



**MARTIN
KRIPAN**

Fran Levstik (1831–87)

Levstik was a poet of both lyric and epic bent, a prose writer, editor, and critic who helped to articulate and elevate the national theme in Slovene nineteenth-century literature. In 1866 together with Josip Stritar and Josip Jurčič he prepared the first major edition of Prešeren's poetry and helped to establish Prešeren's reputation as the national bard. Though much of what he wrote by way of literary criticism and orthographic matters seems dated today, his short story about Slovene efforts and neighbors' ingratitude, *Martin Krpan z Vrha* (1858, "Martin Krpan of Vrh") can still entertain, in part because it is full of the kind of folk wisdom he valued so highly. The text is from Fran Levstik, *Izbrano delo* (Ljubljana: Mladinska knjiga, 1968). The translation is from *The Slavonic and East European Review* 21 (1943): 112–27.

Martin Krpan z Vrha

Močilar mi je časi kaj razkladal od nekdanjih časov, kako so ljudje živeli in kako so imeli to in to reč med sabo. Enkrat v nedeljo popoldne mi je v lipovi senci na klopi pravil naslednjo povest:

V Notranjem stoji vas, Vrh po imenu. V tej vasici je živel v starih časih Krpan, močan in silen človek. Bil je neki tolik, da ga ni kmalu takega. Dela mu ni bilo mar; ampak nosil je od morja na svoji kobilici angleško sol, kar je bilo pa že tistikrat ostro prepovedano. Pazili so ga mejači, da bi ga kje nehotoma zalezli; poštenega boja ž njim so se bali ravno tako kakor pozneje Štempiharja. Krpan se je pa vedno umikal in gledal, da mu niso mogli do živega.

Bilo je pozimi in sneg je ležal krog in krog. Držala je samo ozka gaz, ljudem dovoljna, od vasi do vasi, ker takrat še ni bilo tako cest kakor dandanes. V naših časih je to vse drugače, seveda; saj imamo, hvalo Bogu, cesto do vsakega zelnika. Nesel je Krpan po ozki gazi na svoji kobilici nekoliko stotov soli; kar mu naproti prižvenketa lep voz; na vozu je pa sedel cesar Janez, ki se je ravno peljal v Trst. Krpan je bil kmečki človek, zato ga tudi ni poznal; pa saj ni bilo časa dolgo ozirati se; še odkriti se ni utegnil, temveč prime brž kobilico in tovor ž njo pa jo prenese v stran, da bi je voz ne podrl. Menite, da je Krpana to kaj mudilo kali? Bilo mu je, kakor komu drugemu stol prestaviti.

Cesar, to videvši, veli kočijažu, da naj konje ustavi. Ko se to zgodi, vpraša silnega moža: "Kdo pa si ti?"

Ta mu dá odgovor: "Krpan mi pravijo; doma sem pa z Vrha od Svete Trojice, dve uri hoda od tukaj."

"I kaj pa nosiš v tovoru?" cesar dalje vpraša.

Krpan se naglo izmisli in reče: "I kaj? Kresilno gobo pa nekaj brusov sem naložil, gospod!"

Martin Kerpan of Verkh

Močilar would sometimes tell me how people long ago used to live and carry on their occupations. One Sunday afternoon as we were sitting on a bench under the shade of a linden tree, he told me the following story: In Inner Carniola there stands a village, Verkh by name. In the olden days an enormous man, called Kerpan, lived in this little village. He was so tall that never again will the world see such a man. Though he was an indolent person, yet he carried English salt from the sea on his little mare. Carrying salt in that remote period was already forbidden, and the frontier guards were continually on the alert to catch him in an unguarded moment, for they were afraid to fight openly with him just as later on they were afraid of Stempihar.* Kerpan, however, always managed to keep out of their way and took care that they never succeeded in outwitting him.

But one winter things began to happen. Snow was lying around for miles. Only a single narrow snow-path, available to the inhabitants, led to the other villages for, contrary to conditions at the present time, there were then no roads in that vicinity. In our day the situation is entirely different for there is now, thank God, a path to every kitchen garden.

At that time Kerpan was carrying a few hundredweights of salt down the narrow snow-path on his little mare when suddenly a beautiful carriage came clattering up to him. Its occupant was the Emperor John who was then on his way to Trieste. Kerpan was a simple fellow and did not recognize him; besides there was little time for him to scrutinize the features of the monarch. He did not even have time to take off his hat, but quickly picked up the little mare with her burden and carried her to one side of the road so that the carriage would not run her over.

Do you think this hardened Kerpan's arteries in any way? No! It was no more of an effort for him to accomplish this act than for another man to carry a chair.

The Emperor, seeing this feat, ordered the coachman to stop the horses. When the coach came to a standstill, he asked the giant, "Who are you?"

"They call me Kerpan," the giant answered. "My home is in Verkh at the Holy Trinity, a two hours' walk from here."

"What are you carrying in that pack?" the Emperor asked.

Kerpan was quick to reply, "What am I carrying? Some German tinder and grindstones, Sir!"

* Jože Štempihar (1739–96), an extraordinarily strong peasant contrabandist.

Na to se cesar začudi in pravi: "Ako so brusi, pokaj so pa v vrečah?"

Krpan se ne umišlja dolgo, ampak urno odgovori, kakor vsak človek, ki ve, kaj pravi: "Bojim se, da bi od mraza ne razpokali; zato sem jih v slamo zavel in v vrečo potisnil."

Cesar, ki mu je bil menda silni možak vseč, dalje pravi: "Anti veš, kako se taki reči streže. Kaj pa, da si konjiča tako lahko prestavil? Res nima dosti mesa; pa ima vsaj kosti."

Krpan se malo zareži in pravi: "Vem, da imajo vaši konji več mesa; pa vendar ne dam svoje kobilice za vse štiri, ki so tukaj napreženi. Kar se pa tiče prestavljanja, gospod, upam si nesti dve taki kobili dve uri hoda in tudi še dalj, če je treba."

Cesar si misli: To velja, da bi se zapomnilo,—in veli pognati.

Minilo je potem leto in nekateri dan. Krpan je pa zmerom tovoril po hribih in dolinah. Kar se pripeti, da pride na Dunaj strašen velikan, Brdavs po imenu. Ta je vabil kakor nekdanji Pegam vse junake našega cesarstva v boj. Ali cesar pa tudi ni imel tako boječih ljudi, da bi dejal: nihče si ni upal nadenj; toda kdor se je skušil ž njim, gotovo je bil zmagan. Velikan pa ni bil mož usmiljenega srca; ampak vsakega je umoril, kogar je obvladal.—To je cesarju začelo iti po glavi: "Lejte—si no! Kaj bo, kaj bo, če se Brdavs ne ukroti? Usmrtil mi je že vso največjo gospodo! Presneta reč vendar, da mu nihče ne more biti kos!" Tako je cesar toževal, kočijaž ga je pa slišal. Pristopi tedaj z veliko ponižnostjo, kakor gre pred tolikim gospodom, in pravi: "Cesarost, ali več ne morete pametovati, kaj se je godilo predlansko zimo blizu Trsta?"

Cesar vpraša nekoliko nevoljen: "Kaj neki?"

Kočijaž odgovori: "Tisti Krpan, ki je tovoril s kresilno gobo in brusi, ne veste, kako je kobilico v sneg prestavil, kakor bi nesel skledo na mizo? Če ne bo Krpan Brdavs premogel, drugi tudi ne, tako vam povem."

"Saj res," pravi cesar, "precej se mora ponj poslati."

The Emperor, wondering at that statement, said, "If those are grindstones, why then are they in sacks?" It did not take Kerpan long to think of another answer: "I was afraid they would break because of the cold and so I wrapped them up in straw and packed them in sacks."

The Emperor, pleased by the giant, continued: "And you know how to handle such things? Of course you do since you moved your little mare so easily. In truth, it hasn't much flesh on its body, but at least it has bones."

Kerpan grinned and said, "I know your horses have more flesh on them than mine, but I wouldn't trade my little mare for all four of yours that you have harnessed there. As far as moving my mare is concerned, sir, I can carry two mares like that and walk two hours with them. Or even longer, if necessary."

"This is worth remembering—and bidding," mused the Emperor.

A year passed and Kerpan continued to carry his freight over hill and dale. Now it so happened that a terrible giant named Berdavs came to Vienna. The giant challenged all the heroes of our kingdom to battle, just as Pegam* had done in the old days. It may be said for the Emperor that he did not have any cowards among his people who would have forced him to say, "Nobody dares to challenge the giant,"—but any one who tried to fight the giant was sure to go down in defeat.

The giant was not a man with a merciful heart, for he killed everyone he overcame. This began to worry the Emperor and caused him to think: "See here! What's going to happen to us? What's going to happen if Berdavs cannot be overcome? He has already killed my highest ranking nobles! Confound it anyway, nobody is a match for him!"

