

HER HUMBLE LOVER

"Don't be an idiot," says her ladyship, with a grin. "Sit quiet and enjoy a concert for nothing and without the trouble of going to the theatre. Order my carriage! Certainly not! I am enjoying myself!"

The song went on to its close, amidst, from this point, profound silence, then arose a murmur of well-bred surprise and excitement.

"Didn't know you'd got a professional," grunts the captain to the amazed and bewildered rector.

"A professional! My dear captain!" exclaims the rector, gasping in horror. "I assure you; no, no, quite a mistake. Mr. Warren is a friend of Lord Delamere's; he brought a letter of introduction."

The captain shakes his head.

"I don't care about that. I say he's a professional. I don't care. It's nothing to me. I like it."

"But—but," stammers the rector; "I think you are mistaken. A friend of Lord Delamere's—"

Signa sat beside the piano in the shadow thrown by the candle-screens, listening to the sweet voice with almost a heart-ache, so perfect was the pleasure, and it was with a smile of thanks that she looked up and greeted him as he left the piano and stood before her.

"Thank you," she says, with a little sigh. "It was all too short. What a wonderful voice you have! Do you know what they are saying?" and her eyes gleamed with amused curiosity.

"What?" he says, looking half over his shoulder at the little group whispering with their heads together.

"They are saying that you are an opera-singer. Is it true?"

"He thinks for a moment."

"I wish I could say yes," he says, with a smile. "But it would be of no use. You would know better."

She nods.

"Yes; you sang beautifully, but not as a professional, who makes the most of his best notes. You wasted them."

He laughs.

"I suppose so," he says. "I sing almost entirely by ear, and very theoretically, as a rule; but tonight I tried my best."

There was a significance in his tone that made Signa's eyes drop.

"How hot it is!" he says. "May we not go out on the verandah?" and he puts his hand on the window and opens it. "Will you not come outside for a breath of fresh air?" he pleads.

Signa hesitates a moment, then she glides out and stands beside him. Before them stretches the bay, with the silver river running down into the sea. There is no moon, but the sky is light, and here and again the stars shine faintly through the warm night. It is a lovely scene, and as Signa stands and looks at it, a vague feeling of peace and happiness steals over her. In her ears still rings the song of the Spanish lover; beside her stands the man who has shown her so much sympathy. It is a strange feeling that pervades her whole being; a feeling of half-fearful, half-painful delight, that she cannot define, and clings to almost desperately, lest it should fade and vanish if she were to ask the reason for its presence.

The soft summer night is a night for love; love's breath mingles in the warm, balmy breeze and floats upward from the lips of the sea; but Signa does not think of love; she is too happy with this vague happiness to think or to analyze.

And the man beside her?

He stands leaning against the back of a chair, which he has tilted to the upper angle, and his eyes are fixed, too, but not on the sea. They rest on a fairer picture even than that which lies below them—a young girl's lithe, graceful figure. Never in all his life—and what a life it has been—has he who calls himself Hector Warren been moved by woman's loveliness as he has been moved by Signa's. It has struck home to him, when he had concluded that he had no heart to be struck at. The charm of her fresh young presence, her voice, the very sway and movement of her form, have sunk into his innermost soul, and he knows that the passion within him which burns to-night, at this moment, is the last love he will ever experience.

And yet he stands with a sad, almost a tragic shadow on his handsome face.

He longs with all the ardent desire of a nature little used to the check, to take her in his arms and whisper the fierce, hot words, "I love you!" And yet! Not so would he woo her! Rather would he approach her as the staid devotee creeps to the feet of his patron saint, and kissing the hem of the soft, filmy skirt, whisper:

"Signa, look down at me. I am not not worthy to touch you even as I do. But thou, pure saint, look down at me still. Pity me, for I love thee, and know myself unworthy. Love me a little, Signa, for sweet pity's sake."

This is his temptation, his desire. But he fights against it. His brows knit, his hands clutch the chair in a vise-like grasp.

"How lovely," murmurs Signa. "It is more beautiful now than at sunset; you would have seen the sunset from here if you had come to dinner. Way did you not?"

