

## A STAR OF SONG

"They call your expeditionary force a legion of lost souls. Let me make one of them. Only before you accept me as a recruit you must know one thing."

The young man had spoken in hard, even tones, but now, as he paused on those last words, there was a slight break in his voice, a touch of almost uncontrollable emotion that was, however, instantly repressed.

The man upon whom he had almost forced his presence glanced at him with cold blue eyes, a thoughtful frown casting a shadow over his worn, sun-blackened features.

"Go on," he said, in the curt voice of a man accustomed to command. The other obeyed.

"I—I want to go away, to clear out of England, for if I remain I shall be an Ishmael—a pariah."

Horace Stone's eyebrows lifted a little. He threw an eagle glance at his visitor—a searching, merciless glance that rested a full minute upon that sullen, reckless face, that was yet, for all its boyishness, so firm and strong. His own face relaxed.

"What was it, sonnie?" His voice had altered; the iron had gone from it; he spoke in almost a lazy tone.

"Cards. They said I cheated. I didn't deny it then. I don't deny it now."

"That's a big blot, sonnie, on a young career. It will cling to you for life."

"I—I can't help it. I—I don't care."

"Not now. You are young. But in the years to come?"

"Oh, hang it, sir, don't moralize!" The boy's voice was rough. "Will you accept me upon your expedition or will you not?"

"Do you realize the dangers, the deprivations?"

"Oh, the danger is what I want. His eyes brightened, he drew back his head. The sullen look began to fade.

"Then, yes—I welcome you among my little flock of black sheep. But—wait a moment. You have been frank with me; I shall now be the same with you. You must know something of your leader."

"I, too, was kicked out of club-land and drawing-rooms, years ago, for the same thing. Only, my lad—the deep-set eyes grew somber, with a light that was almost tragic, so intense was its regret—the difference between us is this—I was guilty."

"The difference?" stammered Geoffrey Harding. "What—what do you mean? Haven't I told you that I—"

He broke off beneath that steady gaze, coloring and confused.

No more was said, but the two men, the hardened captain of perilous enterprises, this hunter of the wilds, and the lad with the stigma of dishonor on his name, clasped hands.

The scene came back to one of them with vivid distinctness as he sat on the balcony of his hotel watching with absent eyes the twinkling lights of the gay Continental city stretched out before him.

Geoffrey Harding had accompanied that expedition its rawest recruit. He had returned from it as captain. The man in whose service he had volunteered they had buried beneath African suns, in alien ground.

First in every exploit where danger threatened life, vigilant, courageous, daring, the younger man had soon risen to be second in command, for military rule prevailed amongst that little band.

Upon the death of their leader Harding had been chosen to fill his position—a firm captain, though the youngest there, a man of masterful purpose, whose eyes, whose voice, whose very mien carried command.

They had done wonderful things in Africa, wringing important concessions from reluctant chiefs, penetrating into previously unexplored parts, and, although furnished by private expenditure, all the advantages they had reaped had been placed at their country's disposal—a gift that the Government had gladly accepted.

They would have feted Geoffrey Harding, flung laurel crowns at him, only such things as these were distasteful to him, for many reasons, and he had been glad to escape from London.

Suddenly he started forward in his wicker chair, glancing with a newly-awakened interest across the wide public square upon which his balcony looked, wondering at the sudden animation it displayed.

Within the last few moments, as he had been idly dreaming there, absorbed in past reflections, it had filled with a concourse of people. Far and wide they stretched, fresh arrivals swelling the human tide at every second. A sea of human faces upturned toward a certain point—a platform at the base of a column, on which a woman was standing.

A huge arc lamp shone down upon her face, clearly revealing her

profile as it was turned towards Harding. Then he remembered. A famous star of song, visiting the city, had declared her intention of singing in the square for the benefit of those too poor to pay for places in the opera house.

All the street traffic had been suspended, for this woman, young but already famous, had captured every music-loving city of Europe.

A small band of stringed instruments, grouped behind her, was to accompany her, and now a hush, an expectant silence, fell over that waiting crowd.

Harding bent eagerly forward, his eyes staring, his breathing hurried, his soul shaken by a wave of emotion.

Was he mad or dreaming, or was this woman, this dazzling figure in the forefront of fame, one he had passionately loved five years ago, herself a girl then, but unknown beyond her own little world, albeit she had a wonderful voice?

It must be she—he could not be mistaken. He would have known her by the beat of his heart had she passed a shadowy form in a darkened place, he could have picked her out from the brightest of heaven's angels.