The Emperor continued to complain in this manner. His coachman, overhearing him, approached him with great humility as he stepped before the great lords, and said: "Don't you remember, Your Majesty, what happened two winters ago near Trieste?"

"What happened?" the Emperor asked him somewhat ill-humoredly.

"Whom are you talking about?"

"Kerpan who carried German tinder and grindstones on his little mare," the coachman replied. "Don't you remember how he moved the little mare in the snow, as if putting a dish on the table? If Kerpan can't beat Berdavs, no man can. That's all I have to say."

"Yes, of course," said the Emperor, "we will send for him at once."

* Pegam (Czech), in Slovene folk songs, a reference to the Czech Vitovec who in the service of the Celje counts fought against Emperor Frederick III.

Poslali so veliko, lepo kočijo po Krpana. To je bil ravno tačas natovoril nekoliko soli pred svojo kočo: mejači so bili pa vse čisto ovédeli, da se zopet napravlja po kupčiji. Pridejo tedaj nadenj ter se ga lotijo; bilo jih je petnajst. Ali on se jih ni ustrašil; pisano je pogledal in prijel prvega in druge ž njim omlatil, da so vsi podplate pokazali. Ravno se je to vršilo, kar se v četrter pripelja nova, lepa kočija. Iz nje stopi cesarski sel, ki je vse videl, kar se je godilo, in naglo reče: "Zdaj pa že vem, da sem prav pogodil. Ti si Krpan z Vrha od Svete Trojice, kajne?"

"Krpan sem," pravi ta; "z Vrha tudi, od Svete Trojice tudi. Ali kaj pa bi radi? Če mislite zavoljo soli kaj, svetujem, da mirujete; petnajst jih je bilo, pa se jih nisem bal, hvalo Bogu; samo enega se tudi ne bom."

Sel pa, ki gotovo ni vedel, zakaj se meni od soli, reče na to: "Le urno zapri kobilu v konják, pa se hitro praznje obleci, pojdeva na Dunaj do cesarja."

Krpan ga neverno pogleda in odgovori: "Kdor če iti na Dunaj, mora pustiti trebuh zunaj, to sem slišal od starih ljudi; jaz ga pa menim s sabo nositi, koder bom tovoril in dokler bom tovoril."

Služabnik mu pravi: "Nikar ti ne misli, da šale uganjam."

"Saj bi tudi ne bilo zdravo," reče Krpan.

Na to zopet govori sel: "Kar sem ti povedal, vse je res. Ali več ne veš, kako si bil umaknil predlansko zimo kobilico kočiji s pota? Oni gospod na vozu je bil cesar, pa nihče drug, veš."

Krpan se začudi in pravi: "Cesar?—Menda vendar ne?"

"Cesar, cesar! Le poslušaj. Prišel je zdaj na Dunaj hud velikan, ki mu pravimo Brdavs. Tak je, da ga nihče ne ustrahuje. Dosti vojščakov in gospode je že pobil; pa smo rekli: 'Če ga živ krst ne zmore, Krpan ga bo.' Lej, ti si zadnje upanje cesarjevo in dunajskega mesta."

Krpana je to s pridom utešilo ter jako dobro se mu je zdelo do vsega, kar je slišal, in reče tedaj: "Če ni drugega kakor tisti prekleti Brdavs, poslušajte, kaj vam pravim! Petnajst Brdavsov za malo južino, to je meni toliko, kolikor vam kamen poriniti čez lužo, ki jo preskoči dete sedem let staro; samo varite, da me ne boste vodili za nos!" To reče in brž dene sol s

They, of course, sent a big beautiful coach for Kerpan. At the moment Kerpan was in front of his cabin, loading salt on his little mare. The frontier guards had in the meantime discovered that he was setting out on his business again. They came upon him and attacked him. There were fifteen of them, but Kerpan had no fear. He scowled at his assailants, grabbed one and thrashed the others with him. As a result of this thrashing they all took to their heels. Just as this was going on, a beautiful coach drawn by four horses, drew up. The Emperor's messenger, who had been a witness of this encounter, stepped out of the coach and quickly said to Kerpan, "Now I know I've hit it right. You're Kerpan of Verkh at the Holy Trinity, aren't you?"

"Yes, I am Kerpan of Verkh at the Holy Trinity," he said. "But what do you want? If you want me for the salt, I advise you to be quiet. There were fifteen of my assailants and still I wasn't afraid, thank the Lord, and I'm not afraid of any one of you. That's certain!"

To this caustic reply the messenger, who did not know exactly why Kerpan talked about salt, said, "Lock up your mare quickly in the stable and put on your Sunday clothes. We're going to Vienna to see the Emperor."

Kerpan looked at him doubtfully and replied, "Whoever goes to Vienna had better leave his belly home. That's what I've heard old people say. But I intend to carry my belly with me wherever I carry my freight, until I die carrying my salt."

"Don't think I'm joking," the Emperor's servant said to him.

"Certainly not, and it wouldn't be healthy, either," said Kerpan.

Kerpan wondered at this and said: "The Emperor?—you mean the Emperor?"

"The Emperor! The Emperor! Listen! A terrible giant called Berdavs has come to Vienna. He is so strong that nobody is a match for him. He has already killed enough warriors and lords to fill a graveyard. So we decided if any living Christian can overcome him, Kerpan can do so. You are the last hope of the Emperor and the city of Vienna."

"Everything I've told you is true," the messenger replied. "Don't you remember how you moved your little mare for a coach two winters ago? The gentleman in the carriage was the Emperor, and it was nobody else but he! Understand?"

These words greatly consoled Kerpan. Everything he had heard pleased him very much and now he said: "If there's nothing else but that confounded Berdavs, listen to what I have to say! Fifteen Berdavses for a small meal is for me what pushing a stone through a puddle of water, over which a seven-year-old child can jump, is for you. Only make sure that you aren't leading me by the nose!"

kobile, kobilo pa v konják, gre v kočo ter se praznje obleče, da bi ga pred cesarjem ne bilo sram. Ko se preobuje, ven priteče in sede v kočijo ter naglo zdrčita proti Dunaju.

Ko prideta na Dunaj, bilo je vse mesto črno pregrnjeno; ljudje so pa klavrno lazili kakor mravlje, kadar se jim zapali mravljišče.

Krpan vpraša: "Kaj pa vam je, da vse žaluje?"

"O, Brdavs, Brdavs!" Vpije malo in veliko, možje in žene. "Ravno danes je umoril cesarjevega sina, ki ga je globoko v srce pekla sramota, da bi ne imela krona junaka pod sabo, kateri bi se ne bal velikana. Šel se je ž njim skusit; ali kaj pomaga! Kakor drugim, tako njemu. Do zdaj se še nihče ni vrnil iz boja."

Krpan veli urno pognati in tako prideta na cesarski dvor, ki pavijo, da je neki silo velik in jako lep. Tam stoji straža vedno pri vratih noč in dan, v letu in zimi, naj bo še tako mraz; in brž je zavpila o Krpanovem prihodu, kakor imajo navado, kadar se pripelja kdo cesarske rodovine. Bilo je namreč naročeno že štirinajst dni dan za dnevom, da naj se nikomur in nikoli ne oglasi, samo tačas, kadar se bo pripeljal tak in tak človek. Tako so se veselili Krpana na Dunaj. Kaj bi se ga pa ne? Presneto jim je bila huda za nohti! Ko cesar sliši vpitje, precej ve, kdo je, in teče mu naproti, pa ga pelja v gornje hrame. Čudno lepo je tam, še lepše kakor v cerkvi. Krpan je kar zijal, ker se mu je vse tako grobo zdelo. Cesar ga vpraša: "Krpan z Vrha! Ali me še poznaš?"

Kaj bi vas ne," odgovori on; "saj ni več ko dve leti, kar sva se videla. No vi ste še zmerom lepo zdravi, kakor se na vašem licu vidi."

Cesar pravi: "Kaj pomaga ljubo zdravje, ko pa drugo vse narobe gre! Saj si že slišal od velikana? Kaj deš ti, kaj bo iz tega, če se kako kaj ne preonegavi? Sina mi je ubil, lej!"

Krpan odgovori: "Koga bo drugega? Glavo mu bomo vzeli, pa je!"

Saying this, Kerpan quickly unloaded the salt from the mare, put it in the stable, went into the cabin and put on his Sunday clothes so that he would not be ashamed to be presented to the Emperor. When he had changed his clothes, he ran out and got into the coach. Then the two men started quickly for Vienna.

When they arrived in Vienna, the whole city was in mourning. People crawled about, looking as downcast as ants whose ant hill has been set afire.

“What’s the matter with you people?” Kerpan asked. “You’re all so sad.”

“O, Berdavs! Berdavs!” cried the great and small, men and women alike. “He has just killed the Emperor’s son who was heartbroken with mortification because the Crown had no hero brave enough to fight the giant. He went to try his luck with Berdavs, but what’s the use? Like the others, he too fell. Up to this moment nobody has come back alive from the fight.”

