

ter down the hill. He rode with a careless grace and ease that carried off his height and the powerful look of his limbs. An indescribable fear stirred through her nerves as he vanished from her sight—a fear which she summoned all her strength to dispel.

The bungalow was situated on the top of a hill which commanded an exquisite view of the wooded hills of Jakko and Elysium, a beautiful northern spur clothed with oak and old rhododendron trees. Beyond, towering above all, the everlasting snows glistening in the sun formed a picture of unsurpassing beauty. It was all so lovely and peaceful and calm, and the autumn tints made the woods and hills a blaze of gorgeous color, and the scarlet festoons of the Himalayan vine stood out in vivid contrast to the dark green of the deodar, amongst the branches of which it loves to twine itself.

Suddenly a wailing cry disturbed her reverie, and she went quickly back through the verandah into the room she had left. There at the far end was a cradle in which her baby boy had just been placed by his nurse.

"You need not stay, Rose; I shall mind baby this afternoon," said the young mother, bending over the cradle. But the child was already asleep again with a small pink thumb nestling between the carmine lips.

As the nurse withdrew, Nora Stuart took up a volume of Tennyson from the table and, seating herself in a cane rocking-chair near the fire, swung lightly to and fro. She turned over the leaves of the book till she came to the "Cradle Song" from "The Princess," and was struck afresh with the exquisite beauty of the lines. Now and again her eyes sought the open window and lingered restfully on the masses of blossom and leaves that shut out the glare of the sun. A flood of thoughts stole over her, and wondering, dreaming, she fell asleep.

Minutes ran on into hours, the afternoon was waning, the delicious scents of the evening were blending with the air.

As the timepiece struck five, Nora Stuart slowly opened her eyes, and they fell on something which caused every vestige of color to die out of her cheeks. A cobra about three and a half feet in length was lying coiled up on the quilt at the foot of the cradle. Beyond the brown shining curves she caught a glimpse of a flushed face, closed lids, and downy curls. For one terrible moment she felt as if sense and motion alike had deserted her; an overwhelming terror had stirred her whole being and clutched round her heart with an icy-cold clasp. The next instant all her faculties were concentrated in one intense desire to save her baby boy. Mysterious, sacred, bordering on the divine, was the tie that bound him to her—bone of her bone, flesh of her flesh—and her heart went up in one great, silent cry to Heaven to protect her infant son.

Seconds elapsed that seemed like an eternity of time. Then a strange calmness came over her—a calmness which sometimes comes in the presence of an imminent peril. Suddenly she had remembered the music-loving nature of the snake, and a curious expression swept over her face, as if with the happiness of inspiration.

Surely it might be possible to fascinate the reptile with her voice, she thought, and the song she had been reading was uppermost in her mind. So, forcing herself to rise, she noiselessly approached the cradle. Then her lips parted and the magnificent contralto voice, with its ringing harmonious tones—thrilling, passionate, grand, beyond all power of expression—sounded through the room as they never had before, and never would again—

Sweet and low, sweet and low,
Wind of the western sea,
Low, low, breathe and blow
Wind of the western sea.

At the sound of the deep, clear notes the cobra began to move, and with a sensation of horror she met the fixed glittering stare. Gradually uncoiling itself, it slipped to the ground.

Her eyes never wavered as she moved cautiously backwards, step by step, to-

wards the verandah. And the crawling creature came slowly gliding towards her with graceful undulating movements, following the waving motion of the slim, white hand, and swaying its head from side to side as if evincing pleasure at the melody.

Just then she heard the tramping tread of a horse, the joyous bark of a dog. The welcome sounds rang through the surging and beating in her ears. Her strength was nearly exhausted as she reached the verandah, but the refrain ran on and floated out through the

open window—

Sweet and low, sweet and low,
Wind of the western sea.

As the last grand note died away the beautiful voice failed. Her whole frame shook with a long shiver as of mortal



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