

Baum looked out at the steeple with complacency but said nothing, because he felt it would hardly be suitable for him to do so under the circumstances. He was delighted. Here was comfort and joy about to fall into his hands, and his ready imagination made hosts of glowing pictures concerning his future life and the adorable Margaret's. He looked reverentially upon Krömer. He became possessed with a sincere interest in his white hair, and gazed tenderly upon his handsome face. Who would not be proud of such a gentlemanly father?

Krömer finally resumed. His lip quivered. "My dear Baum, it will be hard for you to understand the joy which fills me as my reflections confirm the justice of my decision. I know my daughter will ratify it, for she is devoted to me and she has a great faith in my discretion. She would marry the devil if I advised her to do so."

"I am sure she would," whispered Baum. "But when I point out a true and generous man, I know she will love him with devotion." Krömer's voice trembled with agitation, and the other could not speak, for his mouth was as dry as a corn-husk. "Baum, my dear friend Baum," cried Krömer, "give me your hand again across the table, and congratulate me. You are acquainted with Reinhold Mayer?"

Baum glared like a tiger. "Then," said Krömer, without waiting for a reply, "that is the man."

The fragile glass which Baum still held shivered to fragments in his fingers, and clattered loudly upon the table and the floor. His hand had closed upon it, and the flesh of his palm was pierced in several places. The pain distracted him for a moment, and while he employed himself in stopping the flow of blood he forgot all about Krömer's daughter and her fate. When, however, he was able once more to turn his mind upon her, he found himself tolerably calm, though in a rage at the deceit he had practiced upon himself.

He by no means abated his intent. Here was an obstacle, but it presented itself in no stronger light.

So, as a necessary preliminary to his future conduct, which he felt must be subtle, he contrived to restrain the smallest exhibition of anger or disappointment. He explained the catastrophe of the goblet with a ready invention, and appeased his startled friend.

"But why did you fix your mind upon the strange character you have named?" he asked. "Because he is a man after my own heart. I am told that he is handsome, and that is an advantage. He has played the first violin in my orchestra for five years, and has never missed a performance or a rehearsal. I hear his kind voice now and then appeasing the infamous quarrels which arise, but I always notice his delightful playing. It is magnificent. He never misconstrues the writer, he never is unfaithful and slack, and he never insults his master by adding flourishes of his own. Such a man will make a good husband, and I know he is ambitious, for he told me he hoped to succeed Kautz as leader when he dies, and you know the old man is enfeebling himself very fast by over-eating."

Baum remained silent, ruminating over this phase of his affairs and wondering how he might best go on. This thought suddenly occurred to him:

"Why, friend Krömer, this boy does not yet know your daughter."

"There," hastily responded the other, "that is it; that is the very thing I was coming to. No, he does not know her, and it is somewhat important that he should if he is ever to become her husband. Now, I have thought of a merry little plan to bring them together naturally and socially. To-morrow we shall have no music to play, for, thank Heaven, it will be Sunday. Now, in the afternoon we four can go out together for a day in the Park; and as you and I will be well content to sit under the green trees and listen to the singing-birds with our pipes in our mouths, the other couple will be left entirely free to stroll off wherever they choose, and chatter and ogle as much as they please. They can't help but feeling an interest in each other at once, for they will be stimulated by all the exhilarating charms of nature; the calm and sparkling water, the fragrant summer winds, the blue sky and rustling foliage. Come, Baum, I tell you that is a skilful plan. We shall enjoy ourselves by watching them walk to and fro, and by marking their strengthening acquaintance as they pass before us at various times. Eh! what do you say?"

"I am afraid it will be dry work for us," replied Baum.

"O no, it cannot be dry, for it will be amusing. We will sit and chat, and if conversation flags, we can both drop off into a nap. It will be shady, and they have the very best beer that can be had in the country. We shall enjoy ourselves."

Finally the plan was agreed upon, and Baum carried an invitation to Mayer, who lived frugally in a garret with a little brother, whom he was teaching to play the violoncello as a primary step to that most divine of instruments, the violin.

Mayer accepted the invitation with profuse thanks, which were as evident in his animated eyes as in the words of gratitude which he showered upon his visitor.

Baum went home full of chagrin.

He felt that the labor he was about to enter upon, namely, to induce Krömer to consider him instead of Mayer, must be elaborate and ingenious. At the moment he felt no particular amount of jealousy towards Mayer, for he was

too much absorbed in anger at Krömer, whose oversight of him appeared malicious.

