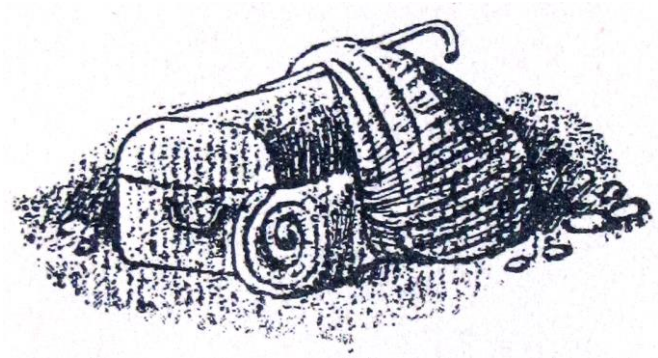
Dorus Kromer[1]

The America Voyage
From the gold-digging years of a Black Forest farmer's son.



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1 **Isidor**, called Dorus, **Kromer**, *April 03, 1829 in Birkendorf-Vogelsang as a son of Dionysius Kromer and Maria Kaiser; †February 08, 1905 in Fruitvale near San Francisco at the age of 75 years, 10 months and 5 days during his 3rd stay in the USA.

2 **Heinrich Ernst Kromer**, *September 26, 1866 in Riedern a. W., †May 05, 1948 in Constance, son of Isidor Kromer and Maria Maurer, *May 09, 1831, †1880, (from civil marriage).

3 [6/5] page change and page number [previous/next page] of the original print, which cannot be determined exactly in this translation.

First Chapter

How a dozen Black Forest people come to Le Havre via a rough innkeeper and Paris An unlucky owl / Six boys celebrate farewell from Europe

As a reason for my emigration I could not really give a good explanation, rather the opposite; I had just begun to build my own house on our large farm, besides my two older brothers, and had broken the stones for it myself, and had also brought the most necessary things to the place, and on top of that I had thought, despite my young age, that I would soon marry a girl from the village and work and farm on my own land. Now the gold country of California, which was discovered only a few years ago, and the fabulous stories about it rumbled in many people's heads, and an enterprising youth was nurtured; but if the old people resisted and warned against it, as long as one had possessions or a livelihood at home, it was accepted by the poorer ones, if they wanted to build a better life for themselves far away, or they even welcomed it. But I was a restless head full [7/8] of enterprise, and so it only took a small dispute with my older brother for my decision to be made: To America! I was quickly agreed with Marei, my fiancée, who trusted me; we repeated and reaffirmed the promise that she could expect me back in a few three or four years, just as I still hoped to find her as my own, and so I only had to say goodbye in the village, finally the painful and wistful farewell to my sick mother, whose favourite I was. That this should be the farewell of a lifetime may have been what my good mother felt; I comforted her in her tears and yet I hardly became master of my own, then I stepped out into the morning - it was November 6, 1851 - and set off on a two-horse cart from our Weilerhof[5] to nearby Riedern, where I took in my schoolmates Josef Kernbold and Karoline Seifert[6], who also wanted to go to America, but for different reasons than I did, and for more profound ones. Out of the village we waved good-bye to our homeland and its little church, the horses pulled up and the car bumped down the road, slightly covered with snow, to Ühlingen, from there up a leisurely hill to Birkendorf, where another two-horse carriage awaited us with seven emigrants; these were treasurer Hilpert's[7] three daughters, Marianne,[8/9] Karoline and Josefa and his

Farewell to the Black Forest

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4 The print of the edition was still done in gothic letters, which use the capital letter J also for I in the original language. The header titles of the pages were reproduced in the right margin when the text changes.

5 A farm that forms a hamlet west of Riedern am Wald(at the forest).

6 Kernbold and Seifert are the pseudonym for the true family names Hierholzer and Schneider.

7 Hilpert is the pseudonym for the true family name Albrecht.

son Isidor, and Marie Nürtig, Johann Endreß and Bertold Güntert from Endermettingen[8]; treasurer Hilpert wanted to bring all these and another feed charge as a sub-agent to Strasbourg and provide them with passports.

The farewell had already taken place; they were waiting for us beyond of the village, and now the emigrant cargo was driving on their two wagons to Grafenhausen and from there via Holzschlag to Lenzkirch. There we took in another couple from Bonndorf. The two had been engaged for quite some time, but had obstacles to their marriage and now they wanted to cock a snook to that with their emigration, that is to say: to the Baden authorities who stood in their way; oversea they knew nothing of this, they said. This was a Franz Josef Reber, simply called Franzsepp, and Nanne Hilpert[9] from Bonndorf, a brother daughter of our Birkendorf agent and sibling of the other four Hilpert. So the holy dozen was full: six young boys and six girls, some of them older, all full of the thought of somehow making their fortune in the new world. From Lenzkirch our journey went down through the Höllental to the Sternen[10], the well-known post office where our ladder wagons turned back and the post office picked us up, via Hirschsprung down to Ebnet, one hour away from Freiburg. [9/10]

A coarse innkeeper

In Ebnet we stopped for a drink, just for fun, at the famous coarse Schenkele innkeeper. His droll ideas and coarseness were praised all over the country, which were known often enough, as they also filled the calendars, and we had arranged to urge him to make similar omissions. We sat down in his parlor in three separate groups and ordered his best wine. The man served us himself; he asked about where from and where to, but did not show the slightest surprise when we spoke to him about America, making big words and shutting our mouths off. To my question then, why he was called the coarse Schenkle innkeeper, since he seemed to me to be a very mannerly person, he announced that he owed his nickname to Freiburg students, credibly because he often had to dismiss them their tally stick and throw them out; coarseness he only did on coarseness. And then I said: we had come to him with a little of that intention. But he remained quite calm and only painted me with chalk, because I asked about the colliery, 58 kreuzer on the table, the other groups 51 and 48; but when I took the whole colliery on myself: "A camel of state," he said, "who wants to go to America and has so much money!" "Yes, I'll show you," I said, and counted out fifty-eight copper kreuzer to him in units and sent me[10/11] to pay them off in the same coin. Then he said, "I will get two guilders and 38 kreuzers; before I take away your verdigris, I will give you the

8 The real family names for the pseudonyms of the persons from Endermettingen are until now not resolved.

9 The real family name for the pseudonym Reber is until now not resolved. The family name of Nanne was Albrecht, whereby no further personal data are known so far.

10 Höllsteig im Höllental, community Breitnau.

whole pit; but then make sure that you and your whole ragtag pack get out of my house!" Now we put in our two cents; but the innkeeper paid me the excessive coin on a Napoleon[11] and served us with two Maß[12] of free wine of the best. At our farewell he wished us good luck, and that we would soon serve as fodder for the gallows in America. We left the good ruffian, laughing and a little tipsy, and drove down to Freiburg, barely an hour away.

We arrived there at 4 o'clock and slipped into the Wild Man Inn. Food and drink was very good; we were also given beds as fine as we had never seen in our lives, and our only wish was to be able to take the inn with us or to be accommodated equally throughout the whole journey.

In the morning of the 7th at 9 o'clock we went by train to Kehl and Strasbourg, where we arrived at 3 o'clock and put up at a German inn. After some refreshment our dozen went with our father Hilpert to the main agent of the emigration society, who issued us passports to New Orleans, the way via Nanzig[13], Bar-le-Duc and Paris to[11/12] Havre, partly by mail coach or train, from Havre to Texas by sailing ship. On this ship the food was included in the price of the journey, but we had to cook for ourselves on the ship. The trip cost 130 guilders each.

Trip to Paris

We were, as already reported, our twelve: six boys and six girls; the youngest was me. Already in the evening of November 9 we were loaded into a three-part stagecoach, six in the back and six in the front, with eight other people in the middle; it was an uncomfortable old box; we sat penned up like slaughter chickens in a box, and so our full furniture was loaded onto a railway wagon. Since the railway from Strasbourg to Paris was only partially completed, as soon as the track ran out, our box was taken off the train, and without us being able to get off and stretch our legs for a moment, the coach was put on an ordinary mail wagon, that is to say, its frame. It was a gallows ride all the way; five times we had the pleasure of going by train, twenty-one times by mail; time after time changing horses, never changing the wagon. Four heavy molds pulled in each case on the bad roads our prison with the twenty inmates, until we finally arrived after three days at Martini early in Paris and were redeemed. Only in Nanzig, Bar-le-Duc and Sezanne[14] were we allowed[12/13] to dislocate our stiff limbs, plus some physical refreshment during a two-hour stay. Then we went back into the narrow stable, where we sweated like the negroes despite the noticeable cold.

In Paris

Arriving in Paris, we thought we had unlearnt how to walk and were happy about the temporary end of the journey; for our limbs cried out: stir yourselves.

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11 Napoleon d'or, goldcoin valid about 9 guilders an 20 kreuzers.
12 One Baden Maß corresponds to 1.5 litres.
13 Nancy, France, (German obsolete Nanzig, Luxembourgish Nanzeg)
14 Sézanne, France

We had a room in Paris next to the East Station in the Inn "To the city of Strasbourg". I immediately went to see my school friend Leo Albrecht, who greeted us with great pleasure and showed us everything worth seeing in Paris. And what was not worth seeing! And what big eyes we made and opened our mouths about the beautiful churches, if I remembered the Riederner one, and the big shops, the theaters, the monuments and the victory avenues, which could only be seen in such a big city like Paris. Unfortunately, the joy lasted only two poor days; already on the 12th in the evening at nine o'clock we went by train to Havre, where we arrived the next morning at 7 o'clock and were accommodated by the ship company, which expected us, in the inn La Paix. We could be quite satisfied with the food, we had enough time until the departure of the ship to wander all over the city, which we thoroughly used and saw all the remarkable things; for it were the last attractions we could enjoy and marvel at on European[13/14] soil, and as villagers we were really not spoiled; but it was certainly not a Paris.

Arrival in Havre

Also, something should still make us pensive and would have had almost ridiculous consequences and tore our enterprising society apart. Three days after our arrival in the city, a French sailor from New-York arrived there with about two dozen American-weary people, among them an older couple, tailors from Württemberg, who at first sight took us as German emigrants.

And now it broke loose over us like a waterfall in the broad Swabian language of the tailoress, who lamented our sad fate in advance and issued her admonitions and warnings to the people: „O du liabs Herrgöttle, O ihr guete Leit'"[15], she whined at us and brought all the abominations and horrors of America upon us. „Jhr liabe Leit', ihr wollet auf Amerika? Lend euch guet rota; ei, ei, ei, gehnd doch glei wieder hoim, höret ihr? Gehnd doch z'ruck, woner Herkomma send; dees ischt eich a Land, dees Amerika! Noi, mer mechts nit glauba: zua da Roß' saget se Hase, zua da Strümpfa Schtockings; zuam Onderrock sait mer B'hüatigott; zuar Muettergottes kascht net betta; sie verstauht koi Deitsch; alles spricht englisch drüba; denket au: die kloine Kender sprecha scho englisch, mer kas net verstauh; jo, jo, ihr liabe Leit', gehnd nu wieder [14/15] hoim!" She continued like this for a litany, which I enjoyed, but it caused heartache and headaches for others in our cronyhood, who despaired at once at hearing all this and would have liked to be back where they came from. For the time I was being able to calm them down and change their minds; they did not want to be called, as I scoffed at them, gallop Americans; and on top of that they had no money to repent. Furthermore, a decision had to be made; on the same

15 "Oh dear God, oh you good people" ... "You dear people, you want to go to America? Let me give you a good guess; ei, ei, ei, just go right back home, you hear? Just go back where you came from; that's really a kind of country, this America! No, one didn't want to believe it: to the horses they call hares, to the stockings they call 'Schtockings'; to the petticoat they call 'B'hüatigott'; you can't pray to Our Lady; she doesn't understand German; everything speaks English over there; also imagine: the little children already speak English, you can't understand them; yo, yo, dear people, just immediately go back home again."

day, the 17th, we were told that the ship would be ready for departure at eight o'clock the next morning and that the food supplied by the shipping company would have to be brought on board by the passengers, as well as any carried baggage. So I had my flock together again; we brought the food in four sections, then also everything else necessary on board, prepared the beds and took care of everything as well as the circumstances allowed it, i.e. badly enough, but we resigned ourselves to it.

Unlucky owl

In order to spend the last day on European soil still in a cheerful mood, for which we could not use the women, we went our foursome, namely Endreß, Güntert, Kernbold and I, to a wine tavern near the ship, ordered a bottle of red wine, which we drank comfortably, and, since the wine went us down fine, had a second and a third following it. A little bit the unacknowledged emigration tomcat[15/16] would have got on us, who moved us to remain seated as long as possible and befoged us a soft twilight. We sat more tenaciously with each bottle, instructed the landlady, a cozy round Alsatian, to leave the empty bottles on the table for easier billing, and song and cheerfulness gradually rose above all of them; a fine lunch prepared for us by the landlady made the wine taste better again, which was evident from the empty bottles that began to fill the table. From time to time the other two companions who had to provide the necessary things in the ship also came, and we did splash out ourselves and generously instilled them; the round landlady also helped us praiseworthily in the accommodation of her wine, and so our celebration continued with singing and great plans and boasts, until the report came that the ship would be closed at eight o'clock in the evening; see everyone how he comes along!

In Havre

This report sobered us up so far that we finally asked about the colliery, but then we made the odd number of bottles an even number, i.e. a lucky number, by adding another one: it were their sixty, each one for one franc. One might think: Is it possible that four young people, even if it takes ten hours and with some help, can put in sixty bottles of wine, or did the landlady slip them some? No, not that; it was always the case that when the others had to leave,[16/17] one of them always remained in charge, and the Alsatian woman's bill was right, and we paid.

The departure

But we had not overextended ourselves with impunity. No one could stand any longer, not to mention walk, and we had to be carried or dragged into the ship, for which precautionary the landlady had also ordered subservient ghosts, to whom she afterwards presented a few bottles at my expense.

In the ship we tried to make ourselves at home as far as possible. I stubbornly wanted to lie naked in bed at all costs, and with the help of Kernbold, who had drunk the least, I completely undressed myself, whereby I even loosened the money belt I was wearing on my bare body, including the fifteen hundred gold francs sewn into it, and threw it

on the floor next to the clothes. Then I was pushed into bed, which was prepared for me and three other comrades on the second floor. If we did not have to worry about falling asleep, since we were already asleep before we were in bed, so most of our male comrades were in quite the same condition, and those who were less drunk than us, as I heard later, made such a noise all night long that the few sober ones did not sleep a wink. But to me the other morning the hour of departure seemed to be only too early. How we would have loved to sleep our noises off completely, so that we could watch the departure of the ship in a tranquil and enjoyable way![17/18]

Second chapter

The disturbed ride / The unlucky owl works / A wet grave / Storm outside, yelling inside Dangerous lull / delayed landing

At the appointed hour, eight o'clock in the morning on November 18, our proud three-master Rouenaise, towed by the small steamer Rouen, sailed out of the harbour into the open sea. As a light breeze came up, the captain gave the order to hoist the many sails, and the ship now managed without the steamer, which returned to Havre with the pilot. I waved goodbye to him, not knowing how soon I would see him again.

Sailing

In spite of my half-madness, I had got ready to leave the ship and watched it sail, but how I suddenly felt when my money belt had disappeared! I looked for it everywhere: in the suitcase, in the bed and wherever else possible; but it seemed to be gone. What could I do? To America without money - no, that didn't work; but if the belt was stolen, I couldn't hope to get it back. Still searching in this desperation, Kernbold was an angel to me[18/19] when he told me he had found the belt on the floor the night before and kept it in his suitcase. The intoxication seemed to me to have vanished over the shock of the loss, and so I thought of going on deck to watch the ship's journey and the doings of the passengers; but this went with me on the merry-go-round with the surrounding countryside; I had to hold on to everything tangible I could reach in order not to fall, and so I went down again to the tween deck and lay dead on the bed; and it was no consolation to me that my comrades and many others on the ship were no better off. Even the crew, from the ship's boy to the captain, as I was told later, had many drunks, so that they could hardly manage the ship, and soon enough we were to feel the terrible consequences of this circumstance. Most of the travelers were asleep the whole time; the crew on duty moved around as well as they were able to, without really knowing where to start, and so the day went by.

First foreboding

When I came back on deck at the beginning of the night, the ship, I thought, was sailing well and at a considerable speed; and everything else seemed to be in order again; at least no command was heard, and so both crew and passengers were rather hopeful in the quiet night. Unfortunately it did not stop there. Towards midnight,[19/20] a steamer approached us coming from the English coast and at the left front side of our ship and tore away the upper part of the rigging and about 35 feet from the side wall, which caused the front mast to partially detach and sway. The impact caused a tremendous shock; the whole ship came to life; the crew ran back and forth, command came upon command; the male passengers all had to get to work on deck to help secure the mast as much as possible. Women and children, of course, and enough men, too, screamed and howled in confusion, as if the water was already running in their mouths. After much effort, the mast was finally fastened and the leak sealed at the waterline, and the noise became quite muffled, especially when the return to Havre began. Immediately after the incident, the flag of convenience was hoisted, but it proved fruitful only when, at 1 o'clock the next afternoon, the little steamer Rouen, which was taking us out to sea, came in sight and immediately rushed to help and took us back to port. However, since the surf was very high, it took two hours before our ship could be attached to the steamer, and this was only successful when one of our sailors swam [20/21] to the steamer with a rope and half an hour of effort to get his hands and feet nearly frozen until he reached the other ship in the ground waves that kept separating the two vehicles. We were moored and returned to Havre at half past four in the evening: A beautiful prospect for us, to arrive soon happily in America!

Shy of America

The incident had its consequences. We were allowed to go ashore until the ship was repaired to continue our journey, but all our belongings had to remain on board. Nevertheless, when the bridge was barely laid out, thirty-five travelers declared not to return; they abandoned their fare and everything else and concurred never to make another trip to America; those who had screamed most at the time of the accident were among them; they all disappeared.

As a consequence, my travel companions, especially the Hilpert girls, also tried to persuade me to return home. I refused. Under no circumstances did I want, was my decision, to be called in the village the American for the rest of my life without having been in America, and so I motivated them, albeit with difficulty and many words, to continue their journey preliminarily. The first and most I urged them not to report the incident to their home country, so that their people would at least be spared the worry until they received safe and reassuring [21/22] news from America. They promised me this; nevertheless, the Birkendorf Hilpert wrote home to ask for money for the return journey. The day before the second departure they received notice to borrow money from me in exchange for a promissory note, since I possessed a good sum of gold; they would soon pay me back the amount, twice if I de-

manded it, and as I continued to refuse, they proved to me in their letter that a writing from New Braunfels reported the death of the tailor Hilpert and an inheritance that fell to them, so that my advance could easily be repaid. That too was of no avail; I grew weary of the moaning and told them to roughly turn around and beg their way home on foot; one of the Hilpert girls even tried to give her travel card back to her subagent in Havre, so that she could go home with a few guilders to be borrowed on it; but when everything failed likewise, they finally gave in, that is to say, they found themselves forced to continue on their destiny path.

The travelers were accommodated near the shipyard and received food from the company, but had to prepare the food themselves. Thus we had the opportunity to practice the art of cooking on land, and even though we did not become artists in it, it afterwards was beneficial for us on the ship.[22/23]

We twelve Black Foresters stayed together in an old kitchen. During the days of involuntary waiting we had hours of fun there, as young people are, but sometimes we also had to put up with the howling and crying of the women, who, in addition to the growing homesickness as the horror at the uncertain future and the dangerous journey, had to sound it.

New sailing

The ship was repaired in an urgent hurry, worked on at night with lights on and finally we were informed of the departure for Friday 28 November. When the tide was rising, it was to be taken out through the shipyard canal, and we were amused by the sight of the two hundred old sailors who could no longer do their sea duty and who now pulled our large ship on a long, mighty rope, probably two kilometers toward the steamship that was to take us out to sea.

There, the sailor fired the usual three cannon shots as a departure signal and received from land the waving of the cloth and the lucky run of thousands for good sailing. Most of them were overcome by a wistful feeling, and many saw the bright water running out of their eyes for the thought of what the future might hold for us; it shook Kernbold the most; but my eyes were also blurred, and I gritted my teeth as if that would help me control myself. [23/24]

Bustle on board

So we were out at sea again. The examination of the passports, which still took place on the first day, revealed 485 third-class travelers and five second-class travelers; the first none. The setup of our third class was simple and poor. From the main deck, two stairs about 8 feet wide, one in the back, one in the front, led down into our deck. This was one big room. On both sides the sleeping places were placed, two above each other, each about six feet wide for four people. Between two places there was a foot-high board and so on until the end of the room. At the sleeping places the travelers had their suitcases for storing clothes

and food; the larger suitcases were stowed in the lowest deck, in the cellar, so to speak, where no one had access during the voyage. In the middle of our room there was a strong joist on the ceiling with nails on which the travelers could hang their food, drink and washing utensils. The two kitchens, if you wanted to call it so, required for third class were located on either side of the upper deck: they resembled cribs, were six feet long, one foot wide and made of cast iron. Above them, at a height of three feet, two iron rods were placed, where the cooking utensils were hung on strong wires. At eight o'clock in the morning the ship's crew lit a coal fire and maintained it [24/25] until four o'clock in the afternoon, after which it was extinguished with water, whether or not someone had been cooking in the meantime. Some had a pot of potatoes or beans with bacon or something else half cooked when the fire was put out. During the first three or four weeks the cooking was so intensive that there was hardly any opportunity to prepare anything for oneself even once a day; often there were disputes and fights, which the sailors used to settle by pouring a bucket of water over the fighting cocks.

After about half the journey time had elapsed, one of them had enough opportunity to cook without quarrelling and arguing, as many travelers saw their food running out. Drinking and cooking water was handed out by the cellar master early in the morning, one and a half liters for each person, and some of them were already without a drop at one or two o'clock at noon; then the water stealing began, and many had suffered from thirst during the day, only to discover in the evening that someone had emptied their water jar or demijohn[16], and then they quarreled again. For my part, I hardly ever suffered from thirst during the journey, despite the heat, because I always knew how to keep my allotted water.

Passing and becoming

In second class traveled , two unmarried men and a rich old woman with two maids to her [25/26] serving. The woman had come aboard sick and undertook the voyage only for her relaxation and convalescence, but she died on the eighth day. After the ship's doctor determined that she was dead, her body was, in accordance with the ship's regulations, sewn into a specially prepared canvas, weighted down with stones at her feet and then placed on a shelf attached to the ship for this special purpose. Then the captain carried out the usual funeral ceremony, in which the whole ship participated already out of curiosity, and handed the dead over to the watery grave. During the crossing, three births took place on board, but seven children died; otherwise, the health was excellent all the time.

