



The King of Clubs and the Queen of Hearts

By

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Five and twenty ladies, all in a row, sat on one side of the hall, looking very much as if they felt like the little old woman who fell asleep on the king's highway and awoke with abbreviated drapery, for they were all arrayed in gray tunics and Turkish continuations, profusely adorned with many-colored trimmings. Five and twenty gentleman, all in a row, sat on the opposite side of the hall, looking somewhat subdued, as men are apt to do when they fancy they are in danger of making fools of themselves. They, also, were en costume, for all the dark ones had grown piratical in red shirts, the light ones nautical in blue; and a few boldly appeared in white, making up in starch and studs what they lost in color, while all were more or less Byronic as to collar.

On the platform appeared a pile of dumb-bells, a regiment of clubs, and a pyramid of bean-bags, and stirring nervously among them a foreign-looking gentleman, the new leader of a class lately formed by Dr. Thor Turner, whose mission it was to strengthen the world's spine, and convert it to a belief in air and exercise, by setting it to balancing its poles and spinning merrily, while enjoying the "Sun-cure" on a large scale. His advent formed an epoch in the history of the town; for it was a quiet old village, guiltless of bustle, fashion, or parade, where each man stood for what he was; and, being a sagacious set, every one's true value was pretty accurately known. It was a neighborly town, with gossip enough to stir the social atmosphere with small gusts of interest or wonder, yet do no harm. A sensible, free-and-easy town, for the wisest man in it wore the worst boots, and no one thought the less of his understanding; the belle of the village went shopping with a big sun-bonnet and tin pail, and no one found her beauty lessened; oddities of all sorts ambled peacefully about on their various hobbies, and no one suggested the expediency of a trip on the wooden horse upon which the chivalrous South is always eager to mount an irrepressible abolitionist. Restless people were soothed by the lullaby the river sang in its slow journey to the sea, old people found here a pleasant place to make ready to die in, young people to survey the world from, before taking their first flight, and strangers looked back upon it, as a quiet nook full of ancient legends and modern lights, which would keep its memory green when many a gayer spot was quite forgotten. Anything based upon common sense found favor with the inhabitants, and Dr. Turner's theories, being eminently so, were accepted at once and energetically carried out. A sort of heathen revival took place, for even the ministers and deacons turned Musclemen; old ladies tossed bean-bags till their caps were awry, and winter roses blossomed on

their cheeks; school-children proved the worth of the old proverb, "An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure," by getting their backs ready before the burdens came; pale girls grew blithe and strong swinging their dumb namesakes; and jolly lads marched to and fro embracing clubs as if longevity were corked up in those wooden bottles, and they all took "modest quenchers" by the way.

August Bopp, the new leader of the class, was a German possessing but a small stock of English, though a fine gymnast; and, being also a bashful man, the appointed moment had no sooner arrived than he found his carefully prepared sentences slipping away from his memory as the ice appears to do from under unhappy souls first mounted upon skates. An awful silence reigned; Mr. Bopp glanced nervously over his shoulder at the staring rows, more appalling in their stillness than if they had risen up and hooted at him, then piling up the bags for the seventh time, he gave himself a mental shake, and, with a crimson visage, was about to launch his first "Ladees und gentlemen," when the door opened, and a small, merry-faced figure appeared, looking quite at ease in the novel dress, as, with a comprehensive nod, it marched straight across the hall to its place among the weaker vessels.

A general glance of approbation followed from the gentlemen's side, a welcoming murmur ran along the ladies', and the fifty pairs of eyes changed their focus for a moment. Taking advantage of which, Mr. Bopp righted himself, and burst out with a decided,--

"Ladees und gentlemen: the time have arrived that we shall begin. Will the gentlemen serve the ladees to a wand, each one, then spread theirselves about the hall, and follow the motions I will make as I shall count."

Five minutes of chaos, then all fell into order, and nothing was heard but the leader's voice and the stir of many bodies moving simultaneously. An uninitiated observer would have thought himself in Bedlam; for as the evening wore on, the laws of society seemed given to the winds, and humanity gone mad. Bags flew in all directions, clubs hurtled through the air, and dumb-bells played a castinet accompaniment to peals of laughter that made better music than any band. Old and young gave themselves up to the universal merriment, and, setting dignity aside, played like happy-

hearted children for an hour. Stout Dr. Quackenboss gasped twice round the hall on one toe; stately Mrs. Primmins ran like a girl of fifteen to get her pins home before her competitor; Tommy Inches, four feet three, trotted away with Deacon Stone on his shoulder, while Mr. Steepleton and Miss Maypole hopped together like a pair of lively young ostriches, and Ned Amandine, the village beau, blew arrows through a pop-gun, like a modern Cupid in pegtops instead of pinions.

The sprightly young lady whose entrance had been so opportune seemed a universal favorite, and was overwhelmed with invitations to "bag," "hop," and "blow" from the gentlemen who hovered about her, cheerfully distorting themselves to the verge of dislocation in order to win a glance of approbation from the merry black eyes which were the tapers where all these muscular moths singed their wings. Mr. Bopp had never seen such a little piece of earnestness before, and began to think the young lady must be training for a boat-race or the ring. Her dumb-bells flew about till a pair of white arms looked like the sails of a windmill; she hit out from the shoulder with a vigor that would have done execution had there been anything but empty air to "punish;" and the "one, two, three!" of the Zouave movement went off with a snap; while the color deepened from pink to scarlet in her cheeks, the black braids tumbled down upon her shoulders, and the clasp of her belt flew asunder; but her eye seldom left the leader's face, and she followed every motion with an agility and precision quite inspiring. Mr. Bopp's courage rose as he watched her, and a burning desire to excel took possession of him, till he felt as if his muscles were made of India-rubber, and his nerves of iron. He went into his work heart and soul, shaking a brown mane out of his eyes, issuing commands like general at the head of his troops, and keeping both interest and fun in full blast till people laughed who had not laughed heartily for years; lungs got their fill for once, unsuspected muscles were suddenly developed, and, when the clock struck ten, all were bubbling over with that innocent jollity which makes youth worth possessing, and its memory the sunshine of old age.

The last exercise was drawing to a close, and a large ring of respectable members of society were violently sitting down and rising up in a manner which would have scandalized Miss Wilhelmina Carolina Amelia S. Keggs to the last degree, when Mr. Bopp was seen to grow very pale, and drop in a manner which it was evident his pupils were not expected to follow.

At this unexpected performance, the gentlemen took advantage of their newly-acquired agility to fly over all obstacles and swarm on to the platform, while the ladies successfully lessened their unusual bloom by staring wildly at one another and suggesting awful impossibilities. The bustle subsided, as suddenly as it arose; and Mr. Bopp, rather damp about the head and dizzy about the eye, but quite composed, appeared, saying, with the broken English and appealing manner which caused all the ladies to pronounce him "a dear" on the spot,--

"I hope you will excuse me for making this lesson to be more short than it should; but I have exercised nine hours this day, and being just got well from an illness, I have not recovered the strength I have lost. Next week I shall be able to take time by the hair, so that I will not have so much engagements in one day. I thank you for your kindness, and say good-evening."

