

HER HUMBLE LOVER

"I am very pleased to see you, Lady Delamere," said the duchess. "Your husband and I are old friends, and I should have been broken-hearted if you had passed through without coming to see me! Will you sit down? Lord Delamere shall bring you some tea," and she made room beside herself on the broad ottoman. Signa sat down, and Hector went for the tea. There were no servants in the room, though the vestibule was crowded with the ducal liveries, with the exception of her grace's own maid, who sat at a large table and poured out the tea, which the visitors fetched for themselves. He knew the customs of the house, and went to the table for the tea, and the duchess, looking after him for a moment with a strange expression which was rather sad and wistful, turned to Signa.

"And so you are the heroine of the romantic tale which has so deeply interested us all, my dear?" she said, with a smile.

"A very poor sort of heroine," said Signa.

"A very lovely one, certainly," said her grace, with a charming smile that robbed the retort of all rudeness. "And is it true that he ran away with you to Scotland with that magnificent pair of horses you drive about?"

"Not at all true," said Signa, with a blush and a laugh. "We did not run away, and it would have been of no use going to Scotland, because they don't marry people there in the fashion they used to do. We were married in a little country church in Devonshire."

"Really?" Then she paused. "How happy you must be!" Signa did not know quite what to say to this, so remained silent.

"And he thought that he could keep you shut up in Paris like a little bird?" said her grace. "That was a wild idea! Why, we were all dying to know you, and should have stormed that pretty little house of yours if you had not surrendered. Laura Derwent is a very dear friend of mine, and has written to tell me all about you. And you are so happy, are you not?" in a lower voice.

"Yes, very," said Signa, frankly.

"And you will hate me for interrupting your dream, and dragging you out into the cold world, will you not?"

"I shall not, indeed," said Signa. "I think it was very kind of you to call."

"I mean that we shall be very great friends while you are here," said her grace. "We must do what we can to amuse you; and as to Lord Delamere—he must not be selfish and wish to monopolize you. Why the honeymoon is over! According to Parisian custom, he ought to quite have tired of you by this time!" But she smiled curiously and shook her head.

Then she beckoned to a gentleman with her fan, and when he came up with a sort of hushed eagerness as if all his object and aim in life were to obey the wishes of her grace, she said:

"Marquis, will you see if the duke is in the room and bring him to me?"

The marquis departed on his errand, and her grace introduced Signa to a dozen or so of great people, and the little chain of courtiers drew closer. It was a trying moment for any young girl, more trying still for a newly-made bride, but Signa bore her position with her usual composure and sweet self-possessedness, and the favorable impression she created was evident in the manner of her grace, who leaned back and smiled with haughty satisfaction.

Presently the marquis returned, accompanied by an old man with a wig and a dyed moustache, and powder thick on his face, yet not thick enough to hide a network of wrinkles. He came up with a jaunty step, amazingly juvenile, and looked at the duchess with a fine smile.

"It was the great duke himself. He had been fetched away from a group of statesmen who were talking politics of the utmost importance, and there was a burning impatience in his soul, though not a trace of it was visible in his smiling face, as he stood waiting for his wife's commands."

"Victor, come and know Lady Delamere," Lord Delamere's wife, she said. "My dear," to Signa, "this is my husband."

The duke smiled still more broadly and unmeaningly, and bowed low, then, as his vacant eyes took in suddenly Signa's loveliness, the smile vanished, and a real look came upon his face. Without a word he approached the ottoman, those near it making room for him, and began to talk to her.

And then, in an instant, it was

known that Signa's fame was established; that the duke had set his seal upon it, and she was to be a great personage.

Lord Delamere, as he sauntered round the vast salon, talking to one and the other, could see the crowd round the Duke and Signa grow larger, and that she had become the centre of attraction; and he smiled to himself sarcastically, the quiet days when they used to be all in it to each other were over.

The duke himself accompanied Signa to the victoria—an honor only accorded to his greatest favorites—and when she had left the salon the room re-echoed her praises. The duke's verdict was very short, but emphatic: "After all," he said, with the unreal smile upon his face once more, "there is no beauty like that of a young, pure English girl."

"Well," said Hector, leaning back and looking at Signa's flushed face with a smile—"well, are you satisfied?"

"The only sentiment on my mind at present, sir, is—confusion!" she answered. "What a crowd of people! It was like the crush-room at the opera. And she receives them twice a week! What do they find to talk about?"

"Each other," he said, laughing. "Poor kind of amusement, isn't it? But we are in for it now, you will see!"

