

The Storyteller.

THE FRAULEIN.

(By DAWN GRAVE, in the *Are Maria*.)

I.—IN THE OLD WORLD.

THE time was near nightfall, for a scarlet-hooded November sun was nodding drowsily westward behind the tower of St. Sebald; the place, old Nuremberg—"city of toys; full of dolls for the girls and drums for the boys," as somebody once described it; and the people of my story, a boy and a girl with pale, tear-wet faces, standing side by side in the garden corner, holding each other's hands.

"Elsa—*herz liebe Elsa*," the boy was saying, "don't cry so! America may not be such a dreadful place, after all. True, the great, cold sea will roll between us; but—who knows—maybe in a few years I shall come back wealthy; and if you have not forgotten your poor Ernest, and married the prince whom your aunt will have chosen for you—"

"Ernest!" interposed the girl, wiping her eyes, and raising their sweet blue depths to his, "I will never marry anyone but you I have promised, and I will wait, and wait, and wait."

"I am content. That is all I have to ask, Elsa," said the boy, "except that you promise not to grieve if I should not again be permitted to see you. There will be much to do at my father's bidding; and every leisure moment I must devote to finishing the little present I am making for you. I warrant though, you will find it charming."

"O Ernest! what is it? Tell me now; won't you, please?" cried Elsa—for the moment her childish sorrow diverted by curiosity.

"*Nein, nein!*" he replied, caressingly. "I have so long planned this pleasure; and if I tell you, my pretty hope to surprise you would fly away like a beautiful kite whose string is broken. But I must go now, or father will be angry. Farewell, little Elsa! *Ach*, I can not bear it—I can not bear it!"

And, turning abruptly, he ran down the tulip-trimmed path of Frau Lichner's carefully-tended garden, and disappeared through the quaintly wrought iron gate. His young face was so full of sorrow as he entered his father's toy shop on the Durenstrasse that the workman, just then engaged in painting the name of Herr Bauman's successor on the old sign above the door, paused for a moment to look after him compassionately.

"It's a hard home leaving for the son and a queer one for the father!" he muttered to himself. "Old Bauman, at his age, going to America! Poor Ernest! poor Ernest! When a boy's face has that look upon it, he should have a mother's arms to creep into."

And the same thought came to Elsa's kind-hearted nurse, as, in the early gray light of next morning, she found Ernest waiting in the church porch to take leave of her.

"Good Manchen, dear Manchen!" he exclaimed. "You know that corner of the garden, under the cherry trees, where Elsa loves to sit? I have left a present there for her on the rustic bench. As soon as she wakes send her to look for it. Perhaps it will keep her from grieving, she cries so easily"—his own lips quivered sadly. "She is only a child, remember."

"And how much older are you pray, young graybeard of fourteen years?" queried the good nurse, laying her shrivelled hands tenderly on Ernest's broad shoulders.

"Oh, two years! That makes a vast difference in a man."

"My poor, brave little Ernest!" said Manchen. "I could take you in my arms and cry with you and for you like a mother, I'm so woeful to see you going. But God's blessing rest upon you, dear, through the long journey and in the far, foreign land. And wherever you are, be sure that Elsa will never forget you."

"Look, O Manchen—look! Was ever anything so perfect, so lovely!"

Elsa was kneeling in the grass beside a long box of some dark red wood beautifully polished. On the lid, exquisitely carved in high relief, were the words, "*Ant Wunderschen*." And when the lid was lifted there lay within the most beautiful of baby dolls, fast asleep! its waxen cheeks flushed as with the very hue of life; the parted lips disclosing two of the cunningest seed-pearl teeth; and its movable head, fascinatingly bald, protected from draughts by one of those droll little crochet caps that German babies wear, tied under its dimpled chin with blue ribbon. Altogether, the most bewitching creature imaginable. But the hard face of Elsa's aunt grew harder as she looked upon it.

"I am sorry I ever permitted you to speak to that toy-maker's boy," she said, sharply. "Don't think you owe him any gratitude. It was not much of a service to draw you out of the water when the ice broke while you were skating. Why, anyone would have done as much. But what presumption to offer gifts to my niece! Carry it up to the attic. It may stay there till we find some poor person to whom it can be given. And go to your lessons, Miss. You are too big a girl to play with dolls."

II.—IN THE NEW WORLD

The building of a gaudy new house on the corner opposite their grand, old-fashioned one had made the Eatons aware that they were soon to have new neighbours, a Mr. Marvin, 'twas said, who had made a large fortune in the West, and whose family intended spending it (rather an easy task) in Washington. Its fancifully ugly tower was receiving the finishing touches when the Eatons left for their summer residence, returning, they found the new neighbours in possession.