As a curiosity, which made us very pensive, I would like to mention that three or four days before the old woman left with death, a 10-12 foot shark followed our ship incessantly, whereupon the crew of the ship

[16] The Demijohn, also known among the seamen as the sailor's bottle for storing drinks, was a Spanish brandy measure.

claimed that a death would soon occur on board. After the old woman was handed over to the sea, no shark showed up, not even when the deceased children were sunk into the water.

Ship escort

Once the second lieutenant of the ship gave us a special spectacle. He was a fishing enthusiast and tried to get hold of fish wherever possible. One day he succeeded in [26/27] catching two mighty creatures with his fishing rod, so-called "Saufische"[17]. They weighed 3 to 4 centner and were later speared with the harpoon, at which they were brought into the ship with great effort. They were disemboweled and given to the sailors; in exchange for brandy to the wardens, which was, of course, strictly forbidden, travelers were also given a share of it; they tasted excellent, especially after the eternal enjoyment of potatoes, bacon and rice that we were expected to have, and which I had long been sick of. Such a catch was of course only made in calm weather, when the ship was completely motionless, which happened quite often during our trip. We also repeatedly had the pleasure of seeing whole flocks of big fish in an endless procession behind the ship; it was hard to believe how black the sea was. We also got to observe the small flying fish, which tried to escape in troops from the pursuit of larger animals; in whole shoals they sometimes drove over the water; but they can only stay in the air as long as their wings or fins are wet, they say, and then they fall back into the sea.

In God's hands

Our sea voyage was generally bearable, even if it was quite long, and the things that happened on it were sometimes quite astonishing, so that only those who have taken part in such a voyage [27/28] might properly imagine what I am telling you here. We had to suffer three storms and had to descend to our lower deck for 30-36 hours each time. Then both entrances were closed and nailed down; for the water often went over the ship as high as a house and washed away what was not nail proofed. In the afternoon of December 24th, an ominous cloud from the northeast indicated that a storm was approaching, and at six o'clock orders were given that all travelers for shelter had to go in their lower deck, and the entrances were closed. Except for the storm sail, all the others were secured. The storm announced by the captain then raged with full force and the towered waves clapped over the deck, blow after blow, and played with the heavy ship so without mercy that most of the travelers believed their end before them and took refuge in prayer. So an old man of about 80 years of age threw himself on his knees in the middle of the staggering ship, and because it was just the

[17] **Saufisch**(literally translated: "Pig fisch"), m. 1) piscis porcus, probably the same fish as delphinus delphis. 2) a Brazilian fish (piexeporco). 3) a shark species, squalus galeus [German dictionary Grimm]. Because of its weight it is to be assumed that it was a dolphin species, whereby several species are possible, e.g. Minke Pilot Whale (Feresa attenuata), Borneo Dolphin (Lagenodelphis hosei), White-beaked Dolphin (Lagenorhynchus albirostris), Broad-billed Dolphin (Peponocephala electra) and others. The School shark, Geman "Hundshai", weighs less than one centner and the Brazilian fish is very small anyway.

eve of the Saviour's birth, he pulled him along and began to cry and pray: "Oh, my dear little baby Jesus, whom you redeemed from soul death a thousand years ago, redeem also us poor sinners from a pitiful sinking on your holy feast of birth! This may be well-intentioned and he may be serious, but in wicked [28/29] Alsatian he was acclaimed: "Aha, you old rascal, now you think of your sins and the baby Jesus should help!" This ruffian was followed by another: "Shut your mouth, rotter; let the man pray that we from ruin may be …" — here he was covered by a harsh Swiss voice: "So, are you also such a sanctimonious bigot and afraid of the punishment for your rascals?" And so and similarly, the noise continued in the lower deck until silence was demanded from all sides, since almost everyone was in bed. Then the old originator of the ruckus gave in and crawled into his bed, but as he later claimed, with the certainty of having saved the ship with man and mouse through his intercession. But the baby Jesus did not yet feel like helping and the old man still had a long time to moan and pray, because it was not until 8 o'clock in the morning of December 27th that we were freed from our fragrant prison and could breathe fresh air on deck.

On December 31st Santo Domingo came in sight and then next the island of Cuba, and we could hope to reach our destination New Orleans soon. Unfortunately, God meant it different; because as soon as our ship lay between the two islands, there was a complete lack of wind, which lasted a whole week. In this situation the ship began streangly to tremble and sway from side to side, worse [29/30] than in a storm, and if there were not the ballast in the lower deck and cellar, it would probably have fallen over. In addition to this endless lying still, we had the unbearable heat that prevailed day and night without the slightest cooling, and further endangered us by the growing shortage of drinking water. We had to ask for it from a passing steamer and luckily we got it.

Preliminaries

The long journey sometimes made the time quite long for me and then I looked for where it was possible and I could catch a quiet corner on the ship to get ready for America, to make it easier to get around there. In Paris, Leo Albrecht had given me a booklet for English. It showed me not only the written word, but also the pronunciation, which, of course, seemed foolish enough and quite demoniacal to me; but a sailor, a German, who had once studied and then eloped from school, showed me, as well as he knew it, everywhere the pronunciation more correctly than the poor letters could show, and I now understood why, for example, the horse was to be called Has and the petticoat Bhütigott, as the Swabian tailors wife in Havre had led us to believe, found me, with the help of the run away student, quite well acquainted with the most common [30/31] questions, sayings and greetings, and also learned that the English language was often different from that of old England, and for all these instructions I only had to offer a little bottle of schnapps or a pint of wine to the sailor. He also put me off about the many Germans we would meet in Texas, so that it would not be so diffi-

cult for us to get through; only that I should prick up my ears everywhere among the foreign people and not try to obtrude them with my German; for one quickly forgets many things again if one always listens to one's own language. I took good note of his teaching and hoped that I would soon be able to end up as an "englischer Wortschatz"(English vocabulary), as my little book was called; and so I found runaway students good for something in the world.

America in sight

With all the adversities of a trip on a sailer, one also meets some amenities that I think one can have less on steamers. The sailing ships are not so crowded, and there is room and opportunity on deck for all sorts of pastimes, such as singing, dancing and playing; also, the passengers on such a long voyage and packing in one room become more familiar to each other and a natural togetherness develops. This becomes clearer (at least that was my experience) only in the final separation, where the one moves eastwards or [31/32] southwards, the other wanders here or there, with the awareness of having found a decent person and perhaps not seeing him again in life.

Reached at last!

Finally, on the seventh of January, a wind rose from the northwest, albeit not quite favourable, but one that woke our ship from its eerie calm and brought a fresh breeze to the annoying heat, which revived us. The trip went its previous course and already we were told that we would arrive in New Orleans in a few days; but when we were close by, how were we disappointed again! We were approaching the confluence of the Mississippi when another storm came up, and in order not to endanger travelers and the ship at the last minute, as the captain said, he had it moved away from the threatening spot on January 14th, from where we then drifted quite a distance. This took us another week until we regained the place we had reached before, from where we still had to drive about 110 miles up the Mississippi. That was a nice drive, of course, considering the longed-for land. On both sides of the mighty river we saw the most splendid plants, namely orchards and ornamental gardens, which were full of ripe fruit, but also showed flowers in quantities and colours we had never seen before. Poor Black Forest people, we with [32/33] our wild cherries and blueberries and juniper berries!

We arrived happily in New Orleans on January the 23rd 1852, after an eight-week journey on water only. What joy to finally be in America, and on solid ground! But our joy was clouded by the separation from some good people and by the uncertainty that we faced, one by one. [33/34]

Third chapter

First separation in America and reunion Brick dreams / Destination California / Death Harvest and hay harvest

So there was our little group. First Karoline Seifert had to go to Saint Louis to her brother, as it had been intended from the beginning. There was a farewell with more than tears, and I had to take the blame for that again, although my conscience was quite clear. The remaining eleven of us stayed in the state of Texas for the time being. We took a steamer to Galveston on January 24, and from there to Indianola, where we arrived on the twenty-sixth. Texas had no railroads at that time, so we had to use a horse-drawn cart, which of course became very expensive for us. And it took us two days to find one that should take us, together with our belongings, to New Braunfels to our German countrymen. The wagoner was a German, and we eleven finally agreed on 88 dollars, eight for each, and left on the 28th in a four-horse covered wagon. It was an endless flat ride, but on the worst roads, mostly along the Guadalupe River, and we [34/35] already the first evening had the pleasure of cooking and sleeping outside, since there were no inns or hostels in the area.

First Work

On January 30th at noon we arrived in Victoria, which is about 40 kilometers away from the sea. Our wagoner had a home and family there and stayed until the next day. As soon as it became known in Victoria that several young people had arrived, various farmers came to hire them to work. Johann Endreß immediately hired himself out for 5 dollars a month, just to be able to crawl under and have food; Kernbold and I each for 10 dollars, and still on January 30th, the farmer, a Saxon, picked us up at his estate, which lay about 8 miles away in a jungle by the raging Guadalupe River populated with crocodiles. The farm consisted of about 30 acres of cleared glade that was to be reclaimed; but most of the lumber was still in place, from where it was now to be dragged to various places for burning; and this we had to do after ploughing and planting.

Farming

The farmhouse was one-storeyed and built of clay and split trunks; kitchen, bedroom and living room in the same room. In the corner to the right of the entrance was the kitchen: a chimney with cooking equipment in it. Opposite [35/36] in the corner, husband and wife had their spacious bed, at the foot end, laid crosswise, the two smaller children of 6 and 8 years of age slept; the corner to the left contained the bed of the 16-year-old daughter and, next to it, the table made of two pairs of stakes driven into the ground and a few boards for boxes; next to it was the bed for both of us workers. The house or room was six by seven meters, without a wooden floor and without a ceiling under the roof. There were no outbuildings; the existing chickens sought shelter

on the moss-covered hundred-year-old trees; the 10 - 12-headed dog flock fed on the lush game hunt; there was no question of feeding them in the house; the only cow sought its food outside, got some hay too. The horse was tied to the fenced-in haystack, which was piled up in the open air; after the work was done, it received four or five corn cobs. Since the farmer held only this single nag, but could not plough with it alone, one was hired by the next farmer, with the assurance that when one of them had finished his work, the other would be able to farm with our help; but not that we had been asked about this arrangement; the contract of employment was as much of a joke as all the Saxon's farming. On the first day the horse was used to drag wood [36/37] into heaps. The trunks were already quite dry from lying around for a long time, were set on fire in the evening and the next morning there was a nice pile of ashes. The following day the cleared area should be ploughed. Ploughing between four-foot-high tree stumps with the strange animals that were coupled together had its difficulties, but the Saxon refused to admit this to me and rebuked me for it.

I had to handle the wagonless plough; the farmer on one side and Kernbold on the other held and guided the nags; wife and daughter beat the animals. One time it went at a gallop, so that the guides could hardly keep up, or even flew to the ground; then again the whole harnessed team stood still; one time a piece of harness broke, and if it had needy patched up, the scales were broken or something else, and so it went on for two hours. Then the plough got caught on a tree root and naturally during the crazy driving broke into pieces. That was the end of the ploughing. Then the plough got caught on a tree root and naturally during the crazy driving it broke into pieces. That was the end of the ploughing.

To New Braunfels

We now had to dig the field to put in potatoes. We were alone in this work and had the opportunity to discuss our sad situation. We decided to leave work the next day, a Sunday, and to look for employment in a brickworks in Victoria. But when Kernbold announced our [37/38] intention to the farmer after breakfast and demanded payment for the work, he threatened to chase us away with the dogs instead of paying wages and called us dawdlers and lazy packs and all the names of shame he could muster. Now that we still had all our belongings in the house of the carter in Victoria, nothing else prevented us from returning through the jungle, from where we had come, that is to say: there was nothing else we could do.

As we discussed our fate in our troubled situation and abandoned by the whole world, also how beautiful we had and could still have it in our homeland, tears came to our eyes and Kernbold took his refuge to pray and began: Our Father in heaven, etc., so that I too was shaken with wistfulness and emotion, but then I gathered myself and raised my comrade with words of comfort. We decided to follow the cart of our other comrades to New Braunfels on foot. Of course, we had to wait

until the end of the service in Victoria, so that we could get the most necessarry of clothes from our wagoner and provide ourselves with food. At 1 o'clock in the afternoon we finally set off to reach the vehicle that left two days ago, which meant a huge effort, as it could already be in Cuero, fifty [38/39] kilometres away, as the wagoner had told us.

At eight o'clock in the evening we came to an inn at a large farm where they were clearing away. We asked for Milch, but since there were all these Americans there and my English was rather gone, we were not understood. They pointed to everything that was still on the table and offered it to us, asked us by signs and gestures if we wanted to sleep there; but we always asked only: "Milch", "Milch", "Milch"; finally a Negro slave woman understood us. „Milk, milk they want", she said, and such was now offered to us in abundance, without any payment. A negro then had to take us through the thousands of cattle on the farm to the way to New Braunfels, and we hiked on until midnight, when we asked for a place to stay on a farm. We were not understood and were told to move on. At three o'clock in the morning we lay down on another farm, because we were dead tired, in a wagon body lying there; but since it started to rain after barely half an hour, we trudged on half-soaked and arrived at 7 o'clock in the morning at an American hostel, where we took breakfast. There was black coffee, bacon floating in fat, and fresh, crushed corn bread; mine: ½ a dollar each. [39/40]

From here on the land was more densely populated. The road was fenced in on both sides and we sometimes had to wade for miles up to our ankles along the soaked path. At 1 o'clock in the afternoon we reached a German farmhouse, where we were lucky enough to reach our carter, who had to stop and relax here because of the rain, and wanted to stay overnight.

After almost two days without a decent meal, we even had a good meal; but what about sleeping, which we lacked even more? Since the limited log cabin, in which husband and wife had only one bed — they were Germans — but the wagoner slept on his own, we were invited to take our place on the floor under the couple's bed, where some old sacks were spread out for us. In all this we slept very well, and were happy to pay the thirty cents we were asked for in the morning, if only for the good lesson that it is cheaper to sleep under the bed than in it, which some people had to pay dearly for. The following day we arrived via Yoakum in Gonzales, went from there to Seguin and finally arrived in New Braunfels on February 5th.

New Braunfels

Here we found compatriots from the Black Forest, and most of us who arrived first took quarters with Alt-[40/41]Hilpert[18], as he was called, the brother of the treasurer Hilpert in Birkendorf.

[18] Blasius **Albrecht**; *1797 in Detzeln, †1863 in New Braunfels; emigrated to Texas/USA in 1844. He is listed as one of the founding fathers of New Braunfels.

New Braunfels did indeed call itself a city, but at that time it was only a settlement of almost three hundred people, almost all Germans; even the few Americans doing business there had to speak German; German were the schools and German the churches, and so we could once again make ourselves honestly understandable and speak us out.

The brick manufacture

The day after our arrival, we were engaged in a variety of efforts to get work, and Kernbold and I had already dug up some gardens the other day, for ½ a dollar a day wage and food. Then a certain person named Mine, a German, gave us piecework, namely cutting wood in the forest and making fence poles and fence bars. After 8 trial days we also took food and lodging from these people and stayed there for fourteen months. In March, however, the heat increased so much that we had to stop working in the woods. Mine recommended that we make bricks and dry them in the sun, which were much sought after for the interior construction of houses. He also gave us the use of his nearby grounds free of charge. So we started with the brick, or rather dry stone production; the clay pit was opened, benches and work tables were prepared and drying areas were [41/42] levelled. In our plans we had already imagined the future brickworks with a steam engine, and with such a perspective we opened the factory already on the third day, and the work showed the best success. In the first afternoon we had about 1000 stones on the drying area; the next day very early in the morning we prepared a larger amount of clay. The first heap was already dry enough to be piled up in the evening. Kernbold formed, I carried away and laid out; everything went as desired. But when the sun began to shine very hot after 9 o'clock, we noticed that one stone after the other began to crack, which became even more acute as the heat increased.

At first we watched it calmly; but soon I got angry and suddenly I helped the sun in its work of destruction by kicking and trampling together the still intact stones. Kernbold ran up to me: "Oh you fool, you madman; let that be!" Why? I thought, because the dry stones were later torn to pieces. That was our brickworks dream.

Mr. Meine, to whom we communicated our evil fate, regretted it, but encouraged us to make further attempts with the advice to mix the clay, which was too fat, with old hay, and provided us with this also without charge. The [42/43] hay was driven to the pit, mixed with the softened destroyed stones and the work went briskly on and proved its success. We formed about 50,000 stones, sold about 6,000 from the site and stored the rest, which was to be delivered for the autumn, in Meines covered shed. Now here was the roof made of elm boards, which arched upwards in the heat of the sun, and since one afternoon a strong thunderstorm came down for several hours, the rain to our horror flowed onto the dried stones and the pile began to move - no brick cheese could have melted more beautifully, and very soon some of the 15000 stones had run away or formed a single lump. If this incident was bad enough in itself, it became even sadder because the whole

heap lay in Meines yard and had to be cleared away again. This cost us three days, plus the wages for a two-horse cart that we needed, and so our brickworks ended before we had a chance to go bankrupt; whether the matter was better off with another, we could never come to know.

New job

Because it was a possibility in America that anyone who wanted to do business there could do so at his own risk, in contrast to many a compulsion or prohibition in Germany, we decided to remedy the need for good drinking water in New [43/44]Braunfels by digging wells, and took the opportunity to build a well, which had already been offered to us once before. We procured the necessary tools and started to drill drinking water for a master-blacksmith Arnold at the beginning of May. Digging, lining and finishing the borehole was to be paid for up to a depth of 20 feet with 1 dollar, for 30 feet with 1½ dollars, for 35 with 1.80 dollars; any obstacles, e.g. removing a layer of rock, were to be specially compensated. Contrary to our expectations, the work was done quickly; already on the third day we had water 30 feet deep, three feet deeper, the desired amount coming out of a rock; the lining was started and finished in another three days to the satisfaction of the owner. In response to this, we were stormed with orders from several sides, and we built another three wells in a short time. But as the heat was increasing daily, we gave up this work for an indefinite period of time, and I more and more decided to move to California, as I did not feel comfortable in Texas from the beginning. I thought I could live more freely there and make faster advances with gold digging. But how would I get there? So first of all it was a matter of patience and waiting for an opportunity.

Such a one seemed to come up soon. [44/45] At the end of April three Americans joined together in a company, the intention being to set out for California with a thousand oxen for slaughter, for which they needed fifty men to lead the trek; it was to be courageous people who did not shy away from danger and hardship. I decided to seize the opportunity. Three wagons, each with six pairs of oxen in front of them, were loaded with food and each man was equipped with a rifle and a revolver to protect the cart, oxen and crew from attacks by the Indians living along the way. Each of the escorts was given a riding horse; half of the crew had to take turns on night watch, the other half had to accompany the caravan during the day. The journey was calculated for six months. After arrival in California, each man still had 25 dollars to get; on the way, everything was free. The journey was dangerous in places; Indian attacks were to be expected, and so were losses of life. At last the company was sufficiently prepared and the departure was set for May 15. Unfortunately, an accident occurred: the main character, named Holiday, died suddenly of cholera on May 12th. He had happily come from Texas to California a year earlier with 1000 oxen and had now invested most or perhaps all of his money in the new business, but his [45/46] widow withdrew from it; the oxen and all the equipment were sold elsewhere, and my hope of making it to the Gold Land this way

became water. After this turn of events, I wrote twice to the steamship company in New Orleans for an opportunity to travel to California; but I never received an answer, probably because my letters were written in German.

Work and illness

But to make sure that something did happen, I bought a cart with three pairs of oxen. We still had a lot of fencing wood, which we had already sold, lying in the woods; but it was difficult to get a wagoner, so I arranged the transport myself. The work went quite well as long as we both worked together; but after only three or four days Kerndold became ill, and because I couldn't get a man to help me, I soon found out, while doing the work on my own, that in the terrible heat in the deforested forest it was impossible to make it without help. Loading the heavy, nine foot long fence timber tired me so much already on the first trip that I could hardly breathe and only with the greatest effort and frequent resting did I get the timber to the place where it was to be stored, after being delayed for hours. My comrade's illness became worse; I had to run to the doctor and get medicine [46/47] and care for him at home, because nobody would take care of a sick person who did not belong to the family. Things got so bad that the doctor and soon I gave up on the sick man, especially since cholera had been rife in the town for some time and claimed many victims. What was worse was that I myself had been feeling ailing for some time, and had unexpectedly learned from the pharmacist, who was a German doctor, that I was worse off than my comrade, for whom I was running for medicine; for I had yellow fever of the highest degree and could be away for a short time, since the disease was very dangerous in this region. I laughed at the man, but he prepared a medicine for me, which I immediately took at home; after a few hours I threw up violently, and a piece of raw ham came out, fresh and undigested, and yet I had eaten it eight days earlier, of course with disgust, God knows why. From then on I felt more comfortable; Kernbold's condition also improved quickly, contrary to our expectations, and we went back to work. But in the city itself it was depressing. Cholera was on the increase; every day the streets to the nearby cemetery were clogged with funerals and we were eerie, especially since several of our acquaintances, who had gone to bed [47/48] healthy in the evening, were found dead early in the morning. As soon as death was ascertained, the corpses were buried immediately because of the contagion. The funeral took place in hackney carriages or on horseback; nobody followed on foot, which at first seemed to us quite amusing and unusual. In order to avoid the sad incidents and the danger, we decided to go to the prairie and make hay, for which we already had firm orders in the town. We loaded beds, the most necessary cooking utensils, food and drinking water onto our wagon and drove out early on Monday morning. Six miles outside the city, where we found hay grass in abundance, we set up camp.Because of the heat, we could only mow for two hours in the morning and two hours in the evening; at noon the ox cart came and we helped load the hay; in the meantime we

were taken there with cooking, eating and resting; during the day we lay underneath, at night inside in the covered cart, to protect ourselves from the many snakes, also from tarantulas, a kind of spider in the size of a hand and very poisonous. We usually managed seven carts of hay a week, the car to 2½ dollars, cartage not counted. Kernbold used to do the cooking the cooking, and since there was a lack of suitable fire-wood, I collected the dry cow dung, which was a good source of burning material and was lying around [48/49] in masses. On Saturdays, a wagon of hay was prepared in stock to be picked up next Monday. In the even-ing we went to town, carelessly enough, and returned to the camp on Sundays, each time glad to have escaped the cholera, which was be-coming more and more vicious. [49/50]

Fourth chapter

A letter from Germany and a farewell On the oxcarriage / Cholera and riding competition The author pilfered brandy / Dying and getting married / Tired of Texas

New enter-prise

On the evening of June 19th, a Saturday, I received the first letter from Germany, from Marie, my bride. It was a sad message; it reported the death of my dear mother[19], above which I forgot and overlooked everything else that was in it, and in my grief I never knew what to do; and at the same time we had come to know the death of some friends who had been taken away by the cholera. So I took it as a lucky and good hint, when an acquaintance told me the next day, that already the next Monday their five carters will go to Indianola and if I wouldn't like to go with them, what I promised spontaneously. So we, the six of us, drove away from New-Braunfels with six carriages, four of them with a team of six pairs of oxen each, one with four and my carriage with three pairs of oxen. Kernbold and Güntert helped me with the harnessing and both wished me heartily, but especially Güntert, a happy journey and come-back-again-[50/51]well, as was the custom at home when saying goodbye. I left with a heavy heart, because I was still quite young, away from both of them, without suspecting that it could be a farewell forever. They might have thought that cholera might take me away, but this time they were wrong. When the ferry had taken us across the swollen Guadalupe River, wagon after wagon, we drove another six miles, then unhitched the oxen and let them run free to graze; and we cooked a supper for ourselves, made up our beds in the wagon body, and went to sleep. They got up at five o'clock in the morning; three men prepared breakfast over the fire, while the other three saddled the horses. We mounted to gather the 31 pairs of oxen, which were running in different directions, to harness them, which took a full three hours.

