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Die Schweizerknaben in Oberschwaben

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Einundzwanzigstes Kapitel. Die Heimkunft.

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Vielleicht daß bald jemand des Weges kommt und uns heraus-
hilft aus unserer Verlegenheit.

Das Verlangen der Frau Koller schien bald und über
Erwarten in Erfüllung zu gehen. Das Dämmern des
frühen Abends war nahe daran in nächtliches Dunkel über-
zugehen. Da trat aus dem Hohlwege, der dem Bache zu-
führt ein junger Wanderer hervor.

„Wahrhaftig, Mann,“ schrie Berena, auffpringend von
ihrem Sitze, „da kommt unser Balthasar. — Gelt, gelt,
ich hab es immer gesagt,“ setzte sie in höchster Aufregung
hinzu und so laut daß der Näherrückende sie deutlich ver-
stehen konnte — „ich hab es ja immer gesagt, die Stur-
zenegger sind Lügner, so weit sie die Haut berührt.“

Einundzwanzigstes Kapitel.

Die Heimkunft.

Es war aber nicht Balthasar, der jetzt hinzugetreten,
der das rathlose Ehepaar recht herzlich begrüßte, obwohl
die Entfernung, und die Dämmerung die Vermuthung Be-
renas begreiflich macht — es war Konrad, der jetzt, tüchtig
gewachsen, beinahe die Größe hatte wie Balthasar im Früh-
ling. Ich meinte du seiest Balthasar, redete Frau Koller,
den heimkehrenden Knaben an, mehr unwillig als betrübt —
„kommt der noch nicht?“

„Ach nein, sagte Konrad, der wird nicht mehr kommen. „Wie so?“ versetzte Berena, „da hätt' ich wohl auch noch etwas dazu zu sagen.“

„Ach, Frau Koller,“ antwortete Konrad und wischte sich die Augen — „euer Balthasar ist — gestorben. — Er läßt Euch noch tausendmal — viel tausendmal grüßen.“

„Wie? gestorben?“ sagte der alte Koller mit so viel Empfindung daß Konrad aufs neue im Innersten seiner Seele erschüttert wurde. Oft unterbrochen erzählte er einiges von Balthasars Unglücksfall, von seinen schweren Leiden, von seinem sanften Tode und sagte dann: „Aber jetzt muß ich nach Hause, die Meinigen erwarten mich gewiß mit Ungeduld. Kann ich euch etwas helfen, so soll es mit Vergnügen geschehen.“

Es war so stille, kein einziges sprach ein Wort als Konrad mithalf den schweren Sack hinaufwälzen auf den Hand-
schlitten. Aber mehr als herbstlich rauschte das dürre Laub in dem Sack. Es schlummerte noch in der Knospe als Balthasar frisch und gesund von den Bergen seiner Heimath schied. Konrad, der schwächere, kehrte munter und lebensfroh in die Arme der Seinigen zurück und Balthasar lag verstümmelt in fremder Erde. —

Die Familie Sturzenegger genoß im vollsten Maaße die Freude des Wiedersehens. Wie wohl that es dem Herzen unseres Konrad im väterlichen Hause die alte Liebe wieder zu finden! Wie erquickend war für die Daheimgebliebenen der

Anblick des wackeren Sohnes und Bruders! Wie süß schmeckten die Gaben, die er auf seinem Rücken hergetragen! Wie lieblich tönte das zufriedene Wort, das von seinen Schicksalen erzählte! Die schönen Zeugnisse die er mitbrachte auch von seinem letzten Aufenthaltsorte her, wurden laut vorgelesen von der ältesten Tochter und gingen dann von Hand zu Hand. Noch mit anderen Schriften, die Konrad auf den Tisch legte, geschah das nämliche. Es geschah mit dem Blatte das Balthasar als Vermächtniß seinen Eltern schickte. Es geschah mit ein Paar Rechnungen, die der Arzt der ihn behandelt und der Bauer der ihn in sein Haus genommen, ausgestellt hatte. So äußerst billig sie waren, sie beliefen sich doch auf mehrere Gulden.

