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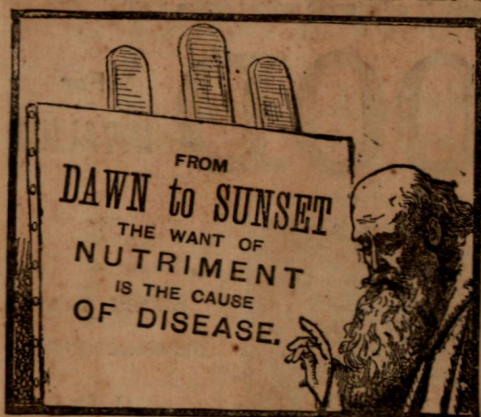
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**Colonel RICHARD HENRY SAVAGE,**

*Author of "The Little Lady of Lagunitas," etc.*

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# A DAUGHTER OF JUDAS

A TALE OF NEW YORK CITY

FIN-DE-SIÈCLE LIFE

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CASTILLO DE MAIFENA DEL ALCOR  
(SEVILLA)

BY

RICHARD HENRY SAVAGE

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# A DAUGHTER OF JUDAS.

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## BOOK I.

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### MISS ULTIMA'S FOE.

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#### CHAPTER I.

##### A THUNDERBOLT IN CLEAR SKIES.

"PARDON me ! Counselor ! You, were saying——" and the speaker turned from the window of the Star Chamber in the Brunswick, with a flash of remorse, for a remarkably pretty woman had just whirled past in a sleigh. Her materialization had startled him.

"That it is always the unexpected which happens," composedly remarked Decatur Hoyt, as he lovingly culled the finest cigar in the box. The old lawyer gazed at Floyd Stanwix with an amused smile. "*Femmina—femmina !* Admiral," he added, with warning finger raised.

"Seems to me I have heard your proverb before," laughed Stanwix, as he seated himself by the counselor, and murmured, "How in the world did she turn up in New York in January ! Too much rapid transit in this world !"

Stanwix hastily drank his neglected cognac, and lighting a cigar, glanced at his watch. "I wish Low would come," he vigorously broke out. "He is fifteen minutes late now ! And a man, at my age, has no evenings to throw away in

New York. The dinner has been charming, the night is crystalline and lovely; you are the only man in the town whom I would bear away, 'as a survival of the fittest,' if I were a modern Noah. But it is late. This year of ninety reminds me that my life has been deficient in sleigh-rides."

"I hate Van Arsdale's business; what on earth does he want of me? You can handle Low when he comes. Send me word to the Club by him." The fretting lover was simply astounded as the old lawyer quietly remarked:

"And you, Floyd Stanwix, trustee, guardian, etc., would be on the way to High Bridge, in ten minutes, with——"

"The Princess of Nowhere! The lady who just swept past! You are right, my friend," merrily rejoined Stanwix. "I did not know that lawyers were mind-readers."

"I wish they were," grimly replied Decatur Hoyt. "If I could hypnotize that wooden Indian in front of Tammany Hall, and then do a bit of mind-reading in General Term, or at the Court of Appeals, I might keep some of you young fellows in order."

"Never mind, counselor. Your fame as a jurist will go down to posterity ringing along the columned years. You should thank me, for your masterly argument in the case of the Countess Broccoli vs. Stanwix, has noised your glory abroad."

"Yes, as far as Naples, where you met her," laughed the amused lawyer, smartly saying, "Show the gentleman up," as a boy handed him a card bearing the words, "Harry Low." "When you resume your normal existence on your yacht, and run around the world again, stop at some ports where the woman-bosom is frostier than at Naples."

"Oh! I never promised to marry the Contessa—at least that is what you said in court. You ought to know!" rejoined the gay defendant. "By the way, I have had strong boarding nettings put around the yacht. I have changed her name from 'Aphrodite' to the 'Unapproach-



able.' I have an old boatswain now on special duty. He was crossed in love, and has orders to fire the signal-gun point blank at any boat showing the flutter of dimity."

"It won't save you, Floyd, my boy," the old lawyer rejoined, gazing kindly on the man whom he had often tipped when a dashing midshipman at the Naval Academy. "The memory of the Aphrodite's rosy record will still invite to soft dalliance with the fair enemy! *Château qui parle*—you know! Besides, this is an age of the uprising of woman and her new claims to a hearing!"

"Yes, and her new Jenness Millers!" laughed the world-renowned host and yachtsman. "I will do the flank-movement act! Change of base! Lure them all on board and,—slip ashore in the dingy! Best not to meet the woman of to-day in her earnest moments; I prefer the softer intervals when aspiration sleeps and woman pauses in her progress for one last delightful draught of that cup of Love whose vanishing bubbles still cling to the ringing crystal!"

"I tell you, Decatur Hoyt, and I wish it to go on the record, that algebra, calculus and Greek roots, with Herbert Spencer and 'woman's sufferings,' will drive my yacht to foreign shores, where woman is devoid of learning but still thrilling with love! The whole agitation business is founded in fiendish cruelty by those cold-hearted sisters whom a man of good taste shuns upon the logical doctrine of 'natural selection.'"

"Stop your nonsense, Floyd! There will always be 'an eye to brighten when you come,' in New York! I'll have the court set you off a sweetheart, if the worst comes to the worst. But give me Van Arsdale's note! Here is mine! What can be this sudden business? Marie is not of age yet!" The old lawyer mused, as Stanwix handed back the brief note he had read.

"Certainly not," he briskly answered; "Miss Ultima only comes of age next year. Poor little maid! It is lonely

enough in that hole of a convent! Yours is the same as mine! The old boy means business!" and he read as follows:

"ST. AUGUSTINE, FLORIDA.

January 8, 1890.

"DEAR HOYT,

"Please meet Stanwix at once with Low, whom I have sent to you. It is a very important matter. Low will telegraph from Philadelphia. He has a letter for each of you. I will be home in a week, to remain. Business all right.

"Yours,

"FRANK VAN ARSDALE."

A knock at the door interrupted Floyd Stanwix in a vain attempt to fathom the mysterious conference mystery. Mr. Harry Low, in graceful youthful presence, entered the room with a gravity not often assumed by that prince of confidential secretaries. His handsome curly head for five years had held the weightiest secrets of Frank Van Arsdale—millionaire, giant operator, clubman, pride of Gotham and envy of his fellows.

For, cool, adroit, smart and devilish at sixty, Frank Van Arsdale's pleasures were quaffed to the last delicious drop, as systematically as his enormous affairs were directed.

