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*Author of "North Italian Folk," "A Story of
Autumn," &c.*

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PARTNERS.

A Novel.

BY

E. WERNER.

AUTHOR OF "SUCCESS AND HOW HE WON IT," "UNDER A CHARM,"
"RIVEN BONDS," "NO SURRENDER," &c., &c.

TRANSLATED BY H. G. GODWIN.

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PARTNERS.

CHAPTER I.

It was afternoon on a sunny spring day. The profound Sabbath rest and stillness which found no place in the incessant turmoil of the great commercial seaport reigned the more undisturbed around a country house which lay beyond the great sea of buildings near the shore, and whose park-like grounds stretched down to the water. It was one of those imposing, elegantly and luxuriously appointed villas which rich townspeople usually inhabit when they wish to live secure from street noises and confusion, and yet would be able to reach the town without great loss of time. In the drawing-room, whose French windows opened upon the garden terrace, were a lady and gentleman engaged in an eager and obviously earnest conversation. The cheeks of the young lady glowed in hot excitement, and she struggled visibly with hardly repressed tears, while the gentleman appeared perfectly indifferent and unmoved. He was a man of middle age, but with already completely grey hair, and grave, cold features; his whole appearance betokened the business man. The calm and cool indifference of his manner was not lost for a moment in the most exciting conversation, and even his mode of speaking was dry and businesslike, without a trace of any warmer feeling.

"Really, Jessie," said he, "I am weary of this constant repetition of the old lamentations. As your guardian and relative I have undertaken the care of your future, and I should have thought the future which I lay before you acceptable enough. But such a silly, romantic, girlish head will never be able to judge what is for its own happiness."

The silly, romantic, girlish head was at least not deficient in grace. Without being regularly beautiful, the fair head, the delicate, but very expressive features, and the rather languishing blue eyes, had something uncommonly attractive.

At this moment, however, the youthful countenance bore the expression of passionate excitement, and the same excitement trembled in her voice when she replied--

"My happiness! What you call by that name, Uncle Sandow, lies immeasurably far from what is happiness to me."

"Will you, perhaps, tell me what misty and fantastic idea you connect with the word?" said Sandow, in a sarcastic tone. "Happiness is a brilliant position in life, in the midst of wealth, at the side of a husband who, under all circumstances, can be a support to you. That is offered to you with the hand of a man"--

"Whom I don't even know," interrupted Jessie.

"But whose acquaintance you will make within an hour. Besides, my brother is no stranger to you, even if you have not yet actually seen him. According to his portrait, his exterior leaves nothing to be wished for, and you have declared that no other inclination binds you. Why, then, this obstinate struggle against a union for which Gustave is already prepared?"

"Just because he was so quickly prepared for it. I cannot--I will not confide my future to a man who does not for a moment hesitate to give up his chosen calling, his already brilliant career, because the prospect of a wealthy match is held out to him."

Sandow shrugged his shoulders.

"There again are the exaggerated ideas with which your German education has imbued you, and without which you were quite sentimental enough. Chosen calling! Brilliant career! You seem to have a very exalted idea of the position of a German journalist. Gustave's pen is admired and sought for so long as the whim of the public and the present political tendency last. Sooner or later that will come to an end, and then good-bye to his brilliant career. Here in America independence, riches, and the coveted post of head of a great commercial house, are offered to him. He would be worse than a fool to throw that up in order to continue to write leading articles."

"That is a matter of taste, and I assure you, Uncle Sandow, it would be quite immaterial to me whom you might choose as a partner if you would not draw me within the circle of your business

calculations."

"I do it in your own interest. You know it was the dearest wish of your late father to keep your fortune in the business. He ever hoped that his place there would be filled by his son-in-law. It was not granted to him to see this himself."

"No," said Jessie, softly, "for he never had the heart to force me as you do now."

Sandow made an impatient movement.

"What exaggerated expressions are these! I do not think of forcing you, but I require with the greatest decision that you should listen to reason, and not cast aside the idea of this union without farther consideration, merely because it does not agree with your romantic ideas. You are nineteen, and must now think of marriage. Ideal marriages, such as you dream of, do not exist. To every one who woos you your fortune is the great attraction. The days of disinterested love are long past, and when one or another plays such a comedy with you it is only more surely to squander your money afterwards. It is important that you should make that perfectly clear to yourself, or the inevitable disappointments may be too hard for you."

An incredible heartlessness lay in the icy calm with which he reckoned all this up in the ears of his ward, and reduced the step on which depended all the dreams, illusions, all the future hopes of the young girl, to a flavourless calculation, of which the factor was her fortune.

Jessie's lip trembled painfully at this merciless exposition, for the air of infallibility with which it was pronounced showed her that Sandow really expressed his inmost convictions. Had she not already learnt what it meant to be a good match, and to thus enchain the selfishness and calculations of every man with whom she came in contact? Even her guardian saw and respected in her only the heiress, a bitter thought for a young creature whose heart longed passionately for happiness and love.

"Here you need not fear this," continued Sandow, who looked on her silence as a kind of assent. "This marriage offers you both similar advantages. With your hand Gustave receives a fortune and a high position in the commercial world here; through him you retain an interest in your father's business, and have the certainty that your wealth will be controlled and increased by your husband. The thing is so clear and simple that I cannot really comprehend your obstinate resistance, particularly as you have interested yourself formerly about Gustave, and you have always read his articles with the greatest enthusiasm."

"Because I believed in the writer of them; because I did not imagine it possible that all this glowing love of country, all this enthusiasm for the great and beautiful, could be only phrases to be cast to the winds as soon as it appeared advantageous to do so."

"These knights of the quill are accustomed to fine expressions," said Sandow slightly. "It is a business matter. It would be hard upon them if they must match word and deed. Gustave has written as his situation and the tendency of the day demanded, and now he acts as reason requires. If he did not he would be useless to me as a partner. And now let us end the discussion. I do not urge you to decide either to-day or to-morrow, but await nevertheless with certainty your assent to my wishes."

"Never!" cried Jessie, flaming out. "To belong to a man who sees in me merely a paragraph in a business contract; to an egoist who sacrifices to his material gain all that is holy and dear to others! Never! Never!"

Sandow took little or no notice of this passionate outburst. If Jessie had been his daughter he would have simply commanded and forced her to follow his wishes, but he knew too well the limits of his power as guardian to attempt anything of the kind here. He knew besides that his long-accustomed and dreaded authority was of itself a kind of compulsion to the girl, and was determined to employ it.

"We will leave the subject now," said he, rising. "I am going to the station, and expect in an hour to present my brother to you. You will condescend in the first place to learn to know him, and everything else will follow in time. Good-bye."

With this he left the room, and the carriage, which had been waiting for him, rolled from the door.

Jessie remained alone, and now, when she felt herself no longer under the ban of those cold, hard eyes, the long-repressed tears burst forth. The girl plainly did not belong to those energetic natures which set will against will. In these tears she betrayed all the weakness of a character accustomed to be directed and led, and which, in the first struggle to which it must arm itself, feels its own impotence.

It was, indeed, the first struggle of her life. Reared in the happiest circumstances, sheltered by the love of the tenderest parents, pain had first approached her when her mother died, and two years after her father followed his wife to the grave. In his will, Sandow, the friend and partner of many years, was named guardian of the orphan girl, and her pecuniary interests could have been placed in no better hands.

But Jessie had never succeeded in forming a real attachment to her uncle, though she had known him from her childhood. He was a near relation of her mother's, and like her a native of Germany. More than twelve years before he had come almost destitute to America, and had sought and found a situation in her father's business. They said misfortunes and bitter experiences had driven him from Europe. What these really had been Jessie could never learn, for even her parents seemed only partially informed on the subject, and Sandow himself never alluded to it.

In the beginning he had been placed in a subordinate position in the office merely out of consideration for him as a connection, but he soon developed such a restless activity, such prudence and energy, that he speedily won for himself a place second only to the chief himself, and when a threatened business crisis was turned aside only through his timely and energetic action, he was promoted to a share in the concern, which under his guidance soon made quite a new departure. A succession of bold and fortunate speculations raised the, till then, modest firm to the position of the first in the town, and the new chief managed to employ so successfully the weight which this good-fortune gave him that he became almost sole ruler, and at all events possessed the first and decisive voice in any question of importance.

In this way Sandow had become in a comparatively short time a wealthy man. As he was alone, he resided as before in the house of his relations, but in spite of this domestic intercourse of many years' duration, and in spite also of the community of interests, he had never become really united with them. His cold, harsh manner closed the way to any nearer approach; he recognised nothing but business interests and incessant labour, and never sought rest or relaxation in the family circle; indeed, these were things which for him appeared to have no existence.

Jessie's father made no opposition to his partner taking the greater portion of the work and anxiety off his own shoulders, being himself more inclined to social enjoyment, to an easy family life. Since he met Sandow's wishes on this point the relations between the two men had always been most harmonious, though they may have arisen in the first place more out of mutual necessity than real friendship.

Now the management of the young heiress's possessions lay in Sandow's hands alone, and he soon extended his rights so far as to wish to control also her future. With the same inconsiderate selfishness which all his undertakings displayed, he wove the plan of a marriage between his ward and his brother, and was as much surprised as displeased when his scheme, which was unconditionally accepted on the one side, found decided opposition on the other. However, he paid little attention to this opposition, and was firmly convinced that the girl, who till now had shown neither strength nor inclination for independent action, would also, in this respect, follow his wishes.

The hour destined for the journey to and from the station had nearly elapsed when the carriage again drew up at the door, and immediately after the two gentlemen appeared in the drawing-room where Jessie still sat.

Sandow did not appear in the least agitated at again meeting his brother after a separation of so many years. His manner was as unmoved, his tone as cool as usual, as he presented Mr. Gustave Sandow to Miss Jessie Clifford. The new arrival approached the young lady with a polite bow.

"May I also reckon on a friendly reception from you, Miss Clifford? I come as a stranger indeed, but I bring you a greeting from the land which was your mother's. Let this be my introduction to you."

That sounded not only kindly, but friendly, almost warm. Jessie looked up with surprise, but the searching, piercing look which met hers chilled her again directly, for it recalled to her the cause of their acquaintance. She replied with cool civility--

"I hope you had a pleasant voyage, Mr. Sandow."

"Remarkably so. We had the calmest sea, the most agreeable passage, and also during my land journey the weather has been most delightful."

"That is why you have protracted it so long, I suppose," said Sandow, joining in the conversation. "You have wandered about the country in every direction like a tourist. We expected you a fortnight ago."

"Well, one ought to learn to know the country and the people," rejoined Gustave. "Did you wish me to come direct here?"

"Not exactly. I quite understand your staying in the large towns. It is always an advantage to be personally acquainted with one's commercial correspondents. Unfortunately I have no time for it, but I certainly provided you with plenty of letters of introduction. What is it--a telegram?"

The last words were addressed to a servant who had entered behind the two gentlemen, and who now offered him a telegram which had just arrived.

While Gustave and Miss Clifford exchanged the first general remarks, the elder brother opened the telegram, glanced over it, and then, turning to the other two, said--

"I must leave you for half an hour; a matter of business which demands immediate attention."

"To-day! Sunday?" asked Gustave. "Do you, then, never allow yourself a moment's rest?"

"Why should I? Something might then be neglected. On Sunday, when the offices are closed, I have the most pressing business sent out here. You looked up Jenkins and Co. in New York, Gustave? The telegram comes from them. I shall speak about it to you later. Meanwhile, I leave you in Jessie's company; so good-bye."

He folded the telegram together and went.

CHAPTER II.

The younger brother looked after him with an air of the most profound astonishment.

"Well! one does not seem in danger of being spoiled by excessive brotherly love," he remarked drily, turning towards Jessie.

"You must know your brother to a certain extent," she answered simply, accustomed to see business take precedence of everything.

"Certainly! but in Europe he was a little more considerate. I thought I had a claim on, at least, the first hour after my arrival."

"You must be tired after your journey," said Jessie, seeking for some excuse for avoiding this equally unexpected and undesired *tête-à-tête*. "Your rooms are ready if you would, perhaps"--

"Thanks, no!" interrupted Gustave; "I am not in the least tired, and have really every cause to be grateful to Jenkins and Co. for procuring me the pleasure of your company."

With that he drew a chair towards him, and sat down opposite to her. But neither his serene and careless air, nor his prepossessing appearance, succeeded in thawing the cold reserve of the young lady. She was not surprised to find him considerably younger than her guardian, as she knew he was the child of a second marriage. The elder brother was, indeed, already past middle age, while the younger was scarcely over thirty. On the whole, his exterior was exactly that represented in the picture which hung in his brother's study. A powerful, manly figure, agreeable, intelligent features, dark hair and beard, and lively, sparkling dark eyes, which were distinctly fine and expressive. But it was just those eyes which displeased Jessie, for she felt instinctively that her whole character was being put to the proof by them. The same observant glance which had met hers in the first moment of their acquaintance rested steadily on her countenance. Mr. Sandow, junior, was openly examining her, as the first paragraph of the business contract clearly entitled him to do, and that was amply sufficient to awake the most decided opposition in the mind of the young lady. He began the conversation by remarking--

"I am unfortunately quite unacquainted with your home. I come, an inexperienced European, as if fallen from the clouds into the new world, and count upon your friendly support."

"I think you will find the help of your brother better, and more to be relied on, than any I might venture to give."

"No doubt, as far as business affairs are concerned. Under all other circumstances, however, he seems to me rather unapproachable, and then there are some subjects with which I should like to make myself acquainted by the way."

By the way! Yes, just so, by the way, so should a marriage be considered a life-long bond which others are accustomed to regard as the highest and holiest. The "inexperienced European" seemed to look on life quite from his brother's point of view, and to consider such relations as merely of secondary importance.

"But no doubt they are entirely business affairs which bring you here," said Jessie, not without irony. "As far as I know, you intend to enter our firm?"

"Certainly! My brother has made that an indispensable condition."

"Condition! Were you not, then, free to act as you chose, Mr. Sandow? But I forgot; no doubt it concerns the inheritance of your brother's fortune."

The stab struck home; that was seen in the sudden flash of the dark eyes, but it produced no other effect, for Gustave replied with the most delightful candour--

"Quite right; the inheritance. It really was in jeopardy had I declined. My brother was quite capable of leaving the whole of his means to a philanthropical institution had I not obeyed his wishes."

Jessie hardly knew whether to be more surprised or annoyed at the openness with which this man acknowledged that he had come to America merely for the sake of the money. And this he declared before the woman whose hand and fortune were both destined for him, and in whom annoyance at last gained the upper hand as she replied--

"Till now I did not know that calculation was so well understood in Germany."

"Oh! thank God at last we are becoming a practical people," said Gustave, with unalterable composure. "We have been long about it, but now we are making undeniable progress. You seem to consider it a reproach, Miss Clifford!"

"No; but I learnt to look on the land to which my mother belonged, and which she taught me to regard as a second home, from quite another side."

"From the ideal side probably. Now I will not deny that this also exists; but, on the whole, people are now sweeping away the ideal from amongst us. There are only a few who still acknowledge it in word or deed."

"Just on that account should the few gather round their threatened colours, and venture life and blood for their sake!"

The phrase sounded rather peculiar in the mouth of a young girl, but she was plainly understood. Again the dark eyes flashed, but this time in unconcealed surprise.

"Ah! how flattering! A quotation from one of my own articles! You know them then?"

"The journal with which you are connected is one of the greatest political importance," said Jessie coolly. "It has always been read in our house. But just because I know your articles, does it surprise me that you were able to release yourself so easily and completely from all the bonds which held you to your native country."

"You mean the duties to which I am bound by my connection with the journal!" remarked Gustave. "There were certainly difficulties, but they have been arranged according to my wishes. One journalist more or less in Germany makes no difference, and my pen has been long since replaced by another, and, no doubt, a better one."

Jessie pressed her lips together. This wilful misunderstanding angered her inexpressibly, and she was still more annoyed at the persevering gaze, which yet had nothing obtrusive, but strove to conceal itself under the appearance of an animated conversation. In spite of this Jessie had the sensation that her whole character was being thoroughly studied, and this drove her by degrees from her reserve into a state of irritation entirely foreign to her disposition.

"I did not know I had such an attentive reader on this side the ocean," Gustave continued, in the most amiable manner. "Since I have learnt the fact, I should like to beg for your criticism. You have declared already that you love my home like a second fatherland. May I, then, reckon on your sympathy for all that my pen describes?"

"You have given up your literary career," remarked Jessie, "for a more advantageous one."

"Yes; I yielded to the force of circumstances. That does not seem to be judged favourably, but perhaps the author finds more grace in your eyes than the future partner in the firm of Clifford and Company."

"At all events, I can admire the ease with which the one has been metamorphosed into the other."

It was an annihilating look which accompanied the words, but Gustave Sandow was not to be so easily annihilated. He bore the look calmly, and his reply betrayed even a certain humour, which increased the growing irritation of the young lady.

"The criticism is not a favourable one, I see. But that is just the reason why I must hear it. You must not withhold your bad opinion from me, Miss Clifford. I insist upon knowing my sentence."

"Without reserve?"

"Quite without reserve."

"Well, then, Mr. Sandow, I declare openly to you that I have read with the fullest sympathy

and admiration everything which came from your pen, till the moment when you accepted your brother's proposal. I should never have thought it possible. I thought that anyone who devoted himself so entirely to his country as you did, who fought so energetically for its rights, who summoned others so stirringly to their duties, must also abide by the colours to which he had sworn fealty, and dare not forsake them for mere fortune's sake. I could not believe that the pen from which flowed such glowing words should serve for the future to write figures, and only figures; that the undaunted champion should of his own free-will throw down his weapons, and quit the lists, to take a comfortable seat at the office desk. I doubted the possibility till the moment of your arrival, and that I must at last believe it--that is the bitterest disappointment of my life!"

Jessie felt herself to be drawn on by her excitement to insult the man who sat before her, but she cared not for that. She saw in him only the adversary, only the importunate suitor, whom she would keep at a distance cost what it might. Let him feel in the first hour how deeply she despised his selfishness, then there would be no room to doubt how she felt about the marriage scheme, and she was safe from his wooing. But he did not appear very sensitive to insult, for he maintained the most perfect composure.

"Miss Clifford, for a merchant's daughter, and the sleeping partner in a great mercantile house, you appear to nourish very disrespectful ideas of accounts and the office desk," said he, with revolting indifference. "My brother would be shocked. I feel myself extremely flattered that my modest pen has had the power of awakening so much interest, and as to the disappointment, I do not give up the hope of at last succeeding in bringing you to a better opinion of my performances at the office desk."

Jessie made no reply. She completely lost her self-control at this way of turning affront into compliment, and at the smiling calm with which the manoeuvre was carried out.

Fortunately at this moment the door opened, and Sandow entered.

"The telegrams are sent off," said he. "Now I am again at your disposal. I suppose dinner will soon be ready, Jessie?"

"I have still some necessary orders to give, which I will do at once."

And hastily, as if taking to flight before the new arrival, but not without casting on him another glance of contempt, she left the room.

"Well, what do you think of Jessie?" said Sandow, as soon as the brothers were alone; "and what progress have you made with her?"