Der wohlthätige Arzt, der menschenfreundliche Bauer hatten, in Erwägung, daß noch unendlich mehr als sie, der liebevolle, treue Konrad, den sie hochachten, bewundern lernten an dem unglücklichen Kranken gethan hatte, ihren Rechnungen die Bemerkung beigefügt: „Obige Summe soll von Balthasars Eltern dem unermüdlichen, edlen Wärter desselben, dem wackeren Konrad Sturzenegger ausbezahlt werden, als ein Zeichen unserer aufrichtigen Liebe.“ —

Während die glücklichen Leute sich gegenseitig erfreuten durch die offenerzigste Darlegung ihres Wohlwollens, hatte sich auch der alte Koller wieder genahet und trat unerwartet in ihre Mitte, nicht mehr so übermüthig wie im Februar, wo wir ihn das erstemal in dieser Gesellschaft gesehen haben.

„Ich möchte noch mehr von meinem Balthasar hören; — ich möchte das Papier sehen, das er uns nach Konrads Aeußerung geschickt hat,“ sagte der alte Koller bescheiden. — Er hatte seine Berena freundlich eingeladen ihn zu begleiten. Sie wies dieses Ansinnen mit Verachtung von sich. Ihre Drohungen, womit sie auch den Mann, dessen hochmüthiger Troß gebrochen war, zurückzuhalten suchte, vermochten nichts gegen das neu erwachte Vatergefühl. — „Ich will noch einmal hören was Konrad von Balthasar erzählt hat, ich will noch Weiteres von ihm vernehmen. Ich muß ihm danken — heute noch“ — hatte Koller zu seinem Weibe gesagt. Sie aber blieb sitzen, einsam, in kalter Nacht, lange, bis sie endlich all ihren Hausrath im Stiche lassend, davon lief, voll Zornes die Worte ausrufend: „Das werde ich meinem Manne nie mehr vergessen.“ —

Koller aber bereute nie seinen späten Besuch bei Sturzenegger. Der junge Konrad berichtete ihm mit zarter Schonung das Wichtigste von Balthasars Krankheit und Tod. Und als er ihm das Blatt überreichte auf welches der Sterbende seine letzten Thränen geweint hatte, weinte der alte Mann auf dasselbe die ersten Thränen einer aufrichtigen Reue.

Die Kinder Sturzeneggers wurden diesmal nicht ungeduldig über sein langes Verweilen, sie merkten daß Konrads Worte einen heilsamen Einfluß übten auf dessen Seele. Und obwohl es schon ziemlich spät war als der Gast sich

verabschiedet hatte, so fühlten sie doch noch gar keine Lust den schönen Tag für beendet zu halten. Die sorgsame Hausmutter erklärte wohl: „Morgen ist auch wieder ein Tag.“

„D laß uns noch länger beisammen bleiben!“ baten die Kinder.

„Es wird kalt in der Stube“ — entgegnete die Mutter, „es könnte die Kälte euch schädlich seyn.“