As the night passed on, however, he began to look at matters in a more rational light. He began to imagine that he had been overlooked by Krömer simply because he had been too close a friend and companion to him; that is, Krömer regarded him as merely a very good brother, and therefore ineligible as a son-in-law.

This was comprehensible, and eventually Baum entertained the idea to the exclusion of all others. But the effect was not a happy one, for he no sooner began to excuse Krömer than he began to hate Mayer.

This passion was about as well suited to Baum's temperament as any other on the list. It grew apace, and he cherished it carefully, as a morbid person does a bodily ailment.

His lack of power to recall a blemish in the life and character of Mayer only added fuel to the already noisome flame; and when he was obliged to acknowledge to himself that the young man was a far better and a more aspiring musician than himself, his mortification and rage were hardly restrainable.

But still he went to the picnic with a placid countenance and a voice of uncommon suavity. The day was a brilliant one.

They traveled to the Park by a small boat, which also conveyed a troop of pleasure-hunters like themselves. There was a flageolet-player in the bow, who would cease playing now and then in order to point out the beauties of the scenery as they went along. Occasionally a quartette of very heavy men would sing love-songs, which would echo from one side of the river to the other, and then die away among a hundred distant crags. The sun was bright, and every one seemed happy.

Krömer and his daughter stood together with his arm drawn through hers, and both inhaling the cool air with great delight. The buttons of his coat were refulgent, his neck-cloth was unusually white, and his carriage was even gay. But his daughter was in her glory; she reveled in the music, in the joy of a cloud-like dress, and in the knowledge that the crown gazed upon her admiringly. She smiled, and blushed, and chatted, and look askance upon Mayer with significance.

He sat talking to the observant Baum, who was full of poetry and gall, only the first of which, however, being apparent.

Mayer was handsome but grave. He tried hard to prefer the seductions of Baum's wit and conversation to those of Margaret's glowing eye and airy form, but he failed. She achieved a signal victory, and when they landed they both dissolved their old partnerships and walked off together, leaving Krömer and Baum to go on in company towards a preconcerted rendezvous under the shadow of a pinewood at the water-side.

"Tell me," said Krömer in a whisper; "tell me how matters are going. Have they both struck fire? How do they get on together?"

"Devilishly well," responded Baum, staring hard after them.

"Good. That is really gratifying," said the old gentleman. "She whispered to me in confidence that she knew she must respect him after a short acquaintance. Come, Baum, let us sit down in the shade. Here comes a waiter who will bring us some beer, and I trust you have your pipe."

They did sit down, and before they arose again Krömer was a miserable man.

Baum's circumstances were something like these. He was poor; but he had an elder brother at home who had received the favor of the government for some fine acts of bravery and skill in a certain war, and who had been shrewd enough to turn his position and honors to considerable profit; enough, indeed, to bring into great prominence a score of loving relatives who had hitherto kept themselves secluded. But the brother retained an affection for but one of his family, and had turned his back upon all the rest; this person was our Baum. Baum having quitted his country to try his fortunes in this one, had shown a spirit of independence which only enhanced his brother's respect for him, and therefore Baum's chance of inheritance increased rapidly. It would be a flagrant untruth to say that Baum was at all oblivious of the delights of wealth, or that he was in the least careless of the reports of the effects of age and unaccustomed ease upon his brother's chances for long life. He watched; for Baum was uncommonly hungry for money.

It has been told that he had discovered Krömer's prosperous condition. He had seen that thirty years of unremitting labor and twenty years of parsimony had produced a good state of comfort for the old man and his daughter, and now, having become enamored of Margaret, it was merely necessary to enamor her father of him in order to carry his point. To do this, he began systematically to excite his cupidity.

This, then, was his task when he sat down beside Krömer upon the bench by the river side on that sunny day.

The stream before them was wide and peaceful, the air was soft, birds sang in the trees, children strolled by over the patches of grass, and Krömer was fain to throw open his blue coat, if not to take it off altogether.

Everything was calm. Young men and young women sauntered by in the broad paths, holding each other's hands; gay colors abounded, and the distance was thick with groups of lovers.

Presently Margaret and Mayer appeared. She with downcast eyes, and he swinging his cane as though he was an ancient with a

"Ho, ho," said Baum; "here they come. He

is whispering to her some of that poetry, no doubt. He is full of poetry."

