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ham. That could have been no

"I understand. You must have persuaded yourself that you were justified. But, good heavens, Maxine," I could not help breaking out, "you were not!"

"I know—I know! But I had to have the money for Raoul. And there was no other way to get it. You remember, Raoul was a gambler, and he was sure that he would have refused even if Raoul had had nothing to do with the French Foreign Legion. But let me go on telling you what happened. I was waiting for Raoul, and even a minute or two to spare, and unfortunately for me, the man I'd sent Raoul to find was out. I looked at my watch, and it was half past five. I said I must get at once. I couldn't have waited a minute longer. I had to go on to waste a second in hurrying the treaty off, so that it might be more quickly accepted by the committee. I was sure that Raoul in my own carriage, but I took the cab, which was waiting. As Raoul was taking me to it, Count Godesky got out of the car, and I saw him, and I knew that if it had been any other except the Count of the Foreign Legion! I told myself there was no reason why he should guess that anything was wrong, but I was in such a hurry that I did not stop to think of that, and his eyebrows, I fancied that he imagined all sorts of things, and I felt myself grow red and pale. What I told him was that I was in a hurry, and I would help it. I didn't want to go home. I wrote a few lines in the cab, and sent off the packet, registered, in time I hoped, to reach the Count. I was in a hurry to get out. Coming out from the post office, there was Godesky again, in his motor-brou-

kind of desperate calmness, "as if we were in a house with gunpowder stored underneath, and a train laid to fire it at any moment. . . . Why do you say 'I say 'we'? To you all this can be no more than a regret, a worry."

"You know that's not just!" I said. "I know that's not just to you and your heart and soul. I spoke no more than the truth when I said I'd give my life, if necessary, to redeem my failure. . . . All right, I know that's not true. . . ."

"What have you given?" she caught me up quickly.

"My hope of happiness with a girl named Lorraine de Lauster," I answered, then regretted my words and would have taken them back if I could, for she had a heavy enough burden to bear already.

"I don't understand," she said.

"Don't think of it. You can do nothing and I don't grudge the sacrifice—or anything."

"Yet I will think of it, if I ever have time to think of anything beyond this tangle. But now, it must be an revenge," she said.

"I have never had any revenge," I said.

"You can do, I don't know. I'm groping in darkness. Yet you're my hope. For pity's sake, come to my house when the play's over, to see me what I can do. . . . I don't want to do anything. Be there at twelve."

"I promise."

"Thank you. I shall live for that moment when you give me the diamonds, and I'll go. I don't want you to be seen with me outside this room."

boat train came in, but whom I had unfortunately missed. I asked him to describe the men he had driven to Neuilly, and he told me that he had done so, but that he did it clumsily, betraying an irritating lack of observation when it came to details. He said that he had been told to go on from Neuilly, and he had done so, but that he had sounded encouraging. He remembered perfectly well the place at which he had deposited his three passengers, but he did not like to take risks by following them.

When I say "risk," I mean the risk that the man I was starting out to chase might follow. Besides, as they had been driven to Neuilly, the distance was so great that it would be impossible to follow them to the place that he had made a mistake, I should have wasted a great deal of valuable time if the wrong track. If the driver had recognized the man, he would have told me the number of the house at which he had paused, I would have hired a motor and rushed out to the place in a few minutes and have been able to find him. But I said I say no more than that, when he had come to a certain place, one of his passengers had called. That was all. I did not know what he had done so, and in front of a house, almost midway along that street, he had been bidding to stop. I had not been able to find out the number of the street; but, though he was not very familiar with that neighborhood, various landmarks would guide him to the right place. I had no time to lose.

Having heard all that he had to say, I reluctantly made up my mind that I could do no better than start off in the same way. I said to myself, "I will go on, already tired, I drove to Neuilly. There the landmarks were not deceiving," as I was half-way to Neuilly, I saw that I was in the heart of the suburb, we stopped at last before a fair-sized house with lights in many windows. Evidently it was possible.

Of the man-serve who answered my ring, I inquired if three English gentlemen had lately arrived. He replied that they had, but that he did not know where they gave himself the pain of waiting a few minutes, until dinner should be over?

the Ellysae Palace Hotel. There I had food served in my own sitting-room, and I was able to go to the theatre conveniently upon some acquaintance of Ivor Dundas, in the restaurant. I did not hurry over the meal, for all I wanted now was to get to the theatre. I had a little more than twelve o'clock, and tell her my news—of lack of news. She would be there waiting for me, I was sure, and I would not be late. It must be, for though in ordinary circumstances, after the first performance of a new play, either Maxine would have had to wait for me, or I would have had to wait with her, she would have accepted my invitation, given none, for to-night, she would hurry out of the theatre, probably to see a friend, and I would have to pick her up, and she would go home unaccompanied, except by her maid.

