

a favorable decision against the manufacturers. If you only knew how good she is! And what sacrifices she makes to fit me as a singer. Oh, Otto,"—and here she began to sob, "if I only were sufficiently accomplished to reward her for what she has done for me. I can't look into the future without her."

"As though you could not repay her all the better if you were my little wife! Are not yours mine? I wish you could see the pretty cottage that I'm designing. What do you say to my asking the old bugbear for the use of it until it's rented?"

Happily for his peace of mind, he could not see with what malignant joy Stöger's face lighted up when he heard himself called an "old bugbear."

"I'll brace myself and make him the proposition."

"Yes, if he only would."

"O, he'll do it readily. I'll promise to invite him to the wedding and give him the first dance with you."

"Greatly obliged to you for the invitation, greatly obliged!" And Stöger squeezed his hands until they creaked.

"Did you hear anything?" asked Rose guardedly.

"Now, I must go!"

"Oh, Rose! Wait a moment. I've something to tell you." She tried to break away, but he held her fast.

The lamp flared high and then suddenly became extinguished.

"Otto, let me go! Don't you know that the lamp has gone out?"

"I can tell you in the dark just as well."

"O, dear, no! You can't hear anything in the dark."

A half suppressed laugh, the rustle of skirts, and with a merry "Do re mi fa sol" Rose flew up the stairs past the motionless Stöger, while the young architect slipped into the office to put the finishing touches to the little cottage that he was designing. He never suspected the cloud that was soon to obscure his brightest hopes.

'Twas several days later. The clear frosty weather had given way to cold rain and the snow in the streets was turned to slush. On the road from the depot could be seen a figure closely wrapped in a cloak. 'Twas Stöger, and he was angrily mutteringly to himself as he fiercely fought his way, step by step, against the driving wind. He was just returning from a business trip which had had connected with it much unpleasantness, and neither the weather nor a severe attack of rheumatism in both arm and shoulder appeared to soothe his feelings.