

E.WERNER

A HERO OF THE
PEN

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A Hero of the Pen:

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CHAPTER I.

Love And Death

The scene of our story is a town on the Mississippi, about midway in its course from Lake Itasca to the Gulf; the time is a cloudless January day of the year 1871. A score of years ago, this town consisted of only a dozen or so roughly built wooden houses; but emulating the marvellous growth of American cities, it has expanded into a populous, thriving business centre.

The dazzling, midday sunbeams enter the windows of a large, suburban mansion, situated upon a hill commanding an unequalled prospect. The elegance of its surroundings, the exquisite taste and richness of its appointments, its artistic and expensive construction, distinguish this residence of the millionaire, Forest, from all others far and near.

In the magnificent parlor, giving evidence of that superfluity of expensive comfort and luxury which to wealthy Americans seems an absolute necessity of life, sits a young lady, in an elaborate and costly home dress. She is a girl of some twenty summers, and sitting near the open fire, whose shifting

gleams light up her face and form, with her head resting thoughtfully in her hand, she listens to the conversation of the man opposite her. The face a perfect oval, of a clear, colorless, brunette complexion, with large, brown eyes and perfectly regular features, is set in a frame of dark, luxuriant hair, and possesses undeniable claims to beauty. And yet there is something wanting in this exquisite face. It is that joyous, artless expression which so seldom fails in youth; that breath of timidity we look for in young maidenhood, and that look of gentleness a woman's face seldom entirely lacks, and never to its advantage. There is a chilling gravity in this young girl's whole appearance, a confident repose, an undeniable self-consciousness; and yet it does not seem as if heavy life-storms or premature sorrows can have brought to her the sad experiences of later years. For this her brow is all too smooth—her eyes too bright. Either inborn or inbred must be that seriousness through which her beauty gains so much in expression, although it loses infinitely in the tender grace and charm of both.

In a low arm chair, on the other side of the fireplace, sits a young man in faultless society-dress. There is marked similarity between these two. It lies not alone in hair and eyes of the same color, in the same clear, pale complexion. It is more in that expression of cold, dignified repose, and self-conscious pride peculiar to both. In the young girl this expression assumes the most decided form; in the young man it is partially hidden by a conventional polish and formality, which much detract from the

manly beauty of his face, and the manly dignity of his bearing. He has for some time been engaged in an animated conversation with the young lady, and now continues a recital already begun:—

"My father thinks this European journey necessary for the completion of my mercantile education, and I readily yield to his wishes, as it promises so much of interest to me. I shall first pass a few months in New York, where the business affairs of our house demand my personal supervision, and from there I shall sail for Europe in March. A year will suffice me to gain some acquaintance with England, France and Germany, and for a short tour through Switzerland and Italy. The next spring I hope to return home."

The young lady had listened with evident approval to the plan of the proposed journey; now she raised her head and looked at the speaker.

"A rich, profitable year lies before you, Mr. Alison! My father will regret that his illness renders it impossible to see you before your departure."

"I also regret that Mr. Forest is too ill to receive my adieux, personally. May I beg you, Miss, to present them to him in my name?"

She bowed slightly. "Certainly! And meantime, accept my best wishes for a prosperous journey and a happy return."

With quiet friendliness she rose and reached him her hand. He took the cold, beautiful hand, and held it fast; but an unwonted expression flashed from the young man's eyes.

"Miss Forest, may I ask you a question?"

A momentary flush passed over the young girl's face, as she replied:

"Speak, Mr. Alison!"

He rose hastily, and still holding the hand fast, he stepped closer to her side.

"Perhaps the time for a declaration is ill-chosen; but I only too well know that Miss Forest is the object of so many solicitations that absence might be dangerous to my hopes. Therefore, pardon me, Miss Jane, if I at this moment venture to speak of an affection which, perhaps, is no secret to you. May I hope that my wishes may find fulfilment, and that, upon my return, I may be allowed to clasp this hand anew, and hold it fast for life?"

He had begun in a calm, almost business sort of way, but his voice grew warm, as if beneath this outward calm there lay an almost violently repressed emotion; and now, in consuming anxiety, his eyes hung upon hers, as if there he would read her answer.

Miss Forest had listened in silence. No flush of surprise, or maidenly embarrassment, not the slightest change in her features betrayed whether this proposal was welcome or unwelcome to her; the immobility of her face offered a striking contrast to his, and the reply came firm and distinct, without the least hesitation or concealment.

"My answer shall be frank as your question, Mr. Alison. I am aware of your affection for me; I reciprocate it, and upon your

return, with the fullest confidence I will place my hand in yours for a united future."

A beam of joy broke through the icy repose of Alison's features, but the usual calmness at once came back, and he seemed almost ashamed of the momentary emotion.

"Miss Jane, you make me very happy," he said. "Can I not now speak with your father?"

"No, I would prefer to tell him myself," she replied hastily. "I have one condition to impose, and you must yield to it, Mr. Alison; I cannot become your betrothed at my father's death-bed; I cannot and will not deprive him of one of those hours the new relation might demand. Therefore let the words you have just spoken to me remain secret, at least to all but those immediately concerned. Until you return, demand from me none of the rights my answer gives you; I cannot and will not now grant them."

There lay little of a betrothed bride's submission in this decided, "*I will not!*" at the first moment of acceptance. Alison must have felt this, for a slight cloud shadowed his forehead.

"This is a hard condition, Jane! You will permit me to delay my departure, and remain by your side, if, as I fear, the inevitable stroke is close at hand?"

She shook her head. "I thank you, but I need no support. What is before me"—here for the first time during the interview the young girl's lips quivered—"I shall know how to bear, and I can bear it best alone. I would not have you delay your departure one hour, or hasten your return one week. In a year we shall meet

again; until then my promise must content you, as yours does me."

She had risen, and now stood opposite him, with an air of such full determination that Alison at once saw the impossibility of opposing her will; he saw that indeed she needed no support, and he yielded unresistingly to the necessity imposed upon him.

"I will prove to you, Jane, that I know how to honor your wishes, even though it is difficult for me to do so. But if I may claim none of the rights of your betrothed husband, you at least will not deny me the first, and for the present, the only boon I ask."

Jane did not answer, but she made no resistance as Alison took her in his arms, and kissed her lips. There was again an impassioned gleam in his eyes, and for a moment he pressed her close to his heart; but as more ardently, more warmly, he sought to repeat the caress, she broke from him with a sudden movement.

"Enough Henry! We make parting unnecessarily difficult. In a year you will find your bride; until then—silence."

He stepped back somewhat offended at this hasty repulsion, and his features again assumed the cold, proud expression, which had not left hers for a moment. Mr. Alison evidently was not the man to beg for caresses which were not freely granted him.

An approaching step in the anteroom demanded that both should immediately resume their company manners; the young lady as before, sat in the arm chair, and Alison opposite her,

when the person who had thus announced his coming, entered the parlor. He was a small, elderly man with gray hair and sharp, penetrating eyes from which gleamed an inconceivable irony, as he saw the young couple sitting there so much like strangers.

"The physician is about to drive away, Miss Jane. You wished to speak with him," he said.

Jane rose hastily. "Excuse me, Mr. Alison, I must go to my father. I will tell him of your visit, this evening."

She reached him her hand. A significant pressure, a glance of deep, calm, mutual understanding, then they parted with a hasty adieu, and Jane left the room.

As the door of the ante-room closed behind her, the last comer stepped up to Alison, and laid a hand upon his shoulder,

"I congratulate you!"

The young man turned quickly around. "For what?" he asked sharply.

"For your betrothal."

Alison frowned. "It appears, Mr. Atkins, that you have chosen to play the spy."

Atkins took this reproach very unconcernedly.

"Possibly! But you ought to know, Henry, that I do not belong to those disinterested persons from whom the affair is to be kept secret."

The young man's forehead cleared somewhat. "You certainly are an exception, and so—"

"And so, you accept my congratulations without further

hesitation," added Atkins. "But you two got through the affair quickly enough. 'Will you have me? I will have you,'—all right. 'The wedding shall be a year from now!'—all short, smooth, clear, without much eloquence or sentimentalism, quite to Miss Jane's taste. But our deceased Mrs. Forest would have thought quite differently of such a betrothal."

Alison's lips curled in scorn. "If Miss Alison had resembled her mother, I should scarcely have sought her hand," he said.

"There you are right!" replied Atkins dryly. "She was not to my taste either, always ill, always inclined to tears and scenes, full of sentimentality and extravagances,—a real German woman, she died of homesickness at last. Happily the daughter has inherited none of this nonsense. She is just like her father."

"I know it! And no one will accuse Mr. Forest of an excess of sentimentality."

"No!" said Atkins gravely, "and yet it seems to me that he too, once possessed his proper share of such emotions; but fortunately, he was sensible enough to leave all sentiment and whatever else could not be of use to him here, over yonder. When Mr. Forest landed here twenty years ago, sentimentality would have been sadly out of place, for he brought with him a very healthy hatred against Germany and all connected with it. With a sort of morose energy, he flung from him every remembrance of the fatherland, and even Americanized his name—it was Forster there, you know—and when our colony grew, and the German settlers naturally clung together, he kept aloof from them and

fraternized with the Americans. But this his wife could not endure; she could not accustom herself to the new life; there were endless quarrels and hard feelings between them, and as the child grew up, matters became still worse. The father wanted to educate her as an American, and he carried his point, as Miss Jane very soon most decidedly placed herself on his side. This quite broke the mother's heart. We had scenes enough, I tell you; there was no peace until Mrs. Forest died of homesickness at last. As things now stand, I fear the husband will not long survive her."

