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Title: A Romance of Tompkins Square

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Release date: December 10, 2007 [eBook #23808]

Most recently updated: January 8, 2013

Language: English

Credits: Produced by David Widger

*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK A ROMANCE OF TOMPKINS SQUARE ***

A ROMANCE OF TOMPKINS SQUARE.

By Thomas A. Janvier
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Whether the honey shall be brought to the boiling-point slowly or rapidly; whether it shall boil a long time or a short time; when and in what quantities the flour shall be added; how long the kneading shall last; in what size of earthen pot the dough shall be stored, and what manner of cover upon these pots best preserves the dough against the assaults of damp and mould; whether the pots shall be half-buried in the cool earth of the cellar or ranged on shelves to be freely exposed to the cool cellar air—all these several matters are enshrouded in a mystery that is penetrated only by the elect few of Nürnberg bakers by whom perfect

lebkuchen is made. And the same is true of the Brunswick bakers, who call this rare compound honigkuchen, and of the makers of pferfferkuchen, as it is called by the bakers of Saxony.

Nor does the mystery end here. This first stage in the making of lebkuchen is but means to an end, and for the compassing of that end—the blending and the baking of the finished and perfect honey-cake—each master-baker has his own especial recipe, that has come down to him from some ancestral baker of rare parts, or that by his own inborn genius has been directly inspired. And so, whether the toothsome result be Nürnberger lebkuchen, or Brunsscheiger peppernotte, or Basler leckerly, the making of it is a mystery from first to last.

It was because of this mystery that the life of Gottlieb Brekel had been imbittered for nearly twenty years—ever since, in fact, his first essay in the compounding of Nürnberger lebkuchen had been made. He was but a young baker then: now he was an old one, and notwithstanding the guarded praise of friends and the partial approval of the public (notably of that portion of the public under the age of ten years that attended St. Bridget's Parochial School) he full well knew that his efforts through all these years to make, in New York, lebkuchen such as he himself had eaten when he was a boy, at home in Nürnberg, had been neither more nor less than a long series of failures.

In the hopeful days of his apprenticeship all had seemed so easy before him. Let him but have a little shop, and then a little capital wherewith to lay in his supply of honey, and the thing would be done! He had no recipe, it is true; for he was a baker not by heredity, but by selection. Yet from a wise old baker he had gleaned the knowledge of honey-cake making, and he believed strongly that from the pure fount of his own genius he could draw a formula for the making of lebkuchen so excellent that compared with it all other lebkuchen would seem tasteless. But these were the bright dreams of youth, which age had refused to realize.

In course of time the little shop became an accomplished fact; a very little shop it was in East Fourth Street. Capital came more slowly, and three several times, when a sum almost sufficient had been saved, was it diverted from its destined purpose of buying the honey without which Gottlieb could not make even a beginning in his triumphal lebkuchen career.

His first accumulation was swept away through the conquest of Ambition by Love. In this case Love was personified in one Minna Schaus—who was not by any means a typical sturdy German lass, with laughing looks and stalwart ways, but a daintily-finished, golden-haired maiden, with soft blue eyes full of tenderness, and a gentleness of manner that Gottlieb thought—and with more reason than lovers sometimes think things of this sort—was very like the manner of an angel. And for love of her Gottlieb forgot for a while his high resolves in regard to lebkuchen making; and on the altar of his affections—in part to pay for his modest wedding-feast, in part to pay for the modest outfit for their housekeeping over the bakery—the money laid aside for the filling of his honey-pots very willingly was offered up.

A second time were his honey-pots sacrificed, that the coming into the world of the little Minna might be made smooth. This, also, was a willing sacrifice; though in his heart of hearts Gottlieb felt a twinge of regret that his first-born was not a son, to whom the fame and fortune incident to the making of perfect lebkuchen might descend. But he was a philosopher in his way, and did not suffer himself to be seriously disconcerted by an accident that by no means was irreparable. As he smoked his long pipe that night, while the bread was baking, he said to himself, cheerily: "It is a girl. Yes, that is easy. Girls sprout everywhere; they are like grass. But a boy, and a boy who is to grow up into such a baker as my boy will be—ah, that is another matter. But patience, Gottlieb; all in good time." Then, when his third pipe was finished—which was his measure of time for the baking—he fetched out the sweet-smelling hot bread from the oven with his long peel, and set forth upon his round of delivery. And he whistled a mellow old Nürnberg air as he pushed his cart through the streets before him that frosty morning, and in his heart he thanked the good God who had sent him the blessings of a dear wife and a sweet little daughter and a growing trade.

And yet once more were his honey-pots sacrificed, and this time the sacrifice was sad indeed. From the day that the little Minna came into the world his own Minna, as in a little while was but too plain to him, began to make ready to leave it. As the weeks went by, the little strength that at first had come to her was lost again; the faint color faded from her cheeks, and left them so wan that through the fair skin the blue veins showed in most delicate tracery; and as her dear eyes ever grew gentler and more loving, the light slowly went out from them. So within the year the end came. In that great sorrow Gottlieb forgot his ambition, and cared not, when the bills were paid, that his honey-pots still remained unfilled. For the care of his home and of little Minna his good sister Hedwig came to him. Very drearily, for a long while, the work of the bakery went on.

But a strong man, stirred by a strong purpose, does not relinquish that purpose lightly; and the one redeeming feature of the life of many sorrows which in this world we all are condemned to live is that even the bitterest sorrow is softened by time. But for this partial relief our race no doubt would have been extinguished ages ago in a madness wrought of grief and rage.

Gottlieb's strong purpose was to make the best lebkuchen that baker ever baked. After a fashion his sorrow healed, as the flesh heals about a bullet that has gone too deep to be extracted by the surgeon's craft, and while it was with him always, and not seldom sent through all his being thrills of pain, he bore it hidden from the world, and went about his work again. Working comforted him. The baking of bread is an employment that is at once soothing and sustaining. As a man kneads the spongy dough he has good exercise and wholesome time for thought. While the baking goes on he may smoke and meditate. The smell of the newly-baked bread is a pleasant smell, and brings with it pleasant thoughts of many people well nourished in the eating of it. Moreover, there is no time in the whole twenty-four hours when a city is so innocent, so like the quiet honest country-side, as that time in the crisp morning when a baker goes his rounds.

As Gottlieb found himself refreshed and strengthened by these manifold good influences of his gentle trade, his burden of sorrow was softened to him and made easier to bear. Comforting thoughts of the little Minna—growing to be a fine little lass now—stole in upon him, and within him the hope arose that she would grow to be like the dear mother whom she never had known. So the little fine roots of a new love struck down into his sad heart; and presently the sweet plant of love began to grow for him again, casting its delicate tendrils

strongly about the child, who truly was a part of the being about which his earlier and stronger love had clung. Yet the love that thus was re-established in Gottlieb's breast was far from filling it, and so for ambition there was ample room.



"One night, as he sat beside the oven smoking his second pipe, he found himself thinking."

