



# LORELEI:

## A TALE OF THE HUDSON

BY MARY J. SAFFORD.



"Really, Van Brunt, my courage, like Bob Acres', is beginning to ooze out of the tips of my fingers at the thought of presenting myself before a stranger at this time of night. Old World experiences can't be transferred to this country, and I fear the plan of boating excursions on the Hudson instead of the Rhine will prove a disastrous failure. Seriously, my dear fellow, isn't there some hotel where we can stay till morning and reach your aunt's country-house at a more seasonable hour?"

"Nonsense, Rex, it still lacks ten minutes of twelve; beyond that rock the river widens into a bay, and Hawksnest is perched on a low crag not half a mile from this very spot. Besides, our baggage was delivered there this evening, and if we don't appear to-night Mrs. Tresham will imagine all sort of disasters, perhaps send out

to have the water dragged before dawn. No, no pull with a will and we'll reach Hawksnest before the witching hour 'when graves do yawn.'"

A moment's silence followed, during which the young men bent sturdily to their oars. Both were above the usual height, but there all semblance ceased. Van Brunt inherited from his Dutch ancestry his broad shoulders, ruddy complexion, fair hair and singularly clear, bright blue eyes, together with a goodly portion of the lymphatic temperament of the old Nynheers, who stolidly smoke their pipes in the angry face of William the Testy. Rex Daland, on the contrary, was of the true Southern type, lithe, slender, with a dusky skin and deep, dark eyes whose fire had descended to a Provencal grandmother from ancestors on the other side of the Pyrenees. He was an artist to the finger tips, ardent, enthusiastic, prone to the most sudden changes of mood, and the very contrast between the two young men had cemented the ties of a close friendship, when two years before they had met in Europe on the deck of a steamer bound from Nice to Naples. Attracted by some occult sympathy, they continued their wanderings to-

gether, strolled over the desolate Campagna, watched the effect of sunlight and shadow on gray-green olive groves and slender Campaniles; then traveling northward floated over Venetian lagoons, and finally, at a sudden fancy of Rex, purchased a boat and rowed for miles up the Rhine, pausing ever and anon to let the young artist enrich his sketch-book with some moss-grown ruin or castle-crowned height. Van Brunt had shaped his course of travel wholly to suit Rex, for he was one of the world's loiterers, while the young artist still had his fortune to win. After eighteen months of pleasant intercourse, the sudden death of Arthur Van Brunt's father summoned him home to attend to the settlement of the estate. Rex lingered a short time longer in Rome, and on his arrival in New York was greeted by his friend with a brother's warm affection. The young artist's studio soon became a favorite resort, and he found himself on the high road to fame and fortune. Mrs. Tresham, Van Brunt's aunt, had an insatiable mania for lions, and in this capacity, though ostensibly to please Arthur, invited Rex to spend a few days at her country seat.

"By the way, Rex," said Van Brunt, breaking the silence, "how comes on the wonderful picture that is to take the world by storm, and which you'll never, by any chance, let me see?"

"Because I don't want to have it lose any of its effect by showing it to you unfinished. I'm going to use you as a barometer to test the dear public. If it stirs your slow blood, old fellow, I shall be sure of success—that is," he cried, with an impatient toss of his head, "If I can ever get my idea on canvas. So far I've tried in vain to find a model that gives me the shadow of the vision hovering before me. Pshaw, there are just two types in New York; round-faced, stolid German blondes and black-haired dark-eyed Italians, who look as if they were always posing for a Judith, Cassandra, or something of the sort. The landscape is finished, and a lovely one it is. You remember that bit of the Rhine I sketched below Drachenfels? But when I try to paint the Lorelei"—he paused a moment, and then, in a quieter tone, continued:

"You see, it is not only exquisite beauty of feature I must have, but a tender, loving, yet