"And does she listen?" hastily demanded Krömer.

"O yes, yes. She drinks it in, as it were. It's poison, dear Krömer, deadly poison. But I tell you it's a pretty sight to see them. She leans upon him, she looks into his face; he softly gesticulates and looks into hers; it's a great pity that they do not own the grounds or one something like them. What delicious pleasure it would be to stroll in one's own garden!"

"Ah yes, indeed," sighed Krömer. Baum permitted him to meditate upon this until the couple reappeared in another bend of the serpentine walk.

"Now I see them again, friend Krömer. How delightful it is! Now he stops and steps to a flower-bed. The happy dog. Now he has picked a rose, and he gives it to her. I can see her cheeks burn from here. But wait—here comes a man in a gray coat with black buttons; he motions towards the bush from which the flower was taken. Mayer is in difficulty. Margaret is ready to cry. Stop—now Mayer slips some money into the man's hand; there—now the man goes away. Doubtless that rose has cost poor Mayer a whole day's earnings. It will pinch him terribly."

"Poor boy," said Krömer. "It is dreadful to live from hand to mouth."

Baum smiled and said nothing. He was pleased to see his friend allow his face to grow grave and his pipe to go out.

Presently the pair came again into view, but this time they were walking away, and their backs were therefore presented to Baum and his companion.

"What a very decent figure Mayer has?" said Baum.

"Has he?" asked Krömer somewhat coldly.

"O, yes, very tolerable, though he dresses it badly; his trousers bag at the knees, his hat is very old, and his coat is misused by time. But Margaret is charming. There is a grace of carriage about her which is intoxicating. Look at the art of her dress, the set of her head. Ah, Krömer, one would imagine you must be a king from the bearing of the daughter."

Weak and foolish Krömer actually aroused himself from his comfortable position and thrust up his head, and in the course of a few moments began acting the king by crossing his arms and keeping his chin in the air. Baum pretended that his attention was drawn to a flower on the edge of the pathway, and he began to deduce from it:

"How often one sees a man or a woman separated from their kinds and planted immovably in the dirt and mire! Some gentle heart or tender soul struggling like this poor daisy in rasping gravel; isolated, bruised, trodden upon and fading for want of company. Love cannot survive when comfort is straitened. Conscience demands compliance, but the soul revolts, the affection grows thin and all the beauties die away." Baum stopped for a moment, meanwhile observing that Krömer was listening to him with great attention, and then he added with a much lighter manner: "Daughters are flowers of the tenderest description, my friend. To transplant them is one of the great responsibilities of life. Humor their old happinesses and don't put them in a scurrying soil." Baum encircled his head in a thick wreath of smoke and hummed an air, while Krömer, leaning upon his cane, began to think he had made a mistake.

A part of the conversation of the other two was interesting, not the whole of it by any means, for the talk of lovers has as defined a taste as milk, and about as much substance. For a single moment both were decently formal, as new acquaintances should be. Then having got out of earshot, said Margaret blithely:—

"O, what a load of wickedness is swept from my overburdened soul by being able to talk with you openly!"

She beamed upon Reinhold, who looked amused.

"And my worn-out brain," said he, "is now relieved from the invention of more subtleties. We now have no need of that wretched letter-writing, which aggravates rather than assuages. I am sure he never dreamed of what was passing under his eyes."

"Eyes?" said Margaret, pathetically; "you know he has no eyes."

"Well, then, his nose."

"No; I am sure he trusted me implicitly."

"Let me think," pondered Reinhold; "we have been engaged now two months."

"Yes, two months; and have been acquainted ten weeks."

"Very true. Now, upon the whole, I am very glad that matters have gone on as they have. We are free to love or hate as we choose; whereas, before, the delight of cheating somebody, which is human, compelled us to endure each other. But as for my part, I shall keep on as I have commenced, and love you extravagantly."

"And I shall do the same."

"What, Baum to the contrary?"

"Certainly! I detest Baum."

"You are quite right, for Baum is a scoundrel. I have his complete story from first hands, and a miserably bad story it is. To begin with, his name is not Baum, but Kirchoff. He is already married, and his ugly wife was at home in their native town three months ago. He fled from her because, between them, they soon spent all the money she brought, and she was not beautiful enough to suit his fastidious taste. Besides that, she was a shrew of the most savage sort. Kirchoff has a brother who is a rich and newly-fledged baron with forty orders of merit and forty bodily complaints,

which causes the gleam of prospective wealth to fall upon the path of our friend of the cornet. To his credit, my heart's-germ, he perceives your virtues, and at this moment he is doubtless bringing his own to the mind of your father, as they sit together upon the bench yonder. You should tremble when you realize that your beauty has persuaded a man to become a bigamist—if he can."

