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A

HERO OF THE PEN.

BY

E. WERNER,

AUTHOR OF "GOOD LUCK," "BROKEN CHAINS," ETC.

TRANSLATED BY

FRANCES A. SHAW.

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A HERO OF THE PEN

CHAPTER I.

Love And Death.

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

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

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

In a low arm chair, on the other side of the fireplace, sits a young man in faultless society-dress. There is marked similarity between these two. It lies not alone in hair and eyes of the same color, in the same clear, pale complexion. It is more in that expression of cold, dignified repose, and self-conscious pride peculiar to both. In the young girl this expression assumes the most decided form; in the young man it is partially hidden by a conventional polish and formality, which much detract from the manly beauty of his face, and the manly dignity of his bearing. He has for some time been engaged in an animated conversation with the young lady, and now continues a recital already begun:--

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Speak, Mr. Alison!"

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

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

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

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

"My answer shall be frank as your question, Mr. Alison. I am aware of your affection for me; I reciprocate it, and upon your return, with the fullest confidence I will place my hand in yours for a united future."

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

An approaching step in the anteroom demanded that both should immediately resume their company manners; the young lady as before, sat in the arm chair, and Alison opposite her, when the person who had thus announced his coming, entered the parlor. He was a small, elderly man with gray hair and sharp, penetrating eyes from which gleamed an inconcealable irony, as he saw the young couple sitting there so much like strangers.

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

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

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

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

"I congratulate you!"

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

"For your betrothal."

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

Atkins took this reproach very unconcernedly.

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

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

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

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

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

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

"No!" said Atkins gravely, "and yet it seems to me that he too, once possessed his proper share of such emotions; but fortunately, he was sensible enough to leave all sentiment and whatever else could not be of use to him here, over yonder. When Mr. Forest landed here twenty years ago, sentimentality would have been sadly out of place, for he brought with him a very healthy hatred against Germany and all connected with it. With a sort of morose energy, he flung from him every remembrance of the fatherland, and even Americanized his name--it was Forster there, you know--and when our colony grew, and the German settlers naturally clung together, he kept aloof from them and fraternized with the Americans. But this his wife could not endure; she could not accustom herself to the new life; there were endless quarrels and hard feelings between them, and as the child grew up, matters became still worse. The father wanted to educate her as an American, and he carried his point, as Miss Jane very soon most decidedly placed herself on his side. This quite broke the mother's heart. We had scenes enough, I tell you; there was no peace until Mrs. Forest died of homesickness at last. As things now stand, I fear the husband will not long survive her."

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

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

The old irony again gleamed from Atkins' eyes, as he sarcastically replied; "I thank you kindly for the proposal, but the property remains by testament in my hands, and consequently all will be found in perfect order. You and your father must wait patiently for a year until Miss Jane herself brings her dowry into your house. Meantime, I can give you this one satisfaction; Mr. Forest is very rich; richer indeed than generally supposed, of this the glance you desire into our business affairs would at once convince you."

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

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

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

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

After leaving these two, Jane had hastily passed through several rooms, and now entered a half-darkened, but richly and tastefully furnished sleeping-chamber. Gliding softly over the carpet, she approached the bed, and flung back its heavy curtains.

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

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

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

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

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

"No!" She suddenly drew herself up, and gazed down upon her father; her sorrow was suppressed by the most absolute self-mastery; her lips scarce quivered. The sick man smiled, but there lay a sort of bitterness in that smile; perhaps he would rather have seen her not obey him so readily.

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

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

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

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

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

"And you?"

"I have given him my promise."

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

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

"You know Jane, that I will neither restrict nor control you in your choice of a husband. It is your own future for which you have to decide, and I am convinced that you have not decided without serious deliberation."

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

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

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

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

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

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

With a movement of the most painful surprise, the young girl rose from her chair.--"In Germany? *I*?"

"Yes, do you not love Germany?"

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"You are not unacquainted with the recent history of your native country, my daughter; you are aware of the glowing enthusiasm which in the thirtieth year of the present century took possession of all Germany, and especially of its high schools. I was a student at that time, and, a youth of eighteen years, I was animated like so many of my comrades with visions of the freedom and greatness that might come to my fatherland under a new and more liberal order of things. We sought to carry out these revolutionary ideas, and for that crime the government repaid us with imprisonment, in many cases with sentence of death. I was doomed to die, but by especial favor, my sentence was commuted to thirty years' imprisonment. Seven of these years I endured; but as you have often enough heard the story, I will not repeat it now. Even these bitter years resulted in good to me; they ended for all time my youthful ideals and youthful illusions. When the amnesty at last came, under the iron pressure of the prison, in endless humiliations, in glowing hatred, had been ripened a man, who better than the twenty years' old dreamer knew how to bravely assume and patiently endure the struggle with life and misery."

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

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

efforts did not always suffice to keep my family from want.

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

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

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

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

"The signal for departure was given. If I remained on shore I was lost, and my wife and child would sail, forsaken and friendless, on the wide ocean to a strange continent. The choice was a fearful one, but I was forced to make it. When I trod the ship's deck without my child; when I saw receding from me the shores where he was left alone, a prey to every danger,--that moment--when I broke loose from home and country forever, the persecutions and bitternesses of a whole lifetime all came back; that moment set the seal to our separation, and darkened every remembrance of the past to me.

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

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

"With this last sacrifice, the evil fates that had pursued me were propitiated, our misfortunes ended. Success attended me from the first step I took on American soil. In New York, I met Atkins, who was there gaining a precarious livelihood from a secretaryship. He rescued me and my little all from a band of swindlers who already had me, the inexperienced foreigner, half in their net. Out of gratitude, I proposed that he should accompany me to the West. He had nothing to lose, and came with me to this place, then a vast, unpeopled solitude. Our plough was first to break up the prairie sod; the board cabin we reared with our own hands was the first dwelling erected here. Perhaps you remember when, in your earliest childhood, your father himself went out to the field with scythe or spade, while your mother did the work of a maid-servant in the house. But this did not last long.

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

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

evidently rooted in the consciousness of being her father's daughter.

With an effort so violent as to show that his strength was failing, Forest hastened to the end of his recital:

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

"You are simply to fulfil a pious duty in keeping the promise I have no power to keep; you are to go through a form to assure yourself, before my entire fortune falls into your hands, that you are in reality the only heir; and for these reasons solely, I send you to the Rhine. In the business steps to be taken, your uncle will stand at your side; you are only to add to your proceedings, that energy of which he is incapable. It will not appear strange to our social circle if you pass the year of mourning for your father among his relatives, in his former home. If Alison wishes, at the end of his European travels, he can receive your hand there, and return with you; but I leave this matter to you alone. I place only one duty in your hands, Jane; you will fulfil it."

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"The home-land had only misery for me," he said in a voice trembling with emotion. "It persecuted, degraded me, cast me out; it denied even bread to me and mine. America gave me freedom, gave me riches and honor; and now, Jane, I would renounce them all--all, could I only die upon the Rhine!"

There lay such harrowing anguish in this final utterance of a long repressed sorrow, that Jane recoiled in terror before it. This fatal homesickness! Her mother, the sensitive, delicate woman, after long years of suffering, had died of it at last; and her father, that proud, energetic man who

had so entirely broken away from home and its remembrances, who had united heart and soul with the land of his adoption, and had seemed petrified into hatred against his fatherland, he too had buried this agonized longing deep in his heart, only to acknowledge it in his dying hour!

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

CHAPTER II.

A Strange Cavalier.

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

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

"We cannot possibly remain here longer in the rain!" continued Atkins in renewed vexation; "You certainly cannot. So far as I can determine, our postilion's injuries are not dangerous, and he declares that B. is only an hour's distance at the furthest. Our best course is to hasten on there and send him the needed help."

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

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

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

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

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

"God be praised, it is a gentleman; he speaks English!" said Mr. Atkins, with a sigh of relief, and quickly approaching the stranger, who until now had been only half visible through the fog, he continued excitedly:

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

"Certainly!"

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

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

"A young lady--am I--"

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

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

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

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

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

For almost ten minutes they had walked on in silence, side by side, when the gentleman suddenly paused, and in the same low, musical voice as before, said; "The highway makes a broad winding here. May I conduct you by the nearer path in which I am wont to go?"

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"I *believe* so!" said Jane, with an irony which happily escaped the stranger; for he gazed searchingly around. They were both standing by the willow-hedge, which rising from a wall of

earth, after a rain of several hours, offered no especially inviting resting place; and yet, the gentleman seemed to regard it as such. With a hasty movement, he tore the plaid from his shoulders, spread it carefully on the wet ground, and with a gesture of the hand, invited his companion to take her seat upon it.

Jane remained standing, and looked up to him. It really surpassed all comprehension. For a whole half hour this man, with the most indifferent air in the world, had seen her getting soaked through and through, and now unhesitatingly, just to afford her a resting place for two minutes, he threw into the mud the shawl which might all this while have protected her. Anything more laughable or impracticable had never before met her observation, and still, in this proceeding there lay such painful anxiety, so timid an apology for former thoughtlessness, that Jane almost involuntarily accepted the invitation, and hesitatingly sat down.

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

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

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

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

"The Rhine! We are on its banks."

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

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

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

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

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

"To the house of Dr. Stephen."

He paused in surprise. "Doctor Stephen?"

"Yes! do you know him?"

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

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

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

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

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

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

"It is there behind the latticed gate."

"Well, then, let us go forward."

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

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

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

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

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

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

The irony had a peculiar effect upon the hitherto timid stranger. A scarlet flush suddenly shot over the pale face; with a single effort, he drew himself up, lifted the young lady in his arms, and rushed with her into the midst of the water. All this passed so suddenly, that Jane, surprised and confounded, had no time for resistance, but now she made a hasty movement, resolved to wade through the deep water, rather than permit a liberty taken without her consent. All at once, she met his eyes. Was it the dumb, almost plaintive entreaty that lay in them, or was there something quite other--something strange in this glance? Jane's eyes fell slowly, the former oppressive feeling returned with redoubled might, and she remained motionless, while with a strength none would have dreamed that those arms possessed, he carried her all the way over.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

He had time to say no more; for scarce had Frederic caught the first words, when, with an unintelligible exclamation, he turned suddenly, and shot away in mighty strides. Jane remained motionless, gazing at the professor; her manner plainly betrayed what she began to think of her German countrymen, and after this meeting with these two first specimens, she began to have serious doubts as to their sanity. The master as well as the servant was ridiculous in her eyes.

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

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

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

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

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

"Come up with me, Frederic?"

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

In consideration of her wealth, they could cheerfully have forgiven every whim and every fault; but they could not forgive this persistent coldness and reticence, through which no beam of warmth ever penetrated, and which made confidence impossible as disagreement. Never, by word or glance, did Jane betray the slightest dissatisfaction with the house in which she was a guest. But the pitying contempt with which this young lady, reared in the bosom of American luxury, yielded to their simple, plebeian way of life, was deeply felt, and wounded none the less. After a few days' acquaintance with their niece, the doctor and his wife came to the conclusion that she was the haughtiest, most heartless creature in the world.

In one respect, Jane did herself wrong; her haughtiness was not founded on the possession of riches or personal advantages; but upon that intellectual superiority through which she ruled all around her, and which she, ere long, began to make evident in a wider circle. Reared in the freedom of American life, she thought the respect here paid to leading personages slavish, the exclusiveness of certain circles ridiculous, and the interminable titles and ceremonies of German society called forth her bitterest irony. Her relatives, in mortal terror, frequently heard her

intrude these opinions in the presence of strangers; but they need have given themselves no uneasiness. Miss Forest was an American and a reputed millionaire, two peculiarities which gave her entire freedom to do and say what would not have been allowed to another; and this so much the more as her betrothal remained a secret. There was scarcely a family of position in the city who did not cherish some hopes of future relationship with this eligible young heiress; and so, upon her entrance into society, Jane found herself courted and nattered, a state of things not at all new to her. All the world was enraptured with her beauty, which was in such striking contrast to the serene, blooming freshness of the Rhineland maidens; they flattered her pride which so often wounded; they admired the intellect which she hardly thought it worth her while to display in these stupid circles. The young students who, without exception, admired and wondered at this foreign meteor which had made so sudden an appearance among them, left no opportunity unemployed to approach and give expression to their homage. But none succeeded even for a moment, in penetrating the icy indifference and chill decorum of this young lady. True to the traditions of her father, she had, upon her first arrival in Germany, girt herself about with this icy dignity and haughtiness, almost as with a coat of mail.

Doctor Stephen owned a pretty house in the handsomest part of B. His family occupied only its lower story; the upper was rented to Professor Fernow, who, called to the university almost three years ago, had since had his lodgings here. A scientific work which had made a profound sensation in the learned world, had won for the young man this professorship in B. He had come here, an entire stranger, without recommendations or acquaintances, and attended only by his servant; but at his very first lectures, he had enforced marked attention from his colleagues, and excited the liveliest interest among the students. With this success he had been content; the professor was not a man to assert himself, or claim any especial place in society. He anxiously avoided all intercourse not indispensable to his calling; he made no visits and received none; he shunned all acquaintanceship, declined every invitation, and lived in the solitude of his studies. His delicate health always served him as an excuse. At first the people of B. had been unwilling to accept this apology, and had sought to ascribe his strange exclusiveness to Heaven knows what mysterious and dangerous motives; but now they were convinced that the professor was the gentlest, most harmless man in the world, whom only his passion for study, combined with his really impaired health, had led into such a way of life.

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

Doctor Stephen found no occasion of complaint against his quiet tenant, who brought neither noise nor disturbance into the house; who punctually paid his rent, and who, when upon rare occasions he became visible, gave a polite greeting but shunned any longer conversation. The doctor was almost the only one who, at the professor's frequent attacks of illness, entered his rooms, or came into any closer relations with him; but the doctor's wife, who would gladly have taken the sick man under her motherly wing, had not succeeded in her efforts, and must content herself with bringing the servant under her domestic sway instead of his master.

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

CHAPTER III.

Was it Sickness or----?

June, with its oppressively hot days, was at an end. In Professor Fernow's lodgings it was as silent as a church on a week-day; nothing moved here, not a sound broke the profound stillness that reigned in these apartments. One room was like another; book-case succeeded book-case,

and upon each stood volumes in endless rows. The curtains were let down, a dim twilight prevailed. The genius and the science of centuries were heaped together here, but not a single fresh breath of air intruded into this solemn seclusion.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Oh yes, literally! If, for example, I sent you to bed, you lay down obediently, but had lamp and books brought to the bedside, and studied until four o'clock in the morning instead of until two. You must possess a good constitution to enable you to do all this; until now it was only your nerves that were ruined. If you go on in this way a year longer, you will have the consumption; I give you my word for that!"

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

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

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

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

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

"For a year--for a whole year long, you ought not to touch a pen, not even to look into a book, and above all, not to think of a syllable of science. Instead of this you must take constant physical exercise, and if you can obtain it in no other way, work with hoe and spade in the garden and keep at it until you grow hungry and thirsty, and can defy every change of weather. Don't look at me in such astonishment, as if I were pointing you out the direct way to the other world; such an entirely shattered nervous system as yours, only the most powerful remedies can avail. It is my firm conviction, that such treatment, energetically begun, and persistently carried through, will save you in spite of all these premonitions of death."

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

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

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

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

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

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

Frederic lapsed into an embarrassed silence. This certainly had not been his intention; he only knew that both these incidents occurred together.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

CHAPTER IV.

The Hero of the Pen.

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

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

She leaned farther back into the shadow of the wall. This German landscape had an unwonted effect upon her; around it hovered a something which at sight of the grandest natural scenery she had never experienced, a breath of melancholy, of longing, of home-sickness. Home-sickness! She had never understood the word, not even when she had seen her mother die of the malady,--not even when it had so overpowered her father in his dying hour. Now, when she trod the soil, to which she, a stranger in all else, still belonged by the sacred right of birth, there rose within her soul, dimly and mysteriously, as it were a distant, half sunken remembrance of that early childhood, when her father had not watched over her education, but had confided it entirely to her mother, who, with old songs and legends, had awakened in the child that longing which later the father's influence had so entirely obliterated or changed into bitterness.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"And that is perhaps very seldom?"

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

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

"A scientific one," returned the professor with an emphasis that equalled the irony.

Jane's lips curled in derision.

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

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

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

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

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

"But supposing a homeless, orphaned child, thrown out upon life alone, falls into the hands of a learned man who knows and loves nothing in the wide world but science?--As a boy I was chained to the book-table, as a youth I was restlessly impelled onward, to exert my capabilities to the utmost, until at last the goal was reached. Whatever I in youth possessed of health or poetry, was irretrievably lost in this process, but he whom this useless book-learning has cost such sacrifices, is bound to it by indissoluble ties for the rest of his life. For this, I have sacrificed every other longing, and every hope."

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

With a hasty excited movement, the professor had turned away from her, and Jane too soon found herself gazing upon the landscape now all aglow with the last beams of the setting sun. The roseate halo transfigured earth and sky; the blue mountains in their clear, transparent outlines caught a new lustre from the rosy light which enwrapt all the towns and villages lying at the mountain's base; which flashed and flamed in the green and golden waters of the Rhine as they flowed on calm and majestic, far out into the illuminated plain, where against the western horizon, distant and scarce discernible, like a giant mist-picture, the mighty dome towered upward, the pride and crown of the old Rhenish stream.

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

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

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

satisfaction.

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

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

"Narrow! poor!" repeated the professor as if he had not rightly understood, while his glance, incredulous and questioning, rested upon her face.

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

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

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

"Ah! Do you know them so intimately?"

"I do."

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

"An every-day life!" cried the professor growing still more excited; "a hive of bees in a restless struggle for success, a life directed but to the present moment! Your giant river, Miss Forest, with its thousand steamers, with its thriving populous cities and luxuriant shores, can never give you what the smallest wave of the Rhine brings in enticing murmurs to us all; the spell of the past, the history of nations, the poesy of centuries."

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

which she cannot comprehend."

Jane bit her lips. This "learned pedant," as she had called him this very morning, was revealing himself in strange ways. Poetic at one moment, he could be cruelly sarcastic at the next; but she was better adapted to this tone; here she could meet him as equal meets equal! The young lady in her vexation, quite overlooked the deep and painful excitement which had goaded the professor to a bitterness so unusual with him; and she did not cease her thrusts. She could not deny herself the dangerous satisfaction of calling forth those lightning-like gleams of anger from the calm, dreamy, superficial being of this man;--gleams which betrayed passionate depths perhaps unknown to him. She felt that only in moments of the highest inspiration or of the highest exasperation, was he capable of these, and as it was beyond her power to inspire him, she resolved to exasperate him.

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

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

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

"And consequently you despise it!"

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

"You ought to be less prodigal of your contempt, Miss Forest," he said, "and there are things which deserve it more than our poetry."

"Of which I have no conception."

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

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

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

The word was spoken, and, as if he had received a wound, the professor trembled under this irony. The flame again flashed up in his face, and from his blue eyes darted a lightning glance that would have made any other than Jane tremble. For an instant a passionate, indignant reply seemed to quiver on his lips; then he suddenly averted his face, and placed his hand over his eyes.

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

What now?

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

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

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

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

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

In one thing at least this German professor had succeeded, a success no one had before achieved; he had broken through the icy coldness with which the young lady had thus far met all, and had brought to the surface an ardent glowing passionateless, which rose in arms against him. She hated this man, who had forced upon her the first humiliation; hated him with the whole energy of a proud, spoiled nature, which had deemed itself unapproachable, and now for the first time had found its master. The costly lace of her handkerchief had to atone; it lay torn in pieces on the ground; but she did not care. Neither did she care that the twilight was falling, that she was two hours' distance from B. and must go back on foot; for nothing did she care after this quarrel. With a passionate movement, she lifted her hat from the ground, and scornfully thrust aside with her foot the ivy twigs that came in her way.

"'It will henceforth be my especial care not to cross your path again!' Well, Professor Fernow, you may rely upon it that I shall not cross yours, and so I hope we have parted forever!"

Jane gave her head a toss that indicated her contempt of the whole world in general and Walter Fernow in particular, and then with rapid steps she swept along the path leading down into the valley. There, dense shadows already lay, while thicker and thicker the twilight wove its gray veil around the ruins of the old castle, around the place where two human hearts had come so near, and had parted so far asunder.

CHAPTER V.

Face to Face.

A few days later, two gentlemen in elegant travelling dress, were walking from the railway station, up the street leading to Doctor Stephen's house.

"Don't be in such a hurry, Alison!" said the elder, somewhat pettishly; "I cannot keep up with you in this heat, and what will Miss Jane think if she happens to be at the window and sees you coming along at such a break-neck pace?"

The warning, superfluous as it might seem, was quite in place here; Alison moderated his pace as if he had been guilty of some unheard-of crime, and turned the glance with which he had been impatiently scanning the houses, to his companion.

"Meeting you was a great surprise," continued Atkins. "We believed you in London; was it not your plan to go directly from there to Paris?"

"Certainly, but as business called me to the Rhine, and as Miss Forest had been for some weeks in B., I came out of my way so as to pass a few days with her. I was very much surprised at your decision to accompany her to Germany."

"You were surprised because I always derided the country," returned Atkins indifferently. "I came here mostly on Miss Forest's account, she is the only practical thing in this sentimental land; I am nominally Miss Jane's guardian, although she is more than independent in all things; and I did not think it proper for her to cross the ocean alone. And, besides, as I know so many Germans in America, I would not deny myself the satisfaction of admiring them in their own much vaunted fatherland. I hope you thank me for remaining at the side of your betrothed."

"Certainly!" replied Alison in a somewhat chilly tone, "I am only astonished that the requirements of Miss Forest demanded so long an absence on your part."

The old sarcasm again appeared in its full sharpness on Mr. Atkins' face, as he cuttingly replied. "Give yourself no uneasiness, Henry. Your future fortune is in safe hands."

"I did not ask in my own interest," said Alison angrily.

"But in those of Miss Jane, which in a year's time will be yours. Well, do not get angry! It is only natural that you should concern yourself with this matter, and I perhaps owe you some explanation. You know, I suppose, that the deceased Mr. Forest, during the last years of his life,

converted most of his property into money. The money is safely deposited, all the other business was settled in two months after his death; the landed property is in good hands; a fortune entrusted to my stewardship would not be placed in jeopardy for the sake of a pleasure tour, Mr. Alison."

In spite of his displeasure, Henry had listened with marked attention and satisfaction, he now knew the most important thing, and quickly changing the subject, he asked:

"And how do you like Germany?"

"I find it tedious enough. It is just what I thought, and the life here in this learned city of B. is perfectly unendurable! I assure you that by staying here Miss Jane makes a sacrifice to her father's wishes. I assure you she is thoroughly disgusted with these formalities and sentimentalities among which she gets so hopelessly entangled, while I take an unceremonious flight away from them all."

"And was it on this account you went to Hamburg?"

"No, I had business there."

"Do you employ your European travels in business transactions," asked Alison gravely.

"Not I; I went in Miss Forest's interests. It was to look after an old debt we have often tried to settle, but in vain."

The young merchant's attention was now fully aroused.

"Is the debt a large one?" he asked, as if incidentally.

"Yes."

"And you hope to secure it?"

"I hope so."

"Then I wish you success," said Alison with animation. "It is always pleasant for a merchant to cancel old debts."

"Do you think so?" asked Atkins maliciously. "It may cost us half a million."

Happily, Alison did not hear these last words, which were spoken only half aloud; for at this moment, his whole attention was directed to the windows of the house before which they halted. Atkins rang the bell and the door was opened by Frederic who was expecting his master. His face grew noticeably long as he saw Mr. Atkins, who, during his stay in B., had not laid claim to the doctor's hospitality, but had lodged at a hotel, daily calling at the house where his ward was staying.

"Is Miss Forest at home?"

"No."

"And Doctor and Mrs. Stephen?"

"They, too, have gone out."

"Are they expected back soon?"

"Every minute."

"Then we shall do better to wait here in the garden than to go back to the hotel," said Atkins. "Frederic, announce our arrival to the family immediately upon their return."

Frederic gazed after the retiring gentleman with open displeasure. "And here is another! This makes the third who has come. These American guests will at last drive us out of house and home. I wish"--His further mutterings were lost in the closing of the door which he had shut with such violence that the window panes rattled.

"What is the matter with the fellow?" asked Alison, as they entered the garden, "he gave us a very singular reception."

Atkins laughed. "A German bear, gigantic, snappish, awkward, into whose wooden head a sort of national antipathy against us seems to have entered. I cannot boast of having seen anything but this bearish manner in him, although to others he is harmless and good natured, even to stupidity."

"Is he a servant out of the house?"

"Not exactly, he is in the employ of a--Ah, Professor Fernow!" exclaimed Atkins suddenly interrupting himself, "I am delighted to see you!"

The professor, who was just returning from the university, and had, as usual, taken the path through the garden, returned the salutation and drew nearer.

"How do you do, Professor Fernow?" asked Atkins patronizingly. "You look ill; that comes from your learning! Will you permit me to introduce you to a countryman of mine? Mr. Alison, Mr. Fernow, professor in the university, and inmate of Doctor Stephen's house."

Countryman! Inmate of the doctor's house! These were two very indifferent, commonplace designations, upon which Atkins had not laid the slightest emphasis, and still they appeared to strike both young men in the same way. Alison's dark glance, with a suddenly awakened suspicion, fixed itself sharply and searchingly upon the professor's face, and Fernow's blue eyes flamed up in painful excitement, as he returned the glance with unwonted spirit. It was as if both in this, the first moment of their meeting, had a presentiment of hostile relations hereafter. Each bowed coldly and haughtily, as if an invisible barrier already lay between them.

CHAPTER VI.

A Strange Presentiment.

Atkins, with his wonted vivacity, sought to introduce a conversation, but he did not succeed. For all that was said to him, Alison had a cold, polite assent; and the professor, even more reticent than usual, seized the first opportunity to take refuge in the house. After a few minutes, in his timid, courteous way, he took leave of the elderly American, bowed silently and distantly to his young companion, and left the two alone.

"Who is this Fernow?" asked Alison when the Professor was out of hearing.

"I have already told you. Professor in the university here, a shining light of science, a precious example of a German scholar, who with his investigations, and thousand-year-old rubbish and hieroglyphics, devotes himself to the good of humanity, and meantime withers up into a mummy. A very well conducted, blameless specimen besides, who made himself supremely comic in the role of knight and protector which he assumed towards Miss Jane on the day of our arrival."

Alison, who had been gazing after the professor, now turned suddenly around.

"Towards Miss Forest?" he asked hastily. "But personally not her sole protector? It is to be hoped that you were present."

"Not at all! Our carriage broke, out on a suburban road; it rained in torrents, I had to remain behind with injured postilion, and was glad to consign Jane to the protection of the first gentleman who offered; in this case it was Professor Fernow, who was passing our tragic group, and to whom his learning had at last left sense enough to take the lady entrusted to him safely to B."

"Ah!" said Alison sharply. "And this adventure has naturally led to a more intimate acquaintanceship between the two, who, being inmates of the same house, meet and converse daily?"

For a moment, Atkins gazed at him in astonishment, then burst into a loud laugh.

"Henry, I really believe you are jealous! Jealous of this consumptive professor! Do you know what it means to be at thirty years invested with a professorship in a German university, with its horrible scientific thoroughness?--and he is not yet thirty! It takes a prodigy of learning for such a place! A man who devotes himself body and soul to his books, and knows nothing of the clear light of day. Really, you do the poor professor a cruel wrong if you believe that anything not bound in calf, exists for him; and as Miss Jane does not enjoy that enviable distinction, she unfortunately has no claim to his approval."

Alison paid no attention to this irony. "Does Miss Forest often converse with him?" he asked impatiently.

"Not at all! At least when I am present, they both seem to have lost the gift of speech, so dumbly do they pass each other by. I implore you, Henry, not to insult the taste of your betrothed in this way! Where is your self-esteem? Do you really place yourself on a level with this bookworm?"

Alison's brow began to clear. "You are right, it would be ridiculous. At home I had to enter the list with many wooers of Miss Forest, and there were no despicable rivals among them. But I had

no fear at sight of this consumptive professor, as you call him. I had a sort of presentiment that he might become dangerous to me."

"A presentiment!" echoed Atkins with a growl. "For Heaven's sake, Henry, don't begin to have presentiments! This is one of the German sensations. They never really reckon, they have all sorts of presentiments. And you, too, are not going to fall into this nonsense?"

Before Alison could reply, they were interrupted; a young servant girl appeared to announce the arrival of the lady of the house and Miss Forest, and to invite the gentlemen in.

Jane, with her usual self-importance, had kept her engagement secret from her relatives, and the betrothed pair met as strangers.

CHAPTER VII.

Lovers, Yet Strangers.

Five months had passed since Alison had seen Jane for the last time, in the elegant reception-room of her father's house, in an elegant toilet; now the tall figure came to meet him in a dark mourning dress, in the centre of the old-fashioned, simply-furnished apartment, which here served as the reception-room. Was it the contrast or the long separation? He had never seen her so beautiful.

"Pardon me, Miss Forest, for coming to visit you on my travels. Mr. Atkins assured me I should meet a kindly reception."

Jane reached him her hand. "A countryman is always welcome." Her glance met his; there was a wordless greeting; the only one between them; otherwise no token, not even the slightest, betrayed that here was a pair of betrothed lovers, who met after a half year's separation. Both had too much control over their features, were too much accustomed to conventional barriers, to betray a relation not yet designed for publicity.

Jane turned to her aunt, and presented "Mr. Alison, a friend of our family?" Frau Stephen bowed; she could not understand the confidence and independence with which her niece received and dismissed strange gentlemen, this girl of twenty years, who, in her opinion, should still take refuge under her aunt's maternal wing, and at the most, only now and then venture a timid remark. Jane, had simply transposed matters, and assigned her aunt the silent rule. This by no means timid old lady had begun to be wholly controlled by the influence of her niece; she now remained passive and overwhelmed by a feeling of her entire inconsequence.

Alison had seated himself opposite the ladies. They spoke of his travels, of England and France, of the Rhine; but Henry's conversational powers were not brilliant. He waited from minute to minute, and with ever increasing impatience, for Atkins to give him an opportunity to be alone with Jane, but Atkins appeared to feel a lively satisfaction in his repressed vexation, and opened out the conversation to seemingly endless limits. The young American was not the man to be trifled with in this way; as no one came to his aid, he himself seized the helm, and simply requested Miss Forest to allow him to give over to her the letters and tidings from home which were designed for her alone.

Jane arose, and with a hasty apology to her aunt, conducted the young gentleman into the sitting-room adjoining the reception-parlor, leaving Mr. Atkins to console the old lady for this new American freedom. Scarce had the door closed behind them, when Alison stepped up to her, and with a powerfully repressed, but still impassioned gesture, took her hand in his.

"Pardon me Jane, for resorting to this awkward device! I could bear the suspense no longer."

He held closely the beautiful, cold hand which as before lay unresisting in his, but did not return its pressure.

"You should have chosen some less transparent device, Henry! Mr. Atkins would, sooner or later, have found an excuse for leaving us alone. It would of necessity have occurred to my aunt that we would prefer to speak of home matters by ourselves."

This cool reply somewhat restrained Alison's ardor. "You seem very much to fear lest Doctor Stephen may gain some knowledge of our mutual relations."

"I certainly hope that he will not."

"And still it cannot be avoided."

"I believe that remains alone with us, and so much the more so as your stay in B. is to be limited to a few days."