The voice of the speaker, at these last words, had involuntarily changed from a mocking to a serious tone; Alison, who had listened in silence, now took his hat from the table.

"You have heard all; I am not to delay my departure; in fact, urgent business calls me to New York. If the event happens, which we must soon expect, stand by Miss Forest's side. But if"—here Alison busied himself with buttoning his gloves—"if there should be difficulties in relation to the arrangement of the property, my father will stand ready to aid you to the full influence of his business knowledge and connections. It would seem especially desirable that the interests of his future daughter should not remain foreign to him, as my journey will prevent my becoming acquainted with them."

The old irony again gleamed from Atkins' eyes, as he sarcastically replied; "I thank you kindly for the proposal, but the property remains by testament in my hands, and consequently all will be found in perfect order. You and your father must wait

patiently for a year until Miss Jane herself brings her dowry into your house. Meantime, I can give you this one satisfaction; Mr. Forest is very rich; richer indeed than generally supposed, of this the glance you desire into our business affairs would at once convince you."

Alison made a passionate gesture. "Mr. Atkins, you are sometimes most horribly inconsiderate," he said.

"Why so?" asked Atkins phlegmatically. "Do you mean this as a reproach? Or do you suppose I could seriously think you would commit the folly of marrying a young lady without fortune, now, when the immense development of your business house and the relations you will establish in Europe make capital doubly necessary to you? No, Henry, I cherish too high an opinion of you to think you capable of any such unpractical romance."

Alison turned and looked searchingly into Atkins face, "I have certainly, as partner and future chief of our house, been circumspect even in my choice of a wife, but I give you my word that if Miss Forest's fortune falls far short of my expectations, I still prefer her to any richer heiress."

Atkins laughed. "I believe that of you without oath, Henry! You are a great deal in love, and I wonder whether you will inspire a like sentiment in our beautiful, cold Miss Forest. Well, that will happen in time; in any event it is fortunate if the merchant and the lover do not come in conflict, and here each is quite sufficient to itself. Once more I congratulate you!"

After leaving these two, Jane had hastily passed through

several rooms, and now entered a half-darkened, but richly and tastefully furnished sleeping-chamber. Gliding softly over the carpet, she approached the bed, and flung back its heavy curtains.

Now it was evident whence the young girl derived that strange expression of face which made her so unlike other girls of her own age, intense seriousness, cool determination, energetic pride; all these, unobliterated, unsoftened by the traces of illness, were repeated in the face of the man who lay here upon the pillow. He slowly turned his head towards the daughter who bent over him, saying:—

"They have just told me of the physician's visit. He was alone with you, and I wished to be present. Was this your command, my father?"

"Yes, my child! I wanted to hear an opinion from him which it would have been difficult to give freely in your presence. I now know that I have but a few days to live."

Jane had sunk on her knees at the bedside, and pressed her head into the pillows. She did not answer, but her whole form shook with the tearless sobs she energetically suppressed. The sick man gazed down upon her.

"Be calm, Jane, this opinion can surprise you as little as it does me, although we have both, perhaps, expected a longer respite. It must be, and you will not make the necessity of the separation more bitter through your tears."

"No!" She suddenly drew herself up, and gazed down upon her father; her sorrow was suppressed by the most absolute self-

mastery; her lips scarce quivered. The sick man smiled, but there lay a sort of bitterness in that smile; perhaps he would rather have seen her not obey him so readily.

"I have to speak with you, my child, and I do not know how many quiet, painless hours may be granted me. Come nearer to me, and listen."

Jane took her place by her father's bedside, and waited silently.

"I can calmly leave you, for I know that despite your youth, you need no stay and no guardian. In outward emergencies, you have Atkins at your side; his sarcastic, eternally mocking nature has never been agreeable to me; but in an association of almost twenty years, I have proved his integrity and devotion. You know that he long since amassed a fortune of his own, but he preferred to let it remain in our house. He will be at your side, until you confide yourself to the protection of a husband, which will perhaps happen soon."

"Father," interrupted Jane, "I have something to tell you. You know that Mr. Alison has been here; he has asked for my hand."

The sick man drew himself up with an expression of lively interest.

"And you?"

"I have given him my promise."

"Ah?" Forest sank back upon his pillow, and was silent.

Jane bent over him in astonishment. "And are you not willing? I felt certain of your consent in advance."

"You know Jane, that I will neither restrict nor control you in

your choice of a husband. It is your own future for which you have to decide, and I am convinced that you have not decided without serious deliberation."

"No; the proposal did not come unexpectedly to me. I have implicit confidence in Mr. Alison's character, and in his future, his family is one of the first in our city, his position is brilliant, and I am certain that his mercantile genius will in after years secure him an important place in the business world. Does this not appear sufficient to you, my father?"

"To *me*? certainly, if it is enough for *you*!"

With an expression of surprise, Jane fixed her dark eyes upon her father. "What more could be demanded from a marriage?" Forest again smiled with the same bitterness as before.

"You are right, Jane, quite right! I was only thinking of my own wooing, and of your mother's promise. But it is just as well. Mr. Alison indeed possesses all the advantages you have named, and in these respect you are more than his equal; you will be very content with each other."

"I hope so!" said Jane, and now began to tell her father the conditions she had imposed upon her betrothed, and the delay upon which she had insisted. Forest listened with eager attention.

"I like that! Without knowing it you met my wishes in this decision, for I, too, have a condition to impose upon you. What would you say if I demanded that you should pass this year of freedom in Germany with our relatives?"

With a movement of the most painful surprise, the young girl

rose from her chair.—"In Germany? *I*?"

"Yes, do you not love Germany?"

"No," replied Jane coldly, "as little as you, my father. I do not love the country that blighted your youth, embittered your life, and at last thrust you out like a malefactor. I could not forgive my mother, that with a consciousness of all you had suffered there, she always clung to the fatherland, and made you and herself inexpressibly unhappy with that incurable homesickness."

"Be silent, Jane!" interrupted Forest passionately. "There are things which you do not understand, will never learn to understand! I met no consideration in your mother, that I confess; she indeed made me unhappy; and still, she gave me hours of happiness, such as you will never give your husband—*never*, Jane! But then Mr. Alison will have no need of them."

Jane was silent. She had become accustomed to find her father very irritable in his sickness, sometimes quite incomprehensible. With the consideration one gives the sick, she now bore this passionate outbreak, and quietly resumed her place at his bedside.

A few minutes after, Forest again turned to her. "Forgive me, child!" he said mildly, "I was unjust. You have become what I educated you to be, what I would have you be, and I do not now regret having given you this direction. You will better endure the life-conflict than your weak, sensitive mother. Let this rest; it was something different you were to hear from me. Do you know that you have a brother?"

Jane started up in terror, and in questioning expectation, fixed her eyes upon her father.

"As a child I sometimes heard a hint of this; but lately no one has ever spoken of him to me. Is he dead?"

A deep sigh rent Forest's breast. "Perhaps he is dead, perhaps not. We have never been able to learn with certainty. I at last forbade all mention of his name, because his remembrance threatened to kill your mother; but the silence was of little avail; she never forgot him for a single hour."

With eager intentness Jane bent down yet closer to her father. He took her hand and held it fast in his.

"You are not unacquainted with the recent history of your native country, my daughter; you are aware of the glowing enthusiasm which in the thirtieth year of the present century took possession of all Germany, and especially of its high schools. I was a student at that time, and, a youth of eighteen years, I was animated like so many of my comrades with visions of the freedom and greatness that might come to my fatherland under a new and more liberal order of things. We sought to carry out these revolutionary ideas, and for that crime the government repaid us with imprisonment, in many cases with sentence of death. I was doomed to die, but by especial favor, my sentence was commuted to thirty years' imprisonment. Seven of these years I endured; but as you have often enough heard the story, I will not repeat it now. Even these bitter years resulted in good to me; they ended for all time my youthful ideals and

youthful illusions. When the amnesty at last came, under the iron pressure of the prison, in endless humiliations, in glowing hatred, had been ripened a man, who better than the twenty years' old dreamer knew how to bravely assume and patiently endure the struggle with life and misery."

Forest was silent for a moment, but the hard, savage bitterness which now lay in his features, and which was even more grimly reflected in Jane's face, showed that these remembrances were not foreign to her, and that the daughter had always been her father's confidant.

After a short pause the father continued: "Scarce was I free, when I committed the folly of marrying. It was madness in my position, but already, while at the university, I had become betrothed to your mother. She had waited long years for me, for my sake had renounced a brilliant position in life, and she now stood alone and forsaken, an orphan, dependent upon the favor and cold charity of *relatives*. This I could not bear; rather would I venture all. We were married, and a year after, your brother was born. He was not like you, Jane."—As he said these words, a lingering, almost painful glance swept the beautiful face of his daughter. "He was blonde and blue-eyed like his mother, but his possession was not unalloyed happiness to me. The first eight years of my marriage were the darkest of my life; more terrible, even, than those days in prison. There I suffered alone; here it was with wife and child that I must endure the conflict against misery and utter destitution which with all its horrors threatened

them. My career was naturally ruined, my connections severed. Whatever I began, whatever I undertook, to the demagogue every door was closed; every means of support withdrawn. At that time I put forth my best strength, and did my utmost in a struggle for daily bread; and still, my most unremitting efforts did not always suffice to keep my family from want.