He was quite right; on the morrow came a shoal of invitations with the pack of visiting cards, and Signa reluctantly accepted one from the duchess. It was a magnificent party, a brilliant gathering of rich and beautiful women and distinguished men; but it was felt, and admitted afterward, that of them all there was no one more lovely than the young English girl; and that Lord Delamere, without a single order on his black coat, save the band of blue ribbon, looked the greatest partizan amongst the gentlemen. The social treadmill, as Hector called it, had begun, and from that day Signa took her place in the great social world and shone there like a bright star. It was then that she understood the meaning of the vast wealth at her disposal.

At the bottom of Lord Delamere's passionate love for his bride was almost a passionate pride in her, and as he was forced to share her presence with the world, he took a grim kind of satisfaction in seeing her at the head of it.

It was known amongst the most eminent of the tradespeople that if they had anything out of the common in the way of precious stones or articles of feminine adornment, they could at once find a purchaser in Lord Delamere, and accordingly Signa found herself possessed of suits of diamonds that had been coveted by every woman in her set. Worth surpassed himself in designing costumes which should set some share of the notice which was lavished upon Lady Delamere. The head of a noble family offered his palatial mansion to Lord Delamere as better adapted to Lady Delamere's position than the little house in the Champs, but Signa declined steadfastly.

"We have been so happy here!" she pleaded. "Don't let us leave it while we are here." And Hector had kissed her and nodded assent with a thrill of gratification.

He went with her everywhere, and stood watching her triumphs, quietly proud of them. Sometimes, as he leant against the wall of some corner, men and women would come to speak to him, and speak of her beauty, and of his nameless charm which did more for her even than her loveliness, which was now the talk of Paris; and he would listen with his grave smile, and say, some few words, and none knew the pride that welled up in his heart.

It was, though she knew it not, a dangerous pre-eminence. There were men continually about her who would have given their lives for one word or smile of more than ordinary kindness from her; there were men who had lost their hearts as utterly as Sir Frederic had done. Had she been anything but absolutely pure and innocent of even the appearance of evil, there might have been peril for her; but her love for Hector was so obvious that like a halo it surrounded her, like a glorious charm, it protected her.

As for him, he was almost as popular as Signa herself, and yet there was a certain reserve about him that kept most men at arm's length. It was not pride or hauteur, but a nameless something they could not understand. In very truth, his life was so wrapped up in his darling that his love was all-sufficient for him. The world was but an unreal, phantasmal atmosphere, through which she, the only real thing, as it were, moved. He used the gay world of Paris as a plaything for her, and was waiting until she tired of it to find some other amusement to take its place. The women envied her her position, her wealth, her diamonds, but there were some, and many, who in their hearts envied her her husband beyond all else.

"He sees no one else when she is in the room," said the duchess one night, as she looked beyond her chain of courtiers to where Lord Delamere stood, alone and silent, his dark eyes fixed on Signa, who was dancing. "When she speaks he listens to catch every word, though he may be talking to some one else with the most apparent interest. There never was such devotion—never!"

"Perhaps it is a mere suggestion!" said a statesman, with a wave of his hand; "perhaps Lord Delamere is—jealous!"

The duchess laughed. "You have not been amongst us long," she said, quietly, "or you would never even make the suggestion. She thinks him a god and worships him—that is all."

The statesman bowed courteously. "Yes? Indeed? It is strange. Delamere was always fortunate. I remember—"

The duchess shrugged her shoulders ever so faintly. "Do not," she said. "Every one has forgotten Lord Delamere's youthful sins."

"And she?" asked the statesman, with a fine smile. "Never knew of them," retorted the duchess.

But she was wrong in point of fact; people had not forgotten, and often, as he stood silent and preoccupied, some one answering a question would explain who he was, and whisper some of the stories of which Signa knew nothing.

CHAPTER XXVII.

The world left them but a few hours to be alone with each other now, and Hector snatched every moment of such time as something precious. He would hurry over his dressing in the evening, that he might go and sit in her room and watch the elaborate toilet, which afforded her maid a great deal more satisfaction and pleasure than it did Signa. On the night that he told her, with gentle irony, that she had been a success, Signa was dressing for a state ball. She had dismissed her maid, and was standing before the glass putting on the diamonds, which the man who sold them had declared to be equal to, if not purer than those of the wife of the great American millionaire. Hector was sitting in a low easy-chair, leaning back to watch her with luxurious content.

"Like Byron you awoke one morning to find yourself famous. I wonder how it feels to be the great planet in the hemisphere of social stars. Does your head get turned now and again, Signa? Tell me! I like to make a study of these things. What sentiments do you feel most acutely when you are queening it in those crowded rooms? To-night now, for instance, when they come round you like the moths round the candle, any one of them ready to think himself fortunate if he can hold your fan, and really happy if he can get a dance; when the duke, for whom all make way, tells you in that whisper of his which can be heard by every one, that your dress is simply perfection—how shall you feel?" And he laughs softly.