Somewhat to his surprise, one night, as he sat beside the oven smoking his second pipe, he found himself thinking once more about his project for making such lebkuchen as never yet had been known outside of Nürnberg—lebkuchen that would make him at once the admiration and the despair of every German baker in New York. Nor was there, as he perceived as he turned the matter over in his mind, any reason now why he should not set about making this project a reality; for he had money enough, and more than enough, in store to buy the honey that he had so long desired. His eyes sparkled; he forgot to smoke; and when he turned again, half unconsciously, to his pipe, it had gone out. This roused him. The brightness faded from his eyes; he drew a long sigh. Then he lighted his pipe again, and until the baking was ended his thoughts no longer were busied with ambitious schemes for the making of lebkuchen, but went back with a sad tenderness to the happy time that had come so quickly to so cruel an end.

But the spark was kindled, and presently the fire burned. When he told the good Hedwig that he had bought the honey at last, that excellent woman—albeit not much given to display of the tender emotions—shed tears of joy. She was a sturdy, thick-waisted, stout-ankled person, this Aunt Hedwig, with a cheery red face, and prodigiously fine white teeth, and very bright black eyes; and her taste in dress was such that when of a Sunday she went to the Church of the Redemptorist Fathers, in Third Street, she was more brilliant than ever King Solomon was in all his glory, in her startling array of vivid reds and greens and blues. But beneath her violent exterior of energetic color she had a warm and faithful heart, as little Minna knew already, and as her brother Gottlieb had known for many a long good year. Therefore was Gottlieb now gladdened by her hearty show of sympathy; and he returned with a good will the sounding smack that she gave him with her red lips, and the strong hug that she gave him with her stout arms.

It was at sight of this pleasing manifestation of affection that Herr Sohnstein, the notary—who was present in the little room back of the shop where it occurred—at once declared that he meant to buy some honey too. And Aunt Hedwig, smiling so generously as to show every one of her fine white teeth, promptly told him that he had better be off and buy it, because perhaps he could buy at the same place some hugs and kisses too: at which sally and quick repartee they all laughed. Herr Sohnstein long had been the declared lover of Aunt Hedwig's, and long had been held at arm's-length (quite literally occasionally) by that vigorous person; who believed, because of her good heart, that her present duty was not to consult her own happiness by becoming Frau Sohnstein, but to remain the Fräulein Brekel, and care for her lonely brother and her brother's child.

Being thus encouraged, Gottlieb bought the honey forthwith; and with Aunt Hedwig's zealous assistance set about boiling it and straining it and kneading it into a sticky dough, all in accordance with the wise old baker's directions which he so long had treasured in his mind. And when the dough was packed in earthen pots, over which bladders were tied, all the pots were set away in the coolest part of the cellar, as far from the great oven as possible, that the precious honey-cake might undergo that subtle change which only comes with time.



“When the dough was packed in earthen pots, over which bladders were tied, the pots were set away in the coolest part of the cellar.”

For at least a year must pass before the honey-cake really can be said to be good at all; and the longer that it remains in the pots, even until five-and-twenty years, the better does it become. Therefore it is that all makers of lebkuchen who aspire to become famous professors of the craft add each year to their stock of honey-cake, yet draw always from the oldest pots a time-soaked dough that ever grows more precious in its sweet excellence of age. Thus large sums—more hundreds of dollars than a young baker, just starting upon his farinaceous career, would dare to dream of—may be invested; and the old rich bakers who can dower their daughters with many honey-pots know that in the matter of sons-in-law they have but to pick and choose.

It was about Christmas-time—which is the proper time for this office—that Gottlieb made his first honey-cake; and it was a little before the Christmas following that his first lebkuchen was baked. For a whole week before this portentous event occurred he was in a nervous tremor; by day he scarcely slept; as he sat beside the oven at night his pipe so frequently went out that twice, having thus lost track of time, his baking of bread came near to being toast. And when at last the fateful night arrived that saw his first batch of lebkuchen in the oven, he actually forgot to smoke at all!

Gottlieb had but a sorry Christmas that year. The best that even Aunt Hedwig could say of his lebkuchen was that it was not bad. Herr Sohnstein, to be sure, brazenly declared that it was delicious; but Gottlieb remembered that Herr Sohnstein, who conducted a flourishing practice in the criminal courts, was trained in the art of romantic deviations from the truth whenever it was necessary to put a good face on a bad cause; and he observed sadly that the notary's teeth were at variance with his tongue, for the piece of lebkuchen that Herr Sohnstein ate was infinitesimally small. As for the regular German customers of the bakery, they simply bit one single bite and then refused to buy. Indeed, but for the children from St. Bridget's School—who, being for the most part boys, and Irish boys at that, presumably could eat anything—it is not impossible

that that first baking of lebkuchen might have remained uneaten even until this present day. And it was due mainly to the stout stomachs of successive generations of these enterprising boys that the series of experiments which Gottlieb then began in the making of lebkuchen was brought, in the course of years, to something like a satisfactory conclusion. But even at its best, never was this lebkuchen at all like that of which in his hopeful youth he had dreamed.

Herr Sohnstein, to be sure, spoke highly of it, and even managed to eat of it quite considerable quantities. Gottlieb did not imagine that Herr Sohnstein could have in this matter any ulterior motives; but Aunt Hedwig much more than half suspected that in order to please her by pleasing her brother he was making a sacrifice of his stomach to his heart. If this theory had any foundation in fact, it is certain that Herr Sohnstein did not appreciably profit by his gallant risk of indigestion; for while Aunt Hedwig by no means seemed disposed to shatter all his hopes by a sharp refusal, she gave no indication whatever of any intention to permit her ripe red lips to utter the longed-for word of assent. Aunt Hedwig, unquestionably, was needlessly cruel in her treatment of Herr Sohnstein, and he frequently told her so. Sometimes he would ask her, with a fine irony, if she meant to keep him waiting for his answer until her brother had made lebkuchen as good as the lebkuchen of Nürnberg? To which invariably she would reply that, in the first place, she did not know of any question that he ever had asked her that required an answer; and, in the second place, that she did mean to keep him waiting just precisely that long. And then she would add, with a delicate drollery that was all her own, that whenever he got tired of waiting he might hire a whole horse-car all to himself and ride right away. Ah, this Aunt Hedwig had a funny way with her!

And so the years slipped by; and little Minna, who laughed at the passing years as merrily as Aunt Hedwig laughed at Herr Sohnstein, grew up into a blithe, trig, round maiden, and ceased to be little Minna at all. She was her mother over again, Gottlieb said; but this was not by any means true. She did have her mother's goodness and sweetness, but her sturdy body bespoke her father's stronger strain. Aunt Hedwig, of this same strain, undisguisedly was stocky. Minna was only comfortably stout, with good broad shoulders, and an honest round waist that anybody with half an eye for waists could see would be a satisfactory armful. And she had also Aunt Hedwig's constant cheeriness. All day long her laugh sounded happily through the house, or her voice went blithely in happy talk, or, failing anybody to talk to, trilled out some scrap of a sweet old German song. The two apprentices and the young man who drove the bread-wagon of course were wildly and desperately in love with her—a tender passion that they dared not disclose to its object, but that they frequently and boastfully aired to each other. Naturally these interchanges of confidence were apt to be somewhat tempestuous. As the result of one of them, when the elder apprentice had declared that Minna's beautiful brown hair was finer than any wig in the window of the hair-dresser on the west side of the square, and that she had given him a lock of it; and when the young man who drove the bread-wagon (he was a profane young man) had declared that it was a verdamnter sight finer than any wig, and that she hadn't—the elder apprentice got a dreadful black eye, and the younger apprentice was almost smothered in the dough-trough, and the young man who drove the bread-wagon had his head broken with the peel that was broken over it.



