, or Jena—an undertaking which, before the days of railroads, must have required considerable resolution to enable those concerned to encounter the hardships of a journey which took from ten to twelve weeks to perform. It was usually conducted in the following manner: Some enterprising Roumanian peasant harnessed twelve to fourteen horses to some lumbering vehicle, and, laden with a dozen or more students thirsting for knowledge, pilgered thus to the German university town some eight or nine hundred miles off. Returning to

Transylvania some six months later, he brought back another batch of young men who had completed their studies.

The weight which these Saxons have always attached to education may be gathered from the fact that in almost each of their fortified churches, or burgs, there was a tower set apart for the inculcation of knowledge, and to this day many such are still in existence, and known as the *schul thurm* (school-tower). Even when the enemy was standing outside the walls, the course of learning was not allowed to be interrupted. It must have been a strange sight and a worthy subject for some historical painter to see this crowd of old-fashioned fair haired children, all huddled together within the dingy turret; some of the bolder or more inquisitive flaxen heads peering out of the narrow gullet-windows at the turbans and crescents below, while the grim-faced mentor, stick in hand, recalls them to order, vainly endeavoring to fix their wandering attention each time a painim arrow whizzed past the opening.

Why thee Saxons, who have shown themselves so rigidly conservative on all other points, should nevertheless have changed their religion, might puzzle a stranger at first sight. The mere spirit of imitation would not seem sufficient to account for it, and Luther's voice could hardly have penetrated to this out-of-the-way corner of Europe at a time when telegraphs and telephones were yet unknown. The solution of this riddle is, however, quite simple, and lies close at hand, when we remember that even before the Reformation all those preparing for the Sacerdoce went to Germany to complete their studies. These, consequently, caught the reforming infection, and brought it back fresh from headquarters, acting, in fact, as so many living telephones, who, conveying the great reformer's voice from one end of Europe to the other, promulgated his doctrines with all the enthusiasm and fire of youth.

Every year thus brought fresh recruits from the scene of action; no wonder, then, that the original Catholic clerical party grew daily miller and weaker, and proved unable to stem this powerful new current. The contest was necessarily an unequal one: on one side, imprisoned rhetoric and the fire of youth; on the other, the drowsy resistance of a handful of superannuated men, grown rusty in their theology and lax in the exercise of their duties.

In the year 1523 Luther's teaching had already struck such firm roots at Hermanstadt that the Archbishop of Gran, to whose diocese Hermanstadt then belonged, obtained a royal decree authorizing the destruction of all Lutheran books and documents as pernicious and heretical. Accordingly an archiepiscopal commissary was despatched to Hermanstadt, and all burghers were compelled to deliver up their Protestant books and writings to be burned in the public market-place. It is related that on this occasion, when the bonfire was at its highest, the wind, seizing hold of a semi-consumed Psalter, carried it with such force against the head of the bishop's emissary that, severely burned, he fainted away on the spot. The book was thrown back into the fire, where it soon burned to ashes; but on the third day after the accident the commissary died of the wounds received.

Another anecdote relating to the Reformation is told of the village of Schass, which, while Luther's doctrine was being spread in Transylvania, despatched one of its parishioners, named Strell, to Rome in quest of a Papal indulgence for the community. More than once already had Strell been sent to Rome on a like errand, and each time, on returning home with the granted indulgence for his people, he was received by a solemn procession of all the villagers, bearing flying banners and singing sacred hymns. He was, therefore, not a little surprised this time, on approaching the village, to see the road deserted before him, though he had given warning of his

intended arrival. The bells were dumb, and not a soul came out to meet him; but his astonishment reached its climax when, on nearing the church, he perceived the images of the saints he had been wont to revere lying in the mire outside the church walls. To his wondering question he received the reply that in his absence the villagers had changed their faith. Strell, however, did not imitate their example, but raising up the holy images from their inglorious position, he gave them an honorable place in his house, remaining Catholic to the end of his days.

Nevertheless, in spite of many such incidents, the change of religion in Transylvania brought about fewer disturbances than in most other places. There was little strife or bloodshed, and none of that fierce fanaticism which has so often injured and weakened both causes. The Saxon peasantry did this as they do everything else, calmly and practically; and the Government permitting each party to follow its own religion unmolested, in a comparatively short time peace and order were re-established in the interior of the country.

Without wishing to touch on such a very serious subject as the respective merits of the two religions, or attempting to obtrude personal convictions, it seems to me, from a purely artistic point of view, that the sterner and simpler Protestant religion fits these independent and puritanical looking Saxon folk far better than the ancient faith can have done; while the more graceful forms of the Oriental Church, its mystic ceremonies and arbitrary doctrines, are unquestionably better adapted to an ardent, ignorant, and superstitious race like the Roumanian one.

### Saxon Villages

Saxon villages are as easily distinguished from Roumanian ones, composed of wretched earthen hovels, as from Hungarian hamlets, which are marked by a sort of formal simplicity. The Saxon houses are larger and more massive; each one, solidly built of stone, stands within a roomy court-yard surrounded by a formidable stone wall. Building and repairing is the Saxon peasant's favorite employment and the Hungarian says of him ironically that when the German has nothing better to do he pulls down his house and builds it up again by way of amusement.

Each village is usually formed of one long principal street, extending sometimes fully an English mile along the high-road; only when the village happens to be built at a junction of several roads, the streets form a cross or triangle, in the centre of which mostly stands the church. From this principal street or streets there sometimes branch off smaller by streets on either side; but these are seldom more than five or six houses deep, for the Saxon lays great stress on the point of locality, and the question of high-street or by-street is to him every whit as important as the alternative of Grosvenor Square or City would be to a Londoner.

Formerly no Roumanians or gypsies were tolerated within Saxon villages, but of late these people have been gradually creeping nearer, and now most German villages have at one end a shabby sort of *bourg*, or suburb, composed of Roumanian and gypsy hovels.

The principal street, often broad enough to admit of eight carts driving abreast, presents but little life at first sight. The windows of the broad gable-end next the street have often got their shutters closed, for this is the best room, reserved for state occasions. Only when we open the gate and step into the large court-yard can we gain some insight into the life and occupations of the inhabitants.

Near to the entrance stands the deep draw-well, and all round are built the sheds and stables for sheep, horses, cows, and buffaloes, while behind these buildings another gate

generally opens. into a spacious kitchen-garden. From the court five or six steps lead up to a sort of open veranda, where the peasant can sit in summer and overlook his farm laborers. From this passage the kitchen is entered, to the right and left of which are respectively the common and the best room, both good-sized apartments, with two windows each. In addition to these there is often a smaller one-windowed room, in which reside a young married couple, son or daughter of the house, who have not yet had time to found their own hearth-stone; or else there lives here the old widowed father or mother, who has abdicated in favor of the young people. A ladder or rough flight of steps leads to the loft; and below the veranda is the entrance, to the cellar, where stores of pickled sauerkraut, the dearly beloved national dish of the Saxons, and casks of their pearly amber-colored wine, are among the principal features of the provisions.

In the village street, in front of each peasant house, there used formerly to stand a large fruit-tree—pear, apple, or sometimes mulberry—whose spreading branches cast a pleasant shade over the stone bench placed there for the convenience of those who like to enjoy a “crack” with the neighbors on fine evenings after the work is done. Many of these trees have now been cut down, for it was found that the godless gypsies used to make their harvest there while the pious Saxons were at church; or else unmannerly school-urchins in pelting down the fruit with stones would sometimes hit the window-panes instead, and thus cause still greater damage. The result is, therefore, that most Saxon villages now present a somewhat bleak and staring appearance, and that on a burning summer day it is not easy to find a shady bench on which to rest a while.

It may be of interest here to quote the statistical ‘figures relating to a large and flourishing village in the north-east of Transylvania:

Houses, 326 (of these 32 are earth hovels).