Tall, dark, with flashing black eyes lighting up a stern, brave under face, and delicate features, Harry Low was the youthful Faust of the far-reaching Mephisto he served, whose very touch was gold.

"Pardon me, gentlemen," said Low, with his usual deference to the lawyer of the great house, and his frank admiration for that nautical Mercutio, Floyd Stanwix, N. Y. C., the brightest, bravest heart in the swim. Low knew well the absolute respect entertained by the skeptic Van Arsdale for Stanwix, the brother of his dead patrician wife. "He is the only young American thoroughbred, I know," Van Ars-



dale would often say, with a keen glance at silent Low, who knew not that Floyd Stanwix and Harry Low were already named as executors of the defiant magnate who faced everything unflinchingly—even King Death!

"The train was delayed. I hope that you received my despatches. I can only excuse this late call by the gravity of the business. I presumed that our usual meeting-place would be most acceptable." And the young secretary was slightly formal as he handed each of the gentlemen a sealed letter. "Excuse me, if I ring for something. I came at once. I am very tired." Harry Low seated himself at the table, and Floyd Stanwix noted his strange appearance as the secretary seated himself.

"I never saw him look like that!" muttered Stanwix, hastily breaking the seal of his own letter.

Decatur Hoyt adjusted his eyeglasses; and methodically opened the communication. Arrived at the golden age of wisdom, the lawyer's firm face was lit up with a strange expectancy. A nobly-poised head on a body of perfect manly symmetry, clear blue eyes of lambent intelligence, and singularly refined delicate features made youthful by a silvery moustache, the lofty bearing of the counselor was aided by another charm in his perfectly modulated voice. Hands and feet which might have been a belle's envy, with an old *régime* courtesy in his movements, Decatur Hoyt represented the gallantry of the service from which he had sprung, and the classic culture of those generations of lawyers—his kindred.

Measured in speech, ripe in culture, dainty in his kindly wit, and of a quiet dignity which repelled every intrusion, the old advocate was a picture of alert intellectual apprehension, as his eyes ranged with professional calmness over the deeply-traced lines of Frank Van Arsdale's long letter.

"This is hell!" cried Floyd Stanwix, dashing down the document which Low had handed him. The agitated club-

man paced the floor like a caged tiger. The astonished secretary started up, in sudden dismay, as Decatur Hoyt turned an unvarying smile of blandness upon the excited Stanwix.

"I believe you said something, Floyd," observed the counselor, and his eye returned to the letter which had plunged him in some abstraction of the moment.

"I was only quoting a remark of the late Mr. Beecher's, with regard to things coming upon us unawares!" vigorously said Stanwix, stooping to pick up the letter, which he folded and thrust into his breast-pocket. Casting an inquiring eye upon the counselor, whose face was now reddened with the glow of an intense emotion, Stanwix glared viciously at Harry Low, and seizing a cigar, lit it and then thrust it into his mouth after the fashion of a javelin in the side of a dying lion.

Harry Low well knew that the stately old lawyer disliked to be interrupted in his mental cogitations, and he arose, and softly murmuring to Stanwix, said, "I think I will await you downstairs. You may wish to confer in private."

"Stay!" roared Stanwix, who was fretted beyond measure at Hoyt's calm silence, "you may be able to explain this d——d business! Nothing will ever astonish me again!" and Floyd, with a sense of hatred of the whole Van Arsdale entourage, suddenly bethought him of the "Princess of Nowhere."

"Too late, by Jove," he growled, as he sought a revenge in another *petite verre*. "Won't this raise a racket, though! Cornelia! By Heavens!" and he whistled softly as he peeped out of the window into the lovely night where the stars glittered over the blanketing snows of Madison Square. He glanced longingly in the direction where the pretty meteor of loveliness had vanished, and gloomily sank into an easy chair.

"The whole Stanwix clan will fall on Van Arsdale," he



mused, "like,—like—like a thousand of bricks!" he triumphantly concluded. Floyd Stanwix, the old bachelor son of the great tribe, was, for once, "a prophet in his own time," and with a pitying thought, born of his kindly sailor heart, he added, "Poor little Miss Ultima!"

"Do I understand that you witnessed this marriage, Mr. Low?" The lawyer's eyes were keen and searching.

Harry Low involuntarily rose, as he deprecatingly said, "Certainly, I was present, Mr. Hoyt," and then he slowly added, as a sop to the disgruntled Stanwix, "at Mr. Van Arsdale's request."

"Then, I will believe it to be a fact," remarked the old lawyer, fixing his eyes on some dim distance. "I was never more surprised in all my life!" added Hoyt, as he aimlessly wandered to the window, while Stanwix and Low smiled as the troubled old gentleman unconsciously quoted "the only Tony Pastor."

There was an awkward silence. Finally the counselor turned and fixed Low in position with a most determined motion of his glasses. "Perhaps you can tell us what Mrs. Van Arsdale is like?" resumed the bewildered Hoyt. What age, what manner of woman, what nationality, in short—a bill of particulars!" Decatur Hoyt turned his earnest eyes for moral support upon the yachtsman who was still "in the breakers."

"Exactly! yes! That's a devilish good idea!" broke in Stanwix. "A sort of custom-house measurement, hull and tackle—the whole business—you know!"

Harry Low smiled gently, as he abstracted his hat, cane, and top-coat with guilty dexterity. "Gentlemen, you will soon see this most charming young person. I have full orders to open the house and prepare the whole establishment to receive them. They come home next week." Stanwix winced as he thought of his dead sister Marie whose gentle presence still seemed to linger around the splendid

home where she died in the flower of her young womanhood. "Mrs. Van Arsdale is, I should judge, twenty-five years of age. She is remarkably handsome!" Stanwix growled an undistinguishable dissent. "I believe of Southern or English parentage, and, in short, a most charming personage!"

Low's description seemed to excite the keen attention of the refined old lawyer. "Ah! I see! Just about the sort of a bride suited to your own taste and years—that is—generally suitable!" murmured Hoyt in silky tones, as Low reddened, saying:

"I have much to do! I will call at the office at ten!" and, with a bow, the startled secretary passed out, saying softly to himself, "By Jove! Van Arsdale is sixty if he is a minute! I wonder if that old boy means to read his client a homily! It is all lost on the cool agnostic! He cares for nothing, God or man, save—himself!"