"Progress! Surely, Frank, you did not quite expect me to make her a proposal of marriage at the first interview!"

"But at least you might lead the way to it."

"The way has opened most successfully," Gustave assured him. "We have already had a most lively dispute."

"Dispute! What do you mean?" and Sandow, who had seated himself near his brother, looked up as if he could hardly believe his ears. "Is that the way you begin your courtship?"

"Why not? At least it prevents indifference. That I certainly need not fear from Miss Clifford. She is prejudiced against me to the highest degree, and looks upon my leaving my country at your call as a kind of treachery against it."

"Yes, the girl has her head full of romantic ideas," said Sandow angrily. "That is owing to the sentimental, high-flown education she received from her mother. Clifford could not be induced to oppose it, although otherwise his understanding was healthy enough. He idolized his only daughter, and thought her everything that is good and beautiful. You will have to contend with these exaggerated ideas when Jessie is your wife."

Around Gustave Sandow's lips played a half ironical smile as he replied--

"Do you, then, think it is a settled thing that she will become my wife? At present I seem to have the most brilliant prospects of refusal."

"Stupid girlish whims! nothing more. She has taken it into her head that marriage must be preceded by a love romance. But you"--and here Sandow's eyes rested on his brother's handsome person--"it need not be difficult for you to gain ground with her, and my authority will do the rest. Jessie is far too dependent a character not to be led at last."

"Well, I have not seen any symptoms of this dependence myself," remarked Gustave drily. "Miss Clifford was tolerably energetic when she gave me the flattering information that my acquaintance was one of the bitterest disappointments of her life."

Sandow wrinkled his forehead.

"She told you that!"

"Literally, and accompanied the speech with the necessary air of dislike and contempt. She is a quite peculiar mixture of maidenly reserve and genuine American self-consciousness. In our country a young girl would hardly have read a total stranger such a lecture."

"Oh! no; Jessie is thoroughly German," said Sandow. "She is the living image of her mother, and has not a single trait of her American father. But never mind that now. Let us come to the point. I never felt any doubt as to your acceptance of my proposal; that it has taken place so quickly and unreservedly is very agreeable to me, since it proves that, in spite of all your idealistic scribbling, you have managed to preserve a clear, cool head capable of making a calculation, which is just what is wanted here. Jessie is in every respect a brilliant match, such as you would scarcely have found under other circumstances. For me, the first recommendation of the plan is that it will keep Clifford's money in the firm. Our interests are therefore identical, and I hope we shall be satisfied with each other."

"I hope so too," said Gustave laconically.

The purely business view taken by his brother of the projected marriage seemed to surprise him as little as the judgment on his scribbling hurt him.

"The arrangement, then, remains as settled in our letters," continued Sandow. "For the present you enter the office as a volunteer in order to learn your new calling. That is not difficult for anyone gifted with the necessary education and intelligence. All beyond requires merely habit and practice. As soon as your engagement with Jessie is openly announced, you will have a share in the business. So don't delay your explanation too long. As an heiress, Jessie is naturally much run after, and in little more than a year she will be of age. Besides, at the present moment I have some large undertakings in view, and must be certain of complete control over the whole capital."

"And therefore Miss Clifford and I must marry," added Gustave. "One sees that you are accustomed to make the most of a fortunate conjuncture, whether of men or dollars."

There was a touch of mockery in these words, but Sandow did not appear to notice it. In his reply lay the same icy indifference which he had displayed in his conversation with Jessie.

"One must reckon with men as with figures; in that lies the whole secret of success. At all events, you have every reason to thank the present conjuncture. Besides all the other advantages, it secures my money to you. You know I have no other relative or heir."

"No other! Really?" asked Gustave in a peculiar tone, while he gazed fixedly at his brother.

"No!"

In that one short word what unbounded severity and determination!

"Then you have not altered your views. I thought that now years have rolled by you might have learnt to look differently on the past."

"Silence!" interrupted Sandow. "Name it not! The past has no existence, shall have no existence for me. I buried it when I left Europe for ever."

"And the recollection of it too!"

"Certainly! and I will not have it recalled by others. You have already attempted it several times in your letters, and I imagined my dislike to the subject had been shown plainly enough. Why do you always return to it? Is it to distress me, or"--here he fixed a threatening, penetrating look on his brother--"does some scheme lie at the bottom of this persistency?"

Gustave shrugged his shoulders slightly.

"Why should you think that? I asked in my own interests. Since the question of inheritance is now before us, you can easily understand the motive."

"Decidedly. You have become uncommonly practical I see, and it is much better for you to have become so without paying the heavy price for your experience which mine has cost me."

Gustave became suddenly serious, and laid his hand on his brother's arm.

"Yes, Frank, a heavy price it must indeed have been, since it has made you another man. I do not find a single trace of what you were at home."

Sandow laughed bitterly.

"No, thank God! there is not much left of the soft-hearted fool who lived for every one, who trusted every one, and in the end must pay the price of his blind faith like a criminal. Whenever that blind confidence has cost a man, as it has me, honour, happiness, nay, existence itself, he will for the future manage his affairs after a different fashion. But now, not another word of the

past. I have cast it from me; let it rest."

"Dinner is ready," announced a servant, throwing open the door.

The brothers rose; the turn the conversation had taken made any interruption welcome to both. They entered the adjoining dining-room, where Jessie already awaited them. Gustave had in a moment regained his usual manner. He approached the young lady and offered her his arm as if nothing in the world had come between them.

"Miss Clifford, I have the honour to introduce myself as a volunteer in the house of Clifford and Company. I may, therefore, now regard you as my second chief, and respectfully offer you my humble services."

And without paying any attention to the frigid manner of his second chief, he took the arm which Jessie did not dare to refuse, and led her to the table.

CHAPTER III.

The house of Clifford, as already hinted, was one of the most important in the town. The numerous staff of clerks and attendants, and the constant activity which reigned there, betrayed even to a stranger the importance of the great mercantile house, whose head, indeed, held a most conspicuous place in the commercial world. Gustave Sandow, who, though now holding the modest post of a volunteer, was destined later to share that dignity, had now entered on his new calling, but showed so far very little enthusiasm for it. His brother noticed with great displeasure that he looked on the whole thing as a kind of entertainment with which he amused himself, and of which the chief attraction was its novelty. He allowed little indeed to be seen of the austere dignity of the future partner, while he made extensive use of his freedom as a volunteer. The various objects of interest in the town, its environs, its society, seemed far more attractive to him than his brother's office. The latter remarked on it in his usual sharp manner, and requested that more interest might be shown in business matters.

Gustave acknowledged in every respect the justice of his brother's observations, but continued as regularly to do what pleased him best, and offered to all reproaches the declaration that at present he was only a guest, and must be allowed to make himself at home in his new surroundings.

Between himself and Miss Clifford had arisen a curious, half antagonistic, half confidential relation. On the whole they were always prepared for war, and Jessie did her best to maintain that state of affairs. But it was difficult enough, for her adversary displayed such unwearied politeness and amiability as left her few occasions for the contrary. The certainly not very flattering estimate of his character which had been forced upon him in the very first hour of their acquaintanceship had obviously affected him very little. On his side he was full of attentions, with which he managed to mingle very adroitly the friendly confidence of a household companion, and Jessie saw with horror the courtship from which she had considered herself entirely free deliberately unfolded before her.

It was morning, about a week after the arrival of the new acquaintance. Breakfast was just over. Gustave was giving Miss Clifford a sketch of some of his travelling experiences, which he did with such sparkling animation and such vivid colouring as enchained Jessie's attention against her will.

Sandow, on the other hand, was occupied in looking for some business papers in his pocket-book, and listened only with half an ear.

When his brother had finished, he said satirically--

"One would really believe that you had undertaken the journey merely to find materials for some future article on the political or artistic views entertained here. Landscape, architecture, national life, you have lost no opportunities of studying, but the business you should have made the main interest is scarcely alluded to. You certainly went everywhere that my introductions would take you, but seem only to have dined with the firms and talked about politics afterwards."

"You surely did not expect us to take our business to table with us!" cried Gustave. "That is a pleasure which only you provide for your guests. I believe you would hail it as a most blessed discovery if eating and sleeping could be dispensed with altogether. What an incalculable gain in hours of business for much-tormented mankind!"

Jessie cast a half terrified glance at her guardian. She knew that this was a very tender point with him. Gustave knew it too, yet every day he ventured on such remarks to his face. He understood most perfectly how to parry the masterful and sometimes offensive manner of his brother, so that he never allowed himself to appear corrected or in any way subordinate.

Sandow, whose strength did not lie in repartee, generally quitted the field when he began in that tone of mockery. So he now rose, and, closing his pocket-book, sarcastically replied--

"Well, you certainly do not belong to the much-tormented class; you take your life easily enough. But I want to speak to you for a few minutes in my room before we go to the office. It concerns the New York affair."

"I will come immediately," returned his brother, who, however, remained calmly seated while the other left the room, and then, turning to Jessie, asked--

"Have you ever seen such a business maniac as my brother, Miss Clifford? At breakfast he makes business notes, at dinner he reads the money article, and I am convinced that he speculates in his dreams."

"Yes, he possesses a most untiring activity," replied Jessie, "and he looks for the same thing in other people. You should not keep him waiting, for I am sure he wants to speak to you particularly."

Gustave paid not the least attention to this broad hint to depart.

"It concerns Jenkins and Co. That agreeable firm actually besieges us with letters and telegrams respecting a common speculation. I am not at all in a hurry to talk about it, and my brother is very considerate when he knows I am with you."

That was unquestionably the case. For various reasons Sandow favoured in every way the growing intimacy between his brother and his ward, and even would go so far as to forgive a want of punctuality occasionally.

The hint to this effect was, however, very ungraciously received by the young lady. She thought best to maintain perfect silence.

"Besides that, I have a great desire to speak to you alone," continued Gustave. "For several days I have sought an opportunity in vain."

An icy, long-drawn "Indeed!" was the only reply.

So really after an acquaintanceship of scarcely a week, this man dared to approach her with his proposals, in spite of her distant demeanour, her plainly shown aversion. In spite of all he would try to complete the business contract which gave him the hand of the rich heiress, and still worse, with an easy assurance as if undeniably in the right.

"I have a petition to offer," he began afresh, "a petition which, by granting you will make me for ever your debtor."

Miss Clifford looked as if carved out of stone, and her manner left no doubt that she had not the slightest intention of placing him "for ever in her debt." She summoned all her energies together to meet the approaching emergency with the necessary decision.

Gustave paid not the least attention to her, and continued with his usual genial smile--

"It concerns a young countrywoman of mine!"

"A-young countrywoman?" repeated Jessie, astonished to the last degree at the unexpected turn which the conversation had taken.

"Yes, a young German who came over in the same ship with me. She was going quite alone to a relative in New York, who had offered the orphan a home with him. On landing, however, she learnt that he had died a few days before, and the poor child found herself quite unprotected and forsaken in the New World."

"You took charge of her," remarked Jessie, with a certain sharpness.

"Certainly; I took her to a German family, where she could be received for a few days. But she cannot stay there long, and it must be a very difficult thing for a girl of scarcely sixteen, and without an introduction, to find a situation as governess or companion. Here in this town it might be more feasible, especially if a well-known house such as yours undertook to introduce her. My petition is this, will you receive this young girl for a few weeks as a guest till something may be found for her?"

Generally Jessie was only too ready to help whenever it lay in her power, and a countrywoman of her mother's had naturally every claim upon her sympathy, but the side from which the demand came caused it to fill her with the darkest suspicions. In her eyes Gustave Sandow was not the man to help any fellow-creature from pure philanthropy. Such an egoist must certainly

have other motives for his actions, and she returned a very cautious answer.

"This takes me quite by surprise. I am to receive a total stranger, who, as you acknowledge, is entirely destitute of introductions?"

"I undertake the responsibility," cried Gustave eagerly. "Any security you can desire I will give."

"Oh, indeed!"

A light began to dawn upon her. She saw the dreaded offer vanish into the distance. A way of escape which she had never thought of suddenly opened before her.

"You seem to know your protégée very thoroughly, Mr. Sandow, and to take an extraordinary interest in her."

"Certainly I do. Towards an orphan that is the duty of every Christian."

"I was not aware that you were such a good Christian," said Jessie, with unconcealed irony.

"Then, Miss Clifford, you have misunderstood me in that as in so many other respects. Where humanity is concerned my opinions are in the highest degree Christian," declared Sandow solemnly.

Jessie's lips curled scornfully at the word "humanity," but the thing began to interest her, so she asked--

"Then you wish for an invitation to our house for"--

"Miss Frida Palm, that is her name."

"I will speak to my guardian about it, and if he is willing"--

"Oh! pray do not; that is just what I am most anxious to avoid," interrupted Gustave. "I do not wish my brother to know anything of my appeal to you. Would it not be possible to give out that Miss Palm is a protégée of your own, recommended by some New York acquaintance, and whom you have agreed to receive? The suggestion is rather singular, I see that in your manner, so I place myself and my petition entirely in your hands."

Jessie's manner certainly showed how surprised she was. She bent on the speaker a long, searching look.

"Indeed, a very extraordinary demand. You really ask that we should literally perform a comedy, in order that you may gain a point with my guardian! With what object?"

"Certainly with no bad object, even if for the present that must remain my secret."

"Your secret is not hard to guess, at least for me," said Jessie sarcastically, but still with a feeling of intense relief at the turn things had taken. "Only acknowledge openly that your interest in this young lady is a much deeper and more serious one than appears, and that you have a decided object to gain in bringing her here."

Apparently overwhelmed, Gustave drooped his head.

"I acknowledge it."

"And for more than one reason you fear that your brother will be opposed to this interest."

"I allow that too."

"Therefore Miss Palm is to appear unacknowledged in our house, that, through her personal qualities she may gain sympathy and consideration, until you may venture to declare the truth."

"Miss Clifford, you have incredible penetration," said Gustave, in the tone of deepest admiration. "It is quite impossible to hide anything from you. Now that you have so completely seen through me, may I reckon on your support?"

The young lady assumed a very dignified manner.

"I have never yet condescended to an untruth, and would never do it if"--

She stopped, and a passing blush tinged her cheek.

"If it were not for certain plans of my brother's," added Gustave. "You do not agree with them; that I saw on the day of my arrival. But just on that account you need not fear that I have any doubt as to the reasons of your confederacy. They are certainly not flattering to me, but in this instance decidedly advantageous."

"Advantageous!" echoed Jessie, in a contemptuous tone. "Quite right; that is sufficient for you."

You fear a breach with your brother if you make a choice without his consent, and, as far as I know him, this would be the case since your choice has fallen on a poor and friendless orphan. It is certainly advantageous if you try to gain your end by circuitous means. But how much more manly it would be to go to your brother and openly declare your love, bidding defiance to his anger. But on such points our ideas are quite opposed. Let Miss Palm know that I shall expect her. She can start immediately on receiving your letter."

"That is not at all necessary," replied Gustave calmly. "I have already written to her; she is on her way, and this afternoon will arrive here."

This was rather too strong for Jessie. She looked at the daring visitor with disdain.

"So that was already decided. You are very considerate, Mr. Sandow."

"I reckoned on your good heart," he assured her, with a deep bow.

"You reckoned far more on your brother's plans, which have, half against my will, made me your confederate. So be it then. I will do my best to afford you the advantage of maintaining a good understanding with your brother. As soon as your fiancée arrives, bring her to me, and for the present she shall pass as my protégée."

And, with a very cold and distant bow, Jessie swept from the room.

Gustave looked after her with a very peculiar smile on his lips.

"Every inch contempt! But it suits her splendidly. Certainly I play a very pitiful part in the story; that, however, is nothing; if Frida can only make good her footing in the house, that is the point."

In her room Jessie walked about in violent excitement. She was really rejoiced that the dreaded suitor should in this way prove himself perfectly harmless, and that he himself lent a hand to the destruction of the hated marriage scheme; but that did not in the least diminish her indignation at the selfishness and avarice of the man who had displayed anew all the meanness of his character. Yet he loved, this man, and apparently truly and disinterestedly. Just on the way to the wealthy, unloved bride, whom his brother had so carefully selected for him, a young, forsaken, unprotected orphan had succeeded in awakening a real affection in his heart. What hindered him, then, from introducing his chosen bride to his brother? And if Sandow really showed himself obstinate and unreasonable, he might then return with her to Germany. He had occupied an independent position there, which would be immediately open to him again, and which would permit him to marry without the consent of his brother. But then his chance of that brother's wealth would be in jeopardy, and at any price that rich inheritance must be secured. Therefore the affianced bride must be content to play the part of a stranger, all kinds of underhand modes of gaining his end would be attempted, and a regular intrigue set on foot in order to wheedle the rich brother to consent, and if, in spite of all, he persisted in a decided refusal--and Jessie knew that her guardian, who always measured men by the length of their purses, would never welcome a poor sister-in-law--then, no doubt, the daring champion of the Ideal would choose the money, and leave the bride in the lurch, as he had already deserted his profession.

Jessie's frank and open disposition rose in rebellion against the part forced on her; yet she felt it necessary to forward this union by every means in her power. She would at any cost avoid a serious struggle with her guardian. It was to a certain extent an act of necessity if she agreed to the proposal. Should they really succeed in gaining Sandow's consent then the threatening storm would pass completely away.

It was remarkable that the one thing in Gustave's favour--his evident capacity for true love--was also the one thing most obnoxious to Jessie. She had so bitterly reproached him for yielding so unresistingly to the business calculations of his brother, and now, when she learnt that in his heart he had thwarted, and wished entirely to defeat those plans, she was more prejudiced against him than ever. She was thoroughly convinced that this man was only worthy of contempt, and that she felt sure of always, and under all circumstances, bestowing upon him.

CHAPTER IV.

Meanwhile Gustave Sandow had mounted to the higher story, where were situated his brother's private apartments.

"I began to think you would not condescend to come at all," was the remark, delivered in his sharpest and most unpleasant tone, with which he greeted the dilatory Gustave.

"I was talking to Miss Clifford," replied Gustave, as if fully aware that that fact would completely justify him. "It was impossible to break off our interesting conversation sooner."

The allusion did not fail of its effect. The projected marriage was too important to Sandow, and his ward's disinclination to it, too well known to him, to allow him to throw the slightest hindrance in the way of his brother's courtship. He therefore replied more graciously--

"I suppose it was one of your usual altercations; you amuse yourselves with this continual wrangling; but I do not find that you make much progress with Jessie. She is more reserved than ever towards you."

"Frank, you cannot judge of my progress," said Gustave, with an injured air. "It is considerable I assure you."

"We will hope so," replied Sandow, significantly, "and now to business. I want to talk to you of the affair, which I, and some business friends in New York contemplate taking in hand together. Jenkins tells me he has already spoken of it to you, and yesterday I gave you the correspondence to look over, so you must now be pretty well up in the subject."

"Decidedly I am."