Heads of population, 1416—of these the proportion of different nationalities as follows:

Saxons—481 male, 499 female.

Hungarians—2.

Roumanians—118 male, 88 female (mostly farm-servants).

Tziganes—104 men, 106 women.

Jews—14 male, 9 female.

In this village, which is exceptionally rich in cattle, the different animals number:

Bulls—3	Cows—357
Young cattle—575	Oxen—1200
Buffaloes—120	Horses—475
Goats—182	Pigs—734
Sheep 1000—1500	

Most of the sheep in Transylvania are in the hands of the Roumanians, while the pigs invariably belong to the Saxons. Among these latter, 1000 men possess on an average 215 horses, while among the Szekels only 51 will be found to the same number of heads.

The Saxon peasant, being an enemy to all modern improvements, goes on cultivating his fields much as did his forefathers six hundred years ago. Clinging to the antiquated superstition that a field is the more productive the longer it lies fallow, each piece of ground is ploughed and sowed once only in three years; and having, owing to the insufficient population, rarely enough hands to till his land himself, he is obliged to call in the assistance of Roumanian farm-servants.

Other people, too, have taken advantage of this agricultural somnolency of the Saxons; so the Bulgarians, who pilger hither in troops every spring-time to rent the Saxons' superfluous fields, bringing with them their own tools and seed, and in autumn, having realized the profit of their labor, wend their way back to their homes and families. The great specialty of these Bulgarian farmers is onions, of which they contrive to rear vast crops, far superior in size and quality to those grown by the natives. A Bulgarian onion field is easily distinguished from a Saxon one by its trim, orderly appearance, the perfect regularity with which the rows are planted, and the ingenious arrangements for providing water in time of drought.

Of the numerous Saxon villages which dot the plain around Hermanstadt, I shall here only attempt to mention two or three of those with which I have the most intimate acquaintance, as having for the object of many a walk and ride. First, there is Heltau—which, however, has rather the character of a market town than a village—lying in a deep hollow at the foot of the hills south of Hermanstadt, and with nothing either rural or picturesque about it. Yet whoever chances first to behold Heltau, as I did, on a fine evening in May, when the fruit-trees are in full blossom, will carry away an impression not easily forgotten. From the road, which leads down in serpentine curves, the village bursts on our eyes literally framed in a thick garland of blossom, snowy white and delicate peach color combining to cast a fictitious glamour over what is in reality a very unattractive place.

The inhabitants of Heltau, nearly all cloth-makers by trade, fabricate that rough white cloth, somewhat akin to flannel, of which the Roumanians' hose is made. It is also largely exported to different parts of the empire, and Polish Jews are often seen to hover about the place. Such, in fact, is the attraction exercised by this white woollen tissue that a colony of the children of Israel would have been formed here long ago had not the wary Saxons strenuously opposed such encroachment.

Once riding past here in autumn, I was puzzled to remark several fields near Heltau bearing a white appearance almost like that of snow, yet scarcely white enough for that; on coming nearer, this whiteness resolved itself into wool, vast quantities of which, covering several acres of ground, had been put out there to dry after the triple washing necessary to render it fit for weaving purposes.

The church at Heltau rejoices in the distinction of four turrets affixed to the belfry-tower, which turrets were at one time the cause of much dissension between Heltau and Hermanstadt. It was not allowed for any village church to indulge in such luxuries—four turrets being a mark of civic authority only accorded to towns; but in 1590, when the church at Heltau was burned down, the villagers built it tip again as it now stands—a piece of presumption which Hermanstadt at first refused to sanction. The matter was finally compromised by the Heltauers consenting to sign a document, wherein they declared the four turrets to have been put there merely in guise of ornamentation, giving them no additional privileges whatsoever, and that they pledged themselves to remain as before submissive to the authority of Hermanstadt.

Some people, however, allege Heltau, or, as it used to be called, “The Helt,” to be of more ancient origin than Hermanstadt—concluding from the fact that formerly the shoemakers, hatters, and other tradesmen here resided, but that during the pest all the inhabitants dying out to the number of seven, the land around was suffered to fall into neglect. Then the Emperor sent other Germans to repeople the town, and the burghers of Hermanstadt came and bought up the privileges of the Heltauers.

The excellence of the Heltan pickled sauerkraut is celebrated in a Saxon rhyme, which runs somewhat as follows:

“Draaser wheaten bread,  
Heltau’s cabbage red,  
Streitford’s bacon fine,  
Bolkatsch pearly wine,  
Schässburg’s maidens fair,  
Goodly things and rare.”

But more celebrated still is Heltau because of the unusually high stature of its natives, which an ill-natured story has tried to account for by the fact of a detachment of grenadiers having been quartered here for several years towards the end of last century.

To the west of Heltau, nestling up close to the hills, lies the smaller but far more picturesque village of Michelsberg, one of the few Saxon villages which have as yet resisted all attempts from Roumanians or gypsies to graft themselves on to their community. Michelsberg is specially remarkable because of the ruined church which, surrounded by fortified walls, is situated on a steep conical mound rising some two hundred feet above the village. The church itself, though not much to look at, boasts of a Romanesque portal of singular beauty, which runny people come hither to see. The original fortress which stood on this spot is said to have been built by a noble knight, Michel of Nuremberg, who came into the country at the same time that came Herman, who founded Hermanstadt. Michel brought with him twenty-six squires, and with them raised the fortress; but soon after its completion he and his followers got dispersed over the land, and were heard of no more. The fortress then became the property of the villagers, who later erected a church on its site.

The Michelsbergers make baskets and straw hats, and lately woodcarving has begun to be developed as a native industry. They have also the reputation—I know not with what foundation—of being bird-stealers; and I believe nothing will put a Michelsberger into such a rage as to imitate the bird call used to decoy blackbirds and nightingales to their ruin. This he takes to be an insulting allusion to his supposed profession.

In the hot summer months many of the Hermanstadt burghers come out to Michelsberg for change of air and coolness, and we our selves spent some weeks right pleasantly in one of the peasant houses which, consisting of two rooms and a kitchen, are let to visitors for the season. But it was strange to learn that this remote mountain village is the self-chosen exile of a modern recluse—a well-born Hanoverian gentleman, Baron K—, who for the last half-dozen years has lived here summer and winter. Neither very old nor yet very young, he lives a solitary life, avoiding acquaintances; and though I lived here fully a month, I only succeeded in catching a distant glimpse of him.

Midsummer idleness being usually productive of all sorts of idle thoughts and fancies, we could not refrain from speculating on the reasons which were powerful enough thus to cause an educated man to bury himself alive so many hundred miles away from his own country in an obscure mountain village; and unknown to himself, the mysterious baron became the hero of a whole series of fantastic air-castles, in which he alternately figured as a species of Napoleon, Diogenes, Eugene Aram, or Abelard. Whichever he was, however—and it certainly is no business of mine—I can well imagine the idyllic surroundings of Michelsberg to be peculiarly fit to soothe a ruffled or wounded spirit. Wrecked ambition or disappointed love must lose much of its bitterness in this secluded nook, so far removed from the echoes of a turbulent world.

Another village deserving a word of notice is Hammersdorf, lying north of Hermanstadt—a pleasant walk through the fields of little more than half an hour. The village, built up against gently undulating hills with vineyards, is mentioned in the year 1309 as Villa Humperti, and is believed to stand on the site of an old Roman settlement. Scarcely a year passes without Roman coins or other antiquities being found in the soil.

From the top of the Grigori-Berg, which rises some one thousand eight hundred feet directly behind the village, a very extensive view may be enjoyed of the plains about Hermanstadt, and the imposing chain of the Forgarascher mountains straight opposite,

Hammersdorf is considered to be a peculiarly aristocratic village, and its inhabitants, who pride themselves on being the richest peasants in those parts, and on their womankind possessing the finest clothes and the most valuable ornaments, are called arrogant and stuck-up by other communities.