"The young apprentice was almost smothered in the dough-trough and the young man who drove the bread-wagon had his head broken with the peel."

Aunt Hedwig did not need to be told, nor did Minna, the little jade, the cause of this direful combat; and both of these amiable women thought Gottlieb very hard-hearted because he charged the broken peel—it was a new one—and the considerable amount of dough that was wasted by sticking to the younger apprentice's person, against the wages of the three combatants.

This reference to the apprentices and to the wagon shows that Gottlieb's bakery no longer was a small bakery, but a large one. In the making of lebkuchen, it is true, he had not prospered; but in all other ways he had prospered amazingly. From Avenue A over to the East River, and from far below Tompkins Square clear away to the upper regions of Lexington Avenue, the young man who drove the bread-wagon rattled along every morning as hard as ever he could go, and he vowed and declared, this young man did, that nothing but his love for Minna kept him in a place where all the year round he was compelled in every single day to do the work of two. Meanwhile the little shop on East Fourth Street had been abandoned for a bigger shop, and this, in turn, for one still bigger—quite a palace of a shop, with plate-glass windows—on Avenue B. It was here, beginning in a modest way with a couple of tables whereat chance-hungry people might sit while they ate zwieback or a thick slice of hearty pumpernickel and drank a glass of milk, that a restaurant was established as a tender to the bakery. It did not set out to be a large restaurant, and, in fact, never became one. In the

back part of the shop were a dozen tables, covered with oil-cloth and decorated with red napkins, and at these tables, under the especial direction of Aunt Hedwig, who was a culinary genius, was served a limited, but from a German stand-point most toothsome, bill of fare. There was Hasenpfeffer mit Spätzle, and Sauerbraten mit Kartoffelklösse, and Rindfleisch mit Meerrettig, and Bratwurst mit Rothkraut; and Aunt Hedwig made delicious coffee, and the bakery of course provided all manner of sweet cakes. In the summer-time they did a famous business in ice-cream.

On the plate-glass windows beneath the sweeping curve of white letters in which the name of the owner of the bakery was set forth was added in smaller letters the words "Café Nürnberger." Gottlieb and Aunt Hedwig and the man who made the sign (this last, however, for the venal reason that more letters would be required) had stood out stoutly for the honest German "Kaffehaus;" but Minna, whose tastes were refined, had insisted upon the use of the French word: there was more style about it, she said. And this was a case in which style was wedded to substantial excellence. What with the good things which Gottlieb baked and the good things which Aunt Hedwig cooked, the Café Nürnberger presently acquired a somewhat enviable reputation. It became even a resort of the aristocracy, in this case represented by the dwellers in the handsome houses on the eastern and northern sides of Tompkins Square. Of winter evenings, when bright gas-light and a big glowing stove made the restaurant a very cozy place indeed, large parties of these aristocrats would drop in on their way home from the Thalia Theatre, and would stuff themselves with Hasenpfeffer and Sauerbraten and Kartoffelklösse, and would swig Aunt Hedwig's strong coffee (out of cups big enough and thick enough to have served as shells and been fired from a mortar), until it would seem as though they must certainly crack their aristocratic skins.

Altogether, Gottlieb was in a flourishing line of business; and but for the deep sorrow that time never wholly could heal, and but for the continued failure of his attempts to make a really excellent lebkuchen, he would have been a very happy man. By this time he had come to be a baker of ease. The hard part of the work was done by the apprentices, and the morning delivery of bread was attended to by the young man who drove the bread-wagon. In the summer-time he would take Minna and Aunt Hedwig, always accompanied by her faithful Herr Sohnstein, upon beer-drinking expeditions to Guttenberg and other fashionable suburban resorts; and through the cozy winter evenings he smoked his long pipe comfortably in the little room at the back of the shop, where Minna and Aunt Hedwig sat with him, and where Herr Sohnstein, also smoking a long pipe, usually sat with him too. Sometimes Minna would sing sweet German songs to them, accompanying herself very creditably upon a cabinet organ—for Minna had received not only the substantial education that enabled her to keep the bakery accounts, but also had been instructed in the polite accomplishments of music and the dance. In summer, when expeditions were not on foot, these smoking parties usually were held upon the roof; where Gottlieb had made a garden and grew roses in pots, and even had raised some rare and delicious cauliflowers.

It was a pleasant place, that roof, of a warm summer evening, especially when the rising full-moon sent a shimmering path of glory across the rippling waters of the East River, and cast over the bad-smelling region of Hunter's Point a glamour of golden haze that made it seem, oil tanks and all, a bit of fairy-land. At such times, as they sat among the rose-bushes and cauliflowers, Herr Sohnstein not infrequently would stop smoking his long pipe while he slyly squeezed Aunt Hedwig's plump hand. And Gottlieb also would stop smoking, as his thoughts wandered away along that glittering path across the waters, and so up to heaven where his Minna was. And then his thoughts would return to earth, to his little Minna—for to him she still was but a child—and he would find his sorrow lessened in thankfulness that, while his greatest treasure was lost to him, this good daughter and so many other good things still were his.

But the lebkuchen dream of Gottlieb's youth remained unrealized; still unattained was the goal that twenty years before had seemed so near. However, being a stout-hearted baker of the solid Nürnberg strain, he did not at all surrender hope. Each year he added to his stock of honey-cake; and he knew that when fortune favored him at last, as he still believed that fortune would favor him, he would have in store such honey-cake as would enable him to make lebkuchen fit to be eaten by the Kaiser himself!

After the affair of the broken peel there was a coolness between Gottlieb and the elder apprentice, which, increasing, led to a positive coldness, and then to a separation. And then it was that Fate put a large spoke in all the wheels which ran in the Café Nürnberg by bringing into Gottlieb's employment a ruddy young Nürnberger, lately come out of that ancient city to America, named Hans Kuhn.

It was not chance that led Hans to earn his living in a bakery when he came to New York. He was a born baker: a baker by choice, by force of natural genius, by hereditary right. Back in the dusk of the Middle Ages, as far as ever the traditions of his family and the records of the Guild of Bakers of Nürnberg ran, all the men of his race had been bakers, and famous ones at that. A cumulative destiny to bake was upon him, and he loved baking with all his heart. It was no desire to abandon his craft that had led him to leave Nürnberg and cross the ocean; rather was he moved by a noble ambition to build up on a broad and sure foundation the noble art of baking in the New World. And it had chanced, moreover, that in the conscription he had drawn an unlucky number.

When this young man entered the Café Nürnberg—being drawn thither by its display of the name of his own native city—and asked for a job, his air was so frank, his talk about baking so intelligent, that Gottlieb took kindly to him at once; and Minna, sitting demurely at her accounts in the little wire cage over which was a fine tin sign inscribed in golden letters with the word "Cashier," was mightily well pleased, in a demure and proper way, at sight of his ruddy cheeks and bushy shock of light-brown hair and little yellow mustache and honest blue eyes. When he told, in answer to Gottlieb's questions, that he was the grandson of the very baker in Nürnberg whose delicious lebkuchen Gottlieb had eaten when he was a boy, and that a part of his bakerly equipment was the lebkuchen recipe that had come down in his family from the baker genius, his remote ancestor, who had invented it—well, when he had told this much about himself, it is not surprising that Gottlieb fairly jumped for joy, and engaged him, not as his apprentice, but as his assistant, on the spot.