"We might perhaps have perished, but the year 1848 came, and showed that the old dreamer had not yet fully learned to renounce his ideals. He allowed himself again to be enticed; for the second time, he listened to the syren's song, only to be dashed anew against the rocks.—I took my wife and child to a secure place among relatives, and threw myself headlong into the tide of revolution. You know how it ended! Our parliament was dissolved, the conflict in Baden broke out. I was one of the leaders of the revolutionary army; we were beaten, annihilated. For the first time a propitious destiny protected me from the worst. Now I was free.

"I would not again, and this time perhaps forever, be shut up in prison; I would not give up my family to irretrievable ruin; therefore I decided upon flight to America. My brother-in-law offered me the necessary passage-money; perhaps from kindness of heart, but more probably it was to be rid of the accursed demagogue, the disgrace of the family. Great circumspection was needed, for from one end of Germany to the other, the minions of the law were already let loose upon our track.

"In disguise, and under an assumed name, I reached Hamburg,

where my wife and children were awaiting me. You had been born during these last months. Poor child! It was in an evil hour I first pressed you to my heart. With the first kiss of your father, tears of glowing hatred, of bitter despair fell upon your infant face. I fear they have thrown a shadow over your life; I have never seen you carelessly merry like other children.

"On our way to the ship we separated so as not to attract attention. Your mother carried you in her arms, I followed at some distance, leading my boy by the hand. When half way up the ship's stairs, I recognized a face of evil omen. It was that of a spy. I knew him, he knew me; if he saw me, I was lost. Hastily forming my decision, I told the boy to follow his mother; he was old enough to understand, and she stood there in sight. I flung myself into the thickest of the throng at the harbor. An hour later, the spy had vanished, and I reached the ship unremarked. My wife, who had been prepared for possible delay on my part, hastened to meet me; her first inquiry was for the child. After a few words of terrible import, we understood the situation. He had not joined his mother; he must be on shore. In mortal apprehension, I rushed back regardless of the imminent danger to myself. I searched the whole harbor up and down, asking tidings of my boy of all I met. No one had seen him; none could give me information.

"The signal for departure was given. If I remained on shore I was lost, and my wife and child would sail, forsaken and friendless, on the wide ocean to a strange continent. The choice

was a fearful one, but I was forced to make it. When I trod the ship's deck without my child; when I saw receding from me the shores where he was left alone, a prey to every danger,—that moment—when I broke loose from home and country forever, the persecutions and bitternesses of a whole lifetime all came back, that moment set the seal to our separation, and darkened every remembrance of the past to me.

"The first hour of our landing in New York, I wrote to my wife's brother; but weeks passed before he received my letter. Doctor Stephen, my brother-in-law, pursued the search with the warmest ardor and the fullest sympathy. He went to Hamburg himself, he did everything in his power; but it was all in vain. He did not find the slightest trace of your brother. The boy had vanished utterly; he remains so to this day."

Forest was silent. His breathing became difficult, but Jane bending forward, eager and intent, had not thought of preventing an excitement which might prove dangerous, perhaps fatal to him; such regardful tenderness did not lie in the relations between this father and daughter. She had a secret to hear, a last legacy to receive, and if he died in the effort, he must speak the words necessity demanded, and she must listen. After a short space for rest he began anew:

"With this last sacrifice, the evil fates that had pursued me were propitiated, our misfortunes ended. Success attended me from the first step I took on American soil. In New York, I met Atkins, who was there gaining a precarious livelihood from

a secretaryship. He rescued me and my little all from a band of swindlers who already had me, the inexperienced foreigner, half in their net. Out of gratitude, I proposed that he should accompany me to the West. He had nothing to lose, and came with me to this place, then a vast, unpeopled solitude. Our plough was first to break up the prairie sod; the board cabin we reared with our own hands was the first dwelling erected here. Perhaps you remember when, in your earliest childhood, your father himself went out to the field with scythe or spade, while your mother did the work of a maid-servant in the house. But this did not last long.

"Our settlement made rapid strides. The soil, the location, were in the highest degree favorable; a town arose, a levee was built—lands which I had bought for a song rose to a hundred-fold their original value. Undertakings, to which I pledged myself with others, had an undreamed-of success. Participation in public life, and the position for which I had once so ardently longed, with social importance and consideration past my most sanguine hopes, became mine; and now, my daughter, I leave you in a position and in pecuniary circumstances, which make even our exclusive Mr. Alison consider it an honor to win your hand."

"I know it, my father!" The self-importance of Jane's manner at this moment was more noticeable even than before; but it did not seem like her usual haughtiness; her pride was evidently rooted in the consciousness of being her father's daughter.

With an effort so violent as to show that his strength was

failing, Forest hastened to the end of his recital:

"I need not tell you, Jane, that I have never abandoned the search for your brother; that I have renewed it again and again, and that since means have been at my command, I have spared no outlay of money or of effort. The result has been only disappointment. Latterly, I have lost hope, and have found solace in you; but your mother's anguish at the loss of her child, was never assuaged. To the hour of her death, she clung to the hope that he was living, that he would sometime appear. This hope I had long since relinquished, and yet upon her death-bed she exacted from me a promise to go myself to Europe and make one last search in person. I promised this, as the last amnesty had lifted the bar which had hitherto prevented my visiting my native land; and I was just making preparations for a long absence, when illness prostrated me. But the last, ardent wish of your mother ought not to remain unfulfilled. Not that I have the slightest hope that a trace, which for twenty long years has eluded the most vigilant search, can now be found.

"You are simply to fulfil a pious duty in keeping the promise I have no power to keep; you are to go through a form to assure yourself, before my entire fortune falls into your hands, that you are in reality the only heir; and for these reasons solely, I send you to the Rhine. In the business steps to be taken, your uncle will stand at your side; you are only to add to your proceedings, that energy of which he is incapable. It will not appear strange to our social circle if you pass the year of mourning for your father

among his relatives, in his former home. If Alison wishes, at the end of his European travels, he can receive your hand there, and return with you; but I leave this matter to you alone. I place only one duty in your hands, Jane; you will fulfil it."

Jane arose and stood erect before her father with all her energies aroused for action.

"If a trace of my brother is to be found, I shall find it, father! I shall yield only to impossibilities; I give you my hand upon that!"

Forest clasped her hand in his, and now the peculiar gravity of the relation between this father and daughter was evident, there were no kisses, no caresses, a pressure of the hand as among men, sealed the given and the accepted promise. For a few moments deep silence reigned; then the dying man said suddenly and in a subdued voice:

"And now, draw back the curtains; I can no longer endure the darkness. Let in the light."

She obeyed. She drew back the heavy, green damask curtain, and through a large corner window, streamed into the room the full dazzling glow of the midday sun. The dying man raised himself upright, and gazed intently out upon the broad prospect offered to his view. There lay the city, with its streets and squares, its sea of houses, the river-landing with its boats; there lay the lordly Mississippi dotted with its fairy isles, among which glided in and out the countless skiffs and steamers. Scattered near and far, were suburban homes surrounded by broad cultivated acres, and smiling in peace and plenty, while away to the horizon's

utmost verge stretched the illimitable prairies, green, billowy seas of verdure, relieved here and there by groves of oak and stretches of uplands.

Forest fixed his glance upon the magnificent panorama. Perhaps he was thinking of the time, when no human foot-fall had profaned this primeval solitude, when poor and friendless, he had come here to wrest from nature her as yet unappropriated wealth; perhaps he was gazing with pride upon the city which owed its birth and expansion to him; perhaps he was sad at the thought of leaving all this beauty and grandeur and prosperity. Convulsed with emotion, he sank back on his pillow. Jane bent anxiously over him. But this was no sudden access of bodily illness, no regretful feeling for the new home and the new-found riches he was to leave for ever. It was a sudden, overmastering feeling long repressed, which now compelled utterance.

"When you arrive in Germany, my daughter, greet the old home and the old home-river for me! Do you hear, Jane? Salute Germany for me! Salute our Rhine!"

The words came painfully subdued, almost inaudible from his lips. Jane gazed at him in mingled surprise and terror.

"Have you then loved Germany so much, father? You have almost taught me to hate it."

Forest was silent for a brief space; his lips quivered, and tears, seemingly wrung from a terrible inward conflict, rolled down his cheeks.

"The home-land had only misery for me," he said in a voice

trembling with emotion. "It persecuted, degraded me, cast me out; it denied even bread to me and mine. America gave me freedom, gave me riches and honor; and now, Jane, I would renounce them all—all, could I only die upon the Rhine!"

There lay such harrowing anguish in this final utterance of a long repressed sorrow, that Jane recoiled in terror before it. This fatal homesickness! Her mother, the sensitive, delicate woman, after long years of suffering, had died of it at last; and her father, that proud, energetic man who had so entirely broken away from home and its remembrances, who had united heart and soul with the land of his adoption, and had seemed petrified into hatred against his fatherland, he too had buried this agonized longing deep in his heart, only to acknowledge it in his dying hour!