It is usual for the name of the house-owner and the date of building to be painted outside each house; but there are differences to be remarked in each place—slight variations in building and decoration, as well as in manner, dress, and speech of the natives, despite the general resemblance all bear to each other.

Some houses have got pretty designs of conventional flowers painted in black or in contrasting color on their gable-ends, and in many villages it is usual to have some motto or sentence inscribed on each house. These are frequently of a religious character, often a text from the Bible or some stereotyped moral sentiment. Occasionally, however, we come across inscriptions of greater originality, which seem to be a reflection of the particular individual whose house they adorn, as, for instance, the following:

“I do not care to brag or boast,  
I speak the truth to all,  
And whosoever does not wish  
Myself his friend to call,  
Why, then, he’s free to paint himself  
A better on the wall.”

Or else this sentence, inscribed on a straw-thatched cottage:

“Till money I get from my father-in-law,  
My roof it, alas! must be covered with straw.”

While the following one instantaneously suggests the portrait of some stolid-faced, sleepy individual whose ambition has never soared beyond the confines of his turnip-field, or the roof of his pigsty:

“Too much thinking weakens ever—  
Think not, then, in verse nor prose,  
For return the past will never,  
And the future no man knows.”

Many of the favorite maxims- refer to the end of man, and give a somewhat gloomy coloring to a street when several of this sort are found in succession:

“Man is like a fragile flower,  
Only blooming for an hour;  
Fresh to-day and rosy-red,  
But to-morrow cold and dead.”

Or else—

“Within this house a guest to-day,  
So long the Lord doth let me live;  
But when He bids, I must away—  
Against His will I cannot strive.”

Here another—

“If I from my door go out,  
Death for me doth wait without;  
And if in my house I stay,  
He will come for me some day.”

The mistrustful character of the Saxon finds vent in many inscriptions, of which I give a few specimens:

“Trust yourself to only one—  
‘Tis not wise to trust to none;  
Better, though, to have no friend  
Than on many to depend.”

“If you have a secret got,  
To a woman tell it not;

For my part, I would as lieve  
Keep the water in a sieve.”

“When I have both gold and wine,  
Many men are brothers mine;  
When the money it is done,  
And the wine has ceased to run,  
Then the brothers, too, are gone.”

“Hardly do a man I see  
But who hates and envies me;  
Inside them their heart doth burn  
For to do an evil turn,  
Grudge me sore my daily bread;  
More than one doth wish me dead.”

“Those who build on the highway,  
Must not heed what gossips say.”

The four last I here give are among the best I have come across, the first of these having a slightly Shakespearean flavor about it:

“Tell me for what gold is fit?  
Who has got none, longs for it;  
Who has got it, fears for thieves;  
Who has lost it, ever grieves,”

“We cannot always dance and sing,  
Nor can each day be fair,  
Nor could we live if every day  
Were dark with grief and care;  
But lair and dark days, turn about,  
This we right well can bear.”

“Say, who is to pay now the tax to the King?”

For priests and officials will do no such thing;  
The nobleman haughty still pay naught, I vouch,  
And poor is the beggar, and empty his pouch;  
The peasant alone he toileth to give  
The means to enable those others to live.”  
“How to content every man,  
Is a trick which no one can; -  
If to do so you can claim,  
Rub - this out and write your name.”

Among the many house inscriptions I have seen in Transylvania, I have never come across any referring to love or conjugal happiness. The well-known lines of Schiller—

“Raum ist in der kleinsten Hütte  
Für ein glücklich liebend Paar,”<sup>ii</sup>

of which one gets such a surfeit in Germany, are here conspicuous by their absence. This will not surprise any one acquainted with the domestic life of these people. Any such sentiment would most likely have lost its signification long before the wind and the rain had effaced it, for it would not at all suit the Saxon peasant to change his house motto as often as he does his wife.

Saxon Interiors--Character.

The old-china mania, which I hear is beginning to die out in England, has only lately become epidemic in Austria; and as I, like many others, have been slightly touched by this malady, the quaintly decorated pottery wine-jugs still to be found in many Saxon peasant houses offered a new and interesting field of research.

These jugs are by no means so plentiful nor so cheap as they were a few years ago, for cunning bric-à-brac Jews have found out this hitherto unknown store of antiquities, and pilger hither from the capital to buy up wholesale whatever they find. Yet by a little patience and perseverance any one living in the country may yet find enough old curiosities to satisfy a reasonable mania; and while seeking for these relics I have come across many another remnant of antiquity quite as interesting but of less tangible nature.

Inside a Saxon peasant's house everything is of exemplary neatness and speaks of welfare. The boards are clean scoured, the window-panes shine like crystal. There is no point on which a Saxon *hausfrau* (housewife) is so sensitive as that of order and neatness and she is visibly put out if surprised by a visit on washing or baking day, when things are not looking quite so trim as usual.

If we happen to come on a week-day we generally find the best room, or *prunkzimmer*, locked up, with darkened shutters; and only on our request to be shown the embroidered pillow-covers and the best jugs reserved for grand occasions will the hostess half ungraciously proceed to unlock the door and throw open the shutter.

This *prunkzimmer* takes the place of the state parlor in our Scotch farm-houses; but those latter, with their funereal horse-hair furniture and cheerless polished table, would contrast

unfavorably beside these quaint, old-fashioned German apartments. Here the furniture, consisting of benches, bunkers, bedsteads, chest of drawers, and chairs, are painted in lively colors, often festoons of roses and tulips on a ground of dark blue or green; the patterns, frequently bold and striking, if of a somewhat barbaric style of art, betray the Oriental influence of Roumanian country artists, of whom they are doubtless borrowed. A similarly painted wooden framework runs round the top of the room, above the doors and windows, with pegs, from which are suspended the jugs I am in search of, and a bar, behind which rows of plates are secured.

On the large unoccupied bedsteads are piled up, sometimes as high as the ceiling, stores of huge, downy pillows, their covers richly embroidered in quaint patterns executed in black, scarlet, or blue and yellow worsted. They are mostly worked in the usual tapestry cross stitch, and often represent flowers, birds, or animals in the old German style—the name of the embroideress and the date of the work being usually introduced. Many of the pieces I saw were very old, and dates of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries are constantly turning up; but alongside are others of recent date, for the custom of thus employing the long winter evenings is still kept up among the village girls.

I asked some of them whence they took their patterns, whether they had any sampler books or printed designs to copy from. Nothing of the sort, I was told; they just copy from one another and from old pieces of work. Thus it comes about that many of them to-day go on reproducing some old bird or flower, first introduced by an ancestress of the worker many hundred years ago.

This system of copying is clearly to be traced in the different villages. As each village forms a separate body or community, and intercourse and inter-marriage hardly ever take place, these patterns become localized, and one design is apt to run in one particular place to the exclusion of others. Thus I remarked one village where flourishes a peculiar breed of square-built peacock; alternated with preposterous stags in red and blue worsted, but these fabulous animals are rarely wont to stray beyond the confines of their own parish; while in another community there is a strongly marked epidemic of embroidered double-eagles, perhaps explainable by the fact that part of the population is of Austrian extraction.

The Saxon hausfrau will generally receive us in a surly, mistrustful manner, and the Saxon peasant will not dream of rising from his seat when he sees a lady enter the room. If we happen not to be tired we had better sit down unbidden, for neither he nor she is likely to offer us a chair.

Our question as to whether they have any jugs or plates is usually met with a sort of ungracious affirmative. "Will they sell them?" "Not on any account whatsoever! these jugs belonged to some dearly beloved great-grandfather or grandmother, and must be preserved in their memory. Not for unheard-of sums of gold could they bear to separate themselves from such a relic," etc.

