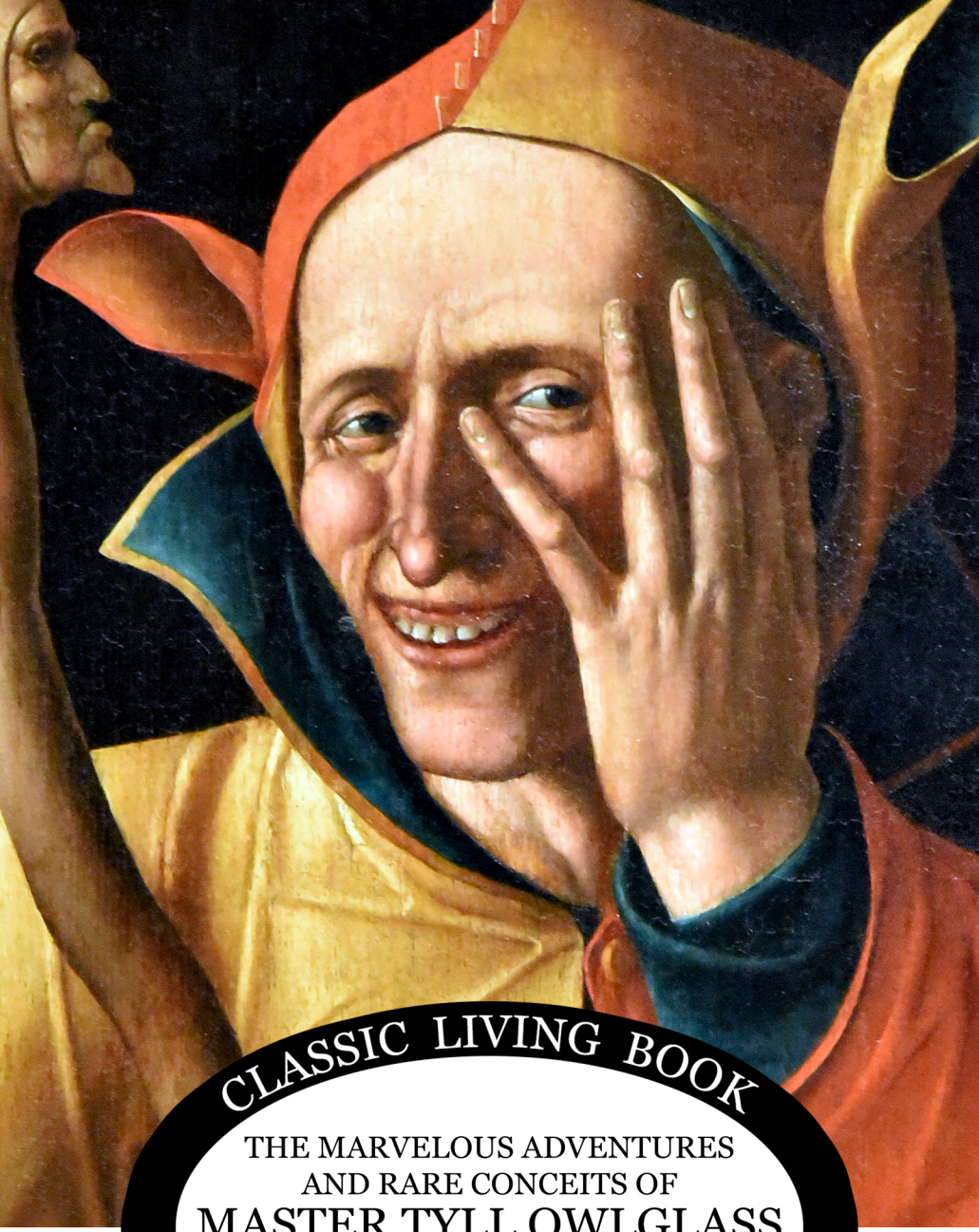

CLASSIC LIVING BOOK

THE MARVELOUS ADVENTURES AND RARE CONCEITS OF MASTER TYLL OWLGLASS

Kenneth Mackenzie

COMPLETE AND UNABRIDGED

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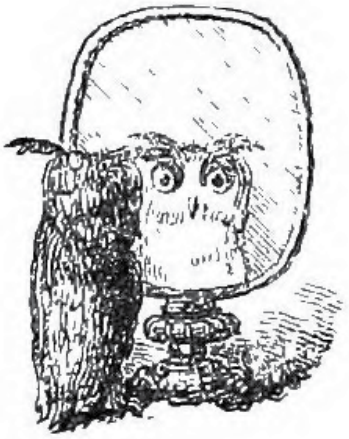

LIVING BOOK PRESS


Folly
Governeth
the
World

Contents

PREFACE.

