KARL HARTMANN.

A STORY OF THE CRIMEA.

IN FOUR CHAPTERS.—CHAP. I.

I HAVE the liveliest recollection of the 3rd of July 1854; more so, perhaps, than of any other day in the calendar of my life, wherein it is emphatically marked with a distinguishing stone—the colour whereof the reader may guess from the tale I have to tell. It was not at all, I may premise, because the morrow was 'Independence Day,' that that particular eve of a glorious anniversary dwells so freshly in my memory. So far from that, I am pretty sure—true-blooded American as I am—my mother at at least was a Boston girl, and I was born there—that on that morning the old stirring watch-words, 'Our heroic forefathers,' 'The saviour of his country,' 'Bunker's Hill,' and so on, would have jarred disagreeably on my ear, so utterly out of unison would they have been with the heavenly frame of mind in which I awoke from delightful dreams to paradisiacal consciousness of waking bliss.

As I leaped out of bed, the bright young day, cloudless, beautiful, as my hopes, was thrusting aside the summer night-curtains, and coming forth a jocund bridegroom to embrace his slumbering bride the earth, and with his glowing kisses awaking her to life and loveliness. It will be easily understood, from this shining similitude, what my head was running upon; but the dawn was really a brilliant one, and the picturesque villas and gay gardens of Staten Island, apparelled in its golden light, shone out in their most attractive aspect. Staten Island, the reader may or may not be aware, is a kind of southern suburb of New York, separated from its sister isle Manhattan, whereon the empire city stretches its huge, restless, ever-swelling bulk, along about five miles of sheltered sea—New York Bay—across which you may be ferried for a few cents in a floating steam-palace. My father, Joshua Henderson, master-mariner, and for many years prosperous ship-owner of New York, had, not long before my mother's death, purchased a pleasant dwelling there—Hope Cottage, so named by himself, where he was every day becoming more and more a fixture. The chief and active share in the business of Henderson & Co. had been some time since ceded to his partners; and my father, moreover, was growing, with increasing years and substance, proportionably chary in his shipping ventures, most of which had latterly been participated by Aunt Martha, his widowed and wealthy sister, located, with her daughter Ruth, at Sherborne Villa, within scarcely more than a stone's-throw of Hope Cottage—and about as sensible and sharp a dame as ever trod in shoe-leather. As for my noble self, I had been intended for a profession—my father inclined to law, my aunt to divinity—but as it was soon abundantly clear, that I should never make a particularly bright figure in either of these, that notion was reluctantly given up. Aunt Martha especially—she was the relict of Silas Garstone, wholesale-dealer in dry goods, Broadway, and major in the New York Militia—resented the family disappointment to a most unreasonable degree. I was a failure, she said, and she hated failures: and as regarded Ruth, I must prove myself worth my salt, which she doubted I ever should do, in some calling or other, before she could bring herself to look upon me as her daughter's future husband; a sentiment, she savagely added, which Ruth fully endorsed. To this un-aunt-like estimate of her only nephew, I, of course, sturdily demurred. I reckoned myself up very differently. I stood five-feet-eleven in my stockings, enjoyed robust health, and a flow of spirits sufficient, if commercially available, to set up a first-rate liquor store in Broadway, and was, besides, sole heir to at least 2000 dollars per annum—Hope Cottage and fixings over the bargain. What on earth, therefore, could it signify, in a husbandly sense, that I had not come off with exactly flying-colours at Harvard University, or as yet shewn signs of a gift for preaching! When I was at home, Ruth and I had been for years inseparable companions; and it thus came to pass that I unconsciously, as it were, but in perfect accordance, I apprehend, with a law of nature, very early arrived at a decided conclusion that we were especially created for each other, and that to sunder or mate us with uncongenial souls would be an inexpiable crime, alike against humanity and Heaven. Certainly I had always misgivings as to Ruth's entire accordance with those views; and upon reaching home on Sunday forenoon, 2d July, after bidding final farewell to Harvard, I determined to bring the damsel to the test without delay. For this purpose, I seized the opportunity afforded by the dropping in, soon after dinner, of one of my father's old cronies, to slip quietly off to Sherborne Villa. The reception awaiting me was a gratifying one. My aunt's manner was decidedly less grim and gritty than at my last visit, and Ruth was wonderfully gracious—actually proposed—mamma not objecting—that we should take a long walk together!

