

AN OLD-TIME LOVE STORY.

The fine old mansion of the Albergi family, near Gluckstadt, was brilliantly lighted, and the sound of music and dancing was borne on the evening air across the rolling, sparkling waters of the Elbe. That night a grand ball was to be given by Count Frederic Albergi, the only remaining representative of the noble family whose name he bore. The building was massive stone, high and dark, protected by most-drawbridge and battle towers. It was a fine old feudal castle, built in the time of Frederick II. Outside it looked grand and gloomy; inside it was ablaze with lights and redolent with perfumes of cholen flowers, which were scattered in profusion, not only about the large reception saloon, but in all the smaller apartments, which were thrown open to the guests.

In a little room far removed from the rest, in the eastern tower, stood two persons—a young man, remarkably handsome, though there was an expression of deep care upon his face, and a lady. The lady was not remarkably handsome just now, as she listened to her champion with drooping eyes; indeed, most people would call her simply pretty until she raised her expressive, dark blue eyes and the brilliant, sapphire-like arches broke over her face. The two were standing talking carelessly together, the lady leaning against the heavily-carved oak window frame, and the young man standing nearly opposite to her, gazing at a bright-eyed falcon perched upon his wrist.

"So, Count Albergi, you will be remembered for a long while as the young noble who gave the most splendid ball as yet ever attended." The lips of the young man curled, and he answered contemptuously:

"That is surely a name worth gaining at any price."

"Of course," said the lady. "But why so scornful about it?"

"You know, Lady Lena, that I care only for your approbation, then the ball is given only in honor and to please you, whose slightest wish I would gratify at any expense."

"Alas, Count Albergi, I am told that a dozen times each day."

"Probably, but the words do not come from the heart, as mine do."

"Fool," said the lady. "They all swear that."

"Very well, Lady Lena; I may some time be able to prove the truth of my words. I have been a fool. For three years I have hung upon your accent, fulfilled your every wish, as far as lay in my power. My fortune—which was ample I laid at your feet, that you might have every thing I could supply; and in return for this devotion I have received nothing but coldness and scorn. You know that I love you as few men love—with my whole heart and soul—yet you scorn me. You are rich and noble. I still love you as madly as ever, but to-night is the last time I bow before you. This once I stand before you to be shown some kindness. For the last time I offer you myself. Will you accept me?"

Lady Lena turned very pale as she listened to the rapid, passionate words uttered by the young man who knelt before her. Her eyes grew dark with some inward feeling, but her words destroyed the faint hope which had risen in his heart at the gentle expression on her face.

"Oh, rise, Count Frederic—for I know this is all nonsense—instantly. Tomorrow you will be beside me as usual, and the next, and every day, just as you have for years." The young man rose, and in answer to her taunt, only bent his head and tenderly stroked the glossy head and neck of the bright-eyed bird on his wrist, and looked from one to the other, as if inquiring what was going on. Piqued at his silence, the lady exclaimed:

"Where now is your boasted love? I say a bitter thing to you and you do not retaliate."

"I cannot forget myself so far as to retaliate to a woman."

"No," said she, "but you can sneer. You can sneer and stroke your falcon, which I know possesses more of your boasted love than I do."

"Jeannette never wounds me, he replied. "In return for my carress she does not give me bitter coldness."

"Perhaps she would if she could speak," persisted the lady.

"Actions, Lady Lena," said he, "speak louder than words."

The girl's eyes flashed, and she turned to the door, but paused as she neared it, and looking over her shoulder, said contemptuously: "I suppose the cause of your love for that bird is because she once belonged to some former lady love."

The tone was very insulting, and this time the young man raised his head with flashing eyes, and his words were rapid and indignant.

"You are right, he replied. "This falcon belonged to a noble lady, whose kind, womanly heart scorned to inflict a wound upon the meanest creature; who trembled not under foot honorable love offered her, as if it were a disgraceful thing. One whom I loved devotedly, and who, had she been unable to return the affection offered her, would have rejected it with considerable gentleness."

"Why, then, don't you return to this person of tenderness and virtue?" sneered the lady.

"She would willingly soothe my wounded spirit," he replied, "but she is dead."

Without another word Lena sped from the room, her brain on fire, her eyes full of tears. Could Frederic have seen her as she leaned far out of a window, weeping bitterly, he would have forgiven the bitter words. As it was, they parted in anger.

