THE SACRIFICE;

—OR—

FOR HER FAMILY'S SAKE.

CHAPTER VIII.—(Continued).

Her son turned suddenly and walked toward the door.

"Rudolph!" shrieked his mother, in such accents of terror that he stopped. She sprang up and seized him by the arm; her eyes fastened on his face, which was as pale as death, with an expression of agonized fear. "Rudolph, for Heaven's sake, what are you going to do?" she murmured.

The young officer turned away, as if he could not endure that look or hear those words.

"Why, mamma," he said, "what are you thinking of?"

"Mamma," entreated Lora, clasping her hands as she came toward her, "tell me, only tell me what has happened?"

Frau von Tollen still kept her son's hand in hers.

"It is Benberg," she said in a whisper, with the same expression in her terrified eyes. "It is Benberg, Lora, who had some money to pay out for Major von Machnitz, while he was away on leave. I believe Machnitz had bought some horses, and told the people to come to Benberg for their pay, and—because Rudi was in difficulties, he offered it to Rudi for a fortnight—offered it to him, you understand——"

"Did Benberg offer it to you, Rudolph?" inquired Lora.

"Yes—at least—I think—I don't really know how it came about," murmured her brother.

Lora said no more; she stood there like an image cut out of stone. Only her lips trembled slightly.

"It was Benberg, Lora," repeated her mother.

"But it was for him, nevertheless, for him!" stammered the young girl. "And now, what is to be done?"

"The matter is, unfortunately, only too simple. If I do not send the money to the post-office by to-morrow evening, then—" he shrugged his shoulders; then he tore open his uniform with so much violence, that the charms on his watch-chain fell to the ground.

"Oh, be quiet," whispered his mother, who, evidently, was hardly conscious what she did. "Don't let papa hear you; do be quiet."

"Rudolph," said Lora, "what will happen to Benberg?"

"He will be cashiered. But we must not let it come to that——"

"And have you only learned all this to-day, Rudolph?"

"Learned it? What do you mean by learned? I knew the money did not belong to Benberg, but there was absolutely no risk. Machnitz had four weeks' leave, and for it was a matter of life or death. Do you understand? I gave him my word of honor that in three weeks he should have the money again—when the devil must needs drive Machnitz home a fortnight earlier—voila tout! This last part I only heard to-day, through one letter and two telegrams. Benberg seems to have lost his head."

"And how much is it?"

"About four thousand marks."

"Good heavens, Rudolph! and you have no idea where you can get it?"

"Not an idea! If I had, do you suppose— You are absurd."

"Becher will lend you the money, Rudolph; go to Becher," said Lora. "You are good friends now——"

The lieutenant shook his head. "He won't give me a penny, Lora, not to me."

"Shall I ask for you, Rudolph? I will beg him, entreat him, for the sake of our parents, and of Benberg, whom you have made so miserable."

"Thanks, very much; don't trouble yourself. You may, perhaps, find it reasonable that the man whom you repulsed with the greatest rudeness, should not be foolish enough to advance your brother six thousand marks. Such magnanimity could hardly be expected from the most foolish person."

"Do you really believe that, Rudolph?"

"I have proof of it. Before the evening of the ball, Becher was ready to lend me what I wanted. But when I went to him the next morning, he could not find it convenient to raise the money; he put me off with hopes for the future. I could not understand then."

Lora drew a long breath. "Indeed," she said slowly, "then I cannot help you."

"Nor do I ask any sacrifice from you," he replied, and left the room.

Frau von Tollen looked after him in silence, and then looked at Lora. It was a melancholy sight, this poor mother, who had been pierced to the heart.

Lora ran to her and threw her arms around her.

"My mother, my poor, dear mother!" she murmured, "do not take it so frightfully to heart; take courage. We must find help somewhere."

"Yes, but where? No matter, Lora, let me go; I must go to your father. I look as though I had been ill again? so—it will be better for you to go. Tell him I have one of my headaches, and I am going to lie down. I will try everything. I will go to Aunt Melitta. I must get out."

"I will go with you, mamma."

"No; do you stay here."

Lora stayed. She sat with her father, in his smoky room, and played chess with him. The major was in a much better temper than he had been at noon. He made jokes, and was delighted when he at length succeeded in checkmating his daughter.