After a round of applause, as a last vent for their spirits, the class dispersed, and Mr. Bopp was wrestling with a vicious pin as he put on his collar ("a sure sign he has no mother to see to his buttons, poor lamb!" thought Mrs. Fairbairn, watching him from afar); when the sprightly young lady, accompanied by a lad the masculine image of herself, appeared upon the platform, saying, with an aspect as cordial as her words,--

"Good-evening, Professor. Allow me to introduce my brother and myself, Dick and Dolly Ward, and ask you in my mother's name, to come home with us; for the tavern is not a cosy place, and after all this exertion you should be made comfortable. Please come, for Dr. Turner always stayed with us, and we promised to do the honors of the town to any gentleman he might send to supply his place."

"Of course we did; and mother is probably freezing her blessed nose off watching for us; so don't disappoint her, Bopp. It's all settled, the sleigh's at the door, and here's your coat; so, come on!"

Dick was a fine sample of young America in its best aspect, and would have said "How are you?" to Louis Napoleon if he had been at hand, and have done it so heartily that the great Frenchman would have found it hard to resist giving as frank an answer. Therefore no wonder that Mr. Bopp

surrendered at once; for the young gentleman took possession of him bodily, and shook him into his coat with an amiable impetuosity which developed a sudden rent in the well-worn sleeve thereof, and caused an expression of dismay, to dawn upon the owner's countenance.

"Beg pardon; never mind; mother'll sew you up in two seconds, and your overcoat will hide the damage. Where is it? I'll get it, and then we'll be off."

Mr. Bopp colored distressfully, looked up, looked down, and then straight into the lad's face, saying simply,--

"Thank you; I haf no coat but one."

Dick opened his eyes, and was about opening his mouth also, for the exit of some blunderingly good-natured reply, when a warning poke from his sister restrained him, while Dolly, with the innocent hypocrisy which is as natural to some women as the art of tying bows, said, as she led the way out,--

"You see the worth of gymnastics, Dick, in this delightful indifference to cold. I sincerely hope we may reach a like enviable state of health, and look upon great-coats as effeminate, and mufflers a weakness of the flesh. Do you think we shall, Mr. Bopp?"

He shook his head with a perceptible shiver as the keen north wind smote him in the face, but answered, with a look half merry, half sad,--

"It is not choice, but what you call necessitee, with me; and I truly hope you may never haf to exercise to keep life in you when you haf sold your coat to pay a doctor's bill, or teach the art of laughing while your heart is heavy as one stone. You would not like that, I think, yet it is good, too; for small things make much happiness for me, and a kind word is often better than a rix dollar."

There was something in the young man's tone and manner which touched and won his hearers at once. Dolly secretly resolved to put an extra blanket on his bed, and shower kind words upon him, while Dick tucked him up in buffalo robes where he sat helplessly beaming down upon the red hood at his side.

A roaring fire shone out hospitably as they came, and glorified the pleasant room, dancing on ancient furniture and pictured walls till the jolly old portraits seemed to wink a visible welcome. A cheery-faced little woman, like an elder Dolly, in a widow's cap, stood on the threshold, with a friendly greeting for the stranger, which warmed him as no fire could have done.

If August Bopp had been an Englishman, he would have felt much, but said less on that account; if he had been an American, he would have tried to conceal his poverty, and impress the family with his past grandeur, present importance, or future prospects; being a German, he showed exactly what he was, with the childlike frankness of his race. Having had no dinner, he ate heartily of what was offered him; being cold, he basked in the generous warmth; being homesick and solitary, he enjoyed the genial influences that surrounded him, and told his story, sure of sympathy; for even in prosaic Yankeedom he had found it, as travellers find Alpine flowers among the snow.

It was a simple story of a laborious boyhood, being early left an orphan, with a little sister dependent on him, till an opening in America tempted him to leave her and come to try and earn a home for her and for himself. Sickness, misfortune, and disappointment had been his companions for a year; but he still worked, still hoped, and waited for the happy hour when little Ulla should come to him across the sea. This was all; yet as he told it, with the magical accompaniments of gesture, look, and tone, it seemed full of pathos and romance to his listeners, whose faces proved their interest more flatteringly than their words.

Mrs. Ward mended the torn coat with motherly zeal, and gave it many of those timely stitches which thrifty women love to sew. The twins devoted themselves to their guest, each in a characteristic manner. Dick, as host, offered every article of refreshment the house afforded, goaded the fire to a perpetual roar, and discussed gymnastics, with bursts of boyish admiration

for the grace and skill of his new leader, whom he christened King of Clubs on the spot. Dolly made the stranger one of them at once by talking bad German, as an offset to his bad English, called him Professor in spite of all denials, and unconsciously symbolized his future bondage by giving him a tangled skein to hold for the furtherance of her mother's somewhat lengthened job.

The Cupid of the present day was undoubtedly "raised" in Connecticut; for the ingenuity and shrewdness of that small personage could have sprung from no other soil. In former times his stratagems were of the romantic order. Colin bleated forth his passion in rhyme, and cast sheep's eyes from among his flock, while Phyllis coquetted with her crook and stuck posies in his hat; royal Ferdinand and Miranda played at chess; Ivanhoe upset his fellow-men like ninepins for love of lackadaisical Rowena; and "sweet Moll" turned the pages while her lover, Milton, sang. But in our day the jolly little god, though still a heathen in the severe simplicity of his attire, has become modernized in his arts, and invented huskings, apple-bees, sleigh-rides, "drop-ins," gymnastics, and, among his finer snares, the putting on of skates, drawing of patterns, and holding skeins,--the last-named having superior advantages over the others, as all will testify who have enjoyed one of those hand-to-hand skirmishes.

August Bopp was three and twenty, imaginative, grateful, and heart-whole; therefore, when he found himself sitting opposite a blooming little damsel, with a head, bound by a pretty red snood, bent down before him, and very close to his own a pair of distracting hands, every finger of which had a hit to make, and made it, it is not to be denied that he felt himself entering upon a new and very agreeable experience. Where could he look but in the face opposite, sometimes so girlishly merry and sometimes so beautifully shy? It was a winning face, full of smooth curves, fresh colors, and sunshiny twinkles,--a face every one liked, for it was as changeful as an April day, and always pleasant, whether mischievous, mournful, or demure.

Like one watching a new picture, Mr. Bopp inspected every feature of the countenance so near his own; and, as his admiration "grew by what it fed on," he fell into a chronic state of stammer and blush; for the frank eyes were very kind, the smooth cheeks reflected a pretty shade of his own crimson, and the smiling lips seemed constantly suggesting, with mute eloquence, that they were made for kissing, while the expressive hands

picked at the knots till the Professor felt like a very resigned fly in the web of a most enticing young spider.

If the King of Clubs saw a comely face, the Queen of Hearts saw what observing girls call a "good face;" and with a womanly respect for strength, the manliest attribute of man, she admired the broad shoulders and six feet one of her new master. This face was not handsome, for, true to his fatherland, the Professor had an eminent nose, a blonde beard, and a crop of "bonny brown hair" long enough to have been gathered into a ribbon, as in the days of Schiller and Jean Paul; but Dolly liked it, for its strength was tempered with gentleness; patience and courage gave it dignity, and the glance that met her own was both keen and kind.

The silk was wound at last, the coat repaired. Dick with difficulty concealed the growing stiffness of his shoulders, while Dolly turned up the lamp, which bluntly hinted bedtime, and Mrs. Ward successfully devoured six gapes behind her hand, but was detected in the seventh by Mr. Bopp, who glanced at the clock, stopped in the middle of a sentence, and, with a hurried "goot-night," made for the door without the least idea whither he was going. Piloted by Dick, he was installed in the "best chamber," where his waking dreams were enlivened by a great fire, and his sleeping ones by an endless succession of skeins, each rapturously concluded in the style of Sam Weller when folding carpets with the pretty maid.