Kerpan told the coachman to drive quickly. They finally arrived at the Emperor’s court which, they say, is very large and beautiful. A guard always stands by the gates, night and day, summer and winter, even in extremely cold weather. The guard quickly announced Kerpan’s arrival as is the custom when anyone of royal birth arrives.

The order had been given day after day for the past fortnight that nobody be announced and that everything remain quiet until the time when such and such a man should arrive. So the Court was anxiously looking forward to Kerpan’s arrival in Vienna. Why shouldn’t it have done so? The members of the Court were at their wit’s end to know what to do in such a desperate and, in fact, seemingly hopeless situation.

The Emperor, hearing the shouting, knew at once who had arrived and he rushed out to meet the giant whom he escorted into the upper chambers of the palace. It was wonderfully beautiful in those rooms, even more beautiful than in church. Kerpan just gaped about in wonder at so much regal magnificence.

Presently the Emperor asked him: “Kerpan of Verkh! Do you still remember me?”

“Why shouldn’t I?” Kerpan replied, “It’s about two years since we saw each other. Well, you look nice and healthy, as one can see by your face.”

“What good is one’s dear health,” the Emperor replied, “when everything else goes wrong! Perhaps, you’ve already heard of the giant? What will be the outcome if events don’t take a more favorable turn? See, he’s even killed my son!”

“What else could happen! We’ll take his head, of course!” Kerpan said.

Cesar žalosten zavrne: "Menim da, ko bi jo le mogli! Oh, ali ni ga, mislim, pod soncem jujaka, da bi vzel Brdavsu glavo!"

"Zakaj ne? Slišal sem," pravi Krpan, "da vsi ljudje vse vedo; na vsem svetu se pa vse dobi; pa bi se ne dobil tudi junak nd Brdavs? Kakor sem uboren človek, ali tako peklenško ga bom premikastil, da se mu nikdar več ne bodo vrnila hudobne želje, po Dunaju razsajati; če Bog dá, da je res!"

Kdo bi bil cesarju bolj ustregel kakor te besede! Le nekaj ga je še skrbelo; zato pa tudi reče: "Da si močan, tega si me preveril; ali pomisli ti: on je orožja vaje iz mladih dni; ti pak si prenašal zdaj le bruse in kresilno gobo po Kranjskem; sulice in meča menda še nisi videl nikoli drugje kakor na križevem potu v cerkvi. Kako se ga boš pa lotil?"

"Nič se ne bojte," pravi Krpan; "kako ga bom in s čim ga bom, to je moja skrb. Ne bojim se ne meča ne sulice ne drugega velikanovega orožja, ki vsemu še imena ne vem, če ga ima kaj veliko na sebi."

Vse to je bilo cesarju pogodu, in brž veli prinesiti polič vina pa kruha in sira, rekoč: "Na, Krpan, pij pa jej! Potlej pojdeva orožje izbirat."

Krpanu se je to vele malo zdelo; polič vina takemu junaku; pa je vendar molčal, kar je preveliko čudo. Kaj pa je hotel? Saj menda je že slišal, da gospoda so vsi malojedni zato, ker jedo, kadar hoče in kolikor hoče kateri, zgolj dobrih jedi. Ali kmečki človek, kakor je bil Krpan, ima drugo za bregom. On tedaj použije, ko bi kvišku pogledal ter naglo vstane. Cesar je vse videl in, ker je bil pameten mož, tudi precej spoznal, da takemu truplu se morajo večji deleži meriti; zato so mu pa dajali od tega časa dan na dan, dokler je bil na Dunaju: dve krači, dve četrti janjca, tri kopune, in ker sredice ni jedel, skorje štirih belih pogač, z maslom in jajci oméšanih; vino je imel pa na pravici, kolikor ga je mogel.

Ko prideta v orožnico, to je v tisto shrambo, kjer imajo orožje, namreč: sabolje, meče, jeklene oklepe za na prsi, čelade in kakor se imenuje to in ono; Krpan izbira in izbira, pa kar prime, vse v rokah zdrobi, ker je bil silen človek. Cesarja skoraj obide zona, ko to vidi; vendar se stori srčnega in vpraša: "No, boš kaj kmalu izbral?"

"V čem si bom pa izbiral?" odgovori Krpan. "To je sama igrača; to ni za velikana, ki se mu pravi Brdavs, pa tudi ne za mene, ki mi pravite Krpan. Kje imate kaj boljšega?"

“If we only could! But I don’t think there is a hero under the sun who could take off Berdavs’s head!” the Emperor replied sadly.

“Why not? I’ve heard it said that all people know everything. Everything can be found in the world, and we can’t find a hero to fight Berdavs! Weak as I am I’ll thrash him, if God grants it, so soundly that he’ll never come back again to terrorize Vienna.”

Nothing could have pleased the Emperor more than this! Something, however, still worried him. So he said, “you have convinced me that you are strong, but consider the fact that he used weapons since his youth, while you until the present time have only grindstones and German tinder about Carniola. Perhaps you have never seen a spear or a sword other than those in the pictures of the Way of the Cross in your village church. How do you mean to fight him?”

“Don’t worry,” Kerpan said, “about how and what I’ll fight him with. That’s my business. I’m not afraid of sword or spear or any other of the giant’s weapons whose names I don’t even know, granting that he had any of these in his possession.”

All this appealed to the Emperor, and he quickly ordered a pot of wine and some bread to be brought to Kerpan, saying: “Here, Kerpan, eat and drink! Then we’ll go to pick out your weapons.”

This seemed to Kerpan a very slight reward. A pot of wine for such a hero! He kept quiet, nevertheless, because he was filled with wonder. What more did he want? He had, of course, heard that the lords all had dainty appetites because they ate the very best food whenever they felt so inclined. But a simple man, such as Kerpan, always had other things up his sleeve! He, therefore, drank the wine in one gulp and quickly bit up. The Emperor noticed all this and, because he was a shrewd man, he also saw at once that a larger portion should have been allotted to one with such a strong body. That is why they gave him daily, for the remainder of his stay in Vienna: two hams; half a ram, three capons, and, since he did not eat crumbs, the crusts of four loaves of bread made of white flour, butter and eggs. Furthermore, he was supplied with as much wine as he could drink.

When the Emperor and Kerpan came to the armory, that is, the place where such weapons as sabres, swords, breastplates, helmets and other war paraphernalia are kept, Kerpan made several attempts to choose a weapon, but he crushed everything he took in his hands, for he was indeed an extraordinarily strong man. The Emperor almost shuddered from terror when he saw this but he summoned up enough courage to ask, “Well, will you pick out something soon?”

“What can I pick from?” Kerpan replied. “These things are mere toys. They wouldn’t do for the giant you call Berdavs, and they won’t do for me, Kerpan. Where do you have anything better?”

Cesar se čudi in pravi: "Če to ne bo zate, sam ne vem, kako bi? Večjega in boljšega nimamo."

Na to reče oni: "Veste kaj? Pokažite mi, kje je katera kovačnica!"

Pelja ga hitro sam cesar v kovačnico, ki je bila tudi na dvoru; zakaj taki imajo vso pripravo in tudi kovačnico, da je kladivo in nakovalo pri rokah, ako se konj izbosi ali če je kaj drugega treba, da se podstavi ali prekuje. Krpan vzame kos železa in najtežje kladivo, ki ga je kovač vselej z obema rokama vihtel; njemu je pa v eni roki pelo, kakor bi koso klepal. "Oj tat sežgani!" pravijo vsi, ko to vidijo; še cesarju se je imenitno zdelo, da ima takega hrusta pri hiši. Krpan kuje in kuje, goni meh na vse kriplje ter naredi veliko reč, ki ni bila nobenemu orožju podobna; imela je največ enakosti z mesarico. Ko to izgotovi, gre na cesarski vrt in poseka mlado, košato lipo iznad kamnite mize, kamor so hodili gospoda poleti hladit se. Cesar, ki mu je bil zmerom za petami, brž priteče in zavpije: "Krpan! I kaj pa to delaš? Da te bes opali! Ne veš, da cesarica raje dá vse konje od hiše kakor to lipo od mize? Pa si jo posekal! Kaj bo pa zdaj?"

Krpan z Vrha pa, ne da bi se bal, odgovori: "Kar je, to je. Zakaj pa mi niste druge pokazali, če se bam te tako smili? Kaj bo pa? Drevo je drevo! Jaz pa moram imeti les nalašč za svojo rabo, kakršnega v boju potrebujem."

Cesar molči, ker vidi, da ne pomaga zvoniti, ko je toča že pobila; pa vendar ga je skrbelo, kako bi se izgovoril pred cesarico. Krpan tedaj naredi najprvo toporišče mesarici, potem pa obseka pol sežnja dolg ter na enem koncu jako debel kij, pa gre pred cesarja: "Orožje imam, ali konja nimam. Saj menda se ne bova peš lasala?"

