

EACH VOLUME SOLD SEPARATELY.

COLLECTION  
OF  
BRITISH AUTHORS  
TAUCHNITZ EDITION.

VOL. 4078.

THE DIVA'S RUBY BY F. MARION CRAWFORD.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

*Grosden, Georg Tamme, Europäischer Hof.*

LEIPZIG: BERNHARD TAUCHNITZ.

PARIS: LIBRAIRIE CH. GAULON & FILS, 39, RUE MADAME.

PARIS: THE GALIGNANI LIBRARY, 224, RUE DE RIVOLI,  
AND AT NICE, 8, AVENUE MASSÉNA.

*The Copyright of this Collection  
is purchased for Continental Circulation only, and the volumes may  
therefore not be introduced into Great Britain or her Colonies.*

*(See also pp. 3-6 of Large Catalogue.)*

## Latest Volumes.—November 1908.

**Fair Margaret.** By H. RIDER HAGGARD. 2 vols. - 4004/5.

This new work by Mr. Haggard is a tale of adventure by land and sea in which Spanish scenes and the terrible grip of the Inquisition play prominent parts. There is no lack of dramatic and unusual situations.

**All Moonshine.** By RICHARD WHITEING. 1 vol. - 4006.

The panoply of war and its attendant "glory" is here held up to ridicule by the author by means of a somnambulistic tale of astral spirits called for the moment out of their terrestrial shells. The book is full of that quiet humour and irony for which Mr. Whiteing is famous.

**The Broken Road.** By A. E. W. MASON. 1 vol. - 4007.

The building of the "Road"—a strategical highway from India's northern frontiers to the Hindu Koosh—is the *Leitmotive* of the present work. It is written with all the conception of the dramatic in fiction for which Mr. Mason is so justly famous, and the problem of the treatment of the Indians by their European rulers is a theme trenchantly elucidated.

**Through the Magic Door.** By A. CONAN DOYLE. 1 vol. - 4008.

All lovers of books will thoroughly enjoy this delightful, chatty volume. The author—himself one of the greatest masters of the penman's art—takes us through his own library of favourite writers, and discourses on them and their works with a *verve* and *esprit* almost unknown among the professional critics.

**The Square Peg.** By W. E. NORRIS. 1 vol. - 4009.

The reader is sure to sympathise with the hero's renunciation of his inheritance. The story contains two studies of the affections in Mr. Norris's own delicate and unique style. Mr. Norris's works are all written with a due regard to the proprieties, yet while his stories are suitable to young and old of both sexes, they never fail in interest.

**Pigskin and Petticoat.** By H. MATHERS. 2 v. - 4010/11.

Like Helen Mathers's last book, this is a tale of the turf. The authoress has been assisted in most of the admirable racing scenes and details by her son. The heroine is as charming and winsome as any of her predecessors, some of whom—notably Bam Wildfire, Cinders, Honey, etc.—have already become general favourites.

**Ghetto Tragedies.** By ISRAEL ZANGWILL. 2 vols. - 4012/13.

These volumes contain a number of short tales illustrative of the intimate life of the myriad Jews who dwell among us, in Russia, Poland, England, and elsewhere, and are companion volumes to the author's last work, "Ghetto Comedies."

**My Merry Rockhurst.** By AGNES and EGERTON CASTLE. 1 vol. - 4014.

A historical novel dealing with the Restoration, in which Charles and his favourite appear in *roles* typical of their times and manners. These well-known collaborators have made the days of Bath and the Restoration their speciality, and their heroes and more especially their heroines are without compare.

**The Convert.** By ELIZABETH ROBINS. 2 vols. - 4015/16.

This new novel by the celebrated authoress of "The Open Question" and "A Dark Lantern" is a drama of English society life founded on the increasing importance of the great question of Women's Suffrage. The authoress has understood how to invest a political affair with an absorbing human interest.

**The House of Lynch.** By LEONARD MERRICK. 1 v. - 4017.

Of Mr. Leonard Merrick the greatest living American critic—W. D. Howells—writes, "Why is not this masterly novelist a master universally recognised and accepted?" "The House of Lynch" is the tale of a marriage in which the American wife—a multi-millionairess—voluntarily sacrifices the whole of her enormous fortune for the sake of her husband's principles.



COLLECTION  
OF  
BRITISH AUTHORS  
TAUCHNITZ EDITION.

VOL. 4078.

THE DIVA'S RUBY. By F. MARION CRAWFORD.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

# TAUCHNITZ EDITION.

By the same Author,

MR. ISAACS . . . . .	1 v.	PIETRO GHISLERI . . . . .	2 v.
DOCTOR CLAUDIUS . . . . .	1 v.	MARION DARCHÉ . . . . .	1 v.
TO LEEWARD . . . . .	1 v.	KATHARINE LAUDERDALE . . . . .	2 v.
A ROMAN SINGER . . . . .	1 v.	THE RALSTONS . . . . .	2 v.
AN AMERICAN POLITICIAN . . . . .	1 v.	CASA BRACCIO . . . . .	2 v.
ZOROASTER . . . . .	1 v.	ADAM JOHNSTONE'S SON . . . . .	1 v.
A TALE OF A LONELY PARISH . . . . .	2 v.	TAQUISARA . . . . .	2 v.
SARACINESCA . . . . .	2 v.	A ROSE OF YESTERDAY . . . . .	1 v.
MARZIO'S CRUCIFIX . . . . .	1 v.	CORLEONE . . . . .	2 v.
PAUL PATOFF . . . . .	2 v.	VIA CRUCIS . . . . .	2 v.
WITH THE IMMORTALS . . . . .	1 v.	IN THE PALACE OF THE KING . . . . .	2 v.
GREIFENSTEIN . . . . .	2 v.	MARIETTA, A MAID OF VE- NICE . . . . .	2 v.
SANT' ILARIO . . . . .	2 v.	CECILIA . . . . .	2 v.
A CIGARETTE-MAKER'S RO- MANCE . . . . .	1 v.	THE HEART OF ROME . . . . .	2 v.
KHALED . . . . .	1 v.	WHOSOEVER SHALL OF- FEND . . . . .	2 v.
THE WITCH OF PRAGUE . . . . .	2 v.	SOPRANO . . . . .	2 v.
THE THREE FATES . . . . .	2 v.	A LADY OF ROME . . . . .	2 v.
DON ORSINO . . . . .	2 v.	ARETHUSA . . . . .	2 v.
THE CHILDREN OF THE KING . . . . .	1 v.	THE PRIMADONNA . . . . .	2 v.



# THE DIVA'S RUBY

A SEQUEL TO  
"SOPRANO" AND "THE PRIMADONNA"

BY

F. MARION CRAWFORD

AUTHOR OF "SARACINESCA," "VIA CRUCIS," "ARETHUSA,"  
ETC.

*COPYRIGHT EDITION*

IN TWO VOLUMES

VOL. I

LEIPZIG

BERNHARD TAUCHNITZ

1908.

# THE DIVA'S RUBY

A SEQUEL TO

"SOPRANO" AND "THE PRIMA DONNA"

BY  
F. MARION CRAWFORD

COMPLETE EDITION

IN TWO VOLUMES

VOL. I



LEIPZIG

VERLAG VON F. A. BROTHMAN

1908

1246 111

D 200/15



## THE DIVA'S RUBY.

### CHAPTER I.

THERE is a ruby mine hidden in the heart of the mountains near a remote little city of Central Asia, unknown to European travellers; and the secret of the treasure belongs to the two chief families of the place, and has been carefully guarded for many generations, handed down through the men from father to son; and often the children of these two families have married, yet none of the women ever learned the way to the mine from their fathers, or their brothers, or their husbands, none excepting one only, and her name was Baraka, which may perhaps mean "Blessed;" but no blessing came to her when she was born. She was much whiter and much more beautiful than the other

girls of the little Tartar city; her face was oval like an ostrich egg, her skin was as the cream that rises on sheep's milk at evening, and her eyes were like the Pools of Peace in the Valley of Dark Moons; her waist also was a slender pillar of ivory, and round her ankle she could make her thumb meet her second finger; as for her feet, they were small and quick and silent as young mice. But she was not blessed.

When she was in her seventeenth year a traveller came to the little city, who was not like her own people; he was goodly to see, and her eyes were troubled by the sight of him, as the Pools of Peace are darkened when the clouds lie on the mountain-tops and sleep all day; for the stranger was tall and very fair, and his beard was like spun gold, and he feared neither man nor evil spirit, going about alone by day and night. Furthermore, he was a great physician, and possessed a small book, about the size of a man's hand, in which was contained all the knowledge of the world. By means of this book, and three small buttons that tasted of mingled salt and sugar, he cured Baraka's father of a mighty pain in the midriff which had tormented him a whole week. He brought with him also



a written letter from a holy man to the chiefs of the town; therefore they did not kill him, though he had a good Mauser revolver with ammunition, worth much money, and other things useful to believers.

Satan entered the heart of Baraka, and she loved the traveller who dwelt in her father's house, for she was not blessed; and she stood before him in the way when he went out, and when he returned she was sitting at the door watching, and she took care to show her cream-white arm, and her slender ankle, and even her beautiful face when neither her father nor her mother was near. But he saw little and cared less, and was as grave as her father and the other greybeards of the town.

When she perceived that he was not moved by the sight of her, she watched him more closely; for she said in her girl's heart that the eyes that are blind to a beautiful woman see one of three things: gold, or power, or heaven; but her sight was fixed only on him. Then her throat was dry, her heart fluttered in her maiden breast like a frightened bird, and sometimes, when she would have tried to speak, she felt as if her tongue were broken and useless; the fire ran lightly along her

delicate body, her eyes saw nothing clearly, and a strange rushing sound filled her ears; and then, all at once, a fine dew wet her forehead and cooled it, and she trembled all over and was as pale as death—like Sappho, when a certain god-like man was near. Yet the stranger saw nothing, and his look was bright and cold as a winter's morning in the mountains.

Almost every day he went out and climbed the foot-hills alone, and when the sun was lowering he came back bringing herbs and flowers, which he dried carefully and spread between leaves of grey paper in a large book; and he wrote spells beside them in an unknown tongue, so that no one dared to touch the book when he went out, lest the genii should wake and come out from between the pages, to blind the curious and strike the gossips dumb, and cast a leprosy on the thief.

At night he lay on the roof of the fore-house beside the gate of the court, because it was cool there. Baraka came to him, before midnight, when her mother was in a deep sleep; she knelt at his side while he slept in the starlight, and she laid her head beside his, on the sack that was his pillow, and for a little while



she was happy, being near him, though he did not know she was there. But presently she remembered that her mother might wake and call her, and she spoke very softly, close to his ear, fearing greatly lest he should start from his sleep and cry out.

"The ruby mine is not far off," she said. "I know the secret place. Rubies! Rubies! Rubies! You shall have as many as you can carry of the blood-red rubies!"

He opened his eyes, and even in the starlight they were bright and cold. She stroked his hand softly and then pressed it a little.

"Come with me and you shall know the great secret," she whispered. "You shall fill this sack that is under your head, and then you shall take me with you to Egypt, and we will live in a marble palace and have many slaves, and be always together. For you will always remember that it was Baraka who showed you where the rubies were, and even when you are tired of her you will treat her kindly and feed her with fig paste and fat quails, such as I hear they have in the south all winter, and Frank rice, and coffee that

has been picked over, bean by bean, for the great men."

She said all this in a whisper, stroking his hand; and while she whispered he smiled in his great golden beard that seemed as silvery in the starlight as her father's.

"That is women's talk," he answered. "Who has seen mines of rubies? and if you know where they are, why should you show them to me? You are betrothed. If you had knowledge of hidden treasures you would keep it for your husband. This is some trick to destroy me."

"May these hands wither to the wrists if a hair of your head be harmed through me," she answered; and as she knelt beside him, the two little hands held his face towards her very tenderly, and then one of them smoothed the thick hair back from his forehead.

"You are betrothed," he repeated, "and I am your father's guest. Shall I betray him?"

"I care nothing, neither for father, nor mother, nor brothers, nor betrothed," Baraka answered. "I will give you the riches of Solomon if you will take me, for I will have no other man."

"There are no rubies," said the stranger. "Show them to me and I will believe."

The girl laughed very low.

"Did I not know you for a man of little faith?" she asked. "I have shown you my arm from the wrist to the shoulder. Is it not like the tusk of a young elephant? Yet you have not believed. I have shown you my ankles, and you have seen me span them with my fingers as I sat at the door, yet you believed not. I have unveiled my face, which it is a shame to do, but you could not believe. I have come to you in the starlight when you were asleep, and still you have no faith that I love you, though I shall be cast out to perish if I am found here. But I will give you a little handful of rubies, and you will believe, and take me, when I have shown you where you may get thousands like them."

She took from her neck a bag of antelope-skin, no larger than her closed hand, and gave it to him with the thin thong by which it had hung.

"When you have seen them in the sun you will want others," she said. "I will take you to the place, and when you have filled your sack with them you will



love me enough to take me away. It is not far to the place. In two hours we can go and come. To-morrow night, about this time, I will wake you again. It will not be safe to unbar the door, so you must let me down from this roof by a camel rope, and then follow me."

When Baraka was gone the stranger sat up on his carpet and opened the small bag to feel the stones, for he knew that he could hardly see them in the starlight; but even the touch and the weight told him something, and he guessed that the girl had not tried to deceive him childishly with bits of glass. Though the bag had been in her bosom, and the weather was hot, the stones were as cold as jade; and moreover he felt their shape and knew at once that they might really be rough rubies, for he was well versed in the knowledge of precious stones.

When the day began to dawn he went down from the roof to the common room of the forehouse, where guests were quartered, yet although there was no other stranger there he would not take the bag from his neck to examine the stones, lest someone should be watching him from a place of hiding; but afterwards, when he

was alone in the foot-hills and out of sight of the town, searching as usual for new plants and herbs, he crept into a low cave at noon, and sat down just inside the entrance, so that he could see anyone coming while still a long way off, and there he emptied the contents of the little leathern wallet into his hand, and saw that Baraka had not deceived him; and as he looked closely at the stones in the strong light at the entrance of the cave, the red of the rubies was reflected in the blue of his bright eyes, and made a little purple glare in them that would have frightened Baraka; and he smiled behind his great yellow beard.

He took from an inner pocket a folded sheet on which a map was traced in black and green ink, much corrected and extended in pencil; and he studied the map thoughtfully in the cave while the great heat of the day lasted; but the lines that his eye followed did not lead towards Persia, Palestine, and Egypt, where Baraka wished to live with him in a marble palace and eat fat quails and fig paste.

She came to him again that night on the roof, bringing with her a small bundle, tightly rolled and well tied up. He wrapped his blanket round her body,

and brought it up under her arms so that the rope should not hurt her when her weight came upon it, and so he let her down over the edge of the roof to the ground, and threw the rope after her; and he let himself over, holding by his hands, so that when he was hanging at the full length of his long arms he had only a few feet to drop, for he was very tall and the forehouse was not high, and he wished to take the rope with him.

Baraka's house was at the head of the town, towards the foot-hills; everyone was sleeping, and there was no moon. She followed the stony sheep-track that struck into the hills only a few hundred paces from the last houses, and the stranger followed her closely. He had his sack on his shoulder, his book of plants and herbs was slung behind him by a strap, and in his pockets he had all the money he carried for his travels and his letters to the chiefs, and a weapon; but he had left all his other belongings, judging them to be of no value compared with a camel-bag full of rubies, and only a hindrance, since he would have to travel far on foot before daylight, by dangerous paths.

The girl trod lightly and walked fast, and as the



man followed in her footsteps he marked the way, turn by turn, and often looked up at the stars overhead as men do who are accustomed to journeying alone in desert places. For some time Baraka led him through little valleys he had often traversed, and along hillsides familiar to him, and at last she entered a narrow ravine which he had once followed to its head, where he had found that it ended abruptly in a high wall of rock, at the foot of which there was a clear pool that did not overflow. It was darker in the gorge, but the rocks were almost white, so that it was quite possible to see the way by the faint light.

The man and the girl stood before the pool; the still water reflected the stars.

"This is the place," Baraka said. "Do you see anything?"

"I see water and a wall of rock," the man answered. "I have been here alone by day. I know this place. There is nothing here, and there is no way up the wall."

Baraka laughed softly.

"The secret could not have been kept by my fathers for fourteen generations if it were so easy to

find out," she said. "The way is not easy, but I know it."

"Lead," replied the traveller. "I will follow."

"No," returned the girl. "I will go a little way down the gorge and watch, while you go in."

The man did not trust her. How could he tell but that she had brought him to an ambush where he was to be murdered for the sake of his money and his good weapon? The rubies were real, so far as he could tell, but they might be only a bait. He shook his head.

"Listen," said Baraka. "At the other side of the pool there is a place where the water from this spring flows away under the rock. That is the passage."

"I have seen the entrance," answered the traveller. "It is so small that a dog could not swim through it."

"It looks so. But it is so deep that one can walk through it easily, with one's head above water. It is not more than fifty steps long. That is how I found it, for one day I wandered here alone in the morning for shade, when the air was like fire; and being alone I bathed in the clear pool to cool myself, and I found the way and brought back the stones, which I have

hidden ever since. For if my father and brothers know that I have seen the treasure they will surely kill me, because the women must never learn the secret. You see," she laughed a little, "I am the first of us who has known it, since many generations, and I have already betrayed it to you! They are quite right to kill us when we find it out!"

"This is an idle tale," said the traveller. "Go into the pool before me and I will believe and follow you under the rock. I will not go and leave you here."

"You are not very brave, though you are so handsome! If they come and find me here, they will kill me first."

"You say it, but I do not believe it. I think there is a deep hole in the passage and that I shall slip into it and be drowned, for no man could swim in such a place. I have but one life, and I do not care to lose it in a water-rat's trap. You must go in and lead the way if you wish me to trust you."

Baraka hesitated and looked at him.

"How can I do this before you?" she asked.

"I will not go alone," the man answered, for he suspected foul play. "Do as you will."



The girl took from her head the large cotton cloth with which she veiled herself, and folded it and laid it down on the rock by the pool; then she let her outer tunic of thin white woollen fall to the ground round her feet and stepped out of it, and folded it also, and laid it beside her veil, and she stood up tall and straight as a young Egyptian goddess in the starlight, clothed only in the plain shirt without sleeves which the women of her country wear night and day; and the traveller saw her cream-white arms near him in the soft gloom, and heard her slip off her light shoes.

"I will go before you," she said; and she stepped into the pool and walked slowly through the water.

The traveller followed her as he was, for he was unwilling to leave behind him anything he valued, and what he had was mostly in the pockets of his coat, and could not be much hurt by water. Even his pressed herbs and flowers would dry again, his cartridges were quite waterproof, his letters were in an impervious case, and his money was in coin. When he entered the pool he took his revolver from its place and held it above the water in front of him as he went on. With his

other hand he carried the sack he had brought, which was one of those that are made of Bokhara carpet and are meant to sling on a camel.

Baraka was almost up to her neck in the water when she reached the other side of the pool; a moment later she disappeared under the rock, and the traveller bent his knees to shorten himself, for there was only room for his head above the surface, and he held up his revolver before his face to keep the weapon dry, and also to feel his way, lest he should strike against any jutting projection of the stone and hurt himself. He counted the steps he took, and made them as nearly as possible of equal length. He felt that he was walking on perfectly smooth sand, into which his heavily shod feet sank a very little. There was plenty of air, for the gentle draught followed him from the entrance and chilled the back of his neck, which had got wet; yet it seemed hard to breathe, and as he made his way forward his imagination pictured the death he must die if the rock should fall in behind him. He was glad that the faint odour of Baraka's wet hair came to his nostrils in the thick darkness, and it was very pleasant to hear her voice when she spoke at last.

"It is not far," she said quietly. "I begin to see the starlight on the water."

The passage did not widen or grow higher as it went on. If it had been dry, it would have been a commodious cave, open at each end, wide at the bottom and narrowing to a sharp angle above. But the pool was fed by a spring that never failed nor even ebbed, though it must sometimes have overflowed down the ravine through which the two had reached the pool.

They came out from under the rock at last, and were in the refreshing outer air. The still water widened almost to a circle, a tiny lake at the bottom of a sort of crater of white stone that collected and concentrated the dim light. On two sides there were little crescent beaches of snow-white sand, that gleamed like silver. The traveller looked about him and upward to see if there were any way of climbing up; but as far as he could make out in the half-darkness the steep rock was as smooth as if it had been cut with tools, and it sloped away at a sharp angle like the sides of a funnel.

Baraka went up towards the right, and the bottom



shelved, so that presently the water was down to her waist, and then she stood still and pointed to a dark hollow just above the little beach. Her wet garment clung to her, and with her left hand she began to wring the water from her hair behind her head.

"The rubies are there," she said, "thousands upon thousands of them. Fill the sack quickly, but do not take more than you can carry, for they are very heavy."

The traveller waded out upon the beach, and the water from his clothes ran down in small rivulets and made little round holes in the white sand. He put down his revolver in a dry place, and both his hands felt for the precious stones in the shadowy hollow, loosening small fragments of a sort of brittle crust in which they seemed to be clustered.

"You cannot choose," Baraka said, "for you cannot see, but I have been here by daylight and have seen. The largest are on the left side of the hollow, near the top."

By the stars the traveller could see the pieces a little, as he brought them out, for the white rocks col-

lected the light; he could see many dark crystals, but as to what they were he had to trust the girl.

"Do not take more than you can carry," she repeated, "for you must not throw them away to lighten the burden."

"You can carry some of them," answered the traveller.

He broke up the crust of crystals with a small geologist's hammer and tore them out like a madman, and his hands were bleeding, for though he was a philosopher the thirst for wealth had come upon him when he felt the riches of empires in his grasp, and the time was short; and although he knew that he might some day come back with armed men to protect him, and workmen to help him, he knew also that to do this he must share the secret with the over-lord of that wild country, and that his portion might be the loss of his head. So he tore at the ruby crust with all his might, and as he was very strong, he broke out great pieces at once.

"We cannot carry more than that, both of us together," said Baraka, though she judged more by the sound of his work than by what she could see.

He lifted the sack with both his hands, and he knew by its weight that she was right. Under the water it would be easy enough to carry, but it would be a heavy load for a man to shoulder.

"Come," Baraka said, "I will go back first."

She moved down into the deeper water again, till it was up to her neck; and feeling the way with her hands she went in once more under the rock. The traveller followed her cautiously, carrying the heavy sack under water with one hand and holding up his revolver with the other, to keep it dry.

"I begin to see the starlight on the water," Baraka said, just as before, when they had been going in.

When she had spoken, she heard a heavy splash not far off, and the water in the subterranean channel rose suddenly and ran past her in short waves, three of which covered her mouth in quick succession and reached to her eyes, and almost to the top of her head, but sank again instantly; and they passed her companion in the same way, wetting his weapon.

"Go back," Baraka said, when she could speak; "the rock is falling."

The traveller turned as quickly as he could, and



she came after him, gaining on him because he carried the heavy sack and could not move as fast as she. He felt his damp hair rising with fear, for he believed that, after all, she had brought him into a trap. They reached the opening and came out into the pool again.

"You have brought me here to die," he said. "Your father and your brothers have shut up the entrance with great stones, and they will go up the mountain and let themselves down from above with ropes and shoot me like a wolf in a pitfall. But you shall die first, because you have betrayed me."

So he cocked his revolver and set the muzzle against her head, to kill her, holding her by her slender throat with his other hand; for they were in shallow water and he had dropped the sack in the pool.

Baraka did not struggle or cry out.

"I would rather die by your hand than be alive in another man's arms," she said, quite quietly.

He let her go, merely because she was so very brave; for he did not love her at all. She knew it, but that made no difference to her, since no other woman was near; if they could get out alive with the rubies

she was sure that he would love her for the sake of the great wealth she had brought him. If they were to starve to death at the bottom of the great rock wall in the mountains, she would probably die first, because he was so strong; and then nothing would matter. It was all very simple.

The traveller fished up the sack and waded out upon the tiny beach, and again the water ran down from his clothes in rivulets and made round holes in the white sand. He looked up rather anxiously, though he could not have seen a head looking down from above if there had been anyone there. There was not light enough. He understood also that if the men were going to shoot at him from the height they would wait till it was daylight. Baraka stood still in the water, which was up to her waist, and he paid no attention to her, but sat down to think what he should do. The night was warm, and his clothes would dry on him by degrees. He would have taken them off and spread them out, for he thought no more of Baraka's presence than if she had been a harmless young animal, standing there in the pool, but he could not tell what might happen at any moment, and so long as he was dressed

and had all his few belongings about him, he felt ready to meet fate.

Baraka saw that he did not heed her, and was thinking. She came up out of the water very slowly, and she modestly loosened her wet garment from her, so that it hung straight when she stood at the end of the beach, as far from the traveller as possible. She, also, sat down to dry herself: and there was silence for a long time.

After half-an-hour the traveller rose and began to examine the rock, feeling it with his hands wherever there was the least shadow, as high as he could reach, to find if there was any foothold, though he was already sure that there was not.

"There is no way out," Baraka said at last. "I have been here by day. I have seen."

"They will let themselves down from above with ropes, till they are near enough to shoot," the traveller answered.

"No," replied Baraka. "They know that you have a good weapon, and they will not risk their lives. They will leave us here to starve. That is what they will do. It is our portion, and we shall die. It will be easy,



for there is water, and when we are hungry we can drink our fill."

The traveller knew the people amongst whom he had wandered, and he did not marvel at the girl's quiet tone; but it chilled his blood, for he understood that she was in earnest; and, moreover, she knew the place, and that there was no way out.

"You said well that I had brought you here to die," she said presently, "but I did not know it, therefore I must lose my life also. It is my portion. God be praised."

He was shamed by her courage, for he loved life well, and he held his head down and said nothing as he thought of what was to come. He knew that with plenty of good water a man may live for two or three weeks without food. He looked at the black pool in which he could not even see the reflections of the stars as he sat, because the opening above was not very wide, and he was low down, a good way from the water's edge. It seemed a good way, but perhaps it was not more than three yards.

"You will die first," Baraka said dreamily. "You

are not as we are, you cannot live so long without food."

The traveller wondered if she were right, but he said nothing.

"If we had got out with the treasure," continued Baraka, "you would have loved me for it, because you would have been the greatest man in the world through me. But now, because we must die, you hate me. I understand. If you do not kill me you will die first; and when you are dead I shall kiss you many times, till I die also. It will be very easy. I am not afraid."

The man sat quite still and looked at the dark streak by the edge of the pool where the water had wet it when the falling boulder outside had sent in little waves. He could see it distinctly. Again there was silence for a long time. Now and then Baraka loosened her only garment about her as she sat, so that it might dry more quickly; and she quietly wrung out her thick black hair and shook it over her shoulders to dry it too, and stuck her two silver pins into the sand beside her.

Still the traveller sat with bent head, gazing at the edge of the pool. His hands were quite dry now, and

he slowly rubbed the clinging moisture from his revolver. Some men would have been thinking, in such a plight, that if starving were too hard to bear, a bullet would shorten their sufferings in the end; but this man was very full of life, and the love of life, and while he lived he would hope.

He still watched the same dark streak where the sand was wet; he had not realised that he had been so far from it till then, but by looking at it a long time in the starlight his sight had probably grown tired, so that he no longer saw it distinctly. He raised himself a little on his hands and pushed himself down till it was quite clearly visible again, and he looked at the rock opposite and up to the stars again, to rest his eyes. He was not more than a yard from the water now.

The place was very quiet. From far above a slight draught of air descended, warm from the rocks that had been heated all day in the sun. But there was no sound except when Baraka moved a little.

Presently she did not move any more, and when the traveller looked he saw that she was curled up on the sand, as Eastern women lie when they sleep, and her head rested on her hand; for her garment was dry



now, and she was drowsy after the walk and the effort she had made. Besides, since there was no escape from death, and as the man did not love her, she might as well sleep if she could. He knew those people and understood; and he did not care, or perhaps he also was glad. He was a man who could only have one thought at a time. When he had left the house of Baraka's father he had been thinking only of the rubies, but now that he was in danger of his life he could think only of saving it, if there were any way. A woman could never be anything but a toy to him, and he could not play with toys while death was looking over his shoulder. He was either too big for that, or too little; every man will decide which it was according to his own measure. But Baraka, who had not been taught to think of her soul nor to fear death, went quietly to sleep now that she was quite sure that the traveller would not love her.

He had been certain of the distance between his feet and the water's edge as he sat; it had been a yard at the most. But now it was more; he was sure that it was a yard and a half at the least. He rubbed his eyes and looked hard at the dark belt of wet sand, and

it was twice as wide as it had been. The water was still running out somewhere, but it was no longer running in, and in an hour or two the pool would be dry. The traveller was something of an engineer, and understood sooner than an ordinary man could have done, that his enemies had intentionally stopped up the narrow entrance through which he had come, both to make his escape impossible and to hasten his end by depriving him of water. The fallen boulder alone could not have kept out the overflow of the spring effectually. They must have shovelled down masses of earth, with the plants that grew in it abundantly, and filled it with twining threadlike roots, and they must have skilfully forced quantities of the stuff into the openings all round the big stone, making a regular dam against the spring which would soon run down in the opposite direction. They knew, of course, that Baraka had led him to the place and had gone in with him, for she had left all her outer garments outside, and they meant that she should die also, with her secret. In a week, or a fortnight, or a month, they would come and dig away the dam and pry the boulder aside, and would get in and find the white bones of the two on the sand, after the

vultures had picked them clean; and they would take the traveller's good revolver, and his money.

He thought of all these things as he sat there in the dim light, and watched the slow receding of the water-line, and listened to the girl's soft and regular breathing. There was no death in her dream, as she slept away the last hours of the night, though there might not be many more nights for her. He heard her breath, but he did not heed her, for the water was sinking before him, sinking away into the sand, now that it was no longer fed from the opening.

He sat motionless, and his thoughts ran madly from hope to despair and back again to hope. The water was going down, beyond question; if it was merely draining itself through the sand to some subterranean channel, he was lost, but if it was flowing away through any passage like the one by which he had entered, there was still a chance of escape,—a very small chance. When death is at the gate the tiniest loophole looks wide enough to crawl through.

The surface of the pool subsided, but there was no loophole; and as the traveller watched, hope sank in his heart, like the water in the hollow of the sand; but



Baraka slept on peacefully, curled up on her side like a little wild animal. When the pool was almost dry the traveller crept down to the edge and drank his fill, that he might not begin to thirst sooner than need be; and just then day dawned suddenly and the warm darkness gave way to a cold light in a few moments.

Immediately, because it was day, Baraka stretched herself on the sand and then sat up; and when she saw what the traveller was doing she also went and drank as much as she could swallow, for she had understood why he was drinking as soon as she saw that the pool was nearly dry. When she could drink no more she looked up at the rocks high overhead, and they were already white and red and yellow in the light of the risen sun; for in that country there is no very long time between dark night and broad day.

