



**'Margaret,'**  
The GIRL ARTIST,  
OR,  
The Countess of Ferrers Court.

CHAPTER XXVII.  
Blair turned pale, then forced a smile.

"My wife has not left me that I know of," he said. "I married Miss Violet Graham; you knew her, Lottie?"

"Violet Graham!" she panted. "Violet Graham! Oh!" and she put her hand before her eyes.

"Yes, and she is with me here at Naples, she and Austin Ambrose," he said. "He will be glad to see you and tell you that there is some mistake in your idea that he had refused to help you."

"She and he here!" she exclaimed hoarsely. "What does it mean? I can't think! I can't see what he wanted! It is all dark—all dark! Blair!" she exclaimed, seizing his arm. "That man—I tell you—I warn you! Oh, Blair, Blair! Take care! He means—" She broke off and almost groaned. "I don't know what he is working for, what he is plotting, but it is no good—no—" She stopped again and drew her shawl round her.

"Whom are you talking about, Lottie?" he asked. "Not Austin! Why, he was a friend of yours, and is one of the best fellows alive! My poor girl, what have you got in your bonnet? What do you mean?"

"Nothing, nothing!" she said, breathlessly. "I am half mad with cold and hunger—"

"Yes, yes," he said, gently. "See here, Lottie; here is some money—get food and a lodging for to-night. Go to the Hotel Nationale. I will come to you to-morrow and you shall tell me all about it," and he held out some English sovereigns.

She looked up at him with a kind of wild horror, then with a cry of remorse, a cry that rang in his ears for hours afterward, she sped away. He threw off his cloak, and started after her, but she had gained one of the entrances to a network of dark and narrow courts, and Blair lost her as completely as if the pavement had opened and swallowed her up.

Lottie was not far off. Hidden in one of the deep doorways, she had

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watched him relinquish the pursuit; then, as if compelled to follow him, she crept out, and gained the large street, again.

As she passed the Palace Augustus, the guests of the conversation were coming out, and she drew back into the shadow of the doorway to let them pass.

"They were all talking in an excited fashion, and two Englishmen, pausing quite close to the trembling girl, were speaking loudly enough for her to hear.

"Rum kind of thing this affair to-night," said one.

"Isn't it? But it's just what one expects in Italy. Gives quite a foreign flavor to the evening," and he laughed cynically. "Fancy two men fighting a duel on such a paltry excuse as that! Why, I didn't hear anything particularly offensive, did you?"

"Not half so offensive as one hears fifty times over at a political meeting in England."

"But then these Italians are all fire, aren't they? And glad of the excuse for a shindy, eh?"

"Poor Blair!" rejoined the other, with a sigh. "Seems rather hard when you are an earl, with goodness knows how many thousands a year, and a charming wife, to be spitted by a fire-eating Italian. But, there, we all prophesied that Blair Leyton would come to a violent end; either a cropper in the field, or the race-course."

"That's all right and consistent enough, and would appear to be the logical conclusion of such a man; but to be pierced through the heart with one of those confounded needles! Bah! And he is such a fine fellow, too! Never saw a better made man. Don't wonder all the women of his set were mad about him!"

"Yes, Blair is a good type of our best men," said the other. "But he may not fall; he used to fence awfully well in the old days, at Angelo's fencing-school, don't you know?"

"I dare say, but fencing at Angelo's is a very different thing to crossing swords with a man like Rivani, especially when he means mischief, and if Rivani didn't mean mischief to-night, then I'm no judge of a man's looks."

They passed on, and left Lottie amazed in her ambush.

Blair and Prince Rivani to fight a duel! She had been in Naples long enough to have heard of Prince Rivani's reputation as a swordsman. Blair was as good as a dead man when he stood opposite the prince's gleaming steel.