Lora could see the street from where she sat, and the opposite houses. Close to the inn in which the Sunday dances made the major so furious there stood a neat, one-story house, with shining window-panes, behind which were snow white curtains. There the Eigels lived—an old couple who had the reputation of being very well off. The old lady was the model of a housewife; the old man was a harmless soul. They used to exchange friendly nods with the Tollens when the families, according to Westenberg custom, sat out on the benches in front of the door, on summer evenings.

Frau von Tollen had often said, when she saw the old couple sitting there so happily together, he in his dressing-gown, with his long pipe, his cap on his silver-white hair, and she in her black woollen apron, with her knitting in her unwearying hands, "They look like the very personification of comfort and happiness, Lora." The Tollens had never seen happiness except from a distance.

But what could possess her mother to go into that house? Lora could see her quite plainly—could see the brown door closing behind Frau von Tollen. Good heavens! was she going to try to get the money from the Engles?

Lora's hand shook suddenly; she knocked down several pieces. "I beg your pardon, papa; but it is so close here."

"It is this abominable weather," grumbled the old man. "I have felt it in my leg for three days. Open the window, if you like."

Lora opened the window. Her father was right; it was unnaturally warm outside, and so still—the stillness before the storm. Her eyes were fixed on the house opposite. Was it not wrong of her mother? What if those good people should grant her request, and lend her their hard-earned money? Was it not betraying them? She was a borrower who could offer no security; her mother had not thought of that. She had gone there in her terrible anguish.

She heard the sound of a bell, and saw Frau von Tollen coming out of the Engles' house. Lora thought she had never seen her face so deathly white.

She looked neither to the right nor to the left, but bent her steps toward the church.

"There goes your mother!" cried the major, who had got up and was looking over his daughter's shoulder. "I thought she had a headache. Heaven knows, one is cheated and deceived within one's very walls. If I only knew what you were all about! I say, Lora, I hope you are not getting up any nonsense for my birthday? You know, Lora, I couldn't stand that."

"No, papa, I don't know of anything," replied the young girl. "Mamma often goes into the fresh air when she has a headache."

"The devil she does!" cried the major, half laughing, half in earnest. "She generally sleeps like a dormouse. No matter; shut the window, and come here. You may all go out, for aught I care."

Darkness came on rapidly, and Lora lighted the lamp. The major, tired of chess, read his paper, and Lora first went down to the kitchen to get supper, and then went up to her little room and began to write to Ernest Schonberg. Katie would bring her his address.

She felt that she must write away her vague fears. If he were only here, if she could only tell him all—but she could not do that; she could not tell of her family's disgrace. Was Rudolph less guilty than the man who had committed a crime to help him? She tore up her letter into little pieces. O God! it was so frightful, this position into which one man's folly had plunged them all! If her mother would only come back!

Outside, the storm had already begun; it dashed against the panes of the Mansard window, and howled through the branches of the lindens in the school yard opposite. And through the storm sounded the clock on the tower of St. Mary's.

Seven o'clock! Would no one ever come? Neither Rudolph, nor her mother, nor Katie?

She was just going down to see if the lamp was lighted in the dining-room, when the door opened, and some one crossed the threshold, whom Lora certainly had not expected.

"Good heavens! Aunt Melitta! And how you do look!" she cried.

The old Fraulein had taken her shawl off her gray head, and had dragged off her hat with it; her corkscrew curls, blown by the wind, hung down round her face, which wore a strange expression of fear and determination.

"Be quiet, Lora, so your father will not hear," she whispered. "Let me sit down, child! I want to talk to you—you know very well what has happened, and that something must be done, and done at once."

"Has my mother been with you, auntie? Did she come home with you?"

"They are all downstairs."

"Katie, too? Why doesn't Katie come up? Shan't we go downstairs, auntie?"

"Sit still, Lora; I want to talk to you first," said Aunt Melitta. "You see, your mother has been running about to Tom, Dick and Harry, trying to get the money—perfect madness, Lora. Not a soul would lend you a penny, let alone such a sum as that. But the poor woman is nearly beside herself with anxiety. Rudolph borrowed a horse from the Bechers, and rode over to Zeppke, to old Schmetlow; but, dear me! he has got three sons in the army himself, and you can't blame him for saying 'No,' and in such a hurry, too. Now-a-days people don't have so much money in the bank. So I went to the Bechers myself."

