

**LOVE IS A
SPIRIT: A NOVEL**

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Love is a Spirit: A Novel by Julian Hawthorne

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JULIAN HAWTHORNE

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A Novel



BY

JULIAN HAWTHORNE



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1896

LOVE IS A SPIRIT

I

"Thy Hornbook I cannot spell—
In me all Wisdom's Secrets dwell.
Prove me Fool by Rule of Thumb—
Blind without me were Heaven, and dumb."

FOR an hour before he came the girl had been sitting nearly motionless on the bench overlooking the rose-garden.

She leaned against a pillar; her right arm, bare to the elbow, lay along the broad marble balustrade of the veranda; the coolness of the smooth stone was grateful in the tropic afternoon. It was an afternoon that drowsed and dreamed and distilled fragrance. The May rains had been sending herald showers before them for a week past, and

sky, mountains, trees, the whole flowery voluptuous earth, were lulled in sensuous delight. Beauty was everywhere.

Beauty was everywhere; but though the full white lids of the girl's eyes were only half closed, she was unregardful of things without. She was gazing quietly into the realms of her soul.

The spiritual world, inhabited unawares by the human spirit even during life in the body, is at rare intervals open to consciousness. Ordinarily, as the ripple on the surface of water obscures the secrets of the depths, so physical sense obscures our vision of the inward life; but the depths are there, and the recesses of the soul — let what turmoil may prevail without—remain forever tranquil.

For conflict belongs to transitory existence only; the immortal is unassailable, and moves unceasingly forward in a current too profound to be perceived. Beings whom no end threatens, who after eternities of divine activity to beatify their fellows and beautify their

world find themselves immeasurably more able than at first — for such there are no clashings of will with law, no discrepancy between means and ends, no discords. They hear the rhymings of truth with love, see forms of use transfigured into beauty, and their hearts beat in the rhythm of common effort towards universal good.

Upon this inner world, through the portals of her virgin heart, the girl looked. Her heart, though virgin, was not vacant. Pure youth is always weaving, out of its beliefs, intuitions, and aspirations, the image of an ideal being. To each of us the opposite sex is a mirror reflecting the reverse image of our own best selves, which, because reversed, is made pregnant of the life which isolation never can engender. Over this image of all loveliness the maiden throws the glamour of whatever is nobly masculine, while the man consecrates it with womanliness.

But the image requires a concrete nucleus on which to model it. Some fair face or

tender voice, some manly look or picturesque action, gives the hint; and straightway the creation glows with life and beauty.

Fully to realize the ideal is a more critical matter. Yet, as a child arrays with the graces of its imagination the first block of wood that comes to hand, and finds it lovable, so has the rankest pretender a fair chance of being accepted as the true prince or princess. But while the child may throw aside its doll, the fable of Frankenstein pictures the plight of the deceived lover.

But how happens it that, in a question to answer which the finest faculties of the soul are addressed, mistake should be so often made? The rankest obtuse on-looker may see at a glance the error to which the exquisite organization of the lover is incorrigibly blind.

Omne ignotum pro magnifico. Youth and maiden, in the mystic glory of pubescence, are not as men and women of the world, catechising the very Eros and Psyche; rather are

they prone to canonize the devil. The more they abhor evil in the abstract, the less ready are they to credit it in the concrete.

Moreover, as the full cloud yearns to give itself in rain, as the winged bird fain would fly, as the trained athlete chafes to put forth his strength, so must needs the potent lover approve potency by act. This limitless wealth was given to spend, and 'spent it shall be, though cast at the feet of swine. The first impulse of love is to give; the craving to receive a like gift in return comes not till afterwards.

It is in that craving that the frailty of the complex emotion lies. To love is safety and increase, for its prototype is the Creator; but to suffer love is perilous, since its dependence is upon the creature. Yet to this end were we born—to love and be beloved; the passion is as sweet as the action; and both must mingle to make the full draught of human happiness. But what marvel if, seek-

ing for our birthright, rich in instinct and poor in experience, we are misled by wandering fires?—or can any danger, incurred for such a birthright, be too great?

The girl suddenly changed her position, and looked towards the right. The height on which the house stood sloped abruptly to a plain, bordered by a forest, from which emerged a road that crossed the plain in the direction of the house. A man on horseback had ridden forth from the wood and was cantering down the road.

She watched his approach with an intentness that made her soul shine through her eyes. There was a tightness about her heart, caused by wide emotions surging through it, as ocean tides rush through a Hellespont. With a sigh the pressure was relieved, and sparkling currents of delight frolicked through her veins, and changed the quick pallor of her cheeks to rose. Her brain was confused with vague images of joy at hand. She was unconscious of her body; she never