

old and forcible as they are, they send forth a sweet, refreshing breath of deep, undying love for me. They speak to me as if they possessed living lips and your own sympathetic voice. I will answer you here, on these very pages where your hand has rested, and meantime I will fancy you are standing beside me, that your deep eyes are watching my pen as it makes stroke after stroke till the riddle lies solved before you.

"Do you remember the day little Cordula Hellwig was searching for her pet white hen, which had been chased into the attic by the hunting-dog? It was dark there, but through a chink in the boards poured a stream of golden light, and millions of notes were dancing in the sunshine. The little girl peeped through the crack. Neighbor Hirschsprung had just stored there the grain gathered from his only field, and high on the golden sheaves sat his wild, dark-haired son.

"Look for me!" the child called, through the crack. The boy jumped down and gazed boldly and keenly around him. "Look for me!" she repeated. There was a crash, and one of the boards behind which little Cordula was hiding fell rattling on the floor of the aristocratic mansion. Ay, it was your deed, and I know you would have leveled many other worthless barriers, destroyed many a carefully erected false system. Just as you threw down the plank behind which the little girl was teasing you.

"I cried bitterly in my fright, and you instantly became kind and gentle, and led me through the opening downstairs into the smoky little room where your father pursued his trade. The board was replaced; but from that hour I crossed the street to see you every day. Oh, what pleasant winter afternoons those were! Outside the wind howled and roared; the rosemary on the window-sill trembled at every gust that raged against the round, leaden-cased panes, and the goldfinch, usually so cheery, retreated to the furthest corner of his cage. But inside the coffee was boiling on the huge stove, your mother sat spinning at her whirring wheel, while your father hammered steadily on his bench to earn his daily bread.

"I can still see his noble, sorrowful face, as he told us of olden days. Then the Hirschsprungs had been a powerful family—a race renowned for their gigantic stature and deeds of daring! What an endless series of heroic acts had been performed by their strong arms. But I trembled at the torrents of noble blood they had shed—I was far more fond of hearing the tale of the knight who had loved his young wife so faithfully and tenderly. He had had two bracelets made, and on each was engraved one half of an old love-song, he wore one, his beloved wife the other. When he fell mortally wounded on the battle field, one of his foes tried to seize the costly love token, but the dying man convulsively clatched the jewel with his left hand, letting it be hacked and cut till his esquire came to his aid and killed the assailant. The bracelets were treasured in the family as heirlooms, until—yes, until the Swedes came. How you used to hate those Swedes! They were the scourge of the ruin of the Hirschsprungs! It was a sorrowful tale, and did not like to hear it, because your father always ended with: 'Had it not been for that, my son, you might have been educated and become a great man; now there is nothing for you but the cobbler's bench.' Ah, the story had a very different side from what we supposed.

"The Hirschsprungs had always been Roman Catholics—they had remained true to the old faith, when the whole country was converted to the new doctrine of Lutheranism. From that time they lived in strict seclusion on account of their religion; but this was not enough to content old Adrian

von Hirschsprung, who preferred to give up his ancient mansion and his Thuringian house rather than to live among heretics. He sold his property, except the house on the market-place, for sixty thousand thalers in gold, and one day his two sons rode off to seek a new home in some Catholic country. Just at that time it happened that the Swedish king, Gustavus Adolphus, with twenty-one thousand men came marching through Thuringia. He spent one day in the little town of X—, on October 22, 1632, and his soldiers were quartered in the houses of the citizens. The knight's mansion on the market-place was also crowded with Swedish soldiers, who must have filled old Adrian with rage and loathing. A terrible dispute arose between him and the half-drunken troopers, who were carousing over their wine in the court-yard, and the dreadful deed was done, a soldier stabbed the poor old man to the heart. He fell back with outstretched arms upon the stone pavement of the court-yard, and died at once, without uttering a word. But the furious Swedes hooked to pieces and destroyed everything they could lay their hands on, and when the sons returned old Adrian had long been lying under the stone flag in the Church of the Holy Virgin, and they searched in vain for their property. The Swedes had carried off the sixty thousand thalers, chests and coffers stood empty, their scattered contents lay torn and trampled on the floors, the family papers were dispersed to the four winds of heaven—not a scrap remained. This was your father's tale! Then the house itself passed for a paltry sum into the hands of the Hellwig family. Adrian's two sons divided the amount between them. Lutz, the elder brother, left the town, and nothing more was ever heard of him; the other hung his knightly sword upon the wall, and the descendants of those who had fought in the Crusades, and been held in high esteem at royal courts for their courage and chivalrous courtesy, seized plane and awl.

