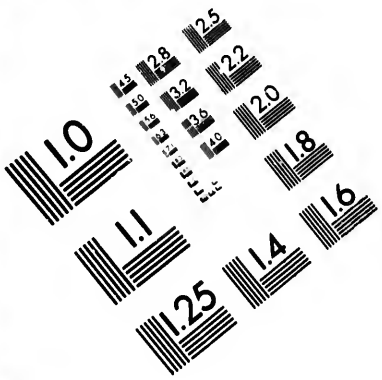

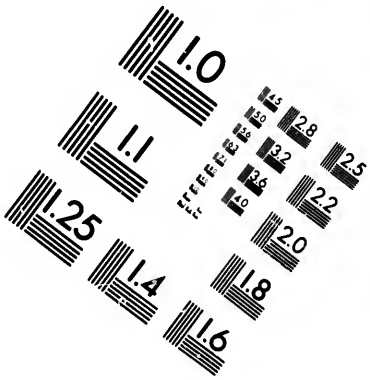

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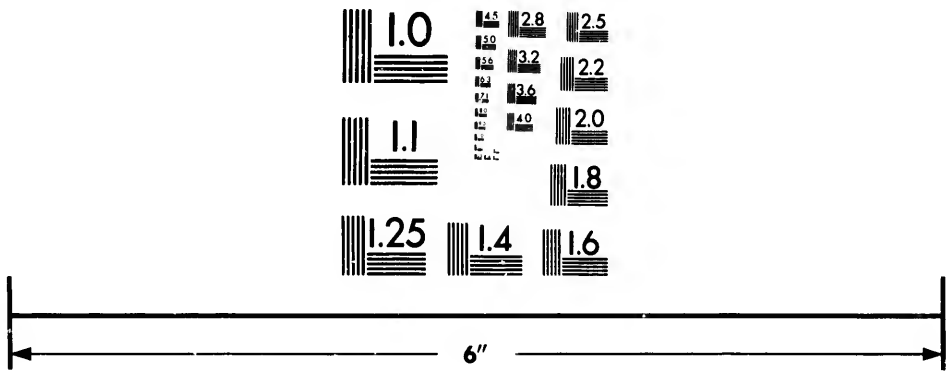

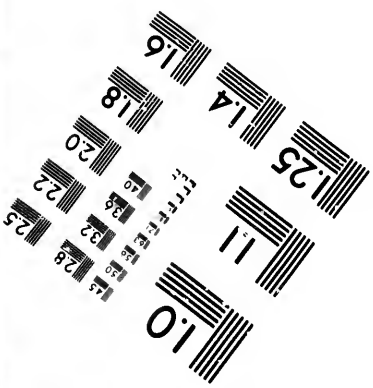

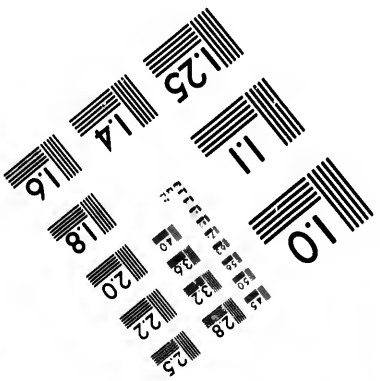

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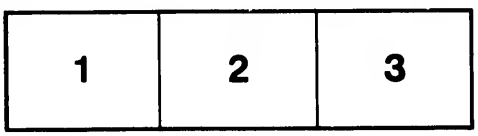

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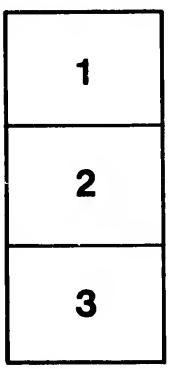

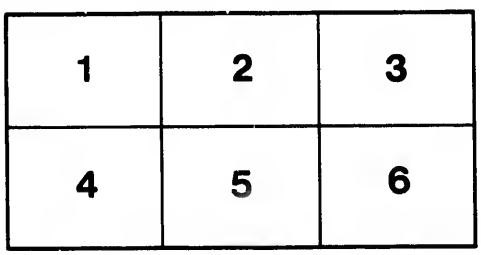

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STRANGER THAN FICTION

BY

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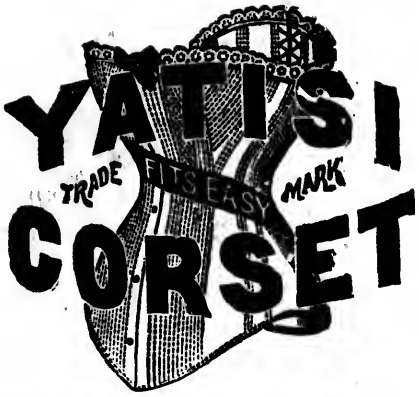

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If you cannot obtain NASAL BALM from your dealer it will be sent post-paid on receipt of price, 50 cents and $1, by addressing,

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Our pamphlet "GEMS OF WISDOM" sent free on application.

STRANGER THAN FICTION.

A NOVEL.

By KENNETH L. [illegible]

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Cured of Indigestion and Headache.

St. Andrew's, Que.,—March 31, 1887.

W. H. COMSTOCK.

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DANIEL HORAN.

What Morse's Pills are thought of at Riverbank, Ont.

Riverbank, Jan. 31, 1887.

MR. COMSTOCK.

DEAR SIR,—I write to tell you in this section of the country DR. MORSE'S INDIAN ROOT PILLS have a good name. I will give you the names of one or two persons who have used them and are loud in their praises. Mr. Robt. Smith who has been an invalid for many years has tried many medicines for regulating the bowels, but none suited him till he tried MORSE'S INDIAN ROOT PILLS. He says that there was no unpleasant effects after taking them, the action being mild and free from pain.

Mrs. Jas. Gilmour, the mother of a large family, speaks in high terms of the benefit she and her family derived from their use. Mrs. Jas. Hamilton said to me, "I thank you very much for the box of MORSE'S PILLS you recommended me to try when I was so sick. They have made a new woman of me."

Yours Respectful,
MRS. MARY HOLLIS,
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W. H. COMSTOCK,

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BROCKVILLE, - - - ONTARIO.

STRANGER THAN FICTION.

CHAPTER I.

THE LOVE THAT LASTS.

It was just the time for the *Edelweiss*. That most chaste and icy of flowers was being sought after in the length and breadth of the Engadine, and many were the disciples that assailed the snow-bloom in its fastnesses.

It was nearing the end of August and the Valley of the Alps was being rapidly deserted for milder Italy; hence this exodus to secure reminiscences of the visit to Pontresina. For, as September advances, the huge hotels are left to solitude; and Rome, Naples, and Venice reap the benefit.

Among the guests at the *Hotel Du Lac* were a certain Mrs. Hamilton and her daughter Muriel. Their stay had been prosaic enough up to a few days ago, when the dullness had been enlivened by the advent of an art-student from Rome, who was busily engaged in catching the autumn tints of the mountains and the fantastic shapes of the lichen-covered pines. That Andrea Bertoni was an acquisition to the party was patent to the most casual observer.

After all, it is only the old, old story.

The party are climbing along the rugged path that skirts the Glacier. Mrs. Hamilton is weary, and soon seats herself on one of the rugged benches, Miss Hamilton pursuing the search with her admirer and guide.

"I am feeling the weight of my years," the old lady said. "You must try and find your cherished flowers without me to-day. No, don't mind leaving me alone, I am perfectly contented here." And the point was not pressed. Youth and selfishness go ever hand in hand.

As regards physical beauty the pair were well matched. He had all the grace of his Southern brothers; she the fair face, the wealth of golden hair, the supple figure that characterizes the most favored of England's children. No wonder they were drawn together, blindly, without reasoning.

And yet Mrs. Hamilton had seen nothing. She thought Signor Bertoni to be the acme of attention and kindliness, and did not dream that a poor artist would aspire to the hand of her only child. That would be too preposterous.

Old people will forget their own youthful feelings; their susceptibilities become hardened in a long intercourse with the world of fashion, where family is the theory, and money the end and aim of all things. So she allowed a friendship, dangerous to her peace of mind, to spring up; she waited calmly for the thunder-storm to break, and did not see the warnings. Nothing new in that.

And so they sought the *edelweiss* together. The weather was still warm and pleasant; but the snow-

flower lurks near the everlasting ice, and even flourishes in the breath of the hated sun.

"See, there is one," he said, "there under that boulder yonder; let me gather it for you."

"Thank you, it is very beautiful."

"It is a type of the Northern nature—cold."

"That is not like you," she answered.

"No, I am ungrateful to-day. The *edelweiss* has set me thinking."

"Of what?"

"Of you."

They were standing in dangerous proximity, as he held her hand in his. She withdrew it from his grasp. "It is getting cold," she said. "Let us return to my mother."

"Let me first speak. Then send me from you if you will. You have only known me a short time. I can expect nothing from you but hope. Will you give me that hope?"

"I think we are getting out of our depth."

"Your words are chilling, but you ill conceal the language of your eyes. They tell me to wait and trust, that time will make you care for even me."

Muriel was silent.

"Then you do not deny me."

"You have a right to speak."

"And you to answer," and he kissed her hand, now left unresistingly in his grasp.

"Since you insist, I must own you are not indifferent to me."

"I did not mean to insist, I was supplicating. My prayer is answered. I am happy."

Where, then, is all that studied flow of eloquence,

which adorns every declaration of love in novels and plays? Forgotten and flown to the four winds of heaven. Nature is always simple. Impassioned pleas, taking the form of polished oratory, are rarely earnest. Pitiful, but true. So love makes us children again, and we walk in the sunny path regardless of the shadows that darken the wayside.

Mrs. Hamilton was nearly asleep when they returned.

"How many have you captured?" she asked.

"Only one," Muriel answered, in a slightly constrained manner. The poor girl was already thinking of the hopelessness of his suit.

"What a miserable little thing. It looks like a bunch of gray dust. Why do they call it *edelweiss*, Signor Bertoni? It is neither noble nor white, as its name implies."

"It is rare and much sought after. If it were common, men would not seek it. We put our very lives in jeopardy for the unobtainable."

Mrs. Hamilton remembered his words in the time to follow.

The journey back to the hotel was uneventful. Muriel had only one chance to speak to her lover before *table d'hôte.*

"Do not speak to my mother yet. It would be fruitless. I believe in your talent and in your love. Wait."

"I understand."

So conclusions are ever arrived at when but few words have been said. Her whispered warning gave him food for thought. "She knows I am poor, and yet she loves me. Will she be able to

keep me in mind for so long? It may be years before I see the promised land of fame and fortune. Will they not force her to marry gold long before then?" And his heart sickened at the thought. "They say they sell their daughters, these English; and account it righteous to bind them to men, who will clothe them sumptuously, and fulfil all the duties of a northern marriage, in exchange for a spotless soul. And I, who love her so fondly, shall be forgotten perhaps, or remembered only as a figure standing regretfully in the dimness of the past. Love is nothing in this nineteenth century."

Weak human nature again. We struggle with the phantom of the future, while the present is dark enough to engage our whole thought and attention.

During dinner Mrs. Hamilton discussed their coming departure. "We intend to winter in Rome, and shall remember your kindness to us during our stay in the Engadine, and I assure you we shall miss you very much."

"Madame is very good. My home is in the Eternal City. Perhaps I may be permitted to call upon madame occasionally."

"You live in Rome? I never knew that before. We shall be delighted to see you there."

"Rome is the Mecca of all artists. I shall be studying there for the next two years. And after——"

"After?"

"Well, after I hope to achieve something."

"I trust and believe you will."

"A thousand thanks.'

As ten o'clock approached the salon de lecture

began to empty, and Mrs. Hamilton drifted into earnest conversation with a newly-found friend on topics, religious and otherwise, which would hardly be interesting in these pages; while Andrea found himself out of earshot of the others, and used his opportunity.

"I thank you for your warning of this evening. I could hardly have taken advantage of what you said, when — when you said nothing — promised nothing."

"You spoke for me."

"As you would have spoken?"

"Perhaps."

"It is a lovely evening outside, and as warm as midsummer; let me place this cloak around you, and entreat you to come with me on the veranda." Muriel glanced toward her mother. "Madame is engrossed with her friend, we shall not be missed; and if so, are within call. I have something to say."

A centre-piece of palms divided the old and young people; tenderly he wrapped her slight form in the shawl, his fingers lingering over their inviting task, and led her forth into moonlight.

"When are you going?" he asked.

"The early part of next week."

"My business keeps me here for some time yet. I shall miss my heart when you are gone. But you will not forget?"

"You do not know me or you would not ask. I shall miss you, too," she said, sadly, then changing her tone to one of forced merriment, "but you must do as I do; work,—you at your painting, I at

my studies; then the time will pass quickly. See what my old singing-master says in his letter accepting my mother's offer of instruction. I hardly like to show it to you, for fear you might think me vain."

"Let me see it. Whatever it says, I will agree to."

"No. Signor Antonio Navello is a very old friend of mine, and it would be a breach of confidence, and—oh, don't look so sad. He is a dear *old* friend, in the truest sense of the word; old enough to be my grandfather. I begin to fear you have your nation's jealousy, and shall be afraid of you."

"I was only sad at the idea of your going. What does he say?"

"He says that it will be a pleasure to him to have my voice under his care and cultivation again, for he was my tutor last winter. He tells me that it is a sin for me to live in retirement and rob the world of my heaven-born talents. What do you think of that, and am not I a conceited little person to read you all that rubbish?"

"He speaks but the truth. What else?"

"Is not that enough? Well, having gone so far, I may as well finish. He writes: 'Perhaps riches may not last, trouble may come, then you will think of what I have said and come to me, so that I may give you to the world.'"

Andrea understood why she had read him the letter. She wished to show him that a time might be when she would face the world for his sake, and he said no more.

"If my mother knew what he had written, I think she would never let me see him again. But Signor Navello does not know the pride and prejudice of the English."

At this moment a harsh, grating voice sounded through the French window:

"Then she must be here."

Muriel was startled.

"Who is that? It can't be he."

"You look startled. What has frightened you?"

"Nothing. A strange voice in the salon which reminded me of a—a friend in England, that is all."

The entrance of a little red man prevented his answering. The gentleman in question stood for a moment in the window, peering into the shadows of the veranda, and Antonio got a full view of him in all his crimson magnificence. He had red hair, face, and tie; was a cut-short specimen of humanity, with an eyeglass and a diabolical leer.

"Ah! there she is. How d'ye do, Miss Hamilton? Your mother told me I should find you somewhere, and I have. Ha! ha! I thought I'd look in some shady nook in search of the beautiful. How d'ye do? how d'ye do?"

Muriel shook hands with the red individual, and exhibited no abnormal signs of delight.

"How do you do, Mr. Smith?"

"Delighted to see you! Not alone, I see?" and the little man darted an insolent look at the Italian, who had withdrawn to a short distance to permit of Mr. Smith's effusive greeting.

"That gentleman is a *friend* of mine," said Muriel, distinctly pointing the word friend. "Let me introduce you. Signor Bertoni, allow me to introduce Mr. Smith to you."

"Ah! how d'ye do?"

"How do you do?"

"Aren't you coming inside, Miss Hamilton?" remarked Mr. Smith, ignoring the Italian entirely. "My sister is with your mother. We only arrived this evening from England. Heard you were going to be in Rome this winter, and couldn't resist the temptation, don't you know?"

"I am glad that Elsie has come," said Muriel, rather meaningly.

"Thought you would; that's why I brought her," answered the obtuse little man. "Always eager to do anything to oblige you, don't you know?"

And Muriel led the way into the salon.

By the side of Mrs. Hamilton sat a young girl, not exactly pretty, but a vision of loveliness when compared to her brother. She, too, had red hair, though not of such a fiery color or wiry consistency; a pert face after the stage-soubrette type, *retrousée* nose, and a perfect rosebud of a mouth, —the only really pretty feature she possessed.

Muriel seemed pleased at her advent, and soon the whole party were in the depths of an energetic conversation about old friends and acquaintances in England.

Elsie did not pursue her brother's tactics, but made herself as pleasant as possible to Andrea, much to Mr. Smith's disgust, and, after some

time had elapsed, the party separated and retired with the exception of the new arrivals.

Andrea made his excuses after Muriel had gone, and betook himself to the smoking-room, to be comforted by a cigar and to brood over the future.

The hope of the family of Smith held an interview with his bright little sister, who, after the party had left them, made herself comfortable on a large divan and hoisted her flag as the oracle of the occasion.

"What do you think of it all?" asked brother James.

"Think? Think you're an owl," politely remarked the young lady. "Bless me, what a mess you do make of everything!"

"How's that?"

"Don't know how you do it, but you always succeed."

"Oh, shut up that clever talk and sharp sayings and come to the point! What do you think of my chances?"

"Think they're nowhere without me."

"And with you?"

"They're everywhere."

"Well, suppose I take your advice, how should I proceed?"

"In the first place, keep your senses about you. What did you see the instant you arrived here?"

"Mrs. Hamilton."

"Exactly. And she told you——"

"That I should find Muriel on the veranda or in the garden."

"And you found her——"

"On the veranda."

"With——"

"A fool of an Italian."

"Precisely. And then you were painfully rude to the said Italian -who, by the bye, is a second Solomon compared to you—instead of being particularly civil to him, for Muriel's sake."

"What do you mean by Muriel's sake? I wish to goodness you wouldn't deal in enigmas!"

"Mean? That's simple enough. We have two people to study: Muriel, and a handsome Italian."

"I don't think he's particularly handsome," objected James.

"Don't you? Well, you know, Jim, you're particularly plain; and, in comparison, he's an Adonis. Setting all odious comparisons aside, he is a very good-looking fellow, without making him stand side by side with you to show him off. That's where the difficulty comes in. Muriel has been thrown in the society of this young man for a certain length of time. He has improved his opportunities, and she likes him—perhaps loves him by now, and——"

"How the devil did you get that information?"

"You shouldn't interrupt. It's rude. I was going to say that by this time there may be even an engagement between them. It looks like it."

"How can you know more than I do on the subject?"

"Because I'm a woman, and such an artless little thing! I know more of the world in my little finger than you do in your whole corporation, and

that's not saying much! You're not clever and you're vicious. I pretend not to be clever, and am never vicious, unless it pays me. You must go to the world to study character, not to plays. On the stage the villain fills up all necessary delays by glowering at the audience and uttering wickedness out loud. You know I should never make a hit as a female *intriguante*. Every one believes me to be a charming little thing, simply because I never do anything wrong for the fun of it, only—only when it pays me, and pays me well. The result is that my life is passed in many consecutive acts of virtue, simply from lack of motive to do otherwise. Those people who pretend to read character are frauds. I don't believe anybody ever did such a thing without a pointer from the action of the subject. You offer me a consideration on your marriage with Muri , and I'm going to *get there*, as our friends the other side of the Atlantic say. *Voila tout.*"

Mr. Smith arose from his seat in astonishment during his sister's remarks and paced the room to and fro.

"You always were a clever little demon. That's why I wanted your assistance after Muriel refused me in such a point-blank manner as she did last spring. You suggested a certain course to me, or rather, you intimated just enough to make me curious and promise you the coin you coveted if I succeeded through your means."

"Certainly, I have that in black and white. Besides, you couldn't possibly accomplish your desire without me. The day has passed when fair maid-

ens were yanked to the altar by the hair of their heads, figuratively speaking."

"Humph! I got that information you wanted."

"You mean, you wanted. Go on."

"The mortgages on the late General Hamilton's property were held by a certain Jewish gentleman named Hart. The General dipped in pretty deep, and Mr. Hart was getting rather afraid about his money on account of the depreciation of land in our locality. I told him that my property adjoins the late General's and that I wanted to unite the same. He clung to a high figure, but I got the papers at last."

"If you hadn't been such an idiot as to tell him you wanted to join the properties, and had curbed that eagerness of yours, you'd have got them cheaper. But always make a mess of everything!"

"Well, I got the papers; that's enough."

"There'd have been a nice lot of spending for me if you'd have let me buy them. Mr. Hart would have turned a charming little commission into my pocket on the transaction. Why will you only give me half your confidence?"

"I thought I'd surprise you with the accomplished deed. You're never satisfied."

"Surprise! Rubbish! For the future don't act without me if you want the affair to live."

James penitently promised and peace was restored.

"What's the next move?" he asked.

"Nothing at present," said the little lady in a satisfied way. "It doesn't do to hurry; besides,

matters are not quite ripe enough for that. The widow may be enabled to raise the money and lift the mortgage, and then you would be worse than lost, after having tried to put the screw on. Your aim now is to bring her deeper in the mire."

"How?"

"Obtain her confidence. That is the first step. That done, come to me for further instructions."

"Who is indulging in half-confidences now?"

"I am, for very good reasons. I don't want you to know too much at once, for fear you'll make the usual mess of it. Obtain her confidence, brother mine, and, after, obtain a wife who will hate you like double-distilled poison and lead you a life that will make your hair turn gray, if such a thing is possible. I'm going to bed now and sleep the sleep of the just. Good-night," and Elsie made for the door.

"Stop a minute. Don't be in such a mortal hurry. Besides, I couldn't sleep a wink in my present worked-up state."

"Charming ideal of selfishness," remarked the young lady, returning to her seat. "You can't sleep, therefore I must keep awake. You remind me of a couple of Birmingham young ladies, who were staying last season in this very hotel. One slightly sprained her ankle climbing up the *Johannisberg*, and limped painfully after the other. I was a good distance in front, but the rarefied mountain air carried their words to me. 'Come on,' said No. 1. 'My foot hurts me so,' complained No. 2. 'My foot don't hurt, hurry up,' remarked the first. Well; you're just like her. What do you want?"

"Nothing till you are disposed to listen."

"I'm all attention."

"How shall I set about it?"

"What, sleeping?"

"Oh, don't annoy a man so. This confidence business, I mean."

"Well, I'll relent and let you see deeper into the Crystal of Fate. I suppose you arranged with this Hart that Mrs. Hamilton was to know nothing about the sale of the mortgage?"

"Certainly. I gave him a 'power of attorney' to collect the interest thereon."

"Very good indeed. Better than I thought you capable of. Now I will tell you a little story. There was once a rich and generous money-lender, who held a mortgage on the property of a widow, the said widow having no more idea of business than this chair. Our friend, the money-lender, is a dear good man, who cannot—will not place this widow to the slightest inconvenience; so he writes her a letter, imploring her not to put herself out in any way regarding the interest, assuring her that he will see that she is not troubled for it, as he has placed the mortgage in the hands of a generous gentleman, who will not press her in any way. So the widow lets the interest slide—that terrible interest which she has had so much trouble to pay, and is consequently happy. Then the generous gentleman forward comes after the back interest has accumulated to a dangerous sum. 'I will save you, dear madam,' says the generous gentleman. 'I will place my happiness in the hands of your charming daughter; and you shall be in affluence

for the rest of your natural life.' Exit generous gentleman with his prize, to begin a life of tribulation with the affable widow's daughter."

"Where did you learn all that?"

"I improve my mind, my dear Jim, and don't let the grass grow under my feet. I have had this case in mind ever since you told me of the widow's difficulties and your holy passion. I used the numerous legal books of our late worthy father and ferreted out this little plan, so that I might realize the consideration you promised me,—knowing, full well, that your personal charms would frighten a tax-collector, and you alone could accomplish nothing."

"But what if the daughter marries some one else during all this delay?"

"Then I lose my consideration; and I assure you that I don't dream of doing such a thing. I will hold the fort, until the generous gentleman is ready. I really cannot afford to lose any more of my beauty-sleep. Good-night."

"Good-night."

CHAPTER II.

AT EVENTIDE TO SAY ADIEU.

THE next few days passed miserably enough for Andrea. It seemed strange to him that Miss Smith should monopolize so much of Muriel's time, and that whenever the lovers were together that unwelcome third would certainly appear. Unwilling, as he was, to impute malice to any one,

he could not help thinking that there was method in her unkindness, and intuitively guessed that her brother was Muriel's admirer; though she had kept the secret of his proposal in the spring, holding that he had honored her by his offer, and had a right to her silence.

"I see so little of you now," he mourned, "and to-morrow you will be far from me. I shall be miserable, when you have left the Engadine."

"Oh, no, surely not, you have your art, and—and——"

"And what, pray?"

"I mean you must work hard and not take so many holidays. You see I speak plainly. You will be a great painter some day."

"Your words comfort me, because they bring me hope. When I have attained the wished-for success, then may I claim my heart's desire?"

So he committed the greatest folly of his life. He was alone with the girl he loved; he did not stop to think or pause for inquiry; he did not ask himself if he was in a position to support her in case of family opposition or reverses of fortune. No such thoughts crossed his mind. What has youth to do with dreams of the future?—trouble to come is only dimly possible. He only said that he loved her, and asked her to be his wife; he only said that his life was wrapped up in hers, and begged her to pity him.

And she did pity him, and kissed him, and told him that she loved him, oh, so dearly.

After all, they were not so much to blame. It was the hand of Fate, and they were powerless in

its grasp. It was the same old, old story; she promised her life was his, and that no earthly power could ever separate them.

And so they parted, happy in the fullness of each other's love; not dreaming of more than temporary objections, of nothing the strong power of affection could not remove; only thinking of one glorious future,—that future, when he should take his place among the foremost artists of the world.

But the adorable Elsie was on the *qui vive* for her victim, and at this juncture appeared upon the scene.

"I've been hunting for you people everywhere," remarked that versatile young lady; "Jim wants to drive to St. Moritz this afternoon. Will you accompany us, Signor Bertoni?" For Miss Smith was far too politic to slight the stumbling-block on her way to the *consideration.*

"I am sorry, mademoiselle, but my work prevents me," said Andrea. Then, seeing the light leave Muriel's eyes, he whispered, "I have my reason, believe me."

"Oh, I'm so sorry, and so is Muriel; aren't you, dear?" responded the wily young person. And, without waiting for an answer, ran away to get ready for the drive.

"Why did you refuse to come with us, Andrea?"

"I hardly like to tell you; but I do not trust your friend. I think she wishes that your mother should read our secret before it is time; Miss Smith has seen through it long ago, and does

not wish us well. There, I have said what has been on my mind for a long time, and——"

"And I am sure that you wrong her."

"If I do, I humbly beg her pardon; but I think not. She reminds me of a feminine Judas Iscariot every time she kisses you. You go with the party, and I will stay at home; thus we will disarm suspicion for to-day at least."

Andrea had done exactly contrary to Miss Elsie's wishes. That charming creature intended to prepare Mrs. Hamilton's mind for the intelligence that her daughter was the heroine of a compromising love-affair with the Italian; so that one obstacle to the *consideration* should be removed, before any harm could be done; and to pave the way for the second act in the life-drama, that of getting Mrs. Hamilton into the power of the generous gentleman, before mentioned. But the fact of a little rebuff like that, in no way daunted our little friend. She ran to her brother's room and gave him the news.

"Jim, it's all up, as far as steering the lambs into exhibiting their loving glances before the eyes of the old lady this afternoon is concerned. The man-lamb has refused to accompany his inamorata; smells a rat, I think. Never mind. You make love to the old woman, and Muriel and I will wander from you in our childish innocence. You needn't swear about it. I know you're sorry to have to pay for the carriage, and not have the full benefit of the scheme; for, of course you know, you are the very meanest man that ever drew the breath of life. *Au revoir.*" And she scuttled away.

It was a bright afternoon. The drive to St. Moritz was most enjoyable; and, when there, the walk *au bord du lac* looked very inviting. The pines extend to the water's edge, and shade the narrow pathway bordering the lake, which, after losing itself in a bridle-road, returns to Pontresina, past a fraudulent Swiss chalet, really a restaurant where liquors predominate, past the beautiful little waterfall, through the woods. Mr. Smith has already fastened himself to Mrs. Hamilton; Muriel and Elsie are some distance in front, chattering in a most friendly manner, for Muriel thinks that her lover's anxieties and fears have no foundation, as she told him; but still, with a certain amount of respect for his prejudice, does not open her heart to her supposed friend.

James is improving the shining hour. This morning's post had carried away a large budget addressed to Mr. Hart, and he is clearing the path for the information that gentleman is likely to send to Mrs. Hamilton.

They are discoursing on the subject of their respective homes—adjacent properties in the heart of Gloucestershire, and he is propounding certain improvements for the poor, which he has not the slightest intention of ever executing. Mrs. Hamilton is listening in rapt attention, thinking that Mr. Smith has most certainly been maligned and traduced by his enemies, and that he is a most worthy and whole-souled young man. In fact, there are few things that Mr. Smith would not do for the poor—in theory.

James is getting absolutely poetic; he is medi-

tating on his idle, useless life, wishing he could do some real service to mankind in this bitter world; lamenting his solitary state, devoid of the influences that a good wife would bring him, such a wife as—well, he would hardly like to say, and is making rapid strides in Mrs. Hamilton's esteem; for he is rich. By the time that they return to the carriage, the horse and driver are fast asleep, so long has he been in running the gamut of his virtues, hopes, and fears; and the party return to Pontresina, to the tune, in Mr. Smith's mind, of "Something accomplished, something done."