"Certainly! It does not appear that I have especial reasons for lengthening my visit."

Jane felt the thrust, and thought best to waive a subject that threatened to be dangerous.

"You will go to Paris? They are speaking of a possible war with France."

Alison shrugged his shoulders. "I do not believe in such a possibility, but should it come to that, I should naturally return to be at your side and conduct you home, if the French army overflowed the Rhine country and Germany."

"Do you really think that would happen?"

"Yes! Have you any other idea?"

Jane threw back her head with a defiant gesture. "And yet, I think we should know how to defend our Rhine!"

"*We*? *Our* Rhine?" repeated Alison sharply. "I thought, Miss Forest, that hitherto it had been your pride and your glory to call yourself a daughter of that country to which you belong in all things--save the first brief days of your infancy."

Jane bit her lips so passionately, that a slight drop of blood came from them. Who bade these unwary lips even here repeat a reminiscence that would not vanish from her memory? '*We*? *Our* Rhine?' These were indeed not her own words, and the remembrance of that moment when she had heard them so glowing, so inspired, from another's mouth, involuntarily sent a deep flush to her face. She turned hastily away, and bent over the flowers standing in the window.

Alison regarded her silently, but, intently and persistently. "It seems that you have already imbibed German sympathies," he said at last.

"I?" With a half-angry movement, Jane turned to him. "You err, Henry! I feel myself, even here circumscribed, exasperated. My stay here is a daily and hourly sacrifice! It is scarcely endurable."

In spite of her self-control, there was a peculiar emotion in her voice, and this did not escape Alison, who had always seen her so cold; but he interpreted it falsely; his eyes suddenly lighted up with a deep, inward satisfaction; he stepped close to her and again took her hand.

"Well then, Jane, it lies in your power to shorten this sacrificial period. Give me now the right you were to confer upon me after a year's delay, and you fulfil my highest wish. In a few weeks the necessary formalities might be arranged, and we could pursue together our continental travels; or, if you wished, I would at once take you back to America."

"No, Henry, no! that is impossible!"

Alison let her hand fall, and morosely stepped back, "Impossible!" repeated he cuttingly.

"And why so?"

Jane might well feel that her almost violent refusal rendered an explanation necessary.

"I am still in mourning for my father!" she said gently, "and in this entire matter I simply follow his arrangements and his wishes."

"It was your wish, Jane, not Mr. Forest's, I understood, that, in the presence of a dying father, you did not wish to be a bride; and it was my own journey which so long deferred the time fixed upon for our union. The one reason exists no longer; and destiny, which after months of separation, has now united us, has done away with the other. If, during your year of mourning, you do not wish to marry, so be it. I will not urge you, but I implore, I demand that you no longer veil our mutual relations in this profound secrecy; that you publicly acknowledge yourself my betrothed, and give me the right to visit you as your accepted suitor in the house of your relatives."

CHAPTER VIII.

The Heiress at Bay.

There was such energy in his manner, such determination in his just demand, that evasion seemed impossible, and any other young lady would scarce have attempted it; but Alison forgot that Jane--was quite a match for him, that her energy was quite equal to his, and that this tone was least of all designed to incline her to obedience. This "*I demand*," sounded very strange and harsh in the ears of the proud girl. It called forth all her obstinacy.

"You forget, Mr. Alison, that the time has not yet come for you to '*demand*,'" she said coldly. "I have imposed upon you a condition which you promised to fulfil; the reason therefor, now as then, rests solely in my judgment. I do not release you from your promise. I *will* not!"

The young lady's entire strength of determination lay in this "*I will not?*" and it sounded just as defiant and provoking as those other words from her lips a few days before. Perhaps she wished to drive this man also to extremities; but here the effect was different.

Alison was for an instant silent. Had Jane been merely beautiful and not rich, the wounded self-esteem of this man would have perhaps called forth an answer, which, from the bluntness of both characters, must have led to an irreparable breach. But the young merchant knew how to count the cost; he would not give up this valuable possession for a woman's whim, and he well knew that here he could assert no authority. He yielded; but there was a portentous cloud on his forehead.

"You are as immovable and hard as a stone, Jane! Well, let it be as you wish, but"--his voice trembled in suppressed resentment--"but do not forget that I, too, have received a promise, and that at the appointed time, I will demand its fulfilment, inexorably as you have demanded mine."

Jane had become ashy pale, but her eyes met his firmly and undoubtedly. "My word is as good as my oath; I would break one as soon as the other," she said.

"And you repeat this oath to me now of your own free will?" His eyes were fixed searchingly upon her face. She seemed to hesitate for one moment, only one; then she laid her hand hastily in his. "I repeat it--of my own free will!"

Alison drew a deep breath, and pressed the hand ardently. "I thank you, Jane," he said. "In the spring I shall come back to demand my wife; until then, you are free as you have wished to be." A pause, oppressive for both, followed; Jane was the first to speak.

"I think we ought not to prolong this interview. It must be time to return to my aunt and Atkins."

Alison made no reply; he silently opened the door, and followed her into the next room, where Doctor Stephen had meantime appeared. The doctor's jovial vivacity which quite equalled Atkins' sarcasm, led the conversation into more agreeable channels.

"Well, how do you find Miss Jane?" asked Atkins, as half an hour later he withdrew with his young countryman.

"Greatly changed!" was the short morose answer.

Atkins looked vexed. "Foolishness! It is you who are changed, Henry! You have caught the spleen in England; it is time that merry Paris should be curing it."

Alison made no reply, he hastily reached Atkins his hand, and went.

CHAPTER IX.

On the Scent.

Meantime Jane had sought her own room, whither Atkins now followed her. She advanced to meet him, and hastily, as if she would cut short any other topic which might be supposed to more nearly concern her, she asked; "Do you bring me tidings of your journey? I can imagine its success! It is sheer foolishness, like all else that has thus far been done!"

"It is not so this time!"

Jane gazed at him as if she did not trust her ears.

"What do you say?"

"We have a trace."

Jane trembled. "Of my brother?"

"Be calm, be calm, Miss Jane," said Atkins, coolly, as he laid a hand upon her arm. "The matter is in no way decided! A trace which appeared only to vanish immediately, and which leaves us only a weak prop for future investigation; that is at present the only result I can impart to you."

Miss Forest had already regained her self-possession. "Very well! It is the first sign of life and being. What have you discovered? How did you discover it?"

Atkins quietly drew her to the sofa, and sat down by her side.

"Moderate your impatience, Miss Jane. I will be brief and clear as possible; you may learn later the results. You know that as we passed through Hamburg I took all necessary steps, I notified the police, I advertised in the public journals; but as usual in such cases, no answer came. Four weeks after, at your request, I returned to Hamburg to convince myself personally, of the hopelessness of our efforts. The first days of my stay, this seemed to be the only result of my journey; but on the third, a sailor came to see me."

"A sailor?" repeated Jane in astonishment.

"Yes, he had just landed, and had accidentally seen my advertisement. He came to tell me that twenty years before, some neighbors of his parents, poor fishermen who lived in a little village on the coast of the North Sea, coming from Hamburg, where they had been to market, had brought with them a boy they had found there, had kept him and reared him with their own son. The man's statement was so positive that it induced me to pay him the reward offered, and to write at once to the designated place."

Jane had listened with passionate intentness.

"And you have received an answer?"

"Yes, an answer with the minutest details. You will yourself read the letter, it has convinced me that this boy was really our young master Forest. The date, the age, the incidental descriptions, all agree with my advertisement. The failure of our investigations hitherto is easily explained. With the usual indiscretion of such people, instead of notifying the authorities of their discovery of the lost child, these fishermen calmly waited for some person to claim him sooner or later, and meantime, adopted him as their own. To that wretched, sandy fishing-hamlet, shut out from all the world, a newspaper scarce ever penetrates, this accounts for the failure of Doctor Stephen's efforts to find the child."

"Well, what about these people?" interrupted Jane, with eager impatience.

"They are dead! They died a few years after, and as their poor neighbors could and would not be burdened with the care and support of the two boys, the fisherman's son was sent to a relative, an artisan in a small North-German town, and young master Forest was received into the house of a clergyman in one of the adjoining villages; but years ago he gave up his parish and left that region. Here ends the letter, and my investigations for the present."

With a deep sigh, Jane arose. Discouraging as were these last words, it required only the slightest hint of her brother's possible existence, to arouse all her energies to action. In one minute she had reviewed all, had mastered the whole situation with her wonted clear-sightedness and promptness.

"We must above all things ascertain the abode of this clergyman, and in order to do this we must make inquiries in his former parish. If he is not to be found, then we must extend our inquiries to the mechanic who adopted the other boy; perhaps he still keeps up some sort of correspondence with his youthful associate. In any event, we must quickly and decidedly follow the clue we had scarce hoped to find."

"That is my opinion. I only wished to advise with you in regard to the necessary proceedings. But one thing more! I have at your express wish, thus far, kept all this from Mr. Alison; he has no suspicion of the possible existence of a brother-in-law. Is it not time now to confide it to him?"

"No!" said Jane, almost roughly. "Not until we are sure. We could expect from him neither assistance nor gratification in efforts which would possibly deprive him of half the fortune upon which he reckons."

CHAPTER X.

The strange tone of her voice was remarked by Atkins. "What has occurred between you and Henry? He, too, was out of humor. Have you had a quarrel?"

"Yes," said Jane with sullen frankness, "I offended him."

"And he?"

"He?" The young girl's lips curled in scorn. "Well, he bore it."

Atkins frowned. "Have a care, Jane!--Alison is not the man to forgive an insult, least of all from you. He may have borne it for the moment, but he will never forget it, and you may have to atone for it at some future day. I know him!"

"And so do I! Have no anxiety, Mr. Atkins, I do not fear this sort of revenge, neither do I care for it!"

"Avoid that tone, Miss Jane, at least in speaking of him. You might drive him to break his troth."

"Hardly! Mr. Alison too well knows my value to him."

Atkins shook his head. He had never before seen his ward thus. "You know as well as I, that Alison loves you in spite of all, and would have loved you without your fortune," he said.

"And would have chosen me?"

He was silent.

"Spare your championship!" said Jane bitterly. "I know to what considerations I shall alone owe the honor of one day being called Mrs. Alison!"

Atkins fixed his keen glance upon her for a moment. "And is this anything new to you?" he asked deliberately. "Did you not know this just as well as now when, five months ago you promised him your hand? and this promise which the heir and future head of the house of Alison and Company then received"--he laid a marked emphasis upon the words--"would it have been given him if he had, for example, held there the modest position of clerk?"

The thrust took effect, for a moment, as if conscious of guilt, Jane lowered her head; the words with which she had announced her betrothal to her father came back to her remembrance. At that time all this had appeared simple and natural; now, indeed, five months had come and gone, five months and--three days!

"You see," continued Atkins cuttingly and relentlessly, "that the dollar also played its role with you, and why not? Mr. Forest educated you into sensible conceptions of life and its realities. Love is a luxury,--which the rich only can allow themselves--and Alison allowed it in his choice. But one must not fall so deeply in love as to forget one's reckoning, which is still the main thing in life."

"In America--yes!" said Jane in a hollow voice.

Atkins shrugged his shoulders. "In Germany there certainly may be extravagantly sentimental heads, that would have no regard at all for a million, and are in a position to unhesitatingly turn their backs to an heiress, if they happen to be not quite pleased with her. Will you reproach Mr. Alison, because he knows better how to estimate such advantages? Those gentlemen in their exalted manly pride may appear very magnanimous, but--they will never become millionaires."

"You are right," said Jane hastily, and in a voice of icy coldness. "*To every one his own*."

Atkins gazed at her as if he did not really know what the answer meant. She had again become thoroughly Miss Forest in her impenetrable repose, as she now stood before him, and yet, there had been a tone of irony in her words. But it was a useless endeavor to seek to solve the enigma to-day; he gave it up.

Rising at the same time, he took a letter-case from his pocket and reached it to her. "We have arrived at the main thing," he said. "Here you find the letter I have mentioned, and all the other notices; examine them critically. This evening I will consult farther with you; now, I must leave you."

Jane reached him her hand. "I thank you!" she said, "And as for my ill-humor to-day"--the apology seemed difficult to her, but she must have felt its necessity--"think nothing more about it. There are moods we cannot control. I shall see you again."

When Atkins was outside the door, he paused, and once more shook his head. "There are moods, ahem! This is wonderful. Henry has presentiments and she moods!--Things they had better let alone, both of them. But he is right; she is changed; and if I were to begin to surmise, then I should say"--here Mr. Atkins hurled a very ungracious glance over to the watery mirror of the river glittering in the sun, and which was visible between the trees of the garden--"I should

say there lies a sort of premonition here in this German atmosphere, and that this accursed Rhine, before we think of it, will be letting loose something of a tempest about our heads!"

CHAPTER XI.

The Dawn of War.

The American's words proved true, although in another sense than he had intended. His apprehensions became a political prophecy. There was indeed something in this German atmosphere, and it was upon the Rhine, that the first lightnings gleamed, heralding the approaching storm. France had declared war! The blow came like a thunderbolt from a clear sky, and as in rolling thunders, from its rocky mountains to the sea, all Germany echoed the call to arms in thousand-fold reverberations.

Upon the Rhine, every city, village and hamlet was all aglow; here, the excitement was more fiery, more ardent than elsewhere; for it was the Rhineland for whose sake the momentous game was to be played, and every man, down to the poorest peasant, felt himself called upon to defend his precious inheritance, to avenge his insulted country, and prevent the intended robbery. In one giant, unbroken procession, Germany threw its assembled forces upon the imperiled boundaries; mightier and mightier swelled the advancing tide of armed men, more and more densely grouped the soldier-masses around the threatened palladium of the nation. For this, the enemy was not half prepared. Those green waves already rolled on under secure protection; shoulder to shoulder, stood the now united Germany, keeping guard on the banks of its Rhine, ready to protect the sacred, ancient stream or to hurl it, an annihilating tide, into the enemy's country.

Nowhere did the fires of enthusiasm mount higher than in B. The students hastened to join the ranks or the sanitary corps; the professors closed their lectures, and when age and health permitted, placed themselves at the head of the students; the women exerted all their powers to send aid and comfort to the soldiers soon to be wounded in the field. All were impelled onward as by one mighty impulse; all was feverish activity and excitement; here, in the city, the once strictly-guarded barriers of class and position were broken down; here, as throughout the fatherland, the old hostility between North and South was forgotten; all united in one common sacrifice, one renunciation; all were borne onward by one common tempest of enthusiasm.

CHAPTER XII.

A Rocket in the Camp.

In the first days of this excitement, upon a lovely July morning, Jane sat alone in the balcony chamber, whose doors, leading to the garden, were wide open. Outside, the glowing sunshine lay upon grass and shrub, upon the waves of the river gliding past; the roses were in their full splendor; beetles and butterflies flitted merrily past, and the large, old-fashioned room, with its vine-wreathed windows, its high backed chairs and sofas, its monotonously ticking wall-clock, looked as peaceful and comfortable as if no outside alarm of war could disturb the rest and peace of this house.

But no rest and peace lay upon the face of this young girl; bending low over a newspaper, she seemed to be reading something which fettered her whole attention; for in eager intentness, her glance followed the lines, and she neither heard the advancing step nor saw the form which stood close before her upon the balcony.

"Are you so much absorbed, Miss Jane?" said Atkins entering the room. "You seem to have found something very interesting. But what can be the matter with you?"

Jane had hastily risen, and turned her face to him; the newspaper was still in her hand. If she had not been accustomed to such strict self-control, perhaps her features would still more have betrayed the stormy emotion which thrilled her whole being; now only the glowing cheeks, the flaming eyes expressed it; but they said enough to give the lie to her hasty subterfuge.

"It is nothing, nothing at all; only I am suffering from the intolerable heat, from which I have vainly sought refuge here."

Atkins gazed at her distrustfully, and a sudden thought seemed to occur to him; there was only one single topic upon which he had ever seen Jane excited.

"Have you learned anything further of that affair? Have you found a new trace?"

Jane had already mastered her emotion. She calmly laid down the paper. "Nothing of that sort; nothing at all! I was hoping, on the contrary, that you came to bring me new tidings."

He shook his head. "I have received none; I expected none. The authorities at this moment have neither time nor inclination for private researches; these would be difficult to them now, when everything human and otherwise, is so out of place. A journey on our part would be of no avail; aside from the impossibility of travelling now, we do not know where to go. Weeks may pass before we receive an answer to our last letter; we shall be obliged to wait."

"Wait!" echoed Jane, "yes, wait forever! And meantime we lose the clue we have just found. How sad it was that this fisherman and his wife must die!"

"It was a very fortunate thing for you and young Mr. Forest," returned Atkins dryly; "for this alone rescued him from the circle into which untoward fates had thrown him. We certainly do not know upon what footing he entered that clergyman's house; let us hope it was as a foster-son, and that all former neglect was there repaired. In any other case the much desired re-union might be very painful; or, would it be a matter of indifference to you, Miss Jane, to find your nearest blood relation unfitted to move in your own sphere?"

The young lady was silent. She had often thought that she should find her brother poor,--but low or ill-bred,--the idea had never for a moment occurred to her; and it now won scarce a moment's power over her; her whole pride rose against it.

"My brother has the blood of his father in his veins; that tolerates no lowness! If he lives, he has risen above a sphere unworthy of him. I know that!"

"Without having learned either to read or write? Ahem! You forget that education aided your father in all his undertakings. A student who has received his education in a German high school, is fitted for any station in life. A fisherboy--well I hope our excellent clergyman has saved us from that mortification; but this war, which has so suddenly broken out, plays us a sorry game; it brings all our researches to an end."

With a sigh of impatience, Jane resumed her seat, while Atkins stepped to the table and took up the newspaper in which he had found her so absorbed.

"Have you read the 'Appeal to the German Nation' that stands at the head of the first column?" asked he.

"Yes," came hesitatingly, and as it were with inward reluctance, from Jane's lips.

"A strange composition!" said Atkins, half mockingly, and half with a gravity not usual to him. "I do not comprehend how a man can mix such a senseless lot of poetry into the prose of a newspaper article. In any event, the author of this must be some sort of a poet, and certainly none of the worst. A mere journalist surely has not written it: it has altogether too much."

"Inspiration!" added Jane, with that rare uplighting of her dark eyes.

"Yes, but that means it is extravagant! Well, this German inspiration always is! But the article has genius and fire, we must admit that; and in the present excitement of B., which is already at the boiling point, it will be like a spark in a powder-keg. Half the city has already lost its senses over it, every student in the university is frantic; the words are setting fire to everything, like congreve rockets. I only wonder how long this brilliant display of fireworks is going to last."

Jane glanced at him somewhat scornfully. "But all this at least gives you a change," she said not without irony. "You found Germany so dull, past all endurance."

"Yes, I did find it so!" growled Atkins, "but I would rather endure the former dulness than be here among a crazy people, whose only praiseworthy virtues, humility and modesty, are now entirely discarded. Do you suppose that they now respect us foreigners, that they concern themselves at all about us? I am horribly neglected at my hotel; every care and attention is for the German officers. On the streets, at re-unions, in conversation, I am every hour made to feel how utterly superfluous a being I am among these Teutonic gentlemen. Your amiable Herr Frederic thinks it no longer necessary to place the least rein upon his bearish nature, and seems every day to develope a greater appetite for devouring me at breakfast. Even the good Frau Stephen begins to assert herself! Did she not yesterday say something really malicious to you when you would not allow yourself to be pressed into her patriotic committee? Would she have dared this a little while ago? They are rebelling even against you, Jane; you must see it. Heiress! American! Englishman! All these are nothing to them, now that they have become a united people. They need none of us any more; they are Germans."

At the last words, a deep flush mounted to Jane's forehead, but she did not look up.

"I have declared to my aunt, that as soon as there are suffering and danger to relieve, I will be in my place; but that I think these enthusiastic demonstrations, in which the ladies now so much delight, unnecessary and superfluous."

"And so they are!" replied Atkins, excitedly. "Hold your ground there, at least! Do not yield a foot's-breadth. And now just hear that uproar at the doorbell! I would wager, that here is again some newly aroused patriot, who, a week ago, rang the bell modestly, and now, as a matter of course, introduces himself with this deafening clamor!"

The malice of the American had this time been directed against his host. It was Doctor Stephen who now opened the door, and rather excitedly entered.

"Well, and even this shall--Ah, I beg your pardon, I did not know that any one was here. But I had to ring three times before the maid stirred out of her kitchen. When Frederic is not in the house all goes wrong."

"And I, too, missed our distinguished porter!" said Atkins with that extraordinary politeness which with him always concealed some malice. "In any event, we must congratulate the Prussian army upon such an acquisition."

"Yes, Frederic has received marching orders," said the doctor, with a suppressed sigh. "He rode over to H. yesterday, but is to return. The professor went at the same time."

"Professor Fernow? And what has he to do in H.?"

"He must submit to the formality of an examination, which in times like these none can easily avoid. Of course it will be only a form with him, but we shall have to lose Frederic. We can get along without him; but how the professor, who he has so petted and spoiled, can content himself with another servant, Heaven only knows!"

So saying, the doctor stepped over to his niece, who seeming to pay no heed to the conversation, had again taken up the newspaper. He looked over her shoulder at the sheet.

"I think you exaggerate Professor Fernow's interest in unlearned and practical things," said Atkins mockingly. "Behind his writing-table and his folios, he will as little remark the change of servants, as he would have remarked anything of the war, if he had not been obliged to take that journey to H."

The doctor's small gray eyes gleamed with a peculiar malicious pleasure as he glanced over to the American, "Ah! Do you really think so? Have you read the 'Appeal to the German nation' which appears in the journal today?"

"Yes," replied Jane hastily, while with a sudden intentness, she raised her eyes to her uncle.

"And you too, Mr. Atkins?"

"The congreve rocket which this morning set afire the good city of B., and will probably enflame hundreds of other cities? Yes, Doctor Stephen, we have read it."

"That delights me. The congreve rocket came out of my house--the article is by Professor Fernow."

Jane trembled, and let the journal fall as if she had all at once taken a glowing coal into her hand; but Mr. Atkins started from his chair, stood erect a moment, and then just as suddenly sat down again.

"It is not possible!" said he dryly.

"Well, I have heard that word at least thirty times to-day?" replied the doctor triumphantly, without feeling in the slightest degree offended. "All have cried out to me, 'impossible!' I could not have believed it myself if the awkwardness of Frederic, who was sent to take the article to the printing office, had not revealed all. I naturally awaited its effect, and then I gave my secret to the four winds. It fell like a bomb into the university; it has kindled a fire everywhere. The professor must make up his mind to a reception when he returns, and I to a scene with him, for he will be enraged at my indiscretion. Bah! He did not take me into his confidence, I had no silence to keep. What do you say to all this, Jane!"

"I? nothing!" said Jane with the severest tone and emphasis that lay at her command. Then she turned away, went to the window, and pressed her forehead against the panes.

"And you, Mr. Atkins!"

The gentleman addressed leaned back resignedly in his chair.

"I shall await further developments, Doctor Stephen. You will perhaps next inform me that the professor has stormed a battery, and that Frederic has given an archaeological lecture in his

place. Do not seek to spare me in the least; I am prepared for all; I shall never again be surprised at anything here in Germany."

The Doctor laughed aloud; but his merriment all at once ceased, and he gazed anxiously out at the window.

"What has happened now? Here is Frederic coming back already, and in such haste! What is the matter with the fellow? He seems greatly agitated."

It was surely Frederic hastening at a full run through the garden. He now burst into the room in such excitement that even the presence of the much feared American Miss and her more hated companion, did not affect him in the least.

"What is the matter?" asked the doctor hastily. "Has anything happened, Frederic?"

"Yes," whispered Frederic, breathlessly. "Something has happened--the Herr Professor"--

"An accident? Where? Upon the railway or over in H. Speak out quickly!" urged the doctor, in serious alarm.

"Over in H.!" burst out Frederic despairingly. "The Herr Professor--he, too, is going with us to the field--we march to-morrow morning!"

The momentary effect of these words was a deathly silence. Jane had turned around, and was gazing at the unhappy messenger as if she seriously doubted his sanity; the doctor stood there as if struck by a thunderbolt; but Mr. Atkins, after an instant's pause, said, half aloud:--

"Now, nothing is really wanting, now, but Herr Frederic's lecture upon archaeology!"

"But are my military colleagues fools?" broke out the doctor, in great exasperation. "Professor Fernow declared capable of bearing arms! My patient, who I have attended for three years! How in Heaven's name has this happened?"

"I do not know how it really came about," said Frederic, to whom anxiety and excitement had lent a wonderful gift of speech; "but it is my master's own fault. I was standing very near him when one of the doctors gave him a side glance, shrugged his shoulders, and said: 'Well you are not fit for military duty; you could scarce carry a musket!' God only knows why the Herr Professor took this so ill; his whole face all of a sudden became red as blood; he gave the doctor an angry glance, drew back a few steps, and then said in a loud voice: 'I beg at least for an examination!' 'If that is all, you shall have it,' answered the surgeon-in-chief, and you can yourself decide"--

"Was it the surgeon-in-chief?" interrupted the doctor. "I should have supposed so! He takes all! even those who, at the very first march, will have to be left lying in the hospital. Well, go on!"

"He only asked: 'Have you any illness?' 'No!' answered the Herr Professor, and set his teeth together, for the men were all staring at him. Then he drew himself up, his face became fire-red even to the forehead, and he did not look at all sick. The surgeon gave him a slight examination, and then said: 'Nonsense, colleagues, we cannot now be so critical; his chest and lungs are sound; this slight weakness comes from close confinement and study, and will soon pass away. You are accepted, never fear!' I thought I had received a paralytic stroke, and the Herr Professor drew a breath deep enough to rend his breast."

CHAPTER XIII.

The Triumph of Pride.

The doctor began to pace excitedly up and down the room; but Atkins now joined in the conversation.

"Do not take it ill Doctor Stephen; your professor is a genius, and this is only one of those freaks of genius which borders on madness. A consumptive professor to come down from his chair, and enroll himself with the army! A lovely accession!"

"Fernow is not consumptive," said the doctor with great positiveness. "My colleague knows that as well as I, and his nervous disease might not be discernible in a moment of excitement;--to learn that would require longer observation. His position does not fully release the professor from the service; he is young yet, scarcely as old as Frederic. If I had only had a suspicion of this proceeding, I would gladly have prevented it by giving the necessary hint about the nervous

trouble, which God knows I could have done with a good conscience. But who could have foreseen all this? The matter was not arranged here in B.--and now it is too late."

"But Herr Doctor"--in mortal anguish Frederic gazed at the physician,--"the Herr Professor cannot march with the soldiers. You know he can bear no draughts of air, no heat, not even cold; that everything has to be cooked for him in a peculiar manner, and that he gets ill if he even goes out with out his umbrella. Good God! he will die before the first week is over!"

"Well, don't take it so tragically," said the doctor, "We will see what can be done. Your master's proceeding cannot be recalled, but perhaps we can arrange it so that he will be allowed some light service in some of the bureaus or official departments. I will take the necessary steps in this direction; but above all things I must speak to him myself. He came back with you?"

"Yes," said Frederic, with a sigh of relief, "I only ran on ahead."

"Well, go now, and arrange your own affairs. Are you, too, going, Mr. Atkins?"

"Only for a quarter of an hour--to get cooled off! I feel an urgent necessity of convincing myself that somewhere there exists in B. something that is not upside down. Miss Forest seems to have a similar feeling. May I request your company, Jane!"

"I--am weary!"

The young lady sank into an arm chair, rested her head on her hand, and thus withdrew her face from further observation.

"Jane is evidently out of sorts to-day!" said the doctor to Atkins, when they reached the balcony outside, whither he had accompanied his visitor. "Scarce a word can we get from her! She seems to have changed very much during the last fortnight. Do you know the reason of this persistent ill-humor?"

"The reason, at this moment, abides in Paris," thought Atkins, but he replied aloud, and in an indifferent tone: "I suppose that Mr. Alison, my young countryman, to whom I introduced you a short time ago, brought Miss Forest letters and tidings from her intimate acquaintances, which are the cause of the change in her demeanor. At least, I have received a hint to that effect."

"Well, that is only natural," said the doctor unsuspectingly. "I feared there was something in my house or in its surroundings, which had displeased her."

Jane, meanwhile, remained motionless in her place. The door-bell rang anew, but this time more gently than before; a step echoed in the hall, but she did not stir until the door of the balcony-room opened. Then she started up. Professor Fernow stood before her! They had not met since that evening upon the Ruènberg; he had indeed, not crossed her path and the persistence with which he avoided a repetition of those earlier accidental meetings in the house and garden, was only excelled by the resoluteness with which Jane shunned every possibility of a re-union. For a fortnight, they had managed to forego the most casual glance, the coldest greeting; and now, all at once, they stood face to face, so near, so entirely alone, that the meeting could not be ignored.

Jane had sprung from her chair; whatever she might have been thinking a moment before, all vanished at the sight of this man, whom she could never forgive for his triumph, and her humiliation. The old, hostile spirit again raged wildly within her. Why did he now appear so suddenly in her uncle's apartments which he had never before entered,--here, where he must apprehend a meeting with her? Was this appearance on her account? The young lady stood there ready for the fray, determined with her whole strength to defy a might to which this time certainly she would not yield.

But her heroism was, just now, quite superfluous; it happened differently from what she had dreamed. The professor still remained upon the threshold; his glance slowly swept the room, but it did not rest upon her.

"I beg your pardon; I seek Doctor Stephen."

"My uncle is in the garden."

"I thank you."

He closed the door behind him, and, without looking at her, walked through the room to the balcony. Jane's brow flushed deeply; she had made up her mind to meet an attack, and met, instead, the most entire disregard; this was more than she could endure; her hand convulsively grasped the arm of her chair.

Meantime, in the balcony, the professor had run against the doctor, who was just returning from the garden, and at once engrossed him entirely.

"Well, here you are at last! Professor, in God's name, what kind of a freak have you been playing? Frederic has thrown the whole house into an uproar by his ill-starred tidings."

So saying, without further parley, he grasped the professor by the arm, and drew him back into the house. This seemed to be the last thing the professor wished; he followed the doctor with evident reluctance, and, regardless of the invitation to sit down, stood upright by the chair offered him.

Without a word, Jane rose and left the room. The doctor gazed after her in surprise and displeasure; the discourtesy of his niece, toward this inmate of his house, began to surpass all bounds. Fernow's lips quivered, but no glance betrayed that he had even noticed this movement.

Miss Forest, meantime, had not gone far; in the next room, morose and hostile, she leaned against a window. She would not remain in the same room with the man who allowed himself to ignore her and her resentment, but--she would hear what he wanted of her uncle, and, through the half-open door, she caught every syllable of the conversation, which the doctor opened with an impressive lecture.

"And now, before all things, tell me, has that Frederic lost his wits, or is it true that you have been declared fit for the military service, that you yourself urged this declaration, that you have represented yourself as healthy, while it would only have cost you a word, a mere silence even, to have proved quite the contrary? Have we heard aright?"

The professor cast down his eyes.

"It was a sudden inspiration," he said, softly; "I was sure of rejection, but the rather contemptuous sympathy of the examining physician enraged me beyond measure. To be sent home as a miserable weakling, when all were hastening to the conflict,--that I could not bear! It was an act of folly for which I must atone with my life; but--I would do the same thing again!"