"You did not follow their example. As the thick locks above your forehead curled and waved, defying any arrangement save their own, your lofty spirit turned from the narrow paths your father and grandfather had pursued. You sought your own career, though you well knew its course must be thorny and stony, that poverty and want would ever be at your side. You saw only the goal, the bright, glittering goal—and all your heroic courage ended on a death bed in an attic-room. The soul fled because the body starved. Omnipotent God! One of thy noble creatures died from lack of bread! Who could have dreamed of such an end to your existence, that had heard you explaining your fresh, bold, original ideas with such convincing power! Or when you sat at the piano, with such marvelous harmonies pouring forth under the touch of your fingers! It was a most miserable little spinnet that stood in a dark corner of your father's room, but your genius animated it till its dull, harsh tones reproduced the roar of the tempest or conjured up the picture of a radiant sky bending over a smiling world. Do you remember how your good father rewarded you, when he was pleased with you? He solemnly unlocked a little antique secretary, and laid a manuscript notebook on the rack of the old spinnet. It was the operetta by Johann Sebastian Bach—his grandfather had received it as a gift from the great master, and it had been treasured by the family like some holy relic. Not one penny in money, not even a mouthful of bread was found in your room after your death, yet the MS. of the Bach operetta—whose value you know well—lay on your table, addressed to me.

"On the other side of the page, exactly opposite to where I am now writing, are the words. My sweet,

golden-haired Cordula came in to-day in her white dress." It was the day of my confirmation. My stern mother had told me it must be my last visit, for I was now grown up, and it would not be proper for the rich merchant's daughter to associate with the shoemaker's family. Your parents were not in the room, and I told you of my mother's command. How pale your face grew under your black looks! 'Well, go, then!' you said, defiantly stamping your foot, but your voice failed and tears glittered in your wrathful eyes. I did not go—our trembling hands suddenly intertwined in a clasp that was never sundered—it was the beginning of our love.

"Could I have forgotten this and, after having for years resisted my parent's anger and entreaties, suddenly proved faithless to my vow of my own free will! They reproached you with your poverty, called you the worthless son of a shoemaker, who could never earn a living, threatened to curse and disinherit me, but I remained firm and it was easy, for you were near me. But when your parents died, and you went to Leipzig, terrible days came! One day, a tall, slender man arrived at my father's house, a man with pale cheeks, over which hung long, scanty locks of smoothly brushed dark hair, and around whose mouth lurked a disagreeable expression. I knew that with him evil crossed our threshold—the instinct of a pure heart told me so. My father judged this Paul Hellwig differently. He was a near relative, the son of a man who had made his fortune and now held an important office. So our young cousin's visit was an honor to our household, and how humbly he could bend his tall figure, how sweet and unctuous were the words that fell from his lips!

"You know that the scoundrel dared to ask my love, and you know how angrily I rejected him—he was base and dishonorable enough to ask the aid of my father, who greatly desired the marriage, and now frightful days began. No letters from you reached me, my father intercepted them. I found them, with my own, among his papers after his death. I was treated like a prisoner, but no one could force me to remain in the room after his hated figure entered it. Then I fled through the house like some hunted creature, and the shades of your ancestors protected me. I found plenty of hiding-places where I was safe from my persecutor.

Was it the invisible finger of one of these ancestresses that one day directed my eyes to a gold coin lying at my feet?

"A wall in the poultry-yard had fallen in, and workmen had been there during the afternoon, tearing away the unsound portion. I was sitting on the rains, thinking of the time when these stones had first been placed on each other—when I suddenly saw the gold coin lying in the grass. It was not the only one. There was a yellow glimmer among the crumbling masonry. Doubtless a large portion of the wall had fallen after the workmen had left the yard, for a pile of broken stones lay heaped together, and among the fragments appeared the sharp corner of a wooden chest—it had been split, and through the crack shimmered the shining gold.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

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A Gentleman

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