But now, instead of an obscure girl, she was a star of song—a woman with a matchless gift, he had been told, this woman known to fame as Margaret Delvain.

She began to sing, the notes falling in clear and liquid cadences, in sound and effect as unpremeditated as skylark's song, but every note considered, every phrase shaped by art into a flawless gem of sound.

It had the wonderful quality, too, that only the few great singers possess, of stirring within the human heart that heard it strangely mingled emotions of sadness and joy.

The great crowd stood enraptured. It might have been some vast concert hall, filled with a well-mannered and habituated audience, the sweet notes, full, rich and clear, a web of entrancing sound, seemed holding them in invisible meshes.

When it was all over, and the last song had been sung, they followed her in triumph to her hotel.

Geoffrey Harding joined in the crowd, his eyes shining like stars. But when he approached the hotel the old look of stern self-repression came back into his face, and abruptly turning on his heel he went off in a fresh direction.

It was all an old dream that was never anything more, even in the past, why had it come back to mock him with reviving memories that were better sleeping in the grave of the past?

But when he returned to his own quarters, it was to find there a letter awaiting him. He broke the seal with an exclamation of surprise, after he had read the first line. A warm letter from La Delvain, recalling an old friendship, when the unknown girl had been five years younger than the famous woman of to-day.

It sent the blood leaping through his veins. His stern, grey eyes glowed with sudden tenderness. To be in her presence again, to speak with her—this woman who had been even in his thoughts during all the perils of those adventurous five years.

Ten minutes later he entered her private suite of rooms. She had more about her of the remembered girl than the brilliant opera singer, now that he saw her, dressed simply in clinging robes that fell in supple lines about her slim, tall figure, no longer hidden beneath velvets and furs.

She gave him both her hands, and eagerness showed in every feature. It was a welcome that would have flattered a king. The coldness that Harding showed to the world fell away from him. For once he lent himself to the intoxication of the moment.

With animated voice she told him her history—how she had been heard singing at some small concert by a travelling impresario, who had been struck by her then untrained voice, and had offered inductive terms.

"Terms I was thankful to accept," she admitted; "for with the loss of my father I was practically penniless."

A grim line or two came into Harding's face.

He was killed in the accident to the Scottish express, was he not, soon after I went away—one of the unfortunate victims pinned beneath the wreck and burnt in the subsequent fire?"

She nodded silently, her head lowered. Neither spoke for a few moments; then—

"Why—why did you go away," she asked, "in such a sudden, secret manner, without a word of farewell? It—it left a certain blank."

"Margaret!"—he bent forward, his strong voice vibrating with emotion—"was—I missed?"

She had spoken in a tone of mingled tenderness and reproach, but now she gave an evasive little laugh.

"Oh, I mustn't answer that question in the affirmative, or it may make you vain," she said lightly, breaking the tension of the moment. Harding laughed constrainedly and sat back in his chair. Then she added, with that earnest note coming again into her voice, "And you would have good cause to be vain. I have read all that you have

done. And you must be proud, Geoffrey, for the world is ringing with your deeds and the courage of your little band of heroes."

He sprang from his chair, coloring and confused, a picture of absolute embarrassment.

"Oh, it wasn't anything very much, after all," he expostulated. "There's been a lot of fuss—and for my part I am tired of it. That was what made me clear out of England. I'm going away again—soon."

"Again?" Was it a treacherous fancy, or did there sound in that voice some touch of regret. "You have not yet told me what it was made you leave England in the first instance?"

He frowned unconsciously. "A roving disposition," he returned, evasively.

"I understand," she replied, a little hardly. "After all, you were only a boy, longing for adventure in unknown lands."

Was it pique that gave such an edge of ice to her tone, or real contempt?

"By the way," she went on, "I wonder if it will interest you to know that I am going to be married."

Harding was silent, angry and perplexed with himself on account of an overwhelming sense of dismay that had come over him.

"Who—who is it?" He asked the question quietly, after a pause.

"Barton King," she murmured. "You know him?"

His face lighted.

"Yes, we were friends in the past," Barton King, who knew what the world did not know—what only the dead man, Horace Stone, had divined—his own innocence in that ugly episode. "I—I am glad," he said. "Barton King had all the gifts, all the chances, and he will gain what must crown them all when you become his wife. We used to think he was singled out for a brilliant career. Has he achieved it yet?"

His words seemed to cause her some uneasiness.

"Not yet," she said. "He—has not been altogether fortunate. But there is time—there is time!"