Left alone, Frederic passed up and down the room. In his despair he murmured aloud: "I have been a driving madman. For three years I have wasted my time, heart, and fortune to the service of this heartless woman. One day I was rewarded with smiles the next with blows. To-morrow when the bills are paid for debts incurred for this night, I shall be absolutely penniless. Yes, to-morrow, my furniture, horses, and plate will be sold, my servants discharged, and

all that will remain to me is this old castle, and my faithful nurse, Margaret, who will not leave me and my falcon. This building, now ringing with the sounds of music, dancing, and merry laughter, will be closed to become the solitary retreat of a woe-stricken man. I shall withdraw from society, and in this small, gloomy tower support my poverty and despair as best I may. I have been worse than foolish—I have been wicked. But this repining will not do. I must rejoin my guests."

So saying, Frederic replaced the falcon on his perch near the window, and forcing a gay smile and careless air, sauntered into the ball-room, and from that time till the company left he was seemingly the gayest of the gay.

"Quick, Susan! fasten the bodice and bring me my hood and mantle and the thick shoes!" exclaimed Lady Lena; then added, impatiently, "you'll have to pin this handkerchief and apron string, for my hands are so cold I cannot do any thing." The maid obeyed, and soon her young mistress stood before the elegant mirror, laughing to see herself in complete peasant's attire.

"Will anybody know me, Susan?" she asked, laughingly, as she drew the hood over her face.

"No, indeed, Lady Lena," replied the maid; "if I hadn't seen you dress I should not know you myself."

"Then I am off."

And snatching the action to the word, the graceful Lady Lena ran out of the room and down stairs in a very undignified way. In the garden she was met by a lover of Susan's, who exclaimed:

"Fears to me we are in a monstrous hurry, Miss Susan. Can't you stop to give a fellow a noontide kiss?"

"Away with you!" she exclaimed. "You shall have two kisses when I come back, if you won't stop me now."

"Good-bye, Susan," said he. "I have much to do, and will wait by the gate till you come back."

Away sped Lena. After a pretty long, rapid walk she reached Castle Albergi, and, entering by a low postern door, which she found open, made her way to the door of the tower, where she saw old Margaret seated.

"Good noon, Dame Margaret," said Lena. The old woman raised her head, and recognizing Susan, Lady Lena's favorite waiting-maid, she returned a very sulky greeting.

"Don't be cross, Margaret," she continued; "I've got a beautiful note for your young master from my lady."

"You needn't come here with it then, said Dame Margaret. "Your lady's notes brought sorrow enough to this house."

"But, Margaret, I was sent to deliver it and receive an answer, and I dare not go back without it; it would cost me my place, and you wouldn't be so cruel as that to a poor girl who has never done you any harm. Here Lena began to sob, and Margaret arose saying:

"You have never done me any harm, so give me the note and let me take it up stairs quickly." The note was produced, and Margaret grumblingly took it up stairs, muttering as she did so:

"Much good, much good it will do your young master. It isn't sealed very close, and I could read it. I would open it, and then if there was anything in it to wrong him, I'd sooner put my hand in the fire than give it to him."

By this time she had reached the second story and knocked at the door.

"Come in," said Frederic, who was seated by the window reading. He looked up as the old woman entered and asked what she wanted.

"A note for you, sir," she replied. The young man's face turned a shade paler, and his hand slightly trembled as he took the delicate perfumed note. A moment he paused, overcome by his feelings, then impetuously tore it open and read the following words:

"Lady Lena Eberf, being about to visit England for several years, desires to have the pleasure of meeting once more her friend Count Frederic Albergi, who has so mysteriously withdrawn himself from society. She will do so on the 15th of August, and will dine with him this day at 5 o'clock."

A spasm passed over the young man's face and he murmured, "Once more." Then turning to Margaret, he said:

"What is there in the house to eat?"

"As good as nothing, sir," replied the faithful woman, "for there is only scraps left from your breakfast."

"That's bad, Margaret," said he, "for I have no money, not a single kreutzer, and here is a note from Lady Lena informing me that she will dine with me to-day."

"She mustn't come, dear sir. There is nothing to give her," Frederic seemed lost in thought. Suddenly, he raised his head.

"I have it now," said he. You must serve up my poor Jeannette. It is all I can do."

"On, master! What, roast this poor bird you have loved so long, and which belonged to—"

"Hush, Margaret; not another word; only do as I bid you. Serve the supper as best you can. Have the table laid up two in the old dining room, having it ready precisely at 5. When the lady arrives summon me, and serve dinner immediately. I shall be in my chamber, to which I shall now retire." Margat dared not remonstrate, but sobbing and wringing her hands she went down stairs. Lena had waited her coming with intense anxiety.

"What's the matter, Margaret? Has anything happened to your master?"