"You seem at times to have very wonderful inspirations," said the doctor with a glance at the morning journal. "Well, we will speak of that another time, our first business now is how we shall atone for this stupidity,--now, don't fly into a passion, I mean the surgeon, not you--how we shall atone for this fellow's stupidity. I will preach him a sermon! I shall drive over to H. with you, and he shall use his influence to have you detailed for duty in some of the bureaus. This is the only thing we can do, as you cannot now wholly withdraw from the service."

A dark, portentous glow overspread the professor's face; his brow contracted, and his voice had a singularly angry tone, as he replied: "I thank you for your good intentions, doctor, but I must decline all intermeddling on your part in my affairs, I am called to active service, and shall follow the call in the sense in which it was given."

The doctor gazed at him in speechless astonishment. He had been accustomed to absolute authority over his patient, who had always yielded him the most implicit obedience; and now, all at once, he had risen in open rebellion against his best and most deliberate conclusions, this was too much for the doctor; he grew angry.

"Are you mad?" he cried excitedly. "You will enter active service? *You?* No, that surpasses all conception."

The professor was silent, but he set his teeth together as Frederic had before described, a deep flush covered his face, and he gazed at the doctor with a glance which forced that gentleman to assume another tone.

"Give me only one reason, one single sensible reason, for this insane proceeding!" he said, almost imploringly. "Could you not serve the Fatherland just as well with the pen, if you could only bring your mind to that? Why will you not enter one of the bureaus? only tell me why."

"I will not!"

"You have an obstinate head!" cried the doctor again becoming angry. "In this you have a remarkable likeness to my niece. '*I will not!*' and now the whole world might rise against it; but it must be! Exactly Jane's manner, exactly her tone; just as if you had learned of her. One is just like the other; you would make a nice, 'married pair!'"

"Doctor, please spare me this foolish jesting!" broke out the professor with great violence, at the same time stamping furiously.

For a moment Doctor Stephen stood utterly dumb before this passionate outbreak of his amiable patient, then he said, in a tone of sincere astonishment.

"I believe that even *you* can be rough and violent!"

Fernow frowned and turned away.

"Well it was only a jest!" said the doctor apologetically. "I know that you and Jane stand half upon a war-footing; but you can become very angry now, professor! I notice that, for the last two months, you have not been the same person you used to be!"

Fernow did not defend himself against the reproach with a single word; he preserved an obstinate silence.

"Well, to go back to the main business," began the Doctor anew--but this time in a low voice--"you will not accept my proposition?"

"No!"

"You will really march to-morrow with the army?"

"In any event."

"Well then--I cannot compel you, and if it cannot be otherwise,"--here the doctor's patriotism broke through all resentment; he cordially extended his hand to his patient--"well then, go in God's name! Who knows? The surgeon-in-chief, may be cleverer than we all; of one thing at least he has convinced you, one which you would never believe from me: that you are not consumptive, that you have no decided illness, and as to your nerves--do you remember what I prescribed to you four weeks ago?"

The professor slowly raised his eyes.

"Some powerful remedy," he said softly.

"Certainly! A radical cure, at which you were horrified at that time. You would not take upon yourself the life of a day-laborer; but you now plunge into the military life, without asking me. Well, I should not certainly have advised so powerful a remedy as this, for we cannot cease taking it at will; if the dose is too strong, we must either bend or break! But if you are determined to venture upon it--good luck to you!"

The professor smiled sadly. "I have little confidence in this blood and iron cure," he said calmly. "I shall fall, I feel sure of that, either in face of the enemy, or in consequence of the unwonted exertion. But it does not matter; in any case it will be better and more speedily than to die at my writing desk after a consumption, years in duration. Do not rob me of this conviction, doctor; it is the best I take with me; I shall at least be of some use in the world!"

"Do not approach me again with your premonitions of death!" cried the doctor excitedly. "To die--nonsense! We in B. forbid ourselves that idea. And so you are of no use in the world! You have written no work over which the whole learned world is beside itself in admiration, eh?"

The professor's lips quivered, as he said bitterly; "and to the rest of the world, it will remain mere nonsense,--dead, fruitless, valueless."

"Do you really think so? And your article in this morning's paper, was that, too, mere nonsense? Yes, be horrified as much as you like, because I know; the whole city knows, the university also. Professor since you have written that article, I deem all things possible to you, I doubt you in nothing more!"

Fernow scarce heard these last words; his glance had followed the motion of the doctor's hand as he pointed to the morning paper, and his eyes suddenly flamed up as if in deep, glowing satisfaction--the paper lay in the arm chair where Jane had just been sitting.

"And you ought to be ashamed of yourself," cried Doctor Stephen growing more and more excited; "you ought really to be ashamed of yourself, for having so little self-esteem, when with your pen you can rouse thousands to the most glowing enthusiasm."

The professor's face again grew dark; a hard, bitter expression lay upon it.

"With the *pen*," he said slowly. "The pen must always fall into disrepute when the moment demands deeds. With all my knowledge and abilities, I stand below Frederick, who, with a pair of vigorous arms, can fight for the Fatherland. At the highest, I can die for it, and for this, I must still thank your surgeon-in-chief; he, at least, has lifted from me the curse of being only *a hero of the pen*!"

The doctor shook his head. "If I only knew how all at once you have become possessed of such terrible bitterness! This sounds as if some one had given you a deadly insult in these words. I tell you your whole nature is changed."

With a deep, repressed sigh, as if he would throw off a heavy burden, Fernow rose to his full height.

"I entirely forget what brings me to you," he said evasively. "They leave us little time; we must return to H. this evening, for we are ordered to march early to-morrow morning. I would request you to take my rooms and my library under your care. In case of my death, you can dispose of the former as you think best; the latter must go to the university; it contains many valuable books, a large share of which I have inherited."

"Yes, and if a formal testament is to be made," interposed the doctor, "I beg you give me the address of your relatives, so that I may be prepared for any emergency. Hitherto, I have made no inquiries concerning them; you have maintained such a strict secrecy in regard to your family affairs."

"Secrecy! I had nothing to conceal. I have no relatives."

"What! not a single one?"

"Not one; I stand entirely alone in the world."

There lay a quiet, but deep anguish in these words. The doctor preserved a sympathetic silence; Fernow reached him his hand.

"I must now bid you farewell. I have much to arrange, but I will see you again this evening."

He went. Doctor Stephen accompanied him to the door, and they parted with a cordial pressure of the hand. The professor entered the parlor through which he must pass in order to reach the hall; his features had won again the gentle, melancholy expression peculiar to them; but suddenly he started, and drew back--he caught a glimpse of Miss Forest.

She had not left her place at the window, but she had stepped forward somewhat, so that he could not avoid seeing her, and her glance met his. Jane's eyes were capable of no soft, dreamy glance, and even their fire was always like the glow of Northern Lights over an ice field; but still, a strange power lay in those shadowing depths, the might of a proud, unyielding will, which knew not how to entice, but to compel; and she was in the fullest measure conscious of her power. Seldom as she had recourse to this power, whenever she did enforce it, the victory remained with her, and it had been a victory over no common individuals. The obstinate character of her father had bowed to this will; it had silenced the ever-ready sarcasm of Atkins; it had brought the cold, equally rigid nature of Alison under her control. And now it must also enforce something else; the step which, in spite of all that had happened, must and should cross her path, the farewell word which she must once again hear from his lips--for this, these eyes now beamed in the full radiance of their splendor, and deep below, under all this ice flamed something warmer than the mere glow of boreal fires.

This mysterious power seemed also to subdue Fernow; as if spellbound, his glance rested upon her face; he saw that she was waiting, waiting for a farewell. It would cost him only one step, one single word; here was involved an absence perhaps without return. Over Jane's features flashed a triumphant glance--then all at once the professor's face grew dark, every muscle was strained for an energetic resistance. Slowly, as if step by step, he would withdraw from the influence of a demoniac power, he tore his eyes from her face; his lips quivered as he set them firmly together, to shut in any farewell word; his breast rose and fell convulsively in an agonizing inward conflict; but the wounded pride of the man held its ground before temptation. He turned to go; a bow, cold, distant as that parting one upon the Ruènberg, and the door closed behind him. He had kept his word!

Jane stood there like a statue; this was too much! She had humiliated herself by waiting; she had waited all this time, and now she stood there decided to offer her hand in reconciliation, ready to give and to receive a last parting word; and this incredible self-mastery of hers had been thus received! What then did this man wish? Did he demand entreaties from her?

Entreaty? At the mere word, the whole nature of this young girl was aroused to resistance and exasperation. To entreat was something she could not do. Miss Forest, who so clearly tested, so calmly considered all, never had occasion to lament a momentary enthusiasm nor to atone for an error, because she never allowed herself to yield to impulse; even in her childhood entreaty was something that had been impossible to her. She had borne every punishment, but it was with an obstinacy which chose to endure for long weeks, rather than allow the word "forgive" to pass her lips; and Forest had discerned in the child too much of his own nature to force her to anything he would himself regard as a humiliation. The thought of entreaty flashed through Jane's soul, only to be repelled with abhorrence. He wished no farewell; well then he might go without it, into the field, to death, wherever he would.

And what had driven him to this? She knew now; the bitter satisfaction with which he had heralded his ceasing to be any longer "a hero of the pen," had betrayed it to her. That phrase had entered deep into this man's soul; for weeks long it had tortured him; had become the goad which had impelled him on to undertake something to which his strength was not equal; and if he now succumbed, if he perished in the undertaking, whose was the blame?

Jane began to pace excitedly up and down the room; she strove to repel this thought, but ever and ever again it would return. She heard only the words he had spoken in gloomy resignation: "I have no one; I stand alone in the world!" She pressed her hand against her breast, as if that agony had found an echo there.--Perhaps she ought now to confess this to him. The old obstinacy again towered up in all its uncontrollable might, she stamped violently as if beside herself. "No, and no! and forever no!"

CHAPTER XIV.

FAREWELL!

The afternoon passed in hasty preparations for the departure of the two soldiers; at last all was arranged, and with the early twilight, Frederic, ready for the journey, betook himself to the doctor and his wife, to say good-by. The poor fellow looked very melancholy; around his broad mouth was a quiver of pain: it was with great difficulty he kept back his tears. Neither the heavy package of money the doctor handed him nor the promise of the doctor's wife to care for him in the field, could console him.

"For shame, Frederic!" said Doctor Stephen, chidingly. "Is that the way to go to war? With such a sorrowful mien, with tearful eyes? I should have believed you had more courage."

Frederic, deeply wounded, wiped the tears from his eyes, and at length, comprehending the full meaning of the reproach, he cried excitedly:

"Do you think, Herr Doctor, that I am afraid? It is a real delight to me to take the musket on my shoulder, and go to war. But my poor master! This is going to cost him his life, even before he meets the enemy."

"Well, that is by no means certain," said the doctor, while Frau Stephen, who was entirely of Frederic's opinion, pressed her handkerchief to her eyes. "Perhaps he will hold out better than we all think. I tell you once more, he is not so very ill as you imagine, and this soldier-life will tear him away from his studies, which, in any event, is a fortunate thing."

"He will not endure it," persisted Frederic with a mournful shake of the head; "he certainly will not endure it! At the very first march, he will lie in the hospital; and if I am not with him to take care of him, he will surely die. And for all this"--here that fearful, bearish nature, so deplored by Mr. Atkins, broke forth anew in Frederic,--"and for all this, those accursed Frenchmen are guilty,--I--I am going to kill a dozen at least for it!"

"Well, well; wait until you are in France!" cried the doctor, retreating from the furious pantomime Frederic enacted after these words. "You certainly will have to wait before you can offer such a propitiatory sacrifice to the manes of your master. So far as I know, he has served his year in the volunteer army, and he still remains alive."

"That was ten years ago," replied Frederic, still more despairingly. "At that time he was much stronger and more healthy than I, and still he lay for some time in the hospital. Well, there is no help for it now! Good-by, Herr Doctor, good-by, Frau Doctorin!" he cordially stretched out both huge hands, and in spite of his efforts to keep them back, tears streamed down his cheeks. "You have been very kind to me during these last three years; when I return I will try to repay you; if *I* cannot--may God reward you!"

So saying, he pressed, and shook with a giant's strength, the proffered hands, accepted another caution and some further words of good advice, waved his cap, and trotted down the steps after his master, who had already taken leave of the married pair, and had gone for a few moments into the garden.

The professor stood at the farther end of the garden, leaning against the latticed gate, and gazed fixedly and dreamily upon the now dry portion of the hedge-way which separated it from the river rushing past. The sun had already set, the last beams of the twilight were fading away, and the first stars faintly glimmered in the sky. Between the trees and shrubbery, dusky shadows already lay, and the cool breath of the night enveloped all. From above came the light rustle and murmur of the waves, the dear old familiar Rhine voices whispered to him their parting salutation. Whether it was a parting from home, or from life as well--it was the last he had to expect.

There was all at once a rustle from another direction, but more distinct, more violent, as a woman's silk dress crossed the path. Thrilled by a presentiment, Fernow turned around. Before him stood Jane, pale as death, her glance fixed upon the ground, her hands firmly clasped, and with an expression as if, just now, the most terrible thing in her whole life had happened. Her breast rose and fell convulsively; her lips quivered; she could not control them, and at last they opened for these momentous words: "I--I beg your forgiveness!"

"Miss Forest! Johanna!" cried Fernow, with uncontrollable emotion; but she had already turned, and like a hunted creature, fled down the path. He was about to rush after her, when Frederic's loud voice echoed through the garden.

"Herr Professor, we must go! Herr Professor, where are you? We haven't a moment to lose."

"Must we go? This very instant!" The new duty was demanding its first heavy sacrifice; a moment of struggle, and then all was over.

"I am coming!" he replied in a firm voice! He hastened to the house. Under the vine-wreathed balcony it was growing dark already, but the outlines of a delicate form were visible, only half

concealed by the foliage. For a moment the professor's feet lingered, only one, and ardent and deep-toned the parting word at last wrung from him up to her:

"*Farewell!*"

CHAPTER XV.

Following the Clue.

Weeks and months had passed, since that first call to arms had echoed through the land, and still the storm of war raged with undiminished fury; but the arrow had recoiled upon its sender. Upon the Rhine the vineyards were ripening, the purple grapes gaining richer hues day by day; golden harvests moved in the fields; over the cities floated the nation's victorious banner; but yonder in France, the vineyards were laid waste, the blooming meadows were trodden under the feet of men and horses, the flames of burning villages rose to heaven. All the horrors which had been destined for the Rhineland, now fell upon French soil, a late but fearful punishment for the once so frivolously devastated Palatinate. Even the victors could no longer restrain their rage: the ruin, now unfettered, took its course, alike visiting the guilty and the guiltless, and the trembling land now at last itself experienced the full, terrible import of those words with which it had often enough absolved itself from every responsibility--*C'est la guerre!*

Onward, still onward, marched the victorious columns of the German army, from the Rhine to the Moselle, from the Moselle to the Meuse, from the Meuse to the Seine, throwing down all that stood in its way. City after city opened its gates, citadel after citadel yielded after a shorter or longer resistance. The fiery August sun blazed down upon seven battlefields, saluting at the same time, countless trophies of victory; and the first cool breezes of September swept that soil, where the wavering enemy, surrounded, hemmed in, pressed on every side, had at last yielded. A whole French corps, the once formidable head of the army, now indeed held the vaunted entrance to Germany; but without arms or resources;--and meantime the conquerors pressed on, with restless, unyielding persistence, to the heart of France--to Paris!

At N., the capital of one of the departments, in spite of the war-billows that had long since swept over it, reigned an active, military life. This town was the principal station on the great military and travelling highway which led from Germany into the interior of France. Marching regiments, endless provision and munition trains, here crossed the path of the returning transports of sick and wounded soldiers, ambulances, and couriers; all the streets were crammed with men, carriages and horses; all the quarters were full to overflowing. In this state of things, two travellers, apparently English or American, who had arrived yesterday, although they undoubtedly belonged to the richer class, still deemed it a lucky accident to obtain, at an extravagant price, a pair of miserably-furnished attic rooms in a hotel of the second grade.

Upon the morning after their arrival, the stronger gentleman sat upon a sofa, while his young companion stood at an open window and gazed up the street, where a confused multitude of pedestrians and vehicles of all sorts blocked the way, while the tumult and excitement, in ever-increasing murmurs, fell upon her ear.

"I do not comprehend how you can endure those deafening noises down there, Miss Jane! Are you not at least weary of this eternal hurrying and surging to and fro?"

"No!" was the curt, somewhat ill-natured answer of the young lady, who, bending far out of the window, at this moment was gazing intently into an ambulance full of wounded men. Her glance fixed itself immovably on the pale wan faces, and she looked after them until the ambulance vanished around a corner.

"Well, you have better nerves than I," said Atkins resignedly. "I confess that during these last eight days I have become really morbid. We were a whole week on this journey to N. which is usually made in twenty-four hours; we have had our night quarters in the most wretched villages, such food I never in my life tasted before. For hours and days, we have had to lie over in half-ruined places on account of broken bridges and impassable roads, and always in danger lest a battle might be fought in our immediate vicinity, and we borne onward with the wave of victory or flight. I should think all this must at last have convinced you how impossible it is to trace out family relationships upon the theatre of war."

During this speech, Jane had closed the window; she now turned around. "Impossible?" she asked calmly. "I thought that in spite of all, we had arrived in N., and that, in any event, a decision awaited us here."

"Or a new deception! This clue misleads us in the most exasperating ways. Scarce do we think

we have it, when it suddenly snaps asunder, and darts away to some other quarter of the heavens. At present, we are in France, and I should not wonder if the next thing, we had to direct our course back to America, only to go from there to the Rhine again, and so on."

"It is all the same!" declared Jane energetically. "I promised my father to find my brother if still alive, and to yield only to impossibilities. I shall keep my word!"

"If it were only a direct clue we are following?" began Atkins again; "but whom do we seek? A man who by some remote possibility may be able to give us information of the principal character in this drama."

"And perhaps the only one who can give it! The direct clue is lost; that clergyman is not to be found, neither in his former parish nor anywhere else; all our efforts in this direction have failed; but we have found the artisan who adopted the other boy."

"And from him have received the joyful tidings that his nephew went to France four years ago, and at this moment may be here in N. For the theatre of his highly respectable efforts at the planing bench, he has chosen a place right in the midst of all these accursed military operations."

Jane's eyes flashed half-angrily. "You forget the most important thing," she said, "the one which alone leads us here; the assertion of that man that the former playfellow of this young Erdmann is still living, that the two, after a separation of years, met again during their term of military service. Certainly, he could tell us nothing further; his nephew was at that time on duty far away from him in a large garrison city; but this much he remembered distinctly, having heard it from Erdmann's own lips. I have learned that my brother still lives, that there is some one in the world who knows him, who can tell me his abode. Does this not seem to you a step gained on the path we seek? It is more than I had hoped!"

"I do not dispute all this," replied Atkins; "I am only of the opinion that it would be better to defer our investigations until after the end of the war."

"Until the end of the war," echoed Jane. "When all present associations are severed, and the soldiers are scattered here and there! These tidings have not come too late; I hope not, at least, but we ought not to delay a moment, to make the best possible use of them, and as an epistolary correspondence was not to be thought of, there was only one resource; I must enter personally into the investigation, and follow the clue. If you suffer from the dangers and deprivations of the journey, Mr. Atkins, it is your own fault--I could have come alone!"

"Yes, God knows you would have done so!" said Atkins, with a sigh. "Jane, you are sometimes terrible in your restless energy! I certainly do not belong to the indolent and the irresolute; but this tireless rushing onward toward one single goal, has at last quite exhausted me."

"But not *me*!" replied Jane, with cool determination. "I am resolved to go on, I repeat it, to the utmost limits of the possible!"

"Well, we have one certainty at least," began Atkins after a brief pause; "the German master with whom young Erdmann was at work when the war broke out, is still here. You know that yesterday, I went from the mayoralty, where I received this intelligence, directly to the designated house. But I found it closed, all its inmates fled to the just arrived Prussian regiments, among whom they hoped to find countrymen. This information I obtained from a very peculiar conversation with an exceedingly talkative neighbor; peculiar, I may well say, for she understood no English and I no French, and we were forced to call a very expressive pantomime to our aid, by means of which I made her comprehend that my visit was designed for Monsieur Erdmann and his master, that I would return to-day, and that I should be infinitely obliged to her if she would hand my card to the latter. Thus far our pantomime brought us, and now I am curious to know what sort of unavoidable confusion Madame has made out of the slang."

Jane glanced at her watch. "It is now half-past nine, and I think we ought to get ready to go out."

CHAPTER XVI.

An Agonizing Doubt.

The answer which Atkins was about to give, was interrupted by a knocking at the door. It was opened, and an old man with white hair, simply but not poorly clad, and with a modest, friendly manner, entered, and immediately addressed himself in good French to the two strangers.

"I beg your pardon, but they showed me up here. I am the master joiner Vogt, Rue de--. A strange gentleman inquired for me yesterday, and left a card with his address which I understood as a request for me to call on him. I trust I have come to the right place?"

Atkins naturally understood nothing of these words. But Jane, who was perfect mistress of French, translated all he needed to hear, and then turned to the visitor.

"You are quite right, but the gentleman's visit was not to you, it was to a young man who, they tell us, works with you. He is in any event, a German, and a journeyman carpenter, Franz Erdmann. We are in search of him, and were just about visiting you again on his account."

"Is it Franz you seek?" asked, the old man, now in his mother tongue. "Good heavens! he has been gone six weeks. Immediately after the declaration of war he went from us back to Germany. He is now in the Prussian army."

Jane involuntarily grew pale. Another vain effort! But the disappointment which, after so confident a hope, would have discouraged any other, only angered her. She compressed her lips and the toe of her little boot beat the floor. If this experience lent her no words, it was evident that in her heart she made a new vow to press forward in spite of all.

Mr. Atkins did not take the tidings so quietly; his vexation found vent in loud exclamations.

"In the army; I believe this glorious Prussian host embraces all mankind! Whatever person we enquire after in the course of our investigations we always receive the stereotyped answer, *In the army!* I am convinced that if at last we get upon the direct track of this Mr. Franz, we shall learn that he too, is in the army. If he is in no other part of Europe, we shall certainly find him there."

The master-joiner understood none of this English, but he heard the tone of the words, and saw from the expression of the young lady's face, what an effect his arrival had produced upon both.

"Yes, and this war comes near enough to us also!" he said sadly. "I miss Franz everywhere, and my poor girl sits weeping her eyes out the whole day long; they were to be married in the autumn. But there was no help for it; he belonged to the first levies, and we would not take upon ourselves the sin of holding him back."

"*Sin!*" growled Atkins, again in his English, and turned to Jane. "Did you ever hear of such a thing? This fellow sits safe and concealed here in France, where no man asks after his military duty. He was to marry here, settle down here, and the prospect was that he would not during all his life, return to Germany; and scarce does the war break out when he runs home, leaves bride, wedding, handicraft, all in the lurch, and hurries off to let himself be shot dead for the beloved Rhine. The sentiment of duty with these Germans is really a sort of mania."

Jane scarce heard these words; a ray of hope already flashed before her eyes here, where Atkins had given up all for lost. She turned hastily again to the master-joiner. "Young Hartman stood in intimate relations to your family? He was to be your son-in-law? Well, then, perhaps you and your daughter know something in regard to his past which may be very important to us. We hope to gain from him some intelligence as to a family matter, and shall very cheerfully requite any such service."

"As to his family relations, I know them intimately. He has been more than two years in my house, and he tell in love with my Marie at the very first," said Vogt unhesitatingly. "Ask on, Mademoiselle, I think I can give you information."

Atkins drew back. He saw that Jane wished to take the affair into her own hands, and he resigned it to her the more readily, as he promised himself no especial result from the pending examination. Indeed no help was necessary; Miss Forest propounded her questions so clearly, so confidently and energetically, that the best criminal lawyer could have done no better.

"Your future son-in-law was born in the little fishing village of M., not far from Hamburg?"

Master Vogt nodded.

"After the death of his parents, he came to relatives in P., who brought him up, and from thence, after his apprenticeship and military service were ended, he went over to France to perfect himself in the joiner's art, and for two years, he has lived at N., in your house?"

"Quite right!" returned the master. "It is really our Franz you describe. All agrees to a hair!"

"Has he never"--Jane's voice again betrayed the excitement she could with difficulty restrain--"has he never told you of a brother who grew up with him in M.!"

"That he has indeed! But he was no real brother, only an adopted child whom his parents had brought with them from Hamburg, and kept, in their kindness of heart, as no one claimed him."

Jane sent a triumphant glance over to Atkins. In spite of all, she was on the track. "And this also is known to you? Later the boys were separated, but the other also found adoption?"

"Yes, with a learned man."

With an almost convulsive movement, Jane lifted her head. "With--a learned man!" she repeated slowly; "they told us it was a clergyman, pastor Hartwigs."

"Yes, you are quite right; he was a very learned old gentleman, with his head always stuck into books; Franz has told us all about him; later, he gave up his pastorate--he was not poor--just to live for his learning."

Jane had all at once become pale as death. A lightning ray had flashed down and rent the darkness which had so long lain over the destiny of her brother; for a moment it glowed lurid and threatning, then all was again night; but its upflowing must have shown something terrible to the sister, for she shuddered before it.

"Are you ill, Miss Jane?" asked Atkins, anxiously, and made a movement to approach her.

"No!" Jane summoned all her strength, and motioned him back; her breath came short and violently, and the hand with which she held for support to the table, trembled as if in a fever.

"And do you know whether that adopted brother is still alive, whether he stands in any sort of relationship to your son-in-law?"

"Certainly he is alive," said the master-joiner calmly. "And they have often written to each other. No longer ago than last Easter, Franz had a letter from him."

"From what place? Where was it dated?" Fearful excitement pulsed through Jane's voice; her glance was fixed upon the man as if life or death for her lay in his answer.

Master Vogt shook his head. "That I cannot tell you. Franz spoke of the letter, and told us that his brother was doing well, but he always called him by his given name, Fritz, and neither my daughter nor I saw the writing. The only thing I know is that he came from the Rhine."

From the Rhine! Jane laid her hand against her moist, icy-cold forehead. For a moment, it seemed to her as if she must swoon away, and all else with her; but she kept up, and remained so dumb and motionless, that both men thought her apathetic.

Atkins glanced over to her in surprise; he waited for her to ask further questions, waited for a full, minute; but as she was still silent he began to speak.

"This being the case, we might have spared ourselves a difficult journey! We have just come from the Rhine, my best Monsieur Vogt. You can give us neither name nor place? Neither you nor your daughter?"

"Neither."

"Well, then, I must beg you to tell me the exact regiment and company in which your future son-in-law serves at present. You have received tidings of him since he left for the war?"

"Only once! We were hoping he would pass through here with the army, and yesterday, when we learned that the new Prussian regiments were entering the town, we all ran out and stood before the gates to see if his was not there."

Atkins still waited for Jane to take part in the conversation; her entire indifference seemed so strange after the feverish interest she had shown a few minutes before; but, as she persisted in her immobility, he drew forth his note book, and jotted down the statement just given. The master-joiner took his leave of the young lady; she bowed mechanically, and left it to her companion to dismiss him with great politeness. The man might perhaps be again needed in this business, and anyone whom Mr. Atkins thought of making use of always enjoyed the politest attention from him.

When the man was gone, he turned to Jane. "Did I not tell you so? We must go to another point of the compass? Now we will direct our steps back to the Rhine. The only thing which remains to us is to write from Germany to Herr Erdmann; in any event this is easier than a correspondence with N., since we have his full address. In case he is no longer alive, we must repeat our advertisement in the several Rhenish newspapers. But in any event, I think we should immediately start upon our return journey."

At these words, Jane started from her stupor.

"And why? We are now in France. Perhaps we may succeed in finding that regiment!"

"For Heaven's sake, Jane, what are you thinking of? Seek a regiment upon the march--what an idea!"

"But that matters not, I will now know the truth! And if it was to cost me my life, and I must rush into the fight, even into the line of battle,--I must have a certainty!"

Atkins stood almost horrified before this sudden outbreak of a passion he had never suspected

in Jane; and he now for the first time remarked her deathly pallor.

"Good God, what is the matter with you! Are you ill? I thought you would have to suffer from the weariness and excitement of this journey."

He sought to assist her, but she repelled him with a passionate gesture.

"It will pass over--I need nothing--but I beg you for a glass of water."

Atkins was in serious anxiety; he knew that Jane was not at all subject to nervous attacks, and he feared that she was ill. As in the hotel at present, prompt service was not to be dreamt of, he himself hastened out to fetch the water.

This was what Jane had expected. She wanted no water, but she needed a moment of solitude to save her from suffocation. Scarce was he gone, when she, too, hastened to the door, drew the bolt, and then sinking on her knees by the sofa, she buried her face in her hands. Jane Forest would not yield in this way before stranger eyes!

"If one is thrust out into life, without parents and without home, and then falls into the hands of a learned man who knows and loves nothing in the wide world but science--" and that letter came from the Rhine! This had been the lightning stroke which had passed through her; the presentiment came with all the annihilating power of certainty. That lightning flash had opened an abyss before her, into which Jane did not dare to glance; it had brought a secret to light, of which the cold, proud betrothed of Alison had not before been conscious. But, as now in mortal anguish she wrung her uplifted hands, it broke forth in one long-repressed despairing-cry;--

"Almighty God, only not this! My rival, my deadly enemy, if it must be, I will bear it--only not my brother!"

CHAPTER XVII.

The Pen and the Sword.

The late afternoon sun of a bright September day shone through the thick-leaved boughs of the ancient gigantic chestnuts which shaded the avenues and grass-plats of the broad park stretching behind the castle of S., one of those magnificently situated country seats in which the interior of France is so rich. This castle, on the western declivity of a precipitous range of hills, which at this point unfolded all their widely-romantic beauty, as well as the village in its immediate vicinity, had just been seized as quarters for the soldiery. A Rhenish landwehr regiment, after having taken part in all the August battles had been ordered back here to protect the mountain region from roving bands of French fusileers, and to keep the passes free. It was a dangerous and arduous post for the rather small detachment, which, many miles distant from its comrades, almost daily undertook excursions to the mountains, thereby placing itself in constant danger of an attack for which this region was only too favorable. The soldiery lay in the village, while the officers had quartered themselves close by in the castle, whose inmates had naturally fled. These gentlemen, for the moment at least, seemed to have surrendered themselves to an idleness of late only rarely offered them; from the terrace echoed loud talking and laughing, blended with the ringing of glasses.

At the entrance of the park, under one of these giant chestnuts, lay a landwehr officer stretched upon the tall grass, and gazing up into the thick leafy roof through which the setting sun threw hither and thither its palpitating rays. The floral treasures of the garden, arranged with great art and care, and now resplendent with all the summer's magnificence and luxuriance, appeared to fetter his attention just as little as the sound of his comrades' merriment coming down to him from the castle. He raised his head only when an approaching footstep startled him from his dream.

A man of about thirty years, his uniform and the bands upon his arm designating him as a surgeon, came up the path as if in search of some one, and halted before the reclining officer.

"I thought as much! Here you lie dreaming again, while I, by the sweat of my brow, am winning popularity for you. You really do not concern yourself about it in the least!"

The man addressed half rose and supported himself on his elbows. "I have a duty to perform," he said. "I must go down to the village at four o'clock."

