

THE SACRIFICE;

—OR—

FOR HER FAMILY'S SAKE.

CHAPTER VII.

The next morning Katie was walking toward the station; she had her little leather bag with her school exercise-books on her arm. In the early morning, Lora had come into her sister's room, and in a weary voice had begged her to do her the one favor of putting her note into Dr. Schonberg's hands; unfortunately, she could not fulfill her promise, for papa was not at all well, in consequence, probably, of staying up so long and drinking punch the night before; she must go up to him at once, to bind up his leg. Katie knew very well that he would never allow any one else to do it.

Katie had absolutely snatched the open note out of her hand, but she did not speak a word. But Lora knew the letter would be delivered. Katie was trustworthy, and her motto was "Faithful and true."

The young girl went to the station by side streets. Her face wore a rigid expression, which made her irregular features almost ugly. There was something stern, almost cruel, in her dark eyes, which were surrounded by dark blue rings. She held Lora's letter in her hand, and scarcely seemed to notice that she had almost crushed it.

At length she stopped in a narrow street, which ran between garden hedges. It was outside the town; the gardens belonged to people who lived in the city, and here and there was a simple country house.

The leafless boughs of the fruit trees towered up above the bare hedges; otherwise the landscape was like a sea, so thick was the mist; it concealed the old walls of the city to the left and the fields round about it. No one was visible on the lonely, narrow path which stretched before her.

Katie looked at the letter and bit her lips. In it were words of love addressed to him, and—Lora had written them!

She gazed at the white paper, as if she would pierce it with her glance. She could have taken the note out of its envelope, but she did not do it. She would not have done it for all the world.

It was not honorable to read other people's letters, even when they were open; and she would not do it, when she knew that every word contained in it would pierce her heart like a stab from a knife.

Katie had ceased to be a child since yesterday. She was no longer a thoughtless school-girl. She had developed suddenly into a woman. She did not comprehend, herself, how she had become so. She had been awake all night, thinking and crying, and she had come to the conclusion that she should go mad if—yes, if—

To "go mad" was a favorite resource of hers, when her passionate temperament was opposed in any way.

She suddenly crushed up the letter in her hand, and clenched her hand over it. Why should she, she of all persons, be employed as this lover's messenger?

Three strokes of the clock sounded through the mist. She raised her head. "Quarter of eight," she murmured. At eight o'clock, precisely, he would go! She turned suddenly about, and walked toward home; behind her, in the distance, a train was thundering along; there lay the station. She sauntered along for awhile, then she stopped and picked a half-frozen seed-vessel from a wild-rose bush, whose thorny briars straggled through the hedge. She broke open the red fruit, and began to count the hard seeds. Her gauze veil was damp from the heavy fog. She must have been very cold, for she was excessively pale.

After awhile she turned back in the direction of the station, and now she walked fast, still carrying the crushed-up note in her hand. Just below her a red-tiled roof rose out of the mist. Again there was a dull, rumbling sound; it came nearer and nearer; she knew it was the Hamburg train, which left at eight o'clock, by which he would travel. All at once she began to run; her face was deeply flushed, and her eyes were wet with tears. She stopped, breathless, just at the end of the street.

A shrill whistle, and the train moved out of the station; she could see it rush away into the silvery sea of mist. Did some one look out of the carriage window? Was it he?

Just then the town clock struck eight. "Too late!" she murmured, and turned slowly to the left toward the Buchow gate. The train had gone too soon—much too soon!

She took the note and began to tear it up in little pieces. They fluttered in the air, behind her, like snow-flakes, for awhile, and then lay like little white flowers on the wet grass by the side of the road. She hardly knew what she did; she only kept thinking that she should go mad if—yes, if—

CHAPTER VIII.

About noon a servant from the Becher villa left at the door a note for the Herr Major von Tollen, with a hare and Frau Becher's compliments. Herr Becher had shot it that morning. Frau von Tollen had taken them both from the messenger.

The major was in a bad temper to-day; he was vexed about his son, who

showed less consideration for him than ever, and the ladies of the house had to bear the consequences. Rudi had stayed out again till one o'clock at night, and this morning he was complaining of headache, and was, in consequence, in a very irritable frame of mind.

