

on, but dark, torn clouds were still sweeping across the sky, like angry warriors anxious to combine their forces for another assault.

Up in the second story doors were banged, trunks pushed about, and clumsy and unstable feet ran to and fro—the occupants were packing for an eternal departure. "So this is the end of the forget-me-nots!" muttered Heinrich, greatly delighted, as he carried a big trunk into the passage.

How quiet and calm, in contrast to all the noise and haste in the front mansion, was the pale young face seen at the bow-window opening into the court-yard. A kitchen lamp was burning on the table, and beside it stood the little trunk containing the clothes Felicitas had worn when a child. Frau Hellwig, still holding the missionary stocking in her hand, had given orders an hour before to have the girl's "rubbish" carried to her, that she might have no reason for staying another night in the house. Felicitas was just looking at the little seal with the Hirschsprung crest by the light of the lamp, when the professor's pale face appeared at the bow-window.

"Come, Felicitas! You shall not stay an instant longer in this house of crime and selfishness," he said, in great excitement. "Leave those things here—Heinrich will take them to you to-morrow."

She threw her shawl around her and met him in the hall. Taking her hand firmly in his he led her through the streets until he rang the bell at the young lawyer's door.

"I bring you a ward," he said to the old lady, who received the couple in her own, well lighted room, kindly, but with evident surprise. Taking her hand, he placed Felicitas's in it. "I confide her to you, my friend," he said, significantly; "guard and protect my Felicitas like a daughter—till I ask you to give her back to me again."

## CHAPTER XXVIII

The young girl had merely walked through a few streets and crossed two thresholds, yet what a transformation those few steps had effected both in her outward and inward life. The massive stone walls of the mansion lay behind her, and with it she cast off the burden of unkind treatment. Wherever she looked all was now brightness and sunshine—there was not the slightest trace of the gloomy bigotry, which brooded like some dark bird of prey over the Hellwig mansion, trying to rood with its dark talons every innocent human soul. Free, healthful views of existence, a keen interest in everything noble and beautiful the world possesses, and a happy, cheerful domestic life formed the atmosphere of her present home! Felicitas found herself in her element. There was both sweetness and sorrow in again hearing all the pet names Aunt Cordula had given her—for she had instantly become the darling of the two old people, the master and mistress of the house.

Such was the outward change in her life—the transformation within she herself regarded with a vague, sweet sense of confusion. In obedience to the professor's summons that evening she had left her few possessions without a word; in the hall she had silently placed her little hand in his and gone with him willingly, without knowing whither. If he had led her on through the dark streets—out of the gate of the town—she would have journeyed with him over the whole world without a word of doubt or suspicion. She was a strange creature who, with all her glowing imagination, her lofty enthusiasm, inflexibly required a firm foundation of principle for all her acts. The professor's ardent professions of love and impassioned entreaties had torn her heart, but had been powerless to shake her firm resolve or offset any change of feeling—other words must be uttered to win her, and

those he had unintentionally spoken. In refusing to give her the book he said, "I can take no different course; though my reward were the assurance that I might instantly call you mine, I should still be forced to say 'No.'" Spite of the terrible anxiety she was then suffering her heart had throbbod exultingly—the strength of his manly resolution and the vigor with which he asserted it, at any cost to himself, solved every doubt and inspired her with that confidence in him without which life by his side would have been impossible for her.

The professor came daily to her new home. He was graver and more reserved than ever—for heavy burdens were pressing upon him. His residence in his mother's house had become unendurable. The mental excitement she had endured had probably affected her irritable nerves—she became ill, and could not leave her bed. She steadily refused to see her son—Dr. Boehm attended her—but the professor was obliged to remain in X—. Meantime he had told his friend, as curator of the presumptive Hirschsprung heirs, the family secret, and informed him of his fixed determination to atone for the wrong. All the objections his friend advanced, to induce him at least to modify the extent of the reparation, were baffled by the professor's query whether he considered the money honestly obtained—to which even the young advocate could not answer "yes." Still the lawyer shared Frau Hellwig's opinion that it was a "fuss about nothing," though for a different reason—he did not believe in the existence of any scions of the Hirschsprung family. But, in his opinion, the devout, esteemed Paul Hellwig, ought not to be spared a strong nervous shock, so the zealous champion of the Lord was summoned to restore the stolen twenty thousand thalers. The pious man quietly replied, with his usual sanctimoniousness, that he had assuredly received that sum from his uncle in payment of an old debt due to his father from the principal branch of the Hellwig family. Where his uncle obtained the money was a matter of entire indifference to him, and did not cause him the slightest uneasiness—it was no affair of his. The money was now in the best possible hands; he did not consider himself the owner of the property, but its steward, under the direction of the "Lord." He should, for this reason, defend the money by every means in his power, and looked forward to a law suit without the least anxiety.

