ANA'S DOLL.

If this story, dear reader, were the work of my imagination, I should hesitate to write it. It would seem too improbable with its mixture of tragic and humorous, but I can assure you that, as far as the facts relating to Ana's doll go, it is entirely true.

Ana was once in the service of a friend of mine, and her present position, her home and husband, are as I represent them. If I have failed to do justice to my son, it is to the doll, whose beauty great judges declare to have been indescribable. But Ana had no doll when this story begins. She was a very clumsy girl with dream heads wound about her head, and big blue eyes that still seemed staring at the world with infantile astonishment. She was but seventeen, but even then betrothed to a certain young Hans who had placed himself with a grocer—a youth as red cheeked, stupid and well baby faced as Ana herself. They were very fond of each other and very true to each other, but they had prudent souls, and had set before them as the goal that a certain sum must be saved before they married. It was a comfortable sum, too, not to be made by a mad servant and a grocer's clerk in a bonery, but, as Ana confided to her mistress, "Ven some peoples gets married together, right away comes dem children, and oof dem much money. It is better dat dem peoples wait until dey got dat money once already."

No one ever considered Ana or Hans in thinking for them her purpose. If Hans ever said anything to anybody—which seemed unlikely, for he would sit long hours without speaking, even to Ana on Sunday evenings, when he always went to see her—he was probably encouraged in his economical intentions. At all events this honest pair of German lovers never swerved from their object. Every week they made a deposit in a savings bank, and slowly the dimes turned to dollars, and the dollars to eagles, and the eagles became the sum total of the marriage portion—very slowly, some sweethearts would have fancied, but Hans and Ana possessed their souls with patience.

For years each Sunday afternoon saw him arrive at the kitchen door of Ana's service placed dressed in his best clothes and wearing a red geranium blossom in his buttonhole. Sometimes they went to church together hand in hand—ever they not betrothed—and if any one grinned neither Hans nor Ana was offended. He bought her papers of peppermint drops and sticky slabs of taffy. She knitted him red worsted comforters, and blue mittens, and yellow wristlets, and sometimes their hands, their hymn books and sometimes their basket-ends, rejoicing when the money gathered interest, until at last there came a day when Ana revealed to her mistress that the money had been accumulated and that the wedding was at hand.

Meanwhile Ana's cheeks had faded and Ana's eyes were not so blue, and little puckers were to be seen at the corners of her mouth, and certain pencil lines crossed her forehead, which had been as smooth as ivory on her betrothal day.

Hans, too, had changed from a round, early headed boy to a sticky man, with a bald spot on the top of his head, and both of them had lost sundry teeth, which they were far too economical to seek to have replaced by a dentist.

But they were as fond of each other as ever, and very happy in the little frame home, with a small garden about it, which they bought and furnished from their savings. Hans was also promoted a partnership in the grocery, and it seemed as though their good angels had looked favorably upon those humble and honest lovers. Their home shone with cleanliness. In their little parlor were the inevitable carpet, the white curtains and the most highly colored religious pictures to be bought. A clock set in a Swiss cottage of carved wood ticked away between a German shepherd and shepherdess. There was an ornament in which the bamboodoo were locked up, and the usual number of chairs and a table, also an enlarged photograph of Hans and Ana, hand in hand, taken in their early courting days. Pleased indeed was this apartment, but the other rooms were just as tidy, and for a while Ana seemed perfectly happy.

There came a time, however, when she seemed to her late mistress to have grown grave—to be anxious about something. She sighed, and when questioned answered:

"Yes, I have some troubles."

Pressed to say what they were, she shortly added:

"I vait now a good vife for de good Lord to send dose little childrens, and dose lovely childrens did not come. And Hans, he vants her."

But children did not come to them.

One day Hans, having been, as in duty bound, to the church fair with his wife on his arm and his money in his pocket, had bought several pretty and useful things, and had taken home to something on the toy table—he hardly knew what—because that weary lady, the pastor's sister, had requested him to do so. Hans was economical, but to spend money at a church fair was a religious duty in his eyes and Ana's. It was the last day of the fair, and just as he was about to leave the hurlying the pastor's sister touched him on the arm and said:

"Well, Hans, don't go without your doll."

"My doll!" said Hans.

"Vas dose the doll," said the pastor's sister. "You had the lucky number."

"Ah, I have no children to give a doll to," said Hans, his native language, but he went back to the toy table and took the parcel that was handed to him.

"I will take it," said Ana.

She carried it home in her arms, saying to Hans every now and then:

"This is how—how—how—" as a real baby, as large and soft as if it were alive."

When they reached home she lighted a light, and sitting down began to unwrap the folds of muslin and paper, and shortly leaped upon one of the most beautiful objects they had ever seen.

