

fancied it might; and for this deliverance he had to thank his American habit of taking time by the forelock.

Long ago Guy had seen his friend's Moorish fetish, but as he had attached not the slightest importance to it, it was impossible for him to be sure that this was not the same.

He had failed, and all his ammunition was now exhausted; while for his sole reward he had the miserable feeling that, if she were really guilty, Magda would see and bitterly resent the trap he had laid for her. If the Duchess and Vanderlane's beautiful mystery were one, Nick must also understand how he had been used as a puppet, and would despise him for pulling the wires. His one hope now was that these two had really never seen each other until half-an-hour ago. In that case perhaps neither would have suspected his designs upon them, and—provided Magda could account satisfactorily for the letter and handkerchief in the overcoat pocket—happiness might dawn again after all. He would tell her what things he had found, and how he had found them, but, of course, not now, before Nick, though Nick knew. Not for worlds would he have Magda dream that he had confided his agonising distrust of her to Vanderlane; and, whatever happened, he could trust Vanderlane not to speak.

As for Magda, impulsive always, she would have liked to hold out both hands in gratitude to the American. For the second time in half-an-hour he had saved the situation for her, and she longed to thank him; for she guessed that somehow he had contrived to exchange a

turquoise of his own, resembling hers, for another.

"I will thank him, too, and in words," she said to herself. "He deserves it, and I will find a chance to do it."

At present all she could do was to give him one glance as she handed back his fetish, which she had taken into her own palm to examine, and say "Many thanks," as if for the loan of the turquoise.

"What was your mysterious lady like?" she boldly asked. "Tall, Junoesque, you say; but an artist might paint a blonde Juno or a dark one."

"She had the hood of her cloak over her head," said Vanderlane. "I couldn't see much of her hair. If I had to describe her I believe I should say she was blonde."

The Duchess could have laughed aloud. "If he had to describe her he would say she was blonde!" He had committed himself to no actual untruth, for he had only declared what his statement would most likely be in certain circumstances, and, despite Magda's real peril and distress, her sense of humour was touched.

"I hope you will meet her again," she said, laughing.

"I hope so too," replied Nick. "I come from Kentucky, and there's nothing a Kentucky man likes better than getting a chance to help a woman in any trouble, little or big."

This was an offer, and as such the Duchess took it. What she would have answered she never knew herself, for at this moment a white-robed maid announced: "The Countess of Westwood."

Magda rose and went forward quickly, almost hastily, to greet her guest,