"Wit, an't be thy will, put me into good fooling! Those wits that think they have thee do very oft prove fools; and I that am sure I lack thee, may pass for a wise man: For what says Quinapalus? Better a witty fool than a foolish wit."

Clown in "Twelfth Night," *Act I., Scene 5.*

Among the folkbooks of the German nation, not one has obtained so general a circulation as that now presented in an English form. It has been deemed worthy, as by the Appendix may be perceived, of being translated into French, Dutch, Danish, Polish, nay, even Hebrew, and honoured by being reprinted on every kind of paper, good and bad. A favourite among the young for its amusing and quaint adventures, and a study among those who strive, by the diligent comparison of different eras of national literature, to arrive at a due appreciation of national character, Eulenspiegel, or Owlglass the boor (peasant), possesses a peculiar value for the old. I well remember how, as a very little child, I first made the friendship of the lithe though clumsy hero; and to the present time do not feel that I can say I have lost my interest in the humourous quips and quiddities of the strolling vagabond. I little thought, when I then read the German book, that it would be my privilege to introduce him to other readers in my own language.

The Gil Blas of German mediæval story, there is deep instruction in the pungent jests and literal ways of the man who held up his mirror for owls to look in, and each of whose tricks might form the groundwork of a moral reflection. And for the early times in which it appeared, there was not a little courage in the author of

it. Strange to say, this person appears to have been a Franciscan friar, Thomas Murner, who, in other matters, made not a little stir in his own day. He visited this country, and wrote a book in defence of our good King Hal the Bluff against that famous monk, Luther; and he received some assistance in a substantial gift from that monarch. An account of him will be found in the Appendix; we have here only to deal with the significance of the book itself.

Like the deep searching work of Rabelais, the book is a satire, not upon human life only, but upon special and dangerous topics. Very early editions contain the story of how Eulenspiegel procured an old skull from a churchyard, and turned the passion for worshipping relics to profitable account;[1] and the priests and would-be learned men of his time continually appear in ludicrous, undignified, or humiliating positions. Rank was not respected, nor was vice in high places passed by with (so-called) discreet silence. Yet with all the graver objects in the book, the immediate aim of amusement was never forgotten; and, letting us into the secrets of peasant life in Germany at an era when peasants had little to rejoice over, we almost imagine that we can hear the shouts of laughter with which the blunt outspoken jokes of this sly clown were received. But Mr. Hallam does justice to a higher appreciation of this kind of literature among the better classes of the time.

"They had a literary public, as we may call it," says this distinguished writer,[2] "not merely in their courts and universities, but in their respectable middle class, the burghers of the free cities, and perhaps in the artizans whom they employed. Their reading was almost always with a serious end: but no people so successfully cultivated the art of moral and satirical fable. These in many instances spread with great favour through Cisalpine

1 See Adventure the 36th, p. 63.

2 Introduction to the Literature of Europe, vol. i. p. 235 (Library ed.); vol. i. p. 240 (Cabinet ed.).

Europe. Among the works of this kind, in the fifteenth century, two deserve mention; the Eulenspiegel, popular afterwards in England by the name of Howleglass, and a superior and better known production,[3] the *Narrenschiff*, or Ship of Fools, by Sebastian Brandt of Strasburg.... It is a metrical satire on the follies of every class, and may possibly have suggested to Erasmus his *Encomium Moriæ*. But the idea was not absolutely new; the theatrical company established at Paris under the name of *Enfans de Sans Souci*, as well as the ancient office of jester or fool in our courts and castles, implied the same principle of satirising mankind with ridicule so general, that every man should feel more pleasure from the humiliation of his neighbours than pain from his own.... The influence such books of simple fiction and plain moral would possess over a people, may be judged by the delight they once gave to children, before we had learnt to vitiate the healthy appetite of ignorance by premature refinements and stimulating variety."[4]