Gustave had all at once become serious, and the answer rang quite differently from his usual cheerful, careless tone. Sandow took no notice of the change, but continued--

"You know we possess in the West large districts which are not yet settled. The purchase was to be made under extremely advantageous circumstances; but the extent of territory was so enormous that Jenkins was not able to complete it with his own means alone. He therefore applied to me and won me over to his views. We were fortunate in obtaining the land for a very moderate sum, and what now concerns us is to have it occupied advantageously. This can only be done by colonisation, and German colonisation in particular seems most suitable. We have prepared all the necessary notices, and intend now to begin seriously."

"Only one question," said Gustave, interrupting the dry business-like narration. "Have you any personal knowledge of your possessions?"

"Why, I should not undertake such an extensive business without full information. Naturally I know all about it."

"So do I," said Gustave laconically.

Sandow started and drew back a step.

"You! How? When? Is it possible?"

"Certainly, and in the most simple manner. Mr. Jenkins, whom I looked up in New York at your express wish, explained to me when the conversation fell on this subject, that you reckoned greatly on me, or rather on my pen. I therefore held it necessary to make myself thoroughly acquainted with the whole affair. That was really the cause of my late arrival, and of my 'pleasure tour,' as you called it. Before all, I wished to know where my country people were to be sent."

Sandow knitted his brows gloomily.

"All this trouble was quite superfluous. We are not in the habit of going to work in such a circumstantial manner. But what seems to me very remarkable is, that you should have been here a whole week without giving me the slightest hint of your journey. But never mind. We certainly reckon much on you and your literary connections. Our agents will do their best, but that is not enough. People have become very suspicious about agents, and the outlay has been too great to let us run any risks. Our great wish is that one of the great influential German papers which stands above all suspicion of a puff, should open the subject in our interest. It is true that you are no longer on the staff of the *K-sche Zeitung*; but they regret having lost you, and would gladly receive your contributions from America. A series of articles written in your eloquent and brilliant style would secure our success, and if you use your other literary connections skilfully so as to make the thing widely known, there is no doubt that in a few years a great German emigration will take place."

Gustave had listened in silence without offering the least interruption; but now he raised his eyes and fixed them earnestly on his brother's face.

"You forget one trifle, which is that your territory is totally unfit for colonisation. The land lies as unfavourably as possible, the climate is in the highest degree unhealthy, indeed, in some seasons deadly. The soil is unproductive, and to the most gigantic efforts returns only the smallest results. All the aids of skilful cultivation are utterly wasted, and the few settlers who are scattered here and there are sunk in sickness and misery. They are exposed, utterly defenceless, to the rigour of the most cruel elements, and those who might follow them from Europe would

share the same fate."

Sadow listened with ever-growing surprise, and at first words failed him, at last he exclaimed angrily--

"What absurd exaggerations! Who has put such ideas into your head, and how can an utter stranger judge of such circumstances? What can you know of it?"

"I have made the strictest inquiries on the spot. My information is authentic."

"Nonsense! And if it were what have I to do with it? Do you think that you, who have scarcely been a week in the counting-house, can give me instructions in the management of my speculations?"

"Certainly not! But when such a speculation costs the life and health of thousands we are accustomed to call it by a different name."

"By what name?" asked Sadow, threateningly, advancing close to his brother.

Gustave would not be intimidated, but replied firmly--

"Knavery!"

"Gustave!" cried Sadow furiously, "you dare"--

"Naturally that word applies only to Mr. Jenkins. The remarkable attention with which that honourable personage received me, the constant sounding of my praises, the popularity of my name, and the brilliant success of my pen, which were to work wonders here as they had done at home--all this roused my suspicions and induced me to undertake the journey. You don't know the place, Frank, or at all events have only glanced superficially at it. But now that I have opened your eyes you will seek for the proof of my assertions, and let the whole thing drop."

Sadow did not seem much disposed to profit by the means of escape which his brother offered to him.

"Who says I shall?" asked he harshly. "Do you think I can give up without an effort the hundreds of thousands already invested there, merely because you have some sentimental objections to urge. The land is as good or as bad as in many other districts, and the immigrants have to struggle with climate and soil everywhere. These difficulties will be easily overcome by perseverance. It would not be the first German colony which had flourished under most unfavourable circumstances."

"After hundreds and thousands had been ruined! That is enriching foreign soil with German blood at too great a cost."

Sadow bit his lips; he evidently controlled himself with difficulty, and his voice was hoarse and stifled as he replied.

"What business had you to go there on your own account? Such exaggerated conscientiousness is here quite misplaced, and also quite useless. And if I did not accept Jenkins' offer there are plenty of others who would; and I must acknowledge that he applied to me first."

"First to you--a German--that was certainly a sign of remarkable respect from an American."

It was singular that the same man who a quarter of an hour before, had shown himself so anxious to conceal the choice of his heart from his austere brother, since it might displease him, now boldly defied him, under circumstances in which he could not be so profoundly interested. Sadow, though ignorant of his conversation with Jessie, was astonished to the highest degree at this conduct.

"You seem to be now playing the part of moral hero," said he with bitter sarcasm; "that does not suit very well with the extremely material motives which brought you here. You should have first made things clear to yourself. If you want a share in my house you must set its interest before everything, and in that interest I require you to write this article, and take care that it appears in a suitable place. Do you hear, Gustave? Under any circumstances you will do that!"

"To bring my countrymen here to rot in that swamp of fever and misery! No."

"Consider the subject well before you give such a decided refusal," warned Sadow with an icy calm, under which lay a half-concealed threat. "It is the first demand I make on you; if you fail me now, any future accommodation is impossible. It is quite in my power to draw back from the proposed arrangement; think of that!"

"Frank, you would not force me"--

"I force you to nothing; I only explain to you that we part if you persist in your refusal. If you are prepared for the consequences, well and good. I hold to my conditions."

He bent over his writing table, and took from it some papers which he placed in his pocket-book. Gustave stood silently by, his eyes fixed on the floor, a dark cloud on his brow.

"Just at the moment when Frida is on her way here," murmured he. "Impossible. I cannot sacrifice that."

"Well?" asked Sandow, turning to him.

"Give me time for consideration. The thing has come so suddenly, so unexpectedly. I will think it over."

The elder brother was quite contented with this partial submission; he had certainly not doubted that his threat would produce its effect.

"Good! a week sooner or later does not matter. I hope you will have sense to see that one must act according to circumstances. But come now, it is high time that we were at the office. And once more, Gustave, give yourself up to my guidance for the future, and undertake no more extravagances like this journey. You see, it only gives rise to differences between us, and increases the difficulties of your position."

"Decidedly," said Gustave, half aloud, while he prepared to follow his brother. "My position is tolerably difficult, worse than I had anticipated."

It was afternoon of the same day, and Jessie awaited with some anxiety and a great deal of curiosity the arrival of the young visitor. Gustave had told her in the morning that he should try to leave business earlier than usual, in order to meet Miss Palm at the station, and bring her to the house before his brother came home. At the appointed hour, then, he entered the drawing-room, leading a young girl.

"Miss Frida Palm," said he, introducing her. "My protégée, from this moment *our* protégée, since you are so good as to afford her an asylum in your house."

Jessie felt painfully impressed by this mode of introduction. So he did not even venture to introduce the girl to her as his betrothed. "Protégée," that was a word open to so many interpretations. He intended evidently to leave himself a means of retreat, should his brother show himself unyielding. Miss Clifford pitied with her whole heart the young creature who had given herself to such an egoist, and consequently her reception was warmer than she had at first intended.

"You are very welcome, Miss Palm," said she kindly; "I have heard all about you, and you may confide yourself to me without fear. I am not accustomed to neglect my protégées."

The "I" was slightly but distinctly accented, but he, at whom the remark was directed, remained, alas, totally unmoved. He seemed extremely pleased that his plan had succeeded, and the young stranger replied in a low, rather trembling voice--

"You are very kind, Miss Clifford, and I only hope that I may deserve your goodness."

Jessie placed her visitor beside her, and while the usual remarks on the weather, her journey, and arrival were made, she took the opportunity of examining her more closely. She was certainly a very young girl, almost a child, who had evidently scarcely reached her sixteenth year, but the delicate childish features bore an expression of seriousness and decision, astonishing at such an age. The large, dark eyes generally rested on the ground, but when they were raised for a moment, they gave a glance full of shyness and restraint which suited ill with the energetic features. The dark hair was simply drawn back from her face, and the deep mourning dress made the young stranger appear even paler than she naturally was.

"You are an orphan?" asked Jessie, with a glance at the dress.

"I lost my mother six months ago," was the short, touching answer.

That touched a kindred string in Jessie's bosom. She still mourned too for her beloved parents, and by the recollection came an expression of pain in her face.

"In that our fates are alike. I am an orphan too, and it is only a year since my father was torn from me. Yours is, no doubt, much longer dead."

The girl's lips trembled, and she replied almost inaudibly--

"In my childhood. I scarcely knew him."

"Poor child," said Jessie, with overflowing sympathy. "It must indeed be sad to stand so alone and desolate in the world."

"Oh! I am not desolate. I have found a protector, the noblest and best of men!"

In these words lay a truly affecting devotion, and the look which at the same moment was cast upon Gustave, betrayed an almost enthusiastic gratitude; the latter, however, received it all with

enraging indifference, with the air of a sultan, as Jessie angrily considered. He appeared to look upon it as a richly deserved compliment, and replied in his usual jesting manner--

"You see, Miss Clifford, what my reputation with Frida is. I should be happy if you would come round to this opinion too, which, alas, I dare not hope."

Jessie ignored this remark. To her the manner in which he received the devotion of his future wife, and treated it as a subject for jesting was quite revolting, and she returned to Miss Palm.

"At present I must welcome you alone. You do not yet know my guardian, but in a short time you will meet him, and I hope with all my heart that you will succeed in gaining his sympathy."

Frida made no reply; she looked in the same timid manner at the speaker, and then dumbly at the ground. Jessie was rather surprised at this strange reception of her kindly meant words, but Gustave joined in the conversation, with the remark--

"At first you must have great consideration for Frida. It will be difficult for her to accustom herself to her new surroundings, and the part which she is forced to play in the house oppresses and terrifies her."

"Forced at your desire!" Jessie could not refrain from adding.

"Yes, that cannot now be altered. At all events she knows the conditions, and also that there is no other way of reaching our end. Frida, you confide entirely in me, don't you?"

Instead of answering, Frida stretched her hand towards him, with an expression which would have excused any lover for pressing the little hand to his lips. But this one calmly held it in his own, nodded protectingly, and said--

"I was sure of it."

"I will do all in my power to relieve what is painful in your position," said Jessie, reassuringly. "And now may I keep you with me?"

"We had better wait till to-morrow," said Gustave. "It would very much surprise my brother to find a complete stranger, of whose arrival he had not even been warned, established as a member of his household. That might at once arouse his suspicions. It would be better for Frida to return to the hotel where I stopped with her and left her things. In the course of the evening some opportunity of speaking of her is sure to arise, and then the removal can be effected without any trouble."

Jessie was annoyed at the suggestion, in proportion as she recognized its justice.

"You are incredibly prudent, Mr. Sandow! I really admire all these precautions, and this clever calculation of all possible emergencies."

Gustave bowed as if he had really received a compliment.

"Yes, yes, Frida," said he, in reply to the look of surprise with which the girl listened to this perpetual bickering. "Miss Clifford and I have an excessive mutual admiration. You see already, what great respect we show each other. But now it is time to start, or my brother will surprise us here."

Frida rose obediently. Jessie felt a deep sympathy with the poor girl who resigned herself so completely to the selfish plans of her lover, and bade her a hearty farewell.

Gustave accompanied Miss Palm to the carriage, which waited to take her back to the hotel; but just as they were descending the steps a second carriage drove up, and Sandow, whose office hours were now over, stepped out.

"My brother," said Gustave in a low voice.

Miss Palm must have stood greatly in awe of this terrible brother, for she suddenly turned deadly pale, and made an involuntary movement as if to fly, while the arm which rested in her companion's trembled violently.

"Frida!" said the latter, in an earnest, reproachful tone.

Frida struggled for composure, but her timidity this time was not the cause of her agitation. It was not the look of a startled dove which met the new arrival, but one in which lay gloomy, almost wild resistance, and the energetic side of her nature was shown so distinctly in her features that it seemed as if she were rather beginning a struggle with a dreaded enemy than trying to conciliate him.

Sandow had meanwhile entered, and met the pair face to face in the vestibule. He bowed slightly, but seemed surprised to see his brother accompanied by a perfect stranger.

Frida returned the greeting, but instead of stopping hastened anxiously forwards, and thus

prevented the possibility of an introduction.

Gustave saw that it would be useless to try to effect it, so placed her in the carriage, closed the door, and directed the coachman to the hotel.

"Who is that girl?" asked Sandow, who had waited for his brother.

"A certain Miss Palm," said he lightly, "an acquaintance of Miss Clifford's."

"And to whom you act as cavalier."

"Not at all; my service is paid to Miss Clifford. At her wish, I fetched the young lady, in whom she is much interested, from the station, and brought her here. You know I left the office earlier than usual."

"Ah, indeed! Are you already on such good terms with Jessie that she entrusts you with such commissions?" said Sandow, much gratified to find his brother had made such decided progress, while they re-ascended the stairs and walked along the corridor together.

As they entered the drawing-room, Gustave took the thing promptly in hand.

"My brother has already seen your protégée, Miss Clifford," he began. "We met him in the hall."

"Who is this new acquaintance, Jessie?" asked Sandow, with an interest not usual to him. "I have heard nothing about her."

Jessie felt now, when the moment for the first equivocation had arrived, the whole weight of the responsibility she had undertaken; however, she had gone too far to be able to draw back. She returned hesitatingly,

"She is a young German, who has been strongly recommended to me from New York. She has come here to look for a situation as companion, and I thought--I wished"--

"Yes, you have gone pretty far," interrupted Gustave. "This Miss Palm seems to have taken your sympathies by storm; just think, Frank, Miss Clifford has offered her her own house, and seriously intends to give her to us for a companion."

Jessie cast an indignant glance at him, but was obliged to accept the proffered help.

"I have certainly invited Miss Palm for a few weeks," she said. "At least, if you have no objection, Uncle Sandow."

"I," said the latter absently, while his eyes already sought the evening papers, which lay on the table on the garden terrace. "You know, I never interfere in your domestic concerns. No doubt you would like a companion for a time, and if this young girl has been well recommended, pray arrange the affair as you like."

With this he stepped on to the terrace and seized the newspaper.

"I saw that I must come to your help, Miss Clifford," said Gustave aside to Jessie. "You are evidently very inexperienced in deception."

"You seem to think it a reproach," said Jessie, in a voice equally low, but trembling with anger. "Certainly I have not yet brought the art to such perfection as you have."

"Oh! that will come in time," said Gustave encouragingly. "When you are in difficulties that way, only turn to me. I am quite at home there."

"Gustave, have you read the evening papers yet?" came from Sandow on the terrace. "The German Exchange is very lively; prices are rising considerably. Here is your own journal; you will find a notice of it."

"Ah! prices are rising? really?" asked Gustave, stepping on to the terrace and taking the German paper which his brother offered him.

Sandow immediately buried himself in another sheet, and so did not see the air of sovereign contempt with which Gustave turned over the page containing the money article, and bestowed his whole attention upon the leading article, which was upon the political situation.

Jessie followed him with her eyes, and, as she beheld him bending so eagerly over what she supposed to be the money article, she curled her lip contemptuously, and thought--

"That poor, poor child! What will be her lot at the side of such an egoist?"

CHAPTER V.

Gustave's scheme, which was imagined and carried out with equal skill, had now been realized. The entrance of the young stranger into the family took place the next day, but so easily and naturally was it managed, that Sandow had not the faintest suspicion of anything unusual. But Frida was, and remained, a stranger in the strange house, however hard and determined the struggle to appear at ease, and to show her gratitude for the protection afforded her. Perhaps the unaccustomed splendour of her surroundings oppressed her, for unquestionably they stood out in sharpest contrast to her former life. She remained silent and self-contained, and all the kindness with which Jessie received her did not succeed in thawing her shy reserve.

Miss Clifford tried in vain to learn more of the family circumstances and former life of the girl; Frida seemed purposely to avoid any such conversations, and even the warm and freely displayed sympathy of the other failed to draw from her one word of confidence. That naturally tended to estrange Jessie, especially as she soon discovered that the stranger by no means belonged to those gentle natures which tremble away from all that is strange or painful. On the contrary, Frida often unconsciously betrayed a very energetic will, a repressed but profound passion. And yet this slavish subjection and obedience to another's will; it was incomprehensible.

Gustave played his part far more successfully. He showed himself in his brother's presence polite, but with the politeness of a perfect stranger. Not a word, not the slightest sign, betrayed any mental understanding, or even suggested a closer acquaintance than appeared; never for one moment did he lose his self-control. He seemed still more agreeable and high-spirited than ever, and all Jessie's attempts to make him feel her contempt met with such a ready sarcasm that she invariably quitted the field.

Sandow himself took little notice of Frida. Generally he showed little attention or interest in household matters. The greater part of the day was passed in town at the office, and the morning and evening hours, which were spent in the villa, instead of being dedicated to relaxation or amusement, were devoted to business occupations in his own rooms.

He saw Frida only at table, and treated her with careless civility, and on her side there was no approach to a closer acquaintance, though she was there precisely with that object. But either she possessed no skill in that direction, or her obedience failed just where it was needed to fulfil her task. At all events, she and the man in whose house she was living were as strange to each other at the end of a week as they had been on her first arrival.

The two gentlemen had just returned from town, and the whole party were seated at table. Gustave, who as usual bore the chief weight of the conversation, was amusing the ladies by describing in the most enjoyable manner, a scene which had taken place in the office during the afternoon. Sandow, who could not endure anything which concerned business to be turned into ridicule, put in a few contradictory remarks, but his brother continued to entertain his listeners with an account of the certainly comical misunderstanding.

"I assure you it was incomparable, the excitement of this zealous agent of Jenkins and Co., who had come at full speed from New York, and persisted in taking me for a would-be settler, thirsting for a farm. He would have dragged me by force to the other end of the world, that I might be made the happy possessor of a piece of land, and looked the picture of despair when my brother entered and put an end to the misunderstanding."

"You brought it on yourself," said Sandow angrily. "You drove the man so into a corner with your endless questions that it was only natural that he should fall into the mistake."

"Do I look like an intending farmer?" cried Gustave. "It is the first time in my life that any one has discovered in me an enthusiasm for spade and hoe. It would be, at all events, a fresh field of activity which I might attempt. I am only afraid that I should be worth still less there than at the office."

"That would be difficult," said Sandow drily, but his brother only laughed at the implication, and observed to Miss Clifford that it was really incomprehensible how little recognition his valuable services at the desk received from any quarter.

Frida had become attentive during the last dialogue. Usually she never joined uninvited in the conversation, but this time she listened with breathless interest, and then turned to Gustave with the question--

"Jenkins and Co., the great firm in New York which is now sending out advertisements and agents for the German emigration?"

"Quite right, Miss Palm," said Gustave. "Is the firm known to you?"

"Not to me; I was only a few weeks in New York, but it was often spoken of in the German family where I lived. People spoke of it with much doubt, and considered it a misfortune that Jenkins should have drawn this also within the circle of his speculations."