Baraka sat down again, on the spot where she had slept, but she said nothing. The man was trying to dig a little hole in the wet sand with his hands, beyond the water that was still left, for perhaps he thought that if he could make a pit on one side, some water would stay in it; but the sand ran together as soon as he moved it; and presently, as he bent over, he felt that

he was sinking into it himself, and understood that it was a sort of quicksand that would suck him down. He therefore threw himself flat on his back, stretching out his arms and legs, and, making movements as if he were swimming, he worked his way from the dangerous place till he was safe on the firm white beach again. He sat up then, and bent his head till his forehead pressed on his hands, and he shut his eyes to keep out the light of day. He had not slept, as Baraka had, but he was not sleepy; perhaps he would not be able to sleep again before the end came. Baraka watched him quietly, for she understood that he despaired of life, and she wondered what he would do; and, besides, he seemed to her the most beautiful man in the world, and she loved him, and she was going to die with him.

It comforted her to think that no other woman could get him now. It was almost worth while to die for that alone; for she could not have borne that another woman should have him since he despised her, and if it had come to pass she would have tried to kill that other. But there was no danger of such a thing now; and he would die first, and she would kiss him many times when he was dead, and then she would die also.

The pool was all gone by this time, leaving a funnel-shaped hollow in the sand where it had been. If any water still leaked through from without it lost itself under the sand, and the man and the girl were at the bottom of a great natural well that was quite dry. Baraka looked up, and she saw a vulture sitting in the sun on a pinnacle, three hundred feet above her head. He would sit there till she was dead, for he knew what was coming; then he would spread his wings a little and let himself down awkwardly, half-flying and half-scrambling. When he had finished, he would sit and look at her bones and doze, till he was able to fly away.

Baraka thought of all this, but her face did not change, and when she had once seen the vulture she did not look at him again, but kept her eyes fixed, without blinking, on her companion's bent head. To her he seemed the most handsome man that had ever lived. There, beside him, lay his camel-bag, and in it there were rubies worth a kingdom; and Baraka was very young and was considered beautiful too, among the wild people to whom she belonged. But her father had chosen her name in an evil hour, for she was



indeed not blessed, since she was to die so young; and the man with the beard of spun gold and the very white skin did not love her, and would not even make pretence of loving, though for what was left of life she would have been almost satisfied with that.

The hours passed, and the sun rose higher in the sky and struck deeper into the shady well, till he was almost overhead, and there was scarcely any shadow left. It became very hot and stifling, because the passage through which the air had entered with the water was shut up. Then the traveller took off his loose jacket, and opened his flannel shirt at the neck, and turned up his sleeves for coolness, and he crept backwards into the hollow where the ruby mine was, to shelter himself from the sun. But Baraka edged away to the very foot of the cliff, where there remained a belt of shade, even at noon; and as she sat there she took the hem of her one garment in her hands and slowly fanned her little feet. Neither he nor she had spoken for many hours, and she could see that in the recess of the rock he was sitting as before, with his forehead against his hands that were clasped on his knees, in the attitude and bearing of despair.

He began to be athirst now, in the heat. If he had not known that there was no water he could easily have done without it through a long day, but the knowledge that there was none, and that he was never to drink again, parched his life and his throat and his tongue till it felt like a dried fig in his mouth. He did not feel hunger, and indeed he had a little food in a wallet he carried; but he could not have eaten without water, and it did not occur to him that Baraka might be hungry. Perhaps, even if he had known that she was, he would not have given her of what he had; he would have kept it for himself. What was the life of a wild hill-girl compared with his? But the vulture was watching him, as well as Baraka, and would not move from its pinnacle till the end, though days might pass.

The fever began to burn the traveller, the fever of thirst which surely ends in raving madness, as he knew, for he had wandered much in deserts, and had seen men go mad for lack of water. His hands felt red hot, the pulses were hammering at his temples, and his tongue became as hot as baked clay; he would have borne great pain for a time if it could have brought

sleep, for this was much worse than pain, and it made sleep impossible. He tried to take account of what he felt, for he was strong, and he was conscious that the heat of the fever, and the throbbing in his arteries, and the choking dryness in his mouth and throat, were not really his main sensations, but only accessories to it or consequences of it. The real suffering was the craving for the sight, the touch, and the taste of water; to see it alone would be a relief, even if he were not allowed to drink, and to dip his hands into a stream would be heaven though he were not permitted to taste a drop. He understood, in a strangely clear way, that what suffered now was not, in the ordinary sense, his own self, that is, his nerves, but the physical composition of his body, which was being by degrees deprived of the one prime ingredient more necessary than all others. He knew that his body was eight-tenths water, or thereabouts, but that this proportion was fast decreasing by the process of thirst, and that what tormented him was the unsettling of the hydrostatic balance which nature requires and maintains where there is any sort of life in animals, plants, or stones; for stones live and are not even temporarily dead till they are calcined to the



state of quicklime, or hydraulic cement, or plaster of Paris; and they come to life again with furious violence and boiling heat if they are brought into contact with water suddenly; or they regain the living state by slow degrees if they are merely exposed to dampness. The man knew that what hurt him was the battle between forces of nature which was being fought in his flesh, and it was as much more terrible than the mere pain his fleshly nerves actually suffered from it, as real death is more awful than the most tremendous representation of it that ever was shown in a play. Yet a stage tragedy may draw real burning tears of sorrow and sympathy from them that look on.

The traveller was a modern man of science, and understood these things, but the knowledge of them did not make it easier to bear thirst or to die of hunger.

Baraka was not thirsty yet, because she had drunk her fill in the morning, and was not used to drink often; it was enough that she could look at the man she loved, for the end would come soon enough without thinking about it. All day long the traveller crouched in the hollow of the ruby cave, and Baraka watched him from her place; when it grew dark the vulture on the pinnacle

of rock thrust its ugly head under its wing. As soon as Baraka could not see any more she curled herself up on the white sand like a little wild animal and went to sleep, though she was thirsty.

It was dawn when she awoke, and her linen garment was damp with the dew, so that the touch of it refreshed her. The traveller had come out and was lying prone on the sand, his face buried against his arm, as soldiers sleep in a bivouac. She could not tell whether he was asleep or not, but she knew that he could not see her, and she cautiously sucked the dew from her garment, drawing it up to her mouth and squeezing it between her lips.

It was little enough refreshment, but it was something, and she was not afraid, which made a difference. Just as she had drawn the edge of her shift down and round her ankles again, the man turned on his side suddenly, and then rose to his feet. For an instant he glared at her, and she saw that his blue eyes were bloodshot and burning; then he picked up the heavy camel-bag, and began to make his way round what had been the beach of the pool, towards the passage through which they had entered, and which was now a

dry cave, wide below, narrow at the top, and between six and seven feet high. He trod carefully and tried his way, for he feared the quicksand, but he knew that there was none in the passage, since he had walked through the water and had felt the way hard under his feet. In a few moments he disappeared under the rock.

Baraka knew what he meant to do; he was going to try to dig through the dam at the entrance to let the water in, even if he could not get out. But she was sure that this would be impossible, for by this time her father and brothers had, no doubt, completely filled the spring with earth and stones, and had turned the water in the other direction. The traveller must have been almost sure of this too, else he would have made the attempt much sooner. It was the despotism of thirst that was driving him to it now, and he had no tool with which to dig—it would be hopeless work with his hands.

The girl did not move, for in that narrow place and in the dark she could not have helped him. She sat and waited. By-and-by he would come out, drenched with sweat and yet parching with thirst, and he would glare at her horribly again; perhaps he would be mad



when he came out and would kill her because she had brought him there.

After some time she heard a very faint sound overhead, and when she looked up the vulture was gone from his pinnacle. She wondered at this, and her eyes searched every point and crevice of the rock as far as she could see, for she knew that the evil bird could only have been frightened away; and though it fears neither bird nor beast, but only man, she could not believe that any human being could find a foothold near to where it had perched.

But now she started, and held her breath and steadied herself with one hand on the sand beside her as she leaned back to look up. Something white had flashed in the high sun, far up the precipice, and the sensation the sight left was that of having seen sunshine on a moving white garment.

For some seconds, perhaps for a whole minute, she saw nothing more, though she gazed up steadily, then there was another flash and a small patch of snowy white was moving slowly on the face of the cliff, at some distance above the place where the vulture had been. She bent her brows in the effort to see more by

straining her sight, and meanwhile the patch descended faster than it seemed possible that a man could climb down that perilous steep. Yet it was a man, she knew from the first, and soon she saw him plainly, in his loose shirt and white turban. Baraka thought of a big white moth crawling on a flat wall. She was light of foot and sure of hold herself, and could step securely where few living things could move at all without instant danger, but she held her breath as she watched the climber's descent towards her. She saw him plainly now, a brown-legged, brown-armed man in a white shirt and a fur cap, and he had a long gun slung across his back. Nearer still, and he was down to the jutting pinnacle where the vulture had sat, and she saw his black beard; still nearer by a few feet and she knew him, and then her glance darted to the mouth of the cave, at the other end of which the man she loved was toiling desperately alone in the dark to pierce the dam of earth and stones. It was only a glance, in a second of time, but when she looked up the black-bearded man had already made another step downwards. Baraka measured the distance. If he spoke loud now she could understand him, and he could hear her answer.

He paused and looked down, and he saw her as plainly as she saw him. She knew him well, and she knew why he had come, with his long gun. He was her father's brother's son, to whom she was betrothed; he was Saäd, and he was risking his life to come down and kill her and the man whom she had led to the ruby mines for love's sake.

He would come down till he was within easy range, and then he would wait till he had a fair chance at them, when they were standing still, and she knew that he was a dead shot. The traveller's revolver could never carry as far as the long gun, Baraka was sure, and Saäd could come quite near with safety, since he seemed able to climb down the face of a flat rock where there was not foothold for a cat. He was still descending, he was getting very near; if the traveller were not warned he might come out of the cave unsuspectingly and Saäd would shoot him. Saäd would wish to shoot him first, because of his revolver, and then he would kill Baraka at his leisure. If he fired at her first the traveller would have a chance at him while he was reloading his old gun. She understood why he had not killed her yet, if indeed he wanted to, for it



was barely possible that he loved her enough to take her alive.

After hesitating for a few moments, not from fear but in doubt, she gathered herself to spring, and made a dash like an antelope along the sand for the mouth of the cave, for she knew that Saäd would not risk wasting his shot on her while she was running. She stopped just under the shelter of the rock and called inward.

"Saäd is coming down the rock with his gun!" she cried; "load your weapon!"

When she had given this warning she went out again and stood before the mouth of the cave with her back to it. Saäd was on the rock, not fifty feet above the ground, at the other side of the natural wall, but looked as if even he could get no farther down. He was standing with both his heels on a ledge so narrow that more than half the length of his brown feet stood over it; he was leaning back, flat against the sloping cliff, and he had his gun before him, for he was just able to use both his hands without falling. He pointed the gun at her and spoke.

"Where is the man?"

"He is dead," Baraka answered without hesitation.

"Dead? Already?"

"I killed him in his sleep," she said, "and I dragged his body into the cave for fear of the vulture, and buried it in the sand. Be not angry, Saäd, though he was my father's guest. Come down hither and I will tell all. Then you shall shoot me or take me home to be your wife, as you will, for I am quite innocent."

She meant to entice him within range of the stranger's weapon.

"There is no foothold whereby to get lower," he answered, but he rested the stock of his gun on the narrow ledge behind him.

"Drag out the man's body, that I may see it."

"I tell you I buried it. I killed him the night before last; I cannot dig him up now."

"Why did you run to the mouth of the cave when you saw me, if the man is dead?"

"Because at first I was afraid you would shoot me from above, therefore I took shelter."

"Why did you come out again, if you were in fear?"

"After I had run in I was ashamed, for I felt sure that you would not kill me without hearing the truth.

So I came out to speak with you. Get down, and I will show you the man's grave."

"Have I wings? I cannot come down. It is impossible."

Baraka felt a puff of hot air pass her, just above her right ankle, and at the same instant she heard a sharp report, not very loud, and more like the snapping of a strong but very dry stick than the explosion of firearms. She instinctively sprang to the left, keeping her eyes on Saäd.

For a moment he did not move. But he was already dead as he slowly bent forward from the rock, making a deep obeisance with both arms hanging down before him, so that his body shot down perpendicularly to the sand, where it struck head first, rolled over and lay motionless in a heap. The traveller's was a Mauser pistol that would have killed as surely at five hundred yards as fifty; and the bullet had gone through the Tartar's brain.

Baraka sprang up the sandy slope and ran along the narrow beach to the body. In an instant she had detached the large brown water-gourd from the thong by which it had hung over Saäd's shoulder, and she felt



that it was full. Without a thought for herself she hastened back to the mouth of the cave where the traveller was now standing. His face was dripping with perspiration that ran down into his matted golden beard, his eyes were wild, his hands were bleeding.

"Drink!" cried Baraka joyfully, and she gave him the gourd.

He gripped it as a greedy dog snaps at a bit of meat, and pulling out the wooden plug he set the gourd to his lips, with an expression of beatitude. But he was an old traveller and only drank a little, knowing that his life might depend on making the small supply last. A gourd of water was worth more than many rubies just then.

"Are you very thirsty yet?" he asked in a harsh voice.

"No," answered Baraka bravely; "keep it for yourself."

His hand closed round the neck of the gourd and he looked up towards the rocks above. The vulture had come back and was circling slowly down.

"You had better bury the body, while I go on work-

ing," said the traveller, turning back into the cave, and taking the gourd with him.

Baraka had marked the place where he had tried to dig for water and had almost disappeared in the quicksand. She took from the body the wallet, in which were dates and some half-dry bread, and then dragged and pushed, and rolled the dead man from the place where he had fallen. The vulture sat on the lowest ledge where his claws could find a hold, and though he watched her with horrible red eyes while she robbed him of his prey, he did not dare go nearer.

The body sank into the moving sand, and Baraka had to roll herself back to firmer ground in haste to escape being swallowed up with the dead man. The last she saw of him was one brown foot sticking up. It sank slowly out of sight, and then she went to the hollow where the ruby mine was and took up a piece of the broken crust, full of precious stones, and threw it at the vulture as hard as she could. It did not hit him, but he at once tumbled off the ledge into the air, opened his queer, bedraggled wings and struck upwards.

Then Baraka sat down in the shade and slowly

brushed away the dry sand that had got into the folds of her linen garment, and looked steadily at the mouth of the cave and tried not to realise that her throat was parched and her lips almost cracking with thirst, and that the traveller had a gourd almost full of water with him. For she loved him, and was willing to die that he might live a little longer; besides, if he succeeded in digging his way out, there would be plenty to drink, and when he was free she was sure that he would love her because she had made him so rich.

The sun rose higher and at last shone down to the bottom of the chasm, and she sat in the narrow strip of shade, where she had passed most of the previous day. She was very thirsty and feverish, and felt tired, and wished she could sleep, but could not. Still the traveller toiled in the darkness, and from time to time she heard sounds from far away as of stones and loose earth falling. He was still working hard, for he was very strong and he was desperate.

Baraka thought that if he was able to dig through the dam the water would run in again, and she watched the sand for hours, but it was drier than ever. The



shadow broadened again, and crept up the rock quickly as the afternoon passed.

It was a long time since she had heard any sound from the cave; she went to the entrance and listened, but all was quite still. Perhaps the traveller had fallen asleep from exhaustion, too tired even to drag himself out into the air when he could work no longer. She sat down in the entrance and waited.

An hour passed. Perhaps he was dead. At the mere inward suggestion Baraka sprang to her feet, and her heart beat frantically, and stood still an instant, and then beat again as if it would burst, and she could hardly breathe. She steadied herself against the rock, and then went in to know the truth, feeling her way, and instinctively shading her eyes as many people do in the dark.

A breath of cool air made her open them, and to her amazement there was light before her. She thought she must have turned quite round while she was walking, and that she was going back to the entrance, so she turned again. But in a few seconds there was light before her once more, and soon she saw the dry sand,

full of her footprints and the traveller's, and then the hollow where the mine was came in sight.

She retraced her steps a second time, saw the light as before, ran forward on the smooth sand and stumbled upon a heap of earth and stones, just as she saw the sky through an irregular opening on the level of her face. Scarcely believing her senses she thrust out her hand towards the hole. It was real, and she was not dreaming; the traveller had got out and was gone, recking little of what might happen to her, since he was free with his treasure.

Baraka crept up the slope of earth as quickly as she could and got out; if she had hoped to find him waiting for her she was disappointed, for he was nowhere to be seen. He had got clear away, with his camel-bag full of rubies. A moment later she was lying on the ground, with her face in the little stream, drinking her fill, and forgetful even of the man she loved. In order to deprive them of water the men had dug a channel by which it ran down directly from the spring to the ravine on that side; then they had blocked up the entrance with stones and earth, believing that one man's strength could never suffice to break

through, and they had gone away. They had probably buried or burnt Baraka's clothes, for she did not see them anywhere.

She ate some of the dates from the dead man's wallet, and a bit of the dry black bread, and felt revived, since her greatest need had been for water, and that was satisfied. But when she had eaten and drunk, and had washed herself in the stream and twisted up her hair, she sat down upon a rock; and she felt so tired that she would have fallen asleep if the pain in her heart had not kept her awake. She clasped her hands together on her knees and bent over them, rocking herself.

When nearly an hour had passed she looked up and saw that the sun was sinking, for the shadows were turning purple in the deep gorge, and there was a golden light on the peaks above. She listened then, holding her breath; but there was no sound except the tinkling of the tiny stream as it fell over a ledge at some distance below her, following its new way down into the valley.

She rose at last, looked upward, and seemed about to go away when a thought occurred to her, which



afterwards led to very singular consequences. Instead of going down the valley or climbing up out of it, she went back to the entrance of the cave, taking the wallet with her, dragged herself in once more over the loose stones and earth, reached the secret hollow where the pool had been, and made straight for the little mine of precious stones. The traveller had broken out many more than he had been able to carry, but she did not try to collect them all. She was not altogether ignorant of the trade carried on by the men of her family for generations, and though she had not the least idea of the real value of the finest of the rubies, she knew very well that it would be wise to take many small ones which she could exchange for clothing and necessaries with the first women she met in the hills, while hiding the rest of the supply she would be able to carry in the wallet.

When she had made her wise selection, she looked once more towards the quicksand, and left the place for ever. Once outside she began to climb the rocks as fast as she could, for very soon it would be night and she would have to lie down and wait many hours for the day, since there was no moon, and the way was

very dangerous, even for a Tartar girl who could almost tread on air.

High up on the mountain, over the dry well where Baraka and the stranger had been imprisoned, the vulture perched alone with empty claw and drooping wings. But it was of no use for him to wait; the living, who might have died of hunger and thirst, were gone, and the body of dead Saäd lay fathoms deep in the quicksand, in the very maw of the mountain.

## CHAPTER II.

THERE was good copy for the newspapers on both sides of the Atlantic in the news that the famous lyric soprano, Margarita da Cordova, whose real name was Miss Margaret Donne, was engaged to Monsieur Konstantin Logotheti, a Greek financier of large fortune established in Paris, and almost as well known to art-collectors as to needy governments, would-be promoters, and mothers of marriageable daughters. The mothers experienced a momentary depression such as Logotheti himself felt when an historical Van Dyck which he wanted was secretly sold out of a palace in Genoa to a rival collector and millionaire for a price which he would willingly have given; the people he knew shrugged their shoulders at the news that he was to marry a singer, or shook their heads wisely, or smiled politely, according to the scale of the manners they had inherited or acquired; the shopkeepers sent him thou-



sands of insinuating invitations to inspect and buy all the things which a rich man is supposed to give to his bride, from diamonds and lace and eighty horse-power motor-cars to dressing-cases, stationery and silver sauce-pans; and the newspapers were generously jubilant, and rioted for a few days in a perfect carnival of adjectives.

The people who made the least fuss about the marriage were Cordova and Logotheti themselves. They were both so well used to perpetual publicity that they did not resent being written and talked about for a time as if they were a treaty, a revolution, a divorce, or a fraudulent trust. But they did not encourage the noise, nor go about side by side in an offensively happy way, nor accept all the two hundred and eighty-seven invitations to dine out together which they received from their friends during three weeks. It was as much as their overworked secretaries could do to answer all these within a reasonable and decent time.

The engagement was made known during the height of the London season, not long after they had both been at a week-end party at Craythrew, Lord Creedmore's place in Derbyshire, where they had apparently come

to a final understanding after knowing each other more than two years. Margaret was engaged to sing at Covent Garden that summer, and the first mention of the match was coupled with the information that she intended to cancel all her engagements and never appear in public again. The result was that the next time she came down the stage to sing the Waltz Song in *Romeo and Juliet* she received a tremendous ovation before she opened her handsome lips, and another when she had finished the air; and she spent one of the happiest evenings she remembered.

Though she was at heart a nice English girl, not much over twenty-four years of age, the orphan daughter of an Oxford don who had married an American, she had developed, or fallen, to the point at which very popular and successful artists cannot live at all without applause, and are not happy unless they receive a certain amount of adulation. Even the envy they excite in their rivals is delicious, if not almost necessary to them.

Margaret's real nature had not been changed by a success that had been altogether phenomenal, and had probably not been approached by any soprano since

Madame Bonanni; but a second nature had grown upon it and threatened to hide it from all but those who knew her very well indeed. The inward Margaret was honest and brave, rather sensitive, and still generous; the outward woman, the primadonna whom most people saw, was self-possessed to a fault, imperious when contradicted, and coolly ruthless when her artistic fame was at stake. The two natures did not agree well together, and made her wretched when they quarrelled, but Logotheti, who was going to take her for better, for worse, professed to like them both, and was the only man she had ever known who did. That was one reason why she was going to marry him, after having refused him about a dozen times.

She had loved another man as much as she was capable of loving, and at one time he had loved her, but a misunderstanding and her devotion to her art had temporarily separated them; and later, when she had almost told him that she would have him if he asked her, he had answered her quite frankly that she was no longer the girl he had cared for, and he had suddenly disappeared from her life altogether. So Logotheti, brilliant, very rich, gifted, gay, and rather



exotic in appearance and manner, but tenacious as a bloodhound, had won the prize after a struggle that had lasted two years. She had accepted him without much enthusiasm at the last, and without any great show of feeling.

"Let's try it," she had said, and he had been more than satisfied.

After a time, therefore, they told their friends that they were going to "try it."

The only woman with whom the great singer was at all intimate was the Countess Leven, Lord Creedmore's daughter, generally called "Lady Maud," whose husband had been in the diplomacy, and, after vainly trying to divorce her, had been killed in Saint Petersburg by a bomb meant for a Minister. The explosion had been so terrific that the dead man's identity had only been established by means of his pocket-book, which somehow escaped destruction. So Lady Maud was a childless widow of eight-and-twenty. Her father, when he had no prospect of ever succeeding to the title, had been a successful barrister, and then a hard-working Member of Parliament, and he had been from boyhood the close friend of Margaret's father. Hence

the intimacy that grew up quickly between the two women when they at last met, though they had not known each other as children, because the lawyer had lived in town and his friend in Oxford.

"So you're going to try it, my dear!" said Lady Maud, when she heard the news.

She had a sweet low voice, and when she spoke now it was a little sad; for she had "tried it," and it had failed miserably. But she knew that the trial had not been a fair one; the only man she had ever cared for had been killed in South Africa, and as she had not even the excuse of having been engaged to him, she had married with indifference the first handsome man with a good name and a fair fortune who offered himself. He chanced to be a Russian diplomatist, and he turned out a spendthrift and an unfaithful husband. She was too kind-hearted to be glad that he had been blown to atoms by dynamite, but she was much too natural not to enjoy the liberty restored to her by his destruction; and she had not the least intention of ever "trying it" again.

"You don't sound very enthusiastic," laughed Margaret, who had no misgivings to speak of, and was

generally a cheerful person. "If you don't encourage me I may not go on."

"There are two kinds of ruined gamblers," answered Lady Maud; "there are those that still like to watch other people play, and those who cannot bear the sight of a roulette table. I'm one of the second kind, but I'll come to the wedding all the same, and cheer like mad, if you ask me."

"That's nice of you. I really think I mean to marry him, and I wish you would help me with my wedding-gown, dear. It would be dreadful if I looked like Juliet, or Elsa, or Lucia! Everybody would laugh, especially as Konstantin is rather of the Romeo type, with his almond-shaped eyes and his little black moustache! I suppose he really is, isn't he?"

"Perhaps—just a little. But he is a very handsome fellow."

Lady Maud's lips quivered, but Margaret did not see.

"Oh, I know!" she cried, laughing and shaking her head. "You once called him 'exotic,' and he is—but I'm awfully fond of him all the same. Isn't that enough to marry on when there's everything else? You really



will help me with my gown, won't you? You're such an angel!"

"Oh yes, I'll do anything you like. Are you going to have a regular knock-down-and-drag-out smash at Saint George's? The usual thing?"

Lady Maud did not despise slang, but she made it sound like music.

"No," answered Margaret rather regretfully. "We cannot possibly be married till the season's quite over, or perhaps in the autumn, and then there will be nobody here. I'm not sure when I shall feel like it! Besides, Konstantin hates that sort of thing."

"Do you mean to say that you would like a show wedding in Hanover Square?" inquired Lady Maud.

"I've never done anything in a church," said the Primadonna, rather enigmatically, but as if she would like to.

"'Anything in a church,'" repeated her friend, vaguely thoughtful, and with the slightest possible interrogation. "That's a funny way of looking at it!"

Margaret was a little ashamed of what she had said so naturally.

"I think Konstantin would like to have it in a

chapel-of-ease in the Old Kent Road!" she said, laughing. "He sometimes talks of being married in tweeds and driving off in a hansom! Then he suggests going to Constantinople and getting it done by the Patriarch, who is his uncle. Really, that would be rather smart, wouldn't it?"

"Distinctly," assented Lady Maud. "But if you do that, I'm afraid I cannot help you with the wedding-gown. I don't know anything about the dress of a Fanariote bride."

"Konstantin says they dress very well," Margaret said. "But of course it is out of the question to do anything so ridiculous. It will end in the chapel-of-ease, I'm sure. He always has his own way. That's probably why I'm going to marry him, just because he insists on it. I don't see any other very convincing reason."

Lady Maud could not think of anything to say in answer to this; but as she really liked the singer she thought it was a pity.

Paul Griggs, the veteran man of letters, smiled rather sadly when she met him shopping in New Bond Street, and told him of Margaret's engagement. He

said that most great singers married because the only way to the divorce court led up the steps of the altar. Though he knew the world he was not a cynic, and Lady Maud herself wondered how long it would be before Logotheti and his wife separated.

"But they are not married yet," Griggs added, looking at her with the quietly ready expression of a man who is willing that his indifferent words should be taken to have a special meaning if the person to whom he has spoken chooses, or is able, to understand them as they may be understood, but who is quite safe from being suspected of suggesting anything if there is no answering word or glance.

Lady Maud returned his look, but her handsome face grew rather cold.

"Do you know of any reason why the marriage should not take place?" she inquired after a moment.

"If I don't give any reason, am I ever afterwards to hold my peace?" asked Griggs, with a faint smile on his weatherbeaten face. "Are you publishing the banns? or are we thinking of the same thing?"

"I suppose we are. Good morning."

She nodded gravely and passed on, gathering up



her black skirt a little, for there had been a shower. He stood still a moment before the shop window and looked after her, gravely admiring her figure and her walk, as he might have admired a very valuable thoroughbred. She was wearing mourning for her husband, not because anyone would have blamed her if she had not done so, considering how he had treated her, but out of natural self-respect.

Griggs also looked after her as she went away because he felt that she was not quite pleased with him for having suggested that he and she had both been thinking of the same thing.

The thought concerned a third person, and one who rarely allowed himself to be overlooked; no less a man, in fact, than Mr. Rufus Van Torp, the American potentate of the great Nickel Trust, who was Lady Maud's most intimate friend, and who had long desired to make the Primadonna his wife. He had bought a place adjoining Lord Creedmore's, and there had lately been a good deal of quite groundless gossip about him and Lady Maud, which had very nearly become a scandal. The truth was that they were the best friends in the world, and nothing more; the millionaire had for some time

been interested in an unusual sort of charity which almost filled the lonely woman's life, and he had given considerable sums of money to help it. During the months preceding the beginning of this tale, he had also been the object of one of those dastardly attacks to which very rich and important financiers are more exposed than other men, and he had actually been accused of having done away with his partner's daughter, who had come to her end mysteriously during a panic in a New York theatre. But, as I have told elsewhere, his innocence had been proved in the clearest possible manner, and he had returned to the United States to look after the interests of the Trust.

When Griggs heard the news of Margaret's engagement to Logotheti he immediately began to wonder how Mr. Van Torp would receive the intelligence; and if it had not already occurred to Lady Maud that the millionaire might make a final effort to rout his rival and marry the Primadonna himself, the old author's observation suggested such a possibility. Van Torp was a man who had fought up to success and fortune with little regard for the obstacles he found in his way; he had worked as a cowboy in his early youth, and was

apt to look on his adversaries and rivals in life either as refractory cattle or as dangerous wild beasts; and though he had some of the old-fashioned ranchero's sense of fair-play in a fight, he had much of the reckless daring and ruthless savagery that characterise the fast-disappearing Western desperado.

Logotheti, on the other hand, was in many respects a true Oriental, supremely astute and superlatively calm, but imbued, at heart, with a truly Eastern contempt for any law that chanced to oppose his wish.

Both men had practically inexhaustible resources at their command, and both were determined to marry the Primadonna. It occurred to Paul Griggs that a real struggle between such a pair of adversaries would be worth watching. There was unlimited money on both sides, and equal courage and determination. The Greek was the more cunning of the two, by great odds, and had now the considerable advantage of having been accepted by the lady; but the American was far more regardless of consequences to himself or to others in the pursuit of what he wanted, and, short of committing a crime, would put at least as broad an interpretation on the law. Logotheti had always lived in a highly civilised



society, even in Constantinople, for it is the greatest mistake to imagine that the upper classes of Greeks, in Greece or Turkey, are at all deficient in cultivation. Van Torp, on the contrary, had run away from civilisation when a half-educated boy, he had grown to manhood in a community of men who had little respect for anything and feared nothing at all, and he had won success in a field where those who compete for it buy it at any price, from a lie to a life.

Lady Maud was thinking of these things as she disappeared from Griggs's sight, and not at all of him. It might have surprised her to know that his eyes had followed her with sincere admiration, and perhaps she would have been pleased. There is a sort of admiration which acknowledged beauties take for granted, and to which they attach no value unless it is refused them; but there is another kind that brings them rare delight when they receive it, for it is always given spontaneously, whether it be the wondering exclamation of a street boy who has never seen anything so beautiful in his life, or a quiet look and a short phrase from an elderly man who has seen what is worth seeing for thirty or forty years, and who has given up making compliments.

The young widow was quite unconscious of Griggs's look and was very busy with her thoughts, for she was a little afraid that she had made trouble. Ten days had passed since she had last written to Rufus Van Torp, and she had told him, amongst other things, that Madame da Cordova and Logotheti were engaged to be married, adding that it seemed to her one of the most ill-assorted matches of the season, and that her friend the singer was sure to be miserable herself and to make her husband perfectly wretched, though he was a very good sort in his way and she liked him. There had been no reason why she should not write the news to Mr. Van Torp, even though it was not public property yet, for he was her intimate friend, and she knew him to be as reticent as all doctors ought to be and as some solicitors' clerks are. She had asked him not to tell anyone till he heard of the engagement from someone else.