Mrs. Hamilton is a great admirer of Signor Bertoni's work. Being by no means rich, and having a frugal mind, the thought suggests itself that his price would be moderate, should she commission him to paint her a picture of her daughter. In a year or two his work would be famous, and possibly his style would be no better than it is now; and really, if he did not place too high a figure upon his talents, she thought it would be by no means an extravagance, and, in fact, a sound investment of a small sum of money. Mrs. Hamilton propounded this theory to Muriel, who did not oppose her intention, agreed with her in every respect, and was the first to bring the news to the favored artist.

"Mamma is going to ask you to paint a picture of me," she said. "Do not seem too eager to do so, and when she inquires about terms——"

"I could not take money from her for such a thing. I——"

"Then you won't get the order. Mamma is very

proud, and she must not know, as yet, that you have sufficient interest in me to work gratis."

Even the innocent are schemers, when the time comes to love.

So the thing was settled, and, almost on the eve of the departure for Rome, the sittings commenced. One circumstance lightened the gloom of separation, the very fact that the picture could not possibly be finished for some weeks hence, and that it would be a satisfactory excuse for many meetings in the Eternal City. But the Smith family had been in no way consulted on the subject, and James was crestfallen in consequence.

"There's that dauber got the job of daubing a picture of her, and I knew nothing about it till Mrs. Hamilton sprung it on me and thought I'd think it clever. It's too bad."

"On the contrary," remarked the imperturbable Elsie, "this is about the best thing that could happen. It will lead to the climax. He will probably propose to her; when we go on to Rome he will write to her; then how easy it all will be. Perhaps he's kissing her now."

"Shut up, for heaven's sake; think I'm made of stone? I——"

"You are insanely jealous. I think you really are in love with your future wife—poor thing."

"I don't see where the *poor thing* comes in."

"But I do. You are actually frantic at the thought of your ideal kissing a very handsome man before your marriage. What will be your rage if she takes it into her head to indulge in that sort of thing after? I tremble to think of it. You know

you won't be able to enchain her by the '*Beauty of your brow and the sweetness of your grace.*'"

"I shall find means to hold her, when she belongs to me, never fear."

"As long as you think so, it will be all right. '*What the eye don't see the heart don't grieve for.*' Only I should fight awfully shy of Italian artists, or you may find your nest deserted one fine morning and your captive flown. Am I not honest? Actually trying to shield you from your fate, and prospective divorce suit, to the detriment of that *consideration* we wot of. Though I'm inclined to think that if there were any chance of your listening to me, and not following your own thick head, I should not be so liberal with that commodity you are so free with—advice."

"If you are treating me to this rigmarole purposely to annoy me, you are wasting your time. I am set on my course, and cannot be driven therefrom by trifles."

"Hoity-toity, how haughty we are getting all of a sudden."

Spats such as these were of constant occurrence, and this particular one has only been mentioned to show the effect of the news which Andrea's new undertaking occasioned.

So the latter days passed joyously, and the coming separation seemed like the night, which would divide to-day from the glorious morrow.

The last day of the Engadine season arrived. Andrea had been loaded with photographs to pursue his work, until he could paint from life again in Rome. Mrs. Hamilton was deep in the throes

of packing, and bewailing the fact that Signor Bertoni had to attend the sale of his pictures in Zurich before he could join them again, and finish the painting. Mr. Smith was on the alert, for he had seen a letter from England for Mrs. Hamilton, and had recognized the handwriting. He expected to be consulted on the subject and was not deceived.

Mrs. Hamilton stopped him in the hotel corridor, and requested his attention for a few moments. James' heart fairly jumped for joy as he accompanied her to her sitting-room.

"You were good enough to show a deep interest in me and—and mine," the old lady commenced, "only the other morning, when we drove to St. Moritz. You remember I had a certain difficulty, after my late husband's death, on account of sundry debts which General Hamilton had incurred. I am utterly alone here, and you are the only person I can consult." Mr. Smith made a gesture of condolence and appreciation. "The person to whom General Hamilton was indebted is a certain man named Hart, who advanced him money to settle many affairs of honor, as he called them. This, I must tell you, threw us into very straitened circumstances. The General was an old friend of your father; you are a valued neighbor, and I hope a dear friend also, and I come to you in my time of trouble, to try and seek the best way out of the difficulty."

James rejoiced at being called a dear friend, and made a lame attempt at a speech denoting that he hoped to be something more than friend some day. This not having the desired effect, partly through

his nervousness and stammering, Mrs. Hamilton inclined her head in gratitude to him, and went on:

"This man Hart writes to me that he does not wish to press me for the interest now due on the mortgage. He says that he has been instructed by his client (a gentleman, to whom he was obliged, through pressure for money, to sell the security) to allow the interest to lapse for a considerable time. He goes on to say that I must take his word for it, as his client wishes to hold his power to collect the same, and rest content that I am not bothered for money, which I could be compelled to pay. The whole thing seems very unbusinesslike to me. What does it mean?"

"May I see this letter?"

"Certainly."

"It looks like this," answered Smith, attentively reading his own production. "The client of Hart evidently thinks that the mortgage is bearing too large an interest, and wishes to let the same go until it is equivalent to a less usurious rate."

"Would it be honest in me to accept this favor?"

"Certainly. Why did you not tell me of this trouble before? I can help you very materially, if you will give me your 'power of attorney' to act for you in your best interests. The mortgage calls for six per cent. interest, and a bonus of four, making ten per cent. in all; which, taking the fact into consideration that the security is ample, is simply extravagant. I will try to buy that mortgage, and accept, as a private matter between you and me, for which no papers need be drawn up, four per cent. on the purchase value, at the same time allow-

ing you to pay off the principal in instalments to suit your pocket. You would not be indebted to me in any way, as I should fairly invest my money, and you would be saved from the maw of this scoundrel, who, I now think, has some scheme at the back of his apparent kindness."

Mrs. Hamilton was charmed with his goodness, and on his assuring her that he was not assisting her himself out of his own money, readily accepted his proposition.

Mr. Smith had seen a better way than that of working through Mr. Hart and the generous gentleman, and Mrs. Hamilton had ably led up to that end herself.

The next day the party left by the diligence for Colico, and Muriel's good-bye lingered in Andrea's ears like a dirge.

"Good-bye." In sadness it sounds like the soughing of the wind over the distant mountains.

CHAPTER III.

LATET ANGUIS IN HERBA.

Rome was filling rapidly, and the hotels began to reap the benefit of the cold, which had already commenced in the Engadine Valley and the Alpine summer resorts.

Mrs. Hamilton's party was established in the Hotel de Normandie; and, as few days had elapsed, they were comfortably settled down in their new quarters.

Miss Elsie was awaiting developments, and was in a high state of glee at an incident which had occurred that morning. She could not restrain her joy, and ran with her news to her brother's room.

"Jim, Jim," she cried through the door, rapping with her knuckles on the wood to break the rhythm of the measured snore within. "Jim, exhibit No. 1 has arrived."

"Wh—what's the matter? Go away, I'm tired."

"I won't go away. Get up. You're worse than the whole seven sleepers combined. I tell you that M.'s got a letter from the man-lamb."

"Let her keep it."

"Of course she'll keep it. That's the beauty of the whole thing. Here, put something over your classic form and let me in."

James crawled out of bed, rubbed his eyes, nearly broke his toe against the foot of the bed, swore, put on his dressing-gown, unlocked the door, and invited the fair Elsie to enter.

"What are you making all that row about?" he asked, nursing his injured extremity and looking black and far from comely. "I was asleep."

"You were. I knew that the moment I turned the corner at the head of the landing. Why don't you take some stuff for it?"

"For my foot?"

"No, for your snore. It will be a constant trouble to that future wife of yours."

"Did you come up here to discourse on snoring? Because if you did, you'd better get out."

"Didn't you hear what I told you through the door?"

"Something about a letter, wasn't it? I was half asleep."

"It was. She's got one. I spotted it on the rack."

"What good will that do us?"

"A great deal. We know now that they correspond. I shouldn't wonder if a little accident happened to the next one, and, James, you know there's sure to be a 'next one.' Good-morning."

And she went down to breakfast.

"Dear me!" thought the young lady on her way to the *salle à manger*, "what an ignorant pig it is; sees through nothing till you poke it at him. When I've finished with his love affair, and got the *consideration*, I shall commence one of my own out of sheer *ennui* and want of something better to do. Perhaps I'm too ugly. Frank Rollingford swears he loves me. I wonder if he will change and cool down? I suppose I'd pass in a crowd."

The days passed quickly by, and the time drew near for Andrea's arrival. He wrote that he had been enabled to finish his business in Zurich far quicker than he expected, and that shortly he would recommence his work on the picture. He wrote of his hopes and fears in the usual trite manner; and, as the reader has probably written and received such letters, it will be well to content myself with the news pertaining to this history, and pass over the other contents.

Little Miss Smith fairly haunted the letter-rack as each post was delivered.

"The Titian-haired Signorina has surely some lover who is neglectful," thought the porter.

The party had been to the Coliseum one afternoon, and as the gloaming turned day into night, they were comfortably seated in the salon awaiting *table d'hôte*—all except Elsie, who shortly appeared carrying a letter in her hand.

"A letter for you, Mrs. Hamilton," she remarked, giving it with a blank side toward the recipient. Then, turning to her brother, she went on: "Jim, there's a procession of gorgeous priests crossing the Piazza Barberini. Will you come with me to see them?"

James was always gracious to his sister when in company, and followed her out.

"James," she whispered, "it's so easy to make a mistake in this light. Do you know that it is quite possible the letter may have been for Miss Hamilton, not Mrs."

. . . . . .

That evening a strange order was given to the porter.

"On the arrival of a gentleman named Signor Bertoni, who is expected to-morrow morning, kindly ask him to see me, immediately he comes. Do you understand?"

"Certainly, Mrs. Hamilton."

And so, as Andrea alighted at the hotel, he was told that Mrs. Hamilton wished to see him, and in answer to his question as to the whereabouts of Muriel, the porter regretted that the young lady was ill, and confined to her room.

Andrea flew up-stairs, full of dread lest the insidious Roman fever had claimed another victim, and was quickly in the presence of Mrs. Hamilton.

At a glance he read the whole story, saw that he was unwelcome, but was relieved to find that his first fears were groundless. Looks can often say more than words, and in this case they spoke their loudest. After a short pause, she began:

"Signor Bertoni, I believe I have always treated you as a friend and equal. How have you repaid my confidence? I know all now, and see through the mask with which you would have blinded me. An accidental opening of a letter addressed to my daughter told me the whole story. You have made illicit love to her, knowing that such a union could never be. You would have deceived us all; how far or how long, you yourself can only tell."

"Madame judges me harshly. I know that I, a poor man, could not be an acceptable suitor for your daughter's hand. I did ask her to marry me, and she consented to wait until such time that I should have attained riches and fame. I am working hard in my profession, and in time perhaps——"

"You have had little thought of my daughter's happiness in trying to bring your own wishes to a satisfactory conclusion. Your conduct has been, to say the least of it, underhand. What right had you to gain the affections of a mere girl—one who does not understand the way of the world—unsophisticated and innocent? You know the utter impossibility of her ever marrying *you*. Why have you made yourself dear to her?"

"Why have I made myself dear to her? Am I a dog? Have I no heart? We are both willing to

wait as long as you may please. Say you will consent when I have made a name, and can give her all to which she has been accustomed. Do not utterly destroy the light of my eyes!"

"I did not mean to wound you unnecessarily," she said, "but you must never meet again. I wish to spare you pain. Allow me to take that picture you are working on unfinished."

"I cannot sell the painting. I will not barter my heart's blood!" said Andrea, his Southern nature boiling over at this treatment.

"I have done my best for you. I cannot stay here and hold further converse with a violent and angry man. I think you forget who I am; but I excuse you, knowing that you are not yourself at this moment. It is perfectly useless to say that you will not give up my daughter. You must do so. She, at any rate, will obey me."

"And have you the custody of her heart? She may do as you command, but it will be misery to her. Have you no thought of your child's happiness? Is it compatible with your conscience to do this thing?"

"Signor Bertoni, I am not in my dotage. I am yet able to manage my own conscience and affairs. I cannot continue this exceedingly unpleasant conversation. You have heard what I have had to say, and that must be absolutely final," and she prepared to leave the room.

"One moment, Signora; let me say one more word. I apologize humbly for my unreasonable passion. Attribute it, I pray, to my agitation. I implore you to let me have some hope. If I ever have a

name, of which you would not be ashamed, say, at least, that then you will look upon my proposal in a more favorable light. I am confident that your daughter loves me; of my own affection I will say nothing, since the mention of it seems to offend you. Do not destroy two young lives! Ah, you cannot be so cruel!"

"I have asked you several times to discontinue this conversation, but as you persist in it, I can only leave the room. You have had my answer irrevocably. Remember, my child is not of age. Until she is, I have absolute control over her actions. I entirely forbid this engagement, both now and ever, even in the event of your becoming a second Raphael. You drive me to speak unkindly to you, much as it is against my nature and inclination. Why could you not take my first answer, and let well alone?"

"Then I have but one favor to ask. May I see Miss Hamilton once more? Do not refuse me. It is for the last time."

"Better not. Better break off all connection here and now."

"Madame, do not make me humble myself to the earth. I implore you to let me but bid her farewell. A very servant might ask that. If I have offended you, forgive me, and do not revenge yourself by keeping her from me for this last poor moment."

"It shall be as you wish. But remember, Signor, no heroics."

"Madame," he faltered, "I am sorry that I have disappointed you about the picture, but I cannot

part with it now. I will, however, paint you another, if you wish, and send it to you."

"Thank you, Signor, but when we leave, I had rather that every link be broken off completely,—that neither of you should have anything to connect your thoughts with the past, or cause either of you to remember this youthful folly, for I look upon it as nothing more. In a year or two you will thank me for my seemingly heartless words. If Miss Hamilton wishes to see you, I will tell her that you are here. Good-bye. I am very sorry for you. Time and work will heal your self-inflicted wounds, and cause you to forget your infatuation. Good-bye."

"Good-bye, madame. My infatuation, as you call it, can never be obliterated from my memory. I cannot forget the past. The future is dead."

Mrs. Hamilton inclined her head in answer to his farewell, and was gone.

He sat and waited as one in a stupor, hardly being able to realize what had been taken from him. Alas! that human nature cannot release that which has been given, and be happy as before the meeting of souls. His lips quivered and his bosom heaved as he tried to grasp the situation. At last, in a voice that seemed strange and foreign to him, he exclaimed: "Gone, gone from me!" Then in a burst of pain and passion, "No, that shall not be. If she is a true woman, she will wait. If she fears, better that she should go her way, and I mine." And he rose from his seat pale and determined as Muriel entered. She paused for a moment on the threshold aghast at his anguish.

"Andrea, my love, they would take you from me. My love, my love!" And he clasped her, weeping, in his arms.

"Nothing can part us for all time but your words, my girl. If you will remain constant, I am content. In two years you will be of age and your own mistress. Then tell me that you will marry me, and I will take you away from those who would compromise your happiness. Believe me, I can never change. Do not fight against fate; you are mine, mine in the future, though the present be black and stormy. Be brave, and remember."

"I shall never forget. I was afraid you would not come before we left. Mamma is about to start for home, and I feared I should never see you again."

"Your address? I must know that, even if I dare not write to you. An address that will find you at any time."

Muriel's quick ears detected her mother's step in the hall. "Hush! I will write to you and tell you all. You will be here?"

"Yes."

"Then it is well. I will be true to you. Trust me and wait." And Mrs. Hamilton entered the room. Without a word Andrea led the half-fainting girl to her mother's arms.

"Farewell, farewell." And he watched them disappear down the dark corridor, and then betook himself to his room. From his window he could see the hotel entrance. Shortly he saw them enter the omnibus and drive away with bag and baggage.

"They must be very bitter against me," he murmured. "Not even giving me credit of enough gentlemanly feeling to leave the hotel; thinking that I should pursue, *they* go. I must indeed be a repulsive being to madame. She throws aside the very object for which she came here: the cultivation of her daughter's voice. Bah! This is a world of surprises." So he thought on, planning and plotting for the future, until the shadows of night were descending.

In the midst of his meditations the waiter announced that a gentleman wished to see him. "A gentleman," thought Andrea; "and he gave no name?"

"No, sir; he merely said a friend from the *Gate of Peace*, and said you would understand."

"Yes, yes; show him up." The waiter withdrew to fulfil his errand, and Andrea smiled for the first time since the departure. "Francesco, from the *Gate of Peace*, he at least will amuse and keep me from the bitterness of my own thoughts. The child of war will give me something to employ my thoughts for the next hour or so, and help to while away the time till I hear from Muriel; for until then, I am as *Tantalus* was in his thirst and wealth of water."

"Ah, my friend," said the stranger, cautiously entering the room. "Good; no one here, saving the man I wish to see; very good. I have to be careful. How are you?"

"First-rate, Francesco, I——"

"Hush! Know me as Luigi, Francesco is dead—for a time at least. Francesco would keep getting

into trouble, therefore he was suppressed. Sad, very sad."

"As far as I can see, Luigi is not much more cautious. He sends up ambiguous messages about the *Gate of Peace*. That sort of thing attracts attention."

"Not at all. The waiter is a brother. The English Shakespeare says that there's nothing in a name; at least I think it's Shakespeare. You are not a brother as yet; but we trust you, when I say we I mean I—I trust you. You will soon be one of *us*. There is something glorious in the thought of that—one of us—*us*—US. Sound's inspiring, doesn't it?"

"Still the same trifler on the brink of the volcano. Death could not make you serious, my Fran——Luigi."

"When the knife is through one's neck, we cannot control our features. Before—I might still smile, unless I could accomplish something by my tears. I wandered in here just now, having a word to pass to sundry brethren. Imagine my surprise and delight, when I saw my old friend's name among the new arrivals. I flew hither, three steps at a time. The waiter heralded my passage, during which delay I accepted a glass of wine. That safely embosomed, I flew, as I said before. I have an affair of importance to communicate to my old friend."

"Your old friend; yes, before you cast your lot with these people. Now, I don't know if I can claim that close acquaintance."

"Ah, you are a bigot. You are not open to con-

viction. There is one man living who can bring you into the fold, and that man stands before you."

"By the bye, Luigi, isn't it rather a lucky thing that you are standing before me, and not behind an iron grating? I thought your freedom was not worth a moment's purchase."

"I have stood on the threshold many times and oft, but always managed to have a pressing invitation elsewhere; besides, I was not directly implicated in the last attempt for freedom."

"Still the same old mania," said Andrea, thoughtfully. "The freedom of one class from another—the dismemberment of the limbs from the body."

Luigi instantly lost his debonair manner, and became austerely grave. "Yes, when those limbs are paralytic and refuse to bear their burden. You call me a zealot and fanatic. I will prove to you that I glory in the title of Zealot. I will convince you that if truth is light, and light is fanaticism, then I am a Fanatic, and glory in it."

The man of many names was a dangerous agitator, a Socialist confessed. It had, at first, amused Andrea to listen to his harangues; for he was never guilty of speaking without his bitterest opponent owning that he handled his minimum of truth with a maximum of talent, and now this ranting individual diverted Andrea's attention, and he was glad of his or any company.

"I want you to come and hear a brother speak this evening on the subject of Socialism, about which you understand nothing, and give it credit for abounding only in murder, treason, and violence. This is one of our *conversion lectures*, and

possible brothers are admitted under certain circumstances. Will you come?"

Andrea could not help laughing at the man's excitement and impetuosity.

"What amuses you?" he continued. "You know we risk our all in the cause: I should like you to hear the argument from our stand-point. I am aware that I am endangering myself by speaking thus openly to you, but I know you to be a good man, whatever your political opinions may be, and I am safe in your hands."

Andrea assured him that he need not fear treachery from him.

"I know it—I know it. It would be a great acquisition if we could only convince the skeptic. Say you will come, and I will make all the necessary preparations."

Andrea was interested. Here was the opportunity of having an hour's amusement. "Shall I be allowed to answer your friend?" he asked.

"Certainly. If you can."

"Thanks. It is at least a comfort to think I shall not be slain if I disagree."

"It is hardly polite to speak in such harsh terms of a man's convictions—of his religious belief, in fact. If you are going to jest, I have no wish to pursue the subject."

"I did not mean to hurt your feelings."

"You will be driven there blindfold. Don't smile, this is serious. You will take an oath not to reveal whom you may see there. We shall not ask you to refrain from repeating what you may hear, because no private business will be discussed;

the speech we should wish the whole world to know, our precepts cannot be made too public."

"I have no objection to do what you have said," answered Andrea. "Your system lives only in its darkness; and would dissolve itself into thin air, if you did not resort to such surroundings as those you propose. Yes, I will come and hear your dear familiar friends."

And as he spoke, he took the picture from its case and arranged it on the easel.

"All right," assented the Socialist. "But, *Corpo di Bacco*, what a lovely face. Where did you get your model from?"

"It is an unfinished portrait, painted to order."

"Unfinished! Then it must be nearly so—seems absolutely perfect. I never thought you could paint like that. You will be a great artist some day, Andrea."

Those same words again. Is it within the bounds of reason to trust that the prophecy will ever be fulfilled?

"Yes, my friend, I will accompany you."

"Then be in front of Piale's library, in the Piazza di Spagna, in precisely one hour from now. Till then, *addio*," and he was gone.

"It will be a relief even to hear those would-be patriots, if only for the pleasure of refuting their arguments and criticising their opinions," Andrea meditated.

The reader will doubtless be surprised that Bertoni should be so familiar with such a doubtful character; but, like many others, the person with the *alias* had been a respected member of society

once; but had fallen lower and lower, through his love of pothouse companions and gutter politics. Being enthusiastic and easily led astray, he quickly became tabooed and cut by his erstwhile associates. How delighted he seemed to be at the idea of bringing another to the same hopeless condition as himself; how he gloried in his shallow cant. After all, when human nature is at its lowest ebb, it strives its hardest to drag others into the same abyss; it cannot bear to be alone in its infamy. The wish of the world is to have a companion in trouble.

The time for the appointment draws near, and Andrea finds himself in the Piazza di Spagna. He sees a closed carriage and his friend anxiously waiting for him. They enter.

"There is as yet no necessity to blindfold you," Luigi commenced; "I will, however, draw down the blinds."

Andrea could scarcely forbear from smiling at his earnest and important manner—at the ridiculous formality of the whole proceeding.

"Luigi," he said, "if I were to rebel, or gasp for air and open the window, would instant death be my portion?"

"No," answered the other, quietly, "only I should have to order the driver to take you back to your hotel." After a pause he continued, "Let me place this handkerchief over your eyes." Andrea complied as gracefully as possible. "I have no doubt that, before this evening is over, you will have joined the glorious army of those who stand ready to give their bodies and souls to the cause."

"My friend, even I am open to the conviction, which you say I am devoid of at present; on proofs, good sir, on proofs."

Luigi remained silent, and after some time had elapsed, during which Andrea guessed, from the severity of the jolting, that they were passing through the small and unfrequented streets, the irrepressible one announced:

"We are at the end of our journey. Let us descend."

CHAPTER IV.

IN SECRET TRYST.

BERTONI could plainly hear that they were walking in a covered place or archway. He was told there were three steps in front of him and after that a door, which was knocked at by his companion; who, at the same time, emitted a peculiar whistle. The portal was instantly opened and a pass-word demanded, which was given in an undertone, the extra precaution being taken of covering Andrea's ears to make security doubly sure. On admission being granted and the handkerchief removed, Andrea found himself in a low vaulted chamber and in the presence of three men.

"Before you may advance further," said one of these, "it is first necessary that you should bind yourself to secrecy, as to what you may see in this place. If you recognize an acquaintance, you must evince no surprise or seek to speak with him. If

by word or deed any forbidden subject is touched on, you must remain silent as the grave which will claim you some day. Have the goodness to repeat the following words after me: *I, Andrea Bertoni, do hereby solemnly swear never to reveal by word or sign, anything, or part of anything that I may hear or see in this place (or elsewhere in connection with this Society) to man, woman, or child; and that I will never write them or cause them to be written or made known in any way or by any act of mine; and that I will neither aid nor abet in others doing so. So help me God. Amen.*"

When this remarkable ceremony was over, he was given to understand, that it was merely gone through as a matter of form in case any business subject might be accidentally touched on, or should a silk mask, worn by the brethren, be insufficient to conceal their identity; that he was perfectly at liberty to repeat the subject of that night's discourse; as it was in itself desirable that the whole world should hear such a man as the coming speaker, and that he would allow them to do so, were he permitted by the laws of a tyrannical country. "The rulers of Italy dare not let him ask the nation a single question, for fear of having their underhand trickeries and hollow time-serving doings exposed to the light of day. They resort to brute force to quell this Society (in itself the liberty and freedom of the people), and the Brotherhood are compelled to answer in kind; much as it is against our doctrines of universal happiness and peace."

The room was in partial darkness, but as the

door was opened into the adjoining hall, and the light flooded the ante-chamber, he saw that his inquisitors as well as the many brethren within had their faces concealed by a thin mask of flesh-colored silk, bound round the head by two pieces of tape. Andrea and his sponsors entered the council room.

"Are we all here?" asked a voice.

"All," responded another. "Signor, will you have the goodness to commence your observations."

A tall, gaunt man ascended the platform, and began, what seemed to our friend, an interminable collection of words, rich only in abuse and treason, powerful only in length of opprobrious terms.

The reader shall not be wearied with the repetition of this senseless and forced harangue. Suffice it to say that it was a repetition of the old argument: the primitive equality of man; assertions as to the uselessness of the aristocracy, etc.,—the whole concluding with innumerable questions and statistics, which were supposed to be unanswerable. Every one seemed to be vastly delighted with their champion, and looked at the new-comer as they might at some fabulous animal that no amount of proof could convince—obstinate to the last degree.

"I should like to hear," said the man, who at length had finished speaking, "the opinion of our young friend, and, we will trust, future brother-patriot, on the subject we have in hand."

Andrea, who had been consuming and fuming within himself during the tirade, gladly acquiesced.

"I hope," said he, "that what I am about to say will not offend you. I cannot entirely agree with the argument I have just heard. Your Society condemns kings and rulers. The whole earth, say you, ought to be one vast republic. Perhaps in theory you are right. That may be the coming form of government, but the time is not ripe for it yet. These same statistics which you have used so freely prove that, with the exception of one country, the United States of America, such revolutionized systems have proven abject failures. Other nations will have to advance considerably before such a thing is feasible. On the count of redivision of property, you must be perfectly aware, that, if everything were equally shared, within twenty-four hours there would be both rich and poor again. I wish to ask if that would necessitate a redivision; if so, how often would that interesting performance have to be gone through? And then, what a haven of bliss this world would be to the thief and scoundrel, what a happy hunting-ground for the burglar and blackleg. These gentlemen would continually be coming in for new spoils, having hidden or lost the proceeds of the last. How utterly impossible is the proposition! Again, all well born and bred rulers must be done away with and their posts filled by, what you please to term, *good men and true.* Now, it is an indisputable fact, that there is no tyrant like a self-made man, no ruler is so hard and grinding as one who himself has sprung from the ranks. He had to bear with this and that—had to do as he was bid, and addressed his superiors with cringing civility;

he was obliged to be meek and lowly before his masters, and so shall his subordinates be to him. If it is so in places of business, how much greater is the temptation to an ill-educated man, who has the opportunity to sieze the reins of government, to oppress and tyrannize over the people. It is observable, nay, it must have been noticed, that a President of a petty Republic desires and expects more servile deference to be paid to him than to an actual sovereign. People here make their great error—not content with one king, they make twenty. It is the old fable again of the frogs and the stork. They had to bear with a monarch—to expend their hard-earned money on him and his family, and not wishing to continue doing so, they throw the government over. Then comes the rub. Now they support a score of kings and a score of families. Each unprincipled all-leveller, who sits in parliament under this régime, appropriates for himself whatever funds he can lay his hands on: the accounts are cooked; the people are robbed; at last they find their mistake, and cry, '*Vive le Roi.*' But for how long? The stump-orators cannot leave the masses alone for any length of time. They recommence their weary palaver about the people's wrongs, until they are again in a ferment. The old thing over again once more. These old nations must become regenerated and born again, before they can adopt the policy that republicanism holds out, till then they must be content with the best of what may be a bad bargain."

At this juncture the speaker was greeted with a storm of hisses and outward and visible signs of

dissatisfaction; but another sound made itself heard above the din, and that was the sharp crack of a pistol.