"Why? Does he not bear a good reputation?" asked Gustave, with apparent indifference.

"That must be the case. They say he is the most unprincipled speculator, and has become rich through all kinds of dishonourable means, and would not for a moment hesitate to sacrifice to his avarice the welfare of all who confide in him."

Jessie sat in painful confusion while listening to this unsuspecting remark. However ignorant she might be of the business affairs, she was aware, from many allusions, that her guardian had commercial intercourse with this firm.

Sadow bit his lip, and was about to turn the conversation, when his brother said emphatically--

"You must have been misinformed, Miss Palm. Jenkins and Co. belong to our business circle; indeed, we have done business with them for years."

Frida turned pale. It was not embarrassment, but perfect horror that her features expressed, as if she could not, would not, believe what she had just heard.

Now Sadow took up the conversation, and said in his sharpest tone--

"You see, Miss Palm, how painful it may be when one believes such evil reports, and repeats them too. My brother is quite right. Mr. Jenkins is, and has long been, a business friend of mine."

"Then I beg pardon; I had no idea of it," said Frida softly, but her pallor became more deadly, and suddenly she opened wide and full her dark eyes on the man before whom she had always shyly sunk them.

There was something singular in these great dark eyes, something like a fearful doubt, an anxious question, and Sadow seemed to feel it, the proud, stiff-necked merchant, who bore no opposition, and had crushed to the ground all the efforts of his brother; he could not support this look. He turned hastily away, seized his glass, and emptied it at a draught.

A painful silence, which lasted some moments, followed. Jessie tried at last to start another subject, and Gustave supported her to the best of his ability, but the attempt flagged.

Sadow appeared unable to master his vexation. Frida sat speechless, and looked at her plate. It was a relief to all when the meal was over. The ladies left the room, and Gustave was just following them when his brother called him back.

"What do you really think of this Miss Palm?"

"That is hard to say. I have not spoken much with her; she seems very shy and reserved."

"To judge by her appearance certainly, but I do not believe in it. In her eyes lies something far removed from shyness. Singular eyes! I have seen them distinctly to-day for the first time, and try in vain to remember where I have met them before. The girl has only just come to America?"

"About a month ago, I heard from Miss Clifford."

"I remember Jessie told me so. And yet there is something familiar in those features, though I cannot recall what it is."

Gustave examined closely the expression of his brother's face, while with apparent carelessness he replied--

"Perhaps it is a passing likeness which you observe."

"Likeness--with whom?" asked Sadow earnestly, while he supported his head on his hand, and lost in deepest meditation looked before him.

All at once he arose, and, as if angry with himself at such involuntary interest, said--

"Her remark at dinner was singularly wanting in tact."

"She was certainly quite innocent of any ill intention. She could have had no suspicion of your connection with Jenkins, or she would have been silent. She just repeated what she had heard. You see what a reputation your 'friend' bears."

Sadow shrugged his shoulders contemptuously.

"With whom? With a few sentimental Germans, who have brought their narrow, provincial ideas from Europe with them, and are determined not to see that our commerce rests on quite other grounds. Whoever will be successful here must dare; and quite differently from in Europe, where people are still swayed by trivial circumstances. Clifford was one of the anxious and timid

ones. I have had hard work enough to drive him forwards. Hence, up to the time of my arrival, he lived in very moderate circumstances; it was only when the guidance of the business fell into my hands that he became a rich man, and the firm entered the ranks of the best in the town. But while we are speaking of Jenkins, you have now had ample time to consider my request, and I await your final answer."

"Then you are still determined to undertake the thing in conjunction with Jenkins?"

"Certainly! Do you suppose that my opinion varies from day to day, or that childish chatter such as we have just heard could make me change?"

"No, I do not suppose so, but that is just why it seemed strange to me that such 'childish gossip' should oblige you to cast down your eyes."

"Gustave, take care!" cried Sandow, his growing passion hardly repressed. "I bear more from you than from anyone else, but this affair will positively separate us. I saw at a glance that you caused the misunderstanding with the agent on purpose to learn how far his instructions went, and I know, too, to whom the remark was directed with which you reproved Miss Palm. But you will gain nothing of me by such means. What I have once decided to do, that I will do, cost what it may, and for the last time I give you the choice; but, if you refuse me your assistance"--

"You are mistaken," interrupted Gustave. "Some days ago I wrote to the *K--che Zeitung* and asked for room for a long article on the subject; naturally they will be glad to have one from my pen. Most likely it will appear next month."

Sadow was speechless. This quite unexpected submission astonished him greatly, and with a certain amount of suspicion he asked--

"You will let me see the article before you send it?"

"Certainly; you shall read it word for word."

The clouds began to disappear from Sandow's brow.

"I am glad, very glad. It would have been very painful to me if a refusal on your part had led to a breach between us."

"On my account, or on that of the Clifford's money?" asked Gustave, with overflowing bitterness.

"Jessie's fortune is not endangered by this speculation," said Sandow, shortly and emphatically. "It is principally placed in very good securities, and Clifford stated expressly in his will that his daughter's inheritance should not be risked in any speculation before she came of age or married. If it will soothe your tender conscience, I can assure you that your future wife has not the slightest interest in this affair. I have gone into it at my own risk, and stand to win or lose alone."

He rose to go. Gustave rose too.

"One more question, Frank. You have gone very heavily into this speculation?"

"With half of all I possess! You see its success is most important to me; therefore I am very glad that we are at last agreed. I repeat, that sort of petty morality won't answer at the present day; sooner or later you will see that for yourself."

"With the half of all he possesses!" murmured Gustave, following the speaker. "That is bad, very bad! Here we must go to work with the greatest caution!"

CHAPTER VI.

When the brothers entered the drawing-room they found it deserted, but Frida stood outside on the terrace. She could not have heard them approach, for as Sandow passed out at the French window she turned hastily round, and the traces of tears were clearly seen. She rapidly passed her handkerchief over her face, but it was impossible to conceal her emotion. It was not usual with the merchant to display much consideration for the feelings of others, but here he could easily connect the girl's distress with the painful conversation at the dinner-table, and in a sudden accession of sympathy he tried to help her through her trouble.

"You need not be so anxious to hide your tears, Miss Palm," said he. "Here in a strange country you feel home-sick, I am sure."

He seemed to have touched the right chord, for in the trembling tone with which Frida replied lay the plainest proof of its truth.

"Yes, an inexpressible home-sickness!"

"Naturally, you have been such a short time here," said Sandow, carelessly. "All Germans feel that at first, but it soon passes away. If one is lucky in the New World one is glad to forget old times, and in the end rejoices at having turned one's back on them. Do not look so shocked, as if I had said something monstrous. I speak from my own experience."

Frida certainly had looked shocked. Her eyes, yet moist with tears, shot forth a glance of scorn and dislike as she hastily cried--

"You cannot be serious, Mr. Sandow. I shall forget, give up my country, even the recollection of it? Never, never!"

Sandow looked rather surprised at this passionate protest from the quiet girl; round his lips played a half contemptuous, half pitiful smile as he replied--

"I reckon you well disposed to learn that. The misfortune of most Germans here is that they hold so fast to the past, that the present and future are allowed to glide away unnoticed. Home-sickness is one of those sickly, affected sentiments which are sometimes considered as poetic and interesting, while in real life they are only hindrances. Whoever will get on here must keep his head clear and his eyes open, in order to seize and profit by every chance. You are compelled by circumstances to seek for a living here, and this weak longing and dreaming will not help you in that."

Hard and heartless though these words might sound, they were spoken with perfect sincerity. The unfortunate remark about his business friend, which might have been expected to irritate and embitter the merchant, seemed, on the contrary, to have awakened an interest in the girl, whom till then he had scarcely observed.

Frida gave no spoken contradiction to the lesson he condescended to give her, and which chilled her inmost heart. But her questioning, reproachful look said enough, and these serious, dark eyes seemed to produce an extraordinary effect on the usually unimpressionable man. This time he did not avoid the look, but bore it unflinchingly. Suddenly his voice took involuntarily a milder tone, and he said--

"You are still young, Miss Palm, very young, far too young to wander about the world alone. Was there, then, no one in your native land who could offer you a shelter?"

"No, no one!" came almost inaudibly from the lips of the girl.

"Of course--you are an orphan. I heard that from my niece. And the relation who invited you to New York died while you were on your way there?"

The slight inclination of the head which Frida made might be interpreted in the affirmative, but a burning blush overspread her face, and her eyes sought the ground.

"That is really very sad. How was it possible to find a proper refuge in New York, where you were quite a stranger?"

The flush on the girl's cheeks became still deeper.

"My fellow-travellers took charge of me," she answered hesitatingly. "They took me to a countryman, the pastor of a German church, where I was most kindly received."

"And this gentleman recommended you to my niece. I know her mother had numerous connections in New York, with some of whom Jessie keeps up a correspondence. She feels such warm sympathy for you, that you need have no anxiety for the future. With the recommendation of Miss Clifford, it will not be difficult to find a suitable place."

Frida appeared as unpractised in falsehood as Jessie. With the latter she had not been obliged to use the deception which was necessary in speaking to the master of the house. Jessie had from the first been acquainted with circumstances which must be carefully concealed from Sandow, even now when he began to display some interest in her. But the manner of the girl showed how hard her part was. Sandow knew her shy and taciturn, but this obstinate silence appeared to annoy him.

As he received no reply, he turned abruptly away, and went into the garden. Frida drew a long breath, as if released from some burden, and returned to the drawing-room. Here she was met by Gustave, who, though remaining in the background, and apparently quite indifferent to the conversation, had, in reality, not lost a word of it.

"Listen to me, Frida, I am not at all satisfied with you," he began in a tone of reproof. "What

was the object of your coming here? What do you mean by avoiding my brother at every opportunity, actually running away from him? You make no attempt at a nearer acquaintance; the rare moments when he is approachable are allowed to pass unused by, and you maintain complete silence when he speaks to you. I have smoothed the way for you, and now you must try to walk in it alone."

Frida had listened to this lecture in silence; but now she drew herself up and said hastily--

"I cannot!"

"What can you not do?"

"Keep the promise which I made to you. You know you half forced it from me. Against my will am I here, against my will have I undertaken to play the part to which you have condemned me. But I cannot carry it through, it is beyond my strength. Let me go home again, here I can do no good."

"Indeed?" cried Gustave angrily. "That is a brilliant idea. For this have I crossed the sea with you, and made deadly enemies of my publisher and the editor, who were determined not to let me go. For this I sit patiently at the office desk under the weight of Miss Clifford's supreme contempt, and all that Miss Frida may declare, once for all, 'I will stay no longer.' But it won't do. Surely you are not going to cast away your arms after the struggle of one week. On the contrary, I must request that you will stay and carry out what we have begun."

The girl's dark eyes rested sadly and earnestly on the speaker, as if reproving his careless tone.

"Do not call me ungrateful! I know what I owe you, what you have done for me; but the task is harder than I had thought. I can feel no affection for this cold, hard man, and he will never feel any for me, of that I have the strongest conviction. Had I once seen a kindly glance in his eyes, once heard a cordial word from his lips, I might have drawn nearer to him; but this frigid character, that nothing can warm, nothing can break through, drives me ever farther and farther away."

Instead of replying, Gustave took her hand, and drew her beside him on the sofa.

"Have I ever said that the task would be easy?" he asked. "It is hard enough, harder than I could have believed, but not impossible. With this shy avoidance of him, you will certainly attain nothing. You must grapple with the foe; he is so strongly mailed that he can only be taken by storm."

"I cannot!" cried Frida passionately. "I tell you that no voice within me speaks for him, and if I can neither give nor receive love, what shall I do here? Steal my way into a home and fortune. You cannot wish that, and if you did, I would refuse both, were they offered to me with the heartless indifference with which he permitted me a refuge in his house."

With the last words she sprang from her seat. Gustave quietly drew her down again.

"Now you are getting beyond all bounds, and the end will be an obstinate refusal. If I did not know from whom you take that wilful obstinacy, that passionate temper which lies under all your outward reserve, I would give you another sort of lecture. But these faults are hereditary, it is no use fighting against them."

The girl seized his hand and held it in both her own, as she entreated--

"Let me away, let me go home again, I beg, I beg! What does it matter if I am poor. I can work. I am young, and you will not desert me. Thousands are in the same position, and must struggle with life themselves. I will rather a thousand times do that than beg for a recognition which is withheld from me. I only followed your wishes, when you brought me to your brother; I need neither him nor his riches."

"But he needs you," said Gustave impressively. "And he needs your love more than you believe."

The girl's lips trembled with a bitter smile.

"There you are certainly wrong! I know little of the world or of men; but I know very well that Mr. Sandow neither needs nor wishes for love. He loves nothing in the world, not Jessie, who has grown up under his eyes almost like a daughter of his own; not you, his own brother. I have seen only too plainly how far he is from you both. He knows nothing but the desire for wealth, for gain, and yet he is rich enough. Is it true, really true, that he is connected with this Jenkins, that such a man belongs to his friends?"

"Child, you understand nothing about that," said Gustave, evasively. "Whoever, like my brother, has seen all the hopes of his life shattered, whose every blessing has become a curse, every pleasure a disappointment, either sinks utterly under such a catastrophe, or he leaves his former self entirely behind, and goes on his way another man. I know what he was twelve years

ago, and what was then living in him cannot be quite dead. You shall awaken it, you shall at all events try, and that is why I have brought you here."

The deep earnestness with which these words were spoken, did not fail of their effect on Frida; but she said, with a shake of the head--

"I am, and must remain a stranger to him. You have yourself forbidden me to let him suspect anything of our circumstances."

"Certainly I have, for if he now discovered the truth he would most likely repulse you with the utmost harshness; your obstinacy is equal to his, and thus all would be lost. But at least you must approach him. As yet you have scarcely spoken together. No voice rises in your heart, you say. But it must rise in you, in him, and it will rise when you have learnt to stand face to face together."

"I will try!" said Frida, with a deep sigh. "But if I fail, if I only meet with harshness and suspicion"--

"You must remember that he is a man much sinned against," interrupted Gustave, "so much, that he has a right to look with mistrust and suspicion on all, and to draw back where another would lovingly open wide his arms. You are innocent, you suffer for the faults of others; but all the weight, poor child, falls on you."

The girl made no reply, but two hot tears rolled down her cheeks, while she rested her head on the speaker's shoulder. He stroked her forehead softly and soothingly.

"Poor child! Yes, it is hard, at your age, when all should be joy and sunshine, to be already so deeply plunged in hatred and disunion, in the whole misery of human life. It has been hard enough to me to reveal all this to you; but it entered with such force into your life that it was imperative for you to know it. And my Frida does not belong to the weak and vacillating, she has something of the energy, and, alas, something of the hardness of a certain other nature. So bravely forwards, we must conquer in the end!"

Frida dried her tears and forced a smile.

"You are right! I am so ungrateful and stubborn towards you, who have done so much for me! You are"--

"The best and noblest of men"--interrupted Gustave, "naturally I am, and it is very extraordinary that Miss Clifford will not recognise my perfections, though you have so touchingly assured her of them. But now go out in the air for a few minutes. You look flushed and tearful, and you must do away with these signs of excitement. Meanwhile, I will wait here for Jessie. We have not had one dispute to-day, and a wrangle has become one of the necessities of life to me, which I cannot do without."

Frida obeyed. She left the drawing-room, crossed the terrace, and descended into the garden. Slowly she walked through the beautiful park-like grounds, which stretched down to the shore, and on which the whole skill of the landscape gardener had been spent; but the spot she sought, lay in the most distant part of the garden. It was a simple bench, shaded by two mighty trees; it afforded an unlimited view over the sea, and from the first day, had become the favourite retreat of the young stranger. The fresh sea wind cooled Frida's heated cheeks, and swept the traces of tears from her face, but the shade on her brow defied all its efforts. This shade grew only darker and deeper, while she, lost in distant dreams, watched the play of the waves which broke upon the beach.

The garden was not so deserted as it seemed, for at no great distance voices might be heard. Just by the iron railing which enclosed the domain of the villa, stood Sandow with the gardener, and inspected the addition, which in the last few days, had been made to the grounds.

The gardener directed, with ill-concealed pride, his attention to the work, which was really planned and carried out with great taste and skill, but the master of the house did not display much interest in it. He cast a careless glance over it, with a few cool words expressed his satisfaction, and went again on his way towards the house. Thus he passed the bench where Frida sat.

"Is that you, Miss Palm? You have chosen the most retired spot in the whole garden for your retreat."

"But also the most beautiful! The view of the sea is so magnificent?"

"That is a matter of taste," said Sandow. "For me that eternal rolling up and down has a deadly monotony. I could not long endure it."

He said this in passing, and was on the point of leaving her. She would probably have left his remark unanswered, and the conversation would have ended there, but Gustave's warning bore fruit. She did not preserve that shy silence as usual, but replied in a tone of which the deep emotion forced a recognition.

"I love the sea so dearly--and--even if you ridicule me, Mr. Sandow,--I cannot forget that my home lies there, beyond those waves."

Sadow did not appear disposed for ridicule. He stood still, his eyes followed involuntarily the direction she pointed out, and then rested earnestly and musingly on Frida's face, as if he sought something there.

It was a misty and rather gloomy afternoon. The clouds hung heavy with rain over the scene, and the usually unbounded view over the sunny blue waves, was to-day, confined and veiled. One could scarcely see a hundred steps away; farther out lay thick fog on the sea, and the restlessly moving flood enlightened by no ray of sunshine, showed a dark grey tint, which gave it an almost oppressive air of gloom.

Restlessly rolled on the waves, and burst with a hiss into white foam on the sand of the shore. Far out in the fog sounded the roaring of the distant ocean, and two gulls took their slow flight over the waves and vanished in the mist. Frida's eyes followed them dreamily, and she started violently when Sandow, who till now had preserved silence, suddenly asked--

"What was the name of the clergyman with whom you lived in New York?"

"Pastor Hagen."

"And there you heard those remarks about Jenkins and Co.?"

"Yes, Mr. Sandow."

Frida seemed about to add something, but the abruptness with which the last question was uttered closed her lips.

"I might have supposed so. These clerical gentlemen with their extravagant views of morality, are always ready with a sentence of damnation, when a thing does not exactly fit their measure. From the pulpit it is much easier to look down on a sinful world, than it is to us who must live and struggle in the midst of it. These gentlemen should for a moment try what it is, they would soon lose some of their virtuous calm and Christian spotlessness, but they would learn to judge better of other things of which now they understand absolutely nothing."

The bitter sarcasm of these last words would perhaps have terrified another, but Frida's spirit rose energetically against it.

"Pastor Hagen is mildness and consideration itself," with a blaze of indignation. "Certainly he will never condemn anyone unjustly. It was the first and only time that I heard a harsh judgment from his lips, and I know that only care for the dangerous position of his countrymen drew it from him."

"Does that perhaps mean that he is right?" asked Sandow sharply, while almost threateningly he advanced a step nearer.