It was rather dashing to Gottlieb's enthusiasm, however, that his assistant—thereby manifesting a shrewd worldly wisdom—declined immediately to impart his secret. He would make all the lebkuchen that was required, he said, but for the present he need not tell how it was made—possibly the Herr Brekel might not

be satisfied with it, after all. But the Herr Brekel was satisfied with it, and so was all the neighborhood when the first batch of lebkuchen was baked and placed on sale. Indeed, as the fame of this delicious lebkuchen went abroad, the coming of the new baker was accepted by all Germans with discriminating palates as one of the most important events that ever had occurred on the East Side. The work of the young man who drove the bread-wagon was so greatly increased that he organized a strike, uniting in his own person the several functions of strikers, walking delegates, district assembly, and executive committee. And when the strike collapsed—that is to say, when the young man was discharged summarily—Gottlieb really did find it necessary to hire two new young men, and to buy an extra horse and wagon. Morally speaking, therefore (although the original young man, who remained out of employment for several weeks, and had a pretty hard time of it, did not think so), the strike was a complete success.

As a matter of course no well-set-up, right-thinking young fellow of three-and-twenty could go on baking lebkuchen in the same bakery with Minna Brekel for any length of time without falling in love with her. Nor was it reasonable to suppose that even Minna, who had treated casual apprentices and wagon-driving young men with a seemly scorn, would continue to sit in the seat of the scornful when siege in form was laid to her heart by a properly ruddy-cheeked and blue-eyed assistant baker, whose skill was such that he could make lebkuchen fit to be eaten by the German portion of the saints in Paradise. At the end of three months the feelings of these young people towards each other were quite clearly defined in their own minds; at the end of six months, as they were sitting together one afternoon in the little back room at a time when the shop happened to be empty, things came to the pleasing crisis that they both for a considerable period had foreseen.

But then, unfortunately, came a storm—that neither of them had foreseen at all—that shook the Café Nürnberg to its very foundations!

Gottlieb was the storm, and he moved over a wide area with great rapidity and violence. He was central, naturally, over Hans and Minna: the first of whom, after being denounced with great energy as a viper who had been warmed to the biting point, was ordered to take himself off without a single instant's delay, and never to darken the doors of the Café Nürnberg again; and the second of whom was declared to be a baby fool, who must be kept locked up in her own third-story back room, and fed on nothing more appetizing than pumpnickel and water until she came to her senses. In the outer edges of the storm the apprentices and the young men who drove the wagons found themselves most hotly involved; and a very violent gust swept down upon Aunt Hedwig and Herr Sohnstein, who surely were as innocent in the premises as any two people quite satisfactorily engaged in earnest but somewhat dilatory love-making of their own very well could be. Indeed, this storm was an ill wind that blew a famous blast of luck to Herr Sohnstein: for Aunt Hedwig, being dreadfully upset by her brother's outbreak, went of her own accord to Herr Sohnstein for sympathy and consolation—and found both in such liberal quantities, and with them such tender pleadings to enter a matrimonial haven where storms should be unknown, that presently, smiling through her tears, she uttered the words of consent for which the excellent notary had waited loyally through more than a dozen weary years. It was Herr Sohnstein's turn to be upset then. He couldn't believe, until he had soothed himself with a phenomenal number of pipes, that happiness so perfect could be real.

Possibly one reason why Gottlieb's storm was so violent was that he could not give any good reason for it. Hans really was a most estimable young man; he came of a good family; as a baker he was nothing short of a genius. All this Gottlieb knew, and all this he frequently had said to Aunt Hedwig and to Herr Sohnstein, and, worst of all, to Minna. As each of these persons now pointed out to him, in order to be consistent in his new position he must eat a great many of his own words; and he would have essayed this indigestible banquet willingly had he been convinced that thus he really could have proved that Hans was a viper and all the other unpleasant things which he had called him in his wrath. In truth, Gottlieb was, and in the depths of his heart he knew that he was, neither more nor less than a dog in the manger. His feeling simply was that Minna was his Minna, and that neither Hans nor anybody else had any right to her. This was not a position that admitted of logical defence; but it was one that he could be ugly and stick to: which was precisely what he did.

Minna did not remain long a prisoner in her own room, feeding upon pumpnickel and water and bitter thoughts. Aunt Hedwig and Herr Sohnstein succeeded in putting a stop to that cruelty. And these elderly lovers, whose fresh love had made them of a sudden as young as Minna herself, and had filled her with a warm sympathy for her, laid their heads together and sought earnestly to circumvent in her interest her father's stern decree. It was a joy to see this picture, in the little room back of the shop, of middle-aged love-making; and it was a little startling to find how the new youth that their love had given them had filled them with a quite extravagantly youthful recklessness. Herr Sohnstein, who was well known as a grave, sedate, and unusually cautious notary, seriously suggested (though he did not explain exactly how this would do it) that they should make an effort to bring Gottlieb to terms by burning down the bakery. And Aunt Hedwig, whose prudent temperament was sufficiently disclosed in the fact that she had hesitated in the matter of her own love affair for upward of a dozen years, not less seriously advanced the proposition that they all should elope from the Café Nürnberg and set up a rival establishment! Herr Sohnstein did not make any audible comment upon this violent proposal of Aunt Hedwig's, but it evidently put an idea into his head.

As Gottlieb happened to be walking along the south side of Tompkins Square, a fortnight or so after the tempest, he found his steps arrested by a great sign that lay face downward on trestles across the sidewalk, in readiness for hoisting in place upon the front of a smart new shop. Inside the shop he saw painters and paper-hangers at work; and on the large plate-glass window a man was gluing white letters with a dexterous celerity. The letters already in place read "Nürnberg Lebkuchen—" And as to this legend he saw "chen" added, he rolled out a stout South German oath and stamped upon the ground. But far stronger was the oath that he uttered as the big sign was swung upward, and he read upon it, in golden German letters:

Nürnbergger Bäkerei.

Hans Kuhn.

That the Recording Angel blotted out with his tears the fines which he was compelled on this occasion to record against Gottlieb Brekel in Heaven's high chancery is highly improbable. In the only known case of such lachrymic erasure the provocation to profanity was a commendable moral motive that was eminently unselfish. But when Gottlieb Brekel swore roundly in his native German all the way from the south-west corner of Tompkins Square to the corner of Third Street and the Bowery; and from that point, when he had transacted his business there, all the way back to the Café Nürnberg in Avenue B, his motives could not in any wise be regarded as moral, and selfishness lay at their very root.

Gottlieb already found himself involved in serious difficulties with the many customers who bought his lebkuchen; for with the departure of Hans he had been compelled to fall back upon his own resources, and with the most lamentable results. Great quantities of his first baking were returned to him, with comments in both High German and Low German of a very uncomplimentary sort. His second baking—saving the relatively inconsiderable quantities consumed by the omnivorous children of St. Bridget's School—simply remained upon his hands unsold. And now, to make his humiliation the more complete, here was his discharged assistant setting up as his rival; and with every probability that the attempted rivalry would be crowned with success. Really there was something, perhaps, to be said in palliation of Gottlieb's profanity after all.

