

**THE STORY OF A  
STRANGE MARRIAGE, IN  
TWO VOLUMES, VOL. I**

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The Story of a Strange Marriage, in Two Volumes, Vol. I by Helen Falconer

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VOL I

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## CHAPTER I.

SOME young girl friends of mine object to what they call an "I story," that is, a story written in the first person singular. "If you are elegant, interesting, accomplished, with a slender waist, and broad shoulders, what a conceited puppy you must be to tell us all that! or if you are modest and truthful, and tell us that you are only poor Hodge at the best—why who wants to hear about such a

hero? No! make yourself out as charming as you possibly can, only hide your conceit decently under a fig leaf of 'he's and 'him's." One resource remains for the unfortunate story-teller who feels himself impelled by fate or inclination to write in his own person, yet would neither chalk himself up a conceited puppy nor a Hodge. Dear young ladies, I am not my own hero. You shall not hear if my hair is red or black. I shall neither flush my eyes in any of these pages, nor stride with majestic stork-like pins in and amongst the various paragraphs, nor "shake my tawny mane," nor even "erect my crest." So absolutely unheroic am I, that I do not know how this last-mentioned process is accomplished. You shall not be called upon to watch me through the dangers

of calf-love, any more than I shall call upon you to watch me through the valley of mumps or measles. No! my hero is none other than my father; my heroine is my mother. They are no chickens when I begin my story, for I, Carl Hübner, their second son, am about 19, and my brother James is two years older. We have a little sister called Gertrude, and these make up our family. Though not in any way connected with Ireland, perhaps you will not object to my allowing myself to indulge in an Irish bull, and to explain that I begin my story nearly at the end of it.

My hero, then, is Friederich Hübner, my father, who came over some twenty years ago from a certain town in Germany, and settled in the United States of America, with

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Gretchen, his wife, and infant son James. Here, in the States, was I born, and likewise Gertrude our sister. He was originally a carpenter by trade, and had lived and worked in his native town with his father and mother till they died. He then wandered off to a little quiet village amongst the Swiss mountains, partly drawn thither by his intense love of the beautiful in Nature, and partly that he found in that place a sufficiency of work. Here he married my mother, who had occupied a situation in an English nobleman's household, and was travelling through Switzerland in his train during the time my father was working there.

In the village where he lived they met, and there they married. After that event, my father returned to his own country and started

a cabinet-maker's shop, and then it was that in the evenings, after work was over, he practised that art which has now for many years brought him into much repute. Few people who love, or pretend to love, the beautiful have not made acquaintance with Friederich Hübner's wood carvings. Under his magic fingers, the dead wood seems to live again, and, dreaming of the mighty forest which was its home in the olden time, it puts forth buds, and blossoms, and innumerable interlacings of leafy branches. Besides his power over this art, he has also gained some fame in a higher branch. He was only able to give much time to the study of painting late in life, for, as he said, he had had to work too hard for daily bread at first, to find time for his own pleasure; but when work

became less needful, and he had more choice in the arrangement of his time, his love of Nature, his accurate eye, and dexterous fingers found a natural outlet in painting. There is a certain vein of romance runs through his nature, which adds an interest to his pictures, though in appearance he is not at all a noticeable man. Honesty, justice, and kindness have no very distinctive marks, else we should not so often be taken in by the opposite qualities. When looking at him doing the honours of his house in his kindly hospitable way, I have heard fine ladies, who did not know that I was his son, compare him to "a working man in his Sunday clothes." Besides these same fine ladies, the best people in literature, science, and art, whether they are from foreign lands or home-