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CHAPTER XXVII

WORMWOOD AND LEES

Madame, like a statue of expectancy, riveted her gaze on the throne. Hers at last! Her dreams were realized. She was no longer a duchess by patent; she was a queen by right of inheritance; she was now to be a power among the great. The kingdom of her forefathers was hers. She had reached the goal without bloodshed; she had been patient, and this was her reward. The blaze of her ambition dimmed all other stars. Her bosom heaved, triumph flashed in her beautiful eyes, and a smile parted her lips. Her first thought had been to establish headquarters in the parlors of the Continental Hotel, and from there to summon the archbishop, as a conqueror summons the chief of the vanquished. But no; she could not wait; above all things she desired the satisfaction of the eye. The throne of her forefathers!

"Mine!" she murmured.

Over her shoulders peered eager faces, in which greed and pleasure and impassibility were written. One face, however, had on it the dull red of shame. Not until now did the full force of his intended dishonesty come home to the Englishman; not until