To be sure, the afternoon was fine and cool; all the world abroad, and she had not yet sported the new dress sent her from New York—considerations which, I doubted not, had something to do with the flattering proposal. However that might be, the walk was a very pleasant one, and would have been much more so but that Ruth, as usual, laughed off every attempt at serious discourse. Still, I was in high feather when we returned, and sat down to tea with dear Dame Garstone. Soon, however, it proved to be sweetly combed down. A tall, handsome, military-looking man, forty years old or so, charged into the room, and was received with all the honors. 'Mr. Hartmann'—'My nephew, Mark Henderson.' The fellow merely glanced at me, in a *de haut en bas* sort of way, but to the ladies he was immensely courteous, especially to Ruth, who received his common-place compliments with evident gratification—but whether only to torment me, I was soon too hot and angry to determine clearly. I stood it pretty well for about half an hour, and then went off with a bounce, and was so little cooled when I entered the parlour of Hope Cottage, a quarter of an hour or so afterwards—I had taken one or two restless turns about the neighbourhood before going in—as to exclaim in a key absurdly loud, except as affording some slight relief to the irritation which was choking me: 'Confound that saucy gipsy! Certainly the most distracting riddle of a girl that ever plagued and puzzled susceptible ingenuous man!'

My father was sitting at an open window, intently scrutinizing through his telescope a large vessel entering the bay from the Narrows. As his deafness had greatly increased upon him of late, I did not suppose, vehemently as I expressed myself, that he could have heard me. I was mistaken: he had caught a portion, at all events, of my words and meaning; for immediately turning from the window, and eyeing me with a grimly smiling expression as he seated himself, and in his slow deliberate way refilled his pipe and grog-glass, he said: 'You have seen the saucy gipsy, then?'

'Confound her!—yes,' I growled; but as he did not hear me, I nodded affirmation.

'That's well,' he replied, adding in his usual seaslang dialect: 'She's a handsome craft, Mark, no doubt, but a little cranky, I fear, and wants more ballast to bring her down to her proper bearings.'

'And a skilful captain too,' I bawled, falling in with his humour.

'That *is* right, lad; and then, I reckon, she'll behave very prettily.'

'Doubtful,' thought I, as I helped myself to a cigar and a tumbler of rum and water. Whenever thoroughly ryled, I am always thirsty.

'They've bedizened her out with a deal of finery,' resumed the ancient mariner.

'That's New York fashion,' I shouted at the top of my voice. 'She must not be out of the fashion, you know.'

'Pray don't scream so, Mark: a stranger would suppose, I was as deaf as a post. As to New York fashions, the Boston folk aint much behind in expensive fal-the-ral.' Here the dialogue was suspended, I being in no mood for talk, and the governor hardly prepared to translate in words the astounding intelligence which I, much wondering what on earth was coming, saw gradually pierce through and illumine his weather-beaten phiz.

'Mark!' said he at last, when the aurora had reached its fullest intensity—'Mark!'

I did mark, and silently intimated as much.

'I have great news for you, Mark,' he went on to say. 'You' rein wonderful luck, my lad, that's a fact, and so you'll say yourself presently. Your aunt, who is, you know, principally interested, was dead against you all along, and required a mortal deal of persuading. "Here," I kept a saying whenever I had a chance—" here's Mark coming home from college with, they say, no gift of tongues whatever, and unfit, consequently, for either law or gospel. The question is, then, how to settle him in the world, and what he's fit for!" I shan't vex you, Mark,' continued my father 'by repeating the answer I got, particularly as your aunt veered round all of a sudden—the very day, I mind that fellow Hartmann or Shartmann came over to Staten Island; and the long and short of it is, that we've agreed, you shall be set going in life at once, with an allowance to start with of sixty dollars a month,—in consideration,' added the veteran with exultant glee, 'that you consent to take legal charge of the craft you were talking of—Hallo! I say—what now!'

My arms were clasped in a trice round the astounded ship-owner's neck, arresting further speech by a grasp, which he only got rid of by an exertion of strength that sent me reeling, till brought up by a sofa, on which I sat down involuntarily.

'Plague take the boy!' growled my father, hitching his discomposed vestments together, and eyeing me with angry surprise—'has he taken leave of his senses?' Confused, dizzy, overwhelmed, I could only gasp out a jumble of excuses, blessings, thanks, which he could not have heard, but seemed nevertheless to comprehend dimly.

"Well, well,' he interrupted; 'enough said, enough said, Mark. It is a good thing, no doubt, to be set up handsomely in life at your age. Still, there's for and against; and, in fact, it's a venturesome risk for all parties.' With that he turned to the window and his telescope, and I rushed into the garden to shout, leap, cry—unheard, unseen. I was but a boy, you know.