"And for that reason you must make yourself invisible at three? Do not deny it, Walter, you ran away from us because you remarked that I had the horrible intention of reading aloud a poem, a

copy of which I forced from you. But flight does not avail you; on your return, you will be received with general acclamation. Our major swears that he never heard anything like it his life; the adjutant was just as enthusiastic in its praise. You know he is a sort of amateur critic, well versed in æsthetics, and from the very first you wonderfully impressed him with your learning. He reminds us how highly favored we are by destiny in being able to call a poet our companion-in-arms, a poet Germany will one day salute as it greatest genius. Our lieutenant swears by all the gods of the upper and lower world, that if the French had possessed a bard who before the battle had inspired them with such songs, they would have given us more to do; but your poetry has had the most stupendous effect upon our fat captain; it has made him forget his dram!"

"Stop this nonsense!" said the young officer half in anger, as he sank back to his reclining posture.

"*Nonsense!* I give you my word that I have only repeated literally to you, what was said. Did you hear the glasses ring? All the officers were just then solemnly guaranteeing you immortality. I am sent to seize the flying singer, and bring him back, living or dead. They clamorously demand your presence."

"Spare me! You know how much I dislike such ovations."

"And again do you refuse to come? Well, it is just like you! We ought by this time to have learned that we can have Lieutenant Fernow's company only when some service is required, or some fight is at hand. You run away from all recognition of your talents, as any other man would run from punishment. You must cease this, Walter; it really is not fitting for the future poet of Germany."

Fernow had meantime risen; he had put on the helmet which lay near him in the grass, and bound his sword more firmly. One who two months ago had seen the learned professor of the university of B. would certainly not have recognized him in this young warrior, whose military coat fitted the slender form excellently, as if he had all his life worn no other. The sickly pallor and the deep, shadowy rings about the eyes, had vanished with the bowed form and the unhealthy appearance. The forehead and cheeks were deeply sunburned, the blood coursed vigorously through the veins, the blonde hair, little cared for, waved in luxuriant profusion under the helmet; the once smooth chin wore a heavy beard; the upright military bearing seemed to cost the present landwehr lieutenant not the slightest effort, and the once delicate hands, with a strong grip, now seized the sword. These six weeks in the field had wrought wonders; it was evident at the first glance--Doctor Stephen's radical cure had been affected.

"You place too much value on my songs," he said evasively. "The verses, written upon the inspiration of the moment, inspire only for the moment, and when the excitement which called them forth is ended, they will fall into forgetfulness."

"Do you think so?" asked the surgeon gravely. "I may be allowed to doubt it. In your verses resounds more than a mere battle-cry, although you may, perhaps, in future, thank the war for having roused your slumbering talent and for showing you the path to future renown."

"Perhaps!" said Fernow gloomily. "And perhaps, also, a bullet may to-day or to-morrow make an end of all the promised renown?"

"Can you not throw off this eternal melancholy?" asked the doctor chidingly. "Walter, I really believe you are bearing an unhappy love around with you."

"Not at all!" cried Fernow passionately, and turned away. The deep flush which earlier had suffused his pale face at every violent excitement, again appeared, although less visible in the bronzed countenance.

This sudden emotion had escaped the surgeon. He had been a younger colleague of Doctor Stephen, a private tutor in the university of B. He and Fernow had known each other sufficiently to exchange a passing salutation as they met. This had lasted for three years, but the army life had in a few hours made them acquaintances, and in a few weeks, friends.

The always merry young doctor laughed aloud at his own comic idea. "I have really been very curious as to the where and when! Since we have been in the field, I have scarcely stirred from your side, and in B. you never so much as looked at a woman, for which reason, the fairer half of the city, with good reason, declared you outlawed and proscribed." Fernow made no answer; he busied himself with the hilt of his sword.

"But Doctor Stephen was right with his diagnosis," continued the surgeon after a momentary pause, "although I would not believe it when he came over to H. to commend you to my care, he having heard that I was assigned to your regiment. I could with a good conscience, promise to do my best, for I was convinced that you would be the first patient, to fall into my hands. The first week, I would not have given a penny for your life, but when the marches and hardships began, when our men fell in scores beneath the fiery August sun, and you still held out; when amid all the over exertion and deprivation which sometimes lay low the strongest, you grew only healthier and more robust then I took off my hat to the superior discernment of my old colleague. Walter, you have one of the best constitutions, a really magnificent constitution, which only needed to renounce the study and the writing-desk, to gain its full development; and you have found the

right, although somewhat unusual remedy for your nerves. The thunder of the cannon has thoroughly re-established them! This will be a surprise to everyone when you return to B."

"When I return?"

"Forever and eternally, these presentiments of death!" cried the surgeon, with an impatient gesture. "You cling to them with a genuine passion."

"Because I feel them!"

"Nonsense! If there is a man bullet-proof it is you! Do not take it ill of me, Walter, but your rushing to the front in all these battles, borders on insanity. Courage need not become reckless; but where excitement urges you on, you see and hear nothing. Your comrades all say this."

"And still there is not one among them, who a little while ago, would have owned that I possessed any courage at all," returned Fernow, with some bitterness.

"I know that," said the surgeon, frankly. "But to tell the truth you used to have little enough of the hero in you. You were entirely a man of the pen, who wholly absorbed in his books had nothing to do with the outside world. Now that is all a thing of the past, as well as the error of your comrades. Since the first battle, none doubt your courage."

Fernow smiled sadly. His eyes alone had not changed. There lay within them the old dreaminess and the old sadness.

CHAPTER XVIII.

The Rival Lovers.

At the entrance of the park a heavy tread became audible, and a giant form loomed up behind the latticed gate. Frederic's huge figure well became his uniform, and he seemed to be aware of this, for there was an inconcealable self-esteem in the rigid military bearing, with which he approached both gentlemen.

"Herr Lieutenant, I come to announce to you that down in the city a carriage has just arrived with some English people, who wish to pass through our lines to the mountains."

Fernow turned quickly, revery and melancholy had all at once vanished; he was now every inch a soldier. "That is impossible!" he said. "No one must pass."

"So the Englishman has been told; but he will not submit. He has papers," he says, "and wishes to speak with the Major or the Lieutenant who is upon duty."

Fernow glanced at his watch. "Very well," he said, "I will come; I must, in any event, now go to the village. It is a very unpleasant duty," he added, turning to the surgeon, "I must send back harmless travellers whom perhaps important business urges forward, but the orders are strict and cannot be evaded."

"Unpleasant, do you call it?" laughed the surgeon. "It gives me great satisfaction to show these arrogant sons of Albion who, with their impudence and blasé manners, spread themselves over our whole Rhine country, who is lord and master here. In their own land, unfortunately, we have never ventured it."

"Are you going with me to the village!"

"No, I am going back to the castle. I leave you alone to manage your Englishmen and your triumph; for the latter that priggish volunteer, that E., has already cared. He snatched your poem from me to read to his comrades. And listen, Walter, when you have gone your rounds, come for half an hour at least, to our quarters. You are falling past rescue in the esteem of our captain, who alone refuses to recognize in you a future celebrity,--you do not drink enough for him."

With a laughing adieu, the surgeon returned to the castle, while Fernow started for the village. Frederic stamped on behind not taking his eyes for a moment from his master. But these eyes had an entirely changed expression. Once they had gazed at the professor, only with the anxiety one shows in guarding a sick, helpless child that may easily come to harm; now there lay a silent awe, a boundless admiration in the glance which followed the slightest motion of the "Lieutenant." The devotion of the faithful servant had withstood more than a fiery trial; it had become proverbial in the company.

At the entrance of the village, before an inn, halted two carriages which had arrived, one after the other. The first, which had come a quarter of an hour soonest, had been first ordered back, but its occupants would not submit to the necessity imposed upon them. Unfortunately, he understood no German, the soldiers no English, and they were obliged to carry on their conversation in the most execrable French--a very difficult and tedious proceeding. But the stranger, who resorted to his papers, had at last succeeded in obtaining a promise that his case should be laid before the proper officer, and still excited by the conversation, with grim forehead and contracted eyebrows, he had just entered the door of the inn, when the second carriage drove up. A gentleman stepped from it and approached the house. The eyes of the two met, and an expression of surprise broke at the same moment from the lips of each.

"Mr. Atkins!"

"Henry!"

"How come you here?" asked Alison, who was first to recover from his astonishment.

"I came from N. And you?"

"Direct from Paris! I dared not remain there longer, the investment began to grow serious. But I have been detained here; they will not allow me to continue my journey."

"And they will not allow us to pass."

"*Us!*" repeated Alison slowly. "Are you not alone?!" And as if startled by a sudden idea, he added hastily: "I cannot hope to find Miss Forest in your company?"

"Yes, she comes with me."

Alison was about to rush to the carriage, but he forebore. Was he abashed at the involuntary movement, or was it the remembrance of their last meeting, that all at once allayed his excitement? Enough, he controlled his emotion, and with a calmness all too indifferent to be natural, he turned again to Atkins.

"And how came you, and above all Miss Forest, here at the theatre of war?"

Atkins had foreseen the question, and was prepared. "How? Well, we wished for an inside view of the war; but in a week's time we have become weary enough of it and as you see, are now upon our return home. Doctor and Mrs. Stephen will be triumphant; they were beside themselves at what they called Miss Jane's eccentricities and my compliance."

A cold mocking smile played around Alison's lips. "But I am not so credulous as Doctor and Mrs. Stephen. This excuse may satisfy them, but I know Miss Jane too well to suppose her guilty of so aimless and romantic a thirst for adventure. She would be the last to undertake such a journey, and she would hardly have found in you so obsequious an escort."

Atkins bit his lips. He might have foreseen the answer.

"Will you have the kindness to explain to me the reason of Miss Forest's coming here?" asked Alison, even more sharply than before.

"Ask her yourself!" cried Atkins angrily. He thought it best to throw the entire responsibility upon Jane rather than betray any of her motives.

"I will do so!" replied Henry morosely, and stepped to the carriage.

His appearance had by this time ceased to be a surprise to Jane; she had seen him leave the house and enter into conversation with Atkins. She at once gained complete mastery over herself. Whatever might have passed through her soul during these last momentous hours. Mr. Alison saw only a perfectly immovable face, upon which was no trace of anxiety or passion. She had again enveloped herself in that icy dignity which had made her so unapproachable in B., and this ice now froze Henry as he stepped to the carriage to greet her. This manner decided Alison's whole bearing. He could in a case of necessity, enforce a right; but he was too proud to betray an affection in the face of such coldness.

With chilling politeness, he lifted her from the carriage, offered her his arm, and conducted her to a bench before the inn, while in a few words he informed her and Atkins that the matter in dispute had been referred to the proper officer, and he hoped that after an examination of their papers, no further hindrance would be placed in the way of their journey.

Atkins seemed to be of the same opinion; he went back to the carriage to give the driver some directions, leaving the two alone.

Jane had thrown herself down upon the bench; she knew that an explanation of her presence here would be demanded. Was she inclined to give it? It did not appear that she was.

Henry showed no haste to question her, he only gazed searchingly into her face; but it was in vain, she remained calm beneath his glance.

"It was a great surprise to me to find you here, Jane!" he began at last.

"And your coming was one to me. I expected no such meeting."

"Under the circumstances, my return was to be expected, I intended to go directly to B. where I certainly hoped to find you; but the place seems to possess small attractions for you."

In spite of the sharp scrutiny of his manner, it still betrayed an involuntary satisfaction; although Miss Forest gave him no explanation, he would far rather see her here in the midst of this tumult of war and exposed to its dangers, than safe at home with her relations in B.

Jane was spared an answer, for at this moment, Atkins returned; Henry frowned, but did not seem inclined to speak upon this subject in the presence of a third person. For some minutes there was an uncomfortable silence in the little group; further questions over the where and when were in the minds of all, and yet each avoided uttering them. Atkins at last began to converse on another subject.

"And what say you of the events which have taken place since we parted? Had you ever dreamed them possible?"

"No!" was the short, morose answer. "I was quite of the contrary opinion."

"And so was I! We judged wrongly, as it appears! This is the tame, patient, unpractical nation of thinkers! But I always said that in every one of these Germans lay hidden something of the bearish nature, and this seems now to have broken out all at once, among the whole people. It is no longer a struggle with changing fortunes; they throw down and crush all that comes in their way. An unblest success!"

"But we are not at the end yet," said Alison coldly. "The Emperor's mercenary hordes are beaten, but the republic summon the whole land to arms; nation now stands arrayed against nation. We shall yet see if the German bear does not at last find his master!"

"I wish he would find him!" growled Atkins surlily. "I wish he could be driven back over his Rhine, so that the intoxication and pride of victory might for all time be taken from him, and he again learn to dance tamely and patiently as when--"

The American got no further in his pious wishes for the future weal of Germany. Jane had suddenly risen, and stood erect and tall before him; her eyes flamed down upon the little man as if she would annihilate him.

"You quite forgot Mr. Atkins, that I too am a German by birth, and the child of German parents," she said.

Atkins stood there as if thunderstruck. "*You*, Miss Jane?" he asked, scarce believing his ears.

"Yes, *I!* and I will not hear my fatherland spoken of in this way. Keep your revilings and your hopes for Mr. Alison's ears; he shares your wishes; but do not utter them in my presence; I will bear it no longer!"

And throwing back her head with a gesture of lofty scorn, she turned away from the two men, and vanished inside the door of the house.

"What was that?" asked Alison, after a momentary pause.

Atkins seemed just to have recovered from the consternation into which this scene had thrown him. "That was the father once again! Mr. Forest just as he lived and moved! That was the very tone, the very glance with which he so imperiously felled down all that opposed him! I have never before encountered this in Jane; have you, Henry?"

Alison was silent; his eyes, with a consuming glow, had rested upon Jane during the whole, time she had stood before Atkins; they now seemed fixed upon the place where she had vanished, and there was far, very far more of admiration than of anger in their glance.

"I thought Mr. Forest hated his fatherland," he said at last, slowly, "and that he educated his daughter in that hatred."

"Oh, yes, he quarrelled with Germany his whole life long, and in his dying hour, like a despairing man, clung to its remembrance. We never thoroughly learn to know this people, Henry! I was for twenty years in Forest's house, I shared sorrow and joy with him, I knew his most secret affairs; and still, forever and eternally, one thing lay between us, this one which the most bitter experiences, the most energetic will, which the associations of twenty years could not banish from the father's heart, and which now bursts its barriers in the daughter who has inherited all this, whose education is American through and through:--this German blood!"

They were interrupted. The officer they had been expecting now appeared in the village street, accompanied by a soldier. Henry advanced some steps to meet him, and saluted him politely; then summoning all his bad French he began to explain his embarrassments; but after the first hasty words, he spoke more slowly, then stopped, began anew, and stopped again, and at

last was wholly silent; his eyes fixed, staring, and immovable, upon the face of the officer.

He too was equally surprised; he stepped back a few paces, but in so doing, he had also approached Mr. Atkins, who now, with an expression of mingled surprise and terror, cried:

"Professor Fernow!"

Henry trembled; this outcry gave him a certainty as to whose eyes they were which had beamed upon him from under the helmet. Every drop of blood vanished from the face of the young American; with one single glance he took in the whole appearance of the officer standing before him; a second flew back to the house where Jane still lingered. He seemed to comprehend something. A wild half suppressed "*Ah!*" broke from his lips, then he set his teeth firmly, and was silent. Atkins had meantime saluted Lieutenant Fernow, who with calm politeness now turned to both gentlemen.

"I regret that it must be I who announce to you unpleasant tidings; but the desired continuation of your journey is impossible. No one can pass; the guards have strict orders to make everyone turn back, whoever he may be."

"But, Professor Fernow, we must go on!" said Atkins in vexation, "and you know us well enough to assure the authorities that we are not spies."

"It is impossible to make any exceptions. I am sorry, Mr. Atkins, but the passes are guarded, and no civilian is allowed to pass from this side into the mountain region. It is possible the order may be recalled to-morrow, as we are expecting re-inforcements; but to-day, it stands in full force."

"Well, then, you will at least have the goodness to inform us where, according to your august decision, we are to pass the night. We cannot go back; the several places through which we have passed are thronged with soldiers, and we are not allowed to go forward; here in the village we can scarce count upon entertainment. Are we to camp in our carriages?"

"That will not be necessary. You are--alone?"

There should have been no question in these words; the answer was self-evident; still there lay in them an unconscious hesitation.

Atkins was about to answer, but Alison cut short his reply. He had made his conclusion.

"Yes," he said very emphatically.

"Then I think I can offer you the hospitality of my comrades. We have room enough in the castle, and our acquaintanceship," here a smile flitted over his face, "guards you from every possible suspicion. Excuse me just for a moment."

He stepped to the guard standing near, and exchanged a word with him.

"And this is the former professor of B. University!" muttered Atkins with suppressed anger. "The bookworm has such a military bearing, one would think he had all his life carried a sword at his side; and there is not the least trace of the consumption to be seen about him now."

"But for God's sake, Henry, explain to me what you are telling that falsehood for--"

"Silence!" interrupted Alison in a low, passionate voice. "No word to him of the presence of Miss Forest, not a syllable! I will be back in a moment."

He vanished in the house; Atkins gazed after him shaking his head.

Now it was Alison who was becoming incomprehensible.

Fernow had meantime returned. "Has your young countryman left us?" he asked after a hasty glance around.

"He will return directly," said Atkins, and in fact, Henry now stepped out of the doorway. Jane was leaning on his arm, and he was talking to her so excitedly and persistently, that she did not notice the figure of the young officer who stood with his back to her, until she was close to him. Then Fernow turned around.

For a moment, the two stood opposite each other, in silent, breathless astonishment. But then as it were the brightest sunshine overspread Walter's face; his blue eyes gleamed with a passionate ardor, and lighted up with an infinite happiness; the whole nature of this man seemed all aglow with one mighty emotion;--the moment of reunion had betrayed all.

But other emotions were mirrored in Jane's eyes. She shrank back affrighted and deathly pale, and would have fallen, if Alison had not supported her. His arm held hers in an iron grasp, he pressed this arm against his breast, firmly and convulsively, but she felt it not. His eyes fastened themselves penetratingly upon both, not even the quiver of an eyelash escaped him, and a terrible expression, icy and of evil omen, lay upon his face. He needed no word, no declaration--

he knew enough.

Fernow was first to recover his self-possession. He had looked only at Jane, not at Alison; he saw her alone.

"Miss Forest, I did not dream that I should also meet *you* here!" he said.

At the first tones of his voice, Henry felt from the contact of the hand resting upon his arm that Jane trembled from head to foot; he let the hand slowly fall, and this movement restored her equanimity.

"Professor Fernow--indeed--we supposed your regiment was already on the way to Paris."

The tone was abrupt and cold, and her glance shunned his; Jane knew that if she now met those eyes, all was lost.

The sunshine vanished from Walter's face; his eyes fell, and the old melancholy again returned. "We were ordered back to guard the passes," he said. His glance still sought hers, but always in vain.

"And so the repulsion we have met came from you? It must be your duty, Professor Fernow, and we submit." And with the last remnant of strength that was left her, Jane turned away from him and went back to Mr. Atkins.

Fernow's lips quivered. This was again the cold, unapproachable Miss Forest, and that moment of separation, which waking or dreaming, had never left his soul, which in all these storms and dangers, he had carried ever with him; even that moment was forgotten, vanished from her remembrance; she shrank from his glance as from something inimical, hated. That evening upon the Ruènberg again arose before him, and now as then, pride conquered bitterness. He turned away.

"Frederic!"

"Herr Lieutenant!"

"You will conduct this lady and these two gentlemen to the castle, to the Surgeon. Mr. Atkins will explain all to him, and he will communicate further with the major, Mr. Atkins, you know Doct. Behrend of B. I must confide you to his care; my duties for the present detain me in the village; I therefore beg you to excuse me."

Touching his military cap, he bade his adieux with a salutation designed for all three, and then strode hastily past the house to the meadow where the first outposts stood.

It was with a feeling of infinite satisfaction that Frederic placed himself at the head of the American trio, to conduct them to the castle. Of the conversation, which had been carried on in English, he had naturally understood nothing, and was therefore firmly convinced the hated individuals consigned to him by his lieutenant, were spies or traitors, upon whose secure keeping the salvation of the whole regiment hung. Proud and triumphant at the mission intrusted to him, with the most rigid military bearing, with head erect, he strode on, ready at the least effort at flight, to make use of his musket.

Happily, the Americans undertook nothing of the kind. The young pair went silently on ahead, without exchanging even a word; but Mr. Atkins, giving the escort a side glance, said sarcastically:

"See here, Mr. Frederic, for good or ill we are now entirely in your hands."

Frederic with immense self-importance looked down upon the little man; now indeed he was lord and master, but his mood became somewhat more gentle as he saw that the haughty American so perfectly understood his position.

"My lieutenant has ordered it!" he said emphatically; "and where my lieutenant is concerned, nothing happens wrong."

"You take a burden from my heart," said Atkins mockingly. "I am infinitely obliged to you for the gratifying intelligence that we are neither to be thrown into a dungeon nor bound in chains; but my best Mr. Frederic, this metamorphose of your lieutenant borders on the fabulous. The professor has become a military hero from head to foot. His learned Eminence now understands, as it seems, excellently, how to command, and already in six weeks, has learned to throw out orders about posts, and arrangements and comrades, as if he had grown up in the field, instead of in the study. What has his Highness done then with his former timidity and absent-mindedness?"

"Left it in B.," returned Frederic dryly, "with his books!"

At this answer, Atkins gazed at Frederic in utter astonishment.-- "Has the fellow really become intelligent!" he muttered. "Nothing now can happen after this!"

The vaunted intelligence was soon enough to have a trial. Ten minutes later, Frederic appeared on the terrace, where, with the exception of the major, who at this moment was in the castle, the other officers were sitting together. He marched right up to the surgeon. "I come from Herr Lieutenant Fernow! He sends you three spies, and wishes you to consult further with the major."

"Are you mad?" cried the surgeon with a loud laugh. "What am I to do with the spies? Are they wounded?"

"No, they are all three sound and healthy."

"Frederic, this is only another of your stupid freaks!" said the captain, thoughtfully draining his glass. "To the major, the lieutenant must have said."

"He said I must take them to the doctor," persisted Frederic, "because he comes from B. The niece of Doctor Stephen, the American Miss, is one of them."

"Miss Forest!" cried the surgeon, starting up. "Heaven and earth! Then Walter has a supreme happiness. Destiny now brings him the prize of war, and he cares nothing for it at all; sends the lady up here to us through an escort,--nobody in the whole world but Walter Fernow is capable of this!"

"Miss Forest! Who is Miss Forest? Tell us at once, Doctor!" echoed from all sides.

"Do not detain me, gentlemen!" cried the doctor excitedly. "I must go, for as it appears, a stupid error has been committed. Would you know who Miss Forest is? A relative of our first physician in B.; a young American lady, heiress to a million, twenty years old, beautiful as a picture, a meteor, which all B. admires and adores, and whose unhappy devotee I also confess myself to be. God be gracious to you Frederic, if you have been guilty of an incivility to her!"

He hastened away. But the brief sketches he had thrown off of Miss Forest, had electrified the whole company. The words, 'millionaire, twenty years old, beautiful as a picture,' had fallen like so many firebrands into the ears and hearts of the younger officers, and they all at once vowed to make the acquaintance of this interesting personage. But the æsthetic major rose solemnly and followed with long strides. The affair promised to be immensely romantic.

"Frederic," said the fat captain, who had been sitting at his drinking bowl in perfect repose of mind. "Frederic, you have again been guilty of a precious piece of stupidity."

Frederic stood there with open mouth, annihilated, quite cast down from the height of his self-importance. He threw a bewildered glance towards the entrance of the park, where his "spies" had been received with the most respectful politeness, and a second melancholy one upon the officer sitting near him, and lowering his head, he said with mournful acquiescence:

"I am at your command, Herr Captain."

CHAPTER XIX.

The Lover's Accusation.

Fernow had not counted too much on the hospitality of his comrades; the major more than fulfilled his promise. The journey could under no circumstances be pursued, but all were ready to receive the strangers for the night into the castle, where a number of finely-furnished unoccupied apartments stood at their disposal. Unfortunately, the hopes of the younger gentlemen as to a nearer acquaintance with the beautiful millionaire were doomed to disappointment. They only saw enough of her to verify the doctor's words that she was young and very beautiful; but Miss Forest did not seem inclined to receive the homage of this warlike circle. She was weary from excitement and the long journey, and after the unavoidable greeting and presentations, she withdrew at once to her chamber.

Doctor Behring looked melancholy, the other gentlemen disconcerted; but the young lady had really been pale as marble, and the few words she had spoken had cost her such apparent effort, that they could not seek to deny her the repose she so much needed. But her two companions could not decline the invitation of the gentlemen to join their social circle. Atkins, as usual, shone through his sarcastic humor, which to-night was more brilliant than ordinarily, since the test was imposed upon it of atoning for the silence of his companion. Here Alison's ignorance of German came to his aid, but the doctor, who politely assumed the office of interpreter, could scarce draw the simplest answers from the melancholy guest. He laid the fault of this persistent silence to his

own defective English, and consoled the young man with assurances of the speedy return of his friend Fernow, who was perfect master of the language. Henry's lips quivered; with icy politeness, he begged the doctor to give himself no anxiety on his account, and as for Lieutenant Fernow, his rounds to-night, seemed endless, he did not come. But the major received an evidently important piece of tidings in place of the Lieutenant; he beckoned to the adjutant, and withdrew with him. This was a signal for the breaking up of the party; and the two American gentlemen were at liberty to withdraw.

The carriages had meantime arrived, and the baggage was brought in. It was already quite dark when the two Americans entered the apartment assigned them, and which, like that given to Jane, lay in the second story of the castle, while the officers were quartered in the first, so as to be at hand in case of alarm. Atkins, with a sigh of relief, threw himself upon a sofa, Alison began to pace silently up and down the room. In vain did his companion wait for a word, a remark; not a syllable came from his lips; he still paced dumbly to and fro, his arms crossed, his head bowed. The continuous silence at length became oppressive to Atkins.

"Things cannot go on in this way, Henry!" he said. "Your betrothal must be acknowledged. You saw that strange meeting in the village as well as I. What do you think of it?"

Alison paused, and lifted his head. "Why did you come here with Miss Forest?" he asked in a cutting tone.

"Henry, I beg you----"

"Why did you come here with Miss Forest?" repeated Alison, but this time a repressed fury pulsed through his voice.

"To look after a family affair!"

Henry laughed bitterly. "Spare yourself this deception. I now know all!"

"Then you know more than I!" declared Atkins gravely. "I at least only half understood that scene. This Fernow--well, his sentiment scarce needed expression, he betrayed it plainly enough; but why Miss Jane, at sight of him, shrank back horrified as if she had seen a ghost, is incomprehensible to me."

"And to me also," said Alison with icy scorn. "One is not usually frightened at sight of anything reached at last after such a painful effort."

Atkins frowned. "It is fortunate that Miss Jane does not hear you; she would never forgive you this suspicion. You ought to know her too well to suppose she would start out on a mere aimless adventure, and now you accuse her with a contempt for all the proprieties and moralities, with having come here in pursuit of a man almost a stranger. Do you believe this of Miss Forest? Fie, Henry!"

Alison remained immovable at this reproach; but the old, chilling irony was in his voice, as he replied:

"I know that Miss Forest would die sooner than make the slightest advance of this kind to me; but, well this is not the first time that a woman's pride has been annihilated before a pair of dreamy blue eyes like these."

"You are going too far!" cried Atkins, indignantly. "I promised to be silent, but in answer to accusations like this, Jane herself ought to speak, and if she will not speak, I will! Well then, we are seeking some one here in France; we are in pursuit of a man, but this man is not named Fernow, and does not offer you the least occasion for jealousy. He bears Miss Forest's name and is her brother!"

"Her brother?" repeated Alison in bewildered surprise.

"Yes!" And Atkins now began in a brief, lucid way, to tell the young man all; of Mr. Forest's dying request, of the trace found in Hamburg, and of the subsequent investigations, up to the time of their departure from N. Alison listened in silence for a moment, he seemed to breathe more freely, but his brow remained clouded.

"You are right," he said, "I believe you now; that meeting was not pre-arranged."

Atkins gazed at him in speechless astonishment. And was this all? He had expected another reception of his tidings.

"You seem to quite forget, Henry, how nearly this matter concerns you," he said impressively. "If, as we have reason to believe, this young Mr. Forest lives; if we find him, as we hope to do, it will cost you half the fortune you expect with your bride."

"Ah, is that so?" muttered Alison. "And I would give the other half if she had never set foot on this German soil!"

Atkins started back. He had not thought this possible. If Henry could so entirely forget and

deny the merchant in his character; if he could speak in this way of the loss of a fortune, he must be terribly in earnest. He approached the young man and laid a hand upon his shoulder.

"Jealousy makes you blind," he said in a pacific tone. "Whatever there may between these two, and it is doubtless some secret, it cannot be love; Jane's terror at the unexpected meeting, betrayed anything but that."

Alison glanced at him coldly and derisively. "You are very unfortunate in your powers of observation, Mr. Atkins. Who was it that in B. derided my presentiment that I saw danger to my hopes in this consumptive professor? Does he still seem to you laughable and of little account, or do you know at least what powers have lain dormant in this man?"

"I have misjudged him, but I defy anyone to estimate justly the character of a man who for years long, plays the role of a misanthropic hermit and learned investigator, then all at once really explodes as a poet, soars aloft as a hero in war, where to all human foresight it seemed clear that he would subside at the first roar of the cannon; and, at an unexpected meeting, flames up like an eighteen-year-old enthusiast. I tell you it takes a long time to find out these Germans! Once tear them from their commonplace ruts in which they have been wont to tread, and they go on in unaccountable ways. It is so with solitary individuals, it is so with the whole nation. They hurl the pen into a corner, and draw the sword from its scabbard, as if this had been their sole business their whole life long. I fear that for the next hundred years we shall not forget in what hand the pen lay!"

Atkins said all this in a peculiar tone of grumbling admiration; but he remembered at the right time, that such observations were not designed to pacify his young companion, and dropping the subject, he said consolingly:

"But Henry, however things may turn out, Jane remains yours. You have her promise; you have received it of her own free will, and the Forests are wont to keep their word to themselves and others. In whatever manner this Fernow may cross her path, I know her, she will be yours notwithstanding."

"She will!" replied Alison morosely. "You may rely upon that, Mr. Atkins! Either with or against her consent; my determination is irrevocable, even though--" and here the former ill-omened expression reappeared upon his face--"even though a pair of blue eyes should have to close forever!"

Atkins recoiled in horror; he made no reply. Darkness had fallen; from the village, in tones long drawn out, came the evening signal; Henry started up and took his hat from the table. With a hasty step the old man stood at his side, and grasped his arm.

"Where are you going?"

"Out into the open air. To the park."

"Now? It is quite dark."

"But I must go out for all that; the air here oppresses me. Perhaps--" he smiled strangely--"perhaps I shall bring better thoughts in with me. Good-night."

Freeing his arm by a hasty movement, he left the room. Atkins gazed uneasily after him.

"Something terrible may happen. If they should chance to meet just now!--Foolishness!" he cried interrupting himself. "Just as if Henry were such a lunatic as to stake life, honor, and future for a mad jealous whim! If he were to meet this Fernow alone in the mean time, I would answer for nothing; but hero among his comrades, where discovery would be inevitable, and revenge sure--no, he would not venture it!"

