

'You are right,' observed the colonel, who had risen; 'if we accomplish that, we need not care what becomes of Sonnenberg, the adventurer. He may have been concerned in the robbery in some way, after all, and then the authorities will be sure to find him out. Well, you are not going for yet awhile, are you, doctor? If you excuse me, I'll just go to my den and fill me a pipe.'

So saying, he fortively gave the lawyer a very significant look and then hastily left the room.

Kerner looked after him somewhat perplexed. He thought he could guess the meaning of the look; but how could the colonel know anything about his secret?

He suddenly remembered that Frau Winkler too had guessed it. Could she have spoken of it here?

However that might be, the look had fulfilled its aim and encouraged him; and, as he was given to quick decisions, he resolved at once to make sure of his fate without further delay.

'So I may hope to see my brother to-day?' asked Fannie, her voice trembling with ill-suppressed inward agitation.

He looked up as if awaking from a dream and adjusted his spectacles in evident embarrassment.

'To-day?' he replied. 'That will hardly be possible. Even if we arrest the thief and extort a full confession from him, the prisoner cannot be discharged at once. The court will have to decide the point. I shall, of course, demand his release as soon as the real culprit is arrested, but I fear we cannot hope for a decision before to-morrow.'

'But you can tell my brother the good news to-day?' 'Oh, of course, I shall do so without delay.'

'Thank you, very much. That intelligence will sweeten his last night in prison. But what if your hopes should not be realized after all.'

'We will not torment ourselves with such doubts, but wait and see what will happen at noon. If our plan should fail there will be nothing left but to concoct another one. We are, at least, convinced that we are following the right track now—May I ask you a question?'

She looked up at him, and probably saw an expression in his features which betrayed to her the nature of the question he wished to ask. Blushing vividly she dropped her lids again, too confused to answer.

'I know you will not expect any fine speeches from me, for which neither you nor I care,' he continued, in an unsteady voice, as he drew nearer her and laid his hand on hers. 'But I trust you will permit me to ask you the simple question: Will you be my wife? You must know how fervently I love you and how happy you will make me by saying: "Yes." I venture to hope that I am not quite indifferent to you. But you may be sure of one thing, Fannie—that my life will be devoted to your happiness, if you will confide this hand to me. Answer me frankly. I shall always be a true and unselfish friend to you even if you feel obliged to reject my suit.'

Fannie had, as it seemed, recovered her composure. She had not been quite prepared for this offer.

'Would it not be better for you if you could overcome and forget your love for me?' she replied, in a low, trembling voice.

'Better?' he asked, in surprise. 'Yes; because I am not only totally without means, but also the sister of a man whose name is dishonoured. Do you think you ought to connect that dishonoured name—'

'But we are going to restore it to honour,' he remonstrated.

'That is the hope you cherish, and I, of course, share it,' she continued, still looking fixedly before her with bowed head; 'but that hope can be frustrated, like so many others, and then my name will be dishonoured too.'

'Your name, dearest love?' he cried passionately. 'No blame can fall on you; and even if the whole world were to be of the contrary opinion, I should not love you the less. Be mine, beloved, and we will defy everything. The misdeeds of others shall cast no shadow on our happiness. If you do not yet return my love, only tell me one thing: Do you think you can learn to love me?'

He had put his arm around her, and she permitted it; and, as he drew her close to him, she laid her fair head upon his breast.

'Do you doubt it?' she whispered, raising to him her beautiful eyes, that were wet with happy tears and radiant with love. 'It was not for want of love that I hesitate; but rather from excess of it, for I have loved you, dearest, ever since I first saw you.'

She could say no more; his kisses closed her lips, and they clung to each other in a long, happy embrace.

Thus the colonel found them, when he re-entered the room with his burning pipe.

At his 'Zounds' they flew apart in alarm.

'Well, well, Fraulein Fannie; how quickly a young lady can change her mind,' said the old gentleman, with good-natured raillery, as she hastened to him, covered with blushes, and threw her arms about his neck, as if to ask his pardon. 'It is hardly half an hour since you vowed you would take care of me as long as I live.'

'And it is my duty now to take part in the fulfilment of that vow,' said Doctor Kerner, without hesitation. 'We will make a happy home for you with us, sir; that I solemnly promise you.'