"I tell you, Dolly, it won't do, and I'm not going to have it."

"Oh, indeed; and how will you help it, you absurd boy?"

"Why, if you don't stop it, I'll just say to Bopp,--'Look here, my dear fellow; this sister of mine is a capital girl, but she will flirt and'"--

"And it's a family failing, Dick," cut in Dolly.

"Not a bit of it. I shall say, 'Take care of your heart, Bopp, for she has a bad habit of playing battle-door and shuttle-cock with these articles; and, though it may be very good fun for a time, it makes them ache when they get a last knock and are left to lie in a corner.'"

"What eloquence! But you'd never dare to try it on Mr. Bopp; and I shouldn't like to predict what would happen to you if you did."

"If you say 'dare,' I'll do it the first minute I see him. As for consequences, I don't care that for 'em;" and Dick snapped his fingers with an aspect of much disdain. But something in his sister's face suggested the wisdom of moderation, and moved him to say, less like a lord of creation, and more like a brother who privately adored his sister, but of course was not going to acknowledge such a weakness,--

"Well, but soberly, now, I wish you wouldn't plague Bopp; for it's evident to me that he is hit; and from the way you've gone on these two months, what else was to be expected? Now, as the head of the family,--you needn't laugh, for I am,--I think I ought to interfere; and so I put it to you,--do you like him, and will you have him? or are you merely amusing yourself, as you have done ever since you were out of pinafores? If you like him, all serene. I'd rather have him for a brother than any one I know, for he's a regular trump though he is poor; but if you don't, I won't have the dear old fellow floored just because you like to see it done."

It may here be remarked that Dolly quite glowed to hear her brother praise Mr. Bopp, and that she indorsed every word with mental additions of double warmth; but Dick had begun all wrong, and, manlike, demanded her confidence before she had made up her mind to own she had any to bestow; therefore nothing came of it but vexation of spirit; for it is a well-known fact that, on some subjects, if boys will tease, girls will fib, and both maintain that it is right. So Dolly whetted her feminine weapon, and assumed a lofty superiority.

"Dear me! what a sudden spasm of virtue; and why, if it is such a sin, has not the 'head of the house' taken his sister to task before, instead of indulging in a like degeneracy, and causing several interesting persons to

tear their hair, and bewail his forgetfulness, when they ought to have blessed their stars he was out of the way?"

Dick snowballed a dozing crow and looked nettled; for he had attained that age when "Tom Brown at Oxford" was the book of books, the twelfth chapter being the favorite, and five young ladies having already been endowed with the significant heliotrope flower; all of which facts Dolly had skilfully brought to mind, as a return-shot for his somewhat personal remarks.

"Bah! they were only girls, and it don't amount to anything among us young folks; but Bopp is a grown man, and you ought to respect him too much to play such pranks with him. Besides, he's a German, and more tender-hearted than we rough Yankees, as any one can see by the way he acts when you snub him. He is proud, too, for all his meekness, and waits till he's sure you like him before he says anything; and he'll need the patience of a family of Jobs at the rate you're going on,--a honey-pot one day and a pickle-jar the next. Do make up your mind, and say yes or no, right off, Dolly."

"Would you have me meet him at the door with a meek courtesy, and say, 'Oh, if you please, I'm ready to say Yes, thank you, if you'll be good enough to say, Will you'?"

"Don't be a goose, child; you know I mean nothing of the kind; only you girls never will do anything straight ahead if you can dodge and fuss and make a mess of it. Just tell me one thing: Do you, or don't you, like old Bopp?"

"What an elegant way to put it! Of course I like him well enough as a leader; he is clever, and sort of cunning, and I enjoy his funny ways; but what in the world should I do with a great yellow-haired laddie who could put me in his pocket, and yet is so meek that I should never find the heart to henpeck him? You are welcome to him; and since you love him so much, there's no need of my troubling myself on his account; for with you for a friend, he can have no earthly wish ungratified."

"Don't try to be cutting, Dolly, because you look homely when you do, and it's a woman's business to be pretty, always. All I've got to say is, you will be in a nice state of mind if you damage Bopp; for every one likes him, and will be down upon you for a heartless little wretch; and I shan't blame them, I promise you."

"I wish the town wouldn't put its fingers in other people's pies, and you may tell it so, with my compliments; and all I have to say is, that you men have more liberty than you know what to do with, and we women haven't enough; so it's perfectly fair that we should show you the worth of the thing by taking it away now and then. I shall do exactly as I please; dance, walk, ride, and flirt, whenever and with whomever I see fit; and the whole town, with Mr. Dick Ward at their head, can't stop me if I choose to go on. Now, then, what next?" After which declaration of independence, Dolly folded her arms, wheeled about and faced her brother, a spirited statuette of Self Will, in a red hood and mittens.

Dick sternly asked,--

"Is that your firm decision, ma'am?"

"Yes."

"And you will not give up your nonsense?"

"No."

"You are quite sure you don't care for Bopp?"

"I could slap him with all my heart."

"Very good. I shall see that you don't get a chance."

"I wouldn't try a skirmish, for you'll get beaten, Dick."

"We'll prove that, ma'am."

"We will, sir."

And the belligerents loftily paced up the lawn, with their purpose so well expressed by outward signs, that Mrs. Ward knew, by the cock of Dick's hat and the decided tap of Dolly's heels, that a storm was brewing, before they entered the door.

This fraternal conversation took place some two months from the evening of Mr. Bopp's advent, as the twins were strolling home from school, which school must be briefly alluded to in order to explain the foregoing remarks. It was an excellent institution in all respects; for its presiding genius stood high in the townfolks' esteem, and might have served as an example to Dr. Watts' "busy bee," in the zeal with which he improved his "shining hours," and laid up honey against the winter, which many hoped would be long in coming. All manner of aids were provided for sprouting souls and bodies, diversions innumerable, and society, some members of which might have polished off Alcibiades a la Socrates, or entertained Plato with "æsthetic tea." But, sad to relate, in spite of all these blessings, the students who resorted to this academy possessed an Adam-and-Eve-like proclivity for exactly what they hadn't got and didn't need; and, not contented with the pleasures provided, must needs play truant with that young scamp Eros, and turn the ancient town topsy-turvy with modern innovations, till scandalized spinsters predicted that the very babies would catch the fever, refuse their panada in jealous gloom, send billet-doux in their rattles, elope in wicker-carriages, and set up housekeeping in dolls' houses, after the latest fashion.

Certain inflammable Southerners introduced the new game, and left such romantic legends of their loves behind them that their successors were fired with an ambition to do the like, and excel in all things, from cricket to captivation.

This state of things is not to be wondered at; for America, being renowned as a "fast" nation, has become a sort of hotbed, and seems to force humanity into early bloom. Therefore, past generations must not groan over the sprightly present, but sit in the chimney-corner and see boys and girls play the game which is too apt to end in a checkmate for one of the players. To many of the lookers-on, the new order of things was as good as a puppet-show; for, with the enthusiasm of youth, the actors performed their parts heartily, forgetting the audience in their own earnestness. Bless us! what revolutions went on under the round jackets, and what love-tokens lay in the pockets thereof. What plots and counterplots occupied the heads that wore the innocent-looking snoods, and what captives were taken in the many-colored nets that would come off and have to be taken care of. What romances blossomed like dandelions along the road to school, and what tales the river might have told if any one could have learned its musical speech. How certain gates were glorified by daily lingerings thereat, and what tender memories hung about dingy desks, old pens, and books illustrated with all manner of symbolical designs.