He opened his door to listen if any sound came from Jane's chamber which lay opposite. "She shut herself in immediately upon our arrival," he said to himself, "and called out to me that she had already lain down--a pretence! I heard her plainly pacing to and fro; but it is of no use to renew my effort to force a conversation with her; perhaps her intervention would only make matters worse.--I had better see that we leave early to-morrow morning, for no matter where; if things come to the worst we can go back to B. When this Fernow is only out of sight, it will be an easy matter to keep our betrothed couple together, and until then--well in any event they can only sleep one single night under the same roof!"

With this consoling thought, Mr. Atkins closed the door, and returned to his chamber.

CHAPTER XX.

The Fateful Hour.

The silence that ruled throughout the castle was in striking contrast to the merry, animated life of the afternoon. A light already burned in the major's chamber, the adjutant and another of the officers were there; the other gentlemen seemed to have withdrawn, for the large ante-room, which opened upon the terrace and usually served as the evening rendezvous, was quite solitary, except that for the moment Frederic was there trying to light a fire in the grate as a protection against the cool, evening air. He undertook this service very unwillingly, and with much grumbling against the castellan who had remained behind, but saw fit to shirk the duties he had been ordered to perform, and as usual, was nowhere to be found.

Frederic had at last succeeded in kindling the dry wood heaped up in the grate; the flames leaped forth merrily, and Frederic had just resigned himself to melancholy reflection over the worthlessness of French servants in general and the shortcoming of French stewards, in particular, when a light hand was laid upon his shoulder, and turning around he saw that Miss Forest stood close behind him.

"Has Lieutenant Fernow yet returned?" she asked.

"Yes," answered Frederic greatly surprised at the question; "ten minutes ago."

"Tell him that I wish to speak with him."

Frederic was still more surprised. "With my master?"

"Yes, I wish to speak with your master. Tell him that I await him here.--Hasten!"

An imperious wave of the hand accompanied the command, for command it was, and Frederic trudged away. Just as he was outside the door, it occurred to him that it was no longer fitting for him, one of the heroes of this glorious Prussian army, to be ordered around in this way by that American Miss; but it was with him as with Mr. Atkins; his will sank powerless before her imperious tone and glance; so, growling and muttering, but obedient, he went to his master's room on the required errand.

Jane had remained back alone in the large gloomy apartment which was only partially lighted by a chandelier suspended from the ceiling. Outside profound darkness already reigned; the moon had not yet risen, the winds sighed through the trees, and through the one open window floated the cold evening air. She shuddered involuntarily, and approaching the grate sank down into an arm-chair, whose richly carved back displayed an French coat of arms.

She was now just on the verge of certainty! All must become clear between them,--the next fifteen minutes would unveil the long buried secret! With what emotions Jane looked forward to his unveiling was known to her alone. The flames as they rose and fell lighted up a face upon which was now mirrored one only expression, firm, unyielding decision. "*It must be!*" With these words, Forest had taught his daughter to endure every conflict and to bear every sorrow; but in his lifetime she had known little of sorrow or conflict. Now the trial had come; but dumbly, without lamentation, she bowed to the iron law of necessity.

For one moment, that unexpected reunion had overpowered her; but it had been for only a moment, it was not in Jane's nature to recoil from any decisive step; she was no coward, and she would now have a certainty, even though that certainty was to prove her destruction. The features wrought to their fullest energy, the compressed lips, and the determined icy glance, at this moment, gave her a really frightful resemblance to her dead father. There was not a breath of weakness, of submission; all was hard, rigid, icy; these features said--"let come what will, it shall be borne!"

The door opened from the outside, and Fernow entered. He closed the door behind him, but remained standing close to the threshold.

"You wished to see me, Miss Forest!"

"I wished an interview with you, Lieutenant Fernow. Shall we be undisturbed here?"

"I hope so for the next fifteen minutes."

"Ah--I beg you to come nearer."

He approached her slowly, and paused at the fireplace, directly opposite her. Between them crackled and glistened the flames, their lurid reflection sharply lighting up both these forms. They alone were visible in the half-darkened room; visible also to him who was pacing up and down the terrace just outside.

"I was not prepared for this summons, Miss Forest. After our meeting in the village it seemed to me as if you wished to avoid every approach on my side. I followed your command; it is you

now who have summoned me."

There lay perhaps some bitterness in these words, but Fernow's bitterness was seldom cutting or harmful. Jane recognized only a gentle, deeply painful reproach nothing more.

"My conduct may seem enigmatical to you Lieutenant Fernow," she said; "I owe you an explanation; but before I make it, I beg you to answer a few questions."

He nodded in silent assent.

"In the first place, will you tell me your given name?"

Of all questions, Fernow seemed least to have expected this. "My given name?"

"Yes."

"I am called Walter."

"Walter?" A deep breath of relief came involuntarily from Jane's breast. "Walter! I do not know that name."

"And why should you know it, Miss Forest?" he asked in evident surprise. "We were strangers until the moment you trod the soil of Germany."

"Perhaps so!" Her glance fastened itself gloomily upon the lurid flame-images which in endless transformations darted forth and fell back dissolved in nothingness; "and perhaps not! You told me once that you had been thrust out into life without parents and without a home; that you had fallen into the hands of a learned man who had led you also into the paths of science.--Was this learned man a clergyman?"

"Yes; but after a time he left his parish and his vocation to give himself entirely up to science."

Jane convulsively pressed her left hand against her breast. "And--his name?"

"Pastor Hartwig!"

A deep, momentous pause! The flames darted yet higher and threw their quivering light upon a deathly-pale, deathly-cold face; not a syllable came from her lips; she remained motionless in her place.

"Miss Forest, what does all this mean?" Walter's voice was low and anxious. "Why these strange questions? Did you know my foster-father? Were you in any way connected with him?"

At these last words, he had stepped nearer, and now stood close to her; Jane seemed not to have heard the question; she gave no answer.

"Johanna!"

A light shudder passed over her. This name! Only once before had she heard it from his lips, in that parting-hour, and it sounded like a melody out of the sweet, faraway days of her childhood. Her mother had once called her so, but only for a short space; the German name of his child had fallen a sacrifice to the rigid will of her father; it had been changed to the English, "Jane." Never since then, had she heard it again, and now as it came from his lips, it had such a soft, entreating tone--all her strength gave way before this one word.

Slowly she lifted her glance to him; it met his eyes, and for a moment, rested in them. Those blue eyes that with mournful tenderness hung upon her face--even now they exerted their mysterious power, a power which, at this moment, when all doubt must be solved, when the inevitable decision must be made, forced this proud, obstinate woman to forget the desire which had so long haunted her, to forget the momentous decision, which wrested her from all the conflict and torture of the few past hours, and with irresistible might, impelled her on into the dream he himself was dreaming at this moment.

She sat again by the willow-hedge where the first green buds of spring were opening, and he stood at her side. All around them brooded the fog, weaving its gray veil over tree and shrub; the rain-drops fell lightly upon the thirsty sod, strange whisperings and echoes thrilled the air, while above all, fell upon their ears the undulating murmurs of the distant Rhine. The present and the real dissolved in nothingness; she knew nothing, felt nothing, but that dumb, inexplicable anguish she had there experienced. She was willessly, powerlessly under the spell of these eyes.

They both started with a sudden tremor, affrighted at the same moment, by an unknown something.

The dream-picture dissolved with its swaying mists and its soft, tender reminiscences of the spring; they were again in that lofty, gloomy apartment of the gray stone castle; inside the fire blazed and crackled, outside, the autumn wind murmured through the trees; perhaps it was the wind that drove a bough against the window, and recalled them from this dream of remembrance. Jane was first to glance out in that direction, and Walter's eyes followed hers.

"We are observed!" she said softly.

"Hardly! But I will find out!"

He walked to the window, opened it wide and bent far out into the darkness, Jane had risen and leaned heavily against the back of the easy chair blazoned with its coat of arms. Now the most difficult thing was to come! He must learn that which to her was no longer a subject of doubt.

"I will see whether he is able to bear it." Perhaps only the voice of nature spoke in this tenderness; perhaps--there was a convulsive shudder at her heart--"he will smile at the discovery. Well, then, if he can bear it, I will not betray my weakness even though I should die at my brother's first kiss!"

Walter had closed the window, and now came back to her. "It is nothing," he said calmly. "Who could have interest enough in our affairs to watch us?" Jane knew already the way in which she had to go; she entered upon it with unfaltering step.

"Who? Mr. Alison!"

Walter started back and glanced at her in consternation.

"Mr. Alison? Your travelling companion?"

"Yes."

That deep glow, sudden and fiery, again mounted his face, until it covered forehead and temples.

"And he is not a stranger to you, this man? I thought it must be so the first moment I met him--Johanna--" his voice trembled in feverish excitement--"and what relation does Alison stand to you? What right has he over you?"

"I am his betrothed."

The flush vanished from his face, quickly as it had come, and a deep pallor look its place.

"His betrothed!" repeated he in a hollow voice.

"And do you love him?"

"No!"

"And still have you given him your promise--your future?"

There lay a bitter lament in this reproach. Jane's glance fell. "I have done so," she replied in a low voice.

"Then would to God we had never met!" said Walter despairingly.

Jane was silent for a moment "And why?" she asked at length almost inaudibly.

He stepped close to her, and his voice also fell to a low, but impassioned whisper.

"And do you ask? Need I tell you in words what you long since must have divined, or--is it I alone who will be wretched through your confession?"

Slowly Jane again turned her face to him; her voice sounded unnaturally calm, but her eyes were fixed upon his face with an unremitting, anxious inquiry, as if every fibre of his inner being must answer her.

"We need not make ourselves wretched on this account, we *must* not. Destiny has brought us together cruelly, perhaps, but if it denies us the highest happiness, it has not ordained our separation. Perhaps--" her glance sank deeper and deeper into his--"perhaps I can persuade my future husband to a long residence upon the Rhine. I know that a single word from my lips will make him approach you as a friend. You need not thrust back this hand! Walter. You will learn to control your emotions, you will learn to regard me as a friend as a--brother should--"

"Johanna!" interrupted he with a wild, passionate outcry. She was silent, but her eyes did not leave his face; it had now the same expression as upon that first meeting in N., as if the next moment would bring with it a decision for life or death.

"And you say this to *me*!" he broke out in uncontrollable anguish. "Must I hear it from your lips? Would you deride the enthusiast, the dreamer, in me, or do you yourself dream of a tie of ideal friendship, where love becomes sacrilege? Do not deceive yourself! Between spirits such a tie may be possible, but not between hearts; there it could spring only from coldness or from crime. Once in the solitude of my study, shut out from all the world, I too indulged in just such sickly fancies; then came this love to you, impelling me out into active life, into earnest, glowing reality. And this life and this reality now demand their right; I must either possess you or lose you

eternally! No third person can come between us."

It was the deep, ardent tone of passion, a passion that thrilled his whole being, that palpitated through every word he uttered, and before this onrushing tide of emotion, fell the last prop to which Jane had clung. But all at once, she stood erect and without support. Right through the certainty of her infinite misfortune, broke a feeling that was mightier even than despair. His words only echoes the sentiment of her own soul; she was beloved even as she herself loved.

She heaved a sigh, "You are right, Walter!" she said. "In our case love becomes sacrilege; I see it now! Between us two there can henceforth be but one command--separation!"

He shuddered at the words. "And can you speak this so calmly! and do you think I shall yield to it without having sought the utmost? Johanna, no sacred oath binds you; a promise can be dissolved, a word can be taken back--are your vows irrevocable?"

"They are!"

"Reflect"--his voice trembled in anguished entreaty--"this concerns the happiness of my whole life and yours also! You can save us both by one only decision. Can you not rend the tie which binds you to this Alison?"

Here with a violent noise the door was burst open, and Frederic's powerful voice was heard.

"Herr Lieutenant, the major begs you to come to him this instant!"

Walter turned around. "What is it!" he asked bewildered. "Where am I to go?"

"To the Herr Major; all the officers are gathered there."

"Very well, I will come."

The door closed again, and Frederic's heavy receding step was heard. Yet once more Walter turned back to Jane; his face was pale as death, but a wild unrest glowed in his eyes.

"You hear; I must go! We are in the midst of war, the next hour, the next moment may rend us asunder. Johanna, I ask you for the last time, can you, will you not be mine?"

"Never, Walter! Even though Alison set me free, and every other barrier fell--never!"

"Then farewell!" he sobbed despairingly, and stretched out his arms, as if he would clasp her to his breast; but with a trembling movement Jane recoiled from him, and raised her hand with a repelling gesture. For a moment he stood as if petrified before her; then he bowed low and distantly.

"You are right, Miss Forest--farewell!"

He was gone, and Jane remained alone--alone with this stony burden on her breast, for the final veil had not been lifted, the final word not spoken. It had pressed violently to her lips, but a strange might had held it back, the fear of seeing him suffer still more, than through her mere *no*. She who usually spared none, because she was always pitiless against herself, trembled now before a strange sorrow. For the first time the hard "*it must* be!" of her father lost its power; for the first time she felt that she could not yield to an inevitable necessity. She had firmly faced all conflicts and tortures; but when, as it now happened, she must also deliver him to this struggle, the woman in her rose in all its anxiety, all its timidity, she shrank back trembling and cowardly before the decisive word--for his sake.

To-morrow! Until then, he must school himself to familiarity with the loss; he would then more easily bear the "*why*." Now it had crushed him utterly.--And Jane's powers of endurance were also at an end. She broke out into a low sobbing; but amid the sobs she moaned softly. "I should have died if he could have borne it!"

CHAPTER XXI.

A Desperate Resolve.

Things looked very grave in the major's apartment. A council of war was in progress. The major himself, with a perplexed air, his hands crossed behind his back, was pacing up and down; the adjutant and a young lieutenant, with thoughtful, anxious faces, sat at the table around which were grouped Doctor Behrend and the other officers. Walter Fernow was the last to enter.

"I have had you summoned, gentlemen," began the major, in evident perturbation, "to acquaint you with a piece of bad news. You know that we expect reinforcements. Captain Schwarz, with his batallion from L., was to unite with us to-morrow. I sent word to him that the mountain road was safe, but I now find this an error I cannot recall."

All faces betrayed a restless suspense; all eyes were fixed upon the major, who continued excitedly as before.

"Lieutenant Witte has just returned with his scouting party. He captured a French peasant on the way, who would not answer his question, but who afterward, becoming intoxicated, prated such strange things and gave such taunting hints, that it was thought best to secure him. Intimidated by threats, he made some confessions which unfortunately were verified, word for word in a reconnoissance which at once followed. The French fusileers, strongly reinforced, hold the mountains between here and L. They have taken possession of the passes, and as they know of the intended march of our soldiers, they will no doubt attack them."

A tremor of alarm passed through the circle of officers. They knew the mountain region too well not to have a fall conception of the danger that threatened their comrades.

"I feared as much," said the captain after a momentary pause; "I feared that some military stratagem lay at the foundation of the sudden disappearance of the French soldiers. You know that within the last few days the passes have been entirely free, so that our patrols could wander unharmed over the mountains, while before, they were fired upon from every cleft in the rocks. The enemy only withdrew for a little space to make us feel more secure; but meantime he has been uniting his forces; now hidden away in their inaccessible fastnesses, they will rush forth to strike us a mortal blow."

"The all-important question," said the major, "is how we shall send a warning to L. Our communications are severed, the passes are held by the enemy, so Lieutenant Witte informs us."

"Wholly so, Herr Major," added the young officer, who at these last words, had turned to his superior. "The French hold the mountain roads as well as the pathways which lead along the cliffs on the other side of the river. It must have happened very recently, for this morning the way was clear; but they now have entire possession, and every patrol, every foot-traveller they get a glimpse of, is shot down without question."

"And if they seize our men in that narrow pass, not a single one will leave it alive," cried the major excitedly. "They will be attacked both in front and in the rear, and shot at by men concealed on the heights. It is a desperate situation!"

"Could not a messenger be sent over to E.?" asked the adjutant. "The way there is unobstructed."

"But he would have to go half around the mountains. It would take too long; at early dawn the batallion will be on the march; if the warning does not arrive by three in the morning, it will be too late!"

"Herr Major!" The voice of young Lieutenant Witte sounded somewhat timid as he ventured to give counsel, but the most courageous determination beamed from his eyes. "There is perhaps one resource, the simplest of all. We might hurl ourselves with all our available strength upon the enemy, overthrow him, and make the path free to our comrades."

In spite of the fearful gravity of the situation, the major smiled; then he shook his head.

"The advice does you all honor, Lieutenant Witte, but it could only come from a three-and-twenty year old head: it is not practicable. You have heard that the enemy has a three-fold strength; the situation makes it tenfold. We should share the fate which threatens our men without being able to rescue them."

Among the officers the proposal of their comrade had found a lively assent; they now besieged the major with entreaties to carry it into execution, but he remained firm.

"And they would seize us in the rear. Are these fellows not hiding in all the woods, have they not spies everywhere among the inhabitants? Our march, which would be immediately betrayed, would be the signal for them to follow us, and we, shut up between two fires, could go neither forward nor backward. Impossible! We will not leave our posts, but we must be doubly on our guard, tonight. Who knows how far the plans and the connections of these bands may extend? Perhaps they design to make a second attack here, and upon us."

This reasoning was so convincing, that none sought to oppose it. All were silent.

"But yet we cannot calmly look on and see our men march unsuspecting to certain destruction," interposed Doctor Behrend.

"No!" said the major decidedly. "The messenger must go. And even were the mountains tenfold more impassable, some possible way must be found."

At this moment, Walter Fernow, the only officer who had hitherto taken no part in the discussion, stepped forward, and said:

"Herr Major, I know a way out of this difficulty."

"And what is it, Lieutenant Fernow?"

"We have often enough reconnoitred the mountains. I know them perfectly. You are aware that a week ago I, with five men, undertook a *reconnoissance* around L. which at that time was occupied by the enemy. We ventured too far, we were pursued by some twenty, attacked and at last dispersed."

"Yes.--Well?"

"After a few shots, with Corporal Braun, who already had a ball in his arm, I threw myself into a side defile where they lost trace of us. The others escaped in another direction. As we pressed on, we found a narrow path half concealed in a thicket; this we took, as it seemed to lead in the direction of S. It rose gradually to the summit of the mountain, and then ran, for the most part hidden in the forest, along the crest, and at last sank precipitously, to the entrance of that narrow, impassable defile, which lies a quarter of an hour's distance from here to the right of the valley. We had for some minutes wound through dense shrubbery, and then we stood suddenly upon that projecting rocky plateau of the mountain-road, where stands a large, solitary fir-tree. From there we reach L. in a short time."

Fernow said all this lucidly and calmly. His manner had nothing of the perturbation of a man who, scarce ten minutes before, had come from an interview which had blighted his whole future. He spoke more gravely and deliberately than usual, and a gloomy calm lay upon his features; the calmness of one who has made a fixed decision. This was no time to lament over a lost love, a lost happiness; he had found a remedy, the speediest, most infallible of all.

The officers had listened in intense excitement; but the major's brow remained clouded.

"And do you believe that the French fusileers, who are at home in this region, do not know the way just as well, even better than you?" he asked.

"Know it--probably! But the question is, do they watch it; for in the first place, they cannot presuppose our knowledge of it; and in the second, they do not dream that their plan is betrayed to us. They will concentrate principally in the defiles and around the declivities; that elevated path may possibly remain out of their reckoning, and this gives it an advantage over the other ways which we know are guarded."

"And do you believe that way is passable at night?"

"On a full-moon night like this--yes! The moonlight removes the principal difficulty--that of finding the entrance amid the bushes, and following the first abrupt windings. Once beyond these, no error is possible; the light shimmers brightly enough through the trees, and from the opening of the path to L. the mountain-highway may be used; the enemy would scarce venture on so far toward the village."

The major, in deep reflection, paced up and down. "You are right;" he said at last. "The attempt must be made, although it must always be an insane venture to send two, or at the most, three men, through a region occupied by the enemy, upon the faint possibility that they have left this path unguarded. It is ten to one you will be discovered, and shot down; the danger is too great.--Do you, remember the path exactly?"

"Exactly."

"Well, then, only one thing remains to us, to find among our men, some who are confident and courageous enough to undertake such an expedition. Corporal Braun--"

"Lies sick of his wound," interrupted Walter calmly. "You see, Herr Major, that the duty falls upon me."

"Walter! Are you out of your senses?" cried Doctor Behrend, in consternation.

The major too had started back, and all the officers with a sort of horrified surprise, gazed upon their comrade. Walter was the general favorite; the pride of his equals, and the darling of his superiors. Despite his silence and modesty, he possessed that boundless influence over those around him, which is peculiar to genial natures. They had often enough seen him rush first to the conflict, they had shared danger with him; but to fall in open combat at the side of one's comrades, with weapons in one's hand, is quite a different thing from being laid low solitary and defenceless, by a ball from some ambush, or being reserved perhaps for a yet more mournful destiny. It requires more than the usual courage to look forward to such a fate, and they would sooner have sacrificed any other than Walter Fernow.

"You--you, Lieutenant Fernow?" said the major deliberately. "That will not do! I must sacrifice no officer in such an undertaking; we lost enough of them in our last battle, and need all we have

left for the next. Such an errand is the business of a common soldier, and I must let some private perform it."

Walter advanced a step nearer the table; the light of the candles fell full upon his face; it was white as marble.

"I am at this moment the only one who knows the way," he said, "the only one who can go in it. The path cannot be described; to confide the mission to another, would be to imperil its success at the outset."

"But," returned the major, in a voice full of repressed emotion; "I can now do without you least of all, and I repeat it to you, the possibility of finding the path open is too small; the probability is you would all be shot down!"

"Perhaps, and perhaps not! In any event, this possibility shall not hold me back from a venture, that you would entrust to a common soldier."

The major stepped hastily to him and reached him his hand. "You are right!" he said simply. "Well, then, go in God's name! If you succeed, you rescue some hundreds of my brave boys, if not--well, he who dies from a stray bullet, meets none the less a hero's death.--How many men will you take with you?"

"Not any! If we are attacked we must yield to numbers, and where one falls, the others are not likely to escape. It would be to sacrifice men uselessly, as a single one will suffice to carry the message. Besides, a number might greatly enhance the danger; a single person would be more likely to escape discovery."

The old superior officer, with undisguised admiration, gazed upon the young poet and dreamer, as Walter was often enough jestingly called, but who, once aroused from his reverie, had shown such a cool, energetic, practical good sense, in even the minutest details of the service. He indeed divined nothing of the storm which had just been raging in this man's soul, or the source of the calmness with which he rushed into danger.

"And you will go alone? When do you think of starting?"

"Not for an hour. I must wait until the moon rises, as I need its full light to show me the way to the heights.--Even though some unforeseen hindrance should arise, I have plenty of time."

"Well, then, gentlemen," said the major to the other officers, "go now, and prepare yourselves for any alarm that may be given tonight. Herr Captain, see that the posts are doubly guarded, that the orders previously given are exactly carried out. I will meantime advise with Lieutenant Fernow."

The officers obeyed, but at the door, the captain turned around once more.

"Good-night, Lieutenant Fernow!" he said.

A smile flitted over Walter's lips; too well he knew the meaning of the farewell.

"Good-night, captain! Good-night, gentlemen!"

Then turning, he met the eyes of Doctor Behrend resting gravely and reproachfully upon him.

"Do you then care nothing at all for your life?" he asked beneath his breath.

"No!" was the melancholy answer given in the same tone.

The doctor sighed. "I shall see you before you leave?"

"Probably! But go now, Robert!"

With another and still heavier sigh, the surgeon followed the others, and Walter remained alone with the major and the adjutant.

CHAPTER XXII.

A Fearful Alternative.

A Quarter of an hour might have passed, when he left his superior officers to go to his own room. He had just set foot in the corridor when a dark figure left the wall where it had been

standing motionless, and crossed his path.

"Lieutenant Fernow, I have been a long time awaiting you!"

Walter paused; he recognized the American.

"What do you want of me, Mr. Alison?"

"Can I have the honor of a conversation with you?"

Fernow glanced at his watch, he had nearly an hour's time. "I am at your service," he said.

He knew what was coming; a single glance at Alison's face had convinced him that Jane's apprehensions were well founded. And this also! Not a single drop of the bitter cup was to be spared him!

Alison, without a word further, had passed on before him, and opened a door opposite. Walter for a moment hesitated about entering; it was the room in which he had just been speaking with Jane. Alison remarked his embarrassment.

"We shall be undisturbed here. Or, have you perhaps an antipathy to this room?"

Without answering, the young officer hastily passed the threshold, and Alison followed him. The room was again quite solitary. The hanging lamp sent down its subdued light, the fire in the grate burned low; but red gleams now and then shot forth from the embers, throwing an ill-omened light around these two forms. Walter, as before, leaned against the mantel; opposite him, in the place where Jane had sat, stood Henry; between them the dim reflection of the fire.

Strange as it might seem, the same sentiment glowed in the souls of these two men; fiery, overmastering passion for one being, and both alike hopeless, stood amid the ruins of their happiness; but in the outward appearance of the two, this common sentiment found an infinitely different expression.

Upon the German's face lay a white, motionless calm; his deep, dreamy nature was not one to break loose from a passion which had engraven itself in the profoundest depths of his heart, and had taken root there forever. He could neither conquer nor endure it; but the alternative he had chosen, had nothing in it base or humiliating. "He who falls by a stray bullet, dies also a hero's death," thought he, and there was something like inspiration in the glance he now turned to the park, where rays of light began to pierce the shadows among the trees--the moon had just risen in the East.

In striking contrast to him was the man who stood opposite--Henry's features were distorted by a really demoniac fury; his eyes had a glance of evil omen, and only by an exertion of all his strength could he control the convulsive quivering of his lips. The cool calculation with which the young merchant had stretched forth his hand to grasp a million, had succeeded; but the love he had promised himself with all this was of far more value. Fearfully, passion asserted her right; under her spell, blind, unsympathetic for all else, he was about to sacrifice life and honor for her sake.

Walter waited in silence for some minutes, until Alison could so control his emotion as to speak. His voice had a hoarse, metallic tone, as he at last said:

"I wish an explanation from you, Lieutenant Fernow, which you cannot well deny me. Almost an hour ago you had an interview in this room with Miss Forest."

"Yes; and were you a witness of it?"

"I was!"

The young officer remained perfectly calm. "Then you must have heard what was said."

Alison's lips curled in scorn. "You spoke German with her, the beloved mother-tongue! And so the confessions of your love and tenderness were debarred from me. But one name, I heard. It sounded very sweet, that 'Johanna,' almost as sweet as the 'Walter' from her lips!"

A slight flush passed over Walter's face; but he quickly repressed his emotion. "I believe you had a question to ask me, Mr. Alison," he said. "Let us stick to our subject!"

"Yes, let us stick to our subject!" replied Alison, in a hollow voice. "You love Miss Forest!"

"Yes!"

"And are loved in return?" Walter was silent, but Alison's eyes flamed upon him in such consuming hatred, that any evasion here would have seemed cowardice.

"Yes!" he returned firmly.

A sound came from Henry's lips like the hiss of a wounded serpent.

"I regret that I must disturb this perfect understanding. Perhaps Miss Forest has already told you that I have prior rights, and am not inclined to resign them to you."

"She has told me!"

"Well, then, you must understand that if the hand of Miss Forest is pledged to me, I will tolerate no love in her to any one but her future husband; at least to no *living* man!"

Walter recoiled in horror. "Does that mean a challenge?"

"Yes; do not start back, Lieutenant Fernow, I waive all your German proprieties as to witnesses, seconds and preliminaries, I offer you a far simpler method. We will draw lots, or throw dice, we two alone, and fortune shall decide. The losing one shall pledge his word of honor not to be among the living twenty-four hours after, and the thing is done."

There was an expression of contempt on Walter's face as he coldly replied; "I regret, Mr. Alison, that this sort of satisfaction does not accord with my ideas of honor. If we must be arrayed against each other, let it be in the orthodox way, eye to eye with weapon in hand. I would fight for my life; not cast lots for it."

Alison's eyes flashed in annihilating scorn. "It certainly may not be so poetical as your German duel, but it is more--sure!"

"But I will not consent. And besides you seem to forget that such a thing is not to be thought of while I belong to the army. My life is not my own, it is my country's. I must not deprive my fatherland of one even the least of its defenders, and while the war lasts, I must neither seek nor yield to private revenge. If I fall, your wish will be gratified; if not, after peace is declared, I am ready to give you the required satisfaction--not before!"

Alison laughed derisively. "After the peace! Perhaps when you have returned to your professor's chair, when rector and regent, when in case of need the whole university covers you with the ægis of science; when all rise in moral exasperation against a barbarism of the middle ages, least of all befitting a teacher of youth. Then at last, impelled by these higher considerations, you will decline! It is a masterly idea, Lieutenant Fernow! But I am not simple enough to fall into the snare you set for me!"

Walter's face glowed with suppressed rage. Involuntarily, ha laid his hand upon his sword.

"How many of the battles in which I have fought, have you gazed at through a spy-glass?" he asked coolly.

The reproach was effectual, but it only the more enraged Alison. It was a tiger's glance he gave the man standing before him.

"Let us end this!" he said savagely. "I offer you one more choice. Give me this night the satisfaction I demand either in my way or in yours. I am ready for all, or--"

"Or what?"

"The consequences be upon your own head!"

Walter crossed his arms and gazed down at his enemy, as if from an unapproachable height. "It cannot possibly happen tonight, as I shall not be here. I must go to the mountains--" A wild, terrible gleam shot suddenly from Alison's eyes; he bent forward and listened, intent and breathless, to what followed--"and all that remains to me is to repeat to you my former words: our quarrel must rest until the end of the war; it cannot be settled a day sooner, and if you seek to force me through insults, I shall appeal to my superior officers."

The last threat was quite unnecessary, for Alison had all at once become calm, strangely calm; he smiled, but it was a smile so icy-cold as to make one shudder.

"Another irrevocable *no*! Very well! But if we should chance to meet again, Lieutenant Fernow, remember that it was I who offered you honorable combat, and that you refused it. *Au revoir!*"

He went. Walter remained motionless in his place and gazed silently down at the last faint glow of the expiring embers. Dead, like the bright glowing flames that had lighted his interview with Jane; dead alike their vivid reflection, and last weary, fitful gleams; but now and then solitary sparks quivered here and there, danced awhile like *ignes fatui* to and fro, and then at last sank away like all else, in dust and ashes. Through the window, the moon now threw a long silver stripe over the floor of the room. It would soon be time to go.

The door hastily opened; this time it was Mr. Atkins who excitedly entered, and approached Fernow.

"I have been seeking you, Lieutenant Fernow!" he said uneasily. "You are alone; has Mr. Alison not been with you?"

"He has just left me."

"I thought as much!" muttered Atkins. "I met him on the stairs. What has happened? What is the trouble between you?"

Walter turned to go. "That, Mr. Atkins, is a matter which concerns him and me alone. Good-night."

Atkins held him back; there was a strange uneasiness in his face. "Listen to reason, Lieutenant Fernow," he said, "and at least, give me an answer. Alison will tell me nothing, but his face says enough. I come to warn you; guard yourself against him!"

Walter shrugged his shoulders. "If you think my life is in danger, you tell me nothing new," he said. "Mr. Alison himself has declared that one of us must leave the world."

"Has he challenged you?"

"He has; and I have told him that the quarrel must rest until the end of the war."

