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AN IDYL OF THE EAST SIDE

By Thomas A. Janvier

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In the matter of raising canary-birds—at once strong of body and of note, tamed to associate with humanity on rarely friendly terms, and taught to sing with a sweetness nothing short of heavenly—Andreas Stoffel was second to none. And this was not by any means surprising, for he had been born (and for its saintly patron had been christened) close by the small old town of Andreasberg: which stands barely within the verge of the Black Forest, on the southern declivity of the Harz—and which, while famous for its mines, is renowned above

all other cities for the excellence of the bird songsters which there and thereabouts are raised.

Canary-birds had been the close companions of this good Andreas through all the fifty years of his lifetime. They had sung their sweet song of rejoicing at his birth—when the storks had brought him one day, while his father was far underground at work in the mines, and was vastly well pleased, when he came home all grimy at night, to find what a brave boy God had sent him by these winged messengers. They had sung over his cradle as his mother, knitting, rocked it in the midst of the long patch of sunlight that came through the low, wide window of the *bauernhaus*—the comfortable home with high-peaked roof, partly thatched and partly shingled, and with great drooping eaves, that was nooked snugly on the warm southern slope of the Andreasberg beside a little stream.



"The comfortable home with high-peaked roof, partly thatched and partly shingled."

They had sung him awake many and many a bright summer morning; and one of his tenderest memories of the time when he was a very little boy—and was put to bed, as little boys should be, at sundown—was of their faint, irregular, sleepy-headed chirpings and twitterings as they settled themselves to slumber on their perches for the night.

And when the time came that Andreas, grown to man's estate, being one-and-twenty years old, but not to man's strength, for he was small of stature and frail, was left lonely in the world—the good father killed by a rock-fall in the mines, and the dear mother thereafter pining away from earth, and so to the heaven that gave her husband back to her—it was his house-mates the birds who did their best to cheer him with their songs. And presently, as it seemed to him, these songs began to tell of new happiness in a new home far away across the mountains and beyond the sea—in that distant America where already his father's brother dwelt, and whereof he had heard wonderful stories of splendors and of riches incalculable all his life long. Indeed, the adventurous uncle had prospered amazingly in the twenty years of his American exile: rising, in due course, from the position of a young man of most promiscuous all work in a delicatessen shop in New York to the position of owner of the business, shop and all.

To go to a land where such things as this were possible seemed to Andreas most wise; and to be near his uncle, and the aunt and cousins whom he had never seen, his sole remaining kin, held out to him a pleasant promise of cheer and comfort in his loneliness.

But, in very truth, the sweet burden of the song of his birds was not born of thoughts of mere commonplace family affection and commonplace worldly wealth. Far more precious than these was the motive of the music that Andreas listened to and understood, and yet scarcely would acknowledge, even to himself; for in America it was that Christine now had her home—and that which set his heartstrings a-thrilling, as he listened to the song of his birds, was the deep, pure melody of love.

They had been children together, he and Christine, their homes side by side on the flanks of the Andreasberg; and when, three years before, she had gone with her father and her mother on the long journey westward, the heart of Andreas Stoffel had gone with her, and only his body was left behind among the mountains of the Harz. And Christine had dulled to him a little the keen edge of the sorrow of their parting by admitting that she left her own heart in the place of the heart that she bore away.

More than once had the rich uncle, owner of the delicatessen shop in New York, written to urge that his nephew—whose frailty of body made him unfit to enter upon the hard life of a worker in the mines—should come to America; and with his large knowledge of affairs the uncle had explained that the best bill of exchange in which money could be carried from Andreasberg to New York was canary-birds, that could be bought for comparatively little in the German town, and that would be worth in the American city a very great sum. And now on this shrewd advice Andreas acted. The dear old *bauernhaus* was sold, and its furnishing with it; and all the money thus gained, together with the greater sum that, little by little, his father had added to the store in the old leather bag (saving only what the journey would cost) was spent in buying the finest canary-birds which money could buy; so that for a long while after that time Andreasberg was desolate, for all of its sweetest singers were gone.

Thus it fell out that even in the time of his long journey his birds still sang to him; and his fellow-travellers by land and sea regarded curiously this slim, pale youth, who shyly kept apart from human converse and communed with his companions the birds. And so lovingly well did Andreas care for his little feathered friends that not one died throughout the whole long passage; and as the ship came up the beautiful bay of New York on a sunny May morning, while Andreas stood on the deck with his cages about him, very blithely and sweetly did the birds sing their hopeful song of greeting to the New World.

But it was a false song of hope, after all. Hearts were fickle thirty years ago, even as hearts are fickle today; and the first news that Andreas heard when he was come to his uncle's home (a very fine home, over a very fine shop, indeed) was that Christine had been a twelvemonth married—in very complete forgetfulness of all her fine words about the heart left behind her, and of all her fine promises that she would be true!

That there be such things as broken hearts is an open question. Yet when this news came suddenly to Andreas a keen agony of pain went through his heart as though it were really breaking; and with his hands pressed tightly against his breast, and with a face as pale as death itself, he fell to the floor. He would have died then very willingly; and it was very unwillingly—the fierce pain leaving him as suddenly as it had come—that he returned to life. Whatever may be said for or against the probability of broken hearts, there can be no question as to the verity of broken lives. That day, assuredly, the life of Andreas Stoffel was broken, and it never wholly mended again. For a while even the song of his birds lost all its sweetness, and seemed to him but a discordant sound.

Yet even a broken life, until it be snuffed out entirely, must battle in the world for standing-room. Luckily for Andreas, there was no need for him to question how his own particular battle should be made. The shape in which his little store of worldly wealth was cast obviously determined the lines on which he should seek maintenance. It was plain that by the rearing and the selling of canary-birds he must gain support until the time should come (and he hoped that it would come soon) when he might find release from this earth, where love so soon grows false and cold.

The rich uncle, who was a kind-hearted man, gave his help in the matter of finding a shop wherein the canary-bird business might be advantageously carried on, and gave also the benefit of his commercial wisdom and knowledge of American ways. And so, with no great difficulty, Andreas was soon established in a snug little place of his own on the East Side; where the friendly German speech sounded almost constantly in his ears, and where the friendly German customs obtained almost as completely as in his own dear German home. But, after all, the change was a dismal one. As his unaccustomed nose was assailed by the rank oil-vapors blown across from Hunter's Point he longed regretfully for the fresh, aromatic air that the south winds swept up and over his old home from the pines of the Schwarz-wald; and the contrast was a sorry one between a home on the slopes of the Harz Mountains and a home in Avenue B.