Let those laugh who will; older and wiser men and women might have taken lessons of these budding heroes and heroines; for here all was honest, sincere, and fresh; the old world had not taught them falsehood, self-interest, or mean ambitions. When they lost or won, they frankly grieved or rejoiced, and wore no masks except in play, and then got them off as soon as possible. If blue-eyed Lizzie frowned, or went home with Joe, Ned, with a wisdom older lovers would do well to imitate, went in for another game of foot-ball, gave the rejected apple to little Sally, and whistled "Glory Hallelujah," instead of "Annie Laurie," which was better than blowing a rival's brains out, or glowering at woman-kind forever after. Or, when Tom put on Clara's skates three successive days, and danced with her three successive evenings, leaving Kitty to freeze her feet in the one instance and fold her hands in the other, she just had a "good cry," gave her mother an extra kiss, and waited till the recreant Tom returned to his allegiance, finding his little friend a sweetheart in nature as in name.

Dick and Dolly were foremost in the ranks, and expert in all the new amusements. Dick worshipped at many shrines, but most faithfully at that of a meek divinity, who returned charming answers to the ardent epistles which he left in her father's garden wall, where, Pyramus and Thisbe-like, they often chatted through a chink; and Dolly was seldom seen without a

staff of aids who would have "fought, bled, and died" for her as cheerfully as the Little Corporal's Old Guard, though she paid them only in words; for her Waterloo had not yet come.

With the charming, perversity of her sex in such matters, no sooner had Dolly declared that she didn't like Mr. Bopp, than she began to discover that she did; and so far from desiring "to slap him," a tendency to regard him with peculiar good-will and tenderness developed itself, much to her own surprise; for with all her coquetry and seeming coldness, Dolly had a right womanly heart of her own, though she had never acknowledged the fact till August Bopp looked at her with so much love and longing in his honest eyes. Then she found a little fear mingling with her regard, felt a strong desire to be respected by him, discovered a certain something which she called conscience, restraining a reckless use of her power, and, soon after her lofty denial to Dick, was forced to own that Mr. Bopp had become her master in the finer species of gymnastics that came in with Adam and Eve, and have kept all creation turning somersets ever since. Of course these discoveries were unconfessed, even to that best bosom friend which any of us can have; yet her mother suspected them, and, with much anxiety, saw all, yet held her peace, knowing that her little daughter would, sooner or later, give her a fuller confidence than could be demanded; and remembering the happiest moments of her own happy past, when an older Dick wooed another Dolly, she left that flower, which never can be forced, to open at its own sweet will.

Meanwhile, Mr. Bopp, though carrying his heart upon his sleeve, believed his secret buried in the deepest gloom, and enjoyed all the delightful miseries lovers insist upon making for themselves. When Dolly was quiet and absent, he became pensive, the lesson dragged, and people fancied they were getting tired of the humbug; when Dolly was blithe and bland, he grew radiant, exercised within an inch of his life as a vent for his emotions, and people went home declaring gymnastics to be the crowning triumph of the age; and when Dolly was capricious, Mr. Bopp, became a bewildered weathercock, changing as the wind changed, and dire was the confusion occasioned thereby.

Like the sage fowl in the story, Dick said nothing, but "kept up a terrible thinking," and, not having had experience enough to know that when a woman says No she is very apt to mean Yes, he took Dolly at her word.

Believing it to be his duty to warn "Old Bopp," he resolved to do it like a Roman brother, regardless of his own feelings or his sister's wrath, quite unconscious that the motive power in the affair was a boyish love of ruling the young person who ruled every one else.

Matters stood thus, when the town was electrified by a general invitation to the annual jubilee at Jollyboys Hall, which this spring flowered into a masquerade, and filled the souls of old and young with visions of splendor, frolic, and fun. Being an amiable old town, it gave itself up, like a kind grandma, to the wishes of its children, let them put its knitting away, disturb its naps, keep its hands busy with vanities of the flesh, and its mind in a state of chaos for three mortal weeks. Young ladies were obscured by tarletan fogs, behind which they concocted angels' wings, newspaper gowns, Minnehaha's wampum, and Cinderella's slippers. Inspired but incapable boys undertook designs that would have daunted a costumer of the first water, fell into sloughs of despond, and, emerging, settled down from peers and paladins into jovial tars, friar waterproofs, and officers in miscellaneous uniforms. Fathers laughed or grumbled at the whole thing and advanced pecuniary loans with good or ill grace, as the case might be; but the mothers, whose interest in their children's pleasure is a sort of evergreen that no snows of time can kill, sewed spangles by the bushel, made wildernesses of tissue-paper blossom as the rose, kept tempers sweet, stomachs full, and domestic machinery working smoothly through it all, by that maternal magic which makes them the human providences of this naughty world.

"What shall I go as?" was the universal cry. Garrets were taken by storm, cherished relics were teased out of old ladies' lavendered chests (happy she who saw them again!), hats were made into boots, gowns into doublets, cloaks into hose, Sunday bonnets despoiled of their plumage, silken cauliflowers sown broadcast over the land, and cocked-up caps erected in every style of architecture, while "Tag, Rag, and Bobtail" drove a smashing business, and everybody knew what everybody else was going to be, and solemnly vowed they didn't--which transparent falsehood was the best joke of the whole.

Dolly allowed her mates to believe she was to be the Queen of Hearts, but privately laid hold of certain brocades worn by a trim grandmother half a century ago, and one evening burst upon her brother in a charming "Little

Bo-Peep" costume, which, for the benefit of future distressed damsels, may be described as a "white silk skirt, scarlet overdress neatly bundled up behind," as ancient ladies expressed it, blue hose with red clocks, high-heeled shoes with silver buckles, a nosegay in the tucker, and a fly-way hat perched in this case on the top of black curls, which gave additional archness to Dolly's face as she entered, singing that famous ditty.

Dick surveyed her with approval, turning her about like a lay figure, and expressing his fraternal opinion that she was "the sauciest little turn-out he ever saw," and then wet-blanketed the remarks by adding, "Of course you don't call it a disguise, do you? and don't flatter yourself that you won't be known; for Dolly Ward is as plainly written in every curl, bow, and gimcrack, as if you wore a label on your back."

"Then I shan't wear it;" and off went the hat at one fell blow, as Dolly threw her crook in one corner, her posy in another, and sat down an image of despair.

"Now don't be a goose, and rip everything to bits; just wear a domino over all, as Fan is going to, and then, when you've had fun enough, take it off and do the pretty. It will make two rigs, you see, and bother the boys to your heart's content."

"Dick, I insist upon kissing you for that brilliant suggestion; and then you may run and get me eight yards of cambric, just the color of Fan's; but if you tell any one, I'll keep her from dancing with you the whole evening;" with which bribe and threat Dolly embraced her brother, and shut the door in his face, while he, putting himself in good humor by imagining she was somebody else, departed on his muddy mission.

