

THE SACRIFICE;

—OR—
FOR HER FAMILY'S SAKE.

CHAPTER XXI.—(Continued).

Then the silken train rustled by, and the shrill voice of her mother-in-law: "Allow me, Herr General, I, too, have a word to say to the lady."
"I am sorry, madam, but I must insist upon your saying nothing for every one's sake. If this lady is an impostor, it would be beneath your dignity; if she is not, it would certainly be useless. Do you understand?"
Lora had now come out of her hiding-place.

"Niece," she cried, hurrying up to him, "take me to mamma, I beg of you."
"Certainly, my love. I can understand that you are longing for your mother; come!"
The young wife went into her bedroom, and soon came back with a face hood over her hair, and wrapped up in her old cloak which she had lately brought home secretly. She had her prayer-book in her hand and her father's photograph in a simple frame.

At the sight of her Frau Becher broke out into sudden, hysterical sobs. "Lora," she said, "you cannot go."
"Yes, I can," she replied, breathing quickly; "I am going—and I will never come back—never!"
"You cannot be sure of that, my love," said the general.

"Yes," returned Lora, who fairly seemed to glow, she drew herself up so proudly. "Yes, I can. For even if she is not his wife according to law, she is so in my eyes; and if anything could add to the contempt I already feel for him, it would be the sight of this child whom he has deserted. Never, never will I set my foot across this threshold again—never!"
"Oh, it will all come out right," sobbed Frau Becher.

"Never!" repeated Lora, and she gathered up the train of her mourning dress, as if even the garments that she wore should not be allowed to touch the floor of the house she was leaving.
"Pardon, madam; she is frightfully agitated, naturally," said the general, in excuse, I shall be back again, directly."

He hurried after Lora, who was waiting for him at the hall door. "Come, child," he said gently, offering her his arm.

She clung closely to him, but she did not speak again. It had grown dark outside, the wind had gone down and the bells sounded deep and solemn from the towers of the city. It was Christmas Eve.

Lora's heart suddenly warmed and softened, and something came back to her of the faith of her childhood; the certainty that there is a God of compassion and of love.

She dropped her uncle's arm. "I am going to church," she whispered, and he nodded.

"I will go on and prepare your mother, and then go back to Frau Becher."

She walked slowly on through the crowded street. Church-goers came from nearly every house, and took the same way that she was going, drawn by the sound of the bells. On the high altar two Christmas trees were blazing with light. Tears came into her eyes, and a solemn feeling came over her. Just in front of her, half hidden behind a great pillar, sat the stranger. Her worn, delicate face was turned toward the blazing trees. She held the child's little hand between her own, and listened to the old Christmas hymn:

"I bring good tidings of a Saviour's birth,
To you and all the nations upon earth."

Lora went into the same pew, sat down beside the child, and bent her head in prayer. The eyes of her neighbor opened wide as she looked at her face, down which one clear drop after the other slowly ran.

"For the child's sake, forgive me for disturbing your peace," said the stranger to her, in a whisper, after the sermon was over.

"I forgive you? Ah, you must forgive me. But, believe me, I am guiltless of blame," replied Lora. Her hand rested for a moment in that of the stranger, and her eyes looked searchingly at her face. No, it was not that of an impostor.

When the service was over, she went through the crowd with a kiffy air; she looked neither to the right nor the left; she looked only into the future, where she saw freedom for her son.

But a Schenker was standing at the church door. His eyes were fixed on his mother, who, with Katie von Tollen beside her, came slowly with a crowd. Then he looked at Lora, and by a startled look, she knew that Lora, as he had said, then saw her in the thin winter cloak, while she lay brightly on the white snow, with the old, sweet, misty smile in her eyes, under the long, shabby tresses, as mundanely as at that time when she was Lora. He felt hot under the nose, why did she cross his path so?

She went through the streets as if in a dream, and was surprised to find herself soon at her mother's door. She went into the dining-room. Her mother's troubled eyes met hers.

"Lora, my God, Lora!"
Lora did not weep. She knelt down beside Frau von Tollen, and pulling her arm round her, murmured:

"Home again, in my own home, once more. Ah, mamma, you cannot know what that means for me."
Frau von Tollen was silent. She bent down amid her tears and kissed her daughter's beautiful, clear brow; it was a mute, touching entreaty for pardon. Her Lora, her beautiful, proud Lora, how frightfully she had been sinned against, and she, her own mother, had lent her hand to the crime, against her own better nature.

"Mamma," entreated Lora, "do not cry. My heart is so light, so light, today."

CHAPTER XXII.

When the general went back to Frau Becher's he was obliged to wait for nearly an hour, with Aunt Melitta to keep him company. The old lady was in a frightfully excited state; nothing worse could happen to her than to be shut out of a secret, and, on this occasion, she could find out absolutely nothing.