"I do not know. I am quite strange and unknown to all. But you, Mr. Sandow, are acquainted with this man, you must know"--

She dared not complete the sentence, for she felt that every additional word might be an insult, and so indeed Sandow seemed to take it. The milder tone in which he had begun the conversation, disappeared in the wonted cold severity as he returned--

"At all events, I am much surprised to hear how the name and reputation of a great firm can be slandered in certain circles. You are still almost a child, Miss Palm, and it is easy to imagine, but understand nothing of, such things. You cannot know how influential the name of Jenkins and Co. is in the commercial world. But those who allow themselves such freedom in their slander should consider that and beware."

This refutation sounded dry enough, but not convincing. Of the power and influence of the man no one had doubted, only that his influence was injurious. Frida of course had no idea of the nature of the connection between the two houses, but even the mention of the two names together had deeply shocked her.

"You are angry with me for my imprudent expressions about your friend," she said. "I repeated unsuspectingly what I had heard, and Pastor Hagen's remarks only referred to the danger with which such undertakings threaten our emigrants. He has daily in New York before his eyes the proof of how deeply such things affect the weal or woe of thousands. You cannot know that the interests of your banking-house lie certainly far removed from such speculations."

"Now how is it that you are so sure of it?" asked Sandow jestingly, but the jest seemed somewhat forced. The dialogue began to disturb him, yet he made no effort to break it off; there was something in it which charmed and enchained him against his will.

Frida emerged more and more from her reserve. The subject interested her in the highest degree, and her voice trembled with deep emotion as she replied--

"I have once, only once, seen such a picture of misery, but it has made an indelible impression on me. While I was in New York, a number of emigrants came to us, Germans, who some years ago had gone to the Far West, and were now returning. They had, doubtless, listened too readily to the representations of the unscrupulous agents, and had lost everything in those pathless woods. There they had left, sacrificed to the climate, many of their nearest and dearest; there they had left their means, their hopes, their courage--all! The German pastor who had warned them before and whom they had not credited, must now advise them and procure them the means of returning to their native land. It was terrible to see these, once so courageous and strong, now so utterly broken down and despairing, and to hear their lamentations. I shall never forget it!"

As if overpowered by the recollection, she laid her hand upon her eyes. Sandow replied not one word. He had turned away and looked grave and motionless out into the mist. Immovable, as if chained to the spot, he listened to every word which came with ever-increasing passion and excitement from the youthful lips.

"I saw myself, on board the steamer which brought also hundreds of emigrants here, how much anxiety and care such a ship carries, how many hopes and fears. Happiness is seldom the cause which forces them to leave their home. With so many it is the last hope, the last attempt to create a new home for themselves out here. And then to think that all their hopes fail, all their toil and labour is lost, that they must be ruined because one man will enrich himself, because there are men who, on purpose, with the fullest knowledge send their brothers into misery, to make a gain out of their destruction. I should never have believed it possible had I not myself seen it and heard it from those who returned!"

She stopped, started at the deadly pallor which overspread the face of the man who still stood motionless before her. His features remained firm and inflexible as ever, no feeling betrayed itself there, but every drop of blood seemed to have forsaken those features, whose fixed expression had something unearthly in it. He did not see the anxious questioning look of the girl, her sudden silence seemed first to restore him to consciousness. With an abrupt movement he drew himself up, and passed his hand over his brow.

"One must acknowledge that you stand bravely by your countrymen," said he. His voice sounded dull and heavy, as if every word were produced by a strong effort.

"So would you if you had an opportunity for doing so," returned Frida, with perfect assurance. "You would cast the whole weight of your name and position into the scale against such undertakings, and certainly you could do far more than an unknown clergyman, whose own duties leave him so little time, and who has already so much distress and misery to alleviate in his own parish. Mr. Sandow," with suddenly awakening confidence, she drew a step nearer to him, "really I did not mean to affront you by those heedless words. It is quite possible that report has wronged the man, or that Pastor Hagen has been deceived. You do not believe it, I can see from your emotion, and you must know him best?"

He was certainly agitated, this man whose hand so convulsively grasped the back of the bench, as if he would crush the carved wood with his fingers, so agitated that some moments passed before he regained full control over his voice.

"We have fallen upon a very disagreeable topic," said he at last turning away. "I should never have believed that the timid, quiet child, who during the week spent in my house, scarcely dared to raise her eyes or open her lips, would blaze out so passionately when strangers' interests were concerned. Why have you never shown this side before?"

"I dared not. I feared so much"--

Frida said no more, but her eyes which were raised half confidently, half timidly to his, expressed what the lips could not, and she was understood.

"Whom did you fear? Was it me?"

"Yes," she replied with a deep breath. "I feared you dreadfully till this moment."

"But you should not fear me, child!" In Sandow's voice was a tone silent for many years and grown quite strange, but which spoke of rising warmth and softness. "No doubt I seem cold and stern to you, and so I am in the business world, but towards the young guest who has sought shelter in my house I would not be so. Do not for the future avoid me as you have done. You must not be afraid of me?"

He stretched his hand out to her, but Frida hesitated to take it. She became alternately red and pale, some stormy, hardly repressed feeling seemed bursting from her control. Suddenly Jessie's voice was heard from the terrace. Growing anxious at the long absence of the young visitor she called her name. Frida sprang up.

"Miss Clifford calls me, I must go to her. Thank you, Mr. Sandow, I will not be afraid of you again?"

And hastily, before he could prevent her, she pressed her lips to the offered hand, and fled

away through the shrubbery.

With great astonishment Sandow looked after her. A singular girl! What did it mean, this strange mixture of shyness and confidence, of blazing passion and such power of self-repression? It was a riddle to him, but just with this unexpected, contradictory character, Frida succeeded in what the cleverest calculations could not have done--in awaking a deep and abiding interest in the heart of a man generally so cold and indifferent.

He had indeed every reason to be irritated and annoyed "with the fanciful girl, with her exaggerated ideas," but through his irritation another feeling forced its way, the same which he experienced when he first looked into these dark childish eyes, and of which he could scarcely say whether it caused him pain or pleasure.

He forgot, perhaps, for the first time in his life, that his study, and his writing table laden with important letters awaited him. Slowly he sank on to the bench and gazed at the restless rolling sea.

"A deadly monotony" he had said, of this eternal motion. The taste for the beauties of nature had long ago died out in him, like so many other tastes, but the words of the just concluded conversation still rang in his ears. Truly; on the other side of this heaving ocean lay his native land, his home. Sandow had not thought of it for years. What was home to him? He had been long estranged from it, he clung with all the roots of his present life to the land he could thank for what he was. The past lay as far distant from him as the unseen coast of home, yonder in the mist.

The proud rich merchant, whose name was known in every quarter of the globe, who was accustomed to reckon with hundreds of thousands, certainly looked back with contemptuous pity on the past, on the narrow life of a subordinate official in a provincial German town. How close and confined was then the horizon of his life, how wearily must he then struggle to make both ends of his paltry salary meet, till at last, after long hoping and waiting, he reached a position which allowed him to establish his modest household. And yet how that poor narrow life had been beautified and ennobled by the sunshine of love and happiness which was shed around it.

A young and beautiful wife, a blooming child, the present full of sunshine, the future full of joyful hopes and dreams, he needed nothing more, his whole life was overflowing with happiness, but what a fearful end to all that joy!

An old friend of Sandow's, who had grown up with him, who had shared his boyish amusements, and later had accompanied him to the university, returned, after a long absence, to his native town. He was well-off and independent, and his life was dimmed by no cares for the morrow, unlike his friend; who, however, received him with open arms and led him to his home. And then began one of those domestic tragedies which are often concealed for years, till at last some catastrophe brings them to light.

The blinded man suspected not that his wife's heart was estranged from him, that treachery spun its webs around him under his own roof. His love, his confidence, firm as if founded on a rock, helped to blind him, and when his eyes were at last opened, it was too late, he saw his happiness and honour lying in ruin before him. Almost driven mad by despair, he lost self-control and struck the destroyer of his happiness to the ground.

Fate had at least preserved him from that last misery, blood-guiltiness. Although severely injured, the traitor recovered slowly, but Sandow had to pay the penalty of his deed by an imprisonment of many a weary year. Though Right was unquestionably on his side, the letter of the law sentenced him, and that sentence destroyed his whole existence.

His situation was naturally lost, his official career closed. She, who had once been his wife, had after the necessary separation had taken place, given her hand to the man for whose sake she had betrayed her husband, and whose name she now bore. And the one thing left to him, the one thing the law allowed to the desolate man, that he himself put from him. He had learnt to doubt all, all that he had once considered pure and true, he now looked on as lying deception; thus he believed no more in his paternal rights, and refused to recognise the little being which had once been the joy of his heart.

He left it to the mother without even seeing it again. Under these circumstances it was impossible to contemplate returning to his native town.

Only America was open to him, that refuge of so many shattered existences. Despairing of himself and of the world, poor and with the prison stain upon his brow, he went there, but it was the turning point in his life. There he rose from deepest misery to riches and splendour.

From that time success had remained true to Frank Sandow. Whatever he ventured brought the richest returns, and soon he found only too much pleasure in these ventures. He dragged the quiet and timorous Clifford with him into the boldest and fool-hardest speculations, and, as since his death, the reins had been entirely in his own hands, he could now brook no control.

There was something almost terrible in this restless, unceasing, hunt for gain in a man, who heaped up riches, but had no one for whom to gather them. But man must have something to

cling to, something to give an aim and object to his life, and when the nobler good is lost, it is often the demon of gold which makes itself lord of the empty shrine.

Thus Sandow had fallen a victim. This demon spurred him ever forwards to new gains, drove him from one wild speculation to another, and led him to place his all on a single card. But it made him also insensible of every joy of life, to peace or happiness.

The chief of the great American banking house had indeed won for himself an imposing position, but his countenance showed only furrows of care, only the traces of feverish excitement; of peace and happiness there was no sign there.

The mist over the sea had grown thicker and spread farther and farther. Like dusky visions it floated to the land, and out of it rolled and burst the gloomy billows. The wind which now arose in its full might, drove them more strongly and violently on the strand. They came no more with a light splash, but roared and foamed on the beach. Threateningly they rushed to the feet of the lonely man, who darkly, and as if lost in thought, looked down on them. It was as if every wave repeated the words he had just heard, and that out of the fog arose the pictures they had called up before him.

Singular! What Gustave's energetic representations could not produce, this childish chatter had succeeded in doing. The earnest warnings of his brother had brought no effect on the merchant, he cast them off contemptuously as "sentimental notions," as the "ideas of a novice," and finally silenced him with a threat.

He had long been unaccustomed to take the weal and woe of others into consideration in his calculations. "One must reckon with men as with figures!" That was the principle of his life, and the foundation of his riches. Even in this speculation which had been proposed to him by his correspondent, he had reckoned with them, and it had not once occurred to him that men's lives should be thought of too. And now an inexperienced child, who had no idea of the effect her words could produce, had dared to speak thus to him. The words worked and fermented in him, he could not tear the thoughts from him.

"How much care and anxiety such a ship bears, how many hopes and fears!" Sandow had experienced that too, he too had landed here with his shattered hopes, with the last despairing attempt to begin a new life here. Success had come to him, friends and relations had held out a helping hand to him. Without that, he also might have succumbed.

But still came hundreds of ships, and the thousands that they carried had made also their last venture, gazed also fearfully around for any helping hand which might be stretched out to them. There was still room for many here, and the New World might look more benevolently on them than the Old.

But, whoever seized the hand which Jenkins and Co. stretched out to them, went to their ruin. And there was room for so many in that district, where famine and fever awaited them. They had bought that enormous territory for a song, and must at any price people it, to pocket the hoped-for enormous gain. There were really men who sent their brothers to destruction to enrich themselves.

Sandow sprang suddenly up. He would tear himself from these thoughts, which seemed burnt into his memory, from these words, which haunted him like spectres. He could endure the monotonous roar of the sea no longer, and the mist lay like a heavy weight upon his breast. It literally hunted him from the place and into the house. But it was in vain that he locked himself into his room, that he buried himself in letters and despatches. Outside the sea roared and rolled, and something within him arose and struggled upwards--upwards--something which had lain asleep for years, and at last awoke--his conscience!

CHAPTER VII.

Jessie sat in the garden and drew, and opposite to her in the arbour sat Gustave Sandow. He had just returned from town, where he had occupied himself about everything imaginable, except, alas! the one thing which was expected from the future head of the house of Clifford. He had not even set his foot within the counting-house. For there were so many other things to attend to. First he had visited a rich banker in the town, who had just received from Europe a costly painting on which he wished Gustave's opinion. As both owner and critic were alike eager on the subject, the inspection extended itself over the whole, tolerably valuable picture gallery of the banker, and occupied several hours.

After that, both gentlemen drove to a great meeting on some town interests, and at which Mr. Sandow, jun., was an eager and interested listener.

In conclusion, he had a small private meeting which some gentlemen of the press had called together in honour of their former colleague. The state of affairs in Germany and America was here thoroughly examined, and meanwhile it had become so late, that Gustave considered it quite unnecessary to visit his brother's office. He preferred driving direct to the villa to keep the ladies company.

After such a thoroughly satisfactory day's work, he thought himself justified in satisfying the craving of his heart, which could only happen when he, at least once a day, had a wrangle with Miss Clifford. With this intention he rapidly sought and found her.

During the last few weeks a noticeable change had taken place in Jessie. Some secret trouble, which she did not perhaps acknowledge to herself, cast a shade over the lovely face, which looked paler and more serious than before, and round the mouth, too, lay a half bitter, half painful line which was formerly not there. The presence of Gustave was clearly not likely to cheer her, for she avoided looking at him, and earnestly continued her drawing, while, to all his remarks, she returned only short and unconnected replies.

But it was not so easy to frighten Gustave away. When all his attempts at conversation failed he rose and bent over the half-finished drawing, which he examined with a critical eye.

"A very pretty subject! It promises much, but you must entirely change the perspective, Miss Clifford, it is quite wrong."

At last that produced the intended effect. Jessie raised her head, and looked indignantly at the uncalled adviser.

"You don't draw yourself, Mr. Sandow, I believe?"

"No, but I criticise."

"So I see. Nevertheless you will permit me to retain my perspective as it is, until a real artist has convinced me of its errors."

Gustave calmly took his seat again.

"Just as you please! I propose that we should call in Frida as arbiter. She has remarkable talent for drawing, and it has been cultivated with the greatest care."

"Frida?" repeated Jessie, letting her pencil rest, "I wanted to speak to you about her. She seems really to have nearly gained her end, for my guardian's interest in her increases day by day. For my part, this is rather perplexing, considering the indifference with which he treated her at first, but Frida must have found out how to get the right side of him, for suddenly he displayed so deep an interest in her as I had not conceived possible with his dry cold nature. Already he cannot bear to miss her. He shows unmistakable displeasure if the possibility of her departure is spoken of, and this morning, without the slightest remark on my side, he proposed to me that she should remain here permanently as my companion."

"Did he really propose that?" cried Gustave eagerly. "That is more, far more, than I had yet dared to hope. Certainly we are not far from our goal!"

"I think so too, and therefore it will soon be time to release the poor child from the painful and humiliating position in which she is. Here she is regarded as a total stranger, while she really stands in the closest connection with you; and is forced to keep up a constant succession of deceptions. I often see, at some harmless remark of my uncle's which she is obliged to avoid, how the blood flies to her cheeks, how the part she is forced to play embarrasses and distresses her. I fear she will not be able to endure it much longer."

"She must!" declared Gustave. "I know that it is hard for her, and sometimes she tries to rebel, but I understand already how to manage her."

Between Miss Clifford's delicate brows appeared a deep frown of displeasure.

"I acknowledge, Mr. Sandow, that your tone and your whole manner of treating Frida are quite incomprehensible to me. You treat her completely as a child that must obey implicitly your higher will, and seem quite to forget that she must take a place at your side some day."

"She must first be educated for it," said Gustave condescendingly. "At present she is scarcely sixteen, and I am thirty, therefore the child must look on me with respect."

"So it seems! I should expect something more from my future husband, than that he should set himself up as an object of my respect."

"Yes, Miss Clifford, that is quite different. No one would permit himself such a tone towards you."

"I suppose my fortune gives me a claim to more consideration. With the poor dependent orphan, whom one elevates to one's own position, any manner is permitted."

The remark sounded so bitter that Gustave noticed it, and cast a questioning glance at the young lady.

"Do you think that Frida belongs to those natures which allow themselves to be thus elevated?"

"No; I think her very proud, and far more courageous than is usual at her age. Just on that account is this unquestioning docility incomprehensible."

"Yes. I am rather successful in training," acknowledged Gustave. "But as to your proposition, to tell the whole to my brother immediately, that is impossible. You don't know my brother; his obstinacy is by no means conquered, and would return doubly strong if he discovered our plot. The moment that he learnt that I had brought Frida here with a decided purpose, his anger would burst forth, and he would send us both back across the ocean."

"That would indeed be a misfortune, for then the advantage of the whole intrigue would be lost."

Jessie must indeed have been irritated before she allowed the hateful word "intrigue" to pass her lips, but it slipped out, and Gustave quite accepted it.

"Quite right; that is what I fear, and it would never do to jeopardise it thus, now my heart is set on remaining here."

There was a peculiar light in his eyes at the last words. Jessie did not see it; she had bent again over her drawing, and worked away with renewed zeal, but the pencil trembled in her hand, and the strokes became hasty and uncertain. Gustave watched her for a while; at last he rose again.

"No, Miss Clifford, it really will not do to treat the perspective like that. Permit me one moment."

And without further ceremony, he took the pencil from her hand, and began to alter the drawing. Jessie was about to make a violent protest, but she quickly saw that the pencil was in a very practised hand, and that a few powerful strokes entirely corrected the error.

"You declared you could not draw," said she, wavering between anger and surprise.

"Oh! It is only a little *dilletante* performance, which I do not venture to call talent. Only enough to enable me to criticise. Here, Miss Clifford."

He returned the leaf to her. Jessie looked silently at it and then at him.

"I really admire your versatility, of which you have just given me a proof. You are everything imaginable, Mr. Sandow! Politician, journalist, artist.--"

"And merchant," said Gustave, completing the sentence. "Yes, I am a sort of universal genius, but share alas, the fate of all geniuses; I am not recognised by my contemporaries."

His half-ironical inclination showed that for the moment he looked upon her as representing his contemporaries. Jessie made no reply, but began to collect her drawing materials.

"It is quite chilly. I ought to go in. Pray do not disturb yourself; I will send the servant to fetch my things," and declining with a motion of her hand any assistance from him, she took the drawing from the table, and left the summer-house.

Gustave shook his head as he looked after her.

"I seem really to have fallen into disgrace; the last few weeks she has been quite changed. I would rather hear the most violent attack on my selfishness and want of thought than this cool and measured bitterness. I fear it is high time for me to tell all the truth, and yet I dare not risk Frida's future by so doing. A premature catastrophe would spoil all."

At that moment a carriage drove past the villa. It was Sandow returning from business. He came direct to the garden.

"Here already!" was the short greeting he bestowed on his brother. "Where are the ladies?"

"Miss Clifford has just left me."

"And Miss Palm?"

"I suppose she is on the beach. I have not seen her since my return."

Sandow's eyes impatiently sought the farther part of the garden. He seemed disappointed that Frida had not come to meet him as usual.