Instantly all animosity and controversial arguments had disappeared. One of the brotherhood rushed to the door for the purpose of reconnoitering; as all was silent he stepped out into the semi-darkness of the ante-chamber. In an instant he was seized from behind by a gendarme, who had crept under the shade of the door, which opened outward. The remainder seeing that their companion was taken and that the outer room was fast filling with armed police, pulled the massive door to and shot the bolt home.

But they were caged as rats in a trap.

"This, then, is to be the end of all my hopes of the future," thought Bertoni. "My usual fortune. I, innocent, shall be condemned for Socialism and conspiracy, and the rice-swamps will claim me with the others."

"Surrender! Surrender!" cried the voices from the outside.

"Sacramento!" said one of the assailants; "if we had not been obliged to shoot that ugly customer with the sword, but could have gagged him, we should have taken the whole nest of vipers without all this bother." And they proceeded to hammer the iron barrier.

"Quick!" said the chief of the Socialists quietly. "The key."

From a ledge over the embossed work on the walls a very small key was produced, which was fitted into an almost imperceptible chink in the

floor, and part of the vaulted roof slid aside, leaving sufficient space for a man's body to pass. In a trice one of the number had leaped upon another's shoulders, and grasping the side of the aperture, hoisted himself through. He then threw down a rope-ladder, and with extreme order and rapidity each one climbed stealthily up. As one was designated he went; no hurry, no confusion; the captain, chief, or whatever he called himself, going last.

The ladder was drawn up, the vault replaced, and the leader, turning to Andrea, said, "Now, Signor, you may consider yourself as safe as if you were in your own house."

"How can I be safe?" he answered. "Could any man in his senses suppose that the police would believe that, because the room below is found empty, we have all vanished into thin air? Listen, they are now breaking open the door."

"Certainly," responded the captain. "Our voices might betray us. Come with me to the further room. Kindly go through; I must speak with the brethren a moment."

As Bertoni went, he distinctly heard one say, "It is necessary," and before he had time to turn, he was caught hold of and gagged. "Listen well," said the same voice. "You have to-day seen part of one of the cleverest schemes for concealment that was ever devised by the mind of man. Our society is free, but in this case you must join us or take the consequences." And he touched the stiletto by his side in grim significance. "If you are willing, bend your right leg, which is free."

Bertoni did so, seeing that this was his one

chance for life, inwardly vowing that, if he ever regained his liberty, he would keep clear of such institutions for the future.

They removed his gags, and administered an oath, if possible somewhat more explicit and binding than the last; he was then asked if he professed any religion. On his owning to the Catholic faith a crucifix was handed to him to kiss. "You see," continued the administrator, "some of us are atheists, and swear on the dagger."

Andrea was released and welcomed among them, an unwilling brother.

"I mentioned just now," said the chief of the gang, "that this arrangement was very perfect. I will demonstrate that fact to you now."

"Perfect!" exclaimed Bertoni; "the first thing the police will do, on entering the room, will be to sound the walls, floor, and ceiling."

"Exactly. The first thing they will do will be to sound the walls, the other two would naturally be left to the last. Listen, you may hear them now, swearing and cursing at their non-success so far. Gently, my friends, you will find all you want to soon. Sacr-r-r-r-r!! what blows they give the wainscoting."

"And finding nothing they will pursue their inquiries in an upward direction."

"On the contrary, my brother, they will find something there. They will find one of the panels to be hollow; they will break it down, and see a passage leading to an old archway below. The same screw which opened the door in the vaulting, also unfastened an opening in the apex of the arch.

They will arrive at the trap-door, and will, if they do not fall through in their unseemly haste, be in the pleasant predicament of having to say, 'The birds have flown.' Take off your boots and follow me lightly. You shall see."

He led the way, after his orders had been obeyed, and withdrawing a piece of wood, discovered a small lens, set among the plaster flowers that decorated the ceiling, and entirely concealed from view in the deep *bas-relief* foliage. Through this medium the movements of the people underneath could be plainly noted.

The room was full of soldiers and police. They had taken the bait, and were endeavoring to open the iron panel, which betrayed itself hollow by its sound. For a time it baffled their skill; but at length a crash rang through the building, which told of the heavy iron-work's destruction. After all, extreme bravery does not perch on the banners of the attacking party, and no one seems over-willing to enter that narrow dark passage. Their officer can scarcely get them to look at it, and does not appear madly anxious to lead the van himself. At last one summons up enough courage to cross the little threshold, going as cautiously as if he were treading on eggs; two or three follow, and in a moment come tumbling back into the room helter-skelter.

"My God!" they say. "There's a regiment of the rebels down there. Body of Bacchus! millions."

"Bah!" exclaimed a voice from the yawning chasm. "I should not run away from my own

friends if I were you. As we were examining the exterior," said the new arrival entering, "we discovered an outlet in the top of the archway over that little by-street, Via Borromeo. The fools forgot to close the trap-door after them, thus giving us a hint which way they fled. The sentinels say they have seen no one. That they got away at all is a mystery."

How brave every one becomes in a moment. How they vie with each other who shall be first down the passage and into the street.

"We have one of the gang," says a gendarme. "Perhaps, with a promise of freedom, he will turn king's evidence."

"Nay," answered another, "these fellows stick to one another like thieves, about the only good thing they do; always devilish kind to one another, and shockingly vindictive to the rest of the world. By Jupiter! it's a funny thing to think of all these men leaving here without our sentries hearing or seeing them. Perhaps they were squared or intimidated; do you think that likely?"

"No, I don't suppose so. Still, they know these Socialists are very powerful. The men are perfectly aware that, if condemned by the Society, their lives would not be worth an hour's purchase. My humble opinion is that unless we can get some information from our solitary prisoner, we have missed them this time. What a pity the old days of the boot and thumbscrews are over. If we could use a little persuasion of that sort, we'd wrench it from him piecemeal."

"We can't afford to let the reward go. We can

get him alone in the guard-house. He need never speak again—after we have the information." And they carried on their conversation in undertones.

Andrea glanced at the captain, who looked grave and stern.

"The one for the many," he muttered. "He is brave; I trust him. Luigi's fate adds one more drop to the stain of blood, which must be washed away."

"Is Luigi taken?"

"Yes, the man who brought you here to-night. It was his turn to mount guard. Silence, I must hear what they say below."

Others of the soldiers were discussing the chances of the prisoner disclosing the whereabouts of the conspirators.

"If we have to wait till he peaches," says one, "we will be where we are forever. If we threaten him with death, what matters that? It is death to him either way. No Government protection can save a traitor from his terrible Association. Any one would rather go to prison than run that risk—risk, did I say? there is no risk, rather certainty of an awful fate. Do you remember how they served Langellotti the detective—how he was found with his heart hung round his neck, and his mouth full of earth? It is horrible! I must send a message to headquarters to announce our defeat and to ask for further orders. I suppose they will keep the place guarded for a day or two on the chance of there being papers concealed, or some of the gang returning to their den."

"Come away," said the chief to Andrea; "all is

well—for us. To-morrow there will be an uprising some miles away from Rome. The police will go there, and will find everything quiet again—we shall escape. They always look for a new excitement and forget the old. Perhaps they will receive a clue as to where we have escaped, and travel on the wrong scent—as usual." They rejoined the community, and found them engaged in opening sundry cans of meats, vegetables, etc.

"We are never unprepared, and are victualled for a month, if necessary; we have even an oil cooking-stove, a plentiful supply of wine, water, coffee, flour, meat, hams, bacon, and tobacco. This is still, you must understand, a very serious business. We shall have to construct another building on these lines elsewhere, and destroy all signs of there having been a room here. Worse still, two of our number are dead by now."

"Dead!"

"One certainly; he was killed at his post; the other, most probably; we all carry the means, for we know we should be sorely tempted to divulge by worse than arguments. And they say *we* are cruel—we, who have been oppressed and tormented from our youth up. Take my case, for instance. My sister was going to her work; she was a dressmaker in her humble way, and an acquaintance asked her to dine with him. He was an officer in the same regiment in which I was a private. She was flattered, and thought his intentions honorable. He drugged her, and—you know the rest. I would have killed him had they not dragged me from him. The poor private had struck his offi-

cer. The dirt of the earth had insulted his Godhead. I escaped—well, that is all. He has paid his penalty since. Bah! why talk of the past, that is dead now. Everything dies—except the cause, which lives on forever. You would hardly think that you were only a stone's throw from your hotel, yet such is the case. You were driven by a circuitous route to mislead you."

"Will it be long before I can return?"

"Perhaps to-morrow, perhaps not for a week. You understand, they will examine the room underneath very minutely. They will see that the building has only one story, and from the street the roof appears nearly flat, it being built in a deceptive way; the tiles are really higher than they seem to be, and the ceiling of the council-chamber is in reality not so lofty as it looks. Thus by a little stratagem we have a house with a false top. There is not a doubt that, if the plan of the decoy passage had not been thought of, that would not save us. There is no necessity for the least alarm. A slight temporary inconvenience and overcrowding, the difficulty of accounting for your absence, that is all. You must imagine yourself on an emigrant ship, and you will be comfortable in comparison. At any rate, let us feed and try to forget our troubles and those who are gone from us. My brethren, since our guest has taken the oath, it is no longer necessary to disguise our faces. Let us take off the masks."

Was it possible! In one corner sat a priest of the church, reputed to be in good standing.

"*Ma foi*," he laughed, "who the deuce will say

Mass for me to-morrow? One thing, they won't suspect my being here."

Good heavens, how many men Andrea knew; some friends of his, of whom he had no conception that they held revolutionary ideas, some again mere acquaintances. It is true he had overrated his own perspicacity. One of them said:

"It is strange for friends to meet like this."

"Very strange."

"Let us sit down to those things which we have provided," said the senior brother. "If you wish to wash your hands, you can do so by going through that door to the right. There is a cistern outside in which rain-water accumulates. You see, everything is provided for a long stay, if necessary; not only things needful to sustain life, but also those to keep one comfortable and in good health. As to how we have these buildings, you will readily understand, when I tell you that we have skilled workmen among us in every branch of trade or business. Our wishes are their law. Before it gets dark we will light the brazier, as a flaming fire cannot be permitted. Let there be no drunkenness or loud talking, neither let any man stint himself. There is no need for that."

"If you have to change your quarters, will it not be a very expensive affair?" asked Bertoni.

"It will cost a large sum, but when divided among the whole fraternity, but a trifle will be required from each, and only those who can afford the outlay will be asked to contribute. That is why everything is of such a perfect nature here. The brotherhood of Rome do not stand alone, by

any means. We have many big men at our backs in this city, who find money, although they do no absolute work, being sleeping partners, as it were, in the most glorious enterprise of Freedom."

It was quite dark now, and the brotherhood were reclining on rugs, smoking, and drinking their night-cap of Lacrima Christi.

"Shall you set a guard to-night?"

"What would be the use? If we are caught we have no means of flight, and if we tried to resist we should not improve matters. We had poor Luigi on the lookout, when we were in the council-chamber, so as to give the alarm in case of surprise, and allow of our escape to this retreat. But now I think it would be wise to sleep—Pouf! these mosquitoes. I will light one of these." He went to a cupboard, and brought out some pastils, which he ignited in the brazier. "There, that is better," and he laid down to rest.

"Fancy these men going to the length of thinking about these pests," thought Andrea, "they certainly must have the credit of the greatest *sang-froid* imaginable, considering that the place is only destined to be used in case of accident," and he composed himself to slumber.

. . . . . .

A dark hour had come upon the unhappy Luigi. On his being taken, his hands were securely fastened behind him, and, struggle as he might, he could not reach a little phial he had concealed in his bosom. A few poor little drops had the power to set him free from his captors, to release him from

his thraldom, to give him peace—in death; even that was denied him.

He was thrown into a cart between two gendarmes, who did not let their gaze wander from him for an instant, and as the vehicle was turning a dark corner, he managed to free his wrist, and to plunge his hand into the bosom of his coat. He was too slow, however, and the policeman thinking that he was reaching for a weapon, struck him upon the forearm with his drawn hanger. The steel sank into the flesh, severing the muscles and incapacitating him from further motion; he sank bleeding and moaning on the hard boards. The guards sprung upon him, wrenched open his coat and took the little bottle from his breast.

"No, no, my friend, first a few questions, and then—freedom, if you will."

The wretched man knew the purport of those words, and trembled.

"We're getting close to home now," said the guard, binding up the gash in Luigi's arm. "We must keep you going till the captain has a chance to make your acquaintance."

"My lips are sealed."

"Ah, others have said that before; but the gentleman you are going to meet knows a method for extracting information from a fossil."

"He will fail with me. I know nothing about the doing of the Socialists, or where they have gone."

"So, your memory will be refreshed, or I am very much mistaken. I don't know how he does it. I only know that he clears the guard-room,

keeping with him a couple of trusted men. When we return the subject has always made his little confidences, and his troubled conscience is at rest. Bah! I'm opening my mouth too wide. I only want to advise you to speak, and quickly. Here we are."

The cart drew up at the guard-house, and the prisoner was dragged into an inner room, and confronted with an evil-looking man, who sat at a deal table with a couple of satellites as ugly as himself.

"Guiseppi brought the news; we are ready for him. Throw him down there," said the officer, pointing to a couple of benches placed alongside, forming a rude couch. The guards relieved themselves of their burden as ordered.

"See here, my friend," continued that worthy, "we are going to spare you a good deal of trouble and—inconvenience," he added grimly. "You know, well enough, where these fellows have gone. You will tell us or——"

"I know nothing."

"Umph, that is foolish—very foolish. Been quarrelsome already, I see," alluding to the wounded arm. "That is a trifle to what will happen, if you refuse to answer. I am a man of few words. Speak, or we will force you to tell all you know a little louder than you intend."

"I am in your power, to a certain extent; but neither you nor the devil can make me do anything against my will."

"*Will* is a new word in this place. I see we shall have to persuade you," and the officer spoke in a whisper to one of his subordinates, who pro-

duced a thin whiplash and a piece of wood, rounded like the handle of a hammer. In a second this was turned round his forehead, and the pressure applied by twisting the coil with the wood, round and round, until the cord sank into the flesh.

"Speak, my friend, speak!" and the relentless devil wrenched the wood, like the handle of a vise. But all to no purpose. The victim's limbs twitched with the agony he was undergoing; the sweat poured from his face, but he remained silent.

"Hold, he's fainting. We shall have to apply something sharper. Wait a moment, let him come round."

Luigi was at last aroused from the stupor into which he had fallen. "Listen, fellow: I am not to be trifled with. Let me know where these villains are to be found, and you leave this place a free man; do you comprehend? Free!"

"I do not know."

"You must know. Slowly and surely we shall wring the truth from you, even if your death-rattle comes with it."

"I do not know where these people are," Luigi answered faintly. "I tell you they escaped through the arch on the Via Borromeo."

"That they escaped we know. Where they are you know. Tell us!"

"I do not know."

"Come here, Pietro, we will drag the truth from this liar's throat. Take hold of his hand—that one with the wound; put that cutlass into the fire, which we have prepared for this idiot. Open your damned mouth, or we'll kill you."

Luigi's face set into a dull stare, and he answered not a word.

"Then you doom yourself."

A moment later, the shriek of the tortured wretch rang through the guard-room, as might the cry of a condemned soul in the breath of hell.

. . . . . .

Andrea was sleeping uneasily. He thought he was again with his beloved at Pontresina. She was divided from him by a deep, impassable crevasse; he was trying to speak to her, but she turned away. "No," she said, "you are a Socialist; you were taken and condemned with them. See, they come to bear you away." And he awoke with a start and a sigh of relief. "Ah, it was but a chimera of the night. Yet, what was that,—some one moving? No, the conspirators were sleeping quietly. Yet, was it all fancy? There was surely a stirring below."

The moon was shining through the little skylight, which had been uncovered after the brazier was extinguished, shedding a fitful gleam into the loft; so he sat up, unable to shake off the impression that something untoward was about to happen. He was chiding himself for his foolishness, when he was frightened and astounded by seeing the trap-door slide to one side, and a man's head appear through the floor. Before he could either move or speak, the figure had drawn himself through, and stood on the offensive with a brace of revolvers; another and another followed his example.

"Surrender," they cried, "surrender."

Bertoni jumped to his feet, and running to the skylight gave a tremendous leap and succeeded in laying hold of the sill. His early gymnastic education stood him in good stead; he pulled himself up, burst open the dark-curtained window, and, with a couple of bullets flying after him, like the devil's benediction, swung himself onto the roof; his retreat being covered by the confusion and chaos that prevailed among the brotherhood. Several further shots were fired, with what effect he never knew, saving that he escaped scot-free. He ran along the roofs of a row of houses, gaining them by means of a steep shed from the top of the lower council-chamber, running swiftly over the sloping tiles, in deadly peril of being dashed to pieces on the pavement below; anything better than the fate behind. How was he to descend? He could hear a pursurer behind him. They were but man to man, still one was armed, while the other had nothing except his willing hands. Near Bertoni was a stack of chimneys, one of them a large disused factory flue. He was up on the top like a monkey, and lowered himself into the interior. Luckily a brick had fallen out, so he had some rest for his feet, and was not obliged to resort to wedging himself and hanging by his hands. He had been there some ten minutes, when he heard the detective come laboriously by. Bertoni had one great advantage over him, that he had removed his boots to sleep, and had been more agile over the smooth slate.

He breathed freer when he passed. In the course of half an hour he returned with two others. "I

have been all round the square," he said; "the man must be a perfect devil to climb, as the only way down is by a long water-pipe; he must have stuck to the wall like a fly. I was right, you see, about the captain being able to get the prisoner to peach. He got all the information—in time. How, of course, no one knows; but gently, no doubt, as the law demands. The man died in the course of an hour, and *suicide* was placed on the books to the prisoner's account. Inquiry was needless, as the captain testified himself, and the body was boxed and buried in the pauper's acre inside an hour. Great man, the captain. However, only one has escaped, and we've got his boots. We shall have to send the crier round after him, like in the old fairy-story of the *Cinder-Queen*, and see whom they fit. We have made our fortunes,—200 liras per head. Won't we have a feast and make the old corporal drunk."

The voices died away in the distance, as they began to leisurely pick their way back to the skylight.

And all was silent.

CHAPTER V.

WITH THEE TO WANDER.

BERTONI, having ascertained that all was secure, descended from his fastness and looked about him for means of reaching the ground. He discovered nothing but the water-pipe, already mentioned, and that seemed altogether impracticable. Once

again he scrambled round the square. No, nothing to aid him; yet stay, what was that? A glimmer of light thrown from an attic window under the eaves to the other side of the road; a poor solace, in truth. Still it seemed his last hope. Creeping on his hands and knees, he leaned over the gutter, where the withered leaves were festering and rotting, and looked into the room below.

There, at a table, sat an old Jew busily mending a watch. How was he to let him know his terrible plight, how to speak to him without raising an alarm and cry of burglars? There was nothing else to be done, and he must risk it at all cost.

He stretched over the yawning chasm, as far as he could, and threw a piece of detached plaster against the window-pane.

"What is it?—what are you doing there?"

"Let me in. For the love of God, let me in, and I will explain all, when I am safe."

"Nay, I know not who you are," said the old man, opening the window wide enough to be heard through. "Get you gone, or I will call the police."

"Father, father," said a girl's voice, "do not act so hastily. He is in danger, and speaks not like a thief or a marauder. Let him enter, I implore you."

"It shall be as you wish, my child," answered the Jew, lowering the sash from the top. "Enter, young man, and state your business."

Andrea swung himself down, stood on the window-sill, and entered the room.

"Sir, I am an unfortunate. I am suspected of being a member of a gang of Socialists, with whom

I have had nothing to do, further than listening to them. I have been nearly hunted down, and should have been so in time, had it not been for your kindness. If you will allow me, I will go through your room to the street at once."

The Jew listened to him with evident interest.

"I heard there had been a raid and that the Socialists had escaped. It is fortunate for you that I worked so late this night. See, the clock points at one. I cannot allow you, faint and hungry as you must be, to leave my poor abode like this,—I cannot be so inhospitable; besides, you are covered with soot. Here is water to wash yourself. I am going to procure something to eat and drink. You will wait till I come back, will you not?"

In vain the young man protested that he was not hungry and only wished to return home.

"It would not be safe for you to go yet, believe me. The street is watched. I insist that you remain here. Rachel, my child, see that this stranger, whom the God of Abraham has sent within our gates, lacks for nothing while I am gone. I shall be away but a little time. Rest, Signor, rest until I come back, then we will arrange some means for your departure."

Bertoni was left to his own thoughts and the company of the beautiful Jewish girl.

"Pardon me for troubling you, but would you give me a cup of water?"

"Willingly," said the girl, and she ran lightly out of the room and returned in a few moments.

I cannot understand the reason, but father has locked the door. It is not his wont to do so, but

perhaps he is fearful of my safety, on account of that party of wicked men, whom we hear are abroad to-night and from whom you have escaped." She was not very clear as to what had happened, and jumped at her conclusion in her anxiety to explain her father's conduct. "The reason that I know anything about it, for father tells me but little, is that he said to-night that he wished he could be the means of bringing some of them to justice, as the reward would enable him to perfect his great invention, which he has toiled till late in the night for years to bring out. During the day he is employed elsewhere. I sit up with him for company. But I do not think the good God would bless such a transaction. It is a fearful thing to sell a fellow-creature for gold, even if they deserve it ever so much. If his conscience force him, well; but for money, a thousand times no!"

Suddenly the truth flashed across Bertoni's mind. Why had the old Jew been so solicitous that he should remain? Why had he locked him in? Because he had gone to lodge the information with the police. In a few words he told the girl his doubts. Her ignorant mind had not seen through the shallow artifices, but now she understood.

"I will say that you insisted on going," she said. "Depart in peace."

Bertoni applied his shoulder to the rotten door with the strength of despair. It gave way with a crash.

"So," she said, "this is the way," and she con-

ducted him down the narrow staircase. In a second or two they were in the street.

"Good-bye," she whispered. "God bless you and guard you from all evil!"

"I can never repay you," he answered. "You have saved my life."

"And destroyed my own."

"What do you mean?"

"That when my father returns he will kill me," she said, now hysterically crying. "Do not leave me to my death. He has always ill-used me for the least misdeed. I have never offended him grievously before, and yet he has often beaten me till his arms have been weary. What will he do, now that I have thwarted him in his design? He will murder me. Ah, you cannot understand. He makes me feel that every mouthful of bread I eat is given me by him, and that I have not earned it. He has tried to drive me to the streets."

"If he treats you so cruelly, why stay with him? You shall not suffer by having aided me. I will find you a new home and the means of earning an honest living. Come with me, rather than remain to meet such a fate. You have been my savior. If you had not spoken, I should have stayed where I was until the police arrested me. You have given me life, I will see that yours shall be happy. Will you come?"

"I trust you. My fate is in your hands."

What else could he have done? Surely he ought not to have left her to the tender mercies of the vile old watchmaker.

"What," thought Andrea, "shall I do with the

poor girl for the rest of the night, and until I can send her somewhere and find a home for her?"

An idea flashed through his mind. He knew Bologna well. A train was advertised to leave Rome at 2.15. There was yet three-quarters of an hour to spare. Once there he could provide comfortable and secure lodgings for the girl until he could get her a situation in London or some town equally remote, where she would be safe from her worthless father's wrath. They were hurrying down the Via del Viminale and nearing the Central Station.

"If I place you in the waiting-room," he said, "you will be quite safe till I return. I go to my hotel to collect my goods and valuables, and will return in time to catch the train."

"Let me not trouble you, I shall be safe."

He placed her under the care of a motherly old soul, and went his way to the Hotel de Normandy. He had expected to be obliged to ring up the porter, but to his intense astonishment he found the door still open, and a bright light burning in the hall. He entered with an affected limp, and answered the porter's inquiry, as to what ailed him, with a cock-and-bull story of his riding in the Campagna, having a fall, and spraining his ankle, with the consequence of his boots being cut off to relieve him.

"Both, sir?" asked the porter in an incredulous tone.

"I have an engagement, which obliges me to leave Rome," he continued, not heeding the janitor's sarcastic remark. "I see I can make the

train departing at 2.15. I will collect a few things and catch it. Can you give me my bill? I shall be back in a few days."

"No, Signor, I do not keep the books; but we know you so well. You will send the money on receipt of our account."

"How is it that you are not in bed at this time of night?"

"There is a ball at the British Embassy. Mr. and Miss Smith have gone. Here comes the carriage, you will have time to bid them good-bye."

Andrea inwardly cursed this *contretemps*, but accepted the inevitable, and made his case as good as he could, in answer to the young lady's pertinent remarks.

"Where are you going, this time of night?" she asked in her strange, brusque way.

"Bologna," he answered, foolishly. He might just as well have told her any other place; but the question took him aback, and confused him. He was no adept in the art of lying, and not being able to exhibit ignorance as to his destination, committed himself. Having gone so far, and seeing that further concealment was impossible, he ordered his letters, etc., to be forwarded to the Hotel du Louvre, Bologna.

He was not many minutes packing his portmanteau; and, newly shod, he hurried down-stairs; past the porter, who did not see him in his eagerness to tell the watchman how the Signor must have been surprised in an unholy love, and had to escape without his boots; past the laughing servants; up the street to the station.

Rachel was standing at the entrance of the wait
ing-room.

"I was afraid," she said, "that you would be lat
and that I should have to remain in this dreadf
city."

He hurried her through the booking-office an
into the train, which had already drawn up; an
wrapping her coat around her, made her as com
fortable as possible in the corner of the carriag
She was shivering with fear and cold, and he wa
consolin her, when he heard his name from th
doo of the compartment, and turning, he saw th
porter with a small note-book in his hand.

"I thought," said the ubiquitous one, "that yo
might need this. You dropped it in the hall i
your haste to catch the train. I see you are en
gaged. Excuse my intrusion. *Bon voyage*," an
the porter hurried away, muttering to himsel
"Lost his boots for that slip of a girl. Che, Ch
what a brazen hussy. It reads like a tale fro
Boccaccio."

Rachel was crying to herself quietly in the corne

"The devil take that man," thought Berton
"All Rome will know as much as he does to-mo
row, with sundry details of their own and his car
fully grafted on. Poor noble girl; but for yo
I should now be in a prison cell. You have blaste
your life to save that of a stranger. A Jewess in
deed. Very few Christians, with all their doc
trines of charity and humanity, would have don
so much." He tried hard to comfort her; he to
her his whole story, from beginning to end, an
praised her kindness and penetration.

"I knew," she said, "that you were innocent. You do not look like those who glory in murder. I did but my duty, in the little I did to help you. But now, what will become of me, where shall I go, what shall I do?"

Her voice had risen to a plaintive wail,—so inexpressibly sad,—so full of heart-breaking grief. She lowered her head and hid her face in her hands.

"My child," he said, "I cannot sufficiently thank you for your great sacrifice—my debt can never be paid; you have saved me from a living tomb. I am not a rich man; but, what I have taken from you, I will repay. Through my fault and folly you have been robbed of a home; I promise that you shall have another, better and more happy; do not cry so bitterly, try to sleep a little."

He saw that his words did no good, and that her grief must run its course. She shrank into the corner, and sobbed herself into a dreamless lethargy.

He, also, after vainly striving to unveil the secrets of the future, slumbered fitfully; and when he awoke the train was nearing its destination.

CHAPTER VI.

LIFE'S FITFUL FEVER.

THE sun was shining on the awakening world as if trouble and sorrow were unknown in the happy villages it caressed with its balmy splendor.

This is Bologna.

Lodgings were, of course, to be had; and it was not long before a clean, decent room was obtained situated over a basket-maker's shop; and a suggestion, as to references, was speedily overcome by an offer of ready money.

"Now, my child, a good long sleep is what you require. I will come here and see you again about five o'clock. In the meantime forget the past. Farewell." And he hurried away to his hotel spending the day arranging his affairs and laying his plans for the future. That Muriel would write he had no doubt. His letters would be forwarded here, and when he had obtained a comfortable situation for Rachel, he would return to Rome, and work with redoubled energy.

As the evening came on, he returned to the basket-maker's and was astounded to learn that a gentleman had been to inquire who the new lodger was.

"What did the woman mean? The girl did not know a soul in the place."

"Nevertheless, Signor, a man came and asked me who the young lady was."

"What did you say?"

"I was afraid—my house is respectable—ask the neighbors. I said she was the wife of the gentleman who brought her hither. You did not tell me her relationship to you, and I saw there was no blood connection; she looks like a Jewess. So I feared, and thought that was best to say."

"Why, in Heaven's name, did you not say that you did not know?"

"You see, Signor, people ought to know who are in their houses; only—only——"

"Only you had too good a bargain and waived your claim. Very good. Then you ought, if you consent to take people in your house on those terms, to have sufficient courage to say so. If you have the opportunity to see this person again, tell him you have answered his impertinent question wrongly; that this girl is no wife, no relation, no connection in any way of mine; that she has been in severe affliction; that she was placed in an honest tradesman's house purposely, so that the finger of scorn should not be pointed at her; and that she is a good girl seeking a situation,—a girl whose history is very sad, and therefore merits respect, even from strangers. Tell this to any one who should inquire."

