

the air like the stirring of angel's wings. He laid her down and flung himself face downwards upon the floor, wishing he could cry now that she could no longer hear, as he had cried that day of the Cesarewitch, when hope had still been his, though he had not known it.

Withers came again in two days, bringing the thousand pounds. He thrust the bank notes excitedly into Frank's fingers, which almost refused to close over them.

"Ten of them," he said, counting them out with a shaking hand. "Hang it, Ranger, you'll have a run of luck now, if you'll stick to doubles! I wish I was you; my luck's clean turned lately."

Frank let him out and stood looking at the notes in his hand. They seemed to burn his palm; the crisp rustle, at the twitching of his fingers, went to his heart with stabs of pain. Her thousand pounds! They had been won for her! She had needed a hundred luxuries in the past months. The day was gone by when the removal to a milder climate might have saved her life. Her thousand pounds, that he had so often, with his flowery imagination, pressed with a mock indifference into the now rigid fingers. He flung them viciously to the ground, putting his heel upon them, ready to grind them into the floor, in the feeling of rage with fate that swept over him. But a sudden inspiration checked him. He picked them up again and folded them together, creeping up to the room where she lay with the red spots still lingering under the shadows of the closed fringes of her eyes.

Gently he moved aside the lid of the plain, black coffin, and, with a hush upon him that suspended his breath, he took up one white hand and placed the little packet within it.

Suddenly, his heart gave a great bound and stood still, while the room swam round him, making him clutch at the side of the coffin for support.

"Good heavens!" he almost shrieked. Had his eyes deceived him? Could it be true? He had thought that he saw the waxen fingers close tighter upon the crisp paper; the faint crackling sound had reached his ears, smiting the thrilling nerves like the cut of a whip.

"Good heavens!" he cried, snatching up the hand and covering it with frantic kisses. "Oh, Heaven! Let me see it again! Tell me it was not a devilish deception!"

He let fall the limp hand and turned trembling to the marble face, raising the eyelids and peering with bated breath into the still, blue, unresponsive eyes. In the sickening suspense, a hoarse groan tore his frame. Pressing the lids down again, he stood waiting with parted lips, his own breath seeming to stand still in the awful chill of doubt that seized him. The next moment he shook it off again, refusing to believe his fancy had played him so cruel a trick.

"Laura! Laura!" he called, leaning over her and breathing in her face.

He drew back, with the light of a great joy rushing again to his eyes. He was not mistaken. This time the sign was unmistakable. God had heard him. The lowered lids fluttered with a faint twitching, in answer to his voice. The trembling movement was repeated as he leant over her in a transport of excitement, and the next moment the pale lips stirred with the same soft, fluttering motion.

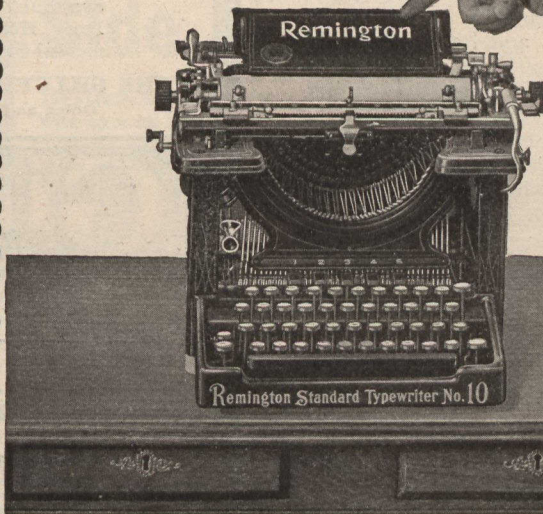
He drew himself up dizzily and swept his hand across his brow, as the icy clutch fell away from his heart and a great gush of tears burst forth. They fell unconsciously

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