Yet with all the repute which the book must have had among the boors and country louts of what people choose, with doubtful taste or insight, to call the "dark ages," Owlglass, if it had not contained within itself great vitality, might have lain in the obscurity which surrounds many a contemporary work. Of the three great philosophers then extant, I have somewhere read a kind of parallel, that Rabelais in his work satirised fantastically, and with peculiar reference to the more educated and scholarly readers of his time. Erasmus, on the other part, struck at the monks with vigorous hand in other fashion; while both Brandt

3 Matter of doubt to the present writer whether it be thus superior; in any case, it would be scarcely so interesting to people now-a-days. But see the Appendix.

4 Bouterwek, in his "History of German Poetry and Eloquence" (*Geschichte der deutschen Poesie und Beredsamkeit*), vol. ix. p. 336, confirms the observations of Hallam, and lends additional testimony to the popularity of the Eulenspiegel. Adolf Rosen von Kreutzheim, in the Preface to his poem, the *Esel-König* (Ass-King), alludes to the general dispersion of Eulenspiegel, Marcolphus, Katziporo, and other works, and abuses them in set terms as shameful, mischievous, and dangerous.

and Murner took a more popular form in their compositions: yet, while Brandt is now scarce remembered, Eulenspiegel remains, a striking and applicable book, setting forth, indeed, in a good light, the truth everywhere, that "the letter killeth but the spirit giveth life." In this may be found the reason of its wonderful popularity in Germany—in this is the secret of its constant reproduction in so many languages.

The fool in idle hour claims our attentive ear, charms, instructs, enchains the mind, when the sonorous voice and weighty arguments of the preacher would have no greater effect than the production of a yawn, or, at most, a fugitive repentance. The fact of the subjection of the letter to the spirit must be borne in mind throughout. Mighty times were those when, by sturdy hands and wise pates, the world was ridding itself of the rule of monks and literal interpreters of the universe and of the duties of society. Yet Murner, as has been mentioned, fought against Luther; nor, indeed, could Rabelais or Erasmus perceive, save somewhat dimly, whither their words tended. Perhaps, in secret, they saw, in fitful glimpses, the truth that history proceeds according to progressive laws of development; and when the monks, who at one time had done good service, were no longer useful to mankind, they decayed from inherent fitlessness, and so vanished, overcome by the light of such lamps as these.

A remarkable feature in the adventures of Owlglass must not be passed over without notice, viz., the very few allusions anywhere made to the occult sciences, or to similar subjects. In the story of the invisible picture there is one slight reference to alchymy; and in that where he is led forth to the gallows, the multitude regard Owlglass as a magician, who will rescue himself by the aid of demons. But so real is the character everywhere, that not even by the many editors has any tale been introduced connecting the hero with such matters. Yet the absence of such a colouring displays a greater skill and a deeper purpose in the author; from

the tendency of the age in which it was written, any mention of occult science would have been excusable, nay, almost natural. If we remember that the era of its publication was rife with magicians, astrologers, and alchymists; that Cornelius Agrippa very shortly afterwards found it necessary to protest against the abuse of such subjects in his treatise "Of the Uncertainty and Vanity of the Sciences and Arts," that Trithemius was then Abbot of the Benedictine Monastery of Spanheim: all these considerations would have caused no surprise at the introduction of scenes of enchantment, or, at least, an employment of them allusively or by implication. But no; true to its mission of a folk-book, filled with the manners and customs of its time, Owlglass is thoroughly worldly, and for us, therefore, possesses greater interest and value.

It may be interesting for a moment to set side by side the jester exhibited in the pages of Shakspere and the good Master Owlglass. Historical Owlglass there certainly was at some time of the fourteenth century, his tomb yet standing at Möllen, as will be seen; but the pranks of many excellent jesters were all centred in the book telling of Owlglass; so that he has been overlaid with jokes, not in his own power to perform. Indeed, in the present edition, from a respect I have for chronology, I have been obliged to extrude two or three which would have involved anachronisms. However, they were somewhat dull, and therefore need not be regretted.

