

# UNDER TWO FLAGS

By "QUIDA"

Yet she did not trust the fancy from her with contemptuous nonchalance as she had done every other of the many passions she had excited and disdained. It had a great sadness and a great terror for her. She dreaded it unspeakably for him; also, perhaps unconsciously, she dreaded it slightly for herself. She wished now that she had not sent for him.

## CHAPTER XXI.

**A**MID the mirth, the noise, the festivity, which reigned throughout the camp as the men surrendered themselves to the enjoyment of the largeness of food and of wine allotted to them by their marshal's command in commemoration of Zaratia alone remained apart, silent and powerless to rouse himself even to the forced semblance, the forced endurance, of their mischief and their pleasure. He sat motionless, sunk in thought, with his head dropped upon his breast. The voice of Cigarette broke on his musing.

"Good sir, you are wanted yonder."

He rose on the old instinct of obedience.

"For what?"

"By your silver pheasant yonder, go!"

"Who? I do not?"

"Can you not understand? Miladi wants you to see. I told her I would send you to her. You know the great tent where she is throne in honor."

Morlie, as if the oldest and ugliest hag that washes out my soldiers' linen were not of more use and more devoted than Mlle. la Princesse, who has never done aught in her life, not even brushed out her own hair of gold! She waits for you. Where are your palace manners? Go to her, I tell you. She is of your own people. We are not."

The vehement, imperious phrases poured in disorder one after another, rapid and harsh and vibrating with a hundred repressed emotions. He paused a moment, doubting whether she did not play some trick upon him; then, without a word, left her and went rapidly through the evening shadows.

"And I have sent him to her when I should have fired my pistol into her breast!" she thought as she sat by the dying embers. And she remembered once more the story of the Marcelline fisher woman. She understood that terrible vengeance under the hot southern sun beside the ruthless southern seas.

Meanwhile, he, who so little knew or heeded how he occupied her heart, passed unnoticed through the movements of the military crowds, crossed the breadth that parted the encampment from the marquee of the generals and their guests, gave the counter-sign and approached, unperceived and so far unseen save by the sentinels, the tents of the Corona suit.

He bowed low before the princess, preserving that distant ceremonial due from the rank he ostensibly held to her.

"Madame, this is very merciful. I knew not how to thank you."

She motioned to him to take a seat near to her, while the Levantine, who knew nothing of the English tongue, retired to the farther end of the tent.

"I only kept my word," she answered, "for we leave the camp tomorrow; Africa next week."

"So soon?"

She saw the blood forsake the bronzed fairness of his face and leave a dusky pallor there. It wounded her as if she suffered herself. For the first time she believed what the little one had said—that this man loved her.

"I sent for you," she continued hurriedly. "There are many things I desire to say to you. I must entrust you to allow me to tell Philip what I know. You cannot conceive how intensely oppressive it becomes to me to have any secret from him. I never concealed so much as a thought from my brother in all my life, and to evade even a mute question from his brave, frank eyes makes me feel a traitress to him."

"Anything else," he muttered. "Ask me anything else. For God's sake, do not let him dream that I live!"

"But why? You still speak to me in enigmas. Tomorrow, moreover, before we leave, he intends to seek you out as what he thinks you—a soldier of France. He is interested by all the fears of your career. He was first interested by what I told him of you when he saw the ivory carvings at my villa. I asked the little vivandiere to tell you this, but, on second thoughts, it seemed best to see you myself once more, as I had promised. That French child forced her entrance here in a strange fashion. She wished to see me, I suppose, and to try my courage too. She is a little brigand, but has a true and generous nature, and she loves you very loyally."

"Cigarette!" he asked wearily. "Oh, no! I trust not! I have done nothing to win her love, and she is a fierce little creature who disdains all such weakness. She forced her way in here? That was unpardonable, but she seems to bear a singular dislike to you."

"Singular, indeed! I never saw her until today."

He answered nothing. The conviction stole on him that Cigarette hated

her because he loved her.

"And yet she brought you my message?" pursued his companion. "That seems her nature—violent passions, yet thorough loyalty. But time is precious. I must urge on you what I have you come to hear. It is to implore you to put your trust, your confidence, in Philip. Let him learn that you live; let him decide whether or not this sacrifice of yourself be needed. His honor is as punctilious as that of any man on earth. His friendship you can never doubt. Why conceal anything from him?"

His eyes turned on her with that dumb agony which once before had chilled her to the soul.

"Do you think, if I could speak in honor, I should not tell you all?"

A flush passed over her face, the first that the gaze of any man had ever brought there. She understood him.

"But," she said gently and hurriedly, "may it not be that you overrate the obligations of honor? I know that many a noble hearted man has severely condemned himself to a severity of rule that a dispassionate judge of his life might deem very exaggerated, very unnecessary."

Her voice faltered slightly over the last words. She could not think with calmness of the destiny that he accepted. Involuntarily some presence of pain that would forever pursue her own life unless his were rescued lent an intense earnestness, almost entreaty, to her argument.