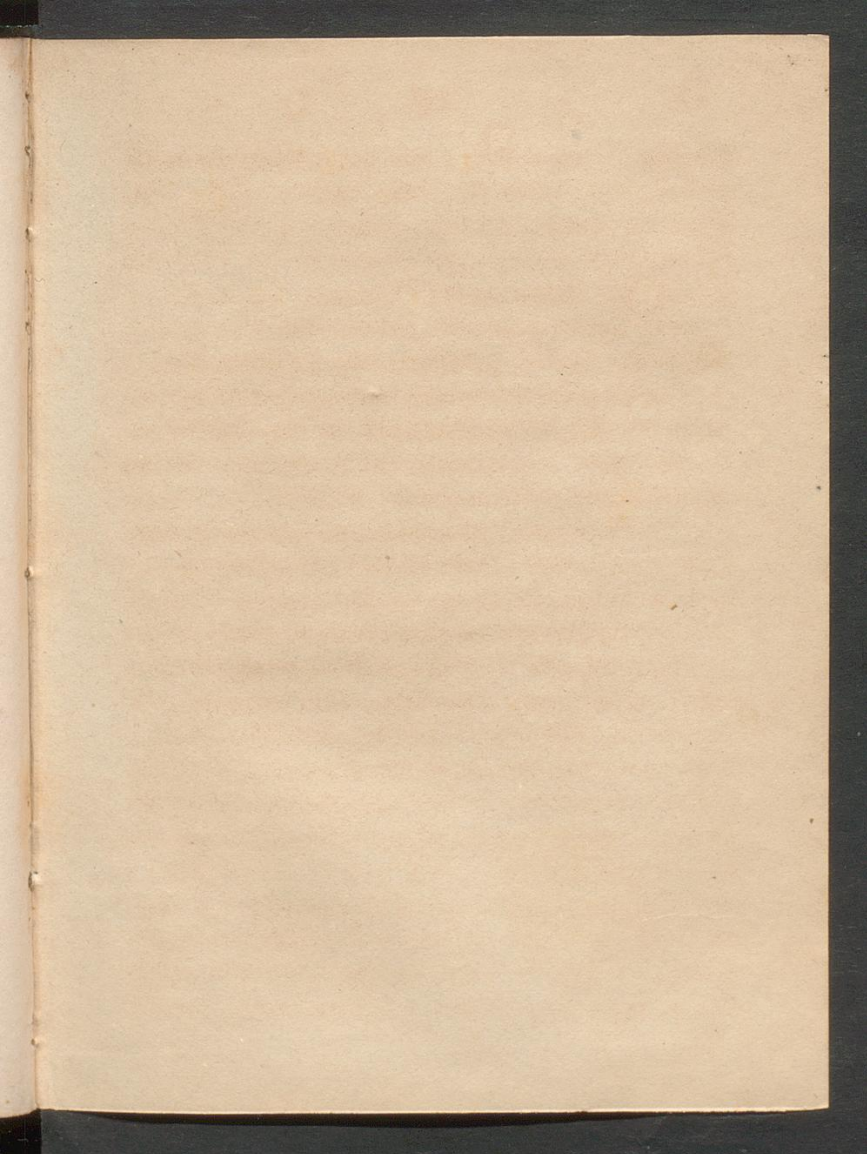
„Schiebe noch ein Büschelchen in den Ofen, Mutter,“ bat schmeichelnd die älteste Tochter.

„Es würde nicht mehr anbrennen, Kind, lautete die Antwort, es ist nur noch ganz wenig Gluth da.“

„Mutter,“ sagte Konrad, indem er ihr die paar Rechnungen darreichte, „nimm diese Papiere hier, und lege sie auf die Gluth, so wird es dir leichter gelingen.“ — —

Und siehe, bald war das Feuer im Ofen neu angefacht, die Stube wurde wieder warm und denen die sich in derselben befanden mangelte nichts mehr. —

The first part of the book is devoted to a general
 description of the country and its inhabitants.
 The second part contains a detailed account of
 the various tribes and their customs.
 The third part is a collection of
 the most interesting stories and legends
 which have been handed down from
 generation to generation.
 The fourth part is a list of the
 names of the various places and
 persons mentioned in the text.
 The fifth part is a list of the
 names of the various tribes and
 their respective territories.
 The sixth part is a list of the
 names of the various languages
 spoken in the country.
 The seventh part is a list of the
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 The eighth part is a list of the
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 pursued by the inhabitants.
 The ninth part is a list of the
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 The tenth part is a list of the
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 The eleventh part is a list of the
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 The twelfth part is a list of the
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 The thirteenth part is a list of the
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 The fourteenth part is a list of the
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 The fifteenth part is a list of the
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 The seventeenth part is a list of the
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 The twenty-third part is a list of the
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 The twenty-fourth part is a list of the
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 The twenty-fifth part is a list of the
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 The twenty-sixth part is a list of the
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 The twenty-ninth part is a list of the
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 The thirtieth part is a list of the
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