

A DREAM OF POOR CHILDREN.

I had a dream, so sad, so sad it was. It hurts my heart to tell that dream again. I thought I stood above the life that draws its weary breath in crowded street and lane, Above the hot, rough pavements, and the glare From blinding roof and wall, and sun-scorched air.

I looked, as might a spirit from on high, Not strong, but trembling, and I saw—God, The children's poor, sweet faces, bold or shy. All, all were piteous, none seemed bright or glad;

I heard their songs and cries, their restless feet,

And their wild, longing hearts, that beat and beat.

Then, as a spirit might, I turned my eyes Out to the broad blue waters of the bay, To all the wide-spread loveliness that lies Within the reaches of God's glorious day—The hills, the fields, the streams that laugh and move,

And the kind, happy heaven that smiled above.

I saw fresh daisies in the cool deep grass, And bending boughs that shook their blossoms down,

I watched the birds on sun-swept pinions pass,

And then I saw again the crowded town—The pale young children, where they waked and slept,

Their eager, pleading faces, and I wept.

And some seemed wan and faint, for want of bread.

And trembling some, with fear of curse or blow,

And some at heavy tasks, bent hand and head,

Numb with the pain that hopeless toilers know,

And some were girls, children no more—oh, God,

I dared not look to see the path they trod!

Near me white seraphs hung, and mutely wept,

And Christ, methought, wept too, above it all.

A broken prayer against my sobbing swept, And I awoke. I weep when I recall That dream, so sad, so strange! It can but seem

Only a dream! Surely 'twas but a dream—*Mary Anger De Vere, in the Ladies' Home Journal.*

A DRAMATIC STORY.

By W. J. FLORENCE (THE ACTOR).

With a heart filled with pleasurable emotions, I took the Rhine steamer at Cologne. My destination was Oberlahnstein, where I hoped to spend a few days, making excursions to the Stolzenfels, Ems, Nassau, and the romantic neighborhood of the river Lahn. I had among my letters of introduction one from my bishop, recommending me to the kind attention of Father Rucker, the venerable pastor of Capellen. This I determined to present immediately upon my arrival. My bishop had given me an eloquent description of the old gentleman. They had been classmates at Rome; and after their ordination Father Rucker was sent to the native village as assistant pastor, while Dr. C. returned to America, became pastor at Arlington, where, after twenty-five years of watchful care over a very numerous flock, he was transplanted to the bishopric of Delaware.

On the arrival of the steamer at Lahenstein, I took the ferry to Capellen, on the opposite bank of the Rhine, and in a few minutes stood at the door of the old priest's house. My knock was answered by an old lady in a white cap, who, in answer to my inquiry, informed me that her brother, Father Rucker, was quite ill, but would of course, see me, and leading me to his room, I stood unannounced at the bedside of the good German priest. He was propped up by pillows in a sitting position, and seeing by my dress that I was a clergyman, he at once made me welcome.

I delivered my letter from Bishop C. On reading it, the tears started to the old priest's eyes, and he asked me a hundred questions regarding the health of my Bishop, and about the Church in America and the incidents of my voyage.

I found him a most pleasant and agreeable gentleman, although suffering terribly from rheumatism, an attack of which had brought him to his present condition. He nevertheless was a merry and entertaining host. He ordered his three hours before dinner passed away pleasantly. The cottage stood on the very edge of the river, the steamers and light craft passing up and down, and now and then a great raft with its village of huts in the centre, and peopled by dozens of men, women and children, made the view from the priest's bed-room a gay and animated sight.

The captivity enforced by this plague, rheumatism, is less irksome from the fact that this window affords an uninterrupted view both up and down the Rhine for many miles, and here I sit and watch the river craft with their bright and fairy-like wings of canvas. At times," said the priest, "I can count as many as forty and fifty sail. Come, Rika, let us give our guest a regular German dinner."

When I returned from my room, where I retired to arrange my dress, I found the old gentleman seated in a little room that served as library, study and dining saloon. He had made a desperate effort, and though in much pain, determined to appear at dinner in honor of the "American priest," as he jocosely called me.

After dinner pipes were in order, and while watching the smoke ascending from our meerschaums, stories and incidents of our priesthood became topics of our conversation.

"It is over twenty years ago," said my host, "when I was awakened one night to go on a sick call."

A little girl, daughter of Heinrich Fink, the innkeeper, came to our door, saying her father had sent her to beg me to humor at once to the tavern, that a stranger lay dying, and that the priest's services would be more required than the physician's. Hastily throwing on my "obstruck," I followed the child to Heinrich's "obstruck."