He had not spoken of it, but something else had happened. He had cabled to Lady Maud that he was coming back to England by the next steamer. He often came out and went back suddenly two or three times at short intervals, and then stayed away for many

months, but Lady Maud thought there could not be much doubt as to his reason for coming now. She knew well enough that he had tried to persuade the Primadonna to marry him during the previous winter, and that if his passion for her had not shown itself much of late, this was due to other causes, chiefly to the persecution of which he had rid himself just before he went to America, but to some extent also to the fact that Margaret had not seemed inclined to accept any one else.

Lady Maud, who knew the man better than he knew himself, inwardly compared him to a volcano, quiescent just now, so far as Margaret was concerned, but ready to break out at any moment with unexpected and destructive energy.

Margaret herself, who had known Logotheti for years, and had seen him in his most dangerous moods as well as in his very best moments, would have thought a similar comparison with an elemental force quite as truly descriptive of him, if it had occurred to her. The enterprising Greek had really attempted to carry her off by force on the night of the final rehearsal before her first appearance on the stage, and had only been thwarted



because a royal rival had caused him to be locked up, as if by mistake, in order to carry her off himself; in which he also had failed most ridiculously, thanks to the young singer's friend, the celebrated Madame Bonanni. That was a very amusing story. But on another occasion Margaret had found herself shut up with her Oriental adorer in a room from which she could not escape, and he had quite lost his head; and if she had not been the woman she was, she would have fared ill. After that he had behaved more like an ordinary human being, and she had allowed the natural attraction he had for her to draw her gradually to a promise of marriage; and now she talked to Lady Maud about her gown, but she still put off naming a day for the wedding, in spite of Logotheti's growing impatience.

This was the situation when the London season broke up and Mr. Van Torp landed at Southampton from an ocean greyhound that had covered the distance from New York in five days twelve hours and thirty-seven minutes, which will doubtless seem very slow travelling if anyone takes the trouble to read this tale twenty years hence, though the passengers were pleased because it was not much under the record time for steamers coming east.

Five hours after he landed Van Torp entered Lady Maud's drawing-room in the little house in Charles Street, Berkeley Square, where she had lived with the departed Leven from the time when he had been attached to the Russian Embassy till he had last gone away. She was giving it up now, and it was already half dismantled. It was to see Van Torp that she was in town in the middle of August, instead of with her father at Craythew or with friends in Scotland.

London was as hot as it could be, which means that a New Yorker would have found it chilly and an Italian delightfully cool; but the Londoners were sweltering when Van Torp arrived, and were talking of the oppressive atmosphere and the smell of the pavement, not at all realising how blessed they were.

The American entered and stood still a moment to have a good look at Lady Maud. He was a middle-sized, rather thick-set man, with rude hands, sandy hair, an over-developed jaw, and sharp blue eyes, that sometimes fixed themselves in a disagreeable way when he was speaking—eyes that had looked into the barrel of another man's revolver once or twice without wavering, hands that had caught and saddled and bridled many

an unriden colt in the plains, a mouth like a carpet-bag when it opened, like a closed vice when it was shut. He was not a handsome man, Mr. Rufus Van Torp, nor one with whom anyone short of a prize-fighter would meddle, nor one to haunt the dreams of sweet sixteen. It was not for his face that Lady Maud, good and beautiful, liked him better than anyone in the world, except her own father, and believed in him and trusted him, and it was assuredly not for his money. The beggar did not live who would dare to ask him for a penny after one look at his face, and there were not many men on either side of the Atlantic who would have looked forward to any sort of contest with him without grave misgivings.

"Well," he said, advancing the last step after that momentary pause, and taking the white hand in both his own, "how have you been? Fair to middling? About that? Well—I'm glad to see you, gladder than a sitting hen at sunrise!"

Lady Maud laid her left hand affectionately on the man's right, which was uppermost on hers, and her voice rippled with happiness.



"If you had only said a lark instead of a hen, Rufus!" she laughed.

"We could get along a great sight better without larks than without hens," answered her friend philosophically. "But I'll make it a nightingale next time, if I can remember, or a bald eagle, or any bird that strikes you as cheerful."

The terrible mouth had relaxed almost to gentleness, and the fierce blue eyes were suddenly kind as they looked into the woman's face. She led him to an old-fashioned sofa, their hands parted, and they sat down side by side.

"Cheerful," he said, in a tone of reflection. "Yes, I'm feeling pretty cheerful, and it's all over and settled."

"Do you mean the trouble you were in last spring?"

"N—no—not that, though it wasn't as funny as a Sunday School treat while it lasted, and I was thankful when it was through. It's another matter altogether that I'm cheerful about—besides seeing you, my dear. I've done it, Maud. I've done it at last."

"What?"

"I've sold my interest in the Trust. It won't be made known for some time, so don't talk about it, please. But it's settled and done, and I've got the money."

"You have sold the Nickel Trust?"

Lady Maud's lips remained parted in surprise.

"And I've bought you a little present with the proceeds," he answered, putting his large thumb and finger into the pocket of his white waistcoat. "It's only a funny little bit of glass I picked up," he continued, producing a small twist of stiff writing-paper. "You needn't think it's so very fine! But it's a pretty colour, and when you're out of mourning I daresay you'll make a hat-pin of it. I like handsome hat-pins myself, you know."

He had untwisted the paper while speaking, it lay open in the palm of his hand, and Lady Maud saw a stone of the size of an ordinary hazel-nut, very perfectly cut, and of that wonderful transparent red colour which is known as "pigeon's blood," and which it is almost impossible to describe. Sunlight shining through Persian rose-leaf sherbet upon white silk makes a little patch of colour that is perhaps more like it than any other shade of red, but not many Europeans have

ever seen that, and it is a good deal easier to go and look at a pigeon's blood ruby in a jeweller's window.

"What a beautiful colour!" exclaimed Lady Maud innocently, after a moment. "I didn't know they imitated rubies so well, though, of course, I know nothing about it. If it were not an impossibility, I should take it for a real one."

"So should I," assented Mr. Van Torp quietly. "It'll make a pretty hat-pin anyway. Shall I have it mounted for you?"

"Thanks, awfully, but I think I should like to keep it as it is for a little while. It's such a lovely colour, just as it is. Thank you so much! Do tell me where you got it."

"Oh, well, there was a sort of a traveller came to New York the other day selling them what they call privately. I guess he must be a Russian or something, for he has a kind of an off-look of your husband, only he wears a beard and an eyeglass. It must be about the eyes. Maybe the forehead too. He'll most likely turn up in London one of these days to sell this invention, or whatever it is."



Lady Maud said nothing to this, but she took the stone from his hand, looked at it some time with evident admiration, and then set it down on its bit of paper, upon a little table by the end of the sofa.

"If I were you, I wouldn't leave it around much," observed Mr. Van Torp carelessly. "Somebody might take a fancy to it. The colour's attractive, you see, and it looks like real."

"Oh, I'll be very careful of it, never fear! I can't tell you how much I like it!" She twisted it up tightly in its bit of paper, rose to her feet, and put it away in her writing-table.

"It'll be a sort of souvenir of the old Nickel Trust," said her friend, watching her with satisfaction.

"Have you really sold out all your interest in it?" she asked, sitting down again; and now that she returned to the question her tone showed that she had not yet recovered from her astonishment.

"That's what I've done. I always told you I would, when I was ready. Why do you look so surprised? Would you rather I hadn't?"

Lady Maud shook her head and her voice rippled deliciously as she answered.

"I can hardly imagine you without the Nickel Trust, that's all! What in the world shall you do with yourself?"

"Oh, various kinds of things. I think I'll get married, for one. Then I'll take a rest and sort of look around. Maybe something will turn up. I've concluded to win the Derby next year—that's something anyway."

"Rather! Have you thought of anything else?"

She laughed a little, but was grave the next moment, for she knew him much too well to believe that he had taken such a step out of caprice, or a mere fancy for change; his announcement that he meant to marry agreed too well with what she herself had suddenly foreseen when she had parted with Griggs in Bond Street a few days earlier. If Margaret had not at last made up her mind to accept Logotheti—supposing that her decision was really final—Rufus Van Torp would not suddenly have felt sure that he himself must marry her if she married at all. His English friend could not have put into words what she felt had taken place in his heart, but she understood him

as no one else could, and was certain that he had reached one of the great cross-roads of his life.

A woman who has been married for years to such a man as Leven, and who tries to do good to those fallen and cast-out ones who laugh and cry and suffer out their lives, and are found dead behind the Virtue-Curtain, is not ignorant of the human animal's instincts and ways, and Lady Maud was not at all inclined to believe her friend a Galahad. In the clean kingdom of her dreams men could be chaste, and grown women could be as sweetly ignorant of harm as little children; but when she opened her eyes and looked about her she saw, and she understood, and did not shiver with delicate disgust, nor turn away with prim disapproval, nor fancy that she would like to be a mediæval nun and induce the beatific state by merciless mortification of the body. She knew very well what the Virtue-Curtain was trying to hide; she lifted it quietly, went behind it without fear, and did all she could to help the unhappy ones she found there. She did not believe in other people's theories at all, and had none herself; she did not even put much faith in all the modern scientific talk about vicious inheritance



and degeneration; much more than half of the dwellers behind the scenes had been lured there in ignorance, a good many had been dragged there by force, a very considerable number had been deliberately sold into slavery, and nine out of ten of them stayed there because no one really tried to get them out. Perhaps no one who did try was rich enough; for it is not to be expected that every human sinner should learn in a day to prefer starving virtue to well-fed vice, or, as Van Torp facetiously expressed it, a large capital locked up in heavenly stocks to a handsome income accruing from the bonds of sin. If Lady Maud succeeded, as she sometimes did, the good done was partly due to the means he gave her for doing it.

"Come and be bad and you shall have a good time while you are young," the devil had said, assuming the appearance, dress, and manner of fashion, without any particular regard for age.

"Give it up and I'll make you so comfortable that you'll really like not being bad," said Lady Maud, and the invitation was sometimes accepted.

Evidently, a woman who occupied herself with this form of charity could not help knowing and hearing a

good deal about men which would have surprised and even shocked her social sisters, and she was not in danger of taking Rufus Van Torp for an ascetic in disguise.

On the contrary, she was quite able to understand that the tremendous attraction the handsome singer had for him might be of the most earthly kind, such as she herself would not care to call love, and that, if she was right, it would not be partially dignified by any of that true artistic appreciation which brought Logotheti such rare delight, and disguised a passion not at all more ethereal than Van Torp's might be. In refinement of taste, no comparison was possible between the Western-bred millionaire and the cultivated Greek, who knew every unfamiliar by-way and little hidden treasure of his country's literature and art, besides very much of what other nations had done and written. Yet Lady Maud, influenced, no doubt, by the honest friendship of her American friend, believed that Van Torp would be a better and more faithful husband, even to a prima-donna, than his Oriental rival.

Notwithstanding her opinion of him, however, she was not prepared for his next move. He had noticed

the grave look that had followed her laughter, and he turned away and was silent for a few moments.

"The Derby's a side-show," he said at last. "I've come over to get married, and I want you to help me. Will you?"

"Can I?" asked Lady Maud, evasively.

"Yes, you can, and I believe there'll be trouble unless you do."

"Who is she? Do I know her?" She was trying to put off the evil moment.

"Oh yes, you know her quite well. It's Madame Cordova."

"But she's engaged to Monsieur Logotheti——"

"I don't care. I mean to marry her if she marries anyone. He sha'n't have her anyway."

"But I cannot deliberately help you to break off her engagement! It's impossible!"

"See here," answered Mr. Van Torp. "You know that Greek, and you know me. Which of us will make the best husband for an English girl? That's what Madame Cordova is, after all. I put it to you. If you were forced to choose one of us yourself, which would you take? That's the way to look at it."



"But Miss Donne is not 'forced' to take one of you——"

"She's going to be. It's the same. Besides, I said 'if.' Won't you answer me?"

"She's in love with Monsieur Logotheti," said Lady Maud, rather desperately.

"Is she, now? I wonder. I don't much think so myself. He's clever and he's obstinate, and he's just made her think she's in love, that's all. Anyhow, that's not an answer to my question. Other things being alike, if she had to choose, which of us would be the best husband for her—the better, I mean. You taught me to say 'better,' didn't you?"

Lady Maud tried to smile.

"Of two, yes," she answered. "You are forcing my hand, my dear friend," she went on very gravely. "You know very well that I trust you with all my heart. If it were possible to imagine a case in which the safety of the world could depend on my choosing one of you for my husband, you know very well that I should take you, though I never was the least little bit in love with you, any more than you ever were with me."

"Well, but if you would, she ought," argued Mr.

Van Torp. "It's for her own good, and as you're a friend of hers, you ought to help her to do what's good for her. That's only fair. If she doesn't marry me, she's certain to marry that Greek, so it's a forced choice, it appears to me."

"But I can't——"

"She's a nice girl, isn't she?"

"Yes, very."

"And you like her, don't you?"

"Very much. Her father was my father's best friend."

"I don't believe in atavism," observed the American, "but that's neither here nor there. You know what you wrote me. Do you believe she'll be miserable with Logotheti or not?"

"I think she will," Lady Maud answered truthfully. "But I may be wrong."

"No; you're right. I know it. But marriage is a gamble anyway, as you know better than anyone. Are you equally sure that she would be miserable with me? Dead sure, I mean."

"No, I'm not sure. But that's not a reason——"

"It's a first-rate reason. I care for that lady, and I

want her to be happy, and as you admit that she will have a better chance of happiness with me than with Logotheti, I'm going to marry her myself, not only because I want to, but because it will be a long sight better for her. See? No fault in that line of reasoning, is there?"

"So far as reasoning goes——" Lady Maud's tone was half an admission.

"That's all I wanted you to say," interrupted the American. "So that's settled, and you're going to help me."

"No," answered Lady Maud quietly; "I won't help you to break off that engagement. But if it should come to nothing, without your interfering—that is, by the girl's own free will and choice and change of mind, I'd help you to marry her if I could."

"But you admit that she's going to be miserable," said Van Torp stubbornly.

"I'm sorry for her, but it's none of my business. It's not honourable to try and make trouble between engaged people, no matter how ill-matched they may be."

"Funny idea of honour," observed the American,



"that you're bound to let a friend of yours break her neck at the very gravel-pit where you were nearly smashed yourself! In the hunting field you'd grab her bridle if she wouldn't listen to you, but in a matter of marriage—oh no! 'It's dishonourable to interfere,' 'She's made her choice and she must abide by it,' and all that kind of stuff!"

Lady Maud's clear eyes met his angry blue ones calmly.

"I don't like you when you say such things," she said, lowering her voice a little.

"I didn't mean to be rude," answered the millionaire, almost humbly. "You see I don't always know. I learnt things differently from what you did. I suppose you'd think it an insult if I said I'd give a large sum of money to your charity the day I married Madame Cordova, if you'd help me through."

"Please stop." Lady Maud's face darkened visibly. "That's not like you."

"I'll give a million pounds sterling," said Mr. Van Torp slowly.

Lady Maud leaned back in her corner of the sofa, clasping her hands rather tightly together in her lap.

Her white throat flushed as when the light of dawn kisses Parian marble, and the fresh tint in her cheeks deepened softly; her lips were tightly shut, her eyelids quivered a little, and she looked straight before her across the room.

"You can do a pretty good deal with a million pounds," said Mr. Van Torp, after the silence had lasted nearly half a minute.

"Don't!" cried Lady Maud, in an odd voice.

"Forty thousand pounds a year," observed the millionaire thoughtfully. "You could do quite a great deal of good with that, couldn't you?"

"Don't! Please don't!"

She pressed her hands to her ears and rose at the same instant. Perhaps it was she, after all, and not her friend who had been brought suddenly to a great cross-road in life. She stood still one moment by the sofa without looking down at her companion; then she left the room abruptly, and shut the door behind her.

Van Torp got up from his seat slowly when she was gone, and went to the window, softly blowing a

queer tune between his closed teeth and his open lips, without quite whistling.

"Well——" he said aloud, in a tone of doubt, after a minute or two.

But he said no more, for he was much too reticent and sensible a person to talk to himself audibly even when he was alone, and much too cautious to be sure that a servant might not be within hearing, though the door was shut. He stood before the window nearly a quarter of an hour, thinking that Lady Maud might come back, but as no sound of any step broke the silence he understood that he was not to see her again that day, and he quietly let himself out of the house and went off, not altogether discontented with the extraordinary impression he had made.

Lady Maud sat alone upstairs, so absorbed in her thoughts that she did not hear the click of the lock as he opened and shut the front door.

She was much more amazed at herself than surprised by the offer he had made. Temptation, in any reasonable sense of the word, had passed by her in life, and she had never before understood what it could mean to her. Indeed, she had thought of herself very



little of late, and had never had the least taste for self-examination or the analysis of her conscience. She had done much good, because she wanted to do it, and not at all as a duty, or with that idea of surprising the Deity by the amount of her good works, which actuates many excellent persons. As for doing anything seriously wrong, she had never wanted to, and it had not even occurred to her that the opportunity for a wicked deed could ever present itself to her together with the slightest desire to do it. Her labours had taken her to strange places, and she knew what real sin was, and even crime, and the most hideous vice, and its still more awful consequences; but one reason why she had wrought fearlessly was that she felt herself naturally invulnerable. She knew a good many people in her own set whom she thought quite as bad as the worst she had ever picked up on the dark side of the Virtue-Curtain; they were people who seemed to have no moral sense, men who betrayed their wives wantonly, young women who took money for themselves and old ones who cheated at bridge, men who would deliberately ruin a rival in politics, in finance, or in love, and ambitious women who had driven their competitors to

despair and destruction by a scientific use of calumny. But she had never felt any inclination towards any of those things, which all seemed to her disgusting, or cowardly, or otherwise abominable. Her husband had gone astray after strange gods—and goddesses—but she had never wished to be revenged on them, or him, nor to say what was not true about anyone, nor even what was true and could hurt, nor to win a few sovereigns at cards otherwise than fairly, nor to wish anybody dead who had a right to live.

She was eight-and-twenty years of age and a widow, when temptation came to her suddenly in a shape of tremendous strength, through her trusted friend, who had helped her for years to help others. It was real temptation. The man who offered her a million pounds to save miserable wretches from a life of unspeakable horror, could offer her twice as much, four, five, or ten millions perhaps. No one knew the vast extent of his wealth, and in an age of colossal fortunes she had often heard his spoken of with the half-dozen greatest.

The worst of it was that she felt able to do what he asked; for she was inwardly convinced that the great singer did not know her own mind and was not pro-

foundly attached to the man she had accepted. Of the two women, Margaret was by far the weaker character; or, to be just, the whole strength of her nature had long been concentrated in the struggle for artistic supremacy, and could not easily be brought to exert itself in other directions. Lady Maud's influence over her was great, and Logotheti's had never been very strong. She was taken by his vitality, his daring, his constancy, or obstinacy, and a little by his good looks, as a mere girl might be, because the theatre had made looks seem so important to her. But apart from his handsome face, Logotheti was no match for Van Torp. Of that Lady Maud was sure. Besides, the Primadonna's antipathy for the American had greatly diminished of late, and had perhaps altogether given place to a friendly feeling. She had said openly that she had misjudged him, because he had pestered her with his attentions in New York, and that she even liked him since he had shown more tact. Uncouth as he was in some ways, Lady Maud knew that she herself might care for him more than as a friend, if her heart were not buried for ever in a soldier's grave on the veldt.

That was the worst of it. She felt that it was



probably not beyond her power to bring about what Van Torp desired, at least so far as to induce Margaret to break off the engagement which now blocked his way. Under cover of roughness, too, he had argued with a subtlety that frightened her now that she was alone; and with a consummate knowledge of her nature he had offered her the only sort of bribe that could possibly tempt her, the means to make permanent the good work she had already carried so far.

He had placed her in such a dilemma as she had never dreamed of. To accept such an offer as he made, would mean that she must do something which she felt was dishonourable, if she gave "honour" the meaning an honest gentleman attaches to it, and that was the one she had learned from her father, and which a good many women seem unable to understand. To refuse, was to deprive hundreds of wretched and suffering creatures of the only means of obtaining a hold on a decent existence which Lady Maud had ever found to be at all efficacious. She knew that she had not done much, compared with what was undone; it looked almost nothing. But where law-making had failed altogether, where religion was struggling bravely but almost

in vain, where enlightened philanthropy found itself paralysed and bankrupt, she had accomplished something by merely using a little money in the right way.

"You can do quite a great deal of good with forty thousand pounds a year."

Van Torp's rough-hewn speech rang through her head, and somehow its reckless grammar gave it strength and made it stick in her memory, word for word. In the drawer of the writing-table before which she was sitting there was a little file of letters that meant more to her than anything else in the world, except one dear memory. They were all from women, they all told much the same little story, and it was good to read. She had made many failures, and some terrible ones, which she could never forget; but there were real successes, too, there were over a dozen of them now, and she had only been at work for three years. If she had more money, she could do more; if she had much, she could do much; and she knew of one or two women who could help her. What might she not accomplish in a lifetime with the vast sum her friend offered her!—the price of hindering a marriage that was almost sure to turn out badly, perhaps as

badly as her own!—the money value of a compromise with her conscience on a point of honour which many women would have thought very vague indeed, if not quite absurd in such a case. She knew what temptation meant, now, and she was to know even better before long. The Primadonna had said that she was going to marry Logotheti chiefly because he insisted on it.

The duel for Margaret's hand had begun; Van Torp had aimed a blow that might well give him the advantage if it went home; and Logotheti himself was quite unaware of the skilful attack that threatened his happiness.

---



## CHAPTER III.

A FEW days after she had talked with Lady Maud, and before Mr. Van Torp's arrival, Margaret had gone abroad, without waiting for the promised advice in the matter of the wedding gown. With admirable regard for the proprieties she had quite declined to let Logotheti cross the Channel with her, but had promised to see him at Versailles where she was going to stop a few days with her mother's old American friend, the excellent Mrs. Rushmore, with whom she meant to go to Bayreuth to hear *Parsifal* for the first time.

Mrs. Rushmore had disapproved profoundly of Margaret's career, from the first. After Mrs. Donne's death, she had taken the forlorn girl under her protection, and had encouraged her to go on with what she vaguely called her "music lessons." The good lady was one of those dear, old-fashioned, kind, delicate-minded and golden-hearted American women we may never see again,

now that "progress" has got civilisation by the throat and is squeezing the life out of it. She called Margaret her "chickabiddy" and spread a motherly wing over her, without the least idea that she was rearing a valuable lyric nightingale that would not long be content to trill and quaver unheard.

Immense and deserved success had half reconciled the old lady to what had happened, and after all Margaret had not married an Italian tenor, a Russian prince, or a Parisian composer, the three shapes of man which seemed the most dreadfully immoral to Mrs. Rushmore. She would find it easier to put up with Logotheti than with one of those, though it was bad enough to think of her old friend's daughter marrying a Greek instead of a nice, clean Anglo-Saxon, like the learned Mr. Donne, the girl's father, or the good Mr. Rushmore, her lamented husband, who had been an upright pillar of the church in New York, and the president of a Trust Company that could be trusted.

After all, though she thought all Greeks must be what she called "designing," the name of Konstantin Logotheti was associated with everything that was most honourable in the financial world, and this impressed

Mrs. Rushmore very much. Her harmless weakness had always been for lions, and none but the most genuine ones were allowed to roar at her garden-parties or at her dinner-table. When the Greek financier had first got himself introduced to her more than two years earlier, she had made the most careful inquiries about him and had diligently searched the newspapers for every mention of him during a whole month. The very first paragraph she had found was about a new railway which he had taken under his protection, and the writer said that his name was a guarantee of good faith. This impressed her favourably, though the journalist might have had reasons for making precisely the same statement if he had known Logotheti to be a fraudulent promoter. One of the maxims she had learned in her youth, which had been passed in the Golden Age of old New York, was that "business was a test of character." Mr. Rushmore used to say that, so it must be true, she thought; and indeed the excellent man might have said with equal wisdom that long-continued rain generally produces dampness. He would have turned in his well-kept grave if he could have heard a Wall Street cynic say that nowadays an honest man may get



a bare living, and a drunkard has been known to get rich, but that integrity and whisky together will inevitably land anybody in the workhouse.

Logotheti was undoubtedly considered honest, however, and Mrs. Rushmore made quite sure of it, as well as of the fact that he had an immense fortune. So far as the cynic's observation goes, it may not be equally applicable everywhere, any more than it is true that all Greeks are blacklegs, as the Parisians are fond of saying, or that all Parisians are much worse, as their own novelists try to make out. If anything is more worthless than most men's opinion of themselves, it is their opinion of others, and it is unfortunately certain that the people who understand human nature best, and lead it whither they will, are not those that labour to save souls or to cure sickness, but demagogues, quacks, fashionable dressmakers, and money-lenders. Mrs. Rushmore was a judge of lions, but she knew nothing about humanity.

At Versailles, with its memories of her earlier youth, the Primadonna wished to be Margaret Donne again, and to forget for the time that she was the Cordova, whose name was always first on the opera posters in

New York, London, and Vienna; who covered her face with grease-paint two or three times a week; who loved the indescribable mixed smell of boards, glue, scenery, Manila ropes and cotton-velvet-clad chorus, behind the scenes; who lived on applause, was made miserable now and then by a criticism which any other singer would have thought flattery, and who was, in fact, an extraordinary compound of genius and simplicity, generosity and tetchiness, tremendous energy in one direction and intellectual torpidity and total indifference in all others. If she could have gone directly from Covent Garden to another engagement, the other self would not have waked up just then; but she meant to take a long holiday, and in order not to miss the stage too much, it was indispensable to forget it for awhile.

She travelled incognito. That is to say, she had sent her first maid and theatrical dresser Alphonsine to see her relations in Nancy for a month, and only brought the other with her; she had, moreover, caused the state-room on the Channel boat to be taken in the name of Miss Donne, and she brought no more luggage to Versailles than could be piled on an ordinary cart,

whereas when she had last come from New York her servants had seen eighty-seven pieces put on board the steamer, and a hat-box had been missing after all.

Mrs. Rushmore came out to meet her on the steps in the hot sunshine, portly and kind as ever, and she applied an embrace which was affectionate, yet imposing.

"My dearest child!" she cried. "I was sure I had not quite lost you yet!"

"I hope you will never think you have," Margaret answered, almost quite in her girlish voice of old.

She was very glad to come back. As soon as they were alone in the cool drawing-room, Mrs. Rushmore asked her about her engagement in a tone of profound concern, as though it were a grave bodily ailment which might turn out to be fatal.

"Don't take it so seriously," Margaret answered with a little laugh; "I'm not married yet!"

The elderly face brightened. "Do you mean to say that—that there is any hope?" she asked eagerly.

Margaret laughed now, but in a gentle and affectionate sort of way.



"Perhaps, just a little! But don't ask me, please. I've come home—this is always home for me, isn't it? —I've come home to forget everything for a few weeks."

"Thank heaven!" ejaculated Mrs. Rushmore in a tone of deep relief. "Then if—if he should call this afternoon, or even to-morrow—may I tell them to say that you are out?"

She was losing no time; and Margaret laughed again, though she put her head a little on one side with an expression of doubt.

"I can't refuse to see him," she said, "though really I would much rather be alone with you for a day or two."

"My darling child!" cried Mrs. Rushmore, applying another embrace, "you shall! Leave it to me!"

Mrs. Rushmore's delight was touching, for she could almost feel that Margaret had come to see her quite for her own sake, whereas she had pictured the "child," as she still called the great artist, spending most of her time in carrying on inaudible conversations with Logotheti under the trees in the lawn, or in the most remote corners of the drawing-room; for that had

been the accepted method of courtship in Mrs. Rushmore's young days, and she was quite ignorant of the changes that had taken place since then.

Half-an-hour later, Margaret was in her old room upstairs writing a letter, and Mrs. Rushmore had given strict orders that until further notice Miss Donne was "not at home" for anyone at all, no matter who might call.

When the letter already covered ten pages, Margaret laid down her pen and without the least pause or hesitation tore the sheets to tiny bits, inking her fingers in the process because the last one was not yet dry.

"What a wicked woman I am!" she exclaimed aloud, to the very great surprise of Potts, her English maid, who was still unpacking in the next room, the door being open.

"Beg pardon, ma'am?" the woman asked, putting in her head.

"I said I was a wicked woman," Margaret answered, rising; "and what's more, I believe I am. But I quite forgot you were there, Potts, or I probably should not have said it aloud."

"Yes, ma'am," answered Potts meekly, and she went back to her unpacking.

Margaret had two maids, who were oddly suited to her two natures. She had inherited Alphonsine from her friend the famous retired soprano, Madame Bonanni, and the cadaverous, clever, ill-tempered, garrulous dresser was as necessary to Cordova's theatrical existence as paint, limelight, wigs, and an orchestra. The English Potts, the meek, silent, busy, and intensely respectable maid, continually made it clear that her mistress was Miss Donne, an English lady, and that Madame Cordova, the celebrated singer, was what Mr. Van Torp would have called "only a side-show."

Potts was quite as much surprised when she heard Miss Donne calling herself a wicked woman as Alphonsine would have been if she had heard Madame Cordova say that she sang completely out of tune, a statement which would not have disturbed the English maid's equanimity in the very least. It might have pleased her, for she always secretly hoped that Margaret would give up the stage, marry an English gentleman with a nice name, and live in Hans Crescent or Cadogan



Gardens, or some equally smart place, and send Alphonsine about her business for ever.

For the English maid and the French maid hated each other as whole-heartedly as if Cressy or Agincourt had been fought yesterday. Potts alluded to Alphonsine as "that Frenchwoman," and Alphonsine spoke of Potts as "l'Anglaise," with a tone and look of withering scorn, as if all English were nothing better than animals. Also she disdained to understand a word of their "abominable jargon;" and Potts quietly called the French language "frog-talk," but spoke it quite intelligibly, though without the least attempt at an accent. Nevertheless, each of the two was devoted to Margaret, and they were both such excellent servants that they never quarrelled or even exchanged a rude word—to Margaret's knowledge. They treated each other with almost exaggerated politeness, calling each other respectively "Meess" and "Mamzell;" and if Alphonsine's black eyes glared at Potts now and then, the English maid put on such an air of sweetly serene unconsciousness as a woman of the world might have envied.

The letter that had been torn up before it was finished was to have gone to Lady Maud, but Margaret

herself had been almost sure that she would not send it, even while she was writing. She had poured out her heart, now that she could do so with the consoling possibility of destroying the confession before anyone read it. She had made an honest effort to get at the truth about herself by writing down all she knew to be quite true, as if it were to go to her best friend; but as soon as she realised that she had got to the end of her positive knowledge and was writing fiction—which is what might be true, but is not known to be—she had the weakness to tear up her letter, and to call herself names for not knowing her own mind, as if every woman did, or every man either.

