

"If my love for another makes me proof against your charms, Fraulein, I am not likely to yield to the temptation of riches. Its dangers and hardships cannot scare me, for I have experienced them all.

"There are some dangers you have not experienced. A comely young fellow may run risks sometimes that he knows not of."

There was a wild look in her eyes as she spoke, and her words left a vague, uncomfortable impress on me. But Lori entered the room at this moment, carrying my bedding in her arms; and further conversation with Gretchen was impossible. She helped her sister to spread the bed upon a trestle in the corner of the room; then she fetched sheets and patchwork counterpane, the design of which I can distinctly recall even now. There were triangular bits of red cloth inserted here and there, which looked to me like so many small tongues of fire,—I have good reason to remember them.

When her task was done, Lori stood before me, with her arms akimbo.

"You feel sleepy, young man, no doubt, after your long day. We keep early hours, for we are up betimes. You shall have a cup of coffee and a slice of black bread at five, before we bid you God-speed. Nay, no excuses. It is in our row, Schlafen Sie wohl."

Had I spoken the truth, I should have said that, far from being sleepy, I had never felt more wide awake than I did then. Ever since supper a strange restlessness of mind had taken the place of the languor which had oppressed me. Gretchen made as if she would have spoken when Lori ceased. She turned towards me. I saw her fingers working nervously at the black apron. I believe it was her sister's silent ascendancy over her which restrained her, for I intercepted a sideways glance from Lori's stealthy eyes which she shot towards Gretchen. With a face in which fierceness and terror and anguish seemed to be conflicting, the latter looked at me, as she followed her sister from the room, without even wishing me the customary "good night."

What did it all mean? Now, for the first time, I think, I began revolving in my mind all that I had seen and heard since I entered that house, and a disagreeable sense of something strange and mysterious gradually took possession of me. What was there about these sisters to inspire mistrust? With the elder, indeed, I could understand it. There was a physical repulsion which made the blood curdle in my veins when I thought of her. But the younger was beautiful to look upon. She had shown herself tenderly inclined towards me. Why should I find myself thinking of her, with a feeling akin to dread? Her words recurred to me. At what danger had she hinted? There had been something wild about her eyes, about her talk, at times. Then there was her extraordinary proposal. Was she mad? I remembered her strange conduct at supper, the fierce authoritative look wherewith her sister had overawed her. It seemed a likely solution to much that was otherwise inexplicable about them both. But, if so, how unaccountable that Lori, knowing her sister to be subject to fits and fancies like these, should offer hospitality to a stranger! There was nothing immodest about the demeanor of either of them; there was nothing that could suggest suspicion that this was a guinea-pen of any sort. The idea of robbery was ridiculous. Was not my poverty, so apparent in the shabby student's house I wore, a sufficient safeguard? Why, I had not even my knapsack with me, as they knew; and I was young and muscular, not an easy victim for open violence had my back intended.

I looked my brain up and down to arrive at some definite conclusion, for as to it, to sleep, I found it

useless. My brain seemed on fire by this time. Every moment I felt myself growing more excited, more keenly alive to every sound, and all my mental perceptions quickened. The single candle they had left me, burned dim; it seemed to fill the room with all sorts of grim shapes and shadows. After a long interval, during which everything in the house was absolutely still, I got up, in my restlessness, feeling that anything was better than to lie tossing there, a prey to feverish fancies. I walked about the room, with the candle, examining every article in it. First, there were the colored prints upon the walls,—among others, one of the Loreley, I remember, and one, as I now recall, Schiller's Robbers, which made my blood run cold as I looked at it. There was a cupboard, which I opened; nothing but a few plates and one old knife. I sat down again upon the bed, and my eye was attracted once more to the red tongues of the patchwork quilt. It was a very ingenious piece of work. I tried to follow the kaleidoscope pattern into which the various shreds had been wrought with that strange device of crimson cloth at regular intervals. Recul r? No. At one place in the corner, I perceived now that three or four tongues seemed to have been sown together. I held down the candle to examine them, and started back. What I had taken for crimson cloth was a stain of coagulated blood.

"I hubberled," I muttered, "Perhaps some one cut his finger here." I said; but I didn't believe my own words; and then I tried to laugh at myself, and said my brain was giving way. I started up. I saw nothing clearly. The Robbers and Loreley were dancing hobgoblin dances on the wall. The moonlight through the sycamore branches played in a shivering shadow on one spot of the floor. I knelt down, and crept along upon my hands and knees, examining the boards. But there was no stain there; only the smell of the beer in one place, and an army of those horrid beetles, who ran away from the light as I lowered it, to the back of the stove. I pursued them with a sudden savage impetus towards destruction. They all disappeared between two chinks in the floor. I sat my foot on the boards. I thought one moved. I stooped, and saw at once that the two boards immediately behind the stove though fitting closely, were not nailed down—might be removed, no doubt, with some little trouble. I dug my nails into the chinks and tried to lift one. In vain. I only tore my finger with a splinter. Then I bethought me of the old knife I had seen in the cupboard. With its help, I presently raised the end of one of the boards, and so drew it out. A square deal box lay concealed beneath. It had no lock or fastening of any kind.

Although my excitement was so strong that I remember my two hands trembling as they laid hold of the lid, yet I paused for a moment before raising it? Was it a dishonorable action? My conscience told me I was justified and I tore the box open. I nearly dropped the candle as my eyes beheld the contents.

First, there was a bundle of coarse, black hair; then one of curly-flaxen, like a child's; then another of very long silky-brown,—a woman's evidently. Along with these were four,—six—eight—rows of teeth, some large and strong, some fine and white. A common ring or two, a silver watch chain, a poor cloth cap, filled the remaining space in the box.

(To be concluded.)

THE PUBLISHERS' INDEX is the only advertising medium in the Maritime Provinces devoted exclusively to the agency business.

It can be had by mail, in New Brunswick, at 6 cents in the 100, and by express, at 10 cents in the 100.