

THE THREAD OF FLAME

"Some one she liked?"

"No, some one she didn't like. That was the funny part of it. But about four or five months ago she came to me with so incoherent a tale that I couldn't make anything out of it. There was a man, a gentleman she said he was, who wanted her to go off with him; and to save some one else she began to think she ought to do it. I really can't tell you what it was, because I couldn't get it straight; only there was a wild, foolish, lovely idea of self-sacrifice in it, and now it's over. *He* won't get her; and if ever any one deserved an exquisite thing like her it's Harry Drinkwater. He can't see how pretty she is, of course; but he gets the essence of beauty that is more than physical."

We dropped the terms of peace and the League of Nations and frankly discussed love. I had already told her that for me, notwithstanding all the conditions, there was no woman in the world but Vio.

"And for me," she laughed, "there's—there's Lohengrin." My expression must have betrayed my curiosity, because she went on: "Haven't I told you that it's all a matter for ourselves whether the blessings of existence are ours or not; and what blessing is greater than a good husband when one wants one? When Elsa was in need of a defender she went down on her knees, a method of expressing her point of view, and he came right out of the clouds. There's always a Lohengrin for every woman born, and there's