"You little know Henry," said Atkins, "if you think he will submit to that condition. A man driven to madness by passion, does not wait months for his revenge. I do not like the look in his eyes, and I fear it will not be well for you both to sleep to-night under one roof."

"That will not happen," said Walter calmly, "I have to go to the mountains."

"And why must you go?" asked Atkins.

"My errand is a military secret."

"I hope you go well guarded?"

"I am to go alone."

Atkins started back and scanned him from head to foot. "It is very inconsiderate in you to tell this so openly," he said half aloud.

"I certainly should not tell it to the castle servants or to the villagers," said Walter. "I know you well enough, Mr. Atkins, to fear no treachery on your part."

"And have you told Henry?"

"Yes, as much as I have told you, nothing more!"

"This is German simplicity which I cannot at all understand!" muttered Atkins; then laying his hand on the young man's arm, he said with almost frightful earnestness.

"Lieutenant Fernow, follow my advice. Do not go to the mountains to-night. Your life is threatened; yours alone. Delegate this duty to one of your comrades."

"I cannot!"

"Then at least take a guard with you."

"It is impossible, Mr. Atkins!"

"Well, then, you rush onto your own destruction," cried Atkins excitedly. "I have done my duty; now the consequences be upon your own head!"

"Compose yourself," returned Walter, with a gesture of impatience. "Your apprehensions are unfounded. I tell you it is impossible for any one who does not know the password to go from here to the mountains. We have a triple line of outposts."

These words failed to pacify Atkins. "You do not know Alison!" he said. "He is an uncontrollable nature whom circumstances and education have subdued only to outward seeming in making him simply a man of business. If such a nature once bursts its long accustomed barriers, it passes all bounds. In his present mood he is capable of anything."

"But not of murder!" said Walter calmly.

"But you have denied him the one legitimate way of revenge, and he will hardly concern himself with ideal conceptions of right and wrong. Be on your guard, Lieutenant Fernow; I cannot vouch for him."

"I have a better opinion of Mr. Alison than you have," returned Walter. "He may hate me to death, but I do not think him capable of the crime you have hinted at. Tell him"--here a peculiar, almost ghastly smile passed over the melancholy face of the young officer--"tell him he need not take my life, his wish may be fulfilled without it. I must go, Mr. Atkins--give my regards to Miss Forest, and--farewell?"

Hastily leaving the room he went to his own chamber.

CHAPTER XXIII.

The Vengeance of Passion.

Alison had met Atkins at the foot of the stairs leading to their apartments, but he had not mounted them. He directed his steps to the room of the French steward of the castle, which had been pointed out to him by one of the soldiers.

The steward, an old man, with sharp, intelligent face, and dark, flashing eyes, sat at a table on which a lamp was burning, and examined his books. He looked up morosely as the door opened, but the embittered resentment which his features wore and with which he met everyone belonging to the hated soldiers quartered in the house, softened somewhat as he recognized the visitor. He knew that the travellers were Americans, forced to seek a night's rest in the castle from the impossibility of finding entertainment in the village. Although guests of the enemy, they did not belong to the hated nation, and the grim reserve which Alison had this afternoon shown in the circle of the officers, and which the Frenchman had found opportunity to observe, gave him a decided advantage. The steward rose, and approached his visitor politely, but still with a sort of chilling reserve.

"In what way can I serve you, Monsieur?"

Henry circumspectly closed the door, and hastily scanned the apartment. "I wish to speak with you on a matter of importance," he said. "Are we safe from intrusion?"

"Perfectly so!" returned the Frenchman. "The room, as you see, has only this one door."

Alison drew near the table, and his voice sank to a whisper. "You know, I suppose, that we are forbidden to pursue our journey. My companions have consented to remain here for the night, but I must in any event go on to the mountains."

"That is impossible, Monsieur," said the Frenchman politely but coldly. "The Prussians hold guard over every avenue; no person can reach the mountain-road without their permission."

Alison gazed at the Frenchman sharply and searchingly. "And would you not know how to get there in spite of the guards, if you wished to send tidings to the French sharpshooters in the mountains!"

"I tell you, Monsieur, that all the avenues are guarded."

"There are always lurking-places in the mountains not known to the enemy, and which the inhabitants can use all the more safely," said Alison with great positiveness. "This very afternoon I heard the officers express their opinion, that in spite of the sharpest watch, a secret understandings till existed between the village and the mountains, and in this case there must be such a path."

"Possibly. But I know of none."

Instead of answering, Alison drew forth his letter-case, took from it a bank-note and silently held it towards the old man. He must have known the value of this piece of paper, and it must have been very great, for he gazed in terror at the American.

"The price of the path," said he curtly.

"I do not allow myself to be bribed, Monsieur," said the Frenchman decidedly.

Alison quietly laid the banknote on the table. "Not by the Germans, I understand that in advance! They might offer you tenfold this sum, and it would be in vain. But I do not belong to them,--I am not their friend. Did my business concern their interests, I should be allowed to pass their line. The fact that I am compelled to seek your aid, may prove to you that as a Frenchman you can assume the responsibility of this treachery. You *must* tell me the way!"

The argument was just, and the lordly confidence of the American did not fail of its effect upon the old steward; still he did not yield.

"Would you go alone, Monsieur?"

"Certainly."

"And this very night? You perhaps know what you will meet there."

"I do!" declared Alison, who thought it best to conceal his entire ignorance of affairs, and pretend to have been initiated. He reached his goal. He succeeded in goading on the Frenchman in the old steward's nature; in making serviceable his hatred to the enemy. The steward well knew what threatened in the mountains to-night, and the circumstance that the stranger, without the knowledge of the Germans, wished to go there alone, convinced him that here he had to deal with an ally. And so his resistance gave way.

"There is such a path," he said, lowering his voice. "It leads over the mountains to L. The Germans do not know it; even if they have chanced to discover it, it ends for them in the first defile on the right. They cannot possibly know that it continues on the other side, and extending through the forest, connects with our park. The beginning and end are too much hidden by rifts in the rock and by shrubbery; it is a secret of ours."

Alison's eyes gleamed with a savage joy. "Very well; and how am I to find the path?" he asked.

"You go into the park, and pass up the principal avenue, which is unguarded; to the left you will see a statue of Flora. Go past this into the grotto close by. It is not so closely shut in by the rocky walls, as it appears to be; there is a way of egress from it to the forest. Follow the narrow path through the bushes; there is but one, you cannot err, and in ten minutes you will have reached the defile; it leads to the left up the mountain road to the rocky plateau where stands a solitary fir. There you are already beyond the lines, and far enough from them not to be remarked."

Alison had listened in breathless attention, as if he would hold fast every word in his remembrance; now with an expression of sullen triumph in his eyes, he took the bank-note from the table and handed it to the Frenchman.

"I thank you!" he said. "Here, take this!"

The old man hesitated. "I did not do this for money, Monsieur," he said.

"I know it. It was from hatred to the enemy. Give yourself no uneasiness. I do not need the money, at least not for to-night," he added, while his lips curled with a cold, bitter irony. "But the information is worth more to me than this paper; take it; it will not lay heavy on your conscience!"

The steward threw one more glance at the money. One would hardly venture such a sum merely to compromise him, and the path certainly was not of so high value to the Prussians as to this morose stranger. He took the reward and muttered some words of thanks.

When about to go, Alison turned and gazed steadily and threateningly at the old man.

"Your complicity ensures your silence. I need not enjoin silence upon you. The Germans would shoot you if they knew you had helped me through their lines."

"I know it, Monsieur."

"If I return towards morning, I shall have found entrance to the mountains impossible, and shall be supposed to have passed the night in the castle. You are not to know otherwise.--Adieu!"

CHAPTER XXIV.

The Shadow of Doom.

In Walter's chamber a bright light was also burning, but upon his entrance, he found no one there but Frederic.

"Doctor Behrend has been here the whole time," he said, "and he waited a long while for you; but he has been summoned over to the village. I believe Corporal Braun is in a very bad state."

Walter seemed unpleasantly surprised at these tidings. "Has Doctor Behrend gone? he asked. I wished very much to speak with him."

"The doctor wished it too. He said I should have ready your cloak and your pistols, as you were to go away this evening, and would not take me with you this time as usual when you go out on patrol duty."

"No, Frederic, not this time," said Walter absently. He paced several times up and down, then he halted suddenly. "It is all the same now!" he murmured. "Why not tell him what I was going to confide to Robert?--Frederic!"

"Herr Lieutenant!"

"It is possible an attack may be made to-night. Have you received orders to be ready for an alarm?"

"Yes, at ten o'clock with two men I am to patrol the park. It is for the sake of security, the captain says, because it is not guarded."

"Very well! In any event you will see the doctor before this. It was very necessary that I should speak with him, but I must go, and I have no time to seek him in the village. You will deliver my errand word for word, just as I tell you; but to him alone, and no other. Do you hear?"

"To no other!"

The next words were very difficult ones for Walter to speak. He struggled with himself for some moments.

"If it should come to a conflict, he is the only one who will not have to take a part in it, and the French sharp-shooters around here are a barbarous horde to whom nothing is sacred. He must protect Miss Forest so far as lies in his power."

"The American Miss?" returned Frederic slowly.

"Yes!" Walter again hesitated, but then all at once the words broke hasty and ardent, from his lips. "Tell him I demand it of him as a last duty of friendship. Miss Forest has been to me the one dearest in the wide world! He shall guard her if he must, with his life!"

Frederic stood there dumb with consternation. This then was the solution of that mysterious hostility between his master and the American Miss! The poor fellow's head began to swim; he was quite incapable of understanding the relation of things.

"You must repeat this word for word!"

"I am at your command, Herr Lieutenant!" answered Frederic mechanically. He stood there as if rooted to his place, and saw his master examine the pistols and throw on the cloak. When he had arrived at the door, Frederic rushed after him.

"Herr Professor!"

Walter paused and glanced around. During the whole war, Frederic had not called him by this name, he had never forgotten the military title of his master, which it had always been his highest delight to emphasize as much as possible. How had this souvenir of B. all at once occurred to him? Surprised at the old familiar name unheard so long, Fernow gazed in the face of his former servant. It was fearfully pale, and there lay a strange repose in the usually expressionless features.

"Herr Professor"--there was a tone of anguished entreaty in the question--"must you really go quite alone? Can you not take me with you--certainly not?"

"No, I cannot!" said Walter gravely. "What has come over you all at once, Frederic? You have a duty to perform to-night and so have I; to such duties we have both become accustomed since the war."

Frederic heaved a sigh. "I do not know why it is, but, during the whole war I have not felt as I feel to-night. Now, when you are about to go, an icy shudder passes through me. Herr Professor," he broke out suddenly and despairingly, "I certainly shall never see you again!"

Walter gazed silently up to him. How strange it was! even this robust, thoroughly healthy nature, usually so unsusceptible to mental influences, at this moment seemed over-powered by a presentiment! Was it love for his master that gave him this instinct? He sought to guard himself against showing any weakness, he knew that the slightest token of weakness would quite rob the giant soldier before him of the little self-possession left him, and transform him into a sobbing child.

"You are out of your senses!" he said half displeased, and with a faint attempt to laugh. "Is this the first time that I have gone into danger? You ought to be ashamed of yourself, Frederic! I really believe you are weeping."

Frederic did not answer, but he kept his clear-blue eyes fixed immovably on his master's face; at this moment, with a gift of introspection wonderfully enhanced, he saw that Fernow's glance did not accord with his words; he saw separation in it, and all subordination, all the military usage which for months long he had conscientiously observed, suddenly vanished; he saw before him only his professor whom he had so often nursed in illness, whom he had watched and guarded as a mother guards her child, who to him had been the one goal, the one object of life.

He sobbed aloud, and a stream of tears gushed from his eyes.

"Herr Professor," he cried piteously, "would to God I could be shot down instead of you! A calamity is to happen to-night; I know it. One of us will certainly fall."

Walter smiled sadly and gently; he felt who this one would be; but the touching devotion of his servant in his parting hour, asserted its right. He now forgot all else, but not those long nights of illness during which Frederic had sat at his bedside, with a fidelity and self-renunciation he could never repay and never forget, and--in such a moment all arbitrary barriers fall, all chasms are bridged over--the officer threw his arms around his servant's neck and then warmly and affectionately pressed his hand. "Good-night, Frederic," he said softly, "Good-by! Whatever may happen to me, your future is provided for. Doctor Stephen has the requisite papers in his hands. And now--" he hastily drew himself up "now let me go, it must be!"

Frederic obeyed. He hesitatingly let go the hand which he had held in both of his, and stepped back. Once again Walter waved him an adieu, and then hurried from the room. With bowed head, the poor fellow stole to a window. He saw enveloped in its military cloak the tall figure which, clearly defined in the moonlight, strode over the terrace; he heard the step grow fainter and fainter in the distance, until its last echo died away. Regretful tears gushed anew from his eyes; with incontestable certainty, he felt that he had seen his master for the last time.

CHAPTER XXV.

To the Rescue.

"Rouse up, Jane! Do not again refuse to see me, it is a matter of the greatest importance, and I must speak with you!"

With these words, Mr. Atkins knocked violently at the door of Jane's chamber, and compelled an entrance. The bolt was shoved back, and the door opened. A light also burned here. Jane was fully dressed, and a glance at the bed showed that it had not yet been disturbed. She evidently had not thought of sleeping. She advanced to meet him with mournful questioning in her face; her eyes were weak and inflamed from inward excitement, but they bore no traces of tears. Jane did not know that weeping which so often is the woman's only and supremest consolation; she had forgotten it in her childhood. That sobbing into which she had once broke out at the death-bed of her father, when for the moment her strength had utterly given way, had come over her, wild and passionate, like a convulsion, but tearless. Her rigid, iron nature knew not even the outward signs of weakness; she bore all sorrow as she had seen her father bear it; like a man.

Atkins allowed her no time to utter the question that trembled on her lips. "It is about a danger," he said hastily. "I thought to delay it, to avert it, but it proves greater than I had believed. My power is at an end; you must now interpose."

"What danger?" asked Jane, apprehensive and breathless. "Of what do you speak?"

"Of Alison and Lieutenant Fernow. They have come in conflict; Henry has challenged the Professor, who denies him satisfaction until the end of the war. Henry meditates revenge--they must not meet a second time."

Jane was horrified at this tidings, but she soon recovered her self-possession.

"You are right," she said with intensest bitterness. "They must not meet a second time; a fight between them and for my sake, would be worse than murder. Henry is in error; only one single word is needed to undeceive him; to-morrow I was going to speak that word; now there is not a moment to lose. Summon him here immediately!"

Atkins shook his head. "But Henry is nowhere to be found, I have already searched the whole castle for him in vain."

"And Walter? For God's sake where is Walter?"

Atkins elevated his eyebrows. "Lieutenant Fernow has gone to the mountains," he said gravely, "On some secret service, and alone, Henry knows that. If he follows--Jane, I need not tell you what calamity I fear."

For a moment Jane stood there rigid as a statue; then by a powerful effort, she roused herself from her stupor, and regained the whole decision of her character.

"I know Henry! He must not go until I have spoken with him; we must have him back at any

price. I believe"--she placed her hand on her forehead, despite the bewildering anguish, striving to collect her thoughts,--"I believe there is only a single pass leading from here to the mountains. Did they not tell us so this morning?"

"Only one, and the Germans hold that; but Henry will hardly seek that path; he knows that the guards would be sure to repel him."

"So he could only go as far as the path. He must be there; I will seek him!"

Atkins tried to hold her back. "For God's sake!" he cried, "remember that we are in a foreign land, amid the storms of war; it is night, you could not possibly go alone."

Jane did not listen; she had already thrown her travelling cloak around her shoulders.

"Remain here, Mr. Atkins. If we should all three leave the castle, they might suspect us. You could have no influence over Henry; I must speak to him myself."

She was out of the door, and down the steps, before Atkins' expostulations were at an end. Involuntarily he wrung his hands.

"What an infernal night this is! This blue-eyed German has brought us all three into mortal danger! But Jane is right, I ought not to go out--it is better for them to arrange this among themselves. She must find him in the park. He can be nowhere else."

CHAPTER XXVI.

A Mortal Agony.

The broad, forest-like park of the castle of S. lay bathed in the clearest moonlight and enveloped in the deepest silence, interrupted only now and then by the heavy tread of the patrols, who at the captain's order were pacing up and down. They had finished their round through the principal avenue, without encountering any suspicious person, and had now separated according to the orders given them, to explore the adjoining thickets and pathways. Frederic took the left, the other two the right, and they were to meet again on the terrace.

Slowly, his musket in hand, Frederic marched forward on the designated way. He needed not to hasten; there was plenty of time; nor to step lightly, a thing always exceedingly difficult for him; he had as before stated, met nothing suspicious on his round. Frederic was not fitted for any service demanding great intelligence, but he perfectly understood and would conscientiously execute the command to keep his eyes and ears open, to hold the strictest watch possible over all around, and at the slightest disturbance, hasten back to the castle to give the alarm. This responsible service had one great advantage for Frederic; it demanded his strictest attention, and left him no time for unavailing regrets over his master's absence, or troubled apprehensions as to his fate.

He had gone over a part of his beat, and was now close by the statue of Flora, which reared its white, moon-lighted form in the midst of a broad, grassy expanse. It had been particularly impressed upon him not to pass the shell-covered grotto near by without throwing a sharp glance within. Just as he reached the statue, he paused, and placed his hand on the lock of his musket. But he lowered the weapon even before a cry of alarm had broken from his lips. A long, white dress, beneath a dark travelling cloak, had betrayed a woman's form looming up behind the shrubbery; and as the figure now stepped out into the full moonlight, he recognized Miss Forest.

Frederic's earlier suspicion began to rise stronger than ever; he still clung obstinately to the idea that the strangers were spies, and that the "American Miss" was the most dangerous of the three. Her being a woman was nothing in her favor; no man could excel her in cleverness, and this strange, solitary meeting, gave new ground for Frederic's suspicion.

"What are you doing here in the park, Miss Forest?" he asked mistrustfully. "You should be more on your guard. Our password must be unknown to you, and if it had not been for your dress, I should have shot you."

Jane paid no heed to the warning; she stepped still nearer, and stood close before him. "Is it you, Frederic? Thank God that I have at least, found *you*!" she said.

Frederic was little inclined to echo this "thank God!" in the ardor of his military duty, he might have repelled her roughly, but remembrance of the words of his master fettered his tongue, and made every harsh tone impossible.

"Go back, Miss!" he said. "You must not remain here, and I cannot allow you to wander around in this way."

Jane seemed to regard the command as little as the threat that had preceded it. "You have looked through the park?" she said excitedly. "Have you not met Mr. Alison?"

Frederic's suspicion grew. Mr. Alison! What business had he here? Was this whole American crew roaming around the park? Something serious must lie at the bottom of all this.

"Mr. Alison is not here!" he said very decidedly. "We have gone our rounds through the park, and if he had been here, we must have seen him."

A sudden terror blanched Jane's face. "Almighty God! I came too late. He must already have found a path!" she cried despairingly. But this was no time to yield to despair, and meeting Frederic had already kindled a new ray of hope in her soul.

"Do you know where your master is gone?" she asked resolutely.

"No, I do not know," replied Frederic crabbedly; "but I tell you now in full earnest, Miss--"

"He is in the mountains," interrupted Jane. "I must go there at once; I must follow him."

Frederic stared at her in utter consternation. "God help me, Miss," he said, "but I believe you have lost your reason! Would you go to the mountains? Among the sharpshooters? You may as well make yourself content, you certainly cannot pass our lines: they are well guarded."

"I know it!" said Jane, "but yet I must go. They will order me back, but you, Frederic, know the pass-word, and must help me through the outposts."

In the excess of his horror, Frederic almost let his musket fall; but he drew himself bolt upright and with an expression of righteous indignation and boundless self-importance, he gazed down upon the young lady.

"Miss Forest," he said very emphatically, "anybody would know you come from that savage, godless America. Such wickedness would never enter the mind of a German Christian man or woman. I must help you through the outposts? Through *our* outposts? And to crown all, I am to give you the pass--word! You surely have no idea of war, or of what a soldier's duty really is!"

Jane stepped nearer to him and her voice sank to a low whisper.

"The life of your master is at stake; listen Frederic,--*your master*! A danger threatens him which does not come from the enemy, of which he has no suspicion, and which I alone know. He is lost, if I do not succeed in warning him. Do you understand now that I must go to him at any price?"

A quiver of pain passed over the soldier's face. "I thought as much!" he cried despairingly. "I knew that something dreadful would happen to-night!"

"There will be no dreadful event," said Jane confidently, "if I can only reach your master in season; and I can reach him, if you make it possible for me to follow him. You now know how much is at stake, Frederic; you will help me, will you not?"

Frederic shook his head. "I must not!" he said in a hollow voice.

In despairing entreaty, Jane grasped both his hands. "But I tell you, the life of your master is in peril; without my warning, he is lost! Will you let him die when a single word from you can save him? Good Heavens! Frederic, you must see that here is no treachery, no deception; that only a mortal agony for him alone urges me on. By your love for your master I implore you, help me through the lines!"

Frederic gazed silently down upon her; he saw and felt the truth of her words; a deathly anguish spoke from her face, entreated from her lips; and this anguish was for his master, concerned only his rescue. There were tears in the poor fellow's eyes; they fell slowly down his cheeks; but he only grasped his musket the more firmly.

"I cannot, Miss Forest! I cannot be false to my duty here; I could not help you through our lines, even to save my master's life. Don't look at me in that way; don't entreat me further! By God above, I cannot do as you wish!"

Jane drew back, and let his arm fall. Her last hope had vanished; the sentiment of duty had more power over Frederic, than even his passionate love for his master. Atkins was right; these Germans were terrible in their iron-sentiment of duty.

"And so Walter is lost!" she moaned faintly.

Frederic shuddered. "Tempt me no further, Miss Forest," he said, "Frederic Erdmann is no traitor!"

Jane trembled at these words. Her wide-open eyes were full of terror.

"What name is that? What are you called?"

"Erdmann! Did you not know that? But you have always heard them call me only Frederic."

Jane leaned against the base of the statue, her breast rose and fell in uncontrollable emotion, her eyes hung upon the man standing before her with an expression that could not be defined; sorrow, anxiety, consternation, all flamed up in that glance, and through all, beamed something like the presage of an infinite happiness.

"Do you know--do you know a young mechanic, Franz Erdmann, of M., who wandered over to France, lived in B., and is now serving in the Prussian army?"

"Why should I not know him?" replied Frederic, surprised more at the strange tone of the question than at the glance which accompanied it. "He is my brother, that is, my foster-brother, as he is usually called."

"And so"--Jane's voice was almost stifled in her terrible excitement--"and so you was that boy whom Erdmann's parents brought from Hamburg?--who grew up with him in M., and after the death of his parents, was adopted by pastor Hartwig! Speak, for God's sake--yes or no!"

"Certainly it was I," replied Frederic. "But where in the world, Miss Forest, did you learn all this!"

Jane did not answer. She summoned all her strength; upon the next question, hung life or death for her.

"And Professor Fernow! He too was reared by pastor Hartwig; but how came he there!"

"Well, it all happened very simply; the pastor took us both into his house the same year. Me first, out of favor and sympathy, because no one else would have me, and a few months later, my master, his sister's son, because his parents had suddenly died, and he had no other relations. As I was already there, he could not very well send me away, and so he kept us both. He did not do it willingly, and we had to pay dear for the bread he gave us; I by hard work around the house, and my master at the writing-desk; the pastor was determined he should be a scholar, but at the first, he would far rather have made verses. Well, all that soon ended; pastor Hartwig kept us well in rein.--God rest his soul! It did not go well with me until he really was at rest, and my young master, who became his heir, took me in charge. We have been almost twenty years together."

Jane had listened breathlessly, her hands pressed against her heart, which she thought must burst, and yet a stony burden had been lifted from it. The out-cry of happiness that broke from her inmost soul, was it for the brother found at last, or for him she had so long regarded as a brother! She did not know, but even the thought of Walter's dangers, receded at this moment; she was conscious of only one thing:--the fearful contradiction in her soul was settled; the terrible conflict ended. Whatever might come now, love for Walter Fernow was no longer sin!

CHAPTER XXVII.

TREASON.

"Frederic!" She laid her hand on his arm, but Frederic turned suddenly away, and gazed intently in the opposite direction.

"What has happened! Let me go, Miss! There is danger in the grotto over yonder. Who is there? Answer!"

No answer came, but Frederic needed none; he knew enough already. The moonbeams falling obliquely at the entrance of the grotto, had revealed all to him; he had seen dark forms and gleaming weapons. In the moment of danger, Frederic's mental capabilities were not so under par as in common life. Instinct supplied him what he lacked in intelligence, and this always guided him aright.

He did not pause to reflect that his two comrades being much nearer the castle than he, could sooner give the alarm, that the most important thing was to know the direction whence the danger came; but he acted as if he had duly considered all this, and summoning the full strength of his powerful lungs, he cried in a voice that rang through the whole park:

"Treason! An attack! The enemy are here! They come from the grotto! Attention, soldiers!"

Then he fired his musket in that direction, and seizing Jane's arm, bore her along with him. The warning had reached the ear of his comrades, the cry again plainly echoed through the silent night, and this time it must have reached the castle. But the enemy remained no longer idle; further concealment was impossible. Half a dozen shots fell at the same time; Frederic paid no heed, but with a low cry of pain, Jane sank upon her knees.

"Forward, Miss, forward into the bushes!" he cried, and rushed on. Jane tried to follow, but her wounded foot forbade. She sank to the earth.

"Fly!" she moaned breathlessly. "Save yourself! I must remain behind!"

Frederic looked down at her, but he saw not now the white, beautiful face, which, would have plead mightily with any other man for her rescue; he thought only that here was a helpless, wounded woman, whom he must abandon if he sought to save himself. Before his soul, clear as the lightning's flash, gleamed only one remembrance: "Tell him that Miss Forest was the one dearest to me in the whole world! He is to guard her, if he must,--with his life!"

As if she had been a child, the gigantic man lifted her from the ground, and retreated with her in his arms. The conclusion and its execution were the work of a moment. The enemy did not follow these two; to leave that secure retreat would have been madness. But the man who had betrayed them was not to escape unpunished. Shot after shot came from the grotto, and our fugitives on this boundless grassy expanse, in the full glow of this bright moonlight, were a mark for every bullet. Frederic now required threefold time for a path he alone could have trodden in a few moments. Jane had twined her arms around his neck; but even here her resolution did not forsake her; she knew that every movement on her part would retard Frederic's steps, that perfect immobility would lighten his burden, and she lay quiet as the dead in his arms. Around both hissed the bullets, but the French shot badly to-night; not one hit. All at once Frederic shuddered convulsively, then he halted, and a hollow moan of agony broke from his lips.

"For God's sake, are you hit?" cried Jane, and sought to loose herself from his arms, but with iron strength, he held her fast. Then he went on again, but more slowly, more circumspectly than before, Jane heard the agonized convulsive heaving of his breast, she felt something hot and moist ripple down upon her hand now loosened from his neck; but still he went on. She gazed anxiously into his face, clearly defined in the bright moonbeams, and an involuntary terror came over her; she seemed to gaze into the face of her dead father. Frederic's heavy, unintellectual features at this moment had a truly frightful likeness to her own,--to those others the grave so long had hidden. It was this expression which had all at once ennobled and transfigured Frederic's face, and this similarity also betrayed his origin, more clearly than all other proofs; it was the grim determination, the hard, perverse inflexibility of the Forests, it was their stony defiance even of the impossible.

And he indeed had overcome it, the impossible; he bore her away over that grassy level and a stretch beyond into the alley, into the secure protection of the trees, and then only did he let her glide from his arms. Meantime, all had become excitement in the direction of the castle; voices rang out, words of command were heard; quick as lightning, the alarm signal echoed back from the village, and at the head of the soldiers quartered at the castle, Lieutenant Witte stormed up the avenue.

"Are they at the grotto?" he cried, recognizing Frederic by his uniform. "Come with us. Forward!"

He rushed on, the others after him; but Frederic did not join them, he did not go forward. For a moment more he stood upright, then he fell heavily to the earth.

With a cry of agony Jane sank down at his side; but over the leather bonds across the soldier's breast, flowed a deep-red tide--the brother had with his life-blood saved his sister!

CHAPTER XXVIII.

The Sacrifice of Blood.

An hour had passed, the fight had proved shorter and less serious than had been apprehended. The enemy, proceeding from the forest and gathering in small numbers at the grotto, had intended to surprise the castle in which the German officers were quartered, and by capturing them to leave the force in the village without leaders, and an easy prey to the attack of their main body. Frederic's cry of alarm had broken up their plan of moving on in perfect silence to the castle, and the hand-to-hand fight in the grotto had been of short duration. A few French fusileers had fallen, half a dozen had been taken prisoners, and the others had fled in wild

disorder to the forest. By this movement the secret way of egress had been discovered and guarded. A few of the Germans were more or less seriously wounded; none mortally but Frederic, who was to be the only sacrifice.

They had borne him to Jane's chamber and laid him on her bed. She sat at his side. She had represented her own wound as a very trifling one, which had certainly made flight impossible to her, but was not at all dangerous. Doctor Behrend bandaged the foot but avoided any further treatment, he saw that she was in no mood to heed so slight a wound.

Atkins stood at a window of the apartment and gazed in silence at the group. Jane had hastily told him all, and every trace of the old, mocking irony had vanished from his features; the deepest gravity alone spoke from them now. There lay the man they had so long and anxiously sought, for whose discovery his parent's wealth had been sacrificed, whom his sister had followed over the sea, through the whole Fatherland, even to this place. For weeks long he had been so near to them, and they had both so haughtily looked down upon him; they had wounded the poor fellow by their pride and scorn, they had derided his small abilities and his simple ways. There had fallen to his share none of those rich treasures of knowledge and culture which had been so lavished upon his sister; poor and ignorant, in wretched servitude, he had grown up, and had been thrown upon the cold charities of the world, this heir of countless thousands; and now, the hour that at last revealed the truth, that restored to him riches and a future--was to be but the hour of his death.

Doctor Behrend, to whom Atkins had briefly revealed all this, could give no hope. The wound was undeniably mortal; perhaps it might not have been, if Frederic, immediately upon receiving the ball, had taken refuge in the shrubbery. The terrible effort through which he had carried Jane that long distance, had proved fatal; an internal hemorrhage had ensued, and he had only a short time to live.

The wounded man had been lying in a deep swoon; he now moved, and opening his eyes, fixed them on the surgeon who stood at the foot of the bed.

"It is about over with me, Herr Doctor, is it not?" he asked languidly.

Doctor Behrend stepped nearer him, and exchanged a glance with Jane, whose eyes forbade his giving the true answer.

"Oh no, not so bad as that, Frederic; but you are severely wounded."

Frederic was perfectly conscious; he had seen the glance, and understood it. "You may as well tell me," he said, "I have no fear of death. My master!"--he turned entreatingly to Jane--"did you not say, Miss, that my master was in peril--that he would be lost?"

Jane buried her face in her hands. She was suffering a two-fold torture. The guard doubled, she herself incapable of taking a step forward; her dying brother before her, and perhaps at this very moment Walter had fallen. Her courage was at an end; she yielded to the impossible.

Frederic understood the wordless answer. "Then I do not want to live any longer!" he said calmly but decidedly. "I knew it when he took leave of me, and without him I could not endure life!"