"The Signor shall be obeyed. Another thing, the young lady is feverish and ill."

"Ill? Feverish? I am very sorry. Kindly ask her if she will see me."

The good woman went on the message, and Andrea paced to and fro, thinking who the individual in question could possibly be. Was he a detective? If so, why did he not inquire as to his where-

abouts instead of the girl's? He would surely have waited near the premises and arrested him. Again, it might be some emissary of the father to take her back. But in that case he would be wanted also. The old Jew would be more anxious to obtain his beggarly 200 lira than to get back his poor, ill-used daughter, whom he abused and ill-treated, and further, actually amused himself by making her very existence miserable. The question seemed unfathomable.

The old woman now appeared with the information that Rachel would see him.

"One moment," he queried. "What was the appearance of this stranger?"

"He looked like an Englishman. I am sure he was one. His hair was red, and, like all the English, his mouth was always open, showing his great, protruding teeth, just like the *Milor'* in the play."

The picture was terse, but explicit. It was a verbal photograph of Smith. But how had he traced him? It would be well to see this impertinent inquirer and set him right in his path of discovery, and he knocked at the door of his unfortunate protégé.

"Come in," said the weak voice. "I have been waiting for you. I heard your voice below, and wondered why you did not come. I am so miserable and so wretched. I feel I have done wrong in leaving home."

"Do not trouble yourself in this way. It would have been a sin on my part had I permitted you to remain in that hovel of cruel unnatural treatment

When your father returned, he would have discovered that you had connived at my escape. Had you tried to make him think that I forced my way out, he would have known that some remark of yours must have aroused my suspicion. Then all your poor cries for mercy would not have stayed his hand. You are ill, my child. What is the matter with you?"

"Oh, no," said the girl, trying not to break down. "I shall be better soon; but I feel so fearfully hot and so thirsty. Do you think, Signor," she continued, looking up suddenly at him, "that there is such a thing as a God?"

"Of course, my child. What a question!"

"Ah! you would not be surprised at my doubts if you knew the truth. Once, when I was little, all the world seemed so good and happy. There was no such thing for me as sorrow and wretchedness; my life was one long summer day, and my father loved me then. In time things began to change. He was a watchmaker and jeweller by trade, and invented a peculiar movement of the watch, which he desired to bring before the public. Both he and I were starved to bring that about, and the greed for gold began to grow on him. I did not care as long as he was kind to me; but as his love of gain increased, his regard for me diminished; he who used to give me his tender affection, now did not desire even to see me, and would often send me from him with a curse or a blow. He would tell me I, too, could bring him money. My lips cannot frame the words, but you understand. Why did God suffer me to be treated thus? If there is

a merciful Creator—an Almighty being, why did He allow me, who had never harmed one of His living creatures, to be beaten and half starved: an object of charity among the neighbors? Alas, that a human heart could be so changed! My father would have sold his soul and mine, had it been in his power, for gold—body and soul, body and soul! And then they say that God is good. He has been good to me, but that is in the past. I am deserted by Him now. I am left to fight alone in this bitter world,—no, not alone, for you are with me; you would befriend me, were that possible, but it is not. I must leave you, Signor. I know you wish to be kind to me,—you will be so in letting me go, where I shall be no further cumbrance to you."

Rachel strove to rise from her seat, but sank back exhausted.

"I cannot move," she said, "and I feel so horribly feverish and ill."

"Stay where you are. Why should you wish to make me unhappy by refusing to allow me to return to you what I have taken away—a home?"

"I do not wish to be a drag on you," she answered. "What am I, that you should care for me? Listen, I think I am going to be ill, perhaps I may even die. Why should you be put to such trouble and expense? I did but do my duty, which I ought to have done to any living soul. Do not let me trammel you thus. Let me go, once more, into the world to—to—die."

"My dear girl, you must not allow your thoughts to prey upon you, in this way. You are not yourself, you are ill at present, but will soon be better.

Do not give way to these hallucinations and suppositions. Let me repay a small part of the debt I owe you, by looking after you until you are well again. Then, you may go, if you wish, when I have found a suitable home and occupation for you. At present it would be worse than madness to even leave your room."

"I will obey you. I will pray for a short illness for your sake—and for myself, that death may come. My life has been bitter and the end is welcome."

"Do not speak like that. You will be strong in a day or two; and then, with the return of health, you will laugh at your late morbid fancies and terrible fears; the future will be bright and happy to you." He took her wrist, and felt the pulse; it was beating at a furious speed, and her hands were frightfully hot. He saw she was in a high fever, and that it was absolutely necessary that she should see a doctor. "I am going out for a few moments," he said, "I shall not be long. I will tell them to send you up some cooling drink. Keep a brave heart while I am gone," and he hurried away in search of a physician.

By the time he returned with the medical man, the girl was much worse, in fact light-headed. The doctor ordered her to be immediately put to bed, informing Andrea that she had low fever, brought on by worry, excitement, and lack of proper nourishment; and, leaving a prescription, promised to return the following day.

Bertoni went to the landlady, feed her heavily, begged her to treat the girl as if she were her own

daughter, told her that they had come away in great haste, asked her to procure those things of which she might stand in need, to get the prescription made up at once, and after, went himself to the hospital and engaged a nurse. He could do no more.

And now for Mr. Smith. Andrea returned to his hotel and found that the little Englishman had arrived in the early morning, and had registered at the Hotel du Louvre.

In answer to his questions the waiter gave the following information: "Monsieur was a *Milor'*, I suppose, for however much we tried to please him, we failed. Monsieur was discontented and left the hotel. He took the train to Rome at 4.37."

So the mystery of the little man's discovery remained unsolved, and there was nothing to do but wait the turn of events, and the letter with particulars from Muriel. When he once received word from her, he would explain everything, and trusted that she would see he had been but honest in his aiding the girl, even if she did chide his folly for attending such a meeting of malcontents.

The evening post brought a letter, which filled him with dismay and horror. It was from the porter, and ran as follows:

"SIGNOR:—All is discovered—all. The detectives are on your track. I pretended not to know your address, and have to appear before the court to-day to be cross-examined. I send this by the hand of a friend, a guard on the railway, who may be trusted. You are advertised for in all the papers, with accurate descriptions of you. As was brought

to light through your leaving your shoes behind—the maker's stamp was on the sole; he had to make a special last for you, and was able to give the police a clue. Every one in Rome is talking about the enormous capture of Socialists. I have had to give up your goods and clothes to be searched. Of course your pictures will all be lost; but I thought I could save one for you, knowing you valued it highly. It was that of the young English lady. I had to cut the canvas, as it was too large to conceal entire. I thought you would prefer to have the fragment than lose the whole. After I had cut the picture I burned the scraps, and hold the painting to your order at some future time, when affairs have cooled down. Another thing that the papers have got hold of, is the fact that you went off with a young girl, a daughter of an old Jewish jeweller of this city. I give you an extract of one of our leading journals of this morning, not to annoy you, but to make you clearly understand the seriousness of your position. It reads as follows: 'This man's coolness is certainly remarkable. After having been chased over the housetops, and having had to climb down a chimney, among other things too trivial to mention, he swings himself into the top story of a house from the eaves. This extraordinary individual, knowing that he must fly from Rome, thinks it most agreeable to let his exodus take the form of a pleasure excursion, and calmly carries off a young girl with him. A man like this is most dangerous, at large. He would, we feel sure, be most careful to have his dinner tastefully prepared, before sending all the Royal families of

Europe to glory.' I copy this extract to show you that you must escape, should there be yet time. At all events, leave the hotel and hide yourself. Another peculiar thing happened. You told Miss Smith you were going to Bologna. Her brother left the hotel almost as soon as you did. Did he follow you? Miss Smith tells me that on his return they will leave at once, and as she does not read Italian, I trust that she may not hear of the contents of this morning's papers. I only discovered the departure of Mr. Smith after I returned to the hotel, otherwise I should have warned you, when I followed you to deliver up the pocket-book you dropped. Receive the assurance of my secrecy in this matter. Above all things conceal yourself. Your obedient servant,

"_____ _____."

The worthy man had wisely refrained from signing his name; he knew well enough that his missive would be understood, and that no doubts would be entertained as to whom it was from. What would be the upshot of all this? Smith had doubtless followed him to Bologna, and by the same train. His purpose was disclosing itself to Andrea's mind. It was to find cause to blacken him to Muriel, so that she might cast him off; and now he had no means of writing to her and explaining everything until he heard from her. Suppose she should never write, but believe these statements? No, no! that would be too cruel—to be condemned without a hearing! She could not be so unjust.

But there was no time for reflection. He must

go, and at once, before the detectives arrived from Rome. He wondered that the telegraph had not already placed the police on the scent, when he remembered that only the porter knew the place at which he was staying, and the authorities would hardly suspect him of going to the leading hotel. So he hurriedly paid his bill, intimating he was about to return to Rome, and soon had his light portmanteau in his hand, refusing the assistance of the hotel omnibus. Having got out of sight of the house, he called at a barber's shop and had his mustache shaved off, and then went onward to the basket-maker's. Here a new complication entered into view. Smith had followed him to that house. Suppose the police were waiting there for him? But the probabilities were that Smith had not heard of the affair with the Socialists at that time, and that he followed him for some purpose of his own. So he entered, but not without sundry qualms and nervousness. Rachel, so the hostess told him, was asleep, which took a great load off his mind.

The next thing to think about was money matters. Fortunately, a day or two before, he had reason to be dissatisfied with his banker, and had not redeposited his small balance, or that would have been irretrievably lost,—one ray of light through the thunder-cloud.

Then again, supposing that Muriel refused to believe the calumnies, would not her mother command her to hold no communication with him? Might not she obey? Yet she promised to send her address: surely she could not forget. Be-

sides, English girls have a great deal more to say on the subject of marriage than their sisters of other nations. Matrimony here savors more of a contract between two families, in which the young lady has little or nothing to do. The girl's prospects and fortune are talked over; while she is very young an eligible match is sought for her; she consents as a matter of course, and consequently lives a life as passive and loveless as her parents. She, in her turn, acts the same part toward her own offspring—history repeats itself, and no one sees the hardship, because no one has known the difference.

But in England they have changed all that. "I will" and "I won't" have been known to settle the matter.

As he meditated, he heard a sudden cry in the room below, for the proprietress had placed an attic at his disposal, and he recognized Rachel's voice. He hurried down the steps. The old woman was out, so he knocked and entered the room.

"What is the matter?" he asked. "Can I do anything for you?"

"I am so glad you have come," she said; "I am afraid to be alone. Such horrible things are flitting before my eyes, even while I hold them. Sometimes I can see my father, who seems to be cursing me. Save me! save me!! There he is, coming toward me! Tell him to go away! Don't let him murder me! don't let him hurt me!"

"My child, no one is going to hurt you. I will stay with you. Try to sleep."

"How can I sleep? On a scroll in one of the Christian schools was the text, '*He giveth His beloved sleep.*' That haunts me now."

"Do not think of such dreadful things. Has no one been here for some time? Where is the nurse?"

"She said she was going to procure some necessaries. I have not seen her since. No one has been near me, except these horrible phantoms. Faces from hell scoff and taunt me, saying, 'Come with us,—come with us, thou who hast left thy home, and grace ours!' And then I feel the flames, the scorching of Gehenna, in this thirst,—in this fearful, unquenchable burning in my mouth and throat. Pity me, I am suffering the tortures of the damned!"

He gave her a cup of lemonade. She drank it greedily.

"More, more! for God's sake, more! Do not drive me mad—mad; I am that already! See! there, near the window! See! see!" and she pointed her thin, wasted hand toward the little panes of glass crusted with the dust of months.

"There is nothing there to frighten you," he said. "Do not tremble so. I will take care of you. No one shall touch you."

"You cannot prevent them," she answered. "You may guard my body, but you cannot hinder them from taking my soul. I am dying. These are my escort; they come to lead me to the eternal flames. I am glad of it. Listen. I can laugh at all the terrible show of fire and blood," and her voice rang in delirious laughter through the room.

"Nothing could be worse than this burning thirst and furnace-heat, so I rejoice that I am going. It is best for you and for me. If I lived, I should only be a care and trouble to you. I thought, when you said that you would find a home for me, that perhaps you meant that I had earned the right—oh, God! never mind what I thought. I was mad then as now. I sinned when I left my home. I cannot repent. Do you hear? I cannot repent. I cannot even bring myself to think that I am sorry, and the time for contrition is passing, passing, and I am passing, too,—miserable and wretched, yet not too paltry for the wrath to come."

He was on his knees, by the bedside, imploring her not to give way to such agonizing grief.

"I have committed the unpardonable sin of our faith. '*Honor thy father and thy mother, that thy days may be long in the land that the Lord thy God giveth thee,*'" she muttered in the Hebrew words. "So I am dying, among strangers, in a strange land. No one to pity me—no one to grieve when I am gone. No," she continued, seeing that he was about to speak, "I know that you sympathize with me, and that you think you are sorry, but that will not really be so. I shall be as a load taken from your shoulders,—a thorn from your side,—a stumbling-block out of your path. God help me. That is the first time I have been able to call upon His name,—in a good sense. I have been cursing my misfortune; aye, and with it God, because His hand has allowed me to stray into the way of trouble. I have been blaspheming, and wishing to die." Her voice had risen al-

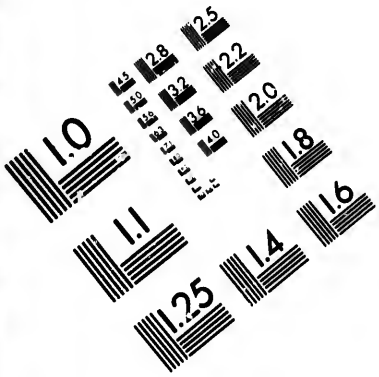
most into a shriek. She had been raving in a sitting position, and now flinging herself back, she laughed hysterically. "Does it not sound well? I expect and ask no mercy. I am ready to be punished forever. I can never go to the promised Canaan—the golden gate is barred with locks and bolts no power of mine can unloose."

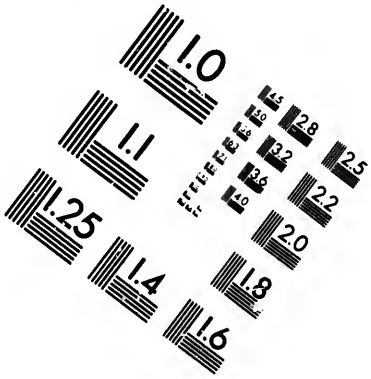
"My child, just now you asked God to help you. Try to do so again. Do not revert to callousness about the future. I think it might be better for you to see a priest of your own belief; not that I think you are going to die, but to calm and comfort you, and prevent you condemning yourself in this unmerciful way."

She shook her head.

"Very well," he continued, "will you see one of my faith? I think we regard God in a more merciful light than you do, and consider His justice more tempered with mercy than your creed teaches."

"Hush, for Heaven's sake, silence. I am bad now, and have been wicked; but I am not an *apostate*. I do not fear to die in the religion I have lived. My nation and faith are despised, it is true, but why should I desert the belief of my forefathers? They knew better, than I ever can, what is right and wrong. I was taught their doctrines, which I believe—if—if I can believe anything. It was cowardly of you to tempt me, when I am weak and ill, and cannot argue with you. If you think that I am made of such poor stuff as that—if you suppose that I would forsake my banner and cause, leave me—leave the despised Jewess to die alone—alone in her awful despair."





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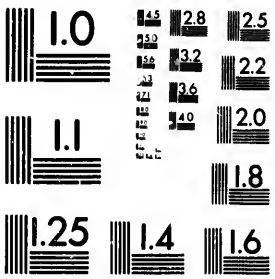

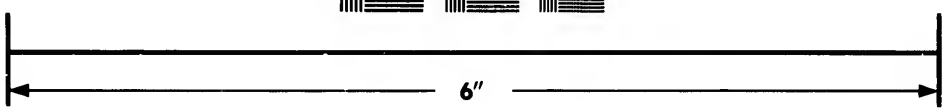

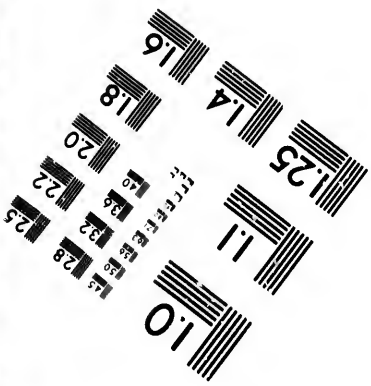

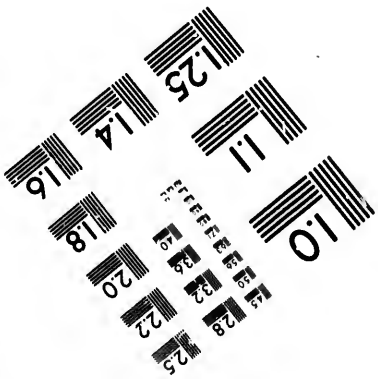

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"I am sorry I have offended you. I did but mean to comfort. Shall I send for a Rabbi? I will tell him your whole sad story. You need entertain no fear of being blamed; he will own you faultless, and give you his blessing."

"You must not do so. You do not know what might be the result. Perhaps your information would be traded on—perhaps he would extort money from you, on pain of giving you up to the law. Do not tell another soul—certainly not a Rabbi; I know them better than you. Some are very good men,—but trust no one. As a rule they try to act rightly, but they have the fault of Israel—an accursed love for money. When I am dead, please have me buried according to the rites of our faith. Let that be the home you promised me—let that be the happier future. I know I am dying. Why, you ask? I do not know. Do you believe in presentiments? I have had one — an awful waking dream. I know my time has come, and that I must face my Judge. I want to ask you one last request. Stay with me till the end; I shall not keep you long. Kiss me once, and say good-bye, and we will wait together for death."

He pressed his lips to her fever-heated brow.

"A thousand thanks. Hush, I hear a footstep on the stairs."

The landlady entered the room, followed by the nurse carrying some newly-prepared medicine, prescribed by the doctor, on the present turn for the worse. This was at once administered.

"How is the patient?" asked the nurse, in an undertone.

"Very feverish," he answered. "She wishes to be left alone with me. It would be well to gratify her whim. Leave the medicines here and go to bed; it is very late. I will sit up to-night, and you can be with her to-morrow—all day, while I rest."

The sister of mercy left the room, and he returned to the bedside.

"I wanted to tell you something," the girl murmured. "Now that you are here, I feel so much easier, so much more resigned. I am not afraid now. I fancy I have some of the strength of the Jew, who fell a victim to the hatred that exists against our race, even in these civilized days. They were stoning a poor old man, the other day in Hungary, and he turned to them and spoke in these words: 'You must need some sacrifice to your God, or you would not persecute me. Take me, then, else you might destroy the life of some bread-winner—or one on whom others depend. Kill me. You cannot slay my soul, and no man can die more than once. Though I pass into my grave inhumanly butchered, tortured, and beaten to death, I hope that my end may satisfy your thirst for blood—that you will not make others taste this bitter cup of gall.' So this aged man sank down to have his brains dashed out by a huge piece of paving-stone, wielded in the hands of a so-called Christian—and the mob laughed—these followers of Christ—Christ the charitable—Christ the all-forgiving—and were pleased to beat a harmless old man to death,—his sole offence being that of his race. Then they say, 'Believe and be saved.' Prove your

religion's charity, and we, heathens, will believe your words. Till you can demonstrate to us our error, we prefer to remain in the darkness, rather than come forward into such a light as you prepare to shine on us; a halo of blood would be its glory, —a shroud its canopy. But let us speak of other things; my moments are numbered. I am glad you are with me in my passing hour; it is so good of you to watch with me all this fearful night; God will reward you in that day, when you must come into the presence of the Most High. You will be praised for not having forced your belief upon me; as much as they will be blamed, who drove their religion into unwilling hearts with torture and the stake. You will not stand side by side with the devils who burnt the flesh from the bones of those heroes, whatever their faith may have been, because they would not give up their parent belief, and fought to the bitter end for the creed learned at their mother's knee.

"Pardon me for talking in this way. I am too young, I know, but the spirit is upon me and I speak; yes, only nineteen! Early to die, is it not?—early to drift onto the vast unknown sea, with no knowledge of the way or the distant land. But the mind is clearest when about to rest forever; the candle burns the brightest just before its last gasp. Lift me up on the pillow, so. No, do not send again for the doctor; no earthly power can save me now. Stay by my side, that does me more good than anything. Stoop lower. Take my hand in yours. I feel happier now, and shall not die so hard. Yes, I can say with you, *God be merciful*

to me, a sinner. Listen. Do you not hear them calling me? do you not hear the music and the songs of the angels? can you not see the golden gates? Listen, listen. It is more beautiful than anything I ever heard, even at Carnival-time. Good-bye. God bless you. May you be always happy in your life and in your love. Why do you look so sad? It is no pain for me to go. Hush, they call again; I can hear the flutter of their wings and the patter of their feet,—as of little children, born again. I am coming with you. Wait a moment, just a little instant—with him. Farewell. I shall love to think of you—sometimes—as one that was very dear to me. You will not mind—now."

She lifts her hands toward him, he clasps them and kisses her forehead in answer. Her lips will never open again in this world. The Jewess is dead!

CHAPTER VII.

FOR HER, EVEN DISHONOR.

ALL was over, and the poor girl was buried the following evening at sundown. He was mourner, the only one.

On his return he wrote a long letter to the porter, addressing it to his mother's house, for he had known the man from his childhood. He thanked him heartily for his kindness, and gave him an address where he could send the picture.

Nothing more was to be done but to wait for the letter from Muriel. As time advanced his fears grew, and at length he fairly worried himself into a fever of apprehension. Smith's conduct now seemed clear to him. He evidently had known nothing about the Socialistic affair, but had followed him for his own ends. No, there was nothing to do but wait, wait, wait.

. . . . . .

The return of post brought a long letter from the porter, and another package disclosed the loved features. There was his darling's face, uninjured; something, at any rate, to bring back sweet visions of the past and recollections of the summer day-dreams.

It will be necessary, in order to thoroughly follow the thread of the story, to reproduce the porter's effusion. It ran as follows:

"DEAR SIR:

"Your letter duly received.

"I think I have some news for you, but will first explain my own conduct in the matter a little more fully.

"Before I begin, please pardon me for my many suppositions and fancies; but I have acted for the best, and do not think that I am wrong.

"The first thing that I supposed was, that you were attached to the lady of the picture, therefore I saved it for you.

"The second, that a certain English gentleman was jealous of your love, therefore I watched him.

"This second supposition was born from the

fact that this gentleman followed you to Bologna, knowing nothing of the trouble with the Society.

"Now for my news. The English lady and her daughter did not go to England, but journeyed to Pisa. This I learnt from the driver of the 'bus. The little red-head followed them, immediately on his return to this city, knowing nothing, as far as I can tell, about the unfortunate matter for which you are wanted.

"You must draw your own conclusions.

"Accept again the assurance of my profound silence.

"Under another cover, please find portion of the painting. This address will always find me. You will note that I have used, and will continue to use, in my correspondence with you, the name you gave in your last.

"So, with best wishes, I am,

"Your obedient servant,

"____ ____."

Andrea felt as if all desire of life had been taken away from him. It had been as he feared. News in hand, this wretched rival had hurried on to Pisa, and had doubtless made his tale good. By this time, also, the other story must have been known by all Italy, and the English papers would surely have copied it. It was futile to expect otherwise. Necessary conclusion: both stories had reached Muriel. She might disbelieve,—it was possible. Yet he dare not run the risk. They were still at Pisa, for aught he knew. After they left, he would have no trace or knowledge of their whereabouts.

He must see Muriel—at Pisa. There was nothing to prevent his going. The Jewess was dead, and his responsibilities were ended, in that direction. He had heard the clods falling on the coffin of one who was at heart so good that it would be well if the rest of the world were equally pure, when it comes to their turn to tread the dark and unknown path of death.

Having paid all his dues, he wasted no time, and hastily collecting his little articles, together with his precious picture, avoided starting by train from Bologna, but commenced a night tramp to Imola, about twenty Italian miles, as the crow flies. It was a splendid night. The sky was glorious with myriads of stars; and if he had only a more satisfactory companion than himself and his thoughts, he would have enjoyed it immensely. He smoked his cigarette as he trudged along, and now and then sat down to rest. He passed outlying farms, homesteads, and cattle—all bathed in one glorious moonlight. Everything seemed so happy. Ah, that misery could exist among such beauty as this, that poverty, wretchedness, and grief should be in such a lovely spot as Italy. But affectionate hearts must part; children, wives, and husbands must die; winter and want are sure to come; the autumn glory is very fleeting; everything is born to decay.

He arrived at Imola, tired and foot-sore, and inquired about a railway station. There was only a *diligence* service to Faenza, and from thence over *La Futa* Pass, onward to Florence. Thus he would baffle any possible pursuit. From Florence

he could easily take the train to Pisa, without the least difficulty. So he went to sleep at the humble inn, with a lighter heart. He would surely be able to see her, by some means or other. Now his mustache was gone, he was not so likely to be recognized by other slight acquaintances. He would see her—he must.

As the journey to Florence would entail no interest to the reader, it would be well to omit tiresome descriptions, and take up the story again at Pisa.

It was getting rapidly dark, when he arrived at his destination, and about six o'clock, when, valise in hand, he quitted the station, and sought the leading hotel, to reconnoitre, as it were; and strive to determine his chances of seeing Muriel alone. All the various devices for clandestine interviews, that he had ever read of, flitted before his mind; they had all, more or less, to do with disguise, and were equally impracticable; they served their turns well enough in novels and plays, but in real life appeared worse than useless.

He seemed as far from the consummation of his wishes as ever. He arrived at the hotel, keeping carefully the other side of the way, and under the shadow of the wall, and gazed in deep meditation at the light in the windows. The words of an old song came into his mind with painfully ludicrous effect, "*Thou art so near, and yet so far.*" Suddenly the door opened, and half hidden in the dusk a man came down the steps; he stopped at the bottom, looked up the street and down the street, leaned his back against a lamp-post, and began

to whistle. After a while he raised his head, and Andrea observed the gold band on his cap. It was the porter, or perhaps one of the couriers attached to the hotel. Here, at any rate, he could get some information of one sort or another. So, going up to him, he inquired whether he could recommend him some guide, to take him round the town, and to the leaning tower, by moonlight. As he anticipated, the porter did not wish to let such a chance slip from his own hands.

"Oh, yes," the man answered, "I do all sorts of odd jobs after business hours, and if the gentleman wishes to see the sights of the town, he has come to the right man,—your humble servant. The moon will be full, when my work is over. Yes, they would meet at the café, as the gentleman desired,—at twelve,—certainly.—Ah, the gentleman knows where to find a man who can show him all,—everything."

That was well. The ear of the porter was gained. The retaining fee had been pocketed gleefully, there was no fear of a disappointment. Supper was ordered at the hour mentioned,—a hearty one with generous wines, calculated to make one man open his heart to another. Andrea knew, well enough, he was playing the spy; but it was not in human nature to leave matters as they were. He had to do it. All other courses seemed to lead to the same end,—failure.

Twelve struck,—and the quarter after, still no one came, and he began to get uneasy, to fume, and pace the apartment. He was complaining about his bad luck, when he heard a step on the stair, and a knock at the door.

"Come in!"

"I beg your pardon, Signor, I am very sorry I am so late; but I was obliged to do some unexpected work, which came inopportunely. Ah, you have not supped yet; when you have done so, we can commence our journey round the town. You will see all—everything. The gentleman will be amused at—everything. The night is beautiful, nearly as clear as day. Believe me, I know the way about Pisa. Gentlemen always come to me. I show them, ah, Signor, I show them—everything. Ha! ha! that is very droll."

"On second thought," said Bertoni, "the distance I have travelled to-day has rather tired me. I can look about the town to-morrow." Then seeing the man's countenance fall: "Of course it will make no difference to you, as far as your fee is concerned. Sit down and have some food."

The man readily acquiesced, and was soon deeply engaged in killing the pangs of hunger, and drowning a voluminous thirst in Falstaffian libations of *Chianti*. When he had finished, and had done remonstrating at his host's poor appetite, he became communicative over a cigar and a fresh bottle.

"Have you had a big season here?"

"Pretty well. Our best times are now, and the spring. Ours is a resting-place, as it were, and people stop in going to and from the South. They just see the tower; then, pouf! they are gone. But this season is dull,—fever at Naples, they say."

"Many Americans and English?"

"So-so. Not a great many, this year. The Americans are the people we like to have. Phew! they fling their money about, like water. After them, other nations seem stale and unprofitable. So many of the newly-rich folks come over here to show off their acquired wealth; easy come, easy go: that's their motto, and a good one too. We servants more than double our wages, if there are plenty of that sort about."