When he told at home that evening of Hans Kuhn's upstart pretensions, his statements were received with an ominous silence. Aunt Hedwig only coughed slightly, and continued her knitting with more than usual energy. Herr Sohnstein only moved a little in his chair and puffed a little harder than usual at his pipe. Minna, who was in her wire cage in the shop settling her cash, only bent more intently over her books. But when Gottlieb went a step further and said, looking very keenly at Herr Sohnstein as he said it, that some great rascal must have lent Hans the money to make his fine start, Aunt Hedwig at once bristled up and said with emphasis that rascals, neither great nor small, were in the habit of lending their money to deserving young men; and Herr Sohnstein, a little sheepishly perhaps, and mumbling a little in his gray mustache, ventured the statement that this was a free country already, and people living in it were at liberty to lend their money to whom they pleased; and Minna, looking up from her books—Gottlieb's back was turned towards her—blew a most unfilial kiss from the tips of her chubby fingers to Herr Sohnstein right over her father's shoulder. All of which goes to show that something very like open war had broken out in the Café Nürnberg, and that the once united family dwelling therein was fairly divided into rival camps.

Gottlieb's dreary case was made a little less dreary when he found that the lebkuchen which Hans produced in his fine new bakery was distinctly an inferior article; not much better, in fact, than Gottlieb's own. To any intelligent baker the reason for this was obvious: Hans was making his lebkuchen with new honey-cake. Thus made, even by the best of recipes, it could not be anything but a failure. Gottlieb gave a long sigh of relief as he realized this comforting fact, and at the same time thought of his own great store of honey-pots—there were hundreds of them now—all ready and waiting to his hand. But his feeling of satisfaction passed quickly to one of impotent rage as he recognized his own powerlessness, for all his wealth of honey-pots, to make lebkuchen which would be eaten by anybody but the tough-palated children from St. Bridget's School. He was alone, smoking, in the little room back of the shop as this bitter thought came to him; in his rage he struck the table beside him a blow so sounding that the family cat, peacefully slumbering behind the stove, sprang up with a yell of terror and made but two jumps to the open door. Coming on top of all his other trials—the revolt of his own little Minna, the defection of Aunt Hedwig, and the almost open enmity of Herr Sohnstein—this compulsory surrender of all his hope of honest fame was indeed a deadly blow.

Gottlieb smoked on in sullen anger; his heart torn and tortured, and his mind filled with a confusion of bitter evil thoughts. And presently—for the devil is at every man's elbow, ready to take advantage of any sudden weakness, or turn to his own purposes any too great strength—these thoughts grew more evil and more clear: until they fairly resolved themselves into the determination to steal from Hans the recipe for making lebkuchen, and so to crush completely his rival and at the same time to make certain his own fortune and fame.

Of course the devil did not plant the notion of theft in Gottlieb's mind in this bald fashion; for the devil is a most considerate person, and ever shows a courteous disposition to spare the feelings of those whom he would lead into sin. No: the temptation that he suggested was the subtle and ingenious one that Gottlieb should proceed to recover his own stolen property! His logic was admirable: Hans had been Gottlieb's assistant; and as such Gottlieb had owned him and his recipe as well. When Hans went away and took the recipe with him, he took that which still belonged to his master. Therefore, triumphantly argued the devil, Gottlieb had a perfect right to regain the recipe either by fair means or by foul. And finally, as a bit of supplementary devil-logic, the thought was suggested that inasmuch as Hans certainly must know the recipe by heart, the mere loss of the paper on which it was written would not be any real loss to him at all! It is only fair to Gottlieb's good angel to state that during this able presentment of the wrong side of the case he did venture to hint once or twice—in the feeble, perfunctory sort of way that unfortunately seems to be characteristic of good angels when their services really are most urgently required—that the whole matter might be compromised satisfactorily to all the parties in interest by permitting Hans to marry Minna, and by

then taking him into partnership in the bakery. And it is only just to Gottlieb to state that to these fainthearted suggestions of his good angel he did not give one moment's heed.

Now the devil is a thorough-going sort of a person, and having planted the evil wish in Gottlieb's soul he lost no time in opening to him an evil way to its accomplishment. When Hans, a stranger in New York, had come to work at the Cafe Nürnberg, Gottlieb had commended him to the good graces of a friend of his, a highly respectable little round Brunswicker widow who let lodgings, and in the comfortable quarters thus provided for him Hans ever since had remained. In this same house lodged also one of Gottlieb's apprentices—a loose young fellow, for whose proper regulation the widow more than once had been compelled to seek his master's counsel and aid. In this combination of circumstances, to which the devil now directed his attention, Gottlieb saw his opportunity. It was easy to make the widow believe that the loose young apprentice had taken the short step from looseness to crime, and that a suspicion of theft rested upon him so heavily as to justify the searching of his room; it was easy to make the widow keep guard below while Gottlieb searched; and it was very easy then to search, not for imaginary stolen goods in the chest of the apprentice, but for that which he himself wanted to steal from the chest of Hans Kuhn. As to opening the chest there was no difficulty at all. Gottlieb had half a dozen Nürnberg locks in his house, and he had counted, as the event proved correctly, upon making the key of one of these locks serve his turn. And in the chest, without any trouble at all, he found a leather wallet, and in the wallet the precious recipe—written on parchment in old High German that he found very difficult to read, and dated in Nürnberg in the year 1603. Gottlieb was pale as death as he went down-stairs to the widow; and his teeth fairly chattered as he told her that he had made a mistake. He tried to say that the apprentice was not a thief—but the word *dieb* somehow stuck in his throat. Keen chills penetrated him as he almost ran through the streets to his home. For the devil, who heretofore had been in front of him and had only beckoned, now was behind him and was driving him with a right goodwill.

When he entered the room at the back of the shop, where Minna was sewing, and where Herr Sohnstein, with his arm comfortably around Aunt Hedwig's waist, was smoking his long pipe, he created a stir of genuine alarm. As Aunt Hedwig very truly said, he looked as though he had seen a ghost. Herr Sohnstein, of a more practical turn of mind, asked him if he had been knocked down and robbed; and the word *beraubt* grated most harshly upon Gottlieb's ears. But what cut him most of all was the way in which Minna—forgetting all his late unkindness at sight of his pale, frightened face—sprang to him with open arms, and with all the old love in her voice asked him to tell her what had gone wrong. Under these favoring conditions, Gottlieb's good angel bestirred himself somewhat more vigorously, and for a moment it seemed not impossible that right might triumph over wrong. But the devil bustled promptly upon the scene, and of course had things all his own way again in a moment. It certainly is most unfortunate that good angels, as a rule, are so weak in their angelic knees!

Gottlieb pushed Minna away from him roughly; addressed to Aunt Hedwig the impolite remark that ghosts only were seen by women and fools; in a surly tone informed Herr Sohnstein that policemen still were plentiful in the vicinity of Tompkins Square; and then, having planted these barbed arrows in the breasts of his daughter, his sister, and his friend, sought the retirement of his own upper room. As he left them, Minna buried her face in Aunt Hedwig's capacious bosom and cried bitterly, and Aunt Hedwig also cried; and Herr Sohnstein, laying aside for the moment his pipe, put his arms protectingly around them both. They all were very miserable.