As Low's footsteps died away Decatur Hoyt turned from the window where he had stood spell-bound, dreaming of beautiful Marie Van Arsdale in her bridal robes, and softly said, "It is a strange, strange marriage! Poor little Miss Ultima!"

The old man laid his hand in kindly sympathy on Floyd Stanwix's shoulder, but the young man was standing lost in thought, murmuring, "Well! of all the breaks, this is the——" He was saved some illogical profanity by the counselor's calm voice.

"Sit down, Floyd, my boy, and let us talk this strange happening over!"

But for some minutes Floyd Stanwix uneasily walked the Star-Chamber. How many times, in that very room, after the business of the regular gatherings was disposed of, Frank Van Arsdale himself had spoken, in mocking bitterness, of similar May and December episodes.

The Star Chamber was convenient to all. Low and Stanwix were lodged hard by the Brunswick. Frank Van Ars-



dale could be instantly summoned from his club, the "Paleozoic," and the counselor, a quiet *bon vivant*, enjoyed these little suppers and cosy dinners, breaking, in this case alone, his rule of never waiting on a client. And it was almost a Siamese-twin life of intellectual activity,—the fierce passion play of Van Arsdale's mighty schemes, and the calm illumination of these varying plans by Hoyt's serene and matchless intellect. But gallant Floyd Stanwix forgot this night the gaudy hotel supper-room, with its reek of richest wines and the thin blue incense of cigars of the Vuelta Abajo. He lost from sight the sparkle of the moonlight on the crusted snow, and his ears were deaf to the jingling sleigh-bells of the little parties *à deux* dashing by. For *à l'improviste*, there was a sudden whirl of the nervous, vicious, spasmodic gaiety of New York. In many a household, with a toss of a defiant head, scruples had been shaken off as lightly as the falling flakes from the curled and perfumed tresses. Guilty fears had fled the passionate heart. For, in many a covert nest and stately mansion, the little twinkling signal-light showed, white and clear, to thrill wildly throbbing pulses.

"And the Sultan Shah Jehan  
Had gone to his Palace of Ispahan!

The last of the Stanwix clan, a hardy squire of dames, a desperate *viveur* of cosmopolitan arts of deviltry, Floyd Stanwix was in a softened mood this winter night; for it seemed to him as if a chord had snapped, binding him to the sacred romance of the old. "Mrs. Van Arsdale!" he murmured, as he stole a glance at Decatur Hoyt regarding the absent capitalist's letter, as if it were a Bill of Exceptions of the most damnable intricacy. A thing to be scorned and done away with. Floyd had always lifted his hat as he passed the closed portals of the Van Arsdale mansion, "on the Avenue." True, its glories were still the talk of Gotham,



albeit a bit faded, and a clan of idle servants maintained it in order, yet it was closed to that intangible penetrating tide of human essence known as "Society!" The sheen of silk and jewels was gone from its drawing-rooms, the glitter of plate and flash of crystal lit up no more its princely dining-hall, the sound of passionate laughter, of whispered burning words, and gasping low replies, woke no more the echoes of its picture-gallery! Over the hearthstone, in dreamy womanly beauty, the exquisite face of the dead Marie Van Arsdale was still veiled under the fleecy folds of white crape.

That veil had never been lifted since the gentle lady of the house died, save on one wild winter night when Frank Van Arsdale walked an hour in that room alone! The passers-by would never have known that the full radiance of the chandeliers gleamed within the darkened windows. It was a lonely room haunted by an angel!

Even Raikes, the old English butler, who cowered in the silent hall during the millionaire's strange visit, was unenlightened as to the sentiment which dragged the Cræsus there. "He's a queer one, is the Marster!" grumbled Raikes downstairs, when the great hall-door clanged, after the owner's exit. "Hain't no more heart than one of them mahogany Injins. Leastways, don't show it."

It was true; and yet, Frank Van Arsdale's respectful deference to Miss Cornelia Stanwix, his untiring courtesies to General Stephen Stanwix, the family hero, and his trust in chivalric Floyd Stanwix, did him honor.

As for Miss Ultima, little Marie Stanwix—the graceful slip of a girl now budding under the ministrations of the Sisters of the Sacred Heart, Frank Van Arsdale regarded her as a mere possession—one of his many belongings.

He had hardly noticed the child's wail as she laid the last spray of white roses on the pulseless breast of her young mother; for it was Floyd Stanwix, with a tender flash of



grave sympathy, who had separated the two Maries on earth forever.

To the brother, on this winter night, the twelve long years seemed to roll away as a stone from the door of a tomb. "Mrs. Van Arsdale!" Would he see that gentle, delicate face waiting for him at the window? His heart leaped up as he recalled how his sister Marie's arms folded him to her glowing bosom, when he returned, a boy hero, from deliberately sighting his pet gun at the "Alabama," under the approving eye of the beloved Thornton. Floyd Stanwix started and sighed as the lawyer spoke gently a second time, for he fain would never cross that threshold again! The door of that house where her gentle shadow lingered yet, and never passed over the shadowy boundary.

He shivered slightly, and then approached his beloved counsellor, "This is a miserable business for me, my friend," he said. "I fear for Marie's future! I feel as if little Miss Ultima was already fighting an invisible foe!"

Decatur Hoyt turned his clear, wistful eyes upon the disturbed yachtsman. The ready grasp of his hand told Stanwix of the unity of their feelings. "You and I are her trustees. I am her lawyer. You, are nearest on earth to her now," the old man softly said. "And we will 'stand by,' as they say in the Navy."

Hoyt gazed in wonder at Stanwix, who was addressing a shape of hidden sweetness and light—some dear embodiment of his heart—as he solemnly said:

"I will do my duty, Marie!"

It was a poor pretence which caused the counselor to try a glass of Madeira, with a trembling hand, for he knew that Floyd Stanwix was speaking to the dead sister of his heart.

"Now, my boy," he cheerfully broke in, "let us be practical. The hour is late. Permit me to see your letter. You will observe, in mine, that Van Arsdale expects you to communicate with Miss Cornelia Stanwix and the General,

and also visit Marie and prepare her to be summoned home to meet——”

“I know! I know!” hastily answered Floyd. “I suppose I must!”

He sighed in relief to have thus saved the lawyer a choice of distant terms in which to refer to orphaned Marie Van Arsdale’s new “substitute for a mother.”

“Let me study the letters,” pleaded the old lawyer, as if asking the court for an hour’s adjournment “for cause.” “What I would like to know, here,” he mused, “is the motive—the impelling motive!”