"But, don't you find ladies, such as widows with a daughter or two, remunerative?"

"Yes, so long as there is no man in the party, who does all the work. In that case the porter suffers, particularly if the gentleman does not want to see the town by night,—does not want to see all —everything. Now, we have now staying in our hotel an old English lady and her daughter——"

"Yes!"

"Eh, what! you seem startled."

"No, no; go on."

"I was saying, they have been here a few days, and I hope for great things from them, when they go. The daughter, too, a merry little soul, always cheerful and happy, the very life and spirit of the hotel. Ah, we porters have hearts."

Never, in the whole course of his life, was the porter in such dire danger of being kicked.

"You can have no idea of her jokes and pleasantries," continued the man, in happy ignorance of what was passing in his host's mind. "She put some wax inside an old gentleman's hat the other day; very thin, you understand. When that funny old gentleman tried to get it off!—Ha, ha, very droll."

Bertoni grasped the arm of his chair, and listened to the calumniator.

"And then her brother,"—at this point Andrea, mentally, begged his pardon, when it was evident that his goddess had not been maligned, "he, too, is of the same description, full of fun. He does take the change of the rest of the guests if they happen to offend him; a perfect little tyrant, I assure you."

Andrea let him ramble on, fearing to arouse his suspicions by asking any direct question, and ordered another bottle of wine, while his loquacious friend ran down his stock of anecdotes, like the alarm of a clock,—just as quick, if not quite so loud. So he went on about the exceedingly vulgar young person, and the joy she caused.

At last human endurance could bear the strain no longer, and the all-important question was asked. "By the bye, I met some people, a short while ago; they said they were coming to Pisa, and I presume to your house, a certain Mrs. and Miss Hamilton. Are they still with you?"

Suddenly, to Bertoni's intense astonishment, the porter assumed a most mysterious expression, and said, "Well, yes, we had them staying with us. I ought not to speak about them; but, of course, you will not mention this to a living soul."

"I shall be cautious."

"Very good. A peculiar thing happened the day before yesterday. The two ladies were joined by a little gentleman, and they all rushed off to the station together. The curious part was this. The little gentleman was indignant that the ladies had

placed their names and addresses in our visitors' book, evidently was afraid of some one following them; at least he and the old lady were. The young one was left out of their confabulation, and seemed weary and sad,—in her room most of the time, poor thing. Well, they talked and talked, and after a while left in a great flurry, and the young lady went with them, walking, just like a ghost, and not seeming to notice anything. She had been crying, I know,—her eyes were red, and the chambermaid, who understands English, said that the young *Mees* (English for Signorina, you may have heard,) called her to her room during the night and said she felt so ill, and wished her to obtain a linen bandage for her aching head. While she was applying the remedy, the poor *Mees* kept moaning, and half wandering, 'Can it be true, can it be true!' she repeated again and again. Oh, it was fearful; that's what the chambermaid said. Then after they had gone, the landlord called me, and asked me if I remembered the address, which was written in the book. I answered that I had forgotten, except that it was some place in England, where the snow comes from. After that, the master told me that in case it should come into my head, I was to repeat it to no one. But I assured him I had forgotten it; and I have. Oh, he was in a heat about it. Told me I should be instantly dismissed if I opened my mouth about them;—just as if I would. Of course I looked at the book, but the writing had all been scratched out, a piece of paper pasted over, and the name of some one who had never been in the house, placed there to

fill up the gap. I have been trying, ever since, to find some reason for the action. No one else ever did that, at least as far as I know,—that is, among the people who stay at our house."

"It is getting late," said Bertoni; "I will come to the hotel with you. You can give me a bed, I suppose?—as yet I have not engaged a room."

"Certainly; we are not so full as we were. Let me carry your bag. So." And they went their way.

Andrea was soon in the solitude of his chamber. Why had he come here? Because he wanted to get hold of the book,—because he wished to put a strong light behind that page, when no one was by, to see if he could read the secret. He had no compunction, now. He was an accused man; it was his only way of defending himself, and clearing his honor. Let those who have not done worse in as great a strait, be the first to revile him. His mind would never have rest till he knew where she was, and where he could go to her and tell her all.

"Everything seems against me," he sighed. "I appear to be destined to failure. Naturally the porter was astonished at their sudden departure. But they were determined to leave no trace in the length and breadth of Italy for me to follow up. At Rome, they registered as coming from the Engadine; in the Engadine the hotel was a private one, and that system was not observed; here, evidently, there must be a space for the home address of visitors."

Next morning he got a good look at the book, where his assumed signature also stood, Giovani

Maderno. Yes, sure enough, there was the space with the hidden name, and from the appearance of the other side of the leaf the page did not seem to have been much scratched. They had evidently trusted to the thickness of the slip to hide the writing. Nothing could then be done, so he went out for a walk round the town, returning in time for *table d'hôte*. Opposite to the place allotted to him, sat the lively young lady, already mentioned. He knew she must be the person referred to, intuitively; for she looked the part to perfection. This interesting innocent commenced operations by staring at him as if he were some peculiar kind of animal, or an intruder on her privacy. She then turned, and whispered to her brother, an unhealthy, sallow-faced youth endowed with an everlasting leer, and the two set up a grand giggle together. There was a gap on each side of them, caused by people requesting that their seats might be moved, on account of the heat being oppressive, or the draught, or whatever came first. Andrea looked around him for some respectable persons. On one hand was an English clergyman, a new arrival; on the other an old Italian. Witticisms had begun on the other side of the table. The young people were pelting one another with bread rolled hard between the fingers; one of these dirty-looking morsels came over the table to the clergyman on the right, and settled close to his plate. This elicited a storm of applause and delight. The new arrival was unused to this treatment, and glanced at the perpetrators, who were convulsed with laughter. Turning round, he said:

"Garçon, a plate. Please take this to Monsieur, yonder, with my compliments, and say that it is his property."

The youth looked abashed. The incident seemed to throw a gloom over their pretty childish glee, and appeared for the moment to take all the fire from the young man's diamond pin.

After dinner was over, Andrea entered into conversation with an old lady, hoping that she might have heard where the Hamiltons lived.

"Oh, yes, she remembered them. They were going to London, she thought. No, she never heard the address, but was quite sure they intended to pass the winter in London; to stay there, in fact, till the end of the following season."

"I am sorry for that," he said. "I have something I wish to send them. I knew them well some time ago. Do you suppose that any one else in the hotel knows where they live?"

"That surely is in the visitors' book. At any rate, the *maitre d'hotel* is certain to know, on account of the letters which might come here to be forwarded."

His heart sunk within him as he feebly answered:

"Of course; I must ask him."

At about eleven the same night he was sitting in the *Fumoir*. A waiter's head appeared at the door.

"What is it?" he asked.

"Nothing, Signor; I only looked in to see if everybody had gone to bed, in order to turn out the lights."

"I am going now. You can do so."

As he passed through the hall, he saw the coveted book on the table.

"Why not take it now? No, it will be better to return for it again, in case it should be missed by the waiter. I will leave my hat down here and come back for it. If met, I want my hat. Rather lame, but it can't be helped."

In about half an hour he descended the stairs and captured the book, without meeting a soul. During his walk in the morning he had bought a small piece of magnesium wire, which he procured to burn on the other side of the paper. It was not long before he had all the arrangements ready. With trembling anxiety he applied the wire to the candle. After a good heating, it flared into a dazzling flame. He placed it as near the paper as possible without scorching it, first putting a piece of tin beneath to catch the drippings, and looked through. There were the names untouched, but the numbers and the rest of the address were obliterated. Stop! he could see that the street began with a *G*, he also perceived a *c* in the middle. By the appearance there seemed room for several more letters, about three or four again. After another space, at about the same distance, there was an *e* or an *o*. The whole looked like this:

"Mrs. and Miss Hamilton, — G - - - c - - - e —— ——."

That was all he could glean,—no number, no description as to whether it was a street, terrace, or square. He was sure of one thing: it was London. He ran noiselessly down-stairs, replaced the book,

and went to bed. His mission at Pisa was finished. He would journey onward.

CHAPTER VIII.

IN FORTUNE'S TRACK.

THE following morning found him on his way. He arrived in Paris dead tired, and immediately went on to London, via Calais and Dover.

On reaching his destination he began his inquiry for rooms. Cheap and nasty, he conjectured, would be his portion, for his stock of money was getting very low. But still there was a fair living to be earned from his pictures. He found a pleasant little room at a very reasonable figure in an out-of-the-way situation. There he took up his abode.

The landlady was a motherly old soul, who did all she could to make him comfortable and feel that this humble little den of a studio and bedroom was his home.

Yes, here he can stay in peace; and, who knows, some day he may be able to pick up the missing thread, trace his lost love, and explain the unfortunate past. In the meantime he must work and try to make the name he had so fondly dreamed of. In any case, if he did not do so, she could never be his wife,—he would not ask her to share his beggarly poverty, even if she were willing. The person who said that two mouths were as

easy to feed as one must have been in his second dotage or suffering from an attack of temporary insanity. In time he would be sure to meet her somewhere, somewhen,—in the park, at the theatre. Some time he must find out where she lived, and then—but might not her mother with equal ease see him first and avoid him? True, he must take his chance of that; but, on the other hand, his appearance had been altered considerably. The eyes of indifference might pass over what affection would see through. It is remarkable the change that the loss of a flowing mustache will make in any face. Now he looked like a parson, an actor, a lawyer, or even a waiter,—nothing romantic about the last. Of course, his figure might betray him; his walk, or fifty other things. It was useless to conjure up evils, there are so many before one in this life. Luck had been against him thus far; perhaps the fickle jade might see fit to give his a season of fortune and wind up the chapter with a grand finale of *All is well.* Whether or no, he would stay in London. His country is forbidden him; he dare not return. If he found Muriel or not, here he must remain,—to work and struggle onward and upward. Even if he became a great man, she would not know it. Had he not changed his name? Henceforth he would be known as Giovani Maderno. The past was dead. He was a new man; he had new hopes, new aspirations, new trials perhaps.

His cogitations were speedily brought to an abrupt conclusion by a knock at the door.

"I've brought you a cup o' tea," said the old

landlady, entering. "I thought as 'ow you might be tired after your long journey. You said Hitaly, didn't you, sir? That's a goodish ways from 'ere, I s'pose?"

"Yes, I have come from Italy."

"Hindeed! And would you be wantin' the room for long, do you think? 'cause there's many a little thing I could get for ye, to make ye more comfortabler like."

"I am much obliged to you. If the place suits me, I shall remain here some considerable time."

"Lor', sir, ye speaks Henglish as well as I does. Well, thank ye kindly, I'll do my best for ye, and look after ye as if you was one of my hown. We 'ave another lodger below, 'e's a hartist too, and a very agree'ble gent',—plays on the concertina splendid; only 'e's rather liable to do it late o' nights, which worries the neighbors constant; but, Lor' bless yer 'eart, sir, it's their ways; they're allus makin' a disturbance a-grumbleering about somethink. Will you take a cup more tea, sir?"

"No, thank you, I have had enough; but don't hurry away. Stay and tell me about the neighborhood. We are a considerable distance from the National Gallery, are we not?"

"I'll tell you all I knows about it, sir, and will sit me down awhile, for my legs is not what they used to be, and them stairs is tarters. From Hitaly, you said; deary me, Hitaly!"

The good woman could not get over the fact of Andrea's nationality, and nodded her head, gravely, in meditation thereon, for several seconds. Then coming to her senses, she rambled on,

"You see, it is a goodish ways to walk, but the underground is 'andy, just at the corner of the street. Deary me, Hitaly!"

"Are there many artists in this locality?"

"I don't know as there's such a lot; 'cept our lodger, 'ere, below; and 'e ain't what you call a reg'lar hartist,—only amatoor, like. He did me that picter," pointing to a daub on the wall, "for a Christmas present, last year; kind-'earted, but rather noisy" (the gentleman, not the picture); "'e's great pals with a lot of them medicinal shtoodents, and they keeps it hup till an unhearthly hour,—makes Rome 'owl, as they say hin Hitaly. 'Eavens, fancy you comin' from Hitaly, deary me, Hitaly! They do make a 'ow-d'e-do, sometimes, and I 'as to go an' turn 'em hout. If I didn't I shouldn't 'ave a lodger in the 'ouse. I've only 'ad these rooms emp'y a short time before you come, from Hitaly, deary me. He was a young parson, as 'ad 'em. 'E used to get 'is livin' by writin' sermons for the rich and lazy ones to preach, and a mighty wretched thing 'e made on it. 'E didn't eat 'nough to feed a sparrer, and died of consumpchin at last,—poor dear young feller; and 'e were that good to me and mine, and I'm sure I did my best to nuss 'im, when 'e got bad; but 'e went off all of a sudden, like the snuffin' of a candle. You'll find you'll be pretty comfortable hup 'ere, though it is three pair stair; but then you're young and won't mind. Hitaly, deary me, Hitaly! What time would you like your dinner, sir?"

"Thank you, about one."

"One it shall be, sir, to the minute; and I must be goin' to get things ready. Lor' bless my soul, Hitaly, you don't say so? Good-mornin', sir."

"Good-morning," and the kind-hearted, garrulous old woman left the room.

Andrea unpacked his things, and went out to buy a canvas and commence a picture for immediate sale. He arrived at the National Gallery, and selected a painting to copy, made arrangements with the official set aside for that purpose, and returned home to dinner.

While eating that frugal meal, he thought of obtaining a London directory, and trying to find out what streets had a *G*, to commence; a *c*, about the centre; and an *e* or an *o*, at the termination. He inquired of the landlady. "Oh, yes. The stationer, two doors off, had one." And to him he went. The shop-keeper courteously lent it to him. Now for the *G*'s. Of course, here is the word, Gloucester, there must have been an *r* after the *e*, he supposed final; but what little guide it was; there were terrace, street, crescent, gardens, square, row, place, with innumerable numbers. Ah, but here are the names of the proprietors of the houses. He went down the whole list, but there was no Mrs. Hamilton. So she only rented; that was evident. His search, so far, was fruitless; as far from his goal as ever; his hopes now are centred in the direction of the theatres, parks, and gardens.

So he worked hard at his picture.

Nothing eventful occurred for a long time after this, save that a rich Scottish gentleman saw Andrea's picture, bought it, and commissioned him to

paint a portrait of his daughter. That night the noise of his fellow-lodger's accordion sounded sweet in his ears, despite the fact that even the rats absented themselves from the wainscoting on that entire floor, in abject horror of it.

Again, we follow him onward, without wasting time. The portrait is the talk of London,—all the artistic fraternity envy the young painter, of whom nothing is known, except that he is an Italian, whose pictures sell for large sums, who has a studio in Piccadilly, and more orders than he can execute. Fortune has been kind to him,—at last. A few months ago, he was a struggling young student, and now, his very name is a household word in London,—his wildest hopes are realized.

He only regrets one thing: he is not working under his own name. His ignorance of the law caused him to change it; he was foolish enough not to know that a political offender was safe in the refuge of all intriguers, England.

So we leave him, soaring on the wings of fame to the haven of success.

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CHAPTER IX.

AT A TERRIBLE PRICE.

THERE is a house standing on a barren tract of land in Gloucestershire looking out across the fell and heather-covered country. Bleak and bare are the surroundings, cold and unfertile is the district, yet it is Muriel Hamilton's home, and she loves it

—every part and particle—every tree and stunted shrub, as if each were a darling child,—a drop of life-blood. This unenviable neighborhood is as dear to her as the Garden of Eden was to Eve in the summer of life long, long ago.

She is standing by the bay-window in the hall, watching the tall trees bend under the pressure of a mighty gale,—listening to the wind howling through the home wood, and ravaging the wealth of blossom from the roses. Her eyes wander toward the park, with its vista of limes and ill-kept coach-road.

She is evidently expecting some one—some one she does not wish to meet—some one she awaits half in fear and dread.

"Perhaps he will not come to-day. Oh, if I could only really think so; and yet I must bear with him for my mother's sake. What is this fearful thing which binds her to such a thing as he is?" she whispered. "Cannot he see that I can never care for him—that I can never even respect him? Is it not in his power to conceive that he is absolutely abhorrent to me? Does he not know that my love is dead—buried in the waning summer at Rome—lying in the heart of a man who, they tell me, is worthless? Yet how vainly do they try to persuade me! If it is true, why kill my day-dream? All is over; they have attained their desire; they have parted us; why not leave him in peace? This dismal day is in harmony with the cold at my heart—great in contrast to the sunny past." The tears are fast rising to her eyes—she is choking herself with sobs. "O God!" she wept,

"they have destroyed our happiness, but they cannot kill our love. No, that shall remain the same until we meet, be it early or late—in this world or the next. They cannot control our hearts, though they may break them. Be he bad or good, I loved him; I love him now; I shall love him always. Whatever the world may say, I love him; that is enough. I have tried to subdue this feeling and forget. They forbade me to write. I will no longer obey. I will tell him that I am here, and that I want him,—tell him that I cannot live without him. God knows I have tried. Then he will come; yes, I know he will. That was his promise. 'Wherever I may be—no matter how far—one word from you will bring me to your feet.' Those words burnt into my heart and remained, like the cut inscription on sculptured marble."

She is leaning, with her fingers pressed tightly, against the woodwork of the window, and the scalding tears are falling on the back of her hands.

"Muriel, my child, what is the matter?" said the mother, who had entered unperceived.

"Nothing. I am thinking of the past and the times that are no more,—bitter Dead-Sea fruit."

"When will you learn to be reasonable? You have been so capricious of late. We were comfortably settled down in London, when you suddenly desired to come here. You were humored, and now——"

"I hated London because he was there. We came home, and behold he is here—just like an ugly Jack-in-the-box. I believe if we went to the

North Pole we should see his hideous self perched on the top of it, to welcome us with his sighs, and leers. That's what I dreamt last night."

"How unlike other girls you are! Come with me to the library. There is a bright fire there," and she led the way.

The girl followed uncomplainingly, mechanically. She had been accustomed to obey her mother in all things without question; though, through her command, two young lives had been destroyed, she was submissive to the iron dominion.

"Listen," said the mother, compressing her lips, and standing directly in front of her daughter, as though she had something important to say which was best over. "You love this place, I know. It is useless to try to break the news gently or tell it by degrees," and she spoke fast and impressively. "All must go, everything must be sold, our treasures must be scattered, and the roof stripped from over our heads. Do you understand?"

"I understand."

"And you alone can save it."

"I?"

"Yes, you. It is in your hands, whether the old house shall pass into the possession of strangers—the old home your ancestors have held for hundreds of years."

"I know what you mean. Spare yourself the degradation of saying it. If I will sell myself to the man I hate, he will redeem the Grange from the mortgages. I will answer, once and for all. I will not! I have not sunk so low as that. I obey

you in all things, saving this. I refuse to become a wanton—by command of my own mother!"

"Listen a moment. Mr. Smith's proposals are such that half the girls in the county would be only too glad to accept without a word; so rich—so universally liked—a man of high position in the county. I can't understand where you have picked up your prudery and unladylike expressions. *Wanton*, indeed! Where did you learn such a word?"

"I used it to save my lips from uttering a worse. Mother, I have seen the poor painted creatures standing under the gaslight as we have driven at night in London. I should be worse than they; I, at least, have the knowledge of good and evil. You, a woman and a mother, ask me to sell myself for a lifetime. Is that better or worse than trading in possession for an hour?"

"For my sake, then, save me from misery and want. I am old and unable to face the world with its troubles. We are dreadfully in debt—how much, I have long blinded myself to. I have been afraid to even think of it. My latter years are in your power; you alone can avert the calamity. I do not command; see, I ask, I implore on my knees. I beg you not to turn me into the streets. He has threatened—he will keep his word. He has never been known to relent."

"And you would give me—to the tender mercies of such a man?"

"But, I know, he loves you. Do not shudder. He will protect and cherish you, and all may yet be well." And the wretched woman tried to pros-

trate herself in supplication before her grief-stricken daughter.

"Mother, what are you doing? Do not kneel to me. Does this man hold the title-deeds to this estate?"

"Yes."

"So. He has bought our home from the money-lenders. He has bought it to gratify his wish—that of forcing me to marry him."

"It is hard to say that," answered the unworthy parent. "The papers may have fallen into his hands in the ordinary way of business, and he wishing to——"

"Trade on them. Speak the word. It is unpalatable, but true."

"Oh, if you would only marry him. He will save us. You will never know the misery of poverty——"

"Stop! Do not drag my fears into the argument. You mean that *you* will not have to miss *your* luxuries, and be poor."

The guilty woman hurried on, not noticing the correction. "We shall both escape the workhouse. The estate will be free——"

"And I shall be fettered."

"No, no, not so bad as that. You will learn to love him—in time. You will forget that unfortunate past."

"I have loved once, I can never love again."

"If you would marry him, these dreadful parchments will be burnt on the day of your wedding."

"Indeed! So everything has been arranged between you, even to these minute details. I admire

the business-like habits of—both of you. He has been threatening, I suppose, yesterday, after I refused him."

Mrs. Hamilton bowed her head, and was silent.

"I understand. The paltry, cowardly wretch. Well, he will keep his word."

"No, no. For Heaven's sake, do not say that," almost screamed the terrified woman. "I dare not face poverty, cold, and hunger. For my sake do this. I know I behaved cruelly, unkindly to you, when I made you discard your lover; but I did it for the best. He was——"

"Silence, I say. Do not utter his name in the same breath with—the other. He is dead to me forever. Let him be in peace. The day we are wed, you say these deeds will be cancelled. I will marry him—for your sake and yours alone. My life would have been empty, in any case, now. I will kill my soul to save you. I cannot and will not see him to-day—or even to-morrow, should he come. Give him this message from me—every word, every syllable of it. Tell him, in the first place, that I can never love him, can never even hold him in indifference, that I hate him. Tell him, that I will be his wife, *but only in name.* Tell him, that he has bought me as he would a horse for his stable or a dog for his kennel—but at a fearful, a terrible price. Tell him, he has bought my body, but that he can never buy or quell my spirit. Tell him, that on these terms, and on these alone, I will marry him." And the girl ran out of the room; went, she knew not whither; paced up and down the long corridors; repeating to herself

a tender farewell to the absent. "Good-bye, my darling, good-bye to you. Good-bye, my love, good-bye to your memory. I may not even think of you now. Good-bye."

At length, she appeared calmer. She sought her bed-chamber, and put on a garden hat. Going to an old trunk, which bore the traces of many a long journey, and, among quantities of foreign labels, those of Pisa and Rome, she took a small bunch of keys from her pocket and unlocked it. At the top of the tray was a packet of photographs and sketches. She picked it hastily up, and fled down the passage and the oak stairs, through the garden, to the boat-house at the pond in the park.

She sat down on the wet rank grass, and looked into the black water. She did not feel the dank weeds clinging to her thinly-clad feet, or the wet herbage soaking through her clothes; no, her mind was far away in sunny Italy, bidding adieu to tender recollections. She opened the bundle of papers, and sorted them; there were the sketches of the tomb of Cecilia Metella, the Foro Romano, and the Pincio he had given her. "I could not bear to keep them," she said, and placing them gently and reverently into the stagnant water, watched them fade out of sight. There was also a painting,—a diminutive picture of a lover leaning over his mistress, with the legend written under, "*When Love is Lord of all*"; and a photograph with the name, Andrea Bertoni, inscribed in a corner. She took the two pictures and looked at them long and thoughtfully. The former she cast into the water, gazing after it until it was hidden. "Foolish saying," she

whispered. "Wretched quibble: Love was Lord of all, but a time came when Love was not; it changed to a mass of ashes in a living urn." She turned to the latter, and addressed it as if it had being and could hear her. "Good-bye, darling. If you could only know the truth, you would forgive in loving pity. Perhaps you may hear, some day; and not understand, why I forsook you. You will think that I grew weary, and ceased to believe in you. You can never know the reason and I can never tell you. If you could but hear me now, as I bid you a long farewell, you would know that my love still wakes. From this time forward, I shall never speak of you, try never to think of you, and what might have come, had the Fates been propitious. Good-bye, my lost and only love. If you were, as they would have me think—if I have given my heart to a worthless being, so be it. I could never have ceased to love you. Had you been the guiltiest of the guilty—the vilest of the vile, I would have drawn you from sin, and held you to my heart. A life of Hell with you, would have been better than Heaven with that man. I kiss your lifeless similitude, for the last time. God bless you. Good-bye." And the water soaked through the card, and it sank from view.

The early autumn wind howled over the tree-tops, and sung a solemn requiem to a dying soul, while the wood bowed its head in answer. The fallen leaves rustled in the gale, and seemed to say, "We, too, mourn with you." She turned toward the lake, once more. "There is peace," she said, "there is rest forevermore. No, no. Not that

God protect me from sin. I have a soul to save. Help me—keep me from my cowardly self."

And she turned away from the water; but was stayed by a figure pushing aside the underwood and confronting her. It was Smith, her future husband,—the man she was about to love, honor, and obey; till death did them part.

"You here? I said, I would not see you to-day."

"I suppose I have free admission into the park, have I not?"

"I suppose so, since it is yours."

"I have just done myself the honor of calling upon you, and received a message from your mother. I asked where you were, and one of the servants said, she had seen you go toward the pond. I came to say that I accepted the trust."

"What do you want with me, now?"

"What a way to greet your intended, who has come to say that he will marry, and love you, despite that pretty verbal message, about, '*only in name, etc., etc.*' Have you finished your reflections and heroic speeches to the fishes? Because, if so, you had better accompany me home. The wet grass is not conducive to health."

"You were playing eavesdropper, were you? Listening to me in my misery. A fit occupation for a man like you."

"I could not well help hearing most of what you were saying. I would not be so rude as to interrupt you. That's a bad habit, you've got, talking to yourself. I think you were preaching about Rome."

But she answered nothing, and preceded him quickly toward the house.

"Damn you," he muttered to himself, "I will pay you out for this, some day, my fine lady. You think to quell me with your bitter sayings and more bitter thoughts; but I will tame you,—in time,—I'll bend your proud spirit, or break your heart. I'll get square with you for every evil word, though I kill you for it."

They walked on in silence, she still leading the way. Suddenly she turned on him, as a tigress might on her prey.

"Stop one moment. Did my mother tell you all I bade her? Did she tell you, that you are about to buy a woman, who hates you? Did she tell you, that I marry you to save her from the beggary and want you have prepared for us both? Did she tell you, that my love belongs to another, and could, in any case, never be yours? You see I am honest with you. Did she tell you all this?"

"Yes, she did. And I love you all the more for your little fierce bursts of anger."

"Don't talk to me of love. What has it to do with you, or you with it? If you were a man of honor, however repugnant to me, I would fall on my knees before you, and humbly pray for freedom. But you,—I cannot place you in that category; so I refrain."

"I do not force you, in any way. How could I? I only say, that the roof which covers you, the land on which you walk, the very money in your pocket, belong to me. I wish to give all back to you, with my love, or, if you prefer it, my profound respect," and Mr. Smith thought himself abused for righteousness' sake.

"Then you do this thing, with your eyes fully open. You buy me, but at an awful price, a horrible price, the day you bind your bargain."

CHAPTER X.

TOO LATE.

THE whole affair was settled. Muriel appeared resigned to her position. She rarely spoke on the subject to any one—never to her mother, who, by this time, had persuaded herself that she had done a very meritorious action and quite the best for her daughter's welfare.

"You look weary, dear," she said one day to the heart-broken girl, who had made herself ill trying to hide her misery. "What ails you?"

"Mother, I want you to take me away from here,—until the time comes for the wedding. Will you do so?"

"Yes, if you wish. Where would you like to go?"

"Back to London—anywhere you please—away from this place and—and the surroundings. I am unhappy here. Let us go. We shall not be long together now. I shall be married in a few weeks, remember."

So, a couple of days after, they once more arrived in town,—Muriel's only hope being that the noise and bustle of the great city might cause her to cease brooding over the inevitable.

"Mother," she said one day, "after I am gone I should like you to have something to remind you of me, a picture,—a something. I may greatly alter, after I am married. You would then, at least, have a semblance of my old self; and when you look at it, you will think of me, as I was, not as I will be. I want you to remember me as a child that is dead, and has passed from your life."

"Do not talk so hopelessly of the future. If this marriage is, in truth, so bitter to you, I retract all my prayers. Give him up, and we will strive to live as best we may."

"To late," answered Muriel, wearily; "I have steeled myself. I have promised. I will keep my word."

The fleeting glimpse of humanity quickly faded from Mrs. Hamilton's face. She had done her duty —she was not forcing this match—even now she had offered her consent to the retraction of the engagement. Foolish! but what would not she do for the dear child?

"Very well," she assented, "I shall be only too delighted to have my pet about the house, though she is but on canvas. Yes, we will have a picture painted, and by a first-class artist. There is a new man—very fashionable and popular, I am told; one Signor Maderno, by name."

