

THE PLYMOUTH BANNER.

"THE STAR-SPANGLED BANNER, LONG MAY IT WAVE, OER THE LAND OF THE FREE AND THE HOME OF THE BRAVE."

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THE BANNER.

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THE RED RIBAND.

BY H. J. BEVERLY, M. D.

A warm day in August was approaching its end. The highest peaks of the Harz Mountains were already gilded by the last rays of the setting sun, while upon the smaller hills and in the valleys, the trees and shrubs cast long shadows upon the ground.

Along a narrow path, meandering between gigantic trunks of gloomy oaks, three young men were talking, whose exterior testified that they were disbandied soldiers. They wore grey pantaloons, short skirted blue coats, yellow buttons, red collars, and round caps with stripes of the same color, and each carried a traveling bundle, arranged in the form of a ring, which lay upon the right shoulder, and hung down over the left hip.

Silently the forest became thinner, the trees on both sides disappeared, and the travelers stood upon the bare ridge of a mountain, at the foot of which extended a romantic valley. The mist of the evening had spread apellid veil over the lowlands, so that the houses of a village, which hung on the hill-side like swallows' nests, presented the appearance of a painting formed by the reflected rays of light. The gilded ball on the top of the white church steeple, projecting far above the plain of mist, glowed like a meteor in the rays of the setting sun, and the long and narrow windows of the church glistened like plates of polished steel. A dark range of hills formed the nearest background of the beautiful landscape, and the brilliant peak of the gigantic Bocken, the most distant prospect, gave the picture more than earthly appearance.

As if one and the same thought struck the young men, they stood still and looked into their native vale. Their sunburnt faces radiated in silent joy, for not one was willing to betray his emotion to the other, and in the eyes of one, whose more regular features distinguished him from the rest, a few tears began to glitter, which, as he continued to look at the village, rolled upon the long auburn eyelashes, whence they were wiped away by the hand.

"This is our home!" exclaimed the liveliest, as he glowed smiling over the valley.

"God be praised!" cried a second, "no war has raged here, it still presents the old physiognomy—prosperity to our home!"

"Prosperity to our home!" cried his two companions, with emotion.

"Is it not so, Conrad?" said the first again, "our Harz Mountains present a more pleasing prospect than the plains of Holstein, which we have half and half preserved to Germany. If we could have got the mischievous Danes within our aim, where they are not backed by their ships, I think their desire for German soil would be gratified forever."

"Let the war alone," said Conrad, and rubbed his eyes as if he desired to have a clearer view—"at least, the war from which we return. Here is our home, the picture of peace, do not disturb the charming prospects by such recollections as are detested in my inmost soul."

"Conrad," replied the third, laughingly, "and you have charged the rough-haired red-coats with the butt end of your musket like a lion, as if you would drive them all from the German soil with one stroke. Does the medal, which you carry in your coatpocket afford you no pleasure?"

"I entreat you to be still," replied Conrad, in a sad tone of voice; "had I not received it for saving the life of my major, the Count Rudolph, I believe I would not have accepted it. The Count thinks as I do, therefore he left the service when the amnesty was concluded, and returned to his castle, which looks so pleasantly over the tops of yonder forest trees."

"Do you really believe that it was aversion to the war that has induced him to

withdraw from the army?" said the first speaker. "Conrad, you stand in an intimate and confidential relation with the Count, and do you not know the true reasons why he withdrew? I will state it to you."

"Well," inquired two voices simultaneously.

"Not aversion, but love, has brought him back to his estates."

"Yes, the love of his cousin, Emma von Linden, who has lived for several years—since she is an orphan—at the mansion of old Baron von H——," added the third; "I might have thought of this, as they talked about it before we joined our regiment."

"Miss Emma is said to possess a valuable estate—this would come very handly to our count, as his affairs are not in the best condition."

"Well," said Conrad, "I don't know a nobleman in the country, who is more deserving of the hand of the beautiful Emma and her large estate, I wish him happiness in this marriage. But let us on," he continued, "the summit of the Brocken is already purple, and daylight disappears in the valley—come."

With these words he adjusted his bundle, and vigorously walked on, his companions following.

"See," whispered one to the other, "how Conrad runs. One might think he had made no more than an hour's journey today, instead of having travelled many miles."

"Look forward, and you will behold the magnet which attracts him—it becomes visible just now."

"Where?"

"Yonder where the smoke curls up from the white chimney."

"Is not that where *la belle* Mary lives?"