Again he closed his eyes, and lay motionless as before. The physician approached Jane, and bent down to her with a low whisper.

"I can give you one consolation," he said. "The inevitable will happen calmly, almost painlessly. If you have anything to say to him--hasten!"

He left the room to look after the other wounded men, and, at a low word from Jane, Atkins withdrew into the adjoining chamber. The brother and sister were now alone.

She bent over him; his face had regained its wonted expression, only that it was now half lifeless and ghastly pale. He scarce appeared to suffer. The look that had glanced forth at the first mortal danger had vanished, and the family resemblance with it. Jane felt that she must set circumspectly about her task, lest the frail life-tenure be too suddenly riven, and she prepare for him a final anguish instead of a final joy. She had strength for the effort. There was in the whole world but one being who had power to rob Jane Forest of her self-control. Even at the death-bed of her brother, this self-mastery asserted its right. Her decision was made; this brother should not leave the world without the last kiss of his sister.

"Fritz!"

Again he opened his eyes, surprised at the strange appellation; but it seemed to be a tender, melancholy remembrance this name awakened in him, the name Jane had so feared she might hear from Walter's lips. She bent yet lower down to the dying man, and took gently his hand in hers.

"You have spoken to me of your childhood. Have you no remembrance at all of your parents--of the real parents, I mean?"

Frederic shook his head. "Only a little! I remember the great ship we were going to sail on over the water, and how my father let go my hand, and sent me to my mother; how all at once father and mother were both gone, and I stood alone in a narrow street among a crowd of people. I must have screamed loudly and wept bitterly, for I did not become quiet until Erdmann took me in his arms and carried me to his wife. That is all I know."

"And have you never since heard from your parents?"

"Never! They must have died over there in America, or they forgot me. No one has ever cared for me my whole life long--nobody but my master."

Jane clasped his hand more tightly. "Your parents did not forget you, Fritz; they sought for you, and bitterly enough mourned your loss for many years--they--would gladly have given all their riches to have their child once more; but he could not be found."

An anxious, troubled look passed over Frederic's face, he made a vain attempt to raise himself upright in the bed.

"Did you know my parents, Miss?" he asked; "did you ever meet them in America?"

"They are dead!" faltered Jane.

Frederic's head sank languidly back on the pillow.

"I thought so!" he murmured.

She bent close down to him, her breath swept his cheeks, and her voice sank to a whisper,

"When your mother went to the ship, she was not alone, she carried a little child in her arms. Do you remember that child?"

Around his lips vibrated a faint but happy smile. "Yes, my little sister, our Jennie! She must have been very little then, only a few weeks old, but I loved her so dearly!"

"And that sister"--for a moment Jane was silent, voice and strength failed her--"would it give you joy to see her? Shall I show her to you?"

Frederic gazed at her with a foreboding, expectant glance; her eyes, the tone of her voice had already revealed to him the truth.

"Miss Forest--you--?"

"My Fritz! My Brother!" broke out Jane passionately, and fell on her knees by the bedside. She did not heed the pain of her wound, she did not feel it at this instant.

But the effect of this revelation was quite other than she had dreamed. The passionate excitement she had feared, did not come; Frederic lay there calm as before, and gazed at her, but there was something like anxiety, like timidity in his glance; he softly withdrew his hand from hers and turned his head away.

"Fritz--!" cried Jane surprised and shocked. "Will you not look at your sister? Do you doubt my words?"

A peculiar emotion, half pain, half bitterness, flitted over his face.

"No, I am only thinking how well it is I am about to die. If I lived you would be so ashamed of me!"

Jane shuddered,--the reproach was just. When she first came to the Rhine, if she had been obliged to embrace Fernow's servant as her brother, she would have been terribly ashamed of him. What a series of conflicts and sorrows, what a fearful sacrifice at the last had been necessary, to wrest this pride from her heart, and create room there for this sentiment which now solely ruled her being, this mighty, irresistible voice of nature! She did not merely know, she felt that this was her brother who lay before her, the only one of her blood and name, the only one who belonged to her through the holy ties of family; and all the sins which in her imperious pride she had committed against him and others, were punished tenfold at this moment. Her brother himself, at the instant of their reunion, had retained but one remembrance of her; he shrank timidly from her embrace.

Frederic interpreted her silence falsely; he misunderstood even the expression of her face.

"It would be so!" he said calmly but without the least bitterness! "You were never friendly to me, and the very first time I saw you,--I had taken such pains with all those flowers and that nosegay; you wouldn't have a single one of them, and nothing in my whole life ever caused me so much sorrow as you gave me then."

He was silent; but these simple words, with touching, pathetic sorrow, accomplished what all these struggles and tortures, what all this agony and despair had not availed to wring from Jane

Forest. A hot stream of tears gushed from her eyes, and she buried her face in the pillows. In loud, heart-rending sobs broke at last the rigid pride with which she had hitherto looked down upon all not her equals in intellect and position; broke the icy strong hardness of her nature, and with it, that masculine strength of will her father had awakened and fostered in her. She wept now as a woman weeps in hopeless anguish and despair, when she sees all waver and fall into nothingness around her. Jane Forest had not been one to be bent--she must be broken.

But these tears, the first since her childhood, had wrought mightily upon her brother's heart, and conquered his painful shyness of her. He saw that this sister was not ashamed of him now; that he had deeply wounded her by such a suspicion, and summoning his last remaining strength, he turned again to her.

"Jenny!" he said softly, and the old-love name fell half shyly, half tenderly from his lips. "Do not be angry with me, dear Jenny! It is all right, my sister. I have at least had one happiness. I have died to save you!"

He stretched out his arms to her, and the lips of the brother and sister met in their first kiss--it was also the last!

When the new day with its first pale beams smiled upon the earth, Forest's son was no longer among the living. Slowly Jane released her brother's lifeless form from her arms, and turned her face to the window. A cold, gray twilight reigned in the death-chamber; but outside, the Eastern heaven was all aglow; the morning, in blood-red beams, was breaking over the mountains.

What sacrifice had fallen there?

CHAPTER XXIX.

The Murderer and the Attack.

A clear, balmy autumn night lay over vale and upland. The dark, sharply-defined outlines of the mountains stood in such bold relief against the unclouded sky, that every cleft as well as every jagged peak was visible. Higher up the forests dissolved in a sombre, formless mass, over which rested a fleecy mist like shimmering gauze, but at the mountain's base, every tree and shrub was as clearly defined as in the full light of day.

Upon a low, rocky plateau at the entrance of the defile, close by the foot of a giant fir-tree, stood Henry Alison. He had gained some distance upon his rival, and had found the path clear. Nothing of all the wild excitement that ruled there an hour later, now disturbed the silence. Insuperable obstacles often arise in the way of duty and rescue, while crime unrestrained, goes on its way, as if guarded by demoniac powers.

Atkins' words had proved true. Now that Henry's uncontrollable nature had burst its barriers, it knew no limits. But it broke forth into no wild fury; the head of the American remained clear and cool. While seeking revenge against the hated rival, he must care for his own safety, and he had assured it. Every one knew that the mountains were unsafe, and the German officer found dead in the morning would be supposed to have fallen by the bullet of a French sharpshooter: such things often happen in war, people would say; why had the foolhardy man ventured alone, by night, into the mountains? The guards, who held every avenue would declare that they had let no one pass, and Alison would not be supposed to have left the circuit of the park.

Discovery was impossible, and consciousness augmented Alison's cool, determined composure. He was disturbed by no moral barriers by no ideal scruples of conscience. He had offered his enemy combat on equal terms, and had stood ready to peril his own life. The rival would not consent; well then, let him suffer the consequences!

The situation could not have been better chosen; Henry stood in the shadow of the cliff, at the foot of the fir-tree and quite concealed by its branches. Right below led the mountain-road and the foot-path. He commanded both with eye and weapon. No human being coming in the direction of S. could escape him, and Henry's revolver was one that never missed its aim; his skill in shooting had always been the admiration of his associates.

He waited, his eyes fixed upon the opening of the road where Fernow must appear; all his powers of mind concentrated in this breathless spying and listening; what happened near him or behind him did not concern him; he did not hear the low, mysterious mutterings up in the firs.

Deep solitude in the mountains! Only now and then resounds the cry of a bird of prey sweeping over the forest in its slow, ponderous flight, and then vanishing in the darkness. Now

and then a gust of wind sweeps over the rocky wall, swaying the tree-tops to and fro. Now the shrubs flutter and nod in the moonlight, now the boughs of the fir-tree rustle softly but uncannily as if wailing or lamenting.

There, at last! At the winding of the road, looms up a dusky form and approaches slowly but with steady tread. Alison recognizes Fernow's gait and bearing; now he recognizes his features also. He has already reached the rocky plateau, and is about to enter the path gradually winding upward, Alison raises his revolver.

Then, all at once, come shots from another direction. From out the thicket of firs on the opposite side of the mountain, rush strange forms, and throw themselves in the German's path. He springs aside, firing at the same moment, but the enemy, conscious of superior strength, retreats only for an instant.

Walter is driven against the cliff, and in a moment, he is surrounded on all sides.

Henry stands motionless, the loaded weapon in his hand, and glances upon the tragic spectacle at his feet; Walter still stands upright, leaning against the cliff, but the blood already trickles over his forehead, and he defends himself only with his sword. It is evident that the enemy wish to overpower him living; not a single one makes further use of his musket; as he is protected in the rear they attack him at the front and side; the next moment all will be over.

Henry sees this; he sees also that the horrible deed will be spared him; he need not take this life, it is in any event doomed, for Walter will not yield. Six against one! At this thought a wild, glowing sensation of shame darts through the American's breast: he would have committed the murder with a steady hand, but to look on passively and see it consummated before his eyes, that he cannot do. There is a fearful momentary struggle, and Henry's noble nature breaks forcibly through hatred and fury, and bears him irresistibly on to help, to rescue.

One shot, and the hindmost of the French sharpshooters lies upon the ground; a second, and the one next him falls also. Confounded, the others pause; they leave Walter, and in their withdrawal give only a better mark for Henry. For the third time! The Frenchmen gaze in horror up the height whence come these solitary, spirit-like balls, every one of which with deadly certainty fells its victim; and as the man they have attacked now rouses himself, and makes use of his sword, the other three take flight. A last shot from the American hisses past them, and the half-audible oath with which one of them lets fall his weapon and gripes at his shoulder, while at a still more rapid pace, he dashes on after his comrades, proves that this last ball has not missed its aim. They all vanish in the fir-shadows on the other side of the path whence they came.

While Walter stands there breathless, he all at once feels himself seized by the arm, and drawn away. "Fly!" whispered a voice in his ear; "they must not suspect there are only two of us."

He followed mechanically; in a few moments they were in the secure shadow of the cliff and the fir boughs. The rescued man leaned against the trunk of the tree, pale, bleeding, half unconscious, and his rescuer stood near him, grim and silent, but breathing heavily, as if freed from an oppressive burden.

For the present they were safe; from here they could remark every approach of the enemy. They had really had to do with only a few patrols; the Frenchmen did not think of returning; no further trace of them appeared.

"Mr. Alison--is it you!"

"Are you wounded?" asked Alison curtly.

Walter passed his hand to his forehead. "It is of no account!" he said. "One of the first balls must have grazed my forehead. It is nothing!"

Instead of answering, Alison drew forth his handkerchief and reached it to him. He looked on silently while Fernow bound it around his forehead whence the blood trickled down drop by drop; but he did not make the slightest effort to help him.

With his own handkerchief, Walter wiped the blood from his face, then he approached his rescuer, and silently offered him his hand. Alison drew back.

"Mr. Alison," said Walter in a voice thrilled by the deepest emotion, "they did you bitter wrong this evening, and it was your own countryman that calumniated you. I had more confidence in you than he."

Morosely and coldly, Alison repelled the proffered hand. "Be on your guard with your confidences, Lieutenant Fernow!" he said roughly. "You came within a hair's-breadth of being deceived."

"You have rescued me, rescued me at the peril of your own life. The French fusileers might have discovered you, and seized you. From the manner in which we met two hours ago, I had not expected this. I relied upon your honor, not upon your help! You must not now repel my thanks; in spite of all that lies between us, they come from my full heart, and you will also--"

"Be silent!" interrupted Alison with savage fury, "I wish no thanks; you owe thanks to me least of all!"

Walter drew back and gazed at him in astonishment. Alison's behavior was enigmatical to him.

"*Thanks!*" repeated Alison, with annihilating scorn. "Well, I cannot dissemble, and before you extol me as your magnanimous preserver, you shall know the truth. I stood there not to protect you, but to kill you! Do not recoil from me in this way, Lieutenant Fernow! I was in bloody earnest; my revolver was loaded for you; one step more, and I should have shot yon down. You must thank that attack; that saved you, that alone. When I saw six men falling upon one,--then I took your part."

A deep, momentary silence followed these words. Walter stood there calm, and gazed steadily and gravely at his rival; then he stepped up to him, and again offered his hand.

"I thank you, Mr. Alison," he said; "I thank you even for that confession. Your heart speaks better than your lips, and in spite of all, we can no longer be enemies."

Alison laughed bitterly. "We cannot? You seem to forget that we are not of one origin. According to your German sentimentality, we ought now to fall into each other's arms, and swear eternal friendship. I am constituted otherwise; if I hate, I hate until my last breath; and I hate you, Lieutenant Fernow, because you have robbed me of the one dearest to me in the whole world. Do not believe that I release you from your promise to meet me at the end of the war, or that I will then spare you; do not believe that Jane Forest can ever belong to you. I hold you fast to your word, and to your oath, and if she is to die of this love for you, she shall still be my wife!"

Walter's eyes fell, and an expression of unendurable agony lay upon his face.

"I did not think of that," he said softly, "I only wished to thank you; but you are right, Mr. Alison; we two are differently constituted, we shall never understand each other.--Farewell,--I must go on!"

"You must go on?" asked Alison in astonishment. "Not further into the mountain! You must have seen how unsafe it is; the French sharpshooters are everywhere."

"I know it. Their main body lies an hour's distance from here. But I must force my way through, if it is possible."

The American stared at him in consternation. "Alone? Wounded? Has this attack not shown you the impossibility of such a step?"

"This very attack gives me courage. It came from below; the French patrols avoid the mountain-road; my way is clear."

"Hardly! You rush on to your destruction, Lieutenant Fernow."

"Well, then," replied Walter, while the old melancholy smile flitted over his face, "another meeting will be spared me, and to you, murder in a duel; for after what has just happened, I will never draw a weapon against you.--But one thing more, Mr. Alison. I do not know how you came past the guard, and I will not ask you; but I demand your word of honor not to follow me further, and to go back immediately by the path on which you came. I am forced to demand this. Do not refuse it."

Alison gazed at him morosely. "I have nothing more to seek in the mountains," he said; "I will go back immediately."

"I thank you, and now--farewell!"

Walter turned away and vanished in the shrubbery.

Alison gazed after him.

"There he goes, right into the midst of the enemy, with that calmness and those eyes before which mine almost fell. Oh, this German!"--he clinched his hands in savage fury. "I can force her to be my wife, but her heart will never forget him; it cannot,--I understand that!"

On the evening of the next day, Captain Schwarz with his battalion, which Lieutenant Fernow had now joined, entered S. It had been almost a whole day upon the march, as it had taken the by-road through E., but it brought welcome news. The very next morning, the colonel and his staff, with the rest of the regiment from L. re-enforced and instructed to fall on the enemy if he still obstructed the pass, went to join the other detachments in S. The regiment had been recalled from its post, and had at the same time received orders to march on to Paris.

CHAPTER XXX.

WAITING.

The winter had passed. More than six months lay between that eventful autumn night, and the spring day which now poured its sunny magnificence over B. Six months, full of snow and ice, full of new sieges and new triumphs. Now the bloody strife had ended. Overthrown in his last, despairing struggles, exhausted, driven back into the very heart of the country, the enemy at last confessed itself beaten. The last war for the Rhine had been fought; henceforth, new boundaries were to guard the ancient river and the land through which it flowed.

In the Rhine-country the first thunderbolt of war had fallen; here the people had most feared and trembled, most fervently prayed; because here the danger had been most imminent; and it was the Rhineland that was to be first greeted as saviour and conqueror. The trembling hope that had a little while ago followed the departing soldiers, was now changed into shouts of exultation and plans of victory.

The old city of Bonn did not remain behind in the joy of victory, in the festal-splendors that lighted up every town and hamlet. Here, too, banners waved from roofs and towers; windows and doors were garlanded, and a gay, triumphant life ruled over all. The house of Doctor Stephen, which had usually been the first to celebrate a victory, belonged this time to the number of those which, bare and garlandless, with closed doors and drawn blinds, gave token that its inmates were called to lament the fallen. The death of his nephew, and respect for the surviving sister, had this restraint upon the doctor and his wife; but all proper sorrow for Frederic and all fitting respect for Jane, could not hinder the doctor from preparing a private festal reception for his Professor on the morning of his return; and although the house showed no outward adorning, he and his wife had secretly intruded into the professor's apartments, and passed a whole afternoon in decorating them.

At this moment the doctor stood at the top of a huge ladder, in a hard tussle with the obstinate end of a festoon which would not yield to the windings required to form the initials which were to be displayed over the door of the professor's study. The Frau Doctorin stood at the foot of the ladder and indulged in some rather merciless criticisms as to the artistic capabilities of her wedded lord; now the spray was too high for her, now too low, now she would shove it to the right, now to the left; at last she declared that the initials were crooked. The doctor rearranged, perspired and growled alternately; but at last he lost all patience.

"You cannot judge rightly down below there, child!" he said angrily "Just go back to the door and look at it from there. The general impression is the great thing to be considered, not strict accordance with mathematical lines!"

The Frau Doctorin, obediently stepped back, but just at that moment when she stood leaning against the door, the better to enjoy that all-important general impression, the door was opened from the outside, and the unexpected visitor, with an outcry of terror and compassion, grasped the old lady who had almost fallen into his arms.

"Herr Behrend," sounded the doctor's voice, in its deepest bass, down from the ladder, "be pleased to remain standing there! That is right! Now tell me if the garland is too high, and if the initials are really crooked."

With a polite apology Doctor Behrend released the old lady from his arms, and stood there immovable to take a look at the decorations in question.

"It is very beautiful, very finely designed, but--"

"I told you so, the general effect is all right!" cried the doctor triumphantly, while with a last stroke of the hammer he fastened a festoon to the door; then he laid aside the hammer, and clambered down the ladder to extend his hand to the younger colleague from whom he had long been separated.

"I came to see if Walter's apartments were in any sort of order," said Doctor Behrend, "and to my great surprise I find them festally adorned. You have attended to this in person--"

"Yes, I am the very man!" said the doctor with great self-satisfaction. "We are not quite through here, but come with me into the professor's sanctum; there you can better admire our work."

With these words he seized Doctor Behrend by the arm and drew him into the study. The professor's "sanctum" differed very much to-day from its appearance when the professor was at work there. Everywhere were traces of the ordering hand of the doctor's wife; the green curtains were thrown back, and through the open window streamed in the full dazzling sunlight. The writing-table, the walls, even the bookcases were adorned with flowers and festoons, and the

whole had an exceedingly festal appearance.

It was very strange, but the young surgeon showed little or no delight over all this; he said something of the very tasteful arrangement, of the kindly feeling that prompted it, but all these tokens of respect to his friend seemed to affect him more painfully than otherwise.

Happily, in the joyous excitement Doctor Stephen remarked nothing of this peculiar constraint. "He will not take it so ill, will he?" he said rubbing his hands in ecstasy. "So entirely without song or garland, the professor was not to enter my house, which of all others has the first right to welcome him. He will meet welcomes enough outside! All B. has blazoned his name on its shield as her hero and poet, and the students are wild with enthusiasm. He is the only one of the professors who has fought with them, and how he has fought! I tell you, colleague, there was exultation enough here whenever your letters or other tidings of him arrived. City and university alike went wild over him, and his poems that you sent us, as your malicious Mr. Atkins would say, like Congreve rockets, set fire to both old and young. Do you know that the university designs giving him a reception?"

"I have heard so, but I shall advise the gentlemen to make no arrangements on his account. It is very doubtful whether Walter returns."

The doctor in his horror almost let fall the vase of flowers he had just lifted.

"Doubtful as to his coming? Good heavens! we confidently expect his regiment this very morning."

"Certainly! But I fear Walter will not be with his comrades. According to the letter I received from him this morning, he appears to be tarrying behind in H., and to have no intention of coming home."

The doctor sat the vase so violently down upon the writing-table as to break it. "I wish our whole military strength might be brought to bear against this obstinate lieutenant, and force him to come home!" he cried angrily. "And so he is not to return to us! He went away as a sick man, whose life we half despaired of; and now, when he might come back healthy, honored, admired by all the world, he will not come. Doctor Behrend, there is some hidden reason for all this! He might have come with you if he had chosen, but he really flies from B. Why did he always make his military duties an excuse for absence, and now that they are ended, why will he persist in remaining away! Something has happened. Tell me what it is."

"I know nothing about it," replied Doctor Behrend evasively. "Perhaps he dislikes the ovation which awaits him here. You know he could never endure being placed in the foreground."

"Nonsense!" cried the doctor furiously. "He must now step to the foreground. We tolerated that anxious timidity in the scholar; but now when he has launched out under full sail as a poet, we forbid all such whims!"

Behrend shook his head. "Do not cherish too great hopes as to Walter's poetic future," he said. "I very much fear that with the sword, he will also lay aside the poets, then bury himself among his books, shut himself out from the outside world more vexatiously than ever, and in a year's time stand just where he did at the opening of the war."

"He will not do that!" cried the horrified doctor.

"He will; it would just suit his fancy. With all his genius, Walter remains an incorrigible dreamer; his energy is only an impulse of the moment. In moments of excitement and inspiration such natures do and dare all; as soon as the incitement is wanting, they sink back again into their dreaming. Life in its every-day dress is nothing to them, simply because they do not understand it."

"And a delightful thing it must be to dream away one's life," cried the doctor excitedly pacing up and down.

"Sensible men like you and me, Doctor Behrend, haven't the least idea of the nonsensical things that haunt such a learned, poetic head as Walter Fernow's."

"He needs a spur to effort," replied the doctor, gravely. "He needs an energetic, ardent force to remain daily and hourly at his side, and wrest him from that ideal life, to animate him for the conflict with the world and give him what he does not possess; ambition and self-confidence. If this were granted him, I believe there is no height he might not attain in the long future yet before him. But if an unhappy passion once comes to such a nature--"

Here Doctor Stephen suddenly wheeled around, and with supreme astonishment gazed into his colleague's face. "An unhappy passion!" he cried. "For Heaven's sake, our professor has not fallen in love!"

Behrend bit his lips in vexation. "Oh, not at all! It only occurred to me as a mere supposition."

Doctor Stephen was not so easily satisfied. "You have hinted at the truth," he said, "now out

with it; who is the professor in love with? How long since it happened? Why is the love unhappy? I hope it is no French woman. Are the hindrances on the side of family, national hatred, or what?"

"I know nothing at all about it, my friend."

"You are positively insufferable with your know-nothingness," growled the old doctor. "You know all about this matter and you might confide in my discretion!"

"I repeat to you that my idea is founded upon a mere suspicion. You know Walter's reticence; he has never spoken a word to me on the subject. In any event, I urgently implore you not to take advantage of my indiscretion, and tell the Frau Doctorin--"

"My wife?" The doctor threw a glance at the door, which fortunately, he had closed behind him. "God forbid! That would be to set all the women of B. in an uproar! The professor has already become a hero to our ladies; if now, the nimbus of an unhappy love surrounds him, he will be overwhelmed by their romantic sympathy. Who would have thought this of our timid professor, when he sat here at his writing-desk, and I gave him lectures upon his health, which I warned him was going to ruin physically and mentally! Now he goes to the war, fights, makes verses, falls in love--it is most atrocious!"

"I must go," said Behrend, evidently anxious to shorten the interview. "You will excuse me for to-day."

"Well, go then!" growled the old doctor. "I can get nothing out of you; but let the professor only come home, and I will set his head right."

The young physician smiled incredulously. "Well, try it!" he said. "I have done my utmost; but that sickly melancholy is beyond my power."

He went, leaving Doctor Stephen very much out of sorts. All his joy in the festal preparations was over, and he said to himself that if the professor really came, he would be hardly in the mood to do justice to the reception prepared for him. All delight in the anticipated surprise was over. Since Frederic's death, everything had gone wrong.

The death of their nephew had come very near to the doctor and his wife. It had been a bitter day for them when the young man who bad gone from them as a servant, was brought home in his coffin, as their nearest relative. The sting which ceaselessly tormented Jane, and would allow her no peace, had also its smart for them, when they thought how the sister's child, so long and so anxiously sought, for whose recovery thousands had been sacrificed in vain, had lived as a menial in their own house, without enjoying the slightest share of the wealth and the affection that should have been his. And yet, the poor fellow had been so grateful for the little they had given him out of mere kindness! His honest, sincere parting words rang continually in their ears! "You have been very good to me during these three years; if I come back, I will richly repay you; if not--may God reward you!"

In Frederic Erdmann, the servant Professor Fernow had brought with him to B., who would have recognized the lost Fritz Forster? The name his foster-parents had given him had prevented the discovery, and a second change of name had been still more unfortunate for him. If his sister had come back to her relatives as Johanna Forster, it might have led her brother, who knew that his family had gone to America, to a remembrance, to a declaration, which would have thrown light upon all; the foreign name of Jane Forest had made this impossible, and the subordinate position of Frederic had done the rest. The servant naturally had made no inquiries as to her history or her former name; and Professor Fernow, who knew both, in his hermit-like seclusion, kept himself too remote from the doctor to be made the confidant of his family affairs, and of the researches Jane was making. Indeed Jane, having Atkins at her side, kept these researches as much as possible from her uncle. The chance solution of the whole mystery, which might have occurred at any moment, did not come, and the decisive word had been spoken only in the hour of death. Perhaps all this had been more than mere chance; it was not to be. Of all this wealth, nothing was to fall to Forest's heir but the splendid monument over his grave, and it was of no avail to Frederic when young Erdmann wrote in answer to the letter addressed to him, removing the last possible doubt, and confirming word for word all that had been already learned. The dead received the name justly his due; but it was too late for aught else.

The relations between Jane and her relatives were, if possible, colder than ever, and she did not make the slightest effort to increase their warmth. When, accompanied by Atkins and Alison, she had come with her brother's corpse to B., she had been most kindly and sympathetically received by her uncle and aunt; but she gave this kindness no return. She secluded herself with her sorrow more obstinately than before with her pride, she bore her grief as she was wont to bear all else, alone and silently. The doctor and his wife could not comprehend a sorrow inaccessible to consolation or sympathy, and were more than ever confirmed in their belief in Jane's heartlessness. In fact, hers was too self-reliant, energetic a nature, to change in a day, or become untrue to its proper character. In the moment of her deepest agony, she had shown her dying brother that she really possessed a heart; but she showed this to none else, and the words Doctor Behrend had spoken of Walter, applied also to her. Her future, too, depended upon a power outside herself; and the few next days would decide whether she would return to the old hardness and reticence, or gradually become that being which one only recognized in her; assert

that true nature against which she had fought so long, and which had first asserted itself at the hour of her brother's death.

CHAPTER XXXI.

The Balance of Power.

Atkins had taken up his abode in B. for the winter; but Alison had left a few days after Frederic's burial. He must have felt that his presence was not comforting to Jane; so he resumed his original plan of travel. He had passed the autumn and winter in a tour through Switzerland and Italy, and now, in the spring, when he had visited the larger cities of Germany, he was about to return to B. The doctor and his wife even now knew nothing of his relations to their niece. Jane had never alluded to the subject. They only knew that the year of her stay in Germany having expired, and its purpose having been accomplished, she was soon to return to America; that the first of the next month had been fixed upon as the time of her departure. It was delegated to Atkins to inform the relatives that Jane would return as Mrs. Alison, and that it was thought best the marriage ceremony should be performed here in the house of her uncle. The great respect and deference they had always shown the young lady's wealth, now found its reward; they were treated as if really inferiors, not being informed of this most intimate of family relations, until their aid was needed in arranging the necessary preliminaries for the marriage decided upon so long ago.

Alison had arrived at Atkins' hotel, and would remain there for the present; but his manner today betrayed nothing of that passionately concealed impatience, which, upon his former arrival in B., had driven him at once to Jane, and subjected him to Atkins' ridicule. He now stood nonchalanty at a window, and gazed indifferently down into the street, as if in no haste at all for the approaching reunion.

Alison at this moment seemed quite another being than on that night when unfettered passion had carried him beyond all bounds. In the last six months he had found ample time to recover his equanimity, and he had perfectly succeeded in the effort. He was again the calm, formal man of business with the cold, calculating glance and the conventional polish. That which lay dormant under all this, and had once so dangerously come to the surface, had now sunken back into the depths. His face looked as if it had never known an emotion, only one trait remained; that expression of inimical hardness and cool determination which had first appeared at that meeting in S.; it was yet in his face; it stood firmly engraven there as if during those six months it had not for an instant left his features.

"You come very late, Henry," said Atkins, who stood near him. "We expected you sooner."

Alison turned and gazed at him. "We! Do you also speak in Miss Forest's name?"

Atkins evaded the answer. "You ought to have come sooner," he repeated gravely. "It was not considerate in you to leave Miss Jane here amid all these rejoicings over the victory, which must have made her loss only the more bitter. We might, all three of us, have been on our way to America long ago."

Henry gave an indifferent shrug of the shoulders. "My travelling plans admitted of no change," he said, "and besides, I had an idea you would all be thankful for the delay. Doctor and Mrs. Stephen are not yet informed, are they?"

"I have just told them."

"Well, after an interview with my betrothed, I wish to be introduced to them as a future relative. The three weeks from now to the beginning of next month will suffice for all necessary preparations, and we shall leave immediately after the ceremony. You are aware of my arrangements with Miss Forest?"

"She has told me that she leaves all to your decision, and that I have simply to consult you in regard to the arrangements."

He turned again to the window. Atkins was for a while silent, but all at once he laid on his hand Alison's arm.

"The regiment is expected back to-morrow, Henry!" he said.

"I know it!" returned Alison, not moving from his place. "And Professor Fernow is coming in

any event," continued Atkins, with marked emphasis.

Henry glanced at him calmly. "Do you know this so certainly?"

"He surely will not remain away from a reception that is especially designed for him."

"He will not come!" said Alison coolly. "After what has passed between us, he does not enter this house while my betrothed remains in it, or I do not understand the German sentiment of honor."

Atkins looked at him doubtfully. "Well, I was not a witness of your interview," he said. "You must know what is to be expected of him; but if he really remains away are you just as sure of Miss Forest?"

Henry did not answer; he merely smiled in his ill-omened way.

"Supposing she should refuse to fulfil her promise to you?"

"She will not refuse."

Atkins did not seem to share his decided conviction. "You may find yourself in error," he said. "Jane is no longer in that hollow stupor that was upon her at our first arrival in B. She is silent as usual, but I know that all her strength of mind is now directed towards one conclusion; and this conclusion will hardly be blind submission to your will. Look before you!"

Henry smiled again, and it was with almost a sympathetic glance he looked down upon the man who warned him.