She had written that she had done very wrong in engaging herself to Logotheti; that was the “wickedness” she accused herself of, repeating the self-accusation to her astonished maid, because it was a sort of relief to say the words to somebody. She had written that she did not really care for him in that way; that when he was near she could not resist a sort of natural attraction he had for her, but that as soon as he was gone she felt it no longer and she wished he would not come back; that his presence disturbed her and made her

uncomfortable, and, moreover, interfered with her art; but that she had not the courage to tell him so, and wished that someone else would do it for her; that he was not really the sort of man she could ever be happy with; that her ideal of a husband was so and so, and this and that—and here fiction had begun, and she had put a stop to it by destroying the whole letter instead of crossing out a few lines,—which was a pity; for if Lady Maud had received it, she would have told Mr. Van Torp that he needed no help from her, since Margaret herself asked no better than to be freed from the engagement.

Logotheti did not come out to Versailles that afternoon, because he was plentifully endowed with tact where women were concerned, and he applied all the knowledge and skill he had to the single purpose of pleasing Margaret. But before dinner he telephoned and asked to speak with her, and this she could not possibly refuse. Besides, the day had seemed long, and though she did not wish for his presence she wanted something—that indescribable, mysterious something which disturbed her and made her feel uncomfortable when she felt it, but which she missed when she did not see him for a day or two.



"How are you?" asked his voice, and he ran on without waiting for an answer. "I hope you are not very tired after crossing yesterday. I came by Boulogne—decent of me, wasn't it? You must be sick of seeing me all the time, so I shall give you a rest for a day or two. Telephone whenever you think you can bear the sight of me again, and I'll be with you in thirty-five minutes. I shall not stir from home in this baking weather. If you think I'm in mischief you're quite mistaken, dear lady, for I'm up to my chin in work!"

"I envy you," Margaret said, when he paused at last. "I've nothing on earth to do, and the piano here is out of tune. But you're quite right, I don't want to see you a little bit, and I'm not jealous, nor suspicious, nor anything disagreeable. So there!"

"How nice of you!"

"I'm very nice," Margaret answered with laughing emphasis. "I know it. What sort of work are you doing? It's only idle curiosity, so don't tell me if you would rather not! Have you got a new railway in Brazil, or an overland route to the other side of beyond?"

"Nothing so easy! I'm brushing up my Tartar."

"Brushing up what? I didn't hear."

"Tartar—the Tartar language—T-a-r—" he began to spell the word.

"Yes, I hear now," interrupted Margaret. "But what in the world is the use of knowing it? You must be awfully hard up for something to do!"

"You can be understood from Constantinople to the Pacific Ocean if you can speak Tartar," Logotheti answered in a matter-of-fact tone.

"I daresay! But you're not going to travel from Constantinople to the Pacific Ocean——"

"I might. One never can tell what one may like to do."

"Oh, if it's because Tartar is useful 'against the bites of sharks,'" answered Margaret, quoting Alice, "learn it by all means!"

"Besides, there are all sorts of people in Paris. I'm sure there must be some Tartars. I might meet one, and it would be amusing to be able to talk to him."

"Nonsense! Why should you ever meet a Tartar? How absurd you are!"

"There's one with me now—close beside me, at my elbow."

"Don't be silly, or I'll ring off."

"If you don't believe me, listen!"

He said something in a language Margaret did not understand, and another voice answered him at once in the same tongue. Margaret started slightly and bent her brows with a puzzled and displeased look.

"Is that your teacher?" she asked with more interest in her tone than she had yet betrayed.

"Yes."

"I begin to understand. Do you mind telling me how old she is?"

"It's not 'she,' it's a young man. I don't know how old he is. I'll ask him if you like."

Again she heard him speak a few incomprehensible words, which were answered very briefly in the same tongue.

"He tells me he is twenty," Logotheti said. "He's a good-looking young fellow. How is Mrs. Rushmore? I forgot to ask."

"She's quite well, thank you. But I should like to know——"



"Will you be so very kind as to remember me to her, and to say that I hope to find her at home the day after to-morrow?"

"Certainly. Come to-morrow if you like. But please tell me how you happened to pick up that young Tartar. It sounds so interesting! He has such a sweet voice."

There was no reply to this question, and Margaret could not get another word from Logotheti. The communication was apparently cut off. She rang up the Central Office and asked for his number again, but the young woman soon said that she could get no answer to the call, and that something was probably wrong with the instrument of Number One-hundred-and-six-thirty-seven.

Margaret was not pleased, and she was silent and absent-minded at dinner and in the evening.

"It's the reaction after London," she said with a smile, when Mrs. Rushmore asked if anything was the matter. "I find I am more tired than I knew, now that it's all over."

Mrs. Rushmore was quite of the same opinion, and it was still early when she declared that she herself was

sleepy and that Margaret had much better go to bed and get a good night's rest.

But when the Primadonna was sitting before the glass and her maid was brushing out her soft brown hair, she was not at all drowsy, and though her eyes looked steadily at their own reflection in the mirror, she was not aware that she saw anything.

"Potts," she said suddenly, and stopped.

"Yes, ma'am?" answered the maid with meek interrogation, and without checking the regular movement of the big brush.

But Margaret said no more for several moments. She enjoyed the sensation of having her hair brushed; it made her understand exactly how a cat feels when someone strokes its back steadily, and she could almost have purred with pleasure as she held her handsome head back and moved it a little in real enjoyment under each soft stroke.

"Potts," she began again at last, "you are not very imaginative, are you?"

"No, ma'am," the maid answered, because it seemed to be expected of her, though she had never thought of the matter.

"Do you think you could possibly be mistaken about a voice, if you didn't see the person who was speaking?"

"In what way, ma'am?"

"I mean, do you think you could take a man's voice for a woman's at a distance?"

"Oh, I see!" Potts exclaimed. "As it might be, at the telephone?"

"Well—at the telephone, if you like, or anywhere else. Do you think you might?"

"It would depend on the voice, ma'am," observed Potts, with caution.

"Of course it would," assented Margaret rather impatiently.

"Well, ma'am, I'll say this, since you ask me. When I was last at home I was mistaken in that way about my own brother, for I heard him calling to me from downstairs, and I took him for my sister Milly."

"Oh! That's interesting!" Margaret smiled. "What sort of voice has your brother? How old is he?"

"He's eight-and-twenty, ma'am; and as for his voice, he has a sweet counter-tenor, and sings nicely. He's a song-man at the cathedral, ma'am."



"Really! How nice! Have you a voice too? Do you sing at all?"

"Oh no, ma'am!" answered Potts in a deprecating tone. "One in the family is quite enough!"

Margaret vaguely wondered why, but did not inquire.

"You were quite sure that it was your brother who was speaking, I suppose?" she said.

"Oh yes, ma'am! I looked down over the banisters, and there he was!"

Margaret had the solid health of a great singer, and it would have been a serious trouble indeed that could have interfered with her unbroken and dreamless sleep during at least eight hours; but when she closed her eyes that night she was quite sure that she could not have slept at all but for Potts's comforting little story about the brother with the "counter-tenor" voice. Yet even so, at the moment before waking in the morning, she dreamt that she was at the telephone again, and that words in a strange language came to her along the wire in a soft and caressing tone that could only be a woman's, and that for the first time in all her life she

knew what it was to be jealous. The sensation was not an agreeable one.

The dream-voice was silent as soon as she opened her eyes, but she had not been awake long without realising that she wished very much to see Logotheti at once, and was profoundly thankful that she had torn up her letter to Lady Maud. She was not prepared to admit, even now, that Konstantin was the ideal she should have chosen for a husband, and whom she had been describing from imagination when she had suddenly stopped writing. But, on the other hand, the mere thought that he had perhaps been amusing himself in the society of another woman all yesterday afternoon made her so angry that she took refuge in trying to believe that he had spoken the truth and that she had really been mistaken about the voice.

It was all very well to talk about learning Tartar! How could she be sure that it was not modern Greek, or Turkish? She could not have known the difference. Was it so very unlikely that some charming compatriot of his should have come from Constantinople to spend a few weeks in Paris? She remembered the mysterious house in the Boulevard Péreire where he lived, the

beautiful upper hall where the statue of Aphrodite stood, the doors that would not open like other doors, the strangely-disturbing encaustic painting of Cleopatra in the drawing-room—many things which she distrusted.

Besides, supposing that the language was really Tartar—were there not Russians who spoke it? She thought there must be, because she had a vague idea that all Russians were more or less Tartars. There was a proverb about it. Moreover, to the English as well as to the French, Russians represent romance and wickedness.

She would not go to the telephone herself, but she sent a message to Logotheti, and he came out in the cool time of the afternoon. She thought he had never looked so handsome and so little exotic since she had known him. To please her he had altogether given up the terrific ties, the lightning-struck waistcoats, the sunrise socks, and the overpowering jewellery he had formerly affected, and had resigned himself to the dictation of a London tailor, who told him what he might, could, should, and must wear for each circumstance and hour of daily life, in fine gradations, from



deer-stalking to a royal garden-party. The tailor, who dressed kings and made a specialty of emperors, was a man of taste, and when he had worked on the Greek financier for a few weeks the result was satisfactory; excepting for his almond-shaped eyes no one could have told Logotheti from an Englishman by his appearance, a fact which even Potts, who disapproved of Margaret's choice, was obliged to admit.

Mrs. Rushmore was amazed and pleased.

"My dear," she said afterwards to Margaret, "what a perfectly wonderful change! Think how he used to look! And now you might almost take him for an American gentleman!"

He was received by Mrs. Rushmore and Margaret together, and he took noticeable pains to make himself agreeable to the mistress of the house. At first Margaret was pleased at this; but when she saw that he was doing his best to keep Mrs. Rushmore from leaving the room, as she probably would have done, Margaret did not like it. She was dying to ask him questions about his lessons in Tartar, and especially about his teacher, and she probably meant to cast her inquiries in such a form as would make it preferable to examine him alone

rather than before Mrs. Rushmore; but he talked on and on, only pausing an instant for the good lady's expressions of interest or approval. With diabolical knowledge of her weakness he led the conversation to the subject of political and diplomatic lions, and of lions of other varieties, and made plans for bringing some noble specimens to tea with her. She was not a snob; she distrusted foreign princes, marquises, and counts, and could keep her head well in the presence of an English peer; but lions were irresistible, and Logotheti offered her a whole menagerie of them, and described their habits with minuteness, if not with veracity.

He was telling her what a Prime Minister had told an Ambassador about the Pope, when Margaret rose rather abruptly.

"I'm awfully sorry," she said to Mrs. Rushmore, by way of apology, "but I really must have a little air. I've not been out of the house all day."

Mrs. Rushmore understood, and was not hurt, though she was sorry not to hear more. The "dear child" should go out, by all means. Would Monsieur Logotheti stay to dinner? No? She was sorry. She had forgotten that she had a letter to write in time for

the afternoon post. So she went off and left the two together.

Margaret led the way out upon the lawn, and they sat down on garden chairs under a big elm-tree. She said nothing while she settled herself very deliberately, avoiding her companion's eyes till she was quite ready, and then she suddenly looked at him with a sort of blank stare that would have disconcerted anyone less superlatively self-possessed than he was. It was most distinctly Madame da Cordova, the offended Prima-donna, that spoke at last, and not Miss Margaret Donne, the "nice English girl."

"What in the world has got into you?" she inquired in a chilly tone.

He opened his almond-shaped eyes a little wider, with an excellent affectation of astonishment at her words and manner.

"Have I done anything you don't like?" he asked in a tone of anxiety and concern. "Was I rude to Mrs. Rushmore?"

Margaret looked at him a moment longer, and then turned her head away in silence, as if scorning to answer such a silly question. The look of surprise dis-



appeared from his face, and he became very gloomy and thoughtful, but said nothing more. Possibly he had brought about exactly what he wished, and was satisfied to await the inevitable result. It came before long.

"I don't understand you at all," Margaret said less icily, but with the sad little air of a woman who believes herself misunderstood. "It was very odd yesterday, at the telephone, you know—very odd indeed. I suppose you didn't realise it. And now, this afternoon, you have evidently been doing your best to keep Mrs. Rushmore from leaving us together. You would still be telling her stories about people if I hadn't obliged you to come out!"

"Yes," Logotheti asserted with exasperating calm and meekness, "we should still be there."

"You did not want to be alone with me, I suppose? There's no other explanation, and it's not a very flattering one, is it?"

"I never flatter you, dear lady," said Logotheti gravely.

"But you do! How can you deny it? You often

tell me that I make you think of the Victory in the Louvre——”

“It's quite true. If the statue had a head it would be a portrait of you.”

“Nonsense! And in your moments of enthusiasm you say that I sing better than Madame Bonanni in her best days——”

“Yes. You know quite as much as she ever did, you are a much better musician, and you began with a better voice. Therefore you sing better. I maintain it.”

“You often maintain things you don't believe,” Margaret retorted, though her manner momentarily relaxed a little.

“Only in matters of business,” answered the Greek with imperturbable calm.

“Pray, is ‘learning Tartar’ a matter of business?” Her eyes sparkled angrily as she asked the question.

Logotheti smiled; she had reached the point to which he knew she must come before long.

“Oh yes!” he replied with alacrity. “Of course it is.”

“That accounts for everything, since you are ad-

mitting that I need not even try to believe it was a man whom I heard speaking."

"To tell the truth, I have some suspicions about that myself," answered Logotheti.

"I have a great many." Margaret laughed rather harshly. "And you behave as if you wanted me to have more. Who is this Eastern woman? Come, be frank. She is someone from Constantinople, isn't she? A Fanariote like yourself, I daresay—an old friend who is in Paris for a few days, and would not pass through without seeing you. Say so, for heaven's sake, and don't make such a mystery about it!"

"How very ingenious women are!" observed the Greek. "If I had thought of it I might have told you that story through the telephone yesterday. But I didn't."

Margaret was rapidly becoming exasperated, her eyes flashed, her firm young cheeks reddened handsomely, and her generous lips made scornful curves.

"Are you trying to quarrel with me?"

The words had a fierce ring; he glanced at her quickly and saw how well her look agreed with her tone. She was very angry.



"If I were not afraid of boring you," he said with quiet gravity, "I would tell you the whole story, but——" he pretended to hesitate.

He heard her harsh little laugh at once.

"Your worst enemy could not accuse you of being a bore!" she retorted. "Oh no! It's something quite different from boredom that I feel, I assure you!"

"I wish I thought that you cared for me enough to be jealous," Logotheti said earnestly.

"Jealous!"

No one can describe the tone of indignant contempt in which a thoroughly jealous woman disclaims the least thought of jealousy with a single word; a man must have heard it to remember what it is like, and most men have. Logotheti knew it well, and at the sound he put on an expression of meek innocence which would have done credit to a cat that had just eaten a canary.

"I'm so sorry," he cried in a voice like a child's. "I didn't mean to make you angry, I was only wishing aloud. Please forgive me!"

"If your idea of caring for a woman is to make her jealous——"

This was such an obvious misinterpretation of his words that she stopped short and bit her lip. He sighed audibly, as if he were very sorry that he could do nothing to appease her, but this only made her feel more injured. She made an effort to speak coldly.

"You seem to forget that so long as we are supposed to be engaged I have some little claim to know how you spend your time!"

"I make no secret of what I do. That is why you were angry just now. Nothing could have been easier than for me to say that I was busy with one of the matters you suggested."

"Oh, of course! Nothing could be easier than to tell me an untruth!"

This certainly looked like the feminine retort-triumphant, and Margaret delivered it in a cutting tone.

"That is precisely what you seem to imply that I did," Logotheti objected. "But if what I told you was untrue your argument goes to pieces. There was no Tartar lesson, there was no Tartar teacher, and it was all a fabrication of my own!"

"Just what I think!" returned Margaret. "It was not Tartar you spoke, and there was no teacher!"

"You have me there," answered the Greek mildly, "unless you would like me to produce my young friend and talk to him before you in the presence of witnesses who know his language."

"I wish you would! I should like to see 'him!' I should like to see the colour of 'his' eyes and hair!"

"Black as ink," said Logotheti.

"And you'll tell me that 'his' complexion is black too, no doubt!"

"Not at all; a sort of creamy complexion, I think, though I did not pay much attention to his skin. He is a smallish chap, good-looking, with hands and feet like a woman's. I noticed that. As I told you, a doubt occurred to me at once, and I will not positively swear that it is not a girl after all. He, or she, is really a Tartar from Central Asia, and I know enough of the language to say what was necessary."

"Necessary!"

"Yes. He—or she—came on a matter of business. What I said about a teacher was mere nonsense. Now you know the whole thing."

"Excepting what the business was," Margaret said incredulously.



"The business was an uncut stone," answered Logotheti with indifference. "He had one to sell, and I bought it. He was recommended to me by a man in Constantinople. He came to Marseilles on a French steamer with two Greek merchants who were coming to Paris, and they brought him to my door. That is the whole story. And here is the ruby. I bought it for you, because you like those things. Will you take it?"

He held out what looked like a little ball of white tissue-paper, but Margaret turned her face from him.

"You treat me like a child!" she said.

To her own great surprise and indignation, her voice was unsteady and she felt something burning in her eyes. She was almost frightened at the thought that she might be going to cry, out of sheer mortification.

Logotheti said nothing for a moment. He began to unroll the paper from the precious stone, but changed his mind, wrapped it up again, and put it back into his watch-pocket before he spoke.

"I did not mean it as you think," he said softly.

She turned her eyes without moving her head, till she could just see that he was leaning forward, resting

his wrists on his knees, bending his head, and apparently looking down at his loosely hanging hands. His attitude expressed dejection and disappointment. She was glad of it. He had no right to think that he could make her as angry as she still was, angry even to tears, and then bribe her to smile again when he was tired of teasing her. Her eyes turned away again, and she did not answer him.

"I make mistakes sometimes," he said, speaking still lower, "I know I do. When I am with you I cannot be always thinking of what I say. It's too much to ask, when a man is as far gone as I am!"

"I should like to believe that," Margaret said, without looking at him.

"Is it so hard to believe?" he asked so gently that she only just heard the words.

"You don't make it easy, you know," said she with a little defiance, for she felt that she was going to yield before long.

"I don't quite know how to. You're not in the least capricious—and yet——"

"You're mistaken," Margaret answered, turning to him suddenly. "I'm the most capricious woman in the

world! Yesterday I wrote a long letter to a friend, and then I suddenly tore it up—there were ever so many pages! I daresay that if I had written just the same letter this morning, I should have sent it. If that is not caprice, what is it?"

"It may have been wisdom to tear it up," Logotheti suggested.

"I'm not sure. I never ask myself questions about what I do. I hate people who are always measuring their wretched little souls and then tinkering their consciences to make them fit! I don't believe I wish to do anything really wrong, and so I do exactly what I like, always!"

Possibly she had forgotten that she had called herself a wicked woman only yesterday; but that had been before the conversation at the telephone.

"If you will only go on doing what you like," Logotheti answered, "it will give me the greatest pleasure in the world to help you. I only ask one kindness."

"You have no right to ask me anything to-day. You've been quite the most disagreeable person this afternoon that I ever met in my life."

"I know I have," Logotheti answered with admir-



able contrition. "I'll wait a day or two before I ask anything; perhaps you will have forgiven me by that time."

"I'm not sure. What was the thing you were going to ask?"

He was silent now that she wished to know his thought.

"Have you forgotten it already?" she inquired with a little laugh that was encouraging rather than contemptuous, for her curiosity was roused.

They looked at each other at last, and all at once she felt the deeply disturbing sense of his near presence which she had missed for three days, though she was secretly a little afraid and ashamed of it; and to-day it had not come while her anger had lasted. But now it was stronger than ever before, perhaps because it came so unexpectedly, and it drew her to him, under the deep shadow of the elm-tree that made strange reflections in their eyes—moving reflections of fire when the lowering sun struck in between the leaves, and sudden, still depths when the foliage stirred in the breeze and screened the glancing ray.

He had played upon her moods for an hour, as a musician touches a delicate and responsive instrument, and she had taken all for earnest and had been angry and hurt, and was reconciled again at his will. Yet he had not done it all to try his power over her, and surely not in any careless contempt of her weaknesses. He cared for her in his way, as he was able, and his love was great, if not of the most noble sort. He was strong, and she waked his strength with fire; he worshipped life, and her vital beauty thrilled the inner stronghold of his being; when she moved, his passionate intuition felt and followed the lines of her moving grace; if she rested, motionless and near him, his waking dream enfolded her in a deep caress. He felt no high and mystic emotion when he thought of her; he had never read of Saint Clement's celestial kingdom, where man and woman are to be one forever, and together neither woman nor man, for such a world could never seem heavenly to him, whose love was altogether earthly. Yet it was Greek love, not Roman; its deity was beauty, not lust; the tutelary goddess of its temple was not Venus the deadly, the heavy-limbed, with a mouth like a red wound and slumbrous, sombre eyes, but Cyprian

Aphrodite, immortal and golden, the very life of the sparkling sky itself sown in the foam of the sea.

Between the two lies all the distance that separates gross idolatry from the veneration of the symbol; the gulf that divides the animal materialism of a twentieth-century rake from the half-divine dreams of genius; the revolting coarseness of Catullus at his worst from himself at his best, or from an epigram of Meleager or Antipater of Sidon; a witty Greek comedy adapted by Plautus to the brutal humour of Rome from Swinburne's immortal *Atalanta in Calydon*. Twenty-five centuries of history, Hellenic, Byzantine and modern, have gone to make the small band of cultivated Greeks of to-day what they are, two thousand and five hundred years of astounding vicissitudes, of aristocracy, democracy and despotism, of domination and subjection, mastery, slavery and revolution, ending in freedom more than half regained. We need not wonder why they are not like us, whose forefathers of a few centuries ago were still fighting the elements for their existence, and living and thinking like barbarians.

The eyes of the Greek and the great artist met, and they looked long at one another in the shade of the



elm-tree on the lawn, as the sun was going down. Only a few minutes had passed since Margaret had been very angry, and had almost believed that she was going to quarrel finally, and break her engagement, and be free; and now she could not even turn her face away, and when her hand felt his upon it, she let him draw it slowly to him; and half unconsciously she followed her hand, bending towards him sideways from her seat, nearer and nearer, and very near.

And as she put up her lips to his, he would that she might drink his soul from him at one deep draught—even as one of his people's poets wished, in the world's spring-time, long ago.

It had been a strange love-making. They had been engaged during more than two months, they were young, vital, passionate; yet they had never kissed before that evening hour under the elm-tree at Versailles. Perhaps it was for this that Konstantin had played, or at least, for the certainty it meant to him, if he had doubted that she was sincere.

---

## CHAPTER IV.

WITHOUT offending Mr. Van Torp, Lady Maud managed not to see him again for some time, and when he understood, as he soon did, that this was her wish, he made no attempt to force himself upon her. She was probably thinking over what he had said, and in the end she would exert her influence as he had begged her to do. He was thoroughly persuaded that there was nothing unfair in his proposal and that, when she was convinced that he was right, she would help him. In a chequered career that had led to vast success, he had known people who called themselves honest and respectable but who had done unpardonable things for a hundredth part of what he offered. Like all real financiers, he knew money as a force, not as a want, very much as any strong working man knows approximately how much he can lift or carry, and reckons with approximate certainty on his average strength. To speak in his own language, Mr. Van Torp knew about

how many horse-power could be got out of any sum of money, from ten cents to more millions than he chose to speak of in his own case.

And once more, before I go on with this tale, let me say that his friendship for Lady Maud was so honest that he would never have asked her to do anything he thought "low down." To paraphrase a wise saying of Abraham Lincoln's, some millionaires mean to be bad all the time, but are not, and some are bad all the time but do not mean to be, but no millionaires mean to be bad all the time and really are. Rufus Van Torp certainly did not mean to be, according to his lights, though in his life he had done several things which he did not care to remember; and the righteous had judged him with the ferocious integrity of men who never take a penny unjustly nor give one away under any circumstances.

But when he had taken the first step towards accomplishing his purpose, he was very much at a loss as to the next, and he saw that he had never undertaken anything so difficult since he had reorganised the Nickel Trust, trebled the stock, cleared a profit of thirty millions and ruined nobody but the small-fry, who of course



deserved it on the principle that people who cannot keep money ought not to have any. Some unkind newspaper man had then nicknamed it the Brass Trust, and had called him Brassy Van Torp; but it is of no use to throw mud at the Golden Calf, for the dirt soon dries to dust and falls off, leaving the animal as beautifully shiny as ever.

Mr. Van Torp did not quite see how he could immediately apply the force of money to further his plans with effect. He knew his adversary's financial position in Europe much too well to think of trying to attack him on that ground; and besides, in his rough code it would not be fair play to do that. It was "all right" to ruin a hostile millionaire in order to get his money. That was "business." But to ruin him for the sake of a woman was "low down." It would be much more "all right" to shoot him, after fair and due warning, and to carry off the lady. That was impossible in a civilised country, of course, but as it occurred to him, while he was thinking that he might find it convenient to go somewhere in a hurry by sea, he bought a perfectly new yacht that was for sale because the owner had died of heart disease the week after she was quite

ready to take him to the Mediterranean. The vessel was at least as big as one of the ocean liners of fifty years ago, and had done twenty-two and one-tenth knots on her trial. Mr. Van Torp took her over as she was, with her officers, crew, cook and stores, and rechristened her. She had been launched as the *Alwayn*; he called her the *Lancashire Lass*—a bit of sentiment on his part, for that was the name of a mare belonging to Lady Maud's father, which he had once ridden bareback when he was in an amazing hurry.

He had one interview with the captain.

"See here, Captain," he said, "I may not want to take a trip this season. I'm that sort of a man. I may or I may not. But if I do want you, I'll want you quick. See?"

With the last word, he looked up suddenly, and the captain "saw," for he met a pair of eyes that astonished him.

"Yes, I see," he answered mechanically.

"And if you're in one place with your boat, and I wire that I want you in another, I'd like you to get there right away," said Mr. Van Torp.

"Yes, sir."

"They say she'll do twenty-two and a tenth," continued the owner, "but when I wire I want you I'd like her to do as much more as she can without bursting a lung. If you don't think you've got the kind of engineer who'll keep her red-hot, tell me right off and we'll get another. And don't you fuss about burning coal, Captain. And see that the crew get all they can eat and not a drop of drink but tea and coffee, and if you let 'em go on shore once in a way, see that they come home right side up with care, Captain, and make each of 'em say 'truly rural' and 'British Constitution' before he goes to bed, and if he can't, you just unship him, or whatever you call it on a boat. Understand, Captain?"

The captain understood and kept his countenance.

"Now, I want to know one thing," continued the new owner. "What's the nearest seaport to Bayreuth, Bavaria?"

"Venice," answered the captain without the least hesitation, and so quickly that Mr. Van Torp was immediately suspicious.

"If that's so, you're pretty smart," he observed.



"You can telephone to Cook's office, sir, and ask them," said the captain quietly.

The instrument was on the table at Mr. Van Torp's elbow. He looked sharply at the captain, as he unhooked the receiver and set it to his ear. In a few seconds communication was given.

"Cook's office? Yes. Yes. This is Mr. Van Torp, Rufus Van Torp of New York. Yes. I want to know what's the nearest seaport to Bayreuth, Bavaria. Yes. Yes. That's just what I want to know. Yes. I'll hold the wire while you look it up."

He was not kept waiting long.

"Venice, you say? You're sure you're right, I suppose? Yes. Yes. I was only asking. No thank you. If I want a ticket I'll look in myself. Much obliged. Good-bye."

He hung the receiver in its place again, and turned to his captain with a different expression, in which admiration and satisfaction were quite apparent.

"Well," he said, "you're right. It's Venice. I must say that, for an Englishman, you're quite smart."

The captain smiled quietly, but did not think it worth while to explain that the last owner with whom

he had sailed had been Wagner-mad and had gone to Bayreuth regularly. Moreover, he had judged his man already.

"Am I to proceed to Venice at once, sir?" he asked.

"As quick as you can, Captain."

The Englishman looked at his watch deliberately, and made a short mental calculation before he said anything. It was eleven in the morning.

"I can get to sea by five o'clock this afternoon, sir. Will that do?"

Mr. Van Torp was careful not to betray the least surprise.

"Yes," he said, as if he were not more than fairly satisfied, "that'll do nicely."

"Very well, sir, then I'll be off. It's about three thousand miles, and she's supposed to do that at eighteen knots with her own coal. Say eight days. But as this is her maiden trip we must make allowance for having to stop the engines once or twice. Good morning, sir."

"Good day, Captain. Get in some coal and provisions as soon as you arrive in Venice. I may want to

go to Timbuctoo, or to Andaman Islands or something. I'm that sort of a man. I'm not sure where I'll go. Good-bye."

The captain stopped at the first telegraph office on his way to the Waterloo Station and telegraphed both to his chief engineer, Mr. M'Cosh, and his chief mate, Mr. Johnson, for he thought it barely possible that one or the other might be ashore.

"Must have steam by 4 P.M. to-day to sail at once long voyage. Coming next train. Owner in hurry. Send ashore for my wash. Brown, Captain."

When the clocks struck five on shore that afternoon, and the man at the wheel struck two bells from the wheel-house, and the look-out forward repeated them on the ship's bell, all according to the most approved modern fashion on large steamers, the beautiful *Lancashire Lass* was steaming out upon Southampton Water.

Out of the merest curiosity Mr. Van Torp telegraphed to Cowes to be informed of the exact moment at which his yacht was under way, and before six o'clock he had a message.

"Yacht sailed at four thirty-nine."

The new owner was so much pleased that he actually



smiled, for Captain Brown had been twenty-one minutes better than his word.

"I guess he'll do," thought Mr. Van Torp. "I only hope I may need him."

He was not at all sure that he should need the *Lancashire Lass* and Captain Brown; but it has often been noticed that in the lives of born financiers even their caprices often turn out to their advantage, and that their least logical impulses in business matters are worth more than the sober judgment of ordinary men.

As for Captain Brown, he was a quiet little person with a rather pink face and sparkling blue eyes, and he knew his business. In fact he had passed as Extra Master. He knew that he was in the service of one of the richest men in the world, and that he commanded a vessel likely to turn out one of the finest yachts afloat, and he did not mean to lose such a berth either by piling up his ship, or by being slow to do whatever his owner wished done, within the boundaries of the possible; but it had not occurred to him that his owner might order him to exceed the limits of anything but mere possibility, such, for instance, as those of the law, civil, criminal, national, or international.

Mr. Van Torp had solid nerves, but when he had sent his yacht to the only place where he thought he might possibly make use of it, he realised that he was wasting valuable time while Logotheti was making all the running, and his uncommon natural energy, finding nothing to work upon as yet, made him furiously impatient. It seemed to hum and sing in his head, like the steam in an express engine when it is waiting to start.

He had come over to England on an impulse, as soon as he had heard of Cordova's engagement. Until then he had not believed that she would ever accept the Greek, and when he learned from Lady Maud's letter that the fact was announced, he "saw red," and his resolution to prevent the marriage was made then and there. He had no idea how he should carry it out, but he knew that he must either succeed or come to grief in the attempt, for as long as he had any money left, or any strength, he would spend both lavishly for that one purpose.

Yet he did not know how to begin, and his lack of imagination exasperated him beyond measure. He was sleepless and lost his appetite, which had never hap-

pened to him before; he stayed on in London instead of going down to his place in Derbyshire, because he was always sure that he meant to start for the Continent in a few hours, with an infallible plan for success; but he did not go.