It was one of those wonderfully fine imported dolls that are really artistic. Its face was as sweet as a cherub's, its waxen arms and shoulders had dimples in them, its flaxen hair curled about its temples. It had the face of a little child of two years old, and was as large as a baby of six months. When it was laid up in open upward arms one of its most beautiful objects they had ever seen.

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Ana stood at it solemnly, and suddenly uttered a cry of rapture. Then Hans, all this time attentive but remote, stepped forward and bent down beside his wife. Ana tenderly touched the doll with his finger.

"Kiss it, then, my beloved," said Ana. He obeyed.

"This is no common doll," said his wife. "This is a doll child. The dear Lord has sent it to us to compensate."

Then they kissed it. That night it lay between them folded in a shawl. The next day the neighbors were astonished by seeing a cradle carried into Ana's house. Curiosity leading them to call, they found Ana sitting in her parlor sewing and softly rocking the doll, which looked so though alive, she was making a nightgown for it. No one dared to laugh—somehow no one wanted to laugh, for Ana repeated solemnly a German phrase, which can only be translated thus, "It is by the hand of God given."

A certain superstitious solicitude, such as they felt when they looked at baby christens in the church on Christmas night, possessed them, and Ana played the mother to her doll in peace. She dressed it as the world have dressed her own baby, held it on her knee, folded it in her arms and bade it like Hans on his return home at night, and actually in a very little while these fancies appeared in the story of the little house a personalities, in which Hans and Ana took the doll to ride every Sunday afternoon exactly as other parents took their real babies.

Just as quietly as they had carried out their long engagement these two grown up children carried on their profession of being parents, and the nine days' wonder ceased to interest the neighbors in time, save when they told it to astonish some strangers.

Alas! who could have thought that this curious play would end tragically? But it did.

One morning Ana, disheveled and in tears, appeared at her late mistress's house. Her mistress closed her afternoon tea at last she contrived to say:

"Oh, madame! great troubles—great troubles—the worst troubles that can come! Oh, madame!"

"Is Hans sick?" the lady asked, fearing that even worse had happened.

But Ana replied:

"My heart is broke like mine! Oh! never can ve laugh any more—all is gone!"

The lady waited for an explanation. It came at last.

"My baby doll—my dear, God given baby doll—is dead!"

"Ana, what are you saying? A doll cannot die," said her mistress.

"My doll baby is dead—she is killed dead!" Ana—who is killed dead? I tell you how dat happens. Hans ought I just put dat child asleep, mit on her de little nightgown, and set de cradle to de parlor door all vas still, ven comes my good friend Gretchen and her husband and dat little dog, and make some coffee on de table, and we drinks and laughs. I think laughing and Hans thinks scolding, but all de while Gretchen says:

"Vare goes dat bad dog?"

"Oh, I say, 'Se yhere—never mind.'

"I think to be polite, but she says:

"Ven he is like dat still he does mischief!'

"So ven we laughs and eat beetle cakes and drink coffee a long time dey go away, and she calls de dog w'ile he comes.

"I like not dat dog's looks,' my friend say. 'He has a look something. If you have got some meat put away for breakfast you find it out.'

"Oh, I guess all right,' I say. But de beetle dog lick so ven his mouth, and she say:

"'All wrong, I am sure.'

"So I laugh, and we all shakes hands and go, and vy goes in and locks up, and I says:

"'Now I get my doll child, and goes straight away to bed,' and I goes into dot parlor door with a candle, and I see my child lying dead and bitten and eaten by dat dog on dat floor, and I falls down and knows nothings."

As soon as she could speak Ana a little the sympathizing lady went with her to her house.

There in the cradle lay a very dead doll indeed. The dog had eaten the wax head and arms and chewed the kid body into tatters. There was no possibility of repair or renovation; but after a while it occurred to the lady to suggest a means of comfort, and she said:

"Ana, a little, you can buy another doll, Ana. One as pretty will cost some thing, but you won't grudge that. I will tell you where, and you can dress it in the same clothes, and forget all that has happened."

At these words the mourning Ana raised her wife and turned upon her with flashing eyes.

"Buy a doll! I am not a fool!" said she. "You do not dou know dat dere is like dat one pretty doll? Dis was by de dear God given to me, because so much I wanted a child. No, my doll child is dead, and de world goes water."

And from that time to this Ana and Hans have been sad and unsmiling, and in their little garden a little mound covered with tart and decorated as are the graves of German children. Here lie the relics of their adored doll.—Mary Kyle Dallas in Fireside Companion.

A Perplexing Situation.

"Hello, Willie," said a small boy as he met a comrade in the street about dusk, "yer mother's lookin' for ye."

"Well, Hans, don't go without your doll."

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