Jane stood dumb and bewildered before this discovery, but she felt that here, just here, that strange something lay, which, despite all misunderstanding, had yet made her father and mother one; which must keep her eternally remote from both. She gazed intently at her father, he now lay quiet, with closed eyes and compressed lips. She knew that in such moments as this she must not disturb him. Softly gliding to the window, she let down the curtain, and the usual subdued twilight again ruled in the sick chamber.

CHAPTER II.

A Strange Cavalier

"Well, Miss Jane, a most promising introduction this much bepraised Rhine gives us, to that fatherland of yours! In six-and-thirty hours, I have become mortally weary of the whole country. We landed in such a fog that we couldn't see the shore until we set foot on it; that day we passed in Hamburg there was such a rain that I really thought a second deluge had broken out, and here upon the Rhine, we find a pretty state of things, don't we? I cannot understand how you remain so calm through it all!"

It was indeed no enviable situation, this, which so aroused Mr. Atkins' ire. In a dense fog, in the midst of a drizzling but incessant rain, the heavy post-chaise lay half upset in the middle of the suburban road. The horses already loosed from harness stood near with bowed heads, as if fully comprehending the unfortunate state of affairs, and in a gully by the road side near the broken hind-wheel, sat the postilion, his head bound up with a handkerchief, and groaning as he held his injured foot in both hands. Jane, who with an air of resignation stood by him, paid no heed to Atkins' complaints. She only gave a slight shrug of her shoulders, and persisted in an obstinate silence.

"We cannot possibly remain here longer in the rain!" continued Atkins in renewed vexation; "You certainly cannot. So

far as I can determine, our postilion's injuries are not dangerous, and he declares that B. is only an hour's distance at the furthest. Our best course is to hasten on there and send him the needed help."

"No," interrupted Jane, gently but decidedly. "His wound is still bleeding, and he is liable to faint at any moment. We could not possibly leave him helpless and alone; you at least, must remain with him, while I try to reach the nearest house."

"Alone? In a strange country? In this fog which would be very likely to lead you right into that accursed Rhine, that we hear raging down yonder, without seeing a glimpse of it? No, I shall consent to no such thing."

"I am not at all afraid," declared Jane, with a positiveness which showed that she did not allow Atkins to have the least influence or control over her movements, "and if I follow the main road it will be impossible for me to lose my way. In any event, it is the only thing that remains for us to do."

"But Miss Jane, consider!—If some human being would only make his appearance!—Hold! there comes some one!—A word with you, Sir, if you will allow it."

These last words, although spoken in German, must, through their strong English accent, have betrayed the foreigner, for a low but musical voice, asked in the purest English; "What is the matter, Sir?"

"God be praised, it is a gentleman; he speaks English!" said Mr. Atkins, with a sigh of relief, and quickly approaching the

stranger, who until now had been only half visible through the fog, he continued excitedly:

"We have had a mishap with our carriage. It is broken, the postilion is injured, and we are entire strangers here. May I ask if you would, perhaps, show us the way to B.?"

"Certainly!"

"And I also beg you to send us out the first carriage you can find. And one thing more! You will, perhaps, have the kindness to take a young lady to B. under your protection."

The stranger, who had bowed a polite assent to the first request, at the last stepped back, and there was something like a tone of horror in his voice as he replied.

"A young lady—am I—"

"You are to conduct her to the city and to the house which she designates to you. Miss Jane, may I implore you to confide yourself to this gentleman's care? You cannot possibly stand here longer in the rain."

Jane, who had taken no part in the conversation, now turned to the stranger. She glanced at his pale, delicate face, into a pair of blue, dreamy eyes which at this moment had an expression of mingled terror and embarrassment.

"I am exceedingly obliged to you," said Mr. Atkins, without waiting in the least for the gentleman's assent. "And now may I beg you to hasten, for the young lady's sake as well as my own? Good-by, Miss Jane. Have no anxiety in regard to the injured man; he remains in my care. I hope to meet you soon in a dryer

atmosphere."

All these arrangements had been made so hastily, with such dictatorial politeness, and in such an incontrovertible tone of command, that no evasion seemed possible. The stranger made no effort at resistance; in dumb consternation, he allowed all this to pass over him, and followed mechanically the directions given him. With a silent bow, he asked the young lady to accompany him; the next moment they were already on the way, and a winding in the road hid them from the eyes of Atkins and the coachman.

Whether the stranger was more surprised at the free, American manner in which the lady confided herself to the care of the first man she had met upon the highway, or frightened at the duty of gallantry imposed upon him, was difficult to decide. But his embarrassment was evident, and kept him from all attempts at conversation. Miss Forest did not understand this strange behavior. She was accustomed every where to be an object of great attention, and now this man, in appearance and language a gentleman, showed himself so little susceptible to the honor of accompanying a lady, that he did not even deem it worth his while to address a word to her. Jane measured her companion with a glance of anger, compressed her lips, and decided not to speak a word to him during the entire way.

For almost ten minutes they had walked on in silence, side by side, when the gentleman suddenly paused, and in the same low, musical voice as before, said; "The highway makes a broad

winding here. May I conduct you by the nearer path in which I am wont to go?"

"I have confided myself to your guidance," answered Jane, shortly and coldly, and with another silent bow, he turned from the public road and took a path to the left.

The designated path might certainly be nearer, and for a man passable in a case of necessity; but it was not at all suitable for a lady. It led over a swampy soil; through wet meadows, through dripping hedges, through fields and bushes, not only to the injury, but to the ruin of Jane's elegant mourning clothes, which had been designed for travelling, but for travelling in an extra post-chaise. The light cloak was as slight a protection as the thin boots; her dress became wet through and through, while her companion, enveloped in a thick woollen plaid, scarce felt any inconvenience from the weather, and did not think to offer her its protection. But he seemed to take very literally Mr. Atkins' injunction to hasten, for he hurried on in such strides that Jane could keep up with him only through the greatest effort.

Any other woman would have declared that such a path and such a pace were beyond her strength. But Miss Forest had determined to reach the town as soon as possible so as to send aid to those she had left behind, and lamentation and delay were not her business. She therefore, more and more resolutely, drew her shoes from the mud which seemed inclined to hold them fast, set her feet energetically into the tall, moist grass, and kept tearing her veil loose from the hedges to which it caught. But her

manner grew more and more morose, and after a quarter of an hour passed in this way, she halted suddenly.

"I must beg you to wait. I need a moment's rest."

These words, spoken in the sharpest tone, seemed to awaken—in her companion a sense of his thoughtlessness. He paused, and gazed in terror upon his protégée, who, exhausted and quite breathless, stood at the edge of a dense hedge of willows.

"I beg your pardon, Miss; I had quite forgotten—I"—he paused, and then added apologetically "I really am not accustomed to association with ladies."

Jane bowed as if she would say: "I have learned that!"

The gentleman now, for the first time, seemed to be aware of the state of the young lady's toilet. "Good heavens, you are quite wet through!" he cried anxiously, and then glancing upward, he added in evident bewilderment: "I believe it rains!"

"I *believe* so!" said Jane, with an irony which happily escaped the stranger; for he gazed searchingly around. They were both standing by the willow-hedge, which rising from a wall of earth, after a rain of several hours, offered no especially inviting resting place; and yet, the gentleman seemed to regard it as such. With a hasty movement, he tore the plaid from his shoulders, spread it carefully on the wet ground, and with a gesture of the hand, invited his companion to take her seat upon it.

Jane remained standing, and looked up to him. It really surpassed all comprehension. For a whole half hour this man, with the most indifferent air in the world, had seen her getting

soaked through and through, and now unhesitatingly, just to afford her a resting place for two minutes, he threw into the mud the shawl which might all this while have protected her. Anything more laughable or impracticable had never before met her observation, and still, in this proceeding there lay such painful anxiety, so timid an apology for former thoughtlessness, that Jane almost involuntarily accepted the invitation, and hesitatingly sat down.

For the first time, she now gazed attentively at her companion, who stood close to her. As if heated by the rapid walk, he had thrown off his hat, and stroked the rain-soaked hair from his high forehead. He had noble, delicate features, intellectual in the highest degree, but a transparent, sickly pallor lay upon them, and the large, blue eyes, with their strange, dreamy expression, looked as if they had nothing at all to do with the world and the present; as if they were gazing far out into the illimitable distance. This young lady, with the cold, beautiful features, and the proud, energetic glance, with an interest peculiar and almost indefinable to herself, gazed into the face so infinitely unlike her own.

Over all brooded the fog, and wove its gray veil around the trees and shrubs, which, dim and shadowy, gleamed through it; softly pattered down the rain, the first mild spring rain, which appeared to revive the whole earth with its warm, aromatic breath; lightly murmured through the air those strange voices, those whisperings and echoes peculiar to the rainy landscape, and amid these mist-voices, far away and mysterious, toned the

ebbing and flowing of the still invisible river.

The whole situation had something strange, something oppressive, and Jane, to whom these emotions were entirely new, suddenly broke loose from their spell.

"Is that the river, down yonder?" she asked pointing out into the fog.

"The Rhine! We are on its banks."