“Did you ever know Frank Van Arsdale to have any motive except the impelling power of his iron will? *Le roi le veut!* I could only wish,” and Floyd laughed bitterly, “that he has met as hard a nature and as strong a will as his own!”

“We as yet know little of this—this Edith Calvert,” soothingly remarked the counselor, “we shall know more later.”

“You will—Frank Van Arsdale may, too,” coldly retorted Stanwix. “As for me, I shall face this, till I know Miss Ultima is *en rapport* with all her natural defenders, and then I’ll try the Mediterranean. I would choke here to see a strange woman queening it in my sister’s house.”

“Floyd, you will do as I advise. I must have you to lean on,” gravely said the counselor. “This is a strange union! It goes without saying, as our Gallic friends remark, that this startlingly sudden marriage will bring bitterness and defeat to some one! If Frank weighed this step well he has some secret end in view. If any one has tried to victimize him—God help them! He is the most—peculiar man I know!” concluded Hoyt, relapsing from a flame of excitement into his finest Court-of-Appeals manner.

“The court is with you,” said Stanwix, laughing in spite of himself. “I will not desert you, or my dear little Marie.



Somebody will soon make the game. We will stand pat—and then, call the turn.”

“That is not law or logic,” doubtfully said Hoyt.

“No. But it’s horse-sense,” persisted the sailor. “All these good-looking women of mysteriously modest antecedents have a gang of jackals behind them. Let us be quiet. By-and-by they will peep out from behind the bridal robes. I suppose Frank will face society in this. Now, my Lady Dainty may lose her head a bit. You can see the game soon. I am too hot-headed.”

“Ah! I will make inquiries,” stealthily replied the lawyer. “I have all the points of this story now, and we will stand together for little Marie!”

“What shall I do first? I will have to face Cornelia Stanwix. I tell you, Hoyt, that relic of the ‘stone-cameo’ and ‘beaded-black-jet’ age will transfix Van Arsdale with a Medusa stare. I am the only man who fears her not. The Scylla of her reproof, the Charybdis of her scorn are powerless to me. Gad! She is an honor to the clan, and she shall go in the very front rank of the line of battle. It’s her *métier*. The General, of course, is the General always,” said Floyd with real tenderness. “But I tell you, my friend, I would sooner face old Semmes’ Blakely rifle again, at short range, than wound that motherless child’s heart as I must. You don’t know Lady Ultima.”

“Ah, Floyd, we must find a way to be wise and gentle,” said the lawyer, rising. “Now, come to the office at noon. By that time I will have gleaned young Low’s budget of impressions, and gained many little details. I will at once send down to Florida for a secret report. So, good-night to business. It is a strange, a very strange, affair. Frank Van Arsdale, the first man to break his own rule! I presume that, as usual with these comets, she has neither influence nor money, but only that shadowy nimbus of ‘good blood’ which seems to be necessary to all very handsome young

women who marry old men. They must have something," gently grumbled Hoyt, as they descended the richly-carpeted stairways. "A family-tree costs nothing in America."

"Yes, but the English lay on a small tax, I believe, in the interests of the exchequer. I wonder if that is why so many impecunious English aristocrats come to America. Do they swim over clinging to the family-tree?"

They parted with a silent hand-grasp—a pledge of loyalty to the girl dreaming far away in her white convent-bed.

"He's a fine fellow, for all his purposeless deviltry," said Decatur Hoyt, as he sank into the cushions of his carriage. "Now, either this particular unknown beauty is a *rara avis*, or else my esteemed client Van Arsdale has made a mess of it. What can have led a hard-headed old man of the world like Frank to fancy that a young woman, brilliant in beauty, throbbing with passion, would fancy a lover well over sixty. Can Low have any scheme? Ah! No, he is above it! It must be——" The old counselor stooped and picked up a gold coin he had dropped as he was handing the driver a tip at his door. The night-air, crisp and cool, and the touch of the gold recalled him. "Yes, it was this—this!" And the son of Blackstone absent-mindedly laid the half-eagle on the hall-table with his hat and cane.

The gray dawn of morning found Floyd Stanwix slumbering, still dressed, on a divan in his cosy bachelor den, for he had forgotten the Princess of Nowhere, and had fallen asleep, holding in his hand the picture of a dark-eyed, sweet-faced woman, to whom he had unconsciously murmured:

"Good-night, Marie; I will see her—see her—to-morrow!"

Floyd Stanwix was a graceful son of Neptune as he lay there, doomed to astound his usually impassive English valet. In the hardy flush of vigorous manhood at forty-five, his well-knit frame, crisp curly hair, stubborn, twisted mustache and sturdy neck showed the effects of a life spent on the crisp salt billows. Sailor brown were his shapely hands, and



a tattooed blue foul anchor attested the enthusiasm with which he had donned the middy's jacket. Dancing dark eyes, a cheery voice, a generous heart, and a sunny, if mobile, temper were characteristics of the last of the Stanwix men. Leaving the service after the war, possessed of an ample fortune, Floyd Stanwix had roved the sea of life, a genial corsair—giving and taking, in *bonhomie*. Deep and tender in his hidden feelings, he was the favorite "holy terror" of society, whose flashing-eyed darlings spoke of him with bated breath, but softly called him "Floyd," with graceful *insouciance*, on the rocks at Newport, or wherever man and maid might meet in the chase of the bubble—pleasure. A thousand acts of gallantry and kindness endeared him to the men of many lands, and it was only in the columns of the exquisitely reported "Society Journals," that he was held up as a "hissing and a snare!"

Yea, moreover, one other pillory had he sat in. An "eminent divine," who mouthed regularly Sundays, at a "go-as-you-please" church in New York, with thinly-veiled innuendo described an unhappy escapade of Floyd's, which translated a person described as "a fair flower of American womanhood," to Paris, in a most unconventional manner. The large congregation of "worshippers," enjoyed the "eminent divine's" anatomical destruction, by moral vivisection, of all that was left of the unfortunate Stanwix, whose excuse for the lady's singular position in Paris, in an unexpected loneliness, was, that he had an objection to a particular French maid and a vicious parrot which this modern "Lady Isabel" had taken with her in her flight!

And yet, with all his faults, a man! The trustee of innocent Miss Ultima's large fortune, and the deliberate choice of that unromantic bridegroom Frank Van Arsdale, as his executor. The bravest, wildest, most headlong man in the club, whose burgee he proudly floated, was the sleeping "Admiral!"