He puts his hand to his brow as if to recall himself.

"Why," he says, with a grave smile. "You were not there—I mean—I beg your pardon—for Signa has turned crimson and moved away slightly—I beg your pardon! Forgive me, Miss Greenville. I—"

Signa laughs. She recovers herself in a moment.

"That was what Lady Rookwell would call a pretty speech," she says. "I did not mean it as such," he says. "And I spoke the truth, though I did it rudely and abruptly. You have forgiven me? I did not come because—now let me be careful!" and he smiles—"because I knew that you did not mean to dine, and I felt that—I am going to be candid—that by some word or look I should resent your absence."

"That is rather a worse speech than the first one," says Signa, laughing, but with a strange feeling of delight fluttering like a bird in her bosom. "I must take care not to ask indiscreet questions for the future."

"You can ask none of me that I shall deem indiscreet," he says, bending near her that he may catch the play of the great gray eyes.

"Well, then, I will ask you to sing again!" she says, with a smile.

"We should lose this," he remonstrates, pointing to the scene.

But he moves toward the window, nevertheless, and opens it for her. As they re-enter the room Lady Rookwell was saying something in the epigrammatic way which seemed to afford her listeners—and they were all gathered round her—enjoyable shocks of horror or amazement.

"Oh, dear Lady Rookwell, it cannot be true!" Signa hears Mrs. Plumbe murmur, incredulously.

"But I tell you it is; it's all the talk of the town. Sir Frederic heard it at his club, didn't you? and my nephew heard it at the Rag and Farnish. Oh, there is nothing too bad for him—nothing. He is worse than ever now. If it wasn't for his never-failing good luck he would have lost every penny he has got, but he wins instead of loses; he is lucky in everything. This young girl; she was going to be married—indeed, I believe it was the day before the marriage—and he met her, met her coming home from market, very likely had gone to get her wedding things! I don't know anything about foreign ways, and I don't want to. At any rate, he met her, got into conversation with her, and the result was that the bridegroom waited at the church the next morning in vain."

"And—and he really persuaded the girl to go away with him?" asked Mrs. Plumbe.

"Yes. She was very beautiful, it seems; one of the better class of peasants; quite the belle of the village. Yes, he ran away with her, took her away, as I say, the night before the wedding day."

"Really dreadful!" murmurs the rector. "I trust it may not be true!"

"True! It's as true as the sun," says her ladyship, with a grin that denotes there is still more to come. "But I haven't told you the end of it. Of course, the bridegroom, the old lawyer, you know—wasn't going to sit down calmly and bear such an insult and wrong. I suppose we only bear these things quietly in England; we go to a court of law—if we can; if we can't, we sit down and put up with it. But there is still some pluck in foreigners; this man followed the gay Lothario and overtook him and the false-hearted girl—"

"Yes," says Mrs. Plumbe, eagerly.

"Overtook them on the road, and they fought there and then, with the girl looking on, and two farm laborers as seconds."

"Bless my soul!" murmurs the rector. "And the result? Dear me! This is very dreadful. Were either of them hurt?"

"One of them was killed," says Lady Rookwell, with intense enjoyment in the excitement on her audience.

"Which?" says the rector, eagerly.

"Lady Rookwell looks up, and her eyes take in the two tall figures standing almost in the centre of the group. For Signa and Hector Warren have paused to listen; Signa with a look of deep, pitying interest, he with a calm, impassive look on his face.

"Which?" she echoes. "Why, of course, the wrong man. It always is."

Lord Delamere shot the poor fellow through the heart."

A murmur of horror rises from the group, and Lady Rookwell sums up dramatically.

"Yes, robbed the poor fellow of his bride and then took his life. That is Lord Delamere!"

There is silence for a moment, and then Signa turns to make some comment on the awful story to her companion, and is surprised to see his pale face frowning; and as she looks he fixes his eyes upon the wrinkled face of the old woman and seems about to speak; but suddenly the frown changes to a smile, half sad, half scornful, and he turns to her with a laugh.