"What can it be about?" said Frau von Tollen anxiously, when she had dismissed the servant. As she spoke she looked anxiously at the elegant note.

"Mamma," said Lora gently, "if you do not know, I cannot enlighten you; but it is probably only about the game."

Her mother's worn face was flushed with embarrassment.

"Oh, heavens!" she cried, "if only Frau Becher does not—"

"Want to propose for me for her Adalbert, mamma? I should not be surprised."

"And do you consider it an insult that a mother who loves her son should try to win for him the girl of his choice?" cried Frau von Tollen.

"Mamma, you must keep to the point—please, mamma. It is an insolence if she dares do it after I—"

Lora stopped. She saw, by her mother's expression, that she would not understand.

"I must carry up the note," said Frau von Tollen resolutely, laying the hare down on the table.

"Why should we talk about it? We shall know soon enough what she wants."

Lora smiled involuntarily; she knew very well what a mountain of courage her mother needed, to put a note like that into her husband's hands. Her courage did not quite hold out; the Frau Majorin came back into the kitchen.

"Rieke!" she called out of the window into the garden, "come here." She put the letter on a plate and gave it to the little maid. "Carry it up to the Herr Major; but first put on a clean apron—so—it has just come."

She sat down in a chair by the kitchen table, at which Lora was standing, peeling apples quite mechanically. Her thoughts were already far, far away, on the road to Mainz.

"Oh, Lora," sighed the old lady. The daughter turned her pale face toward her.

"You are so indifferent, Lora." "About Rudi, mamma? No, indeed, I am not," asserted the young girl. "I cannot sleep at night. I feel oppressed as if before a thunder-storm; but there is nothing to do but wait. And then—"

She bent tenderly over her mother, and kissed her on the forehead, "then we will bear the trial together, motherkin, as we have so often done before."

"But what if it is too heavy; if my old shoulders should bend beneath the burden?"

"I will help you, mamma. Have faith; a sunbeam will surely shine in the midst of it; only wait! There was a smile in her eyes for a moment; she knew well what the sunbeam was. And, as if this consciousness gave her new courage, she inquired, "Has Rudolph heard nothing from Herr Becher to-day?"

"Oh, yes, replied her mother; he gives the poor boy no peace. Two letters yesterday, and another one just now; but Rudi put it into his pocket unread. And when good can it do?"

"Where is Rudi?" "With papa."

The little maid just then clattered downstairs again in her wooden shoes, and ran out into the garden.

"Now he has got the letter," whispered Frau von Tollen, "and Rudolph is coming down, now."

A moment later the young officer came into the kitchen, to his mother and sister.

"Thank Heaven!" he murmured, "his temper is too much to be borne. It is to be hoped the letter will give him something else to think about, for I have been buffeted about enough. Did Becher send the hare?" he added; "he was going out this morning, I know."

Lora replied in the affirmative. "Well, at any rate we shan't have that everlasting veal for Sunday," he grumbled.

"My love, I can't buy partridges and that sort of thing for you," said Frau von Tollen absently.

"Why, of course not, mamma! Good heavens! you take offence at everything I say."

"Oh, no, Rudi; I have long got over that—"

She suddenly started up from her chair; the major was calling her in a voice of thunder.

The brother and sister were now alone.

"There'll be a pretty row, now," said the lieutenant, taking his mother's seat.

and if it hot and heavy up there, do you hear?" he remarked, with a shrug of his shoulders. They could hear the major's voice, hoarse with anger.

"Everything comes to an end some time," said Lora, though she had grown a shade paler. "I am only sorry for mamma. Papa, I think, is of my opinion."

After awhile she went upstairs. As she was passing her father's door, the major was exclaiming: "My daughters may marry whom they like; but they shall not be forced into a marriage. When the girl tells me herself that she wants him, then I will believe it, but not before—and that is all I have to say. But if Melitta shows her face here, I will throw her downstairs, as sure as there is a God in heaven, even though I should be the murderer of my own sister. I won't stand her gossip."