With a benignant smile, like a loving father who sees his child's dearest wish fulfilled, the colonel kissed Fannie's forehead, and then passed his hand lightly over her hair.

'I was only joking,' he said, extending both hands to the young lawyer. 'I shall find a home at Elm Court, too. May God bless you if you make this dear child happy as I expect you will. You have found a pearl, my friend, the true value of which you will learn only in the future.'

'I fully appreciate its value even now,' replied Kerner, retaining the old gentleman's cordial grasp, 'and I think I can prophesy confidently that we shall be happy.'

'And now we will ratify this betrothal with the ringing of the glasses,' said the colonel, about to pull the bell.

'I must ask you to postpone that festive rite, colonel, as I have no more time to spare just now. At twelve, or soon after, the matter I spoke of will be decided, as we hope, and you can imagine that I wish to be on hand so as to be able to take the joyful news to my darling here without delay.'

'That is certainly an excellent reason, my dear fellow. Till we meet again then, and when you return we'll have our celebration.'

Doctor Kerner did not hear the last words. He was bidding his betrothed a tender farewell, and as they had reason to fear the old gentleman's jokes on the subject, Fannie accompanied him into the hall.

'My happiness will be perfect when you bring me the news of Gustav's discharge,' she said, with a beseeching look. 'When may I expect you?'

'Soon after dinner,' he replied. 'It may be two or three o'clock before we arrive at a complete certainty, and it is that alone which has any value for you now. But even if you should expect me in vain during the whole afternoon, do not despair, darling; it is possible that we may meet with difficulties which we have not foreseen.'

'If they are only surmountable ones!' 'Do you still doubt?' he asked, smiling. 'Can you wonder, dearest? I do not doubt you and your earnest purpose; but success of such a plan so often depends on chance.'

'Courage, child, and patience a little while longer! I must really go now. Good-by.'

He kissed her once more, and then hastened downstairs and, after consulting his watch, took the shortest way to the Black Eagle, where Martin was, possibly, already waiting for Herr Roland, who was to buy the English banknotes from him.

Fannie stood at the window and looked after her lover with radiant eyes.

The colonel, who had been walking to and fro, smiled as his eyes rested on the lovely girl.

'Are you happy now?' he asked. 'Unspeakably happy,' she replied, turning to him.

'And you really intended to renounce this happiness for the sake of a foolish prejudice?'

'I did. It did not seem to me a prejudice, I thought it my duty, and I expressed all my doubts. I could not know that Walter was so noble-minded.'

'Indeed! So you know that he would offer himself to you?'

'I suspected it.'

'Zounds! Just look at this hypocrite! A while ago I was assured that there was no possibility of a man's even wanting to marry such an unfortunate girl. I was boldly asked whether I knew any man who would do so. Well, well, you had better not try such hypocrisy on me again.'

'But, uncle dear—' 'Don't attempt to justify yourself. You had foreseen everything. You knew all about it and had kept it secret. Just wait; I'll pay you off yet! And now you had better be thinking of dinner; and, mind you, don't spoil the soup. 'Tooks that are in love have the reputation of being very wasteful with salt you know.'

'Not when they are once engaged,' replied Fannie, with a laugh.

'Not?' said he, likewise laughing. 'Well, that is a comfort for me, to be sure. But don't forget my warning, nevertheless,

child. Engaged people are apt to be absent-minded, and much mischief is done through absence of mind.'

(To be Continued.)

MARRIAGE IN SCOTLAND.

A SCOTCH minister has been telling some of his experiences in marrying people, which are rather funny. Sometimes, when he has asked a couple to join hands, the four join hands all round, as if preparing to sing 'Auld Lang Syne.' On several occasions, when the question was asked of the bridegroom whether he took this woman for his wife, no reply was returned. He then repeated the question more pointedly, which always brought out the tardy but cool response: 'Oh, ay!'

A common practice after the knot is tied is for the minister to shake hands with the young couple and say: 'I wish you much joy.' A bridegroom once briskly replied: 'The same to you, sir.' The minister on one occasion remarked to a middle aged bride that this was the last time she should sign her maiden name. She coolly replied: 'I've signed it lang enoch, I think!'

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