The stars were looking forth when, still very nervous and excited, I knocked at my aunt's door. The mulatto help, in reply to my inquiry for her young mistress, pointed to an inner apartment, where, finding Ruth alone, I threw myself at her feet, and poured forth a torrent of wild, wordy rhapsody, to which she hearkened like one in a dream. Presently recovering from the shock and surprise of such a salutation, she forcibly disengaged her dress from my grasp, and angrily exclaimed: 'Mark Henderson! you have been drinking; you are positively tipsy, sir!'

'Drinking! yes; joy from golden goblets, which'——

'Absurd!' interrupted Ruth with increasing displeasure. 'Pray have done with such senseless rhodomontade, and tell me quietly, soberly, if you can, what it is my uncle has been saying to you?'

I did so as nearly as I could, in my father's own words. So overflowing was Ruth Garstone's mirthful gaiety of heart, that I saw she had the greatest difficulty as I proceeded to repress a burst of girlish merriment. But my evident sincerity, the fervour of a true affection, which must have been apparent through all the high-flown fustian in which it was expressed, touched the dear girl's better nature—a shade, so to speak, of kindliness and sympathy gathered over her beaming face; and when I had concluded, she said gently: 'I perfectly understand, Mark; we will speak further upon the subject to-morrow; you are too excited now; and hark! that is mamma's step. I would not have you see her at this moment for the world. This way, through the garden. My dear Mark,' she added, caressingly, seeing that I hesitated, 'do come, let me beg of you, and at once.'

The reader is now in possession of the why and wherefore of the blissful state of being, in which I awoke from soft slumbers on the 3d of July, 1854, though why I got up so very early, I cannot precisely say. Awfully slow, I remember, the time seemed to pass till eight o'clock struck, the hour at which, I knew, my Aunt Martha and Ruth were expected. When I entered the breakfast-room, my father was there alone, and a little sourish-tempered.

'If sister and her gal don't come soon, I shan't wait,' he grumbled. 'I suppose they're staying to get breakfast for that stranger they're so sweet upon. And, by the by, Mark, that free-and-easy-going chap is bound on the same pleasant vy'ge as yourself.'

'The deuce! Surely he's not going to marry Aunt Martha!'

'What's that?' said my father forming his left hand into an ear-trumpet.

I repeated what I had said in a louder key.

'Marry your Aunt Martha! Who was talking about marrying aunts or uncles'—

He was stopped by the entrance of the dame herself. I jumped up all of a tremble, shook hands with her, and then gazed stupidly at the reclosed door.

The good lady looked at me in a queer quizzical sort of way, as she said, in answer to my blank aspect: 'Ruth wouldn't come; she will have it, there is some strange mistake.'

'What's all that about?' demanded my father, impatient for his coffee.

'I was telling Mark,' said his sister, seating herself, and placing her lips close to his ear, 'that Ruth wouldn't come.'

'Then let Ruth stay away,' was the gruff response. 'You, and I, and Mark can settle the business we are upon without her, I hope.'

'Without Ruth!' I exclaimed, a hot qualm flushing through me. 'That would indeed be, as they say, the play of *Hamlet* with the part of the Prince left out.'

'Don't talk of plays!' interrupted Aunt Garstone, with a nervous shudder, and still fixing me with that odd, quizzical look: 'they've crazed the wits of wiser folk than you, my poor boy. Why, what ails the lad?' she continued in a much louder tone. 'It can't surely be true, Joshua Henderson, that you've been telling him, we've agreed that he's to marry my Ruth?'

Joshua Henderson looked as if apprehensive that his deafness had assumed a new and more disastrous phase—that of totally perverting the sound and sense of words addressed to him, and Aunt Martha iterated her query twice or thrice before he replied to it.

'I tell Mark,' he at length said, 'that he was to marry thy Ruth! Pooh! I don't believe I mentioned the gal's name!' This was too much.

'What!' I fairly screamed, 'you did not assure me, yester-evening, that my aunt, after much persuasion, had agreed that the best thing to be done was for me to marry Ruth at once—take legal charge of her, were your words—and that we were to have an allowance, to start with, of sixty dollars a month, besides a reasonable outfitting: do you mean seriously to deny that?'

'You young varmint!' shouted my father; 'if I haven't a mind to'——

'Well, but what, Joshua, *did* you tell him?' interrupted my aunt, springing up and interposing between us. 'As Ruth says, a strange mistake has been made by somebody.'

