



BY J. H. BROWN.

"Yes," I said, as I sank upon the sofa with a sigh of satisfaction, "it must be a realistic tale, true to the time in which we live and to the human nature that surrounds us. This the age demands, and only those who can supply the needs of the developing soul—a spirit just finding its wings—can hope for the high rewards. Men desire to be shown themselves, not travesties of them, not heroic personages, but human beings. This I shall strive to do for them. Yes, I shall willingly submit to classification with the realists."

I was in that delicious state of weariness wherein the individual loses all consciousness of social responsibility as of personal aspiration. The thoughts I have just written were the ebbing waves of a high tide of idealized emotion, which had left me with the convictions so inadequately expressed. I felt that for the true poet, the true novelist, the world was a temple with broad aisles and spacious windows, through which shone the lights of heaven—a temple divine in all its parts. Simply to walk amid these majestic columns, with the star-fretted firmaments for dome,—to note the wonders of the architecture, the faces of the devout and frivolous worshippers, was enough to fill the soul. Moving on this exalted plane, my spirit was for the time uplifted and set free. I felt a sympathetic thrill which seemed sweetly to connect me with life in its myriad forms, to make me an illuminated participant in the sad or joyous experiences of these million copies of myself. And so I had said, Life in its naked, its wonderful reality contains romance enough for me. Strange that we, who constantly build ourselves shrines, cannot see that we are forever acolytes before an altar.

As my sense of harmonious comfort increased I surrendered myself to the passes which soft-fingered sleep was making above my eyelids, with the resolution that on awaking I should begin that imaginative labor which was to be my first religious offering. I lazily glanced from my window, through which the river in the near distance gloomed darkly among the trees. On the right was a stretch of meadow, on the left a grove of pines. The sky was covered with a cool grey and the wind was beginning to rise. My eyes gently closed. A Nirvana of delicious sensation stole upon me. I was conscious of nothing more until starting from my couch, my resolution of an hour before stood out

clearly in my mind, like a burnished sword just drawn from its scabbard.

I determined to take a stroll through the fields, to bring together the already converging threads of my realistic story.

Stepping into the street I dispersed a heterogeneous group of children, who were engaged in mimic housekeeping directly in my pathway. Against this unexpected incursion, Azelma, a tiny favourite of the house, protested with childish volubility. She consented, however, to accept my very humble apologies, and resumed her place with invitations to her friends to reassemble. The street wore the tired and saddened aspect that had grown familiar to me. The Saturday afternoon milkman arrested his patient steeds at the central doorway of the terrace, and proceeded to make his calls. Before Malcolmson's shaky fence opposite certain industrious, though erratic fowl, scratched and started with ever wavering purpose. In brilliant contrast to the surroundings, a fashionable carriage with its occupants bowled past, and, as it turned the corner, to my exceeding astonishment who should emerge from its shadow but my friend Rudolph Graham.

There was something in his expression which did not quite suggest the bridegroom and the felicities of the honeymoon. I was struck by the unusual pallor of his fair German face, and his almost girlish blue eyes wore a most unwonted seriousness.

"Hello, Graham!" I cried. "What in the world is this? Have you come from the land of spirits?"

He smiled sadly as I grasped his hand. The change in his appearance was greater than I had at first supposed.

"Why, I thought you were in Europe," I said, regarding him with frank surprise.

"I have been further than Europe," he said in a low voice.

The deuce you have! was my mental exclamation. Aloud I said, "That can only add to my astonishment at seeing you here to-day, and alone. How did you do it? How is your wife? How is Gertrude?"

"She—Gertrude is well," he answered. The words were ordinary. But the tone? I had never heard that tone before. There was something in

it that arrested my steps. Fears were in it and bitter pain.

"Rudolph," I cried, placing my hand on his arm, "dear old friend—what has happened? Tell me. Where is Gertrude? Did you leave her behind?"

He looked stricken. His head fell forward, his eyes were fixed on the ground. He would have stumbled had I not held him. "I have been to Mars," he said brokenly.

"To Rome?" I asked gently, thinking of Mars' Hill.

"No. To Mars—to the planet Mars."

"To the planet Mars, Rudolph?" I grew almost tremulous. Had his reason given way?

"All the way, Jack, to the planet Mars, and I left Gertrude behind me."

"Dead, Rudolph?" There was something awful in this mystery. I must hurry to the end.

"Yes, Jack, dead."

Here surely was woe enough. Whether it was death or madness, or both.

"My poor Rudolph! my poor Rudolph!" And the compassion of my heart spoke in my voice. "Your Gertrude—our Gertrude, dead!"

"Dead," he echoed drearily, "and buried in Mars."

"Can you tell me about it, Rudolph?"

I was filled with amazement. Though changed so startlingly, and with the speech of a lunatic on his lips, my friend's eyes retained their quiet and steady light. They never seemed saner to my mind.

"I will tell you it all," he said. "I came to tell you Jack." He commenced to talk in a sad, subdued voice, and listening I wondered, and as I listened my wonder grew.

"As you know," he began "we sailed for Europe on the 20th of September." (It was now the middle of October, and Indian summer). "We had a quick passage, and perfect weather all the way. We were so happy. I was so happy, and Jack, you knew her, she was happy too. For once the marriage ideal was fulfilled. We seemed one person. We were scarcely parted for ten minutes during the voyage. I lived in a dream of love, and one form filled my imagination. Heaven was everywhere. Before this I had not known what life could do. Whether the moon rose over the sea