There was a trace of doubt in the voice that asked the question, and, whilst Geoffrey nodded reassuringly, his heart misgave him. He suddenly remembered certain failings of Barton's—failings that were likely to handicap a man in life's race.

He took his leave soon after, conscious still of that sense of desolation which he had felt at her announcement. As he was leaving the hotel he came upon the very man in his thoughts—Barton King.

The latter started violently at the sight of Geoffrey, and his face went a grayish hue. He seemed uncertain whether to advance or retreat. But Geoffrey would not let him pass by.

"Come, man; you can't pretend not to know me," he said; then, in a lower voice, "if you were one of those who didn't know, I should fancy you wanted to cut me."

The other gave a little gasp, a sigh as of relief. Confidence came back into his face.

"My dear old chap—welcome." He extended a hand, which Harding grasped. "You—you have seen Margaret—you know?"

Geoffrey nodded.

"Come, let's have a drink, and a talk over old times."

The two men returned to where Geoffrey was staying, and Barton King, after a stiffish whisky, began to talk, bewailing his ill-luck, declaring that he was born under adverse stars, whilst Geoffrey listened with growing but concealed irritation.

The other's excuses for his failure to make his mark sounded so weak and paltry to the man of action, and he also strongly suspected that the greatest cause of them was to be found in an unmistakable predilection for alcohol that Barton betrayed.

Heavens! what a fate for Margaret, to be wedded to a man who might soon become a moral wreck, with shattered nerves and broken will.

Yet he was the man who must have won her from a crowd of suitors that a woman so lovely as herself was certain to have attracted, apart from her glorious gift of song.

The following day Harding returned to England. He would not remain there to risk another meeting with Margaret. He possessed the courage of a strong man who can run away from danger that he fears.

Weeks passed by, employed by Geoffrey Harding in making preparations for departure once more. People were at last beginning to leave him alone; his peace was undisturbed, and the showers of invitation cards had almost ceased.

One thought persisted in troubling him—that of a woman who might be making the mistake of her life.

Yet, what could he do to save her from a self-chosen fate? In how ever delicate a fashion, how was it possible for him to hint at another man's weaknesses, he whose own character was irrevocably blackened.

Only that day the past had been brought very rudely home to him, had he ever permitted himself to forget it. A former friend, a man

of rigid if just principles, had passed him by with stony gaze, refusing to recognize a man whom others would have acknowledged as a hero.

Geoffrey smiled bitterly, not unprepared for this slight; indeed, his own face had been set and hard enough.

This was one of the few men who had been present at that card party at which some one had cheated—a suspicion formulated at last into a direct accusation against Harding, to be received by him in silence, without any attempted defence.

The scandal had not been widely circulated at the time—he was too unimportant a young man for it to create a sensation—but now that prominence had been, in a measure, forced upon him, it was always possible that it would find its way into some of the baser gossip journals—sags that trade in scurrility.

Turning towards home one night, almost upon the eve of departure, he passed outside a big restaurant, attracted by a small crowd. In the centre of them, with flushed face and defiant attitude, stood King, addressing them in foolish, hectoring tones.

In a moment Harding was at his side, holding his arm in a close grip. A few stern words, and the crowd had melted.

The sight of him seemed to sober King, but an ugly, malicious smile came into his face as he obeyed the other, and passively entered a taxi which Geoffrey hailed.

"It's all right, old man," he said, "But—but I've had a blow today. It's all over between Margaret and myself."

"She has given you up?" For all his care it was impossible for Geoffrey to keep from his voice the wonderful relief that he felt. And King detected it. He looked at him with a sneer, that ugly expression deepening.

"It was I who broke it off," he said, with an attempt at dignity. "I found there was some other man in the background of her life."

"What do you mean?" Geoffrey demanded the question harshly.

"Some man whom she secretly visits—an invalid, I believe—some man of low birth, illiterate, a boor, since she is ashamed to acknowledge and evident attachment. She spends most of her time there when in London. Spies have informed me of this. There is a natural inference—"

"No more!" Harding's voice was terrible. There was murder in his eyes, a light that silenced that blackening tongue. "She stooped when she let you approach her. She is pure and true. If she loves this man, why should she not become his wife?"

The other shrugged his shoulders sullenly.

"She would give me no explanation beyond admitting that she cared for him."

"Did your doubts deserve any explanation?"

But the other had relapsed into sulky silence, and refused to speak again.

Geoffrey at last desisted, and, after seeing him safely to his own home, returned to his apartments.