The glorious morning sun danced over the crystal snows and threw warm gules on the windows of the "Paleozoic," from whence Frank Van Arsdale would no longer gaze on the draped plate-glass and fortified gloom of the great mansion. Its vanished mistress slept in Greenwood; but her gentle graces and tender spirit thrilled in little Marie Van Arsdale's heart as she kissed, on waking, the dear face, which hovered in the night over the little white convent-couch.

Already there was an air of frightened unrest at the long-closed mansion, as if a cloud of social Uhlans were soon to swoop down upon the fat, sleek idlers of the Van Arsdale house.

Butler Raikes lifted his voice, not his sacred hand, and aided loudly in the labor of others, letting in the sunlight to greet the coming bride. The golden gleams which chased away the last shadows lingering around the veiled portrait of the forgotten queen threw their lances of burning power against Floyd Stanwix's casements.

Slowly opening his eyes, he astounded Hatton, his valet, by vigorously crying—"Fix me up! Some breakfast! Ah!" with a glance at a Cupid-and-Psyche Meissen clock, "I must be off! Business—down town!"

Hatton silently handed him the letter-tray, and, as he disappeared for the apollinaris and cognac, murmured, "If that don't wake the Guv'ner up, nothink will!" For the impassive companion of Stanwix's "wanderjahre" well knew the splotchy seal, the passionately dashed-off address, the dangerous crackle, and the devilishly mysterious perfume of the missives hurled at Stanwix by the impetuous "Princess of Nowhere." "Wot's she doin' over here, now? wants something—money, I suppose," calmly soliloquized Hatton, as he sprang to his toilet duties.

Stanwix was an inexorable disciplinarian. When Hatton returned, the letter and envelope lay, in geometric divergence, where hastily tossed away. The unopened budget



was cast down without further remark, and Stanwix sententially commanded "Coupé!"

The "Admiral" was whistling an old battle-song cheerily as he smartly departed, with a briskness unusual to the nautical sybarite, a half-hour later. He had resolutely crowded the fluttering draperies, piquant face, and waiting allures of the impatient Princess into one of the obscure lock-boxes of his pigeon-holed heart, and stoutly murmured, "Business first!" It was a new departure.

"He's got business down town!" Hatton grinned, as he picked up the dispatch from the Court of Venus, and imitated his vanished master in an "eye-opener." "Oh, my eye! Business!" and the valet rose to an elated mood whenever that idea returned.

But Floyd Stanwix, having chosen a sober-looking *boutonnière* from his favorite pretty flower-girl, was good-humoredly surveying Broadway as he whirled down town. "Thank God! I have something to do at last!" he cheerfully cried, as he opened his cigar-case. "A stern chase is a long one!" he continued, "but, my unknown friend, 'Miss Edith Calvert,' you are first over the line! You are not yet past the judges!"

Casting his eye upon the nerved army of New York's eager schemers pouring down the great thoroughfare, he smiled as he listened to Trinity's bells.

"I love every brick in the pavements," he thought. "There's no place like New York in the world!" His brow was gloomy, though, as he mounted to the high-perched den of his Nestorian friend, Decatur Hoyt. "I don't mind Cornelia a bit! She will open the vials of wrath! By Jove! I'll switch her off on old Frank! She can brandish the tomahawk over him! The dear old general, he's dead-game! But that child—that child! I must not give her needless pain! Poor little chick!"—And Floyd Stanwix walked into the legal lair, with an uncon-

scious air of tender affability which fluttered the heart of the peculiarly Marguerite-like typewriter who attacked all susceptible manhood from the strong works of Hoyt's quiet office.

"He's a gallant fellow! Looks like a man to stay to the last!" mused the sly Marguerite, as she flashed her "three-star" smile upon the sailor man.

It glanced off harmlessly, for, unknown to Stanwix, white-winged angels of love and tenderness were filling his stormy breast with purer gleams of the brightest and most innocent love—the love of a devoted man for a gentle and defenceless child—the purest, noblest, in the human heart.

"I think now, my dear boy, we have the outlines," said Hoyt, an hour later, as he lit his one morning cigar. The cloud of clients without, were heard in confused murmur. "I have a lot of people here. Go and see your friends, and to-night, run up to the convent. Your own heart will guide you there. I will trust you to make no blunder. Before the bridal wreath has withered, I will know all. Low is as much in the dark as we are. He says that Frank was unusually quiet and reserved at St. Augustine. How in the world did Miss Edith snare the old tiger?"

The counselor was a man whose mind was ruled by a clear intellect, his being was serene, his life measured. It would have seemed incredible had he known that stern, bitter, egoistic Van Arsdale, suddenly turning in the winding gardens of the Ponce de Leon, to meet Edith Calvert, in a royal morning's glow, had searched the wonderful brown eyes with one deep, daring, hungry stare, and then muttered, "If that is a single woman, I will marry her!" It is not according to the way of books, but after the wild maddening impulses of life, that Van Arsdale had minutely looked, with quickened, burning glances, at her every point, as she swept past. "Yes! That's the woman—for me!" he had murmured with parched lips, as he followed her with studied



aimlessness. The conquest of that fresh, bright young being seemed to Van Arsdale, life's last triumph; and he turned to it with a mad zest.

That evening, after an hour's social and physical microscopic glancing at the "living picture" near him, Frank Van Arsdale had hoarsely muttered, "Yes! She is the woman I want!"

And Edith Calvert? what was her heart whispering? Who can translate woman's cryptogram?

## CHAPTER II.

## THE HANGING OF THE CRANE.

"SOMETHING is wrong with the Admiral!" was the comment of twenty different men about town, as Stanwix sat glowering at Bougereau's all-too-amiable nymphs, dividing up one frightened satyr, at the Hoffman.

Floyd lunched at a little table alone, unmindful of all this notice. "No one will think, here, that I am on business," he wisely concluded, and he was right. For a senator, a railroad president, one or two draggled-looking tenors, a prize-fighter in his maiden bloom, some unnecessarily loaf-erly capitalists from the west, the "man from Chicago," a thirsty-looking "southern gentleman, by Jove, sah!" and a few assorted rascals were all worshipping the great invincible, ever visible, inexhaustible, American god—"Cock-tails!" And, imbued with the spirit of the hour, they little dreamed of Stanwix's real embarrassment.