19 † February 18th, 1852 at the Weilerhof(Riedern a. W.) at the age of 56 years.

At 1 o'clock we came to the small town of Seguin, about 12 miles away, stopped briefly and then drove another six miles. We stopped at a spring, but as usual we had to camp outdoors, cook and sleep, since there were no inns or other houses to find shelter in. We always had to be concerned about water, because of our animals, which usually walked for hours around at night to find some, and then it was a great difficulty to get so many oxen together [51/52] again, because there was also other cattle running around in herds, which belonged to surrounding farmers. In addition, foreign carters draft cattle grazed around. You often had to search for a long time, or it were even, as it happened to me, two or three oxen driven away, which one got back unexpectedly in an area with more water, but only for a high finder's fee, which was also a good business for crooks.

To Indianola

Again in other places it was dangerous to stay because of the annoying mosquitoes, from which the cattle simply ran away, four or five miles away from the camp; there we had to hobble them, as they were called, because their front feet were tied together with specially prepared leather straps, so that they could only needy hop about instead of walking. Despite this tormenting measure, they still ran for miles, especially towards the bushes, where they could protect themselves from the mosquitoes. When they were found, the straps were taken off the animals and they were driven to the camp.

In a two-day trip we reached from there to Gonzales, a small town of about 1000 inhabitants. We didn't stay there long, bought only the necessary food, rested for a few hours and drove away again. After another three days we reached Victoria and finally on July 2nd Indianola. We had 12 days to drive the 150 miles [52/53], and this with empty wagons, so that meant, not too much haste.

Indianola

In the otherwise so busy little town it looked appallingly. Half of the commercial buildings were closed; the cholera raged terribly. Those who had been able to flee had run away to more sheltered places, but a quarter of the inhabitants died within a rather short time. There was an eerie dead silence. The fourth of July, the great American celebration day, was remembered by burning down only three rockets.

Until we had the full load for our six wagons, we lay here for 6 days; it was lucky that we had already received half of the orders in New Braunfels, otherwise we would have had to lie here longer and might have fallen victim to the disease. On the nearby God's Acre it looked horrifying. Many corpses, especially recently immigrated ones, lay without coffins in insufficiently deep graves; some had been scratched out by prairie wolves and other wild animals and their bones were found everywhere; there seemed to be no surveillance anywhere; one would not have believed such reports if one had not seen everything with one's own eyes. The immigration to Texas from Germany was quite high at that time, hence their many deaths in Indianola. Whoever expected emigrants here, hurried with them immediately into the inner

part of the country. A [53/54] friend of mine picked up his bride there; she died the day after arrival, he himself two days after her.

Cholera

We finally had our cargo together, drove off in the best hope and camped barely four miles outside the desolate, dead city. The next day, two more carters joined us, Americans with cargo to Seguin. While we were still sitting together in the evening, one of these two boasted that he did not fear cholera; when he saw it coming, he spurred his steed and rode away from her. When we saddled up early in the morning and four of us with the American caught up the oxen, I had ridden barely an hour and had six pairs of oxen together, when I saw a hat in the grass at a short distance; seventy to eighty paces from it I found the young American dead; the horse grazed quietly, barely ten paces from it; so cholera had caught him up. I reported it to the camp; we took his body on his steed to the wagon, kept it there, and since we were barely 8 miles from Victoria, he was buried there. His lonely comrade took another man with him who had to lead the cart of the deceased.

A few miles from there we camped again. The other day, after we had hardly left, the only married man of ours became ill and died [54/55] of cholera an hour later, away from four children, which was all the more terrible for us, since his eldest son, a thirteen-year-old, accompanied his father on this journey. We had to remove a few boards from his wagon body to make a makeshift coffin for the poor deceased, which we buried with the owner's permission in the God's Acre of the next farmhouse. Two days later a twenty-two year old boy died away just as unexpectedly, and before we had finished taking care of his body, the third, an unmarried thirty year old died. When may it happen to you? everyone had to think, and just give in to the will of God.

Because of these occurrences we had to rest here for two days. We buried our unhappy comrades together in a suitable place in one pit, and we did so, how else schould we do, without singing or sound. Then we set off again.

Along our way we found dozens of graves; one was shivering; most of them stirred up by wolves or other predators, the dead gnawed on or limbs and bones idragged nto the prairie. Anyone who would have told me these things I would never have believed him, but here I had to believe my own eyes.

Such things are understandable in a country like Texas at that time, where culture and orderly conditions were unknown and there was hardly [55/56] a human dwelling for 20, 30 miles. With infectious diseases with such numerous deaths, people had to seek shelter in healthier places as quickly as possible if they did not want to die off family by family.

So after two days of stalling because of these deaths, we moved on. The missing carters could not be replaced in their work any other way than by putting a cart between two others, whose people on horse-

back drove one of them until we received substitutes from the owners in New Braunfels. There we finally arrived without any further illnesses or other misfortunes after six weeks of absence.

Wagoner customs

To this trip I would have to tell about a custom or evil custom that was prevailing at that time. As soon as the carters had taken up their load, the food they needed for themselves was taken away from them: Potatoes, flour, butter, eggs, salt, wine, brandy, and whatever the things were called; what the one did not have on the wagon, the other carried and communicated. The carters carried all the necessary tools with them: saw, chisel, drill, hammer. Where bungs and pegs were sealed on wine barrels, a hoop was knocked back, a hole was drilled in the stave, and when several bottles were tapped, a wooden plug was driven into the hole and the hoop was put back in its place. Sugar and [56/57] coffee sacks were cut open and then sewn up again. One American had loaded two large barrels of brandy there. That's when I got the deal to siphon off eight litres of it. The bottles were filled completely with water and put into the bunghole of the liquor barrel with the opening facing down. The water flowed, because it was heavier, slowly into the barrel, the brandy rose yellowish, as I could clearly see, into my bottles; the barrel was again full as before and the brandy was in any case still strong enough to drink for buyers and drunkards alike, so there was no disadvantage in that. Every merchant knew that the carters kept it that way and did not write it on the loss page.

The Grim Reaper

When we stopped for a few hours on the last day of the journey, a Sunday, two miles before New Braunfels, among other acquaintances of the carters, Kernbold came, but to my astonishment without Bertold Güntert. I shouted to him from afar: Where's Bertold? Then he approached me and said sadly: Bertold has died, whereupon I could never hold back my tears and had much more than ever to remember his words at farewell: Come back healthy again. I wonder whether he might have suspected his early death at that time or rather feared mine? Güntert had been a good-hearted, fine boy and had been dear to me as a brother.

Second ox cartload

We rested for eight days, because we needed [57/58] rest; then the second journey was undertaken, with the same vehicles, but other men had to be recruited. We left with the most beautiful expectations, but it should not be a success for me. Already on the third day I became ill and unluckily cattle thieves drove three pairs of oxen away from me, unfortunately including my two leading oxen. We searched for them for a full day in vain, and so the others drove on the following morning, since each of them still had five pairs of animals on the wagon; I and my two pairs had to stay behind alone. On the third day, well-known German wagoners who stopped with their cargo took me back with them, with my wagon as best they could. I owed my recovery at that time in large part to a kind American woman who, although two miles away, sent me the finest food, boiled chicken with soup. Twice she

came riding herself and checked on my condition; afterwards a female Negro slave came from her, also on horseback, with the food. The woman took no payment for all this; also I was betoken not to give the negress anything.

Six weeks after my unfortunate enterprise, against all hope, we got our three pairs of oxen back, but only for a 20 dollar finder's fee: a profitable business for both parties! [58/59]

Turn-about

When I had recovered from my illness and at the same time the cholera had ceased in the area and the worst heat had passed, Kernbold and I began to dig wells again; we made several of them with more than enough water; but in two of them we stopped work at sixty and at ninety feet, as the contractors shied away from the further costs.

We then built some log cabins and provided a good fencing, as we took over every job we had to do and always to the satisfaction of the customer. Meanwhile I let my animals run and graze on the prairie and only rarely used them for jobs, as we both earned as much, if not more, with our work; to go to Indianola I gave up completely.

Thus we worked together harmoniously and quite lucratively until July 3, 1853, when Kernbold married Barbara[20], the daughter of master blacksmith Arnold, a rather pretty girl barely seventeen years old. From then on we saw each other less frequently and our good relationship became much more casual, but now I felt like traveling to California and seeking my fortune there. I sold my carriage in October to a man who could hardly pay half of it in cash; with the rest I referred him to Kern-bold, in case I was no longer in the [59/60] region. He later received the 80 dollars properly paid out, but I never saw a cent of it and have long since written the amount down in the chimney, assuming that the debt-or is in the other world, where a credit balance is not pursued by the courts.

Depar-ture from Texas

I now put all my issues in order and on November 12th I traveled from Braunfels to Indianola, in the company of a 15-year-old young man named Julius Reis, who had been entrusted to my leadership by his brothers in California. We drove on the six-horse carriage of an American. During the second night the two most valuable horses were driven away from the wagoner, kept somewhere in a safe hiding place and not found despite searching in all directions. On the third day they were returned to him, admittedly only after offering a 50 dollars finder's fee. We arrived without further adversity on November 20th in Indiano-la, from where we took the steamer via Galveston to New Orleans the next day.

Yellow fever

At Galveston, our ship picked up 585 head of slaughter oxen. After

[20] Barbara, (*about 1836; † before 1855, after her first child), daughter of Peter Arnold and Catharina Riedel Hierholzer then married their sister Magdalena Chris-tina Arnold.

a very stormy voyage in heavy thunderstorms we reached New Orleans in two days, where it turned out that 15 of the oxen had been knocked over[21]. We stayed at the Inn "zur Pfalz", which was owned by a [60/61] German, where about 200 boarders and travelers lived besides us. On November 24, I bought Julius Reis and me a California boat pass, which cost 87½Dollar third class including food. Since the ships only sailed twice a month, we had to wait another 10 days and wanted to get acquainted with the situation there whenever we felt like it. It looked very bad in the city after the yellow fever had been at its worst from May to the end of August. When this was gone, cholera also appeared and continued. According to official records, the yellow fever of 90000 inhabitants had taken away 15000; whole families, even whole districts became extinct. Nobody wanted to do sick duty, not to mention mortuary service; usually only hired Negroes took over such jobs on five dollars an hour. If one walked through the streets early in the morning, one found dead people outside or on stairs and in entrances to houses. The hearses drove day and night; we had not an hour's rest in the inn: nothing but hearses and hearses. In my room I found a book by my predecessor, a German physician, on a wall border; his notes from May the 15th to September the 6th showed 145 deaths of his patients, until he died himself after the last note, as the innkeeper told me. [61/62]

The fewest corpses were buried in coffins; almost all of them were laid on the burial ground in pits of 200 and 300 on unslaked lime and the place was filled with water; I watched as the bodies burned in this way; it happened because of the infection.

To Havanna

How happy we were when we and our 71 fellow travelers were finally able to say goodbye to this sad place of death on 3 December and the steamer took us further, first to Havana in Cuba. There mail and some freight was taken in. On the third day of the voyage from Havana, a fire broke out in the middle holds of the ship in the cargoes; at first it seemed to be of a dangerous size and the life belts were already being distributed, but fortunately we did not have to use them. Within an hour, the fire-fighting crew had already curbed the fire to such an extent that the danger of destroying the ship was eliminated and the damage to burnt cargo was not too significant. [62/63]

[21] In the original text an outdated German word "umgestanden" was used, which has the meaning of "to perish".

Fifth chapter

Reviews on Texas / Inheritance and disappointment
Slavery / Herd bells and church peal
Fates of the emigrants / All kinds of peeves
for the author / Journey to Panama
Funny fright night / Traces of criminals

Inheritance regulation

To tell you about Texas, there were, after some hardships and adversity that Kernbold and I encountered, some things there that were not really pleasant, but for us young fellows they were exhilarating, and we made fun about them; one would not have been a human being. It concerned mainly our fellow travelers from the Black Forest and their relatives in New Braunfels. I have already mentioned that in Havre, before our second departure, the four Birkendorfers Hilpert, in order to obtain a loan from me for their return home, presented an inheritance notice from New Braunfels. There they had an uncle, a brother of their father, called Old-Hilpert par excellence, a cap maker; but the maid Hilpert from Bonndorf, who married her fiancé Josef Reber immediately after landing in Texas, had also a father-brother, a tailor by profession. Both, House [63/64]Bonndorf and House Birkendorf, wanted to be the heirs of this tailor, and both parties did so with equal zeal and hope, and so they distributed the rich inheritance they had hoped for in Havre; even during the crossing the hateful competition of the lurking bereaved continued stubbornly; because in the death report sent to the homeland no first name was mentioned, so the facts of the case were still disputed. The woman from Bonndorf was particularly nasty, and together with her bridegroom she accused the four relatives of having prematurely betrayed their inheritance and swore that she would force the relatives from Braunfels to take an oath that they would have to hand over everything they owned to the deceased. The inheritance report had mentioned a fleet of vehicles with wagons, a mule, six oxen and other things, and poor emigrants could even dream about these. On arrival in Indianola, the supposed heirs looked all the more perplexed when they heard the news that the cap maker had died, not the tailor, as was inaccurately reported in the inheritance report. Haus Bonndorf had stubborn doubts, until finally the matter was cleared up in New Braunfels. The fleet of vehicles had already been sold by the court because of the many costs involved, and the rest of the estate was never significant; it was paid out to the four Birkendorfers, that is to say the three; indeed [64/65] Karoline had died before the case was settled through the bite of a snake she stepped on in the kitchen, only a few days after her arrival.

Relationship

While we all got along quite well with the Birkendorfers, the woman from Bonndorf, through her conceitedness and domineering bossiness, caused almost daily quarrels, so that we soon avoided her company. After her marriage she lived in New Braunfels in a house opposite her

uncle Old-Hilpert. This was a cozy man of 70 years; his pretty young wife was thirty; there was also a young four-year-old Hilpert. The tailor Hilpert lived with this old uncle and did his business there. The young woman helped him, and this relationship was discussed and interpreted in different ways, to the annoyance of the brother-in-law and sister from Bonndorf. The secret quarrels first broke out openly when the young tailor died of cholera barely three months later, and instead of the Bonndorf woman, the Old Man's four-year-old boy became the sole heir. On the day of the funeral, which was attended by all the acquaintances, the sister wore a bright red silk dress and said without shame that she wanted to put a particularly fragrant flowering plant on her brother's grave instead of warbling around it, for she was in her own good for that. [65/66]

I lived with Kernbold for a while at Old-Hilpert's; but then, because of the quarrelsomeness of the woman from Bonndorf, who crossed our path daily as our vis-a-vis, we moved away from there and to a certain Meine; but we remained good friends with the Old Man and his young wife. Together we devoured many a bottle of wine, but mainly whisky, which he appreciated very much. He was very popular and respected in the city and was generally known as one of the first settlers of New Braunfels.

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Slaves and Masters

At the time of our staying, Texas was a slavery state; only a quarter of the population were free whites. I knew farmers with many hundreds of acres of land, for whom thousands of Negroes served as slaves. But these were often better kept than here and there white servants who were free. I saw entire negro villages on farms where the houses for the individual families were built in rows, similar to towns. In the midst of these buildings stood the home of the owner or his administrator; every Negro family could keep and slaughter pigs, cattle, also poultry; the remaining food was supplied to them in sufficient quantity, also clothes as needed. With such slaves the owners did not have the [66/67] inconvenience of running away as with white servants; all were obedient, hardworking, and highly content; many, when they were later declared free by the United States government, did not want to leave their owners, even begged that they be kept and continued to be cared for as before, and in many cases this was done. They were paid wages, granted legal freedoms, or even, which had not happened until then, had them taught in everything. Here and there a slave was taught to read and write, but mainly in languages, to the advantage of the owner, who either used him in his own business or sold him at a high price. I met a 20-year-old Negro on the ship from New Orleans to Texas who spoke German, French and English, and not long after that he was sold on the open market in New Orleans for 5000 dollars away from his parents and siblings to an American merchant in Houston. There, in the presence of Germans, I saw various such auctions where three hun-

dred, four hundred of such slaves, men, women and children, individually or in families, were offered for sale and sold at the highest bid. The scenes when parents were sold and taken away from their children or children were [67/68] sold and taken away from their parents, in the knowledge that they might never see each other again, cannot be imagined. During the purchase, the exhibited slaves were touched and examined in every possible way, like cow, ox or horse at the cattle market; it was just a sale. There were slaveholders who treated their property inhumanely: poorly nourished, poorly clothed, forced to work beyond their means and beaten at the slightest offense, put them in straitjackets, tied them to posts for days in the blazing sun, without food or drink, and committed the most dreadful misdeeds against them. If such maltreated persons, which often happened with these owners, took flight, he was hunted down, and people not involved were allowed to be forced to help. The captured man was so maltreated that some preferred to take their own lives; and woe to the white man who refused to join such a hunt; he might be about to be shot. This danger once threatened me too, but that slave owner had been mysteriously killed before. No court was found in such trials which would have found the wrongdoer guilty: thus always acquittal; that was the law. Or rather customary law. [68/69]

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Sunday celebration

I would also like to mention how we initially spent our Sundays in New Braunfels, where no work was waiting for us. Since there was indeed a Catholic church, i.e. a building shell made of planks, but no clergyman was resident, and only every three or four weeks one of them came from San Antonio and held a service, we had our four or five early Sunday mornings a walk on the prairie, where the cattle in thousands ran freely on the pasture. Many of them had bells around their necks, which gave off a peculiar ringing sound and reminded us very much of our homeland with its church ringing. It was not seldom that one or the other, but mostly all of them suddenly felt homesick, so that we could not suppress the crying and cried miserably together. So it usually fell to me to encourage and comfort everyone. I reproached[22] them that since we were here and had chosen our fate voluntarily, we had to accept it: the matter would turn to our good again and so on. But because some of our circle and other acquaintances died unexpectedly within a short time, my encouragement had only limited success and little sense. But how could one think of going home, since the others lacked the means to do so and I, the only one with money, did not want to go back in disgrace as long as I was healthy and had not at least acquired the money for the return journey and a [69/70] decent amount above it? After all, it had been my decision from the very beginning to stay in America for at least three years; but in front of me and in the eyes of the bride I

[22] The author uses an outdated German word "vorrücken" (literally: to advance), which is approximately reproduced in its former meaning.

had left behind, should that have been only an expensive trip to be able to brag about it at home? Such were our Sunday reflections and ever-repeated considerations in the endless prairie under God's vast sky and the melancholy ringing of herd bells.

Separation

Over that the first weeks and then long months passed and we were still in Texas with the most hackneyed reasons and most unforgivably myself, who had other plans but at first could not leave the oppressed comrades. That changed five quarters of a year after the arrival when Kernbold got married, so he was tied up and had only the choice to stay; but others died away quickly, so I could think about going to California, my original and final destination.

Destinies

Because a small pile of our Black Forest dozen was left over. With Isidor Hilpert from Birkendorf we had little contact; he turned out to be a pompous little fellow; he was also very quarrelsome. After only a few months he was expelled from the city, and then from the entire district, due to [70/71] stabbings, as reported by the authorities. I heard nothing more about his further fate. His three sisters, however, were fine, industrious creatures. Marianne, the eldest, married a certain Mr. Kaiser (also a Black Forest man) after only a year; Karoline had died of a snake bite, Josefa, the youngest, got out of my sight, and despite repeated inquiries her fate remained unknown to me; she had always been a sickly girl and might have died. The calm but determined Marie Nürtig from Endermettingen married already four months after landing to Seguin, where we visited her several times. Her village comrade Johann Endreß died early of cholera; unfortunately also, as already reported, Bertold Güntert. So I stood there as a one-horse team and very lonely.

I still have to commemorate a strange, unfamiliar performance, not because it is particularly worthy of mention; it only injured our feelings and is probably only possible in America in such crudeness. It represented a Catholic funeral, that is, the imitation and mockery of one.25 to 30 people, mostly married men, were gathered in a stone house that was rarely bare brickwork, and Old-Hilpert and Kernbold curiously went there with me, as we were not working on [71/72] Ash Wednesdays. But what should we see! A man dressed as a Catholic priest with a choir shirt, stole and beret, two sextons, four men in mourning with dented, very old top hats and other mourners with burning candles followed the alleged corpse: this was an old boot without a sole on a black-covered ladder, above it the American flag. The blessing took place with a censer, holy water kettle and sprinkler, then the assembly sang the death song:

Experiences

"Bootlet must die,
So young, so young!
If the heel would know,
that Bootlet would have to die,

to die,
It would grieve him to death."

Then the body was sunk into the grave, i.e. into the cellar room, and with loud moaning and sobbing of the mourners, the priest held the eulogy, naming the merits of the deceased: how he served the owner in rain and sunshine, in dust and excrement, until he lost his sole due to old age and had now gone the way of everything earthly and followed his ancestors into the realm of oblivion. So may he rest in peace. In his memory the mourning meeting was called to the usual funeral banquet, and with wine, brandy, sausage, ham and [72/73] roast it went wild and raw, so that the three of us left, but first we expressed our displeasure that they had played fast and loose with our religion. Kernbold was close to weeping; he again remembered the warning of that returning swabian woman in Havre who denied America the religion, and wished all the more to be back in Germany, where such mischief would not be tolerated after all. But old Hilpert laughed along with it: In America everything is different than in Germany, and we shouldn't take seriously every humbug that is offered to us, nor believe everything that the parson pretend to us, and so on. We gradually calmed down, but subsequently we determined that at Catholic funerals no priest delivers a funeral eulogy, not even in Texas, but that memorial words are only spoken from the circle of the mourners. That the whole thing, as I learned later, was only a foolish carnival custom of course we did not know.