"I will sing you that song, now

PILES CONQUERED

Lady Rookwell has finished her story," he says. "And that is all. Not a word in defence of his absent friend."

CHAPTER VIII.

The evening is over, the guests have gone, and Signa stands before her looking-glass, with a face faintly flushed, and with a curious, dreamy look of happiness in her dark-gray eyes. For she feels that the evening has been a triumph for her, and that a change has come over the spirit of her dream, and that the tide of her life has changed. When she had said good-night to Aunt Podswell, that lady, who had not thought her niece good enough to sit down at the table with Lady Rookwell and Sir Frederic Blyte, had actually impressed an icy kiss on the sweet, white forehead, and the rector had held her hand and patted it with a nervous, embarrassed playfulness which spoke volumes.

The worthy couple felt rather ashamed of themselves, but they would not have done so if Signa had not made such a sensation.

But it was not of her triumph, or her uncle and aunt's changed manner that Signa was thinking, but of Hector Warren. As she stood, looking into vacancy rather than at her own beautiful reflection, she recalled his handsome face, with its hundred-and-one fleeting expressions; she heard his voice speaking and ringing in her ears. The sad, grave look of the dark eyes haunted her; there was something strangely fascinating for her in the very bearing and movement of the graceful, distinguished figure. She could not understand why it should be so, but she was conscious that when he spoke to her, something within her went out to meet his words, as it were, that when he touched her, a sharp thrill, half painful, half pleasurable, ran through her.

Love? She never thought of it, and if she had done so, would have laughed at the idea; how could she love a man of whom she knew nothing, of whom she had seen so little?

Then, as she slowly got rid of the gauze dress, there flashed upon her remembrance the awful story which Lady Rookwell had told so dramatically, and the strange expression which had crossed Hector Warren's face as he listened. He had seemed as if half inclined to contradict her, and pronounce the romantic tale a fiction, but he had not done so. Was it true, and did he know that it was true? If it was not true, why did he not speak up in defence of his absent friend?

Signa could not repress a shudder as she recalled the story. That Lord Delamere should rob a man of the girl he loved was bad enough, but that he should afterward kill the man in cold blood was terrible.

The very name of Delamere was growing fearful in her ears. She could picture him standing over the body of the man whom he had robbed of his happiness and his life—standing with the cold, impassive look of a heartless man of the world, caring for his own pleasure only, and careless of the cost to himself or others. It was a terrible story, and it made her shudder. For relief she turned to Hector Warren, and recalled the musical voice with which he bade her good-night, the gentle pressure of his hand as he held hers. How was it possible that he could own such a man as the cruel, heartless Lord Delamere for friend?

And so she goes to sleep at last, and her dreams Hector Warren and Lord Delamere mingle in a strange confusion, the one with the sad, gentle smile in his eyes, the other with the hard, cold scowl, as he stands over

the man he has robbed and killed.

When she comes down in the morning a little pale, perhaps, but wondrously beautiful in her pallor, her aunt greets her with a stiff smile, and the rector rises and puts a chair for her at the breakfast-table—a courtesy he has omitted until now—and Signa feels that indeed things have changed.

"Well, my dear," he says, with his head on one side, and an affable smile "and how do you feel this morning—not knocked up, I hope, eh?"

"Not at all," says Signa. "I enjoyed myself very much indeed, and enjoyment never knocks me up."

"I am glad of that, very glad," says the rector, rubbing his chin. "Ahem! Yes, it was a pleasant evening, thanks to you and—our friend, Mr. Warren."

Signa feels the blood mounting to her face at the sudden mention of his name, but she bends over the coffee-cup and conceals the uncalled-for blush.

"—er—most accomplished gentleman," continued the rector; "quite a gentleman, don't you think, my dear?"

"Quite," assents Signa. "Yes, he played and sang beautifully."

"Lady Rookwell said he was a professional," said Mrs. Podswell, grimly.

Signa shakes her head confidently.

"No, I am sure he is not."

"Ahem—how do you know, my dear?" asks the rector, curiously. "Did he—"

"No, he didn't tell me; at least he admitted that he was not," says Signa, reflecting.