The first English version of Owlglass (as to which see the Appendix, p. 212) having been published early in the sixteenth century, in a "little dumpy quarto," by Master William Copland, its fame might, without much difficulty, have infiltrated the country parts of England; and, if we regard the clowns of Shakspere, Touchstone, in "As You Like It," for example, it might appear that Shakspere had seen this Black Letter of William Copland: yet, while the humour of Owlglass consists in his stolid performance of the exact words commanded him, there is clearly a quite other

appreciation of wit in the English writer. It is, in fact, the polished foil beside the homely cudgel—both effective weapons, but one of them far more glittering, swift, and murderous. The cudgel may be warded off by a less skilful hand, the glancing steel hath made a wound, and been withdrawn in the very flash of its own rapidity. Dogberry and Verges, Costard perhaps, nay, even Sir Toby Belch, have points of character more resembling Owlglass than do the clowns of our great poet. The Fool in King Lear, has some kin to him, but is infinitely wiser. Indeed, we might perhaps rather class Bardolph, Pistol, and Nym, humourists in their way, with Master Owlglass than the subtle wits Shakspere brings upon the stage. Yet has Owlglass an existence beyond and outside all question of contrast, all opinion of similarity. Gervinus, in his comprehensive History of German Fiction[5] has well defined Owlglass to be "the personified quip and crank" (*der personificirte Schwank*). In fact, he is a Gothic Diogenes set in a Teutonic frame, living, moving, and having his being in an atmosphere as peculiarly distinct in its grotesque and massive proportions, as was the earlier Hellenic age, in its union of elegance and power. No previous time could have produced such an out-birth, and, with all our modern tendencies towards humour, fostered by the constant study of our quainter dramatists, another Owlglass would be a distortion, if not an impossibility.

That, even in grave England, and with quaint Ben Jonson, Master Owlglass was a favourite, we may see from two allusions which he makes to him; one in the "Poetaster," Act the Third, Scene the Fourth, where Tucca exclaims: "What, do you laugh, Owlglass?" And again in the "Masque of the Fortunate Isles," produced in 1626, Ben Jonson introduces Howleglass; and Johphiel says to Merefool:—

> Or what do you think
> Of Howleglass instead of him?

5 History of German Fiction, vol. ii. p. 298.

Merefool.— No him
I have a mind to.
Johphiel.— O, but Ulen-spiegle,
Were such a name—but you shall have your longing.

And later on, the remark is made:—
Whether you would present him with an Hermes
Or with an Howleglass?
Skelton.—*An* Howleglass
To come to pass
On his father's ass;
There never was,
By day, nor night,
A finer sight,
With feathers upright
In his horned cap,
And crooked shape,
Much like an ape,
With owl on fist.
And glass at his wrist.[6]

A most unjustifiable libel, by the way, is committed here, for Owlglass was always a "proper" gentleman, having no crook-back or ape-like appearance.[7]

One of the most thoughtful and philosophic writers of our day, Mr. Carlyle, has a few noteworthy sentences regarding this strange book, which we shall do well to transfer to these pages:—

"Lastly, in a third class, we find in full play that spirit of broad drollery, of rough saturnine humour, which the Germans claim as a special characteristic; among these, we must not omit to mention the *Schiltbürger* correspondent to our own *Wise Men of Gotham*;

6 Jonson's Works, p. 650.

7 An Howleglass is mentioned as being in the library of a Captain Cox. On which, see the Appendix, p. 212.

still less the far-famed *Tyll Eulenspiegel* (Tyll Owlglass), whose rogueries and waggeries belong in the fullest sense to this era.