Old-Hilpert was right: we had to come to terms with such things in our boys' brains, as well as with our fate of being in America. I reminded Kernbold of this; since who had — I could tell him — less reason to complain than I did? What drove me well-heeled farmer's son across the great water? Since I had already been working on building my own house, I had broken the stones in my own quarry [73/74] and driven them to the building site with my own horses, only to give in to my desire to emigrate due to a ridiculous dispute. My obstinacy[23] trumped all warnings away[24], though with the consciousness of returning home soon, to marry my chosen one, as we vowed to each other, and then over there or over here to enjoy the happiness that youth has always holds in hereditary lease. On the other hand, the poor classmate was more likely to obtain funds in the vast, rich America than in the needy village, which offered him at best the position of a poorly paid groom; but I had neither provoked nor persuaded him to take this step; but when I saw him determined, I did not take away his courage, but only strengthened it. The good fellow, by the way, was always easy to cure from such fits

[23] An old South German-Swiss word was used here: "Stettkopf", m: 1. stubborn head, pigheaded; 2 obstinacy, Switzerland [dictionary of Alsatian dialects]; Swiss: "Stettchopf": pigheaded, obstinate man [Swiss idioticon].

[24] Here a word was used in a meaning that is hardly used any more: "abtrumpen" (which means to trump, to ruff in a card game, but colloquially also stands for to rebuke sharply, to reject). [German Dictionary Duden]

of grey misery and since his marriage I hardly needed to play the doctor on him.

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Passions

I did myself rather difficult — so that I still remember these things — with the fair sex. One of our fellow female comrades had already turned her neck after me at home, although I never gave her the slightest reason for hope and she knew how I stood with my chosen one. But one wanted to direct such an extensive water like me to one's own mill [74/75] at all costs, and even emigration was not too expensive or too daring. Kernbold and I could have played husbands even in Havre, just before the first embarkation; simplicity placed the virgin camps beside ours without being asked, and the potipharian creatures played their games without any particular timidity until the stricter Joseph's threw them out. When we came on the ship for departure, heavily drunk as mentioned, the foolish game started again, and after arrival in New Orleans I had to destroy all hopes. Kernbold and I had initially planned to travel on with the comrade to her brother in Saint Louis and to try our luck from there. I recognized the danger in time and abandoned the plan; but I will never forget the whining of the disappointed woman who screamed out in the street like a shot animal and would not let me out of her embrace. It grieved[25] me very much, I would not have had to be a human being, and who knows? if I had not remembered the word given in the homeland, would I not have stepped into the trap, out of sheer, stupid pity? Kernbold had also warned me: "Human feelings are everywhere: in America as in Riedern", he had said; may the humanity now have been for my pity or the passion of the woman in love. [75/76]

Love bargain

I had passed this trap unharmed, but I was to find more and more dangerous ones on my way; usually there was beside a nice mask a fortune hung up as bacon-decoy. Since we both, Kernbold like me, were, despite all our hard work and thrift, a cheerful lad, we were gladly seen, and the girls were after us like the marten behind the chicken folk, and we were carefully weighed down to this and that. Although there was a lack of public places and opportunities for public amusement in Texas at that time; they were created around them in houses where marriageable daughters were, the juicier the better, and generously provided for regalement and entertainment; after a few celebrations the matching couples were recognized, since everything was offered to them for rapprochement and the word: Opportunity makes love was known. On one of the next Sundays, in a high mood the engagement was announced without further ado, and perhaps it was only for fun, but it was certainly a reminder of where the cart was going. I avoided such courtship as far as possible; I never favored a particular

[25] Here a German word was used with a meaning that is now outdated. „dauern" (today meaning „to last"), dolere, poeniter: ... 1. „es dauert mir": I am dissatisfied, upset, worried, I regret, I lament. [German Dictionary Grimm]

girl noticeably and behaved courteously towards all of them; no one should recognize which one it was, for they would have noticed that it was no one. Nevertheless, I barely got out of the noose a few times, for example with fifteen-year-old Sophie, the daughter [76/77] of the people, where we ate for fourteen months, and who would have liked to see me as a son-in-law. The little girl pretended to be indifferent, as if she wanted to be conquered; this appealed to me properly, but my calm reserve also appealed to her, and when she even found out that her niece Friederike Penshorn, the beautiful daughter of her equally beautiful forty-year-old mother, had my more serious affection, she stood in the way of this everywhere, but she herself created every opportunity to tie me up and have a flirtatiousness. When Penshorns then wanted to recognize that Friederike had the upper hand in my case, Meine's mother went ahead with the heavy ordnance, because it seemed more effective to her, she wrote in English: "Have you intentions?" „My daughter will have a god dowry, but of course she cannot marry quite a penniless man."*[26] I gave her back, also by letter, but in German, the Baron Have-Nothing, who was engaged in Germany to a wealthy girl and who duly kept his word; then I left with Kernbold and we took food and lodging with master smith Arnold.

Here again were two daughters: a fifteen-year-old Magdalene and a Barbara full seventeen. The latter, with the help of his parents, quickly succeeded in capturing [77/78] my team, whereupon only Dory was missing, as they called me, and both would have been married off, alluded the Arnolds; but Dory was not a gawk, and quietly let him marry the seventeen alone. This was in July 1853.

Marriage Race

Some months later, in late autumn, I worked with the husband Kernbold for some time in the forest, near the home of an old couple named Wenz, not far from the farm of a certain Neumann, a Saxon. The Neumann's older daughter, Anna, was engaged to the son of a neighbouring farmer, and now I, the good Dory, was to go into the yoke with seventeen-year-old Karoline Neumann, as the Wenzian couple advised me: Karoline No. 3, but it was human again here: Anna, the fiancée, was the one who was most in love; she offered herself as my bride without a long torch; she wanted me to unhitch her farmer fiancé; and she confessed to me bluntly that her parents had sent her because of Karoline, to earn the pander-fur[27] for which the Wenzians had already strained oneself about me. I rebuffed an urgent Sunday invitation from Neumann's, whereupon the Wenzians ordered me there the following Sunday and the pimp wanted to pick me up in the early morning. But when he found [78/79] the fox out of the house and Neumann also realized that I was not keen on his chickens, he threatened to judge him:

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[26] * Haben Sie Absichten? Meine Tochter wird zwar eine gute Mitgift bekommen, aber natürlich kann sie einen ganz armen Hund nicht heiraten.

[27] Pander-fur, original text: "Kuppelpelz": 'to earn a pander-fur': to work (successfully) as a bride suitor, marriage broker, marriage broker. [Goethe Dictionary]

To marry Karoline, or pay her half of my fortune in damages. In front of American judges everything was now possible and my conviction was certain, but only if the Neumanns were perjured; for I had not promised any of the daughters the marriage. In this situation I did not rush into anything; I still visited occasionally, and one day, with the prospect of leaving soon, I pretended that I had written about my property in Germany, on which I would buy land in Texas; for without a property of my own I could not think of marrying. So I was safe and sound at first, but now Arnolds and her Magdalene were getting on my nerves again, and especially rebellious in the whisky inebriation. Then the old woman once told me that I would not want to cook my good catholic meat in a Lutheran pot, and meant the Neumann-Karoline. I laughed and said that I presume the meat would soften just as quickly there as in the Catholic one. Now Magdalene was a pretty, well-behaved thing, not at all obtrusive, which I liked about her; but no American could compete with my sweetheart in Germany. But to escape the marriage rush, I left for California earlier than originally planned. [79/80]

Contemplations

There over the year I received report from Kernbold that Karoline Neumann had married, but died soon after. His wife died two years later, and he took her sister Magdalene, so that she was also married off. I wanted to touch these love handles and needs in passing, as they only touched me, even if here and there they were more tangible than I would have liked. But in that country the marriage rush is to be understood by parents and girls alike. Texas did indeed have a strong immigration, primarily from Germans; but many scattered over the vast territory immediately after landing, and the men who remained around the Mississippi estuary often spread out across the prairie or died off quickly in those years from the plagues there; the newly arrived, especially the girls, outnumbered the men, tearing at them like dogs at the bone, apart from their early adolescence. In California, on the other hand, female immigration was low, if only because of the insecurity that required men to cope with it. But once a doe came there, she often either only went to see her fiancé or had no effort to find a man, unless she was spoilt for choice among many applicants. Nevertheless, some of them were to be pushed to me as well. [80/81]

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And now the further journey.

To Panama

After coping with the ship fire, the journey went luckily, albeit a bit slowly. We arrived quite late, namely not until December 11th in Aspinwall, which is opposite Panama, but still 60 kilometers away from it. There we had 6 hours time and we could recover and refresh ourselves thoroughly, also provide us with everything necessary for the further journey. When the passengers and the freight had all been placed on the wagons of the short railway line, which had been upgraded at that time, we traveled twelve kilometres to Barbados near Gatun and then on river boats up the Chagres River. The trip offered great attractions,

also some strange things. The river had little water at that time, and so boat after boat, each with 8 travelers, was pushed up the river by two strong inhabitants, dressed only in a long shirt, with large flexible poles; the water would not have been enough to guide oars. After three hours of bumping, vehicle after vehicle arrived at five o'clock in the evening in Gorgona, a town of barely 500 inhabitants, about halfway to our preliminary destination Panama. Since the place consisted almost only of bush huts, and had only some inns run by inhabitants, most of us had to sleep in or next to such huts; in contrast [81/82] to this miserable night camp, we were served a splendid evening meal and good breakfast at a modest price. The inhabitants of this place were a cheerful and happy people. Music, singing, dancing prevailed everywhere, with the greatest cleanliness, which we noticed in the clean clothes of the women; we had never encountered anything similar in these southern parts of the country. On the whole, the people seemed to me to live happily in their simplicity, happier perhaps than some fat millionaires in their palaces. We experienced a cheerful night at this place, like never before; nobody went to sleep before one o'clock; even the señoritas retired late into their hammocks.

About the land neck

The other morning, to our embarrassment, there was ruckus and noise. Some of the travelers wanted to leave without paying, and if the rest had not stood against the rapscallions, it would hardly have happened without bloodshed; for revolvers and daggers were at hand, and the whole place was in an uproar.

From Gorgona we started the second and more arduous half of our journey over the isthmus. There was no railroad or road there and so we had to go on foot or with one of the many donkeys, each at twelve dollars. Most of them went on foot, and so did I, for where a donkey [82/83] came through with its load, I said to myself, I also came through alone. For a fixed sum of money we contracted to transport our luggage over the final distance. Four tree-strong natives packed everything on ten donkeys; then at 11 o'clock the march from Gorgona began. With the many swamps and springs in the area, the way was very difficult for walking, even worse for riding, as far as one did not know the area. Again and again it happened that equestrians came with their donkeys into watery meadows or into swampy stretches and then only with much effort pulled their animal out of the mud; the pack mules, which went freely, avoided the dangerous places and never sank, while the others had to go through where they were led. This riding and sinking did not last too long, however; the pedestrians did not want to keep on struggling with those in danger and delay their own advance; but the riders, who, in order to save freight money, had hung small suitcases and other luggage on the donkeys, wanted to hand them over to the carriers, who now required triple the wages as before in Gorgona. So even before the first evening one or other had unloaded his donkey and let it, saddled and bridled, run free in the bushes and carried the luggage himself or paid the increased price for carrying it. [83/84]

To Panama

The first night we spent in our quarters, even the 20 or 25 riders were there, but the donkeys were absent. We encamped in a small settlement of about 100 inhabitants. Dinner and breakfast we got prepared the Spanish way. The inhabitants took their breadfruit, as they called it, from the trees, dried it, then crushed it in hollowed stones, whereupon it was mixed with water, wrapped in corn leaves and dried in the sun; this was their bread and apparently they liked it. After lunch we set off again, walked for five long hours and then had lunch (or rather snack) at two, as it turned out, very smart Americans; they demanded a dollar each for beans with bacon and rice and black coffee. These crooks got their money's worth.

Some twelve of our fellow travelers, who had traveled to California via the isthmus earlier, rushed ahead to reach Panama the same day, but not all of them succeeded; their six were caught by night 12 kilometers before their destination and had to spend the night in an abandoned bush hut. But as they told us afterwards, it was to be a terrible night for them. No sooner had they settled down than they heard a noise in the nearby bushes, [84/85] which drew ever closer. What was more likely to happen to them than to be blindsided by robbers? So they kept watch all night with daggers and revolvers, like the knight Don Quixote and his squire at the fulling mills, until at daybreak it turned out that the feared attack was due to free-ranging donkeys grazing in the bush around the hut.

Surprises

The last night before Panama we were only our four, namely apart from me a North German, a Pole and a Frenchman, plus our four luggage guides. We took shelter in a native hut inhabited by two men and one woman, ordered dinner and asked for a place to sleep. After long negotiations with the Frenchman, who was able to communicate with the inmates to some extent in Spanish, we obtained a place on the bare clay floor, which was needy covered with various pelts. Then we strictly indicated to the owners that we did not want to be bothered by them or the baggage handlers; for on the slightest occasion we would defend ourselves with our revolvers. We lay down; the Pole kept watch with me until midnight with his gun loaded, the other two until early morning. But the night passed quietly. When we paid the bill after breakfast, the owners [85/86] of the hut served us with homemade drinks, but we did not drink before they had drunk from it in front of our eyes. This caution was not born of cowardice or unfounded fear: it was justified in this inhospitable and dangerous region in so far as, on the long way of our march, we repeatedly found crosses and inscriptions carved on trees in memory of the robbery and murder committed against returning Californians and as a warning to all those who marched this way. It was later discovered and established beyond doubt that two Americans released from prison had maintained a well-equipped hostel in this area and hosted Californian returnees. Since 10 to 12 of them mysteriously disappeared on this route, their traces were followed up to there and bones of men were discovered in the bushes who had not even been

buried. The two prisoners, however, had disappeared and could never be dragged out for punishment.

Breakfast and a farewell drink with the owners of the hut had been taken, the guides loaded their donkeys again and then we went on along a footpath, which was often difficult for us with large watery areas and extended the march a lot. We finally arrived in Panama at noon, [86/87] searched for our fellow travelers and found them accommodated in various inns; we moved into one near the beach, as the place could hardly be called a ship harbour: The tide made it difficult to land there. Twice a day the low tide went back so far that whoever wanted to could walk two kilometres to the sea. When the tide came in, however, it was almost impossible to escape the water, because one sank into the deep sand mixed with water up to one's ankles and some, as we were told, paid for the risk with their lives. However, gondolas and lighter ships were able to enter and brought all kinds of products to market, especially tropical fruits. Many things were sold in the city itself, but most of them were reloaded on ships to foreign countries. Thousands of Panamanians live and subsist on the turnover of these land products, mostly tropical fruits of all kinds. There is no mention of cereals and similar products in that area; sugar cane, on the other hand, is planted a lot and brings high profits.

Hustle in Panama

Panama must be an ancient place and was probably once conquered and settled by the Spaniards, at least they speak their language and the place names on the isthmus almost all sound Spanish. That the city is a good Catholic, as we saw from its many churches, and even more [87/88] from the Jesuits who swarmed around it; nowhere did I meet so many of them, and yet Texas did not have a lack of them either. The city also has troops, and since we had to wait there, to our sorrow, first 4, then another 6 days for an occasion to travel on, we also looked at these soldiers to pass the time. It was a funny bunch with all sorts of surprises. One went barefoot, the other in shoes or boots, or both, but without headgear, some even without a tunic; in short, no one was dressed like the other, not even in file while practicing. Here one man turned right, the other left; it all reminded me of the alleged goings-on of Swiss soldiers after the little verse: hay around, straw around, as it was mockingly imitated at home, without that anyone had ever seen it. The exercises took place in a lower-lying courtyard surrounded by a wall, and we now enjoyed throwing small stones, rotten apples or oranges at the soldiers; but it was soon forbidden to watch the exercises from up there; a sentry chased away anyone who showed up at the wall crowning.

The food in Panama was good, but the first days we missed the usual fresh meat. But there, after the slaughter, they immediately cut the meat into narrow stripes, [88/89] hung it on bars and dried it in the sun; otherwise it would quickly decompose in the great heat. Dried,

however, it tasted very good after cooking; after all, we preferred to eat it than fresh meat elsewhere. [89/90]

Sixth chapter

Delayed onward journey and awkward crossing Cub escort / Through the Golden Gate into Gold Country

Ship's emergencies

On the second day after our arrival, more than 600 travelers arrived from New York with the destination of San Francisco and waited with us for the onward journey. After another four days, however, the news came that the steamer Winfield Skott[28], which was supposed to come from California and take us there as well, had failed at a rock and sank with passengers and crew. This Job's mail made many discouraged; not more confident, however, was the declaration of the shipping company to equip the steamship Columbus, which had been lying idle in port for a long time, and to use it for the journey. To make matters worse, another 700 men arrived on December the 22nd from New York and New Orleans, who also wanted to go to San Francisco; this caused a real panic among the shipping company. Finally the old Columbus was repaired in a makeshift way and the departure could take place on December 24th; but since the ship was an old, unsafe box [90/91] for the long journey, only 140 of the about 1500 emigrants lying in Panama, including myself, decided to make the dubious crossing, once because of the longed-for destination, then in the opinion that I could also perish with any other ship, if my destiny would be the same. That the journey with this old beast was a risky undertaking was proven by his late arrival in San Francisco; instead of the usual 12 days we needed a full 18.

Besides, the trip was bad beyond all expectations. Nearly all food was spoiled and could only be eaten with disgust, even when honestly hungry. The salted meat that had been administered might have been kept untouched in barrels for years; the rusk was pitted by worms; as well as beans and peas; other vegetables were not available. Fresh bread and meat was not available for all the money. What was still edible, namely potatoes, were only available Tuesday and Friday at noon in the most meagre proportions, and until they reached their man, they had already been taken away from the plates of the guards by the hungry, and each time it came to a brawl. Meat and rusk were served in heaped bowls, but hardly anything was eaten, and finally everything, even including the bowls, found its way to the sea. The drinking water was like boiled water, and copper-colored; it was probably stored in

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[28] **SS Winfield Scott** was a sidewheel steamer that transported passengers and cargo between San Francisco, California and Panama in the early 1850s, during the California Gold Rush. After entering a heavy fog off the coast of Southern California on the evening of December 1, 1853, the ship crashed into Middle Anacapa Island. All 450 passengers and crew **survived**, but the ship was lost. [Wikipedia]

[91/92] iron barrels that had rusted; it meant a miracle that with such a diet we had so few sick people on board.

Frictions on board

Except for 12 Germans, almost all the travelers were Irish. It was difficult to get along with them, and since I did not put up with anything, I had bad experiences with the raw pack. I didn't understand enough English to keep up with their moods, but again I understood too much when I returned their rudeness, for which they demaged my head, despite my fierce resistance. My German companions did not interfere in my favour; they preferred to let be a pack a pack than to spoil it with one of them, or in the end they even had fun with our quarrel.

Six days of traveling and Acapulco in Mexico was reached. How we had been looking forward in the bad time to get off here and get food and how we were disappointed! The ship did not enter the port; it was moored outside. Twelve pieces of slaughter cattle and some other things were taken on board; none of the passengers were allowed ashore, only a few of the crew. I gave a sailor five dollars in gold to fetch me fresh bread, cheese or something similar to eat; he brought me five gingerbreads, and for his own person an enormous rush; he hardly ever came aboard; all for five dollars! [92/93]

Invidious companionship

From Acapulco we had another twelve days of traveling. One understands that we all became tired of this journey, which seemed never want to end, and I for my part also because of the anger about Julius Reis entrusted to me, whom I had taken upon myself to bring him to his brothers in California. Already in New Orleans this reckless twerp, beat loose from me where he only found an opportunity. He was in the habit to show off everywhere with the money his brothers had sent him in abundance, and so he had a tail of swindlers and cutthroats on his heels. He repeatedly got into gambling houses with the dangerous riff-raff, where they took the money from him in the card game or stole it straight out of his pocket. Then he whined to me, borrowed money from me and solemnly swore that his brothers would pay me back in abundance. As a precaution I now let him confirm in writing every borrowed post, although I did in good faith not doubt about the honest will of his brothers. At the last loan of thirty gold dollars I threatened him: "That's it; but despite his promise of betterment, two hours later I had to free him from the clutches of two players in a notorious pub, at my own risk, since they were stabbing me with daggers and I could only get the plundered kid out with the help [93/94] of two policemen and bring him home. Without this protection I would never have been able to vouch for my life, but he himself would hardly have been able to see his brothers. In those days in Texas, human life was cheap and robbery and murder was nothing unusual. On the crossing to Aspinwall I left the boy without money to save him from the game; it was only when the bad food on Columbus forced us to spend some extra money — mostly unsuccessfully, of course — that I slipped Julius a few dollars, which

then went the way of its predecessors in playing cards with Irish people. Now I dried him up. But he tried to borrow from his friends; the Irish laughed at him, for where there was nothing to be got, they did not touch a playing card. Under these circumstances I really was glad to see an end of the long journey by land and sea. We entered the port of San Francisco through the Golden Gate at five o'clock in the morning of January the 12th 1854. I cannot describe the feeling of being able to enter the so longed-for destination after a bimonthly journey. I welcomed the arrival mainly because I finally got the opportunity to work again and to hope for luck and honest profit.

In the Gold Country

The travelers scattered all over the town which was still small in those days. A few years earlier, this had been a blockhouse settlement of barely [94/95] 80O inhabitants and had been called Yerba Buena, after a medicinal herb that grows there. San Francisco was only the abandoned Jesuit monastery; its mighty brick building was still there, but in terrible decay.

In San Francisco

Together with some Germans and Julius Reis, whom I had to bring to Marysville, I took lodgings at the Philadelphia House inn, and after we had once again washed ourselves properly, bathed profusely, and invigorated our tongues and stomachs extensively, we visited the town, which already had several large commercial buildings, banks, and other important edifices. We also wandered through some magnificent gambling houses, although we had been warned extensively about such things during the trip; we did not play then either. Everything was shown to us willingly and hospitably by acquaintances who had already been there for a longer time; I had the impression that this city would one day have a mighty upswing.