These assertions must, however, be taken for what they are worth, and whoever has tried the experiment will have found by experience that it is merely a question of money, and that sometimes an extra bid of ten or twenty kreuzers (twopence or fourpence) will turn the scale, and induce these pious grandchildren to consign to oblivion the memory of the beloved ancestor.

These jugs, which are destined to hold wine (one for each guest) on the occasion of their baptismal, wedding, or funeral banquets, are from nine to eleven inches high, and have a metal

lid attached to the handle. Every variety of coloring and pattern is to be found among them; sometimes it is an uncouth design of dancing or drunken peasants, sometimes a pair of stags, or a dog in pursuit of a hare, or else a basket filled with fruit, or raised medallions with sprigs of flowers in the centre.

My inquiries were usually met by the suspicious counter-questions, "Why do you want to buy our jugs? What are you going to do with them?" and the answer I gave, that I was fond of such old things, and that they would be hung up in my dining-room, was often received with evident disbelief.

These people are not easily induced to talk about themselves, and have little sense of humor or power of repartee. They have an instinctive distrust of whoever tries to draw them out, scenting in each superfluous question a member of a species they abhor—namely, "a duel among them taking notes;" or, as the Saxon puts it, "one of those incomprehensible towns-folk, ever fretting and ferreting after our ways and customs, and who have no sensible reason for doing so either."

Two analogous incidents which I met with, soon after my arrival in Transylvania, seemed to give me the respective clues to Saxon and Roumanian character. The first was in a Saxon peasant's house, where I had just purchased two jugs and a plate, for which, still a stranger in those parts, I had paid considerably more than they were worth, when on leaving the house the hostess put a small bunch flowers into my hand. The nosegay was somewhat tumbled and failed, for this was Sunday afternoon, and probably the woman or her daughter had worn these flowers at church earlier in the day. In my ignorance of Saxon character I took this offering in the light of a courteous attention, and accepted the bouquet with a word of thanks.

My error did not last long, for as I stepped into the court the wooden, Noah's-ark faced woman hurried after me and roughly snatching the nosegay out of my hand, she harshly exclaimed,

"I do not give my flowers for nothing! unless you pay me two kreuzers (a halfpenny), I shall keep them for myself!"

Very much amused, I paid the required sum, feeling that, in spite of the crushed condition of the flowers, I had got more than a half penny's worth out of my hostess after all.

Two or three days later, when out riding, we lost our way in the mazes of the Yungwald, the large oak-forest which stretches for miles over the country to the south of Hermanstadt. It was near sunset when we found ourselves in a totally strange neighborhood, not knowing which turn to take in order to regain the road back to the town. Just then a Roumanian peasant woman came in sight. She had on her back a bundle of firewood, which she had probably stolen in the forest, and in her hand she carried a large bunch of purple iris flowers, fresh and dripping from some neighboring marsh.

I suppose that I must have looked longingly at the beautiful purple bunch, for while my husband was asking the way as well as he could by means of a little broken Italian, she came round to the side of my horse, and with a pretty gesture held up the flowers for my acceptance. With the Saxon lesson fresh in my mind I hesitated to take them, for I had left my purse at home; so I explained to her by pantomime that I had no money about me. She had not been thinking of money, it seems, and energetically disclaimed the offer of pay continuing her way after a courteous *buna sara* (good evening).

Since then, in my walks and rides about Hermanstadt, I have often been presented with similar offerings from perfectly unknown Roumanian peasants, who would sometimes stop their galloping horses and get out of the cart merely for the purpose of giving me a few flowers; but never, never has it been my good-luck to receive the smallest sign of spontaneous courtesy from any Saxon, and I grieve to say that frequently my experience has been all the other way.

One day, for instance, when walking in a hay-field through which ran a rapid mill-stream, I suddenly missed my dog, a lively rat-terrier, which had been running backward and forward in search of field-mice. "Brick, Brick, Brick!" I called in vain over and over again, but Brick was nowhere to be seen. Only a stifled squealing, apparently proceeding from the mill-stream some way off, met my ear; but I did not immediately think of connecting this sound with my truant terrier. Some Saxon peasants were at work near the water stowing up hay on to a cart. "Have you not seen my dog?" I called out to them -

One of the men now slowly removed his pipe from his mouth. "Your dog?" he asked, stolidly. "Oh yes; lie's just drowning yonder in the stream." And he lazily pointed over his shoulder with a pitchfork.

I rushed to the bank, and there sure enough was my poor half-drowned Brick struggling to keep himself above water, but almost exhausted already. He had fallen in over the treacherous edge, which was masked by overhanging bushes; and the banks being too steep to effect a landing, he must inevitably have perished had I not come up in time. With considerable difficulty, and at the risk of falling in myself, I managed to drag him out, the worthy Saxons meanwhile looking on with indolent enjoyment, never dreaming of offering assistance.

The hard and grasping characters of the Saxons appear in every detail of their daily life; they taint their family relations, and would almost seem to put a marketable price on the most sacred affections. Thus a Saxon mother in her cradle-song informs the sleeping infant that she values it as high as a hundred florins; while the grief over a beloved corpse often takes the form of counting up the exact pecuniary loss to the family sustained from the decease.

Their family life does not appear to be happy, and divorces are lamentably numerous. It seems, in fact, as if divorce had grown to be an established habit among these people; and despite all efforts of the clergy to discourage this abuse, and the difficulties purposely put in the way of divorcing parties, there is little prospect of improvement as yet. No improvement can possibly take place till Saxon parents give up forcing their children to wed against their will, merely for mercenary reasons, and till girls are allowed to attain a reasonable age before binding themselves down to a contract of such importance. When want of sympathy towards the proposed husband is urged on the part of the girl, such objections are usually settled, by the practical advice of the long-sighted parents. "Try him for a time, and maybe you will get to like him; and if not—well, the misfortune is none so great, and you can always seek for a divorce." Brides of fifteen are quite the order of the day, and few are suffered to reach so mature an age as seventeen or eighteen; the consequence of these arrangements being that fully a third of the couples go asunder, each choosing another mate, with whom they usually fare better than with their first venture.

Often in the course of my visits to Saxon peasant houses have I come across one of these unfortunate young females returned to her parents' house, sometimes after a few weeks only of matrimony, there to await the divorce which is to set her free to choose again.

The reasons which induce these people to sue for a separation are frequently so exceedingly futile and ridiculous as hardly to deserve that name. Often it is the food which is made a cause of complaint—either the husband declaring that his wife will take no trouble to please him with her cookery, or else the wife complaining of his being capricious and hard to please. An underdone potato may prove so very indigestible as to sever the conjugal bond, or an ill-baked loaf of bread assume such dimensions as to constitute a barrier for life.

Village pastors whose parishes lie in the wine-bearing districts affirm that the season immediately following upon the vintage; when the cellars are full of new wine, is the most quarrelsome time in the year, and the one which engenders separations. But even without the aid of stimulants, and when no thought of divorce is in their minds, quarrelsome *ménages* are numerous; and the old story of the Tartar carrying off the shrewish wife of a thoroughly resigned husband may well have had its origin here. This legend, told all over Hungary, relates how a peasant, as he calmly watched the retreating figure of the Tartar bearing off the wife of his bosom, was heard to murmur, “Poor Tartar! thou hast made a bad bargain.”

In Transylvania this same story is told of a Saxon peasant, but with a sequel; for this version relates how the bereaved widower settled himself down to a hearty supper that same evening, ever and anon murmuring, as his eye rested on the empty chair opposite his own, the words, “Poor Tartar!” for he was a kind-hearted man, and felt compassion even for the sufferings of a barbarian. But of a sudden the door flies open, and the wretched man once more beholds his lost wife standing before him. Her temper had proved too much even for a Tartar, who had wisely flown, leaving his captive behind.