"Deed there has," woefully answered Margaret.

"What?" said Lena. "Speak, woman."

"Oh, only he's gone clean demoralized. You bring a note from your lady's mistress, who ought to be drowned in the Elbe, for she always makes trouble for my dear young master, one of whose fingers is worth more than her whole body; so that now he's waste all his fortune, so that now he's as poor as Job and now makes him kill his best friend."

A triumphant smile now flashed into the eyes of the false waiting-woman, and she asked, "How so?"

"Why, you see, Mistress Susan, your lady is coming to dine with him, and there is nothing in the house, neither victuals, nor even a kreutzer, so he has ordered the falcon to be roasted for your wicked lady's dinner."

"I have no doubt it will make capital eating," laughed the girl.

"Out upon you," said Margaret. "You are as heartless as your mistress. Go

back to her and tell her she is welcome. I hope the bird may stick in her throat and choke her, unfeeling woman that she is."

"Oh, don't take on so, Margaret. To an angry young master is so poor, but he will offer my lady the valuable for its rarity, for I warrant me she never tasted roast falcon before." Margaret's only answer was to throw herself into a chair and sob. The disguised Lena approached her.

"Don't feel so sad, but tell me why should Count Frederic care so much for the poor bird?"

"Don't you know that? Why, it belonged to his blessed mother, who is now an angel in heaven." Tears filled Lena's eyes, and she said:

"Well, I didn't know that, and it is a real shame to roast the bird, and if you will keep it a secret I'll help you. Give me the bird and I'll take it home, and send you another in return. Your master will be none the wiser." Margaret's face lighted up and earnestly thanking the girl she left the room and soon returned with the falcon, closely hooded, which she gave to the false Susan, who went off with it.

Previous to the minute came Lady Lena, and never had she looked so lovely or been dressed with so much elegance and taste. Margaret, with a silent air, ushered her into the dining room, where Frederic came forward to meet her. He was struck with her fresh, winning appearance, a bitter change to be wrought in so few weeks. His greeting was friendly, polite, and hands particularly genial and kind.

The dinner was soon served, and Lena shuddered as she glanced around the long, dark, unfurnished room, seen last brilliantly lighted and decorated, filled with sprightly guests, and before whom groined a table covered with every luxury the season afforded and money could buy. What a contrast! Now all gorgeous hangings, furniture, pictures, silver, glass and lights were gone, and in their places stood in the empty room a small deal table, bearing two covers and one dish of meat. With all his old grace of manner, Frederic sat Lena to the table and took his place opposite to her. The meal was silent one, or Frederic was abstracted, and Lena so overcome by everything around her that she could scarcely repress her tears. As they arose from the table the count said:

"I am sorry, madam, to offer you so poor a repast."

"Don't speak of it, Count," hastily interrupted Lena, affecting a gaiety she was far from feeling. "It was charming—so new; I never tasted a more delicious chicken."

"I am happy to find that I have pleased you," said Frederic; "but at least, in all reference to your taste, to correct one mistake—the bird you have partaken of was not chicken, but my falcon."

"Your pet falcon?" said Lena, in affected astonishment.

"The same, madame," he replied.

"Frederic," she exclaimed, and the tone in which his name was uttered caused Frederic to start. He was dumb with surprise when he saw the haughty Lena burst into tears, and before he could recover his self-possession Lena stood before him erect and pale.

"Frederic, to-day we part forever," said she, "and before we do so I must allow you your forgiveness. You have always treated me with respect and love, and I—I have repaid you with coldness and scorn. Will you forgive me?"

"Most certainly," coldly answered Frederic, making a great effort to subdue the passion her unwonted gentleness had roused. "I loved you, and probably I needed a reason, and I have learned it. I could not expect one who did not love me to—"

"Stop there and listen to me," said Lena, "and if my confession made in this hour seems unadvisedly let my excuse be that it is the only preparation in my power. I am wealthy—the wealthiest in my country, in all Germany, as it is said. I needed a reason, and I have learned it. I could not expect one who did not love me to—"

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THE OLD WOLF.

A Story in Seven Fables from the German of Lossing.

The bad wolf had grown pretty old and made the hypocritical resolve to live on a friendly footing with the shepherds. He, therefore, betook himself to the shepherd whose flocks were nearest to his den.

"Shepherd," said he, "thou callest me the bloodthirsty robber, which I really am not. Of course I must keep myself alive with thy sheep, if I am hungry, for hunger causes suffering. Protect me from hunger, only satisfy me, and thou shalt be well pleased with me, for I am really the most, gentlest animal which I am satisfied."