"I am sure that I shall finish this day's work, but it is the beginning which is difficult. I suppose it's like a tumble from the royals. 'I will begin all at once.'" He nodded carelessly to a friend here and there, and his eye roved over the queer *mélange* of celebrities and *vauriens*. It's an ill-wind that blows not the wandering guest to the Hoffman bar! Peering at the stock-ticker, selecting cigars, returning freshly trimmed from the "tonsorial artist," after a night's poker, making bets, inditing Love's illicit ciphers, arguing useless politics, or exchanging vile scandal over vile whisky, all worthless New York was humming around that gilded hive, the Hoffman, which, like charity, covers a multitude of



sins! Purple-faced, cruel-eyed Tammany politicians with heavy jaws, growled their orders to waiting "heelers," while shoals of jockeys off duty, and villainous-eyed messenger-boys, made up a fringe of the Devil's children, to the chorus of the haggard-eyed waiters.

"Hangman's parade!" muttered Stanwix, as he noted a half-dozen heroes of the most desperate personal affrays on record. "I will get out of here! I will have a shy at Cornelia Stanwix!"

As it was a little early for the deliberate toilet of that faded Knickerbocker blossom, still clinging to the Stanwix tree by a very dried-up stem, Floyd lit a cigar and hid himself behind a huge newspaper in the reading-room. Around him, fifty men were driving their eager eyes over the diluted trash devoured daily in New York by countless thousands. Shop-girl, tramp, clerk and idler, busy man and foolish maid must daily devour the twenty-four page "Universe" or the last base-ball extra.

"It's a peculiarly local form of mental debauch," thought Floyd, as he settled himself, "but I suppose they do find, now and then, something that is true or useful!"

He went over the morning's conference. The "Admiral" laughed outright as he remembered how simple-minded Hoyt had informed him that Harry Low was not over-communicative. "He has a vast amount of detail left to him, I presume," innocently said Hoyt, who never dreamed Harry Low had gladly fled the presence of the one man he could not lie to, even for his millionaire employer.

Decatur Hoyt gradually edged his way always toward the truth. His calm, fine intellect pierced rugged-breasted, obstinate men in their hypocrisy, and fathomed the corrupt, lingering lies dreaming under fluttering fans waved over whitest heaving breasts.

"You know all that I do, now, Mr. Hoyt," said Low, with quickened pulses. "You will naturally be able to read the

whole situation soon yourself. The bridal couple will soon arrive."

"So you think this union a marriage of advantage to one, or both, of the happy lovers?" was Hoyt's last thrust.

"I presume it will be an agreeable change—for Mr. Van Arsdale," said Low, as he fled. "He has been quite lonely."

"Oh! I have no doubt," dryly concluded Decatur Hoyt, as his mind returned to a desperate conflict over four disputed inches of Broadway which was "on" for the day. He smiled as he fingered the papers, for he had professionally adjusted one or two little differences of his sturdy client with persons who had vicariously shared "that same loneliness."

"I hope all will go well," mused Hoyt. "It is, I suppose, a matter of money, as well as heart. There's plenty of money; as to the heart—if that is in this, it must be furnished by Miss Edith Calvert—the budding Mrs. Van Arsdale. I suppose she has a tender heart—naturally," the old lawyer's face relaxed, "I hope it is a stout one!" And he turned to search for 'Job Lots' on the "Incorporeal Hereditaments," and left the new Mrs. Van Arsdale's heart to come up in due time.

A very stout, determined heart it was, beating in suppressed pride, as that faultlessly beautiful bride sped north through the whispering pines, in a specially magnificent private car. Beside her sat Frank Van Arsdale, his eyes gleaming with the burning fires of man's highest pride—the pride of possession.

"Her history is a strange one," mused Floyd Stanwix, in his waiting hour. "Her father, an ex-Indian officer, left England to contest some shadowy rights in South Carolina, Georgia, and Florida, of an elder branch. He marries the usual dashing beauty, with no halo or family-tree! God knows where she came from!" Stanwix glowered at her



ideally repellent shade. "Major Calvert dies, leaving a boy and this girl to grow up in that easy way, without means, only practicable in the kindly south. "Let me see," he mentally figured, "this victorious Venus is probably fully twenty-five or six, the boy two years younger, a gentlemanly wanderer, a picturesque background, conveniently absent, visiting his uncle, the British Minister at Athens. I suppose he, too, will turn up soon. It is a slim family history. Father and mother are barred by the limitations of time and the churchyard. Miss Edith is free to make her own game! They have lived in the various eddies of life's whirlpool into which such people float. Harry Low, busy and unsuspecting, was naturally unable to glean any details from the haughty young southern gentry. Van Arsdale never talks.

"The reigning Sultana brings her whole bundle of charms in her face and figure. I wonder what manner of woman she may be! I wonder if she is a— Hang it. I'll descend upon Miss Cornelia. She will exhaust every supposition in the varied mathematics of social possibilities," thought Stanwix, as he realized the futility of speculating upon the woman whom he only knew as fair. "Of course, she is a regular out-and-outer," he murmured, as he fortified for the bearding of Cornelia Stanwix with a last cogniac. "Frank Van Arsdale will never be deceived in that. Not he." And Floyd Stanwix smiled grimly, as the wicked renown of Van Arsdale came to his mind. For of all the cold voluptuaries of the mighty city where gold alone is god, Frank Van Arsdale was the most pitilessly heartless devourer of the human heart on record. "He absolutely frightens me, that old scoundrel," had once remarked to Stanwix a handsome youth under twenty-five, who well deserved his pet name of "Hell-Fire Jack." "He has a heart of stone, and the cruelty of a panther," Stanwix mused in his carriage.

"If she would only prove to be a particularly hard case

of a royally luminous Kohinoor, I should be happy. She might keep old Van 'engaged at all points,' as the British said at Alexandria of the well-waked-up Egyptians. He is rather a tough-fanged old wolf for any tender lamb to encounter in the forest of Ardennes."

Jovial Floyd Stanwix was a trifle pale when he had concluded his diplomatic announcement of the change of state of Van Arsdale to Miss Cornelia Stanwix.