The words “Poor Tartar!” now gave place to another form of ejaculation; and whenever he deemed himself out of ear-shot, the Saxon muttered bitterly between his teeth “Rascally Tartar! Rascally Tartar!”

But for this unfortunate denouement, who knows whether Saxon husbands of to-day might not frequently be moved to regret the good old times when an obliging Tartar might be expected thus to relieve them of such superfluous blessings?

The bond between parent and child seems to be hardly more commendable. Perhaps my experience has been exceptionally infelicitous, but certainly never in any country has it been my ill-fortune to listen to such shocking and disrespectful language from children to their parents as what I have occasionally overheard in Saxon cottages.

The Saxon peasant being a declared enemy of large families presents a striking contrast to his Roumanian neighbor, with whom six or eight bairns are a very common allowance, and who regards each new addition to the family as another gift of God. The oft-repeated insinuation that the Transylvanian Saxons seek to limit their progeny by unnatural means does not seem to be entirely without foundation. It is said that to have two children only is considered the correct thing in a Saxon household, and that the Saxon mother who, when cross-questioned as to her offspring, has to acknowledge three bairns, turns away her head shamefacedly, as though she were confessing a crime.

It is because the Saxon does not care to see his fields cut up into small sections that he desires his family to be small; and the consequence of this short-sighted egotism is, that the population of many villages shows a yearly decrease, and that houses often stand empty because there is no one to live there.<sup>iii</sup> Thus one village near Hermanstadt can show twenty-seven,

another twelve such deserted dwellings. A man whose whole family consisted of two daughters, both married to peasants with houses of their own, was asked what would become of his fine well-built home after his decease. "It will just stand empty," was the stolid reply. In some villages these empty Saxon houses have been taken possession of by Roumanians, who look strangely incongruous within these massive stone walls, reminding one somehow of sparrows which have taken up their residence in a deserted rookery.

Saxon political economists, alive to the danger of their race becoming extinct, think of trying to get new batches of German colonists to settle here, in order to freshen up and increase the number of the race; but there is little chance of such projects being successful. The inducements which formerly tempted strangers no longer exist; and there are probably few Germans who would think it worth their while to settle in a country where every inch of land has already been appropriated, and where the Government seeks to rob each one of his nationality.

The besetting fault of this whole Saxon nation seems to be an immoderate spirit of egotism, so short-sighted as frequently to defeat its own end, leading each man to consider only his individual welfare, to the exclusion of every other feeling. It is strange and paradoxical that these honest, moral, thrifty, industrious, and educated Saxons should live thus in their well-built, roomy houses in a constant state of inward dissension and strife; while their neighbors, the poor, ignorant, thieving Roumanians, crowded together—in their wretched hovels, are united by the bonds of a most touching family affection.<sup>IV</sup>

## SAXON CHURCHES AND SIEGES

The words "church" and "fortress" used to be synonymous in Transylvania, so the places of worship might accurately have been described as churches militant. Each Saxon village church was surrounded by a row, sometimes even a double or triple row, of fortified walls, which are mostly still extant. The remains of moat and drawbridge are also yet frequently to be seen. When threatened by an enemy the people used to retire into these fortresses, often built on some rising piece of ground, taking with them their valuables as well as provisions for the contingency of a lengthy siege. From these heights the Saxons used to roll down heavy stones on to their assailants sometimes with terrible effect; but when they had in this way exhausted their missiles, the predicament was often a very precarious one. Some of these stones still survive, and may occasionally be seen—as within the fortress walls of the old ruined church which I have already mentioned as standing on a steep incline above the picturesque village of Michelsberg.

The church itself, having been replaced by a more conveniently situated one down in the village, is now deserted, and is used only as a storehouse by the villagers. The fortified walls are crumbling away, and the passage round the church is choked up by weeds and briars, among which lie strewn about many old moss-grown stones, circular in shape and resembling giant cannon-balls. These were the missiles which lay there in readiness to be rolled down on to an approaching enemy; as there was a law compelling each bridegroom, before leading his bride to the altar, to roll uphill to the church-door one of these formidable globes. This was so ordained in order to exclude from matrimony all sick or weakly subjects; and as the incline was a steep one, and each stone weighed about two hundred-weight, it was a considerable test of strength.

Would that these old stones, lying here neglected among the nettles, had the gift of speech! What traits of love and of bloodshed might we not learn from them! Only to look at them

there strewn around, it is not difficult to guess at the outlines of some of the stories they are dumbly telling us. Many are chipped and worn away, and have evidently been used more than once in their double capacity, alternately rolled up the hill by smiling Cupid, to be hurled down again by furious Nemesis.

Here near a clump of burdock-leaves is a shabby-looking globe of yellow sandstone, whose puny size plainly speaks of a *mariage de convenance*—a mere union of hands without hearts; perhaps some old widower, with trembling hands and shaky knees, in quest of a wife to look after his house, and to whom the whole matter was very uphill work indeed!

Close alongside, half hidden beneath the graceful tangles of a wild-rose bush, is a formidable boulder of gigantic, nay, heroic size, which forcibly suggests that it must have been a mighty love indeed which brought it up here—so mighty, no doubt, that to the two strong young arms which rolled it up the hill it must have seemed light as a feather's weight.

And how many of these, might one ask, have been rolled up here in vain, in so far as the love was concerned? When the fire of love had grown cold and its sweetness all turned to vinegar, how many, many a former lover must heartily have wished that he had never moved his stone from the bottom of the hill!

Such thoughts involuntarily crowd on the mind when sitting, as I have done many a time, within this lonely ruin on fine summer evenings, the idyllic peacefulness of the scene the more strongly felt by contrast with the bloody memories linked around it. It is so strange to realize how completely everything has passed away that once used to be: that the hands which pushed these heavy globes, as well as the Moslem crania for which they were intended, have turned alike to dust; that hushed forever are the voices once awaking fierce echoes within these very walls; and that of all those contrasting passions, of all that tender love and that burning hatred, nothing has survived but a old stones lying forgotten near a deserted church!

The history of the sieges endured in Transylvania on the part of Turk or Tartar would in itself furnish matter for many volumes. Numberless anecdotes are yet current characterizing the endurance and courage of the besieged, and the original means often resorted to in order to baffle or mislead the enemy.

Once it was the ready wit of a Szekel woman which saved her people besieged by the Tartars within the Almescher cavern. As the whole land had been devastated from end to end, a severe famine was the consequence, and both besiegers and besieged were sorely in want of victuals. The Szekels had taken some provisions with them into the cave, but these were soon exhausted; and the Tartars, though starving themselves, were consoled by thinking that hunger would soon compel their enemy to give in. One day, when, as usual, the barbarians had assembled shouting and howling in front of the cavern, whose entrance was defended by a high wall, a Hungarian woman held up before their eyes a large cake at the end of a long pole, and cried out, tauntingly, "See here, ye dogs of Tartars! Thus are we feasting in plenty and comfort, while you are reduced to eat grass and roots of trees." Thus much vaunted cake was but kneaded together of water and ashes, with a few last remaining spoonfuls of flour; but the Tartars, taken in by the feint, abandoned the field.

Another time it was nothing more than a swarm of bees which turned the scale in favor of the Saxons, hard pressed by the enemy outside. Already they had begun to scale the walls of the fortified church, and death and destruction seemed imminent, when the youthful daughter of the

church-warden was struck by a bright idea. Behind the church was a little garden full of sweet-scented flowers, and containing a dozen beehives, which it was Lieschen's (such was her name) pride to watch over. Seizing a hive in each hand, she sprang up on the fortress wall, and with all her strength hurled them down among the approaching besiegers. Again and again she repeated this maneuver till the hives were exhausted, and the bewildered enemies, blinded by the dense swarm of infuriated bees, deafened by the angry buzzing in their ears, and maddened by hundredfold stings, beat an ignominious and hasty retreat.