Yet had these been his only sorrows, and had he borne them—as he had hoped to bear them—with Christine, his lot would have been anything but hard. It was the deep heart-wound that he had suffered that made his life for many a year a very dreary one; too dreary for him to find much pleasure even in the singing of his birds. Now and again he met Christine. At their first meeting—in his uncle's fine parlor over the fine delicatessen shop, one Sunday afternoon—she was, as she well might be, confused in her speech and very shamefaced in her ways. Her husband was with her, quite a prosperous person, so Andreas was told, who had built up a great business in the pork and sausage line. He was a loud-voiced, merry man; and he aired his wit freely, though evidently with no intent to be unkind, upon the lover out of whose lucklessness his own luck had come. Even as pretty a girl as Christine could not have more than one husband at a time, said this big Conrad, with great good-humor; and so, since they could not both marry her, Andreas would do well to stop crying over spilled milk. They all would be very good friends, he added, and Andreas would be godfather to the first child. He put out his big hand as he made this proffer of friendship; and although Andreas could not refuse to clasp it, there was not, in truth, any great store of friendliness for Christine's loud-voiced husband in his heart. So soon as this was possible, he was glad to get away from the merry Sunday afternoon gathering in his uncle's fine parlor to the more sympathetic society of his birds. Yet there did not seem to him much music in the singing of his birds that day.

Christine was vastly proud of her big, rosy-faced, noisy husband, whose sausage-making greatly prospered, and to whom the American dollars rolled in bravely. But even in these days of her good-luck she sometimes found herself thinking—when Conrad's rough love-making was still further roughened, and his noisiness greatly increased, by too free draughts of heady German beer—of the gentler ways and constant tenderness of her earlier lover, whose love, with her own promise to be true to it, she had so lightly cast aside. Thoughts of this sort, it is true, did not often trouble her, but now and then they gave her a little heart-pang; and the pang would be intensified, sometimes, as the thought also would come to her that perhaps it was because she had broken her plighted troth that her many prayers to become a mother remained unanswered.

As time went on, Christine's sorrows came to be of a more instant sort. Her too jolly husband's fondness for heady beer grew upon him, and with its increase came a decrease in the success that until then had been attendant upon his sausage-making. His business fell away from him by degrees into soberer and steadier hands, which had the effect of making him take to stronger drinks than beer in order that he might the more effectually forget his troubles. He lost his merriness, and somewhat of his loudness, and became sullen; and the wolf always was shrewdly near the door. Thus, in a very bad way indeed, things went on for half a dozen years; then the big Conrad, what with drink and worry, fell ill—so ill, that for a long while he lay close to the open jaws of Death.

No one ever knew—though several people quite accurately guessed—why the wolf did not fairly get into the house during that dismal time. It is certain that when Conrad arose from his bed at last, a thin remnant of his former bigness, there were few high-priced birds left in Andreas Stoffel's little shop, where there had been a score or more when his sickness began. And, possibly, it was something more than a mere coincidence that nearly all of the few which remained were sold about the time that Conrad started again, in a very humble way, his business of sausage-making.

But if Andreas did thus sacrifice his birds for Christine's good, he did not grudge the sacrifice; for upon the big Conrad poverty and sickness had exercised a chastening and most wholesome influence. He got up out of

his bed a changed man; and the change, morally at least, was greatly for the better. Physically the result was less salutary; indeed, he never quite recovered from his sharp attack; and three or four years later, just as his business was getting into good shape again, he sickened suddenly, and then promptly paid to nature the debt that all men owe, and that his partial return to health had but a little time delayed.

But Christine was not left desolate in the world, for in the last year of her husband's life the strong yearning that so possessed her had been satisfied, and she was the mother of a baby girl. Andreas, claiming the fulfilment of the promise made so long before, had stood godfather to the little Rosa—for so, because of her fresh rosiness, was she named; and there was a strange, sorrowful longing in his heart when, the rite being ended, he came again to his lonely home and sat him down to be comforted by the singing of his birds: for while the children of Alice call Bartram father, there must be ever a weary weight of sadness in the world.

Life had not given so much of happiness to Christine—though, possibly, her happiness was equal to her deserts—that her hold upon life was a very firm one; and although she tried, for the little Roschen's sake, to put fresh strength into her grasp, the pressure of poverty and care and sorrow all combined to make her loosen it. Gently, a little at a time, her hold gave way. She knew what was coming, and so did Andreas. Once or twice they spoke about it; and spoke also of the old days on the Andreasberg, when began the love that in one of their hearts at least never had grown cold. And for this old love's sake Andreas promised that when she was gone the little Rosehen should find a home with him and with his birds. It was not a great while after this promise was made that the end came.

Some of the women laughed a little, and cried a little too, when, after the funeral, old Andreas—for so already had they begun to call him, because of his silent habit and quaint, old-fashioned ways—asked to be shown how a baby should be carried; and, being in this matter properly instructed, bore away with careful tenderness in his arms the little Rosehen to her new home. And when he was come home with her, the birds, as though in welcome—which seemed the more real because certain of the tamer ones among them came forth from their open cages and perched upon his arm—



"And when he was come home with her, the birds broke forth together into a chorus of sweetest song."

The good-wives living thereabouts were somewhat shocked at the thought of risking a baby's life in the care of a man who was qualified only to minister intelligently to the needs of baby canary-birds; yet were they not a little touched when they came—in unnecessary numbers, as Andreas thought—to give him the benefit of their superior wisdom in the premises by finding how well, in a queer, awkward way, he was discharging the duties of his office; and such gentleness in a man they all vowed that they had never seen. Yet it was not surprising that his quaint effort was crowned with so signal a success; as the birds could have explained, had their song-notes been rendered into human speech, Andreas had served an apprenticeship in caring for them which well fitted him to care with a mother's tenderness for this little girl, who, such was his love for her, seemed to him in all verity to be his own proper child. Benefiting by the advice which so lavishly was bestowed upon him, he presently became—as even the most critical of the women were forced to admit—a much better mother to the little Roschen than many a real mother might have been. It was, indeed, a sight worth travelling far to see, this of Andreas washing and dressing the baby in the sunny room at the back of the shop where hung the cages in which were the choicest of his birds. Roschen's first conscious memory was of laughing and splashing in her little tub in the sunshine, while all around her was a carolling of song.

