

and sat down and began to serve the dinner. The whole appearance of the man seemed uncanny to Arnold, and he noted that the others looked very much depressed. But the mayor was not the sort of man that would allow any trouble to interfere with his dinner, and he bade the maid bring bottles of fine, old wine and glasses. All were much livelier after they had drunk of it, and a stream of fire seemed to flow through Arnold's veins. The mayor was like another person for he was now as jovial and mirthful as he had before been stern and silent. As if seized by a sudden impulse, he snatched up a violin and began to play the liveliest of dance music. Arnold, upon whom the wine had a similar enlivening effect, danced around the room with the beautiful Gertrude in such a reckless manner that he upset the spindle and a chair and collided with the maid who was taking the dishes off the table, and he cut such queer capers that the others were almost convulsed with laughter. Suddenly everything became quiet in the room, and when Arnold looked at his guest for an explanation, the latter pointed towards the window with his violin-bow and replaced his instrument in the large wooden box from which he had previously taken it.

Arnold glanced out of the window and saw six men clad in white shrouds bearing on their shoulders a coffin. They were followed by a tottering, old man and a little, blonde-haired girl scarcely four years old. She did not comprehend the situation, but nodded whenever she met a person whom she recognized and laughed merrily whenever she saw anything that amused her simple mind. The silence lasted only as long as the coffin remained in sight.

"Come," whispered Gertrude to the young artist, "let us take a walk before the strong wine goes to your head. When we get back it will be time for us to go to the inn for there will be a dance there to-night."

"A dance? that will be fine. I could not have come at a better time. May I have the first dance with you?"

"Certainly, if you wish it."

Arnold had already picked up his hat and portfolio.

"What are you going to do with that book?" inquired the mayor.

"He draws, father," said Gertrude. "Show him the picture which you made of me."