

'I know. Little mutter, please forgive, and I will all tell you I have kept. Meine sester und her mann live here since long time. Ven I bin on my home in Berlin, meine sester has write I call to her kommen. S'e has say s'e will be meine mutter here in America. Dat makes mein fater und meine mutter sorry ven I say, "Yes, dat iss good. I will nach America." So mein fater say, "Ven Richardis vill, s'e shall go." So meine mutter has cry, und I bin come to my sester. Et iss sex mile to dat place wo meine sester live. Her mann iss far-mer. You know far-mer—yes?" (She had evidently just mastered the word.) "Und I have work by my sester, und cows milk, und alles, und dat iss all right. Aber meine shoes sind full von holes, und I had not money, neffer not any, little mutter. Now kommt ein mann. He iss far-mer, too. He got big farm mit plenty money und vun mutter und vun bruder, Und dat mutter iss old und not can more work. So dat mann say to de bruder, "Joe, you git a frau." Und Joe say no. So dat mann say to my sester, "Vat I shall do it? Joe, he not vill get a frau, und de mutter not can work. I mus git vun." So my sester tell dat mann, "Dat iss good. Here is Richardis."

"Oh, little mutter, vat you think I shall do it? Dat iss good mann, aber dat mann iss not for me. I mus sa no, so soon I can spik it!"

She stopped for a minute, but hurried on, in her curious mixture of English and German, with her 'mys' and 'meines' tumbling over each other, to tell how angry her sister had been at her refusal. She had even gone so far as to write, asking their parents not to notice Richardis' letters until she should promise to obey, and had told Richardis that their father, in answering, sent word to her that if she wanted to be their child and have their love she must do as her older sister said.

Richardis had written, again and again, to both father and mother without receiving a reply, and at last, sick at heart and really afraid that she would be forced into the dreaded marriage, she had run away to the village one night, and had found a position for a few weeks in the German boarding house from which she had come to us. Apparently her sister had dropped the matter then, for she had never tried to follow her. Richardis said that when she first came to us she could not bear to tell me that her parents had disowned her, because she was afraid I would think she was a wicked daughter, but afterwards, when I was so ill, she wished she had confessed it all.

"So," she finished, "I have vun sester in America. S'e iss meine sester. I know dat. I bin sorry s'e iss bese auf mich und I not can help dat, but oh, little mutter, tell vat I shall do it, ven my fater und meine mutter vill me not more luf?"

Her voice choked and her eyes were full of tears. I reached for her hand. "You poor child! I cried, and then—I cannot remember what then. There was a sudden rushing and pounding behind us, and a voice screamed. Richardis looked over her shoulder and jumped to her feet in a flash. The same instant I felt her strong arms seize me and cast me bodily out of the carriage, and after that there was a time when everything was black.

My poor Richardis! They had thought her dead when they first drew her out of that mass of wreckage in the deep ditch by the roadside, but now she was moaning pitifully, and she knew me as soon as I knelt beside her. Gradually I was comprehending what had happened. That mass in the ditch was Dr. Maxwell's buggy, and I heard some men who had gathered around saying that they would have to shoot his horse. The great automobile, which stood there like a disabled monster, had come whizzing like mad down the main highway, and had slowed up barely enough to turn the corner into the bit of narrow road where we, hidden from it by a grove until it turned the corner, were jogging along, too much absorbed in our own thoughts to realise danger.

The chauffeur was an inexperienced boy, out for a frolic with a party of reckless friends, and when he had suddenly seen us close ahead of him and had realised that there was no room to pass, he had lost his head completely. Instead of throwing the lever that would stop the machine, as he meant to do, he had done exactly the opposite, and, to the horror of all in the car, it had shot forward and crashed with all its tremendous weight into the rear of our buggy.

But between that one swift glance over her shoulder and the final crash Richardis had saved my life. The men on the auto had jumped when they had seen the danger, and, strangely enough, none of them was seriously injured. Little Richardis had suffered for us all.

How we managed to get her home I scarcely know. Somebody brought a wagon with a cot in it, and at last we had her lying on my bed, with Dr. Maxwell bending over her. One look at his face, after he had finished his examination, took away my hope, and from that moment I did not leave her side.

She was not conscious all the time, but there were moments when she seemed to understand everything, and in one of them she whispered a wish to me. I told mother, and she hurried to send a messenger to Richardis' sister.

As soon as horse's feet could bring her she was there. She was a hard-faced woman, but she went on her knees beside her little sister and sobbed bitterly. She confessed that there had been loving answers to all of Richardis' letters home, but that she had managed to get and keep them in the hope of influencing her sister to marry as she had planned. She promised solemnly that she would tell their parents all the truth, and said that they had never really written one of the unkind things she had quoted from their letters; that they loved Richardis more than any other child.

Richardis lay with closed eyes. We were afraid she was not hearing, but she was, for one of her hands wavered out and rested on her sister's head. "Et iss luf in my heart to you," she said, with an effort. "Ven meine fater und meine mutter not hate me, I bin happy."

Dr. Maxwell led the sobbing woman into the other room and came back quickly. I knew what his expression meant, and I bent closer over Richardis. Suddenly her fingers clasped mine more tightly, and her eyes opened and looked straight into mine with a strange, deep gaze. "Et iss something I will say," she whispered. "I not know how. I not can tell it. Oh, little mutter, I—am—yours!"

My tears fell on her face as I kissed her, but even then she was past heeding kisses or tears.

A few days later there was a new-made grave in our own family lot in the village cemetery. That is the chapter. There are other happier ones to follow it, I know—and some day I shall read beyond that little grave in the story of my Richardis.—"The Advance."

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