"This last is a true German work; for both the man, Tyll Eulenspiegel, and the book which is his history, were produced there. Nevertheless, Tyll's fame has gone abroad into all lands; thus, the narrative of his exploits has been published in innumerable editions, even with all manner of learned glosses, and translated into Latin, English, French, Dutch, Polish; nay, in several languages, as in his own, an *Eulenspiegelerei* and *Espiéglerie*, or dog's trick, so named after him, still by consent of lexicographers, keeps his memory alive. We may say, that to few mortals has it been granted to earn such a place in universal history as Tyll; for now, after five centuries, when Wallace's birth-place is unknown even to the Scots; and the admirable Crichton still more rapidly is grown a shadow; and Edward Longshanks sleeps unregarded save by a few antiquarian English, Tyll's native village is pointed out with pride to the traveller, and his tombstone, with a sculptured pun on his name,—namely, an Owl and a Glass,—still stands, or pretends to stand, at Möllen, near Lübeck, where, since 1350, his once nimble bones have been at rest. Tyll, in the calling he had chosen, naturally led a wandering life, as place after place became too hot for him; by which means he saw into many things with his own eyes; having been not only over all Westphalia and Saxony, but even in Poland, and as far as Rome. That in his old days, like other great men, he became an autobiographer, and in trustful winter evenings, not on paper, but on air, and to the laughter-lovers of Möllen, composed this work himself, is purely a hypothesis; certain only that it came forth originally in the dialect of this region, namely, the *Platt-Deutsch*; and was therefrom translated, probably about a century afterwards, into its present High German, as Lessing conjectures, by one Thomas Murner, who, on other grounds, is not unknown to antiquaries. For the rest, write it who might, the book is here, 'abounding,' as a wise

critic remarks, 'in inventive humour, in rough merriment, and broad drollery, not without a keen rugged shrewdness of insight; which properties must have made it irresistibly captivating to the popular sense; and with all its fantastic extravagancies, and roguish crotchets, in many points instructive.'"[8]

Mr. Carlyle then cites one adventure, that of the Easter Play, which has not been included in the present version; for although it illustrates well enough the interior of a parson's household of the fourteenth century, there is a smack of profanity about it which it is well to avoid. And, indeed, it is due to the reader of this volume, to inform him, that our present chronicle differs in one material point from all former editions. While it has been my object everywhere to tell the story of Owlglass in a quaint and simple manner, modern good taste required a special duty at the chronicler's hands: viz., that of purification and modification, for it may readily be believed that a book written *of* the fourteenth century, *for* the sixteenth century, would abound with homely wit, not quite consonant with the ideas of the nineteenth. Therefore several stories of a somewhat indelicate, and generally pointless, character have been omitted, and their place supplied with matter obtained by a collation of several editions in the German, French, and Flemish languages.

And another aim which I have had in view has been, where good taste and opportunity admitted, to apply, in a veiled manner, the axioms and quips of our knight-errant of roguery, to subjects and follies not banished from our own more polite age. The reader will thus be able to judge in how far this modern Owlglass differs from its predecessors. In no instance, however, have I permitted myself to lose sight of the object in view, which was to give as good a picture of the original as might be, and that in spirit rather than in letter. This spirit has been so justly estimated by M. Robin, a clever and dashing French critic, whose sad death may still be

8 Carlyle, Miscellaneous Essays, Edition 1857, Vol. II. pp. 287–288.

remembered by a few, that, at the risk of adding too much to this preface, I subjoin an epitome of his remarks:—

"It is quite true," says he, "that glory is nothing but vanity. I have seen in the sepulchral silence of libraries, names quite unknown, on the backs of gigantic volumes, the librarians could tell me nothing of these, except that they were the authors of these books. I have seen, on the pavement of ancient churches, pompous epitaphs, and heraldic arms, and the nails of the peasant's shoe tread them under foot. Be then in life a man of learning, knowing every language, be a noble of Spain, a Knight of the Golden Fleece, Viceroy of Mexico or Peru, say you have the right of keeping your hat on in the presence of the King, yet it will scarcely be known that you have lived, while a *vaurien*, a man who had neither hearth nor home, a practical joker, a drunkard, having the devil in his purse, living from hand to mouth, sleeping to-day in the streets, and to-morrow in the bed of his host, whom he never pays, and understanding too well the buffoonery of life ever to have thought of glory; as soon as this man is dead, and ignobly buried, he enters at once into immortality, bequeathing to the people a name which they will never forget, and, to the Attic language of the moderns, a word of which they stood much in need. Who can boast of having invented a word? Very few of the greatest writers can arrogate to themselves this most rare glory. But to leave one's name to the most grave and self-sufficient language in Europe, to force it to say *espiègle*, because one's name was Ulenspiegel; and to pass fifty years in practical joking and laughter; to be able to call oneself the father of the great family of Mystificators, surely this is no common fate, and doubtless the contemplator of it will cry out: 'Where doth Immortality dwell? Poor author, it was well worth thy pains to wear out thy brain in writing folios! Unfortunate hidalgo, it was well worth the trouble of being puffed up with pride at a long name unpronounceable in a breath, that this name should be forgotten, and that the

name of a boorish jester should be transmitted almost intact to the most distant posterity."

