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bleached hair, and there was an unearthly look in his eyes.

"I have killed my man, Excellency. I am ready for the scaffold."

"There is no penalty for killing out-laws. On the contrary there is a reward. You will have a decent competence, Langli. I congratulate you."

"What I have done I have done from love and hate—love of her, hate of him. If there is money to be given, let it be spent as she would have spent it, on the sick mother and the starving child."

"That is well spoken. But tell me how you came here."

"I am more of a shadow than a man, Excellency. Where the Red Virgin went I followed, as far as my duties permitted. I loved her as no man ever loved woman—and she never suspected it. She was of another world, and I a thing of base and common clay. I never hoped to make her mine. Virgin she was and Virgin she was fated to die. No man was anything to her, save one, and that one, Excellency, was yourself."

"God knows why?" said Saunders hoarsely.

"I do not grudge you her love," said Langli, "for you did not abuse it. Her spirit will be near you always. Cannot you feel it now? But as for me—I must wait."

SAUNDERS nodded gently. The presence of the freed soul seemed about as real as anything else in the room just then.

"Faith is a good thing, my friend," he said. "It is better than blood-money, and brings a man peace at the last. And so you were following the Red Virgin here?"

"I was at the 'Three Cats' when she left with the Arch-duke. I wondered deeply, for her lips smiled on him and her eyes were strangely bright. Could it be possible that she, the Red Virgin, had fallen victim to the allurements of a great noble? It seemed incredible, and yet—I followed with a knife in my breast and a horrible pain in my heart. The devil makes strange conquests; perchance even she, the sweet strange spirit that compelled my worship, was the prey to the devouring power of the evil one. I tracked him to this house, and entered silently and unseen behind them. Soon I was to be undecieved. Whatever the Red Virgin's motives were, they were pure; only a saint could have appeared as she appeared before her end; and only a very evil man could have spurred his blasphemous will to violate the sacred atmosphere that surrounded her."

"That is true," said Saunders; "yet perhaps he, too, found grace at the end. He kissed the hem of her garment."

"I have killed him, and I am glad I killed him," said Langli. "Yet I do not grudge him the peace he won at his last breath. A man's hate should not go beyond the grave."

Saunders looked at the man searchingly.

"And you are a forger?" he asked. "I was," he replied simply, "till I knew her."

"Langli," said Saunders in more serious tones than he often employed. "Till a man meets one particular woman he is generally a forger, or a cheat of some sort. Either he cheats his neighbour or else his own soul. Perhaps I was such a one. Perhaps even the Baron of Friedrichsheim was another. He is so no longer, for he has met the greatest gift in the world, purity enshrined in womanhood. Forgive me, Langli, for I am getting sententious. Also do not repeat my words, or I should dissipate a hard-earned reputation for cynicism. Cynicism, by the way, is another name for moral cowardice, and somehow in the presence of death it is difficult to be a moral coward. Let us shake hands, Langli?"

"I am honoured, Excellency."
"Perhaps we are both honoured. God knows. But now there is work to be done—the victor's work, for we have won the long battle of right. The House of Karl has triumphed, and the State has peace—at a price."

Then he knelt down and kissed the Red Virgin's cold brow, and his heart sent forth a little prayer which need not be set down here.

(Last Chapter next week.)

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