In the course of the years which had drifted by since Andreas came with his birds to New York that May morning he had not made for himself many friends. To be a friend of birds a man must have a quiet habit of body, and great gentleness of nature, and a true tenderness of heart; which qualities tend also to solitariness, being for the most part harmed rather than fostered by association with mankind. As suited him well, his

business was not one that called him much abroad, nor that brought him greatly into contact with his fellows. In his good care the famous stock of songsters which he had brought with him from the fatherland had increased prodigiously; and even the sale of nearly all his best old birds, about the time that Conrad was ill, had worked, in the long run, to his benefit; for he had taken these birds to one and another of the great dealers, who thus came to know that in the little shop on Avenue B were to be found canaries the like of which for tameness and for rare beauty of note could not be bought elsewhere in all New York. Thereafter, as his young birds grew up, learning from Andreas himself the lesson of gentleness, and from his teaching-birds the lesson of sweetness of note, he had no lack of high-paying customers; so that from his business he derived an income far in excess of his modest needs. What went with the overplus was known only to certain of his country-folk, whose ill venture after greater fortune in America had proved to be but a fiercer struggle with still greater poverty than they had struggled with at home; and no doubt the angels also kept track of his modest benefactions, for such is reputed to be their way.

Many a wounded life was healed by these hidden ministrations on the part of Andreas; and, as rightly followed, great love there was for him in many a humble heart. But love of this sort is not friendship, for friendship requires some one plane at least of equality, and also association and converse, which conditions were lacking in the case of Andreas and those to whom he gave his aid; for the shyness of his nature led him to keep himself apart—save when the demand upon his charity was for that comfort and sympathy which can only be given in person—from those whose burdens he lightened; so that, for the most part, while the needed help was given the hand that gave it remained concealed.

Yet with a few of his country-folk in New York Andreas had established, in course of time, relations of warm friendliness. Of his kin only two cousins were left; for the rich, good uncle, from overmuch eating of his own delicatessen, had come to a bilious ending; and his uncle's widow, wise in her generation, had returned to her native town in Saxony, where she was enabled, by reason of the fortune that the delicatessen-shop had brought to her, to outshine the local baroness, and presently to attain the summit of her highest hopes and happiness by wedding an impoverished local baron, and so becoming a baroness herself. Her two sons were well pleased with this marriage. They were carrying on a great business in hog products, and had purchased for themselves fine estates in the country and fine houses in town. To be able to speak of their mother as "the baroness" suited them very well. Andreas saw but little of these gilded relatives—who yet were good-hearted men, and very kindly disposed towards him—for their magnificent surroundings were appalling to his simple mind. His few friends were more nearly in his own walk in life, and his friendship with them had been built up, as substantial friendship should be, by slow degrees.

At the Café Nürnberger, near by his own little shop—a bakery celebrated for the excellence of its bread, and for the great variety of its toothsome. German cakes—it was his custom to make daily purchases. With the plump, rosy Aunt Hedwig, who presided over the bakery, he passed the good word of the day shyly; he responded shyly to the friendly nod of the baker, Gottlieb Brekel, when that worthy chanced to be in the shop; and he shyly greeted a certain jolly Herr Sohnstein, a German lawyer of distinction, who was about the bakery a great deal and who popularly was believed to be a suitor for the plump Hedwig's plump hand. And these shy greetings might have gone on day after day for all eternity—or at least for so much of it as these several persons were entitled to live out on earth—without increasing one particle in cordiality, had there not been one other dweller in the bakery to act as a solvent upon the bird-dealer's reserve. This was the baker's daughter Minna, a child a year or two older than Roschen and cast in a sturdier mould.

There was that about Andreas which drew all children to him, even as his birds were drawn to him; and a part of the spell certainly was the love for children that always was in his heart. The small Minna was disposed not a little to caprice—for she was a motherless child, and Aunt Hedwig humored her waywardness a trifle more than was good for her—and she manifested, usually, a certain haughtiness towards those who sought to make friends with her. Yet of her own accord one day, when Andreas had ceased to be a stranger to her, she went up to him and offered him a kiss. Aunt Hedwig volubly explained to Andreas the honor that had been done him, and from that moment was disposed herself to be most friendly with him—as was also the baker, and as was also Herr Sohnstein, when the story of this extraordinary performance duly was related to them. And thus there began a real friendship between Andreas and these kindly souls that ever grew riper as the years went on. Sometimes of an evening, when his birds were all asleep and he was left lonely, Andreas would step around to the bakery; and would sit for an hour or so in the little room back of the shop, listening pleasantly to the talk of Gottlieb and Herr Sohnstein, as they smoked their long pipes, and even laughing in a quiet way at the merry sallies thrown into the conversation by Aunt Hedwig as she sat knitting beside the fire. Andreas himself rarely spoke—it was not his way; but there was such a sympathetic quality in his silence that his lack of words passed almost unobserved. Much more attention was attracted by the fact that he did not smoke—a fact that was looked upon as most extraordinary. But this also went unheeded after a while, as it well might in a small room wherein Gottlieb and Herr Sohnstein were smoking with such vigor that the air was a deep, heavy blue. It was because his birds did not like smoke that he had given up his pipe, he explained, simply; and only to Minna did it occur to say, after she had turned the matter over in her small mind for a while, that the Herr Stoffel must be a very kind-hearted man to go without smoking because the smell of tobacco-smoke wasn't nice for his birds.