The best test of the worth of a book, whether it be several centuries old, or, as it were, a production of our own day, is the proportion of times that it has been reproduced or imitated. Singularly enough, while, in most continental languages, such translations and imitations have been frequent, in two instances only has this celebrated folk-book appeared in an English dress; first, as has been already stated, in Black Letter, in 1528–1530, and again in a modified form in 1720. With a description of these two editions I will not trouble the reader here, as in the Appendix at the end an accurate account of them will be found; and I will merely add, in this place, that of the Black Letter translation only two copies are known to exist, both in the British Museum; and that of the second, a copy of which is now in my own possession, I have only been able to find one other, which is in the Douce Collection in the Bodleian.

It was originally in contemplation to reprint the scarce Black Letter edition; but, on a careful examination, I found this an impossibility, as the contents, for reasons already hinted at, would have shocked good taste; nor, in point of fact, would that edition have offered so great a variety as in this volume has been presented; which may be understood when it is explained, that of all kinds of stories, good and bad, the Black Letter gives but forty-eight; while in the present chronicle there are—such questionable adventures being omitted—no less than one hundred and eleven. Although the idea of such reprint was thus abandoned, there appeared no reason, however, why the old-fashioned form should not be adopted in the telling of the tale. For this and any other faults which the reader may detect I hold myself responsible; and I may mention, that so careful have I been to imitate the style of the time in which it is supposed to be written, that I have even followed the confusion between the use of the "thee"

and "thou" and "you" and "ye" common in early books, especially at the transition era of the Stuarts.

The edition which I have adopted as a guide or clue-line, is the Low German original of 1519 in the excellent and exhaustive work of Dr. Lappenberg; and I need not here especially refer to any other, save that of M. Octave Delepierre, long time a zealous antiquary, who argues for a Flemish origin for our hero, an origin in which, giving every meed of praise to that gentleman for the singular ingenuity and complete localization which his book exhibits, I need scarcely say that I cannot coincide. Nay, it may even be suspected that he himself is but in jest with his argument.

I have also to draw the notice of the reader to the Appendices at the end of this volume, which enter into the bibliographical and other history of the book, and to mention that I am greatly indebted to the Rev. Dr. Bandinel, the venerable Librarian of the Bodleian Library at Oxford, and also to my friends, the Rev. Alfred Hackman, M.A., Precentor of Christ Church, and the Rev. John S. Sidebotham, M.A., Chaplain of New College, and Preacher at St. Martin's, Carfax, Oxford, for much valuable assistance in searching for Eulenspiegel literature amidst the treasures contained in that valuable library.

This is all, I think, which need here be said touching the task I have here completed; for the reader need not be asked to appreciate the artistic skill of my friend and coadjutor, Mr. Alfred Crowquill. If the reader does but experience in the perusal of this singular book—practically the first English edition of it—one tithe of the pleasure I have had in preparing it, all that was to be accomplished will have been duly fulfilled.

Kenneth Robert Henderson Mackenzie

35, Bernard Street, Russell Square, W.C.

October 3, 1859.

The Introduction touching Master Tyll Owlglass.

With what joy and inward content do I not greet ye, my masters, bringing with me for your sweet delectation and delightful comfort the history, the which I have most diligently written, and out of many learned and wise books gathered together, and which indeed telleth of the merry jests, rare conceits, and subtile cony-catching of that renowned Master Tyll Owlglass, who in the Brunswick land was born. And i' faith, ye do owe me not a little grace and thankfulness for that which I have now finished,—but as if my pains had been a thousandfold greater than they have been, I would not have spared myself. This is mine answer unto ye. And my desire hath been, that ye shall most merrily sit ye round the fire and laugh until that your sides shall ache, and your inner man be shaken with the continual reverberation

of your delighted spirit. For an ill heart is such an one that doth never rejoice, but trembleth ever and anon at the wonders with the which we be encompassed, so do ye now, without any other speech from me, accept this little book, and therein read, and ponder well the deeds of this noble master, who from low estate and boorish condition rose to be the companion of princes and dukes, and, by his infinitude of rare parts, remaineth well known and beloved of all men in divers countries and lands all over the fair domain of Christendom. And now do I bid ye farewell, and leave ye with a companion less tedious than am I, and in the reading of his life will ye not lose your labour, that know I well.