"Oh, Tollen!" cried his weeping wife. "Be silent! I will answer that old gypsy, that Becher-woman, myself, do you hear? A fine fellow that, to hide himself under his mother's apron! Can't the idiot try his luck himself? No! My son, who is too modest to approach the daughter behind the father's back, would be glad to know whether it would be agreeable to the esteemed Herr Major and amiable wife, if he could ask for the hand of Fraulein Leonore." Confounded women's nonsense! The fellow has never worn uniform, or he would have come frankly, and said to me, 'I love your daughter—can I have her or not?' and then—then I would just as frankly have flung him downstairs, so he would have had to pick up his bones separately, the scented dandy!"

Lora's lovely face grew suddenly radiant. She ran hastily upstairs into her room. Her dear, good old papa! She would like to throw her arms around his neck. She looked across to the gymnasium, and then off into the distance that spread before her, veiled in mist. Dear, good papa! Never again would she murmur when he scolded and grumbled, never again. And she would go to him this very day and say: "Papa, I love some one, who will come to you and ask you plainly whether he may be your son. And he is a true man, a good and wise man—Doctor Ernest Schonberg."

She caught herself singing in a low tone. If Katie would only come! She must bring her a message; she must be able to tell her whether he was very much disappointed because she could not come herself. And this afternoon, in the twilight, she would slip across to his mother. She flushed crimson at the thought, and her heart beat rapidly. It is a critical moment for a young girl when she comes before her future mother-in-law for the first time. She knew that the old Frau Patrin made an idol of her son, and she would observe her sharply, as the one on whom her son's happiness and well-being depended. If she might only please her! She went to her flower-pots, where the last monthly roses were blooming, and bent down each one, to look at it closely. She meant to cut them for Frau Schonberg.

If Katie would only come! But Katie did not come. When the family was seated at dinner, the boy who acted as page to Fraulein Melitta appeared, and announced that Fraulein Katie would dine with Fraulein von Tollen and they need not wait for her. This was something so unheard of that it excited universal amazement, for Katie and Aunt Melitta avoided one another like sun and moon.

"What has the gracious lady for dinner to-day?" asked the lieutenant, with a spice of humor, pouring some of his father's wine into his soup to make the "dish-water" tolerable, as he said to himself.

"Dumplings and stewed fruit," replied the servant lad, with a grin.

Lora wondered inwardly, for Katie usually delectated dumplings and stewed fruit.

The boy was dismissed. The major sat in silent fury at the waste of his wine, and no one spoke a word. Lora endeavored, in her pleasant way, to break the oppressive silence, but in vain. The major ate his dinner hurriedly, and wore his grimmest countenance, and Frau von Tollen was mute; her son played with his knife and fork, and was excessively polite in passing the dishes, or in declining those offered to him. At length his father folded up his napkin before he had finished, and, muttering a short "Mahlzeit!" he limped out of the door.

"Papa does not feel well," said his mother, in excuse. "You mustn't mind him."

She was scarcely conscious that she spoke—she had long known this excuse by heart. For years she had had occasion to use it daily, and she did it with unwearying patience.

The lieutenant arose, and whittled a few notes, took his cigar case out of his pocket, and seated himself by the window.

"It is a mystery to me how you manage to hear it," he remarked, and buried himself in his paper, while the little maid cleared the table.

Lora took a thin shawl and went into the garden. The sky was full of clouds, but the air was still, and almost warm. She walked up and down the narrow paths, and at length turned her steps toward the iron gate in the old wall, and opening it, went out. Outside, she stopped, and looked down at a certain spot in the wet grass.

Was it very wicked of her that the jars and discords of her home did not oppress her so heavily to-day as usual? She could not help it; her heart was so full of sunshine, that she felt as if everything must come right at last. She felt like a wanderer, walking through crooked paths, in night and darkness; but who knows that at the

end of this path there lies a shining goal, and that after the night the morning will dawn in golden sunlight. She threw her arm round the stem of a birch tree, which, standing close to the water, still kept all its foliage, though dyed a brilliant yellow, as if every leaf was gilded.