The most absurd schemes suggested themselves. He was disgusted with what he took for his own stupidity, and he tried to laugh at the sentimental vein that ran through all his thoughts as the thread through a string of beads. He grew hot and cold as he recalled the time when he had asked Margaret to marry him, and he had frightened her and she had fled and locked herself into her own room; his heart beat faster when he thought of certain kindly words she had said to him since then, and on which he built up a great hope now, though they had meant nothing more to her than a general forgiveness, where she really had very little to forgive. A genuine offer of marriage from a millionaire is not usually considered an insult, but since she had chosen to look at it in that light, he was humble enough to be grateful for her pardon. If he had not been so miserably in love he would have been even more amazed and alarmed at his own humility,



for he had not shown signs of such weakness before. In a life which had been full of experience, though it was not yet long, he had convinced himself that the "softening" which comes with years, and of which kind people often speak with so much feeling, generally begins in the brain; and the thought that he himself was growing less hard than he had been, already filled him with apprehension. He asked himself why he had withdrawn from the Nickel Trust, unless it was because his faculties were failing prematurely. At the mere thought, he craved the long-familiar excitement of making money, and risking it, and he wished he had a railway or a line of steamers to play with; since he could not hit upon the scheme for which he was racking his brains. For once in his life, too, he felt lonely, and to make it worse he had not received a line from his friend Lady Maud since she had abruptly left him in her own drawing-room. He wondered whether she had yet made up her mind to help him.

He was living in a hotel in London, though he did not like it. Americans, as a rule, would a little rather live in hotels than in houses of their own, perhaps because it is less trouble and no dearer, at least not in

American cities. Housekeeping in New York can be done with less risk by a company than by an individual, for companies do not succumb to nervous prostration, whatever may happen to their employees.

But Mr. Van Torp was an exception to the rule, for he liked privacy, and even solitude, and though few men were better able to face a newspaper reporter in fair fight, he very much preferred not to be perpetually on the look-out lest he should be obliged to escape by back stairs and side doors, like a hunted thief. He felt safer from such visits in London than in New York or Paris, but only relatively so.

He was meditating on the future one morning, over an almost untouched breakfast, between nine and ten o'clock, when his man Stemp brought a visiting card.

"Reporter?" he inquired, without looking up, as he leaned far back in his chair, his gaze riveted on the cold buttered toast.

"No, sir. It's some sort of a foreigner, and he talks a heathen language."

"Oh, he does, does he?" The question was asked in a tone of far-away indifference.

"Yes, sir."

A long silence followed. Mr. Van Torp still stared at the buttered toast and appeared to have forgotten all about the card. Stemp endeavoured very tactfully to rouse him from his reverie.

"Shall I get you some more hot toast, sir?" he inquired very gently.

"Toast? No. No toast."

He did not move; his steady gaze did not waver. Stemp waited a long time, motionless with his little salver in his hand. At last Van Torp changed his position, threw his head so far back that it rested on the top of the chair, thrust his hands deep into the pockets of his trousers and stared at the ceiling as intently as he had gazed at the plate. Then he spoke to his man again.

"Stemp."

"Yes, sir."

"What do you suppose that fellow wants, now, Stemp? Do you suppose he thinks I speak his heathen language? What does he come bothering me for? What's the good?"

"Well, sir," answered Stemp, "I can't quite say, but I believe there's something written on the card if



you care to look at it, sir, and he has a person with him that speaks a little English. Shall I throw him out, sir?"

Stemp asked the question with such perfect gravity that, being an Englishman, he might very well have been thought to mean the words literally. But he did not. He merely adopted Mr. Van Torp's usual way of expressing that the master was not at home.

"I'll look at the card, anyway."

He stretched out one hand without turning his eyes towards it; the careful Stemp promptly brought the little salver into contact with the large fingers, which picked up the card and raised it deliberately to the line of vision. By this means Mr. Van Torp saved himself the trouble of turning his head.

It was a rather large card, bearing in the middle two or three odd-looking signs which meant nothing to him, but underneath them he read in plain characters the single word "Barak."

"Barrack!" grumbled the American. "Rubbish! Why not 'teapot,' or 'rocking-horse,' or anything else that's appropriate?"

As he paused for an answer, Stemp ventured to speak.

"Can't say, sir. P'r'aps it's the only word he knows, sir, so he's had it printed."

Van Torp turned his head at last, and his eyes glared unpleasantly as he examined his valet's face. But the Englishman's features were utterly impassive; if they expressed anything it was contempt for the heathen person outside, who only knew one word of English.

Mr. Van Torp seemed satisfied and glanced at the card again.

"I guess you didn't mean to be funny," he said, as if acknowledging that he had made a mistake.

"Certainly not, sir," answered Stemp, drawing himself up with an air of injured pride, for he felt that his professional manners were suspected, if not actually criticised.

"That's all right," observed Mr. Van Torp, turning the card over. "Oh, the writing's on the back, I see. Yes. Now, that's very curious, I must say," he said, after reading the words. "That's very curious," he repeated, laying strong and equal emphasis on the last two words. "Ask him to walk in, Stemp."

"Yes, sir. With the man who speaks English for him, I suppose, sir?"

"No. He can wait outside till I want him, and you can go away too. I'll see the man alone."

"Very good, sir."

As the valet went out Mr. Van Torp turned his chair half round without getting up, so that he sat facing the door. A moment later Stemp had ushered in the visitor, and was gone.

A slim youth came forward without boldness, but without the least timidity, as if he were approaching an equal. He had an oval face, no moustache, a complexion like cream, short and thick black hair and very clear dark eyes that met the American's fearlessly. He was under the average height, and he wore rather thin, loose grey clothes that had been made by a good tailor. His hands and feet were smaller than a European's.

"So you're Mr. Barrack," Mr. Van Torp said, nodding pleasantly.

The young face smiled, and the parted lips showed quite perfect teeth.

"Barak," answered the young man, giving the name the right sound.



"Yes, I understand, but I can't pronounce it like you. Take a chair, Mr. Barrack, and draw up to the table."

The young man understood the gesture that explained the speech and sat down.

"So you're a friend of Mr. Logotheti's, and he advised you to come to me? Understand? Logotheti of Paris."

Barak smiled again, and nodded quickly as he recognised the name. The American watched his face attentively.

"All right," he continued. "You can trot out your things now, right on the table-cloth here."

He had seen enough of Indians and Mexicans in his youth to learn the simple art of using signs, and he easily made his meaning clear to his visitor. Barak produced a little leathern bag, not much bigger than an ordinary purse, and fastened with thin thongs, which he slowly untied. Mr. Van Torp watched the movements of the delicate fingers with great interest, for he was an observant man.

"With those hands," he silently reflected, "it's either a lady or a thief, or both."

Barak took several little twists of tissue-paper from the bag, laid them in a row on the table-cloth, and then began to open them one by one. Each tiny parcel contained a ruby, and when the young man counted them there were five in all, and they were fine stones if they were genuine; but Mr. Van Torp was neither credulous nor easily surprised. When Barak looked to see what impression he had produced on such a desirable buyer, he was disappointed.

"Nice," said the American carelessly; "nice rubies, but I've seen better. I wonder if they're real, anyway. They've found out how to make them by chemistry now, you know."

But Barak understood nothing, of course, beyond the fact that Mr. Van Torp seemed indifferent, which was a common trick of wily customers; but there was something about this one's manner that was not assumed. Barak took the finest of the stones with the tips of his slender young fingers, laid it in the palm of his other hand, and held it under Mr. Van Torp's eyes, looking at him with an inquiring expression. But the American shook his head.

"No rubies to-day, thank you," he said.

Barak nodded quietly, and at once began to wrap up the stones, each in its own bit of paper, putting the twists back into the bag one by one. Then he drew the thongs together and tied them in a neat sort of knot which Mr. Van Torp had never seen. The young man then rose to go, but the millionaire stopped him.

"Say, don't go just yet. I'll show you a ruby that'll make you sit up."

He rose as he spoke, and Barak understood his smile and gesture, and waited. Mr. Van Torp went into the next room, and came back almost immediately, bringing a small black morocco case, which he set on the table and unlocked with a little key that hung on his watch-chain. He was not fond of wearing jewellery, and the box held all his possessions of that sort, and was not full. There were three or four sets of plain studs and links; there were half a dozen very big gold collar-studs; there was a bit of an old gold chain, apparently cut off at each end, and having one cheap little diamond set in each link; and there was a thin old wedding-ring that must have been a woman's; besides a few other valueless trinkets, all lying loose



and in confusion. Mr. Van Torp shook the box a little, poked the contents about with one large finger, and soon found an uncut red stone about the size of a hazel-nut, which he took out and placed on the white cloth before his visitor.

"Now that's what I call a ruby," he said, with a smile of satisfaction. "Got any like that, young man? Because if you have I'll talk to you, maybe. Yes," he continued, watching the Oriental's face, "I told you I'd make you sit up. But I didn't mean to scare you bald-headed. What's the matter with you, anyway? Your eyes are popping out of your head. Do you feel as if you were going to have a fit? I say! Stemp!"

Barak was indeed violently affected by the sight of the uncut ruby, and his face had changed in a startling way; a great vein like a whipcord suddenly showed itself on his smooth forehead straight up and down; his lids had opened so wide that they uncovered the white of the eye almost all round the iris; he was biting his lower lip so that it was swollen and blood-red against the little white teeth; and a moment before Mr. Van Torp had called out to his ser-

vant, the young man had reeled visibly, and would perhaps have collapsed if the American had not caught the slender waist and supported the small head against his shoulder with his other hand.

Stemp was not within hearing. He had been told to go away, and he had gone, and meant to be rung for when he was wanted, for he had suffered a distinct slight in being suspected of a joke. Therefore Mr. Van Torp called to him in vain, and meanwhile stood where he was with his arm round Barak, and Barak's head on his shoulder; but as no one came at his call, he lifted the slim figure gently and carried it towards the sofa, and while he was crossing the large room with his burden the palpable truth was forced upon him that his visitor's slimness was more apparent than real, and an affair of shape rather than of pounds. Before he had quite reached the lounge, however, Barak stirred, wriggled in his arms, and sprang to the floor and stood upright, blinking a little, like a person waking from a dream, but quite steady, and trying to smile in an apologetic sort of way, though evidently still deeply disturbed. Mr. Van Torp smiled, too, as if to offer his congratulations on the quick recovery.

"Feel better now?" he inquired in a kindly tone, and nodded. "I wonder what on earth you're up to, young lady?" he soliloquised, watching Barak's movements.

He was much too cautious and wise to like being left alone for many minutes with a girl, and a good-looking one, who went about London dressed in men's clothes and passed herself for a ruby merchant. Mr. Van Torp was well aware that he was not a safe judge of precious stones, that the rubies he had seen might very well be imitation, and that the girl's emotion at the sight of the rough stone might be only a piece of clever acting, the whole scene having been planned by a gang of thieves for the purpose of robbing him of that very ruby, which was worth a large sum, even in his estimation; for it was nearly the counterpart of the one he had given Lady Maud, though still uncut.

Therefore he returned to the table and slipped the gem into his pocket before going to the door to see whether Stemp was within hail.

But Barak now understood what he was going to do, and ran before him, and stood before the door in



an attitude which expressed entreaty so clearly that Mr. Van Torp was puzzled.

"Well," he said, standing still and looking into the beautiful imploring eyes, "what on earth do you want now, Miss Barrack? Try and explain yourself."

A very singular conversation by signs now began.

Barak pointed to the waistcoat-pocket into which he had put the stone. The matter concerned that, of course, and Van Torp nodded. Next, though after considerable difficulty, she made him understand that she was asking how he had got it, and when this was clear, he answered by pretending to count out coins with his right hand on the palm of his left to explain that he had bought it. There was no mistaking this, and Barak nodded quickly and went on to her next question. She wanted to know what kind of man had sold him the ruby. She improvised a pretty little dumb show in which she represented the seller and Mr. Van Torp the buyer of the ruby, and then by gestures she asked if the man who sold it was tall.

Van Torp raised his hand several inches higher than his own head. He had bought the ruby from a very tall man. Putting both hands to her chin and

then drawing them down as if stroking a long beard, she inquired if the man had one, and again the answer was affirmative. She nodded excitedly and pointed first to Van Torp's sandy hair and then to her own short black locks. The American pointed to his own, and then touched his watch-chain and smiled. The man's hair was fair, and even golden. By a similar process she ascertained that his eyes were blue and not black, and her excitement grew. Last of all she tried to ask where the man was, but it was some time before she could make Mr. Van Torp understand what she meant. As if to help her out of her difficulty, the sun shone through the clouds at that moment and streamed into the room; she pointed to it at once, turned her back to it, and then held out her right hand to indicate the east, and her left to the west.

"Oh yes," said Van Torp, who had seen Indians do the same thing, "it was west of here that I bought it of him, a good way west."

He pointed in that direction, and thrust out his arm as if he would make it reach much farther if he could. At this Barak looked deeply disappointed. Several times, to show that she meant London, or at

least England, she pointed to the floor at her feet and looked inquiringly at Van Torp, but he shook his head and pointed to the west again, and made a gesture that meant crossing something. He spoke to her as if she could understand.

"I've got your meaning," he said. "You're after the big man with the yellow beard, who is selling rubies from the same place, and has very likely gone off with yours. He looked like a bad egg in spite of his handsome face."

He turned his eyes thoughtfully to the window. Barak plucked gently at his sleeve and pretended to write in the palm of her left hand, and then went through all the descriptive gestures again, and then once more pretended to write, and coaxingly pushed him towards a little table on which she saw writing materials.

"You'd like to have his address, would you, Miss Barrack? I wonder why you don't call in your interpreter and tell me so. It would be much simpler than all this dumb crambo."

Once more he made a step towards the door, but she caught at his sleeve, and entreated him in her own



language not to call anyone; and her voice was so deliciously soft and beseeching that he yielded, and sat down at the small table and wrote out an address from memory. He handed her the half-sheet of paper when he had dried the writing and had looked over it carefully.

"Poor little thing!" he said in a tone of pity. "If you ever find him he'll eat you."

Barak again showed signs of great emotion when she put the address into an inside pocket of her man's coat, but it was not of the same kind as before. She took Van Torp's big hand in both her own, and, bending down, she laid it on her head, meaning that he might dispose of her life ever afterwards. But he did not understand.

"You want my blessing, do you, Miss Barrack? Some people don't think Brassy Van Torp's blessing worth much, young lady, but you're welcome to it, such as it is."

He patted her thick hair and smiled as she looked up, and her eyes were dewy with tears.

"That's all right, my dear," he said. "Don't cry!"

She smiled too, because his tone was kind, and,

standing up, she took out her little leathern bag again quickly, emptied the twists of paper into her hand, selected one by touch, and slipped the rest back. She unwrapped a large stone and held it up to the light, turning it a little as she did so. Van Torp watched her with curiosity, and with an amused suspicion that she had perhaps played the whole scene in order to mollify him and induce him to buy something. So many people had played much more elaborate tricks in the hope of getting money from him, and the stones might be imitations after all, in spite of Logotheti's pencilled line of recommendation.

But Barak's next action took Van Torp by surprise. To his amazement, she pressed the ruby lightly to her heart, then to her lips, and last of all to her forehead, and before he knew what she was doing she had placed it in his right hand and closed his fingers upon it. It was a thank-offering.

"Nonsense!" objected the millionaire, smiling, but holding out the stone to her. "It's very sweet of you, but you don't mean it, and I don't take presents like that. Why, it's worth a thousand pounds in Bond Street any day!"

But she put her hands behind her back and shook her head, to show that she would not take it back. Then with her empty hand she again touched her heart, her lips, and forehead, and turned towards the door.

"Here, stop!" said Mr. Van Torp, going after her. "I can't take this thing! See here, I say! Put it back into your pocket!"

She turned and met him, and made a gesture of protest and entreaty, as if earnestly begging him to keep the gem. He looked at her keenly, and he was a judge of humanity, and saw that she was hurt by his refusal. As a last resource, he took out his pocket-book and showed her a quantity of folded bank-notes.

"Well," he said, "since you insist, Miss Barrack, I'll buy the stone of you, but I'll be everlastingly jiggered if I'll take it for nothing."

Barak's eyes suddenly flashed in a most surprising way, her lower lip pouted, and her cheek faintly changed colour, as a drop of scarlet pome-granate juice will tinge a bowl of cream.

She made one step forwards, plucked the stone from his fingers, rather than took it, and with a quick, but



girlishly awkward movement, threw it towards the window as hard as she could, stamping angrily with her little foot at the same moment. Mr. Van Torp was extremely disconcerted, as he sometimes was by the sudden actions of the sex he did not understand. Fortunately the stone hit the wall instead of going out of the window.

"I'm really very sorry, Miss Barrack," he said in a tone of humble apology, and he went quickly and picked up the gem. "I hadn't quite understood, you see."

She watched him, and drew back instinctively towards the door, as if expecting that he would again try to give it back to her. But he shook his head now, bowed with all the grace he could affect, which was little, and by way of making her feel that he accepted the gift, he pressed it to his heart, as she had done, and to his lips, but not to his forehead, because he was afraid that might cause some new mistake, as he did not know what the gesture meant.

Barak's face changed instantly; she smiled, nodded, and waved her hand to him, to say that it was all right, and that she was quite satisfied. Then she made a sort

of salute that he thought very graceful indeed, as if she were taking something from near the floor and laying it on her forehead, and she laughed softly and was out of the room and had shut the door before he could call her back again.

He stood still in the middle of the room, looking at the gem in his hand with an expression of grave doubt.

"Well," he said to himself, and his lips formed the words, though no sound articulated them, "that's a queer sort of a morning's work, anyway."

He reflected that the very last thing he had ever expected was a present of a fine ruby from a pretty heathen girl in man's clothes, recommended to him by Logotheti. Though he almost laughed at the thought when it occurred to him, he did not like the idea of keeping the stone; yet he did not know what to do with it, for it was more than probable that he was never to see Barak again, and if he ever did, it was at least likely that she would refuse to take back her gift, and as energetically as on the first occasion.

At that moment it occurred to him that he might sell it to a dealer and give the proceeds to Lady Maud for her good work. His recollections of Sunday-School

were very misty, poor man, but a story came back to him about someone who had observed that something valuable might have been sold and the money given to the poor. If he had remembered the rest, and especially that the person who made the suggestion had been Judas Iscariot, he would certainly have hesitated, for he would have been sure that there was something wrong with any advice that came from that quarter. But, happily for the poor, the name of Judas had dropped out of his memory in connection with the incident.

"At least it will do some good to somebody, and I shall not be keeping what I've no right to."

A mere acquaintance, judging him by his hard face and his extraordinary financial past, would not have believed that such a simple and highly moral reflection could occur to him. But Lady Maud, who knew him, would have given him credit for this and much more, even though she felt that he had lately tempted her to do something which her father would call dishonourable, and that the temptation had not yet quite taken itself off to the bottomless pit, where temptations are kept in pickle by the devil's housekeeper.

Mr. Van Torp took his hat and gloves, but as he



was really a good American, he had no stick to take; and he went out without even telling Stemp that he was going. In spite of what Londoners were calling the heat, he walked, and did not even feel warm; for in the first place he had lately come from Washington and New York, where a Hottentot would be very uncomfortable in July, and, moreover, he had never been at all sensitive to heat or cold, and lived as soberly as an Arab in the desert. Therefore London seemed as pleasantly cool to him with the thermometer at eighty as it seems to a newly landed Anglo-Indian who has lately seen the mercury at a hundred and thirty-five on the shady side of the verandah.

He walked up at a leisurely pace from his hotel by the river to Piccadilly and Bond Street, and he entered a jeweller's shop of modest appearance but ancient reputation, which had been in the same place for nearly a century, and had previously been on the other side of the street.

Outside, two well-dressed men were looking at the things in the window; within, a broad-shouldered, smart-looking man with black hair and dressed in perfectly new blue serge was sitting by the counter with his back

to the door, talking with the old jeweller himself. He turned on the chair when he heard the newcomer's step, and Mr. Van Torp found himself face to face with Konstantin Logotheti, whom he had supposed to be in Paris.

"Well," he said, without betraying the surprise he felt, "this is what I call a very pleasant accident, Mr. Logotheti."

The Greek rose and shook hands, and the American did not fail to observe on the counter a small piece of tissue-paper on which lay an uncut stone, much larger than the one he had in his pocket.

"If you are in any hurry," said Logotheti politely, "I don't mind waiting in the least. Mr. Pinney and I are in the midst of a discussion that may never end, and I believe neither of us has anything in the world to do."

Mr. Pinney smiled benignly and put in a word in the mercantile plural, which differs from that of royalty in being used every day.

"The truth is, we are not very busy just at this time of the year," he said.

"That's very kind of you, Mr. Logotheti," said Van

Torp, answering the latter, "but I'm not really in a hurry, thank you."

The stress he laid on the word "really" might have led one to the conclusion that he was pretending to be, but was not. He sat down deliberately at a little distance, took off his hat, and looked at the gem on the counter.

"I don't know anything about such things, of course," he said in a tone of reflection, "but I should think that was quite a nice ruby."

Again Mr. Pinney smiled benignly, for Mr. Van Torp had dealt with him for years.

"It's a very fine stone indeed, sir," he said, and then turned to Logotheti again. "I think we can undertake to cut it for you in London," he said. "I will weigh it and give you a careful estimate."

As a matter of fact, before Van Torp entered, Logotheti had got so far as the question of setting the gem for a lady's ring, but Mr. Pinney, like all the great jewellers, was as discreet and tactful as a professional diplomatist. How could he be sure that one customer might like another to know about a ring ordered for a lady? If Logotheti preferred secrecy, he would, only



have to assent and go away, as if leaving the ruby to be cut, and he could look in again when it was convenient; and this was what he at once decided to do.

"I think you're right, Mr. Pinney," he said. "I shall leave it in your hands. That's really all," he added, turning to Mr. Van Torp.

"Really? My business won't take long either, and we'll go together, if you like, and have a little chat. I only came to get another of those extra large collar-studs you make for me, Mr. Pinney. Have you got another?"

"We always keep them in stock for your convenience, sir," answered the famous jeweller, opening a special little drawer behind the counter and producing a very small morocco case.

Mr. Van Torp did not even open it, and had already laid down the money, for he knew precisely what it cost.

"Thanks," he said. "You're always so obliging about little things, Mr. Pinney."

"Thank you, sir. We do our best. Good morning, sir, good morning."

The two millionaires went out together. Two well-

dressed men stood aside to let them pass and then entered the shop.

"Which way?" asked Logotheti.

"Your way," answered the American. "I've nothing to do."

"Nor have I," laughed the Greek. "Nothing in the world! What can anybody find to do in London at this time of year?"

"I'm sure I don't know," echoed Van Torp, pleasantly. "I supposed you were on the Continent somewhere."

"And I thought you were in America, and so, of course, we meet at old Pinney's in London!"

"Really! Did you think I was in America? Your friend, the heathen girl in boy's clothes, brought me your card this morning. I supposed you knew I was here."

"No, but I thought you might be, within six months, and I gave her several cards for people I know. So she found you out! She's a born ferret—she would find anything. Did you buy anything of her?"

"No. I'm not buying rubies to-day. Much obliged

for sending her, all the same. You take an interest in her, I suppose, Mr. Logotheti? Is that so?"

"I?" Logotheti laughed a little. "No, indeed! Those days were over long ago. I'm engaged to be married."

"By-the-bye, yes. I'd heard that, and I meant to congratulate you. I do now, anyway. When is it to be? Settled that yet?"

"Some time in October, I think. So you guessed that Barak is a girl."

"Yes, that's right. I guessed she was. Do you know anything about her?"

"What she told me. But it may not be true."

"Told you? Do you mean to say you understand her language?"

"Oh yes. Tartar is spoken all over the East, you know. It's only a sort of simplified Turkish, and I picked it up in the Crimea and the Caucasus when I was travelling there some years ago. She comes from some place in Central Asia within a possible distance of Samarkand and the Trans-Caucasian railway, for that was the way she ultimately got to the Caspian and to Tiflis, and then to Constantinople and Paris. How a



mere girl, brought up in a Tartar village, could have made such a journey safely, carrying a small fortune with her in precious stones, is something nobody can understand who has not lived in the East, where anything is possible. A woman is practically sacred in a Mohammedan country. Any man who molests her stands a good chance of being torn to ribbands by the other men."

"It used to be something like that in the West, when I punched cattle," observed Mr. Van Torp, quietly. "A man who interfered with a lady there was liable to get into trouble. Progress works both ways, up and down, doesn't it? Bears at one end and rots at the other. Isn't that so?"

"It's just as true of civilisation," answered the Greek.

"They're the same thing, I should say," objected Mr. Van Torp.

"Oh, not quite, I think!"

Logotheti smiled at his own thoughts. To his thinking, civilisation meant an epigram of Meleager, or Simonides' epitaph on the Spartans who fell at Thermopylæ, or a Tragedy of Sophocles, or the Aphrodite

of Syracuse, or the Victory of the Louvre. Progress meant railways, the Paris Bourse, the Nickel Trust and Mr. Van Torp.

"Well," said the latter, "you were telling me about Miss Barrack."

"Is that what you call her?" Logotheti laughed lightly.

He seemed to be in very good humour. Men often are, just before marriage; and sometimes, it is said, when they are on the eve of great misfortunes which they cannot possibly foresee. Fate loves unexpected contrasts. Logotheti told his companion the story of the ruby mine, substantially as it was narrated at the beginning of this tale, not dreaming that Van Torp had perhaps met and talked with the man who had played so large a part in it, and to find whom Baraka had traversed many dangers and overcome many difficulties.

"It sounds like the *Arabian Nights*," said Mr. Van Torp, as if he found it hard to believe.

"Exactly," assented Logotheti. "And, oddly enough, the first of these stories is about Samarkand, which is not so very far from Baraka's native village. It seems to have taken the girl about a year to find her way to

Constantinople, and when she got there she naturally supposed that it was the capital of the world, and that her man, being very great and very rich, thanks to her, must of course live there. So she searched Stamboul and Pera for him, during seven or eight months. She lived in the house of a good old Persian merchant, under the protection of his wife, and learned that there was a world called Europe where her man might be living, and cities called Paris and London, where people pay fabulous prices for precious stones. Persian merchants are generally well-educated men, you know. At last she made up her mind to dress like a man, she picked up an honest Turkish manservant who had been all over Europe with a diplomatist and could speak some French and English as well as Tartar, she got a letter of recommendation to me from a Greek banker, through the Persian who did business with him, joined some Greeks who were coming to Marseilles by sea, and here she is. Now you know as much as I do. She is perfectly fearless, and as much more sure of herself than any man ever was, as some young women can be in this queer world. Of course, she'll never find the brute who thought he was leaving her to be



murdered by her relations, but if she ever did, she would either marry him or cut his throat."

"Nice, amiable kind of girl," remarked Mr. Van Torp, who remembered her behaviour when he had refused her proffered gift. "That's very interesting, Mr. Logotheti. How long do you count on being in London this time? Three or four days, maybe?"

"I daresay. No longer, I fancy."

"Why don't you come and take dinner with me some night?" asked the American. "Day after tomorrow, perhaps. I'd be pleased to have you."

"Thank you very much," Logotheti answered. "Since you ask me, I see no reason why I should not dine with you, if you want me."

They agreed upon the place and hour, and each suddenly remembered an engagement.

"By the way," said Mr. Van Torp without apparent interest, "I hope Madame Cordova is quite well? Where's she hiding from you?"

"Just now the hiding-place is Bayreuth. She's gone there with Mrs. Rushmore to hear *Parsifal*. I believe I'm not musical enough for that, so I'm roving till it's

over. That's my personal history at this moment! And Miss Donne is quite well, I believe, thank you."

"I notice you call her 'Miss Donne' when you speak of her," said Van Torp. "Excuse me if I made a mistake just now. I've always called her Madame Cordova."

"It doesn't matter at all," answered Logotheti carelessly, "but I believe she prefers to be called by her own name amongst friends. Good-bye till day after to-morrow, then."

"At half after eight."

"All right—half-past—I shall remember."

But at two o'clock, on the next day but one, Logotheti received a note brought by hand, in which Mr. Van Torp said that to his very great regret he had been called away suddenly, and hoped that Logotheti would forgive him, as the matter was of such urgent importance that he would have already left London when the note was received.

This was more than true, if possible, for the writer had left town two days earlier, very soon after he had parted from Logotheti in Pall Mall, although the note had not been delivered till forty-eight hours later.

## CHAPTER V.

MR. VAN TORP knew no more about Bayreuth than about Samarkand, beyond the fact that at certain stated times performances of Wagner's operas were given there with as much solemnity as great religious festivals, and that musical people spoke of the Bayreuth season in a curiously reverent manner. He would have been much surprised if anyone had told him that he often whistled fragments of *Parsifal* to himself and liked the sound of them; for he had a natural ear and a good memory, and had whistled remarkably well when he was a boy.

The truth about this seemingly impossible circumstance was really very simple. In what he called his cow-punching days, he had been for six months in company with two young men who used to whistle softly together by the hour beside the camp fire, and none of the other "boys" had ever heard the strange tunes they seemed to like best, but Van Torp had caught and remembered many fragments, almost un-



consciously, and he whistled them to himself because they gave him a sensation which no "real music" ever did. Extraordinary natures, like his, are often endowed with unnoticed gifts and tastes quite unlike those of most people. No one knew anything about the young men who whistled Wagner; the "Lost Legion" hides many secrets, and the two were not popular with the rest, though they knew their business and did their work fairly well. One of them was afterwards said to have been killed in a shooting affray and the other had disappeared about the same time, no one knew how, or cared, though Mr. Van Torp thought he had recognised him once many years later. They were neither Americans nor Englishmen, though they both spoke English well, and never were heard to use any other language. But that is common enough with emigrants to the United States and elsewhere. Everyone who has been to sea in an American vessel knows how the Scandinavian sailors insist on speaking English amongst themselves, instead of their own language.

Mr. Van Torp was fond of music, quite apart from his admiration for the greatest living lyric soprano, and since it was his fancy to go to Bayreuth in the hope

of seeing her, he meant to hear Wagner's masterpiece, and supposed that there would not be any difficulty about such a simple matter, nor about obtaining the sort of rooms he was accustomed to, in the sort of hotel he expected to find where so many rich people went every other year. Anyone who has been to the holy place of the Wagnerians can imagine his surprise when, after infinite difficulty, he found himself, his belongings and his man deposited in one small attic room of a Bavarian tanner's house, with one feather-bed, one basin and one towel for furniture.

"Stemp," said Mr. Van Torp, "this is a heathen town."

"Yes, sir."

"I suppose I'm thought close about money," continued the millionaire, thinking aloud, "but I call five dollars a day dear, for this room, don't you?"

"Yes, sir, I do indeed! I call it downright robbery. That's what I call it, sir."

"Well, I suppose they call it business here, and quite a good business too. But I'd like to buy the whole thing and show 'em how to run it. They'd make more in the end."

"Yes, sir. I hope you will, sir. Beg pardon, sir, but do you think it would cost a great deal?"

"They'd ask a great deal, anyway," answered the millionaire thoughtfully. "Stemp, suppose you get me out some things and then take a look around, while I try to get a wash in that—that tea-service there."

Mr. Van Torp eyed the exiguous basin and jug with some curiosity and much contempt. Stemp, impassive and correct under all circumstances, unstrapped a valise, laid out on the bed what his master might need, and inquired if he wished anything else.