When Andreas took the little Roschen to his home, that sad day after the funeral, the good Hedwig was among the first of the womenkind to go to him with tenders of instruction and advice; for while Hedwig was only, as it were, a matron by brevet, she was deeply impressed by the extent of her own knowledge in the matter of how motherless children should be raised; and it is but just to add that this self-confidence was fully warranted by the good results that had attended upon her care of her brother's child. Something of the story of Andreas and Christine, and something of what he had done for her and for her husband, was known in the bakery; and enough more was guessed to make these friends of his feel towards him, because of it all, a still stronger and more earnest friendship. Herr Sohnstein, who, being a lawyer with an extensive practice in the criminal courts, was not by any means in the habit of praising his fellow-men indiscriminately, even went so far as to say that Andréas was "better than any of the saints already." And when Aunt Hedwig, somewhat shocked at this comparison to the disfavor at a single thrust of the whole body of saints put together, reproved Herr Sohnstein for his irreverence, he stoutly declared that while his knowledge of saints was

comparatively limited—since they did not come within the jurisdiction of the courts—he certainly never had read of one who had shown a finer quality of charity, both in forgiveness and in self-sacrifice, than that which Andreas had displayed.

"Don't you make believe, Hedwig," Herr Sohnstein continued, "that if you go off after promising yourself to me and marry another fellow, that I'll take care of him when he's sick, and set him up in business when he gets well, and wind up by giving him a first-class funeral; and don't you get it into your head that I'm going to adopt any of your children that are not mine too—for I'm not a saint already, even if Andreas is."

To which general declaration Aunt Hedwig replied, with much spirit, that in the first place Herr Sohnstein had better wait until she promised to marry him—or to marry anybody, for that matter—before he took to preaching to her; that in the second place it was unnecessary for him to declare that he was not a saint, since only a deaf blind man would be likely to take him for one; and that in the third place he would do well to save his breath to cool his broth: at which lively sally they all laughed together very comfortably.

With these good friends Andreas consulted in all important matters relating to Roschen's well-being. Aunt Hedwig's practical advice in regard to clothing and food and general care-taking was of high value in the early years; and it was Gottlieb's suggestion, when the time came for beginning the sowing of seeds of wisdom in her small mind, that Roschen should go with his own Minna to the school where the Sisters taught; and of a Sunday the children went also together to be instructed by the Redemptorist Fathers in the way of godliness. So these little ones grew in years and in knowledge and in grace together, and towards each other they felt a sisterly love.



"And of a Sunday the children went together to be instructed by the Redemptorist Fathers."

Insensibly, too, as Roschen grew out of childhood into girlhood, her attitude towards her adoptive father changed. In the great matters of her life he still cared for her, planning always for her good, and withholding from her nothing suited to her station in life that money could buy. In the matter of her music, Aunt Hedwig declared that he was positively extravagant; yet accepted in good part his excuse that a voice so beautiful deserved to be well trained. It was her mother's voice alive again, he said; and as he spoke, Aunt Hedwig saw that there were tears in his eyes. But while Andreas still continued the larger of his parental duties, in the smaller matters of every-day life his adopted daughter now cared for him; so beginning to pay the debt (though to neither of them, such was their love for each other, did any thought of debt or of payment ever occur) that she owed him for all his goodness to her and to her dead father and mother in the past.

In truth, it was a pretty sight to see Roschen first beginning to play at keeping house for her father—for so she always called him—and then, in a little while, keeping house for him most excellently in real earnest. Here, again, the good qualities of Aunt Hedwig came to the front, for to her intelligent direction was due the rather surprising success that attended Roschen's ambitious attempt to become so early a *hausfrau*. Time and again was a great culinary disaster averted by a rapid dash on Roschen's part from her imperilled home to the bakery, where Aunt Hedwig's advice was quickly obtained and then was promptly acted upon. And if sometimes the advice came too late to avert the catastrophe—as on that memorable and dreadful day when Roschen boiled her sausage-dumplings without tying them in a bag—the lessons taught by calamitous experience caused only passing trouble, and tended, in the long-run, to good.

Indeed, by the time that Roschen was sixteen years old, and had so far passed through her apprenticeship that she no longer was compelled to make sudden and frantic appeals to Aunt Hedwig for aid, the little household over which she presided so blithely was very admirably managed; and it certainly was as quaint and as pretty an establishment as could be found anywhere upon the whole round globe. Whoever entered the little shop was greeted with such a thrilling and warbling of sweet notes that all the air seemed quivering with music, and the leader of the bird choir was a certain wonderful songster that Andreas had named the Kronprinz, and for which he repeatedly had refused quite fabulous sums. Andreas himself had bred the Kronprinz, and had given him the education that now made him such a wonder among birds, and that made him also of such great value as an instructor of the young birds whose musical education was still to be gained. After his adopted daughter, Andreas held this bird, and justly, to be the most precious thing that he owned.

But far sweeter than the singing of the prized Kronprinz—at least, to any but a bird-fancier's ears—was the singing that usually was to be heard above the trilling of the canaries, and that came from the room at the back of the shop where Roschen was engaged in her housewifely duties. It was such music as the angels made, Andreas declared, yet thinking most of all of one angel voice, the memory of which while still on earth was very dear to him; and even in the case of those who were moved by no tender association of the sweet tones of the living and the dead this estimate of Roschen's singing did not seem unduly high. Gustav Strauss, the son of the great bird-dealer over in the rich part of the town, vowed that Andreas was entirely right in his angelic comparison; and Ludwig Bauer, the young shoemaker, who lived next door but one, went even further, and said that Roschen's voice was as much sweeter than any mere angel's voice as Roschen herself was sweeter and better than all the angels in Paradise combined. There was nothing halting nor half-way in Ludwig Bauer's opinion in this matter, it will be observed.

The little room wherein Roschen sang so sweetly while at her work was their kitchen and dining-room and parlor all in one. As noon-time drew near there would come out into the shop from this room, through the open door-way, such succulent and enticing odors of roasting pork and stewing onions and boiling cabbages, that even Bielfrak—as the Spitz dog, who was chained as a guard close beneath the cage of the Kronprinz, appropriately was named—would fall to licking his chops as he hungrily sniffed these smells delectable; and Andreas suddenly would discover how hungry he was, and would make occasion to go to the door-way that he might see if the setting of the table was begun.