"When thou art satisfied? That may be," replied the shepherd. "But when art thou satisfied? Thou and covetousness never are. Go thy way!"

The wolf, thus repulsed, came to a second shepherd.

"Thou knowest, shepherd," said he, addressing him, "that I could kill more sheep of thine during the year. But if thou wilt give me six sheep every year I will be satisfied. Then thou canst safely sleep and dismiss thy dogs without hesitation."

"Six sheep," replied the shepherd. "Well, since it is, then, I will content myself with five," said the wolf.

"Thou art joking; five sheep! I scarcely sacrifice more than five sheep yearly to Pan."

"Nor for?" asked the wolf, further; and the shepherd shook his head scornfully. "Three? Two?"

"Not a single one!" was the final reply. "For it would be foolish, indeed, for me to put myself under tribute to an enemy from whom I can protect myself by my watchfulness."

Three is a lucky number thought the wolf, and came to a third shepherd.

"It touches me very deeply," he said, "that I am decried among you shepherds, whose most cruel and the most unconscientious creature, I will now show thee what wrong is done me. Give me one sheep a year and thy flock may pasture free and unharmed in that forest, which no one but myself makes insecure. One sheep! What a trifle! Could I act more generously, more unselfishly, than I do now?"

What art thou laughing, shepherd, when thou art laughing at me?"

"Oh about nothing. But how old art thou, good friend?" said the shepherd.

"What concern is it to me? I am always old enough to kill thy choicest lambs."

"Don't get angry old growler. I am sorry that thou comest a few years too late with thy proposition. Thy worn-out teeth betray thee. Thou art playing the part of an unselfish fellow so as to be supported more comfortably and with less danger."

The wolf was out of humor, but calmed down and went on to the fourth shepherd, whose faithful dog had just died, and the wolf profited by the circumstance.

"Shepherd," said he, "I have fallen out with my brethren in the forest so badly indeed that I shall never be reconciled with them. Thou knowest how much thou hast to fear them! If thou wilt take me into thy service in place of the dead dog, I will guarantee that they will not even squint at thy sheep."

"Then thou wilt," replied the shepherd, "protect them against thy brethren in the forest?"

"Of course! What else could I mean?"

"That wouldn't be bad. But if I took thee into my flock, tell me, who would then protect my sheep against thee? To take a thief into our houses in order to make us safe against thieves outside the house, we men consider—"

"I hear enough," said the wolf, "thou beginnest to moralize. Fare thee well!"

"If I were not so old," said the wolf, grinding his teeth. "But I must, unfortunately, adapt myself to the times. And then he came to the fifth shepherd.

"Dost thou know me, shepherd?" asked the wolf.

"At least I know thy kind," replied the shepherd.

"Why do I doubt it greatly. I am so singular a wolf that I am quite worthy of thy friendship and of all shepherds."

"And how singular art thou?"

"I would not kill and eat a live sheep, even if it should cost me my life. I only feed on dead sheep. Is not that praiseworthy? Permit me, therefore, to stop now and then with thy flock and to inquire—"

Spare thy words," said the shepherd. "Thou must not devour any sheep, even dead ones, if thou wouldst not have me for an enemy. An animal that gets far enough to eat my dead sheep easily learns, when hungry, to consider sick sheep as dead ones and healthy ones as sick. Do not, then, therefore, count upon my friendship, but go!"

"I must now do my very best to accomplish my purpose!" thought the wolf, and came to the sixth shepherd.

"Shepherd, how does my pursuit thee?"

"Thy fur?" asked the shepherd. "Let me see it. It is handsome; the dogs could not often have got the better of thee."

"Well, listen, shepherd; I am old, and will not run about much longer. Feed me until my death and I will will thee my skin."

"Indeed," said the shepherd. "Thou art as cunning as any old miser. No, no, thy skin would at last cost me seven times more than it would be worth. But if thou art in earnest about making me a present, give it to me right away."

Hereupon the shepherd reached for his club and the wolf fled.

"Oh, the pitiless people!" cried the wolf, and went into a towering passion. "They will die as their enemy, rather than with hunger, for they will not have it better."

He ran and broke into the shepherd's houses, snatched their children, and was only killed with great difficulty by the shepherds.

Then the wisest of them said: "We probably did it wrong when we provoked the old robber and took from him all

means of reformation, no matter how late or compulsory it was!"

The Necessity of Looking Well at Home.