"And do you really believe I would have gone on my travels, and have calmly remained half a year away, if I had not previously secured myself on all sides?--I challenged Professor Fernow; he put me off until the end of the war; his promise now binds him, and as the injured man, the first shot is due me. Miss Foster knows this; she knows also that I will shoot him down, if she does not unconditionally submit to what I think best. The choice was given her at that time when the death of her brother led her to ask from me a delay of the marriage until the proper period of morning had expired. I allowed her ample time, for I knew that I need fear no change of her mind. *His* life was at stake! Through that apprehension I hold her more firmly than by a tenfold cord; she will not venture to resist my will, not even by a word; she knows the price of his safety."

Atkins gazed at him almost in horror. "And will you really force her consent in this way? Be on your guard, Henry! Jane is no woman to allow herself patiently to be sacrificed; she will revenge her blighted happiness upon you. You purchase that longed-for million with hell in your house."

Alison's lips curled in scorn. "Give yourself no anxiety as to our future married happiness, Mr. Atkins! I believe that I am in all respects a match for my future wife.--But it must be time for us to go to Doctor Stephen's. May I ask you to get ready?"

Atkins lingered a moment. "Henry," he said entreatingly, "whatever may happen between you two, spare Jane; she has fearfully suffered in these last months."

"Has she spared me?" asked Alison with an icy coldness. "The proud Miss Forest would have cast me aside as a worthless burden, had not another's life rested in my hands. Now I have the power and I will use it; the obstinate woman shall yield to me at my price!"

Atkins sighed deeply as he went into the next room for his hat and gloves. "What a marriage this will be! God pity us when these two are man and wife!" he said.

CHAPTER XXXII.

The Brand from the Burning.

The formal part of the visit at Doctor Stephen's house was over. Alison had saluted the doctor and his wife, and exchanged with them the inevitable polite phrases, questions and answers; but this time he betrayed no glowing impatience to shorten the interview; he waited calmly until Atkins ended it, and conducted him to Jane, who although she knew of his arrival, had remained in her chamber.

Here, too, there was a cold, polite greeting, a few words in relation to the journey, the arrival, the different places of interest on the route; then Atkins withdrew. Henry and Jane were left alone.

She again sat opposite him as at that time when he had sued for her hand; but she was paler than then; she had become so much paler during this winter, but in this long space, she had regained complete mastery over herself. Her head was again upright, her features firm and cold, and her eyes met his with the old glance of defiance. This was not the bearing of intimidation or submission: Atkins was right; she would dare one more last conflict.

"*Why this useless struggle?* I *will not let you go!*"

Perhaps Jane read this thought in his face, for her brow grew dark, and her lips compressed. These two beings so soon to be united forever, stood now as hostilely arrayed, the one against the other, as if this were to be a struggle for life or death. Both knew it, they were equals in energy, in strength of will, in inflexibility; not a foot's-breadth would one yield to the other, and now it remained to be proved whose will was the stronger.

Henry had already arranged his tactics; he enveloped himself wholly in that cold politeness she had shown at the first greeting.

"I come, Miss Forest," he said, "to demand the fulfilment of a promise which I received a year ago, and which was repeated to me in this place. Your time of mourning for young Mr. Forest must now be at an end, and I must beg you to name the day for our union. Mr. Atkins wishes exact information so as to arrange all formalities for the marriage, and I too have various preparations to make for our departure. We had decided upon the first of next month; but the day and the hour, as well as the manner of the ceremony, are of course left to your decision. I await your commands."

Jane sighed deeply. He had entered upon the subject in a masterly way; he had made all evasion impossible, but still he was not to win the victory so easily.

"You have my promise, Mr. Alison, it is true, and I am ready to fulfil it, if, after what has come to your knowledge, you dare demand such a thing."

Word and glance, alike ineffectual, glided off from the icy indifference with which Alison had armed himself. He remained perfectly calm.

"And why should I not dare to demand a hand which was freely promised me, and would just as freely have been mine, if it had not been for that--*episode*, which is of very little import in my eyes? Miss Forest is too precious a treasure to be sacrificed for a mere romantic infatuation. I, at least, have no mind to make any such sacrifice."

"You forget one thing!"--Jane's voice involuntarily betrayed the fearful excitement that had taken possession of her whole being.--"Hitherto, you have had the power to torture me, but from the moment of our marriage, that power will fall to me. A woman can become a curse to her husband, if he has taught her to hate where she ought to love.--Force me to this marriage, and I become such a curse to you!"

But even this threat, so defiantly hurled at him, glanced powerless from that smooth, icy calm; Henry smiled at this as he had before smiled at Atkins' words.

"I hardly think we shall continue upon American soil, this romance, into which German sentimentality has drawn us against our will; the atmosphere there is not suited to such extravagances, we had better leave them behind here. I am convinced that Mrs. Alison will as brilliantly represent my house, and as unconditionally play the first role in the social circles of our city, as Miss Forest once did. To enable her to do this, she will find surroundings worthy of her, and a husband whose name and position will do her honor. Our marriage could certainly never have become a shepherd's idyl, and it need not become a tragedy; if you, Miss, have an intention to play a tragic part here, you will have to do so alone; for myself, I have not the slightest capability for such roles."

Jane trembled under this irony; she felt that Henry was not accessible on this side, and she felt also, that he was now making her atone for the haughty "*I will not*," she had once flung at him. Not in vain had Atkins warned her against this man, who never forgot nor forgave an injury even though he appeared so to do. He was now seeking his revenge, and Jane knew that she could reckon upon no pity; but this certainty, all at once, gave back her presence of mind. She rose resolute and cold, and there was an expression of contempt upon her lips. She must have foreseen the uselessness of this last effort; she had other, and in her opinion, more infallible weapons at command.

"Before we dwell upon this point," she said, "I beg you listen to a proposal I am about to make you."

Henry also had risen; he bowed assent.

"You know that since my brother's death, I have become sole heir to my father's fortune. His will also gives me full, lawful control of all."

"Certainly!" returned Henry, in astonishment, he had no idea where this would end.

"Well, then, I am ready to make over to you the whole fortune as the price of my freedom."

Alison started back, he had all at once become pale, and his glance, with a mysterious, threatening expression, fixed itself full upon her face.

Jane stepped hastily to her writing-desk, and drew a paper from a portfolio lying there.

"I have already drawn up the necessary paper; you will see from it that I keep back nothing except what is in my hands at this moment. It is a sum sufficient to afford me a support here in Germany, but scarcely worth mention in comparison with that which will fall to your share. The legal execution of this may take place any day, whenever you wish; the transaction naturally remains a secret to all save those immediately interested. I offer you all I possess; only leave me free!"

She reached him the paper. Silently Alison took it from her hands, silently he read it through; the paleness of his face grew yet deeper, and the paper rustled strangely in his hands. At last he laid it deliberately upon the table, and crossed his arms.

"Before all else, I request you, Miss Forest, to change the tone in which you see fit to speak to me. One does not meet a man who holds one's whole future in his hands, with such--contempt."

A hasty flush passed over Jane's face; her voice had unwittingly betrayed her sentiments as she made this proposal. "I do not see," she replied, "why we should seek to deceive each other. You won me for my fortune and hold fast the hand upon which it depends. I would relieve you from a troublesome appendage to this fortune, and myself from a hated tie. You are merchant enough to appreciate the advantages of my offer; and I have lived long enough in America to take into account the value it will be to you there."

Jane did not dream what a fearful game she was playing at this moment, and she did not suffer herself to be warned by the low, hissing sound that again came from Henry's lips, as upon that evening, when he had listened to her conversation with Walter. His calmness quite deceived her.

"I doubt it, Miss Jane; your proposal is too German for that. With us, at home, one does not throw away a million to escape a marriage! Besides, I scarce believe that you clearly understand what it means for one like you, reared in the lap of riches, to be really poor!"

Jane proudly lifted her head. "My father was once poor," she said, "and he thought nothing of sacrificing position and a future, for the joys of freedom; I give up his riches for like object. I too would be free!"

"Would you really?" Alison fixed his penetrating glance upon her, and there was a tone of annihilating irony in his voice. "And besides, do you think that in case of necessity you could live upon a professor's salary? May I ask if Herr Fernow has a share in this romantic decision? If not, I advise you not to assume too much from his ideality. The heroine of his romance was an heiress, and his sentiments might grow cold if she were suddenly to appear before him poor."

Jane eyes flashed; she forgot all discretion, forgot how fearfully this man had once already made her atone for an insult; his irony robbed her of all self-control.

"Do not measure such a nature by your own standard, Mr. Alison! Walter Fernow is not *your* equal!" she said.

This was too much! The deep, deadly contempt in her words tore away the mask under which, hitherto to his own self and to her, he had feigned indifference. He gnashed his teeth in rage; still he controlled the storm of passion; but it was only for a few moments.

"Not my equal! You are very honest, Miss Jane. In your eyes, Professor Fernow has perhaps no equal in the world, and you would never have dared approach him with the proposal to sell his bride for money. Keep your indignation to yourself, I see that your whole nature rises in arms at the very thought. You dared not propose it to him, but you have to me!" Here the self-mastery ended, and the old, uncontrollable passion broke forth fearfully from its depths.--"You have dared make this proposal to *me*! You suppose that I would take part in such an infamous transaction! You dare treat Henry Alison as if he were an extortioner, whose word and honor were to be sold for dollars! Jane Forest, by Heaven you shall answer to me for this insult!"

Jane drew back, she gazed at him in consternation. She had not been prepared for such a reception of her proposal.

Henry snatched the paper from the table, and furiously tore it in pieces. "With this wretched bit of paper you would purchase your freedom, and hurl the money and your contempt after me. Forever and eternally you have seen in me only the moneyed man. It may be that it was calculation that led me to you, but you soon enough taught me to reckon with another factor than the dollar. I have loved you, Jane loved you to madness, and I loved you only the more ardently the more coldly you repelled me, up to the moment when that blue-eyed professor crossed my path, and I learned to hate you both. You know nothing of my interview with him, only what I have told you myself; you do not dream what passed between us that night your brother died. Well, then, I meant to murder him because he denied me the duel. This money lover had carried

his calculations so far that he forgot all, that he risked life, honor and future, for the sake of one treasure they sought to wrest from him. Do you now understand, Jane, what you have been to me, and why I now hold you fast? I know that I have no happiness to expect from you, that my house will be to me a hell; but I also know that no power on earth can tear you two asunder unless it is my arm. And my arm shall do it; let it cost you your whole inheritance, let it cost me my last dollar, I fling both from me, but he shall not have you!"

He tore the paper into bits and threw the pieces scornfully away; then he strode excitedly to the window and stared out with face turned away from her.

Jane stood motionless, horrified, bewildered, by this wild outbreak of an emotion she had never suspected in Henry. For the first time he showed her this aspect, and deep in her heart she felt it was the true one, and she felt also with burning shame the wrong she had done him; but through it all, this shame and horror, broke softly and faintly a ray of hope; she knew that the woman is all-powerful when she is beloved.

Henry felt a light touch on his shoulder; when he turned around, Jane stood right before him, but the obstinacy and the contempt had vanished from her manner; she had lowered her head as if conscious of guilt, and her glance was fixed upon the floor.

"I did you wrong!" she said softly, and almost an entreaty lay in her tone as she added, "I did not think that you could love."

Henry drew back; there came over him a suspicion of what was before him, and his brow grew yet more dark, his features yet more hard, his whole manner expressed grim, icy repulsion.

"Enough of confession!" he said roughly. "I request you once more, Miss Forest, to name the day of our nuptials. I expect your answer,--expect it immediately."

Jane yet stood before him with downcast eyes; now she suddenly laid both hands on his arm.

"Henry."

He trembled, and turned away.

"You have set a cruel choice before me, and fearful was the threat with which you forced me to silence, him to inaction. His life and my future now lie in your hands alone, Henry.--Give him back his unfortunate promise, and me freedom!"

With a violent movement he flung back her hand. "What do you mean by that tone, Jane? Do you think to compel me with it? Have you gathered nothing other from my words than that I would now play a magnanimous role and lead you to his arms? Not a word further, not a single word more, or--I forget myself!"

The forbiddal sounded wild and threatening enough, but it remained without effect; Jane was now conscious of her power; she felt no further fear.

"I no longer offer you my wealth, and all else I have to give, belongs to another. I can compel nothing from you, purchase nothing from you; well, then, I now entreat you; Henry, for your own salvation and for mine, release me from my promise!"

She had fallen on her knees before him, her voice trembled in anguished entreaty, in soft, moaning supplication, such as he had never before heard from these lips; the large dark eyes gazed upon him full and steadily, they were full of burning tears; her whole manner was so entirely changed, so different from the Jane Forest he had hitherto known, that for the first time, at this moment, Henry felt what he was to lose with her.

"*At my feet!* I might be proud of the triumph did I not know too well whom I must thank for it! Miss Forest once would sooner have taken upon herself a whole life full of torture and wretchedness, would sooner have died even, than allow a word of entreaty to fall from her lips. But his happiness is at stake, *his* future, and here she can take a thousand humiliations upon herself; and even if her pride bled from a thousand wounds, she could entreat, kneel even--and this she would never have done for herself.--Would you, Jane?"

This time, Jane remained proof against his irony; she felt only the infinite bitterness whence it came, felt that through all his grim resistance, her triumph was fighting its upward way.

"Yes," she said softly, still keeping her eyes fixed upon him.

He bent down to her, and lifted her gently in his arms. Those arms clasped the slight, delicate form as if they would hold it fast forever, and with strong, irresistible might he pressed her to his heart. His face was again distorted by all the tempestuous passion that had raged through its lineaments on that autumn night; his breast rose and fell as if in fearful conflict; but it was something nobler than fury or revenge that now plowed up the very soul of this man; it was a dumb, torturing sorrow, pulsing through his whole being, and stirring it to its inmost depths.

Jane saw the conflict, and had no heart to go on with her entreaties. She felt that a word from her would decide all, and yet she was silent. Her head sunk unresisting, upon his shoulder, but

two heavy tears rolled slowly from her eyes down upon his hand.

Then suddenly, she felt Henry's lips, hot and burning, against her forehead; it was a kiss so unlike that first kiss she had received from him; it burned like a fiery brand upon her forehead. "Farewell!" vibrated in a half-stifled, yet ardent tone, through his voice. Then he let her loose from his arms. With this one word, he had freed her, renounced her forever!--When she glanced up, he had already left the room.--She was alone.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

An Unexpected Meeting.

Spring upon the Rhine! How many a heart with fond, irresistible longing reverts to this thought! The spring comes everywhere. In the storms and billows of the ocean, in the soft, aromatic breath of leafy forests; in raging, devastating freshets from the mountains, in the blossoming splendors and jubilant lark-songs of the plain;--but nowhere does it so smile as here, by the cradle of German romance, where a breath of poesy hovers overall. The spring glides through the Rhineland, laying lightly her hand in blessing upon field and vineyard; and the blessing becomes a consecration. She floats sun-kissed, over forest and rocky cliff, and glances smiling down from hoary castles, gray with age. But never had the German spring been so greeted, so enjoyed as now, when she came bringing to a united people the festival of resurrection and of victory;--and peace to the world.

This spring had come to the land prematurely and unannounced, as if in haste to greet the new empire with its sunshine and its flowers. B., that "learned nest," was to-day full of joy and exultation, for it was to receive its university professor, Fernow, as a military hero; but the town being the centre of all rejoicings, its environs were silent as the dead. The day was magnificent, and yet the gentleman and lady who were climbing the path to the Ruènberg, seemed the only pedestrians far and near. Was it through accident or intention? Jane Forest had to-day, for the first time, laid aside her deep mourning; her dress was still sombre and without ornament, but it was no longer of that sable, hopeless black, and it almost seemed as if with the gloomy dress had vanished that stony, melancholy expression which, during the whole winter, had shadowed her face. There brooded over this face something like a breath of the spring; a tender, longing hope timidly ventured forth from beneath the scarce-broken icy covering, but had not as yet courage to look happiness and the future full in the face. There was a strange, wholly new expression on these once proud, resolute features, and it gave the face something which despite its beauty had hitherto been wanting--gentleness.

Mr. Atkins, who trudged along at the young lady's side, looked very grim and morose to-day; he seemed to feel this splendor of the spring a personal affront. Everything he saw annoyed him, and he was still more annoyed by what he did not see. He could not understand why this tender green had started forth so soon; it must certainly be destroyed by the night-frosts. This preposterous shining of the spring sun with a real June heat, only portended speedy and violent rains, and the Rhine, just now, was the object of his utter and supreme aversion. As Mr. Atkins walked along its banks, it had taken the liberty to wet his boots through and through, and had also shown an ardent longing to draw his whole person down into its watery depths, things which naturally excited the American's bitter ire.

"Your blood-thirsty Rhine grasps after every strange nationality that ventures near it!" he growled, and at that moment, he made up his mind to remain no longer upon this hated soil. "The sooner we return to America the better!" muttered he.

Jane paid little heed to Mr. Atkins' outbursts of ill temper, and she made due allowance for them all. She very well knew that their sole reason lay in the hollow thunders whose reverberations were heard even here, and which announced the return of Walter Fernow, the university professor and hero.--But as Atkins began to groan anew over the difficulties of the path and the excessive heat, Jane said with a touch of impatience.

"You should have remained in the town. My mourning excludes me from all share in the festivities. I did not wish to force my uncle and aunt to remain at home on my account, and so I undertook this walk. But no such consideration restrains you, and I need no escort to-day."

Atkins drew down his face. "I cannot say that I feel myself irresistibly drawn toward the city," he said, "where every little urchin you meet on the street is babbling of the 'new power,' and every student demands that I shall make my most humble obeisance to the genius of united Germany. These people are lost in admiration of themselves? Their beloved Rhine has become to them the one river of Germany, and they dream of enlarging its boundaries still more. German

idealism is really beginning to become practical; but for these last weeks I have been so persistently entertained at all the clubs and societies with the prospective greatness and glory of the new empire, that I feel as if I would like, just for a little while, to hear something else spoken of. I wish--" Happily, just here he recalled the sharp reprimand he had once received from Jane, so he changed his pious wish into a sigh--"I wish I was back in America; but after all that has happened here in the fatherland, our Germans there will be so puffed up with conceit and vanity, that there'll be no getting on with them!"

Jane smiled at this outbreak of bitterness, and calmly replied:

"You will have to make up your mind to recognize the new power, Mr. Atkins, difficult as it may be to you. Nothing can now be changed, and you will at last reconcile yourself to paying some homage to our newly awakened German genius in your own land."

"*Our*? *Your* land?" drawled. Atkins. "Ah, yes! I keep forgetting that you have wholly and entirely gone over to the Germans, and are full of enthusiasm for your new countrymen. Well, just here we differ. I don't understand, Miss Jane, how you can enjoy the prospect here, the sun dazzles one so horribly, that one can see nothing but its beams; the river glares up at you so as to give you pains in the eyes, and this old wall glares at me just as if it would afford it an especial pleasure to fall down and crush us both. Just look before you!"

Jane made no answer; she sat down and left it to her companion to rail at the sun, the river and the ruin as much as he liked; but as Mr. Atkins found nothing more in his surroundings, over which he could growl, he came to her side.

"I only regret," he said, and the expression of his face betrayed how maliciously he rejoiced over it--"I only regret that B. must to-day be deprived of its principal hero. Lieutenant Fernow is really not with his regiment; the garlands with which Doctor and Mrs. Stephen have taken such a world of pains must wither, the stupendous reception which the students had planned must, like their enthusiasm, result in nothing; the learned salutation speeches of his colleagues will become somewhat antiquated. I am convinced that one of these evenings the professor will step quietly in at the back door, and the next morning will be found sitting at his writing-desk, pen in hand, placidly as if nothing had happened. That would be just like him, I think; he is the only German who now seems to have the least bit of sense left him."

Atkins, taking advantage of Jane's unusually gentle mood, ventured to speak a name which, during the whole winter, had not been mentioned between them, and he had his reasons. They had begun to treat him as they treated Doctor Stephen, to keep him in entire ignorance of the course of family affairs, revealing nothing to him until it was absolutely settled. This vexed him beyond measure; he wanted to know what had passed between Henry and Jane, wanted to know how matters really stood, and as he could venture no direct questions he tried this manœuvre.

But he missed his aim. Jane certainly blushed when Fernow was mentioned, but she remained calm and did not open her lips. It required more than the mere mention of a name to rob her of her self-possession. Atkins saw that no subterfuge would avail him; he must advance openly to his goal.

"Our travelling arrangements will perhaps require some change!" he began again in his sharp, searching tone. "Henry's sudden departure has disarranged all our plans; I have not been told,--I certainly have not been informed," he added with an irritation that showed his sensitiveness on this point, "why he last evening stormed so violently into my lodgings, demanded his travelling effects, and immediately drove to the station--and in such a humor too that I thought it best to keep as far away from him as possible; but, for my own interests I would now like to ask you, Jane, what you think of all this."

Jane's glance fell. "You are the first to inform me of Henry's departure," she said. "Did he leave no line for me?"

"No! not even a good-by; he declared that he should return to America on the first steamship that sailed from Hamburg."

Jane made no answer, but a deep sigh escaped her breast which had in it more of sorrow than relief.

"What had you done to Henry, Jane?" asked Atkins in a low voice, as he bent down to her. "He looked terribly when he came from you."

She glanced timidly up, but her voice was subdued and unsteady. "You always declared that he cherished a passion for me," she said. "I had never believed it. I thought the dollar the only divinity to which he knelt."

"It will perhaps be so in the future!" replied Atkins dryly. "Such weakness overpowers a man like Henry but once. He should have held to his American traditions; then the heir and future chief of the house of Alison & Co. would have received no refusal. It is not well, this mixture with German blood; you yourself very well see that now, Miss Jane, and Henry evidently has had enough of your German romances to last a lifetime. But his is not a nature to burden itself with an unhappy, love for any long time, and I do not doubt that within a year's time we shall hear of

his marriage with one of our home heiresses."

"Would to God it might be so!" sighed Jane from the deepest depths of her heart, as she rose and stayed her arm against the wall.

For some moments, Atkins stood near her in silence. "Shall we continue our walk?" he asked at length. "This old castle is doubtless very interesting, but there is a draught about the romantic, mediæval haunt. I think we had best return to the sheltered valley."

"I shall remain!" declared Jane with her usual positiveness. "But I will not allow you to expose yourself longer to this 'romantic draught.' You will of course direct your walk to M. and we shall meet upon our return."

The hint was plain enough, and Atkins very readily accepted it. He thought it inexpressibly dull up here, and gladly availed himself of any excuse to withdraw.

"I have an idea that I shall have to return to America alone," he muttered to himself, as he took a by-path leading directly down into the valley. "And besides, I am to have the extraordinary pleasure of sending Mr. Forest's whole fortune across the ocean. The fortune Henry Alison made the object of all his energies and calculations, and which is now to fall into the lap of this German professor who was stupid enough to care nothing at all about it, and who would have married unhesitatingly upon his professor's salary! And he will have a brilliant career in the world--there is no doubt of that. They are now lauding him as the future poet, and there must be something in the uproar his verses cause. If a million stands behind them, and a wife like Jane sits near him--all this will urge him on more surely and speedily to the wished for goal. Our deceased Mrs. Forest would have been triumphant; but I'd like to know what Mr. Forest would say at seeing his riches exclusively in German hands and subserving German interests. I believe he would"--here Mr. Atkins bethought himself, and concluded with this emphatic ejaculation--"I believe he would say amen to it!"

Jane had remained behind alone. She drew a deep breath as if relieved of a heavy restraint, and sat down again in the old place. The bright spring radiance fell around the gray, ancient ruins of the castle, while above and beneath them, throughout all the landscape, reigned a thousand-fold life of fragrance and blossoming. The ivy again wove its green meshes around the dusky stone, and let its wavy tendrils flutter far out over the abyss. At her feet, lay a grassy expanse bathed in the sun's golden lustre, while far beyond flashed and shimmered the dear home river, as if only hours had passed since that day when they two had sat here; as if autumn and winter, with all their tears and conflicts, with their melancholy symbols of mourning, had been only an evil, oppressive dream.

And, as at that time, the gravel now creaked under advancing footsteps. Could Atkins have come back? Impossible! This was not his calm, deliberate tread. It came nearer; a shadow fell upon the sunny space before her; Jane sprang up, brow and cheeks suffused with a treacherous glow, trembling, incapable even of a cry of surprise. Walter Fernow stood before her!

In eager haste he had climbed the hill, but this time, he did not arrive breathless and exhausted, as once from his most quiet walks; such exertion was now sport to him, and it must have been something quite other than fatigue, which at this moment stopped his breath and sent that deep flush to his face. He would fain hasten to Jane's side, but he paused suddenly and gazed silently on the ground; it seemed as if with the old student's dress which he had to-day for the first time resumed, the old timidity had returned.

"Professor Fernow--you here?"

A shadow of painful disappointment passed over Walter's face; perhaps he had expected a different greeting. The deep flush vanished and the old melancholy expression again darkened his features. Jane had meantime in a measure recovered her self-control, although she could not overcome the agitation that thrilled her frame and gave a treacherous vibration to her voice. "I--we heard that you were not with your regiment; my uncle and Doctor Behrend at least declared that you were not," she said.

"I did not come with my comrades; I arrived an hour ago. Doctor Stephen and his wife were not at home, and I was not in the mood to enter at once into the festivities. I undertook this walk; it accidentally led me here--"

His face betrayed the untruth! He had incidentally heard at the house that Jane was not at the festival, and it was not without good reasons that he had undertaken this walk so immediately after his arrival. It had perhaps been more presentiment than accident which had led him here. Jane might have felt this, the flush upon her face deepened, and the dark lashes sank slowly, while her trembling hands sought a point of support in the wall. Walter hesitatingly approached.

"I have frightened you!" he said in a subdued voice. "It was not my intention to return so suddenly; I felt that I could not for the present come to B.; but a meeting I had with Mr. Alison--"

"With Henry!" cried Jane in painful apprehension. "Did you speak with him?"

"No, I only saw him! He arrived last night at the hotel in K., where I had taken lodgings; we

met upon the stairs, but he passed me silently and morosely, without greeting, and as if he did not know me. This morning a note was brought me with tidings that the gentleman who had left it had already gone; it explains the reason of my being here so soon."

He handed her the note; it contained only a few lines.

"I release you from your promise to meet me after the close of the war; there is need of no such meeting. In future, the ocean will lie between us, that secures to you the fruit of your victory. I do not hinder your return to B. There you can demand an explanation of what has happened. In a few days, I leave Europe forever.

"HENRY ALISON."

CHAPTER XXXIV.

THE RIDDLE SOLVED.

Jane held the sheet silently in her hand; her eyes were veiled as if by starting tears. It is never a matter of unconcern to a woman to see a heart bleeding for her sake, least of all if she is the first and the only one who has taught this proud, cold heart to feel.

Walter's glance rested searchingly upon her face; it was sad, and painfully intent, as if from torturing unrest.

"I must now entreat the explanation, and yet, I do not know whether Miss Forest will be inclined to give it. When we met for the last time, on that day of my return from L. with Frederic's corpse, Mr. Alison stood between us, and held your hand in his, firmly, as if by this one act he would assert his right to all the world, He need not have thought it necessary to deprive us in so decided a manner of all opportunity to be alone; the moment forbade any word but of sorrow for the dead; we both alike lost much in him."

Gently but excitedly Jane shook her head. "You lost only a servant, Professor Fernow," she said. "The lot of my brother was one of cruel servitude from his earliest youth, and destiny would have been still more cruel to him had he not found in you a good master. I--did not make things easier for him while it lay in my power, and later, I could give him nothing--nothing but the cold marble above his grave!"

Walter now stood close to her; gently he took her trembling right hand in his. "And the last embrace of a sister!" he said softly.

Jane's lips quivered in bitterest sorrow. "He paid dearly enough for it," she said; "he had to buy it with his life-blood. If I had not been near him in that hour he might have come back healthy and merry with the others; my rescue was his destruction. I bring only sorrow to all that love me; I had to give death to my brother; I had to make Henry wretched--keep far from me, Professor Fernow, I can give you no happiness!"

With a convulsive movement she stepped to the edge of the balustrade, and with averted face gazed out into the distance. Frederic's death still threw its shadow over her life; the shadow would not lift, she could not overcome her remorseful sorrow. Something of the old hardness and bitterness again lay upon her features, and the anguish which thrilled through them and would scarce yield to control, only too well betrayed how serious she had been in those gloomy words before which at this moment, all hope, every dream of the future, sank into nothingness.

"Johanna!"

It was again that tone which once before in S. had wrought so mightily upon her heart, lifting it above all sorrow and all conflict; it compelled her now to turn round, to glance up to him; and when she met his eyes, hardness and bitterness could no longer hold their ground before these blue depths which once more spoke to her in that language of dreamy tenderness now as then holding her spell-bound.

"You have also caused me sorrow, Johanna, fearful sorrow; it was upon that autumn night when I implored you to make yourself free, and was ready the dare the utmost to win you. At that time, you flung back at me, this hard, 'Never! Even if Alison should release me and every other barrier should fall, NEVER, Walter!' Those words have ever since stood threateningly between us both; they have intimidated me up to this moment. Will you now at last, solve for me the riddle?"

Jane bowed her head. For some moments she was silent, then she said in a hollow voice: "I had found a clue to my brother, I knew that he had been reared by pastor Hartwig, and I heard the name from your lips as that of your foster-father."

"For God's sake, you did not believe--?"

"Yes! Do not chide me, Walter, that I deemed it possible. I suffered fearfully from that possibility, I almost died from that unhappy error."

Jane Forest's proud lips had at last humbled themselves to this confession, and there was a moist glimmer in her eyes, their "boreal glow" had vanished and the ice with it, and from those eyes beamed forth as it were, a radiant, glowing spring--life. That glance which Alison yesterday had seen but for a moment, when she had fallen on her knees before him in agonized entreaty--that glance through which she had forced him to a renunciation which without it she would never have attained, now fell, ardent yet tender, upon him who had known how to awaken it. He felt the whole spell of this nature, a nature which could irresistibly attract, indissolubly fetter, and infinitely bless. He knew the worth of the being who now, for the first time, gave herself fully and unreservedly to him.

There was no wooing, no proposal, not even a declaration, between these two; but there was much, inconceivably much that had been wanting at that first betrothal where all had been so formally arranged, glowing blushes, tears of happiness, and a betrothed bride, tender, joyous yielding up of life and future into the hands of him she loved. And here was the deep, glowing, inspired passion of a man over whom cold calculation and interest could have no sway. In his arms, Jane felt that this dreamer who had known how to throw aside the pen and wield the sword, knew also how to love with all the fervor of a deep, unselfish nature.

There was a rustle in the shrubbery at the foot of the ruin, and Mr. Atkins, who again had been playing the spy, came to light. But this time, he neither disturbed the pair of lovers, nor brought them his congratulations.

His face expressed anything but good wishes as hastily and unremarked, he took the homeward way.

"A most preposterous, sentimental thing, love is here in Germany!" he growled. "Jane Forest was lost us to the moment she set foot on this poetic soil. It is shameful! And that accursed Rhine over yonder, with its romance, is answerable for all!"

He threw a glance of deepest resentment upon the hated river, and then, muttering, turned his back upon it. But the Rhine did no seem to take the discourtesy at all to heart. All through its waves there was a sparkle and a glitter as if the old Niebelungen horde had mounted up from those deep recesses, making those waters one tide of liquid gold, that overflowed even the environing shores. And the old river rolled on mightily and triumphantly, as if upon it swelling current, it were bearing the spring and peace far into the land.

THE END.

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