If the ghosts of the first settlers had taken their walks abroad on the eventful Friday night, they would have held up their shadowy hands at the scenes going on under their venerable noses; for strange figures flitted through the quiet streets, and instead of decorous slumber, there was decidedly,--"A sound of revelry by night"

Spurs clanked and swords rattled over the frosty ground, as if the British were about to make another flying call; hooded monks and nuns paced along, on carnal thoughts intent; ancient ladies and bewigged gentlemen seemed hurrying to enjoy a social cup of tea, and groan over the tax; barrels staggered and stuck through narrow ways, as if temperance were still among the lost arts, while bears, apes, imps, and elves pattered or sparkled by, as if a second Walpurgis Night had come, and all were bound for Blocksberg.

"Hooray for the Rooster!" shouted young Ireland, encamped on the sidewalk to see the show, as Mephistopheles' red cock's feather skimmed up the stairs, and he left a pink domino at the ladies' dressing-room door, with the brief warning, "Now cut your own capers and leave me to mine," adding, as he paused a moment at the great door,--

"By Jove! isn't it a jolly sight, though?"

And so it was; for a mammoth boot stood sentinel at the entrance; a Bedouin Arab leaned on his spear in one corner, looking as if ready to say,--

"Fly to the desert, fly with me,"

to the pretty Jewess on his arm; a stately Hamlet, with irreproachable legs, settled his plumage in another, still undecided to which Ophelia he would first address "The honey of his music vows."

Bluff King Hal's representative was waltzing in a way that would have filled that stout potentate with respectful admiration, while Queen Katherine flirted with a Fire Zouave. Alcipades whisked Mother Goose about the room till the old lady's conical hat tottered on her head, and the Union held fast to a very little Mac. Flocks of friars, black, white, and gray, pervaded the hall, with flocks of ballet girls, intended to represent peasants, but failing for lack of drapery; morning and evening stars rose or set, as partners willed; lively red demons harassed meek nuns, and knights of the Leopard, the Lion or Griffin, flashed by, looking heroically uncomfortable, in their gilded cages;

court ladies promenaded with Jack tars, and dukes danced with dairy-maids, while Brother Jonathan whittled, Aunt Dinah jabbered, Ingomar flourished his club, and every one felt warmly enthusiastic and vigorously jolly.

"Ach himmel! Das ist wunder schon!" murmured a tall, gray monk, looking in, and quite unconscious that he spoke aloud.

"Hullo, Bopp! I thought you weren't coming," cried Mephistopheles in an emphatic whisper.

"Ah, I guess you! yes, you are well done. I should like to be a Faust for you, but I haf no time, no purse for a dress, so I throw this on, and run up for a hour or two. Where is--who is all these people? Do you know them?"

The one with the Pope, Fra Diavolo; the telegraph, and two knights asking her to dance, is Dolly, if that's what you want to know. Go in and keep it up, Bopp, while you can; I am off for Fan;" and Mephistopheles departed over the banisters with a weird agility that delighted the beholders; while the gray friar stole into a corner and watched the pink domino for half an hour, at the end of which time his regards were somewhat confused by discovering that there were two pink damsels so like that he could not tell which was the one pointed out by Dick and which the new-comer.

"She thinks I will not know her, but I shall go now and find out for myself;" and, starting into sudden activity, the gray brother strode up to the nearest pink lady, bowed, and offered his arm. With a haughty little gesture of denial to several others, she accepted it, and they joined the circle of many-colored promenaders that eddied round the hall. As they went, Mr. Bopp scrutinized his companion, but saw only a slender figure shrouded from head to foot, and the tip of a white glove resting on his arm.

"I will speak; then her voice will betray her," he thought, forgetting that his own was undisguisable.

"Madame, permit me that I fan you, it is so greatly warm."

A fan was surrendered with a bow, and the masked face turned fully toward his own, while the hood trembled as if its wearer laughed silently.

"Ah, it is you,--I know the eyes, the step, the laugh. Miss Dolly, did you think you could hide from me?"

"I did not wish to," was the whispered answer.

"Did you think I would come?"

"I hoped so."

"Then you are not displeas with me?"

"No; I am very glad; I wanted you."

The pink head drooped a little nearer, and another white glove went to meet its mate upon his arm with a pretty, confiding gesture. Mr. Bopp instantly fell into a state of bliss,--the lights, music, gay surroundings, and, more than all, this unwonted demonstration, put the crowning glory to the moment; and, fired with the hopeful omen, he allowed his love to silence his prudence, and lead him to do, then and there, the very thing he had often resolved never to do at all.

"Ah, Miss Dolly, if you knew how much, how very much you haf enlarged my happiness, and made this efening shine for me, you would more often be a little friendly, for this winter has been all summer to me, since I knew you and your kind home, and now I haf no sorrow but that after the next lesson I come no more unless you gif me leaf. See now I must say this even here,

when so much people are about us, because I cannot stop it; and you will forgif me that I cannot wait any longer."

"Mr. Bopp, please don't, please stop!" began the pink domino in a hurried whisper. But Mr. Bopp was not to be stopped. He had dammed up the stream so long, that now it rushed on fast, full, and uncontrollable; for, leading her into one of the curtained recesses near by, he sat down beside her, and, still plying the fan, went on impetuously,--

"I feel to say that I lofe you, and tho' I try to kill it, my love will not die, because it is more strong than my will, more dear than my pride, for I haf much, and I do not ask you to be meine Frau till I can gif you more than my heart and my poor name. But hear now; I will work, and save, and wait a many years if at the end you will take all I haf and say, 'August, I lofe you.' Do not laugh at me because I say this in such poor words; you are my heart's dearest, and I must tell it or never come again. Speak to me one kind yes, and I will thank Gott in himmel for so much joy."

The pink domino had listened to this rapid speech with averted head, and, when it ended, started up, saying eagerly, "You are mistaken, sir, I am not Dolly;" but as she spoke her words were belied, for the hasty movement displaced her mask, and Mr. Bopp saw Dolly's eyes, a lock of dark hair, and a pair of burning cheeks, before the screen was readjusted. With redoubled earnestness he held her back, whispering,--

"Do not go mitout the little word, Yes, or No; it is not much to say."

"Well then, No!"

"You mean it? Dolly! truly mean it?"

"Yes, let me go at once, sir."

Mr. Bopp stood up, saying slowly,--"Yes, go now; they told me you had no heart; I believe it, and thank you for that No;" then bowed, and walked straight out of the hall, while the pink domino broke into a fit of laughter, saying to herself,--

"I've done it! I've done it! but what a piece of work there'll be to-morrow."

"Dick, who was that tall creature Fan was parading with last night? No one knew, and he vanished before the masks were taken off," asked Dolly, as she and her brother lounged in opposite corners of the sofa the morning after the masquerade, "talking it over."

"That was old Bopp, Mrs. Peep."

"Gracious me! why, he said he wasn't coming."

"People sometimes say what they don't mean, as you may have discovered."

"But why didn't he come and speak to a body, Dick?"

"Better employed, I suppose."

"Now don't be cross, dear, but tell me all about it, for I don't understand how you allowed him to monopolize Fan so."

"Oh, don't bother, I'm sleepy."

"No you're not; you look wicked; I know you've been in mischief, and I insist upon hearing all about it, so come and 'fess' this instant."

Dolly proceeded to enforce her command by pulling away his pillow and dragging her brother into a sitting posture in spite of his laughing resistance and evident desire to exhaust her patience; for Dick excelled in teasing, and kept his sister in a fidget from morning till night, with occasional fits of penitence and petting which lasted till next time. Therefore, though dying to 'fess,' he was undecided as to the best method of executing that task in the manner most aggravating to his listener and most agreeable to himself, and sat regarding her with twinkling eyes, and his curly pate in a high state of rumple, trying to appear innocently meek, but failing signally.