I informed my bride of my happy arrival in California, told her about the long journey and promised to give her further news as soon as I had found a place to stay and work. [95/96]

Seventh Chapter

Shipping accident no. 2 / Rascals handover First gamble / A helper in need Gold digger's changing luck / A profitable Chinese grave

Return and farewell

Our stay in San Francisco lasted only for the day; the destination of the young rice, Marysville, was also mine; I hoped to acquire land there to dig gold. For the next ship I bought the travel documents in time, also for Julius Reis, whom I had left without money the last days. In the evening at five o'clock we went on the small steamer Perry Grant with 24 passengers and quite rich cargo from the port to the mentioned destination. Five hours we had a quiet trip; at 10 o'clock at night a stronger ship coming from Stockton approached ours and tore a hole in its side,

big enough to sink it in 15 minutes despite the hard work of the crew. At the captain's call for help, the other steamer took over the passengers and crew and brought us back to San Francisco, where we arrived at three o'clock in the morning and stayed in the same inn. This [96/97] was the second, but not improved edition of our accident of Havre. Of course, driving off in such bright starlight happened intentionally. The ships belonged to two quarrelling bread-envious companies, one of them wanted to force the other down. She soon succeeded in doing so; for the ship and its cargo were completely lost, and this upset the injured company, which had no insurance. Such a procedure, it was said, was not uncommon in California at that time, and it is no better in the world today, according to the saying: The stronger becomes master.

Marysville and gambling houses

We were able to inspect San Francisco a second time and this time more thoroughly, especially the magnificent surroundings. Then again in the evening at five o'clock a steamer of the unlucky society took us up to Marysville and the journey went without an accident. We arrived at our destination at six in the morning. The two brothers of young Reis, who lived there, received us warmly and could not thank me enough for the long and good company of the reckless fellow, whom they had, as they assured me, been very concerned about.

Marysville wasn't the right place for me to stay.In the middle of January there was still quite a lot of snow there, and since the goldfields in Ferun[29] could not [97/98] be exploited before May, I was afraid of waiting, celebrating and wasting time, and I pushed on, even though the Reis brothers offered me a free stay until the winter was over. Undecided what to start, I stayed there another four or five days, ranging through the little town, visiting and looking at what only excited my curiosity after such a long journey; also dance, drinking and play houses. I never felt comfortable in the latter, although they were precious and splendidly equipped. The many tables were covered by the game holders with piles of ten- and twenty-dollar coins, the gold in the middle; cards were laid all around, on which the players could place their bets. The bet was placed on any one card; if this card was favourable to the player when he turned it over, then, depending on the rules of the game or the agreement, the winner received double, quadruple or even eight times the amount; otherwise, the game holder sack it all. This lasted through the night until the early morning, and since every player was free to drink, it kept them there, and with the tempting hustle and bustle, many a prospector lost his hard-earned income in a few nights, and instead of being able to live carefree in his old homeland with the wealth he had dug up, he found himself forced back to the gold field. Rarely did any of them win rich and leave at the [98/99] same time; I saw more disappointed and desperate faces; but such gamblers never got tired of this hustle and bustle.

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29 Ferrum?, Riverside County, California, named after the iron mines (lat. ferrum).

Temptations

I watched the games for a few nights with the intention of not participating, but once I could not avoid trying at the table of an old Mexican in whose dice game I saw no possibility of cheating. I bet on a number of the dice and won, bet again and lost, and so both continued until my silver ran out. I thought of my Napoleon gold pieces, went to an unobserved place and cut two from my belt; but soon these too were chased after the lost silver. Another three, because I bet half a dollar and then a whole dollar instead of a quarter, went away by looking around. Now I let go of my sewn-in gold pieces untouched and, in the devil's name, I no longer tried to regain the 11 dollars that were being gambled away from the old man; as I left, I trawl through my trouser pockets and found another tiny gold dollar; out of desperate remorse at my carelessness I threw it into the street dust.

Into the Gold Territory

I went to bed, but could not sleep, the game rumbled in my head. I reconsidered my situation and decided to leave as soon as possible, to the south, where no more snow laid and I knew some friends from the trip [99/100] to Panama, who were traveling to Sonora. In the morning the Reis brothers tried to hold me, advised me not to, and to refrain; but I boarded the steamer for Sacramento, where I arrived an hour later, but did not stay. I drove by mail coach via Amador City and Sutter City to Mokelumne Hill, a gold-digger location where I thought I would get work. It was lunchtime when we arrived there, hungry and thirsty after a horrible, dusty drive. The bell of the nearby inn was calling out for food; I went there and ate well and abundantly; but how muggy I was when I asked about the bill and heard: Three dollars, sir. After the payment there were only sad 15 cents left, which I gave away for a glass of beer. Since the time of my thinking, this was the first time I had been completely without money and it was a small consolation to hope for help from heaven in a foreign country without a copper cruiser and without sufficient knowledge of the language. On inquiry for work, but especially for Germans, I was told that four miles away from there a German named Peter Haug runs a gold mine and might be willing to take me in. I set out in the direction indicated, and was lucky enough to find the Dutch Piet, as they called him, meaning German Peter, [100/101] in his house at five o'clock in the evening. After expressing my embarrassment, the man kindly invited me to take a seat in his log cabin. Happy only to be able to crawl under somewhere, I willingly let him ask me where I came from, where I was going, and everything else, and let him know that I knew a fellow traveler in Sonora named Jochum. The latter has a brother there who once sent him the money to travel from New York to California; he is now traveling to him. Then Peter Haug said that he knew this Jochum, a brewer, well; he was his business partner two years ago; later he bought into a brewery in Sonora; that's where I'll find him. As for work, Haug continued, he could not promise me any now; while there was snow, there is no profit to be made in the mines; but he is willing to give me enough money on my honest face to come to Sonora. I should then, when I could, pay the amount back to

Jochum on his name. This gave me hope and I did not want to lack gratitude and honesty for such a good deed against Haug. I had to spend the night in his house and eat and drink with him what he could. The next day, when the mail wagon, a six-horse-drawn carriage, arrived, Haug gave me a hundred dollars; the trip cost 6o; the considerable rest remained for [101/102] me to cover further expenses until I found work.

Inviduous situation

This arduous mail journey over hill and dale, over root and stone and marshes on the most miserable paths got me nearly down; I felt relieved to finally arrive safely in Sonora, where I visited my friends unseamed and met them in perfect condition.

God's creatures

I lived there in a German-Jewish inn and was in good hands with regard to drink and food, but on the second day I already found that I had made the acquaintance of unpleasant guests: my underwear was teeming with that kind of goods. In the evening before laying down, I took fresh laundry and threw the used one it into a corner, in the belief that this would help. Early in the morning I found the swarming blessing again, and about noon I had the idea of throwing all my clothes, exept my boots, trousers, hat and frock, into a pit and going home, but to lie naked in bed at night. This time I escaped from the plague, which was probably hidden all together in the discarded laundry; but the innkeeper, whom I told about his weird birds, only smiled and said that they were God's creatures and he did not charge them; he only demanded for the night's lodging. The following morning I packed my things, which were getting less and less [102/103] as I threw most of them away, and went on foot to Dutch Bar, where I could find other travelers that I knew from Panama, and arrived that same evening. The next day, in addition to six Germans, I got a work at 2½ Dollar per day and worked there for eight weeks; thereupon, together with a former fellow traveler, I bought a goldmine, for which we got the missing money borrowed from a German; I could thank God to find such trust everywhere.

Gold diggers ado

At this place, which was located in the river Wood Creek, a dam was built, draining the water from one side to the other to make this side dry for processing; then we made the necessary drainage ditch and set up the machine for gold extraction: all this in the course of three days, with the help, of course, of two Chinese. Now the real gold mining began, at first a little arduous, since we were not very familiar with the work; but we were pleased and attracted by it, for it offered hope. After a few weeks everything went its right way and paid off well. We lived near this place in a spacious canvas[30] house, a square cloth tent with a roof of the same type, and, as far as we understood, we cooked ourselves. Mainly there were potatoes, peas, beans, wheat flour, also [103/104] salted but excessively fat pork bacon; how I often longed for our

[30] Here, Kromer used the word **Karnevas**, French for a coarse mesh, which would not be suitable for accommodation. What is meant here is the similar sounding **canvas**.

fine Black Forest smoked meat, which, however, came from completely different sows and was also honestly smoked. The drink was coffee or tea; there was no butter, fresh meat only every 8 or 14 days when we came to the town three miles away. The milkman brought us a litre of milk every Sunday for tea or coffee; it was a simple diet, but it kept us healthy.

All kinds of experiments

Our place provided a good return. We were able to pay back the borrowed money as early as mid-July, and I was also able to pay back the 100 dollars received from Peter Haug, which I gave with interest to Mr. Jochum in Sonora. We continued to work until the end of August, but since we were harassed by a six-man Russian company working above our pit and trying to get our place, my partner did not want to stay any longer; we cocked a snook at the Russians by selling our property quietly, and for a small price. My comrade went north; but I bought in Jacksonville from five Irishmen the sixth part of a gold mine for 400 dollars and came along on September 3 with all my belongings to seek my fortune there. It deceived me, however; after a few days I found that the place was carrying [104/105] much less than the one we had sold so cheaply. In the hope of returning it to its owner, I pretended to be ill and offered a remorseful reversed transaction at 200 Dollars. The man refused, and in order not to lose all 400 dollars, I had to go back to work and pay the employee hired in my place another thirty dollars for six days; so my clever cure made me healthy without a doctor, but not cheaper. We puttered around in the old rut, but without much profit, until we were driven out of our pit by the flood of the river on New Year's Eve and had to stop working.

Dutch Bar

The next morning already, on New Year's Day 1855, I left with my few belongings and found a German in Dutch Bar, named Ruckteschel —,but he now wrote his name in American John Rucktashel — whom I had known since my stay in California and now also found without work, that is to say: without a pit. We agreed to buy one and found one with a house and all its accessories for 50 dollars, from a Swiss man who was homesick but, as it seemed, also had enough money; how else would he have given us the place so cheaply? The work was started immediately, which was well worth it, and I was glad to be away from Jacksonville. [105/106]

Bad luck and good luck

There, however, the five participants had decided, as the water was receding after only ten days, to start the work again, which now consisted of removing the sand and gravel twenty feet deep to get to the gold-bearing earth. But this could not be processed until the middle of August. I agreed to put a man in my place for five dollars a day because of the better prospects we still had around New Year's Day. When the washing of the ground began in August, however, the daily costs could hardly be met from the meagre income and the whole place, for that sixth I had paid 400 dollars a year before, was sold for 200. So one

can miscalculate, who is rushing after gold and money and is afraid that he could be undershooted.

Meanwhile, I've had good luck elsewhere. The place I worked at Dutch Bar paid well, and although I had to pay thirty dollars a week to my worker in Jacksonville, I had earned another thousand dollars free money here until New Year's Day. That was in 1855; but fifty-six we worked in the same place without profit, yes, each of us had to add another 200 dollars. In the following year, the results were good again there; but already at the end of November, when the first rain started, it drove us out of the river and we had to decommission the place. [106/107]

Partici-pants. Flood

Now in July 1856 I had bought half of a place including house and equipment from a German friend for 50 dollars. The place was situated on the bank of the river and it was possible to work there even during the flood, but I did not want to do so, as I had to work elsewhere in the river with 6 employees, and hired a man for the position to work with my partner. At first it went as I wished, but I soon became certain that my deputy was cheating me miserably. Without further ado and without making a fuss, I suggested that one of us should pay the other one out, which he cleverly passed on to me in exchange for another 50 dollars, as I had paid my predecessor. For the sake of peace I accepted. For undisturbed work on the site, I had created an 1100 meter long drainage channel, three meters deep at the upper end and protected from flooding by a one and a half meter high dam. In spite of this weir, it was destroyed by floods in mid-February and sedimented along its entire length. What good were the 50 men who worked with me at the head end for three hours, using all their strength! The flood broke through in various places, and at last we were in the greatest hurry to save ourselves from being washed away and drowned. The never-ending downpour [107/108] continued for another four hours in such a way that the river exceeded the usual water level by a strong two meters. This heavenly greeting from the God brought me a loss of 2000 dollars, because to reopen the ditch required two months of hard work by eight men; without a ditch the place could not be used. Towards the end of April we worked again and had a good yield for six weeks; then it turned out that the rest of the place was exploited earlier, and we left.

About chinese

At Dutch Bar I had let the pit be worked all winter long, first with three men, then with six; it beared very well, and I could sell the remaining part of the pit for 1000 dollars. This was an unusually high price; the advantage was that Chinese people lived in a house on the square and there was also a Chinese burial place there. Both of these things had to be removed, and although the yellow faces objected, nothing could be achieved legally. Later the dead Chinese man was dug up, his bones carefully collected and united with brass wire as artfully as once in the living body, and brought to San Francisco in a coffin of precious wood; with him 60 such coffins were transported from there on

a steamer to China, each for 300 dollars. The Chinese all, those who die and are buried [108/109] there, are taken out again after 5-6 years, when all the flesh has disappeared, the remains are collected as described and sent to the residence of the deceased, where they are piously kept by the dependents or their relatives.

Ends well …

On the so advantageous sale of this place I bought the water pipe leading from Stedtman's Bar to Blue Gulch for 3300 dollars. The water was sold to the mine owners working along the pipe, not too expensive, but it brought me a nice profit; with it I was able to get over the loss and contradiction of earlier days. Of course, piling up and scraping money had never been my first goal; but I did not want to have gone through the difficult years in America in vain, instead I wanted to be able to show myself in my homeland as a man who had built his life by himself and in honour, and I felt even more the joy of not having turned back, at the time after the ship accident in Harve, despite the misfortune of Swabian woman and the moaning of many fellow travelers. [109/110]

Eighth Chapter

A brother is welcome, pack of thieves less
More serious dangers / A dog as a warner
Mexicans and other gangs / Wages for murderers
Gold digger customs / About Indians

After all the year 1858 came. I worked here and there with good fortune, but mostly in the same area, kept up my connection with my homeland and my chosen one, as briskly as the post service allowed it over such a long distance, and even planned to buy properties in the homeland, partly also in the vicinity of the village, which the bride or her parents advised me to buy. Among those was the old Riedersteg mill, which would have appealed to me the most with its beautiful farmland and large forest. The plans, however, were thwarted at the last moment, mostly by my bride, who shied away from urging me to make a decision prematurely; otherwise I would certainly have returned to Germany years earlier.

Brother Donat

In November of that year, I received from my siblings a letter from my brother Donat, who had emigrated to Illinois in 1854, which described his situation in a less than rosy light. Donat was the second youngest of the eight brothers and sisters still living — the first four [110/111] had died in infancy — and was especially dear to me. So he had been too shy to ask me directly for help, or perhaps he didn't know my whereabouts for sure, as I was soon here, soon there, and so he contacted the siblings. For the sake of brevity, I wrote to him immediately to Illinois that if he wanted to come to California, I would send him the necessary money and ensure a good place. He happily agreed, and to

avoid a long detour for the money, I asked a New York friend to send him 300 dollars as quickly as possible, and on May 5th I had the pleasure of welcoming my brother, who I hadn't seen for 8 years, in a foreign country. I bought him a place in Jacksonville near my water pipe, which we then let exploit. This business didn't quite meet our expectations and we soon sold it again, and without a profit. As I had enough water available at my pipe, which didn't cost us anything, we tried different places and finally found one that was profitable. We worked on it thoroughly, but gave it away the next winter. My brother had to keep the water pipe, a job for which, since it required the greatest punctuality, I couldn't need everyone, but I didn't want to constantly burden my brother with it. [111/112]

Gold hyenas

In some places we had quite varying successes, but on the whole we could be satisfied. However, some of our profits were reduced by thieves, as it was the case with many other gold seekers. They used to examine the ground with rare ingenuity using thin steel rods; a certain sound of these rods indicated gold, and the thieves dug it up, and in this way many a prospector has lost the gold or money he thought was safe in his hut, hidden three or four feet deep. More insolently, my comrade and I were robbed one day. The thief cut open our canvas house on one side, searched everything inside, threw it all upside down and stole a watch, a revolver and some gold dust worth about 11 dollars. The other gold worth 600 dollars, which I had hidden in a half-filled sack under potatoes, he didn't seem to guess that it was there, and so it remained to us. Six weeks later, I saw my watch displayed in the shop of a German watchmaker; I was able to name the number and special details exactly and thus got the watch back. The watchmaker had bought it from a Chinese man unknown to him and had to write off the money he had spent. [31]

Rejected visitor

Ruckteschel and I only escaped the worse attempt of a robbery by a happy coincidence. Should I have dreamed that [112/113] I would one day owe my life saving to a mouse? And yet I must believe that today if I am not to blame everything that happens to accident.

At that time we lived in a canvas house in an exploited gold pit, casually four hundred meters away from other gold-digger houses. Since we did not feel safe after the first robber visit we received, and since we did not want to make anybody's job easier, we had secured the inside of the room about 12 feet high with planks, but not the roof. One night, it was on November the 14th 1858 - came the visit. We were asleep, from which I was awakened by the gnawing of a mouse in a box standing next to my bed, filled with newspapers and potatoes, but which also contained my gold at the bottom. It was at three o'clock in the morning. I didn't fall asleep right away, and now, when the rustling

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[31] Outdated southern German/Swiss word: „**hinterhaben**“, verb. zurückhalten [DWB, Grimm]; „**hinderhaben**“ **1.** a) tr., to withhold; b) refl., to abstain; **2.** Damage, loss, suffer, e.g. to a good in trade; to come off badly; lose, forfeit; ... [Idiotikon]

of the mouse stopped for a while, I heard a suspicious noise; it was like the nois of ripping cloth, but it came in jerks, as it were carefully. I grabbed the rifle and the revolver hanging next to the bed and thought of getting up and waking Ruckteschel, who was snoring, quietly. At that moment I noticed how in the corner of the roof the cloth was cut inch by inch. I jumped to my feet and [113/114] fired the rifle towards the roof corner. Ruckteschel flinched, but outside I heard someone jumping down and rushing away. Since we were doubtful whether the robber was not several, we kept calm and decided to wait until daybreak to see what was going on. Then we found the door tied from the outside and when we came out, the cloth was cut open all around, also on the roof two feet long. The robber would probably have lowered himself into the interior, and in order not to disturb the neighbourhood by shooting, he would have slew us with his dagger. We were soon able to guess who did it. A week later he climbed through a window of a French woman living alone and running a boarding house, stole her wallet with 83 dollars in front of her eyes and left. As he held the naked dagger in his hand, the woman, in her fear of death, made noise not before the robber had already gained a far distance.

A robber

This robber seems to have prepared his two robberies cleverly. On Sunday, three days before his visit to our house, he collected the rent from the French woman who was running her business in his house. He discovered that the woman was taking the money out of her bedroom; in the meantime he appropriated the key to the bedroom and removed a window latch in order to be able to get in there undisturbed. Afterwards he came to me to change a [114/115] twenty-dollar coin and could see that I took out my change from under my pillow and put the bag back there. He might also have known that I bought gold almost every week from the gold diggers living there, and that he hoped to grab it easily in my tent house, since the wooden walls had not yet been erected; but the day after he changed the money, we did it. Er hätte jene Nacht über 4000 Dollar Goldeswert bei mir, gefunden und wie der Kampf geendet hätte, war auch zweifelhaft. Wir brachen das Haus sogleich weg und erbauten ein besseres zwischen denen anderer Goldgräber.

This dangerous fella was the Frenchman Iwan Fuller, who lived in the area. His own countrymen accused him of seven robbery killings face to face, but they had not been able to bring him to court with sufficient witnesses. He would have it easy with his goings-on; he was generally known as a gold-digger, crept into every society as a good friend, listened which places yielded profit and where the gold was sold, and thus knew where he could get hold of it successfully, all the more so since he knew the habits of the people from frequent visits. So he had sneaked into the confidence of a company of 20 Chinese, two of whom one Sunday went to the Chinese camp three miles away with the gold dug up during the week, about [115/116] 800 dollars. Half a mile before the rather lonely location, Fuller stabbed the two of them, left the bod-

ies lying around, and then arranged a meeting with another Frenchman near the murder site, where they found the dead seemingly by accident and reported it to the other Chinese. Fuller even accompanied them to the discovery site, but his feigned regret only aroused their suspicion, which they freely expressed to him. They could not catch him in court, but they hated and avoided him ever since.

Murder victim

About half a year later he killed two Irishmen in their lonely hut, again at Chinese Camp, where they had sold gold; it was May 18. I wanted to borrow a shovel from them, but upon my knocking and shouting I found no one there; on the other hand an unfamiliar smell aroused in me a suspicion. I opened the door, which was strangely locked from the outside, and to my horror I encountered a kneeling dead man with his upper body over the bed, then on the fireplace a second one, still with a bundle of brushwood in his hand. I closed the hut again and rounded up the neighbourhood; the judge of Chinese Camp was also informed. By the time he came, about 300 gold diggers had already gathered on the place. The corpses had already begun to decompose, [116/117] death was caused by stabs in the back. All values were missing, except for two ounces of gold dust in a small box. The hut was teeming with carrion flies and vermin, so it was burned down and the remains of the murdered were packed into a coffin and buried in the Catholic churchyard of Chinese Camp. Due to lack of witnesses, investigation and atonement remained undone.

Re-enact-ments

More serious suspicions fell on Fuller until several months later, when another Frenchman, who had wanted to return home with quite a lot of money, was found murdered and robbed in his own house, but Fuller had always been seen with him in those days. His fellow countrymen openly accused him of this murder and all avoided him. He had made himself particularly suspicious by the fact that on Sunday afternoons he always went into the city where he could see who was selling gold and how much; for there anyone had free access. At the same time it may have become known to him that every Sunday I brought up to two thousand dollars of gold dust to the San Francisco Mint and the next Sunday I picked up the minted value.

Warned in time

The attempt to bowl us down in our tent house was unsuccessful, and so he tried it alone in the open air and ambushed me one Sunday evening. I was on my way home from Chinese Camp, where I [117/118] received my money, when I in Camp Salvado, a small gold digger settlement, saw Fuller's dog coming from Dutch Bar, my home. The animal ran past me, and as I slowly walked on, it overtook me again, and I concluded that its master was near. With a revolver in my hand, ready to fire, I surveyed every bush and every spot on the path where he could hide; then he appeared about 400 paces away in the middle of the footpath, which was littered with bushes and large stones, running

as if he was in a hurry. Ten steps[32] in front of him, I moved three steps to the side above the path, aimed at him and ordered him to go his way as fast as possible; otherwise I would shoot. He wanted to hear why I was threatening him since he were my best friend. He knows that better than me, I made him understand and told him to walk on. At the next house I encountered some Frenchmen and asked them when Fuller had passed by. "Two hours ago," they said. That's how long he had been lying in wait for me; I was lucky that his dog had given him away. From that day on, I never walked the path alone again.