What should she do? What should she do?  
Half wild, she stood wringing her hands, her black eyes gleaming with terror and despair; then, suddenly, worn out and exhausted by privation, and the excitement of her meeting with Blair, and this subsequent discovery, she fell to the pavement in a deep faint.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

Mr. Austin Ambrose was pacing up and down, in tiger fashion, the extremely luxurious sitting-room, waiting for Blair to return from the Rivani's; and Austin Ambrose was anything but tranquil and at ease.

Hitherto fate had played into his hands so completely that he had run his career of villainy as smoothly as a well-oiled piston-rod works in its cylinder, but the sight of Lottie in Naples, close to his elbow, rather upset him.

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The countess had gone to her boudoir some half an hour since; but she had languidly dropped a few words indicating that she intended remaining up for Blair, and Austin Ambrose listened intently now and again to hear if Blair went straight to his room.

Presently he heard a step upon the stairs; it was Blair's, but heavier and slower than usual, and it stopped at Austin's door, and Blair knocked.

Austin was almost giddy of an exclamation of surprise as Blair entered, for the handsome face looked so haggard and wearied that it might have been the face of a haunted man. "You're late," he said, speaking lightly. "Had a pleasant evening, I hope?"

Blair sank into a chair, and his head drooped upon his breast; then he looked up and motioned to the table on which stood a liqueur stand.

"Mix me something—anything, there's a good fellow," and his voice was dry and hoarse. "A pleasant evening," he laughed grimly, "you shall judge for yourself. Austin, I have seen Lottie Belvoir!"

Austin Ambrose started, and he set the glass down with a little thud. Then he smiled.

"Not really!"

"Yes, I was right, and you were wrong; it was she whom I saw. Poor girl! Lottie—who used to be the brightest and the gayest of them—in Naples, starving and in rags."

"It is very strange! The last I heard of her," said Austin, his face pale with suppressed excitement and fear, "she was travelling with a dramatic company. Did she tell you—"

"She would tell me little or nothing," said Blair with a sigh.

Austin Ambrose drew a long breath. Lottie had stood firm, then!

"Little or nothing, Austin," suddenly, "did she ever apply to you for help?"

"To me!" he exclaimed, raising his brows. "Certainly not! Why do you ask?"

"Because she said that she had, and you had refused to assist her. But she was dreadfully incoherent, and I'm afraid that privation and trouble have upset her reason. She, poor girl, seemed possessed by some wild idea that she had injured me. She even feared that I should—strike her! When I offered her some money and begged her to tell me where I could find her, she turned and bolted, and I lost her."

Austin Ambrose drew a breath of relief and mixed himself some brandy and water.

"Poor Lottie, she must be half mad! Thought she had injured you! Why, how could she do that?"

Blair shook his head.

"By no way that I know of. She behaved very strangely all through. She must be found to-morrow."

"Of course; and there's nothing easier. Don't make yourself uncomfortable about it, my dear Blair. I will set the police on her track at once, and we'll soon find her. But

the meeting with poor Lottie hasn't spoiled your evening, I hope?"

Blair was silent for a moment, then he said, in a low voice:  
"No; it was not that, painful as it was. I wish to Heaven it was no more! But—but—Austin, I have seen poor Margaret!"

Austin Ambrose sprung to his feet, and his hand slid like a snake into the bosom of his coat.

"Seen—seen—!" he exclaimed, hoarsely.

"Yes," said Blair, whose back was turned toward him and who did not see his white face and the movement of his hand; "yes, I have seen her in a picture"

Austin Ambrose dropped into the chair again, and lifting the glass to his lips took a good draught.

"In a picture, my dear Blair! You—you startled me. In a picture! A face that resembled hers. My dear old fellow, you are too sensitive. You must, really you must fight against these feelings. They are ruining your life. In a picture—"

"Yes; not a face like hers, but her very own. I saw a picture"—and he stood and held out his hand as if he were pointing to it—"of Margaret, of my poor darling herself—lying on the Long Rock at Appleford!" his voice broke, and he turned away.

Austin Ambrose looked at him.

"He is going mad!" he thought.

