

For the Sake of Honor.

(A Christmas Storyette) Adopted from the German.

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CHAPTER I.

It was Christmas Eve. The steel-grey heavens were filled with heavy, thick snow-clouds, and the dark shadows of the night had already begun to creep around the lone western hills that bordered the quaint German city that lay in the lap of the silent valley, with the light of the moon full upon her peaceful face. The hours were getting late and yet the Christmas market was still the self-same scene of activity.

The many small booths were lit up by gorgeous colored lights and lanterns, and round the various Christmas trees stationed here and there groups of shivering children were standing—their poor little hearts give with expectation and happiness.

Just then an old man, whose gait bespoke that of a soldier, was seen walking in the direction of the market-place. His coat was buttoned tightly below his chin and his cap was pressed down over his forehead. At his side walked a woman in deep mourning, with a sweet, sad face. When he beheld those little freezing forms of the children lined up before the beautiful Christmas trees he stood still for a moment, murmured a few words and then drew nearer with the strange woman in black.

"Had these done it," he said softly, "these poor children of the street, who have no bringing up, no home where they can see the good example daily before their eyes, then—"

"Father, let us go back to the hotel," interrupted the woman, in soft, pleading tones.

"Is poverty hateful to you, my child?" asked the old man, somewhat sternly. "Do you not know that in the hearts of the common people lies the pride, the honor, the hope, the ambition of the fatherland! Who knows, but that amongst these very boys, there may not be perhaps, a son of that unfortunate

man, who suffers for the sin of your only child and my grandson."

The woman trembled visibly and the tears crept into her eyes. The old man took no notice of her, and left her for a few moments, while he made some purchases at the various booths, and distributed little Christmas gifts to the poor, frozen children, standing there so beseechingly. Their voices rang a joyful gratitude, in clear, liquid notes, that could not but help pierce the hardest heart. The old man was happy, and over his wrinkled noble face, there stole a smile. Quickly he turned, and taking the arm of the woman in black in his own, he disappeared into the darkness.

CHAPTER II.

A poor woman was wandering aimlessly through the Christmas market. Her shoulders were covered with a thin shawl and on her head she carried an old cap. Upon her troubled face were imprinted deep lines of suffering. It bore such a pale, sad look. Was it, perhaps, that the flakes of snow had whitened her dark black hair and thus intensified the paleness of her face, or had want, despair or misfortune dimmed the roses in her cheek—for surely the woman could not have been much over thirty? No, there were no snowflakes; they were only thin, white, silver threads that want and despair had woven through her dark hair prematurely. Ah! this poor woman was unhappy. On her face was written the tale of her life. She was another creature of circumstances, and the surging crowds of people took no notice of her, as they pushed her aside in their mad endeavor to get away—away to their homes to celebrate, in their cherished circles, the festivities of a Christmas Eve, when kindness is indulged in almost too freely at home and it takes only an atom of it to bring joy to a longing, desolate heart, that has tasted life's bitter cup of gall and knows no