Assaults and atonement

More cleverly two Mexicans went to work at a lonely gold-digger's house. Four Germans were sitting there having lunch; the crooks tied their horses outside, stepped into the house with their revolvers [118/119] cocked and told the Germans to raise their hands, while one of them had to take and deliver the four revolvers from the wall. After they had also handed over their money, they had to go out, and one of the robbers kept them in check, so that in the meantime the other searched the house; then both rode off with the revolvers of the Germans and 1200 dollars of booty, with a polite Adios caballeros!

Two others, however, also Mexicans, it turned out worse. The hold-up man, a North German, had sold gold in town for 200 dollars. The thugs followed him and demanded his money with a threatening weapon. The German willingly gave out a few silver dollars, but when they demanded the gold as well, he threw the filled bag at their feet. While the two of them bent down after it, the German shot the older one down and hit the other one on the head with his gun so that he staggered. He then took the revolvers from both of them, killed the one completely and led the defenseless younger one back to the camp. Upon the German's report, several hundred men gathered in a trice, held court and led the culprit back to the scene of the crime. The informations given by the German were recognized as valid, the 20-year-old Mexican, however, got a rope around his neck and he was pulled up at a tree [119/120], with the jeering and bravos of the spectators; this also happened to the shot person, and when both were exercising harmoniously above, they shot a few dozen bullets into their bodies. It took two days till the bodies were taken away by the authorities and the German was interrogated, but his deed was recognized as legal. The robbers were buried at Chinese Camp.

Robbed Chinese

The riffraff liked to raid the peaceable, good-natured Chinese, and usually on Saturday nights when the people still had their weekly yield at hand; on Sundays they would sell it somewhere and send most of the proceeds to China. So once in the night a Chinese house with 20 inmates was attacked near me. Since the board house was well locked,

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32 The original text here uses a German word "Gänge" in a no longer common meaning for steps. „Gang" m. subst. ... **I.** The walking, of humans and animals. **1)** Originally also and probably first the individual step, steps (cf. DWB gehn), ... [DWB - Grimm]

the robbers, equipped with dazzling lanterns, waited until the door was opened by one whom a need led outside. This was seized, led as a hostage into the house, where the sleeping Chinese were robbed or threatened with shooting anyone who tried to resist. The affair was bloodless; the robbers took over 400 dollars in gold and six revolvers. From now on, the Chinese protected their houses with bushes and hung on them empty tin cans, which made noise when they were touched and called the inmates to defend themselves.

Murietta

The most dangerous and daring robbers in [120/122] California back then were the Mexicans. They often carried out their raids in gangs; the one of Joaquín Murietta[33] was too well known in the gold region and the rest of California for not keeping everyone in fear. This Murietta had the cold-blooded audacity, although on his catch, alive or dead, 5000 dollars were suspended, to show himself publicly where he liked it. So I saw him one evening in Mokelumne Hill in a well-attended drinking house where his actions were being discussed. An American opened his mouth: If he would met him, Murietta would not escape.The braggart had no idea that the robber nearby had heard the bragging. Murietta jumped up on the table, raised the revolver and shouted, "Here's Murietta; who wants to catch him?" With that he jumped down, left the room untouched and mounted his horse, held by a henchman, outside, whereupon both disappeared into the night. The matter would certainly not have been bloodless, but none of us dared to put our skin on it, least of all the boasting Yankee. Another time, Murietta spent the night at an inn in Stockton. When he mounted his steed in the morning and rode away, a public announcement at the church door lured him. He dismounted, mingled with the curious, and read that 5000 dollars had been put up for his capture. He [121/122] wrote underneath with a pencil: "I'll pay you 10,000" and signed: Murietta. After that he rode off quietly. On this challenge the sheriff sent a patrol after him to neutralize him, but in vain. Attempts to get hold of him several people have paid with their lives. Murietta was an adept marksman; no bullet was cast for him, he should have bragged often, and, it seems, it has come true. For one has never heard nothing about his capture, and of course nothing more about himself after a few years.

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[33] Joaquín Murrieta Carrillo (also: Murieta, Murietta) (* 1829; † July the 25th, 1853 in Fresno County, California) revived already in 1854 in a novel of which excerpts were printed in the "California Police Gazette" in 1858. After he was shot by a search party, his head was preserved and displayed as evidence. [Wikipedia] So he was dead before Kromer arrived in California and a legend during his stay. That means that Kromer can only have seen his preserved head but not Murrieta alive. This is an own poetry of one of the Kromer's or a plagiarism of the robber stories from his time in the USA.

Three-Finger Jack

Another gang was making California unsafe at the time of my arrival, whose commander was the three-fingered Jack[34], a man with only three fingers on his right. Twenty murders were proven to have been committed by these people; they acted in a foursome and kept the gold region in fear for a long time. Finally, the sharp intervention of the authorities drove them into couples and shot them together, at last the commander, and even by a friend who wanted to get the reward. The traitor was soon after dastardly eliminated by a brother of the Three-Fingered Jack.

German victims

In 1856, when I was staying in Mokelumne Hill, a terrible murder took place there: a German butcher's family, husband, wife and three almost grown-up children were killed after a hard struggle [122/123] and the considerable money was robbed. The people had sold their business and wanted to return to Germany the next day. The night before their departure, they were assaulted in their apartment by three Mexicans. Neighbours came to their aid, but the bloody deed was done and the money was gone. The perpetrators were recognized as Mexicans, but one had to watch how they escaped on their nimble horses. Two sheriffs and two policemen pursued them from location to location. Three days after the murder they came to Camp Salvado, where mostly Mexicans lived, behind them the four pursuers who had heard in Chinese Camp that the three had ridden against Camp Salvado two hours ago. I was just in the area with an acquaintance and, curious about the outcome, we hurried after the pursuers. Halfway to Camp Salvado we heard a shot; on the second and third we saw a Mexican crossing over from a drinking house into the nearby bush forest, a second one towards us. About ten of the shots sent after them failed. Then in the drinking house we found the sheriff of Mokelumne Hill dead on the ground. One of the murderers was hiding in a tent house, around which there was an immediate furious shooting back and forth until it was burned down; the murderer had escaped unnoticed into the next hut; when that too was set on fire, he came out from behind a box with burning [123/124] trousers and fired from two revolvers, but without hitting: then, as everyone was shooting at him, he crashed under 30 or 40 bullets, and when he was hung with smouldering clothes, he got several dozen more in his body. His murder companions could escape from California and one lost track of them.

Foiled robbery

A robbery at Love's Bar, my closest neighbourhood, was thwarted by a dog. The owner of a delivery shop was visited one evening by two Mexicans, allegedly for orders. They lured the man into his workroom, where the cash register was. There one of them threatened him with a revolver and demanded the money, while the other grabbed him by the neck. But he was torn down on his back by the powerful dog of the merchant and the animal immediately bit through his neck. The dog

[34] Three Fingered Jack was together with Murrieta one of the „Five Joaquíns Gang" and was also hunted and shot at the same time, whereby his three-fingered hand was cut off as evidence. [Wikipedia]

was shot along by the other robber, but not dangerous, and the dog held him down furiously until his master shot the robber. The mastiff, trained on the man, had already protected his master everywhere during his single years; without the dog, he would have been lost; for before help came, the whole work was done, with the brave support of the loyal animal.

If I think of another misdeed I came in contact with, it should be said that I was not [124/125] really fearful, but neither was I, as one might think, aiming for the goldland because of adventure. But those who were not looking for adventures, they found them all the more certain; you couldn't escape them, so to speak; I certainly hadn't been looking for my encounter with Iwan Fuller, for example. I want to tell you how I met him one last time.

French landlady

Not far from us lived the French woman I mentioned earlier. Her husband was a gold-digger, respected and appreciated. One day they found him murdered in his mine, and took his compatriot Iwan Fuller for the murderer, only there was nothing to prove to him. The widow, an enterprising and determined person of about 27 years of age, had initially run a boarding house in one of Fuller's houses, but after being robbed by her own landlord, she moved to a log cabin, which she bought; that is all probably already told. Ruckteschel and I followed her there as guests, as well as other gold diggers, including a number of her fellow countrymen, including Fuller. For fear of his revenge the landlady did not dare to expel him from the house; but she hardly spoke the most necessary things to him, and not even in their common language, but only in English.

We both had the trust of the usually very careful landlady, and this finally to such an extent [125/126] that she preserved a part of our gold yield for us; I gave her mine always in a sealed suede bag. Where she kept the things until we took them away was unknown to us; but we believed everything was in safe guard and in the best hiding place.

Attempted robbery

For her protection, the woman kept a big dog, which followed her everywhere, and in his vigilance even, when we passed by on our way to the gold mine, sent his barking or a warning growl from inside the hut after us. During the day she carried a revolver in her belt, two of them she had hung above the bed in the bedroom, and above them a mighty old cuirassier's sabre; according to her story an uncle of hers, who in those days had moved to Russia with Napoleon, had carried it; she had brought the weapon and an effigy of the Emperor to California as a memento and hung it up in the bedroom.

Now one morning I went to the gold mine quite early with Ruckteschel, each with his shotgun, because we wanted to prey a piece of game: then suddenly something alienated me; I saw a window open at the Frenchwoman's hut, which looked like a dead eye, while I had usually ever seen the sky reflected in it. I told Ruckteschel and we looked

at each other questioningly; he noticed that the dog's usual [126/127] barking was missing. “There something is not perpendicular,” he said and immediately guessed a raid. We whistled at the dog, called his name, then the Frenchwoman hers, but everything remained silent. We carefully approached the hut, the shotguns ready to fire. After some twenty steps I discovered a strange object under the open window on the ground, which we could not recognize in the hardly noticeable twilight. When we finally got to the house, the mysterious thing was a large leather suitcase, of which the lid had jumped out of the lock and stood open; it was filled with coffee beans, of which a part lay in the grass. Now it seemed to us that the robbery was beyond doubt, and since there was no movement in the hut, I ordered Ruckteschel to help me up to the window and dragged him up too, since the door of the house was locked.

But how it looked there! Was there anything we could do to help?

A terrible discovery

Inside, on the floor under the window parapet, lay a man with a split skull, with bloody brains pouring out of it. His right hand held a shotgun; the shot had failed; only the percussion cap had burnt off. But in front of her bed laid the French woman, apparently dead. She had a long, thick bump on her forehead; her hand grasped the bloody cuirassier's sabre. We strove for the woman, found her pulse still active and gradually brought her to here own consciousness by lining [127/128] her up with whisky we found in the host room. But she talked confused, partly incomprehensible stuff, while calling the name Fuller and complained about gold and money.

We didn't find anything else noticeable in the hut, but finally we discovered the dog, which had crawled under the stairs leading to the cellar, dead, obviously poisoned.

Unsuccessful robbery

We bedded the landlady comfortably on her bed and left the hut again through the window. Outside at the suitcase, however, we had another horrible surprise: a bloodless hand, chopped off behind the joint, hung wax pale from a leather handle. It held its fingers convulsively clawed around the handle, as if it wanted to hold on to the robbery in death.

Ruckteschel began to rummage through the coffee beans. He pulled a bag of gold dollar pieces and some silver to the light, then his own gold in a green linen bag and finally my suede bag, also undamaged. Obviously, there the landlady had thought the things were safe!

We took the valuables with us so that other passers-by would not take them away, and, as the day was slowly approaching, we went on the robber's trail, which showed itself in drops of blood in the grass, and after a short search we found the man dead in an old gravel pit behind a bush. [128/129]

Atonement

The left one held the stump of the right arm in a clasp; it wanted to hold on to the life that was surging away in the flowing blood. The

dead man was Ivan Fuller; the robber lying in the hut was a Mexican; the horseman's sabre had once again proved its power on them and at the same time had taken just revenge.

The way we made up the robbery, the Frenchwoman described it to us on the other days. She had cut off Fuller's hand, who already had the suitcase on the windowsill; the other man got the sabre over his head when, at the same time, he struck her with the failing rifle, which made her unconscious. How the robbers might have discovered their hiding place of money remained a mystery to her.

The fate of the two robbers, especially Fuller's, seemed fair and deserved to all gold diggers. The Frenchwoman recovered completely, but although her business was going especially well now, she did not stay in the country for long and returned to France.

Regarding these robberies and crimes, they were usually condemned by the local gold-diggers when the sinner was caught in the act or was identified by witnesses. The punishment for murder was immediate hanging. Robbery and theft were punished with flogging and expulsion. [129/130]

Laws and customs

The gold diggers had their own, self-created laws in their districts, to which the individual had to comply. Violations resulted in the loss of the worked place. In the place where I worked, the owner had to claim twenty-five feet of the riverbed, and also on the bank of the river twenty-five feet wide up to the top of the mountain for digging gold; but he had to make this known there in two inscriptions. Anyone who did not work his place for two days lost the right to it; anyone else could occupy it in the early hours of the third day; of course there were many disputes and even dangerous shootings about it; for not everyone put up with the denial of a lucrative place without remuneration. Gold miners' meetings then used to decide on it. In 1857 I would have lost my most productive place in this way, too, if I had been at work only half an hour later one Monday morning; four evil-known Americans, fellows there called “Hoodlums”, wanted to occupy it; I was told of the planned attempt a few weeks later by an American friend of mine. Further I had no more complaints.

Gold thieves

A bad side effect of our work was the robbery out of the machines. When the owner was not present, for example during lunchtime, the machines were emptied of their contents; also at night the machines were often cleaned with iron [130/131] hooks in places where the gold tends to adhere, and this work was often well worthwhile. Later I always filled my machine with earth as a precaution and thus prevented the robbery. Some Indians used this craft particularly successfully; of course white people often enough as well. But this circumstance should play pranks on a Frenchman. Two of his compatriots, who were working a very lucrative place, found their machines robbed in the morning without being able to catch the thief despite of several night watches.

They came up with the idea of placing a loaded shotgun at the end of the pit in such a way that the thief had to take a lesson when he appeared. This happened as he walked along the machine and poked for the gold. After two torturous days, the poor man died of the injury. It had been one of the nearest neighbours who had known the conditions exactly and had used it with success.

Indians

But Indians were not always looking for such theft; there were also those who literally dug for gold. The man with the rifle over his back goes ahead with his three or four women, runs from place to place in the pits and chooses a place where he suspects gold. Then comes the woman with the digging iron, bores herself a hole, and the other woman takes the earth with a washing bowl and washes it in the [131/132] nearby water. Depending on the gold she finds, the place is either held or marched on. Besides the white prospectors, the Indian ones have always been small in number.

While in some areas of the United States the Indians were still belligerent and dangerous, and, where it was possible to do so, demolished the White passing through, in California they remained peaceful, but had little contact with us. They still had their own customs when they were among themselves; it is also possible that they practiced them secretly and therefore the government did not interfere, although in my opinion they were often against American law or even against the human nature. I found this, for example, at the burial of a dead Indian chief I attended in 1854; it took place in a ravine near Chinese Camp in late March. The body was brought there to be burned according to tribal custom. They built a mighty pile of wood, put the corpse on top of it in war ornaments and tied his three favorite dogs next to him; those were very beautiful animals whose cruel fate drove the water into my eyes. The mourning crowd, about 800 Indians, including the seven wives of the dead man with partly adult, partly still young children carried in baskets on their backs, surrounded the pyre. [132/133]

This was lit, and the more the fire came up and the more fearfully the poor dogs whimpered and then howled until they were dead, the louder they cheered and sang and the more foolishly the Indians danced around the fire until it was completely burned down, which lasted until the dawn. As a sign of mourning, the women of the deceased then smeared the fat boiled from his bones on their faces, which they were not allowed to wash off as long as this disgusting ointment held. The bones of the dead man and his dogs were then taken away by the Indians, I do not know where.

In the vicinity of my residence there were still quite a lot of redskins in those years, but all of them, as I said before, were peaceful. They wore only sparse clothing and mostly got it from white people, also the food. I felt sorry for the poor fellows; half a hundred years ago they had been a great brave people, and now they simply succumbed to the weapons of a not yet so brave, only more cunning intruder, proba-

bly also to the liquor with which they were spoiled. But that too was called Christian.

As far as I could observe, the Indians' favorite food was meat, but mostly they were only given foot bones. These were after being buried 4 times, whereupon they already smelled of decay, eaten, sometimes raw, sometimes cooked. [133/134] Rice, peas, and similar crops were placed in baskets, woven from split ribbons, laid in a pot of water and placed on heated stones until the food was cooked. Then they ate from the pot with their fingers.They never used knives, spoons, and forks: rural morality. [134/135]

Ninth Chapter

Disgusting jaws and dear Next Ones / Women's market / A hope is deceived and a long journey ends in the homeland.

Snakes

Life in the gold country was dangerous; hunger for gold and greed for money bred criminals who found a fertile ground in the washed up rabble of America as well as Europe, and every honest man who came through unscathed and not damaged in body and soul could say of luck and thank the Lord. Besides crooks and robbers, there were other dangers, especially snakes and other vermin. Although I encountered fewer of these in California than in Texas, where one could not be on guard enough. So one day, while walking for mowing, I accidentally stepped on a rattlesnake. The animal immediately wriggled up my right leg, but couldn't bite me immediately because of the high boots, that is to say: I had time and fortunately enough reflection to cut it off with a dagger. Then I crushed the fallen head, brought the two parts of the animal to the householder Mine, for whom I was working at the time, and hung them over a clothes-bar. When I came home [135/136] from mowing in the evening, I found the two relicts gnawed cleanly by a kind of wasps and other creatures. I took the rattle of this animal to myself to bring it back to my homeland later.

Scorpions

Another time, when I stopped for lunch with Kernbold in a hay shed, we saw a big snake rolled up on the ridge tree above us. We reported it to Mr. Meine and decided to hold the animal on the roof with a pole and to kill it there with an axe. In the process, however, it turned out that there were two snakes, and we now had every effort to become master of them. Meine then cut them both open to boil out the fat, which was considered a good remedy; there was a hen's egg in one of them, completely intact, but in the other there were several yolks, and Mr. Mine now saw who had committed the egg thefts of which he had always suspected us both, as he now confessed. At him, we had initially made our beds in the grain room; one night I felt something cold next to me in the bed, reached for it and jumped out immediately, then the

snake also left, and I just escaped quite happily with the scare. From then on we set up our beds under the roof and were spared from further cold visits. On the other hand, we had to fight a lot with snakes during haymaking, namely [136/137] in the cactus bushes, where rattlesnakes like to stay, because of the cactus apples they prefer, I was told. They use to lie rolled up foot-high in the grass, the head up; who doesn't disturb or pursues it, has nothing to fear; in the defense, however, they are so skillful and quick as dangerous. Our fellow traveler, Karoline Hilpert, was, as already told, so careless to step on a snake in the kitchen and died just the same day from that bite. One of our neighbors, on the other hand, who had been bitten by a rattlesnake, his wife saved his life with a bottle of brandy, which she ordered him to drink up completely. In Texas we also had to fear the scorpions; I never forget the horror when I found the first one under the bark of a fence wood and the disgusting animal pointed its tail with the curved end towards me. We found still many of them in these woods, which we had to peel at that time, to fence in huts and paths with it. Just as horrible seemed the tarantulas to us, a special kind of big spiders. We met them mostly in the open field, where they lived in artistically vaulted caves under fine closing lid. It is said that they are as poisonous as snakes and scorpions and that they arouse a strange dancing fury or madness in the bitten. They were ugly, uncouth spiders; we killed all those [137/138] we encountered; but the horror of them and the scorpions I never lost.

New gold fever

Beside the animals, who became dangerous for us, namely through the fact that they were not always to be discovered early enough in order to resist them, the dear fellow men, of whom one would have liked to be better, became even more dangerous for us in murder or robbery. But I have reported too much of this to go on making you horrified. Often enough I reproached myself: What have you put yourself in danger; expect now that you will perish in it. But heaven has graciously preserved me for nine years, or did not want to have me prematurely; but perhaps one is always in danger, one way or another, and if the donkey is too comfortable, he goes on the ice. I even finally did so by deciding to leave California, because in May 1858 a rich gold discovery had allegedly been made on the Fraser River. While I was doing well in California, did I have anything to do up in Canada, over 1,200 kilometers away by air, just because thousands of gold diggers rushed there, who raised the travel money? The fool's fever took hold of me and at the end of June I departed from my flourishing gold mine Dutch Bar to San Francisco, where I wanted to wait for more miracle news. Fortunately, it was soon [138/139] discovered that the story was a hoax, or a prank by crooks who wanted thereby to lure the prospectors away from their places. After an absence of six weeks I returned to the old place, which I had let run under my brother, only because my stupidity about 400 dollars eased.

Gambling addiction

In those days a good acquaintance of mine, a North German, wanted to take the return trip to Germany with four comrades from San Francisco. He had raised a lot of money with gold prospecting, and already had the travel documents when he just happened to meet me. Now, however, the oats stung him and he went at the evening before his departure to a gambling den, where 1000 dollars were taken from him in a very short time. We all implored him to put up with this bloodletting, but he let the other four travel away, let his travel money expire, and began to gamble, always with higher stakes, until he had lost 91,000 dollars in a fortnight, so that a friend had to advance him the money to return to the mines, where he now continued to serve as a worker. As long as he was there, he never came up; each time he took his earnings to the gambling house to force his luck. In this way, hard-earned fortunes have been melted away and sad family fates have [139/140] been created. I said to myself after the first game loss of 21 dollars: Over and done with! and never succumbed to addiction again.

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Law and courts

As immigrants and non-nationals, we had no political rights in California and probably in the other American states at that time, but we did not consider this a disadvantage; we were happy about our admission to work and earn money and about the right to defend ourselves in danger and distress of our skin. Some things were ordered differently there than in Germany and seemed at least strange to us. In elections, for example, every citizen was allowed to cast his vote in as many places as he could ride to from sunrise to sunset, whereby some of them voted legally valid in 20-25 places. Other rights, on the other hand, were not curtailed, though probably only under certain circumstances dictated by necessity. Gold diggers' meetings could, for example, appoint a lynch court in response to a newly discovered crime. It happened to me twice to be elected to one; here an American was to be judged for murder, there a Chinese for robbing. However, in such convictions, legal regulations or established practice, which had become customary law, were observed. A court of 12 men, chairman and clerk was elected by the gold-diggers' [140/141] meeting, the prosecutor was heard, witnesses were interrogated, everything was put down on paper and after that the sentence, which had to be unanimous, was announced and immediately executed. There was no appeal; nor could any higher court intervene against lawful lynch judges after the execution of the verdict.

