

THE COUCH OF DEATH.

THE veiled Evening walked solitary down the western hills, and Silence reposed in the valley; the birds of day were heard in their nests, rustling in brakes and thickets; and the owl and bat flew round the darkening trees: all is silent when Nature takes her repose. - In former times, on such an evening, when the cold clay breathed with life, and our ancestors, who now sleep in their graves, walked on the steadfast globe, the remains of a family of the tribes of Earth, a mother and a sister were gathered to the sick bed of a youth. Sorrow linked them together; leaning on one another's necks alternately - like lilies, dropping tears in each other's bosom, they stood by the bed like reeds bending over a lake, when the evening drops trickle down. His voice was low as the whisperings of the woods when the wind is asleep, and the visions of Heaven unfold their visitation. "Parting is hard, and death is terrible; I seem to walk through a deep valley, far from the light of day, alone and comfortless! The damps of death fall thick upon me! Horrors stare me in the face! I look behind, there is no returning; Death follows after me; I walk in regions of Death, where no tree is; without a lantern to direct my steps, without a staff to support me." - Thus he laments through the still evening, till the curtains of darkness were drawn! Like the sound of a broken pipe, the aged woman raised her voice. "O my son, my son, I know but little of the path thou goest! But lo, there is a God, who made the world; stretch out thy hand to Him." The youth replied, like a voice heard from a sepulchre, "My hand is feeble, how should I stretch it out? My ways are sinful, how should I raise mine eyes? My voice hath used deceit, how should I call on Him who is Truth? My breath is loathsome, how should He not be offended? If I lay my face in the dust, the grave opens its mouth for me; if I lift up my head, sin covers me as a cloak! O my dear friends, pray ye for me! stretch forth your hands, that my Helper may come! Through the void space I walk between the sinful world and eternity! Beneath me burns eternal fire! O for a hand to pluck me forth!" As the voice of an omen heard in the silent valley, when the few inhabitants cling trembling together; as the voice of the Angel of Death, when the thin beams of the moon give a faint light, such was this young man's voice to his friends. Like the bubbling waters of the brook in the dead of night, the aged woman raised her cry, and said, "O voice, that dwellest in my breast, can I not cry, and lift my eyes to heaven? Thinking of this, my spirit is turned within me into confusion. O my child, my child! is thy breath infected? so is mine. As the deer wounded, by the brooks of water, so the arrows of sin stick in my flesh; the poison hath entered into my marrow." - Like rolling waves upon a desert shore, sighs succeeded sighs; they covered their faces, and wept. The youth lay silent - his mother's arm was under his head; he was like a cloud tossed by the winds, till the sun shine, and the drops of rain glisten, the yellow harvest breathes, and the thankful eyes of the villagers are turned up in smiles - the traveller that hath taken shelter under an oak, eyes the distant country with joy. Such smiles were seen upon the face of the youth! a visionary hand wiped away his tears, and a ray of light beamed around his head! All was still. The moon hung not out her lamp, and the stars faintly glimmered in the summer sky; the breath of night slept among the leaves of the forest; the bosom of the lofty hill drank in the silent dew, while on his majestic brow the voice of angels is heard, and stringed sounds ride upon the wings of night. The sorrowful pair lift up their heads, hovering angels are around them, voices of comfort are heard over the Couch of Death, and the youth breathes out his soul with joy into eternity.

(737 Wörter)

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