"My dear Blair, impossible! This is the freak of a mind overwrought by sorrow and too much dwelling on the past. It is impossible. Where did you see this wonderful picture?"

he asked. "I should like to see it."

"I saw it at Prince Rivani's. You can see it, no doubt. Do you think I am dreaming! That I have conjured the picture from my own imagination? Do you think I am going mad?"

Austin Ambrose certainly did think so, but he said:

"No, no; certainly not. But—but—"

"You do think so. Let me give you direct evidence that I know what I am about," said Blair. "The picture is Prince Rivani's; he took me to his private room to see it; it is the talk of all Italy, Europe, for what I know. It is a magnificent picture, terrible, moving, to any one; but judge what effect it must have had upon me when I saw that it was the place itself, the face and figure themselves of my poor lost darling."

Austin Ambrose stared at him.

"And Prince Rivani showed you this! What did he tell you about it, its history and so on?"

"Nothing," said Blair, gloomily. "I was so startled that I was almost beside myself, and I was about to ask him the history of the picture, and by whom it was painted, when he—you will think I am mad now, Austin!—refused to tell me anything excepting that the picture was a famous one. And he brought the interview to an abrupt conclusion by challenging me to fight him—"

Austin Ambrose's face worked.

"Which you refused?" he said.

"For which I asked his reasons. He declined to give me any one, called me a liar, and so—" he laughed, grimly—"provided me with an excuse for shooting him!"

"Well, and—the artist, who is he?"

"It was not a man, but a woman—a girl," said Blair, quietly and wearily.

Austin Ambrose started, and his eyes flashed. He saw it all in a moment. The picture had been painted by Margaret herself! The prince had fallen in love with her, she had told him her story, and the prince meant to avenge her.

(To be Continued.)

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**Be**

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**War News.**

Messages Received  
Previous to 9 A.M.

OFFICIAL.

LONDON, May 8.

The Government, Newfoundland's a brilliant French assault took enemy positions northwest of Mort Homme. Desperate fighting is now resumed on both banks of the Meuse. The enemy made some progress, but last night the lost ground was partly recovered. The enemy's losses were extremely high.

On the British front there is mining and bombing warfare.

A Zeppelin returning from the last raid was wrecked on the Norwegian coast. Our naval forces destroyed another in the North Sea. A third was destroyed by the Allied fleet at Salonika.

In Ireland all is quiet. Trial of the rebels is proceeding.

Russians are advancing on the Persian front in the direction of Baghdad. HONAR LAW.

**RAIDERS IN THE ATLANTIC.**  
NEW YORK, May 8.

The steamship Venezia here from Bordeaux with forty American citizens aboard, was fired upon and chased for several hours by two commerce raiders, while off the coast, according to a story related when the vessel docked. The captain and members of the crew were reticent when questioned, concerning the attack upon the vessel, but Americans on board who were employed in caring for horses transported on the Venezia's last voyage eastward, vouched for the accuracy of the story. According to these men the Venezia encountered the commerce raiders on April 28, three days out from Bordeaux.

Captain Gaunt, Naval Attaché of the British Embassy at Washington, today investigated the report that German commerce raiders are operating in the transatlantic steamship lanes. Gaunt obtained from Captain Boniface a statement showing the exact latitude and longitude in which the raiders were sighted. The Naval Attaché said that he intended to wire to Halifax, to ask that British cruisers now in American waters would be warned. They will know in Halifax if any of our cruisers or auxiliaries are in the region, reported by Captain Boniface, said Gaunt. If these are really German raiders, that have escaped from Kiel, they will have a short lease of life. We will do everything possible to clear the ocean lanes quickly.

**LINER CYMRIC REPORTED SINK-  
ING.**  
LONDON, May 8.

The White Star Liner Cymric is reported sinking, according to Lloyd's, from New York. She carries a general cargo, and no passengers. Nothing is known yet as to the nature of the accident.

**NO MUNITIONS ON BOARD.**  
NEW YORK, May 8.

The Cymric when she left New York

**REDI**