"Now, then, up and tell," commanded Dolly.

"Well, if you won't take my head off till I'm done, I'll tell you the best joke of the season. Are you sure the pink domino with Bopp wasn't yourself,--for she looked and acted very like you?"

"Of course I am. I didn't even know he was there, and think it very rude and ungentlemanly in him not to come and speak to me. You know it was Fan, so do go on."

"But it wasn't, for she changed her mind and wore a black domino; I saw her put it on myself. Her Cousin Jack came unexpectedly, and she thought if she altered her dress and went with him, you wouldn't know her."

"Who could it have been, Dick?"

"That's the mystery, for, do you know, Bopp proposed to her."

"He didn't!" and Dolly flew up with a startled look that, to adopt a phrase from his own vocabulary, was "nuts" to her brother.

"Yes he did; I heard him."

"When, where, and how?"

"In one of these flirtation boxes; they dropped the curtain, but I heard him do it, on my honor I did."

"Persons of honor don't listen at curtains and key-holes. What did they say?"

"Oh, if it wasn't honorable to listen, it isn't to hear; so I won't tell, though I could not help knowing it."

"Mercy! don't stop now, or I shall die with curiosity. I dare say I should have done the same; no one minds at such a place, you know. But I don't see the joke yet," said Dolly dismally.

"I do," and Dick went off into a shout.

"You idiotic boy, take that pillow out of your mouth, and tell me the whole thing,--what he said, what she said, and what they both did. It was all fun of course, but I'd like to hear about it."

"It may have been fun on her part, but it was solemn earnest on his, for he went it strong I assure you. I'd no idea the old fellow was so sly, for he appeared smashed with you, you know, and there he was finishing up with this unknown lady. I wish you could have heard him go on, with tears in his eyes"--

"How do you know if you didn't see him?"

"Oh, well, that's only a figure of speech; I thought so from his voice. He was ever so tender, and took to Dutch when English was too cool for him. It was

really touching, for I never heard a fellow do it before; and, upon my word, I should think it was rather a tough job to say that sort of thing to a pretty woman, mask or no mask."

"What did she say?" asked Dolly, with her hands pressed tight together, and a curious little quiver of the lips.

"She said, No, as short as pie-crust; and when he rushed out with his heart broken all to bits apparently, she just burst out laughing, and went and polked at a two-forty pace for half an hour."

Error! Hyperlink reference not valid. unclasped her hands, took a long breath, and cried out,--

"She was a wicked, heartless hussy! and if I know her, I'll never speak to her again; for if he was really in earnest, she ought to be killed for laughing at him."

"So ought you, then, for making fun of poor Fisher when he went down on his knees behind the huckleberry bushes last summer. He was earnest enough, for he looked as black-and-blue as his berries when he got home. Your theory is all right, ma'am, but your practice is all bosh."

"Hold your tongue about that silly thing. Boys in college think they know everything, can do everything, have everything, and only need beckon, and all womankind will come and adore. It made a man of him, and he'll thank me for taking the sentimental nonsense and conceit out of him. You will need just such a lesson at the rate you go on, and I hope Fan will give it to you."

"When the lecture is over, I'll go on with the joke, if you want to know it."

"Isn't this enough?"

"Oh, bless you, no! the cream of it is to come. What would you give to know who the lady was?"

"Five dollars, down, this minute."

"Very good, hand 'em over, and I'll tell you."

"Truly, Dick?"

"Yes, and prove it."

Dolly produced her purse, and, bill in hand, sat waiting for the disclosure. Dick rose with a melo-dramatic bow,--

"Lo, it was I."

"That's a great fib, for I saw you flying about the whole evening."

"You saw my dress, but I was not in it."

"Oh! oh! who did I keep going to, then? and what did I do to make a fool of myself, I wonder?"

Purse and bill dropped out of Dolly's hand, and she looked at her brother with a distracted expression of countenance. Dick rubbed his hands and chuckled.

"Here's a jolly state of things. Now I'll tell you the whole story. I never thought of doing it till I saw Bopp and told him who you were; but on my way for Fan I wondered if he'd get puzzled between you two; and then a grand idea popped into my head to puzzle him myself, for I can take you off to the life. Fan didn't want me to, but I made her, so she lent me hoops and gown and the pink domino, and if ever I thanked my stars I wasn't tall, I did then, for the things fitted capitally as to length, tho' I kept splitting something down the back, and scattering hooks and eyes in all directions. I wish you could have heard Jack roar while they rigged me. He had no dress, so I lent him mine, till just before the masks were taken off, when we cut home and changed. He told me how you kept running to him to tie up your slippers, find your fan, and tell him funny things, thinking it was me. I never enjoyed anything so much in my life."

"Go on," said Dolly in a breathless sort of voice, and the deluded boy obeyed.

"I knew Bopp, and hovered near till he came to find out who I was. I took you off in style, and it deceived him, for I'm only an inch or two taller than you, and kept my head down in the lackadaisical way you girls do; I whispered, so my voice didn't betray me; and was very clinging, and sweet, and fluttery, and that blessed old goose was sure it was you. I thought it was all over once, for when he came the heavy in the recess, I got a bit flustered, he was so serious about it, my mask slipped, but I caught it, so he only saw my eyes and forehead, which are just like yours, and that finished him, for I've no doubt I looked as red and silly as you would have done in a like fix."

"Why did you say No?" and Dolly looked as stern as fate.

"What else should I say? You told me you wouldn't have him, and I thought it would save you the bother of saying it, and him the pain of asking twice. I told him some time ago that you were a born flirt; he said he knew it; so I was surprised to hear him go on at such a rate, but supposed that I was too amiable, and that misled him. Poor old Bopp, I kept thinking of him all night, as he looked when he said, 'They told me you had no heart, now I believe it, and I thank you for that No.' It was rather a hard joke for him, but it's over now, and he won't have to do it again. You said I wouldn't dare tell him about you; didn't I? and haven't I won the"--

The rest of the sentence went spinning dizzily through Dick's head, as a sudden tingling sensation pervaded his left ear, followed by a similar smart in the right; and, for a moment, chaos seemed to have come again. Whatever Dolly did was thoroughly done: when she danced, the soles of her shoes attested the fact; when she flirted, it was warm work while it lasted; and when she was angry, it thundered, lightened, and blew great guns till the shower came, and the whole affair ended in a rainbow. Therefore, being outwitted, disappointed, mortified, and hurt, her first impulse was to find a vent for these conflicting emotions, and possessing skillful hands, she left them to avenge the wrong done her heart, which they did so faithfully, that if ever a young gentleman's ears were vigorously and completely boxed, Dick was that young individual. As the thunder-clap ceased, the gale began and blew steadily for several minutes.