Fraulein Melitta stopped and wiped her forehead with her handkerchief.

"Aunt!" came anxiously from the lips of the young girl.

"They will lend the money, child," continued the little woman, "if you will only give him a little hope—nothing more at present, I give you my word, Lora."

"Aunt Melitta!" cried the young girl, in horrified tones, "are you mad? How can you say such a thing? Is there no sense of honor in our family?"

"Lora, I beg of you, you don't know what you are talking about. It isn't for the sake of Rudi—the young scoundrel might put a bullet through his head, as he declares he will; for all I should care—but for the other one and his mother, and above all for your own poor mother, who will certainly die of it."

"Aunt Melitta, I would give my life, if it were necessary, but not that!"

"Ah, Lora, it is all very well to talk. That sounds like a novel; but that is of no use. You would not be engaged to-day, or to-morrow. You need only give him a little hope."

"But I cannot do that. Have some pity on me! I should be wicked if I did it. I cannot give him the slightest hope, Aunt Melitta."

"It can all be arranged afterward; but for the present you must overcome that feeling, you must, I say. It is your duty to make some sacrifices for the honor of your family—do you hear, Lora? Think it over; think what your parents, what your mother has done for you. Parents and children are obliged to help each other. Lora, I beg of you, don't look at me like that!"

The young girl seemed utterly crushed beneath this storm of entreaties.

"No!" she gasped out. "I will die first."

"Well, then, you will see your brother a convict, or if he is lucky enough to escape to America—you will never see him again, and your father and mother will never recover it; and then see how happy you will be!"

The old Fraulein rushed to the door in utter despair.

"Send Katie up to me," entreated Lora.

"Katie! What can Katie do? She has no responsibility. She does not even understand what it is all about—the capricious thing. She came to me to-day, and she did not open her lips, but sat like a stock and stone at the window where you always sit. I asked her questions, but I got no answer; she only kept staring at the Schonberg house, as if she had never seen it before. I brought her her favorite book, the 'Almanach de Gotha,' and she said it did not interest her at all to know whether Herr So-and-so married Fraulein So-and-so or not, or how many children they had—it was tiresome. Good Heavens! What is going to become of you spoiled children?"

"Send Katie to me," repeated Lora.

"Do be reasonable, child!"

"Don't torture me to death!" cried the young girl, wildly drawing her hand through her soft, light hair. "I cannot, God knows I cannot, Aunt Melitta."

"You will not?"

"No, I will not."

"Well, then, let come what may."

The old Fraulein went away, and Lora was left alone.

It was icy cold in her room, for the little stove was only rarely heated, but her cheeks burned like fire. She looked toward the door and listened. Katie must come. Yes, there she was! Slowly, step by step—what ailed her? At last the young girl came in.

"Ah, Katie; thank God it is you!"

"Yes, it is I—and a nice day we are having to-day," she replied, leaning her back against the door.

"Yes, it is very sad; it is dreadful, Katie, but——"

"Don't be offended, Lora; but when such a choice is put before a girl——"

"What then, Katie?"

"I mean family disgrace, or self sacrifice, one knows very well what has to be done."

"Katie, do you say that? You?"

"Yes."

"And you say it, knowing that I should break my word and destroy his happiness?"

"Yes."

Lora made no answer, and Katie, too, was silent. She did not move from her position, but kept her eyes cast down, and tapped on the floor with her foot.

"Katie," said Lora at length, "you may go."

"Very well. Good-bye."

"Only I should like the address."

"I don't know it."

"Didn't you ask him for it, Katie?"

"No. Good-night!" She turned slowly away. "It is to be hoped that Benberg will not put a bullet through his head," she cried over her shoulder. "I think he will."

The door banged behind her, and Lora felt uncertain whether she were awake or dreaming. She sat down on the chair by the bed and tried to think. But she could not. "Why should I suffer?" she said once aloud, and then relapsed into her apathy.