"An Italian?"

"Yes; but if you wish, we will go elsewhere."

"No, no; why should I object? Let us see him on the subject."

"We will do so during our morning drive."

"Yes, please see about it. It will while away

the tedious hours. I am too tired to come with you to-day; I am so often tired now."

"My poor girl!" and the old lady went to get ready for the drive, leaving Muriel reclining on the sofa.

Never had the mother spoken truer words than those with which she parted from her daughter. "Poor girl," indeed. She was *poor* in the fullest meaning of the term. Poverty, in a worldly sense, could in no way compare with the emptiness of spirit which she endured. She was alone. That was all she cared for. Better be left to her own thoughts than be punished with the sound of the voice to which she ascribed all her misfortune and trouble. Even her great sense of duty could not subdue the knowledge that her own mother had caused all this ruin and desolation. It was to be feared that, even in the matter of the picture, some idea lingered in her mind of the constant reproach—of the coals of fire it would be in that Gloucestershire household. It was so hard to forgive—completely.

As for Mrs. Hamilton: she went gaily forth on her mission.

"All was well, after all. This lassitude was a mere nothing. Everything would be all right in the future, when that silly infatuation had worn off—when the summer came again with its health and gladness; then she would forget, and thank a far-seeing parent for the happy to-day. What could a girl desire more than to marry a rich man—a gentleman? To have her house for the season; her box at the opera; her every comfort that riches can afford? Then, compare that with the love of a

man unendowed with these necessaries of bare existence. Preposterous!"

So she prevaricated to herself, excusing her lack of motherly love. On she went, happy and contented in her mind, to Piccadilly, where the famous artist lived.

He is sitting in his studio, when we rejoin him. Yes, he has greatly changed. His hair is becoming prematurely tinged with gray. Andrea Bertoni, otherwise Giovani Maderno, has altered strangely.

And yet he has been so successful—his wildest hopes have been realized, he has become famous, more renowned than he, with all his ambition, had ever dared to dream of. But he has not all he desires. His love is dead, his heart is gone, the light of his eyes has vanished; he is fretting and pining for something that is not—something that is a chimera—a bright vision in the nightmare of the hideous past.

His servant entered and informed him that a lady wished to see him.

Not wanting any orders, and having his hands full at the time, he mentally consigned her elsewhere, and ordered her to be shown up.

In a few moments Mrs. Hamilton entered. The artist recognized her and flinched, fearing she would also remember him and go, leaving no clue as to her or her daughter's whereabouts. So he waited in silence.

"I fear," said the visitor, "I have come on a fruitless errand, knowing the value of Signor Maderno's time."

"Thank God," he thought, "she does not know me."

"I have come to ask you," she continued, "if you will paint me a picture of my daughter?"

For the second time to paint her portrait, to have the chance of telling her all. Oh, if only his changed appearance will shield him, until he sees her once again—once again. He was mad with excitement, and could scarcely contain himself.

"I shall be most happy to do so," he answered. "The sittings may commence to-morrow, if you will."

He saw her look at him and turn pale. He knew that his voice had betrayed him.

She turned quickly toward the door.

"You," she said, "you again? I beg your pardon for having taken up your time; but you will readily understand why another picture at your hands would be undesirable. Good-morning, *Signor Maderno!*"

"Stay one moment—one moment only, I entreat you. Let me explain. I am misunderstood, maligned. I was not guilty of the crime imputed to me. If you will only listen, I will tell you all the miserable circumstances; they are nothing more than a long string of events, in which misfortune predominates."

He had placed himself, in his eagerness, between her and the door, and awaited her permission to go on.

"Of course, I must wait here, until you choose to allow me to go. You are aware that I cannot contend with you and force my way out of the

room. I am pleased, however, to hear that you were not guilty of the charges against you; though, why you should wish me to know it, is more than I can tell. It can make very little difference to either of us. I am not your conscience, confessor, nor judge. If I were, I could understand your desire to explain; but, as it is, it is beyond me. Will you kindly permit me to pass? I really prefer not to be forced to listen to a history of your life; it has no interest to me, in any way whatever. I came here merely on a matter of business. If you had been working under the name you are now ashamed of, I would have avoided you. I shall be much obliged if you will not keep me prisoner any longer."

"I had no intention of detaining you. You choose to pretend that you do not understand why I wish to tell you the true facts of the case. If you will not hear me, I cannot help it. I have done my best."

"You, certainly, seem to have done your best to question my veracity in this way. I think you left your good manners where you left your good name—in Italy. All my recollections of you were that you outwardly behaved like a gentleman. Since then, I have reason to alter that opinion. Good-morning."

He opened the door, and she hurried downstairs. He followed a moment after. He could not let this last chance escape him. No, he would keep the brougham in sight and find out where she lived. He had no compunction now, after the way he had been treated. When he got to the door

neither hansom nor four-wheeler was disengaged, so he quickened his pace, keeping the vehicle in view. At the first crossing a hansom nearly ran into him; he hailed it frantically.

"Follow that brougham—the one with the coachman in dark-green livery. Keep some little way behind. Double fare if you don't lose it."

The man gave a grunt of satisfaction, evidently taking him for a detective or something of that description, and kept in close pursuit for some time. Suddenly he pulled up.

"She's turned into the Park, sir. We ain't allowed to follow her."

"Drive like the wind to the Marble Arch. We might get there before they do. You shall have double money anyhow, and treble if we sight the carriage again."

They certainly did spin along to some purpose. When they arrived at the above place, the dark-green livery was nowhere to be seen; so they drew up, until told by a policeman to move on, and then walked slowly up and down. No; either the brougham had beaten the cab, or the former had made its exit by another gate.

There was nothing left but to go home. He paid the cabman and walked back to the studio, in no enviable frame of mind. Not only was he as far from the object of his search as ever, but he was actually more remote. Mrs. Hamilton now knew his personal appearance, and it would be more difficult than ever to obtain an interview with her daughter.

"*Nil desperandum* must be my motto," he

thought. "Win or lose, I will persevere, as long as there is hope, as long as my courage does not fail me, as long as there is a possibility of success."

The days dragged themselves slowly by. Plenty of work ought to have prevented that; but he was ever restless,—always on the alert. If only he could discover the address; then, by bribing a servant to deliver a note, the affair would be accomplished.

Yet the opportunity never seemed to come. Perhaps he missed a great many chances by not going into society. Now he had a name, the élite of London were desirous of seeing him at their balls and soirées. And why? Not because they cared for him or his company; simply because it was the thing to do. If he had remained in poverty, even though he had brought letters of introduction from good people, very little notice would have been taken of him; unless found useful, he certainly would not have been asked to their houses more than once. This totally English custom jarred on him greatly; he could not get over the idea that he personally was not welcome, and, therefore, making exception only in the cases of a few friends, whom he knew when poor, he rarely went to any private house.

He frequented the theatres, parks, and gardens, but with no success; until, one evening, he went to the Italian Opera at Covent Garden; and coming out, thought he saw the cherished figure in front of him. He had been with a few compatriots in a box. As all the quantity had been taken, there was a dense crush in the lobby. He tried to hurry on, but could not do so. It was not until then he

fully recognized the hopelessness of his position—his utter inability to say anything to her, even if he did meet her in such a place; but there might be the possibility of handing her a note, with the accompanying more than probability of her refusing to accept it. But to try need not necessarily mean to fail. When he returned to his house he compiled a long letter, minutely written, so as to go into small compass. This he would carry about with him, so as to be ready at any time opportunity offered itself.

About a month after, he was eating his solitary breakfast in a restaurant in New Coventry Street. The waiters, as usual, were dilatory, and he was patiently biding his time. The papers were not of a late date, some a good month old. There was a file of the *St. James' Gazette*, *Graphic*, and *Illustrated London News*. He took up a bundle of the papers and began perusing them in a dreamy, incoherent way.

What made him start from his seat, and hurriedly leave the place without a word?

"Funny gent', that," said the waiter, scratching his head. "Gone, and I didn't keep 'im long, neither."

What made him hail a hansom and drive to Paddington? A paragraph in one of the newspapers, which read as follows:

"A marriage is arranged, and will take place on the 15th of next month, between Miss Muriel Hamilton, daughter of the late Colonel Hamilton, 42d regiment, of the Grange, Alerton, Gloucestershire, and Mr. James Smith, of Kirkdale Hall, in the

same County. This, we learn, will unite two of the richest and most flourishing properties in the neighborhood. We wish the happy pair every good fortune."

There is little wonder that he hastens, if he wishes to arrive at Alerton in time for the wedding. It is nearly nine o'clock now, and to-day is the 15th.

. . . . . .

Would the train never reach its destination, would this awful state of suspense never cease?

It was nearly eleven o'clock before he arrived at Alerton station.

"Yes, sir," said a cabman; "suttingly, sir, three miles or may be more to the Grange, sir. Per'aps you wants to go to t' weddin', sir? Well, you can't do no better than take my keb. I'll land you there, sir, quick as winkin'. Will that suit you, sir?"

"Where does the wedding take place?"

"In Alerton church, sir. They've built the station a goodish way from the town. It's a way they've got down here."

"Drive there as quickly as possible."

"To the church, sir? Suttingly, sir."

Andrea whiled the time away by trying to convince himself that Muriel was not worthy of his love. But the task was hopeless. He argued that she must be heartless, having given him up, and being about to marry another,—and such another. Yet the more he blamed her, the more he saw the fruitlessness of his efforts. If she had been the meanest of God's creatures,—if it had been pointed

out to him, clearly and beyond dispute, that she was no fit recipient of an honest man's love, he would have disregarded the warning and have taken her to himself for better or worse. And why? Because his whole soul had gone out to her. If she had proven to be the foulest thing under heaven, he would have pressed her to his heart, cherished her, and prayed for the times to come. This is a love these northern countries rarely see, —an undying, unquenchable love,—one born of God.

To the longest day comes even-song; to the weariest night daybreak at last appears over the hills. Even tortures such as these cannot last forever; and at length the tumble-down conveyance drove up to the churchyard gate.

Never had Alerton seen such festivities. There were rows of family carriages belonging to the county gentry waiting at the wicket, as Andrea sprang hastily out and entered the building. The church seemed to whirl round; he knew his doom was spoken. These were the words that greeted him:

"*Those whom God hath joined together, let no man put asunder.*"

All was quickly over, and the cortège was leaving the church. He crouched back in the pew, trying to escape observation, trembling lest she should see that he had come these weary miles to behold his life-blood sacrificed,—his heart's idol sold forever.

But as she passed him in her wedding finery her eyes sought him out. Her face turned livid, she

grasped her husband's arm convulsively, and some half-uttered words escaped her lips. "At last I see you; but too late." She seemed scarcely able to move. Every one noticed the change, and Smith plucked her arm, but in vain. "Tell me, Andrea Bertoni," she continued, forgetting where they were and the surrounding throng — forgetting everything except that they were face to face, "tell me, if you are here to taunt me? You knew where I was, and let me come to this," and she passed on, not waiting or expecting an answer.

How long he stayed there he knew not—long after the church was empty—until the old woman, who had the care of the place, touched him on the shoulder and bade him go.

He went aimlessly out into the chilly winter air —mazed and grief-stricken, and walked as though his life depended on it. On, on, he went, not caring or knowing where he was wandering; and at last, more by good luck than management, reached the station.

"Yes, there was an up train in about an hour." So he waited and paced the dreary platform, counting the minutes that must elapse before he could place miles between him and this most hateful spot under the firmament of heaven.

London, at last. The dirty old place was more than a consolation. It was like an old friend, parted from for ages, whose presence brings back the light of other days: not very glorious days, it is true; but glimpses of Eden, compared to this. It seemed as though some long period had elapsed since he had left town; he could not realize what

had befallen him in so short a space of time. He had passed through such an eternity of sorrow. Everything he valued appeared so far away.

Yet, when he arrived at his studio, he could not stay there. The demon of unrest had laid hold of him, and he must roam—must wander on, seeking that peace which was far from him. So he went on and on, never stopping or feeling tired. All he wished for now was oblivion and the waters of Lethe. On, on, as a maniac might go, neither looking to the right nor left, regardless of passers-by, mindless of all but the past.

At length he paused. He was opposite Brompton Oratory. He was not a religious man, but he looked up at the sacred edifice, and talking to himself, as might a tired child, went in.

A priest was chanting vespers when he entered, and Andrea was drawn toward the altar. Here was something he had of late neglected—something which, if it were superstition, had the power to comfort the wounded spirit.

He knelt down, and put his face in his hands. The tears rolled from between his fingers, and dropped to the pavement.

A child, unnoticed by her mother, crept near him, and looked at him wistfully.

"Do not cry," she said. "Are you in pain, or have you lost some one who is dear to you? Poor mamma cried too, when baby died."

"Yes, my child, I too have lost some one I greatly loved."

"If you go to the good fathers, they will tell you that if you obey the commandments of God, you

will meet again in Paradise. You have not lost your dear one forever."

And the child's words gave him more peace than a sermon from the highest of the ecclesiastical dignitaries, or a volume from the pen of the most prolific comforter of nations.

CHAPTER XI.

MATED, YET ALONE.

THE wedding morning broke pleasantly over the Kirkdale household, and yet Miss Elsie did not seem herself. All her gaiety had vanished, and she crept around the house a wraith of her former self.

At an early hour she sought her brother's room, and even James was astonished at his sister's care-worn appearance.

"What's the matter?" he began. "You look as if you hadn't slept for a fortnight."

"What if I haven't?" retorted the young lady, with a little of her old acidity. "You wouldn't care if I was dead. I've come for the money due me over this wedding affair. I suppose you're pretty sure of its coming off now, aren't you? and can afford to pay me my *consideration*. You would do it, you know, and I arranged it for you. Well, I want the money. I shall need it."

"Sister mine, you shall have a post-dated check. I am sure of nothing in this world,—not even of my

marriage,—until the ring is on the finger and the final words spoken. Then you shall be paid, but not before."

"Give me the check."

"There it is."

"How long shall you be away on your honeymoon?"

"I don't know. You'll go and stay at Aunt Emma's, and be the first to come and see us, when we return."

"How long do you suppose you'll be?"

"About a month."

"A month! Yes, I shall be here to see the effect of my handiwork."

"Of course you'll be here, and so will Rollingford, I suppose. Otherwise you might stay where you are, if you wished, until we came home. But Rollingford may arrive at any time, and it would hardly be proper to have you two here together with no one to play propriety. You see he waits no invitation; he comes and goes as he likes. I only wish there was a little more going and not so much coming."

And Elsie went away with the price of a ruined life in her hand, and a heavy weight at her heart. Truly, she was a changed girl; but remorse had not worked the miracle.

. . . . . .

There were great festivities at the Grange.

The villagers assembled in full force, and were discussing the good things provided by the Lady Bountiful. Yet many were the asides, expressive of dissatisfaction at the coming union of their

young lady and Squire Smith of Kirkdale Hall. One even went so far as to tell his village gossip, that "she was throwed away on the likes of him."

A stranger would have thought the cheers rather meagre which greeted the happy pair as they drove away; yet had he inquired as to the affection borne toward Muriel in the village, their poor vocabulary would have been unable to utter the undying devotion they entertained toward their *young lady*, as they always called her.

She looked pale and careworn, yet firm and resigned. She knew her sun had set, but she had steeled herself to her coming life. Life! That is surely a misnomer, rather say existence,—an act of sustaining the vital powers,—a lingering, unwilling soul imprisoned in this case of clay. And her husband looked pleased with his bargain. He did not notice her agony; or, if he did, showed no signs of being affected by her pain. She shrank as far from him as she could. Even that did not tell him its story. The little red man was very obtuse. In any case he had no finer feelings. He had gained possession; what did he want more?

They drove in silence for some distance. At last he spoke. "You don't seem very gay on your bridal morning. Strange that you should be so demure."

"It can hardly be called strange. I am as you have made me. My prayers to you were unavailing. I said I would be wife to you in name only. I have kept my promise so far, and shall continue to do so till the end. You have bought my person; over my spirit you have no dominion."

"Hoity-toity, how haughty we are, and what long words we do use. Look here, my fine lady, I have borne with these tempers of yours long enough; I have put up with your insults as long as I intend to. Understand me, I mean to be obeyed. I will have no snivelling, crying wife in my house. If you are not happy, well, you'd better look it,—that's all I can tell you. Do you think I'm going to let you make my life miserable to gratify a whim of yours? Not likely."

Poor child. Her troubles had only commenced; although she had suffered more than many have to go through in a lifetime—more grief, more heart-aches, more pain. She did not answer his cruel taunt, and tried to bear it patiently; but he would not let her be. "Why don't you answer me? Damn these sulky women, they are always grumbling about something."

"I do not see that my conversation could be of much interest to you. I am not a stable-boy, neither am I a book-maker. I believe those are the class of people you generally associate with. You are one of those men who swear at women. Let me ask you not to benefit me with such language again."

"Come now, Muriel," said the little man, abashed by her fearlessness, "I only wanted to prevent you looking so glum." And he tried to put his arm round her.

"Leave me alone," she said. "Don't touch me. You remember what I told you that afternoon by the lake. You recollect that I warned you, and you understood the price of the bargain. Even you

may live to rue the day that I sacrificed myself to save my mother from beggary and starvation,—saved her from the workhouse,—at your hands. You married me with your eyes fully open to the fact that I loved another man, and hated you. You have done this thing in the light of day. Yours must be the blame."

Never had she looked more beautiful, more dignified, more full of the knowledge of her own superiority over the creature who sat, half afraid, by her side.

"If you won't be friendly, I can't help it," grumbled Mr. Smith. "I know, if loving you can ever make you care for me, there won't be a more affectionate couple anywhere, in time. Don't shudder and shrink from me. I'm not so bad as all that. Even I have my feelings."

"I do not wish to hurt your feelings. I am sorry for you, almost as much as I am for myself. I think that you could hardly have weighed the gravity of your position, or perhaps you thought I was weak and would relent."

"Why do you throw my love for you in my teeth?" asked the happy bridegroom. "Why do you wish me evil?"

"You misjudge me. I wish you no wrong. I only long for rest and peace,—for the ability to forget the past, and follow the course I have laid out,—to do my duty."

"To do your duty! Yes, a fine thing that is. Duty, indeed. Don't you glory in the fact that I was foolish enough to pull you out of the mire, and

give you an honest man's love? You don't seem to remember that little circumstance."

"I remember the price. I suppose I ought to thank you for the high figure you gave. Why repeat this again and again?"

"That's just it. I'm willing enough never to mention it," assented the newly-made Benedict. "I am the first to try and bridge over the gap; though you have slighted and despised me."

"Then listen, for the last time. What would you expect me to do? You bought me——"

"That's right," interrupted the little man. "Go on about the buying. I like it."

"You bought me," she continued, heedless of him, "against my own will. I told you plainly that I was in your power and implored your mercy. This you refused. I told you that my love was given; but you were hard, cruel, and would not listen. I told you, first and last, that I would be your wife, but in name only. I have said all I can, or care to say. You have my answer now, irrevocably."

He slunk back into the corner of the carriage, and gave way to a full-fledged fit of the sulks, for which he was so justly famous, and growled to himself, in an undertone; afraid to speak his mind, too ill-disposed to remain silent.

As for her, her heart was dead, and she felt as if she had spoken nothing but the merest commonplaces. Her power of acting cruelly or kindly was gone,—her hatred or love was no more. She had loved once, now apathy reigned supreme. Her

soul was in a deathlike trance; that one voice, and one alone, could recall to life.

When they arrived in London, an intimate friend of Smith's met them at Paddington; one Captain Rollingford, captain of what regiment the world did not seem to remember. A very shady customer, some said.

"You here?" said Smith, "couldn't you leave me alone even on my wedding-day?"

"Manners, my friend, manners, if you please; and introduce me to your charming wife."

Smith winced and seemed to demur.

"Won't you do as I *suggest?*" With indescribable emphasis on the suggest.

"An old friend of mine, Captain Rollingford; my wife," mumbled James sulkily.

Captain Rollingford conversed for a few moments, told how he had heard of the wedding, and happened to be at the station by a mere coincidence, and shortly talked with Smith apart. Muriel saw her husband draw a pocket-book from his coat, and with many signs of disgust and unwillingness hand his companion what seemed like a bundle of notes, or papers of similar appearance. Their voices were raised during the short altercation, and she could not help overhearing this scrap of conversation. Smith was speaking.

"It's pretty cool of you to put a limit on the time I am to be away. My wife may have something to say to that."

"Your wife, my good fellow, is not in the contract. If she comes between you and me, it will be the worse for you, and I suppose the better for her;

as she will be relieved of your society for a time; say ten years or so—a long while for a man to stay away from the partner of his joys and sorrow, isn't it? Eh?"

"Shut up, for heaven's sake. Why do you want me to come back so soon?"

"Because it is so much easier to collect in person, and you are such a poor correspondent. I had to fetch you back once, you remember, when I got no reply to my missives. Besides, I get so much amusement out of you. It's astonishing how high you jump at the mere mention of the *broad arrow.* It is uncomfortable, isn't it?"

"You're the damnedest, blackest beast unhung."

"You are politeness itself. I know I do touch you to the core sometimes. You had better not quarrel with me."

"No, of course not. You've been always so particularly kind, so very——"

"Considerate," interrupted Rollingford, lighting a cigarette. "Certainly I am, and have been, especially in a matter of six years ago, before your father died, and you were poor. You are rich now, and so am I,—by your favor. Good-morning. I shall be down at Kirkdale as per your kind invitation, old man," and with a sweeping bow to Mrs. Smith, Captain Rollingford left the station.

Muriel was astounded at hearing this. She had not been trying to listen, but the lull of escaping steam for a minute, brought the words plainly to her ears. As for the men, they were so engrossed in their conversation that they did not perceive

that the accommodating noise, which muffled their voices, had ceased.

"He seems to have a great deal of power over you," she remarked.

"Did you hear what he said?" he asked sharply.

"I could not help it. The purport only dawned upon me, after I had heard you both, or I should have gone further away."

"Well, then keep it to yourself; that's all I have to tell you. Never meddle in what does not concern you; that is, if you wish to keep on the safe side and out of trouble."

"I am not one to meddle in anything," the girl said, "and I cannot be intimidated by you or your bullying words. I am fully able to mind my own business, and should not have wished to overhear you had not your loudness forced your quarrel upon me, for quarrel it certainly was."

"As long as you understand me, that is all I require. I do not want to bandy words, or reintroduce the discussion of this morning."

And so they went for their honeymoon. He, silent and evidently frightened at the turn of affairs; she, as she had of late appeared, cold and distant,—her thoughts far away from the hateful surroundings.

It would be useless to follow them further on the commencement of their dreary path through life. We will omit the uninteresting and ugly details, and take up the thread of the story some few days after.

They were at Nice.

The world remarked that they were an ill-mated

couple, evidently devoid of that natural affection which ought to exist between man and wife; but it was equally discernible that they were rich; and worldly wealth covers up so many faults. What would be a sin in a poverty-stricken being, became excusable in her. So they called her *Edelweiss*, the child of snow.

Yet she seemed to have left all her sorrows behind her. She was the shining light of all the balls and social gatherings, for which the place is famous. Only in the solitude of her chamber did those tears come unbidden, and the words fell in broken accents from her lips:

"O God! if I could only recall the long ago; no one should make me think ill of you—no one could persuade me to forsake you. Let your sin have been what it may: I would have forgiven, and you would have loved me the more."

The *maitre d'hotel* rarely had such customers. *Madame* had her *boudoir* and her private apartments. She was indeed a *grande dame*, and hardly ever even saw *Monsieur*. But perhaps they lived that way, often, at the North Pole, or somewhere there, where these people came from.

It was about noon, on a lovely winter day, such as one only sees on the shore of the Mediterranean.

Muriel was sitting in her room, looking out of the window in deep thought, gazing at the blue water, and watching the ripples chasing one another over the smooth surface. She heard a step behind her, and turning, saw her husband.

"Well," she said.

"Well! It isn't at all well; it's anything but

well. We must leave for home at once, or at least I must. I have some important business to transact that necessitates my immediate return. You will do as you always do, as you please. I have ceased trying to get you to act reasonably, like an ordinary Christian, or in any way as rational people do."

"I have nothing to bind me to this place. It is the same to me where I go. The whole world, even if it were a desert, would be the same—to me."

"Would it?" rasped Mr. Smith. "You wouldn't find it so long. How would you do without your gaieties, new dresses, parties, and extravagances? You would quit Sahara in short order,—for a time, at all events."

"I do not know. I have tried to find peace, and it is far from me. Nothing could be worse than this life here,—nothing could be more monotonous."

"Indeed. Perhaps you'll remember that my life with you isn't a bed of roses; or if it is, the roses have infernally sharp thorns. I don't think that you are the aggrieved party. You treat me like a lackey. I can't stand it forever."

"Please God it may not last forever," she answered, wearily; "perhaps some day you may tire of your bargain and let me go."

"To your lover, I suppose?—the man you are always dreaming of, and in doing so, sin against me. By God! you even dare to mention him openly."

"I said nothing. You spoke of him, not I. It is I who should be angry, not you. I tell you that the man you speak of is dead to me forever. You

taunt and urge me to mention a subject that it would be wise to have buried fathoms deep between us. You have tried to open an old wound. Well, you have succeeded. Please leave me."

"And you will honor me with your company to our happy home?—where, I have no doubt, we shall live as if miles asunder. Is that so?"

"Yes, I will come."

Again we will omit a repetition of their doings, and spare the reader an account of the return journey to Kirkdale Hall.

After the usual annoyances and difficulties of travel, they arrived. It was night; the snow was falling thickly, and the ruddy glow of the Hall windows looked most inviting to any one ignorant of the skeleton which was ever present there. To Muriel it seemed as though they were bringing her to a prison. She shuddered and thought how, when a little girl, she had come to some picnic in these very woods, little thinking that the old gray Hall would ever become hers,—her home, her abode of sorrow, her dungeon.

The wheels ground upon the newly-turned gravel, and the carriage stopped at the door. The butler and footman, having heard the horses' hoofs, anticipated the bell and were there to meet them. The old servant assisted her to alight, and as she entered the house, she distinctly heard him say to his master:

"He's come, sir,—has been 'ere since last night. You said I was to give 'im all 'e asked for; and I've done that same, sir. He's made 'imself at 'ome, sir; about as at 'ome as any gent' could in 'is own 'ouse, sir."

"Damn that man!" ejaculated Smith; "I half expected it."

Muriel found Captain Rollingford leaning against the mantelpiece in the hall. He started forward to greet her, with a sneering smile on his handsome face, and his dark eyes lit up with an amused expression.

"You are surprised to see me here," he began.

"I certainly am," she retorted, "as my husband did not tell me that he expected you."

"Ah, your husband, I have no doubt, forgot to inform you of my expected arrival. I often do stay here, don't I, old fellow?" to Smith, who had followed at that moment.

"You do," he answered, sulkily, "more often——"

"More often the better, you were going to say," interrupted Rollingford, with a dangerous look, which quite awed the little man.

"Yes, that's about it," Smith answered, trying to be gay. "It's time to dress for dinner." He looked round for Muriel, but she had gone without a word or sign of welcome.

This, however, did not disturb Rollingford. In his checkered career a rebuff was nothing. He rather admired her than otherwise. "Plucky woman," he thought. "I don't suppose she cares for him, but she knows that I'm no friend of his, though I am in his house. I rather think she hates me only one degree less than she does him. I wonder, if she knew her sweet husband's story, whether she'd take advantage of it, and send him to board and lodge at the country's expense,—I

wonder," and he slowly betook himself to his room to prepare for the evening.

Muriel was first down in the drawing-room; Smith soon followed. "While we are alone," she said, "I wish to ask how it is that man is here? If you invited him, why did not you have the common civility to let me know?"

"I didn't know he was here, I tell you, — that is, I didn't think he would arrive to-day. For Heaven's sake try and be agreeable to him, if you can be decent to any one. I am greatly indebted to him, and——"

"You mean to say, that you are in his power; is not that so? Why try to prevaricate and stave off what I must shortly find out? Do not fear I will betray you; that is not in my nature, spoiled as it has been, and by you."

"I can't say you haven't hit the mark I owe him some money, and can't manage to pay him yet awhile."

"Is that all?"

"For goodness' sake, Muriel, I'm not in a witness-box. I owe him some——"

"Don't take the trouble to repeat it. There is something more than that, which, on second thought, I do not care to know. I dislike this man Captain Rollingford, and as he is in your house, I suppose I must bear with him, but I beg you to see that he terminates his visit within a reasonable time."

"If you think I'm going to kick him out of the house, you're precious well mistaken. You're so infernally shrewd. How did you come to think

that there was anything more than money matters between us? Been prying, as usual?"