Cesar, zastran lipe še zmerom nekoliko nevšečen, pravi: "Pojdi, pa vzemi konja, katerega hočeš. Saj vem, da le širokoustiš. Kdaj bom jaz papež v Rimu? Takrat, kadar boš ti zmogel velikana. Če misliš, primi ga, pa mu odstrizi glavo, ako si za kaj, da bo imela moja država mir pred njim, ti pa veliko čast in slavo za njim!"

The Emperor began to wonder and said, "If these things won't do for you, I don't know what else will be suitable. We haven't anything bigger and better."

"I have an idea," said Kerpan. "Show me where the smithy is."

The Emperor quickly took him to the smithy which was also in the court, for monarchs have all sorts of things, even a smithy, so that they can always have a hammer and anvil available in case a horse gets unshod or there is something to be forged or repaired. Kerpan selected a piece of iron and the heaviest hammer in the place. The blacksmith always had to swing this hammer with both hands but in Kerpan's hand it sang as if he were sharpening a scythe.

"That bronze rascal!" all who saw him said. It now even seemed a distinction to the Emperor to have such a strong, strapping man about the palace.

Kerpan forged and forged. He worked the bellows with all his might and finally made something so large that it resembled no particular weapon but it was more similar to a cleaver than to anything else. When he had finished, he went into the Emperor's courtyard and chopped down a young, bushy linden tree which stood spreading its branches over a stone table where in summer the lords and ladies assembled as the tree was a refuge from the rays of the sun. The Emperor who was always at his heels, quickly ran up to him and cried, "Kerpan! What are you up to now? May the devil let you burn! Don't you know that the Empress would rather part with all our horses than have this linden tree chopped down? And you've cut it down! What shall we do now?" But Kerpan of Verkh answered him fearlessly, "What is done is done. Why didn't you show me another tree, since you're so particular about this one? What shall we do? A tree is a tree! I must have wood especially for my own use—the kind I'll need for the fight."

The Emperor remained silent because he saw that there was no use crying over spilt milk. Still, he worried about his future excuses to the Empress.

Kerpan first made a handle for his cleaver. He then cut a pole half a fathom long and made a very large club from it. Thereupon he went to the Emperor and said, "I have my weapons now, but I don't have a horse. Surely we won't have to fight on foot."

The Emperor, still somewhat uneasy about the linden tree, said, "Come and take whatever horse you wish. I know you are only boasting. When shall I be Pope in Rome?—When you will kill the giant. If you mean to do anything, take him and chop off his head, if you are really any good, so that my country will have peace and you will have great renown!"

Krpan je bil malo srdit, pa vendar jezo pogoltne in reče: "Kar se tiče Brdavsca, to ni igrača, kakor bi kdo z grma zapodil vrabca, ki se boji vsakega ocepka in kamna. Koliko junakov pa imate, da bi si upali nádenj? Zapomnite si, cesarost, kar sem obljubil, storil bom, čeprav od jeze popokajo vsi obrekovalci, ki me mrazijo pri vas. Da bi le vsi ljudje vselej držali se svojih besedi tako, kakor se mislim jaz, ako me Bog ne udari; pa bi nihče ne vedel, kaj se pravi laž na zemlji! Toda svet je hudoben ter ne pomisli, da je Bog velik, človek majhen. Zdaj pa le pojdite, greva, da konja izbereva. Nočem takega, da bi pod mojo težo pred velikanom počenil na vse štiri noge, vam v sramoto, meni v sitnost. Dunajčanje bi se smejali, vi pa rekli: 'Poglejte ga, še konja mi je izpridil!'"

Cesar je kar obstekel, poslušajo modrost Martinovih ust, in potem gre ž njim. Ko prideta v konják, povpraša: "Po čem bodeš pa konja poznal, je li dober ali ne?"

Krpan odgovori: "Po tem, da se mi ne bo dal za rep čez prag potegniti."

Cesar pravi: "Le skusi! Ali daravno si, prekanjeni tat, storil mi dovolj sitnosti pred cesarico, svarim te, vari se, da te kateri ne ubije; konji so iskri."

Martin Krpan pak izleče prvega in zadnjega in vse druge čez prag; še celo tistega, ki ga je sam cesar jahal samo dvakrat v letu, namreč: o veliki noči pa o svetem Telesu; to se je menda cesarju posebno pod nos pokadilo. Potem reče Krpan: "Tukaj ga nimate za moje sedlo! Pojdiva k drugim."

Cesar odgovori čméren: "Če niso ti zate, moraš se peš bojevati. Ti nisi pravdanski človek! Vem, da ga nimam v cesarstvu takega, da bi ga ti, zagovédnež, ne izlekel!"

"Ta je pa že prazna!" pravi Krpan. "Jaz imam doma kobilico, katere ne izleče nobeden vaših junakov, stavim svojo glavo, če ni drugače; da ne poreko Dunajčanje z Brdavsom vred, da lažem."

"Pa ni tista," vpraša cesar, "ki si ž njo plesal po snegu?"

"Tista, tista!" zavrne on.

Cesar pa se razhudi, rekoč: "Zdaj pa že vidim, da si bebec ali pa mene delaš bebec! Vari se me, Krpane! Moja roka je dolga."

Krpan pa mu v smehu odgovori: "Če je s tem dalja, pa vendar ne seže velikanu še celo do pasa ne, nikar že do brade, da bi ga malo oskubla in zlasala. Ampak pustimo šale takim ljudem v napotje, ki nimajo drugega dela, kakor da ž njimi dražijo svojega bližnjega; meniva se raje od Brdavsca,

Kerpan was rather angry now, but he swallowed his anger and said: "As far as Berdavs is concerned, I know he isn't a plaything. It won't be like chasing a sparrow who is afraid of every stick and stone out of the bush. How many heroes have you on whom you can depend? Remember, Your Majesty, I'll do what I promised, even if all the backbiters, intriguing against me, burst from anger. If people only always kept their promises as I mean to keep mine, provided God does not strike me dead, no one on earth would know the meaning of a lie. But the world is wicked and does not know that God is great and man is small. Let's go now. Let's go pick out the horse. Still, I do not want one that will squat on all fours under my weight, before the giant, to your humiliation and to my annoyance. The Viennese would laugh and you would say: 'Look at him. He's even ruined my horse!'" The Emperor became motionless from terror. He listened to this wisdom coming from the lips of Kerpan and followed him. When they reached the stable, the monarch asked him, "How will you be able to tell whether the horse is good or not?"

"By the simple fact that he won't, if he's any good, let me pull him by the tail over the threshold," Kerpan replied.

"Just try it!" the Emperor said. "You've already made trouble enough for me with the Empress, you sly old rascal. I'm warning you; take care that they don't kill you. These horse are somewhat spirited."

Martin Kerpan, nevertheless, pulled the first one, then the second one, and all the others, over the threshold, including the horse that the Emperor himself rode only twice a year, that is, on Easter and on All Saint's Day. This especially must have irked the Emperor.

"You haven't any horse I like," Kerpan said.

"If these don't satisfy you, you will have to fight on foot. You aren't an ordinary man! I know there isn't a horse in the Empire you couldn't pull out of the stable, you clown!" said the Emperor sullenly.

"That's not so!" Kerpan said, "I have a little mare at home that none of your heroes can pull over the threshold. I'll bet my head on that, if necessary, so that the Viennese and Berdavs won't say I'm lying."

"Not that mare you danced with in the snow."

"Yes, that's the one, that's the one!" Kerpan retorted.

The Emperor became angry and said, "It is perfectly clear to me now that you are either a fool or are trying to make one of me! Take care, Kerpan! My arm is long!"

"Even if it is as long as you say, still it can't reach the giant's belt, much less pluck his beard," Kerpan replied with a laugh. "But let's leave such joking to idle people who have no other work except to annoy their neighbors with their jokes. Let's talk rather about Berdavs who still has his

ki še zdaj nosi glavo. Pošljite mi hitro po kobilico; ali pa naj grem sam ponjo. Toda potlej ne vem?—Ko bi mene več ne bilo nazaj?— Bogu je vse mogoče!”

Cesar, ko to sliši, urno pošlje na Vrh po Krpanovo kobilico. Ko jo pripeljejo na Dunaj, Krpan reče: “Zdaj pa le vkup dunajski junaki, kjer vsa je še kaj! Moje kobilice, kakor je videti slaba, vendar nihče ne potegne do praga, nikar že cez prag!”

Skušali so jahači in konjarji in vsi tisti, ki so učeni, kako velja v strah prijeti konja, bodisi hud ali pa krotak, pa kobilice ni nihče premaknil z mesta; vsakega je vrgla na gnojno gomilo. “Bes te lopi!” reče eden in drug. “Majhno kljuse, velika moč!”