"Yes, the handsomest girl in the village. Conrad is in love with her."

"I remember, I heard people talk of it."

"I would like to know why he keeps the matter so secret. He has never once spoken of it."

"Conrad's" now cried Conrad, who had gained a start of a hundred paces, and stood at a turn of the road, "why do you linger? Forward! In ten minutes we are at the mill; I already hear the roaring of the water, and the rattling of the wheels."

The two broke off their conversation and redoubled their steps. The way now led through a small birch wood. In a few minutes they emerged from it upon a fragrant meadow. The twinkling stars began to appear and a white veil of mist extended over the earth.

Not a word disturbed the silence of the evening. Silently the young men looked at the village, as one window after another began to be lighted up. The meadow was soon passed, and now the wanderers stood under a large linden, whose gigantic branches covered a sedge roof, beneath which was heard the monotonous rattling of a mill.

"Good night, friends!" said one. "I have reached home. Here dwells my old mother, who still fancies her son on the sea-coast, or perhaps under the earth. I will enter the house softly. Good night!"

"Good night, Philip," whispered the others.

He noiselessly opened the meal-covered door, and disappeared.

When Conrad and his companion passed the gable-end of the mill, they heard through the small open window the loud sobs of a woman. Philip held his old mother in his arms.

Evening had in the meantime, completely set in. In the west, a thunder-storm was rising; but in the east shone the moon, lighting with her melancholy rays, the silent and fragrant forest.

The conversation of the two hunters had now come to an end, and Eberhard's heavy head lay on the table; he had evidently drunk too much. Graff contemplated in silence the evening landscape through the open window. The room was dark, and in the other parts of the solitary house all was quiet; for the two hunters were the only guests this evening.

Suddenly Graff heard a conversation in the forest. He listened. It seemed to come from persons advancing on the road from the village, which was about half an hour's walk distant. After a few minutes two persons emerged from the wood into the dimly lighted open place; they walked slowly, arm-in-arm, gaily conversing. Graff, retreating into the shadow of the room, listened.

"Had not we better stop here, Conrad?" said the female voice, "the thunder-storm will overtake us before we can regain the village."

"Just as you say, my Mary," replied the voice of a man. "Let us sit down upon the bench under the window, and wait until my sister Rosa comes. I hope she will hurry, when she looks at the dark Heavens."

"In Rosa's place I would have gone to my aunt some other day," said Mary, again; "it would have been better if we had remained together to-day, and celebrated your arrival by making a party to the Ilsestein."

"You are right, dear Mary, but aunt is an old woman, who is much concerned on my account, and would have thought

angrily vowed it should be the last. After many reproaches from the uncle, the nephew had said that his excesses were, in part, the result of loving unsuccessfully to you."

"You in love?" cried the magistrate, staring at Eberhard through his spectacles.

"Yes! why not? Is it with your ward, Mary?"

When the first surprise of the magistrate had passed, he grew all at once strangely lenient to his nephew. He knew that, beside the farm she inherited, Mary would receive a dowry of three thousand dollars, on her wedding day, from Count Rudolph, who was her foster-brother. "Hem," he said at last, "you are not the fool I took you to be. But why don't you press your suit?"

"She gives me no encouragement. Yet perhaps," added Eberhard, "if you would speak for me, I might hope."

"Not badly said, boy," replied the magistrate, pompously, "I am her guardian; she will listen to me. Strike while the iron's hot says the old proverb, so if you are ready, we'll visit her at once."

Accordingly the magistrate, taking his cane, and followed by his nephew, had gone to see Mary; and was with her at the very moment Conrad passed. But the guardian failed in his negotiation. Mary, however, was compelled to acknowledge her love for Conrad; and Eberhard went away vowing revenge.

His disappointment was greater, indeed, than even his uncle supposed—Eberhard had become acquainted with a fellow forester, belonging to another district, who was as much older in vice as he was in years, and who led the young man to gamble beyond his means. Eberhard was even now in fear of a prison, in consequence of being unable to pay a sum of money, that would soon be due, but which he could not discharge, in consequence of having lost so much at play.

Though Mary had always looked coldly on him, he had hoped that time, and his uncle's influence, would induce her to alter her mind; but this expectation was now over; and all future prospect of her returning likewise was cut off, for she loved Conrad, who, she had heard that very day, was soon to return from the war covered with honor.

The next day, which was Sunday, Eberhard, gloomy and sullen, was in the forest when unexpectedly he met his elder comrade, Graff. The latter, noticing Eberhard's troubled face insisted on knowing the reason; and finally the young man told him all.