"There isn't anything else," answered Mr. Van Torp, gloomily.

"When shall I come back, sir?"

"In twenty-five minutes. There isn't half an hour's wash in that soup-plate, anyway."

He eyed the wretched basin with a glance that might almost have cracked it. When his man had gone, he proceeded to his toilet, such as it was, and solaced himself by softly whistling as much of the "Good Friday" music as he remembered, little dreaming what it was, or that his performance was followed with nervous and almost feverish interest by the oc-



cupant of the next room in the attic, a poor musician who had saved and scraped for years to sit at the musical feast during three days.

"E sharp!" cried an agonised voice on the other side of the closed door, in a strong German accent. "I know it is E sharp! I know it!"

Mr. Van Torp stopped whistling at once, lowered his razor, and turned a mask of soap-suds in the direction whence the sound came.

"Do you mean me?" he inquired in a displeased tone.

"I mean who whistles the 'Good Friday' music," answered the voice. "I tell you, I know it is E sharp in that place. I have the score. I shall show you if you believe not."

"He's mad," observed Mr. Van Torp, beginning to shave again. "Are you a lunatic?" he asked, pausing after a moment. "What's the matter with you, anyhow?"

"I am a musician, I tell you! I am a pianist!"

"It's the same thing," said Mr. Van Torp, working carefully on his upper lip, under his right nostril.

"I shall tell you that you are a barbarian!" retorted the voice.

"Well, that doesn't hurt," answered Mr. Van Torp.

He heard a sort of snort of scorn on the other side and there was silence again. But before long, as he got away from his upper lip with the razor, he unconsciously began to whistle again, and he must have made the same mistake as before, for he was interrupted by a deep groan of pain from the next room.

"Not feeling very well?" he inquired in a tone of dry jocularity. "Stomach upset?"

"E sharp!" screamed the wretched pianist.

Van Torp could hear him dancing with rage, or pain.

"See here, whoever you are, don't call names! I don't like it. See? I've paid for this room and I'm going on whistling if I like, and just as long as I like."

"You say you make noises you like?" cried the infuriated musician. "Oh no! You shall not! There are rules! We are not in London, sir, we are in Bayreuth! If you make noises, you shall be thrown out of the house."

"Shall I? Well, now, that's a funny sort of a rule for a hotel, isn't it?"

"I go complain of you," retorted the other, and Mr. Van Torp heard a door opened and shut again.

In a few minutes he had done all that the conditions would permit in the way of making himself presentable, and just as he left the room he was met by Stemp, the twenty-five minutes being just over.

"Very good, sir. I'll do what I can, sir," said the excellent man, as Mr. Van Torp pointed to the things that lay about.

As he went out, he recognised the voice of his neighbour, who was talking excitedly in voluble German, somewhere at the back of the house.

"He's complaining now," thought Mr. Van Torp, with something like a smile.

He had already been to the best hotel, in the hope of obtaining rooms, and he had no difficulty in finding it again. He asked for Madame da Cordova. She was at home, for it was an off-day; he sent in his card, and was presently led to her sitting-room. Times had changed. Six months earlier he would have been told that there had been a mistake and that she had gone out.

She was alone; a letter she had been writing lay unfinished on the queer little desk near the shaded



window, and her pen had fallen across the paper. On the round table in the middle of the small bare room there stood a plain white vase full of corn-flowers and poppies, and Margaret was standing there, rearranging them, or pretending to do so.

She was looking her very best, and as she raised her eyes and greeted him with a friendly smile, Mr. Van Torp thought she had never been so handsome before. It had not yet occurred to him to compare her with Lady Maud, because for some mysterious natural cause the beautiful Englishwoman who was his best friend had never exerted even the slightest feminine influence on his being; he would have carried her in his arms, if need had been, as he had carried the Tartar girl, and not a thrill of his nerves nor one faster beat of his heart would have disturbed his placidity; she knew it, as women know such things, and the knowledge made her quite sure that he was not really the coarse-grained and rather animal son of nature that many people said he was, the sort of man to whom any one good-looking woman is much the same as another, a little more amusing than good food, a little less satisfactory than good wine.

But the handsome singer stirred his blood, the touch of her hand electrified him, and the mere thought that any other man should ever make her his own was unbearable. After he had first met her he had pursued her with such pertinacity and such utter ignorance of women's ways that he had frightened her, and she had frankly detested him for a time; but he had learned a lesson and he profited by it with that astounding adaptability which makes American men and women just what they are.

Margaret held out her hand and he took it; and though its touch and her friendly smile were like a taste of heaven just then, he pressed her fingers neither too much nor too little, and his face betrayed no emotion.

"It's very kind of you to receive me, Miss Donne," he said quietly.

"I think it's very kind of you to come and see me," Margaret answered. "Come and sit down and tell me how you got here—and why!"

"Well," he answered slowly, as they seated themselves side by side on the hard green sofa, "I don't suppose I can explain, so that you'll understand, but

I'll try. Different kinds of things brought me. I heard you were here from Lady Maud, and I thought perhaps I might have an opportunity for a little talk. And then—oh, I don't know. I've seen everything worth seeing except a battle and *Parsifal*, and as it seemed so easy, and you were here, I thought I'd have a look at the opera, since I can't see the fight."

Margaret laughed a little.

"I hope you will like it," she said. "Have you a good seat?"

"I haven't got a ticket yet," answered Mr. Van Torp, in blissful ignorance.

"No seat!" The Primadonna's surprise was almost dramatic. "But how in the world do you expect to get one now? Don't you know that the seats for *Parsifal* are all taken months beforehand?"

"Are they really?" He was very calm about it. "Then I suppose I shall have to get a ticket from a speculator. I don't see anything hard about that."

"My dear friend, there are no speculators here, and there are no tickets to be had. You might as well ask for the moon!"

"I can stand, then. I'm not afraid of getting tired."



"There are no standing places at all! No one is allowed to go in who has not a seat. A week ago you might possibly have picked up one in Munich, given up by someone at the last moment, but such chances are jumped at! I wonder that you even got a place to sleep!"

"Well, it's not much of a place," said Mr. Van Torp, thoughtfully. "There's one room the size of a horse-box, one bed, one basin, one pitcher and one towel, and I've brought my valet with me. I've concluded to let him sleep while I'm at the opera, and he'll sit up when I want to go to bed. Box and Cox. I don't know what he'll sit on, for there's no chair, but he's got to sit."

Margaret laughed, for he amused her.

"I suppose you're exaggerating a little bit," she said. "It's not really quite so bad as that, is it?"

"It's worse. There's a lunatic in the next room who calls me E. Sharp through the door, and has lodged a complaint already because I whistled while I was shaving. It's not a very good hotel. Who is E. Sharp, anyway? Maybe that was the name of the last man who occupied that room. I don't know, but

I don't like the idea of having a mad German pianist for a neighbour. He may get in while I'm asleep and think I'm the piano, and hammer the life out of me, the way they do. I've seen a perfectly new piano wrecked in a single concert by a fellow who didn't look as if he had the strength to kick a mosquito. They're so deceptive, pianists! Nervous men are often like that, and most pianists are nothing but nerves and hair."

He amused her, for she had never seen him in his present mood.

"E sharp is a note," she said. "On the piano it's the same as F natural. You must have been whistling something your neighbour knew, and you made a mistake, and nervous musicians really suffer if one does that. But it must have been something rather complicated, to have an E sharp in it! It wasn't 'Suwanee River,' nor the 'Washington Post' either! Indeed I should rather like to know what it was."

"Old tunes I picked up when I was cow-punching, years ago," answered Mr. Van Torp. "I don't know where they came from, for I never asked, but they're not like other tunes, that's certain, and I like them.

They remind me of the old days out West, when I had no money and nothing to worry about."

"I'm very fond of whistling, too," Margaret said. "I study all my parts by whistling them, so as to save my voice."

"Really! I had no idea that was possible."

"Quite. Perhaps you whistle very well. Won't you let me hear the tune that irritated your neighbour the pianist? Perhaps I know it, too."

"Well," said Mr. Van Torp, "I suppose I could. I should be a little shy before you," he added, quite naturally. "If you'll excuse me, I'll just go and stand before the window so that I can't see you. Perhaps I can manage it that way."

Margaret, who was bored to the verge of collapse on the off-days, thought him much nicer than he had formerly been, and she liked his perfect simplicity.

"Stand anywhere you like," she said, "but let me hear the tune."

Van Torp rose and went to the window and she looked quietly at his square figure and his massive, sandy head and his strong neck. Presently he began



to whistle, very softly and perfectly in tune. Many a street-boy could do as well, no doubt, and Mrs. Rushmore would have called it a vulgar accomplishment, but the magnificent Primadonna was too true a musician, as well as a singer, not to take pleasure in a sweet sound, even if it were produced by a street-boy.

But as Mr. Van Torp went on, she opened her eyes very wide and held her breath. There was no mistake about it; he was whistling long pieces from *Parsifal*, as far as it was possible to convey an idea of such music by such means. Margaret had studied it before coming to Bayreuth, in order to understand it better; she had now already heard it once, and had felt the greatest musical emotion of her life—one that had stirred other emotions, too, strange ones quite new to her.

She held her breath and listened, and her eyes that had been wide open in astonishment, slowly closed again in pleasure, and presently, when he reached the "Good Friday" music, her own matchless voice floated out with her unconscious breath, in such perfect octaves with his high whistling that at first he did not understand; but when he did, the rough hard man shivered

suddenly and steadied himself against the window-sill, and Margaret's voice went on alone, with faintly breathed words and then without them, following the instrumentation to the end of the scene, beyond what he had ever heard.

Then there was silence in the room, and neither of the two moved for some moments, but at last Van Torp turned, and came back.

"Thank you," he said, in a low voice.

Margaret smiled and passed her hand over her eyes quickly, as if to dispel a vision she had seen. Then she spoke.

"Do you really not know what that music is?" she asked. "Really, really?"

"Oh, quite honestly I don't!"

"You're not joking? You're not laughing at me?"

"I?" He could not understand. "I shouldn't dare!" he said.

"You've been whistling some of *Parsifal*, some of the most beautiful music that ever was written—and you whistle marvellously, for it's anything but easy! Where in the world did you learn it? Don't tell me

that those are 'old tunes' you picked up on a Californian ranch!"

"It's true, all the same," Van Torp answered.

He told her of the two foreigners who used to whistle together in the evenings, and how one was supposed to have been shot and the other had disappeared, no one had known whither, nor had cared.

"All sorts of young fellows used to drift out there," he said, "and one couldn't tell where they came from, though I can give a guess at where some of them must have been, since I've seen the world. There were younger sons of English gentlemen, fellows whose fathers were genuine lords, maybe, who had not brains enough to get into the Army or the Church. There were cashiered Prussian officers, and Frenchmen who had most likely killed women out of jealousy, and Sicilian bandits, and broken Society men from New York. There were all sorts. And there was me. And we all spoke different kinds of English and had different kinds of tastes, good and bad—mostly bad. There was only one thing we could all do alike, and that was to ride."

"I never thought of you as riding," Margaret said.



"Well, why should you? But I can, because I was just a common cowboy and had to, for a living."

"It's intensely interesting—what a strange life you have had! Tell me more about yourself, won't you?"

"There's not much to tell, it seems to me," said Van Torp. "From being a cowboy I turned into a miner, and struck a little silver, and I sold that and got into nickel, and I made the Nickel Trust what it is, more by financing it than anything else, and I got almost all of it. And now I've sold the whole thing."

"Sold the Nickel Trust?" Margaret was quite as much surprised as Lady Maud had been.

"Yes. I wasn't made to do one thing long, I suppose. If I were, I should still be a cowboy. Just now, I'm here to go to *Parsifal*, and since you say those tunes are out of that opera, I daresay I'm going to like it very much."

"It's all very uncanny," Margaret said thoughtfully. "I wonder who those two men were, and what became of the one who disappeared."

"I've a strong impression that I saw him in New York the other day," Van Torp answered. "If I'm

right, he's made money—doing quite well, I should think. It wouldn't surprise me to hear he'd got together a million or so."

"Really? What is he doing? Your stories grow more and more interesting!"

"If he's the fellow we used to call Levi Longlegs on the ranch, he's a Russian now. I'm not perfectly sure, for he had no hair on his face then, and now he has a beard like a French sapper. But the eyes and the nose and the voice and the accent are the same, and the age would about correspond. Handsome man, I suppose you'd call him. His name is Kralinsky just at present, and he's found a whole mine of rubies somewhere."

"Really? I love rubies. They are my favourite stones."

"Are they? That's funny. I've got an uncut one in my pocket now, if you'd like to see it. I believe it comes from Kralinsky's mine, too, though I got it through a friend of yours, two or three days ago."

"A friend of mine?"

He was poking his large fingers into one of the pockets of his waistcoat in search of the stone.

"Mr. Logotheti," he said, just as he found it. "He's discovered a handsome young woman from Tartary or somewhere, who has a few rubies to sell that look very much like Kralinsky's. This is one of them."

He had unwrapped the stone now and he offered it to her, holding it out in the palm of his hand. She took it delicately and laid it in her own, which was so white that the gem shed a delicate pomegranate-coloured light on the skin all round it. She admired it, turned it over with one finger, held it up towards the window, and laid it in her palm again.

But Van Torp had set her thinking about Logotheti and the Tartar girl. She put out her hand to give back the ruby.

"I should like you to keep it, if you will," he said. "I sha'n't forget the pleasure I've had in seeing you like this, but you'll forget all about our meeting here—the stone may just make you remember it sometimes."

He spoke so quietly, so gently, that she was taken off her guard, and was touched, and very much surprised to feel that she was. She looked into his eyes rather cautiously, remembering well how she had



formerly seen something terrifying in them if she looked an instant too long; but now they made her think of the eyes of a large affectionate bulldog.

"You're very kind to want to give it to me," she answered after a moment's hesitation, "but I don't like to accept anything so valuable, now that I'm engaged to be married. Konstantin might not like it. But you're so kind; give me any little thing of no value that you have in your pocket, for I mean to remember this day, indeed I do!"

"I gave nothing for the ruby," said Van Torp, still not taking it from her, "so it has no value for me. I wouldn't offer you anything that cost me money, now, unless it was a theatre for your own. Perhaps the thing's glass, after all; I've not shown it to any jeweller. The girl made me take it, because I helped her in a sort of way. When I wanted to pay for it she tried to throw it out of the window. So I had to accept it to calm her down, and she went off and left no address, and I thought I'd like you to have it, if you would."

"Are you quite, quite sure you did not pay for it?" Margaret asked. "If we are going to be friends, you must please always be very accurate."

"I've told you exactly what happened," said Van Torp. "Won't you take it now?"

"Yes, I will, and thank you very much indeed. I love rubies, and this is a beauty, and not preposterously big. I think I shall have it set as it is, uncut, and only polished, so that it will always be itself, just as you gave it to me. I shall think of the 'Good Friday' music and the Chimes, and this hideous little room, and your clever whistling, whenever I look at it."

"You're kind to-day," said Mr. Van Torp, after a moment's debate as to whether he should say anything at all.

"Am I? You mean that I used to be very disagreeable, don't you?" She smiled as she glanced at him. "I must have been, I'm sure, for you used to frighten me ever so much. But I'm not in the least afraid of you now!"

"Why should anyone be afraid of me?" asked Van Torp, whose mere smile had been known to terrify Wall Street when a "drop" was expected.

Margaret laughed a little, without looking at him.

"Tell me all about the Tartar girl," she said, instead of answering his question.

She would not have been the thoroughly feminine woman she was—far more feminine, in the simple human sense, than Lady Maud—if she had not felt satisfaction in having tamed the formidable money-wolf so that he fawned at her feet; but perhaps she was even more pleased, or amused, than she thought she could be by any such success. The man was so very much stronger and rougher than any other man with whom she had ever been acquainted, and she had once believed him to be such a thorough brute that this final conquest flattered her vanity. The more dangerous the character of the wild beast, the greater the merit of the lion-tamer who subdues him.

"Tell me about this handsome Tartar girl," she said again.

Van Torp told her Baraka's history, as far as he knew it from Logotheti.

"I never heard such an amusing set of stories as you are telling me to-day," she said.

"That particular one is Logotheti's," he answered, "and he can probably tell you much more about the girl."

"Is she really very pretty?" Margaret asked.



"Well," said Van Torp, quoting a saying of his favourite great man, "for people who like that kind of thing, I should think that would be the kind of thing they'd like."

The Primadonna smiled.

"Can you describe her?" she asked.

"Did you ever read a fairy story about a mouse that could turn into a tiger when it liked?" inquired the American in a tone of profound meditation, as if he were contemplating a vision which Margaret could not see.

"No," said she, "I never did."

"I don't think I ever did, either. But there might be a fairy story about that, mightn't there?" Margaret nodded, with an expression of displeased interest, and he went on: "Well, it describes Miss Barrack to a T. Yes, that's what I call her. She's put 'Barak' on her business card, whatever that means in a Christian language; but when I found out it was a girl, I christened her Miss Barrack. People have to have names of some kind if you're going to talk about them. But that's a digression. Pardon me. You'd like a description of the young person. I'm just thinking."

"How did you find out she was a girl?" Margaret asked, and her tone was suddenly hard.

Mr. Van Torp was not prepared for the question, and felt very uncomfortable for a moment. In his conversation with women he was almost morbidly prudish about everything which had the remotest connexion with sex. He wondered how he could convey to Margaret the information that when he had been obliged to carry the pretended boy across the room, he had been instantly and palpably convinced that he was carrying a girl.

"It was a question of form, you see," he said awkwardly.

"Form? Formality? I don't understand." Margaret was really puzzled.

"No, no!" Mr. Van Torp was actually blushing. "I mean his form—or her form——"

"Oh, her figure? You merely guessed it was a girl in boy's clothes?"

"Certainly. Yes. Only, you see, he had a kind of fit—the boy did—and I thought he was going to faint, so I picked him up and carried him to a sofa, and—

well, you understand, Miss Donne. I knew I hadn't got a boy in my arms, that's all."

"I should think so!" assented the Englishwoman. "I'm sure I should! When you found out she was a girl, how did she strike you?"

"Very attractive, I should say; very attractive," he repeated with more emphasis. "People who admire brunettes might think her quite fascinating. She has really extraordinary eyes, to begin with, those long fruity Eastern eyes, you know, that can look so far to the right and left through their eyelashes. Do you know what I mean?"

"Perfectly. You make it very clear. Go on, please."

"Her eyes—yes." Mr. Van Torp appeared to be thinking again. "Well, there was her complexion, too. It's first-rate for a dark girl. Ever been in a first-class dairy? Do you know the colour of Alderney cream when it's ready to be skimmed? Her complexion's just like that, and when she's angry, it's as if you squeezed the juice of about one red currant into the whole pan of cream. Not more than one, I should think. See what I mean?"



"Yes. She must be awfully pretty. Tell me more. Has she nice hair? Even teeth?"

"I should think she had!" answered Mr. Van Torp, with even more enthusiasm than he had shown yet. "They're as small and even and white as if somebody had gone to work and carved them all around half a new billiard ball, not separate, you understand, but all in one piece. Very pretty mouth they make, with those rather broiled-salmon-coloured lips she has, and a little chin that points up, as if she could hold her own. She can, too. Her hair? Well, you see, she's cut it short, to be a boy, but it's as thick as a beaver's fur, I should say, and pretty black. It's a silky kind of hair, that looks alive. You know what I mean, I daresay. Some brunettes' hair looks coarse and dusky, like horsehair, but hers isn't that kind, and it makes a sort of reflection in the sun, the way a young raven's wing-feathers do, if you understand."

"You're describing a raving beauty, it seems to me."

"Oh no," said the American innocently. "Now if our friend Griggs, the novelist, were here, he'd find all the right words and things, but I can only tell you just what I saw."

"You tell it uncommonly well!" Margaret's face expressed anything but pleasure. "Is she tall?"

"It's hard to tell, in men's clothes. Three inches shorter than I am, maybe. I'm a middle-sized man, I suppose. I used to be five feet ten in my shoes. She may be five feet seven, not more."

"But that's tall for a woman!"

"Is it?" Mr. Van Torp's tone expressed an innocent indifference.

"Yes. Has she nice hands?"

"I didn't notice her hands. Oh yes, I remember!" he exclaimed, suddenly correcting himself. "I did notice them. She held up that ruby to the light and I happened to look at her fingers. Small, well-shaped fingers, tapering nicely, but with a sort of firm look about them that you don't often see in a woman's hands. You've got it, too."

"Have I?" Margaret looked down at her right hand. "But, of course, hers are smaller than mine," she said.

"Well, you see, Orientals almost all have very small hands and feet—too small, I call them—little tiny feet like mice."

Margaret's own were well-shaped, but by no means small.

"The girl is in London, you say?" Her tone made a question of the statement.

"She was there two days ago, when I left. At least, she had been to see me that very morning. Almost as soon as she was gone I went out, and in the first shop I looked into I met Logotheti. It was Pinney's, the jeweller's, I remember, for I bought a collar stud. We came away together and walked some time, and he told me the Tartar girl's story. I asked him to dine to-day, but I was obliged to leave town suddenly, and so I had to put him off with a note. I daresay he's still in London."

"I daresay he is," Margaret repeated, and rising suddenly she went to the window.

Mr. Van Torp rose too, and thought of what he should say in taking his leave of her, for he felt that he had stayed long enough. Strange to say, too, he was examining his not very sensitive conscience to ascertain whether he had said anything not strictly true, but he easily satisfied himself that he had not. If all



was fair in love and war, as the proverb said, it was certainly permissible to make use of the plain truth.

The Primadonna was still looking out of the window when the door opened and her English maid appeared on the threshold. Margaret turned at the sound.

"What is it?" she asked quietly.

"There's Mr. Van Torp's man, ma'am," answered Potts. "He wants to speak to his master at once."

"You had better tell him to come up," Margaret answered. "You may just as well see him here without going all the way downstairs," she said, speaking to Van Torp.

"You're very kind, I'm sure," he replied; "but I think I'd better be going, anyway."

"No, don't go yet, please! There's something else I want to say. See your man here while I go and speak to Mrs. Rushmore. Send Mr. Van Torp's man up, Potts," she added, and left the room.

The American walked up and down alone for a few moments. Then the impassive Stemp was ushered in by the maid, and the door was shut again.

"Well?" inquired Mr. Van Torp. "Has anything happened?"

and I'd have gone to the police station rather than pay it, only I knew you'd need my services in this heathen town, sir. I'm highly relieved to know that you approve of that, sir. But they said we must turn out directly, just the same, so I re-packed your things and got a porter, and he's standing over the luggage in the street, waiting for orders."

"Stemp," said Mr. Van Torp, "I'd been whistling myself, before you came in, and the lunatic in the next room had already been fussing about it. It's my fault."

"Yes, sir. Thank you, sir."

"And it will be my fault if we have to sleep in a cab to-night."

The door opened while he was speaking, and Margaret heard the last words as she entered the room.

"I'm sorry," she said, "I thought you had finished. I could not help hearing what you said about sleeping in a cab. That's nonsense, you know."

"Well," said Mr. Van Torp, "they've just turned us out of the one room we had because I whistled *Parsifal* out of tune."

"You didn't whistle it out of tune," Margaret answered, to Stemp's great but well-concealed astonish-

ment. "I know better. Please have your things brought here at once."

"Here?" repeated Mr. Van Torp, surprised in his turn.

"Yes," she answered, in a tone that forestalled contradiction. "If nothing else can be had you shall have this room. I can do without it."

"You're kindness itself, but I couldn't do that," said Mr. Van Torp. "Bring our things to this hotel, anyway, Stemp, and we'll see what happens."

"Yes, sir."

Stemp disappeared at once, and his master turned to Margaret again.

"Nothing will induce me to put you to such inconvenience," he said, and his tone was quite as decided as hers had been.

She smiled.

"Nothing will induce me to let a friend of mine be driven from pillar to post for a lodging while I have plenty of room to spare!"

"You're very, very kind, but——"

"But the mouse may turn into a tiger if you contradict it," she said with a light laugh that thrilled him



with delight. "I remember your description of the Tartar girl!"

"Well, then, I suppose the hyæna will have to turn into a small woolly lamb if you tell him to," answered Mr. Van Torp.

"Yes," laughed Margaret. "Be a small, woolly lamb at once, please, a very small one!"

"Knee-high to a kitten; certainly," replied the millionaire submissively.

"Very well. I'll take you with me to hear *Parsifal* to-morrow, if you obey. I've just asked Mrs. Rushmore if it makes any difference to her, and she has confessed that she would rather not go again, for it tires her dreadfully and gives her a headache. You shall have her seat. What is it? Don't you want to go with me?"

Mr. Van Torp's face had hardened till it looked like a mask, he stared firmly at the wall, and his lips were set tightly together. Margaret gazed at him in surprise while she might have counted ten. Then he spoke slowly, with evident effort, and in an odd voice.

"Excuse me, Miss Donne," he said, snapping his words out. "I'm so grateful that I can't speak, that's all. It'll be all right in a second."

A huge emotion had got hold of him. She saw the red flush rise suddenly above his collar, and then sink back before it reached his cheeks, and all at once he was very pale. But not a muscle of his face moved, not a line was drawn; only his sandy eyelashes quivered a little. His hands were thrust deep into the pockets of his jacket, but the fingers were motionless.

Margaret remembered how he had told her more than once that she was the only woman the world held for him, and she had thought it was nonsense, rather vulgarly and clumsily expressed by a man who was not much better than an animal where women were concerned.

It flashed upon her at last that what he had said was literally true, that she had misjudged an extraordinary man altogether, as many people did, and that she was indeed the only woman in the whole world who could master and dominate one whom many feared and hated, and whom she had herself once detested beyond words.

He was unchanging, too, whatever else he might be, and, as she admitted the fact, she saw clearly how fickle she had been in her own likes and dislikes, ex-

cept where her art was concerned. But even as to that, she had passed through phases in which she had been foolish enough to think of giving up the stage in the first flush of her vast success.

While these thoughts were disturbing her a little Mr. Van Torp recovered himself; his features relaxed, his hands came out of his pockets, and he slowly turned towards her.

"I hope you don't think me rude," he said awkwardly. "I feel things a good deal sometimes, though people mightn't believe it."

They were still standing near together, and not far from the door through which Margaret had entered.

"It's never rude to be grateful, even for small things," she answered gently.

She left his side, and went again to the window, where she stood and turned from him, looking out. He waited where he was, glad of the moments of silence. As for her, she was struggling against a generous impulse, because she was afraid that he might misunderstand her if she gave way to it. But, to do her justice, she had never had much strength to resist her own instinctive generosity when it moved her.



"Lady Maud told me long ago that I was mistaken about you," she said at last, without looking at him. "She was right and I was quite wrong. I'm sorry. Don't bear me any grudge. You won't, will you?"

She turned now, rather suddenly, and found him looking at her with a sort of hunger in his eyes that disappeared almost as soon as hers met them.

"No," he answered, "I don't bear you any grudge; I never did, and I don't see how I ever could. I could tell you why, but I won't, because you probably know, and it's no use to repeat what once displeased you."

"Thank you," said Margaret, she scarcely knew why.

Her handsome head was a little bent, and her eyes were turned to the floor as she passed him going to the door.

"I'm going to see the manager of the hotel," she said. "I'll be back directly."

"No, no! Please let me——"

But she was gone, the door was shut again, and Mr. Van Torp was left to his own very happy reflections for awhile.

Not for long, however. He was still standing be-

fore the table staring at the corn-flowers and poppies without consciously seeing them when he was aware of the imposing presence of Mrs. Rushmore, who had entered softly during his reverie and was almost at his elbow.

"This is Mr. Van Torp, I presume," she said gravely, inclining her head. "I am Mrs. Rushmore. You have perhaps heard Miss Donne speak of me."

"I'm very pleased to meet you, Mrs. Rushmore," said the American, bowing low. "I've often heard Miss Donne speak of you with the greatest gratitude and affection."

"Certainly," Mrs. Rushmore answered with gravity, and as she established herself on the sofa she indicated a chair not far from her.

It was only proper that Margaret should always speak of her with affection and gratitude. Mr. Van Torp sat down on the chair to which she had directed, rather than invited him; and he prepared to be bored to the full extent of the bearable. He had known the late Mr. Rushmore in business; Mr. Rushmore had been a "pillar" of various things, including honesty, society, and the church he went to, and he had always bored

Mr. Van Torp extremely. The least that could be expected was that the widow of such an estimable man should carry on the traditions of her deeply lamented husband. In order to help her politely to what seemed the inevitable, Mr. Van Torp mentioned him.

"I had the pleasure of knowing Mr. Rushmore," he said in the proper tone of mournfully retrospective admiration. "He was sincerely lamented by all our business men."

"He was," assented the widow, as she would have said Amen in church, in the right place, and with much the same solemn intonation.

There was a moment's pause, during which the millionaire was trying to think of something else she might like to hear, for she was Margaret's friend, and he wished to make a good impression. He was therefore not prepared to hear her speak again before he did, much less for the subject of conversation she introduced at once.

"You know our friend Monsieur Logotheti, I believe?" she inquired suddenly.

"Why certainly," answered Van Torp, brightening at once at the mention of his rival, and at once also



putting on his moral armour of caution. "I know him quite well."

"Indeed? Have you known many Greeks, may I ask?"

"I've met one or two in business, Mrs. Rushmore, but I can't say I've known any as well as Mr. Logotheti."

"You may think it strange that I should ask you about him at our first meeting," said the good lady, "but I'm an American, and I cannot help feeling that a fellow-countryman's opinion of a foreigner is very valuable. You are, I understand, an old friend of Miss Donne's, though I have not had the pleasure of meeting you before, and you have probably heard that she has made up her mind to marry Monsieur Logotheti. I am bound to confess, as her dear mother's oldest friend, that I am very apprehensive of the consequences. I have the gravest apprehensions, Mr. Van Torp."

"Have you really?" asked the millionaire with caution, but sympathetically. "I wonder why!"

"A Greek!" said Mrs. Rushmore sadly. "Think of a Greek!"

Mr. Van Torp, who was not without a sense of

humour, was inclined to answer that, in fact, he was thinking of a Greek at that very moment. But he abstained.

"There are Greeks and Greeks, Mrs. Rushmore," he answered wisely.

"That is true," answered the lady, "but I should like your opinion, as one of our most prominent men of business—as one who, if I may say so, has of late triumphantly established his claim to respect." Mr. Van Torp bowed and waved his hand in acknowledgment of this high praise. "I should like your opinion about this—er—this Greek gentleman whom my young friend insists upon marrying."

"Really, Mrs. Rushmore——"

"Because if I thought there was unhappiness in store for her I would save her, if I had to marry the man myself!"

Mr. Van Torp wondered how she would accomplish such a feat.

"Indeed?" he said very gravely.

"I mean it," answered Mrs. Rushmore.

There was a moment's silence, during which Mr. Van Torp revolved something in his always active brain,

while Mrs. Rushmore looked at him as if she expected that he would doubt her determination to drag Logotheti to the matrimonial altar and marry him by sheer strength, rather than let Margaret be his unhappy bride. But Mr. Van Torp said something quite different.