He was lingering over a somewhat belated breakfast—for he had sat long into the night, anxious and wide-awake—when an unexpected visitor followed close upon the announcement of his name.

Harding glanced at him with steady eyes; this was the man who had "cut" him a few days before.

"I forced myself upon you, fearing that you would refuse to see me," his visitor began when the door was shut. "Harding, will you forgive me and others for ever doubting your honor? We should have known better. In my name and theirs, will you take my hand?"

Geoffrey looked at him bewildered; but a sudden burden seemed to be slipping away from his shoulders—a burden he had carried patiently for years.

"We know you innocent," the other continued, unheeding in marriage. "The proofs are in our hands. The true cheat was Roger Dale. His daughter, the famous diva, Margaret Delvain, came to us herself only last evening. It was her own dead father whom you shielded. She only discovered the truth itself yesterday, only then knew that you had ever been accused. An old diary, found amongst forgotten papers, betrayed her father's guilt. Harding, there isn't a club house in the whole of London that wouldn't be proud to throw open its doors to you. Let mine be the pleasant task to assist in your rehabilitation."

"Why did you do this?" The woman's voice was tremulous with emotion, her eyes were misty.

"Margaret, it was because I loved you," the man answered simply. "Your father begged me to take the responsibility of his folly. He would have lost his appointment had discovery been made; worse than that, investigation once begun other matters would have been brought to light—the use he had made of money belonging to others, lost in rash speculations. It would have meant prison for him and a wrecked life for you, his child. But I—I was alone—it only hurt myself, no one else."

"But what a price you paid to save us both!"

"Margaret, now that my honor is

## The Home

Notes of Particular Interest to Women Folks

### TESTED RECIPES.

Haricot beans and Spanish onions served with baked bacon will make an excellent and economical dinner.

**Vegetable Shape.**—Take boiled potatoes, carrots, and cabbage in equal proportions. Mash these together with butter, salt, and pepper. Press all into a mould and bake in a cool oven for an hour.

**Stewed Cheese.**—Take four ounces of dry cheese which has become too dry and hard for table purposes. Set this in a stewpan with a gill of milk and half an ounce of butter, and stew the whole very gently till dissolved. When nearly cold, add a beaten egg. Put in a piedish and brown in the oven.

**A Plain Batter Pudding.**—For a quart basin take twelve tablespoonfuls of flour, a good pinch of salt, and by degrees mix with three beaten eggs. Finally, beat all thoroughly with one pint and a half of milk. Let stand for an hour. Then beat up again, pour into a well-greased mould, and boil one hour and a quarter.

**Brown Scones.**—Take half a pound of wholemeal flour and half a pound of white flour, add a teaspoonful of baking-powder and some salt. Mix together three ounces each of lard and butter, and then rub into the flour. Beat up an egg with a little milk, and with it make all into a soft dough. Roll out rather thick, cut into shapes, brush over with milk, and bake in a moderate oven.

**Steamed Railway Pudding.**—Cream together two ounces of fresh butter and one cupful of caster sugar, add to this the well-beaten yolk of an egg and a cupful of milk. Work well together, and flavor with any essence desired. Mix a teaspoonful of baking-powder with two teaspoonfuls of flour, and gradually add to the mixture. Steam for one hour and a half in a greased basin. Turn out and sift caster sugar over.

Haricot beans cooked as follows are excellent. Boil one pint of haricot beans in cold water till you can rub them into meal between your finger and thumb (the beans must previously soak twelve hours). Strain off the water, add pepper and salt and one ounce of clarified dripping. Shake up well over the fire, and serve hot with chopped parsley scattered over. N. B.—Salt must never be added to beans while cooking.

Beef kidney is inexpensive and

cleared, through you, if I dared—if there was any hope—I would tell you that all this love, useless though it was, has meant to me. But as it is—well, I know there is some other man."

She started nervously and looked at him with widened eyes.

"You—you have seen Barton King? He has told you?"

"Yes—that all is over between you two, that there is another man."

"Then, alas, there is indeed no hope for me."

"Wait!" A strange and wonderful smile came into her face. "I will tell you what I dare not confide in him—a secret, my secret. Geoffrey, this man whom I visit—it is my own father—the man you shielded."

"But—but he is dead! He was killed in that railway disaster!"

"Supposed to have been; and thus he has been saved prosecution, for exposure at last would have been inevitable. He was injured, not killed, in that accident, struck upon the head by a piece of wreckage, and ever since then he has dwelt in mental twilight, his reason hopelessly afflicted. Geoffrey, this is the man in the background of my life—this is the only man I love—except"—her tone softened into one of trembling surrender—"except yourself, who so well deserve a woman's love—my love."

