

THE SACRIFICE;

OR
FOR HER FAMILY'S SAKE.

CHAPTER XX.

Lora declined to drive out with her mother-in-law. She sat in her room upstairs, looking out into the garden, and scarcely looked up when Aunt Melitta came into her boudoir, every minute or two, to tell her of something very important. She had just appeared again with a plateful of cake.

"Really, I cannot understand, Lora," she cried, "how it is that you do not take any pleasure in these preparations. You ought to see what quantities of presents there are for the poor children. And the tree! And the macaroons have just come out of the oven—just take one—they are made after the old Tollen receipt. Only think how sweet it is of your mother-in-law. She is going to give Katie a new winter cloak. The child looks quite too unfashionable in her old jacket—and all the things there are there for you, Lora; I shall not tell you anything about them, only there are so many; you really have a delightful husband—and so rich. Won't you take a macaroon?"

Lora declined, and drew her shawl closer round her, shivering as she did so.

"Well, then, will you excuse me? I must go down again."

The young wife took up her crochet work, but it soon lay forgotten on the window-sill. She took one of the books, bound in white vellum and gold, out of the dainty bookcase.

It was "Burns' Poems." She turned over the leaves, scarcely knowing herself what she read. Then her eyes rested on one place:

"O plight me your faith, my Mary,
And plight me your lily-white hand;
O plight me your faith, my Mary,
Before I leave Scotia's strand."

"We have plighted our troth, my Mary,
In mutual affection to join,
And erst be the cause that shall part us,
The hour and the moment o' time."

As she read, the little river, the birches, and the autumn evening, when she had plighted her troth to him, came back before her. Yes, and she had been cursed from the moment she had broken her faith, and she would remain under the ban as she lived. There was no help for it, except—

She suddenly started to her feet; her book fell to the ground. It is a terrible law which chains two persons together like galley-slaves. A sudden helpless rage against order and propriety seized upon her—the gently-nurtured girl. And in a moment she covered her face with her hands. What wild thoughts would still arise in her tortured brain. A little while ago a telegram had come for her, announcing that her husband would begin his homeward journey on the twenty-seventh of December, and that she was to meet him in Hamburg, the eighth or ninth of January.

He should wait for her then—wait for her in vain, always, always. If to-day were only over!

The dinner-hour came nearer and nearer; Frau Melitta kept looking in at intervals. "I can't comprehend where your mother-in-law can be," she cried. "Aren't you anxious? She has been driving about town ever since ten o'clock; it is true she had twelve poor families to visit, but—"

"Lora's maid came in."

"A gentleman wishes to speak to you, madam."

Lora took the card from the silver tray, and instantly started to her feet. "My uncle," she stammered, "Uncle William!"

And the next moment she had hurried past her aunt and the servant, and they heard a low cry, half choked by tears: "Oh, uncle, is it you?"

When Aunt Melitta got into the other room, she found Lora's slender figure lying half unconscious in the arms of her eldest brother, who, quite overcome by the appearance and manner of his darling, could say nothing but "Child—Lora—what has happened to you?"

She recovered herself by a strong effort, and drew him, with a trembling hand, into her little boudoir. Then she stood before him, holding both his hands fast, and looked at him with the blue eyes that gazed so anxiously at him from out the small, pale face.

"Uncle," she said, "you have come too late—"

"What is it, my Lorchon, what is it?" he asked, much disturbed.

"Ah, let us not speak of it, uncle; I am talking nonsense. You could have done nothing, after all, sit down, uncle, I am so thankful if you give me some pleasure on this day."

He sent himself without saying a word, and looked lividly at her.

"Lora," he said at length, without telling the presence of Aunt Melitta, who was lying on the lounge, sobbing, "Lora, are you not my daughter?"

ly, "What is the matter?"

The young wife stretched out her hand to him. "Uncle, tell me all about yourself."

He translated this to mean: "Let it be; it is of no use. Don't ask me about it. I must drive you mad."