This occurred in the village of Holzmengen towards the end of the seventeenth century, and of this same village it is related that, when peace was finally restored to the land, the population was so reduced that most houses stood empty. Of four hundred landholders there used to be, but fifteen now remained; and many years passed by with, out any wedding being celebrated in the place. When, however, at last this rare event came to pass, the bridegroom received the name of the "young man," which stuck to him until his end. The bride was no other than Lieschen, the bee-maiden, and Thomas was the name of her husband; and to this day whoever is in possession of that particular house goes by the name of "*den Jung mon Thomas*," even though he happen to have been christened Hans or Peter, and be, moreover, as old as Methuselah. If you ask the name of such another house in the same village, you are told that it belongs to *Michel am Eck* (Michael at the corner). It is not a corner house, neither does its proprietor answer to the name of Michel; but where it stands was once the corner of a street, and Michel the name of one of the fifteen landholders who divided the property after the war; hence the appellation.

There is a story told of an active Saxon housewife who, after she had been shut up for three days within the fortress awaiting the Tartars reported to be near, began to weary of her enforced idleness, and throwing open the gate of the citadel, impatiently called out, "Now, then, foul dogs of Tartars, are you never coming?"

When the Tartars had succeeded in capturing prisoners they used to fatten them up for eating. A woman from the village of Almesch, being sickly, refused to fatten, and, set at liberty, came home to relate the doleful tale. The little Hungarians and Saxons were regarded as toys for the young Tartars, who, setting them up in rows, used to practise upon them the merry pastime of cutting off heads.

Living in Transylvania, we are sometimes inclined to wonder whether to be besieged by Turks and Tartars be really a thing of the past, and not rather an actual danger for which we must be prepared any day, so strangely are many little observances relating to those times still kept up. Thus in the belfry tower at Kaisd there hangs a little bell bearing a Gothic inscription and the date 1506. It is rung every evening at the usual curfew hour, and until within a very few years ago the watchman was under the obligation of calling forth into the night with stentorian voice, "Not this way, you villains! not this way! I see you well!"

Also the habit of keeping provisions stored up within the fortified church-walls, to this day extant in most Saxon villages, is clearly a remnant of the time when sieges had to be looked for. Even now people seem to consider their goods to be in greater security here than in their own barns and lofts. The outer fortified wall round the church is often divided off into deep recesses or alcoves, in each of which, stands a large wooden chest securely locked, and filled with grain or flour, while the little surrounding turrets or chapels are used as storehouses for Home-cured bacon. "We have seven chapels all full of bacon," I was once proudly informed by a

village church-warden; but, with the innate mistrust of his race, he would not indulge my further curiosity on the subject by suffering me to inspect the interior of these greasy sanctuaries, evidently suspecting me of sinister intentions on his bacon stores.

This storing up of provisions is a perfect mania a the Saxons, and each village has its own special hobby or favorite article, vast quantities of which it hoards up in a preposterous, senseless fashion, reminding one of a dog who buries more bones than he can ever hope to eat in the course of his life. Thus, one village prides itself on having the greatest quantity of bacon, much of which is already thirty or forty years old, and consequently totally unfit for use; while in an other communities the oldest grain is the great *specialité*. Each article, case, or barrel is marked with the brand of the owner, and the whole placed under the charge of the church-warden.

Some parishes can still boast of many curiously wrought pieces of church plate remaining over from Catholic days—enamelled chalices, bejewelled crucifixes, remonstrances, and ciboriums, richly inlaid and embossed. The village of Heltau is in possession of many such valuable ornaments which, during the Turkish wars, used to be buried in the earth, sometimes for a period of many years, the exact spot where the treasure was hidden being known only to the oldest church-warden, who was careful to pass on the secret to the next in rank when he felt himself to be drawing near the end of his life. Thus, in the year 1794, the church at Heltau, struck by lightning, was seriously damaged, and urgently demanded extensive repairs. How to defray these expenses was the question which sorely perplexed the village pastor and the church elders, when the old warden came forward and offered to reveal to the pastor and the second warden the secret of a hidden treasure of whose existence none but he was aware. The man himself had never set eyes on the treasure, but had received from his predecessor precise directions how to find it in case of necessity. Accordingly, under his guidance the pastor, accompanied by the younger warden, repaired to the church, where, entering the right-hand aisle, the old man pointed to three high-backed wooden seats fixed against the wall, saying, “The centre one of these chairs is a movable panel, behind which a door is said to be concealed. After some effort—for the panel was jammed from long disuse—it yielded, moving upward, and disclosing a small iron door with a keyhole, into which fitted an old-fashioned rusty key produced by the warden. When this door was at last got open, the three men stepped into a small vault paved with bricks. “One of these bricks is marked by a cross, and under it we have to dig for the treasure,” were the further instructions given by the old man. A very few minutes proved the truth of his words, bringing to light a small wooden chest containing a chalice, a silver remonstrance, and various other valuables, which may still be seen at the Heltau parsonage; likewise a bag of gold and silver coins dating from the time, of the Batorys, which leads to the supposition that the treasure had been lying here concealed ever since the beginning of the seventeenth century.

Great was the pastor’s surprise and delight at this unexpected windfall; but he only took from the bag sufficient money for the necessary repairs, replacing the rest of the treasure where it had been found. None of the other parishioners were informed whence had come the money, so the secret remained a secret. Only many years later, in the present century, when the son-in-law of the former clergyman had become the pastor in his turn, the story of the treasure was imparted to him by the successor of former wardens. The necessity for concealment had now gone by, and peace and prosperity reigned in the country; so the church ornaments were once more disinterred, and finally restored to the light of day, while the antiquated gold and silver pieces, exchanged into current coinage, were applied to useful purposes. Thus it was that the secret oozed out, and came to be generally known.

Saxon village churches of the present day are generally bare and unornamented inside, for all decorations had been dismantled at the time of the Reformation; stone niches have been emptied of the statues they contained, and rich pieces of carving stowed away in lumber. Only the old Oriental carpets, brought hither from Turkish campaigns, which frequently adorn the front of the pews or the organ-gallery, have been suffered to remain, and hang there still, delicately harmonious in coloring, but riddled through with holes like a sieve, and fed upon by the descendants of a hundred generations of moths, which flutter in a dense cloud round the visitor who inadvertently raises a corner of the drapery to investigate its fleecy quality.

Curious old tombstones and bass-reliefs may often be seen carelessly huddled together in the church entrance or outside the walls, treated with no sort of appreciation of their historical value or care for their ultimate preservation. Also the numerous frescos which used to cover many church walls have been obliterated by the barbarous touch of a whitewashing hand. It would almost seem as if this Saxon people had originally possessed some degree of artistic feeling, which has been, however, effectually extinguished by the Reformation; for it is difficult otherwise to explain how a nation capable of raising monuments of real artistic value in the troubled times of the barbarous Middle Ages should be thus heedless of their conservation in the present enlightened and peaceful century.

Of this lamentable indifference to the conservation of their historical and artistic treasures, the ruined Abbey of Kerz, situated in the valley of the Aluta, offers a melancholy instance. This wealthy Cistercian monastery was founded by King Bela III. towards the end of the twelfth century; but being abolished by King Mathias three centuries later, on account of irregularities into which the monks had fallen, it passed, with its lands, into possession of the Hermanstadt church.

The choir of the ancient abbey church, built in the time of Louis the Great in the transition style, is still used as a place of worship by the small Lutheran congregation of Kerz, but the nave has been suffered to fall into decay; many of the richly carved stones of which it was formed have been carried off by the villagers, who have utilized them for building their houses, or degraded them to yet baser purposes. We ourselves crossed the little stream, which runs close by the parson's house, on stepping-stones evidently taken from the ancient building. Likewise a lime-tree of gigantic dimensions in front of the western portal, and supposed to have been planted when the foundation-stone of the church was laid, is now in imminent danger of splitting in twain for want of the trifling attention of an iron waistband to keep its poor old body together. Such the present lamentable condition of one of the most interesting relics in the country which has been named the Melrose of Transylvania.