"You think it a joke, do you? I tell you, it's a wicked, cruel thing; you've told a lie; you've broken August's heart, and made me so angry that I'll never forgive you as long as I live. What do you know about my feelings? and how dare you take it upon yourself to answer for me? You think because we are the same age that I am no older than you, but you're mistaken, for a boy of eighteen is a boy, a girl is often a woman, with a woman's hopes and plans; you don't understand this any more than you do August's love for me, which you listened to and laughed at. I said I didn't like him, and I didn't find out till afterward that I did; then I was afraid to tell you lest you'd twit me with it. But now I care for no one, and I say I do like him,--yes, I love him with all my heart and soul and might and I'd die this minute if I could undo the harm you've done, and see him happy. I know I've been selfish, vain, and thoughtless, but I am not now; I hoped he'd love me, hoped he'd see I cared for him, that I'd done trifling, and didn't mind if he was poor, for I'd enough for both; that I longed to make his life pleasant after all his troubles; that I'd send for the little sister he loves so well, and never let him suffer any more; for he is so good, so patient, so generous, and dear to me, I cannot do enough for him. Now it's all spoilt; now I can never tell him this, never comfort him in any way, never be happy again all my life, and you have done it."

As Dolly stood before her brother, pouring out her words with glittering eyes, impetuous voice, and face pale with passionate emotion, he was scared; for as his scattered wits returned to him, he felt that he had been playing with edge tools, and had cut and slashed in rather a promiscuous manner. Dazed

and dizzy, he sat staring at the excited figure before him, forgetting the indignity he had received, the mistake he had made, the damage he had done, in simple wonder at the revolutions going on under his astonished eyes. When Dolly stopped for breath, he muttered with a contrite look,--

"I'm very sorry,--it was only fun; and I thought it would help you both, for how the deuce should I know you liked the man when you said you hated him?"

"I never said that, and if I'd wanted advice I should have gone to mother. You men go blundering off with half an idea in your heads, and never see your stupidity till you have made a mess that can't be mended; we women don't work so, but save people's feelings, and are called hypocrites for our pains. I never meant to tell you, but I will now, to show you how I've been serving you, while you've been harming me: every one of those notes from Fan which you admire so much, answer so carefully, and wear out in your pocket, though copied by her, were written by me."

"The devil they were!" Up flew Dick, and clapping his hand on the left breast-pocket, out came a dozen pink notes tied up with a blue ribbon, and much the worse for wear. He hastily turned them over as Dolly went on.

"Yes, I did it, for she didn't know how to answer your notes, and came to me. I didn't laugh at them, or make fun of her, but helped her silly little wits, and made you a happy boy for three months, though you teased me day and night, for I loved you, and hadn't the heart to spoil your pleasure."

"You've done it now with a vengeance, and you're a pair of deceitful minxes. I've paid you off. I'll give Fan one more note that will keep her eyes red for a month; and I'll never love or trust a girl again as long as I live,--never! never!"

Red with wrath, Dick flung the treasured packet into the fire, punched it well down among the coals, flung away the poker, and turned about with a look and gesture which would have been comically tragic if they had not

been decidedly pathetic, for, in spite of his years, a very tender heart beat under the blue jacket, and it was grievously wounded at the perfidy of the gentle little divinity whom he worshipped with daily increasing ardor. His eyes filled, but he winked resolutely; his lips trembled, but he bit them hard; his hands doubled themselves up, but he remembered his adversary was a woman; and, as a last effort to preserve his masculine dignity, he began to whistle.

As if the inconsistencies of womankind were to be shown him as rapidly as possible, at this moment the shower came on, for, taking him tenderly about the neck, Dolly fell to weeping so infectiously, that, after standing rigidly erect till a great tear dropped off the end of his nose, ignominiously announcing that it was no go, Dick gave in, and laying his head on Dolly's shoulder, the twins quenched their anger, washed away their malice, and soothed their sorrow by one of those natural processes, so kindly provided for poor humanity, and so often despised as a weakness when it might prove a better strength than any pride.

Dick cleared up first, with no sign of the tempest but a slight mist through which his native sunshine glimmered pensively.

"Don't dear, don't cry so; it will make you sick, and won't do any good, for things will come right, or I'll make 'em, and we'll be comfortable all round."

"No, we never can be as we were, and it's all my fault. I've betrayed Fan's confidence, I've spoiled your little romance, I've been a thoughtless, wicked girl, I've lost August; and, oh, dear me, I wish I was dead!" with which funereal climax Dolly cried so despairingly that, like the youngest Miss Pecksniff, she was indeed "a gushing creature."

"Oh, come now, don't be dismal, and blame yourself for every trouble under the sun. Sit down and talk it over, and see what can be done. Poor old girl, I forgave you the notes, and say I was wrong to meddle with Bopp. I got you into the scrape, and I'll get you out if the sky don't fall, or Bopp blow his brains out, like a second Werther, before to-morrow."

Dick drew the animated fountain to the wide chair, where they had sat together since they were born, wiped her eyes, laid her wet cheek against his own, and patted her back, with an idea that it was soothing to babies, and why not to girls?

"I wish mother was at home," sighed Dolly, longing for that port which was always a haven of refuge in domestic squalls like this.

"Write, and tell her not to stay till Saturday."

"No; it would spoil her visit, and you know she deferred it to help us through this dreadful masquerade. But I don't know what to do."

"Why, bless your heart, it's simple enough. I'll tell Bopp, beg his pardon, say 'Dolly's willing,' and there you are all taut and ship-shape again."

"I wouldn't for the world, Dick. It would be very hard for you, very awkward for me, and do no good in the end; for August is so proud he'd never forgive you for such a trick, would never believe that I 'had a heart' after all you've said and I've done; and I should only hear with my own ears that he thanked me for that No. Oh, why can't people know when they are in love, and not go heels over head before they are ready!"

"Well, if that don't suit, I'll let it alone, for that is all I can suggest; and if you like your woman's way better, try it, only you'll have to fly round, because to-morrow is the last night, you know."

"I shan't go, Dick."

"Why not? we are going to give him the rose-wood set of things, have speeches, cheers for the King of Clubs, and no end of fun."

"I can't help it; there would be no fun for me, and I couldn't look him in the face after all this."

"Oh, pooh! yes, you could, or it will be the first time you dared not do damage with those wicked eyes of yours."

"It is the first time I ever loved any one." Dolly's voice was so low, and her head drooped so much, that this brief confession was apparently put away in Dick's pocket, and being an exceedingly novel one, filled that inflammable youth with a desire to deposit a similar one in the other pocket, which, being emptied of its accustomed contents, left a somewhat aching void in itself and the heart underneath. After a moment's silence, he said,--

"Well, if you won't go, you can settle it when he comes here, though I think we should all do better to confess coming home in the dark."

"He won't come here again, Dick."

"Won't he! that shows you don't know Bopp as well as I. He'll come to say good-by, to thank mother for her kindness, and you and me for the little things we've done for him (I wish I'd left the last undone!), and go away like a gentleman, as he is,--see if he don't."

"Do you think so? Then I must see him."

"I'm sure he will, for we men don't bear malice and sulk and bawl when we come to grief this way, but stand up and take it without winking, like the young Spartan brick when the fox was digging into him, you know."

"Then, of course, you'll forgive Fan."

"I'll be hanged if I do," growled Dick.

"Ah ha! your theory is very good, sir, but your practice is bosh," quoted Dolly, with a gleam of the old mischief in her face.

Dick took a sudden turn through the room, burst out laughing, and came back, saying heartily,--

"I'll own up; it is mean to feel so, and I'll think about forgiving you both; but she may stop up the hole in the wall, for she won't get any more letters just yet; and you may devote your epistolary powers to A. Bopp in future. Well, what is it? free your mind, and have done with it; but don't make your nose red, or take the starch out of my collar with any more salt water, if you please."