"He met me at the door, and in a few brief sentences told me that the sick man only arrived that afternoon, that after partaking of a glass of wine and a pretzel, he deposited a package of letters and a small pocket-wallet filled with money—silver and silver—and bidding the landlord good-night, had gone to bed; that some two hours after groans and cries were heard in the stranger's room.

"On opening the door the poor man was found in great agony. His only answer to the kind inquiries as to what

could be done for him was to send for a priest.

"I never saw such a sad spectacle as the man presented, stretched full length in the bed, a large and powerfully built man, his hair tangled and matted over his eyes, his massive frame shaking with agony.

"I suspected suicide, and we searched the room for some evidence of the case, but discovered nothing to show an attempt at self-destruction. I ordered Heinrich to bring some brandy and with great difficulty the poor fellow swallowed it. For a moment he ceased to toss in pain—slowly he opened his great black eyes—and waving his hand to Heinrich to leave the room, spoke or rather gasped out, as follows:

"Oh, Father, I am glad you are here. I have much to say to you. Are we alone?"

"Yes," I said, assuringly.

"Well," said he, while his eyes gave out a most unearthly glare, "I am a hunted man, hunted by visions of her who fell by my hand. I am a murderer—a double murderer! Ten years ago I was leading actor at the Royal Theatre at Hanau—the favorite of the grand duke and the star in the Rhine provinces."

"Tell me your name, my son," said I.

"Not yet, good father—not yet. At Hanau I fell in love with a girl attached to the theatre—she was as pure as an angel—an orphan. Her father having been for years the bandmaster at the theatre adopted her, and she was making rapid strides towards a proud position in the profession when I first met her."

"We acted many nights together. She played Juliet to my Romeo, Goethe's heroine Margaret to my Faust. Well, father, this artless, pure child won my heart, and she loved me too—she told me so.

"We had arranged secretly to become man and wife on her reaching twenty. She was not yet nineteen.

"My professional duties took me to Cologne. During my absence her letters were loving and trustful.

"I was happy then.

"The very secret of our love, for no one knew of our attachment, was in itself a charm, and I thought with pride of the hour when I could present the darling girl before the world as my wife.

"One day while at Cologne I received a letter from Lena, for that was her name, in which she spoke of the great success of a play written by a very young officer of Dragoons at Coblenz; that, as her acting had contributed so much to the general success, the young lieutenant desired to present her with a bracelet, and she wished to know if I had any objection to her receiving it.

"I consented that she should accept it, though at the time I had some misgivings as to the propriety of the act.

"From that hour it seemed as if she had changed in her feelings towards me. Her letters grew less frequent, and the pure and tender tone formerly so characteristic of her nature seemed wanting."

"Christmas was approaching, and I had promised myself the pleasure of spending that day with Lena. I communicated my intention to her. Her reply to my letter suggested that it was a long journey to make, and that it did not have a new part to study, and that it did not in fact express the least desire to see me.

"The coldness of her letter stung me. I felt that another had taken my place in her affections.

"That night I paced my room almost frantic with jealousy. I threw myself on the bed only to rise again, for sleep had deserted me. That night I made a vow that should my suspicion prove true, I would kill her; and as daylight appeared through my windows, I repeated my oath, that she should die, and by my hand.

"On Christmas eve, under protest of a desire for study and privacy, I told my landlord that I would keep my room for a day or two, and did not wish to be disturbed. I ordered some biscuits and a few bottles of wine to be sent to my apartment.

"The moment the waiter left my room, I hastily put on my disguise—I shaved off my moustache, put on a brown wig, and as my professional skill came to my aid, I was completely metamorphosed. I then locked the door, and gaining the street, at once made for the railway station.

"I was just in time to take the train for Coblenz.

"My companions in the third-class compartment were farmers and cattle-raisers, who had been at Cologne making purchases for their Christmas holiday, and their simple merriment and happy conversation made my poor heart sink within me.

"The honest people were joyous and happy, while I sat there miserable, heart-broken man, with premeditated murder on my soul.

"Just as they were lighting the lamps I stepped from the train in the station at Coblenz.

"At the same moment several military officers alighted from the first-class carriage, among them tall, handsome young cavalry men.

"Instinctively I felt that this man was my rival.

"At once mounting the horses held in wait for them by their orderlies, these officers rode away.

