

watching him carefully to see that not a page was left; she did not touch them herself, it almost seemed as though she thought they might burn her fingers. At last she told Heinrich to carry the basket down to the front mansion, and, after carefully locking all the doors upstairs, followed him. To the annoyance of Frederica, to whom her visits were an abomination, she went into the kitchen, where Heinrich set down his load and was then sent to the sitting-room for a paper knife. The cook had just made up a hot fire.

"You can save your wood to-day, Frederica!" said Frau Hellwig, throwing one of the loose sheets into the blaze. The handsome portfolio containing the old mam'selle's valuable autograph collection lay on the top of the basket. The silk ribbons that tied it were loosed one after another by Frau Hellwig's determined fingers. Oh, how the flames shot up and consumed them! The name of "Gluck" glowed forth in fiery characters, the notes of a brilliant cadenza by Cimaroso shone like flaming pearls; Italians, Germans, and French shared the same fate.

Heinrich had at first stood by helplessly—speechless with rage. Poor, lonely mam'selle's body was not yet buried, and this shameless woman was already rummaging and destroying her property more savagely than the rudest soldier would do in a hostile country.

"But," he said at last, "suppose there should be a will!"

Frau Hellwig raised her face, flushed by the heat of the fire. It wore a look of anger, mingled with contempt. "How long have I allowed you to make your wise remarks in my presence?" she asked, sharply. She had just taken up the manuscript opera by Bach, which the old mam'selle had once said was the only copy in existence, and would some day be worth its weight in gold. With still greater energy, and a strange expression upon her face, she cut and tore the sheets into atoms, and stuffed them under the oven.

At this moment the door bell rang loudly. Heinrich went to answer it. A lawyer, accompanied by a constable, entered, bowed to the mistress of the house, who came out of the kitchen, with a very astonished face, and introduced himself as the commissary charged with the duty of sealing the effects of the late Cordula Hellwig, spinster.

Perhaps for the first time in her life Frau Hellwig lost her iron composure and coolness.

"Seal up?" she faltered.

"There is a will at her lawyer's."

"That must be a mistake!" cried Frau Hellwig. "I am positively certain that, by her father's will, she had no power to make one—the whole property reverts to the Hellwig family."

"I am sorry," said the magistrate, shrugging his shoulders. "The will exists, and much as I regret being compelled to trouble you, my duty requires me to affix the seals at once."

Frau Hellwig bit her lips, took the keys of the old mam'selle's rooms, and led the way. But Heinrich ran triumphantly upstairs to Felicitas, who was fulfilling her duties as nurse, though to Anna's astonishment she sat as stiff and silent as a statue beside the prattling little girl. Heinrich told her everything that had occurred. At this account of the *auto da fe* the young girl started up.

"Were they single sheets that she burned?" she asked, in a stifled voice.

"Yes, single sheets. They were in red portfolios, tied with handsome ribbons."

Felicitas did not stop to hear anything more, but rushed down to the kitchen. There stood the basket, which still contained a few exercises for the piano and some music-books, but the open portfolios lay scattered over the floor, not a sheet remained in

them. The draught blew a torn scrap of paper out upon the hearth. Felicitas picked it up.

"Paritur of Johann Sebastian Bach, written by his own hand and received from him as a remembrance in the year 1707. Gottlieb von Hirschsprung," she read, with tears streaming from her eyes.

It was the last fragment of the mysterious manuscript—the melodies were silenced forever.

Frau Hellwig had apparently not intended to interrupt her son's pleasure-trip by the tidings of the old mam'selle's death, but, after the business of sealing was over, from which she returned in a very angry mood, with a most sour and irritated expression on her face, she wrote a few hasty lines recalling him. According to the dead woman's directions, the will was to be read on the very day after the funeral. Frau Hellwig needed some support for this ordeal; never had she felt so unnerved. The possible loss of a considerable fortune, which she had always believed to be inalienable, produced a marked impression even upon her iron nature.

The party had started without fixing any definite end to their journey. "A trip at random, pitching our tents wherever we choose," had been the programme; so Frau Hellwig was somewhat uncertain where to address her letter. The search commenced in the old mam'selle's rooms she now continued in her dead husband's study.

Doubtless, among the family papers she could find proofs that the old mam'selle had no right to dispose of her property according to her own will. Perhaps she had accumulated something from her savings. Frau Hellwig had suspected something of the sort the evening of the day before—but the lock of the bird room door had done its duty and preserved this sum also to the Hellwig family. But, no matter how she pondered and reflected, she could not tell where she obtained the firm assurance on which she had so long relied. Either she had read it herself in the will of Cordula Hellwig's father, or else she had been told it verbally by some trustworthy person—but no matter whence came the conviction, she felt sure of the fact, and the papers proving it must be found. She searched and read till drops of perspiration stood on her pale forehead—but it was an unlucky day—her exertions were as

profitless as those of the morning. Fortune seems to prefer to fling her roses at the feet of cold-hearted calculating, unimaginative people—it almost seems as though she fancied her treasures would be less secure with richly endowed natures than in the hands of those whose souls are closed with iron bars as well as their coffers. The great lady had hitherto been one of these spoiled children of fortune—therefore she was greatly surprised by this day of ill luck.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

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