

**COLLECTION OF GERMAN
AUTHORS; VOL. 35: AN OLD
STORY OF MY FARMING DAYS;
IN THREE VOLUMES; VOL. II**

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FRITZ REUTER

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COLLECTION
OF
GERMAN AUTHORS.

VOL. 35.

AN OLD STORY
OF MY FARMING DAYS BY FRITZ REUTER.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

AN OLD STORY
UT MINE STROMTID.

CHAPTER I.

ON the 23rd of June 1843, the eldest son of David Däsel and the youngest daughter of John Degel were seated on a bench in the pleasure-grounds at Pümpel-hagen. They had gone out to enjoy the beauty of the moonlight evening together. Sophia Degel said to her companion: "What made you look so foolish, Kit, when you came back from taking the horses over to meet the squire?"—"It was no wonder if I looked a little foolish. He took me into the sitting-room at the Inn and showed me his wife, and, says he, 'this is your new mistress.' Then she gave me a glass of wine, and made me drink it at once."—"What's she like?" asked the girl.—"Why," said Christian, "it's rather difficult to describe her. She's about your height; her hair is bright and fair like yours, and her colouring is red and white like yours. She has grey eyes like you, and she has just such another sweet little mouth."—Here he gave Sophia a hearty kiss on her pretty red lips.—"Lawk a daisy! Christian!" cried the girl, freeing herself from his embrace. "I suppose then that you gave

her just such another kiss as you've given me?"—"Are you crazy?" asked Christian, and then went on soothingly. "No, that would have been impossible. That sort have something about them that doesn't go with our sort. The lady might have sat here on the bench beside me till doom's day, and I'd never have thought of giving her a kiss."—"I see!" said Sophia Degel, rising and tossing her pretty head, "you think that I'm good enough for that sort of thing! Do you?"—"Sophia," said Christian, putting his arm round her waist again, in spite of her pretended resistance, "that kind of woman is far too small and weakly for us to admire; why if I wanted to put my arm round a creature like that—as I'm doing to you just now, Sophia—I'd be frightened of breaking or crushing her. Nay," he continued, stroking her hair, and beginning to walk home with her, "like mates with like."—When they parted Sophia was quite friends with Christian again. "I shall see the lady in the morning," she said, as she slipped away from his detaining arm, "the girls are all going to make wreaths of flowers to-morrow, and I'm going to help."

Every one at Pümpelbogen was busy weaving garlands, and setting up a triumphal arch across the avenue. Next morning Hawermann saw the last touches put to the arch, to which Mary Möller added a bunch of flowers here, and a bit of green there, as it seemed to be required, and Fred Triddelfitz fluttered about amongst the village-lads and lasses as a sort of volunteer-assistant, in all the grandeur of his green hunting-coat, white leather breeches, long boots with yellow tops, and blood-red neck-tie. While they were employed in this manner, uncle Bräsig joined them in his

very best suit of clothes. He wore pale blue summer-trousers, and a brown coat which he must have bought in the year one. It was a very good fit at the back, and was so long in the tails that it nearly reached the middle of his calf, but it showed rather too great an expanse of yellow piqué waistcoat in front. As the coat was the same colour as the bark of a tree, he might be likened to a tree that had been struck by lightning, and which showed a broad stripe of yellow wood in front where the bark had been torn away. He also wore a black hat about three quarters of a yard high. "Good morning, Charles. How are you getting on? Aha! I see that the erection is nearly finished. It looks very nice, Charles—but still, I think that the arch might have been a little bit higher, and you might have had a couple of towers, one on the right hand and the other on the left. I once saw that done at Güstrow in the time of old Frederic Francis, when he came back in triumph! But where's the banner?"—"There's none," said Hawermann, "we hav'n't one."—"Do try to remember where we can get one, Charles. You can't possibly do without a flag of some kind. The lieutenant was in the army, and so he must have a flag flying in his honour. Möller," he called without turning round, "just fetch me two servant's sheets and sew them together lengthwise; Christian Päsel, bring me a smooth straight pole, and you, Triddelfitz, get me the brush you use for marking the sacks, and a bottle of ink."—"Bless me! Zachariah. What on earth are you going to do?" asked Hawermann, shaking his head.—"Charles," said Bräsig, "it's a great mercy that the lieutenant was in the Prussian army, for if he had been in a Mecklenburg regiment we

should never have managed to get the right colours. Now it's quite easy to rig up a Prussian flag. Black ink and white sheets! we want nothing more."—Hawermann at first thought of dissuading his friend from making the flag, but on second thoughts he let him go on unchecked, for, thought he, the young squire will see that he meant it kindly.