She turns, and yet her glove fall upon the dressing-table, her violet eyes fixed upon him questioningly as a smile curves her lips.

"Come," he says, with an air of gentle banter, "don't let your modesty overcome your truthfulness. Tell me exactly how it takes you. I have often wondered, as I have stood at some remote distance and watched

you, it is so different to the old life at Northwell—and yet how calmly you take it; if you had always had a duke in your retinue, you could not accept the fact with greater composure. What are you thinking of, Signa?"

For a moment longer she is silent, then her eyes are suffused, and she glides towards him and kneels at his side.

"Shall I tell you—honestly and truly?" she murmurs. "Certainly!" he says, taking the one ungloved hand and kissing it. "I am thinking of—you," she says, and her voice thrills with suppressed passion.

He looks into her eyes and the color comes into his face for a moment; but he says, with that quiet, which comes of intense self-suppression: "Of me, my queen?"

"Of you!" she repeats, and she takes his hand and puts it round her white neck, where it lies against the diamonds. "Hector, I wonder whether—ah! how shall I go on?"

"Go on; tell me everything, dear," he says, gently.

"It is so hard," she murmurs. "But I have often wondered if you thought me frivolous and—heartless, all this giddy, whirling time!"

"Heartless, no," he says, quietly, his eyes fixed on hers.

"Yes, heartless!" she says. "Day after day, night after night, it has been one rush and hurry; we have lived in a crowd and confusion, that seems to me, when I think of it quietly, like a mad dream. It is often like a dream to me when they are all round me, buzzing like bees, with the music filling the air, and the lights dazzling and bewildering, and—then I wake and see you standing silent and alone, and I wish—ah, Hector! if you could see my heart—I wish that you and I were wrecked on St. Clare, and were quite alone, where the glittering, buzzing crowd could not reach us!" And with a little sob, that is scarcely a sob, she draws near to him, and lays her head upon his shoulder.

BABY'S OWN TABLETS OF GREAT VALUE

Mrs. J. A. Lagace, Ste. Perpetue, Que., writes: "Baby's Own Tablets have been of great value to me and to other mothers." Thousands of other mothers say the same thing. They have become convinced through actual use of the Tablets that nothing can equal them in regulating the bowels and stomach, driving out constipation and indigestion; breaking up colds and simple fevers; expelling worms and curing colic. The Tablets are sold by medicine dealers or by mail at 25 cents a box from The Dr. Williams' Medicine Co., Brockville, Ont.

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moment, as he said, and his brows were furrowed in doubt. "And that you were happy—that, woman, like, you enjoyed it! It is only natural that you should have enjoyed it! Such as you were meant to play the queen! And all this time you—"

"Have been longing for the old time when we were all in all to each other, and there was no duke to murmur flattery into a heedless ear!" she whispers.

"Great Heavens!" he says. "Why—why did you not tell me? A word or a look could have ended it!" She smiles strangely.

"And that I would not have said or looked," she says. "You have said I have—been a success. You said it—not I."

"All Paris says it, darling!"

"Well, he is so. Do you know why I have borne it, and gone on? No? Because you have told me to speak, dear—because I wanted you to feel that I was not all unworthy the great name you have bestowed on me!"

"Signa! My child!" he murmurs, for the tears are streaming from her upturned eyes.

"Yes—yes," she says, swiftly, with a long breath. "You—you married me, a mere nobody—without title or position; you, an earl, with a high place in the great world, and I—I—when the chance came to show myself worthy to stand beside you and bear your name, seized it. I care nothing for all this;—Hector—I hate it! but I have done it and gone through it that the world might admit that you had not married beneath you."

Pale and steadfast she looks at him, and pale and steadfast he looks down at her. Then he draws her face toward him and kisses her.

"Then it was all for my sake, my darling?" he says.

"Yes," she says. "If there was at any time any pride in my heart, it was that the world should deem me worthy to be your wife and bear your name, Hector; nothing more. Often, when I have looked at you standing alone, my heart has ached for the old time; but I have whispered to myself: 'Be patient! The time will come when he will say: "You have done enough! and we shall go away and be alone; once more, he and I together, and leave the crowd to itself!"'

He is silent for a moment; then he bends over her, taking her into his arms, utterly regardless of the magnificent costume which Worth expects to see chronicled in the morning papers.

"Great Heaven!" he murmurs, more to himself than to her, "who shall know a woman's heart! And it is for me that you have done all this! My poor darling! Well, there shall be an end of it!"