"What made you accept Barton King?"

"Can't you guess? He was persistent, my walking shadow through Europe, and he had a supposed claim upon my gratitude, for he lied to me, as he lied to you, Geoff, when he said that it was he who broke off the engagement."

"He told me that he was the man who had accepted my father's guilt in a card scandal. And this, he declared, was the secret cause that kept him down. Men looked askance at one whom they thought to be an acknowledged card cheat, and all advancement was barred to him. I believed him, until that locked diary, hidden for years in a secret drawer, was discovered by myself, and the paltry meanness that had been played upon my pity revealed, together with your silent heroism."

—London Tit-Bits.

very tasty if cooked as follows: Cut the kidney into thin slices, flour these and fry a nice brown in dripping. When cooked, make a good gravy in the pan, putting in a small piece of butter, a quarter of a pint of boiling water, pepper and salt, and a tablespoonful of mushroom ketchup. Let the gravy boil up, stir well, add the slices of kidney, simmer gently for ten minutes, and serve on a thick round of toast.

**Stewed Knuckle of Veal.**—Wash four pounds of the veal and put it on to simmer, let it cook for two hours in two quarts of cold water with salt and pepper. Peel and cut up an onion wash four ounces of rice, and when the veal has simmered for one hour add these to it. Take care that all cooks slowly, adding at the last a tablespoonful of chopped parsley. To serve place the meat on a hot dish, arrange the rice round, thicken and color the gravy, and pour over the meat.

**A Good Beef Stew.**—Cut one pound and a half of beef skirting into neat pieces, free from fat, dip each in seasoned flour, using plenty of flour. Melt one ounce of dripping, and brown the meat in it. Take up the meat, add some flour to the fat, and stir till browned; gradually stir in one pint of gravy, add one onion, sprinkle with cloves, add one teaspoonful of vinegar, pepper and salt to taste. Place the meat in this, set the pan at the side of the fire and let it cook very gently for three hours. Serve on a hot dish garnished with sprigs of toast.

A calf's heart makes a nice roast, and can be cooked in a stewpan, so that no oven need be heated. Clean the heart well, soak it in warm water so as to draw out the blood. While it is soaking make the stuffing as for veal. Take the heart, dry it with a clean cloth, cut off the "deaf ears" and stuff it full. Sew up the heart, and place it in the pot with two ounces of dripping, over a very slow fire; baste it frequently and turn occasionally. Cook for one hour and a quarter. Serve with a good thick gravy and red-currant jelly. The heart should be cut in thin slices at table.

**Spotted Dick.**—Take a good large saucepan three parts full of water, and let it come to the boil. Take one pound of flour, and work it with the hands, half a pound of suet, a teaspoonful of baking-powder, and then add sufficient water to make a stiff paste. Roll out about half an inch thick and spread the fruit over the paste. Roll it up and wet the edges. Dip a pudding cloth in boiling water, wring it out, and flour it, turn the paste on to the cloth and tie it up tightly, allowing room for the pudding to swell. Plunge the pudding into the fast-boiling water and cook it at a gallop for two hours and a half.

**THINGS WORTH KNOWING.**

Buy articles of the best quality. They are cheapest in the end.

Cold water, a little ammonia, and soap will take out machine grease. When wanted to use as a disinfectant carbolic acid will mix readily with water, if the latter is boiled.

Ground ginger used for plasters instead of mustard is just as good to "draw" and never blisters.

Cream is an excellent substitute for cod liver oil, and can be taken by many who cannot digest the oil.

To boil ham and cabbage without odor, throw red pepper pods or a few bits of charcoal into the pan they are cooking in.

For seasoning soups always use the whole spices and peppers, putting them in after it has boiled up, and been skimmed.

Add a handful of chopped walnuts to your cranberry sauce before taking off the stove; it gives the sauce a delicious flavor.

When cooking onions, set a tin cup of vinegar on the stove, and let it boil, and no disagreeable odor will be noticed in the room.

Do not salt stock until you have done skimming it, as the salt prevents the scum from rising. Add a very little at a time.

When baby is troubled with cold hands fill a small sized water bag with warm water and let baby play with it. It amuses as it warms the little hands.

Stains and discolorations on tinware can be removed by dipping a damp cloth in common soda and rubbing briskly. Then wash thoroughly and wipe dry.

Many people complain that drinking milk always upsets their digestion. The reason is not that the milk itself is not wholesome, but that it has been taken too quickly.