"Your words have long ceased to have the power of annoying me. I am not guilty of using the methods you describe in such a gentlemanly and graphic manner. When a man, whom any one can see is not on really friendly terms with you, comes to your house unbidden, and, as it were, takes possession of it, I think it is time to imagine that something has occurred, other than the ordinary incidents in a man's life, even where debt is included. Besides, you are rich, or you would scarcely have been able to afford to have bought me at the extravagant price of the Grange estate, which belonged to you by right of purchase."

"That's right. Always drumming that *buying* into me. God knows our marriage hasn't been so happy that you can afford to make it worse. I've done my best to smooth matters over, but you won't let me. As you say, your nature is changed."

"Yes, changed entirely," answered Muriel. "Anything which a year ago would have affected me to tears, I can now see without even a tremor. I am indeed altered, so altered that I should not know myself. I have been conjured from a happy, joyous girl into a hard woman of the world. All my sympathy and fellow-feeling has gone. I think my heart has turned into stone."

Captain Rollingford now joined his host and hostess. He addressed Muriel with an easy air and polite, well-turned phrases, inquired about her journey, the smoothness of the passage, and the various ordinary topics of the day. Any ordinary

person would find it a difficult task to abash the gallant captain. No one was harder to insult, or more easy to make friends with, when it suited his purpose. He was determined, in this case, that he would be in the good graces of his pigeon's wife, whether she chose so or not. And so he was very suave, for he knew that she disliked him. He had guessed that intuitively from the first moment they met. He was playing an up-hill game, and fighting against considerable odds, and those the serious ones of distrust and antipathy. Yet he was not dismayed.

A day or two after this, Elsie arrived, and the prestidigitateur's hand seemed to have worked a miracle with her also. The gaiety which she had lost before the wedding had not returned, and she was downcast and disheartened. One night, she had an opportunity of cornering the wily captain, who had strenuously tried to avoid her, and addressed him very abruptly. They were alone in the east room, and the young lady was determined to have her say.

"Are you going to do me justice?" she asked, dropping her forced manner, when Smith had left the room.

"Justice! That depends upon what you call justice. I'm not a marrying man, if that's what you mean."

"You know you have ruined me. How shall I hide my shame?"

"I really can't advise you," said the captain in his most debonair voice. "I should leave a woman to find the ways and means. The female sex is so

full of tricky devices, that I pale before it. Personally, I do not fear exposure. You are too sensible to cut off your nose to spite your face. You see, you would be hurt so much worse than I. Please don't make a scene; I hate scenes, such bad form. I'm not a rich man, but take this. You'll be able to tide over all right," and Rollingford thrust a couple of notes into her nerveless fingers.

Elsie stood aghast, her power of speech deserted her, and with a bitter sob of disgrace and anger, she threw the money down and ran from the room.

But Rollingford was not disconcerted. He picked up the notes, smoothed out the creases across his knee, and returned them to his pocket-book. "Dear me," he meditated, "what a vixen it is. Throws cold cash about like dirt. Well, it sha'n't go begging. I can use it comfortably. I shall have to get out of here for a time." And the gentleman of fortune retired to rest.

In the morning the household was thrown into confusion. Miss Elsie had disappeared.

Captain Rollingford proffered his assistance to his distracted host, who thought, in his feeble way, that Elsie's knowledge of her own co-operation in the marriage scheme had driven her to self-destruction, and was busy having the river dragged. No, he could be of no use. Terrible business this.

So the unwelcome guest excused himself, and sought fairer fields, for a while, where the surroundings did not necessitate his looking glum.

CHAPTER XII.

IN DIRE DISTRESS.

DURING the next six months nothing very interesting occurred. July was half over, and no tidings of Elsie, beyond the fact that the suicide theory had been overthrown, as the young lady was traced to London, and there all clues were lost.

The newspapers were tired of paragraphing the *Kirkdale Mystery*, and the excitement had almost abated. Therefore Captain Rollingford decided upon paying his friend another visit, and wrote to that effect.

One day, during luncheon, the butler approached his mistress with the information that a gentleman from London wished to see her, as soon as was convenient.

"He hadn't no card, but said his name was Monster, or somethin' like that."

Mr. Smith did not honor the luncheon-table with his presence, so Muriel went to see the stranger.

She entered the drawing-room and found a very young man, with a very small head, and the promise of a mustache, twirling his hat in the middle of the room. At the sight of Muriel he let his hat fall in consternation, attempted to pick it up, bumped his nose against the table, under which the hat had rolled, desisted from the pursuit, and exclaimed:

"Deary me, to-day! Now that's very kind of you to come, miss, ma'am I should say. Excuse me. My name is Mongchur. That's very peculiar. You see my father used it,—but no matter."

And the gentleman from London shook with nervousness.

"Won't you be seated? You wish to see me, I believe."

"Yes,—that is,—No, I don't, but a party does, and sent me to see you instead of seeing you herself, because she said, like this, 'Mr. Mongchur,'—well, perhaps I'd better begin at the beginning."

"I think it would be best," assented Muriel, trying to put the young man at his ease. "Won't you sit down?"

"Certainly. You're very kind. I'm sure I never expected,—but no matter, miss, ma'am I should say. I live at 117 Ebenezer Row, where my father, whose name was Mongchur, lived before me. He was a builder, but now he's gone where neither must nor roth doth corrupt, and where there's no more building." Mr. Mongchur paused and bowed profoundly to a Dresden china shepherdess, as if to impress the surroundings with the excellence of his departed parent; and Muriel began to vaguely wonder whether the person in question took such a keen delight in rust and moth or building, when the nervous individual threw light upon his statements and proceeded. "If there was a place as large as my hand, he'd want to build something on it, if it was only a flag-pole. Mrs. Golightly, of 316 Great Roomer Street, a very genteel locality, I assure you, miss, ma'am I should say, had a back garden, and my guv'nor, father, I should say, set his heart upon building her a green-house. He fairly haunted Great Roomer Street, until, they say, he hastened the old lady's death by three months. I only tell

you this to explain that I live at 117 Ebenezer Row. That's very important. I've come down here, being a clerk in the grocery line, I've come"—here he lowered his voice to a dramatic whisper, "I've come on account of a lady named Brown." At this point Mr. Mongchur accepted Muriel's invitation of a few minutes before, and sat on the extreme edge of a chair, and whispered, "You are very kind." He then looked up to see the effect of his speech, and seeing Muriel's blank dismay, repeated, "Brown, Mrs. Elsie Brown. Yes, that's what she told me to say, in case I was to see you."

"Ah!"

"Well, miss, ma'am I should say, this lady, Mrs. Brown, told me to wait until I saw you personal, if it was a week; only she didn't say it in those words. And I should have too, in spite that the dogs was not very friendly; but just as Daniel risked the lions taking bites out of his trous—pants I should say. No, I didn't mean that. Oh!" and Mr. Mongchur sank into ignominious silence for some moments. He was so busy blushing and wiping beads of perspiration from his brow, that Muriel had some difficulty in getting him to continue. At last he resumed his task. "She's a very nice lady, and has seen a lot of trouble. She took our third floor back at 117 Ebenezer Row, about six months ago. I suppose she was waiting for Mr. Brown, but he never turned up, arrived I should say, miss, ma'am. And then—" Mr. Mongchur was again attacked with a violent blush, and his face became lobster-colored, "and then—" he fairly choked, "and then her baby, infant I should

say, was born, or came into the world, as the case may be. I don't think she had any too much money, but she says to me, 'I daren't write,' says she, 'for fear of them seeing my handwriting, because I married against the wishes of my relations. So please go down, and deliver this letter to Mrs. Smith,' that's you, miss, ma'am, 'and don't let any one see you give it.' Then she paid my fare down, second class; but I rode third and will give her the difference back, and cab fares at both ends, but I walked."

"You are very good," said Muriel, taking the letter, which he produced from the recesses of a Norfolk shooting-coat of gay plaid.

"Not at all. I enjoyed the ride, I assure you, and, though startled by that largest dog with the spots and woolly tail, I've had quite an outing."

With trembling fingers the letter was opened. It read as follows:

"Please come and see me; I am in fearful trouble. Do not betray me or tell James. For God's sake, do not fail to come. I have something to confess to you, which you *must hear*.

"ELSIE.

"P. S.—Come to-morrow, if possible, and don't breathe a word to any one."

When she looked up, the young man was balancing himself on one foot and pursing up his lips, as if he had been conflicting with a particularly sour lemon.

"Deary me, to-day," he ejaculated. "Blest if she didn't tell me to say nothing about the mar-

riage or the bab—infant, I should say, and I've been and gone and done it."

"You need have no fear. Tell Mrs. Brown I will see her to-morrow. Wait one moment, perhaps you will be so kind as to deliver a letter?"

"Delighted, I'm sure."

Muriel wrote a few words:

"MY DEAR ELSIE:

"I will come and see you to-morrow, Wednesday. Do not fear. I can sympathize with you. I, too, have suffered.

"Your loving sister, MURIEL SMITH."

The young man took the note and placed it in the lining of his hat, which he went down, on all fours, to rescue from under the table. In response to Muriel's question, as to whether he would take some luncheon, he refused with an emphasis, as though he had taken an oath to fast for six months. The bare idea of eating in this grand house nearly frightened him out of his wits.

Mr. Mongchur then bowed to the piano, stumbled over a chair, stepped on the cat, and rushed from the room, nearly tearing down the portières in his haste.

Muriel's mind was made up. She would go, and would refuse to give her reason. She felt that she herself had known the meaning of the word *shame;* and the text from the Scripture flitted through her mind, "*Judge not, that ye be not judged.*"

Mr. Smith, strange to relate, did not put very much stress on her foregoing the London visit.

"Shopping, as usual. It'd pay me to have a linendraper in the Park and get my own wife's custom," he grumbled.

And it is to be feared Muriel allowed him to labor under the delusion.

So the following afternoon brought her to No. 117 Ebenezer Row.

She knocked at the door, which was opened by the redoubtable Mr. Mongchur himself, who nearly fell backward when he saw his call thus promptly returned.

"Come inside, miss, ma'am I should say. Come to see Mrs. Brown, I presume?"

"Yes. Would you be so good as to tell her that I am here?"

He flew up the steps at her bidding. In an incredibly short space of time he scaled the three pairs of stairs and returned, leaving Muriel standing in the narrow hall.

"Oh, I meant to have asked you into the parlor, but I forgot. Perhaps you'll just walk in before going up them steps. They're a bit steep," he stammered, as he puffed for breath, thinking that it was never too late to mend; and trusting that Muriel would enter the parlor, if only to walk out again.

"No, thank you. If Mrs. Brown is ready to receive me, I will go to her at once."

"Very well, miss — ma'am. Good-morning — good-afternoon," and Mr. Mongchur hurried away, leaving Mrs. Smith to grope her way up the dismal stairs.

Elsie was waiting her arrival on the landing.

"It is so kind of you to come to such as I am," said the outcast. "I would not have asked you to take this journey, if I had not something of importance to tell you," and the wretched girl broke down. She seized her visitor's hand and covered it with tears and kisses. Recovering her equanimity, she led the way into the shabby little room. "I won't raise the blind," she whispered; "darkness befits my story best. Sit down. No, further away from me."

And the two women conversed in undertones.

There is nothing to be gained by repeating the sinful recital of woe. Justice has been satisfied. Retribution has come. There was but one frail excuse: "I loved him so. I believed and trusted him with my life."

It was now that Muriel learned how the child had been born in poverty and disgrace, and that God, in His mercy, had taken the waif to Himself. Then came the confession of the despicable transaction with the Jewish money-lender. Thus the whole black history was told.

Muriel's tender nature, so long dormant, now returned at the sight of the weeping unfortunate.

"Why will you not come back with me? We will hide your secret, and live this mystery down."

"How can I account for these months of my miserable life? My brother will have no mercy."

"Then let me help you."

"No, no," Elsie answered, a faint smile illuminating her careworn face, "I can help myself. I am going away."

"Have you got a situation? Are you about to work for your living?"

"Yes, yes; that is it," said the poor girl eagerly. "Besides, I could accept nothing from you, whom I have so basely wronged. I am ashamed to be near you. But that was necessary before I took my journey."

"Elsie, look me in the face. Are you going to live a life of shame with that man?"

"As God will judge, you wrong me. But you have reason to distrust. I have not fallen so low as that. I made one false step, and I have been punished. Things equalize themselves in this world, as well as the next, and the balance has fallen heavily toward the side of sorrow with me. You can never tell how I have suffered. I cannot rest, for my eyes are weary with ill-doing. In the Spring I am unhappy, for that is the season of hope; hope is dead to me: Summer brings no joy, for then the promise is accomplished and Nature lives, while I remain in desolation: Autumn will see all fade, as my life has done: and Winter gives the blessing of death, but I cannot die, except——there, I have told you the whole circumstance, how I plotted against you for some wretched money. Now, good-bye."

"Elsie, I cannot leave you like this. You must let me find a home for you."

"You heap coals of fire on my head," sobbed the girl. But she refused and refused again; and Muriel could only obtain from her a promise to write to her if in want. So she went, slipping a diamond ring from her finger, and leaving it on the

little table, with a couple of bank-notes. Elsie had refused to accept any help; so she tried to force on her what she could. The ring was one of value; she would not miss it, and ready money was somewhat scarce with her, although she was the wife of the rich Mr. Smith of Kirkdale Hall.

And Muriel, with the whispered good-bye of the girl sounding in her ears, returned to her loveless home.

Elsie sat for some moments in meditation, then rising saw the ring and notes on the table. "She did not despise me so much, but that she wished to really help me." And she took the little bundle, placed it in an envelope, went to the table drawer, took from thence a little bottle, which she placed in the bosom of her dress, and left the room and the house.

She wandered on and on until she saw a dismal-looking building with the legend "Apartments to let" in lurid colors in one of the windows. She entered. The woman of the house looked her up and down, and concluded she was not a desirable tenant. But Elsie produced a five-pound note, which worked like a charm; as the landlady, in the whole course of her apartment experience, had never known a shabby young person wishing to pay a month in advance, she concluded the bargain without more delay. Elsie hardly looked at her new abode, which was very gaudy and very dear; she shut the door and locked herself in. Feeling in her pocket her hand touched the envelope. She had forgotten. She ran out, registered the letter, and returned.

Taking her last remaining money she placed it on the mantelpiece. "There," she said, "that will pay for any trouble I may be after—after—I have taken my journey." And she drew the little phial from the bosom of her dress. "A few drops of the chloral and all will be over. I have often used it without a tremor lest I should never wake again, yet now I fear the unknown terrible future and delay my passage with cowardly misgivings." She flung the window wide open and leaned out. The glory of the summer sun sent its flickering rays through the leaves of an old tree opposite to the pavement beneath. "It is such a beautiful world and I am so young—so young to die. And they say it is a coward's death.

"A coward! Who has stood, death in hand, and contemplated the hidden mystery? A coward would fling down the death-potion and flee; madness alone can look the Pale King straight in the eyes and drink the waters of forgetfulness."

All the pain lay in the thought of her youth and ill-spent life. "If I wait, perhaps it will be harder. I have told her all. She has gone to her desolate home, unmindful of me, who am about to die. Unmindful! Perhaps not. Her heart is scarred worse than my unworthy breast." A delirious frenzy seemed to light up her face. "I drink to you, Muriel, to your happiness, to your future; may all be brighter, when I am gone. Do not think of me with loathing, but with tender pity; you gave me that, knowing my enmity; I shall need it more in the near future." And she drank the draught of Lethe.

For a moment she waited as if dreading the result, and then sank on her knees by the bedside. "God, please forgive me. Have you not punished me enough? I have been wicked all my life; and if you will only listen to my prayer, bless her, and give me death,—easily, for I am afraid. If you will not pardon me, let me die body and soul, and forget that I ever lived. I—I—am going on my journey. I would have lived for baby's sake, but you took him from me. You will pardon me? I am too insignificant for your lasting wrath. I cannot pray more, my strength is leaving me. Forgive—forgive—forgive."

The uplifted voice died away, and the form stiffened on its knees in mute supplication.

A few days after, an unknown was buried.

CHAPTER XIII.

WITHOUT PROTECTION.

THE following evening Mr. Smith was sitting in solitary grandeur, awaiting the arrival of Captain Rollingford. Muriel had retired to her room, and had left her husband to digest a message, which she had given him to deliver to the captain.

At last he came. "See here, Frank, my wife and I had a devil of a fuss to-night."

"Indeed," responded the captain, "that's of pretty frequent occurrence, isn't it?"

"I didn't say that; but we had a pow-wow, and it was about you."

"About me? I never knew the ladies took so much interest in my welfare. What did she say?"

"She said that if you didn't get out of this house, she would. That's straight."

"Ah!" remarked Rollingford, "plain, at all events."

"She didn't say those words, but——"

"To that effect. I understand," interrupted the imperturbable one. "It suits me to stay here for a while. I hate being thwarted. I shall have to say a few words to Mrs. Smith, and after—well, I'll go if she likes the consequences."

"What do you mean?" gasped Smith, jumping to his feet, and staring at his tormentor. "You're not going to tell her——"

"I shall tell her nothing, my good James,—I shall only intimate, and perhaps suggest. We are too closely allied in our—what shall we call them? well—errors, to be sent to the right-about by a woman. Just leave things to me. I'll patch up the peace."

"I'll tell my wife I've told you," said the unhappy Smith.

"Certainly, dear boy, tell her you've done what she bade like a good child, then you won't get spanked. Now I'll eat this charming little supper you have had prepared for me, and then retire to roost." But the captain's idea of supper seemed to consist of a superabundance of liquid refreshment. Brandy and *soda* were worse than useless; soda and *brandy* answered the purpose admirably. So Rollingford arose about an hour after with as much as he could conveniently carry, and the chalk-

line would have been superfluous to discover his condition.

Muriel was in her boudoir, with her face pressed against the window, watching the summer lightning flickering in the heavens. Suddenly she started at a noise behind her, and turning saw Captain Rollingford, his handsome face reddened with alcohol, and his leering eyes doubly brilliant from the effect of his debauch.

"You here!" she cried.

"Yes, it is I. I wish to speak to you."

"This, sir, is neither the time nor the place. You have intruded into my private room. Kindly leave me. My husband gave you my message, I believe. That is all I have to say."

"Precisely," returned Rollingford, "I came to speak with you about that same message," and he reeled against the door.

"You are not in a fit state to be near a woman. Leave my room, and to-morrow I trust you will quit the house. I know a little more of your character than you think I do. Go."

"Not so fast, my lady. You say you know something about me. Perhaps you do. I'm not so drunk but that I can see as far as most men through a brick wall. You show the cloven foot to me; what if I were to exhibit a little of my power toward you and yours. I think civility will pay best in the long run. Do you know that a felon's cell would be your husband's portion, if I desired? That would be nice for us! Eh? You know I could love you like—like—all that," he added, at a loss for a simile.

"So you try to be a traitor to your friend's hospitality. You dare to say this to me under my husband's roof."

But the captain had reached the amorous stage, and was not to be refused. "I have gone too far to retract," he blurted, "I won't go."

"Then I will ring for assistance." She saw the matter was serious, and rushed for the door; but he reached it first, and locked it. Her only chance now was the bell; he jumped on a chair, and taking his knife from his pocket cut the rope near the ceiling.

"No, you shall hear me. We are alone. No one could hear you if you were to call. Listen to me, I love you."

She backed toward the window, and her fingers sought the hasp of the French casement. Quicker than it takes to tell, the frame swung open, and she stood outside on the portico. With a cry of rage he sprang after her; but too late. She fastened the outside guard, and for the time was safe. The lights of the window glittered on the wet flags twenty feet below; it had commenced to rain in torrents after the lightning. How was she to make any one hear? A thought flashed upon her. The far window, at the other end of the lead-topped veranda, was her husband's dressing-room. She ran swiftly along the slippery surface, and rapped loudly at the glass, but at first got no answer, though she wounded her little hands against the plate window-panes. "Open, open, in God's name." Another sound struck her terrified ears. It was the breaking of the window of her own room, and the

outer shutter being unfastened. There was not a moment to lose. "Open, open." This time her cry was answered. In great surprise Smith unfastened the sash, and she entered, dripping wet—half fainting.

"What is it?"

"There," she answered, pointing to the portico, where stood Rollingford, having followed her so far, "there is the man who has insulted me. Avenge my injury."

Smith turned ashy pale and did not move.

"Coward," she said, "can you see me abused in your own house and fear to chastise the scoundrel? Coward!"

"Any one, in the world, but he. He can send me to jail, if he wishes. One word of his can set the police on my track, and I cannot escape. I dare not anger him,—I dare not."

Rollingford approached the window, which was still open.

"See, madam, how your husband takes up your cause. He is a brave man. You notice how he merely awaits your retiring to annihilate me. I tremble at his approach."

"Will you make this villain answer for the wrong he has attempted this night,—will you, I say, will you?" she almost screamed. "Do you think that I will bear such treatment,—do you suppose for an instant that I will stay in this house with a man who is afraid to avenge his wife's wrongs, or near such a libertine as this, able to work his wicked will as he chooses! See, there stands the man who has attempted to dishonor you. Will you see him

laugh you to scorn without a word,—are you such a poltroon as that?"

"I dare not, I dare not," he whispered; "I am in his power, he could do anything to me or mine and I should be helpless."

"Then you refuse to protect me,—you refuse to give me the freedom to walk in your gardens by making them unsafe with the presence of this man. Do I understand you rightly, is that so?"

"I tell you I dare say nothing to him."

With a scornful look she swept from the room and ran down the passage to her boudoir. She found the door locked and went on to the head of the stairs. The footman had not yet gone to bed and answered her call.

"Please come and break open the door. It has become locked from the inside."

The man obeyed her order, and soon succeeded in prying back the fastening. She entered, bolted the door, and sat down to think. What was she to do? If she went to her old home her husband would be the first to seek her there. No, that would never do. Ah, a thought at last. The old days at Rome were not quite faded from her memory, nor had the Professor, whose letter had come to her in the Engadine begging that she would let him give her to the world. What if she were to seek his aid? Here she could not stay. He would surely remember her. It was not so very long ago, only a year, and yet it seemed ages. She would work—and work hard. Anything would be better than this bondage. She felt degraded as though she had been one of the painted unfortunates of the great

cities; had she not been sold? Was she any better than they?

The room was very dark, a few pale flickering moon-rays lighted up the gloom. The candle had blown out, and the house was silent. A train left Alerton station at 12.25, the night-mail. It was within an hour of that now; not a moment was to be lost. She put on her wraps, took her jewelry and money, packed up her few necessaries, and closing the door, crept along the passage, across the corridor, down the oaken staircase, looking often behind her as if fearing pursuit. Cautiously she undid the massive bars and bolts which secured the front door, and stood outside in the drizzling rain. She seemed nerved for anything; she was bidding for freedom, and sped along her path. She had ample time to catch the train—had plenty of money for present wants—booked for London, and soon was whirling away.

They issued through tickets to the Continent, had she wished; but by doing so she might have been detected and followed. Her chances lay in their losing her in the great metropolis. Onward to London. Her wrongs were unredressed; her duty no longer bound her to a man who owned himself incapable of protecting her. She was free to go where she wished. He had broken the contract. His be the blame. So she would seek her old music-master in Rome, and let him put her on the road of life by labor.

. . . . . .

What passed between the two men would be needless to narrate; enough that the anger of

the one was quenched by the fear he bore the other.

The following morning Smith was puzzling his small brains how he should make right the *contre-temps* of the preceding night. He had packed Rollingford out of the way for the time-being—had sent him off by an early train, and was waiting till his wife descended to offer voluminous apologies for his conduct.

Half an hour elapsed and she did not come down. At last he rang the bell and asked for her maid.

No, her mistress had not yet rung her bell. Yes, it was much later than usual—quite an hour. Yes, she would go and call her.

A few minutes elapsed before she returned. "Sir," she stammered, "my mistress is not in her room. The bed hasn't been slept in, and she must be out, as her hat and cloak are gone."

To conjecture the truth was the work of a moment. What had she threatened? Had she not said that he was a man unfit to be the guardian of any woman—had she not called him a coward and a poltroon? Surely she had gone, never to return.

The little man was nearly distracted—on the verge of lunacy. But what is the first thing he does? Why, seek the assistance of the very man who has caused all this trouble—find his friend Rollingford and ask his help; then the captain had gone away far too soon in order to avoid Muriel should she come down earlier than usual. He had driven to the Junction, and even if Smith started now, there was enough time to catch the train.

No sooner thought than done. He ran round to

the stable and ordered the dog-cart immediately; he himself waiting in the stable-yard while they were putting the horse in. The necessary delay seemed like hours, and at length he was enabled to start. Never had the old bay mare been compelled to cover the ground in such short order. She fairly flew through the slush and soon stood panting at the station-gate.

He flung the reins to the groom and entered. The train was already drawn up, and there, in a carriage all to himself, sat Captain Rollingford. Smith, without waiting to get his ticket, jumped in after him as the train was gliding out of the station.

"What! you here?" said Rollingford. "I've had a beastly time waiting round this hole. This is a surprise."

"Yes, I am here," said the irate Mr. Smith, "and we have an account to settle. Do you know what your blackguardism has driven my wife to? She has left me, I say; do you understand, left me."

"Certainly, my good friend. Don't shout, I'm not deaf. I think you ought to be supremely grateful to me for having helped you to get rid of one who only too plainly showed her distaste for you."

Mr. Smith sank back in a flabbergasted state of astonishment. All his ideas of asking advice from his familiar friend had vanished and his anger gained the day.

"Damn you, silence! I can't stand this, even from you. A worm will turn——"

"If you stand upon his neck," interrupted Rol-

lingford, flipping off the ash of his cigar, and laughing at the furious little man. "I don't want to converse with you about worms. You were saying?"

"That I know I am in your power, but you may go too far."

"Far, nonsense. Shall I let you see the little treat I keep for good boys? Does my old friend Smith remember the altered check signed by his intimate friend Frank Rollingford — that pretty little piece of paper which has been stuck onto the foil again, with this droll difference, the foil says £50, the check £500? Peculiar, isn't it? Do you not remember how poor you were at that time, and how close your late respected father always kept you? Can't you recollect how your good friend let the check go through and took a little acknowledgment from you?" And Rollingford produced a leather pocket-book from his coat. "There, aren't they both pretty?" He returned the papers to his pocket, humming quietly to himself with the coolness worthy of a Bow Street runner.

Smith was sitting in the far corner of the carriage, eying him wistfully. He was cooler now, and seemed to wish that he had been less ferocious in his demeanor. "Rollingford," said he, "what will you sell those papers for? I will add another 0 to the sum written there and make it £5,000. Will that satisfy you?"

"What! And give up so much a year? Not likely. You must think me a fool!" and he turned again to the window. The train was travelling at a great speed, and would not stop until it reached

Reading. They were alone, man to man, both were unarmed; why should Smith not be able to obtain these damning proofs and then defy his persecutor? One man's word is as good as another's. There were no witnesses. Hate and despair lent the little man for the time being the bravery, or rather the doggedness of a maniac. He sprang at his calm oppressor with a shriek. "Give me that book; or, by God, I'll take it."

Rollingford only half turned toward him, and brushed him aside with one hand. "Really this is very foolish. You try to intimidate me. Very droll."

But Smith would not be denied. "Give it me, I say! Give it me!"

Rollingford, in the fullness of his own power and knowledge of his superior strength, disdained his adversary, merely treating him as though he were a child, and again endeavored to put him away. But that was not to be. Smith had all his little pluck thoroughly aroused, and he leaped at him again, renewing the struggle. Rollingford now saw that he was in bitter earnest, and turning faced him as though he had become impressed with the idea that he had an opponent of moment.

"Damn you," he said, "you shall smart for this."

Smith seemed to have the courage of a demon. The repeated blows which were dealt him had no more effect than might so many onslaughts of a fly, though they deluged him with blood. He was beside himself and fought, oblivious of the consequences, what was now an earnest struggle. At

last Rollingford's superior strength gained the mastery. He caught his adversary by the throat and was strangling him by degrees. The fingers seemed embedded in his flesh, and the blood spurted from his nostrils. Still Smith did not flinch. With an almost superhuman effort he drove him back, but only for a time. Sufficient ground had been gained to bring them to the centre of the compartment, when Rollingford brought his weight to bear and the little man was hurled back with tremendous force against the carriage door. His life was being wrenched from him inch by inch. Suddenly the latch gave way, the door opened, and the two men fell from the train.

Nothing was heard or seen of the struggle. A plate-layer during the morning found the remains of both, tightly locked in each other's arms. On the news being telegraphed down the line the bodies were identified by the old butler as those of his master and Captain Rollingford.

Muriel, although she knew it not, was fleeing from one who was no more. Free from her bondage,—free from the knowledge that she was a thing bought,—free from her thraldom.

CHAPTER XIV.

YE SHALL HAVE PEACE.

OLD Professor Navello, as genial and smiling as ever, was sitting in his study in the little street off the Corso, where he had lived for years, looking over the composition of one of his most promising pupils.