"My curses followed them, and scarcely knowing why I did so, I sauntered towards a "Bierhalle" and entered. The waiters, to whom I was well known, never suspected that in the sad, worn, heavy-laden man I then presented, was concealed the favorite actor of the Rhine provinces. Calling for a glass of beer and the *Zeitung*, my eyes fell on a theatrical announcement for the evening. At the Stadt Theatre Fraulein Lena was the Baronne in *Graff von Huber's* new play, "The Venetian Bride."

"I shall be there to-night, and for the last time will see this base, disloyal Lena," murmured I to myself.

"I wanted but an hour before the opening of the theatre, so I wandered towards the Augusta Strauss and, placing myself in a dark doorway opposite her lodgings, watched the lights in her windows.

"Coming from the Bierhalle I passed many of my professional friends, but so complete was my disguise that I was not recognized; and now as I was watching at her window, the most sorrowful reflection filled my mind.

"How often had I called there to accompany her to the theatre! And after the play would see her home, and at that very door would she renew her promise of love. While I was thus employed, a couple paused at Lena's door, and, by heaven's! the officer I had met at the station alighted, and with a latch-key entered the house.

"My first impulse was to follow him and kill them both. No, she at least must die, nor must I be known as the perpetrator of the deed. The last train left for Cologne at 11.15. If I could manage to catch that train I should be in my own room before daylight, and throwing off my disguise it would ap-

pear as if I had not left my apartments.

"While thus determining my mode of action, Lena and her military escort appeared, and in a moment were driven off in the direction of the theatre.

"The bells from the tower of the churches were ringing out the holy sounds that seemed to tell of peace on earth and good will to all men.

"The streets were crowded with throngs of women and children, peering into the shop windows, decorated with evergreens and toys, all indicating Christmas time, while I made my way to the theatre, and, purchasing a ticket took a seat in the stalls. The curtain had just risen, and Lena as the Baronne, had just entered from the church, followed by a procession of bridesmaids. I watched her glance at one of the private boxes. It fell on the sole occupant, the young officer of Dragoons. He threw a kiss from his gloved hand.

"Oh, the agony of that moment! Jealousy, rage, hate, despair, and murder all seemed to possess me. During the entire performance, which lasted two long hours, she constantly signalled to her admirer from the stage, and after each act he would leave the box and visit her.

"This so increased my rage and mortification that from time to time I was forced to seek the open air of the street. The play ended, I posted myself where I could see Lena as she left the theatre. I looked at my watch. It was exactly eleven. In fifteen minutes the train left for Cologne. I must fulfill my oath within the next quarter of an hour. While I was thus deliberating, Lena and the officer left the stage door, and entering the carriage, I heard him direct his coachman to drive to the Schwarz Adler a noted restaurant and cafe in the Royal Platz, and but a few squares from the theatre.

"I followed—saw them enter. I entered the drinking hall and presently heard the landlord order one of the waiters to go upstairs to wait on the Graf von Huber. The room became crowded with people from the theatre, and amid the drinkers I soon managed to slip unperceived through the side door leading to the restaurant.

"I met the waiter ascending the stairs to the private room occupied by Lena and her lover. Telling him I wanted to have a glance at the great actress, and giving him a couple of thalers, he exchanged his apron and jacket for my coat and hat, and giving me the bill of fare, told me to take the order for supper, saying he would wait at the foot of the stairs until my return.

"On my tapping at the door the count bade me enter.

"They were seated side by side in loving converse.

"While the officer glanced over the list of wines, I under pretence of arranging the table, unperceived placed a pinch of white powder in their glasses.

"The officer ordered a bottle of Rudesheimer, and with an insolent air commanded me to hasten.

"At the foot of the stairs I found the kelner waiting and returned him his apron and jacket for my coat and hat. He let me into the street, and in five minutes I was in the train and on my way to Cologne.

"Next morning the good people of Coblenz were horrified at the news of the double suicide at the Schwartz Adler.

"It was given out that the Graf von Huber and the actress Lena had taken strychnine and died almost instantaneously."

"At this point of the man's story (continued the priest) the sound of horses' feet and the clanging of spurs and sabres were heard in the little street. A moment more, and two soldiers, followed by Heinrich, the landlord, rushed into the room.

"At seeing the military, the man gave a wild yell, while they proceeded to haul him up to just before the wear. He says that up to just before the wear, he had a long way off, unless one takes a boat and crosses the river to the metropolis that swirls and roars on the other bank.

"He was then taken to the police station.

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