So Bräsig set to work, and painted a great "vivat!!!" on the sheets. "Hold tight!" he shouted to Mary Möller and Fred Triddelfitz who were helping him, "I want to get 'Lieutenant and Mrs. Licutenant' properly written on the banner."—He had decided, after much thought, on putting "Lieutenant and Mrs. Licutenant" after the "vivat", instead of "A. von Rambow and F. von Satrop" as he had at first intended, for von Rambow and von Satrop are merely the names of two noble families, and he had all his life had a great deal to do with people of that kind, while he had never yet known a lieutenant, and therefore thought the title a very distinguished one.

When the flag was finished he trotted across the court with it, and stuck it up on the highest step of the manor-house, and then hastened down stairs again to see how it looked from below. After that, he tried hanging it out at the granary-window, and again from the loft above the stable where the sheep were wintered; but none of these places met with his approval. "It won't do at all, Charles," he said at last; but after a long pause he added: "I have it now!" and pointing at the arch he continued, "That's the very place for it."—"Ah, but," said Hawermann, "don't you see that if you put it there, it'll hide our arch completely. The great poplar over there prevents any wind getting at

your banner, and so it's hanging to the pole like an immense icicle that hasn't melted since last winter."—"I'll soon put that right, Charles," cried Bräsig, pulling a quantity of twine out of his pocket, and tying one bit to the upper and another bit to the lower end of his banner. "Gustavus Kegel," he called to the boy who fed the pigs, "are you a good climber?"—"Yes, Sir," answered Gustavus.—"Very well then, my dear pig's Marcary," said Bräsig, laughing heartily at his own joke, and all the grooms, and farm-lads, and lasses laughed because he did, "take the ends of these strings, climb the poplar with them, and then draw tight."—Gustavus did as he was desired, and drew the banner as tight and firm as if he had been setting a main-sail in preparation for Pömpellugen leaving her moorings and sailing away. Bräsig meanwhile stood by the pole or mast like a captain during a sea-fight, and looked as if he were commanding the whole ship's company: "He may come now as soon as he likes, Charles. I'm quite ready for him."

But Fred Triddelütz was not ready yet, for he had constituted himself commander-in-chief of the land-forces, and wanted to arrange his army in two lines, one on each side of the road. The first of these lines was formed of the old labourers, the grooms, and the farm-lads. The other of the married women, the maid-servants, and the girls who worked on the farm. After a good deal of trouble he partially succeeded in arranging the men to his mind; but it was otherwise with the women; he could not manage them at all. The married women were each armed with one of their little olive-branches, for, as they said, Josy and Harry ought to see all that was going on at such a

time; but unfortunately the said olive-branches required so much dancing and talking to, to keep them quiet, that it spoilt the look of the whole line. The maid-servants refused to acknowledge Fred's authority, and Sophia Degel even went so far as to say that he had better not attempt to order *her* about, for she would obey no one but Mamselle Möller. As for the light infantry of farm-girls, they were never in the same spot for two minutes at a time! There was no managing them, for they seemed to be under the impression that the enemy was in sight, and that it was their bounden duty to take some dapper young foe prisoner on the spot. Fred Triddelfitz struck the crook-stick he had intended to use as his marshal's baton on the ground before them, and said that they were not worth all the trouble he was taking with them. He then went to Hawermann and told him: He would have nothing more to do with it, and as the bailiff did not entreat him to persevere, he asked if he might have the use of his horse to ride out, and see whether the young squire and his wife were coming. Hawermann was rather unwilling to allow him to do so, out of regard for his old horse, but Bräsig whispered: "Let him go, Charles, for our preparations will have a much more imposing effect when we get rid of the grey-hound."

Fred rode off towards Gürlitz; but no sooner was he gone than Bräsig had a new cause of displeasure in the conduct of Strull, the schoolmaster, who now came up followed by all the youthful descendants of the Äsels and Egels who were of an age to go to school, each with his or her hymn-book open. The

* *Translator's note.* The housekeeper in a large farm in N. Germany is a person of great consequence, and is always called Mamselle.