"Patience, father! Presently! You are as bad as Bielfrak himself!" Roschen would say; and as this attribution of gluttony to her father was a time-honored joke between them, they always would laugh over it pleasantly. And then Andreas would stand and watch his little *hausfrau* with a far-away look in his gentle blue eyes as she bustled about her work in the sunny room, her pretty dimpled arms bared to above the elbow, her lovely cheeks (because of much stooping over the fire) brighter even than the roses after which she had been named, her golden hair done up in a trig, tight knot (as Aunt Hedwig had taught her was the proper way for hair to be arranged while cooking was going on), and over her tidy print gown a great white apron, fashioned in an ancient German shape, as guard against the splash-ings and spillings which even the most careful of cooks cannot always control. In the sunny windows, opening to the south, flowers were growing; the Dutch clock, with pendulous weights made in the similitude of pine-cones, ticked against the wall merrily; Mädchen, the cat—who, being most prolific of kittens, notoriously belied her name—sat bunched up in exceeding comfort on a space expressly left for her upon the sunny window-ledge among the plants; steam arose in light clouds from the various pots upon the stove, and in the middle of the little room the table stood ready for the dinner to be served.

It was a very cheerful, home-like picture this; and yet many a time, as Andreas stood in the doorway and contemplated it, there would be tears in his eyes, and a strange feeling, half of glad thankfulness, half of very sorrowful longing, in his heart. She was so like her dead mother! In look, in speech, in motions of the body, in turns of the head, and in gestures of the hands she was Christine over again. Sometimes Andreas would forget his fifty years and all the sorrows of hope destroyed and irrevocable death-parting which his fifty years had brought him, and would fancy for a moment that he was young again, and that the dearest wish of his life was here fulfilled. And then she would call him "Father!" and his moment's dream of happiness would die coldly in his heart. Yet would there come to him always an after-glow of solacing warmth, as comforting thoughts would steal in upon him of the happiness not a dream—different from that which he had hoped for in his youth, but most sweet and real—that God's goodness had given him in these his later years.

Andreas truly was old Andreas now. As men's lives go, his age was not great; but sorrow had made him, as it had made many another man, far older than the mere number of years which he had lived. No, great store of strength had been his at the beginning, and the heart-break that he had suffered that day of his landing in the New World, when faith and love and hope all died together at a single blow, was less a sentimental figure than a physical reality. A like pang, yet not so keen, had wrenched him when he first came to know of Christine's sharp trial of poverty, and another seized him in the night-time following that sad day when she passed away from earth. And now of late, without any cause at all, these pangs had come again. Andreas was glad that they had come always when he was alone; for the pain was too searching to be wholly hidden, and his strong desire was that Roschen should be spared all knowledge of his suffering. In his own mind he perceived quite clearly what before long must come to pass. And it was a good happening, he thought, that in Gottlieb Brekel and Aunt Hedwig, and the excellent Herr Sohnstein, who, being a lawyer, could care well for the little store in the bank and for the little house that Andreas now owned, Roschen had such staunch and worthy friends. The only signs of these thoughts which Roschen perceived was that her father grew much keener in the matter of selling his birds at high prices; and that she was somewhat seriously reproved when, in her housekeeping or in her occasional expeditions to the fine shops in Grand Street, she ventured upon any small extravagance. But Roschen would laugh when thus reproved, and would declare that her father, who long had been a glutton, was become a miser already in his old age; whereat Andreas also would laugh, yet not quite so heartily as Roschen liked to hear him laugh when she cracked her little jokes upon him, and would say that sometimes a miser was not thought by his heirs so bad a fellow when they found what a snug little fortune he had left behind him all safe in the bank.

It was because of these thoughts, which he kept hidden from her, that Andreas began to take a much more active interest in what Roschen had to say from time to time about certain young men of her acquaintance. The young man of whom she spoke most frequently, and with a frank friendliness, was the handsome young assistant baker at the Café Nürnberger; a very capable young fellow, Hans Kuhn by name, who of late had brought that excellent bakery into great vogue because of the almost miraculously good lebkuchen which he baked there. But Andreas was not at all alarmed by this open friendship; for Hans and the stout Minna Brekel were to be married presently, and Roschen's feeling obviously was no more than hearty good-will towards the lover of her dear sister-friend. Fine chatterings she and Minna had, as Andreas inferred from her occasional brief reports of them, about the prodigious matrimonial event that was so near at hand. As Andreas also inferred, these chatterings put various notions of an exciting and somewhat disturbing sort into Roschen's little head. If one young girl might get married, so might another, no doubt she thought; and it is conceivable that from this mental statement of a rational abstract possibility her thoughts may have passed on to

consideration of the concrete possibilities involved in her own relations with the good-looking Gustav Strauss, son of the rich bird-dealer, or with the good-looking young shoemaker, Ludwig Bauer, who lived next door but one.

It is certain that when Roschen had arrived at the dignity of eighteen years, and her hitherto slim figure had taken on quite a plump, pleasing womanly roundness, the business visits of the young Herr Strauss to the little bird shop on the East Side became, as it struck Andreas, rather curiously frequent. And about this time, also, their neighbor Ludwig developed a very extraordinary interest in the business of raising canary-birds. It was a business that he long had thought of engaging in, he explained; and he truly did exhibit an aptitude in comprehending and in practising its mysteries that greatly exalted him in the little bird-dealer's esteem. The birds all seemed to recognize a friend in him; and even those which were but partially tamed, and were gentle only with Andreas himself, would perch willingly upon his hand. With Andreas it long had been a maxim that canary-birds were rare judges of human character, and the testimonial thus given to Ludwig's worth counted with him for a great deal—as did also the quite converse opinion of the birds in regard to the young Herr Strauss: from whom, notwithstanding his training in the care of their kind, they always flew away, and whose mere presence in the shop sufficed to make every bird ruffle himself and to chirp angrily in his cage. Yet Herr Strauss was most agreeable in his manners, and was a very personable young man. As for his riches, they spoke for themselves in his fine attire and in his fine gold watch and chain; and he also spoke for them, making frequent allusions to his comfortable present position in the world as his father's partner, and to his still more comfortable prospective position as his father's sole heir.