He opened his lips to ask a question, but he closed them again, for just then Frau Elfrida rustled in, her cheeks blue with the cold, and greeted "his excellency" with such a flood of words, that it was impossible for him to answer her at all. He looked down from his stately height upon this over-dressed little person, and he lifted his bushy eyebrows with the slightest suggestion of a smile.

"And your excellency will spend the day with us?"

Frau Elfrida nearly melted with softness, as she brought out these words with the sweetest smile.

"Lorchon, child, you must know—does his excellency prefer a feather-bed or a hair mattress? Officers are so peculiar, generally, about their beds. Of course his excellency will prefer Lorchon's modest guest-room, so Frederick shall bring his excellency's baggage from the hotel at once."

"I thank you, madam," replied the general, "but it is against my principles to stay in a private house."

"But, William, you will spoil all Lora's pleasure in her first guest in her charming house," cried Aunt Melitta.

"Lora, you will not be hurt? It is quite impossible, madam."

"No, uncle," replied Lora.

"Oh, how very sorry I am," complained Frau Elfrida, "but I must go and see about getting you something to eat as soon as possible. Auf wiedersehen! Dearest Fraulein von Tollen, she continued, "can I speak to you for one moment?"

Aunt Melitta followed Frau Becher out with an air of great importance. After they had gone an almost painful stillness reigned in the little room in which the uncle and niece sat together alone.

"God bless my soul," thought the old gentleman. He did not venture even to look at Lora. He thought, with her refined feelings, she must be so ashamed of this common old woman, who was her mother-in-law.

"Lorchon," he said, at length, "you look so miserable, and your mother says you have grown so strange; have confidence in me—are things not right here?"

"Yes, uncle; oh, yes."

"If I'm!"

They were silent again, and nothing could be heard but the ticking of the little clock. Lora looked as if she would like to say, "Of what use would it be, uncle? You cannot help me."

The general's honest old heart ached for her. What happened to the girl? And he was so confoundedly clumsy, he did not even know how to go to work to find out whether it was her father's death that made her unhappy or—him. "It is hard, child, that you should have so much trouble, just at the beginning of your married life."

She nodded. "Where did you get the news?" she inquired, and when he said, "In Cairo," she began hurriedly to inquire about his journey. He was hardly able to answer her, her voice sounded so nervous, so constrained.

She was thinking of something quite different. She would like to lighten her burden by confiding in him, but—would he understand?

In a few minutes she took his arm to go down to her mother-in-law's dining-room, on the floor below.

Frau Elfrida had set out all the silver, of which she was possessed, in honor of "his excellency." Though early, it was already dusk in the dark-oak-paneled room; therefore the gas was lighted in the old German chandelier, over the table, which sparkled with glass and silver. In the fireplace a huge log glowed and crackled. The thick Syrian rug spread itself out soft and warm, over the oaken floor. It was a comfortable, harmonious room, the only note of discord being produced by two dreadful oil-paintings, genre pictures after some celebrated originals in the Dresden Gallery, the one representing dead game and fish, the other fruits and a glass of Rhine wine.

The general sat with his back to the carved buffet at the small end of the table, Lora and her mother-in-law on either side, and Aunt Melitta opposite.

The conversation, led by Frau Elfrida, turned on the death of Major von Tollen and the condition in which he had left his wife and children, a topic not particularly cheering for his family.

"Your excellency may rest assured," stammered Frau Becher, putting her handkerchief to her eyes, just as the servant entered with another course, "but we shall help them whenever we can; what would be the use of our being relations if we did not?"

"You are very kind," replied Lora, "but I must decline in my mother's name; she would not accept assistance from you in any case."

Her hand trembled so that the wine in the glass, which she took up mechanically, spilled over the edge.

An embarrassed pause ensued; the words sounded contemptuous, and the voice, usually so soft, was hard and rough.

The servant, dressed in violet plush, suppressed a smile as he offered the ragout. Lora declined. The others ate their dinner in silence.