#### THE SAXON VILLAGE PASTOR.

The contrast between the domestic lives of Roumanian and Saxon peasants is all the more surprising as their respective clergies set totally different examples; for while many Roumanian priests are drunken, dissolute men, open to every sort of bribery, the Saxon pastor is almost invariably a model of steadiness and morality, and leads a quiet, industrious, and contented life.

On the other hand, however, it may be remarked that if the Saxon pastor be steady and well-behaved, he has very good and solid reasons for so being. Certainly he is most comfortably indemnified for the virtues he is expected to practise.

When a pastor dies the villagers themselves elect his successor by votes. Usually it is a man whom they know already by sight or reputation, or from having heard him preach on stray occasions in their church. Every Saxon pastor, in order to be qualified for the position, must have practised for several years as professor at a public gymnasium—a very wise regulation, as it insures the places being filled, by men of education.

The part which a village pastor is called upon to play requires both head and heart, for the relation between shepherd and flock is here very different from the conventional footing on which clergy and laity stand with regard to each other in town life. Whereas in the city no congregation cares to see its spiritual head outside the church walls, and would resent as unpardonable intrusion any attempt of his to penetrate the privacy of the domestic circle, the villager not only expects but insists on his pastor taking intimate part in his family life, and being ready to assist him with advice and admonition in every possible contingency.

The peasants are therefore very circumspect about the choice of a pastor, well aware that the weal or woe of a community may depend upon the selection. They have often seen how some neighboring village has awakened to new life and prosperity since the advent of a worthy clergyman; while such another parish, from a rash selection, has saddled itself with a man it would fain cart away as so much use less straw, were it only possible to get rid of him. For although the power of choice lies entirely with the peasants, they cannot likewise undo their work at will, and only the bishop has power to depose a pastor when he has investigated the complaints brought against him and found them to be justified.

Not only the pastor *in spe*, but also his wife, is carefully scrutinized, and her qualifications for the patriarchal position she has to occupy critically examined into; for if the clergyman is termed by his flock the “honorable father,” so is she designated as the “virtuous mother.” The candidate who happens to have a thrifty and benevolent consort finds his chances of election considerably enhanced; while such another, married to a vain and frivolous woman, will most likely be found a-wanting when weighed in the balance.

The funeral of a village pastor has been touchingly described by a native author<sup>v</sup>, whose words I take the liberty of quoting:

“The old father had gone to his long rest: more than once during the last few years he had felt that the time had come for him to lay down the shepherd’s crook; for the world had become too stirring, and he no longer had the strength and activity of spirit to do all that was expected of him. There were serious repairs to be undertaken about the church, and the question of building a new school-house was becoming urgent. Likewise many of the new church regulations were harassing and distasteful exceedingly; most especially was he troubled by inward quakings at the idea that at the bishop’s next official visit he would be expected to submit to him the manuscripts of all the sermons he had preached within the year, and which, neatly tied up together with black worsted, were lying on the lowest shelf of the bookcase.

All these thoughts had reconciled him to the prospect of death; and when sitting before his door on fine summer evenings he would sometimes remark to the neighbors who had lingered near for a passing chat, ‘cannot last over-long with me now: one or two pair of soles at most I shall wear out, and I should be glad to remain in the village, and to sleep there under the big lime-tree, in the midst of those with whom my life has been spent. Therefore kindly bear with me a little longer, good people, for the few remaining days the Lord is pleased to spare me.’

And these words never failed to conciliate even the more turbulent spirits, who we apt to think that the Herr Vater was over in going, and that the parish stood in need of a younger head.

Now at last the coffin has been lowered into the earth, and the fresh mound covered with dewy garlands of flowers. All the villagers have turned out to render the last honors to the father they have lost. The eldest son of the defunct, standing-near the grave, addresses the congregation. In a few simple words he thanks them for the good they have done to his father and to his whole family, and, in name of the dead man, he begs their forgiveness for whatever wrongs the pastor may unwittingly have done; and when he then lays down the keys of both church and parsonage into the hand of the church-warden, scarcely an eye will remain dry among the spectators. For forty years is a long time in which a good man, even though he often errs and be at fault, can yet have done much very much, good indeed, and resentment is a plant which strikes no root in the upturned clods of a new-made grave.”

But the orphaned congregation must have a new pastor; the flock cannot be suffered to remain long without a shepherd; and this is the topic which is being discussed with much warmth at an assemblage of village elders. On the white-decked table are standing dishes of bread-and-cheese, flanked by large tankards of wine. The first glass has just been emptied to the memory of the dead pastor, and now the second glass will be drunk to tile health of his yet unknown successor.

These meetings preceding the election of a new shepherd are often long and stormy; for when the wine has taken effect and loosened the tongues, the different candidates who might be taken into consideration are passed in review, and extolled with much heat, or abused with broad sarcasm. One man is rejected on account of an impediment in his speech, and another because he is known to be unmarried; a third one, who might do well enough for any other parish, cannot he chosen here because his old parents are natives of the village; for it is a true though a hard word which says that no one can he a prophet in his own country. One man who ventures to suggest the vicar of a neighboring village is informed that no blacker traitor exists on the face of the earth; and another, who describes his pet candidate as an ideal clergyman, with the figure of a Hercules and the voice of a Stentor, is ironically asked whether he wishes to choose a pastor by weight and measure. If only his head and heart be in the right place the clergyman’s legs are welcome to be an inch or two shorter.

After a longer or shorter interval a decision is finally arrived at. From a list of six candidates one has been elected by the secret votes of the community, each married land-owner having a voice in the matter, and the name of the successful aspirant is publicly made known in church. Meanwhile a group of young men on horseback are waiting at the church door, and hardly has the all-important name been pronounced when they set spurs to their steeds and gallop to bear the news to the successful candidate. A hot race ensues, for-the foremost one can hope to get a shining piece of silver—perhaps even gold—in exchange for the good tidings he brings. In a carriage, at a more leisurely pace, follow the elders who have been deputed to hand over the official document containing the nomination.

An early day is fixed for the presentation of the new shepherd to his flock, and at a still earlier date the new Frau Pastorin precedes him thither, where she is soon deep in the mysteries of cake-baking, fowl-killing, etc., in view of the many official banquets which are to accompany the presentation. In this employment she has ample assistance from the village matrons, as well as contributions of eggs, cream, butter, and bacon. The day before the presentation the pastor has

been fetched in a carriage drawn by six white horses. The first step to his installation is the making out and signing of the agreement or treaty between pastor and people—all the said pastor's duties, obligations, and privileges being therein distinctly specified and enumerated, from the exact quantity and quality of Holy Gospel he is bound to administer yearly to the congregation down to his share of wild crab-apples for brewing the household vinegar, and the precise amount of acorns his pigs are at liberty to consume.

After this treaty has been duly signed and read aloud, the keys of the church are solemnly given over and accepted with appropriate speeches. The banquet which succeeds this ceremony is called the "key-drinking" Then follows the solemn installation in the church, where the new pastor, for the first time, pronounces aloud the blessing over his congregation, who strain their ears with critical attention to catch the sound and pass sentence thereon. The Saxon peasant thinks much of a full sonorous voice; therefore woe to the man who is cursed with a thin squeaky organ, for he will assuredly fall at least fifty per cent, in the estimation of his audience.

Then follows another banquet, at which each of the church officials has his place at table marked by a silver thaler piece (about 3s.) lying at the bottom of his large tankard, and visible through the clear golden wine, with which the bumper is filled. Etiquette demands that the drinker should taste of the wine but sparingly at first, merely wetting the lips and affecting not to perceive the silver coin; but when the health of the new pastor is drunk, each man must empty his tankard at one draught, skillfully catching the thaler between the teeth as he drains it dry. This coin is then supposed to be treasured up in memory of the event.