Miss Cornelia, on receiving her nephew's card, descended to her drawing-room in the consciousness of a toilet showing off her very best ancestral points. As grave and severely stately in black and finest lace, as the sister of a Venetian admiral prepared for his state funeral, she awaited anxiously some family disclosure. Keen, energetic, a severe arbiter of manners and morals, she was the chronologist of the family, and was the last "Miss Stanwix." Seated in her drawing-rooms upon the quiet Avenue, she bewailed the approach of trade. In her youth she had been borne up the island of Manhattan, and torn away from her natal Washington Square, by the wave of business. Even now she shuddered as new flank movements seemed to break in upon the purlieus of Fifth, Madison, and Lexington Avenues. Successful tradesmen, to her horror, planted their gilded signs in defiance under her very nose! The decorously elegant manners of the spinster spoke of days that are dead, and, surrounded by the fast-accumulating memorials of the Stanwix clan, she seemed to be a sample patrician left over by the sweep of the modern destructive *régime*. As "all roads lead to Rome," so every fall of the different decaying branches of the once haughty clan swept to her the scattered treasures of her tribe.

Her august name had never defiled a journal of modern Gotham. It was popularly supposed to have been used upon some clerical memorials, or faded legal papers in prehistoric days. Her severely refined face shone out, on rare



occasions, by the side of her brother, General Stanwix. Stephen was the only man of whom she heartily approved; and yet the last lingering drop of warmth in her *frappée* heart clung to Floyd Stanwix. For she was proud, secretly, wickedly proud, of the brave, bright boy; and Miss Cornelia's one insincerity of life was the shutting of her eyes to Floyd's moral obliquities. No one dared to flaunt the rosy record of the yachtsman's failings before her. And the "Churchman" was not likely to set up those neat little paragraphs which were "caviare to the general," wherein her kinsman was spoken of as "Mr. F——d S——x," and which usually concerned events of a startling domestic nature, or upheavals at the "Casino."

In the days when Floyd was subject to school-boy "tips," Miss Cornelia's then youthful hand was regal in its bounty, and it is on record that of all living human beings, he alone had daringly demanded, "Aunt Cornelia, were you ever in love?" This unanswerable query remains like the open question of the "smiting of the Gods of Greece, the "Iron Mask," and several other neat bits of historical "shelf-goods." Suffice it, that no man had even dared to madly crush Miss Cornelia in his arms with passionate avowals of love. Her life was a simple exposition of human dignity and self-denial, regardless of the loss to others, by her ignoring the futile attacks of rosy Don Cupid! And yet, to this gentle, steadfast, faded woman, the flavor of deliciously superior selection and personal isolation still clung. Unexceptionable in her slender form, and coldly proper features, the just proportion of her character gave a quiet harmony to her every attitude. To her physical and moral nature, the faint fragrance of the faded roses of her wasted youth still clung with an antique charm.

Having finished his disclosure in rather abrupt form Floyd was about to make some very cheerful remarks as to certain coveted old heirlooms which had been drifted to

Miss Cornelia's all-conquering presence by the tide of family fortune, when he was struck by the ashen pallor of her face.

The kind-hearted sailor sprang to the agitated lady's side. "Can I do anything? Shall I call some one? I hope I have not alarmed you, Aunt Cornelia.

With a wave of her graceful yellowing hand, the startled lady protested against a violation of the usual brooding decorum of her home.

"Nothing; nothing, thank you, Floyd! But, if you don't mind, I would rather be alone! I must at once send for General Stanwix; no one but myself must break this news to him."

Floyd started with a guilty pleasure; one off his list, and another interview thus rubbed out; things were going royally.

"We must take action on this," the spinster proceeded, "at once."

Floyd Stanwix bowed, though dimly doubtful of the exact measures in view.

"We must hold a family council, of course. None of us can keep up a future friendship! Poor Marie! I am glad that she cannot feel this new sorrow!"

Stanwix refrained from suggesting that the dazzling scion of the shadowy Calverts could not be brought home in triumph, had his sister lived, and brightly and practically said,

"Dear aunt, we must all stand by Ultima now. As I am her trustee, I must frequently see Frank Van Arsdale. To do her justice, this suddenly-discovered paragon seems to have no shadow upon her; you know Van Arsdale; you know what he would look for."

Miss Cornelia Stanwix sighed—"Living, dazzling, impudent beauty, I suppose," she bitterly said.

"Something of that sort, I guess," hastily rejoined Floyd, with a guilty conscience, as he feared he might be led to select along similar lines himself, rather than the crystal-



lized Grecian symmetry of a spotless maidenhood. "Now, she may turn out to be a very nice person," soothingly continued Stanwix; "some one who will learn to love little Marie."

Floyd Stanwix rose hastily as Miss Cornelia turned upon him a face of bitter acerbity. "I must take to my boats, and desert ship!" he hastily mentally concluded. "This sort of thing will never do," and speaking with humility, he said, "I must go up to Fort Lee and see Marie. Her father is coming home next week with Mrs. Van Arsdale, and he wishes her to be informed of this happy news."

"Of course you must go," said Miss Cornelia, speaking in a cold, dry, hard voice. "It would be impossible for me, and, General Stephen is too feeble. Oh! that place! Floyd, you must come to breakfast to-morrow. General Stanwix will be here. My poor child! You will then tell me all!"

Floyd Stanwix chivalrously kissed his aunt's hand and hastened away, for the tears in the gentle woman's wistful eyes smote his heart. He would have even accepted an invitation to breakfast with ghouls, in order to leave that morally rarefied atmosphere of haunting, clinging sorrow and regret, upon which Miss Cornelia Stanwix seemed to thrive.

As he sprang into his carriage, a frosty but tender smile followed him from the window. "Ah, Floyd, you are, after all, a Stanwix," said the lady, who had been touched by the sailor's tender courtesy. As she called her Abigails around her and summoned her carriage of state, eager to carry to General Stephen the tidings of moment, Miss Cornelia's heart was softened. "I will leave Floyd my money," she resolutely said. "Marie will have all the Stanwix lands,—she is the last life,—and will be one of the richest girls in New York! Frank Van Arsdale will not see his child robbed, at any rate; and Floyd can use my money. He is so light-hearted—even if he throws it away upon French women and things." With this vague detrimental allusion to Floyd's

feminine surroundings, the placid patrician lady proved she had delved into secular reading slyly, and here and there picked up a glimpse of her nephew's singularly jolly, if wicked, way of life.

Miss Cornelia had that dignified set of the neck and proudly-poised shoulders which is inseparable from the possession of funds and property. She was always decorously salaamed to by an old mossy lawyer, her agent, and most ceremoniously received at the "Chemical," the "Shoe and Leather," the "Marshmallow," and other scattered banks where she kept stagnant deposits. Her income was only broken in upon by judicious investments in church charities, certain doles, and the purchase of awkward-looking brass reading-eagles, gilded candelabra, suspicious-looking crosses, stained-glass windows, and other uncanny High-Church gear. Any physical thrill of luxury was a waft from Sodom and Gomorrah to her spiritually sensitive nostrils.