The tree shone out in its splendor in the gray autumn afternoon as golden as the hopes of the young creature standing beneath it, in the gloomy present. She was so deep in thought, that she did not perceive how slowly leaf after leaf fell to the ground; she did not perceive how the little maid suddenly shot out of the door with a disturbed countenance, and eyes staring with terror.

"Fraulein Lora! Fraulein Lora!" she shrieked, grasping her young mistress by the shoulder. "Good land! Come in—the gracious lady—"

Lora asked no questions; she stared at the girl in terror, and then she ran into the house.

"Downstairs," the girl called after her, "in the salon!"

Lora flung open the door of the parlor. For the first few seconds she saw nothing but her brother, standing motionless in the window, with his hands in his pockets.

"What has happened?" she tried to ask, but her voice died away. There, on the floor, in front of the sofa, lay her mother; her head resting on the cushions, her hands clutching her gray hair.

"Mamma!" cried Lora, "dear mamma, do speak to me."

Frau von Tollen raised her head. Lora started as she looked into her mother's changed countenance—she looked like a mad-woman.

"This is what I get!" she shrieked. "I have deserved this of my children! They, for whom I have given up my life, now trample me into the dust! Oh, why did I not die, at least?"

As she spoke she dropped into a chair and covered her face with her trembling hands.

(To be Continued.)

OUR LITTLE FRIEND.

"Papa," said Willie, as he and his father roamed over the fields together, "I like to go walking with you. You know so much about everything, don't you?"

"Yes, Willie, I know a great deal," returned Mr. Bronson, complacently. "And it is a great pleasure to me, my son, to be able to impart to you the information I have acquired."

Willie looked as if he didn't exactly know what "acquired" and "impart," and "information" meant, but he looked for granted that his father understood what he was saying, and for a minute he was silent. Then he asked, catching sight of cattle grazing in the next field?

"Papa, what is cows?"

"Cows," returned Mr. Bronson, after a moment of thought—"cows—are animals with horns, that give milk and eat grass."

"Do cows like grass better than they do apple and custard?" asked Willie.

"Very much better," said Mr. Bronson. "Why do they, papa?" asked the boy.

"Oh, because they were born that way."

"Why do cows give milk, papa? Can't they sell it?"

"No, cows don't know anything about money, you know; and even if they did, they wouldn't know where to keep it."

"Couldn't they keep it in their horns?" "Oh, my, no!"

"What good are cows' horns? Do they make that funny 'moo' sound with their horns?"

"What an idea! No, indeed. They do that with their throats."

"Why don't they do it with their horns?"

"They can't."

"Can't anybody blow horns?" "Oh, yes. Tin horns, and—er—brass horns, but not cows' horns."

"Papa, why don't cows have tin horns?"

"Oh, nonsense! Oh—er—because they are cows, I suppose."

And then he regretted that he had promised to impart information.

WARSHIP BUILDERS BUSY.

British Firms Have Secured Many Large Contracts.

British shipbuilders are experiencing quite a "boom" in contracts for warships.

Brazil has recently given contracts to Messrs. Armstrong, Whitworth and Company and Messrs. Vickers, Sons and Maxim for the building of three battleships and two cruisers.

Japan has ordered two submarines of the Holland type from Messrs. Vickers, and the Argentine Government two powerful cruisers from Messrs. Armstrong.

The Vickers Company has also secured an order for two battleships for China, which country is also in the market for twenty shallow-draught gunboats for patrol service on the Yangtse-kiang, the announcement being made that tenders from British firms will receive favorable consideration.

Tenders are also out for the 33-knot destroyers, provision for which has been made in this year's navy estimates, and shipbuilders on the Admiralty list have just been asked to tender for the construction of torpedo boats, which are to form the basis of the new Australian Navy, but as a hitch has occurred in the negotiations there will probably be some delay in placing them.

Many a family tree has a bad branch and a shady reputation.

THIS GAS PLANT

LIGHTING THE STREETS FROM STRAW AND CORN COBS.