He started from her side as he heard and paced to and fro the narrow limits of the tent like a caged animal. For the first time it grew a belief to him in his thoughts that were he free, were he owner of his heritage, he could rouse her heart from its long repose and make her love him.

"Hear me," she said softly. "I do not bid you decide. I only bid you confide in Philip. You are guiltless of this charge under which you left England. You endure it rather than do what you deem dishonorable to clear your name. That is noble; that is great. But it is possible, as I say, that you may exaggerate the abnegation required of you. Whoever was the criminal should suffer. And I have sent him to her when I should have fired my pistol into her breast!" she thought as she sat by the dying embers. And she remembered once more the story of the Marcelline fisher woman. She understood that terrible vengeance under the hot southern sun beside the ruthless southern seas.

"It is! It was a madness, a quirk, a wild, unconsidered act of a fool. What you will! But it is done. It was done forever long ago—when your young eyes looked on me in the pithy of your innocent childhood. I cannot redeem it fully now by adding to its baseness; I cannot change the choice of a madman by repenting of it with a coward's caprice. Ah, God! You do not know what you do—how you tempt! Answer me! Choose for me!" he said vehemently. "Be my law and be my God!"

She gave a gesture almost of fear.

"Hush, hush! The woman does not live who should be to any man."

"You shall be that to me. Choose for me!"

"I cannot! You leave so much in darkness and untold!"

"Nothing that you need know to decide your choice for me save one thing only—that I love you."

She shuddered.

"This is madness! What have you seen of me?"

"Enough to love you while my life shall last and love no other woman. Ah, I was but an African trooper in your sight, but in my own I was your equal. No famine, no humiliation, no obloquy, no loss I have known, ever drove me so cruelly to buy back my happiness with the price of dishonor as this one desire to stand in my rightful place before men and be free to strive with you for what they have not won!"

"You give me great pain, great surprise," she murmured. "All I can trust is that your love is of such sudden birth that it will die as rapidly!"

He interrupted her.

"You mean that under no circumstances—not even were I to possess my inheritance—could you give me any hope that I might wake your tenderness?"

She looked at him full in the eyes with the old, fearless, haughty instinct of refusal to all such entreaty which had made her so indifferent—and many said so pitiless—to all. At his gaze, however, her own changed and softened, grew shadowed and then wandered from him.

"I do not say that. I cannot tell!"

The words were very low. She was too truthful to conceal from him what half dawned on herself, the possibility that, more in his presence and under different circumstances, she might feel her heart to go to him with a warmer and a softer impulse than that of friendship. The heroism of his life had moved her greatly.

His head dropped upon his arms.

"O God! It is possible at least! I am blind-mad. Make my choice for me! I know not what I do!"

The tears that had gathered in her eyes fell slowly down over her colorless cheeks. She looked at him with a pity that made her heart ache with a sorrow only less than his own. The

grief was for him chiefly, yet something of it for herself.

"Choose for me, Venetia!" he muttered at last once more.

She rose with what was almost a gesture of despair and thrust the gold hair of her temple.

"Heaven help me, I cannot, I dare not! And I am no longer capable of being just!"

There was an accent almost of passion in her voice. She felt that so greatly did she desire his deliverance, his justification, his return to all which was his own, desired even his presence among them in her own world, that she could no longer give him calm and unbiased judgment. He heard, and the burning tide of a new joy rushed on him.

"Follow the counsels of your own conscience," she continued. "You have been true to them hitherto. It is not for me or through me that you shall ever be turned aside from them."

A bitter sigh broke from him as he heard.

"They are noble words, and yet it is so easy to utter, so hard to follow, them. If you had one thought of tenderness for me, you could not speak them."

A flush passed over her face.

"Do not think me without feeling, without sympathy, pity."

"If you loved me," he pursued passionately. "Ah, God! The very word from me to you sounds insult! And yet there is not one thought in me that sounds insult—if you loved me, could you stand there and bid me drag on

blindly? From where the tents stood there was a stronger breadth of light, through which he had passed and was passing still—a light strong enough or it to be seen whence he came, but not strong enough to show his features."

"Halt, or I fire!" The sentinel brought the weapon to his shoulder and took a calm, close, sure aim. He did not speak. The password he had forgotten as though he had never heard or never given it.

Another figure than that of the soldier on guard came out of the shadow and stood between him and the sentinel. It was that of Chateauroux. He was mounted on his gray horse and wrapped in his military cloak, about to go the round of the cavalry camp.

"It is one of my men," said the chief carelessly to the sentinel. "Leave me to deal with him."

The guard saluted and resumed his beat.

"Why did you refuse the word, sir?"

"I did not hear."

"Why are you absent from your squadron?"

There was again no answer.

Chateauroux's teeth ground out a furious oath. Yet a flash of brutal delight glittered in his eyes. At last he had bounded down this man, so long out of his reach, into disobedience and contumacy.