"I wish we knew who he was," remarks Mrs. Podswell, complainingly. "It is very awkward; Lady Rookwell asked a hundred questions about him last night, and I could not answer one scarcely."

"It doesn't matter," says the rector. "I believe he intends leaving the place shortly."

A sudden vague pain strikes Signa, and her head droops; but she recovers herself, and looks up calmly enough a moment afterward.

"And what do you think of Sir Frederic?" asks the rector with a smile.

"Sir Frederic," replied Signa, absent-mindedly. "Oh—he was very polite!"

The rector coughs and takes up a note which lies on the table.

"Ahem! he has sent over by one of the grooms an invitation, my dear."

"An invitation?" says Signa. "For Mrs. Podswell, do you mean?"

The rector colors and coughs again. "I think, my dear," he says awkwardly, "that you might call your aunt by a more affectionate name—ahem!—'Aunt Amelia' would sound better."

Signa smiles and flushes a little.

"Very well," she assents in that calm, quiet way which so awes the rector.

"The invitation is for your aunt and you, my dear," he goes on. "It is—er—rather short notice; but Sir Frederic apologizes, and presses you to take advantage of the fineness of the weather. Would you like to go, my dear?"

Signa looked over at her aunt, inquiringly.

"Oh, don't study me!" says Mrs. Podswell. "I dare say I shall manage it. In fact, we'd better go. Sir Frederic wouldn't like us to refuse."

"You see, Sir Frederic is the most influential man in our part of the country, my dear Signa," explains the rector, deprecatingly, "and he is—ahem!—rather touchy. It is very kind of him to send over so soon after last night, and so early. The groom is waiting for an answer."

"Pray, do not let us offend Sir Frederic," says Signa, with a laugh. "The consequences would be too fearful. But what about Archie's lessons?" and she looks over with a smile at Archie, who sits open-eyed, and listening with all his might.

"My dear," said the rector, blandly, "you really must not let your self-imposed duty interfere with your innocent pleasure. It was very kind of you to undertake Archie's education, but of course we understood that it was merely as a pastime for you, and that it was not to be an irksome task. Archie will do very well; we couldn't think of allowing you to consider yourself an ordinary governess."

"Oh, but I can't give up my position as Archie's guide, mentor and friend," says Signa, smiling at the blank look on Archie's face.

"Well, well," murmurs the rector, awkwardly. "We shall see about it; at any rate, Archie can have a holiday to-day, eh, Archie," and he smiles across at the child, who takes no notice of him, but watches Signa's face.

"Signa's a great lady, now Lady Rookwell and Sir Frederic have made friends with her, I suppose," he says, and at this shrewd thrust Signa colors, the rector rubs his chin, and Mrs. Podswell says solemnly:

"Archie, if you have finished your breakfast you can go and play."

"I don't want to go and play if Signa isn't coming," he replies, calmly, and Mrs. Podswell is about to retort angrily, when Signa says in her quiet way:

"Go now, Archie; I will come in a minute or two," and he gets off his chair and goes out obediently.

"What time do we start for the park?" asks Mrs. Podswell.

(To be continued.)

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HOW GREAT BRITAIN PREVENTS ENEMIES FROM GETTING VALUABLE PRODUCT AND AT THE SAME TIME HAS REDUCED THE PRICE OF THIS STAPLE IN CANADA.

Few of those of us who shake our heads and bemoan increasing cost of living know, or appreciate, what Great Britain is doing for us in the way of keeping down the price of at least one staple article—rubber. Few of us realize how completely the British Government has the rubber market under its control and what that control means to us and also to the neutral countries of the world.

Handicapped on every side, baffled by this question and that problem, Great Britain has found a means of keeping her finger on the rubber situation and a way to give Canada crude rubber at a price—not only low by comparison, but at half the price paid for it at the outbreak of the war.

The real purport of this is not appreciated until one stops to consider this a rubber age. Without rubber thousands of persons would be idle and millions would suffer inconvenience beyond comprehension for no synthetic substance to replace rubber has ever been discovered, in spite of repeated efforts along that line.

