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## A Great Intrigue,

—OR, THE—  
**Mistress of Darracourt.**

CHAPTER XIII.

"Like most sorrows that are born with us," he went on, "this shadow did not trouble this man much for a time. He was young, and Fate, which had put this thing upon him, had given him health and strength to help

him to bear it. He lived apart, communing with himself, and with no confidants but Nature. As the years rolled on, and he grew to manhood, it seemed as if the shadow had grown lighter, and that it would not matter much, and he grew, if not contented with his lot, at least resigned. Let

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Fate have done what she might in the past, for the present there was the sunshine for him as well as his fellows. With Nature for his close friend and companion, life promised some show of gladness even for him. Then there came suddenly, unexpectedly, a change. A man who had stood by him and permitted him to live in the place of his birth, died. The young man, deprived of his protector, was to leave the place. In wretchedness and misery, he was taking a farewell of it, when there suddenly came before him, like a star from heaven, a flower from the Garden of Paradise—a woman.

He paused and drew a long breath, but did not raise his eyes or move.

Lucille gathered the coat more closely round her, and turned her face farther away from him.

"Till that moment he had never given a thought to women; love was a thing he had read about only to marvel at. All womenkind were alike, and nothing to him. But in this one moment, something, of which he knew nothing, fell upon him like a spell. She was beautiful, more beautiful than anything he had ever dreamed of; but it was not her loveliness that seemed to strike him and touch his heart; it was something vague and undefined, something that he could not put into words, that seemed to enter into his life and take possession of him. It was worked, this miracle, in an instant. He did not know that it was love; he only knew that there was standing before him a being who could draw him after her, through life or death, with a word, a look, a smile!"

He stopped and let his hands fall to his side.

"Shall I go on?" he said, in a low voice.

Lucille murmured a word; it sounded like "Yes," and he went on.

"He found that this beautiful creature, who seemed to him like a goddess, was indeed as far removed from him as a goddess could be. Circumstances had made her almost his mistress; he begged and prayed that she would let him remain her servant, and she consented.

"From that hour his life was changed. In place of the peace which he thought he had found, there was a dull, aching pain in his heart, which never rested day or night.

"His books—his solitary life had made him studious—became dull and meaningless. There was room for only one thought in his mind, only one feeling in his heart—the thought of her, the longing to be near her.

"He was a coward, you say! Yes, he was a coward; but he fought hard at first. A hundred times an hour he told himself with savage force that she was as far above him as the stars are beyond the muddy pool on which they shine. He told himself that he

was not even as other men; if he had

been like his fellows, equal even to the lowliest of them, he might have gone into the world and struggled and fought and climbed until he had reached a place at least beside her feet. But ambition was barred to him; though he had become the greatest among men, there would still be the shadow upon his life—the shadow which would stand like a figure clothed in black between him and her.

"And yet, although he knew this, he could not cast aside his madness; it grew until it possessed him like an evil spirit of old, body and soul! He lived only on one thought, the desire to be near her, to hear her voice, to bring in the light that beamed from the lovely eyes which had enshrined

himself in his heart. He was her servant, and he saw her now and again. Day by day his madness grew until all things took its color. All the world was represented by the beautiful creature to whom he was but a servant. He treasured every word she spoke to him; the dumb things she touched with her dear fingers became precious to him; a glove she had worn was as a thing sacred, and hoarded as a miser hoards his gold.

"And all the time he knew that the passion he was fighting against would at last turn and rend him, that the fire which burned in his heart must in the end consume it. He saw that

in the future a greater misery would

be in store for him. Some day one would come, her equal, who would love her—ah, not as he loved her, no other could love like that!—but would come and take her away. There was no vestige of hope in his heart, his madness never reached that pitch, there was only black despair and helpless rage against the fate which had dug so deep a pit between them forever and ever."

He paused and stretched out his hands, with a deep sigh.

"For a time he hugged his secret, persuading himself like a fool that he could hide it from all eyes, from hers especially. But at last the time came when he knew that his strength was failing him, that his madness would drive him some day into telling her—her, his mistress, his goddess!—that her servant, the wretched man upon whose life there rested so deep a stain—that this man whom she regarded as little higher than her dog or her horse—loved her! Loved her with as passionate a devotion as a prince could feel! Loved her so dearly that he could live no longer within the sunshine of her presence and keep silence! He knew with what scorn she would drive him from her, he knew that the contempt which must burn in her eyes would live within his memory to torture him till he died, but he knew that the day would come when, overmastered by his love, he would draw that scorn down upon him."

There was silence for a second, while he took breath, then he went on in a low voice:

"What was there left for him, for this madman, Miss Darracourt, but to go away? Go where he would, he must carry his wound with him. While there was sight in his eyes and memory in his brain, he would see her and hear her, though he put miles between her and him; but at least he could go away and save himself the misery of knowing that she knew his secret and scorned him."

His voice broke, and his head sank lower, and there was stillness for a moment or two.

Lucille leaned against the tree, motionless as a statue, though it seemed that the throbbing of her heart must be heard by him.

Every word he had uttered seemed to fall like fire upon her ears; her face was crimson, and then white, her lips tremulous.

"What should she do? What should she say? It is easy to blame her, to say she should have silenced him and sent him away. An ordinary girl, brought up under the wing of a watchful mother, would have known what to do in an instant, and would have done it; but Lucille was not an ordinary girl. She had been brought up in a large school into which romance never entered. She had had no mother to instill into her a reverence for the proprieties and the rules which regulate conventional lives. She had never heard a word of love from lips of man until this moment. Like a ship in a storm, anchorless and rudderless, her mind drifted to and fro in helpless confusion and indecision.

But amid all this bewilderment and confusion was a strange feeling of wild happiness and satisfaction. He loved her! This great, handsome man, who had saved her life, loved her! He was her servant, yes; but what servant had ever spoken as she had spoken? There was not a word, not an inflection in the musical voice that might not have come from a patrician.

And he loved her so deeply, so passionately, that he must go away from her, out of her sight. A dull pang assailed her at the thought; and then there flashed another thought upon her.

A wild, mad idea, but it came and stayed for a second.

Suppose she were to turn to him and say, "Harry, do not go! Stay, for I have no scorn for you, but love!"

At the thought the blood ran riot in her veins, and her heart gave a wild leap. Then she recollected what he had said—that there was a shadow on his life which divided them as a gulf. What did he mean? What was it? Drifting in an unknown sea, she asked herself the question again and again in the few seconds which elapsed, while he stood silent, then she heard his voice, and came back from dreamland to listen to him.

(To be Continued.)

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