Frau Elfrida was flushed and angry. Aunt Melitta made a clumsy attempt to set the ball rolling again, but her announcement that somewhere or other there had been a railroad accident, met with no response. Lora leaned back in her chair, and played with crumbs of bread. She looked horribly pale.

"If you don't feel well, Lorchon, you had better not stay; go and lie down," suggested Aunt Melitta.

"Yes, thanks; excuse me," she stammered out, and left the room.

In the large hall there was still a lingering twilight. At the foot of the great staircase the servant was standing with a lady.

"I am very sorry, madam, the master is gone away, and the ladies are at dinner," Lora heard him say.

"Can I not wait?" was the reply, in broken German. "It is so hard to find the way in the dark. Show me into the reception-room, and announce me after the dinner is over."

The servant retreated as Lora appeared, like a dark shadow in the dusk of the corridor.

"The lady wishes to see Frau Becher," he announced.

"I wish to speak to Frau Becher on business," said the stranger, who had a child beside her—a little boy, who clung closely to her.

"You wish to see me, or my mother-in-law?" asked Lora wearily.

"Frau Becher," repeated the stranger hesitatingly; and as at this moment the chandelier in the hall was lighted, Lora saw a young face whose eyes stared at her with an astonished expression.

"You must mean my mother-in-law, I suppose," replied Lora. "But will you not—"

"The mother of Adalbert Becher," gasped the lady.

"Yes. But will you not come up into my room, and wait for her? My mother-in-law has guests, and—"

"You are, my God! you are—"

Lora felt her arm grasped as in a vice, so tightly the slender fingers closed round it.

"You are engaged to Adalbert Becher?" the stranger said, in a low whisper.

"Engaged to him? No; I am his wife. But—good God! cried Lora, in terror; the stranger staggered, and caught at the support of the wrought-iron balustrade, leaning against it like one crushed, with a strange expression of horror in her face.

"His wife? His wife? That is not true!" she gasped. "It is simply impossible."

"Come, mamma," entreated the child. Lora was bewildered. She drew her hand across her aching brow. What did this mean? "Come upstairs with me, I beg of you," she whispered, leading the way.

The stranger summoned all her strength, and followed her.

CHAPTER XXI.

The lamp with the rose-colored shade, was lighted in the boudoir. The two women stood, looking at each other. Lora tall, proud, waiting, with high-bred composure, for what she was to hear; the other, holding the child's hand, her head drooping, as if stunned by a sudden blow.

"With whom have I the pleasure of speaking?" asked Lora, pointing to a chair.

The stranger, unable to stand any longer, sank into it and drew the child toward her.

"I am—pardon me if I offend you—I am Adalbert—I am his wife, and this is his son."

Though she spoke in a low tone at first, she almost screamed out the last words, covering her face with her hands as if in despair.

"I must entreat you," said Lora coldly, "to give me proofs of what you say; I cannot think any one would have dared to deceive me—"

The stranger felt in her pocket, and gave Lora some papers.

"Here is my marriage certificate and the certificate of baptism of the child; we were married in St. George's church, in New York, one Sunday, madam. I came here to remind you of his duty as a father. Since he left me for the last time—it was a year and a half ago—he has not given me a penny for my support; all the letters I sent to him remained unanswered. If it were only for myself, I would never have taken this step; but the child has rights. I must not permit a stain to rest on his name. Ah, madam, I don't know whether you understand me—"

Lora's eyes in the mean time were wandering over the paper. Ellen Smith, of Washington, and Adalbert Becher, of New York—the lines seemed to dance before her eyes.

"I cannot judge," she stammered, while a burning blush mounted to her forehead; "excuse me for a moment."

She went into the next room, rang the bell, and told the maid to ask the Herr General to come to her. Everything seemed to be whirling round with her. She could not say what she felt; her ideas were a perfect chaos of contradictory impressions. Only one thing seemed clear to her and shed a light into her despair, the hope of liberty.

If this stranger had spoken the truth. She walked up and down in feverish unrest. Presently the general came in with an anxious look.