Legal comedies

A young American had shot a Chinese man on the public street out of high spirits. The murderer's mother, a very rich widow, offered 100,000 dollars for the acquittal; but the criminal had to dangle. At such judgments, in such uncertain and dangerous times, excitement and the feeling of revenge spoke along with them; one saw only two things: crime and expiation, and so the verdict was usually unanimous; before a proper jury, a bribe such as the widow mentioned would have

been more likely to be successful, i.e. the unanimity demanded would have been easily prevented. Once we saw the sheriff in league with the criminals during the execution of two likewise rich American murderers. The sentence read: Between eleven and twelve o'clock the two would have to be judged by the rope. In front of thousands of spectators, the condemned held speeches to the people while the rope was already around their necks, but in such a way that it did not get tightened when they fell from the [141/142] ladder, with the sheriff's consent. Both fell to the ground and the one pulled the watch and shouted: "It's six minutes past twelve: we're free!" Now, however, the excited spectators threatened to hang the sheriff themselves; the murderers came back into the noose and now to death. I later avoided another election to lynch courts by staying away from the gold-digger meetings; an acquaintance used to call them lentil dishes, probably jokingly, or he did not know any better. But it was customary that whoever was elected by the gold diggers had to consider and accept the election as a matter of honor. But who was entitled to judge over others?

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Homeland issues

I had remained in touch with my home country during the long years of my absence, as busy as the postal service allowed. Although there was little to report from the small village with its modest hustle and bustle, this was done by my beloved fiancée with a good sense of humor and a lot of fun; she also understood how to hide the fear she suffered for me because of the many dangers, and I had to hear her concerns occasionally through my siblings. As a man in love, I awaited every answer with longing and each one brought me a festive day. [142/143]

I repeatedly asked her to come to California to get married, but she held on to her parents, siblings, and home, patiently awaiting my return with each new year, as I had promised her, but had not been able to do so for a long time. Heaven had not always kindly blessed my ventures and had namely spoiled me two valuable years in Texas; how helpful was there my good will? The work in California repeatedly brought good profits and I was able to put some gains aside because of my undemanding way of being. But after four years of American rascals, I would hardly have returned home as a stingy pensioner[35], as the Swabians say; but my ambition and stubbornness were not so modest, apart from my restless spirit for enterprise, which was beneficial to me in California, but could have been even more dangerous in the narrow countryside of Baden. In spite of all the whispers, my fiancée accepted these reasons and quietly rejected some suitors from the village and the surrounding area, against the many foreign encouragements and even more against the mockery of the sisters, who always remonstrated to her the American bridegroom, who would never find his way back

[35] The original text is „Dreischöppli-Rentner" what literally means retiree with three jackets.

across the Great Water with the wedding bouquet on his jacket; the future mother-in-law, on the other hand, always stood by me, as I heard [143/144] repeatedly to my delight. Letters from my brothers, who often had to write to me concerning the affairs of the Weilerhof, reported such things to me as gossip; but my bride turned over good and bad reports Kernbold's saying: It is fleshly, she said, not only in America, but also in Riedern. In this way she, like me, gained peace of mind from such drifting from siblings and family in law.

New gin trap

Of course, I would have found an opportunity to become a husband in California just as I did in Texas, and what would be more familiar to a young man, or what would be easier to forgive him, than to break a word given to a girl for the sake of another who knows how to guide him, or who is brought to him on a plate? I was not spared the latter there either. The import of women grew, the market revived, namely with German goods, and the gold digger was rated as a good buyer. Some German acquaintances had gone to New York at the beginning of 1855 because of marrying and just brought along a bunch of relatives from there, only for the purpose, as one of them joked, to bring male and female in California under and over and behind each other. The latter had brought his wife's sister, a pretty 17-year-old Charlotte Senning, with him and had either intended her for me or for my partner, [144/145] whom she just now liked. My part-owner Ruckteschel also soon found himself moved to make the young lover happy, after I had placed my German bride in front of me as protection and shield. He sold, although I strongly advised against it, his share of our abundant space and moved to Janky Hill, where the seventeen-year-old lived with sister and brother-in-law, and intended to tie the knot soon. He returned to the left place after 6 months, one experience richer, if not two; for he found a new partner of mine and now worked for us for three dollars a day, where he had previously earned twice as much, and again cooked himself some of his meals, while Charlotte took on the role of maid to an American family. After only a few months, I was once again being peddled: "Pretty woman, interested?" But since the woman who was destined for me was still sitting in the Black Forest, waiting for her knight, Charlotte was offered for sale quite openly, until finally a tree-length American, a former Swiss, Täschler by name, but who now wrote himself Tashler, tied the bond of marriage with the fortune-seeker and traveled with her to the East, so that something like a pouch[36] remained attached to her; Ruckteschel, on the other hand, married only in 1868 in New York, a funny Franconian girl from the Baden lowlands. [145/146]

Wedding market

In the summer of 1858, a man from Wangen im Allgäu let import his sister Karoline into California, also with the kind intention of relieving me of such tiresome female activities as bed-making and cooking; my Karoline quartet would have been finished with that, but again there

[36] „Täschler" and „Ruckteschel" could be understood as a variation of „Tasche", what means a kind of small bag.

was no match, and the woman from Allgäu finally became the conjugal associate of an older man who was running a vineyard in Chinese Camp. With this, enough of the more frequent attempts and temptations to make me disloyal to my promise, and who knows what fortune or misfortune I would have stumbled into in America, if I would have bound myself more loosely in my homeland.

Now, however, I had been in the country for almost a decade, and it was understandable that gradually the one-horse carriage with its work that was hardly familiar or less appropriate to the man was becoming a burden to me. Although one lived more comfortable than in the boarding house and was able to put aside many things that would otherwise have gone to the devil with smoking, drinking, or worse, but sometimes one was longing for companionship that made one forget the everyday stuff and let the person come into his right, which seemed less possible to me in America with each drudgerynt-year. This had induced Ruckteschel and me, since the bag allowed it us, to go to the Frenchwoman's house for board and lodging and [146/147] to waste a few hours of the evening there with entertainment; other boarding houses were too far away or would have offered more opportunities for drinking and spending money inappropriately, and that I avoided, although miserliness was not my style otherwise. With the Frenchwoman's departure for her homeland, we found ourselves relegated to our bare huts, and so I was all the more pleased to hear from my fiancée that she was willing to come to California and become my wife. She reported that my properties in the village, that is, my share of the Weiler-farm, had been sold, and since nothing would call me back there now, she thought it dangerous to know the bridegroom so far away and to lose him as a California husband after all. I was happy, as I wasn't for a long time, about Mareis message and made all preparations to pick up the dear bride in San Francisco and take her to my then home country Dutch Bar or to Chinese Camp.

Hope and disappointment

But in what happiness does not the devil have to clap his paws! After barely two more weeks Marei wrote to me that she had given up her preparations and would not make the trip; she wrote me no reasons, only the wish to see me at home and hold a wedding with her there. Who might have persuaded her to this change of heart was unknown to me and could also be indifferent to me; instead, I gave vent [147/148] to my displeasure in curses and imprecations, as it seldom happened, despite my abrupt and fierce nature. Brother Donat was my savior there; he calmed the puffing firebug, calmly discussed the matter with me, and the end was that I decided to travel home at the next opportunity, force the recalcitrant into the yoke, and lead her to California as my wife. „Yes, bring her by the nose ring," said Brother Donat, laughing on his back teeth, and I nodded to it and the weather sky was bright again.

Departure to San Francisco

The very next day Donat and I went to Chinese Camp and had the powers of attorney prepared at the court, in which I assigned him the management of my business in California and he assigned me the collection of his assets in Germany. What I could still arrange in the most necessary things happened in all haste; then I made arrangements for departure; the many acquaintances living around were bid farewell, then a two-day farewell party was held in the inner circle. We were very happy together, even though it was an important decision in my life.

To Panama

In the early morning of August 17th I said goodbye to my brother. It hurt my courage as if it was a farewell for life, and both of us had water in the eyes. Donat put me off for a [148/149] reunion already at Christmas, then I boarded the mail cart for Stockten, which arrived from Sonora at five o'clock, under the congratulations of the friends. I arrived in Stockton in the afternoon, and at five o'clock in the evening I took a small steamboat to San Francisco, where I arrived at two o'clock in the morning, and found accommodation at the Philadelphia Inn with the innkeeper Bootz, whom I knew from the past. There were a few stores to be visited for gifts for the homeland, and several acquaintances, which was done with happy drinking; to travel to the homeland was a joyful occasion for this, and words of farewell and congratulations called for a drink.. On August the 19th I left for Panama by steamer.

Travel companion

There were many Germans on the ship, and I made the acquaintance of some of them, who also traveled to their old homeland. Among them were two bakers who had become wealthy in California in their business, just as most bakers there were Germans. One of them had had a farm in Stockton besides; he was in his forties and had been married, but his wife had divorced from him because she didn't get any children. The court had adjudicated her, as is almost always happens over there for the benefit of women, compensation, and that was five thousand dollars, half of his property; yes, it would have [149/150] come even higher to him, he said, if he would have declared his property correctly. Out of anger at the murderous judgement, as he called it, he traveled back to the once blasphemed Germany to marry an honest fellow countrywoman, he said, instead of a professional divorce goose. As I later heard, he married a well-behaved woman from Darmstadt, returned to California soon and also had several children. This question was generally his hobby-horse on the whole trip; every day we heard his lament about Californian judges and his assertion that he was not to blame for the childlessness of his marriage; when he had had enough of it, gallows humor seized him and his slogan then was: “Come here; let us make one.” He drew the cards he always carried with him, losing each time, partly on purpose, partly ripped off by us, and had to pay for all the drinking he had ordered with at least half a dollar. When he was not in the mood to play, he shouted, "Come here; we want to put one," and then the four or five of us had to sit together with him and drink all we could, and he never let anyone else pay, but declared that the service was sometimes a penance for the stupidity of having married his

ex-wife, and sometimes a sacrifice of thanksgiving for he got rid of her. Then he also trumped apparently with the ruse with which he had bamboozled the judge about the state [150/151] of his fortune, whereby his divorcée had been fleeced by some 15000 dollars.

Hustle and bustle on board

Instead of an eighteen-day trip as on the outward journey, this time we arrived in Panama after a very quiet 12-day trip on September the 1st. We were immediately loaded with our luggage onto the waiting railroad cars, and a journey of only two hours took us to Aspinwall, and after a stay of nearly 4 hours we boarded the steamer bound for New York.

We had hardly left Aspinwall when the trip became very stormy and our good fun maker Hörchner disappeared, as much as he had bragged before about not getting seasick. To our astonishment, he reappeared at noon on the fourth day, while otherwise seasick people often tend to disappear for the entire duration of a voyage; by the way, he was not the only one of us who was affected. When I asked him about his cure, he maliciously said that the other half of his marriage had appeared to him in a dream and that his seasickness had run away from such a spook.

Books

As long as our jester-preside and others from our group were sick, I had some books, which I had already owned or precautionary bought in San Francisco, partly even from a German bookseller, to pass the time, without finding the right leisure for reading them. There was some [151/152] curly stuff underneath that I could hardly get into; a larger one, called Siebenkäs, I couldn't cope with at all, although I found some nice passages in it and read it repeatedly, in order to perhaps become familiar in this way with the whole thing. On the other hand, I couldn't get away from two Swiss peasant stories; they seemed to be written by a priest, so much they preached on every page for the good; it was the story of the farmhand Uli, who then becomes a tenant farmer, although he had been gone astray as a servant and only got on the right track through his well-meaning farmer. There was a lot of Swiss German in the book; but because they speak very similarly in my native land, I understood it without effort. Northern Germans who browsed through it immediately put it away and called it silly stuff, which on top was written in an incomprehensible language. But they had great praise for the stories of Peter Hebel. I already knew them from my childhood; the book was lying in our house on the wall-shelf next to the Bible and my good mother knew the stories from behind and from the front and many of the poems by heart. My Prussians mostly just picked out the farcical ones, but laughed their bellies sick at them; one of them tried to bargain the book from me: but I liked it too much, despite the pictures in it, which I found little successful. [152/153]

In New York

On the fourth day, as I said, Hörchner reappeared, and the others were spent on deck by playing and drinking in an entertaining way. On September 8th we arrived in New York. We stayed there for three days,

as there was no ship leaving earlier, and stayed at the Hudson House Inn. Some Californians known from earlier years were visited and accompanied by them we looked at the more interesting buildings, establishments and institutions. We crossed over to the island of Manhattan and the next day across the East River to Brooklyn; then we put our friendly guides on leave, who also had to do their business again, and stayed near the harbor in anticipation of departure. There, more than anywhere else, the shoeshine boys became a nuisance to us. They kept on our heels everywhere with their call "Black boots, black boots", kept their brushes ready, even threw themselves in front of us to jerk off our boots. Hörchner, who was usually slightly tipsy, always walked in the back, and we directed the boys to him, who then usually grabbed his shoes until he relieved by giving everyone a nickel. Finally, he took off his shoes and went in stockings, whereupon they began to blacken, the ones those in his hand, the others at his foot. Finally, however, since he could not resist the boys, he called a policeman to help, whereupon the spook quickly dissipated. [153/154]

To Europe

On September the 12th we were able to board the ship; it was the German steamer Bavaria with destination Hamburg, and we were in second class forty-two, among us the whole Californian party. Since our class was poorly occupied, especially compared to the occupation of our Texas sailor, we had a comfortable and pleasant trip; the kitchen was very good; in addition to good wines, we found various kinds of beer and approved of them quite well, first of all the Munich one. I was always up early and read in my books, which I had increased by a few more in New York; when the dormice then appeared, one spent the time playing cards, drinking and singing, and the smokers did not let their pipes get cold. We could be on deck almost all the time, because except of two stormy days we had very nice weather.

On the long trip, I was, as young as one is at thirty, and although I am otherwise cheerful, I was constantly pressed by serious thoughts. I pondered over my future situation in the small home village, now that the big world had finally opened up to me, and found my return to California more necessary than only wise, not at least because of my brother who had been left behind: his being alone in the gold place worried me. From such thoughts, which in the end were pointless, since they did not change anything [154/155] at all, Hörchner, our buffoon, usually shook me up again, and the day went by over drinks and cards, until the crapulous living or weariness stretched us onto the bed.

Ship accident no. 3

On September the 26th, after a fortnight's journey, we at last reached the English Channel. We passed near the island of Wight and saw hundreds of ships arriving and departing. We were also able to get an idea of the trade that these vehicles conveyed between the nearby countries and probably also over sea. But also the misfortune should not be missing on our trip: on September 27th our steamer hit an English coal ship at bright starlight, which sank quickly; so even all evil

things are three. But we were able to take over the whole crew unharmed. On September the 29th we arrived in Hamburg.

In Hamburg

Hörchner had sharpened our curiosity about his Hamburg every day during the crossing, and we both, the other baker and I, had to be his guests there. He accommodated us in an inn that was familiar to him. He had worked as a baker in the city for seven years, knew it in its good and bad places and brought it to our minds as we only wished it to be. On the second evening he took us to a particularly distinguished [155/156] house, where, as he importantly assured to us, only very familiar acquaintances of the innkeeper with their friends should have access. The innkeeper, however, could not recognize him at first, namely as long as Hörchner spoke English; was even a little offended when the guest called him by his first name; only when he finally came up with his Hessian dialect did the innkeeper recognize him by his voice and welcomed us in the most pleasant way. Thereupon also the waiter served us very obligingly, as if we were God knows what noble heroes, while I felt rather uncomfortable and oppressed in the fine hustle and bustle; one has not been for nothing a hard gold-digger for eight years, and I felt relieved when they directed us into a separate smaller room, where we were alone. Hörchner listed all the finer wines, which I did not know even from hearsay; only our Markgräfler were not among them and the Glottertaler, which makes the legs heavy. Three bottles were presented to us, and then a night meal such as I had never seen in my life, not to mention eaten; the good black bread was most welcome to me; since my departure from the Black Forest I had not been able to get it: not in France, not on the ship, and not in America; the wheat bread there had always tasted like exhausted straw, and I did not get fat from it. [156/157] After the good meal, we enjoyed the fine wines and continued to drink them until midnight, sometimes in the company of the landlord. Then we went to bed in the house itself, to the delight of Hörchner, who kept laughing and constantly assured us how well lit we were. The other day, at the crack of dawn, I visited the harbor without the two pastry chefs, who used to sleep well into the day, and marveled at the lively traffic there and in the city, which I had not thought I would find here. I then walked for an hour along the Alster to the wide outer Alster, then across the suburb St. Pauli to the river Elbe and haphazardly followed its many water courses until my head was spinning. So I decided to pick up the two traveling companions for lunch, but I had to wake them up first.

We spent the afternoon in Altona, where Hörchner picked up some acquaintances and played the generous one again, who, as he said, didn't want to be stingy in his Hamburg. At the Hamburgers we found quite cozy people and had beneficial hours with these capable people, who seemed so different from us Upper Germans, but by the sea for Germany quite at home.

In Heidelberg

Towards evening we went to the first booked inn. They had been somewhat worried about us there; they had perhaps already taken us for [157/158] swindlers. The following morning we parted ways, as each had a different destination. Hörchner and I wished to see each other again in America, but baker no. 2 assured us that he wanted to stay in Germany, so it was: Good luck at home.

I traveled from Hamburg via the Lüneburger Heide to Hanover, then via Hildesheim to Kassel, from there to Giessen, where I had to give presents to two families from American relatives and brought much joy and happiness to the people. My next destination was Heidelberg.

Towards home

I was driven to Heidelberg by a worry that had been with me since my departure from San Franzisko: a slight cloudiness had appeared in my right eye, which then stopped for a while so that I hoped for improvement; near England things got worse and the ship's doctor advised me to go to a Heidelberg doctor called the Eye-Becker. Without this worry I would have traveled straight from Giessen to the Black Forest; but now it was time to visit the professor; I had hardly a glimmer of light in my eye, and the Eye-Becker told me straight out: “What a pity! if you had come eight days earlier, there would still have been hope; now the cloudiness has hardened.” It must have come from a cold, namely [158/159] from the feet, he said. So I remembered that I had worked in the water for hours a few weeks before my departure and had not changed my boots immediately afterwards. The doctor found the other eye healthy, but warned me against wet and cold feet and especially against the coldness when sweating, whereas he prescribed flannel underwear for summer and winter. One likes to follow prudent advice, and so I bought the required underwear while I was still in Heidelberg. Now I took the shortest way home via Offenburg and Freiburg to Basel, then along the Rhine to Waldshut. How I felt when, after nine years of being so far away and forty-nine days of traveling, I suddenly found myself so close to my bride and siblings - I would have liked to start crying from balefulness and joy. Since it was already darkening, I ordered a carriage and took the route via Tiengen to the Mountain Inn, where the innkeeper, when we fed the horses and took a bite, recognized the carriage man, but not the passenger, and did not accept that he would come to the Mountain Inn on the straight route from America. Probably the old man was mistaken by my mighty black full beard; otherwise, when I revealed myself, he would probably not have said: "The same one will never come, and the good Mayor-Marei is not badly betrayed." Then I laughed and invited him to our wedding. [159/160]

Then we drove into the night, to Ühlingen, and leisurely uphill to my village, on the same bumpy road on which I had started my trip to America nine years ago. My return home was not reported to anyone, and so the world traveler and tramp came to his home unexpectedly and unrecognized; it was eighteen hundred and sixty on the night of the fourth of October. [160/161]

Tenth Chapter

Gifts, business and a wedding / A disaster message / Second trip to America and return

How surprised siblings and in-laws were, and how happy my bride was about the return of her American, I cannot describe; neither can I describe the wondrousness and gossip and looking around the village. But with this I corrected some wrong opinions and women's gossip[37], and Mary's sisters got red heads when I told them that with their speeches they had earned the pander-fur not from me but from others. Meanwhile I had not come to carry the discord into the house, and moved, after this breeding rod, the gifts to the day to bring everything back on track, according to the pattern of the merchant who, coming from the Leipzig Fair, distributes the gifts to the children.

Donating virtue

Mother Martina, who had always been the most loyal to me, received a golden watch on a thread-thin chain. „Nei, was hesch au denkt!“[38] she said. „Und Gold au no! Fryli, wölfeler tuesches du nit; bisch allewyl e weng en Großmogul gsy.“ With the tobacco pipe I had missed father Leodegar, [161/162] although I had never heard about his sickliness. „E Pfyfli, wo scho der Blosbalg kan Tubak meh verlydet!“[39] A pipe he said; but he wanted to cherish it for his boys. These two, Rudolf and Stephan, were reluctant to accept gifts and asked: „Wofür denn au?“[40], however, they had great pleasure in the flat pocket watches with the silver dials; they looked for the time every two minutes and held it next to Stephan's potato thick spindle clock, which had to be knocked on the table every quarter of an hour in order for it to do its duty. Kathrie and Petronella, the sisters, I put up with golden brooches; they were visibly happy and shook my hand with red heads: „Dankeigisch!“[41] Maria finally, my darling, I brought the same watch as her mother on a long hair-thin chain with beautiful gold clasps and sliders, and in addition a special brooch of solid gold. The piece, about an inch long, was still as I dug it out of the ground in Dutch Bar, and showed a beautifully formed vine leaf and a grape on it; everyone said that it was made by the goldsmith; but he had only soldered the needle and a braided gold cord around the piece: the piece had been in the little suede bag that was almost stolen out of the coffee case when our French woman was raided. Mother Martina crossed her-

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37 Original text “Fraubaserei”: chatter, gossip; origin from Swiss German ‘Fraubase’: Gossip woman. [Goethe Dictionary]

38 The following quotations are in Alemannic dialect: “No, what were you thinking!” ... “And even gold! Of course, you are not greedy; you have always been a Grand Mogul.”

39 “A pipe, when already the bellows can't stand tobacco anymore!”

40 “For a what should it be?”

41 “Thanks, I say.”

self during my telling: [162/163] „Hä Jesis, Marei und Josef, was hesch au du mitg'macht, Dory!“[42] she said.

But everyone was satisfied that I was just back again.

