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THE COURIER,

1132 N St., Up Stairs. Phone 384. LINCOLN, NEBR.

Freda, who laughed at Gretchen's three lovers, and had none of her own. Yet no one smiled when *das Kleine* was welded together for the finger of Black Kummelmann's bride.

It was the year when the grasshoppers fell like live hail upon the land, when the river flowed between banks bared of every spear of grass, and through fields whose empty furrows had lost in a night, leaf and stalk and milky grain of the unripened harvest. The miller's cave had spread forth its store of first gathered fruits for the Hochzeit of Gretchen. When the miller took his way, with bent head, over the prairie path, to the utmost "distributing station," where three barrels of clothing and three of provisions were dealt out to a silent thin faced company, Freda took her way to the store house. Little Frau Gertrud shook her head and was eager in her offer of a better solution of Freda's hard problem. But the girl put both her arms about the tiny shoulders of the smith's wife, and cried as she had not, since she left her mother's grave in the fatherland.

"Good bye, best friend," she said, in her soft Berlin German.

"It is not good bye. We shall be nearer, now."

For in the week, Freda became mistress of the thatched roof across the river, and the cooper wore but one cleft ring.

This is not the story of Black Kummelmann and his bride, save as they shattered the peace of Gustav Kestner. Else there were many things to be told of the losing game played by the woman who, bred to household work, tries to adapt herself to the conceptions of a lord of the soil whose strong wristed kinswoman have swung the scythe with him in the harvest fields of an older world. Tiny Frau Gertrud's fingers might have twisted the corn ears from the stalks, had the blacksmith said the word. But heavy-eyed Freda moved beside her wagon with an ever slackening gait which might have provoked to wrath a far gentler master than the sullen cooper.

Only once, on a rare Sunday when, as of old, they all sat in the stone house, Freda suffered her friend a look. It was when they spread the table together, and the men talked in the after glow of their refreshed drouth. As the smith's wife touched the girl's arm with a quick motion, Freda winced and then, quietly turning up her sleeve, showed ugly black marks which made Frau Gertrud catch her breath. The finger placed on her lips silenced the little woman, until Schwartz Kummelmann and his wife crossed the ford. And then—"What can one do?" said the smith simply. "Whatever disturbs him will be revenged on her. That is what it is to deal with a cur."

And though Smith Kestner was less free to speak his mind, next day, he was no less minded to hold his peace.

There are tragedies of which the cornrows tell nothing. Like the giant smith they are silent. Here and there the harvest's moving with their huge bounty over the plains, are yet watered with the blood of women and children, as well as with the sweat of men.

(Continued next week.)

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MRS. BADGER'S DIPLOMACY.

"What do I think of Mrs. Badger? What do I think of it?" and he put down his fork so as to pay full attention to the matter in hand. "I think it the product of a degenerate brain—in other words, an idea of your cherished friend, Mrs. Fadder. Am I correct in my surmise, my dear?"

"There you go, blaming—"

"Is it a Fadder scheme or is it not?"

"When I only asked—asked you—"

"Mrs. Badger, you beg the question!"

"I don't!"

"Then tell me, is it—?"

At this point Mr. Badger saw signs of tears, and changed his tones somewhat.

"There, there, never mind that, then; let's get back where we started. You asked what I thought of our having a den, did you not?"

She nodded, in an absent way, afraid to lose her advantage by appearing cheerful too quickly.

"Well, may I ask if by 'den' you refer to the kind of realized nightmare that young Fadder affects? A place you reach by climbing to the attic by a stairway made of a ladder—where you have to go up on your toes and come down on your heels, crouching always, to avoid banging your head into the ceiling? A place hung with stuffy stuffs, where you have to be doubled up on some squat-window seat or smothered in a poky cosy corner? A place lighted—lighted is good!—by smoky little red lamps, so that you're forever falling over tabourets and palms? A place where a man is offered, instead of a cigar, a bottle of water with some foreign arrangement of gaspipe and gold cord? A place filled with ugly little pots and bowls that send out reeking smells of so-called incense? A place where sane people are expected to drink weak tea and nibble Uhatem biscuits? Is that the kind of an apartment you're thinking of getting up at my expense, Mrs. Badger?"

During this characteristic outburst she had been calmly considering the situation. Long experience had taught her that her husband's will was not a thing to be turned by ordinary means. But diplomacy and tact had sometimes proved successful, and it had occurred to her at times that her lord's unbending determination had one weak spot.

"I suppose they are something like that," she observed, gazing at him with that look that seems to say, "What a great, strong, brainy man you are!" "I haven't seen many of them myself, and I don't know but there might be dens without all those objectionable features. You know, of course, dear."

Mr. Badger, while somewhat bewildered, felt decidedly better.

"Er—if you really care for something of that kind," he began, "perhaps—"

"Oh, no, it wasn't that, exactly—but— Well, you see, I know how much you know about Oriental things, and how you appreciate the beautiful—"

"She never mentioned the fact before," thought Mr. Badger.

"But everybody doesn't know you as I do, and so few men have sense enough to care for such things—"

Mr. Badger thought that he had a clue.

"See here," he exclaimed, fiercely, "has that Fadder woman been insinuating that I wouldn't appreciate a den?"

"Well, she didn't say so in so many words, but—"

"Oh, she didn't did she," cried Mr. Badger, now at a white heat. "She probably merely intimated, in her imitation high-bred language, that I don't know a den from at Eskimo hut! She doubtless suggested that I can't distinguish between a hookah and an Indian club. She said it was a pity you married a man who didn't know Satsuma