Prišel je čas voja z velikanom; bilo je ravno svetega Erazma dan. Krpan vzame kij in mesarico, zasede kobilico, pa jezdi iz mesta na travnik, kjer se je Brdavs bojeval. Martina je bilo čudno gledati: njegova kobilica je bila majhna, noge je imel velike, tako da so se skoraj po tleh za njim vlekale; na glavi je nosil star klobuk širokih krajev, na sebi pa debelo suktnjo iz domače volne; vendar se nobenega ni bal; celo sam cesar ga je rad poslušal, kadar je kakšno prav žaltavo razdrl.

Ko ugleda Brdavs jezdeca, svojega sovražnika, začne s hrohotom smejati se in reče: “Ali je to tisti Krpan, ki so ga poklicali nadme tako daleč, tam z Vrha od Svete Trojice? Mar bi raje bil ostal doma za pečjo, da bi ne cvelil svoje stare matere, ako jo še imaš, da bi ne žalil svoje žene, ako ti jo je Bog dal. Pojdi mi izpred oči, da te videl ne bom, pa le naglo, dokler mi je srce še usmiljeno. Če me zgrabi jeza, ležal boš na zemlji krvav, kakor je sam cesarjev sin in sto drugih!”

Krpan mu odgovori: “Če nisi z Bogom še spravljen, urno skleni, kar imaš; moja misel ni, dolgo čakati, mudi se mi domov za peč; tvoje besede so mi obudile v srcu živo željo do svoje kočice in do svoje peči; ali poprej vendar ne pojdem, da tebi vzamem glavo. Pa ne zameri! To mi je naročil moje gospod, cesar; jaz nisem vedel ne zate ne za tvoje velikanstvo in za vse krvave poboje. Prijezdi bliže, da si podava roke; nikoli si jih nisva poprej; nikoli si jih ne bova pozneje; ali pravijo, da Bog nima rad, če pride kdo z jezo v srcu pred sodni stol.”

head on his shoulders. Send someone quickly to get my mare, or let me go myself. But then I don't know whether I shall come back again?—For God, however, everything is possible!”

Having heard Kerpan's wish, the Emperor quickly sent to Verkh for the little mare. When they brought her to Vienna, Kerpan said to him, “Get all the heroes of Vienna together now, if there are any more of them left! As weak as my little mare may seem, there isn't one among them who can pull her even to the threshold, much less drag her over it!”

Riders and hostlers and all who knew the effect of fear in handling a horse, whether he is spirited or gentle, made attempts without success, for nobody could even move the little animal. She threw everyone who touched her on a dung heap.

“Hang it!” they said. “Small mare, great strength!”

The day came for Kerpan's fight with the giant. It so happened that it was also St. Erasmus' Day.* Kerpan took his club and cleaver, mounted his little mare, and rode out of town to the meadow where Berdavs fought his challengers. Riding on his little mare, his long feet dragging on the ground, Martin Kerpan was certainly a strange sight. He was wearing an old, broad-brimmed hat and a thick homespun coat. It is needless to add that he was afraid of no one. In fact, the Emperor himself liked to listen to him when he was saying something very audacious.

When Berdavs saw the rider, his foe, he began to roar with laughter. “Is this that Kerpan—the man from the distant village of Verkh at the Holy Trinity—whom they sent for to fight me? It would have been better for you to have stayed at home by the stove, so that you wouldn't grieve your old mother, if you still have one, or your wife, if Allah has blessed you with one. Get out of my sight, and be quick about it, while I still have some pity in my heart for you. If I get angry, you'll soon lie covered with blood on the ground like the Emperor's son and a hundred others like him!”

“If you haven't yet made your peace with God, do so at once,” Kerpan replied. “I don't intend to wait too long. I'm in a hurry to get back home to my stove. Your words have awakened in my heart a burning desire for my cabin and my stove, but I won't go until I cut off your head. I beg your pardon! My Lord, the Emperor, gave me this task. Previously I had neither heard of you nor of your greatness, nor of all this bloody fighting. Come nearer so that we can shake hands. We have never met before this time and probably will never shake hands again. They say that God does not like to have anyone come before the Judgment Seat with anger in his heart.”

* June 2.

Velikan se nekoliko začudi, ko to sliši. Naglo prijezdi ter mu poda svojo debelo roko. Krpan mu jo pa tako stisne, da precej kri izza nohtov udari.

Brdavs malo zareži, pa vendar nič ne pravi, ampak misli si: ta je hud in močan; pa kaj bo—kmet je kmet; saj ne zna bojevati se, kakor gre junakom.

Urno zasukneta vsak svojega konja in zdirjata si od daleč naproti. Brdavs visoko vzdigne meč, da bi že o prvem odsekal sovražniku glavo; ali ta mu urno podstavi svoj kij, da se meč globoko zadere v mehko lipovino; in preden ga velikan more izdreti, odjaha Krpan z male kobilice, potegne Brdavs na tla, pa ga položi, kakor bi otroka v zibel deval, ter mu stopi za vrat in reče: “No, zdaj pa le hitro izmoli en očenašek ali dva in pa svojih grehov se malo pokesaj; izpovedal se ne boš več, nimam časa dolgo odlašati, mudi se mi domov za peč; znaj, da komaj čakam, da bi zopet slišal zvon, ki poje na Vrh pri Sveti Trojici.”

To izreče, pa vzame počasi mesarico ter mu odseka glavo in se vrne proti mestu.

Dunajčanje, ki so do zdaj le od daleč gledali, pridero k njemu, tudi sam cesar mu pride naproti, pa ga objame pričo ljudstva, ki je vpilo na vse grlo: “Krpan je nas otel! Hvala Krpanu, dokler bo Dunaj stal!”

Krpanu se je to kaj dobro zdelo, da je dosegel toliko čast in držal se je na svoji kobilici, kakor bi šel v gostje vabit. Saj se je tudi lahko; še tu med nami, če kdo kakega slepca ali belouško ubije, še ne ve, na kateri grm bi jo obesil, da bi jo videlo več ljudi.

Ko pridejo v cesarsko poslopje vsi knezi, vojskovodje in vsa prva gospoda s Krpanom, spregovori najprvo sam cesar in pravi: “Zdaj si pa le izberi! Dam ti, kar želiš, ker si zmogel tolikega sovražnika in otel deželo in mesto velike nadloge in nesreče. Nimam take stvari v cesarstvu, da bi dejal: ne dam ti je, če jo hočeš; celo Jerico, mojo edino hčer, imaš na ponudbo, ako nisi še oženjen.”

“Oženjen sem bil, pa nisem več,” odgovori Krpan; “rajnica je umrla, druge pa nisem iskal. Sam ne vem, kako bi vendar, da bi ne bilo meni napak, Bogu in dobrim ljudem pa všeč. Vašega dekleta sem že videl. Če je tudi še tako pametna, kakor je lepa, potlej naj se le skrije moja babnica pred njo v vseh rečeh. Dobrote, res, da je navajena, tistega ne bom dejal, ker je

The giant was, of course, greatly surprised by these words. Thereupon he quickly rode up to Kerpan and gave him his enormous hand. Kerpan squeezed it so hard that blood began to gush from the giant's finger nails.

Berdavs gave a low groan and still said nothing, but he thought to himself, "This fellow is big and strong. Well, what of that—a peasant is a peasant. At least he doesn't know how to fight like the heroes."

The two combatants turned their horses about and rode away swiftly in opposite directions. Berdavs raised his sword high in the air as a preparation for chopping off his foe's head in one stroke.

Kerpan, however, quickly covered himself with his club and let the giant thrust his sword deep into the soft linden wood. Before the giant could unhorse him, Kerpan jerked Berdavs off his horse to the ground, laid him flat on his back as though he were putting a baby in a cradle, stepped on his neck, saying, "Well, hurry up now and say a little Our Father or two and repent for your sins. You can't go to confession any more now and I can't wait very long. I'm in a hurry to get back to my stove. You see, I can hardly wait to hear the bell in Verkh at the Holy Trinity ring again."

Having said this, Kerpan slowly raised his cleaver and cut off the giant's head. He then returned to the city.

The Viennese, who until now had watched the fight only from afar, went to meet him. The Emperor himself came to greet him and embraced him in the presence of all the people who were shouting at the top of their lungs: "Kerpan has saved us! Thanks to Kerpan as long as Vienna shall stand!"

It made Kerpan feel very gratified to think he had won so much fame. He carried himself on his little mare as though he were about to invite friends to dine with him. Indeed, he could well afford to do so for even here in Carniola, if anyone kills a worm or a snake, he does not know on which bush to hang it so that it may be seen by more people.

When all the princes, generals and lords of the land had assembled with Kerpan in the palace, the Emperor himself was the first to speak, "You just choose anything you want! I'll give you whatever you want for conquering so great a foe and saving the country and the city from such a great scourge and disaster. There isn't a thing in the Empire I wouldn't give you for the asking. You may even have Jerica, my only daughter,—if you're not already married."