Ludwig, on the other hand, could not boast of any great amount of gilding upon, as Andreas believed it to be, the sterling metal of which he was made. But he was by no means what would be considered by the dwellers on the East Side a poor man. He was a steady and a good master-workman, with three or four apprentices under him; and all day long there was to be heard in his shop the cheerful, business-like sound of the thumping of short hammers on lap-stones, together with the loud clicking of the sewing-machine on which the delicate stitching of uppers was done. In the window, screened with a green curtain of growing vines—as is the pretty custom with most of the German shoemakers on the East Side—there always might be seen a pair or two of well-made stout shoes drying in the sunshine on their lasts; and with these a half-dozen or more pairs of shoes newly soled and heeled in a substantial, workmanlike fashion that would have done credit to Hans Sachs himself. Making and mending together, it was a very good business that Ludwig was doing; each year a better balance was lodged to his credit in the savings-bank, and the great golden boot that hung above his door-way told no more than the truth of the good work that was done and of the good money that was well earned within. From the stand-point of public opinion on the East Side, this thriving young shoemaker already was a man of substance, whose still more substantial future was assured.

There was in the nature of Ludwig much the same simplicity and gentleness that characterized Andreas—which common qualities, no doubt, had much to do with the strong friendship that there was between them; and all his neighbors, remembering how good a son he had been, and knowing also how deeply he still sorrowed for the dear mother lost to him in death, were more than ready to vouch for the goodness of his heart. Indeed, it was while trying to comfort him a little after this great sorrow fell upon him that Roschen first felt towards him something more than the passing interest that every maiden reasonably feels in every seemingly young man. Her disposition towards him, to be sure, even when thus stimulated by a sympathetic melancholy, was only that of friendliness; but it evidently was a friendliness so cordial and so sincere that it made quite a tolerable foundation upon which Ludwig freely built fine air-castles of hope. For his disposition towards Roschen was altogether that of a lover—as anybody might have known after hearing that decided expression of his opinion to the effect that all the angels singing together could not make music so sweet as the music of her voice.

In due time, in accordance with the decorous German custom, both of these young men made formal application to Andreas for permission to be ranked formally as Roschen's suitors; and, as it chanced, they both preferred their requests upon the same day. The young Herr Strauss undeniably had some strong points to make in his own favor; and he made them, to do him justice, without any hesitation or false modesty. As he truly said—speaking with an easy assurance, and airily fingering his gold watch-chain as he spoke—in marrying him Roschen would make an excellent match. In rather marked contrast with this justifiable yet not wholly pleasing assumption of self-importance, was the modest tone in which Ludwig urged his suit; yet was Andreas not unfavorably impressed by the fact that he dwelt less upon his deserts than upon his desire to be deserving; and that in connection with the creditable presentment that he made of the condition of his worldly affairs he did not insist, as the Herr Strauss had insisted, upon a minute examination of Roschen's dowry. As bearing indirectly yet forcibly upon a general consideration of the cases of these young men, the statement may be added that one of them had made for his proposed father-in-law several excellent pairs of shoes, while the other had made for—or, rather, against—him only a series of uncommonly sharp bargains.

To neither of the lovers did Andreas give an immediate answer. He must think a little, he said. The self-esteem of the Herr Strauss was a trifle ruffled by the suggestion that in such a case waiting of any sort was necessary; it seemed to him that an offer so desirable as that which he had made was entitled to instant acceptance. But Ludwig noted a certain trembling in the voice that bade him wait, and was not so completely engrossed with his own hopes of happiness but that he could perceive its cause and could feel sorrow for it. All these years had Andreas cared for this sweet Roschen, and had cherished her as his dearest treasure; and now, when the best time of her life had come, he was asked to give her up to a love that rested its claim for recognition upon nothing more substantial than promises of care taking which the future might or might not make good. That Andreas, under such circumstances, even should consider his request, touched Ludwig's good heart with gratitude; and the love that he had for a long while felt towards the old man led him now to pat an arm around his shoulder, as a son might have done, and to tell him that the home which he had ready for Roschen was ready for Roschen's father too. And Ludwig's voice also trembled a little. Andreas did not speak, but he put his thin hand into the big brown hand—much stained with the dark wax which shoemakers use and with long handling of leather—that Ludwig held out to him; and when they had stood together thus affectionately for a little time they parted, silently.

In truth, Andreas was more deeply moved than even Ludwig, for all his affectionate sympathy, had divined. His love for Roschen was a double love. With the love of a father he had watched over her these many years; yet even stronger had come to be his love for her as her mother born again. Sometimes, for whole days together, confusing the past with the present, he would call her Christine; and in his heart he ever gave greater room to the fancy that the life which he had hoped for was realized, and that the life which he was living was a dream. No wonder, then, that he asked for a little time in which to school himself to meet the fate that at a single blow brought destruction to his dear home on earth and to his dearer castle in the air.

Roschen was abroad that afternoon, and as Andreas, alone with his birds, turned over in his mind the answers which he must give to these young men—who sought to take to themselves, for the greater pleasure of their young lives, the single happiness which his old life had left to it—a great bitterness possessed his soul. When they had so much and he so little, it was cruel of them to seek to rob him thus, he thought. And their love, after all, was but the growth of a day, while his love had been growing steadily for forty years. Roschen was to him at once the sweetheart of his youth and the dear daughter of his age. How could these young fellows have the effrontery to place their own light love fancies in rivalry with this profound love of his that was rooted in all the years of a lifetime? His thoughts went back to those long-past days when he and Christine first had known each other as little children on the sunny slopes of the Andreas-berg, and when began the love that still was a living reality. And then he followed downward through the years his own love-story from this its beginning—the promise made in the twilight, while the south wind, laden with the sweet smell of the pine-trees of the Schwarzwald, played about them; the hard parting; his joyous journey with his birds westward across the sea; the black day when that journey ended; the years of sorrow which closed in still keener sorrow when his Christine was lost to him utterly in death; and then through the later years, which ever grew brighter and happier as his love for Christine was born anew and lived its strange, half-real life in his love for Christine's child, who also was the daughter given him by Heaven to cheer and comfort him in his old age. And now at the end of it all he was asked to give to another this sweet flower of love that for his happiness, almost by a miracle, as it seemed, a second time had bloomed. Was not this asking more of him, he thought, than rightly should be asked?