'What did I tell him, sister?—why, this: that our new clipper-brig the *Saucy Gipsy*, loaded with sorted sundries for Constantinople and elsewhere, was to be placed under his legal charge as supercargo, with'——

Enough! more than enough! A sensation akin to sea-sickness came over me; and it was only by a great effort, that I retained sufficient strength to leave the room, stagger up stairs, and throw myself, in bitter anguish, upon the bed, from which so short a time before I had risen in such elation of mind.

Two or three bitter hours brought healing on their wings, suggesting as they did that, after all, I had no right to rave in that mad way of cruel fate and unpropitious stars! The air-drawn prospect, existing only in my own imagination, had vanished—that was all, leaving me, so far as Ruth was concerned, in the same position as before; whilst Aunt Martha's opinion of my discretion and ability must have greatly improved, since she had consented to invest me with so important a charge as the one proposed. These and similar cogitations were interrupted by a tap at the door, and 'Can I come in now, Mark?' sharply demanded by Dame Garstone herself. She was instantly admitted; and I was glad to see that, in place of the mocking quizzical look, as I interpreted it, her countenance wore an expression of kindliness and benignity. 'I shall not let Ruth know,' she began, 'how crazily you behaved this morning: she is quite vain enough already. But I may tell you, that it has much inclined me to believe you capable of—that you do, in fact, love your cousin with a sincere and lasting affection.'

'Ah, my dear aunt, if I might only express to you how fervently'——

'No, don't Mark,' she hastily interrupted: 'I would much rather not. I feel increased confidence, I was about to say, that I shall not have reason to regret placing you in charge of the large venture embarked in the *Saucy Gipsy*—you may well blush and wince at that ridiculous blunder—unless this, her first voyage, should be permanently associated in our minds with calamitous tidings, as I much fear may be the case.'

'What the deuce is coming now?' thought I, as my aunt paused, in some embarrassment, it seemed.

'I cannot give you,' she resumed, 'a stronger proof that I already look upon you as my son—pray, sit still—than by placing that confidence in you which I deem it prudent to withhold from my own brother. I have never, indeed, doubted your manliness and courage, Mark, and that conviction first suggested to me that you would not be an unfit person to take care that Karl Hartmann—whom you saw yesterday at my house, and who is to sail with you in the *Saucy Gipsy*—does not play me and others false.'

'I am to be a kind of supercargo, then, to Mr. Karl Hartmann, am I?'

'Something, as you say, of that kind. But that we may thoroughly understand each other, I must begin at the beginning. You are aware, Mark, that your father and I arrived in America from England now about five-and-thirty years ago, he being then in his twenty-sixth, I in my fifteenth year. Joshua had long made up his mind to emigrate, but I should hardly have done so, had my home continued to be what it once was. Our father kept a shop in the small town where we were born, and where our mother died, soon after the birth of her youngest child, myself. Matters went on pretty much as usual, till about my ninth year, when our father gradually yielded himself up to dissipated, or, perhaps, I should say desultory, idle habits, delighting especially in theatrical entertainments, so that whenever a troop of players entered the town, we were sure to have two or three of them living at rack and manger with us. The upshot was—but we are none of us our own keepers—that my father married an actress, of no great skill in her profession, I understood, but young, showy, and of course artful—successfully assuming to be the essence of her craft. This is, I know, according to you, mere unreasoning prejudice; but let that pass. From that time, my father's house was no longer a home to me, and I soon decided upon accepting the repeated invitation of my uncle Philipps, to come over to Boston, and take up my abode in his childless home. It was well,' continued Aunt Martha in a subdued tone, 'that my brother was free to come away at the time he did, for there was fast strengthening a link of love binding me to that unhappy household which a few more years would have rendered indissoluble. God, as we all know, sends his rain alike upon the just and the unjust, and his choicest creations are scattered with the same all-embracing bounteousness. One of the loveliest human flowers that ever blossomed upon earth sprang from that else unblest union. Viola, the child was named after some character in a play, and, bitter grief to me, her mother, with my weak father's concurrence, began, from the first hour, the pure, intelligent child was capable of receiving instruction, to train and educate her for the stage! I left Sherborne, when Viola was in her fifth year, and her subsequent history, so far as it has been made known to me by her letters, of which I have received many, may soon be told. My father died in embarrassed circumstances. Mrs Henderson returned to the stage; and Viola made her first appearance at one of the inferior