

### 310 THE MAN WITH THE DOUBLE HEART

charged through and broke the Standard—the great white lilies of Florence—off from the famous ‘Carroccio.’

“I don’t fancy any of these won their honours *our* way—the modern way in old England—a fat subscription to ‘Secret Funds’! They were rather a bad lot, all the same . . .”

“I don’t doubt it,” Jill laughed, mischief in her mocking glance. “Perhaps they all had ‘double hearts’—it seems to lead to a lot of trouble! Look at those lovely pearls there—on the lady in the satin gown—and the single drop on her forehead! You could pick it up—it looks so real.”

“So you shall. We’ve got it still. Safe in my Roman bank—for *you*!—And all sorts of other jewels—an emerald ring that belonged to a Pope. You’re going to be a little queen!—have every mortal thing you want. And you’re worth it, you dearest child. You’re the loveliest woman in the world!”

“Hush!” she smiled—“I want to think . . .”

But a new idea had struck McTaggart.

Absently she let him lead her to where two great gilded chairs stood on a dais, under a canopy.

“Sit there,” he commanded.

She settled herself easily, her slim shape swallowed up between the great carved arms, beneath the shield of the Maramonte. He stood back to look at her, as she went on, thoughtfully:

“We’re rich, then, Peter?—ever so rich.”

“Yes,” he nodded his head gravely. “What are you puzzling out now?”

“I was thinking of Rodly,” she confessed—“Of all that this may mean—to him.”

“He’s to be your Court Painter, my queen”—McTaggart’s eyes never left her—“Won’t he love Italy? And Aunt Elizabeth?—She knows!—I told her the whole story, Jill. She’s been a brick to keep the secret.”

Then he mounted the dais—impatiently—as she still dreamed on.

“I say, Jill. You’ve never thanked me! This is my wedding present, you see.”