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Patrol in the home-land

The next day I went to the graves of my dear parents, who had both been dead for a long time, and found them beautifully decorated with asters and periwinkle; brother Josef and his wife, but also mother Martina, were very careful that they did not get lost in the weeds. Then I took the way to Berau behind the village and visited the castle of Mandach, which we had torn down almost to the ground as wild boys, went down into the Mettma valley to the old good Lochmühle[43], finally to Berau up to the Rößlewirt, where I met some nearer and farer relatives at a card game and could greet them immediately as a perfect stranger, and it had been a long session at that time. They missed me at the Weilerhof that night, but I was in good care of the Hole-Miller, who had caught up with me on the way home.

Marriage issues

The next thing to do was to pursue my wedding. But my zeal and urge found all doors closed. All sorts of authorities demanded oaths and vows from me that I was not married over there and perhaps that I had not left my wife and children [163/164] over there. All my Yes-Yes and No-Nos of the Savior brought nothing, and I finally them coughed up something rough and walked away. Then I was given a written statement that after six months stay in the country my marriage could be validly concluded. That looked different from what I had seen in America. There marriage was a business like any other, which any “Schnuderbub”*[44] could conclude overnight in the presence of witnesses, but which could be divorced again quickly if necessary, now of course only with the assistance of scheming lawyers and similar shady characters[45] who made a profit[46] in the process. Therefore, I could take the bride across the pond and marry her immediately, as my fellow travelers had done in Texas at that time; but for the sake of my bride and her well-behaved parents, I obeyed the rules and stayed in the village, but looked for an enterprise that would shorten the year and satisfy my thirst for entrepreneurship; after the marriage there was still time to emigrate with my wife; until then, my things were in good hands with brother Donat.

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42 “But Jesus, Mary and Joseph, what have you been through, Dory!”

43 literally: “Hole-Mill” … “Little-Roses-Landlord”, an inn, … “Hamlet-Farm” … “Hole-Miller”

44 * Original dialect word “Schnuderbub” is explained as “Rotzbube” witch could be translated as: “snotty-nosed brat”.

45 Outdated original word “Gelichter”, n. kinship, stirps, lineage, actually brothers and sisters. [DWB - Grimm]

46 The outdated original word “Rebbach”, today “Reibach”, m. (also “Rebbach”, “Rewwig”, “Rewwich”): profit, earnings, interest (19th century), from the Red Welsh to Yiddish. “re(i)bach”, Hebrew “ręwah”: earnings, profit. [DWDS]

Brothers

In the meantime, my older brothers in the village realized that I could do something with the assets I had gained in California. We talked about all sorts of things, sometimes with a nod, other times [164/165] with a shake of the head; Josef, the older one, however, fell off quickly and concentrated himself on his farm: he was a farmer and wanted nothing more. Jacob, on the other hand, had a troubled commercial blood, which looked for an increase in the penny, the easier the better, and in the end it was in the sense of all of us that Jacob leased his part of the farm to the older one, and joined me to negotiate with his and my money; but I left my parental inheritance untouched.

We now bought some forests from unthrifty farms, which we intended to lumber and sell the wood out in the country, or even abroad, since France in particular was looking for long logs at that time. Winter prevented deforestation; we were now searching for, and we also succeeded in selling the forests again, mostly unfortunately not to honest farmers, but to the state. All in all, luck was with us and the profit nourished his man. Where once a trade did not want to come about, it was due to unreasonable demands of my brother, who could not bargain well enough and thought he had to sell overpriced, so that I sometimes reproached him that dealing was a dishonest thing; he was hawking next to fraud. Then usually I brought the matter to the track.

My brother, like the oldest one, was a tall blond man, blue-eyed and with a long beard, towering over me [165/166] by head length. He was commonly called the Red, I the Black, but both were also called, as I heard, the unequal brothers: however not because of hair and body measurements, no, as the people give out their nicknames and hit the nail on the head; but they liked to do business with us; we always got money in cash.

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Wedding

About this it became spring and our wedding came. It took place on April the 18th, a Thursday, sunny, as specially ordered for it, and over 200 guests from the village and surrounding area attended, filling the inn in all its rooms; even the barn and outdoor seats were occupied. Among the guests were two fellow Californians, one from Neustadt, the other from Mauchen, and the three pioneers of the Wild West shared their memories and adventures with the villagers, and when a little yarn was spun and bragged about, the bystanders liked to hear it until deep into the night, where everyone went home, the way they just still achieved it in their condition; some even heard the first cockcrow. For Sunday I invited everyone again to the post-wedding ceremony, with free drinking: the Californian was capable of it, and the innkeeper of the Kreuz-Inn smirked. [166/167]

Business

On Monday we traveled away via Konstanz to Überlingen in the Linzgau region, where I and my brother had purchased sixty acres of high forest near Pfullendorf for felling. We first started the work with

two carts, ten horses and four farmhands and transported the logs to the lake to deliver them to France. In the course of the years I acquired various farms there, mostly dilapidated estates, which I sold again at a profit after having set them up properly; the last one in the Württemberg Allgäu, from where I should have had a wife once in California. Mine meanwhile had given me three healthy children[47], a daughter and two boys, and each of them had as a result of my wandering another farm as a birthplace. It is understandable that the bothered woman now thought only with concern about the resurgence of emigration; she could not get any idea of California, or only a one full of dangers, from which she wanted to protect the children above all: otherwise she would not have been a mother. So the big trip was postponed and a small one undertaken in its place.

Message of mourning

In October 1865, we five traveled from the Allgäu to Lindau, from there across Lake Constance and Schaffhausen to Tiengen, to see our homeland once again. We arrived in Riedern at 9 o'clock in the evening and were greeted happily [167/168] by the relatives who hadn't seen my wife and me for four years and never before the three children. But on the threshold of my wife's house I was struck by a message that made me tired of life. My sister-in-law Kathrie gave me two letters from Californian acquaintances and I didn't suspect anything good; after all, my wife had been expressing dark suspicions for weeks and had just made the way up to the village particularly hard, so that I finally had to silence her. And now she should be right. Both letters reported the death of my brother Donat, who had been killed by a Chinese man in his old place where he was digging gold. The unfortunate news was also about the settlement of the California estate, which was registered in my name by the court, and so we had to deliberate back and forth into the disturbed night, while my wife cried helplessly out as if she had lost one of her own. Now the Californian journey could not be averted. I arranged my ventures in the Allgäu region as quickly as possible, returned to the village and acquired the farm of my recently deceased father-in-law from his widow, so that my family could have a home; for my wife refused to emigrate more than ever.

Back in America again

The American Consul in Mannheim, whom I went to see for my passport and for advice about my [168/169] powers of attorney, said that my brother's affairs could be settled from Germany; so I returned to the village after three days; but after writing back and forth to California twice, I found it advisable to travel there; for wherever the offices find cause for making trouble they do it extensively; I lost at least half a

47 Daughter Lydia Kromer, born on 29.08.1861 in the community of Straß, Denkingen parish, married Holler. Friedrich Viktor, born on June 5, 1863 in Straß, Denkingen parish; Carl Alfred, born on May 25, 1865 in „Dametsweiler" (presumably Dabetsweiler) in the Kingdom of Württemberg, Donaukreis, Superior Office Wangen; Heinrich Ernst, born on September 26, 1866, Riedern am Wald, Grand Duchy of Baden. The last child should be Robert Kromer. (THE SAN FRANCISCO CALL of February 10, 1905)

year over this, and who knows when the matter would have been settled if I not would had taken it into my own hands. I said goodbye to my wife and children early in the morning on August the 23rd, was in Paris on the same day and left Havre for Hull[48] in England on the 27th, then to London and Liverpool, where I took the steamer Hekla via Queenstown in Ireland to New York at 12 noon on the 28th. The voyage was terribly stormy, especially the first three days in such a way that I saw even tough sailors praying to God. I arrived over there on September the 10th, visited my Californian comrades Rucktashel, as he now wrote himself, and Thomas Nicol, but left for Aspinwall the very next morning on the steamer Arizona. Arrival there on September the 19th early at seven o'clock. In two hours the train brought me also this time to Panama, where the big steamer Golden City with 550 passengers took us aboard. Under a heavy thunderstorm we won the high seas, but then [169/170] we had a very strepitous night, as drunken Irish people beat each other up again and again until the captain finally let some of the worst ones be put in chains in the early morning and left them like that for 24 hours to calm down the rest of the travelers. On the 25th we entered the port of Acapulco. At that time, the port was occupied by the French; Mexico was at war with France, which appointed the Austrian Prince Maximilian as Emperor; but only three quarters of a year later - in 1867 - he was summarily shot by the Mexicans in Queretaro. On September the 26th, I was still on the high seas near the Gulf of California, not suspecting that on that day my family had increased by one more scion, the third son[49], as I learned later. He came into the world as an extremely sickly child, to whom one did not give two hours of life and therefore the emergency baptism, two days later then the right one. His father should see him for the first time not until long months later, and then still not only sick, but close to death. Fortunately, I had no idea about all this; it would have worried me. After an otherwise good trip, we arrived through the Golden Gate in San Francisco at five o'clock in the evening of October the 3rd, which I immediately reported back home. That same evening I left on a steamer [170/171] for Stockton. There, by chance, an acquaintance from my first trip home to Hamburg (1860) joined me and we had many strange things to tell each other after such a long time. Then the six-horse carriage took me in an unusually annoying and dusty journey to Chinese Camp at four o'clock in the evening.

towards California

I immediately sought out some acquaintances and with them the wistful grave of my unlucky brother. Donat had been my favorite brother and, along with my wife, the most faithful and reliable person I found in my life. In the six years of my absence he had managed my mine to

At brother's grave

48 Hull can only be identified as "Kinston upon Hull", which is located on the North Sea coast of Scotland. Kromer must have landed in a port in southern England between Southampton and Brighton or Dover and from there traveled on by train via London to Liverpool.

49 Heinrich Ernst

the best, had acquired a fine fortune for himself and increased altruistically mine, only to have to lose then his young life through an imprudence.

Murderers and judges

In the first message to Germany I was not informed about the details of his death. Donat, as he still told his acquaintances, had been robbed of a significant sum of money on August the 13th, 1865, and that was according his presumption by a Chinese man who had worked for him. As he also said, he wanted to confront the man and it seems that he did so in his home. Thereby the Chinese man killed him with a hatchet. He carried the dead body across the river and hid it in the bushes. Since Donat did not return home in the evening as usual, [171/172] first one of his workers searched for him, but in vain, and so his acquaintances went on to search together, discovered the dead man in the bushes and thereupon found traces of blood in the house of the Asian man, before still suspected by the murdered man, as well as the bloody hatchet and the boot trail on the bank of the river over which the murderer had carried his victim. On this suspicion, the Chinese was arrested and interrogated, but he escaped at night through the carelessness of the police officer on duty, whereupon he was caught again after 16 months and brought before the judges. In such a long time, however, the agitation over the murder had diminished, and since there were no eyewitnesses to the crime, the jury acquitted the murderer. A death sentence on the Chinese would not have brought my poor brother back to life, but we had to hear that the Asians living in the area had raised 5000 dollars for the defense of the murderer, appointed two of the most capable lawyers and probably bribed one of the jurors, who then thwarted the required unanimity of the verdict. What the lawyers touch, everything gets twisted, and everything is possible for money in America, and presumably not only in America.

In Nicaragua

Arranging and selling the legacy required more time than I had expected and the American Consul in Mannheim [172/173] had led me to believe; it was not until October 21st that I was able to get ready for my journey back home. I brought flowers to the brother's grave, then went back to Chinese Camp and took the stagecoach to Copperopolis, where I stayed overnight, in order to travel via Stockton to San Francisco the next day. I arrived there on the 23rd and was able to travel further with the Nicaragua steamer Moses Taylor already on the 25th. I traveled in the company of 185 cabin and 230 steerage passengers, but this time not via Panama and Aspinwall, as on the outward journey, instead, via San Juan del Sur and San Juan del Norte with the destination New York. We moored only briefly in Acapulco and arrived already on November 5 in the unusually large port of San Juan del Sur at the Parrot Gulf. There 30 wagons with 160 mules took us to Virgin Bay on

Lake Nicaragua[50]. This inland water, about 40 meters above the sea, has a length of 150 kilometers, more than twice as much as Lake Constance, and a width of 70 kilometers and several islands, including the largest Ometepe.

In the Mosquito-Bay

We arrived at the end of the day and spent a very enjoyable evening. At midnight, the steamer Cavaya took us over and brought us across Lake Nicaragua, passing the island of Ometepe and the Solentiname Islands on the glorious moonlit night; it was an [173/174] incomparable night trip never experienced before; I stayed on deck the whole time and didn't sleep a wink, despite travel fatigue, and with me most of the travelers. We reached Fort Carlos at the outlet of the San Juan River, where we transferred to a smaller steamer, due to the rapids of the river, and on November the 8th we arrived downstream at San Juan del Norte, thus reaching the ocean again; that is, the Caribbean Sea.

Here we had to wait three days for the New York steamer, and it were bad days, the likes of which I had never experienced before. The very hot weather at that time brought us millions of mosquitoes. These animals gave the bay its name rightly; they also made sure that we will never forget them, so annoyingly they fell to us day and night. We would have liked to protect ourselves from them by bathing at least during the day; but that was strictly forbidden and in English as well as in Spanish language there was a warning by public placards everywhere, because many alligators populated the river and the bay. Nevertheless, on the second day in the afternoon four of our fellow travelers, all of them Irish, dared to seek shelter from the mosquito plague in the river; but hardly had they got into the water when one of them was grabbed by an alligator at the foot and, to the horror of all of us, was dragged down with heartrending cries [174/175] never to be seen again. I had to experience many horrible things in my gold-digger years; but something that horrifies me more and that I would forget less, never.

Journey to New York

Finally, on St. Martin's Day, November the 11th, the longed-for steamer arrived from New York. The travelers were exchanged and the ship left the same evening at six o'clock. After an at first somewhat stormy, but else beautiful journey, we first moored in Kingston on the island of Jamaica, then briefly in Santiago de Cuba, and then took course between Cuba and the island of Haiti via the Bahama Islands on New York. The trip offered everything imaginable new, although I had seen and memorized a lot of memorable things on my trip to New Orleans 16 years earlier. But one finally gets tired of such sea voyages, and so I was glad to land in New York on November the 20th; it was a Wednesday and a very beautiful day.

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50 Today: "Lago Cocibolca" with the starting port "La Virgen" and the destination port "San Carlos" at the outflow of the San Juan River and "San Juan de Nicaragua" at the mouth into the Caribbean.

Old friends

I lived, like the first time, in the Hudson Inn; the then innkeeper was still in the business and recognized me; only my name had slipped his mind; but it was seven years since then. I had to wait a fortnight until the departure of a steamer that suited me. I passed the time partly in the surroundings of the city, where I had to visit old friends [175/176] and mostly spent the evenings with them. There was an old comrade from California, named Schreiber, with whom I had business dealings; his brother, whose stay in California I had not been able to find out about, still had some claims on Donat, and I settled them with the New Yorker, who strangely enough was completely unaware of my brother's sad fate. Thomas Nicol and John Rucktashel were on travel and not speakable at first, but with him I spent the last two days of my stay. What different destinies each of us had had since then! Rucktashel had been living in New York for years and was very lucky with his business. I tried to persuade him, since he was wealthy, to return to his homeland; but he refused: he had become an American, he said, and felt very comfortable in the States; nor did he believe that the narrow, quiet Germany could comfort him again, nor that it would satisfy him. Among my own kind, he continued laughing, he understands the return to the home country. Whoever has remained faithful to a beloved for ten years, on top of that in all dangers among gold seekers, robbers, murderers and all kinds of strange women, is a restless flibbertigibbet, like the Greek Odysseus, but after so many adventures and odysseys, he naturally longs to see again the smoke rising from the old [176/177] Black Forest farm and to find the faithful Penelope at the baking oven. I stood there before unfamiliar things and may have glanced gawky; at least Rucktashel now laughingly said, "Why are you amazed, barbarian; look here," he said, and brought me an old book which he had had to read as a prospective student; I should take it with me, it was a good means of entertainment for the boredom of my sea voyage, and suited a brave farmer like me.

Book questions

Well, the book was entertaining, of course. Although I found it difficult to get into it at first because of the many foolish names and the unbelievable gods-wares with their tricky stories, I put it aside a few times with the will not to read further. But the boredom told me to reach for it again and I finally found fun in the curly wonder stuff and pleasure in the lies and artfulness and boasts of the unresting rounder and his cronies, and I honestly took part in his joy, when he finally finds house and wife and child again and throws out the hoggish pack. There is a lot of experience in this strange book, and you can make sure to remember all kinds of wisdom from it . I read it several times during the crossing, but I didn't want to accept a comparison with me and the [177/178] misguided man, as Rucktashel had meant.

Crossing and return

Our ship was the English steamer Pretoria, destination Liverpool. It left on the 4th of December. Since it was winter, we had only a few travelers, namely our eight in first class and twenty-five in third class; there was no second on the ship. The journey was unusually beautiful;

there was no grumpy thundering to smash our vehicle or stir up the sea threateningly; but the eternal hovering between water and sky often made me wish for land, and on this point I liked to keep it with the ancient Greek on his frail raft.

It took us a fortnight to get there, we arrived in Liverpool on December the 18th and I took the train via London to Dover, then on a French steamer to Calais. Via Paris I went to Basel, from there up the Rhine to Tiengen, where I arrived at ten o'clock in the evening on the 21st. At such an advanced hour, I took a cart for the rest of the day and reached the village via Berghaus and Ühlingen, where everything slept except the night watchman, at 1 o'clock in the night.

No, still one woman was awake. And the surprise of my unexpected arrival was great and even more hearty was the welcome, albeit under tears. [178/179]

At the bedside of the youngest

But what a face my fifteen-month-old youngest made when he saw his father for the first time, whom he did not want to be considered part of the family at all, and turned his face away from him again and again screaming until his mother pushed me away to tell me how sick the child is, and how worried the doctor. But the next few days, the evil turned and the little one was saved for the time being.

I, however, a man to be on the go, was back in the village and wanted to see how I with my restlessness, which was in my bones from childhood on, made me feel comfortable in the small circle of a Black Forest farmer. Because the threads between the Old and the New World were torn apart for now, at least for my part. [179/-/181]

Postface

When I asked my father about the records of his trip to America, a good thirty years ago, he sent them to me on about one hundred pages of closely written letter pages, but then let them follow up with supplements to the extent of a third of the main text. In these additions I had to erase repetitions and shorten some narrative widths; on the whole, I kept as close as possible to the original and only rectified linguistic inaccuracies that understandably occurred to the simply trained and more or less dialect-thinking author.

The author was born as the ninth among the twelve children of his father Dionys Kromer and his mother Maria, née Kaiser, on April the 4th 1829 in Birkendorf in the southern Black Forest. The parents considered their farm as too small for the business and leased a larger one of 80 acres in Riedern am Wald in 1830. Eight years later they bought there the "Weilerhof" which included 100 acres. Unfortunately for the family, only two years later, in the middle of the restructuring of the farm, the father[51] died after a short [181/182] illness, not fifty years old. The wife carried out the more urgent improvements, built a second farmstead to the restored one and in 1850 divided the estate among the three older sons. To our American traveler devolved the task to build his own house in addition to his share of the farm, as he mentions in his memoirs.

The Weilerhof is situated in the middle between the village of Riedern, which holds barely 400 souls, and the deep, wooded valley of the Metma, where on the slope of the valley the former castle of the robber-knights of Mandach was situated, which today only shows the last poor ruins. Probably the surrounding smaller farms were built from their remains, which would have made the farmer master over the exploiter once again.

The boy Dorus attended the elementary school in Riedern, which was housed in the building of the former monastery, more correctly: a provostry of the Kreuzlingen monastery in Thurgau. He turned out to be a pupil to whom the school could not impart the wealth of knowledge to match his zeal, so that he regretted not having twice as many lessons; otherwise, as he used to say, he would have become better than he is now. Such an attitude explains approximately his quick decision to emigrate out of stable social conditions and to stand his man in a foreign country, unmoved by possible dangers and [182/183] unperturbed by well-meaning warnings of his relatives and his homeland.

The book describes his experiences in America, his first return home, his marriage to Maria Maurer, the mayor Marei, and the under-

[51] † 02. Febr. 1840 im Alter von 49 Jahren.

takings with his brother until 1866, when he went to California for the second time. After returning home from this second trip to America, he and his brother Jakob acquire the ironworks Smeltery in Hegau[52] from the Baden government. When, in 1870, the brothers split the property and one of them built a cotton spinning mill in place of the disintegrating smelting furnace, the American continued to operate the hammer mill for a short time, but then turned it into a sawmill, which he ran alongside his farm until 1875.

His family now has five children, who are between the ages of 14 and 7, and he is keen to involve them strongly in the farm work, while striving to provide a better education for each of them according to their disposition. Thus the only daughter, the eldest, attends a secondary school, as does the always ailing third son to prepare him for his future profession as a visual artist; the other three stay on the farm at their own choice.

Although he lost his wife in 1880, he acquired another large farm, next to which he continued the two smaller ones in the village; his daughter acted as [183/184] farmer's wife. In 1884 the oldest and the youngest son are infected by emigration fever; the father leaves them their will, although he needed them due to the great lack of servants. The two are followed two years later by the second son, his most capable force, and again after a year, out of health considerations, also the daughter, whereupon he decides to lease or sell the property and in 1889 travels to California to join the children. He returns from this third tour in 1897, but is now almost always active in business in the Black Forest with his youngest brother Johann, and is again involved in the Weilerhof. In 1901, when his son, who lives in Munich, unexpectedly wants to visit him, he meets the restless man by chance and unsuspectingly on his way to his fourth trip to America, fifty years after his first.

In the spring of 1905, in Fruitvale near San Francisco, where he stayed for the last time, he was struck by pneumonia and pleurisy, which took the so healthy and sprightly man away after eight days of sick leave on February 10th: strangely enough, on the anniversary of his father's death and exactly twenty-five years after his wife, and again to the day fifty years after he first entered Fruitvale, the place where he was to die.

He was respected and loved by his surroundings and all his acquaintances here and over there [184/185] for his simple and incorruptible nature and his selfless helpfulness where he thought such was appropriate; lumpen were not his people, and he was hostile to every kind of swindle. He shows his view of life in one of his last letters: "Already in early youth, barely eleven years old, I memorized a motto, which I read on the gravestone of the mother of my good teacher Keller, who rested

52 Ironworks in Zizenhausen near Stockach on Lake Constance.

beside the grave of my blessed father: ‘Blessed is the man who led his life as he wishes to have led it in the moment of his death.’”

The publisher
[185/-/187]

Jnhaltsübersicht