"I was married, but I'm not now," Kerpan replied. "My wife is dead and I never looked about for another. I don't know how it is to be badly off and to be displeasing in the sight of God and honest people. I have already seen your daughter. Perhaps she is as sensible as she is beautiful but she belongs to a rich family, she's used to luxuries that I can't afford to give

od bogate hiše doma; pa saj na Vrhu pri Sveti Trojici spet nismo zgolj berači; pri nas tudi skozi vse leto visi kaj prekajenega na ražnju. Samo to ne vem, kako bo.—

Nesla sva bila z Marjeto v oprtnih košéh enkrat grozdje v Trst. Nazaj grede mi je bila pa ona zbolela na potu. Tako se mi je sitno zdelo, da vam na morem povedati! Raje bi bil imel, da bi se mi bili utrgali v cerkvi naramnici obe kmalu, takrat ko bi ravno bil sveče prižigal. Ni bilo drugače: naložil sem jo v oprtni koš, koš pa na pleči ter sem koračil mastito ž njo! Izhajal bi že bil; saj Mretačka je bila tako majhna kakor deklina trinajstih let—pa jih je nadloga vendar imela že trideset, ko sva se jemala—težka tedaj ni bila; ali kamor sem prišel, povsod so me vprašali, kakšno kramo prodajam. To je presneto slaba krama, babo po svetu prenašati! In ko bi se zdaj na cesti nama spet kaj takega nakretilo, vaši hčerki in pa meni? Od tukaj do Vrha se pot vleče kakor kurja čeva. Koša revež nimam, kobilica ima pa samo eno sedlo! Pa bi tudi ne bilo čudo, ki bi zbolela; saj vemo vsi, da take mehkode niso vajene od petih zjutraj do osmih zvečer cika coka, cika coka s konjem. Če se to prav do dobrega vse premisli, menda bo najbolje, da vam ostane cesarična, meni pa vdovstvo, čeravno pravzaprav dosti ne maram zanje; ali kar Bog dá, tega se človek ne sme braniti.”

Cesarica pa že zdaj ni bla pozabila košate lipe nad kamnito mizo na vrtu; zato je tudi ni bilo zraven, poslušala pa je za vrati, kakor imajo ženske navado, ki bi rade vse izvedele. Ko sliši, da cesar ponuja Krpanu svojo hčer v zakon, pride tudi ona in pravi: “Ne boš je imel, ne! Lipo si mi izpridil; hčere ti pa ne dam! Ljubeznivi moj mož, menda ti je kri v glavi zavrela—ne morem ti dobrega reči—da govoriš take besede, ki sam dobro veš, da so prazne ena in druga. Pa tudi vas naj bo sram, vas, gospodje! Grdo je tako, da se mora kmet za vas bojevati! Še dandanes bi lipa lahko stala pa tudi velikan več ne imel glave, ko bi vi kaj veljali. Pa saj vem: kar so se obabili možje, je vsaka baba neumna, katera se omoži! Res je, Krpan, otel si cesarstvo in tudi Dunaj si otel; zato boš pa dobil vina sod, ki drži petdeset malih veder, potem sto in pet pogač, dvajset janjcev in pa osemštirideset

her. We, however, are not quite such beggars in Verkh at the Holy Trinity. We, too, have smoked meat hanging off spits all the year round. But I don't know how it'll be now.

“Once Marjeta and I carried grapes in back-baskets to Trieste. On our way back, she was taken suddenly ill. This annoyed me so much that I can't describe it. I'd sooner have both of my shoulder straps break in church as I'm about to light the candles for Mass. But there was no way out. I had to put her in one of the baskets, put the basket on my shoulders and march off with her. “I managed well, for Marjeta was as small as a girl of thirteen years—although she was really thirty when we were married. She was, therefore, not heavy. Wherever I came, they asked me what kind of goods I was selling. It's a beastly business to carry a woman around the world in a basket! Just suppose something like that should happen to your daughter and me on the road? The road from here to Verkh drags on like chicken gut. Being a poor man, I have no basket—and my little mare has only one saddle! It wouldn't be strange if your daughter became ill, for we all know that soft women like her aren't used to the plop-plop, plop-plop of horses' hoofs from five o'clock in the morning till eight in the evening. If one thinks this matter over carefully, he'll soon see that it is better for the princess to stay with you and for me to remain a widower even if I am not exactly reconciled. But man should not refuse whatever burdens God may inflict upon him.”

The Empress never forgot the incident of the bushy linden tree, spreading its branches over the stone table in the garden. This was really the reason for her absence, but she listened behind doors as is the habit of women who want to know everything. When she heard the Emperor offering their daughter in marriage to Kerpan, she burst into the room and shouted to the latter: “You won't have her! No, you won't! You chopped down my linden tree and I won't give you my daughter! My dear husband, you must have water on your brain—I can't say anything better for you—to say such things when you yourself know they are nonsense. And you, too, gentlemen, ought to be ashamed of yourselves. It isn't decent to have a peasant fight for you! My linden tree would still be standing there today and the giant would have lost his head too, if you amounted to anything. But I know! Since men have become so effeminate, every woman who marries is mad! It's true, Kerpan, you saved the Empire. It's also true that you have saved Vienna. For that reason you are going to get a barrel of wine containing fifty small *veders*,* a hundred and five loaves of bread and twelve rams. We'll also give you forty-eight hams. Now listen closely! All

* An old Slovene measure of 10 pots containing 14.5 liters.

krač ti bomo dali. Dobro me poslušaj! Ti moraš pa vse domu na Kranjsko spraviti, ko hočeš. Prodati pa ne smeš cepêra, ne tukaj ne na potu. Kadar boš a Vrhu pri Sveti Trojici, potlej pa stori, kakor se ti zdi. In ker zdaj nimamo tukaj nobenega Brdavsca več, menda ne bo napak, če osedlaš imenitno svojo kozico, ki praviš, da je kobilica, pa greš lepo počasi proti Vrhu. Pozdravi mi tamkaj Vrhovščake, posebno pa mater županjo!”

Cesarica je to izgovorila, pa je šla precej spet v svoje hrame. Vseh gospodov je bilo jako sram. Kaj bi jih pa tudi ne bilo? Prebito jih je obrenkala; prav kakor takim gre! Krpan se je pa držal, da je bil skoraj hudemu vremenu podoben. Kakor bi se za Mokrcem bliskalo, tako je streljal z očmi izpod srditega čela; obrvi so mu pa sršele ko dve metli. Da te treni, kako je bilo vsem okoli njega čudno pri srcu! Še cesar je plaho od strani gledal, cesar! Pa vendar, ker sta bila vedno velika prijatelja, zato se počasi predrzne in reče mu: “Krpane, le ti molči; midva bova že naredila, da bo prav!”

Krpan ga pa nič ne posluša, temveč zadene si na desno ramo kij, na levo pa mesarico, stopi k durim in reče: “Veste kaj? Bog vas obvari! Pa nikar kaj ne zamerite!”

Na te besede prime za kljuko, pa kakor da bi hotel iti.

Cesar poteče za njim: “Čaki no! Daj si dopovedati! Bog nas vari; saj menda nisi voda!”

Krpan odgovori: “Koga? Menite, da nisem še zadosti slišal, ka-li? Meni bi gotovo segla brada že noter do pasa ali pe še dalj, ko bi se ne očedil vsak teden dvakrat; pa bo kdo pometal z mano? Kdo je pome poslal kočijo in štiri konje? Vi ali jaz? Dunaja ni bilo meni treba, mene pa Dunaju! Zdaj se pa takisto dela z mano? In pa še zavoljo mesa in vina moram očitke požirati? Že nekatere matere sem jel kruh, črnega in belega; nekaterega očeta vino sem pil: ali nikjer, tudi pri vas nisem in ne bom dobil take postrežbe, kakršna je v Razdrtem pri Klinčarju. Ni grjega na tem svetu kakor to, če se kaj da, potlej pa očita! Kdor noče dati, pa naj ima sam! Pa tudi, kdo bi mislil, da lipove pravde še zdaj ni kraja ne konca? Ali je bilo tisto drevesce vaš bog ali kaj? Tak les raste za vsakim grmom, Krpana pa ni za vsakim voglom, še na vsakem cesarskem dvoru ne, hvalo Bogu! Darove pa spet take dajate, da človek ne more do njih; to je ravno, kakor bi mački miš na rep privezal, da se potlej vrti sama okrog sebe, doseči je pa vendar ne more. Petdeset malih veder vina, pet in sto pogač, dvajset janjcev in pa

these things you may take home to Carniola, if you wish, but you must not sell them here or on your way back home. When you return to Verkh at the Holy Trinity, you may do whatever you please with them.

