

Let Not Man Put Asunder

up, even after they had settled down on the balcony to tobacco and green chartreuse.

Then, with a skilful question or two, Lechmere had probed his friend's hopes.

"Ho, ho, Harry, my boy! So that's the way the cat jumps, is it? Now I see the reason for this out-of-the-way journey into the fastnesses of New Hampshire. Siegfried has struggled through the thicket to find Brünhilde on the hill of fire. The lady is not asleep, though. She struck me as uncommonly wide awake."

"You will be struck in another way if you don't shut up," Vassall had said, a little nettled.

"Then I shall get out of harm's way," Lechmere had replied, going back into the room to fill his pipe.

In the silence that followed Vassall leaned back against a pilaster of the balcony and watched the rising moon. The light above the mountain made all the valley below seem very dark. The night was still. Now and then slight sounds were heard in the forest, and from far away, near the lake, came the maniacal, lonely laughter of a loon.

"You wouldn't expect me to congratulate you, old chap," persisted Lechmere, calling from the room.

"Why so?"

Vassall answered wearily. He would have been glad to let the subject drop.

"Because," said Lechmere, coming out and taking his seat again, "my conscience will not allow me to say that I approve when I don't."

"It's best, then, for our future relations that your opinion should not be asked."

"I give it spontaneously, old man. My eloquence is bubbling up within me, like a fountain that no power can dam."