"I have not seen you since this morning," he remarked with temper. "You certainly asked leave on account of pressing business, still I expected to see you in the office later. What kind of business can you have which occupies a whole day?"

"Well, first I was with Henderson, the banker."

"Ah! About the new loan which is being raised in M----. I am glad that you have seen him yourself."

"Naturally about the loan," said Gustave, who did not scruple to leave his brother in error about his business proceedings, though in his wanderings through the picture gallery there had been no mention of the projected loan. "And then there was some talk about private affairs. When Mrs. Henderson was last here she saw our young country woman, and is quite charmed with her. It is remarkable what an effect this still, timid child produces on every one. From their first meeting, Miss Clifford, too, became one of her warmest friends."

"The child is not so quiet and shy as you imagine," said Sandow, whose eyes continued to look towards the shore. "Beneath that reserve is a deeply emotional, a quite uncommon nature. I never suspected it till accident revealed it to me."

"And since then, you, too, belong to the conquered. Really, Frank, I scarcely know you again. You treat this young girl, this almost total stranger, with a consideration, one might almost say a tenderness, of which your only and highly deserving brother has never been able to boast."

Sandow had seated himself, and thoughtfully supported his head on his hand.

"There is something so fresh, so untouched, in such a young creature. Against one's will it recalls one's own youthful days. She still clings so fast to her enthusiastic ideas, to her dreams of happiness to come, and cannot understand that the outer world should look on things under such a different aspect. Foolish, childish ideas, which will fall away of themselves in the rough school of the world, but while one listens to them all one's lost beliefs by degrees revive again."

Again his voice had that peculiar softened tone, which those even who best knew the merchant had never heard from his lips, and which seemed like an echo from some older, happier time. Frida must indeed have understood how to touch the right chord as no one before had done, for the very qualities, which in Jessie were regarded as sentimentality and exaggeration, had here found their way to the stern, cold heart of the man. Gustave felt this contradiction, and said, with a touch of satire--

"But all that should not be new to you. You have lived all these years in Clifford's family, and Jessie has grown up under your eyes."

"Jessie was always her parents' idolized darling," replied Sandow, coldly. "Love and happiness were literally showered upon her, and whoever did not treat her with flattery and tenderness, as myself for example, was feared and avoided by her. I have always been a stranger to this fair-haired, soft and petted child, and since she has been grown up, we have become still more distant. But this Frida with her wilful reserve, which we must overcome before reaching the real nature, has nothing weak and wavering about her. When once the somewhat forbidding crust has been broken through, strength and life are found beneath. I like such natures, perhaps because I feel something kindred in them, and sometimes I am surprised, almost startled, to hear from the lips of that girl, remarks and ideas almost identical with what were mine at the same age."

Gustave made no reply, but he closely examined his brother's countenance. The latter felt this, and, as if ashamed of the warmer feeling he had allowed himself to display, immediately stopped, and resumed his usual cold business tone and manner.

"You might at least have come to the office for a few hours. There are things of importance going on, and another letter from Jenkins has arrived. He presses for the fulfilment of your promise with regard to the *K--che Zeitung*, and it is certainly high time. You must have written your article long since."

"I had not supposed there was any hurry," said Gustave. "For some weeks you have not even mentioned the subject."

"There were so many preparations to make. I have kept up an active correspondence with New York on the subject."

"Which you have not allowed me to see as you did the former letters."

"Then it was necessary for you to learn all particulars. This time it concerned very unpleasant difficulties which I alone must arrange."

"I know; you have tried to release yourself from the whole thing!"

Sandow sprang up, and looked at his brother with the same air of speechless astonishment, as formerly when he heard of the journey to the much talked of possessions.

"I! Who has betrayed that to you?"

"No one, but many signs led me to suppose so, and now I see that I was not mistaken in my supposition."

Sadow looked darkly and suspiciously at his brother, who stood before him with perfect composure.

"You have really a dangerous power of observation! With you one must be perpetually under control, and even then is not safe in his inmost thoughts. Well yes, then, I did wish to withdraw. On closer examination the speculation did not seem so favourable, did not promise half the profit we had at first believed. I tried to release myself from the obligation, or to induce someone else to take my place, but have not been successful. Jenkins stands by the completion of our bargain, and I have now pledged myself completely. Nothing remains but to promptly carry out the first agreement."

He brought out these disjointed remarks with nervous haste, and meanwhile played with his pocket-book which he had drawn out. His whole manner displayed a violent, hardly suppressed excitement. Gustave did not appear to notice it, but replied with calm decision--

"Now there must be some means of freeing oneself from such a bargain."

"No; for the sums which I have already sunk in this undertaking bind my hands. I stand the chance of losing all, if I withdraw now. Jenkins is just the man to hold me fast, and to use every letter of the contract against me, as soon as our interests cease to go hand in hand. So the thing must take its course.--Ah! Miss Frida, at last you allow us a glimpse of you."

The last words, which sounded like a sigh of relief, were directed to the girl who now appeared in the arbour. During the last weeks Frida had also altered, but the change took a different form, than with Jessie. The childish face formerly so pale had now a rosy tinge, the dark eyes were still grave, but they had lost that troubled look. They sparkled with glad surprise when they beheld the master of the house, whom Frida immediately approached with frank confidingness.

"Are you home already, Mr. Sadow? I did not know, or I should have come long ago, but"--she looked at the serious faces of the two men, and made a movement as if to leave them--"I am afraid I disturb you."

"Not at all," said Sadow quickly. "We were only debating on some business matters, and I am glad to make an end of the discussion. Stay here!"

He threw his pocket-book on the table and stretched out his hand. The cold, stern man, whose austere manner had never softened even in the family circle, seemed at this moment another being. The few weeks must have wrought a great change in him.

Gustave greeted Frida in the polite but formal manner, which he always showed to her in the presence of his brother.

"I have a message and an invitation for you, Miss Palm," said he. "Mrs. Henderson would like to see you soon, in order to talk farther with you over the arrangement which has been already mentioned."

"What arrangement is that?" asked Sadow, becoming suddenly attentive.

Frida cast a startled and questioning look at Gustave, and replied with some uncertainty--

"Mrs. Henderson's companion is leaving, and the situation has been offered to me. I had better"--

"You will not accept it," interrupted Sadow with decision. Vexation was audible in his voice. "Why this haste? There must be other and better places to be found."

"The banker's family is one of the first in the town," remarked Gustave.

"And Mrs. Henderson one of the most insupportable women, who torments her entire household with her nerves and whims, and her companion is a perfect victim to them. No, Miss Frida, give up the idea. I will on no account agree to your taking this situation."

An almost imperceptible but triumphant smile played round Gustave's lips.

Frida stood speechless, her eyes on the ground; all the old awkwardness seemed to have returned with these words.

Sadow misunderstood her silence. He looked searchingly at her, and then continued more slowly--

"Of course I do not wish to control your wishes. If you want to leave us"--

"No! no!" cried Frida, so passionately that Gustave was obliged to make a warning sign to her, to remind her of the necessity of self-control.

She quickly collected herself, and said with a trembling voice--

"I am so much afraid of being tiresome to Miss Clifford."

"That is a foolish idea," said Sandow reprovingly. "Tiresome to us! My niece will soon convince you of the contrary. She will make you a better offer than Mrs. Henderson's. Jessie is far too much alone, and needs a companion; it is not good for a young girl to be quite without one of her own sex. Will you be this companion, Frida? Will you stay altogether with us?"

The girl raised her eyes to him; they were wet with tears, and there was something in them which looked like a prayer for forgiveness.

"If you agree to it, Mr. Sandow, I will gratefully accept Miss Clifford's kindness, but only if you wish me to remain."

Over Sandow's face flashed a smile, slight, but it brightened like a ray of sunshine the dark, stern features.

"Am I, then, such a dreaded power in the house? Jessie has, then, already spoken of this project, and you feared my refusal. No, no, child! My niece is perfectly free to do as she pleases, and I will immediately talk the thing over with her, and settle it once for all. Mrs. Henderson shall learn to-morrow morning that she must look for another companion."

He rose, and waving her a slight, but friendly greeting, left the arbour.

Scarcely was he out of hearing when Gustave approached the girl.

"He is afraid that the Hendersons will kidnap you from him, and hastens to make sure of you!" said he triumphantly. "Why do you look so terrified? Do you think I shall hand you over to Mrs. Henderson, who to-day certainly gave me the message to you, but who really deserves the character my brother has given her. I was obliged to learn how he would look on the idea of your leaving. He was quite beside himself about it. Bravo, child! You have managed your affairs capitally, and now, instead of the censure I first heaped upon you, must declare that I am thoroughly satisfied with you."

Frida paid no attention to the eulogy. Her eyes followed Sandow, who was just disappearing behind the shrubbery. Now she turned and said--

"I can deceive him no longer. As long as he was hard and cold I might have done it; now, the falsehood crushes me to the earth!"

"Cast the whole responsibility on me," said Gustave encouragingly. "I have placed you in this position, have woven the 'intrigue,' as Miss Clifford so flatteringly expresses it; I will also bear the responsibility when the moment for explanation comes. But now the watchword is 'forward!' and we must not fail for a moment. When we are so near our aim, we must persevere. Think of that, and promise me that you will endure to the end."

Frida drooped her head; she did not refuse, but neither did she give the required promise.

Gustave continued in a serious tone--

"Jessie, too, urges me to a declaration, and, I see, cannot comprehend my hesitation. She does not understand the circumstances, but believes that you are a stranger to her guardian, who has won his affection, and to whom he would gladly open his arms. But we"--here he seized Frida's hand, and grasped it firmly in his own--"we know better, my poor child! We know that you have to struggle with a gloomy hatred which has already poisoned his life, and has rooted itself so firmly in that life that a few kind words cannot banish it. I struggled for your rights when my brother left Europe, have tried again and again, and have thus learnt how deeply grafted in him is this miserable idea. You must become still more to him if it is entirely to be torn from him. Can you think that without the most urgent necessity I would lay such a yoke upon you?"

"Oh, no, certainly not! I will obey you in everything, only it is so hard to lie."

"Not to me!" declared Gustave. "I would never have believed that the Jesuitical principle, 'the end justifies the means,' could have been such a perfect antidote to all the pricks of conscience. I lie with a kind of peace of mind, or rather with a conscious sublimity. But you need not take a pattern by me. It is by no means necessary that a child like you should have attained such a height of objectivity. On the contrary, falsehood must and should be difficult to you, and it gives me the greatest satisfaction to know that such is the case."

"But Jessie," said Frida, "may I not at least take her into our confidence? She has been so kind, so affectionate to me, a stranger, has opened her arms as if to a sister"--

"To get rid of me!" interrupted Gustave. "Yes, that is why she received you with open arms. In order to escape my wooing she would have deceived the very old gentleman himself, if he would

have delivered her from the unwelcome suitor. No, no, Jessie is out of the question. It is my special delight to be despised by her, and I must enjoy it a little while longer."

"Because the whole thing is only play to you," said Frida reproachfully, "but she suffers from it."

"Who? Jessie? Not at all. She is in the highest degree shocked at my wickedness, and I must give myself the one little satisfaction of leaving her still this sentiment."

"You are mistaken; it gives her bitter pain to be obliged to judge you so. I know how she has wept over it."

Gustave sprang up as if electrified.

"Is that true? Have you really seen it? She has wept?"

Frida looked with unmeasured surprise at his beaming face.

"And you are glad of it. Can you really blame her if she has a mistaken opinion of you when you have caused that mistake? Can you be so revengeful as to torment her for it?"

"Oh! the wisdom of sixteen years!" cried Gustave, bursting into irrepressible laughter. "You will defend your friend against me, will you?--against me? You are indeed very wise for your years, my little Frida, but of such things you understand nothing, and, indeed, it is not necessary. You can still wait a couple of years. But now tell me all about it! When did Jessie weep? What did she cry for? How do you know that the tears concerned me? Tell me, tell me, or I shall die of impatience!"

His face indeed betrayed the highest excitement, and he seemed actually to devour the words from the girl's lips. Frida seemed certainly to know nothing of such things, for she looked astonished to the last degree, but yielded at last to his urgency.

"Jessie asked me seriously a short time ago if I would really entrust my whole future to such an egoist as you. I defended you, awkwardly enough, as I dared not betray you, and was obliged to submit to all the reproaches heaped on you."

"And then?" asked Gustave breathlessly, "and then?"

"Then, in the midst of the conversation, Jessie suddenly burst into tears, and cried--'You are blind, Frida; you persist in your blindness, and yet I have only your happiness in view! You don't know what dreadful pain it gives me to have to place this man in such a light before you, or what I would give if he stood as pure and high in my eyes as in yours!' And then she rushed away and locked herself in her room. But I know that she cried for hours."

"That is incomparable, heavenly news!" cried Gustave, in fullest delight. "Child, you do not know how cleverly you have observed. Come, I must give you a kiss for it!"

And with that he seized the girl in his arms and kissed her heartily on both cheeks.

CHAPTER VIII.

A shadow fell on the entrance of the arbour--there stood Sandow, who had returned to fetch his forgotten pocket-book, and thus became a witness of the scene.

For a moment he stood speechless and motionless, then he approached and cried, with the greatest indignation--

"Gustave!--Miss Palm!"

The girl started violently, even Gustave turned pale as he released her. The catastrophe which at any price he would yet delay, had burst, he saw that at a glance; now he must stand firm.

"What is all this?" asked Sandow, measuring his brother with blazing eyes. "How dare you treat thus a young girl under the shelter of my house, and you, Miss Palm, how could you permit such conduct? It could not be agreeable to you? And yet there seems already a thorough understanding!"

Frida made no attempt to reply to the bitter reproaches heaped upon her. She looked at

Gustave as if she expected him to defend her. He had already collected himself, and said impressively to his brother--

"Listen to me, you are in error, and I will explain all to you."

"It needs no explanation," interrupted Sandow. "I have seen what you have been guilty of, and you will not try to deny the evidence of my own eyes. I always thought you frivolous, but not so dishonourable, but that you have, almost under the eyes of Jessie, your promised bride"--

"Frank, stop there!" cried Gustave, with such determination that Sandow, although trembling with rage, was silent. "I cannot allow this, my self-sacrifice will not go so far as that. Frida, come to me. You see that we must speak. He must learn the truth."

Frida obeyed. She came to his side, and he laid his arm protectingly round her. Sandow looked bewildered from one to the other. The affair was unintelligible to him, he had clearly no presentiment of the truth.

"You wrong me by your accusations," said Gustave, "and you wrong Frida too. If I kissed her I had a right to do so. She has been my charge from her earliest youth. The poor forsaken child was neglected by everyone who ought to have protected and sheltered her. I was the only one who recognised the right of kindred. I have used that right, and can support my actions by it."

It was astonishing how deeply earnest the voice of the irrepressible jester had become. At the first words a terrible presentiment seemed to seize Sandow. Every tinge of colour left his face, he became paler and paler, and with his eyes fixed on Frida, he repeated in a tuneless and mechanical voice--

"Your right of kindred? What--what do you mean?"

Gustave raised the head of the girl, which leant on his shoulder, and turned the face full towards his brother.

"If you have not yet guessed, then read it in this face, perhaps it will now be clear to you. What likeness is it that you have remembered there. I have certainly deceived you, been forced to deceive you since you thrust every possibility of an understanding from you. Then I seized the only means, and brought Frida to you. I thought you would by degrees learn to comprehend the feeling which warmed your half-frozen heart, I thought it must at last dawn upon you, that the stranger who attracted you so powerfully had a right to your love. That is now impossible, the discovery has come too suddenly and unexpectedly, but look at those features, they are your own. For long years you have suffered under a dark and gloomy illusion, and have punished a guiltless child for the guilt of the mother. You awake at last and open your arms to her--to your own, your neglected child."

A long oppressive silence followed these words. Sandow staggered, and for a moment it seemed as if he would give way altogether, but he stood upright. His face worked terribly, and his breast rose and fell quickly with the gasping breath, but he spoke no word.

"Come, Frida!" said Gustave gently, "come to your father, you see he waits for you."

He drew her forwards and would have led her to her father, but he had now regained his power of speech. He made a movement as if to thrust her from him, and hoarse and roughly cried--

"Back! So easy a victory you need not expect. Now I see through the whole comedy."

"Comedy!" repeated Gustave, deeply hurt. "Frank, in such a moment can you speak thus."

"And what else is it?" broke out Sandow. "What else do you call that miserable jugglery which you have carried on behind my back? So, for weeks past I have been surrounded in my own house, with lies and deceit. And even Jessie has joined you; without her help it would have been impossible. All have conspired against me. You," he turned to Frida as if he would pour all his rage and scorn upon her devoted head, but he encountered the girl's eyes, and the words died on his lips.

He was silent for some moments, and then continued with the bitterest contempt--

"No doubt they described to you in very enticing colours the benefit of having a father from whom you might inherit wealth, and who could give you a brilliant position in life. That is why you have stolen into my house with lies. But what I swore when I left Europe that I stand by. I have no child, will have none, were the law ten times to adjudge me one. Go back over the sea to whence you came. I will not be the victim of deceit."

"That is what I feared," said Gustave, half aloud. "Frida," he stepped quickly to her, "now you must rouse the feelings of a father. You see he will not listen to me; to you he must, and will listen. Speak, then, at all events open your lips, do you not feel what hangs on this moment?"

But Frida spoke not, and did not open her lips, which were convulsively pressed together. She was deadly pale, and in her face was the same expression of hard, settled obstinacy which

disfigured her father's countenance.

"Let me alone, Uncle Gustave," she replied, "I cannot entreat now, and if my life depended on it, I could not. I will only tell my father I am innocent of the 'deceit' with which he reproaches me."

The delicate form was suddenly drawn up to its full height, the dark eyes blazed, and the deeply injured feelings burst forth, passionately overflowing all bounds, like a stream which can no longer be controlled.

"You need not repulse me so harshly, I should have gone in the moment when it became clear to me that the one thing I sought here--my father's heart--was denied me. I have never known a parent's love. My mother was estranged from me, of my father I only knew that he lived on this side the Atlantic, and had cast me off because he hated my mother. I came against my will, because I neither knew nor loved you. I only feared you. I came because my uncle said that you were lonely and embittered, and in spite of your wealth had no happiness in life; that you needed love, and that I alone could give it to you. By those means he forced me to follow him, in spite of my opposition, and by those means has he ever prevented me when I begged to return home. But now he will not wish to detain me, and if he did, I would tear myself away. Keep your wealth, father, that which you think has brought me to you. It has brought no blessing to you; I knew it long ago, and hear it again in your words. If you were poor and desolate I would try to love you, now I cannot. I will leave you within the hour!"

The unmeasured violence with which these words were spoken, or rather with which they rushed from Frida's lips had something terrible in it, but it also betrayed something which produced a more powerful effect than all the prayers and petitions could have done--the resemblance between the father and the daughter.

In the ordinary course of life the resemblance between the girl of sixteen and the already grey-haired man might have disappeared, or only have been remarkable occasionally; here, in the moment of highest excitement, it found such overwhelming, such convincing expression, that every doubt vanished on the spot.