Nathanael wrote in a very similar strain. It was a matter of indifference to him what crime might have been committed by an ancestor who had long since moldered into dust—he did not consider it his duty to whitewash the characters of the other, and certainly should not give up one penny of his heritage. He, too, he wrote, looked forward with the utmost composure to a law suit, and already cherished pleasurable anticipations of the moment when the heirs presumptive would have to pay the costs, and his "over-scrupulous" brother find disgrace brought on his once honored name.

"Then there is no course for me to pursue," said the professor, smiling bitterly, as he flung these written testimonials of the nice sense of honor that characterized the Hellwigs upon the table, "except to sacrifice every penny I have inherited or saved, if I do not wish to be a hypocrite and accomplice in an evil deed."

Thus the end of the vacation had gradually arrived. Frau Hellwig had recovered sufficiently to leave her bed, but had resolutely declared that she would not see her son before his departure, except on condition that he would drop the whole "crazy" Hirschsprung business and give up his intention of marrying Felicitas. Of course this separated the mother and son forever.

Felicitas was in a mood difficult to describe. Ever since her arrival in her new home she had sat down every afternoon, at the usual hour, with a throbbing heart, and cast stolen glances out of the window until the well-knit, manly figure, with its self-poised bearing turned the corner. Then it required all her self-control not to run to meet him. He came nearer and nearer, neither looking to the right nor to the left, not even noticing the acquaintances he met, his eyes were fixed upon the window where Felicitas's head was apparently bent over her sewing. At last the moment came when she could venture to look up—their eyes met—ah, life held a wealth of bliss of which the girl's young heart had hitherto not even dreamed! The professor never spoke of his love. Felicitas might have thought the events which had recently occurred had driven it out of his mind had it not been for his eyes, but those steel-gray eyes perpetually followed her as she moved about the room engaged in household duties; they sparkled when she entered or when, lifting her head from her work, she turned her face fully toward him. She knew that she was still "his Fay," who "was to wait for him at home and think of him." And with this feeling she received his afternoon visits. The girl who had once possessed such an iron will, whose glance had been so full of hate, and whose manner had expressed such cold reserve, did not even suspect what a witchery now surrounded her, since all the harsh traits in her character had melted in the sweet humility of love.

And to-morrow the time would come when she might sit at the window and wait for him in vain. In the hour of the afternoon, for whose coming she always longed so eagerly, he would be far, far away from her—throgs of strange faces would separate him from his Fay—perhaps a whole long year might elapse ere she should see him again. What a desolate time was coming! Felicitas beheld a dreary void, to which she could no longer accustom herself—she was drifting rudderless.

On the day before the professor's departure, while Felicitas and the other members of the household were at dinner, the maid servant brought in a card which she handed to the young lawyer. A sudden flush of surprise crimsoned his face, and throwing the card on the table he left the room. The shining bit of white pasteboard bore the words: "Baron Lutz von Hirschsprung, of Kiel." A man's voice was heard in the hall outside speaking most excellent German in the refined tones that are a token of gentle breeding—then the two gentlemen went upstairs to the lawyer's study.

While the councilor and his wife were engaged in an eager conversation about this heir, who seemed to have come from No-Man's Land, Felicitas sat silent in the most intense agitation. The poor player's child, who, bereft of every family tie, had hitherto lived alone among strangers, suddenly found herself under the same roof with an unknown kinsman. Was it her grandfather or her mother's brother? Had that deep, calm voice, whose tones had made every nerve in her body quiver, once pronounced a curse upon the recreant daughter of the Hirschsprungs? (TO BE CONTINUED.)

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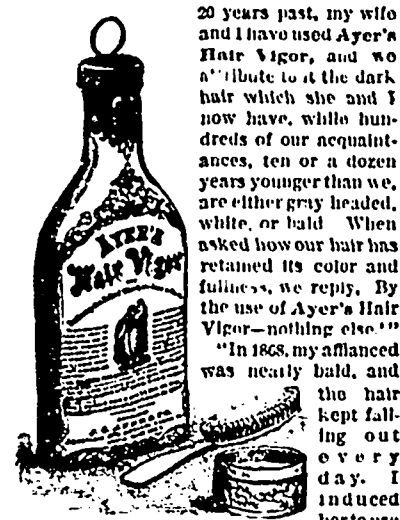
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