“And now as there is no longer any Berdavs to annoy us, it wouldn’t be a bad idea for you to saddle that famous little goat you call a mare and go back nicely to Verkh. Give my regards to all the people of Verkh, especially the burgomaster’s wife!”

Having said this, the Empress went back at once to her room. All the lords were very much ashamed. Why shouldn’t they have been? She had given them such a severe scolding, just as they deserved! Kerpan made such fierce grimaces that he resembled a thunderstorm. His eyes flashed underneath his angry brows as though the sky were flashing beyond the little town of Mokrice. His brows bristled up like two brooms. Good God, how strange they all felt around him! Even the Emperor seemed timid as he looked askance at him. Imagine, the Emperor! However, because they had been such friends, he slowly ventured to say to him, “My dear Kerpan, just be quiet. We’ll make everything right!”

Kerpan paid no attention to these remarks. Putting his club on his right shoulder and his cleaver on his left, he went to the door, saying, “May God guard you! And no offense!”

With these words, he raised the latch and started to leave.

Thereupon, the Emperor ran after him and called to him, “Wait a minute! Let me explain! God forbid! Surely you aren’t a jellyfish!”

“What is it?” Kerpan replied. “Don’t you think I’ve heard enough of this already? My beard would reach to my belt, or even to my toes, if I didn’t shave myself twice a week. But then who would sweep the floor after me if I didn’t do so myself? Who sent for the coach and four? You or I? I didn’t need Vienna but Vienna needed me! Why do you treat me like this now? Must I swallow your complaints about the meat and bread I ate? I have already eaten the bread, black and white, of many a mother and drank the wine of many a father, but I’ll never get such service, even here, as I get in Razderto at Klincar’s place. There isn’t anything worse in this world than giving something and then begrudging it! Whoever does not wish to give anything, let him keep it for himself! But who’d have thought that there are still laws about linden trees! Was that little tree your God, or what? That kind of wood grows behind every bush in Carniola, but Kerpan isn’t to be found on every corner—not even in every court, thank the Lord! Then again you give such gifts that one can’t even get to them. It’s just as though you’d tie a mouse to a cat’s tail in order to make the cat turn around without being able to catch the little animal. Fifty small veders of wine, a hundred and five loaves of bread, twelve rams, and forty-eight

oseminštirideset krač; tako blago res ni siromak; ali kaj pomaga! Prodati ne smem; z Dunaja na Vrh pa tudi ne kaže prenašati! Pa jaz bom drugo naredil, kakor se nikomur ne zdi! Deske si bom znesel na dvorišče in, ako jih bo premalo, potlej bo pa drevje zapelo. Vse bom posekal, kar mi bo prišlo pod sekiro, bodisi lipa ali pa lipec, hudolesovina ali dobroletovina, nad kamnito ali nad leseno mizo; pa bom postavil sredi dvorišča kolibo in tako dolgo bom ležal, dokler bo sod moker, pa dokler bom imel kaj prigrizniti. Ampak to vam pravim: samo še enkrat naj pride Brdavs na Dunaj, potlej pa zopet pošljite pome kočijo in služabnika, ali pa še celo svojo hčer, ki ne maram zanjo malo in dosti ne; pa bomo videli, kaj boste pripeljali z Vrha od Svete Trojice! Ako bo Krpan, mesa in kosti gotovo ne bo imel; ampak iz ovsene slame si ga boste morali natlačiti; pa se ga ne bodo še vrabci dolgo bali, nikar že velikani! Mislil sem iti brez besedice govorjenja. Ker ste me pa sami ustavili, ne bodite hudi, če sem vam katero grenko povedal; saj menda veste, kako je dejal rajnik Jernejko na Golem: 'Ali ga bom s pogačo pital, kadar se s kom kregam! Kar ga bolj ujezi, to mu zabelim.' zdaj pa le zdravi ostanite!"

Cesar pravi na to: "Martin, potrpi no! Vsaj ne bodi tako neučakaven. Ti ne pojdeš od naše hiše, verjemi da ne! Saj sem jaz gospodar, veš!"

Krpan odgovori: "Vsak človek je tak, kakršnega je Bog dal; vsak ima nekaj nad sabo: kdor ni grbast, morda pa je trobast! Moje obnašanje ni za vsa, že vidim, da ne. Tega se tedaj ne menimo, da bi jaz tukaj ostal. Saj tudi kobilica, ki se ji pravi kozica, ni vajena zmerom ob suhi krmi. Doma se je pasla po gozdu, na potu pa ob cestah!"

Na to pristopi minister Gregor, ki je imel ključe od cesarske kase, ker taki imajo za vsako reč posebej služabnika. Minister se oglasi: "Cesarost, veste kaj? Vaš norec Stehan je umrl; včeraj smo imeli osmi dan za njim, Bog mu daj nebeško luč! Stehan in Krpan, to si je nekam jako podobno. Kaj menite? Morda bi le-ta prevzel njegovo službo? Nič se ne ve. Zvitorepec je; debel je; smešen tudi, jezičen ravno tako; vse krščanstvo ga nima takega!"

Krpan odgovori: "Magister Gregor, veste kaj? Enkrat sem bil vaš bebec, dvakrat pa ne bom. Smejalo bi se malo in veliko meni in moji zarobljeni pameti, ko bi to naredil.—Zdaj pa dobro, da mi je prišlo na

hams! Such provisions aren't really bad, but what's the use? I can't sell them, and it doesn't pay to carry them from Vienna to Verkh! But I'll do something that nobody has ever dreamed of! I'll bring all the planks in Vienna together in the courtyard and if these are not enough, I'll begin on the trees. I'll cut down everything that comes under my hatchet, whether it be a full-grown or a small-leafed linden, a dogberry or a snow-ball tree, underneath a stone table or underneath a wooden one. I'll then build a cabin in the middle of the courtyard and lie in bed until the barrel is empty and I have eaten everything. But let another Berdavs come to Vienna again and then you can just send your coach and servant, or even your daughter, for whom I have little or no use, to fetch me and see what you will bring back from Verkh at the Holy Trinity! If that person be Kerpan, he certainly won't eat meat and bones but you will have to stuff him with oak straw. Then even the sparrows won't be afraid of him, much less the giant! I meant to go without a word of parting but since you stopped me, please don't be angry if I said anything bitter to you. Surely you remember what the late Jernejko of Gole said: 'Must I feed one with a loaf of bread whenever I quarrel with him? Whatever makes a person angrier, that's what I snap back at him.' And now good-bye!"

Upon hearing this, the Emperor said, "Be patient, Martin! At least, don't be so impatient. You won't go from this house. Believe me, you won't! I'm master here, understand!"

"Every man is as God made him," Kerpan replied. "Every man has a burden of his own. If one hasn't a hunched back, he has a snout! My behavior doesn't suit you; I can see it doesn't. Let's not talk about my staying here. Even my little mare, which they call a goat, is not used to dry fodder. At home she can graze in the forest, on the cow paths, along the roads!"

At this moment, the Minister Gregor, who held the keys to the imperial coffers,—for they have a separate servant for everything in royal courts—joined them.

"Do you know, Your Majesty," said the Minister, "that your jester Stefan is dead? Yesterday we had an eighth-day Mass said for him. May God grant him celestial light! Stefan and Kerpan! In many ways there is a striking resemblance between them. What do you say? Perhaps this man can take his place. You never can tell. He's a slyboots. He's crafty and ridiculous too and just as glib. There isn't a fellow like him in all Christendom!"

"Do you know this, Master Gregor?" Kerpan replied, "I was your fool once but I won't be again. The small and great would laugh at me and my homespun humor, if I'd accept your offer!—It's all right now that I

misel! Kmalu bi bil pozabil, kar imam že dolgo na jeziku. Cesarost, nekdam ste me bili srečali s kobilico v snegu, kajne?”

Cesar: “Bilo je tako, bilo!”

Krpan: “Kaj pa sem nesel na tovoru?”

Cesar: “Bruse pa kresilno gobo.”

Krpan: “To je bilo tačas, ko ste se vi peljali v Jeruzalem.”

Cesar: “Bosa je ta! V Trst sem šel; za Jeruzalem toliko vem, kakor za svojo zadnjo uro.”

Krpan: “Jaz pa za bruse in kresilno gobo ravno toliko. Takrat, veste, vam nisem bil resnice povedal, kar mi je še zdaj žal. Angleško sol sem prenašal. Saj se nisem bal pravzaprav ne vas ne vašega kočijaža. Pa taka je le: kadar se človek zasukne s pravega pota, naj bo še tako močan, pa se vendar boji, če veja ob vejo udari.”

Na to pravi minister Gregor: “Ne veš, da je prepovedano? To je nevaren človek; državi dela škodo. Primate ga, zaprimo ga!”