Sadow must have seen it whether he would or not. Those were his eyes, which flamed before him, that was his voice which rang in his ears, that was his own dark, unbending obstinacy which now turned against himself. Trait by trait he saw himself reproduced in his daughter. The voice of blood and nature spoke so loud and convincingly that even the long treasured illusion of the father began to yield.

Frida turned to her uncle.

"In an hour I shall be ready to start! Forgive me, Uncle Gustave, that I have so badly carried out all your teaching, that I have rendered useless all your self-sacrifice, but I cannot do otherwise!"

She threw herself wildly on his breast, but only for a moment, then she tore herself away, fled past her father, and rushed like a hunted thing through the garden towards the house.

As Sadow saw his daughter in his brother's arms, he made a movement as if to tear her away, but his hand fell powerless by his side, and he sank as if crushed upon a seat, and buried his face in his hands.

Gustave, on his side, made no attempt to detain his niece. He stood quietly there with folded arms and watched his brother. At last he asked--

"Do you believe it now?"

Sadow raised himself; he tried to reply, but the words failed him, and no sound came from his lips.

"I thought this encounter must have convinced you," continued Gustave. "The likeness is really startling. You are reflected in your child as in a mirror. Frank, if you do not believe this testimony I have indeed lost all hope."

Sadow passed his hand over his brow, bedewed with cold sweat, and looked towards the house, where Frida had long since vanished.

"Call her back!" said he, hoarsely.

"That would be labour in vain, she would not listen to me. Would you return if you had been so driven away? Frida is her father's daughter, she will not approach you again--you must fetch her yourself."

Again silence, but this only lasted for a minute, then Sadow rose, slowly and hesitatingly, but he rose. Gustave laid his hand upon his arm.

"One word, Frank, before you go. Frida knows of the past only what she was compelled to know, not one syllable more. She does not dream *why* you have driven her away, nor what fearful

suspicion has kept her all these years from her father's heart. I could not bring myself to reveal that to the child. She believes that you hated her mother because she was unhappy in her marriage with you, left you and married another man, and that this hatred has descended upon her. This reason satisfied her, she asked for no other, so let it remain. I think you will understand that I could not let your daughter look into the depth of your domestic misery, and concealed the worst from her. If you do not mention it she need never learn it."

"I--thank you!"

The elder brother seized the hand of the younger, the latter returned the pressure heartily and firmly. Then Sandow turned and went rapidly away.

"He is going to her," said Gustave, with a sigh of relief. "God be thanked; now they can arrange the rest together."

CHAPTER IX.

Frida had fled to her own room in the upper floor of the villa. Another might have given way to tears, or have poured out her heart to the sympathizing Jessie; this girl did neither; but with restless haste made the preparations for her journey.

The harsh repulse of her father, which burnt like fire into her soul, left her only one thought. Away out of this house from which he wished to drive her, away as quick as possible.

Frida had drawn out her travelling trunk, which still stood in the corner of the apartment, and collected her things together. She did it silently, tearlessly, but with a stormy haste, as if she would escape some misfortune. She knelt before the open box and was in the act of laying her dresses in it, when a step sounded outside. It must be her uncle who was looking for her, she knew that he would come to her, and would beg him to take her to an hotel. There they could arrange about her return home. She would be docile, obedient in everything, only he must not attempt to keep her longer here. The steps came nearer, the door opened, and on the threshold stood--her father!

Frida trembled violently, the shawl which she held in her hand fell to the ground, and she stood as if rooted to the spot.

Sandow entered and shut the door; he looked at the open box and the things scattered around.

"You are going?"

"Yes."

Question and answer were alike short and abrupt. It seemed as if the gulf between father and daughter would again open wide. Sandow was silent for a few moments, he visibly struggled with himself; at last he said--

"Come to me, Frida!"

She rose slowly, stood a moment as if undecided, and then approached slowly, till she stood close before her father. He put his arm round her, and with the other hand raised her head. Bending over her he examined line by line, feature by feature, and his eyes seemed literally to pierce into her countenance. The old suspicion arose once more, and for the last time, but it vanished by degrees, as the father saw his own features reproduced in his child.

A deep, deep sigh burst from Sandow's breast, and the half anxiously seeking, half threatening look, melted into tears, which fell hot and heavy on Frida's brow.

"Just now I gave you great pain," said he, "but do you think it was easy to me to drive from me the one thing that could give me joy. Gustave is right; it has been a terrible delusion, may it be forgotten for ever. My child," his voice broke in deepest emotion, "will you love your father?"

A joyful cry burst from the daughter's lips. At this tone, the first which seemed really to come from the heart, vanished the bitterness of the last hour, vanished also the recollection of the long years of separation and estrangement.

Frida threw both arms round her father's neck, and as he pressed her with a burst of tenderness to his breast, they both felt that the gloomy shadow which had so long separated

them, had vanished for ever!

CHAPTER X.

Meanwhile Gustave had also returned slowly to the house. As he entered the drawing-room, Jessie came to him full of uneasiness.

"Mr. Sandow, pray, pray tell me what has happened. Ten minutes ago Frida rushed into my room, threw her arms round my neck, and wished me good-bye. She seemed quite beside herself, and declared that she must go, she could not stay another hour, would answer no questions, but referred me to you for all explanations. What has happened?"

Gustave shrugged his shoulders.

"What I feared, if the discovery could not be postponed. An accident betrayed our secret to my brother, and we were obliged to confess the truth. His anger at the deception burst forth with great violence, and was poured unsparingly upon us both. Frida could not support this, she declared she would go at once, and now is, most probably, making the necessary preparations for her journey."

"And you are not with her!" cried Jessie. "You have not protected and supported her! Can you leave her alone at such a moment? Go to her!"

"I should only be in the way," declared Gustave, with a composure which appeared to Miss Clifford as the height of selfishness. "What remains to be done Frida must fight out alone. I may, at last, be allowed to think of myself."

His eyes, which rested on Jessie's face, beamed again as when Frida had made a certain revelation to him. Lost in this gaze, he quite forgot that his words must give rise to fresh misunderstanding, and this indeed happened in fullest measure.

"All this while you have only thought too much of yourself!" replied Jessie, her excitement rising, "but if there is one spark of love in your breast, you must feel that your place is at the side of your betrothed bride."

Gustave smiled, and stepped close to the indignant girl, while he said impressively--

"Frida is not, and has never been, betrothed to me."

"Not betrothed to you?"

"No; if you remember, it was expressly as my *protégée* I introduced her. It was you, Miss Clifford, who took the other connection for granted, and I left you in your error. But now, when I have ceased to play the part of protector, I may acknowledge to you that my inclinations were directed to quite another quarter."

He bent over her hand, and pressed a passionate kiss upon it, which amply explained his words, but the game which he had so boldly carried on was now to be revenged on him. He had too long played the part of the heartless egoist, and must now do penance.

Jessie snatched her hand away with the greatest indignation.

"Mr. Sandow, you are going too far! So now, when my guardian repulses Frida, when you see the impossibility of gaining his consent, you dare to approach me! You even venture to deny your bride before me, and to give the whole thing out as a farce. That is really too much!"

"But Miss Clifford--for heaven's sake!" cried Gustave, now seriously disturbed.

She would not allow him to speak, but continued, as if beside herself--

"I knew long ago, when you laid such stress upon the word *protégée*, that you were leaving a way of escape open. If Frida and fortune could both be won, well and good; if only fortune, Frida must go. There would still remain the heiress, who in the first place was intended for you, and this heiress you would secure while the forsaken, deceived girl was still under our roof. I have already experienced bitter disappointment with respect to your character, but such disgraceful disregard of truth and good faith I had not expected, even from you!"

A flood of tears choked her voice. Gustave tried prayers, entreaties, explanations; all were in

vain. She hurried into the adjoining room, and when he tried to follow her she drew the bolt inside. Directly after he heard her leave that room also by another door, so that his words could no longer reach her. Left thus in the lurch, Gustave began to give vent to his anger.

"This is really too bad! This is what I have gained by sacrificing myself to the interests of others! My brother bursts upon me raging and storming because I give a caress to my own niece, and now I am treated like a criminal because I am too indifferent to her. Really, I ought to have taken Jessie into our confidence. This comes of too great a supply of high spirits. The thing amused me, and she--now she cries like one in the depths of despair. Now perhaps I may wait till tomorrow without her reappearing, and the misunderstanding should be brought to an end at once."

Despairingly he stamped with his foot, when suddenly a voice behind him said--

"I beg pardon--but I was directed here."

Gustave started and looked round. At the principal entrance of the drawing-room stood a stranger, a little man with a round face, who, bowing politely, said--

"Have I the honour of addressing the head of the house of Clifford?" He looked rather nervous, for Gustave's violent pantomime had not escaped him. "I have been to the office, and was there told that Mr. Sandow had already left. As my business is very urgent, I have been obliged to follow him out here."

"My brother is not visible," said Gustave irritably, for this interruption was in the highest degree unwelcome at such a moment. "He has important business in hand, and cannot be disturbed."

At the word "brother" the little gentleman bowed still more profoundly, and approaching with a confidential air, said--

"Mr. Gustave Sandow! the great German journalist! I am deeply rejoiced that fortune has permitted me to make the acquaintance of such a celebrity, a celebrity whose value is thoroughly appreciated by our firm."

"What do you want?" asked Gustave, with a look which clearly expressed a burning desire to show the admirer of his greatness to the door.

"I am an agent of Jenkins and Co.," explained the stranger, with an air of great self-satisfaction. "I arrived here today with a number of emigrants, and found myself obliged to call upon our honoured correspondent here. Since Mr. Sandow cannot be disturbed, perhaps I may make my statement to you."

Now Gustave's sorely tried patience was at an end. At a moment of such anxiety to receive an agent of Jenkins and Co. was beyond his power. He turned with great want of politeness to the bearer of the hated name--

"I can receive no communications intended for my brother. Bring your news to-morrow to the counting-house. I would"--here he suddenly dropped the English in which he had spoken to the American, and relieved his mind with a few strong German curses. "I wish the devil would take Jenkins and Co. with all their agents to their accursed place in the West, that the consequences of their philanthropical speculation might fall on their own heads."

With this he quitted the room by another door, leaving the astonished agent dumb with horror. For a few minutes he looked at the door by which Gustave had vanished with a bewildered mien. He had not understood the words of the German objurgations, but so much was clear to him that the "great German journalist" had not expressed very benevolent wishes with regard to himself and his Company. What should he do? The elder Mr. Sandow invisible, and the younger--

The little gentleman shook his head thoughtfully, and said to himself--

"Remarkable people, these German journalists! They are so nervous, so excited, one might almost say raving mad. When one pays them a compliment they answer by insult. Our gentlemen of the press are much more polite when people talk of their fame."

CHAPTER XI.

Jessie had locked herself in her own room, and there gave full course to her tears. Never in her life had she felt so profoundly unhappy, so despairing, as at this hour. Now she felt how her whole heart clung to this man, whom cost what it might she would drive from her.

Long ago, while he still lived in Germany, she had treasured a secret interest in her guardian's brother. She did not know him, but his pen wove an invisible bond between them. With what glowing eagerness had she read his articles; with what enthusiasm had she followed the flights of his idealism. She felt a community of ideas between them on all points of thought and sentiment, and by degrees he became a sort of ideal to her. And now the idealist had come--to falsify his whole past by yielding himself to his brother's sordid speculations. Then he concealed the best feelings of his heart from a cowardly fear of losing that brother's wealth; he heaped intrigue on intrigue to secure the coveted riches, then denied his bride rather than risk the fortune, and again courted the heiress. The most miserable selfishness, the most paltry calculations, were the mainsprings of his actions. Jessie hated and despised him with all her soul, but that she was forced to do so, that it was precisely this man whom she must despise, tore her very heart.

She had thrown herself on her couch, and buried her face in the cushions, smothering there her sobs, when suddenly she heard her name called, and springing up, she was startled to see Gustave Sandow standing in the middle of the room. She passionately cried--

"Mr. Sandow, how do you come here? I thought"--

"Yes, you bolted the drawing-room door," interrupted Gustave, "and you ordered your maid to admit no one, but in spite of bolts and lady's maid I am here. I must speak to you; it is necessary for your sake as well as mine."

"But I will not listen!" cried Jessie, with a vain attempt at self-control.

"But I will be heard!" replied Gustave. "At first I thought of sending Frida as a mediator, but soon gave up the idea. It would have taken too long. She is still with her father."

"With whom?"

"With her father--my brother!" Jessie stood as if petrified. The revelation was so sudden that she could not at first realize it, till Gustave said--

"May I now justify myself?"

Then through her soul flashed hope and happiness. She allowed him to take her hand and to lead her to the sofa, and even to place himself beside her.

"I have a confession to make to you, Miss Clifford," he began, "and to make all clear to you I must go far back into my brother's past life. By-and-bye, I may do it at greater length, but now I will only tell you enough to justify myself."

He detained her hand in his, and Jessie left it unresistingly there. She began to believe in the possibility of justification.

"My brother's domestic life was one of bitter experience. An apparently happy wedded life ended in a terrible discovery. He found himself betrayed by his wife and his dearest friend, and the circumstances of the discovery were such that with his domestic happiness fell also his outward prosperity. He neither would nor could remain longer at home, and went to America, where your parents received him. But in Germany he had left his daughter, his only child, who at that time was almost an infant. In his hatred, his bitterness against all, he would not acknowledge the child; it remained with the mother, who after the necessary divorce had married that man."

He paused a moment. Jessie listened in breathless anticipation; over her pale, tear-stained face crept a slight flush, as Gustave continued--

"I was then at the university, and had no means of supporting Frida, and all my representations in her behalf were fruitless. But I have never forsaken my little niece. The poor child had a comfortless youth in that family where her very presence was a rock of offence. Endured against his will by her step-father, treated by her own mother with indifference, nay, almost with aversion, she stood a stranger among her step-brothers and sisters, and with every year more keenly felt her loneliness. As soon as my means permitted, I assumed the rights of an uncle, which were certainly readily granted me, and extricated my niece from these surroundings. I placed her at school, where she remained till her mother's death. That death broke the bond which caused constant bitterness to my brother, and now I determined to come to America and fight for her rights, cost what it might."

"And that was your reason for coming to America?" said Jessie, timidly.

"That alone! I had already made an attempt by letter, but was most harshly repulsed by Frank. He threatened to break off all correspondence with me if I ever touched on the subject again. So then I placed all my hopes on the effect of Frida's own presence, but it at first seemed impossible to carry out this plan. I could not allow a young girl like that to cross the sea alone, and if she had appeared in my company my brother would have instantly had his suspicions roused. Then the

death of your father, Miss Clifford, obliged him to think of a new partner, and his thoughts turned to me. Under ordinary circumstances the invitation to cast overboard my fatherland, my calling, and my independence, yes, the very heart and soul of my former life, for the sake of material interests, would have met with the most decided refusal; now it seemed like a sign from heaven itself. I apparently yielded, and started with Frida. She remained in New York while I viewed the field of action, and then introduced her under an assumed name into her father's house. You know what followed. The discovery has cost a last but severe struggle. There was a scene, which threatened to destroy all, but at last the father's heart awoke in my brother's bosom, and now he is reconciled with his child!"

Jessie sat with eyes cast down and glowing cheeks while she listened to this recital, which took one thorn after another from her breast. It seemed to her as if she herself were released from a gloomy oppression, now that the veil which so long had covered the "egoist" had fallen.

"Yes, Miss Clifford, now it is all up with the inheritance," said Gustave mischievously. "It was indeed offered to me, and I have had a hard fight for it, but only in the interest of the rightful heiress. Unfortunately, I must also resign the honour of becoming a partner in the house of Clifford. The editor and staff of the *K-sche Zeitung* have bound me by a solemn oath as soon as my leave of absence is at an end; and in the long run indeed 'keeping accounts' does not appeal very strongly to me. I shall take up my old colours again, which, by-the-bye, I have not so shamefully deserted as you supposed. Do you still find my presence at the office desk so contemptible an action?"

Jessie looked at him, ashamed, confused, yet with a feeling of intense happiness--

"I have wronged you, Mr. Sandow; it was certainly your own fault, but--I beg your pardon?"

She could not offer him her hand, for he had never released it, but he pressed a kiss upon it which this time was quite patiently endured.

"I have for weeks past rejoiced at the thought of this explanation," said he, laughing. "Do you think I would have endured my brother's arbitrary manner and your contempt even for an hour, had I not been certain of your petition at the end?"

"And Frida is really only your adopted child?" asked Jessie, with a throbbing heart, which could not be controlled. "You do not love her?"

"Frida is my dear niece, and I am her venerated uncle, with that our mutual relation is exhausted. Now that she has found her father, I am become superfluous as an object of respect. But now that we are on the subject of love, Jessie, I have one question to put to you."

The question seemed to be guessed, for Jessie's face was bathed in blushes. She dared not look up, but that was also unnecessary, for Gustave was already at her feet, so she was compelled to look down at him, as he, with warmest devotion, whispered--

"My dearest, my beloved Jessie, it is now my turn to beg your pardon. I have intrigued, I have lied even to you, that cannot be denied, but I have also suffered for it, for you have compelled me to hear some bitter strictures. But one thing has remained real and true in me since our first meeting--the feeling which awoke in me when I first saw those blue eyes! So you must be gracious to me!"

Jessie seemed certainly inclined to grace, that the blue eyes said before the lips could express it. He sprang up full of passionate joy, and the pardon was confirmed in every point, indeed, no necessary formalities were omitted.

Half an hour later the two entered Frida's room, where Sandow still sat with his daughter. Gustave had drawn Jessie's hand within his arm, and now solemnly led her to his brother.

"Frank," said he, "in your inconsiderate plan was one sensible idea--indeed a very sensible one--yes, my little Frida, do not make such astonished eyes at your uncle and your future aunt--these are things which you do not understand; with our mutual penetration we have discovered that one sensible idea, and now introduce ourselves to you as an engaged couple."

CHAPTER XII.

It was the next morning. After breakfast the two brothers had withdrawn to the study of the elder one, and were alone there. Sandow sat at the writing-table; on his countenance lay an expression

which for long years had never dwelt there, a shimmer of the happiness of former days, but his brow was still clouded as he spoke to his brother, who leant against the window opposite to him.

"Then you will really forsake me and carry Jessie off to Germany? I hoped that when Clifford's daughter should belong to you, you would also become his successor in business, and thus fulfil his dearest wish. You need not on that account give up your pen altogether, the real weight of business will rest as before on my shoulders. Our press is mightier and more influential than yours, here you would find a freer and wider field than in our native land. Consider it!"

"It requires no consideration," said Gustave with decision. "I can only give my whole interest and energy to one occupation. Merchant and *litterateur*; that won't do! Were the intellectual horizon here ten times as wide, every chord of my heart is bound to my home, I can only there work and create. And then we should never do as partners. For a few weeks I could wear the mask of a subordinate and be silent to all, for on Frida's account I wished to prevent a breach. But now Frank! I must tell you plainly that your business practice, your whole system, would render it impossible for us ever to get on together. It led you to a close union with Jenkins--in that lies your condemnation."

Sandow did not spring up, as at such a declaration he would certainly have done before, but his brow took a deeper shade.