She only knew that something had happened—something monstrous, unheard of; but all attempts to get any detailed information were frustrated by her brother's silence. He walked slowly up and down the violet salon, with his hands behind his back, and paid no attention whatever to his sister's questions.

"Good heavens, there is Rudolph! I can't be Rudolph, again!" she sobbed out at length. "Oh, do tell me, William; he wants money from the Bechers again, doesn't he? Dear me, even though they are rich, one ought not to ask too often for—"
"Indeed? They paid his debts, did they?" asked the general, with apparent indifference.

"Yes, Wilhelm, otherwise he would have been—but you didn't know about that?"

And Aunt Melitta, delighted to feel herself important, came close up to him. "Otherwise he would have left the service in disgrace, do you know?" she whispered, and as the general stopped she poured out the whole wretched story in his ear, twisting her handkerchief about in her hands in her eagerness.

"Thank God," she concluded, "Leo never knew of it; it was all settled by Lora's engagement—yes, by her engagement," she nodded till her curls shook.

"And the engagement was arranged on account of this delightful affair?" he asked, with a growl like thunder, and following her to the chair in which she had seated herself, he stopped before it and looked at her with darkening eyes.

His sister made no reply.
"Eh, Melitta, did the girl consent of her own free will?" he asked.

"The good-natured little lady looked at this moment as helpless as a child. "Why, William, how do you look at me?" she said yes, at last. It is no trouble for a Tollen to—I don't know, William, what to call Rudolph's misstep—but to leave the service, and you see Lora made a good match, and—"
"Very good, I understand. She did say yes, at last!"

He did not say another word; everything suddenly became clear to him.

At length Frau Eilfrieda appeared. Aunt Melitta was requested to wait in another room.

She went out in direful anger, and she had to put up with the fact that the Polish carp in the kitchen were done to rags, and the Christmas tree in the hall-room remained unlighted, and the costly presents awaiting their recipients in vain. What was the use of her making a sofa-pillows and pin-cushions by the dozen? But the worst part of all was that her brother left the house without asking for her; Frau Becher sent word through the servant that she was so tired she could not see him, but her cloak on with a sigh, and Christmas Eve with all its gay, prophylactic meal, who was standing whispering with the footman. The servants' faces had a curious, insolent expression, and they looked after her and her maid. And this was Christmas Eve.

As she walked through the park the clock struck eight. From the window of the gardener's cottage a brilliant Christmas Eve shone out. Yes, there was still joy somewhere.

At her own door, a moment later, she found a slender figure, gazing eagerly at the Schenker's house. There was a light, downstairs in the Frau Pastern's room, and in the hall, the door of which was wide open, the scholars of the gymnasium had just

lighted the tree, and were singing a Christmas song.

"Katie, is it you?" cried Aunt Melitta, in amazement.

"Yes," said the girl, without turning her head, "I have been waiting here for you a long time already. Everything seems to be at sixes and sevens. What has happened, I should like to know? The Christmas family party gone to pieces—Lora suddenly at home—mamma in tears, and uncle like a thunder-cloud. Can I come up with you, auntie?"

"If you like, Katie; but it is cold in my room, and I haven't even a morsel of gingerbread in the house; it doesn't look much like Christmas with me today."
"As if it were any more like it with us," said Katie bitterly, and as the song across the way had ceased, she followed her little aunt into the house, sat down by the window in the cold room, and looked with burning eyes at the dark gable window opposite. He was downstairs with his mother; there, there was a fragrance of evergreen and wax candles; there was happiness.

Katie clenched her fist and said to herself, "I will be there next year—I will—I will!"

CHAPTER XXIII.

The general in the mean time set opposite Frau Becher, every inch the soldier. He developed his strategic talent, and began first to reconnoitre.

Frau Becher sat on the yellow flowered damask sofa of her boudoir, with an air of being ready for the fray. On her coarse features, swollen with crying, however, there rested in contradiction to this, an expression of injured innocence and gentle resignation.

"Madam," began the general, "this is a sort of thing—yes, yes; you need not tell me. I am an old man, I know the world. It is true, young men will be young. So this lady was in your house, Frau Becher?"

"Yes," replied Frau Becher, with a sigh, "and God knows, if I had had an idea, when she came to me, of what a misfortune she was bringing to me, I would never have let her cross my threshold," and she made an expressive gesture.

"Of course, of course, no one could blame you. And you had a great deal of trouble about her?"

