

## 488 Patience Sparhawk and Her Times

mighty desire, to compel her imagination to give her the phantasm, the voice, the touch of her lover.

The wrench with which she accomplished her object was so violent, the mental concentration so overmastering, that all other consciousness was extinguished.

Suddenly her ears were pierced by a din which made her muscles leap against the straps. Was she in hell, and was this her greeting? She felt a second's thankfulness that death had been painless.

Then, out of the babel of sound she distinguished words which made her sit erect and open her eyes, her pulses bound, her blood leap, hot and stinging, her whole being rebound with gladness of life.

The cap had been removed, the men were unbuckling the straps. The head-keeper had flung his cap on the floor and run his hands through his hair until it stood up straight. Round her chair the newspaper men were pressing, shouting and cheering, trying to get at her hand to shake it.

She smiled and held out her hand, but dared not speak to them. Pride still lived, and she was afraid that she should cry.

Then she forgot them. A sudden parting in the ranks showed her the open door. At the same moment the men stopped shouting. Bourke had entered. He had followed the guard mechanically, neither hoping nor fearing until the far-reaching cheers sent the blood springing through his veins once more.

He was neither clean nor picturesque, but Patience saw only his eyes. He walked forward rapidly, and lifting her in his arms carried her from the room.

THE END.