

coated all visible objects. Hair, skin, and clothes were tinted to uniformity, and a smothering oppression burdened the lungs. Yet as Patrine lay gasping, nerveless, beaten, that fierce new-kindled instinct of protection lived in her, potent, vital with possibilities as the spark in the battery or the germ in the cell.

The Great Test had found her not wanting nor unready. The dross of self had been burned away in the flame of a passion high and pure. The Crown of a noble womanhood was hers in that great moment when her body had made a rampart for the shielding of her love.

Under the heave of her bosom Sherbrand's broad chest panted. He lived—and her heart went up in a rush of passionate thanks to Heaven. She moved from him, quaking in every nerve and fibre, crouched beside him, found her handkerchief, and wiped the pungent dust from his face. It was pale, the mouth and eyes were closed, the nostrils fluttered with quick panting. His head had struck against the ground when her leap had hurled him backwards. He had been stunned, she told herself. He would revive soon.

"Patrine!" he choked out, opening his eyes.

"Pat's here by you, my darling!" She slipped her strong arm under his neck and helped him to sit up:

"You're not hurt?" His lungs pumped hard, and his reddened eyes ran water. He blinked it away and caught her hands, crushing them in his grip. "You're sure you're not?"

"Quite, quite sure! And you're all right, aren't you?"

"As right as rain, except for a bump on the head!" He freed a hand and rubbed it. "When the shell came over—and the ground rose up and hit me. How did it happen?"

"I—hardly know. Oh, Alan! God has been good to us! Hasn't He?"

There was no immediate response. Sherbrand's lean face was working. He rose to his knees and thus remained