May Revolutionize the Gas Industry—Coal is Needed No Longer.

Red tongues of flame shooting through the black smoke of a burning straw pile, gave J. R. Coutts, of Chicago, an idea which bids fair to revolutionize the gas producing industry of the United States. It has solved the fuel problem for the great Central West, which is without gas coal, but has millions and millions of tons of straw, corn-cobs, etc., now considered waste matter on the farms.

Coutts worked three years on his idea and last month there was opened in Beatrice, Neb., the first results of his work—a gas plant which used not the high priced coal and oil, but simply the waste matter of the farm. The new gas plant is not an experiment on the small scale, but instead, is a full-fledged gas manufactory, and its product is lighting the streets of the city in addition to furnishing gas for heating and lighting hundreds of homes.

PLANT LOOKS LIKE FEED STORE.

Instead of paying out hundreds of dollars every day to coal mines and railroads for material from which to make the gas which it sells, the Beatrice plant buys up straw, cobs, corn-stalks and matter of that kind, throws them into the retorts, and the result is a splendid gas with ten per cent. more heating power than the best coal gas known. And for ton for ton the straw and cobs make sixty per cent. more gas than does the best gas coal.

The Beatrice plant looks more like a gigantic feed store than a gas plant. On every side, instead of cars of coal and tanks of oil, are bales of hay and corn-stalks and cribs of corn-cobs. There is the old familiar odor of gas in the atmosphere and all the apparatus usually seen around a gas plant. But there is another little room which is not found where coal gas is made—and in that little room are the secrets of the business. Here are the formulas and the processes which represent the three years' work done by Mr. Coutts, and of which the completed plant is the result.

Beatrice is a city of twelve thousand people. The new gas company opened for business without a single customer, June 15, 1907. As a competitor there was an old established gas company furnishing gas to three hundred metres. After one month of operation the new company is lighting the city, has three hundred metres already installed, has fifty men installing other metres just as fast as possible and has three hundred applications on hand.

As to the character of the new gas, the experience of some of the local papers is a sample. Formerly it was necessary to keep the fires under the metal pots lighted for four hours before use, in order that the type and metal might be liquid when needed. The new gas burns just ninety minutes before the metal is ready for use. To be exact, the coal gas produced 600 British thermal units, while the vegetable gas produced 600 units of heat in the same time.

TON PRODUCES 10,000 CUBIC FEET.

One ton of the best gas producing coal laid down in Beatrice costs \$6, and will produce 10,000 cubic feet of gas. But one ton of common old corn-cobs or straw treated in the new plant produces 16,000 cubic feet of a better grade of gas than does the coal. And after the gas is extracted there remains 600 pounds of the best coke obtainable. In the case of straw almost pure carbon remains. And this coke is burned beneath the retorts, thus producing the heat necessary to make more gas and more coke.

The Beatrice plant cost \$50,000, including eighteen miles of gas mains. This is just about the cost of an ordinary gas plant of the same capacity. But the ordinary gas plant can be made into a corn-cob plant by expending about \$2,000. The burners and other fixtures are the same for both gases.

Instead of dreaming of to-morrow the successful man is wide-awake to the opportunities of to-day.

When a girl says she never intends to get married she means it about as much as the man who says he has more money than he knows what to do with.

He—Look at that woman on the other side of the street waving her hands about her head. Is she practising physical culture? She—"Good gracious, no! She's describing her new hat to the other woman!"

It is sad to learn, from official sources, that, in spite of the march of civilization, an average of nearly 30,000 unaddressed letters find their way to the British Post Office yearly, and that over \$30,000 per annum is, in this way, presented to the National Exchequer. The amusing part of the matter is the way in which many letters are addressed. "Obanvidock" was, on one occasion, made to do duty for Holborn Viaduct; "Malland" was found to be Mile End in masquerade; "Hilewile" was alleged to be photo-phonetic; but most experts collapsed when it came to "Haseleach in no fampshire"—which at last emerged into Hazelbeach, Northamptonshire. The last production, however, was the best: "To the Cecery of Wore, Chelsey Osbielle, London Queen Victoria."