"Yes, Hector?" eagerly.

"Yes, to-night shall be the last night," he says, firmly. "Why, Signa, I thought—blind fool that I was!—that you were enjoying your triumphs

most intensely!"

"Ah, Hector! When they left me so little time for you!" she murmurs. He bows his head penitently.

"I have been wrong. Forgive me, Signa! We will leave Paris at once. I have noticed that you have looked pale and tired—"

She smiles. "I have often been tired, Hector; but for this quiet half-hour I don't think I could have borne it!"

"Good heaven! Signa, we will go to-night."

She shakes her head. "Not to-night, dear."

"Why not?" he demands, gently. She laughs, softly.

"Don't you understand? This is a great occasion, this state ball, and I have told so many that I intended to be there. Why, I think I have promised nearly all the dances."

"Well!"—with a smile—"what would the world say if we did not put in an appearance?"

"I neither know nor care!" he says, carelessly.

(To be continued.)

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THAT DODD'S KIDNEY PILLS
CURE RHEUMATISM.

Harold D. Bertram Had Inflammatory Rheumatism and One Box of Dodd's Kidney Pills Cured It Out of His System.

Southampton, Ont., May 24—(Special.)—That rheumatism is caused by disordered kidneys and that Dodd's Kidney Pills will cure it is again proved by the case of Harold D. Bertram, a young man well and favorably known here. He had inflammatory rheumatism for two months. Dodd's Kidney Pills cured him.

"The doctor said my trouble started with the grippe," Mr. Bertram states. "My hands and feet were badly swollen, and the doctor did not seem to be doing me any good. My grandmother, Mrs. G. Grasser, advised me to take Dodd's Kidney Pills. I took one box of them, and I haven't been bothered since. I am clear of the rheumatism."

That Mr. Bertram's trouble came from his kidneys is shown by his other symptoms. He had stiffness in the joints, was tired and nervous, and there were flashes of light before his eyes. He had a dragging sensation across the loins, was always thirsty, and felt heavy and sleepy after meals.

Rheumatism is caused by uric acid in the blood. Cured kidneys strain the uric acid out of the blood. Dodd's Kidney Pills cure the glands.

THE CATACOMBS.

Between Six and Eight Million Bodies Laid There.

Nature has been kind to the Palestine, that hill where dwelt the shepherd kings and where later rose the tremendous palaces of emperor after emperor, clothing its scanty ruins with lavish verdure. The silence of oblivion broods over the fragments of the halls where Domitian played with his fleas and Caligula bathed in shimmering seas of minted coins. The most compelling thing upon the whole booky hill, says Geographic Magazine, is the little stone altar chiselled: Seti, Deo, Seti Delvao—to the Unknown God.

This was really the shrine of the protecting deity of the city, the patron god of Rome, and only the priests knew the dread spirit's name. It was never written, but handed down verbally from generation to generation, because, if the common people knew whom they worshipped, any traitor could reveal the sacred name to an enemy, who might bribe the deity to forget Rome.

What a contrast! The home of the Unknown God on the pleasant hillside, in the sun-drenched air, and far underground, pent in the dank chill of the Catacombs, the altars—often the sarcophagi of martyrs—of the stout-hearted who worshipped the Known God.

Originally cemeteries, perfectly well known to the pagan authorities, these remarkable vaults and galleries and chapels, 20 to 50 feet below the surface, became hiding places for the faithful in time of persecution. More than forty of these cities of the dead, which extend around Rome in a great subterranean circle, have been explored, and it has been estimated by an Italian investigator that between six and eight million bodies were interred in them.

The Miracle.

Let me be thankful for the flaming day,
The noon that burns to splendor when I hear
The feet of Beauty passing on her way,
The voice of Beauty as she trembles near,
Sweet silvery wealth, my hope and my despair!
Man's path is but a pilgrimage of need
Seeking the ultimate star, the hidden fair,
And if he falters in his ruthless greed
Let him remember life, the miracle—
The rose of evening faint against the sky,
The slow moon's glory risen in the dell,
First love or children's laughter floating by—
The sweep of sudden wind among the trees!

Let me be thankful, Lord, for all of these!
—Blanch Shoemaker Wagstaff in the New York Sun.

Versatile.

"Do you know," she whispered "you are the first real actor I ever met. It must be extremely interesting to act the parts created by the master dramatists like Shakespeare and—"

"Now you're talkin' kid," he broke in. "Just eat that Shakespeare stuff alive. Why, I played in Shakespeare's 'East Lynne' for two whole seasons, and part of the time I played a horn in the orchestra."

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