He was leaning back in his chair with half-closed eyes, thoughtfully humming over the refrain which the novice had submitted to him. He was evidently well pleased with the production, for he smiled to himself, and beating time with his forefinger murmured, "*Brava! Bravissima!!*" Still, good-tempered as he undoubtedly was, he did not like to be disturbed, and he turned in a somewhat peevish manner to his old housekeeper, who entered at that moment. "What do you want?" said he.

"Nothing, sir, in particular. Only a little note which a lady handed to me and asked that it should be delivered as quickly as possible. She is waiting your answer in the reception-room."

The Professor made an impatient movement which closed the old woman's mouth with a snap, and hastily opened the envelope. "What!" he whispered. "That bright little English girl in trouble? Poor dear, poor dear." Then in his old brusque tones, "Do not keep the lady waiting outside; ask her to enter at once."

The old woman went on her mission, and the

music-master reread the letter, saying to himself, "Poor helpless child, has it come to this—has it come to this?"

The door opened gently and the kind-hearted man was on his feet to receive his visitor. He took both her little hands in his and tried to soothe her, for she was weeping.

"Nay, nay, my child, do not cry so bitterly. Tell me all your trouble and I will do everything in my power to assist you. Calm yourself, little one, and confide in me."

Muriel tried to stifle her tears.

"I am so sorry to have been obliged to come to you in this way. You remember the old days at the Hotel de Normandie. You often told me—you once wrote to me that I could earn a living by my singing, should I ever be reduced to straitened circumstances. That time has come. I am in difficulties and must make my own way in the world. I come to ask you if you can get me an engagement of any sort so that I may work for my daily bread and earn it honorably. Do you think I can do so?"

"Do so? Yes, my poor hunted lamb. Why, you are so pale and look as careworn as though you were poor; and you can never be poor while the good God preserves to you your heavenly voice. Be comforted, little wanderer. I can and will help you; and at some future time, perhaps, you will tell me your sorrow, and even I may be able to comfort you on that score too. Who knows? An old man, like myself, may prove the prince of the fairy tale and set all matters right. For the present time you

must think no more about your grievance and trust fully in me. Have you only just arrived?"

"I have been here an hour at the most. You were the first—the only person that I knew in Rome. I came directly to you."

"You did rightly. Now, while we cast our lines for a plump engagement, you must go to some place where you are known and will be treated with proper respect. You were staying at the Hotel de Normandie before, why not go there again? Yes, that will be best—by far the best." The good old friend in need did not notice her expression of despair at the mention of the place where her first great trouble had clouded her life. He was too engrossed in his plans for her future—so busy assuring her and murmuring to himself, "Yes, that will be best—by far the best."

So she on her part, fearful of his asking her questions for the present, readily acquiesced, although she well knew the pangs the very sight of the old house would conjure up. She thanked him with a full heart and went her way with his promise that he would see her early on the morrow. He courteously accompanied her to the door, engaged a carriage, saw her little hand-bag and wraps safely deposited therein, and returning to his study began wistfully to imagine what chain of adverse circumstances could have brought her to this trouble.

"Poor little dove," the kindly old man soliloquized, "she would do no wrong. She has been persecuted in some way. The child has a beautiful voice, and will surely be able to earn good

money at the opera or in concerts. We must see —we must see."

The *maitre d'hotel* remembered Muriel perfectly, and did his best to make her comfortable. She only intended to remain there until she could obtain decent, respectable lodgings and commence her career with the strictest economy. She was perfectly confident in herself, which after all is half the battle, and did not fear the future. The only thing that caused her brave little heart to quail was the remembrance of the past; she could never obliterate that from her mind, even when hopefully dreaming of the time to come. Thought of the days that were dead would arise and, like a black cloud, shut the sunshine from her path and make the way dark and drear.

The following day Signor Navello called on her, and although he had heard nothing as yet, his smiling face brought reassurance and new hope.

"Yes, my dear," he said, "continue to practice within reason, and we will soon hear great things from our little one. When she is a *prima donna* she will sometimes think of her old friend Antonio Navello, and say, 'If he had not helped me I should still be what I am, but not perhaps so soon by a week or two.' And Antonio Navello will throw his old black cap into the air and will shout, 'See, I have given an angel to the world; I have done something in my old age; I worship her with all the rest of you voiceless mortals; and take a good deal more credit to myself than I deserve.' That is the same all the world over. I am glad, glad, glad."

. . . . . .

When Navello left her he went to give his lesson to the choir of the Order of Capuchins. He was training them for one of their festivals. Among the novices was one Giovani Maderno, who was waiting to be allowed to take the vows which would separate him from the world forever. He was anxious to keep himself occupied and was an ardent supporter of the choir.

Antonio Navello had taken a great liking to this young man and did everything in his power to further and help him. They would often spend an odd quarter of an hour together and a sincere friendship sprang up between them. Navello told him of his strange visitor, not mentioning any name. Could Andrea have but guessed that it was she, and that, though ignorant of it herself, she was no longer bound, how he would have hastened to her side and poured into her willing ears the story of his misfortunes and his great love. But that was not to be. How could he dream that she was so near? He only pictured her in her northern home, sad-looking and pensive, perhaps thinking like himself of the dreary waste of life to come, and the vanished hopes of days gone by. She generally appeared to him to be standing in an old doorway, shading her eyes with her hand, and gazing earnestly for some one who would never come, though she waited so patiently—so very patiently. Yet he tried not to think about her. What had his life now to do with the earth? He was about to give his soul to God and pray for His blessing of forgetfulness.

He listened to his old friend with a sad smile

on his face—not taking much interest in his *protégé*.

"If you only saw her," Navello continued, "how she would interest you. Divinely beautiful, with a wealth of golden hair such as the old masters loved to paint. A very type of loveliness."

Maderno turned and glanced at his friend curiously.

"Strange," he thought. "It seems as though such a slight description tells of the love that is gone—of the woman who was the light of my eyes; had the fates not willed otherwise." His interest strengthened. "Has she a sad story?" he asked.

"I do not know," replied the other; "I have not inquired."

"Do you think she is worthy of your confidence?"

"Emphatically, yes; I believe her. She has a face which seems incapable of doing wrong. She is an angel of purity—a very saint in the garb of a woman."

"Bah! You can never tell. There was once a woman whom I would have trusted with my life. Had a soul lifted his voice against her, I would have branded him a liar. Yet, when the times of sorrow came, she had not the courage to be true. She feared to deny that any human being had the right to control her love, and she left me. I saw her married, and that is why I am here. I have forsaken the world—it proved so hollow to me. I have adopted the garb of Religion, which, coarse though it is, is more comfortable than the fine linen

of the old times. That is my romance. A sad one, is it not?"

"I am sorry for you."

"Thank you for your sympathy. It does me good to speak of it sometimes. I try to persuade myself that I am contented with the life that I am about to embrace, but often I ponder on the reminiscences my brain conjures up, and then I know that my love is only dormant, and that, though she be far away, she will ever be dear to me as long as I have life. I cannot forget—I cannot bring myself to think hardly of her; even now I repent what I have this moment said."

"I understand you. The world has not been a Garden of Eden to you. Happiness is far away, so you intend to give yourself to the poor and the church."

"Nothing gives me peace, and that may. I trust so."

And the old man took leave of Giovani Maderno, otherwise Andrea Bertoni, little dreaming that they had both been speaking of the same woman.

So Andrea had returned to his old home. Rome was the only tie he had, and the chances of his being recognized were almost *nil*. His hair had turned prematurely gray. His beard reached to his breast. His own mother, had she been alive, would have passed him by unknown. There was no fear of his being troubled about the old story. Then the Order which he wished to join was established in Rome. So he made his way thither, and entered his name to become a member of the

Capuchins. He had been accepted on probation, and when the time of his novitiate had passed, he would be admitted into the fraternity from which there was no retreat. His vows once given, his life would be devoted to God, until that time when He should see fit to call him to His kingdom. So he came back to the Eternal City, never expecting to leave it again. He did, as far as lay in his power, the same work as the monks of the Order; visited the sick, and was at every poor person's beck and call. So he tried to find peace. As for guessing anything from Navello's sketchy description, he would have doubted his eyes had he seen her. She was dead to him.

. . . . . .

While we are engaged in the task of retrospection, it would be well to return for a few moments to the Grange and see what has occurred there.

When the news of the accident on the railway reached Mrs. Hamilton's ears, she had as yet not heard of her daughter's absence. Smith, on leaving home, had said nothing to any one. The servants, however, had freely given vent to their suppositions; but as yet the fast-spreading rumors had not reached her so far, most probably due to the natural shrinking from imparting such news to a mother; as of course motives had been invented, which seemed to suit the case.

Mrs. Hamilton hastened to see her daughter. Within half an hour of receiving the news, she was on her way to Kirkdale Hall, and there she learned of the disappearance. The whole affair was a mystery; she could come to no conclusion,

—save the correct one, that the husband was in pursuit of his wife at the time of his terrible and violent death. Then the consciousness of her own sin came to her:

"If I had only dared to have braved the world and its troubles," she thought, "I should not have driven her to this." One reflection leads to another, and her mind wandered back to Muriel's first engagement. "No, I could not possibly have misjudged him. He was despicable—unworthy of her. In making her give up all thoughts of herself and marry a man she hated, I committed a deed which has caused all this."

The following morning an advertisement appeared in all the morning papers:

"M–R—L. Come to the Grange at once and forgive the past. Do not keep me in this awful state of suspense. Why remain away, when the man you fled from is dead?

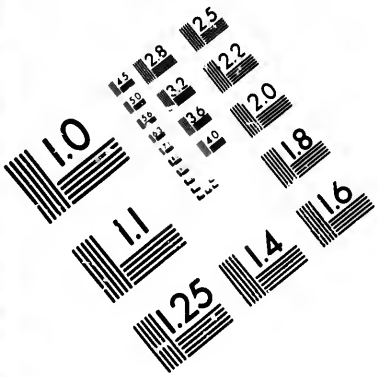
"YOUR DISTRACTED MOTHER."

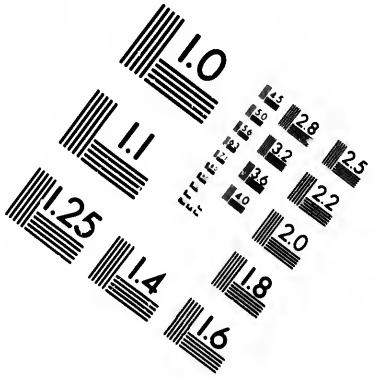
CHAPTER XV.

E'EN THROUGH THE FIRE-HEAT.

THE Hotel de Normandie is situated in the Piazza Barberini, quite close to the Capuchin Monastery.

One night Andrea Bertoni was on his way with a message to his friend Navello. He was passing the hotel windows, when a sound thrilled him to the core. It was a woman singing,—that was all.





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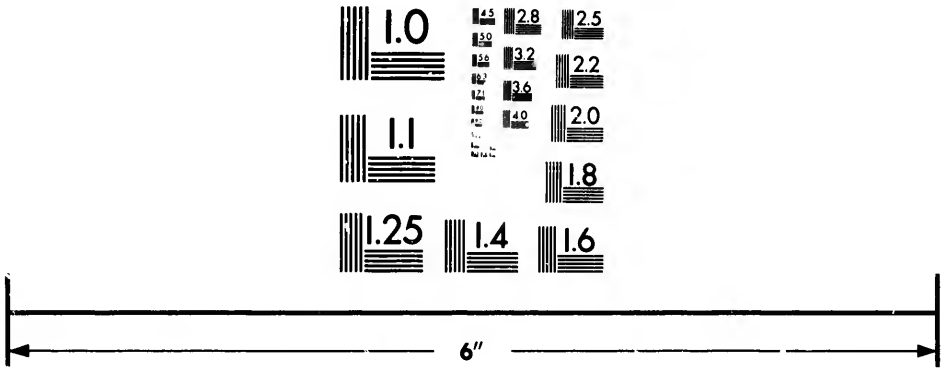

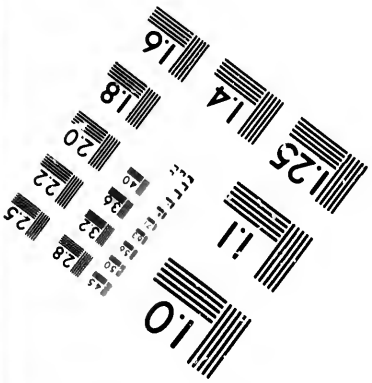

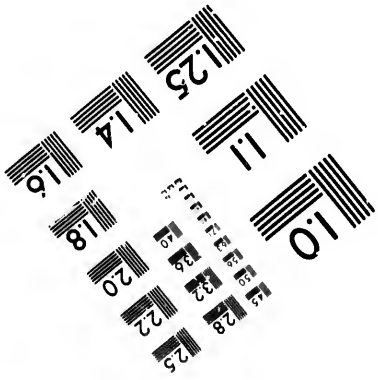

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"Great God!" he whispered, wiping his brow, "I am mad—mad. I have been thinking of her until every voice brings back the past." And he listened attentively. "Yes, truly it is the voice of a year ago, singing an old song in sweet tones:

> "'Could he come back to me, Douglas, Douglas,
> In the old likeness that I knew.'

"Then it is really she. How could her husband bring her here, of all places in the wide world? She could never have cared for me, or this could not be." Still he waited as if enchanted, stopping outside the window, crouching to hear the words he knew so well—a song that had been sung to him times out of number, thirsting to hear the old familiar strains. And the old song came in fits and starts sobbing through the casement:

> "I was not half worthy of you, Douglas,
> Not half worthy the like of you."

He stayed far into the night—long after the hotel was in total darkness,—hours after the last drunken roisterer had sought his home. At last one of the police bade him move onward. He was sadder and quieter, nothing more. All he did was to gently murmur under his breath, "If she only knew—if she only knew," and he passed on over the bridge of the Apostles to the Castle of St. Angelo. "Who would miss me," he thought, "if I were to cast myself into these waters? who would regret me? No one, no one; except perhaps dear old Navello: he would say, 'Poor fellow, I pity him.' Saving him I am alone. Yet my soul re-

volts at committing suicide. I must bear my burden, be it ever so heavy. A life of trouble and few joys has one advantage: the wayfarer becomes weary and longs for the end, then he is ready to welcome rest in the evening of his life—then he has nothing to regret, nothing to live for. *Then* the cry ascends and seeks the throne of Grace, 'God, give me Thy blessing of sleep—eternal sleep.'"

And he retraced his steps toward the Monastery.

The following day he saw Antonio, who told him that he had just come from the Hotel de Normandie. "I regret to say," he continued, "that my brilliant pupil is ill. She has overtaxed her strength, I think. Why, man, what is the matter with you? You look as if you had seen a ghost."

"Nothing, nothing."

"Well, I was saying how sorry I was to hear of such a thing. It is a serious matter for any one from the northern latitudes to fall ill in a climate like this. This is the tale as it was told to me. She had been singing last night; and before she went to her bed, she took up a paper for a few moments. She had said, prior to that, that she felt ill, and was advised to retire as quickly as possible. Suddenly she appeared to read something which startled her, for she cried, 'I will go back to her; let me go back to her at once!' and fell down in a dead faint. When they took the paper from her nerveless hands, they found that it hardly could have been anything there that had frightened her, for the page she clutched so convulsively was the advertisement sheet of the *Times* newspaper, some

days old. So they thought it was the effect of her imagination, and that she was a little light-headed. The doctor, who is in attendance on her, says it is a case of Roman fever. A bad prospect, I fear, for so fragile a girl; and they do not know her address, or where to write to any of her relations."

"Navello," the young man answered, after a short pause, "I know that I can trust you, and that you will not repeat where you have obtained your information." The old man nodded assent. "I can tell you where a telegram will reach its destination and find the mother. Perhaps I had better tell you the whole story, and it shall be the last time it shall ever pass my lips." And Andrea told the bitter history; how he had lost sight of her, and found her again—too late.

The Professor listened attentively, and when he had finished speaking, was silent. He only pressed the hand that lay in his and looked his sympathy, which was more eloquent than ten thousand words. He dotted down the address, and went to write by that night's post to the Grange, and on his way past the telegraph-office sent the following message in his best English:

"The daughter of you is at the Hotel de Normandie, Roma. She wills to see you, but is ill."

There was nothing more to be done but wait and hope.

At that time there was a pestilence in Rome. It raged the fiercest in the Ghetto—the Jewish quarter. The following midnight saw Andrea leaving a stricken hovel, where he had been assuaging the last agonies of the dying.

He wandered on in deep thought—his inclinations taking him toward the Piazza Barberini. People passed him running in the same direction. "What is it?" he inquired.

But they went on, not staying to answer his question.

At last one spoke. "Matter!" he said, "matter, indeed! Why, the Hotel de Normandie is on fire. *Fire! Fire!!*" he screamed.

And the mob took up the cry, "*Fire! Fire!*"

The news staggered him as though some one had dealt him a blow, and he ran with the crowd.

"See," they laughed, "here is an embryo monk rushing to the blaze. They are but human, these good Capuchins. How he runs! Ha! ha!"

On, on he went at his topmost speed, neither looking to the right nor left. On—on.

The hotel was one mass of flames. Great forked tongues of fire seemed to vie with each other which could leap the highest—sporting, glorying in their strength and power.

And the people laughed at him as he tried to force his way through their midst.

"See this sucking priest again. What does he want now?"

"Let me pass," he cried, "let me pass, for the love of God."

The mob saw that he was in bitter earnest and let him make his way through the dense mass.

"He is in desperate haste, this saint. Perhaps he has some mistress in the flames—some little fly-by-night; or why should the reverend friar hurry so?"

On, on he dashed—on through the flames and blinding smoke—on to the board in the hall where the names of the visitors and the numbers of the rooms are placed. So engrossed was he in his search the choking gases had no effect upon him.

"Found at last!" he cried. "I am here, in the hour of your need, to save you or share your fate! Darling, I come, I come!"

And he rushed up the already burning stairs.

The first landing was lined with flames, still he hurried on to his victory or death. He had but one aim in view. Besides, what cared he for life? He existed, nothing more—he cared not when that existence might terminate. The sooner it was over, the less pain had he to endure—the less trouble, the less dull agony of thinking what might have been.

At length he found the room for which he was in search. He forced the door open with his shoulder—it gave way with a crash—nothing could be seen but the blinding smoke and an occasional flame making its way through the interstices of the boards.

The floor was trembling—about to fall.

With a leap he was at the bedside. Clasping the fragile figure in his arms he carried his precious burden through the fiery vapors and once more faced the all-devouring element. Gaining the landing he ran down the stairs, which cracked and broke after them from their joint weights. At last, after what seemed hours, he stood upon the earth—safe and sound.

Deafening were the cheers that rang half over Rome that night.

"Why," said the people, "there's some pluck after all in these monks—these useless cumberers of the land. *Corpo di Bacco*, how strange."

He had snatched a coat in the hall, which he wrapped round her, and the spectators made way for him again. He was a hero now.

"*Bravo! bravissimo!!*"

What was their praise to him? Bah! They would have taken greater pleasure in stoning him for some trivial offence.

Others, from the accident, were in the charge of the same hospital.

"Who is it?" they asked.

"Do not stay to ask questions. Enough that it is a sufferer in need of help. What more seek you to know?" And he bore her into one of the private rooms reserved for patients who could afford to pay.

The doctor shook his head on seeing her.

"The system has undergone a severe shock," he said. "A dangerous illness, aggravated by terror and exposure, places her in a very critical condition. Unless she takes a decided turn for the better, and that shortly, I cannot answer for the consequences."

She was senseless. Nothing disturbed the silence of the room save the fitful breathing of the sufferer and the stifled sobs of the man kneeling by the bedside. In pity they had left them together after all had been done to give her comfort.

"Great God," he murmured, "grant that she may know the truth. If she must leave me, let her not go thinking me guilty and unworthy to be by her

side now in the bitter end. If she only knew—if she only knew," and the night wore on.

Toward morning she opened her eyes.

"Where am I?" she whispered; "where am I?"

"Among friends who will care for you. Do not fear."

"I am not afraid," she answered, "but I am so weak and ill that I think I am dying. If I could only see some one I knew once again before I die—once again."

"Some one you knew?"

"Some one I loved—how dearly, God alone can tell. Some one I forsook in sorrow for his sin, and then found that I could not kill my love. Some one I love now, and should have loved always."

"Darling, I am here by your side."

"You! Is it really you? The good God has answered my prayer and given you back to me. Believe me, now that my life is waning and I am nearing my Judge—believe me, they forced this marriage upon me. I have been punished. Have I atoned?"

"All is forgotten and forgiven long ago."

"Darling, they said that you were wicked and bade me not even think of you—they showed me proofs; why did I believe them?"

"Do not speak of the past," he implored; "that is over and done with now and forever."

"Ah, but I must. I cannot drift into the great unknown without your full forgiveness. I believed in your guilt. I tried to cast you out of my heart, but I could not. Say those words again, *I forgive you.*"

"I forgive you. I have forgotten everything saving that I am near you," and he kissed her poor pale face.

"Then I am happy," she said; "I go to my eternal rest, if it must be so, with a contented mind. All is dark before my eyes. Take my hand in yours. We are united, even though it be in death. Some day you will rejoin me across the dark river."

"Do not speak of death. Rather think of life —though we are parted."

"What can part us now? Nothing but the water of the gloomy stream; and the tide shall ebb and flow until that time when the pathway will be bare for you. But until then the waters are dark. No, not so very black; see how the ripples gleam in the sunshine, watch the sun-rays sparkling on the lake." She was wandering, her thoughts had gone back to the happy times that seemed so long ago. "You say that you love me, and that a happy future is before us. The good God will make our life so peaceful; even though He gives us His eternal sleep," and she looked at him vacantly. "Why are you so sad? Have you no faith? do you not see the rosy lining of the clouds? God is merciful. He will not let us suffer. If joy may not be now, we shall meet again when we are unfettered from this world—when we come to His kingdom—when we reach the Elysium of the future—then we shall have peace."

"My darling, you forget. Try to sleep."

"But are not our prospects fair? A happy heaven is before us, such as this earth can never

give—a glorious life extending throughout eternity—together—always." She laughed hysterically and her tongue wandered on, telling him her fevered thoughts—living her miserable life over again—repeating the words of the advertisement, which told that her husband was dead. "See how the river runs onward to the sea. I am floating down the tide, while you remain on shore. Do not let them separate us—do not allow them to part us."

"Never while my arm can hold you."

"Yet the cruel sea is coming between us. My darling, come back to me—come back to me!"

"Nay, dearest, I am here. They shall not divide us——"

"But we must part at the end of my journey," she sighed, "and I am content to pass through the valley of the shadow of death; for you have promised me to follow—after the night on earth is passed and the morning comes, throwing its golden light upon your unchained spirit. See how black the water is turning now—the water that divides us, I mean—that beyond is as clear as day. The dawn is breaking away on the open sea. I am so tired—so very weary—you have promised you will keep your word. We shall meet again."

"Loved one, pray for life."

"Life! I cannot pray now. Everything moves so quickly, and I can only think and speak of what I see. Now the water has gone away, and I am standing on the top of that blue mountain, which we used to call so beautiful as we stood on the Pi-

azza. You are climbing—still climbing up the hill. I am waiting for you—my darling, come—do not keep me longing here—come quickly!"

"Do not speak of leaving me. Try to live, and pray that you may not go."

"Live! With you always by my side. God, give me life, as Thou hast given me my dear one. I am tired—I am going to sleep. Kiss me once again."

And he kissed her and said: "Sleep well."

And she slept.

. . . . . .

A life was trembling in the balance—a soul was struggling to stay with an earthly love. He was by her side once more after all the weary wanderings. Fate could not be so cruel as to send forth the dreaded sentence now. If she had been alone, she would have prayed for death; now it was life: "God, give me life, as Thou hast given me my dear one."

Her supplications sought the throne; his kisses brought the color to her wan cheeks, and her new desire to live vanquished the angel of the end.

Months of pain were lightened by sun-crowned hope. "The whole world is fair, for thou art near."

They who have felt the sting of sorrow, alone can know the blessing of peace. The sufferer, racked with fiery torture, experiences heaven when the pangs abate.

A deeply repentant mother welcomes her daughter back to life; a generous man forgives the injuries and insults of the past.

There is nothing more to tell. Agony fled after

the dreary night and vanished before the beauty of a glorious day.

"The whole world is fair, for thou art near."

. . . . . .

In the hall of an English home hangs the picture of a beautiful woman caressing a bright-haired boy. Proof that the hand has not lost its cunning.

FINIS.

Extract from Mr. Sidney Dickinson's letter to the *Boston Journal*, descriptive of a trip over the Canadian Pacific Railway from Vancouver, B.C., to Montreal.

The impression that is made upon the traveller by a journey over this road is, at first, one of stupefaction, of confusion, out of which emerge slowly the most evident details. If one can find any fault with the trip, it must be upon the score of its excess of wonders. There is enough of scenery and grandeur along the line of the Canadian Pacific to make a dozen roads remarkable; after it is seen, the experiences of other journeys are quite forgotten. The road is attracting large numbers of tourists, and will attract more as its fame becomes more widely known; it is, undoubtedly, the most remarkable of all the products of this present age of iron. I have crossed the continent three times and should have some criterion for the judgment, and may say that whether we look to Ontario and Manitoba for richness of soil and peaceful and prosperous homes of men; to Lake Superior for ruggedness of shore, beauty of expanse of water, or wealth of mine and quarry; to Assiniboia and Alberta for impressive stretch of prairie and wild life of man, bird and beast, or to the Rocky, Selkirk and Cascade Mountains for sublimity and awfulness of precipice, peak and crag—we shall find them all as they nowhere else exist, even in America, the land of all lands for natural resources and wonders. No more delightful trip can be imagined than that by the Canadian Pacific Railway during the months of summer. For ourselves, until near Montreal, we found neither heat nor dust, and arrived at our journey's end with little feeling of fatigue. One point is especially worthy of remark—indeed, two, but one above all the rest. That is, the superior methods of provisioning the line, a thing in marked contrast to some roads which I could mention, where travellers are sure to be fed irregularly and wretchedly at the eating houses by the way, and, in consequence of delays, often are unable to secure any provision at all for eight or ten hours. The Canadian Pacific runs dining cars over all its line, except through the mountains, and there well managed hotels furnish a most excellent meal and at a moderate cost. In the dining cars (which are put on in relays at certain fixed points) meals are served exactly on time from day to day, and even in the wildest regions the passenger may be sure of dining, supping or breakfasting as well and cheaply as at any first-class hotel. The second point upon which comment is permissible is the invariable courtesy of all the railway's servants; I myself am much indebted to engineers, conductors and division officials for facilities in seeing and learning about the country over which we travelled. Wonderful in its construction, the road is equally admirable for the spirit and carefulness with which it is run.

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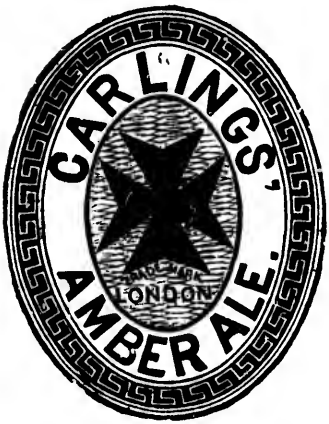

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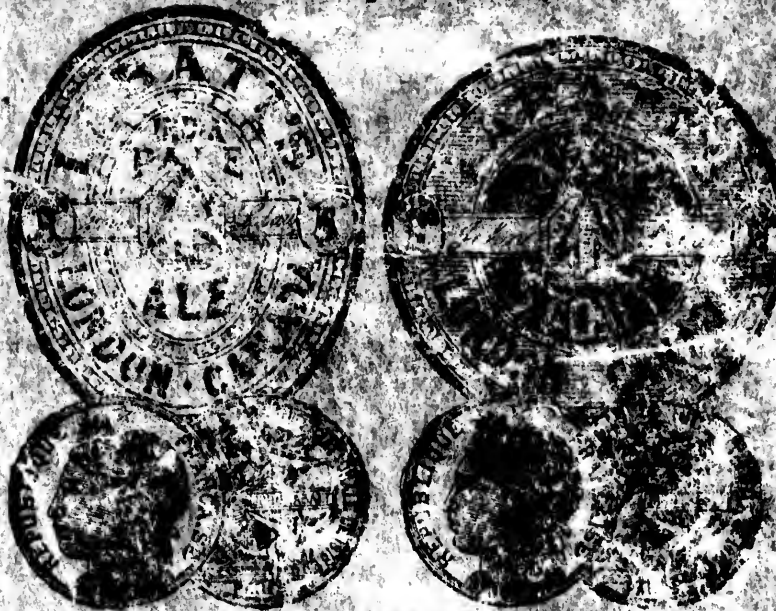

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