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over Adrian's face, like the passing swoop of a dark wing.

"I do not know," he said bitterly. "For a time I thought her safe with you, and—blessed you for it, but—"

"Then you know nothing of her—noting at all?" cried Lesley.

"No more than my fellow-dead," said Adrian, a sudden, despairing break in his voice. "It was all in vain—I did not even save her."

"Adrian, it was not by chance we have met now," she cried. "It was not by chance that I have been thinking and speaking of you to-day, not by chance that I opened that book, 'The Underworld.' It is your book. I know it, I feel it; I heard your voice in it, crying aloud out of the depths." Adrian neither assented nor denied, and Lesley went on, with mounting emotion, "At last we are face to face, let us have the truth out between us. Save for a moment on that last dreadful day, I have never really doubted you. Forgive me for that, for now I know that you have wronged no one but yourself. Is it the wrong-doer who cries for justice—justice—justice? Do justice to yourself, Adrian! You have suffered enough—sacrificed enough. Why should you bury your life and all your powers longer? I believe in you—I always will believe in you, but don't bruise my faith again. Give me one word, if it must be for myself alone, if you cannot speak it out to the world for the sake of—the one you are shielding." Adrian's eye forbade her to utter the name that was on her lips.

"Stop!" broke in Adrian, and the harsh, abrupt syllable held a world of vain, anguished longing.

He moved away a pace or two, but when he came back to Lesley's side his voice was calm again.

"Lesley," he began, and the once familiar sound of her name upon his lips struck chill through all the girl's ardour—so far-off, so hopeless it seemed.

"It is vain to thank you for what you have said, but I can say nothing in return. You are right, I am buried alive—the stone has been lifted a little, but when I leave you it will fall again, and I cannot put out a hand to stay it. But remember—slowly—"it is my own doing, and I dare not even ask you to cherish that wonderful faith in me, for I can never defend myself—never clear my name. While life lasts there is no hope for me."

### CHAPTER XV.

"I've got some good news for you," exclaimed Mrs. Kenyon gaily to the company in general.

Tea was going on, and the usual one or two friends had dropped in.

"You haven't told us yet what the extra bait is," said Lesley, smiling.

"Didn't I? Why, he has got hold of La Fiammetta."

"What, the woman who has been making such a stir by reciting from that weird book, 'The Underworld'?" exclaimed one of Mrs. Kenyon's guests, one of those men who dabble in literature and art, and are credited with a much more intimate knowledge of these and of their devotees than their surface acquaintance warrants.

"What is she like?" chimed in a pretty, fair girl.

"I haven't seen her yet," said Mrs. Kenyon. "She was to have been at the Delmore's, but failed them. She can afford to do that just now. Of course you have seen her," with a smile at Mr. Dennison.

"Reminds one of Bernhardt when she was young."

The evening's engagement, which had been merely a weariness before, now seemed for the moment intolerable to Lesley, and yet as the hour in

which she was supposed to be resting slipped away, there awoke within her a strange, restless desire to hear these words of Adrian's which had so thrilled her in the cold medium of print, uttered with all the added appeal of an impassioned human voice. It would be painful, horribly painful, like a sudden touch upon a bare nerve, but there are times when a quick, leaping pang seems a relief from dull, continuous aching.

That the long drive had had no more deterrent effect on society in general than on Mrs. Kenyon's party was apparent from the procession of motors and carriages slowly moving up the avenue at Moreland's through the soft summer dusk. People grumbled loud and long at the distance and the trouble of going so far, but Sir Hartley and Lady Wilmot's invitations were eagerly schemed for, and their great house and the wonderful old gardens were thronged whenever they were thrown open. Nor did Lesley wonder at it when, having escaped at last from the slow progress up the avenue, with its heavy grind of wheels and reluctant pauses, the party strolled into the gardens, with Sir Neil, whom they found awaiting them, as guide.

Lady Marchmont and Mrs. Kenyon were soon surrounded by friends, and, nothing loth, returned to the house. Lesley preferred the gardens, which, after the long hot day, were a rapture of coolness and freshness and fragrance, and all those gracious sights and sounds, half seen, half heard, which attend the gentle oncoming of a June night. The formal stretch of the Long Water reflected the gleam from one or two brilliantly-lit boats, and the soft illuminations which made the lawns and bowers enchanted ground. These earthly lights would pale ere long beneath the mounting majesty of the moon, but she had not yet lifted her white disc above the massed darkness of the trees. From the mullioned oriels of the old house, set wide to the sweet night, the light fell in broad yellow streams, and with it came wafts of music and laughter and gay voices.

"Miss Home, I have been seeking you everywhere," exclaimed Mr. Dennison, detaching himself from the approaching group. "I have been collecting the stragglers. La Fiammetta is about to make her appearance, and I know you want to hear her. We shall have to make haste."

Whether Mademoiselle Fiammetta's fate would be, according to Mr. Dennison, but to blaze and to vanish, there could be no question as to the brilliance of the blaze for the moment. From the illumined gardens, from the picture gallery, from the cushioned, palm-screened nooks which invited to *solitude a deux*, even from the supper-tables in the panelled dining-room, people came thronging into the hall.

The hall, with its cavernous, arched roof, was, in spite of innumerable lamps, a playground of lights and shadows.

"Odd that Wilmot won't have electric light here—thinks it an anachronism, I suppose, but it seems rather like blacking yourself all over to play Othello," Lesley heard someone say, as Mr. Dennison piloted his convoy through the throng, pressing towards the further end of the hall, where the wide arched recess under the musician's gallery was suggestively screened off.

Others beside him were desirous of obtaining a nearer view for themselves and their friends, and with such an object in view some society ladies use the methods of the average crowd.

(To be continued)



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