you, also, and — Heinrich is not here," she added, roguishly.

"Yes; but if he should come to-morrow?"

"To-morrow?" she said, and looked at him earnestly, with her large, dark eyes. "Between then and now there lies a long, long night. To-morrow? You will understand to-morrow what that word signifies. But we will not speak of that now," she broke off; "to-night is the merry festival which we have so long, so very long waited for, and we must not spoil it by sad thoughts; and here we are. The men will not look cross because I bring a new dancer with me, I hope."

Arnold was about to reply, when the music started up, and drowned his voice. The musicians played after a remarkable fashion of their own. Gertrud conducted him into a brilliantly-lighted apartment, where a group of peasant-girls were chattering away, and there she left him for awhile, to become acquainted with the other fellows and maidens before the real dancing began.

Arnold did not feel very comfortable at first among so many strange faces, their costumes and their speech seemed to him so strange and uncouth. The unwonted tones which sounded so sweetly from Gertrud's lips, grated harshly now on his ear. The young fellows were, however, very friendly toward him; and one of them, coming up to him, took his hand, and said,

"It is very sensible of you to remain with us. Only live a jolly life, and the interval will pass away quick eno'."

"What interval?" asked Arnold, less astonished at the expression than that the fellow should have surmised he meant to make the village his home. "You mean, I suppose, the time before I come here again?"

"And you mean to go away again, do you?" said the young peasant, quickly.

"Yes, to-morrow — or next day, at most; but I shall come back again."

"To-morrow? So — do you, indeed? Ha! ha! ha!" laughed the young peasant.

"That is pretty good! But we will talk more of that to-morrow," and he, with the rest, burst into a droll laugh which made Arnold almost shiver — he knew not why.

All at once the musicians gave a sign that the dance was to begin, and thereupon Gertrud came once again to his side and took his arm.

"Come; we must not be last," said the maiden, gaily; "for, as the Mayor's daughter, I must open the dance."

"But what a strange melody they are playing to dance by," said Arnold. "I cannot keep time to it at all."

"It will go all right," laughed Gertrud; "after the first few minutes you will find out the way, and I will tell you how it goes."

Every one now pressed into the dancing-hall except the card-players, and Arnold soon forgot everything else in the blissful sensation of holding the beautiful girl in his arms. Again and again he danced with Gertrud, and no one seemed to wish to quarrel with him on that account, although the other girls teased him somewhat about it. One thing only disturbed him; close by the tavern stood the old church, and in the parlor one could distinctly hear the sharp, dissonant clang of the cracked bell. At the first stroke it seemed as though the staff of a magician had touched the revelers. The music ceased in the middle of a measure, the throng of men and maidens stood as if rooted to their places, and every one counted out the slow, tedious strokes, with upraised finger. As soon, however, as the last sound had died away, the whole scene was again life and gayety. It was the same way at eight, at nine, and ten o'clock; and when Arnold inquired the reason of this mysterious behavior, Gertrud laid her finger upon her lips, and appeared so sad and melancholy, that he would not for the world have troubled her more about it.

At ten o'clock there was a pause in the dance, and the musicians, who must have had iron lungs, preceded the young people into the dining-room. Here everything went merrily; the wine flowed freely; and Arnold, who could not remain behind the rest, began to calculate.