The First Adventure.

How Tyll Owlglass was born and was in one day three times christened.

As verily all creatures must have a beginning of their lives, so that they may come into this world to abide therein, so also must it be with the famous Master Owlglass, who lived in Germany many years, and of whom many notable adventures are told and noised about all over that country. In the land of Brunswick, in the deep wood named Melme, lieth a village named Kneitlingen, and there was born the pious child Owlglass. And the name of his father was Nicolaus, commonly said Claus, Owlglass, and his mother's name was Anna Wertbeck. It fortuned, that when the child was born that they made a great feast, and sent the child to be christened in the village of Amptlen; hard by the castle of Amptlen, which was after destroyed by the people of Magdeburg. And when the child was baptised, he was called Tyll Owlglass. Truly, however, after that the feast had come to an end, the godfathers and godmothers of the child having eaten

and drunken right lustily (for it was the custom of that place most heartily to do these things), set forth on their way homeward, and the sun being hot, they were tired and they minded not their steps to be careful of them, and so it came to pass, that one of them carrying the child caught her foot upon a stone and fell into a ditch, so child and all were quickly covered with mud. But as weeds cannot so easily come to harm, the child was not hurt, but only thus christened in the mire.

When they got home, the child was washed clean in hot water. Thus was Owlglass in one day three times christened, first in the church, then in the mud of the ditch, and at last in warm water. So is it always shown with great and famous persons, that, in their infancy, strange and most wonderful things do foreshow their future greatness.

The Second Adventure.

How that Owlglass when that he was a child did give a marvellous answer to a man that asked the way.

Upon a time went the father and mother of Owlglass forth, and left Owlglass within the house. Then came a man riding by, and he rode his horse half into the house in the doorway, and asked: "Is there nobody within?" Then answered the child: "Yea, there is a man and a half, and the head of a horse." Then asked the man: "Where is thy father?" and the child made answer and said: "My father is of ill making worse; and my mother is gone for scathe or shame." And the man said to the child: "How understandest thou that?" And then the child said: "My father is making of ill worse, for he plougheth the field and maketh great holes, that men should fall therein when they ride. And my mother is gone to borrow bread, and when she giveth it again and giveth

less it is a shame, and when she giveth it and giveth more it is scathe." Then said the man: "Which is the way to ride?" And the child answered and said: "There where the geese go." And then rode the man his way to the geese, and when he came to the geese they flew into the water; then wist he not whither to ride, but turned again to the child and said: "The geese be flown into the water, and thus wot I not what to do nor whither to ride." Then answered the child: "Ye must ride where the geese go and not where they swim." Then departed the man and rode his way, and marvelled of the answer of the child. Thus from the mouths of babes cometh forth wisdom and ready conceit.

The Third Adventure.

How all the boors did cry out shame upon Owlglass for his knavery; and how he rode upon a horse behind his father.

Now when Owlglass had come to an age to run about, he began playing divers tricks and knavish actions among the boys of his village; and he fought and tumbled about upon the grass, that he looked more like a monkey than a boy. But when it came to pass that he was four years old, his malice waxed greater and greater, so that his father was ever being disputed with by the neighbours, who cried out shame upon Owlglass, as being so great a knave; and though it happened that his father did scold him with many words, Owlglass did always excuse himself by knavish answers. Thereat the father thought he would quickly learn the verity of these sayings of the neighbours, and at a time when the boors were all walking in the streets, he did set his son Owlglass behind him on his horse. Then, also, he commanded Owlglass that he should be most quiet and silent. What, then, did the pious and good child? He did silently play tricks and mocked the people, whereon they did most loudly cry out upon Owlglass: "Fie upon the little malicious knave!"

Now as Owlglass spake never a word in all this time, his father did not know how it came to pass that the people did cry out so loudly; and Owlglass complained to him, and said: "Hearest thou, father! Here sit I silently behind thee upon thy horse and say no word, and yet the people cry out against me for my knavery." Then the father sayeth but little, and taketh Owlglass and setteth him upon the horse in front of him. Then did Owlglass open his