This has been but a flying visit to his new parish, and only some weeks later does the new pastor hold his solemn entry into the parish, the preparations for the flitting naturally occupying some few weeks. The village is bound to convey the new pastor, his family, as well as all their goods and chattels, to the new home, and it is considered a distinction when many carts are required for the purpose, even though the distance be great and the roads bad, for the people would have no opinion at all of a pastor who arrived in light marching order, but seem rather to value him in proportion to the trouble he gives them. As many as eighteen to twenty carts are sometimes pressed into service for this patriarchal procession.

The six white horses which are to be harnessed to the carriage for the clergyman and his wife have been carefully fattened up during the last few weeks, their manes plaited with bright ribbons, and the carriage itself decorated with flower garlands. At the parish boundary all the young men of the village have come out on horseback to meet them, and with flying banners they ride alongside of the carriage. In this way the village is reached, where sometimes a straw rope is stretched across the road to bar his entrance. This is removed on the pastor paying a ransom, and, entering the village, the driver is expected to conduct his horses at full gallop thrice round the fortified walls of the church before entering the parsonage court-yard.

he village pastor, who lives among his people, must, adopt their habits and their hours. It would not do for him to be abed till seven or eight o'clock, like a town gentleman: five o'clock, and even sooner, must find him dressed and ready to attend to the hundred and one requirements of his parishioners, who, even at that early hour, come pouring in upon him from all sides.

Perhaps it is a petition for some particularly fine sort of turnip-seed which only the Herr has got; or else lie is requested to look into his wise book to see if lie can find a remedy for the stubborn cough of a favorite horse, or the distressing state of the calf's digestion. Another will bring him a dish of golden honey-comb, with some question regarding the smoking of the hives;

while a fourth has come to request the pastor to transform his new-born son from a pagan into a Christian infant.

Various depositions of villagers, inviting the pastor to two different funerals and to six weddings, have successively been disposed of: then will come a peasant with some Hungarian legal document which he would like to have deciphered. Has he won the lawsuit which has been pending these two years and more? Or has he lost it, and will he be obliged to pay the damages as well? This is a riddle which only the Herr Vater can read him aright by consulting the big Hungarian dictionary on the shelf.

The next visitor is perchance an old white-bearded man, bent double with the weight of years, and carrying a well-worn Bible under his arm. He wants to know his age, which used to be entered somewhere here in the book-; but he cannot find the place, or else the bookbinder, in mending the volume last year, has pasted paper over it. Perhaps the Herr Vater can make it out for him; and further to facilitate the search, he mentions that there was corn in the upper fields, and arid maize in the low meadows, the year he was born, and that since then the corn has been sown twenty-four times on the same spot, and will be sown there again next year if God pleases to spare him. The pastor, who must of course be well versed in this sort of rural arithmetic, has no difficulty in pronouncing the man to be exactly seventy-three years and three months old, and sends him away well pleased to discover that he is a whole year younger than he had believed himself to be.

Often, too, a couple appear on the scene for the purpose of being reconciled. The man has beaten his wife, and she has come to complain—not of the beating in the abstract, but of the manner in which this particular chastisement has been administered. It was really too bad this time, as, sobbing, she explains to the Herr Vater that he has belabored her with a thick leather thong in a truly heathenish fashion, instead of taking the broomstick, as does every respectable man, to beat his wife.

The virtuous Frau Mutter has likewise her full share of the day's work. An old hen to be made into broth for a sick grandchild, a piece of cloth to be cut out in the shape of a jacket, or a handkerchief to be hemmed on the big sewing-machine, all pass successively into her busy hands; and if she goes for a day's shopping to the nearest market-town she is positively besieged by commissions of all sorts. Six china plates of some particular pattern, a coffee-cup to replace the one thrown down by the cat last week, a pound of loaf sugar, the whitest, finest, sweetest, and cheapest that can be got, or a packet of Composition candles. Even weightier matters are sometimes intrusted to her judgment, and she may have to accept the awful responsibility of selecting a new mirror or a petroleum lamp.

Letter-writing is also another important branch of the duties of both pastor and wife. It may be an epistle to some daughter who is in service, or to a soldier son away with his regiment, a threatening letter to an unconscientious debtor, or a business transaction with the farmer of another village. In fact, all the raw material of epistolary affection, remonstrance, counsel, or threat is brought wholesale to the parsonage, there to be fashioned into shape, and set forth clearly in black upon white.

Altogether the day of a Saxon pastor is a busy and well-filled one, for his doors, from sunrise to sunset, must be open to his parishioners, so that after having "risen with the lark" he is well content further to carry out the proverb by "going to bed with the lamb."

A great deal of patience and natural tact is requisite to enable a clergyman to deal intelligently with his folk. His time must always be at their disposal, and he must never appear to be hurried or busy when expected to listen to some long-winded story or complaint. Nothing must be too trifling to arouse his interest, and no hour of the day too unreasonable to receive a visit; yet, on the whole, the lot of such a village pastor who rightly understands his duties seems to me a very peaceful and enviable one. He is most comfortably situated as regards material welfare, and stands sufficiently aside from the bustling outer world to be spared the annoyances and irritations of more ambitious careers. The fates of his parishioners, so closely interwoven with his own, are a constant source of interest, and the almost unlimited power he enjoys within the confines of his parish makes him feel himself to be indeed the monarch of this little kingdom.

One parsonage in particular is engraved on my mind as a perfect frame for such Arcadian happiness. An old-fashioned roomy house, with high-pitched roof, it stands within the ring of fortified walls which encircle the church as well. A few wide spreading lime-trees are picturesquely dotted about the turf between the two buildings; and some old moss-grown stones, half sunk in the velvet grass where the violets cluster so thick in spring, betray this to be the site of a long-disused burying-place. Up a few steps there is a raised platform with seats arranged against the wall, from which, as front an opera-box, one may overlook the village street and mark the comings and goings of the inhabitants; and a large kitchen-garden, opening through the wall in another direction, contains every fruit and vegetable which a country heart can desire. But the greatest attraction, to my thinking, was a long arcade of lilac-bushes, so thickly grown that the branches closed together overhead, only admitting a soft, tremulous, green half-light, and scented with every variety of the dear old-fashioned shrub, from the exquisite dwarf Persian and snowy white to each possible gradation of lilac pink and pinky lilac. Along this fragrant gallery old carved stone benches are placed at intervals; and hither, as the venerable pastor informed me, he always comes on Saturday evenings in summer to compose his sermon for the morrow. "It is so much easier to think out here," he said, "among the birds and flowers and the old graves all around. When the air is scented with the breath of and fro the open church window comes the sound of the organ, ah, then I feel myself another man, and God teaches me quite other words to say to my people than those I find for myself inside the house!"

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<sup>i</sup> This, however, may be doubted, as I do not believe that, under any circumstances, a natural amalgamation between Germans and Magyars could ever have come about. There is a too deeply inrooted dislike between the two races.

<sup>ii</sup> "There is space in the smallest hut  
To contain a happy, loving couple."

<sup>iii</sup> This abuse, however, is entirely confined to the villages, the towns showing a far more favorable rate of increase among the-Saxon population.

<sup>iv</sup> The assertion that the Transylvanian Saxons—taken as a body—show a yearly decrease is, however, incorrect, as has been conclusively proved by Dr. Oskar von Meltzl, in his recent interesting work, "Statistik der Sächsischen Landbevölkerung in Siebenbürgen." By the authors own acknowledgment, however, the increase within the last thirty-two years has been but insignificant; while of 227 Saxon communities established in the country 92 have diminished in number between the years 1851-1883 to the extent of nearly 11 per cent.

<sup>v</sup> Dr. Fronius

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