"Ah, Heaven only knows how much," she moaned. "First, all the fuss when Adalbert fell in love with her. I always said to him, 'Stop that nonsense. Girls like that are sure to give trouble; you will repent it.' But young people always know so much. Afterward when he had got his way, then the trouble began in earnest. She was always writing for money; that sort of person always needs so much more than a respectable woman. She made a perfect thimble of her relations with Adalbert, and of course, on account of the child, she always got something."

"Ah, you knew, then, that you had a grandchild?"

"A grandchild! Your excellency, I must insist—The lady's thick little nose went higher in the air. "We had determined to have the child educated," she continued. "Adalbert has gone over there now, to settle—" she broke off suddenly, and turned red.

"Oh, I thought your son had urgent business there. And it was for this reason that he left my niece so soon after the wedding—for such reason as that?"

Frau Becher grew redder still. "Good gracious, yes; she had threatened to come over here—and—and— But for Heaven's sake, your excellency will not believe that this person has any foundation for her insane demands? I swear it, your excellency. She sprang up in anger and confusion. "I will bring you the shameful creature's letters," she cried. "Adalbert gave them to me to keep when he married; he wanted to keep them for some reason. I have not read them, general, upon my word I have not. I only took out some photographs, which I destroyed. I hated that person's face so, I know they are begging letters, nothing but begging letters."

She disappeared for a few moments, and then came back with a package of letters.

"Here," she cried, unfastening the string, "take them!" and she took up one herself and looked at it. "There, you see," she cried triumphantly, "it is nothing but begging."

The general glanced at the packet, took out several of the letters, and read them. In truth, it was always the same imploring cry, "For the child's sake."

They were touching letters, in words which made the old soldier's heart soft. No castaway ever wrote like that. At length he took out a tolerably thick letter; amidst all the white paper he had caught a glimpse of a blue one.

"It is admirable," screamed Frau Becher suddenly. "She calls him, 'My dearest husband.' Ah, perhaps it is the custom in such cases."

The general unfolded the blue letter and read the address, "Dear Sir," and the signature, "A. M. Hardy, Becher." He laid the envelope on his knee, drew out the contents, and began to read, said once. When he came to the end he turned the letter over and began to read it again; then he looked up the wall, pater and glanced at the few words in a woman's hand, that were traced there:

"Dear Bertha:
I cannot hear it any longer. I implore you to write to me. I will to

Rector Hardy, yesterday, because I felt I must speak to some one. Forgive me for it. He said he would write to you. Don't be angry—I am so desperate. Oh, I beg of you, Adalbert, if not for my sake, at least for that of the child, write and come to—
"Your ELLEN."
"New York," Oct. 16, 188—

It was a date shortly before his engagement to Lora.

"Madam," said the general, in a voice that sounded very hard and stern, "it is evident to me that you had no suspicion of the existence of a marriage between your son and this Ellen; but, nevertheless, it does exist. Here is the letter of a Pastor Hardy, who married them. He admonishes your son to come to his young wife, and to fulfill his duties to the mother and child."

He felt sorry for the woman before him. She leaned back in her cushions, and turned deathly pale.

"It is impossible," she gasped, "it is—it must be a mistake."
But she knew only too well that it was no mistake. She knew the celebration, he had been her own pastor in America, and she knew his handwriting.

"No, madam, you can see it here in black and white, and let us thank God that we found the letter."
But Frau Eilfrieda, who felt as if she had experienced a terrible blow of fate, could not see any reason for thanking God for such a discovery. The stout woman, breathing heavily, lay down, and buried her head in the sofa-cushions, and remained so for a long time, almost overwhelmed by the shock.

The old general, who would not, on any account, have called in any witness, waited patiently till she sat up, with a groan.

"Oh, it is hard, it is hard," she murmured, and then she began to sob.

"You must telegraph to your son this very day," said the general calmly as she stopped speaking, and burst into tears. "Your son must not come back here, do you hear? He will run the risk of a heavy punishment if he—"
"Not come back?" she stammered.

"And you, madam, must go to your son as soon as possible," continued the general.

"It sounded like a shriek."
"I should wish to avoid all scandal, for the sake of my poor niece."
"Merciful heavens! It is impossible. I should never survive it—Adalbert—"

"I hope you will, madam. To-morrow, when you are calmer, I will talk with you about it."
"Your excellency!" she shrieked, clapping her hands over her face, "I never knew it; I did not even suspect it. Don't desert us, do advise him; he loves Lora too much. Only for that, only for that! Oh, how hard it is for a mother, when her children do wrong!"

The general could not but pity the coarse, over-dressed woman at this moment, when all the false excuses fell away with which she tried to defend the sinner, whose mother she was.

"Calm yourself, and, above all things, say not a word about this, for my niece's sake." He stepped and walked slowly up and down the room. "Your son must go back to New York to live, on account of his business," he said at length, stopping before the mother, who still lay on the sofa like one distracted.