"No, I won't; and I only want to say that, as you owe the explanation to us both, perhaps it would be best for you to tell August your part of the thing as you come home to-morrow, and then leave the rest to fate. I can't let him go away thinking me such a heartless creature, and once gone it will be too late to mend the matter. Can you do this without getting me into another scrape, do you think?"

"I haven't a doubt of it, and I call that sensible. I'll fix it capitally,--go down on my knees in the mud, if it is necessary; treat you like eggs for fear of another smash-up; and bring him home in such a tip-top state, you'll only have to nod and find yourself Mrs. B. any day you like. Now let's kiss and be friends, and then go pitch into that pie for luncheon."

So they did, and an hour afterward were rioting in the garret under pretence of putting grandma's things away; for at eighteen, in spite of love and mischief, boys and girls have a spell to exorcise blue devils, and a happy faculty of forgetting that "the world is hollow, and their dolls stuffed with saw-dust."

Dick was right, for on the following evening, after the lesson, Mr. Bopp did go home with him, "to say good-by, like a gentleman as he was." Dolly got

over the first greeting in the dusky hall, and as her guest passed on to the parlor, she popped her head out to ask anxiously,--

"Did you say anything, Dick?"

"I couldn't; something has happened to him; he'll tell you about it. I'm going to see to the horse, so take your time, and do what you like," with which vague information Dick vanished, and Dolly wished herself anywhere but where she was.

Mr. Bopp sat before the fire, looking so haggard and worn out that the girl's conscience pricked her sorely for her part in the change, but plucking up her courage, she stirred briskly among the tea-cups, asking,--

"What shall I give you, sir?"

"Thank you, I haf no care to eat."

Something in his spiritless mien and sorrowful voice made Dolly's eyes fill; but knowing she must depend upon herself now, and make the best of her position, she said kindly, yet nervously,--

"You look tired; let me do something for you if I can; shall I sing for you a little? you once said music rested you."

"You are kind; I could like that I think. Excoose me if I am dull, I haf--yes, a little air if you please."

More and more disturbed by his absent, troubled manner, Dolly began a German song he had taught her, but before the first line was sung he stopped her with an imploring--

"For Gott sake not that! I cannot hear it this night; it was the last I sung her in the Vaterland."

"Mr. Bopp, what is it? Dick says you have a trouble; tell me, and let us help you if we can. Are you ill, in want, or has any one wronged or injured you in any way? Oh, let me help you!"

Tears had been streaming down Mr. Bopp's cheeks, but as she spoke he checked them, and tried to answer steadily,--

"No, I am not ill; I haf no wants now, and no one has hurt me but in kindness; yet I haf so great a grief, I could not bear it all alone, and so I came to ask a little sympathy from your good Mutter, who has been kind to me as if I was a son. She is not here, and I thought I would stop back my grief; but that moosic was too much; you pity me, and so I tell you. See, now! when I find things go bright with me, and haf a hope of much work, I take the little store I saved, I send it to my friend Carl Hoffman, who is coming from my home, and say, 'Bring Ulla to me now, for I can make life go well to her, and I am hungry till I haf her in my arms again.' I tell no one, for I am bold to think that one day I come here with her in my hand, to let her thank you in her so sweet way for all you haf done for me. Well, I watch the wind, I count the days, I haf no rest for joy; and when Carl comes, I fly to him. He gifs me back my store, he falls upon my neck and does not speak, then I know my little Kind will never come, for she has gone to Himmel before I could make a home for her on earth. Oh, my Ulla! it is hard to bear;" and, with a rain of bitter tears, poor Mr. Bopp covered up his face and laid it down on his empty plate, as if he never cared to lift it up again.

Then Dolly forgot herself in her great sympathy, and, going to him, she touched the bent head with a soothing hand; let her tears flow to comfort his; and whispered in her tenderest voice,--

"Dear Mr. Bopp, I wish I could heal this sorrow, but as I cannot, let me bear it with you; let me tell you how we loved the little child, and longed to see her; how we should have rejoiced to know you had so dear a friend to make

your life happy in this strange land; how we shall grieve for your great loss, and long to prove our respect and love for you. I cannot say this as I ought, but, oh, be comforted, for you will see the child again, and, remembering that she waits for you, you will be glad to go when God calls you to meet your Ulla in that other Fatherland."

"Ah, I will go now! I haf no wish to stay, for all my life is black to me. If I had found that other little friend to fill her place, I should not grieve so much, because she is weller there above than I could make her here; but no; I wait for that other one; I save all my heart for her; I send it, but it comes back to me; then I know my hope is dead, and I am all alone in the strange land."

There was neither bitterness nor reproach in these broken words, only a patient sorrow, a regretful pain, as if he saw the two lost loves before him and uttered over them an irrepressible lament. It was too much for Dolly and with sudden resolution she spoke out fast and low,--

"Mr. Bopp, that was a mistake. It was not I you saw at the masque; it was Dick. He played a cruel trick; he insulted you and wronged me by that deceit, and I find it very hard to pardon him."

"What! what is that!" and Mr. Bopp looked up with tears still shining in his beard, and intense surprise in every feature of his face.

Dolly turned scarlet, and her heart beat fast as she repeated with an unsteady voice,--

"It was Dick, not I."

A cloud swept over Mr. Bopp's face, and he knit his brows a moment as if Dolly had not been far from right when she said "he never would forgive the joke." Presently, he spoke in a tone she had never heard before,--cold and quiet,--and in his eye she thought she read contempt for her brother and herself,--

"I see now, and I say no more but this; it was not kind when I so trusted you. Yet it is well, for you and Richart are so one, I haf no doubt he spoke your wish."

Here was a desperate state of things. Dolly had done her best, yet he did not, or would not, understand, and, before she could restrain them, the words slipped over her tongue,--

"No! Dick and I never agree."

Mr. Bopp started, swept three spoons and a tea-cup off the table as he turned, for something in the hasty whisper reassured him. The color sprang up to his cheek, the old warmth to his eye, the old erectness to his figure, and the eager accent to his voice. He rose, drew Dolly nearer, took her face between his hands, and bending, fixed on her a look tender yet masterful, as he said with an earnestness that stirred her as words had never done before,--

"Dollee, he said No! do you say, Yes?"

She could not speak, but her heart stood up in her eyes and answered him so eloquently that he was satisfied.

"Thank the Lord, it's all right!" thought Dick, as, peeping in at the window ten minutes later, he saw Dolly enthroned upon Mr. Bopp's knee, both her hands in his, and an expression in her April countenance which proved that she found it natural and pleasant to be sitting there, with her head on the kind heart that loved her; to hear herself called "meine;" to know that she alone could comfort him for little Ulla's loss, and fill her empty place.

"They make a very pretty landscape, but too much honey isn't good for 'em, so I'll go in, and we'll eat, drink, and be merry, in honor of the night."

He rattled the latch and tramped on the mat to warn them of his approach, and appeared just as Dolly was skimming into a chair, and Mr. Bopp picking up the spoons, which he dropped again to meet Dick, with a face "clear shining after rain;" and kissing him on both cheeks after the fashion of his country, he said, pointing to Dolly,--

"See, it is all fine again. I forgif you, and leave all blame to that bad spirit, Mephistopheles, who has much pranks like that, but never pays one for their pain, as you haf me. Heart's dearest, come and say a friendly word to Richart, then we will haf a little health,--Long life and happiness to the King of Clubs and the Queen of Hearts."

"Yes, August, and as he's to be a farmer, we'll add another,--'Wiser wits and better manners to the Knave of Spades.'"