It must have been late when she started up at last; the lamp was burning low, and she was shivering. Had the others all gone to bed? She looked at the clumsy silver watch, hanging over her bed, which had belonged to her grandfather, and which she had begged of her father, so she should not oversleep. The hands pointed to eleven.

She wondered whether her mother was asleep.

She went out softly, and listened over the baluster. It was all dark and still below; only the wind rattled the blinds. She was just going back, when a groan sounded in her ears. "It is the storm," she murmured, but she dared not move; an indescribable dread took possession of her; all the tales of horror which the country-people here related came into her mind.

In storms like this, when any one has taken his own life, the people say, then his poor soul flies away with the night-raven over the dark land, and must flee so through storm and horror, through all eternity, as a punishment for his sins. She suddenly saw Lieutenant Benberg before her with fearful distinctness, as she had seen him yesterday, in the photograph she had found in Rudolph's trunk; a slender man, with his uniform buttoned up to the chin; but the face was pale and grave, frightfully pale, and he lay on a cushion, with his eyes closed: Dead—and through Rudolph's fault; and she, she might have saved him!

"Merciful God!" She started violently. Another groan through the wailing of the storm. The next moment she was on the stairs, and was standing in the hall, on the first floor.

"Mamma!" she cried, "for Heaven's sake, where are you?"

It was so dark down here that Lora could not see her hand before her; nevertheless she found her mother at once, and kneeling down, she threw her arms around the figure, which was crouching down at her son's threshold.

"Mamma," sobbed Lora, "my poor, dear mamma!" and she sprang up and raised the trembling woman. "Come come, you are shivering; come to bed, and I will stay with you."

"Do you think he is asleep, Lora? Do you think he is here?"

"I will see, mamma; but first you must come to your room." She almost carried her mother in, laid her on the bed, and began to rub the cold feet.

"Oh, my heart, Lora, my heart! it feels as if it would stop beating," wailed her mother. Then she lay still again; and her daughter held her hand, sitting beside the bed.

"Go to sleep, mamma, do."

"Ah—sleep!—Lora, I keep thinking of the time when Rudolph fell from his horse, and they brought him home for dead—do you remember?"

"Yes, mamma."

"Good God! why didst Thou not take him to Thyself, then?" murmured the unhappy woman, sitting up in bed, and wringing her hands. "The poor, sick man in the other room," she continued, as if talking to herself; "the day after to-morrow is his birthday; and he sent secretly to Kruger's and ordered tickets for the concert, so you might have a little pleasure on that day. And now, what will be the result? Lora, don't cry; you can't help it. Ah, Lora! —my Rudolph, my curly-headed boy, my dearest son! he has proclaimed himself a common thief, and I shall never see him again! For God's sake—Lora, he will keep his word, and come to say good-bye to me!"

"Mamma, I do not understand you."

"Lora, he cannot leave Benberg in the lurch! Well, he has written to Machnitz that he stole the money from Benberg—do you understand? Benberg is to act as if he had no suspicion of it—he will get off with a reprimand—and Rudolph will go to America—he is going this very night. But," she whispered with strange, fixed eyes, "he only says th[illegible] Lora; he will go to Hamburg, an[illegible] he will buy him a revolver, and th[illegible] he will go away into some quiet spot, and the next day they will find him. You see, child, a Tollen cannot live as a thief—never! My brother did it, too—Lora, don't cry so loud; papa sleep so lightly. Ah, I wish I were dead!"

The young girl threw herself down beside the bed and buried her face in the cushions. She thought her mother was dying.

"Mamma—mamma," she murmured, as she raised her head, "mamma—I will do it!" And again her head sank back on the cushion. "Go to sleep, and I will come back in a moment," she whispered.

"You will be sure to come back?"

"Yes, mamma."

"Just listen at his door—didn't it open then? He is gone; I am sure of it! Oh, Almighty God, and I did not see him!"

Lora sprang up and ran across the hall to her brother's room. She could hear steps within; he was awake, he was moving about. She grasped the knob suddenly. "Open the door," she cried in a low voice; "it is I, Lora."

The door opened. Her brother stood before her, in civilian's dress; a small, open portmanteau lying beside him on the floor.

(To be Continued.)

OLD AIRS.