"May I speak quite frankly, though we hardly know each other?" he asked.

"We are both Americans," answered the good lady with a grand national air. "I should not expect anything but perfect frankness of you."

"The truth is, Mrs. Rushmore, that ever since I had the pleasure of knowing Miss Donne, I have wanted to marry her myself."

"You!" cried the lady, surprised beyond measure, but greatly pleased.

"Yes," said Mr. Van Torp quietly, "and therefore, in my position, I can't give you an unbiassed opinion about Mr. Logotheti. I really can't."

"Well," said Mrs. Rushmore, "I am surprised!"

While she was still surprised Mr. Van Torp tried to make some running, and asked an important question.

"May I ask whether, as Miss Donne's oldest friend,



you would look favourably on my proposal, supposing she were free?"

Before Mrs. Rushmore could answer, the door opened suddenly, and she could only answer by an energetic nod and a look which meant that she wished Mr. Van Torp success with all her excellent heart.

"It's quite settled!" Margaret cried as she entered. "I've brought the director to his senses, and you are to have the rooms they were keeping for a Russian prince who has not turned up!"

## CHAPTER VI.

IN the sanctuary of Wagnerians the famous lyric Diva was a somewhat less important personage than in any of those other places which are called "musical centres." Before the glories of the great Brunhilde, or the supreme Kundry of the day, the fame of the "nightingale soprano" paled a little, at least in the eyes of more than half the people who filled the Bayreuth theatre. But she did not pass unnoticed by any means. There were distinguished conductors of Wagner's music

who led the orchestra for other operas too; there were Kundrys and Brunhildes who condescended to be Toscas sometimes, as a pure matter of business and livelihood, and there were numberless people in the audience who preferred *Cavalleria Rusticana* to the *Meistersinger* or the *Götterdämmerung*, but would not dare to say so till they were at a safe distance; and all these admired the celebrated Cordova, except the few that were envious of her, and who were not many. Indeed, for once it was the other way. When Margaret had come back to her own room after hearing *Parsifal* the first time, she had sat down and hidden her face in her hands for a few moments, asking herself what all her parts were worth in the end compared with Kundry, and what comparison was possible between the most beautiful of Italian or French operas and that one immortal masterpiece; for she thought, and rightly perhaps, that all the rest of Wagner's work had been but a preparation for that, and that *Parsifal*, and *Parsifal* alone, had set the genius of music beside the genius of poetry, an equal, at last, upon a throne as high. On that night the sound of her own voice would have given her no pleasure, for she longed for another tone in it; if by

some impossible circumstance she had been engaged to sing as Juliet that night, she would have broken down and burst into tears. She knew it, and the knowledge made her angry with herself, yet for nothing she could think of would she have foregone the second hearing of *Parsifal*, and the third after that; for she was a musician first, and then a great singer, and, like all true musicians, she was swayed by music that touched her, and never merely pleased by it. For her no intermediate condition of the musical sense was possible between criticism and delight; but beyond that she had found rapture now, and ever afterwards she would long to feel it again. Whether, if her voice had made it possible to sing the part of Kundry, she could have lifted herself to that seventh heaven by her own singing, only the great Kundrys and Parsifals can tell. In lyric opera she knew the keen joy of being both the instrument and the enthralled listener; perhaps a still higher state beyond that was out of anyone's reach, but she could at least dream of it.

She took Van Torp with her to the performance the next day, after impressing upon him that he was not to speak, not to whisper, not to applaud, not to



make any sound, from the moment he entered the theatre till he left it for the dinner interval. He was far too happy with her to question anything she said, and he obeyed her most scrupulously. Twenty-four hours earlier she would have laughed at the idea that his presence beside her at such a time could be not only bearable, but sympathetic, yet that seemed natural now. The Diva and the ex-cowboy, the accomplished musician and the Californian miner, the sensitive, gifted, capricious woman and the iron-jawed money-wolf had found that they had something in common. Wagner's last music affected them in the same way.

Such things are not to be explained, and could not be believed if they did not happen again and again before the eyes of those who know how to see, which is quite a different thing from merely seeing. Margaret's sudden liking for the man she had once so thoroughly disliked had begun when he had whistled to her. It grew while he sat beside her in the darkened theatre. She was absorbed by the music, the action, and the scene, and at this second hearing she could follow the noble poem itself; but she was subconscious of what her neighbour felt. He was not so motionless merely be-

cause she had told him that he must sit very still; he was not so intent on what he heard and saw, merely to please her; it was not mere interest that held him, still less was it curiosity. The spell was upon him; he was entranced, and Margaret knew it.

Even when they left the theatre and drove back to the hotel, he was silent, and she was the first to speak. Margaret hated the noise and confusion of the restaurant near the Festival Theatre.

"You have enjoyed it," she said. "I'm glad I brought you."

"I've felt something I don't understand," Van Torp answered gravely.

She liked the reply for its simplicity. She had perhaps expected that he would summon up his most picturesque language to tell her how much pleasure the music had given him, or that he would perhaps laugh at himself for having been moved; but instead, he only told her that he did not understand what he had felt; and they walked on without another word.

"Go and get something to eat," she said when they reached the hotel, "and I'll meet you here in half an hour. I don't care to talk either."

He only nodded, and lifted his hat as she went up the steps; but instead of going to eat, he sat down on a bench outside, and waited for her there, reflecting on the nature of his new experience.

Like most successful men, he looked on all theories as trash, good enough to amuse clever idlers, but never to be taken into consideration in real life. He never asked about the principle on which any invention was founded; his first and only question was, "Will it work?"

Considering himself as the raw material, and the theatre he had just left as the mill, he was forced to admit that *Parsifal* "worked."

"It works all right," he inwardly soliloquised. "If that's what it claims to do, it does it."

When he had reached this business-like conclusion, his large lips parted a little, and as his breath passed between his closed teeth, it made soft little hissing sounds that had a suggestion of music in them, though they were not really whistled notes; his sandy lashes half veiled his eyes and he saw again what he had lately seen: the King borne down to the bath that would never heal his wound, and the dead swan, and the wondering Maiden-Man brought to answer for his



bow-shot, the wild Witch-Girl crouching by the giant trees, and the long way that led upward through the forest, and upward ever, to the Hall of the Knights, and last of all, the mysterious Sangreal itself, glowing divinely in the midst.

He did not really understand what he had seen and saw again as he half-closed his eyes. That was the reason why he accepted it passively, as he accepted elemental things. If he could by any means have told himself what illusion it was all intended to produce upon his sight and hearing, he would have pulled the trick to pieces, mentally, in a moment, and what remained would have been the merely pleasant recollection of something very well done, but not in itself different from other operas or plays he had heard and seen elsewhere, nothing more than an "improvement on *Lohengrin*," as he would probably have called it.

But this was something not "more," but quite of another kind, and it affected him as the play of nature's forces sometimes did; it was like the brooding of the sea, the rising gale, the fury of the storm, like the leaden stillness before the earthquake, the awful heave of the earth, the stupendous crash of the doomed city,

the long rolling rumble of falling walls and tumbling houses, big with sudden death; or again, it was like sad gleams of autumn sunshine, and the cold cathedral light of primeval forests in winter, and then it was the spring stirring in all things, the rising pulse of mating nature, the burst of Maybloom, the huge glow of the earth basking in the full summer sun.

He did not know, and no one knew, what nature meant by those things. How could nature's meaning be put into words? And so he did not understand what he had felt, nor could he see that it might have significance. What was the "interpretation" of a storm, of an earthquake, or of winter and summer? God, perhaps; perhaps just "nature." He did not know. Margaret had told him the story of the opera in the evening; he had followed it easily enough and could not forget it. It was a sort of religious fairy-tale, he thought, and he was ready to believe that Wagner had made a good poem of it, even a great poem. But it was not the story that could be told, which had moved him; it was nothing so easily defined as a poem, or a drama, or a piece of music. A far more cultivated man than he could ever become might sit through the

performance and feel little or nothing—of that he was sure; just as he could have carried beautiful Lady Maud in his arms without feeling that she was a woman for him, whereas the slightest touch of Margaret Donne, the mere fact of being near her, made the blood beat in his throat.

That was only a way of putting it, for there was no sex in the music he had just heard. He had sat so close to Margaret that their arms constantly touched, yet he had forgotten that she was there. If the music had been *Tristan and Isolde* he could not have been unaware of her, for a moment, for that is the supreme sex-music of Wagner's art. But this was different, altogether different, though it was even stronger than that.

He forgot to look at his watch. Margaret came out of the hotel, expecting to find him waiting for her within the hall, and prepared to be annoyed with him for taking so long over a meal. She stood on the step and looked about, and saw him sitting on the bench at a little distance. He raised his eyes as she came towards him and then rose quickly.

"Is it time?" he asked.

"Yes," she said. "Did you get anything decent to eat?"



"Yes," he answered vaguely. "That is, now I think of it, I forgot about dinner. It doesn't matter."

She looked at his hard face curiously and saw a dead blank, the blank that had sometimes frightened her by its possibilities, when the eyes alone came suddenly to life.

"Won't you go in and get a biscuit, or a sandwich?" she asked after a moment.

"Oh, no, thanks. I'm used to skipping meals when I'm interested in things. Let's go, if you're ready."

"I believe you are one of nature's Wagnerites," Margaret said, as they drove up the hill again, and she smiled at the idea.

"Well," he answered slowly, "there's one thing, if you don't mind my telling you. It's rather personal. Perhaps I'd better not."

The Primadonna was silent for a few moments, and did not look at him.

"Tell me," she said suddenly.

"It's this. I don't know how long the performance lasted, but while it was going on I forgot you were close beside me. You might just as well not have been there. It's the first time since I ever knew you that

I've been near you without thinking about you all the time, and I hadn't realised it till I was sitting here by myself. I hope you don't mind my telling you?"

"It only makes me more glad that I brought you," Margaret said quietly.

"Thank you," he answered; but he was quite sure that the same thing could not happen again during the Second Part.

Nevertheless, it happened. For a little while, they were man and woman, sitting side by side and very near, two in a silent multitude of other men and women; but before long he was quite motionless, his eyes were fixed again and he had forgotten her. She saw it and wondered, for she knew how her presence moved him, and as his hands lay folded on his knee, a mischievous girlish impulse almost made her, the great artist, forget that she was listening to the greatest music in the world and nearly made her lay her hand on his, just to see what he would do. She was ashamed of it, and a little disgusted with herself. The part of her that was Margaret Donne felt the disgust; the part that was Cordova felt the shame, and each side of her nature was restrained at a critical moment. Yet when the "Good

Friday" music began, she was thinking of Van Torp and he was unconscious of her presence.

It could not last, and soon she, too, was taken up into the artificial paradise of the master-musician and borne along in the gale of golden wings, and there was no passing of time till the very end; and the people rose in silence and went out under the summer stars; and all those whom nature had gifted to hear rightly, took with them memories that years would scarcely dim.

The two walked slowly back to the town as the crowd scattered on foot and in carriages. It was warm, and there was no moon, and one could smell the dust, for many people were moving in the same direction, though some stopped at almost every house and went in, and most of them were beginning to talk in quiet tones.

Margaret stepped aside from the road and entered a narrow lane, and Van Torp followed her in silence.

"This leads out to the fields," she said. "I must breathe the fresh air. Do you mind?"

"On the contrary."

He said nothing more, and she did not speak, but walked on without haste, dilating her nostrils to the sweet smell of grass that reached her already. In a



little while they had left the houses behind them, and they came to a gate that led into a field.

Van Torp was going to undo the fastening, for there was no lock.

"No," she said, "we won't go through. I love to lean on a gate."

She rested her crossed arms on the upper rail and Van Torp did the same, careful that his elbow should not touch hers, and they both stared into the dim, sweet-scented meadow. He felt her presence now and it almost hurt him; he could hear his slow pulse in his ears, hard and regular. She did not speak, but the night was so still that he could hear her breathing, and at last he could not bear the warm silence any longer.

"What are you thinking about?" he asked, trying to speak lightly.

She waited, or hesitated, before she answered him.

"You," she said, after a time.

He moved involuntarily, and then drew a little farther away from her, as he might have withdrawn a foot from the edge of a precipice, out of common caution. She was aware of his slight change of position without turning her eyes.

"What made you say what you did to Mrs. Rushmore yesterday afternoon?" she asked.

"About you?"

"Yes."

"She asked me, point-blank, what I thought of Logotheti," Van Torp answered. "I told her that I couldn't give her an unbiassed opinion of the man you meant to marry, because I had always hoped to marry you myself."

"Oh—was that the way it happened?"

"Mrs. Rushmore could hardly have misunderstood me," said Van Torp, gathering the reins of himself, so to say, for anything that might happen.

"No. But it sounds differently when you say it yourself."

"That was just what I said, anyhow," answered Van Torp. "I didn't think she'd go and tell you right away, but since she has, I don't regret having said that much."

"It was straightforward, at all events—if it was all true!" There was the faintest laugh in her tone as she spoke the last words.

"It's true, right enough, though I didn't expect that I should be talking to you about this sort of thing to-night."

"The effect on Mrs. Rushmore was extraordinary, positively fulminating," Margaret said more lightly. "She says I ought to break off my engagement at once, and marry you! Fancy!"

"That's very kind of her, I'm sure," observed Mr. Van Torp.

"I don't think so. I like it less and less, the more I think of it."

"Well, I'm sorry, but I suppose it's natural, since you've concluded to marry him, and it can't be helped. I wasn't going to say anything against him, and I wouldn't say anything for him, so there was nothing to do but to explain, which I did. I'm sorry you think I did wrong, but I should give the same answer again."

"Mrs. Rushmore thinks that Konstantin is a designing foreigner because he's a Greek man of business, and that you are perfection because you are an American business man."

"If I'm perfection, that's not the real reason," said Van Torp, snatching at his first chance to steer out of the serious current; but Margaret did not laugh.

"You are not perfection, nor I either," she answered gravely. "You are famous in your way, and people



call me celebrated in mine; but so far as the rest is concerned we are just two ordinary human beings, and if we are going to be friends we must understand each other from the first, as far as we can."

"I'll try to do my share," said Van Torp, taking her tone.

"Very well. I'll do mine. I began by thinking you were amusing, when I first met you. Then you frightened me last winter, and I hated you. Not only that, I loathed you—there's no word strong enough for what I felt. When I saw you in the audience, you almost paralysed my voice."

"I didn't know it had been as bad as that," said Mr. Van Torp quietly.

"Yes. It was worse than I can make you understand. And last spring, when you were in so much trouble, I believed every word that was said against you, even that you had murdered your partner's daughter in cold blood to get rid of her, though that looked as incredible to sensible people as it really was. It was only when I saw how Lady Maud believed in you that I began to waver, and then I understood."

"I'm glad you did."

"So am I. But she is such a good woman herself that nobody can be really bad in whom she believes. And now I'm changed still more. I like you, and I'm sure that we shall be friends, if you will make me one promise and keep it."

"What is it?"

"That you will give up all idea of ever marrying me, no matter what happens, even if I broke——"

"It's no use to go on," interrupted Van Torp, "for I can't promise anything like that. Maybe you don't realise what you're asking, but it's the impossible. That's all."

"Oh, nonsense!" Margaret tried to laugh lightly, but it was a failure.

"No, it's very far from nonsense," he replied, almost sternly. "Since you've spoken first, I'm going to tell you several things. One is, that I accepted the syndicate's offer for the Nickel Trust so as to be free to take any chance that might turn up. It had been open some time, but I accepted it on the day I heard of your engagement. That's a big thing. Another is, that I played a regular trick on Logotheti so as to come and see you here. I deliberately asked him to dine with me last night in London. I went right home,

wrote a note to him, postdated for yesterday afternoon, to put him off, and I left it to be sent at the right hour. Then I drove to the station, and here I am. You may call that pretty sharp practice, but I believe all's fair in love and war, and I want you to understand that I think so. There's one thing more. I won't give up the hope of making you marry me while you're alive and I am, not if you're an old woman, and I'll put up all I have in the game, including my own life and other people's, if it comes to that. Amen."

Margaret bent her head a little and was silent.

"Now you know why I won't promise what you asked," said Van Torp in conclusion.

He had not raised his voice; he had not laid a heavy stress on half his words, as he often did in common conversation; there had been nothing dramatic in his tone; but Margaret had understood well enough that it was the plain statement of a man who meant to succeed, and whose strength and resources were far beyond those of ordinary suitors. She was not exactly frightened; indeed, since her dislike for him had melted away, it was impossible not to feel a womanly satisfaction in the magnitude of her conquest; but she also



felt instinctively that serious trouble and danger were not far off.

"You have no right to speak like that," she said rather weakly, after a moment.

"Perhaps not. I don't know. But I consider that you have a right to know the truth, and that's enough for me. It's not as if I'd made up my mind to steal your ewe-lamb from you and put myself in its place. Logotheti is not any sort of a ewe-lamb. He's a man, he's got plenty of strength and determination, he's got plenty of money—even what I choose to call plenty. He says he cares for you. All right. So do I. He says he'll marry you. I say that I will. All right again. You're the prize put up for the best of two fighting men. You're not the first woman in history who's been fought for, but, by all that's holy, there never was one better worth it, not Helen of Troy herself!"

The last few words came with a sort of stormy rush, and he turned round suddenly, and stood with his back against the gate, thrusting his hands deep into his coat-pockets, perhaps with the idea of keeping them quiet; but he did not come any nearer to her, and she felt she was perfectly safe, and that a much deeper

and more lasting power had hold of him than any mere passionate longing to take her in his arms and press his iron lips on hers against her will. She began to understand why he was what he was, at an age when many successful men are still fighting for final success. He was a crown-grasper, like John the Smith. Beside him Logotheti was but a gifted favourite of fortune. He spoke of Helen, but if he was comparing his rival with Paris he himself was more like an Ajax than like good King Menelaus.

Margaret was not angry; she was hardly displeased, but she was really at a loss what to say, and she said the first sensible thing that suggested itself and that was approximately true.

"I'm sorry you have told me all this. We might have spent these next two days very pleasantly together. Oh, I'm not pretending what I don't feel! It's impossible for a woman like me, who can still be free, not to be flattered when such a man as you cares for her in earnest, and says the things you have. But, on the other hand, I'm engaged to be married to another man, and it would not be loyal of me to let you make love to me."

"I don't mean to," said Van Torp stoutly. "It won't be necessary. If I never spoke again you wouldn't forget what I've told you—ever! Why should I say it again? I don't want to, until you can say as much to me. If it's time to go, hitch the lead to my collar and take me home! I'll follow you as quietly as a spaniel, anywhere!"

"And what would happen if I told you not to follow me, but to go home and lie down in your kennel?" She laughed low as she moved away from the gate.

"I'm not sure," answered Van Torp. "Don't."

The last word was not spoken at all with an accent of warning, but it was not said in a begging tone either. Margaret's short laugh followed it instantly. He took the cue she offered, and went on speaking in his ordinary manner.

"I'm not a bad dog if you don't bully me, and if you feed me at regular hours and take me for a walk now and then. I don't pretend I'm cut out for a French pet, because I'm not. I'm too big for a lap-dog, and too fond of sport for the drawing-room, I suppose. A good useful dog generally is, isn't he? Maybe I'm a little quarrelsome with other dogs, but then, they needn't come bothering around!"



Margaret was amused, or pretended to be, but she was also thinking very seriously of the future, and asking herself whether she ought to send for Logotheti at once, or not. Van Torp would certainly not leave Bayreuth at a moment's notice, at her bidding, and if he stayed she could not now refuse to see him, with any show of justice. She thought of a compromise, and suddenly stood still in the lane.

"You said just now that you would not say over again any of those things you have told me to-night. Do you mean that?"

"Yes, I mean it."

"Then please promise that you won't. That's all I ask if you are going to spend the next two days here, and if I am to let you see me."

"I promise," Van Torp answered, without hesitation.

She allowed herself the illusion that she had both done the right thing and also taken the position of command; and he, standing beside her, allowed himself to smile at the futility of what she was requiring of him with so much earnestness, for little as he knew of women's ways he was more than sure that the words he had spoken that night would come back

to her again and again; and more than that he could not hope at present. But she could not see his face clearly.

"Thank you," she said. "That shall be our compact."

To his surprise, she held out her hand. He took it with wonderful calmness, considering what the touch meant to him, and he returned discreetly what was meant for a friendly pressure. She was so well satisfied now that she did not think it necessary to telegraph to Logotheti that he might start at once, though even if she had done so immediately he could hardly have reached Bayreuth till the afternoon of the next day but one, when the last performance of *Parsifal* would be already going on; and she herself intended to leave on the morning after that.

She walked forward in silence for a few moments, and the lights of the town grew quickly brighter.

"You will come in and have some supper with us, of course," she said presently.

"Why, certainly, since you're so kind," answered Van Torp.

"I feel responsible for your having forgotten to dine," she laughed. "I must make it up to you. By this time Mrs. Rushmore is probably wondering where I am."

"Well," said the American, "if she thinks I'm perfection, she knows that you're safe with me, I suppose, even if you do come home a little late."

"I shall say that we walked home very slowly, in order to breathe the air."

"Yes. We've walked home very slowly."

"I mean," said Margaret quickly, "that I shall not say we have been out towards the fields, as far as the gate."

"I don't see any harm if we have," observed Mr. Van Torp indifferently.

"Harm? No! Don't you understand? Mrs. Rushmore is quite capable of thinking that I have already—how shall I say?—" she stopped.

"Taken note of her good advice," he said, completing the sentence for her.

"Exactly! Whereas nothing could be further from my intention, as you know. I'm very fond of Mrs. Rushmore," Margaret continued quickly, in order to get away from the dangerous subject she had felt obliged to approach; "she has been a mother to me, and heaven knows I needed one, and she has the best and kindest heart in the world. But she is so anxious for my happiness that, whenever she thinks it is at



stake, she rushes at conclusions without the slightest reason, and then it's very hard to get them out of her dear old head!"

"I see. If that's why she thinks me perfection, I'll try not to disappoint her."

They reached the hotel, went upstairs, and separated on the landing to get ready for supper. Margaret went to her own room, and before joining Mrs. Rushmore she wrote a message to Alphonsine, her theatre maid, who was visiting her family in Alsatia. Margaret generally telegraphed her instructions, because it was much less trouble than to write. She inquired whether Alphonsine would be ready to join her in Paris on a certain day, and she asked for the address of a wig-maker which she had forgotten.

On his side of the landing, Mr. Van Torp found Stemp waiting to dress him, and the valet handed him a telegram. It was from Captain Brown, and had been re-telegraphed from London.

"Anchored off Saint Mark's Square to-day, 3.30 P.M. Quick passage. No stop. Coaling to-morrow. Ready for sea next morning."

Mr. Van Torp laid the message open on the table

in order to save Stemp the trouble of looking for it afterwards.

"Stemp," he asked, as he threw off his coat and kicked off his dusty shoes, "were you ever sea-sick?"

"Yes, sir," answered the admirable valet, but he offered no more information on the subject.

During the silence that followed, neither wasted a second. It is no joke to wash and get into evening dress in six minutes, even with the help of a body-servant trained to do his work at high speed.

"I mean," said Van Torp, when he was already fastening his collar, "are you sea-sick nowadays?"

"No, sir," replied Stemp, in precisely the same tone as before.

"I don't mean on a twenty-thousand-ton liner. Black cravat. Yes. I mean on a yacht. Fix it behind. Right. Would you be sea-sick on a steam yacht?"

"No, sir."

"Sure?"

"Yes, sir."

"Then I'll take you. Tuxedo."

"Thank you, sir."

Stemp held up the dinner-jacket; Mr. Van Torp's

solid arms slipped into the sleeves, he shook his sturdy shoulders, and pulled the jacket down in front while the valet "settled" the back. Then he faced round suddenly, like a soldier at drill.

"All right?" he inquired.

Stemp looked him over carefully from head to foot in the glare of the electric light.

"Yes, sir."

Van Torp left the room at once. He found Mrs. Rushmore slowly moving about the supper-table, more imposing than ever in a perfectly new black tea-gown and an extremely smart widow's cap. Mr. Van Torp thought she was a very fine old lady indeed. Margaret had not entered yet; a waiter with smooth yellow hair stood by a portable sideboard on which there were covered dishes. There were poppies and corn-flowers in a plain white jar on the table. Mrs. Rushmore smiled at the financier; it would hardly be an exaggeration to say that she beamed upon him. They had not met alone since his first visit on the previous afternoon.

"Miss Donne is a little late," she said, as if the fact were very pleasing. "You brought her back, of course."



"Why, certainly," said Mr. Van Torp with an amiable smile.

"You can hardly have come straight from the theatre," continued the lady, "for I heard the other people in the hotel coming in fully twenty minutes before you did."

"We walked home very slowly," said Mr. Van Torp, still smiling amiably.

"Ah, I see! You went for a little walk to get some air!" She seemed delighted.

"We walked home very slowly in order to breathe the air," said Mr. Van Torp—"to breathe the air, as you say. I have to thank you very much for giving me your seat, Mrs. Rushmore."

"To tell the truth," replied the good lady, "I was very glad to let you take my place. I cannot say I enjoy that sort of music myself. It gives me a headache."

Margaret entered at this point in a marvellous "creation" of Chinese crape, of the most delicate shade of heliotrope. Her dressmaker called it also a tea-gown, but Mr. Van Torp would have thought it "quite appropriate" for a "dinner-dance" at Bar Harbour.

"My dear child," said Mrs. Rushmore, "how long

you were in getting back from the theatre! I began to fear that something had happened!"

"We walked home very slowly," said Margaret, with a pleasant smile.

"Ah? You went for a little walk to get some air?"

"We just walked home very slowly, in order to breathe the air," Margaret answered innocently.

It dawned on Mr. Van Torp that the dignified Mrs. Rushmore was not quite devoid of a sense of humour. It also occurred to him that her repetition of the question to Margaret, and the latter's answer, must have revealed to her the fact that the two had agreed upon what they should say, since they used identically the same words, and that they therefore had an understanding about something they preferred to conceal from her. Nothing could have given Mrs. Rushmore such profound satisfaction as this, and it revealed itself in her bright smiles and her anxiety that both Margaret and Van Torp should, if possible, over-eat themselves with the excellent things she had been at pains to provide for them, and for herself. For she was something of an epicure, and her dinners in Versailles were of good fame, even in Paris.

Great appetites are generally silent, like the sincerest affections. Margaret was very hungry, and Mr. Van Torp was both hungry and very much in love. Mrs. Rushmore was neither, and she talked pleasantly while tasting each delicacy with critical satisfaction.

"By-the-bye," she said at last, when she saw that the millionaire was backing his foretop-sail to come to anchor, as Captain Brown might have expressed it, "I hope you have not had any further trouble about your rooms, Mr. Van Torp."

"None at all, that I know of," answered the latter. "My man told me nothing."

"The Russian prince arrived this evening while you were at the theatre, and threatened the director with all sorts of legal consequences because the rooms he had ordered were occupied. He turns out to be only a count after all."

"You don't say so," observed Mr. Van Torp, in an encouraging tone.

"What became of him?" Margaret asked, without much interest.

"Did Potts not tell you, my dear? Why, Justine assisted at the whole interview and came and told me at once."



Justine was Mrs. Rushmore's Parisian maid, who always knew everything.

"What happened?" inquired Margaret, still not much interested.

"He arrived in an automobile," answered Mrs. Rushmore, and she paused.

"What old Griggs calls a sudden-death-cart," Mr. Van Torp put in.

"What a shocking name for it!" cried Mrs. Rushmore. "And you are always in them, my dear child!" She looked at Margaret. "A sudden-death-cart! It quite makes me shiver."

"Griggs says that all his friends either kill or get killed in them," explained the American.

"My throat-doctor says motoring is very bad for the voice, so I've given it up," Margaret said.

"Really? Thank goodness your profession has been of some use to you at last, my dear!"

Margaret laughed.

"Tell us about the Russian count," she said. "Has he found lodgings, or is he going to sleep in his motor?"

"My dear, he's the most original man you ever heard of! First he wanted to buy the hotel and turn

us all out, and offered any price for it, but the director said it was owned by a company in Munich. Then he sent his secretary about trying to buy a house, while he dined, but that didn't succeed either. He must be very wealthy, or else quite mad."

"Mad, I should say," observed Mr. Van Torp, slowly peeling a peach. "Did you happen to catch his name, Mrs. Rushmore?"

"Oh yes! We heard nothing else all the afternoon. His name is Kralinsky—Count Kralinsky."

Mr. Van Torp continued to peel his peach scientifically and economically, though he was aware that Margaret was looking at him with sudden curiosity.

"Kralinsky," he said slowly, keeping his eyes on the silver blade of the knife as he finished what he was doing. "It's not an uncommon name, I believe. I've heard it before. Sounds Polish, doesn't it?"

He looked up suddenly and showed Margaret the peeled peach on his fork. He smiled as he met her eyes, and she nodded so slightly that Mrs. Rushmore did not notice the movement.

"Did you ever see that done better?" he asked with an air of triumph.

"Ripping!" Margaret answered. "You're a dandy dab at it!"

"My dear child, what terrible slang!"

"I'm sorry," said Margaret. "I'm catching all sorts of American expressions from Mr. Van Torp, and when they get mixed up with my English ones the result is Babel, I suppose!"

"I've not heard Mr. Van Torp use any slang expressions yet, my dear," said Mrs. Rushmore, almost severely.

"You will," Margaret retorted with a laugh. "What became of Count Kralinsky? I didn't mean to spoil your story."

"My dear, he's got the Pastor to give up his house, by offering him a hundred pounds for the poor here."

"It's cheap," observed Mr. Van Torp. "The poor always are."

"You two are saying the most dreadful things to-night!" cried Mrs. Rushmore.

"Nothing dreadful in that, Mrs. Rushmore," objected the millionaire. "There's no investment on earth like charity."

"We are taught that by charity we lay up treasures in heaven," said the good lady.



"Provided it's not mentioned in the newspapers," retorted Mr. Van Torp. "When it is, we lay up treasures on earth. I don't like to mention other men in that connexion, especially as I've done the same thing myself now and then, just to quiet things down; but I suppose some names will occur to you right away, don't they? Where is the Pastor going to sleep, now that the philanthropist has bought him out?"

"I really don't know," answered Mrs. Rushmore.

"Then he's the real philanthropist," said Van Torp. "If he understood the power of advertisement, and wanted it, he'd let it be known that he was going to sleep on the church steps without enough blankets, for the good of the poor who are to have the money, and he'd get everybody to come and look at him in his sleep, and notice how good he was. Instead of that, he's probably turned in under the back stairs, in the coal-hole, without saying anything about it. I don't know how it strikes you, Mrs. Rushmore, but it does seem to me that the clergyman's the real philanthropist after all!"

"Indeed he is, poor man," said Margaret, a good deal surprised at Van Torp's sermon on charity, and

wondering vaguely whether he was talking for effect or merely saying what he really thought.

An effect certainly followed.

"You put it very sensibly, I'm sure," said Mrs. Rushmore, "though of course I should not have looked for anything else from a fellow-countryman I respect. You startled me a little at first, when you said that the poor are always cheap! Only that, I assure you."

"Well," answered the American, "I never was very good at expressing myself, but I'm glad we think alike, for I must say I value your opinion very highly, Mrs. Rushmore, as I had learned to value the opinion of your late husband."