So heavy was the load of bitterness that oppressed him that even the singing of the Kronprinz, who was moved to break forth into song just then, failed for a time to arouse him. Yet presently the sweet sound penetrated the thick substance of his sorrow, and slowly turned the current of his sombre thoughts. Andreas loved all music; but because of the long train of associations which it invoked, and because of his skilled knowledge of its quality, there was no music so sweet to him as the singing of a bird. And when the singer was the Kronprinz, who sang with a mellow sweetness rare and wonderful, the music never failed to move his tender nature to its very depths. And so, as he listened to the singing of his bird, gentler and better thoughts possessed him; and then he reproached himself for the selfishness that had so filled his heart. He had no right, he thought, to stand in the way of Roschen's happiness—to compel her to take the old love that he had to give in place of the fresh young love that was offered to her. It was only a foolish fancy, this that he had cherished, that she was his sweetheart of long ago; it was the rational truth that he had to deal with—that she was his daughter, who had given him in full measure a daughter's love and duty, and for whom now, as was a father's duty, he must secure a good husband, who would care for her well and loyally when death had taken her father from her. This was the right conclusion, but all the strength of his will was required to bring him to it; and when at last He said to himself that what so plainly was right should be firmly done, the color suddenly left his face, and there went through his heart the sharp pang that he had learned to dread because of the agony of it. So wrenching was the pain that he could not repress a cry; but it was not a loud cry, and the sound of it was lost in the glad carolling of the Kronprinz's song.

When Roschen came home, a little later, she was frightened by finding her father looking so pale and worn; but the sight of her dear face, and her loving looks and words, revived him quickly, and her fear passed by. And she forgot her fear the sooner because of the momentous question which he then opened to her; for this last sharp seizure, keener than any that had preceded it, had warned Andreas that the duty which he had to do should not be delayed.

Very tenderly and lovingly did he speak of this heart matter to his little rose, his Roschen, as she sat beside him on a low stool, after the childish habit that she never had relinquished, while her head was nestled against his breast, and while he stroked her fair hair gently with his thin, delicate hand. And as he made clear to her all that she was to know, and explained to her that the decision between these rival lovers, or the rejection of them both, must be made by herself, the rosiness of this pretty Roschen became a deep crimson, and her head sank down upon her father's breast so that her face was hid from him; and as his arms clasped her closely to this loving haven she fell to crying gently there, as in such cases is a proper maiden's rather unreasonable way.

"Does the thought of lovers make thee sad, my little one?" Andreas asked; and he could not quite stifle, though he tried hard to stifle, the hope that perhaps Roschen might settle this present matter so that for a little time longer she still would be wholly his own.

"It is not the thought of lovers, dear father," Roschen answered, and her voice was low and broken, "but the thought that anything should take me away from thee."

The hope grew larger in the heart of Andreas, but he said: "The young Herr Strauss will make thee a fine husband, my daughter. He is a rich young man already, and—"

But Roschen promptly cut short this eulogy by raising her head abruptly and saying, with great decision: "He is a horrid young man, and nothing is good about him at all. He tries to cheat thee whenever he comes here to buy our birds; and—and he has said things to me; and he—and he tried to kiss me. Ugh! I will have nothing to do with the Herr Strauss—nothing at all!"

As she spoke, Roschen held up her head firmly and looked Andreas straight in the eyes. Her own eyes quite sparkled with anger, for all the tears that were in them; and the tone in which she pronounced the name of the Herr Strauss suggested pointedly that he was one of the various unpleasant creatures which humanity disposes of with tongs. All this was so emphatic that Andreas suffered his hope to grow yet stronger; for now, certainly, one of these lovers was put safely out of his way.

"And Ludwig, my little one?"

Roschen did not speak, but the angry sparkle that was in her eyes gave place to a softer and much pleasanter brightness, and a still deeper crimson showed in the pretty face that she hid again suddenly upon her father's breast.

"And Ludwig?" Andreas repeated.

But still Roschen did not speak. She put her arms around her father's neck, and nestled her head beneath his chin in a lovingly coaxing way that she had devised when she was a little child; and then she fell again to sobbing gently.

"Hast thou, then, nothing to say of this friend of ours, my daughter?" Andreas spoke eagerly, his hope being very strong within him now; for he was not versed in the ways of maidens, and the silence that would have been so eloquent to another woman or to a wiser man conveyed a very false notion to his mind.

"Thou hast told me, dear father, that Ludwig makes very good shoes," Roschen said at last, speaking hesitatingly, and in a voice so low that it was little more than a whisper.

"Yes," Andreas answered, somewhat taken aback by the irrelevant and very matter-of-fact nature of this remark; "yes, Ludwig makes good shoes."

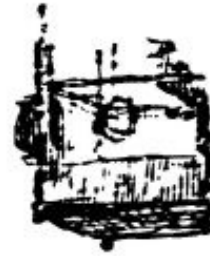
"And thou likest those which he has made for thee?"

"Truly. They are good shoes. They have cured my corns." Andreas spoke with feeling. He was sincerely grateful to Ludwig for having cured his corns. "But it is not of Ludwig's shoes that we are talking now, my Roschen," he went on. "It is of Ludwig himself. Hast thou nothing to say in answer to what he asks?"

Through her tears Roschen laughed a little, and she pressed her head still more closely beneath her father's chin. "Thou dear foolish one," she said, "canst thou not understand?" And then, after a moment of silence, she went on: "Hast thou not seen, dear father, how all the birds love Ludwig, and of their own accord go to him?"

Then a little light broke in upon Andreas, and the hope that he had cherished began to pale; but he answered stoutly: "Yes, the birds love him, for he is a good young man. And thou, my daughter?"

And Roschen answered in a voice so low and tremulous that Andreas divined rather than heard the words she spoke: "Perhaps it is with me also, dear father, as it is with the birds!"



"Perhaps it is with me also, dear father, as it is with the birds."

For a little time there was silence—for Andreas did not trust himself to speak while his hope was dying in his heart—then he raised the pretty head from its resting-place upon his breast, and as he kissed the forehead that was so like the dead Christine's.

"Perhaps it is with me also, dear father, as it is with the bird!" he said, reverently and tenderly: "For thy good and happiness, my dear one, may God's will be done." And as he clasped her again to him closely, the Kronprinz once more lifted up his voice in sweetest song.

When at last Roschen raised her rosy, happy face from her father's breast, she was so full of the wonder that had come to pass that she did not perceive his weary look, nor how pale he was; yet less pale now than a little time before when his face was unseen by her.