Through her foresight Great Britain began in 1893 to finance and subsidize rubber plantations in Ceylon, Sumatra, Java and the Malay States. Previous to that time all rubber used came from South America and Africa and exclusively from the wild trees. Today that supply continues, but 23 per cent of the whole and Great Britain controls the market with the rest.

So closely does she guard this privilege that in order to cut off the Ger-

man supply she refused to admit rubber to the United States at the outbreak of the war, until finally an agreement was reached with American rubber manufacturers, whereby all rubber is shipped to the States through the British consular office at New York. Canada's rubber comes direct, but the Dominion can export none except through the British Consul at New York. With this advantage and with the fact that England is using thousands of tons of rubber to supply her army she has benevolently and patriotically reduced the price from \$1.25 to 67 cents a pound, which is a considerable decrease from the price in 1910, when it was three dollars a pound.

The soaring price of leather is fast bringing boots and shoes to the point of luxuries, but Britain has solved the question by giving us rubber—the only satisfactory substitute for many leather goods—at a price within the reach of all. To be sure, chemicals and fabrics used in rubber manufacture have increased and also the price of labor, but the decrease in the crude rubber price has kept rubber goods, and particularly rubbers and overshoes at about normal.

Here is an opportunity for the patriotic man. The mother country is generously giving us rubber at a reduced price in return for the fact that she must have leather. The approach of winter gives us an opportunity to use more rubber in our footwear, buying at a lower price and at the same time saving on the more costly leather footwear.

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ABOUT YOUR GIRL.

Are her fingers, neck and arms covered with gaudy jewels, cheaply imitated on the five and ten-cent counters? Is her hair done up in a way that is not to the opera and so high that the color of her stockings is discernible? Is she following the fashion set by the undressed chorus girls of the stage? Is she bedecked in filmy garments meant to display the contour of a shapeless figure? Is her walking dress cut so low that face rouged and powdered with the freedom of the brazen demimonde? Is she dining, drinking, and dancing with the giddy midnight throng in an atmosphere of excitement? Is she the joy-riding on Sundays and neglecting the church of her father and mother? Is she in the pursuit of pleasure, frivolity and fashion the consuming passion of her heart? Is she going the pace in a restless desire to shine in the blazing light of the cabaret and to be known as one of the fast set? Is she walking the primrose path of dalliance with no thought of the journey's dreadful end? Are her companions lifting her up or dragging her down? Is she seeking the love of one true man or basking in the sunshine of many without manhood? Is her modesty a mockery, the prayer book and Bible relics of the past, and mother's advice the play-out whim of the antiquated? Is she no longer a comfort to those at home, the confiding delight of her mother and the pride of the family circle? Is this your daughter are you proud of her? Look at her latest photograph. Then take down the picture of her mother or grandmother. Which do you like the better? And which do the men of real worth prefer?

South American Hats.

Throughout the West Indies, Central and South America the native women make wonderful straw hats. The Dutch island of Curacao, near Venezuela, is famous for the exceptional women's straw hats that are there produced. Porto Rico and Cuba make excellent ones from the leaves of the palm. While Ecuador, Panama, Honduras and Peru are noted for their Panama hats. While wealthy men have been known to pay as high as \$100 for a Panama hat, such prices are decidedly unusual. Hats of the best quality,

plant and flexible so that they may be folded and carried in the pocket without injury, can be purchased for from \$2 to \$40, depending upon the shrewdness of the buyer and the financial needs of the maker or seller. Women and children, owing to the deftness of their fingers, make the best hats, and but few men are engaged in the industry. No factories exist for their production. As the hats are finished they are either traded to the village storekeeper for necessities or sold to the native buyers, who send them in lots of fifty to a hundred to the merchants at the port. —W. E. Aughtinbaugh in Leslie's.

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Willie—What's a boob? dad? Crab-saw—He's a fellow who goes on a picnic and always manages to sit in the castard pie.—Judge.

Debutante—I wonder why women used to wear such wide wedding rings. Blaise Matron—Because at that time, poor things, they expected them to last a lifetime.—Lief.



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