"Uncle," she cried out as he entered, "there is a woman in there who declares she is Becher's lawful wife. Go and see her, and if she is speaking the truth, then, uncle, then—"

The old gentleman was so amazed that he thought her delirious. "Why, Lora," he said gently, drawing her toward him, "why, Lora, what ails you, child?"

"Uncle, if she is speaking the truth," began Lora again, "I will thank her. Thank her on my knees, for then—then—"

She drew him to the door and thrust him into the boudoir, and she herself fled into the farthest corner of one of the deep bay-windows, laid her burning forehead against the pane, and gazed out into the darkening park. In a moment she heard the general's words.

"Eh, eh! It is you, madam—"

Then the door closed and she could hear nothing but an indistinct murmur. Sometimes there were long pauses, and then came the soft, plaintive woman's voice.

"Merciful God! what if she should prove to be an impostor, if she were not his wife at all, and her own chains were firmly forged! There are such strange laws—what if this ray of light had come only to make the night of her despair the darker and more gloomy? 'Merciful God, grant that she may be speaking the truth,' prayed the young wife. 'Let me live, let me be free.'"

She did not think of the insult that had been put upon her, if this should prove the truth. The saken door which led into the corridor opened, and with short, hasty steps Frau Elfrida rustled through the room—came to see what was going on up here—and Lora's heart began to beat violently. The lady knocked at the door of the boudoir, and then quickly entered.

The door was left open. Lora heard a half-suppressed cry and the angry words: "You dare to come here? Herr General, she is an adventuress of the purest water. She lived with me as a companion, and the vile creature entered into an intrigue with my son—you know, your excellency, how young men will be young men—especially where there is a sly creature like her. I had to send her away, but she has done nothing for years but pursue the poor fellow."

"Madam, I entreat you for your own sake—the general's voice sounded very cold—"to be calmer; in such a matter as this there should be no anger and no malice. I am not a lawyer; therefore I cannot say how good this lady's claim may be; but we shall soon find out when the matter comes before the courts. Of course I have no reason for doubting your word; but there is one thing that seems serious; this lady is quite willing to call the law to her assistance. If I—I think the lady must feel that the ground is pretty firm under her feet, and—have you any idea, madam, what the punishment is for such a mistake?"

"Merciful heavens! Don't speak so loud; not so loud," cried Frau Becher, nearly beside herself. "She is an impostor, I swear it; she is an impostor."

"I am no impostor," Lora heard the stranger say in a trembling voice, "nor did you dismiss me as you say; I went out of your house voluntarily, to protect myself against your son's pursuit; but he found me out at my aunt's, with whom I had taken refuge. There he offered me his hand—as I remained firm—and I—I accepted it—"

She stopped for a moment, and then went on speaking in a lower tone, "because I was fond of him, although he had tried to degrade me. We were married, and I had no suspicion because our marriage was to be kept secret, and because he would not take me home to his mother. I knew she hated me; he said to me so often that it was all her fault that he had not offered to marry me before. He always declared he would take me to Germany. Then he went away himself—the child was just two months old—and he promised to come back for me as soon as possible. He came to see me once a year—he was there once last winter—and then—"

"Lara!" cried Frau Becher, "Madam," said the general to Ellen, "go back to your hotel, and I will talk with you Becher. You shall hear from me to-morrow morning. Excuse me for not going with you, but my first duty is to look after my niece."

Lora, who had not moved, now heard steps behind her, a woman's steps, and the rattling steps of a child, and those of her uncle.

(To be Continued.)

DOCTOR SHOT BY A DOG.

Animal Touched Trigger of a Loaded Gun in a Motor Car.

Dr. Vernon Paul, a young Harwich, England, medical man, was the victim of a sad shooting fatality at Ramsey. He had been rabbit shooting with some friends, and the sport having finished, the guns were placed in a motor in readiness for the return journey.