Again there was a pause. Miss Forest impatiently broke a twig from the willow-hedge, for a moment gazed absently at the opening buds, from which the first green was just bursting forth, and then carelessly threw it on the ground. Her companion bent, and lifted up the twig; she glanced at him in surprise.

"They are the first spring buds," he said softly. "I would not see them perish in the mud."

Jane's lips curled mockingly. How sentimental! But, indeed, she was now in Germany! Annoyed and almost angry at this indirect reproach, the young lady rose suddenly, and declared herself quite rested.

The gentleman was ready to go at once. Jane threw a hasty glance upon the plaid still lying in the mud, but as he seemed to have quite forgotten it, she did not think it worth her while to remind him of it. They walked on silent as before, but the guide now moderated his steps, and often looked anxiously around to see if she could follow. Another quarter of an hour had passed, when the outlines of houses and turrets loomed up through the fog, and the stranger turned to his companion.

"We are in B. May I ask Miss, where I shall conduct you?"

"To the house of Dr. Stephen."

He paused in surprise. "Doctor Stephen?"

"Yes! do you know him?"

"Certainly. I live in his house, and indeed"—he passed his hand thoughtfully over his forehead—"I faintly remember having heard that some one was expected there, a young relative, I believe."

"I was certainly expected," said Jane impatiently, "and you will oblige me if you would shorten the waiting of my relatives as much as possible."

"I am at your command, Miss! May I beg you to turn to the right so that I can conduct you through the garden by the shortest path?"

Jane followed, but she soon found reason enough to execrate this shortest path; for the hedge-way leading through the garden was worse than the deep mud and difficulties of the path they had just gone over. Her companion appeared to realize this himself, for after a while he paused suddenly, and said in evident embarrassment:—

"I forgot that the path was not suitable for a lady. Shall we turn around?"

"I think we are already half through it," answered Jane in a somewhat exasperated tone. "The end cannot be far distant."

"It is there behind the latticed gate."

"Well, then, let us go forward."

They had advanced a hundred steps or more, when a new

obstacle loomed up. The deepest portions of the path were quite overflowed by the rain, which here formed a real lake, that, enclosing the whole breadth of the passage, was not to be avoided. The unhappy guide halted in utter confusion.

"You cannot possibly pass through here," he said anxiously.

"I will try!" answered Jane resignedly, and placed the tip of her foot in the water; but he excitedly held her back.

"Impossible! The water is a foot deep. If you only—if you would allow me to carry you over."

The question was very timidly uttered, and with a half sympathetic, half derisive glance, Jane's eyes swept the tall but very slender and delicate form with its bowed shoulders.

"I thank you!" she returned with unconcealed irony. "The burden might be too heavy for you."

The irony had a peculiar effect upon the hitherto timid stranger. A scarlet flush suddenly shot over the pale face; with a single effort, he drew himself up, lifted the young lady in his arms, and rushed with her into the midst of the water. All this passed so suddenly, that Jane, surprised and confounded, had no time for resistance, but now she made a hasty movement, resolved to wade through the deep water, rather than permit a liberty taken without her consent. All at once, she met his eyes. Was it the dumb, almost plaintive entreaty that lay in them, or was there something quite other—something strange in this glance? Jane's eyes fell slowly, the former oppressive feeling returned with redoubled might, and she remained motionless,

while with a strength none would have dreamed that those arms possessed, he carried her all the way over.

"I beg your pardon," he said in a low voice, as, timidly and respectfully, he set down his burden at the garden gate.

"I thank you," replied Jane, curtly and coldly, as she herself thrust open the gate, and entered.

She had only taken a few steps in the garden, when a tall, almost gigantic, figure loomed up before her.

"Herr Professor, in Heaven's name, what tempted you to go out in such weather," he said. "And without an umbrella too! You may have taken a cold, a fever, your death—and the plaid! Herr Professor, where then have you left your plaid?"

Vexed and almost offended, the professor turned away from the anxious servant, who, armed with an immense umbrella, sought to protect him in such an obtrusive way.

"But Frederic! Do you not see the lady?" He pointed to Jane whom in his great excitement Frederic had not remarked. This new event, the appearance of a lady by his master's side, seemed to entirely transcend the servant's powers of comprehension; he let the umbrella fall, and stared at both with wide-open mouth, and in such boundless astonishment that it was very evident such a thing had never happened before.

The professor made a hasty end to his speechless consternation. "It is the young lady who was expected at Doctor Stephen's," he said. "Go, now, and tell the doctor—"

He had time to say no more; for scarce had Frederic caught

the first words, when, with an unintelligible exclamation, he turned suddenly, and shot away in mighty strides. Jane remained motionless, gazing at the professor; her manner plainly betrayed what she began to think of her German countrymen, and after this meeting with these two first specimens, she began to have serious doubts as to their sanity. The master as well as the servant was ridiculous in her eyes.

Meantime, in the house, Frederic's cry of announcement had caused a positive uproar. Doors were opened and shut violently, stairs creaked under light and heavy footfalls; they seemed to be in eager haste to improvise some new reception ceremonies, or to place in order those already begun; and when, at last, Jane, accompanied by the professor, approached the front door, a new surprise awaited her. Rich garlands of flowers surrounded doors and pillars, a giant "*Welcome*" was displayed over the former; flowers were strewn upon floors and stairways, and at the foot of the staircase stood the tall Frederic, with an immense bouquet in his hand, which, with a proud smile on his broad face, he held in rather an awkward manner, right before the young girl's nose.

Such a reception was evidently not to Miss Forest's taste. In her father's house, all such superfluous sentimentality had been suppressed in the same measure as all undue familiarity with servants had been avoided. Jane's brows contracted, she scanned the servant from head to foot, and as he, abashed at this ungracious stare, stepped to one side, with a haughty wave of the hand in which there lay small thanks, but a great deal of cold

repulsion, she swept past him up the stairs, without deigning a glance at the festal adornments in her honor, and arrived at their head, where Doctor Stephen and his wife stood to meet her.

The professor, as if spell-bound, stood below, and gazed at her through the door, which remained open for a moment. He saw how the young lady at this very peculiar first meeting with her relatives, before whom she appeared unexpectedly, drenched with rain, through the garden gate and in the company of an entire stranger, did not for a moment lose her self-possession. She stepped up to her uncle, with cool politeness, reached him her hand, and with exactly the same expression, offered her cheek to be kissed by her aunt. She then drew herself up, and stood before them both, resolute, majestic, and self-conscious, as if at that very first moment of meeting, she would protest against any future guardianship or dictation from them.

The door closed, and as if awaking from a dream, the professor started up, and glanced around at Frederic. The poor fellow still stood at the foot of the stairs; the flowers had fallen from his hands, and he stared motionless after the proud, beautiful apparition, that had so rudely repelled him. His master laid a hand upon his shoulder.

"Come up with me, Frederic?"

At these words, some life entered the poor fellow's face, which gradually assumed an expression of deep mortification. He passed his hand through his ash-blonde hair, and with his clear blue eyes, in which stood some tears, he gazed at his master.

"But what have I done so much out of the way?" he asked in a pathetic tone.

"Never mind, Frederic," said the professor kindly. "The young lady is evidently not acquainted with our German manners of reception. Come, now!"

Frederic obeyed. He bent down and picked up his bouquet, but at sight of it, the former mortification seemed to give place to resentment. With an expression of rage, he hurled the bouquet far out into the garden.

"Frederic!" The exclamation and the grave tone of his master brought the servant at once to reflection.

"I am coming, Herr Professor!" he replied humbly, and wiping away the tears with his hand, with bowed head, he softly followed his master up the stairs.

More than six weeks had already passed since the arrival of the young American, and she still remained a stranger in the house of her relatives. It was not their fault; they had from the first treated her with the warmest cordiality. Doctor Stephen and his wife belonged to those good, harmless people, whose highest endeavor it is to live in peace with all the world, and not to allow themselves to be disturbed in the even tenor of their way. The deceased Forest had judged his brother-in-law righteously, when he declared that he had defrayed the expenses of himself and wife and children to America, partly out of a good heart, but in a great measure, to be rid of the demagogue, who threatened to bring his otherwise loyal family into constant annoyance and

suspicion.

The doctor had very much regretted that his sister's destiny was united to that of this unfortunate man, who in his pride and obstinacy, would let his family starve rather than accept the slightest assistance from relatives; and he had been most firm in his conviction, that this dreamy, eccentric radical would go to ruin in matter-of-fact America. It had happened otherwise, and here, as elsewhere, success had won its homage. Although Doctor Stephen and his wife had once anxiously shunned all mention of their Forest relatives, they had of late years, gladly and often, spoken of their brother-in-law, the millionaire across the ocean, and the prospective visit of his daughter had thrown them into no small excitement. If the orphan niece had come to them poor and helpless, she would have been greeted with open arms; but the young heiress was received with the most profound respect, and this was what Jane especially demanded. From the first, she resisted every attempt at outside control, and the relatives soon found that they must in no way interfere with the young lady's independence.