"Now this is disagreeable," said Margaret, with tears in her eyes. "You talk very rudely to-day; so put this man out of your mind and let us walk down by the water and imagine all this beautiful place to be our own."

"How Baum watches us."

"Then let us delight him by endeavoring to entrance each other."

"I am entranced already," said Mayer helplessly.

"Well," responded Margaret thoughtfully, "I think that I am too. You are a delightful man, Reinhold."

It was at this point that the conversation assumed its milk-like character; all vigor and sense departed, and for a third pair of ears it possessed no charms. They wandered hither and thither like two children. The music seemed to them to be the music of Heaven; the distant grassy hills, the bright flowers on every hand, the happy faces all about them, the sweet perfume of the air, appeared to be a part of Paradise. They chirruped like birds, and while counting the prospects of future troubles upon their fingers, they imagined untold thousands of perpetual joys. They were both ready to sing, but they contented themselves by merely flitting to and fro, chatting and smiling, and wishing the sun might never go down.

The politic Baum contrived to unsettle the peace of Krömer's mind before the time arrived for the party to return.

The pleasures of wealth were never presented so carelessly and yet so powerfully. The vanity of the old man burst out again, and he imagined himself surrounded by luxuries without qualification or stint. He fully regretted his selection of Mayer.

Baum reached his chamber burning with jealousy. No passion is so quick to nerve the languid wickedness of a bad man's heart as this. A man of brains is always harmless ~~under~~ his attacks, but a jealous fool is the most dangerous of brutes. He entered his room pale with the excitement which he had repressed all day. He had been reared under the shadow of a German university, and had caught the spirit of its ruffianism without any of its profitable lessons; consequently, when he felt his antagonism to Mayer, his cowardly nature made him instantly dread a personal conflict.

He did not know how to fence, and as he had known disputes to be settled by swords in the German community in which he moved, he felt sure that any quarrel which might arise between him and his enemy would have the same appeal.

Therefore, before he could safely insult this rival, he must take some lessons.

On the succeeding day Mayer led the orchestra at the rehearsal in the morning. This was a new honor, and the young man acquitted himself nobly. Baum's hate was inflamed, and he ran home almost demented. In the afternoon he set out to hunt up a fencing-master, and was directed to one whose rooms were over a wheelwright's shop.

He passed up the stairs and entered. The apartment was hung with gloves, masks, and fells. Targets ornamented the walls, and several padded vests were hung upon hooks bearing their owner's names.

A boy presented himself to Baum and informed him that his master was out, but that the assistant-teacher would wait upon him. The assistant-teacher entered promptly, and Baum turned around to meet him.

It was Mayer.

Baum felt himself blush, but still he contrived to smile and put out his hand.

"What, are you fencing-master besides?"

"Yes, I play at night, rehearse at eleven in the morning, and come here at two in the afternoon. It keeps me employed, and I earn money. I shall get rich, as sure as your name is Baum."

Baum would like to have flown at him and torn him to pieces, but he wisely restrained himself and endeavored to discover his meaning by staring at him. Mayer, however, was imperturbable.

"Did you come to be taught fencing?" he asked.

"No," replied Baum; "I came to—to ask the rent of the vacant loft overhead. I think of loaning some money to a house-painter to start in business. But your master is not in?"

"No," responded Mayer with a bow, "he is not present."

Baum caught the emphasis, and with a significant gesture he turned towards the door. Mayer followed him to the passage, and laid a finger on his arm.

"I am sure you came to learn how to fight with me. I have watched your conduct. I knew the state of your mind when we returned from the park yesterday, and I assure you it is a dangerous one for you to indulge in. Do not make an enemy of me, for a man who has secrets such as yours are, should confine his attention to friends, not enemies. I advise you to relinquish all hopes of marrying Margaret."

"How do you dare—"

"Go down-stairs, Kirchoff!"

Baum's knees knocked together, and, seizing the balustrade, he looked at Mayer, who stood above him.

"Go down," cried Mayer. Without thinking