"Come," said Graff, when Eberhard had done, "the affair will not be as bad as you imagine. Let us strike into this path toward the tavern; we'll take a drink together, and perhaps the wine will give us some good advice."

Arm in arm they followed the footpath, which in ten minutes, led them to a clearing, on which stood a small house. It was inhabited by an old hunter, who, in summer-time, offered drinks and eatables for sale.

The two entered this little tavern, and calling for the best wine, sat down in a room whose windows faced the forest. Graff related anecdotes, at which Eberhard, whose head by and by began to feel the effects of the wine, laughed from his very heart, and soon forgot debts and miseries.

"To me?" asked Conrad, in astonishment. "I have come here for that purpose. But who is that lady?"

"It is Mary, my bride. Ah! how she will rejoice when she sees you again—I will call her."

"Not if you love me. I must not be known, even by Mary."

"For heaven's sake, dear count, what affords you? You are so agitated—your face is pale—what has occurred?"

"You shall know all, but first send Mary inside a while."

Without saying a word Conrad hurried to his bride, who stood trembling at the door of the tavern.

"Mary," he said, softly, "go into old Caspar for a few moments, I will soon return, and then we shall go on home."

"Who is the stranger?" anxiously asked the trembling girl.

"I cannot tell you now; but fear nothing; the conference which he requests of me can be only to our advantage—come into the house."

Conrad took Mary's arm, and gently drew her along with him, attempting to allay her fears by a few pleasant words. After he had assigned her to the care of old Caspar, he returned to the count.

The count had taken a seat on the bench under the window, his head buried in his hands.

"But in the meantime, and while the count and Conrad had been talking, Graff had taken Conrad's hat with the red ribbon and from the bench, reaching out of the window for that purpose. Then he roused his companion.

"Eberhard," he softly exclaimed, "awake!"

"What is the matter?" groaned the half-drunken man.

"Look at this hat!"

"Why at the hat?" he said, rubbing his eyes.

"The ribbon around it is from Mary, the heiress, Mary I say."

"To whom does it belong?"

very hard of it, if we had delayed, even for a day, the information of my arrival. Besides, she has some important business to attend to."

"Business?"

"That concerns you and me."

"I understand," whispered the girl, blushing, "her consent?"

"Yes, Mary, and to-morrow I shall go over myself, personally to entreat her for it."

"Oh, Conrad, if the war with the Danes should break out again?"

"Let it break out," said the young man vehemently, "I move no hand, but stay with my Mary and attend to the farm."

"But if they compel you?"

"They will not compel me, my dear, for the leaves fall from the trees I am your husband, and when I show that the management of the farm depends entirely upon me, nobody will be around me to take part in this contemptible war."

"You looked much better too, after you threw off the soldiers' uniform and had your ordinary clothing on again."

"And how will I look?" replied Conrad, "when the bridegroom's red ribbon flutters on my hat?"

"This we shall soon see," exclaimed Mary, as she took the hat from the head of the young man.

"What do you want with the hat?"

"Look, Conrad!"

With a light movement of the hand, Mary took a red ribbon from her black bodice, which had formed a large loop around her breast, and wound it around the hat, as she held the latter upon her knees.

"Thus," she pleasantly exclaimed, and again placed the hat upon her head, "thus, pretty much, looks the hat of a bridegroom—it is a pity that the ribbon has not a larger loop."

"Mary," cried the enraptured Conrad, "this ribbon I will never return to you."

"Well, then keep it, dearest; its red color is a symbol of my love for you!"

"And this kiss may tell you that my love is greater than yours!"

"This is not so!"

"Oh, yes!"

"Oh, no!"

Conrad locked the girl in his arms, and settled the little quarrel by a glowing kiss. The happy pair were not sensible of the listener at the window. The moon had now come forth.

Suddenly footsteps were heard in the forest. "Do you hear?" exclaimed Mary, "Rosa is coming. I will scold her for making us wait so long."

And like a chamois she ran over the grass-plot toward the forest path, whence the steps were heard. But she had scarcely entered the thicket, when the form of a man stood before her. With a shriek she started back, and ran toward Conrad, who had hastened after her.

"What is the matter?" he cried.

"Look at that figure—it comes nearer!"

"Let us fly, it may be a robber!"

"Fly! If!" exclaimed Conrad, and advanced toward the man, who had now reached the grass-plot.</