In consideration of her wealth, they could cheerfully have forgiven every whim and every fault; but they could not forgive this persistent coldness and reticence, through which no beam of warmth ever penetrated, and which made confidence impossible as disagreement. Never, by word or glance, did Jane betray the slightest dissatisfaction with the house in which she was a guest. But the pitying contempt with which this young lady, reared in

the bosom of American luxury, yielded to their simple, plebeian way of life, was deeply felt, and wounded none the less. After a few days' acquaintance with their niece, the doctor and his wife came to the conclusion that she was the haughtiest, most heartless creature in the world.

In one respect, Jane did herself wrong; her haughtiness was not founded on the possession of riches or personal advantages; but upon that intellectual superiority through which she ruled all around her, and which she, ere long, began to make evident in a wider circle. Reared in the freedom of American life, she thought the respect here paid to leading personages slavish, the exclusiveness of certain circles ridiculous, and the interminable titles and ceremonies of German society called forth her bitterest irony. Her relatives, in mortal terror, frequently heard her intrude these opinions in the presence of strangers; but they need have given themselves no uneasiness. Miss Forest was an American and a reputed millionaire, two peculiarities which gave her entire freedom to do and say what would not have been allowed to another; and this so much the more as her betrothal remained a secret. There was scarcely a family of position in the city who did not cherish some hopes of future relationship with this eligible young heiress; and so, upon her entrance into society, Jane found herself courted and nattered, a state of things not at all new to her. All the world was enraptured with her beauty, which was in such striking contrast to the serene, blooming freshness of the Rhineland maidens; they flattered her pride which so

often wounded; they admired the intellect which she hardly thought it worth her while to display in these stupid circles. The young students who, without exception, admired and wondered at this foreign meteor which had made so sudden an appearance among them, left no opportunity unemployed to approach and give expression to their homage. But none succeeded even for a moment, in penetrating the icy indifference and chill decorum of this young lady. True to the traditions of her father, she had, upon her first arrival in Germany, girt herself about with this icy dignity and haughtiness, almost as with a coat of mail.

Doctor Stephen owned a pretty house in the handsomest part of B. His family occupied only its lower story; the upper was rented to Professor Fernow, who, called to the university almost three years ago, had since had his lodgings here. A scientific work which had made a profound sensation in the learned world, had won for the young man this professorship in B. He had come here, an entire stranger, without recommendations or acquaintances, and attended only by his servant; but at his very first lectures, he had enforced marked attention from his colleagues, and excited the liveliest interest among the students. With this success he had been content; the professor was not a man to assert himself, or claim any especial place in society. He anxiously avoided all intercourse not indispensable to his calling; he made no visits and received none; he shunned all acquaintanceship, declined every invitation, and lived in the solitude of his studies. His delicate health always served him as

an excuse. At first the people of B. had been unwilling to accept this apology, and had sought to ascribe his strange exclusiveness to Heaven knows what mysterious and dangerous motives; but now they were convinced that the professor was the gentlest, most harmless man in the world, whom only his passion for study, combined with his really impaired health, had led into such a way of life.

Several of his colleagues, who had approached nearer to him in the way of official relations, spoke with wondering admiration of his astonishing knowledge and his astonishing modesty, which really shunned all recognition, all emerging from retirement; but from their full hearts they were content with this, for they best knew how dangerous such a man might become to their authority, if, with this fulness of knowledge, was united an obtrusive personality and an energetic character. So, without opposition, they let him go on in his silent way; his learning was esteemed without envy, his lectures were numerously attended; but he played as unimportant a role in the university as in society, and lived like a veritable hermit in the midst of B.

Doctor Stephen found no occasion of complaint against his quiet tenant, who brought neither noise nor disturbance into the house; who punctually paid his rent, and who, when upon rare occasions he became visible, gave a polite greeting but shunned any longer conversation. The doctor was almost the only one who, at the professor's frequent attacks of illness, entered his rooms, or came into any closer relations with him; but the

doctor's wife, who would gladly have taken the sick man under her motherly wing, had not succeeded in her efforts, and must content herself with bringing the servant under her domestic sway instead of his master.

Frederic was not gifted with surpassing intelligence nor with especial strength of comprehension; his intellectual abilities were small, but in their stead, Nature had given him a giant body, and replaced his other defects by a boundless good nature and a really touching devotion to his master. But quite in contrast to him, he had a most decided inclination to associate with others, and was delighted to employ for others, the abundant leisure which the professor allowed him; and so he helped the doctor's wife in the house, and the doctor in the garden. In this way he had gradually become a sort of factotum for both, without whose help nothing could be done, and it had been he who, through hours of exertion, and an expenditure of all his powers of invention, had prepared that unsuccessful welcome for the young American. Since that scene he always avoided her, half-timidly, half-resentfully.

CHAPTER III.

Was it Sickness or—?

June, with its oppressively hot days, was at an end. In Professor Fernow's lodgings it was as silent as a church on a week-day; nothing moved here, not a sound broke the profound stillness that reigned in these apartments. One room was like another; book-case succeeded book-case, and upon each stood volumes in endless rows. The curtains were let down, a dim twilight prevailed. The genius and the science of centuries were heaped together here, but not a single fresh breath of air intruded into this solemn seclusion.

In this study, which differed from the other rooms in nothing but perhaps a still greater mass of books, sat the professor before his writing table, but he was not at work; pen and paper lay unused before him; his head thrown back against the upholstery of his easy chair, his arms crossed, he gazed fixedly at the ceiling. Perhaps it was the green window curtains that made his face appear so strangely pale and ill, but his bearing also expressed an infinite weariness, as if both mind and body were wrought to their utmost tension, and his eyes betrayed nothing of that intensity of thought—which is perhaps just about to solve some scientific problem; there lay in them only that melancholy, purposeless reverie which so often absorbs the poet, so seldom

the man of science.

The door opened, and softly as this had happened, the professor trembled with that susceptibility peculiar to very nervous persons; Doctor Stephen appeared on the threshold, and behind him the anxious, care-worn face of Frederic was visible.

"Good evening," said the doctor entering the room. "I have come to give you another lecture. You are not so well to-day, are you?"

The professor glanced at him in surprise, "You are mistaken, doctor! I find myself quite well. There must be a misunderstanding, I did not send for you?"

"I know that," said the doctor, coolly. "You would not send for me unless it were a matter of life or death, but this Frederic here has declared to me that all is not quite right with you."

"And indeed it is not," said Frederic, who, as he saw the displeased glance of his master, had taken refuge behind the doctor, and placed himself under that gentleman's valiant protection. "He has not been well for a long time, and I know now just when it began; it was that day when the Herr Professor went out in the rain without his umbrella and came back with that American Miss and without his shawl"—

"Silence, Frederic!" interrupted the professor suddenly, and with such a vehemence, that Frederic started back affrighted before that unwonted tone. "You would do better to attend to your own affairs, than to meddle with things you know nothing about. Go now, and leave us alone!"

Confounded at the unwonted severity of his usually indulgent master, Frederic obeyed reluctantly, but the doctor, without paying the least attention to the professor's glance, which plainly enough betrayed a wish for his withdrawal, drew up a chair and sat down in it.

"You have been at your studies again? Of course! This magnificent summer's-day, when all the world hastens out into the open air, you sit here from morning to night, or rather until far into the night, at your writing desk. Tell me, for God's sake, how long do you think this can go on, and you bear up under it?"

The professor, although not without evident reluctance, had resumed his former seat, and appeared not yet to have become master of his excitement. "I must have taken cold," he said, evasively.

"No, it is not cold," interrupted the doctor, "it all comes from so much study, which has now become a mania with you, and will bring you to your grave if you do not allow yourself some recreation. How often I have preached this to you! But what can one do with a patient who always listens gently and patiently, always says 'yes,' and always does just the contrary to what he is ordered to do!"

The professor had indeed listened with great patience. "I have always followed your directions," he affirmed in a low voice.

"Oh yes, literally! If, for example, I sent you to bed, you lay down obediently, but had lamp and books brought to the bedside, and studied until four o'clock in the morning instead of until two.

You must possess a good constitution to enable you to do all this; until now it was only your nerves that were ruined. If you go on in this way a year longer, you will have the consumption; I give you my word for that!"

The professor rested his head on his hand, and gazed straight before him. "So much the better!" he said resignedly.

The doctor sprang up impatiently, and noisily shoved back his chair. "There we have it! You really long for death! There is nothing healthy in your learning. Consumption of mind and body; that is the end of it all."

Fernow had risen at the same time. He smiled sadly. "Give me up, doctor; I repay your care only with ingratitude! My health is entirely undermined, I myself am best conscious of this, and with all your good will and all your medicines you cannot help me."

"With medicines—no," said the doctor gravely. "Only a radical cure can save you; but I fear it is quite useless to advise you."

"And what would your advice be?" asked the professor abstractedly, fastening his glance again upon his books.

"For a year—for a whole year long, you ought not to touch a pen, not even to look into a book, and above all, not to think of a syllable of science. Instead of this you must take constant physical exercise, and if you can obtain it in no other way, work with hoe and spade in the garden and keep at it until you grow hungry and thirsty, and can defy every change of weather. Don't look at me in such astonishment, as if I were pointing you out the direct way to the other world; such an entirely shattered nervous

system as yours, only the most powerful remedies can avail. It is my firm conviction, that such treatment, energetically begun, and persistently carried through, will save you in spite of all these premonitions of death."

The professor shook his head incredulously. "Then I certainly must despair of cure; you must yourself know that to carry on the work of a day laborer in my position is impossible."

