

When Frantz Mathéus had formed the generous resolve of illuminating the world with his own light, a strange and undefinable calm entered into the depths of his soul. It was the eve of St. Boniface, towards six o'clock in the evening; a splendid sun lit the valley of Graufthal, and relieved the motionless branches of the tall firs against the clear sky.

The good man was seated in the old arm-chair of his forefathers, near the small casement, his eyes wandering over the silent little town stretched at the foot of the misty mountains.

Peasants were mowing grass on the skirt of the forest; women, old Martha herself amongst them, armed with rakes, were turning the hay and singing old country airs.

The Zinsel murmured softly in its pebbly bed; a low hum filled the air; long files of ducks were taking their way up the stream, and every now and then raised their nasal cry; fowls were sleeping under the shadow of walls, on the shafts of carts and implements of labour; chubby children were romping and amusing themselves on the thresholds of cottages; and watchdogs, their muzzles between their paws, gave themselves up to the overpowering heat of the day.

This calm scene insensibly touched the heart of Mathéus; silent tears stole down his venerable cheeks; he took his already grey head between his hands, and, with his elbows on the window-ledge, wept like a child.

A crowd of tender recollections rose to his mind. That rustic dwelling, the abode of his father—this little garden, the trees of which he had cultivated, every plant in which he had sown—this old oak furniture,

embrowned by time—all reminded him of his peaceful happiness, his habits, his friends, his infancy; and it almost seemed as if each of those inanimate objects appealed to him in touching accents not to desert them—reproached him for his ingratitude, and commiserated him beforehand on his loneliness in the world. And the heart of Frantz Mathéus echoed all these voices, and at every recollection fresh tears streamed more abundantly from his eyes.