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ice to her, it seemed to mock her, and say that she was growing. The Comte was a drunkard and a great roulette player. He up to his neck in debt, the castle was deeply mortgaged, and asked to Naomi to help clear it. Naomi had plenty of suitors anxious to marry her, but she heard tales of their wild midnight and debauches, and greatly to her father's disappointment, she would not own it to herself. These men were so different from her ideal. The Comtessa however, lost her temper, and poured out her such a current of wrath and insults, that Naomi had been completely cowed.

When the Baron Muriccio had asked for her hand in marriage, she had been received with open arms. He was one of the richest in Italy, and a friend of the king. Naomi had never seen the Baron. He had called to see her father when she was away on a visit. Her father had given his consent without consulting her. The Baron said that he was hopelessly mad. He scarcely ever went to court, and more seldom to balls, or society functions—but dwelt in and year out in his great castle on the hills. This was a promising outlook for Naomi who had been for the last year used to a succession of gaities.

One could not say that he was not generous, for every day presents of rich jewels, rare hot house flowers, and fruit came for Naomi from the Baron.

Perhaps he was not such an orge after all. She did not care, she wanted was money and position. Money so that she could have all she craved for—rich dresses and jewels—position, so that she could make other women jealous, and show off to better advantage her great beauty.

Out in the moonlight, hidden by the dense shrubbery, a stray musician was playing some sweet strain. It sounded like some bird which was captive in a cage, and was crying out for the freedom of the woods.

She stopped in the midst of her brooding to listen. It was such a sweet strain, with a note of gladness running through it. It told a tale of the mountains and valleys, of a life where one was free from care and worry.

She knew only one man who could make the violin speak like this—and that was Francisco. He must be in the shrubbery and was playing for her.

What did she want to hear about the hills and mountains for; she wanted to hear of the court, its riches and splendour—the coming of the friendship of the king—of the conquests she was to make—and the happy lovely life she was to lead.

She stepped away from the balcony to reenter the house, and go back to the ball room. The violin brought back memories and scenes which she wanted to forget.

Again the violin arrested her, the tune was changed. A softer, lighter strain, she caught her breath and her heart began to throb quickly.

Francisco loved her, he was telling her so. She listened intently, his voice was soft and pleading. He had no wealth and possessions to offer her, only himself and his great love.

She who was to become a baroness on the morrow, leave luxury and wealth, to go back to the old life of the caravan? Never, she wanted to enter the house, but could not; she was curious to hear what would come next.

She liked Francisco very much, but she loved wealth and position more.

Once more the violin played, and now she listened entranced. She saw herself in the old days. Mother Therese in her snowy