In the upper room, where the air seemed so stifling that he had to open the window wide in order to breathe, Gottlieb was very miserable too. He was fleeing into Tarshish, this temporarily wicked baker; and just as fell out in the case of that other one who fled to Tarshish, his flight was a failure: for this little world of ours is far too small to give any one a chance to run away from committed sin.

Gottlieb tried to divert his thoughts from his crime, and at the same time tried to reap its reward by studying the stolen recipe; but his attempt was not successful. The cramped letters, brown with age, on the brown parchment, danced before his eyes; and the quaint, intricate High German phraseology became more and more involved. He could make nothing of it at all. And the thought occurred to him that perhaps he never would be able to make anything of it—that, without losing any part of the penalty justly attendant upon his crime, the crime itself might prove to be, so far as the practical benefit that he sought was concerned, absolutely futile. As this dreadful possibility arose before his mind a faintness and giddiness came over him. The room seemed to be whirling around him; life seemed to be slipping away from him; there was a strange, horrible ringing in his ears. He leaned forward over the table at which he was sitting and buried his face in his hands.

Then, possibly, Gottlieb fell asleep, though of this he never felt really sure. What is quite certain is that he saw, as clearly as he ever saw her in life, his dear dead Minna; but with a face so sad, so reproachful, so full of piteous entreaty, that his blood seemed to stand still, while a consuming coldness settled upon his heart. He struggled to speak with her, to assure her that he would repair the evil that he had done, to plead for forgiveness; but, for all his striving, no other words would come to his lips save those which a little while before he had spoken so roughly to poor Aunt Hedwig: "The only people who see ghosts are women and fools!"

And then, of a sudden, he found himself still seated at the table, the brown parchment still spread out before him, and the faint light of early morning breaking into the room. The window was wide open, as he had left it, and he was chilled to the marrow; he had a shocking cold in the head; there were rheumatic twinges in all his joints as he arose. What with the physical misery arising from these causes, and the moral misery arising from his sense of committed sin, he was in about as desperately bad a humor with himself as a man could be. He was in no mood to make another effort to read the difficult German of the recipe, the cause of all his troubles. The sight of it pained him, and he thrust it hurriedly into an old desk in which were stored (and these also were a source of pain to him) several generations of uncollected bills—practical proofs that the adage in regard to the impossibility of simultaneously possessing cakes and pennies does not always hold good.

He locked the desk and put the key in his pocket; and then returned the key to the lock and left it there, as

the thought occurred to him that the locking of this desk, that never in all the years that he had owned it had been locked before, might arouse suspicion. It seemed most natural to Gottlieb that his actions should be regarded with suspicion; he had a feeling that already his crime must be known to half the world.

And before night it certainly is true that the one person most deeply interested in the discovery and punishment of Gottlieb's crime—that is to say, Hans Kuhn—did know all about it; which fact would seem surprising, considering how skilfully Gottlieb had gone about his work, were it not remembered that his unwitting accessory had been the little round Brunswicker widow, and were it not known that little round widows—Brunswick born or born elsewhere—as a class are incapable of keeping a secret.

This excellent woman, to do her justice, had followed Gottlieb's orders to the letter. He had warned her not to tell the loose apprentice that his chest had been searched; and, so far as that apprentice was concerned, wild horses might have been employed to drag that little round widow to pieces—at least she might have permitted the wild horses to be hitched up to her—before ever an indiscreet word would have passed her lips. But when Hans Kuhn, for whom she entertained a high respect, and for whom she had also that warmly friendly feeling which trig middle-aged widows not seldom manifest towards good-looking young men, came to her in a fine state of wrath, and told her that his chest had been ransacked (he did not tell her of his loss, for he had not himself observed it), she did not consider that she violated any confidence in telling him everything that had occurred. It was all a mistake, she said; the Herr Brekel had gone into the wrong room; she must set the matter right at once; that bad young man might be a thief, after all. Hans felt a cold thrill run through him at the widow's words. But he controlled himself so well that she did not suspect his inward perturbation; and she accepted in as good faith his offer to inform the Herr Brekel of his error as she did, a day later, his assurance that the matter had been satisfactorily adjusted, and that the innocence of the apprentice had been proved.

And then Hans returned to his violated chest, and found that the dread which had assailed his soul was founded in substantial truth—the recipe was gone! In itself the loss of the recipe was no very great matter, for he knew it by heart; but that Gottlieb—who had also a cellar full of rich old honey-cake—should have gained possession of it was a desperate matter indeed. Here instantly was an end to the hope of successful rivalry that Hans had cherished; and with the wreck of his luck in trade, as it seemed to him in the first shock of his misfortune, away in fragments to the four winds of heaven was scattered every vestige of probability that he would have luck in love. Being so suddenly confronted with a compound catastrophe so overwhelming, even a bolder baker than Hans Kuhn very well might have been for a time aghast.

But as his wits slowly came together again Hans perceived that the game was not by any means lost, after all; on the contrary, it looked very much as though he had it pretty well in his own hands. Gottlieb was a thief, and all that was needed to complete the chain of evidence against him was his first baking of lebkuchen; for that as clearly would prove him to be in possession of the stolen recipe as what the widow could tell would prove that he had created for himself an opportunity to steal it. The most agreeable way of winning a father-in-law is not by force of threatening to hale him to a police court, but it is better to win him that way than not to win him at all, Hans thought; and he thought also that this was one of the occasions when it was quite justifiable to fight the devil with fire. So his spirits rose, and now he longed for, as eagerly as in the first moments of his loss he had dreaded, the production of such lebkuchen at the Café Nürnberg as would prove the proprietor of that highly respectable establishment to be neither more nor less than a robber.

Hans was both annoyed and surprised as time passed on and the "cakes succulent but damnatory" were not forthcoming from Gottlieb's oven. He himself went on making unsatisfactory lebkuchen of bad materials by a good formula, and Gottlieb continued to make unsatisfactory lebkuchen by a bad formula of the best materials. Orthodox German palates found nothing to commend and much to reprobate in both results. This was the situation for several weeks. Hans could not understand it at all. The subject was a delicate one to broach to Minna during their short but blissful interviews about dusk in the central fastnesses of Tompkins Square, at which interviews Aunt Hedwig winked and Herr Sohnstein openly connived by keeping watch for them against Gottlieb's possible appearance; for Hans had determined that until he had positive proof to go upon he would keep secret, and most of all from Minna, the dreadful fact of her father's crime. Therefore did he remain in a state of very harrowing uncertainty, with his plan of campaign completely brought to a stand.

