

THE SACRIFICE;

—OR—

FOR HER FAMILY'S SAKE.

CHAPTER II.

Lora had been busy in the kitchen for some time, had put luncheon on the table in the dining-room, had looked after the washing, and then had betaken herself to her own room, to make her toilet. Her room was in the attic, and was so-called Mansard, but how pleasant it looked here! The narrow bed under the steep roof, was hung with clear-white muslin curtains, the many holes in which were drawn together with such exquisite darts that they might almost have been taken for the original pattern. In the low window stood a quaint little rococo writing-table, on which time had dimmed the polish and inflicted many injuries; one twisted leg was missing entirely, and had been very clumsily replaced. But this writing-table was historical. Frau von Tollen, of Donnerstadt, had once called it hers, and Prince Louis Ferdinand, when he was quartered in Donnerstadt for a fortnight for the autumn manoeuvres, had written his letters at this very table. On the upper shelf stood the few ornaments of the present owner—modest flower vases, which were always filled with fresh flowers when the season permitted; pin-cushion, a cabinet-photograph of the emperor, and, as pendant, a picture of Queen Louisa; little favors from the cotillon, a casket with brass ornaments to contain jewels; which, however, only concealed beneath its red cushions a withered bouquet. On the lower half lay a blotter, a present from Katie; on one side was displayed, in the largest possible size, but in a rather crude style of painting, the Tollen coat of arms, a silver hound against a golden pale in an azure field, with the motto beneath, "Treu und Fest." The little glass over the dressing-table also bore the coat of arms in the corner. It seemed as little suited to the simple wooden frame that surrounded it as did this lovely young girl to the humble room she had just entered, and where she was standing so still, with deeply bowed head.

At length she drew her hand across her forehead; through the window, voices were heard laughing and shouting. She peeped out behind the flower-pots across to the neighboring garden. A large building, gray with age, stood there in the clear sunshine, and on the broad gravelled square in front several hundred boys were playing at this moment. Formerly a convent, it was now used as a public school.

Lora's eyes wandered over the moving throng, and at last rested, with an expressive look, on a young man, who in the midst of all the uproar, was walking across the square toward the old wall. He wore a dark blue, well fitting civilian's costume, and felt that of the same color. As he drew nearer, he looked up to the dormer window and took off his hat. Lora, blushing deeply, bowed and drew back, and he walked on bare-headed, holding his hat in his hand, as if on account of the heat.

The young girl had seated herself in a chair by her bed, whence she could follow him with her eyes. A radiant smile overspread her face, and still lingered there as she turned her head to greet her mother, who just then entered the room.

"Lora," began Frau von Tollen, in some embarrassment, "if it is not inconvenient to you—the shoemaker—you know, Katie's boots, and some repairs—he has just sent his bill for the third time, and he has receipted it. The woman is waiting downstairs,—and I am—you know it—it is only the twenty-seventh, Lora."

The young girl sprang up and went to her drawer.

"How much, mamma?" she asked gayly, as she drew out a little box from some remote corner and rattled it in her mother's ears.

"Twelve marks, Lora,—if it is not too much."

Four shining thalers disappeared in Frau von Tollen's hand, and four lips were pressed close together. "On the first of the month, Lora."

"Don't trouble yourself about it, darling mother."

As soon as she was alone again she counted the rest of her little treasure. There were still twelve thalers. Of these, three were to be spent for her father's birthday festival, and the rest—she smiled again and thought of the light blue tulle dress that she wanted so very, very much for the first winter-club meeting. But—Christmas! Well, long before Christmas her birthday would come, and her uncle always gave her twenty marks; and till then there was the embroidery shop in Berlin. Involuntarily she looked round, for no one must know that she worked secretly for money! Her father would scold, her mother would cry, and Katie would be furious, and even Rudi—ah, Rudi!

Her sunny smile faded; how could she have forgotten that, even for a moment! Quietly she finished her simple toilet, and before she left the room she took from the book-shelf a collection of aphorisms, and putting her slender finger between the pages, read the lines that it rested on. She was accustomed to do this every morning, and to seek her counsel for the day in the words thus lit upon by chance.