And presently the rosiness of this sweet Roschen grew still deeper as the shop door opened, with a great

tinkling of its little bell, and Ludwig entered. Andreas arose from his chair slowly—but neither of them noticed how feeble and labored were his motions, like those of a weak old man—and clasped in both of his own Ludwig's great brown hand, while with a look of love he said: "It is as thou wouldst have it, my son. This dear rose of my growing will bloom in thy garden now"—and he led Ludwig to where Roschen, who indeed was a true rose just then, was standing and put her hand in his.

And then, with a wistful eagerness, he went on: "And thou wilt care for her very tenderly and well, in my place? Thou canst not understand what my love has been; part of it, I know, has been foolishness—and that which thou wilt give her, if it be strong and steadfast, will be far better than ever was mine. For it is the way of life"—and here the voice of Andreas trembled and fell a little—"that for young hearts love also must be young."

"With God's help, dear father, I will be true and good to her," Ludwig answered, speaking with a stout heartiness that gave the ring of truth to his words; "and I will care well for her and for thee too."

"For me it will not be long," Andreas answered; "but give the care which thou wouldst have given to me to these my birds."

"Do not make us sad to-day, dear father, by such gloomy words," said Roschen, as she put her arms around his neck. "To-day a beautiful time of happiness has begun for us."

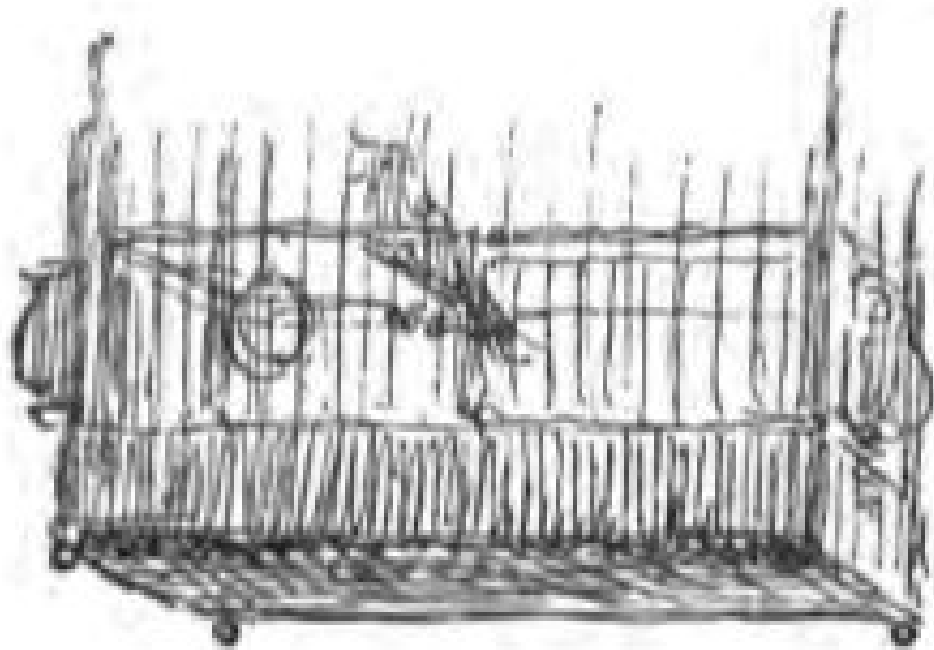
"Truly a beautiful time of happiness has begun," Andreas answered; "and I thank God that I have seen its beginning—for when grief comes to thee, and grief must come to us all, my daughter, thou hast now a strong young heart to stay and comfort thee. Yes, this is truly the beginning of a happy time." It was with a very tender smile that Andreas spoke these cheery words; and he added, cheerily: "Now go out into the Square, my children, and say to each other the words which I know are in your hearts. I will be glad in your happiness as I sit here among my birds."

And so Andreas, for the second time in his life, was left alone with his birds.

As he sat there, desolate, he buried his face in his hands, and between his thin fingers there was a glistening of tears. It was so hard to bear! They might have waited just a little while, he thought; it would not have been very long. For he forgot, and perhaps it would be unfair to blame him for forgetting, his own desire that before that little time should pass his Roschen should have assured to her the good care-taker whom she surely would need when the season of sorrow came. A little thrill of pain, a premonition of which he knew the meaning, ran through him.

Then it was that the Kronprinz began to sing. The notes at first were low and liquid, and they fell soothingly upon the ears, and so into the heart of this poor Andreas; and as they rose higher and fuller and clearer, light began to show for him where only darkness had been. The other birds, fired to emulation by these mellow warblings, joined in a sweet chorus, above which the strong rich notes of the Kronprinz rose in triumphant waves of harmony. And gladness came then into the heart of Andreas, and great thankfulness; for as the music of the birds exalted him he seemed to see with a strange clearness into the depths of the future, and all that he saw there promised well for those whom he loved. Such wonderful music was this that the very air about him seemed to be growing goldenly radiant; and with a certain awe creeping into his heart he seemed to hear low echoes of a music even more ravishingly beautiful that came faintly yet with a bell-like clearness from very far away.

Truly there was something strange about this music, for even Bielfrak, who was grown to be a deaf, rheumatic old dog now, heard it and was greatly moved by it. From his comfortable rug in the corner he raised himself painfully upon his haunches, and, pointing his nose upward, uttered a long melancholy howl. Then he came by slow effort across the room to where his master sat and laid his head upon his master's knee. And there was a puzzled look upon Bielfrak's face, for never before had he thus manifested the love that was in his honest heart without finding a quick response to it in the gentle touch of his master's hand. Yet now that hand remained most strangely still, and it was strangely white, and Bielfrak drew back suddenly from touching it—finding it most strangely cold.



The birds had been frightened into silence by Bielfrak's howl, but now they all burst forth again into the song of strange and wonderful sweetness that of a sudden they had learned to sing. In waves of harmony the chorus rose and fell, and above all sounded the notes of the Kronprinz, rich, full, clear, so delicately perfect as to seem a blending of sunlight and of sound. And in this song there was a strain that seemed to tell of restful triumph and eternal joy. And on the gentle, kindly face of Andreas, as he sat there so very quietly while all the air around him with these sweet sounds was vibrant, there was a most tender smile that told of perfect peace.

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