During this period a heavy cloud hung over the Café Nürnberg. Gottlieb came fitfully to his meals; and when he did come, he ate almost nothing. Each day he grew more and more morose; each night, when poor Aunt Hedwig was not kept awake by her own sorrowful thoughts, her slumbers were, broken by hearing her brother pacing heavily the floor of the adjoining room. In some sort he made up for his loss of sleep at night by sleeping of an evening in the little room back of the shop, falling into restless naps (when he should have been restfully smoking his long pipe), from which he would wake with a start and sometimes with a cry of alarm, and would dart furtive horrified glances at Aunt Hedwig and Herr Sohnstein: who were doing nothing of a horrifying nature, only sitting cozily close together, more or less enfolded in each other's arms. It was a little inconsiderate on the part of the lovers, and very-hard on Minna, this extremely open love-making; for Minna's love-making necessarily was by fitful snatches amid the bleak desolations of Tompkins Square. They would try to comfort each other, she and Hans, as they stood cheerlessly under the chill lee of the music stand; but their outlook was a dreary one, and their efforts in this direction were not crowned with any great success. Sometimes as Minna came home again along the west side of the square, and saw in Spengler's window the wreaths of highly-artificial immortelles with the word "Ruhe" upon them in vivid purple letters, she fairly would fall to crying over the thought that until she should become a fit subject for such a wreath there was small chance that any real rest would be hers.

However, all this is aside from Gottlieb's horrified looks as he waked from his troubled slumbers—looks which would disappear as he became thoroughly aroused, but only to return again after his next uneasy nap. One day he startled Aunt Hedwig by asking her if she believed in ghosts. Remembering his severe words in condemnation of her casual reference to these supernatural beings, it was with some hesitation that she replied that she did. Still more to her surprise, Gottlieb turned away from her hurriedly, yet not so hurriedly but that she saw a strange, scared look upon his face, and in a low and trembling voice replied: "And so do I!"

And now the fact may as well be admitted frankly that a ghost was the disturbing element that was making

Gottlieb's life go wrong; that, as there seemed to be every reason to believe, was hurrying him towards the grave: for a middle-aged German who refuses to eat, whose regular sleep forsakes him, and who actually gives up smoking, naturally cannot be expected to remain long in this world.

It was the ghost of his dead wife. At first she appeared to him only in his dreams, standing beside the desk in which he had placed the stolen recipe for making lebkuchen, and holding down the lid of that desk with a firm but diaphanous white hand. Presently she appeared to him quite as clearly in his waking hours. Her face still wore an expression at once tender and reproachful; but every day the look of tenderness diminished, while the look of reproach grew stronger and more stern. Each time that he sought to open the desk that he might take thence the recipe and make his crime a practical business success, the figure assumed an air so terribly menacing that his heart failed him, and he gave over the attempt.

This, then, was the all-sufficient reason why the good lebkuchen that would have proved Gottlieb a thief was not for sale at the Café Nürnberg; and this was the reason why Gottlieb himself, broken down by loss of food and sleep and by the nervous wear and tear incident to forced companionship with an angry ghost, was drawing each day nearer and nearer to that dark portal through which bakers and all other people pass hence into the shadowy region whence there is no return.

Gottlieb Brekel never had been an especially pious man. As became a reputable German citizen, he had paid regularly the rent of a pew in the Church of the Redemptorist Fathers in Third Street; but, excepting on such high feasts as Christmas and Easter, he usually had been content to occupy it and to discharge his religious duties at large vicariously. Aunt Hedwig's bonnet invariably was the most brilliantly conspicuous feature of the entire congregation, just as the prettiest face in the entire congregation invariably was Minna's. But now that Gottlieb was confronted with a spiritual difficulty, it occurred to him that he might advantageously resort in his extremity to spiritual aid. He had no very clear notion how the aid would be given; he was not even clear as to how he ought to set about asking for it; and he was troubled by the conviction that in order to obtain it he must not only repent of his sin, but must make atonement by restitution—a possibility (for the devil still had a good grip upon him) that made him hesitate a long while before he set about purchasing ease for his conscience at so heavy a material cost. However, his good angel at last managed to pluck up some courage—it was high time—and, strengthened by this tardily given assistance, he betook himself in search of consolation within church walls.

The Church of the Redemptorist Fathers is a very beautiful church, and at all times—save through the watches of the night and through one mid-day hour—its doors stand hospitably open, silently inviting poor sinners, weary and heavy laden with their sins, to enter into the calm of its quiet holiness and there find rest. Tall, slender pillars uphold its vaulted roof, in the groinings of which lurk mysterious shadows. Below, a warm, rich light comes through the stained-glass windows: whereon are pictured the blessed St. Alphonsus Maria de Liguori, founder of the Redemptorist Congregation, blessedly instructing the chubby-faced choristers; and the Venerable Clement Hofbauer, "primus in Germania" of the Redemptorists, all in his black gown, kneeling, praying no doubt for the outcast German souls for the saving of which he worked so hard and so well; and (a picture that Minna dearly loved) St. Joseph and the sweet Virgin and the little Christ-child fleeing together through the desert from the wrath of the Judean king. And ranged around the walls on perches high aloft are statues of various minor saints and of the Twelve Apostles; of which Minna's favorite was the Apostle Matthias, because this saint, with his high forehead tending towards baldness, and his long gray beard and gray hair, and his kindly face, and even the axe in his hand (that was not unlike a baker's peel), made her think always of her dear father. The pew that Gottlieb paid for so regularly, and so irregularly occupied, was just beneath the statue of this saint; which, however, gave Minna less pleasure than would have been hers had not the next saint in the row been the Apostle Simon with his dreadful saw. It must have hurt so horribly to be sawed in two, she thought. In the dusky depths of the great chancel gleamed the white marble of the beautiful altar, guarded by St. Peter with his keys and St. Paul with his naked two-edged sword; and above the altar was the dead Christ on Calvary, with His desolate mother and the despairing Magdalene and St. John the divine.

Into this beautiful church it was that Gottlieb, led thither by his good angel, entered; and the devil—raging in the terrible but impotent fashion that is habitual with devils when they see slipping away from their snares the souls which they thought to win to wickedness—of course was forced to remain outside. But what feelings of keen repentance filled this poor sinning baker's heart within that holy place, what good resolves came to him, what light and refreshment irradiated and cheered his darkened, harried soul—all these are things which better may be suggested here than written out in full. For these things are so real, so sacred, and so beautiful with a heavenly beauty, that they may not lightly be used for decorative purposes in mere romance.

Let it suffice, then, to tell—for so is our poor human stuff put together that trivial commonplace facts often exhibit most searchingly the changes for good or for evil which have come to pass in our inmost souls—that Gottlieb, on returning to the Café Nürnberg, ate a prodigious dinner; and after his dinner, for the first time in a fortnight, smoked a thoroughly refreshing pipe.

Over his dinner and his pipe he was silent, manifesting, however, a sort of sheepishness and constraint that were not less strange in the eyes of Aunt Hedwig and Minna than was the sudden revival of his interest in tobacco and food. As he smoked, a pleasant thought came to him. When he had knocked the ashes from his pipe he ordered Minna, surlily, to bring him his hat and coat; he must pay a visit to that rascal Sohnstein, he said; and so went out. He left the two women lost in wonder; and Aunt Hedwig, because of his characterization of her dear Sohnstein as a rascal, disposed to weep. And yet, somehow, they both felt that the storm was breaking, and that clear weather was at hand. There was nobody in the shop just then; and the two, standing behind the rampart of freshly-baked cakes that was high heaped up upon the counter, embraced each other and mingled tears, which they knew—by reason of the womanly instinct that was in them—were tears of joy.

And that very evening the prophecy of happiness that was in their joyful sorrow was happily fulfilled.

