

VIGIL—AND AFTER

in marriage. That was not Antonina Caldora. A love which could go out to the child Brigitta with such a passionate strong tenderness that it cast out all fear of Fonzano, and defied him in even in his wrath, would surely some day waken in a yet more passionate strength for the one man worthy of it. That, said Le Brocq, sorrowfully, I am not. Galahad? There were no Galahads, only weak faulty men who, more or less blindly, more or less stumblingly, saw and followed their Grail whatsoever it was. If it had love in it, such love as tramples self and baseness under foot, then it was holy; not the highest perhaps, not the greatest quest of life, but at least one which a man can follow in the world of men.

And he had followed though he might not find. Three times in the past night—it was drawing on to morning now; one by one Le Brocq had heard through the quietness the muffled boom of the hours as they passed—three times she had cried her refusal with an insistence there was no mistaking; not even the lash of Fonzano's smooth tongue could drive her to a reluctant obedience. God bless her for a good woman, said Le Brocq a second time, with apparent inconsequence. And yet not so. It stirred his reverence that she should reverence her womanhood too highly to degrade it even in name without love. Without love! Le Brocq winced—well, there was always the army. Bowing his head once more on his folded arms he prayed dumbly. There were no words even in his thought, only the sense of a great need, and an unflinching belief in the power of a solemn presence. And, such are men, presently he slept.

At a touch upon his shoulder Le Brocq awoke, cramped and stiff but fully alert on the instant. It was broad day, but no direct light lit up the multi-coloured glories of the southern window, therefore the sun still hung in the east. By his side stood Fra Luca, a smile on his mild face.

"You are a good sleeper, my son; doubly good.