She looked at him vaguely.

"Live in New York," she repeated. "And my niece refuses to go there with her husband. Do you understand?"

"Yes," she replied, "I will send for her repeatedly, she will even appeal to the courts, but she is determined to stay here."
"Ah, heavens, your excellency!"

"After that, your son will apply for a divorce, and my niece will gladly submit to it. In this way, I can, at least, spare the girl the disgrace of appearing before the world as a victim of your son's duplicity. If it were not for that, by God, madam—"

His wrath was too much for him, and he stood before the trembling woman, with clenched fists and flaming eyes. After awhile, when he had calmed himself by walking up and down, he continued:

"I will ask Mrs. Becher to go away to-morrow as far as Hamburg, for the present, at least, and I will give you a few days here to get everything ready. And now for the telegram. I will write it out."

The Farm

MAKE THE COWS COMFORTABLE.

It is not every man who can afford to build a new stable for his cows, even though it may be badly peeced, but any man can fix up the old one so it will be comfortable during the cold months now approaching.

The first thing wrong that attracts the attention, when preparing to better the conditions existing in most stables is the want of light. A cow may be just as warm in a dark place as in a light one, and possibly just as comfortable, but the dark stable is not in accordance with our present-day ideas of what is best in a sanitary way. Probably one reason why so many were built with so little window space years ago might be found in the fact that cows were formerly kept inside only at night when light was not required. So the first thing to do in rearranging the building is to see that more windows are added. A barn where animals are confined ought to be as well lighted as a human habitation.

Next, go after the cracks where the wind blows in. It is not pleasant to contemplate the discomfort unavoidable when an animal is tied fast in any place where a cold wind sweeps directly upon it. In a box stall or even an open shed it is usually possible for the drafts to be avoided by shifting the position from place to place, but in a stall, held by stanchions or tie, it is different. The cracks may be baffled with lath easily and effectively. I have often wondered why it is that with the expenditure of so small a sum as that represented by a bundle of lath and a roll of building paper so many cold stables should exist.

Next go after the floors. If they are of dirt, such as we sometimes find where but a few cows are kept, they are sure to get in a bad condition. Dig out the earth for four inches down and put in a layer of gravel and over this cement. If the top layer is of boards or plank, all the better, as it is easier to keep than cement. Raise the part where the animal stands from four to six inches above the back part by making it that much higher than the other.

Cement work is so well known and so easy to manage that no outside labor should be required, thus reducing the expense. Measure carefully after estimating the length required for each animal, so as to bring her heels as near as may be to the back edge of the platform.

I shall say nothing here about mangers, for they are not quite so important as windows and floors. Whatever style is present in a stable can be kept every day or more is taken to empty them every day or more remains unclean.

Mouldy or musty cornstuffs or staid ends of other fodder should be cleaned out, and if this is done the manger will not be bad. At least it would hardly pay in an old stable to go to the expense of putting in new.

Many of the older stables to be found in the Eastern and Middle States, says an exchange, have the rigid stanchions, and some modern ones have them also. These are by no means as comfortable as another style of fastening, and about the only excuse I ever heard for their presence was that they permit of placing a greater number of animals on the same floor space.

Personally, I dislike the arrangement very much and would urge the abolishment of that style of fastening. The rigid stanchion is not comfortable. It shows that on its very appearance, and I am convinced that if animals could communicate their wishes to man they would enter a mighty protest against being held in the stocks after the manner of those barbarous arrangements called stanchions.

The old time stable rarely ever lacks for ventilation—such as it is. Cracks in siding and around doors and the one window usually found, provide drafts of air which may be depended on to change the circulation, but that is not all that is wanted. In an old stable it would not pay to put in an expensive system, but a simple blue for a small stable could be easily made, and something of the kind is imperative.

FORTUNE FOR A TOWN.

Irish Miser's Curious Legacy for Recreation Purposes.

The market town of Portadown, County Armagh, Ireland, has been notified of a substantial legacy in curious circumstances.

Recently the death occurred of Mr. William John Watson, who was over 70 years of age. Although born in Portadown, the old man's early life was spent in Australia, where he amassed a fortune of about £10,000. Returning to his native place, he purchased property, but himself lived in the utmost poverty in a small, three-roomed house. The other day, as he had not been seen for two days, the police broke into his house, and found the old man lying dead. Death from apoplexy was the verdict of the coroner's jury. Later, the will of the deceased was read, and it was found that Watson had left the whole of his property to Portadown for the purpose of providing healthy recreation for the people. The fund and "provision for speed" the town provided as recreation which was to be provided for. He also provided that the urban council should have a dinner every five years, the expenses not to exceed £1 per head. At each of these dinners the mayor's wife is to be ready.