"Be not anxious overmuch, for He creeth for us," she read.

And again:

"There is no sweeter sorrow than hope."

She repeated this softly, and as if questioning. Then her eyes glanced through the window to the schoolhouse opposite, and a deep flush overspread her lovely face. Hastily, as if she had betrayed a secret, she closed the book and ran down to her father.

The paralyzed old man was sitting in his wheeled chair, talking with his son. When he saw Lora, an impatient expression passed over his furrowed face.

"Lora, how many times have I told you to get some pigeon's feathers and clean these pipes? They are not fit to smoke."

"Papa, I cleaned them all two days ago, except this one, and you were smoking that."

"Always an excuse," grumbled the old man.—"Well what did the impudent idiot of a corporal say?"—he continued, turning to his son. "In my time I would have put him under arrest for twenty-four hours, but—"

"So I did, papa."

"Lora!" called the major.

The young girl came in from the next room.

"Shut the window. Confound it, child, hear that uproar outside! What is it twelve already? Ah, yes; school is out an hour earlier than usual. I tell you this house is enough to drive one mad; on week days it is the noise of the school, and on Sundays the dance music over there in Hellmann's garden-hall—he bowed ironically to Lora as he spoke—"and all this we have to thank the ladies for. They thought this hole idyllic, healthy, charming—I don't know what not—and I must come here perforce!"

Lora made no answer. She was dusting the chest of drawers, in which the big tobacco-box had its place. Rudolph had risen and gone to the window.

"Ah," he said, "here comes Herr Adalbert Becher, on horseback. Is he doing it to attract your attention, Lora?" He bowed as he spoke, in answer to a greeting from without. "By Jove, a splendid horse!"

"His fortune admits of it," growled the major, "and with it all he has so much judgment of horse-flesh that he can hardly tell a stallion from a he goat. Look at him; the fellow hangs on his horse like a clothes-pin on the line."

The young girl knelt down and dusted the claw-feet of the table.

"But you know him?" asked the lieutenant.

"When you are in Rome, you must do as Romans do," replied the old gentleman fretfully; and as if he preferred to talk of something else, he added: "Aren't you going to drink a glass of beer? You will find the cream of the Westenberg jeunesse doree at Cramer's,—in the market-place, you know?"

"Oh, well, yes,—I might as well, I suppose," was the reply.

Lora had just left the room with a water-bottle in her hand, when her brother followed her. "Allow me," he said, gallantly, taking the carafe from her hand. "Are you going to the pump?"

She nodded and they went downstairs together.

"Papa seems rather irritable," he remarked.

She looked at him calmly. "No more so than usual. He feels miserable; his gout is tormenting him again. We must have patience; he does not mean anything by it."

They were standing at the fountain, near the old ways.

"I say, Lora," said the lieutenant, giving her the full carafe, "I should like to drink a glass of beer at Cramer's—but you understand, I used up all my money in Berlin; could you lend me a little—till the paymaster sends me my pay? I actually haven't another penny—"

"Why, of course, Rudolph."

An imperceptible smile played round the charming mouth.

"How much?"

"How much can you spare, Lora? I have—that is, I must pay a little bill. Could you give me ten thalers?"

"Certainly." She hurried upstairs to her room, and emptied her purse of its contents. A few minutes later the lieutenant went to Cramer's, and when he left there, he had consumed two portions of caviar, a ragout fin, and several glasses of wine, and had planned a riding party to Demnitz for the next day, with Adalbert Becher and the next adjutant of the district, to partake, in the officers' casino of the regiment of dragoons there, of an entertainment which Becher had to give in consequence of a wager he had lost. So he came home less bored than when he went out, teased Katie in the most amiable manner, and told stories of the garrison, which amused the major so much that he joined in. Lora was sent down to the cellar for a bottle of Rudesheimer.

"I drink to his majesty, our emperor!" cried Katie, clinking glasses with her brother, and she drank off her glass at one draught, in a charming imitation of a student. And then she whispered to Lora, with sparkling eyes, "Do you know, Dr. Schonberg would not call the

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