"And sure, ma'am, it's no credit they'll be to our square, with all their gold and glitter," said Norah, judiciously. "It's a royal

style of dress they wears, but there is frayed edges showing underneath, I'm thinking. Mrs. Marvin's no lady, ma'am, and I said it the minute I saw her speak to her coachman; for, you know, it's one of the best tags o' ladyhood the way a mistress gives an order to a servant. And it's the hard, sour mouth she has; there's not a child would be the happier for a kiss from it. And she the own mother of two little girls, with a furrin' governess to mind 'em. But it's not them that minds her indade. You know the poor begging-man that stands there by the President's house singing that song which rhymes with 'blind'—about the Blessed Lord's

Giving us eyes to pity with

And hearts to make us kind.

Sure I saw her the other morning trying to make the children give him a bit of charity, and they just laughed and ran on; and it was only a coin from her own purse that went into his hat as she passed him."

"I shall not visit our new neighbours," said Mrs. Eaton to her husband. "From what I have seen and heard, they are not people for whom I'd ever feel esteem or sympathy; and a mere interchange of meaningless civilities between persons just because their houses face each other I consider simply hypocrisy. But if ever I see an opportunity to do anything for that sad-eyed little German governess of theirs, I shall seize it."

Lo! a few weeks later, when, glancing away from her prayer-book, she perceived the Fraulein's diminutive figure glide timidly up the aisle of St. Matthew's, she rose quickly and drew her back into her own pew.

"I hope you'll sit beside us every Sunday," she said, as, service over, they walked out together; the Fraulein, not a little touched by the stranger's politeness, acknowledging it with many thanks in her pretty, imperfect English—

"You are most good, most good, Madame! It is not every Sunday that I am permitted the consolation of hearing the holy Mass. Mrs. Marvin she not a Catholic, alas! and she have not ask me if I was one when she bring me with her away from the Faderland. And when I tell her, she seem so angry I fear she keep me no more, and I all alone in the strange land—a stranger with no friend."

"Friendships for life are often formed in a brief moment," answered Mrs. Eaton, taking out her card and leaving it, with a warm clasp, in the Fraulein's hand. "I am your neighbour, you know; and I hope you will always think of me as a friend; and come to me, as one, for sympathy in any good that may befall you, or help in any trouble."

"O mamma, what do you think? I've something dreadful to tell you," began Effie Eaton, as she came in from school the next afternoon. "Rose Pierce's mother knows the Marvins, and yesterday Rose spent an afternoon there with the children. And, mamma, there's another little girl that we never saw or heard of—a sick girl that can't walk, but lives away up in the tower; and it's like Cinderella's story with the cruel step-mother—sisters and all. They told Rose they never cared to talk to her or play with her; she was 'only trouble,' their mother said. And she had no toys or pretty things like them; and if it hadn't been for the Fraulein, Rose would not even have seen her. She took her upstairs with her, and, and poor little girl—her name is Margaret—was so lovely and sweet that Rose began loving her right away. I wish we could call on Margaret, mamma, without acquainting ourselves with the rest of the family—indeed, I would not even want a bowing acquaintance with them."

"I'll tell you what we might do, dear," said Mrs. Eaton. "Gather together some of your books and pictures; we'll hide them in a pretty basket, under fruit and flowers, and send them to Margaret—care of the Fraulein."

III.—AN ARRIVAL.

How many there are who passing grand mansions look longingly at them, and wish that some good fairy would suddenly open the carved door, and, tossing its golden key into their hand, say: "Come in, come in! This is *your* house; a trifle better than you deserve, indeed, but yours still by order of the Queen o' Wishes!" Yet, ah! who knows how much sorrow may dwell within the grandest palace, how much joy within the humblest cottage!

Supervising his business interests in Colorado, Mr. Marvin had not seen, and scarcely heard from his family since their return from Europe; and when he beheld for the first time the marble residence in Washington—whose erection had been a caprice of his wife's, to gratify which every nerve had been strained—he ceased to wonder at the exorbitant demands for money lately made upon him.

With many emotions depicted on his worn, deeply-lined face, he stood a moment contemplating its exterior, so heavy with tasteless superfluity of adornment; then ascending the steps, he rang imperatively.

The liveried servant who answered the summons extended his silver card-tray; but the gray-haired stranger, with travel-dusty, broad-brimmed hat and shabby valise, walked boldly in—a free breath of Western civilisation, seeming as much out of place in the rose-perfumed Moorish hall, under its dimly burning jewelled lamps and rare cashmerian hangings—as much out of place, but perhaps not more than the Louis XVth chair just added to its wealth of furnishings.

"I am Mr. Marvin," he said, simply. "I suppose I've arrived earlier than they expected. Where is Mrs. Marvin and the children?"

"They're h'll hout, sir," answered James, regarding his unknown master suspiciously, and for the first time in his trained life doubtful how to act.

"And my Margaret—where is Miss Margaret?"