

myself. Walking the streets after being deserted by a man who was sleepier than I, I was lucky enough to give a little help to a charming lady in distress. I didn't learn her name or where she lived. If I had I wouldn't have told even you or Guy, Duchess—for the lady was a lady, and whatever the circumstances which had led to her disagreeable adventure I'd swear they were to her credit. That's enough for me."

"You are chivalrous," said the Duchess.

"I reckon I'm a judge of character, that's all," replied Vanderlane, in his pleasant, Kentucky drawl. "I probably wouldn't have alluded to the affair at all, only Guy and I were swapping adventure stories this morning, and he seems to have attached more importance to mine than I thought he would"

"You dwelt so much upon the lady's June-like beauty and the contrast between the white, filmy ball-dress she wore and the common cloak she had on over it," persisted the Duke. "It sounded romantic, and—it interested me particularly. By the way, Nick, I believe you said that your fair incognita was wearing a bracelet with a turquoise exactly like a stone you carry about in your pocket for a mascot. Was it anything like the one in that bracelet of the Duchess's?"

This was the coup a'etat, and he expected much from it. The large, square turquoise in the bracelet which Magda wore on her left arm was the only spot of color about her, save the rose with its leaves at her belt, for her rings were all white, pearls or diamonds. The blue stone, engraved with characters in gold, had been conspicuous on the graceful wrist as

the white hands of the Duchess moved among the tea-cups a few moments before. Vanderlane's eyes could not have failed to fall upon it, even though he had looked more often at the hands, ringed now, which had been ringless last night.

Involuntarily, Magda would have hidden the turquoise bracelet under the lace of her flowing sleeve, but she checked the impulse, and instead held out her arm with the thin, round band of gold and the great blue square upon it. She had now a faith, which amounted to reckless daring, in the American's resourcefulness and in his good will towards her. He had contrived to explain to her, almost in so many words, exactly how, and how much, he had told the Duke of last night's adventure, and there was a certain, almost painful, pleasure in flinging down defiance to Guy's distrust, with his friend as her ally.

"Yes"—she echoed the Duke's words—"was the mysterious lady's turquoise anything like this?"

"They're both engraved turquoises, that's the only resemblance to the one I've got in my pocket," said Vanderlane.

"Let us see it," suggested the Duke.

Nick put his hand into a pocket of his waistcoat, where he always carried his fetish, and produced a turquoise, more oblong than square, smaller than the Duchess's, greenish in colour, engraved less elaborately, and in gold of a more coppery tint. How he blessed himself now for the thought which had taken him into a curio shop after parting with the Duke. The contingency against which he had then provided had happened even sooner than he had