By some mischance one of them was left loaded and at half cock, and just as Dr. Paul was stepping into the motor a dog jumped and touched the trigger. The charge entered Dr. Paul's body, passing through the left lung, and he died that evening.

Dr. Paul was only 28 years old, went to Harwich in January of the present year, and had previously held an appointment at Taunton Hospital.

The Farm

TURKEY RAISING.

Young turks are harder to raise than chicks or ducklings, and, in order to succeed with them, more pains must be taken to study their nature and habits.

The natural tendency of the turkey is to roost where night overtakes it, and in time the wild animals are apt to diminish the flock.

This can be avoided by an inexpensively constructed roosting place, which can be made with woven-wire netting, a few posts and a roof of tarred paper, where the birds can be housed at night.

The young can be trained to come up regularly at about four o'clock to be fed, when they can be easily driven into the roosting place for the night.

An earthen floor can be laid in this pen, but it must be kept clean. The majority of failures are, no doubt, due to lack of proper knowledge or carelessness.

In many instances, where the young are hatched by hens, the foster-mother is cooped and the little ones deprived of their liberty, and fed almost entirely on wheat or grain of some sort, which alone is enough to cause the poult to die.

They must have more of a vegetable diet, and even in this, care and judgment must be exercised.

A diet of horse-radish leaves would be to many detrimental. If allowed to choose for themselves they would select such as lettuce, cabbage, clover and many kinds of grasses.

Turn the hen loose with the little ones, and let them pick what they most relish, giving them a little meal or wheat to coax them home, and also to quicken their growth.

Study the habits and instincts of the particular variety desired, and there will be less liability to failure.

In picking stock from which to start, make your calculations that some are wild and some are tame.

The Bronze variety is very desirable for the market on account of its size and the sweet flavor of its meat. But, on account of its wild roving disposition, this variety is hard to raise. The birds nearly always hide their nests, and perhaps will not be seen for a month or two after hatching season.

The White Holland are more domesticated, and are more apt to make their nests about the barn and outbuildings, the same as chickens do. They are also good layers, having a record of as high as 100 eggs each.

They are probably a little harder to raise than the Bourbon Reds, which, by the way, are handsome birds, but do not become quite so tame.

All turkeys are peculiar about their nests, and when they once select the location they must not be disturbed.

It has been customary for the farmer to treat his chickens as though they were of little importance. Anything that takes his fancy is tried. As a result, it is not uncommon to find a lot of mongrel birds made up of six or eight different breeds. These chickens seldom attain a desirable size—nor do they develop good quality as egg or meat producers. Better a good deal to select one breed and stick to that closely. If you desire more than one keep the two separate. This, though, is hardly practical on the average farm.

WHY DANISH MILK IS PURE.

Some countries and many cities have regulations governing milk supplies, but in few cities the milk regulations are what they should be. One of the best milk supplies in the world is the one furnished by the Milk Supply Company of Copenhagen. This is a corporation furnishing milk to consumers and about the city of Copenhagen, Denmark.

The following are some of the regulations which they require all dairymen furnishing them milk to follow—

1. The feed must be such that it does not affect the taste or character of the milk injuriously.

2. In the summer time the cows must not be fed in the barn under any conditions.

3. The cows must be clipped on the udder, tail, and hindquarters in the fall before they are put into the barn.

4. The utmost cleanliness must be observed in milking, and the milk must be strained through a metal strainer covered with a clean woolen cloth.

5. There must be at the disposal of the dairy at least thirty pounds of milk produced on the farm.

6. As soon as it is drawn from the cow, the milk must be cooled before it is shipped.

7. The dairy farmer must permit one of the company's veterinarians to examine his cattle whenever he chooses, and carry out the directions which the latter may give him.

8. Cows which the veterinarian finds have tuberculosis must be removed from the herd at once, and disposed of as soon as possible.

9. Cows which are taken with any suspicious disease must be removed from the herd at once.

10. If any contagious disease occurs among the persons who live on the farm, it shall be the duty of the dairyman to inform the company of the fact at once.