"You look at things from one point of view and I from another. Your calling gives you perfect liberty in act and thought, I stand amidst all kinds of antagonistic interest, and cannot always choose my means. I wish"--he paused a moment, and then overcoming himself continued--"I wish I had not entered on this partnership with Jenkins. But it has happened, and I cannot extricate myself."

"Can you really not? Is there no way out of it?"

"I have told you that hundreds of thousands are invested in this affair, and run the risk of losing all if it does not succeed, or if I withdraw from it."

"But you must withdraw whatever the loss may be!"

Sandow looked at him as if he did not believe his ears.

"At the risk of such a loss? Are you serious? Have you any idea of what such a sum means? I have done what I could, I have made the attempt to separate from Jenkins, to my injury--for he has become more obstinate in consequence. In his last letter he asked with ill-concealed suspicion, if I really required my money, since I appeared so anxious to withdraw my capital. He seems to suspect losses on my side, perhaps doubts my credit, and for a merchant that is the most dangerous thing that can happen. I must enter upon the thing with redoubled energy if I would repair such an imprudence."

"Yesterday I gave you your child," said Gustave earnestly, "and I believe that in her you have won more than you will lose here. For Frida's sake I hoped you would withdraw from a speculation which hinders you from meeting your daughter's eyes."

Sandow turned quickly away, but his voice had the old harsh sound as he replied--

"Just for Frida's sake! Shall I impoverish my newly-found child? Shall I rob her of the half of her fortune?"

"She will have enough in the other half, and I do not believe that the whole will bring a blessing, when it is retained at such a price."

"Silence! You understand nothing about it. A retreat at any risk, such as you suggest is an impossibility, so not another word on the subject! Naturally, I release you from your promise, for, knowing you as I do now, I am sure that you have never written the articles."

"The first is long since ready," replied Gustave coldly. "It will certainly be also the last, one such will suffice. I intended showing you the MSS. to-day. Here it is."

He drew some pages of writing from his pocket, and offered them to his brother, who took them hesitatingly, and looked questioning and doubtfully at him.

"Read," said Gustave simply.

Sandow began to read, at first slowly, but with, ever-increasing haste. He turned over the leaves with a trembling hand, and glanced over them. His face grew darker, and breaking off in the midst he threw the manuscript violently on the table.

"Are you out of your mind! You have written, you will publish that! It is terrible what you there expose to the world!"

Gustave drew himself up to his full height, and stepped up close to his brother.

"Terrible! indeed it is! And the most terrible part is, that all these things are true. I have been

on the spot, and can pledge my honour for every word that I have written there. Draw back, Frank, while there is yet time. This article, appearing in the *K-sche Zeitung*, repeated throughout the entire German press, cannot fail in its working. The Consulate, the Ministry will be obliged to notice it. They will take care that no one falls unwarned into the hands of Jenkin's and Co."

"You are very proud of the wonderful effect of your pen!" cried Sandow beside himself. "You seem to have forgotten that I am an equal shareholder with Jenkins, and that when you describe the place in such revolting colours, every word is directed against the wealth and honour of your brother. You will not only ruin me by this, but represent me as a scoundrel in the eyes of all the world."

"No. I shall not do that, for you will separate yourself altogether from this rascally company, and I shall add, that my brother, who had unwittingly become involved in this speculation, retreated from it at a great pecuniary sacrifice, as soon as his eyes were opened to the enormity of the proceeding. Declare this openly to the man, if you fear that merely withdrawing will be injurious to your credit. The truth, here too, is the best."

"And you think that Jenkins would believe me, the merchant, the head of the house of Clifford, guilty of such an insane trick. He would simply believe I had lost my senses."

"It is possible, for since this honourable personage has no conscience himself, he would not understand its existence in anyone else. Nevertheless, you must try every means."

Sadow walked wildly up and down the room for a few minutes, at last he stopped and said with gasping breath--

"You do not know what it is to seize a wasp's nest. In Europe you would at least be safe from their stings, while I must remain here open to all. Jenkins would never forgive me if my name were attached to any such revelations. He is influential enough to set against me all who are concerned in it, and they are counted by hundreds. You do not know the iron ring of interest which surrounds and binds us together. One hangs on the other, one supports the other. Woe to him who tears himself away and offers battle to his former companions. They all swear to destroy him. His credit is undermined, his plans crossed, he himself calumniated and harassed till he is ruined. Just now I could not support such attacks. Jessie's money will be lost to the firm, this speculation has weakened my own means to the last degree; should it fail, for me it will be the beginning of ruin. I speak as unreservedly to you as you have to me, and now go and publish your discovery to all the world!"

He paused, overwhelmed with excitement; Gustave looked darkly before him, his brow, too, bore the marks of deep and anxious care.

"I did not think that you were so surrounded and entangled on every side. That comes from this execrable system of business! Well then"--he laid his hand upon the paper--"destroy this, I will not write it again. I am silent when you assure me that my words will be your ruin. But the consequences are on your head! You must answer for every human life which is lost in that den of fever."

"Gustave, you are killing me!" groaned Sandow sinking into a chair.

The door was gently opened and the servant announced that the carriage which usually conveyed the two gentlemen to town was at the door. Gustave signed to the man to withdraw, and then bending over his brother said--

"You cannot now come to a decision. You must be calm. Let me go alone to the office to-day and represent you there. You are terribly agitated and excited, too much came on you yesterday."

Sadow made a mute sign of assent, he might well feel that he was not in a condition to show his ordinary calm business demeanour to his subordinates. But when his brother was already at the door, he suddenly started up,

"One thing--not a word to Frida! Don't bring her into the field against me, or you drive me to extremities."

"Be tranquil, I should not have ventured that," said Gustave with great emphasis. "It would estrange the scarcely won heart of your child--perhaps for ever. Good-bye Frank."

About an hour later Frida entered her father's room, where he was still pacing restlessly up and down. She started when she saw him, for his countenance betrayed something of the struggle of the past hours. He tried indeed to conceal his agitation, and avoided giving a direct reply to the anxious inquiries of his daughter, but still she saw that he was devoured by feverish anxiety. The girl was still too much a stranger to venture on forcing his confidence by prayers and entreaties, but she looked with secret dread at the gloomy shadow which brooded over the brow, where nothing but joy and pardon should have been seen.

Suddenly Gustave entered with Jessie; he appeared to have just returned from town, for he still held his hat and gloves; he had, however, been scarcely an hour absent.

"I have brought Jessie with me," he said in his usual cheerful manner, "and since Frida is also here, we can hold another family council in your room. You are surprised to see me again so soon, Frank. I wished to relieve you of all business affairs to-day, but have been compelled to come to you for a decision. At the office I found some emigrants who would not be satisfied without seeing you, and as you were not coming to town today, I have brought them out here."

"Yes, Gustave brought them out in his own carriage," said Jessie who had been rather astonished at seeing her future husband drive up to the door, with some homely peasants in the elegant equipage belonging to their house.

"They are Germans, fellow-countrymen, indeed they are from our own little native place," added Gustave quickly. "They might not have been able to find their way here alone, so I considered it best to bring them."

"That was quite unnecessary," said Sandow uneasily, and displeased at what he foresaw would be a last and decisive attack. "The thing could have waited till to-morrow. What have I personally to do with the wanderers? They can receive every information at the office. You have really brought them all here?"

"Yes all, excepting the agent of Jenkins and Co. He was here yesterday with the object of speaking to you; I put him off till this morning, and arrived just in time to rescue these people from him; for he seemed resolved not to let them go till he had given them the fullest particulars. You will of course receive them; I promised them positively an interview with you."

And without leaving his brother time to refuse, he opened the door of the adjoining room, and invited the men who were waiting there to enter. The two girls were about to retire when they found a business interview was to take place, but Gustave held Jessie's arm fast, and said softly but impressively to her and his niece--

"Stay, both of you. I want you, but particularly Frida!"

Meanwhile the strangers had entered. There were three men, robust country folk, with sunburnt faces and toil-hardened hands. The eldest, a man of middle age, appeared highly respectable in manner and dress. The two others were younger and looked more necessitous. They stood awkwardly near the door, while their leader made a few steps forward.

"There is my brother," said Gustave, directing their attention to him. "Speak quite freely and fearlessly to him. Under the present circumstances, he only can give you the best advice."

"God be with you, Mr. Sandow!" began the leader, with the touching German salutation, usual in his province, and with a strong, harsh provincial accent. "We are thankful to find Germans here, with whom we can speak an honest word. At your office where we at first sought you, we were ordered here and there, and were quite bewildered, till fortunately your brother appeared. He immediately took our part, and has been very rough with the agent who would not let us see you. But he was right then, for long ago we lost all confidence in the whole band."

Sandow rose; he felt the storm approach, and cast a threatening, reproachful glance at the brother who had thus entangled him. But the merchant well knew that he must not allow the strangers to have any idea of his position, but must preserve his usual business air. He asked--

"What do you want with me, and what am I to advise you upon?"

The peasant looked at his two companions as if he expected them to speak, but as they remained silent and made energetic signs for him to continue, he alone replied--

"We have fallen into a horrible trap, and know no way out of it. Before leaving Germany we were recommended to Jenkins and Company, and on arriving in New York were received by their agent. They promised us a mine of wealth, and at their office one seemed to believe that in the far west lay an earthly paradise. But on the way here we accidentally met a few Germans, who had been several years in America, and they told another tale. They bade us beware of this Jenkins and his western paradise. He was a regular cutthroat, and had already brought many to misery. We should all be ruined in his forests, and what all his other fine things might be. Then we felt stunned! The agent, who was travelling in another compartment, was furious when we plainly told him what we had heard, but as I said before, we had lost all confidence in him, and wished to consider the thing again before we travelled so many more hundred miles westward."

Gustave, who stood beside Jessie, listened with apparent calm. She looked rather frightened; she did not know all the circumstances, but could easily feel that this meant more than an ordinary business affair.

Frida, on the other hand, listened with breathless excitement to the words which bore such singular resemblance to those which, weeks ago, she had spoken to her father. But what could he have to do with this emigration scheme?

"We were directed to your bank, Mr. Sandow," continued the man, "for the signing the contract and payment for the land. We heard in the neighbourhood that you were a German, and indeed out of our own province. Then I called together the others and said, 'Children, now there

is no more difficulty; we will go to our countryman and lay the thing before him. He is a German, so will, no doubt, have a conscience, and will not send his fellow-countrymen to their destruction!"

If Sandow had not before realised to the full extent, what a sin his speculation was, he learnt it in this hour, and the simple, true-hearted words of the peasant burnt into his soul, as the bitterest reproaches could not have done.

It was torture that he endured, but the worst was to come. Frida crept to his side. He did not look at her at that moment, he could not, but he felt the anxious, imploring look, and the trembling of the hand which clasped his own.

"Now it is your turn to speak," said the man, turning half angrily to his companions, who had entirely left the management of the affair to him. "You, too, have wives and children, and have spent your last penny on the journey. Yes, Mr. Sandow, there are poor devils among us who have nothing but their strong arms, and can count on nothing but their labour. Some of us are certainly better off, and so we thought one could help the other in the new colony. There are about eighty of us, besides a dozen children, and for the poor little ones it would indeed be bad if things over there are as we have been told. So give us advice, *Herr Landsmann!* If you say to us, 'Go,' then in God's name we shall start early to-morrow, and hope for the best. It will be God Himself who has brought us to you, and we shall thank Him from the bottom of our hearts."

Sandow leant heavily on the table which stood before him. Only by exerting the utmost force of will was he able to appear collected. Only Gustave knew what was raging in his heart, and he now decided to break the long and painful pause which had followed the last words.

"Have no fear!" he cried. "You see my brother has himself a child, an only daughter, and thus he knows what the life and health of your little ones is to you. His advice can be implicitly followed. Now, Frank, what do you advise our countrymen to do?"

Sandow looked at the three men, whose eyes rested anxiously, yet confidingly, on his face, then at his daughter, and suddenly standing erect, he cried--

"Do not go there!"

The men started back, and looked at each other, and then at the merchant, who had given them this strange advice.

"But you are connected with this company?" cried the one, and the others confirmed his words. "Yes, indeed, you are one of them!"

"In this affair I have been deceived myself," explained Sandow. "It is only lately that I have learnt exactly the nature of the land, of which I am certainly one of the owners, and I know that it is not suited for colonization. I will, therefore, make no contract with you, as I intend to withdraw from my obligations and give up the whole undertaking."

The Germans had no suspicion what a sacrifice their countryman had made for them, or at what price their rescue had been bought. They looked quite helpless and despairing, and their leader said with startled manner--

"This is an abominable business? We have made and paid for this long journey, and here we are in America. We cannot return, we must not proceed; we are betrayed and sold in a strange country. Mr. Sandow, you must advise us again, you mean well by us that we can see, or you would not deal such a blow at your own interest. Tell us what to do?"

A heavy, troubled breath came from the breast of the merchant. Nothing was spared him to the last detail, but he had gone too far to retreat.

"Go to the German Consul in this town," he replied, "and lay your case before him. As far as I know there is a German company in New York, which has also undertaken the colonization of the West, and which is under the special protection of our Consulate. Their possessions are not extremely distant from the original object of your journey, the route is almost the same. More particulars you will learn of the Consul himself; you may place implicit confidence in him, and he will assist you by every means in his power."

The faces of the poor men cleared wonderfully at this intelligence.

"Thank God! there is some escape for us!" said the leader. "We will start immediately so as to lose no time, and we are much indebted to you, sir, and to the young gentleman here. It is brave of you to retire from this swindling affair, as though you would not say so, we can see that it is a great loss to you. May God reward you for what you have done for us, and for our wives and children!"

He offered his hand to the merchant, who took it mechanically, and the words of farewell with which he released the people were just as spiritless.

But Gustave shook them all heartily by the hand, and rang the bell violently to summon a

servant, whom he ordered to accompany them to the German Consulate and only to leave them at the door.

When they were gone, Sandow threw himself into a chair; and the agitation which had been so sternly repressed now claimed its rights; he appeared crushed beneath it.

"Father, for God's sake what is the matter?" cried Frida, throwing her arms round him, but now Gustave re-entered, his face actually beaming with triumph.

"Let him be, Frida, it will pass. You have indeed right to be proud of your father! Frank, from the moment when our countrymen stood before you, I was certain that you would in the end warn them against your own speculation, but that you would have recommended them to the other company, against which Jenkins quite lately published a most violent article in the *New York Revolver Press*, that I did not hope, and for that I must shake you by the hand?"

But Sandow waved him and his proffered hand away, and pressed his daughter to his breast. A bitter expression rested on his lips as he said--

"You don't know what Gustave has done to you, my child, nor what this hour may yet cost to your father. From to-day Jenkins will be my most unyielding enemy, and will never rest from attacking me. I have placed myself only too entirely in his hands."

"Throw the whole thing over and come with us to Germany," cried Gustave. "Why should you allow yourself to be tormented and harassed by these honourable New Yorkers, when you could live happy and comfortably in your native land. When Jessie is married there will be an end of the name of Clifford, why not also wind up the firm. Of course you will lose by withdrawing from the thing, but for German ideas you are still rich enough, and there is plenty of room for activity at home."

"What are you proposing to me!" exclaimed Sandow, irritably.

"Just what you proposed to me when you called me here. I think the best way is to turn the thing completely round. Look how Frida's face lights up at the thought of home! Naturally she will never again leave her father, wherever he may be, but it may be your lot to see her die of home-sickness some day."

Gustave had cleverly set the most efficacious spring in motion. Sandow gave a startled look at his daughter, whose eyes certainly beamed when her home was mentioned, and who now resignedly drooped her head.

"Come, Jessie," said Gustave, taking the arm of his betrothed, "we will leave them alone. I must explain all this to you, for I see that you only half comprehend it, and besides I feel an urgent necessity to be again admired by you. Yesterday you did me an extraordinary amount of good."

He led her away, and father and daughter remained alone. Frida required no explanation, he had long ago divined the circumstances, and clinging close to her father, she said with the deepest affection--

"I knew very well when we were standing that time by the sea that you could never send any one into misery!"

Sandow looked long and deeply into the dark eyes, which now beamed with love and admiration. It was the first time he did so, without reading a reproach in them, and he felt as if redeemed to a new life.

"No, my child!" said he softly, "I could not do it, and now whatever may come, we will bear it together."

Meanwhile Gustave and Jessie strolled arm-in-arm through the garden, but at first their talk was very serious. He told her all, screening his brother as much as possible, whom he represented as the victim of a deception which had only just become clear to him. When he had finished, Jessie said eagerly--

"Gustave, even if my money had been mixed up with this, it is unnecessary to say that we will leave it to the uncontrolled management of your brother as long as he wants it."

"Your money has never been concerned in it," Gustave informed her. "Whatever Frank may be as a speculator, as a guardian, he is conscientiousness itself. He has respected your father's will to the fullest extent. You are and remain still an heiress, Jessie, but in spite of that uncomfortable peculiarity, I am resolved to marry you, and in four weeks, too."

"That is impossible," protested Jessie. "There are so many things to order and prepare. You must see yourself that the time is too short."

"I see nothing of the kind," declared Gustave. "The business part my brother will arrange, everything can be settled within the time named. In your America everything is done at express speed, speculation, fortune-making, even living and dying. I do not find this custom unpleasant

since it can be extended even to marrying, and as your future tyrant I require you to become my wife in four weeks."

Jessie did not appear to dread this tyranny too much, but after some discussion she, smiling and blushing, consented, when her lover said--

"At least I can stand by my brother when the first storm breaks, and it will not be long before it does. At the Consulate, of course, all the particulars will be learnt, and by the evening they will have spread through the whole town. That amiable agent, the admirer of my literary fame, will first tear his hair, and then send telegram upon telegram to New York. I wish I could see how Jenkins and Co. breathe fire and flame, and wish me in the lowest depths of hell. With God's help I hope to renew that pleasure whenever my articles appear. They shall learn to know the pen they wished to buy."

"But do you think really that my guardian can release himself from these obligations?" asked Jessie.

"He must, at any price! After the events of to-day there is no choice left him, and he is business man enough to save all that is possible. Jenkins will certainly make his life a misery to him, so much the better! Then he will be obliged to turn his eyes towards Germany, and we shall win him back. He will never return to his old fever for speculation, and here there is so much temptation to it. The ice is now broken, and Frida has so much of the charm of novelty about her that we may confidently leave the rest to her. I pledge my word on it, in a few years she will bring her father home to us!"

They had unconsciously reached the shore, and now stood by the bench where Frida had sat on that memorable evening. Before them lay the sea, bathed in sunshine.

Gustave pointed across it, while he put his arm round his future wife.

"There lies my native land, Jessie! In a few weeks it will also be your home, as it was the home of your own mother, and as such you will learn to love it. What my brother declared this morning may be true--that here the intellectual field too, is wider and freer than with us, that one rises more rapidly here, and wields a mightier power, even with the pen. With us just now, our first duty is to hold high our flag in the midst of the hottest fight, and to defend it with the whole strength of our lives. But that I will do joyfully and with all my heart, and ask no other reward than that my Jessie, my beloved wife, shall be contented with her egoist."

THE END.

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