"Why are you here, and where have you been?" he demanded once more.

"I will not say."

The dark and evil countenance above him grew livid with fury.

"I can have you thrashed like a dog for that answer, and I will. But first listen! I know as well as though you had confessed to me. Your silence answers your guilt. You are a traitor. Ah, he is punished! So mad, so mad, your princess is so cold to her equals only to choose her lovers out of my blackguards and take her midnight intrigues like a cat courtesan!"

Ceill's face changed terribly as the vile words were spoken. With the light and rapid spring of a leopard he reached the side of his commander, one hand on the horse's mane, the other on the wrist of his chief, that it gripped like an iron vise.

"You lie, and you know that you lie! I have his name once more, and, by heaven, as we are both living men, I will have your life for your outrage!"

And as he spoke with his left hand he smote the lips that had blasphemed against her.

Chateauroux wrenched his wrist out of the hold that crushed it and drew his pistol. Ceill knew that the laws of actual service would hold him back, but just dealt with if the shot laid him dead in that instant for his act and his words.

"You can kill me; I know it. Well, use your revolvers; it will be the best good you have ever done to me."

And he stood erect, patient, motionless, looking into his chief's eyes with a calm disdain, with an unuttered challenge that for the first moment wrong something of savage respect and of sullen admiration out from the soul of his great foe.

He did not fire. It was the only time in which any trait of abstinence from cruelty had been ever seen in him. He signed to the soldiers of the guard to stand by, for pity's sake! After tonight I shall never look upon your face again."

"Do forgive," she said gently, while her voice grew very sweet. "You are a man, for pity's sake! I believe that I should—I am sure that I should. As it is—as your friend!"

"Ah, hush! Friendship is crueler than hate!"

"Yes, the worst cruelty when we seek love—a stone proffered us when we seek for bread in famine!"

"Lord Royallieu," she said slowly, as if the faintest name were some barrier between them, some cause of excuse for these the only love words she had ever heard without disdain and rejection—what I said, it is in my heart of hearts that I should—I am sure that I should. As it is—as your friend!"

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gent and passed out into the red glow of the torchlit evening. And Venetia Corona dropped her proud head down upon the silken cushions where his own had rested and wept as women weep over their dead, in such a passion as had never come to her in all the course of her radiant, victorious and imperious life.

It seemed to her as if she had seen him slain in cold blood and had never lifted her hand or her voice against his murder.

"Who goes there?"

Ceill never heard it. Even the old, long accustomed habits of a soldier's obedience were killed in him.

"Who goes there?" the challenge rang again.

Still he never heard, but went on blindly. From where the tents stood there was a stronger breadth of light, through which he had passed and was passing still—a light strong enough or it to be seen whence he came, but not strong enough to show his features."

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well to say. That she went, knowing nothing of his fate. And with the sunrise went also the woman whom he loved—in ignorance.

To be continued.

## Consumptive People

CAN SECURE RENEWED HEALTH AND STRENGTH.

The Old Red Book Made by Dr. Williams' Pink Pills Gives New Strength to Every Nerve, Fibre and Organ of the Body.

From the Budget, Birmingham, N. S.

Among the young ladies of Shelburne there is none today who more fully bears the impress of perfect health than Miss Lillian Durfee. Unfortunately this was not always the case, as a few years ago Miss Durfee became ill, and her friends feared that she was going into decline. A doctor was called in and prescribed but his medicines did not have the desired effect. Her strength gradually left her, her appetite failed, she had frequent headaches, was very pale, and finally grew so weak that a walk of a few rods would send them all who fear that consumptive people would help her after the doctor's treatment had failed. However, this good friend still urged, and finally prevailed. By the time the third box was used, there was an unmistakable improvement in Miss Durfee's condition. Cheered by this, the pills were continued, and in course of a few weeks the former invalid whose strength was taxed by the slightest exertion, was almost restored to health. The use of the pills was still continued and a few weeks more found Miss Durfee again enjoying perfect health.

To a reporter who interviewed her, she said: "I believe that Dr. Williams' Pink Pills saved my life, and I earnestly recommend them to all who fear that consumptive people has laid its grasp upon them."

That the facts related above are not in any way exaggerated, is born out by the following statement from Robt. G. Irvin, Esq., the well known stipendiary magistrate for the municipality, who says: "I distinctly remember the pale face of Miss Lillian Durfee and the regrets of friends as they expressed their conviction that she would soon be compelled to say farewell to earth. Miss Durfee, however, carries the unmistakable credentials of good health and cheerfully expresses her indebtedness to Dr. Williams' Pink Pills."

Pale and anemic girls, or young people with consumptive tendencies, will find renewed health and bodily vigor through the use of Dr. Williams' Pink Pills. These pills are an unfailing cure for all diseases due to a watery condition of the blood, or shattered nerves. Sold by all dealers in medicine or