Krpan odgovori: “Kdo me bo? Morda vi dolgopetec, ki ste suhi kakor raženj; ki je vas in vašega magistrovanja z vami komaj za polno pest? Z eno samo roko vas porinem čez svetega Štefana streho, ki stoji sredi mesta! Nikar praznih besed ne razdirajte!”

Cesar pravi: “Le ti meni povedi, če bi morda še kaj rad. Midva ne bova v sovraštvu ostala, ne, če Bog da, da ne. Minister Gregor, ti ga pa le pusti! Že jaz vem, kako je!”

Krpan odgovori: “Poslušajte me tedaj! Moje otepanje z Brdavsom vem, da je imena vredno. Kaj se zna? Morda bodo postavači še celo skladali pripovedovavke in pesmi, da se bo govorilo, ko ne bo ne vas ne mene kosti ne prsti, če ne bo magister Gregor dal drugače v bukve zapisati. Pa naj stori, kakor če; meni se ne bo s tem ne prikupil ne odkupil. Ampak vendar je vsak delavec vreden svojega plačila, to sem v cerkvi slišal. Če je vaša draga volja, dajte mi tedaj pismo, ki bo veljavno pred vsako duhovsko in deželno gosposko; pa tudi svoj pečat morate udariti, da bom brez skrbi nosil angleško sol po svetu. Če mi to daste, naj bom ves malopridnež, kolikor me je pod klobukom, ako vam bom kdaj kaj opotikal, dokler bom tovoril!”

Cesar je bil precej pri volji; minister Gregor pa nikakor ni pritegnil. Ali cesar ga ni poslušal, ampak šele dejal je: “Gregor, vzemi pero, pa zapiši, kakor je Martin rekel!”

Minister Gregor se je kisko držal, branil se pa le ni, kar so mu veleli; zakaj cesarja se vendar vsak boji. Kadar je bilo pismo narejeno in

remember! I almost forgot what I have had on the tip of my tongue for a long time. Your Majesty, remember you once met me with my little mare?"

"Quite right, quite right!"

"And what was I carrying?"

"Grindstones and German tinder."

"That was then, when you were going to Jerusalem."

"That's not the truth! I was going to Trieste. I know as much about Jerusalem as I do about the appointed hour of my death."

"And I know just as much about grindstones and German tinder. You know, I wasn't telling you the truth at that time, for which I am very sorry. I was carrying English salt. I wasn't exactly afraid of you or your coachman, but so it goes when a man turns from the right path. Let him be ever so strong, still he may be frightened at the mere rustling of branches."

"Don't you know it's forbidden to do that?" the Minister Gregor said. "This is a dangerous man. He is a menace to the country. Seize him and lock him up!"

"Who'll do that?" Kerpan asked. "Perhaps you will, you longlegged beanpole! You who are as dry as a spit! You, who with all the authorities to help you, hardly make half a handful! I can throw you with one hand over the roof of St. Stephen's church standing in the middle of the town! Don't waste your breath!"

"You just tell me, if you want anything else," the Emperor said.

"You and I won't be enemies, not if God grants it. And you, Minister Gregor, let him alone. I know how it is!"

"Listen to me then," Kerpan went on to explain. "I know my fight with Berdavs has made me famous. Who knows? Perhaps some of the loafers in Vienna will write stories and poems about this fight. Perhaps even such stories and poems might be recited at some future time when neither our bones nor our dust remain, provided Master Gregor does not have something else written in the books. But let him do as he likes. Now, if you please, give me a letter that will hold good for every lord in the kingdom. You must also stamp it with your seal, so that I'll be able to carry my English salt freely all over the world. If you grant me that, and if I ever bother you about anything else as long as I carry my freight, you may call me the worst scamp you ever saw!"

The Emperor was ready at once to do what Kerpan wished but the Minister Gregor could not be made to agree with him. The Emperor, however, did not listen to him but said, "Gregor, take your pen and write down what Martin said!"

Though the Minister Gregor looked surly, he did what the Emperor commanded him to do, for everyone is somewhat afraid of an Emperor.

zapečateno, pravi cesar Krpanu: "Martin, ali prodaš meni pogače in vino, pa kar je še drugih reči? Najlaže bo tako, lej! S cesarico bom že jaz govoril, da bo prav. Mošnjo cekinov ti dam; ti boš pa blago pustil. Kdo bo to prenašal z Dunaja do Svete Trojice?"

Krpan odgovori: "Poldrugo mošnjo pa še kakšno krono povrhu, vem, da je lepo vredno, ko bi prodajal brat bratu. Pa naj bo, no, pri vas ne bom na tisto gledal. Samo da jaz ne bom imel pri cesarici zavoljo tega nikakršnih ohodkov; ne lazim rad okoli gosposke! Pa saj imam priče, da ste vi prevzeli vse sitnosti, ki bodo prišle prvič ali drugič iz tega, dobro me poslušajte!"

Cesar mu dé: "Nič se ne boj; to bom že poravnal sam brez tebe. Ná mošnjo; tu je pa še pismo. Saj nocoj tako še ne pojdeš iz grada, če le misliš iti; priklonil se je že dan ter noč se bliža."

Ali Krpan odgovori: "Lepa hvala vam bodi najpopred za pisemce, da ga bom v zobe vrgel vsakemu, kdor me bo ustavljal na cesti; pa tudi zavoljo mošnjička se ne bom krčil. Kaj se ve, kaj zadene človeka v neznanju? Morda mi utegne še na hvalo priti. Vselej pravijo: bolje drži ga, kakor lovi ga! Pri vas pa ne bom ostajal čez noč, ako se vam ne zamerim skozi to. Že hudo me ima, da bi spet enkrat bil na Vrhju pri Sveti Trojici. Samo še nekaj bi vas rad prosil, ko bi mi dali človeka, da bi me spremil do ceste. Mesto je veliko; hiš je, kolikor jih še nisem videl, kar sol prenašam, akoravno sem že na Reki bil, tudi v Koprju, na Vrhnikih in v Ljubljani; ali tolikih ulic ni nikjer. S kočijažem sva se hitro vozila in toliko vem, kod sem prišel, kakor bi bil imel oči zavezane; pa sem vendar gledal na levo in tudi na desno; ali to ni dano vsakemu človeku, da bi vselej vedel, kje je."

Cesar mu je obljubil svojega služabnika, potlej mu je roko podal, pa tudi Gregorju velel, da naj mu roko poda. Minister se ni branil; ali vendar je bil zavoljo pisma ves zelen od jeze.

Krpan zadene kij in mesarico, in to so bile njegove zadnje besede pred cesarjem: "Ko bi se spet oglasil kak Brdavs ali kdo drug, saj veste, kje se pravi na Vrhju pri Sveti Trojici. Pozdravil bom pa že Vrhovščake in mater županjo. Zdravi ostanite!"

"Srečno hodi!" pravi cesar, minister Gregor pa nič.

When the letter was written and sealed, the Emperor said to Kerpan: "Martin, will you sell me your bread, wine and all those other things? It'll be easier this way. I'll speak to the Empress about it, so that it will be all right. I'll give you a bag of ducats and you will leave the goods here. Who would lug this around from Vienna to the Holy Trinity?"

"I know a bag and a half with an additional crown-piece would be a fair price, if I were selling it to my brother; but let it go at your price. I don't mind since it's you and as long as I won't have any trouble with the Empress because of this. I don't like to crawl on my belly before lords! At least I have witnesses that assumed responsibility from all the trouble that might result from this sooner or later," Kerpan replied.

"Don't be afraid," the Emperor assured him, "I'll smooth this matter out myself, without your help. Here's the bag and here's the letter too. But aren't you going from this castle tonight, if you really intend to go at all. The day is already far spent and night is falling."

"Many thanks," Kerpan said, "most of all for this little letter which I shall throw into the teeth of anyone who will try to stop me on the road. I won't refuse the bag, either. Who knows what may hit one in the unknown darkness of the night? Perhaps it might come in handy yet. People always say: 'A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush!' But I won't stay here over night, if you don't mind. I feel a strong urge to be in Verkh at the Holy Trinity again. I'd like to ask you for something else. That is, if you'd send someone with me to take me to the road. The city is big. There are so many houses. I have never seen so many before in all the time I have been carrying my salt, although I have already been to Reka, Koper, Verhnika, and Ljubljana. But in those places there were never so many streets. The coachman and I drove fast and I know as much about the road I came on as I should if had my eyes blindfolded, although I looked right and left. But it isn't given to every man to know always where he is."

The Emperor promised him his servant, gave him his hand, and told Gregor to do likewise. The Minister made no objections, but his face was yellow with rage because of the letter.

Kerpan swung his club and cleaver over his shoulder and these were his last words to the Emperor: "If any Berdavs or anybody else should ever come to Vienna, you know where the place is that they call Verkh at the Holy Trinity. I'll give your regards to the burgomaster's mother and the people of Verkh. Good-bye!"

"Pleasant journey," the Emperor said, but the Minister Gregor said nothing.