Often when I have been riding in the country, on a summer afternoon have seen the farmer's wife sitting in the door engaged with her sewing—her sleeves tucked to her elbows, her hands perhaps uncombed, or at best brushed back in the plainest manner, her hair in slipshod shoes, and her dress the same in which she had worked all day morning, with perhaps the same apron and usually not over-clean. Her house if one should enter, would probably be found in excellent order—clean walls, floors, and chairs set back against the wall, as if arranged for a funeral, and not a thing out of place. In the cupboard or store-room would be found the whitest of bread, plenty of toothpaste and cake, the freshest and sweetest of butter, and many little delicacies of materials for which nature so abundantly provides, and which the modern housewife has learned so well to prepare. Nothing has she been remiss in her duty to her house but on herself, perhaps the most important, certainly the most necessary, thing in it she has no spent thought. She is too wearied with her labor, and there is a pile of sewing and mending waiting to be done. So will perfect self-abnegation she sits down to her task till the evening's meal is worn, and the preparation for supper, with its consequent duties closes the day on her weary body, and mind. And so the days pass—one after another—much alike their sameness, until her mind is narrowed down to this small routine, daily cares, and the thought of "dressing" to go home, or to reach the company be some almost irksome. Her habits have become so fixed that she has never considered, that a few minutes spent in bathing face, hands, and neck, combing the hair in a tasteful and becoming manner, and putting on a clean dress with the addition of a fresh lace muslin neck-tie, will not only add wonderfully to her self respect, but actually bring rest to her weary body, and mind. No matter if the dress be nothing but print, if it be clean and fresh. For summer wear, this is usually the best material, as the evening chores must necessarily be done, and with the addition of a pair apron, one is ready for the work of a brigadier, so pretty and cheap, that there can be no excuse for not always having one on hand. And then, in the present mode of dressing the neck is as pretty and yet so simple, and cheap that there is no need of being seen even in the morning without a clean, fresh collar or kerchief. No frills—no stiff collars, but simply a piece of India muslin, or a costly one cut square and hemmed, put on corner-wise, and tucked into the dress in front, or if one prefers, a strip of a few inches wide and of suitable length simply hemmed and a few tucks across the ends put on for a tie. Four or five such articles are all that is necessary. They are thrown into the weekly wash, and ironed without starch. Costly materials made with elaborate care, are not at all necessary to personal neatness. The wife and mother cannot afford to grieve about her house, with a torn or dirty dress, neither for the example which she brings, nor her own personal self respect. There are few husbands so different to the appearance and dress of a wife, as not to feel a glow of satisfaction when on coming to the house from his labor he finds her neatly arrayed, and smiling with a smiling face—instead of the sternly being which is sometimes seen. Indeed, I think the "male man," as Samantha Allen would say, is naturally fastidious in this respect. Every man in his younger days not only wished to be dressed his self with a degree of care and taste, but his admiration of the girl he loves is greatly increased by the care which she bestows upon her personal appearance, and if in after life, she becomes coarse and seemingly oblivious to the refining influences, which taste and culture bring, who shall say in how large a manner she is responsible? The wise mother of daughters will insist that each daughter should see them not only neat and tidy, but tastefully dressed, so that in case of unexpected callers, there need be no flurry, nor loss of self-respect. This, if begun in early life will grow into a habit which in time will become so fixed, that when she becomes a wife and mother, she will no more think of discarding, than the necessary ones of eating and sleeping.

The Value of Silence.

There are times, even in the best regulated families, that silence is a wonderful peace-maker. In certain moods of mind and body one may be wrought to frenzy by words and suggestions that in other moods would have no such effect. When one is hungry, or tired, or sleepy, or sick, he cannot take the same view that he does when full fed, fresh minded, and vigorous in health. If he can make due allowance for this inevitable state of things in himself and in those around him, and restrain his words, govern his tones, control his manners, he may avert a deal of trouble. An impulsive word is sometimes a spark to powder. We are careful to keep flame from powder, we not be careless of sulphur. Should we not be equally careful to prevent social and domestic explosions? Some people are so constituted that in certain moods they will say disagreeable things simply because they feel like it. If the combustible stuff about them is wet with the cool water of silence it will not take fire, and great damage may be prevented. It is more easily to take advantage of a fruitful calm, than to be vexed and tormented him, "for the fire of it." And yet some families tolerate this species of amusement. How many words are best left unsaid! Why should we drop caustic remarks that can only burn and rankle and corrode in the hearts they touch? Why should we return railing for railing? Why should we meet pollution with harshness? Let us never forget that a soft answer turns away wrath.

Frank Spioop, aged thirty-three, a trainee, has mysteriously disappeared.