"You're very kind," she said, in a grateful tone.

Margaret was not sure that she was pleased as she realised how easily Van Torp played upon her old friend's feelings and convictions, and she wondered whether he had not already played on her own that night, in much the same way. But with the mere thought his words and his voice came back to her, with his talk about the uselessness of ever repeating what he had said that once, because he knew she could never forget it. And her young instinct told her that he dealt with the

elderly woman precisely as if she were a man, with all the ease that proceeded from his great knowledge of men and their weaknesses; but that with herself, in his ignorance of feminine ways, he could only be quite natural.

He left them soon after supper, and gave himself up to Stemp, pondering over what he had accomplished in two days, and also about another question which had lately presented itself. When he was ready to send his valet to bed he sat down at his table and wrote a telegram:

"If you can find Barak, please explain that I was mistaken. Kralinsky is not in New York, but here in Bayreuth for some days, lodging at the Pastor's house."

This message was addressed to Logotheti at his lodgings in London, and Van Torp signed it and gave it to Stemp to be sent at once. Logotheti never went to bed before two o'clock, as he knew, and might very possibly get the telegram the same night.

When his man was gone, Van Torp drew his chair to the open window and sat up a long time thinking about what he had just done; for though he held that all was fair in such a contest, he did not mean to do anything which he himself thought "low down." One proof of this odd sort of integrity was that the telegram



itself was a fair warning of his presence in Bayreuth, where Logotheti knew that Margaret was still stopping.

As for the rest, he was quite convinced that it was Kralinsky himself, the ruby merchant, who had suddenly appeared at Bayreuth, and that this man was no other than the youth he had met long ago as a cowboy in the West, who used to whistle *Parsifal* with his companion in exile, and who, having grown rich, had lost no time in coming to Europe for the very purpose of hearing the music he had always loved so well. And that this man had robbed the poor Tartar girl, Mr. Van Torp had no manner of doubt; and he believed that he had probably promised her marriage and abandoned her; and if this were true, to help her to find Kralinsky was in itself a good action.

## CHAPTER VII.

WHEN Van Torp and Logotheti left Mr. Pinney's shop, the old jeweller meant to have a good look at the ruby the Greek had brought him, and was going to weigh it, not merely as a matter of business, for he

weighed every stone that passed through his hands from crown diamonds to sparks, but with genuine curiosity, because in a long experience he had not seen very many rubies of such a size, which were also of such fine quality, and he wondered where this one had been found.

Just then, however, two well-dressed young men entered the shop and came up to him. He had never seen either of them before, but their looks inspired him with confidence; and when they spoke, their tone was that of English gentlemen, which all other Englishmen find it practically impossible to imitate, and which had been extremely familiar to Mr. Pinney from his youth. Though he was the great jeweller himself, the wealthy descendant of five of his name in succession, and much better off than half his customers, he was alone in his shop that morning. The truth was that his only son, the sixth Pinney and the apple of his eye, had just been married and was gone abroad for a honeymoon trip, and the head shopman, who was Scotch, was having his month's holiday in Ayrshire, and the second man had been sent for, to clean and re-string the Duchess of Barchester's pearls at her Grace's house in Cadogan Gardens, as was always done after the season, and a

couple of skilled workmen for whom Mr. Pinney found occupation all the year round were in the workshop at their tables; wherefore, out of four responsible and worthy men who usually were about, only the great Mr. Pinney himself was at his post.

One of the two well-dressed customers asked to see some pins, and the other gave his advice. The first bought a pin with a small sapphire set in sparks for ten guineas, and gave only ten pounds for it because he paid cash. Mr. Pinney put the pin into its little morocco case, wrapped it up neatly and handed it to the purchaser. The latter and his friend said good morning in a civil and leisurely manner, sauntered out, took a hansom a few steps farther down the street, and drove away.

The little paper twist containing Logotheti's ruby was still exactly where Mr. Pinney had placed it on the counter, and he was going to examine the stone and weigh it at last, when two more customers entered the shop, evidently foreigners, and moreover of a sort unfamiliar to the good jeweller, and especially suspicious.

The two were Baraka and her interpreter and servant, whom Logotheti had called a Turk, and who was really



a Turkish subject and a Mohammedan, though as to race he was a half-bred Greek and Dalmatian. Now Dalmatians are generally honest, truthful, and trustworthy, and the low-class Greek of Constantinople is usually extremely sharp, if he is nothing more definitely reprehensible; and Baraka's man was a cross between the two, as I have said, and had been brought up as a Musulman in a rich Turkish family, and recommended to Baraka by the Persian merchant in whose house she had lived. He had been originally baptised a Christian under the name of Spiro, and had been subsequently renamed Selim when he was made a real Moslem at twelve years old; so he used whichever name suited the circumstances in which he was placed. At present he was Spiro. He was neatly dressed in grey clothes made by a French tailor, and he wore a French hat, which always made a bad impression on Mr. Pinney. He had brown hair, brown eyes, a brown moustache, and a brown face; he looked as active as a cat, and Mr. Pinney at once put him down in his mind as a "Froggy." But the jeweller was less sure about Baraka, who was dressed like any young Englishman, but looked like no European he had ever seen. On the whole, he took the new-

comer for the son of an Indian rajah sent to England to be educated.

The interpreter spoke broken but intelligible English. He called Baraka his master, and explained that the latter wished to see some rubies, if Mr. Pinney had any, cut or uncut. The young gentleman, he said, did not speak English, but was a good judge of stones.

For one moment the jeweller forgot the little paper twist as he turned towards his safe, pulling out his keys at the same time. To reach the safe he had to walk the whole length of the shop, behind the counter, and before he had gone half-way he remembered the stone, turned, came back, and slipped it into his waistcoat pocket. Then he went and got the little japanned strong-box with a patent lock, in which he kept loose stones, some wrapped up in little pieces of paper, and some in pill-boxes. He brought it to his customers, and opened it before them.

They stayed a long time, and Spiro asked many questions for Baraka, chiefly relating to the sliding-scale of prices which is regulated by the weight of the stones where their quality is equally good, and Baraka made notes of some sort in a little English memorandum-

book, as if she had done it all her life; but Mr. Pinney could not see what she wrote. He was very careful, and watched the stones, when she took them in her fingers and held them up against the light, or laid them on a sheet of white paper to look at them critically.

She bought nothing; and when she had seen all he had to show her, she thanked him very much through Spiro, said she would come back another day, and went out with a leisurely, oriental gait, as if nothing in the world could hurry her. Mr. Pinney counted the stones again, and was going to lock the box, when his second man came in, having finished stringing the Duchess's pearls. At the same moment, it occurred to Mr. Pinney that he might as well go to luncheon, and that he had better put Logotheti's ruby into the little strong-box and lock it up in the safe until he at last had a chance to weigh it. He accordingly took the screw of paper from his waistcoat pocket, and as a matter of formality he undid it once more.

"Merciful Providence!" cried Mr. Pinney, for he was a religious man.

The screw of paper contained a bit of broken green



glass. He threw his keys to his shopman without another word, and rushed out into the street without his hat, his keen old face deadly pale, and his beautiful frock-coat flying in his wake.

He almost hurled himself upon a quiet policeman.

"Thief!" he cried. "Two foreigners in grey clothes—ruby worth ten thousand pounds just gone—I'm Pinney the jeweller!"

You cannot astonish a London policeman. The one Pinney had caught looked quietly up and down the street, and then glanced at his interlocutor to be sure that it was he, for he knew him by sight.

"All right," he said quickly, but very quietly. "I'll have them in a minute, sir, for they're in sight still. Better go in while I take them, sir."

He caught them in less than a minute without the slightest difficulty, and by some odd coincidence two other policemen suddenly appeared quite close to him. There was a little stir in the street, but Baraka and Spiro were too sensible and too sure of themselves to offer any useless resistance, and supposing there was some misunderstanding they walked back quietly to Mr.

Pinney's shop between two of the policemen, while the third went for a four-wheeler at the nearest stand, which happened to be the corner of Brook Street and New Bond Street.

Mr. Pinney recognised his late customers without hesitation, and went with them to the police-station, where he told his story and showed the piece of green glass. Spiro tried to speak, but was ordered to hold his tongue, and as no rubies were found in their pockets he and Baraka were led away to be more thoroughly searched.

But now, at last, Baraka resisted, and with such tremendous energy that there would have been serious trouble if Spiro had not called out something which at once changed the aspect of matters.

"Master is lady!" he yelled. "Lady, man clothes!"

"That makes a pretty bad case," observed the sergeant who was superintending. "Send for Mrs. Mowle."

Baraka did not resist when she saw the matron, and went quietly with her to a cell at the back of the station. In less than ten minutes Mrs. Mowle came out and locked the door after her. She was a cheery little

person, very neatly dressed, and she had restless bright eyes like a ferret. She brought a little bag of soft deerskin in her hand, and a steel bodkin with a wrought-silver handle, such as southern Italian women used to wear in their hair before such weapons were prohibited. Mrs. Mowle gave both objects to the officer without comment.

"Any scars or tattoo-marks, Mrs. Mowle?" he inquired in his business-like way.

"Not a one," answered Mrs. Mowle, who had formerly taken in washing at home and was the widow of a brave policeman, killed in doing his duty.

In the bag there were several screws of paper, which were found to contain uncut rubies of different sizes to a large value. But there was one, much larger than the others, which Mr. Van Torp had not seen that morning. Mr. Pinney looked at it very carefully, held it to the light, laid it on a sheet of paper, and examined it long in every aspect. He was a conscientious man.

"To the best of my belief," he deposed, "this is the stone that was on my counter half an hour ago, and for which this piece of green glass was substituted.



It is the property of a customer of mine, Monsieur Konstantin Logotheti of Paris, who brought it to me this morning to be cut. I think it may be worth between nine and ten thousand pounds. I can say nothing as to the identity of the paper, for tissue-paper is very much alike everywhere."

"The woman," observed the officer in charge of the station, "appears to steal nothing but rubies. It looks like a queer case. We'll lock up the two, Mr. Pinney, and if you will be kind enough to look in to-morrow morning, I'm sure the Magistrate won't keep you waiting for the case."

Vastly relieved and comforted, Mr. Pinney returned to his shop. Formality required that the ruby itself, with the others in the bag, should remain in the keeping of the police till the Magistrate ordered it to be returned to its rightful owner, the next morning; but Mr. Pinney felt quite as sure of its safety as if it were in the japanned strong-box in his own safe, and possibly even a little more sure, for nobody could steal it from the police-station.

But after he was gone, Spiro was heard calling

loudly, though not rudely or violently, from his place of confinement.

"Mr. Policeman! Mr. Policeman! Please come speak!"

The man on duty went to the door and asked what he wanted. In his broken English he explained very clearly that Baraka had a friend in London who was one of the great of the earth, and who would certainly prove her innocence, vouch for her character, and cause her to be set at large without delay, if he knew of her trouble.

"What is the gentleman's name?" inquired the policeman.

The name of Baraka's friend was Konstantin Logotheti, and Spiro knew the address of the lodgings he always kept in St. James's Place.

"Very well," said the policeman. "I'll speak to the officer at once."

"I thank very much, sir," Spiro answered, and he made no more noise.

The sergeant looked surprised when the message was given to him.

"Queer case this," he observed. "Here's the thief

appealing to the owner of the stolen property for help; and the owner is one of those millionaire financiers; and the thief is a lovely girl in man's clothes. By-the-bye, Sampson, tell Mrs. Mowle to get out some women's slops and dress her decently, while I see if I can find Mr. Logotheti by telephone. They'll be likely to know something about him at the Bank if he's not at home, and he may come to find out what's the matter. If Mrs. Foxwell should look in and want to see the girl, let her in, of course, without asking me. If she's in town, she'll be here before long, for I've telephoned to her house, as usual when there's a girl in trouble."

There was a sort of standing, unofficial order that in any case of a girl or a young woman being locked up, Mrs. Foxwell was to know of it, and she had a way of remembering a great many sergeants' names, and doing kind things for their wives at Christmas-time, which further disposed them to help her in her work. But the London police are by nature the kindest set of men who keep order anywhere in the world, and they will readily help a man or woman who tries to do good in a sensible, practical way; and if they are sometimes a little prejudiced in favour of their own perspi-



cuity in getting up a case, let that policeman, of any other country, who is quite without fault, throw the first stone at their brave, good-natured heads.

Logotheti was not at his lodgings in St. James's Place, and from each of two clubs to which the officer telephoned rather at random, the only answer was that he was a member but not in the house. The officer wrote a line to his rooms and sent it by a messenger, to be given to him as soon as he came in.

It was late in the hot afternoon when Mrs. Foxwell answered the message by coming to the police-station herself. She was at once admitted to Baraka's cell and the door was closed after her.

The girl was lying on the pallet bed, dressed in a poor calico skirt and a loose white cotton jacket, which Mrs. Mowle had brought and had insisted that she must put on; and her men's clothes had been taken from her with all her other belongings. She sat up, forlorn, pale and lovely, as the kind visitor entered and stood beside her.

"Poor child!" exclaimed the lady, touched by her sad eyes. "What can I do to help you?"

Baraka shook her head, for she did not under-

stand. Then she looked up into eyes almost as beautiful as her own, and pronounced a name, slowly and so distinctly that it was impossible not to hear each syllable.

"Konstantin Logotheti."

The lady started, as well she might; for she was no other than Lady Maud, who called herself by her own family name, "Mrs. Foxwell," in her work amongst the poor women of London.

Baraka saw the quick movement and understood that Logotheti was well known to her visitor. She grasped Lady Maud's arm with both her small hands, and looked up to her face with a beseeching look that could not be misunderstood. She wished Logotheti to be informed of her captivity, and was absolutely confident that he would help her out of her trouble. Lady Maud was less sure of that, however, and said so, but it was soon clear that Baraka did not speak a word of any language known to Lady Maud, who was no great linguist at best. Under these circumstances it looked as if there were nothing to be done for the poor girl, who made all sorts of signs of distress, when she saw that the English woman was about to leave her, in sheer

despair of being of any use. Just then, however, the sergeant came to the door, and informed the visitor that the girl had an accomplice who spoke her language and knew some English, and that by stretching a point he would bring the man, if Mrs. Foxwell wished to talk with him.

The result was that in less than half an hour, Lady Maud heard from Spiro a most extraordinary tale, of which she did not believe a single word. To her plain English mind, it all seemed perfectly mad at first, and on reflection she thought it an outrageous attempt to play upon her credulity; whereas she was thoroughly convinced that the girl had come to grief in some way through Logotheti and had followed him from Constantinople, probably supporting herself and her companion by stealing on the way. Lady Maud's husband had been a brute, but he knew the East tolerably well, having done some military duty in the Caucasus before he entered the diplomatic service; his stories had chiefly illustrated the profound duplicity of all Asiatics, and she had not seen any reason to disbelieve them.

When Spiro had nothing more to say, therefore, she rose from the only seat there was and shook her head



with an air of utter incredulity, mingled with the sort of pitying contempt she felt for all lying in general. She could easily follow the case, by the help of the sergeant and the Police-Court reports, and she might be able to help Baraka hereafter when the girl had served the sentence she would certainly get for such an important and cleverly managed theft. The poor girl implored and wept in vain; Lady Maud could do nothing, and would not stay to be told any more inane stories about ruby mines in Tartary. She called the sergeant, freed herself from Baraka's despairing hold on her hand and went out. Spiro was then marched back to his cell on the men's side.

Though it was hot, Lady Maud walked home, as Mr. Van Torp had done that same morning when he had left Mr. Pinney's shop. She always walked when she was in any distress or difficulty, for the motion helped her to think, since she was strong and healthy, and only in her twenty-ninth year. Just now, too, she was a good deal disturbed by what had happened, besides being annoyed by the attempt that had been made to play on her credulity in such a gross way.

She was really fond of Margaret Donne, quite apart

from any admiration she felt for the Primadonna's genius, by which she might have been influenced. In her opinion, the Tartar girl's appeal for help to reach Logotheti could only mean one thing, and that was very far from being to his credit. If the girl had not been positively proved to be a thief and if she had not attempted to impose upon her by what seemed the most absurd falsehoods, Lady Maud would very probably have taken her under her own protection, as far as the law would allow. But her especial charity was not for criminals or cheats, though she had sometimes helped and comforted women accused of far worse crimes than stealing. In this instance she could do nothing, and she did not even wish to do anything. It was a flagrant case, and the law would deal with it in the right way. The girl had come to grief, no doubt, by trusting Logotheti blindly, and he had thrown her off; if she had sunk into the dismal depths of woe behind the Virtue-Curtain, as most of her kind did, Lady Maud would have gone in and tried to drag her out, as she had saved others. But Logotheti's victim had taken a different turn, had turned thief and had got into the hands of justice. Her sin would be on his head, no

doubt, but no power could avert from her the just consequences of a misdeed that had no necessary connexion with her fall.

Thus argued Lady Maud, while Baraka lay on her pallet bed in her calico skirt and white cotton jacket, neither weeping, nor despairing by any means, nor otherwise yielding to girlish weakness, but already devising means for carrying on her pursuit of the man she would still seek, even throughout the whole world, though she was just now a penniless girl locked up as a thief in a London police-station. It was not one of the down-hearted, crying sort that could have got so far already, against such portentous odds.

She guessed well enough that she would be tried the next morning in the Police-Court; for Spiro, who knew much about Europe, and England in particular, had told her a great deal during their travels. She had learned that England was a land of justice, and she would probably get it in the end; for the rest, she was a good Musulman girl and looked on whatsoever befell her as being her portion, for good or evil, to be accepted without murmuring.

Lady Maud could not know anything of this and



took Baraka for a common delinquent, so far as her present situation was concerned. But when the Englishwoman thought of what must have gone before, and of the part Logotheti had almost certainly played in the girl's life, her anger was roused, and she sat down and wrote to Margaret on the impulse of the moment. She gave a detailed account of her experience at the police-station, including especially a description of the way Baraka had behaved in trying to send a message to Logotheti.

"I tell you quite frankly," Lady Maud wrote in conclusion, "that my friend Mr. Van Torp has begged me very urgently to use any friendly influence I may possess, to induce you to reconsider your engagement, because he hopes that you will accept him instead. You will not think any less well of him for that. A man may ask his best friend to help him to marry the girl he is in love with, I am sure! I told him that I would not do anything to make trouble between you and Logo. If I am making trouble now, by writing all this, it is therefore not to help Mr. Van Torp, but because the impression I have had about Logo has really frightened me, for you. I made such a wretched failure of

my own married life that I have some right to warn a friend who seems to be on the point of doing just the same thing. I don't forget that in spite of all your celebrity—and its glories—you are nothing but a young girl still, under twenty-five; but you are not a school-girl, my dear, and you do not expect to find that a man like Logo, who is well on towards forty now, is a perfect Galahad. Even I didn't flatter myself that Leven had never cared for anyone else, when I married him, and I had not half your knowledge of the world, I fancy. But you have a right to be sure that the man you marry is quite free, and that you won't suddenly meet a lovely Eastern girl of twenty who claims him after you think he is yours; and your friend has a right to warn you, if she feels sure that he is mixed up in some affair that isn't over yet. I'm not sure that I should be a good friend to you if I held my tongue. Our fathers were very close friends before us, Margaret, and there is really a sort of inheritance in their friendship, between you and me, isn't there? Besides, if you think I'm doing wrong, or that I'm making trouble out of nothing, just to help Mr. Van Torp, you can tell me so and we shall part, I suppose, and that will be the

end of it! Except that I shall be very, very sorry to lose you.

"I don't know where Logo is, but if he were near enough I should go to him and tell him what I think. Of course he is not in town now—nobody is, and I've only stayed on to clear everything out of my house, now that I'm giving it up. I suppose he is with you, though you said you did not want him at Bayreuth! Show him this letter if you like, for I'm quite ready to face him if he's angry at my interference. I would even join you in Paris, if you wanted me, for I have nothing to do and strange to say I have a little money! I've sold almost all my furniture, you know, so I'm not such a total pauper as usual. But in any case answer this, please, and tell me that I have done right, or wrong, just as you feel about it—and then we will go on being friends, or say good-bye, whichever you decide."

Lady Maud signed this long letter and addressed it to Miss Margaret Donne, at Bayreuth, feeling sure that it would be delivered, even without the name of the hotel, which she did not know. But the Bayreuth post-office was overworked during the limited time of the



performances, and it happened that the extra assistant through whose hands the letter passed for distribution either did not know that Miss Donne was the famous Cordova, or did not happen to remember the hotel at which she was stopping, or both, and it got pigeon-holed under D, to be called for. The consequence was that Margaret did not receive it until the morning after the performance of *Parsifal* to which she had taken Van Torp, though it had left London only six hours after him; for such things will happen even in extremely well-managed countries when people send letters insufficiently addressed.

Furthermore, it also happened that Logotheti was cooling himself on the deck of his yacht in the neighbourhood of Penzance, while poor Baraka was half-stifled in the Police Station. For the yacht, which was a very comfortable one, though no longer new, and not very fast according to modern ideas, was at Cowes, waiting to be wanted, and when her owner parted from Van Torp after promising to dine on the next day but one, it occurred to him that the smell of the wood pavements was particularly nasty, that it would make no real difference whether he returned to Pinney's at

once or in two days, or two weeks, since the ruby he had left must be cut before it was mounted, and that he might just as well take the fast train to Southampton and get out to sea for thirty-six hours. This he did, after telegraphing to his sailing-master to have steam as soon as possible; and as he had only just time to reach the Waterloo Station he did not even take the trouble to stop at his lodgings. He needed no luggage, for he had everything he wanted on board, and his man was far too well used to his ways to be surprised at his absence.

The consequence of this was that when Baraka's case came up the next morning there was no one to say a word for her and Spiro. Mr. Pinney identified the ruby "to the best of his belief" as the one stolen from his counter, the fact that Baraka had been disguised in man's clothes was treated as additional evidence, and she and Spiro were sent to Brixton Gaol accordingly, Spiro protesting their innocence all the while in eloquent but disjointed English, until he was told to hold his tongue.

Further, Lady Maud read the Police Court report in an evening paper, cut it out and sent it to Margaret

as a document confirming the letter she had posted on the previous evening; and owing to the same insufficiency in the address, the two missives were delivered together.

Lastly, Mr. Pinney took the big ruby back to his shop and locked it up in his safe with a satisfaction and a sense of profound relief such as he had rarely felt in a long and honourable life; and he would have been horrified and distressed beyond words if he could have even guessed that he had been the means of sending an innocent and helpless girl to prison. The mere possibility of such a mistake would have sent him at the greatest attainable speed to Scotland Yard, and if necessary in pursuit of the Home Secretary himself. The latter was in the North of Scotland, on a friend's moor, particularly preoccupied about his bag and deeply interested in the education of a young retriever that behaved like an idiot during each drive instead of lying quiet behind the butts, though it promised to turn out a treasure in respect of having the nose and eye of a vulture and the mouth of a sucking-dove. The comparisons are those of the dog's owner, including the "nose" of the bird of prey, and no novelist



can be held responsible for a Cabinet Minister's English.

One thing more which concerns this tale happened on that same day. Two well-dressed young men drove up to the door of a quiet and very respectable hotel in the West End; and they asked for their bill, and packed their belongings, which were sufficient though not numerous; and when they had paid what they owed and given the usual tips, they told the porter to call two hansoms, and each had his things put on one of them; and they nodded to each other and parted; and one hansom drove to Euston and the other to Charing Cross; and whether they ever met again, I do not know, and it does not matter; but in order to clear Baraka's character at once and to avoid a useless and perfectly transparent mystery, it is as well to say directly that it was the young man who drove to Euston, on his way to Liverpool and New York, who had Logotheti's ruby sewn up in his waistcoat pocket; and that the ruby really belonged to Margaret, since Logotheti had already given it to her, before he had brought it to Mr. Pinney to be cut and set. But the knowledge of what is here imparted to the reader, who has already guessed this

much of the truth, would not help Baraka out of Brixton Gaol, where the poor girl found herself in very bad company indeed; even worse, perhaps, than that in which Spiro was obliged to spend his time.



END OF VOL. I.

much of the truth, would not help Barak's out of Brix-  
ton Canal, where the poor girl found herself in very bad  
company indeed; even worse, perhaps, than that in  
which Spino was obliged to spend his time.

---

PRINTING OFFICE OF THE PUBLISHER.

---

END OF VOL. I

Biblioteka Główna UMK



300049016176



## Latest Volumes.—November 1908.

**The Stooping Lady.** By MAURICE HEWLETT. 1 vol.-4018.

Like all tales by Mr. Maurice Hewlett, this historical canvas of the early Georges is replete with his inimitable power of exhibiting to the reader the romanticism which underlay the lives of our ancestors.

**Ancestors.** By GERTRUDE ATHERTON. 2 vols.-4019/20.

This clever Anglo-American story is, like all Mrs. Atherton's works, full of incidental and psychological interest. The second half of the book deals with California, and contains a vivid description of the great earthquake and fire which have recently devastated the City of the West.

**Mr. Strudge.** By PERCY WHITE. 1 vol.-4021.

This is an admirable elucidation—in this well-known satirist's style—of one of those individuals who unfortunately infest English society, and are only to be described with the designations of "Snob," "Humbug," or—in vulgar *parlance*—"Bounder."

**The Fruit of the Tree.** By EDITH WHARTON. 2 vols.-4022/23.

A drama of American life, of great psychological interest, in the scheme of which dollars, love, and human conscience are happily blended. Miss Wharton is the gifted authoress of "The House of Mirth."

**The Lakes of Northern Italy.** By RICHARD BAGOT. 1 vol.-4024.

This book is an admirable *vade-mecum* to the lakes of Northern Italy, and is full of picturesque descriptions of scenery, art, and historical incidents. Mr. Bagot is excellently well qualified to be our guide, as his well-known novels on Italy will prove.

**Sheaves.** By E. F. BENSON. 2 vols.-4025/26.

Mr. Benson has given us a story which will appeal to every student of human nature, and will wring the heart-strings of those who have had to do with that terrible disease, consumption. Davos, the refuge of such invalids, is painted with a masterly hand.

**Chastelard and Mary Stuart.** By ALGERNON CHARLES SWINBURNE. 1 vol.-4027.

One of the greatest modern poets that England has produced is seen at his best in these two dramas of the life and death of the unfortunate Mary Stuart, Queen of Scots.

**Flower o' the Orange, and Other Stories.** By AGNES & EGERTON CASTLE. 1 v.-4028.

This volume contains a collection of such delicate tales of a romantic past as are the especial *forte* of these popular writers. The men and women of the old-time *noblesse* become living figures again under Mr. and Mrs. Castle's unique and sympathetic touch.

**The Company's Servant.** By B. M. CROKER. 2 vols.-4029/30.

The history and romance of one of those Englishmen who have been disowned by their family for a fancied fault, go to India and there carve out a new career, is the theme of Mrs. Croker's latest Indian story. "Truth will out" might be this clever tale's motto.

**Wheels of Anarchy.** By MAX PEMBERTON. 1 vol.-4031.

A new romance by one of the favourite living English writers of adventurous tales, in which the hero undertakes a single-handed campaign against the horde of anarchists who infest the Continent.,

Biblioteka

Główna

1246111

Latest Vol

UMK Toruń

**The Primadonna.**

MARION CRAWFORD.

4032/33.

This sequel to the author's well-known work, "Soprano," describes the final adventures and marriage of the heroine, whom Mr. Crawford has already made such an interesting personality. The character of the Greek, Logotheti, remains excellently pictured.

**The Man who was Thursday.** By G. K. CHESTERTON.

I vol. - 4034.

This clever story by a new author among the list of those in the Tauchnitz Edition is replete with a humour of an unusual kind, and the comedy of anarchist and police adventures of which it consists have an allegorical meaning.

**The Shuttle.** By FRANCES HODGSON BURNETT. 2 vols. -

4035/36.

The question of the moral advantages of Anglo-American marriages, especially where the American wife is a millionairess, and the English husband a penniless though titled person, forms the main theme of this newest romance by the celebrated authoress of "Little Lord Fauntleroy."

**Emotional Moments.** By

SARAH GRAND. I vol. - 4037.

These stories from the pen of one of England's most powerful lady writers are instinct with a deep, and withal a kindly, insight into the workings of the mainspring which chiefly controls our erring human nature.

**White Rose of Weary Leaf.**

By VIOLET HUNT. 2 vols. -

4038/39.

Her sex has seldom met with so true and clever an expounder as Miss Violet

who appeals irresistibly.

**The Human Boy Again.**

By EDEN PHILLPOTTS. I vol. -

4040.

A second series of humorous sketches of schoolboy life, in which the youthful heroes are made to expose the inherent deviltry of their nature in their own characteristic way. The volume is, of course, a sequel to the author's "Human Boy."

**The Weavers.** By GILBERT

PARKER. 2 vols. - 4041/42.

This is an Egyptian drama of absorbing interest, which will go far to enhance the author's already brilliant reputation. In following the story we breathe the very air of the desert and plumb the depths of Eastern intrigue.

**The Millionaire Girl, and Other Stories.** By "RITA."

I vol. - 4043.

This volume contains a dozen sketches of English and the Riviera, many of which are written in the minor key of pathos, by an authoress well known as a pitiless satirist of the English *haut monde*.

**The Heart of a Child.**

By FRANK DANBY. 2 vols. -

4044/45.

The authoress has in this keen study of humanity depicted the life history of a London slum girl who rises to the position of a peeress of the realm. Sally Snapes is one of the most striking and lovable female figures in modern fiction.

*The Tauchnitz Edition is to be had of all Booksellers and  
Railway Libraries  
per volume.  
attached to*

Biblioteka Główna UMK



300049016176

1,60. or 2 francs  
Tauchnitz Edition is



Biblioteka

Główna

1246111

Latest Vol

UMK Toruń

The Primadonna.

MARION CRAWFORD.

4032/33.

This sequel to the author's well-known work, "Soprano," describes the final adventures and marriage of the heroine, whom Mr. Crawford has already made such an interesting personality. The character of the Greek, Logotheti, remains excellently pictured.

The Man who was Thursday. By G. K. CHESTER.

I vol. - 4034.

This clever story by a new author among the list of those in the 2nd Edition is replete with a humour of the usual kind, and the comedy of the author's and police adventures of which it has an allegorical meaning.

The Shuttle. By F. HODGSON BURNETT.

2 vols. - 4035/36.

The question of the moral aspect of Anglo-American marriages, where the American wife is a millionaire and the English husband a penniless titled person, forms the main theme of this newest romance by the co-author of "Little Lord Fauntleroy".

Emotional Moments.

SARAH GRAND. I vol.

These stories from the pen of England's most powerful lady writer are instinct with a deep, and withal a keen insight into the workings of the human spring which chiefly controls our human nature.

White Rose of Weary.

By VIOLET HUNT. 2 vols.

4038/39.

Her sex has seldom met with a more and clever an expounder as Mr. Hunt.

who appeals irresistibly.

The Human Boy Again.

By EDEN PHILLPOTTS. I vol.

4040.

A second series of humorous sketches of schoolboy life, in which the youthful

x-rite

colorchecker CLASSIC



The Ta  
Railway L  
per volume.  
attached to

Biblioteka



3006 40010 116

mm