"I know it to my sorrow! And you are the last who yield to such requirements. Well then, study on in Heaven's name, and prepare yourself for the consumption. I have preached and warned enough.—Adieu!"

With these words, spoken in great exasperation, the good natured, but somewhat choleric Doctor Stephen took his hat and went out at the door; but in the ante-room, the giant figure of Frederic had posted itself,—there was a dumb, questioning look upon his anxious face.—The doctor shook his head.

"Nothing is to be done with your master, Frederic!" he said. "Give him his usual medicine, it is the old complaint that has again"—

"Oh no, it is not that!" interrupted Frederic with great positiveness, "it is something entirely new, this time, and since that day when the American Miss"—

The doctor laughed aloud. "I hope you will not make the arrival of my niece answerable for your professor's illness," he said, greatly diverted at this juxtaposition of things.

Frederic lapsed into an embarrassed silence. This certainly

had not been his intention; he only knew that both these incidents occurred together.

"Well, and how is it really with your master this time?" asked the doctor.

Frederic, greatly embarrassed, kept twirling his hat in his hands; a literal description of the circumstances that had so impressed him, was beyond his power of language. "I do not know—but he is entirely unlike himself," he persisted, obstinately.

"Nonsense," said the doctor curtly. "I must know that better. You give him the usual medicines, and then above all see that you get him away from his writing desk today, and out into the open air; but take care that for his especial recreation he does not pack a folio along with him. Do you hear?"

So saying, the physician went down the stairs, and when he had arrived there, asked for his niece.

"She has gone out," replied Frau Stephen in a very ill humor. "She went at four, and, as usual, alone. Speak with her, doctor, I implore you, once again, and represent to her the impropriety and adventuresomeness of these long, solitary walks."

"I?" said the doctor; "no, my dear, that is your business, you must expostulate, with her yourself."

"Expostulate!" cried the old lady, angrily; "as if anyone could succeed in that with Jane; whenever I venture a slight hint as to this or any other of her independent proceedings, I receive this invariable reply: 'Dear aunt, please leave all such matters to my discretion;' and not another word am I allowed to say."

The doctor shrugged his shoulders. "And do you really believe I should succeed any better?" he asked.

"But half the city is already talking about the freedom of this girl" cried the Frau Doctor, excitedly, "Everybody thinks us accountable for it all, and everybody is wondering why we allow her to go on as she does."

"Is that really so?" returned the doctor with stoical calmness. "Well, then, I only wish that all these people who are criticising us, could have Jane Forest in their houses a single week just to test their own authority. They would soon get tired enough of trying to control her. Jane, with her bluntless, and our professor up there with his gentleness, are two obstinate mortals, with whom all B. can do nothing. And so the only thing you and I can do about it, wife, is just let them both have their own way."

CHAPTER IV.

The Hero of the Pen

The doctor was right. Miss Forest troubled herself very little as to whether the people of B. thought her solitary wandering proper or not. Not that she had any especial inclination for solitary dreamy roamings, but she wished to become acquainted with the environs of the town; and as, after Atkin's departure, she found no one she thought worthy to accompany her, she went alone.

One day, after a longer walk than usual, which took her some hours' distance from B., she ascended the Ruèenberg, from whose summit there was a view of an ancient castle. Wearied with the long walk, she sat down upon a relic of the old wall, and leaning against the rock, gazed far out into the landscape. The misty veil which, on the day of her arrival, had so densely enveloped all, had now lifted, and the beauties then hidden from her view, now bathed in golden sunlight, lay outspread at her feet.

She leaned farther back into the shadow of the wall. This German landscape had an unwonted effect upon her; around it hovered a something which at sight of the grandest natural scenery she had never experienced, a breath of melancholy, of longing, of home-sickness. Home-sickness! She had never understood the word, not even when she had seen her mother die of the malady,—not even when it had so overpowered her

father in his dying hour. Now, when she trod the soil, to which she, a stranger in all else, still belonged by the sacred right of birth, there rose within her soul, dimly and mysteriously, as it were a distant, half sunken remembrance of that early childhood, when her father had not watched over her education, but had confided it entirely to her mother, who, with old songs and legends, had awakened in the child that longing which later the father's influence had so entirely obliterated or changed into bitterness.

It was a strange, almost uncanny feeling for Jane; and she knew the very moment when it began. Not at sight of a magnificent prospect like this, not at the rich landscape-pictures of a tour up the Rhine, which she had a little while before made with her uncle and Atkins, had this feeling first awakened. No, it was amid the swaying mists of that country road, at the edge of that willow hedge, from whose buds the first green of spring burst forth, when that gray veil enveloped all around, and only the murmur of the river broke through the silence; then it had for the first time awakened, and, in an unaccountable manner, it always attached itself to the form of the man who had at that time stood near her. Jane thought only seldom, and always with a sort of aversion, of that meeting. In spite of the ludicrousness of the hero, there lay in it something of that romance, which the matter-of-fact daughter of Forest so much despised; and now, just as she was about to repel the intrusive and ever-recurring remembrance, this became impossible;—she caught the sound of an advancing

footstep, and Professor Fernow himself came around the angle of the wall.

For a moment, Jane almost lost her presence of mind at the sudden apparition which so peculiarly responded to her thoughts; but the professor seemed really frightened at so unexpected a sight of her. He started back, and made a movement to turn around, but all at once, the impoliteness of such a step seemed to dawn upon him; after a moment's hesitation, he bowed silently, and walked to the other side of the wall, where he took his stand as far as possible from the young lady; and still, from the narrowness of the space, they were none too far apart.

It was the first time since their meeting upon the suburban highway, that they had found themselves alone together. Their casual and unavoidable meetings in the house and garden had always been signalized by the professor with a shy bow, which Jane had coolly returned; they had both shunned all conversation, and it seemed that they would preserve the usual silence to-day. The professor had arrived, exhausted, and out of breath; neither the weariness of the long pathway, nor the exertion of climbing, which he had so conscientiously undertaken in response to his physician's order for moderate exercise in the open air, had sufficed to redden his cheeks, upon which lay the same ashy pallor they had worn that afternoon; and the deep lines on the young man's forehead, the dark rings around the eyes,—all these only too well confirmed what Jane had often heard from her uncle, that the professor was working himself to death, that his

days were numbered.

And still,—her thoughts must keep reverting to that moment when he had stood with her before the flooded pathway. Those had not been the arms of a consumptive which had so vigorously lifted her, so easily and safely carried her; and that quick flush of excitement at her question of his strength, had been anything but an indication of illness. She could not resolve the contradiction between that moment and the usually delicate appearance of the young man, which today was more plainly than ever revealed to her eyes.

"Do you often climb the Ruènberg, Mr. Fernow?" began the young lady at last, for the obstinate silence of the professor left her no choice but to open the conversation, and she had heard enough of this eccentric man to be aware that nothing offensive lay in his silence.

At the sound of her voice he turned hastily around, and it seemed as if he made an effort to retain in her presence, his usual dreamy, absent manner.

"It is the most beautiful place in the environs of B. I visit it as often as my time permits."

"And that is perhaps very seldom?"

"It is so, and especially this summer, when I must dedicate all my strength to an arduous work."

"Are you writing another learned work?" asked Jane in a slightly ironical tone.

"A scientific one," returned the professor with an emphasis

that equalled the irony.

Jane's lips curled in derision.

"You think perhaps, Miss Forest, that this is both a thankless and fruitless effort," he said, with some bitterness.

She shrugged her shoulders. "I must confess that I have none too great reverence for book-learning, and that I cannot at all comprehend how one can lay his whole life, a free-will offering upon the altar of science, and write books which, like yours, Professor Fernow, are of interest only to the learned, and which to the rest of mankind, must always remain dead, fruitless and valueless."

This was another specimen of Jane's horrible frankness, which had so often thrown her uncle into despair; but the professor seemed neither surprised nor wounded. He fixed his large melancholy eyes on the young lady's face. She already half regretted having begun the conversation, for if she could better hold her ground before these eyes than at that first interview, they still called forth that torturing, anxious sensation she could not control.

"And who tells you, Miss Forest, that I do it of my own free will?" he asked in a peculiarly emphatic tone.

"Well, one does not allow himself to be forced into such a direction," replied Jane.

"But supposing a homeless, orphaned child, thrown out upon life alone, falls into the hands of a learned man who knows and loves nothing in the wide world but science?—As a boy I was

chained to the book-table, as a youth I was restlessly impelled onward, to exert my capabilities to the utmost, until at last the goal was reached. Whatever I in youth possessed of health or poetry, was irretrievably lost in this process, but he whom this useless book-learning has cost such sacrifices, is bound to it by indissoluble ties for the rest of his life. For this, I have sacrificed every other longing, and every hope."

There lay a sort of despairing resignation in these words, and the melancholy glance into Jane's face which accompanied them, awoke in her a feeling of resentment against the professor, and against herself. Why could she not remain calm under this glance? Surely if anything could have lowered this man in her eyes it was the confession he had just made. And so, not even from conviction or from inspiration, but from habit, from a vague sentiment of duty, he was working himself to death! To Jane's energetic nature, this passive endurance and persistence in a half-enforced calling, appeared supremely pitiable. The man who did not possess the strength and courage to rise to his proper place in life, might just as well sink into nothingness as a bookworm!

