

least. Two hundred carloads were to arrive from Milwaukee last night——"

She made a little gesture of despair, turning her head for an instant, searching the gloom about her. But she could see no one not interested in the stage. Why could not men leave their business outside, why must the jar of commerce spoil all the harmony of this moment.

However, all sounds were drowned suddenly in a long burst of applause. The tenor and soprano bowed and smiled across the footlights. The soprano vanished, only to reappear on the balcony of the pavilion, and while she declared that the stars and the night-bird together sang "He loves thee," the voices close at hand continued:

"——one hundred and six carloads——"

"——paralysed the bulls——"

"——fifty thousand dollars——"

Then all at once the lights went up. The act was over.

Laura seemed only to come to herself some five minutes later. She and Corthell were out in the foyer behind the boxes. Everybody was promenading. The air was filled with the staccato chatter of a multitude of women. But she herself seemed far away—she and Sheldon Corthell. His face, dark, romantic, with the silky beard and eloquent eyes, appeared to be all she cared to see, while his low voice, that spoke close to her ear, was in a way a mere continuation of the melody of the duet just finished.

Instinctively she knew what he was about to say, for what he was trying to prepare her. She felt, too, that he had not expected to talk thus to her to-night. She knew that he loved her, that inevitably, sooner or later, they must return to a subject that for long had