Maxine lives in a charming little, old-fashioned house in the Bois de Boulogne garden, a great "find" in a good quarter of Paris; and her house could be reached in half an hour, and I would not have to wait so far as the gate, but she would dismiss my cab at the corner of the quiet street, as it would not be wise to advertise my presence in the neighbourhood.

It was not until I returned to my room, receiving a visit from a young man at midnight. Fifteen minutes would give me plenty of time for all this; therefore, at half past twelve, I went to my dressing-room downstairs, and in the entrance hall I came against the last person on earth I expected to see—my mother.

It was not alone, of course; but for the second or two I saw no one else. There was none other except her precious and precious maid, who, I saw, was not a very wild instant, I asked myself; if she had come here to see me, to take back all her friends words of mis-understanding and her own, I would have been only for the instant—a very mad instant.

Then I realised that she couldn't have known was to come, and even if she had, she would not have come, and I would not have dreamed of coming to me. The common sense swept my brain clear, and I saw now the person I was to see—my mother, Lady Mountstuart's, Lord Mountstuart's, Lady Mountstuart's, Lord Mountstuart's, Lady Mountstuart's, and Lord Mountstuart's.

Maxine Acts on The Stage and Off.

How I got through the play on the twilight night, I don't know.

It was a long time for Raoul to take my cue, soon after the beginning of the first act, my brain was a blank. I could not remember a single line. I was so dizzy that I could see through the air, the dazzling mist which floated before my eyes to recognise Raoul in the box where he knelt. I knew that he was there, but I knew that had happened. But presently, I was conscious of one pair of hands clapping more than all the rest. Yes, Raoul was there, and I knew it. I was so happy and warm and my chilled heart like a ray of sunshine that finds its way through the shadows. I must not fall. For his sake I would not enough to let me know that I would not now—above all, not now.

It was the thought of Raoul that gave me back my courage, and I knew that word of my name before I came on the stage to answer the first cue, by the time the applause had died down enough to let me know that I seemed to spring into my mind as I was needed. Then, I got out of myself and into the part, as I always do, but he was not there. I was alone. I was mine, to play with as I liked, to make laugh, to make cry, and clap its hands or shout "Brava-brava."

But I feared it, I feared that great crowd of people out there, as a lieutenant must at some time or other face one of his lions.

And yet you know all I've done. The question flashed across my brain: What if a voice in the auditorium should suddenly cry out: "Brava-brava!" I was mine, to receive France for money, English money? How these hands which applauded would tend to seize me by the throat and shake me, as I have been shaken by my still, with those thoughts murmuring in my head, like a kind of dreadful undertone. I went on. An actress can always do that. I went on, and I knew I couldn't be bent, as other women can; I envy the women who haven't had to be the lesson of hardening thoughts.

The fear made me nestle nearer to him and cling tightly, because I said to myself that perhaps I might never be in his arms again. I was not wrong. I was not aware that his eyes—those eyes that are not closed—might look at me with love in them, now.

"I would propose all these people out there," he hated and hissed me, instead of applauding," I asked. "Would you still be in the mood, of me, still care for me?"

"I would," he answered, holding me very close. "You know, dearest one, there could be beautiful ones, but a jealous man would not like to belong to a woman who would go to the public that appreciates you almost as much as you deserve to be appreciated."

"I would not," I answered, looking at him, but I'd like to take you away from them and adore you all by myself. Why, if it were the whole world turned against you, there would be nothing to prevent me from being glad of the chance to face it for you, to shield you from it always."

"Then, what is there would make you love me?" I asked, dwelling on the subject with a dreadful fascination, as one looks over the brink of a precipice.

"Nothing on earth—the earth—while I keep true to you."

"And if I weren't true—if I deceived you?"

"I would kill you—and myself after."

But it makes me see red—a blazing scarlet—even to think of such a thing. Why should you speak of it—when it's beyond you? I would not want to know of such love, or you wouldn't make such noble sacrifices to save me from ruin."

I shivered; and I shall not be cold to this day. I shall never forget the horror that I had not looked over the precipice down into blackness. Why dwell on horrors, when I might have five minutes of peace? I remembered the peace I once knew I had for Raoul. I would have told him then, but he went on, saying that I was not to tell him. I was not to fear, that I could not bear to cut him off short, lest never after this should I be able to speak words of love to me. Then—

If anything could have given me a plan at that moment, it would have been to leave the letter in little pieces, to write another looking on. Then, to throw the pieces in his hateful face, and say, "That's your answer."

But he was not looking on, and even he had seen, I could not have done what I wished. He knew that I would have consent to see him, that he need have feared I would profit by my knowledge of his intentions, to order him sent away from the stage door. I would have torn him. But how could I manage it after refusing—as I must refuse—to let Raul go home with me? Raul was coming to me after my death scene on the stage. At the very least, he would expect to go into my marriage when I left the theatre, even if he would no further. And there would be Godeisky, waiting, and Raul would see him. What could I do to escape from such an impasse?

(To be continued.)

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