With a hasty excited movement, the professor had turned away from her, and Jane too soon found herself gazing upon the landscape now all aglow with the last beams of the setting sun. The roseate halo transfigured earth and sky; the blue mountains in their clear, transparent outlines caught a new lustre from the rosy light which enwrapt all the towns and villages lying at the mountain's base; which flashed and flamed in the green and

golden waters of the Rhine as they flowed on calm and majestic, far out into the illuminated plain, where against the western horizon, distant and scarce discernible, like a giant mist-picture, the mighty dome towered upward, the pride and crown of the old Rhenish stream.

The reflection of this same fiery glow lay upon the gray, weather-beaten stones of the old castle, upon the dark ivy which had woven around it its thick green meshes, while the wild, luxuriant vines hanging over the abyss, fluttered to and fro in the evening wind; and it lay also upon the faces of the two up yonder.

Jane was for some minutes so lost in gazing at the wonderful illumination, that she had not remarked the professor standing close by her side, and now, she was almost frightened at the sound of his voice.

"Can our Rhine also win a moment's admiration from you?" he asked in a tone of peculiar satisfaction.

"From me?" The thought suddenly occurred to Jane that he might have divined something of the weakness of which she had been guilty in this respect. She had certainly always retained a mastery over her features, it could be only supposition; but the supposition vexed her.

"*From me?*" she repeated, in an icy tone. "You may be partly right, Professor Fernow, I find some very charming features in this landscape, although upon the whole, it seems to me rather narrow and poor."

"Narrow! poor!" repeated the professor as if he had not rightly

understood, while his glance, incredulous and questioning, rested upon her face.

"Yes, I certainly call it so!" declared Jane with a tone of haughty superiority and a touch of vexation. "To one who, like me, has lived upon the shores of the great Mississippi, who has seen the magnificence of Niagara, who knows the majesty of vast prairies and primeval forests, this German landscape can appear but narrow and poor."

The professor's face flushed—a sign that he was beginning to be angry.

"If you measure a landscape by space, you are right, Miss Forest. We are apt to employ other standards, which might perhaps seem petty to you; but I assure you that your landscapes would appear to us supremely empty and desolate; that we should think them tame or dead."

"Ah! Do you know them so intimately?"

"I do."

"I really wonder, Professor Fernow," said Jane with cutting irony, "that, without having seen our landscapes, you are able to give so positive a verdict in regard to them. You appear to think our Mississippi region a desert, but you should at least know from your books, that the life which rules there is infinitely richer and grander than by your Rhine."

"An every-day life!" cried the professor growing still more excited; "a hive of bees in a restless struggle for success, a life directed but to the present moment! Your giant river, Miss

Forest, with its thousand steamers, with its thriving populous cities and luxuriant shores, can never give you what the smallest wave of the Rhine brings in enticing murmurs to us all; the spell of the past, the history of nations, the poesy of centuries."

"To us"—here the professor suddenly and unconsciously dropped the English in which he had been speaking, for his native German—"to us, this chimes and echoes through a thousand songs and legends, it is wafted to us in every rustle of the forest, it speaks to us in the voiceless silence of every rocky cliff. From our mountains, from our castles, the mighty forms of the past descend; in our cities, the old races rise again in their pristine might and splendor; our cathedrals, memorials of imperishable magnificence and power, tower heavenward; the Loreley entices and beckons us down beneath its green waves, in whose deepest depths, sparkles and glitters the Niebelungen horde,—all this lives, and enchants us in and around our Rhine, Miss Forest, and this certainly, no—stranger can understand."

Jane had listened, first in surprise, then in wonder, but at last in utter consternation. What had all at once come over this man. He stood before her erect and tall, his face almost transfigured by an inner light, his eyes glowing with excitement. She listened to the deep, fervid tones of his voice, she yielded to the spell of his eloquence, where word crowded upon word, picture upon picture, and it seemed to her as if here also a misty veil had been riven, and she caught a glimpse out into infinite space—gleaming with golden light. The chrysalis had suddenly fallen from the

pale, suffering form, which so long under a ban, now came forth into its true light, and soared to its true place.

Jane Forest was not woman enough to remain long under such an infatuation, without exerting all her strength to break from it. Her whole inner being rose in arms; the whole pride and obstinacy of her nature arrayed themselves against this power, which for some moments had held her in willess control, against this influence that had so oppressed her. She must break the spell, cost what it would, and with quick determination, she grasped after the first weapon that stood at her command—remorseless irony.

"I did not know you were a poet, Professor Fernow!" she said, mockingly.

The professor shuddered, as if a shrill discord had met his ear; the flush in his face died out, his eyes fell to the ground.

"*A poet?--I?*" he said in a half-stifled voice.

"What you have just been saying did not sound at all like prose."

Fernow sighed deeply, and passed his hand over his forehead.

"I beg your pardon, Miss Forest, for having ennuyed you with poetry. Ascribe it to my ignorance of the rules of society,—whose first precept is, that one must not speak to a lady of that which she cannot comprehend."

Jane bit her lips. This "learned pedant," as she had called him this very morning, was revealing himself in strange ways. Poetic at one moment, he could be cruelly sarcastic at the next; but she

was better adapted to this tone; here she could meet him as equal meets equal! The young lady in her vexation, quite overlooked the deep and painful excitement which had goaded the professor to a bitterness so unusual with him; and she did not cease her thrusts. She could not deny herself the dangerous satisfaction of calling forth those lightning-like gleams of anger from the calm, dreamy, superficial being of this man;—gleams which betrayed passionate depths perhaps unknown to him. She felt that only in moments of the highest inspiration or of the highest exasperation, was he capable of these, and as it was beyond her power to inspire him, she resolved to exasperate him.

"I wonder so much the more, Professor Fernow, that you have guarded this susceptibility in so extraordinary a way; but really, in dreaming and poetizing, the Germans were always in advance of us."

"In two things which stand infinitely low in your esteem!"

"I, at least, am of the opinion that man was created for deeds and not for dreams! This poetizing is only listless dreaming."

"And consequently you despise it!"

"*Yes!*" Jane was fully conscious of the cruelty with which she uttered this rough *yes*, but she had been challenged, she resolved to wound; and it seemed indeed as if she had succeeded. A deep red flush mounted to Fernow's forehead. Strange—he had taken it so calmly when she sought to disparage science, but her attack upon poetry he would not bear.

"You ought to be less prodigal of your contempt, Miss Forest,"

he said, "and there are things which deserve it more than our poetry."

"Of which I have no conception."

"For which you *will* have none, and which will yet assert its right, like the home-bud at that very moment when you called it poor and narrow."

Jane was for a moment speechless with pride and anger. What had taught this man, who in his revenge and absence of mind often forgot the simplest, most familiar things, to glance so deeply into her soul, although her features never betrayed what was passing there? What induced him, with such exasperating clearness, to bring to light sentiments which she herself would not confess? For the first time that indefinable oppression she always experienced in his presence, found a decided reason; she felt dimly that in some way danger threatened her from this man; that she must at any price hold herself far from him, even on account of this one provocation.

Miss Forest drew herself up with her utmost dignity, and measured the professor from head to foot. "I regret, Mr. Fernow," she said, "that your penetrating glance has so deceived you. I alone am accountable for my sympathies and antipathies; besides, I assure you that I thoroughly detest sentimentality and revery in whatever form and that to me nothing in the whole world is so antagonistic as—a hero of the pen."

The word was spoken, and, as if he had received a wound, the professor trembled under this irony. The flame again flashed up

in his face, and from his blue eyes darted a lightning glance that would have made any other than Jane tremble. For an instant a passionate, indignant reply seemed to quiver on his lips; then he suddenly averted his face, and placed his hand over his eyes.

Jane stood immovable. Now she had her will. The storm was invoked. She had made him angry, angry as he had been that day when he had so hastily lifted and carried her in his arms to disprove her insinuation of his want of physical strength.

What now?

After a momentary pause, Fernow turned to her. His face was pale but perfectly calm, and his voice lacked that peculiar vibration it had possessed during the whole interview.

"You seem to forget, Miss Forest, that even a lady's privileges have their limit," he said. "If the social circle in which you move, allows you so free an expression of your opinions, I beg leave to remind you that I do not belong to that circle, and will not tolerate direct insults. I should have answered a man otherwise. As for you, I can only assure you that it will henceforth be my especial care that our paths do not again cross."

And with a bow just as cold and distant, just as haughty as Miss Forest herself had at her command for persons not agreeable to her, he turned away and vanished behind the wall.

Jane remained standing there motionless, in a sort of bewilderment, which gradually yielded to the consciousness of what this man had presumed to say to her. He had mortified, chided, repulsed her! Her, Jane Forest! This pitiable scholar,

upon whom until this hour she had looked with sympathetic contempt! The contempt indeed was over, but who could have dreamed that this man, so timid, so helpless in every-day life, could in a moment, when the conventional barriers fell, become so unmasked! In the midst of her resentment, Jane experienced something like a deep satisfaction, that he to her and to her alone, had shown himself in this light; but that did not lessen her exasperation, neither did the consciousness that she had driven him to extremities, and that the rebuke was just, in the least console her.

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