

**SPECIMENS OF GERMAN
ROMANCE, IN THREE
VOLUMES, VOL. II**

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Specimens of German romance, in three volumes, Vol. II by Various

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VARIOUS

**SPECIMENS OF GERMAN
ROMANCE, IN THREE
VOLUMES, VOL. II**

VOL. II.



MASTER FLEA.

C. T. A. HOFFMANN.

SPECIMENS
OF
GERMAN ROMANCE.

SELECTED AND TRANSLATED FROM
VARIOUS AUTHORS.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

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MASTER FLEA.

First Adventure.

INTRODUCTION—Wherein the gentle reader learns as much of the life of Mr. Peregrine Tyss as is requisite for him to know.

Presentation of Christmas-boxes at the bookbinder's, Lemmerhirt, in the Kelbecker-street, and beginning of the First Adventure.—The two Alinas.

ONCE upon a time—But what author will venture to begin his tale so now-a-days?—Obsolete! tedious!—Such is the cry of the gentle, or rather ungentle reader, who wishes to be plunged at once, *medias in res*, according to the wise advice of the old Roman poet. He feels as if some long-winded talker of a guest, who had just entered, was spreading himself out, and clearing his voice to begin an

endless discourse, and he angrily closes the book which he had but just opened. The present editor, indeed, of the wonderful tale of Master Flea, thinks this beginning a very good beginning, not to say the best for every history, on which account the most excellent story-tellers that are, namely, nurses, old women, &c. have at all times made use of it; but as every author writes chiefly to be read, he,—that is, the afore-said editor,—will not at any rate deprive the kind reader of the pleasure of actually being his reader. He tells him therefore at once, without more circumlocution, that this same Peregrine Tyss, of whose strange adventures this history is to treat, had never, on any Christmas evening, felt his heart so throb with anxious joyful expectation, as precisely on that with which begins the narration of his adventures.

Peregrine was in a dark chamber, next the show-room in which he was wont to receive his Christmas-box. There he crept gently up and down, listened a little at the door, and then seated himself quietly in a corner, and with

shut eyes inhaled the mystic odours of the marchpane and gingerbread which streamed from the sanctuary. Then, again, there would shoot through him a sweet mysterious thrill when, on suddenly re-opening them, he was dazzled by the vivid beams of light which fell through the crevices of the door, and danced hither and thither upon the wall.

At length sounded the little silver bell,—the chamber door was flung open, and in rushed Peregrine, amidst a whole fire-flood of variegated Christmas lights. Quite petrified, he remained standing at the table, on which the finest gifts were arranged in the most handsome order, and only a loud “oh!” forced itself from his breast. Never before had the Christmas tree borne such splendid fruits, for every sweetmeat that can be named, and amongst them many a golden nut, many a golden apple from the garden of the Hesperides hung upon the boughs, which bent beneath their burthen. The provision of choicest playthings, fine leaden soldiers, hunting trains of the same, picture-books, &c. is not to be told. But

as yet he did not venture to touch any part of the wealth presented to him; he could only occupy himself in mastering his wonder, and comprehending the idea of his good fortune in all this being really his.

“O my dear parents! O my good Alina!”—so he exclaimed, with feelings of the highest transport.

“Well, my little Peregrine,” replied Alina, “have I done it well? Are you in truth rejoiced from your heart, my child? Won't you look nearer at these handsome things? Won't you try the new rocking-horse and the beautiful fox?”

“A noble steed,” said Peregrine, examining the bridled rocking-horse with tears of joy—“a noble beast, of pure Arabian race;” and he immediately mounted his proud courser; but though Peregrine might else be a capital rider, yet this time he must have made some mistake, for the wild Pontifer (so was the horse called) reared, and threw him off, making him kick up his legs most piteously. Before, however, Alina, who was frightened to death, could run

to his assistance, he had got up again and seized the bridle of the horse, who threw out behind, and endeavoured to run away. Again he mounted, and using with strength and skill all the arts of horsemanship, he brought the wild animal so to his reason, that it trembled and panted, and recognized his master in Peregrine. Upon his dismounting, Alina led the conquered horse into his stable.

This somewhat violent riding, which had caused an outrageous noise in the room, and indeed through the whole house, was now over, and Peregrine seated himself at the table, that he might quietly take a nearer view of the other splendid presents. With great delight he devoured some of the marchpane, while he set in motion the limbs of the different puppets, peeped into the various picture-books, mustered his army, which he with reason deemed invincible, since not a single soldier had a stomach in his body, and at last proceeded to the business of the chase. To his great vexation, he discovered that there was only a hare and fox hunt, and that the stag and wild boar chase were alto-