Miss Wagner—I just dote on music, don't you?

Miss Shrude—Not a bit of it.

Miss Wagner—Don't you like the old airs?

Miss Shrude—Old millionaires, yes.

ON THE SIDEWALK.

"What is your favorite amusement?" asked the peach kernel.

"My favorite amusement," answered the banana peel, "is tripping the light fantastic toe."

The Farm

VALUE OF FALL CULTIVATION.

In order to get the land into the best mechanical condition for the production of cereal crops and at the same time obtain control of the various weeds which of late years have taken possession of our fields, fall cultivation, with a short rotation of crops is essential.

As soon as possible after haying all clover intended to be followed by corn or roots should be carefully ploughed; the ploughing of each day being harrowed down before night. In about a week or less the weed seeds brought near the surface will have germinated and the tiny plants show green over the field, when this happens go over the land with a broad shared cultivator, cutting not more than about two inches deep, the effect of this will be to destroy weeds of every class before they can become established and at the same time provide a mulch upon the surface sufficient to conserve moisture and promote fermentation. This at the interval of another week should be followed by a lance-toothed cultivator, lapping the work, so as, in fact, to cover the ground twice. By working the land in this way alternately each week with broad-shared and lance-toothed cultivators, slightly deeper each time of going over it, bacterial action will be promoted, moisture conserved, and every weed seed near the surface caused to germinate and be therefore destroyed. At the end of September or early in October a suitable implement may be used to rib up the land, making the ridges about sixteen inches apart. If when this is done there are any hollows or even slight depressions in which water can lie, a man with brains should be sent on the field with a narrow round nosed shovel to cut water furrows or channels in such a way as to effectually surface drain the whole. The land can then be laid by for the winter. Under ordinary circumstances fields treated as above may be successfully worked two weeks earlier in the [illegible]ring than those upon which insufficient cultivation was done in the fall and the resulting crops will be at le[illegible]fty per cent. larger. In one case well [illegible]own to the writer, where this system has been followed for some years, oats or mixed grains have averaged ninety bushels per acre, while clover has never failed and in fact has always yielded fully double the crop produced on adjoining farms where spring cultivation was chiefly practised.

Of course with regard to the use of tools or the exact time for doing each particular item of the work, no cast iron rule can be laid down, for instance, it may happen that under some circumstances it would be best policy to disk a field where the sod was heavy before cultivating it, and in the case of heavy land, particularly when the season is wet, favorable opportunities must be seized for cultivating.

What has here been said with regard to grass or clover land applies with equal if not greater force to stubble fields. In the Province of Ontario it is often the practice to seed down all grain, and farmers object to losing their seed, but if our farms are to be freed from the weed curse and are to be brought up to their highest producing power, fall cultivation must be practised. In our Western provinces this system requires to be carried out rigidly or serious results will follow.

ATTRACTIVE FARM HOMES.

To make the farm home attractive:—

Pile wood neatly.

Keep the barn clean and neat.

Keep walks and porches swept clean.

Clean up or fill up small, dirty ponds.

Burn as much of the garbage as possible.

See that fences are mended and painted.

Keep the grass around the house in good condition.

Cover the old rain-barrel with a piece of cheese-cloth to keep the insects out.

Rake off all the rubbish, pick up the papers and dispose of all waste matter.

Keep the house in good condition. See that the roof is mended and the house painted.

Put screens in neatly and see that the screen doors have locks that are in order.

Don't keep garbage or wet material in wooden barrels, because the wood becomes soaked and can't be cleaned.

Don't empty dishwater right outside the kitchen door. It makes a wet slimy place, which is often the source of diseases.

Be sure that the fence around the chicken yard is in good shape, so that the chickens won't get into the flower-garden.

Dig a deep pit and put all the old tin cans, broken bottles, broken china and rusty pans and kettles into it. Cover with earth.

Prune the trees, and don't leave the branches lying under them. Either take them away or use them for a hedge for sweet peas.

Do not have too many trees right around the house. A farm-house should be very healthy, but it is often quite the opposite; and we find the rooms damp and the roof and foundation often covered with moss.

A miss is far better than a mile. No man would care to miss a mile.

Lots of men seem to think the wrong side of a saloon is the outside.