Gottlieb did not return to the Café Nürnberg until after nine o'clock. With him came Herr Sohnstein. They both were very grave and silent, yet both exhibited a most curious twinklesomeness in their eyes. Neither Aunt Hedwig nor Minna could make anything of their strange mood; and Aunt Hedwig was put to her trumps

completely when she was sure that she saw her brother—who was whispering to Herr Sohnstein behind the pie-counter—poke the notary in the ribs. As to the joint chuckle at that moment of those two mysterious men there could be no doubt; she heard it distinctly! 14

Still further to Aunt Hedwig's surprise, for the Café Nürnberg never was closed before ten o'clock, and usually remained open much later, Gottlieb himself began to put up the shutters; and when this work was finished he came back into the shop and locked behind him the double front door. Almost as he turned the key there was a knock outside, as though somebody actually had been waiting in the street for the signal that the closing of the shutters gave.

"Another rascal would come in already, Sohnstein," said Gottlieb, gruffly. "Open for him, but lock the door again. I must go up-stairs."

Gottlieb, with a queer smile upon his face, left the little back room; and a moment later Minna uttered a cry of surprise, as Herr Sohnstein unlocked the door and her own Hans entered the shop. What, she thought, could all these wonders mean? As for Aunt Hedwig, she had sunk down into her big armchair and her bright black eyes seemed to be fairly starting from her head.

Herr Sohnstein locked the door again, as he had been ordered to do, and then brought Hans through the shop and into the little back room. Hans evidently was not a party to the mystery, whatever the mystery might be. He looked at Minna as wonderingly as she looked at him, and he was distressingly ill at ease. But there was no time for either of them to ask questions, for as Hans entered the room from the shop, Gottlieb returned to it. In his hand Gottlieb held the brown old parchment on which the lebkuchen recipe was written; the smile had left his face; he was very pale. For a moment there was an awkward pause. Then Gottlieb, trembling a little as he walked, crossed the room to where Hans stood and placed the parchment in his hands. And it was in a trembling, broken voice that Gottlieb said:

"Hans, a most wicked man have I been. But my dead Minna has helped me, and here I give again to thee what I stole from thy chest—I who was a robber." Then Gottlieb covered his face with his hands, and presently each of his bony knuckles sparkled with a pendant tear.

"My own dear father!" said Minna; and her arms were around him, and her head was pressed close upon his breast.

"My own good brother, thou couldst not be a thief!" said Aunt Hedwig; and, so saying, clasped her stout arms around them both.

"My good old friend! all now is right again," said Herr Sohnstein; who then affected to put his arms around the three, but really embraced only Aunt Hedwig. However, there was quite enough of Aunt Hedwig to fill even Herr Sohnstein's long arms; and he made the average of his one-third of an embrace all right by bestowing it with a threefold energy.

The position of Hans as he regarded this affectionately writhing group (that was not unsuggestive of the Laöcoon: with a new motive, a fourth figure, a commendable addition of draperies, and a conspicuous lack of serpents) would have been awkward under any circumstances; and as the circumstances were sufficiently awkward to begin with, he was very much embarrassed indeed. To Aunt Hedwig's credit be it said that she was the first (after Minna, of course; and Minna could not properly act in the premises) to perceive his forsaken condition.

"Come, Hans," said the good Hedwig, her voice shaken by emotion and the tightness of Herr Sohnstein's grip about her waist.

"Thou hadst better come, Hans," added Herr Sohnstein, jollily.

"*Wilt* thou come, Hans—and forgive me?" Gottlieb asked.

But it was not until Minna said, very faintly, yet with a heavenly sweetness in her voice: "Thou *mayst* come, Hans!" that Hans actually came.



"But it was not until Minna said, very faintly, yet with a heavenly sweetness in her voice: 'Thou *mayst* come, Hans!' that Hans actually came."

And then for a while there was such hearty embracing of as much of the other four as each of them could

grasp that the like of it all for good-will and lovingness never had been seen in a bakery before. And Gottlieb's good angel exulted greatly; and the devil, who had lingered about the premises in the hope that even at the eleventh hour the powers of evil might get the better of the powers of good, acknowledged his defeat with a howl of baffled rage: and then fled away in a blue flame and a flash of lightning that made the waters of the East River (which stream he was compelled to wade, thanks to General Newton, who took away his stepping-stones) fairly hiss and bubble. And never did he dare to show so much as the end of his wicked nose in the Café Nürnberg again!

"But thou wilt not take from me this little one, my daughter, Hans?" Gottlieb asked, when they had somewhat disentangled themselves. "Thou wilt come and live with us, and be my partner, and together we will make the good lebkuchen once more. Is it not so?"

Hans found this a trying question. He looked at Herr Sohnstein, doubtfully. "Ah," said Herr Sohnstein, "thou meanest that a very hard-hearted, money-lending man has hired a shop for thee and has made it the most splendid bakery and the finest restaurant on all the East Side, eh? And thou art afraid that this man, this old miser man, will keep thee to thy bargainings, already?"

Hans gave a deprecating nod of assent.

"Well, my boy Hans," Herr Sohnstein continued, with great good-humor, and sliding his arm well around Aunt Hedwig's generous waist again as he spoke—"well, my boy Hans, let me tell thee that that bad old miser man is not one-half so bad as thou wouldst think. Dost thou remember that when he had a garden made upon the roof of that fine bakery, and thou toldst to him that to make a garden there was to waste his money, what he said? Did he not say that if he made the garden God would send the flowers? And when that fine sign was made with 'Nürnberger Bäckerei' upon it, and thou toldst to him that to take that name of Nürnberg was not fair to his old friend, did he not tell thee that with his old friend he would settle that matter so that there should be no broken bones? For did he not know already that for these five years past it has been the wish of Gottlieb's heart to leave this old bakery—where his lease ends this very coming May—and to have just such a new fine bakery upon the Square as now you two together will have? Ah, this bad old miser man is not afraid but that his miser money will come back to him again; and he is not such a fool but that he had faith in his good friend Gottlieb, and knew that all would end well. And now, truly, all will be happiness: for Gottlieb, who has gained a good son, can spare to me this dear Hedwig, his sister, and he will come to church with us and see us all married in one bright day."

Aunt Hedwig looked up into Herr Sohnstein's face as he ended this long speech—not so fine, perhaps, as some of the speeches which he had delivered in the criminal courts, but much more moving and a great deal more genuine than the very best of them—and, with her eyes filling with happy tears, said to him: "And it is to thee that we owe it, this happiness!"

But Herr Sohnstein's face grew grave and his voice grew reverent as he answered: "It is not so, my Hedwig. We owe our happiness to the good God who has taken away the evil that was in our dear Gottlieb's heart." They all were very quiet for a little space, and upon the silence broke the sweet sound of the clock bell in the near-by church-tower.

When the last stroke had sounded Herr Sohnstein spoke again, and in his customary jolly tone: "As for these young ones here, we will unlock the door and let them walk out and look for a little at the music-stand that they love so well in the Square. And Hedwig shall sit beside me while we smoke our pipes, Gottlieb, eh? It is a long time already, old friend, since thou and I have sat together and smoked our pipes."

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK A ROMANCE OF TOMPKINS SQUARE ***

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