"Poor, dear, old girl!" said Floyd, as he swooped upon a cigar, the moment his coupé door was closed. "Now, for Fort Lee!" And the yachtsman remembered how vigorously Miss Cornelia had objected to Marie's internment within the Catholic fold. But hard-headed Frank VanArsdale was inexorable; he knew the pitfalls around the paths of heiresses. "I don't care about her religion! They won't hurt her there; but I'll leave the girl anyway; she'll be safe there!" And so the gentle sisters had received the motherless stray lamb, who nestled in their tender bosoms.

Stanwix was as great a favorite with the placid nuns, perched upon the rocky battlement of old Fort Lee, as he had been with the bronzed sailors who cheered him, when, at nineteen, he threatened to break his sword over his knee, if the "old man" would not consent to sink the "Alabama" on a Sunday! He brought a bit of light and color into their dead lives, pale and faded as the ghostly skeletons of flowers.



The Mother Superior well knew who often sent game, fruit and flowers to the convent hospital; and unknown children of poverty thanked the child of sin for a Christmas-tree, which made them forget, for one happy hour, the social ban of poverty! Childhood's first bitter grief! The bright-eyed woman who was secretary and treasurer, had once found a hundred dollar bill in the poor box, when tender-eyed Marie dragged Floyd, with eager persistence, through the chapel. For a face shining down from the wall reminded the worldling of a woman whom he had loved and lost. In a blind belief in the doctrine of "works," Stanwix dropped this particular bill in the urn. He shuddered, later, as he recalled the fact that he had won it at poker, from a callow Knickerbocker who had more "money," than skill with the "painted pictures."

Stanwix found not, therefore, the frown of the grave-faced nuns, as the ferry-boat glided under the rocky shadows of the Palisades. He knew they regarded him with the gentle, distant admiration which all good women foolishly yield to, when a desperate social sinner is generous, hearty, young, and good-looking.

As a purveyor to his ward, he was a Saint Christopher. In his coupé reposed several "wave" and "heave" offerings of pretty trifles, and also a dainty hamper from Maillard's. The child should not find him coming empty-handed. It was a case of *noblesse oblige*." But, as the boat touched the quay with a shock, Floyd started. "By Jove! Marie is a child no more! She has the feelings of a woman." And catching a glimpse of his own slightly silvering hair—a memorial of the "pace that kills"—he murmured, "Eheu, fugaces labunter anni"—She is a child no more!"

Driving up the scarped face of the rocky walls, once wet with the blood of heroes, the man of the world sorrowed that he must bring life's second great trial to a tender heart, and his better nature swelled within him. By Heavens! I'd

sooner lose the old 'Aphrodite,' than give that little maid a sleepless night of tears! And her cold-hearted brute of a father cares no more for her, than a stray clipping of his coupons!"

Floyd Stanwix sat in the spacious reception-room of the convent with a gloomy brow, ten minutes later, as generous-hearted Marie Van Arsdale shared her treasures with her particular intimates in merry abandon. He noted the little corner-parties of visitors in the great room repellent with its conventional coldness of religious ornament.

In an angle, a modest, grave face bent over a rosary, and the nun's dark dress made the shadows even deeper where she sat; but her velvety dark eyes reached all, and the portly Mother Superior moved in and out, unchallenged, and as imposing as England's Channel iron-clad flagship; for she only trembled at the frown of a bishop, an archbishop, or His Eminence, the august Cardinal.

Stanwix gazed at Miss Ultima's slim, willowy figure, darting about in unsuspecting glee—a lady bountiful, with dark-gray eyes, warming to a clear blue, with her nut-brown hair falling on her shapely shoulders, she was the very embodiment of girlish beauty. An exquisitely budding bust, delicately-rounded arms, and a swaying, vernal gracefulness in her every movement told Stanwix that his blossom was now expanding under the mystic charm of womanhood; for the bloom on her soft cheek, the gentle languor of her liquid eyes, and a thrilling rich note new to him in her voice, hinted of the coming days of life and love.

"I must speak to her alone," he mused, as, with a sudden impulse, a telepathy of kindred blood and innocent heart, perchance moved by a waft of the wing of her guardian angel, Marie Van Arsdale left her companions and laid a gentle hand in the sailor's bronzed palm.

"You have something to tell me, Uncle Floyd," the clear-eyed maiden said, fearless and frank in her young



affection. "You are going away! You are sick! Something has happened! Ah, my father! Wait—wait!"

Before the grave Mother Superior, Miss Ultima, with a gentle swoop of reverence, murmured, in flute-like tones, the request of one who conquered all by her unassuming trust in the gentle power of loving girlhood. Accustomed to greet and aid the messengers of family woes and business reverses, the sister calmly opened a private room. Her keys jingled, as if it were a prison door. They rang cold and harsh, as they fell with a resounding clang upon the silken cord around her waist.

"It opens the stormy door of womanhood's trials to my darling," thought Stanwix, as, with a strange awkwardness, he seated himself and gazed lovingly at his beautiful niece.

He forgot all his words of careful preparation, and, in a few stammered sentences, told of the summons home to meet the coming bride. Marie Van Arsdale sat silently gazing at him, her delicate hands clasping a locket wherein the dear dead mother's picture rested night and day upon a loving and loyal bosom. There was a strange new light in her eyes as she slowly said, "Uncle Floyd, is it possible my father did not send me a word! Have you no letter, no message for me?"

She was bending forward eagerly, and a crimson flush stole up from her throat and mantled her cheeks. Her eyes silently filled with tears, "And—and—this lady?" she said with choking voice, for Floyd Stanwix had bowed in a grave negative.

His eyes met hers in pity. He tried to turn away to gaze out of the window, but two soft arms encircled his neck, and a tired little head lay sobbing on his bosom. Miss Ultima cried to the one she trusted alone on earth: "Uncle Floyd! you are the only one who loves me, you are my only friend!"—for the girl's heart, with quick intuition, told her that the last of the old line—Miss Ultima, so fondly chris-

tened—had no place at the wedding-feast, no share in the glories of the royal home-coming. To be sent for as a mere chattel—a thing to be coldly gazed at—the pity of her uncle's eyes roused the Stanwix spirit in the girl's heart. "I will obey my father, Uncle Floyd, but you must come to take me; and then, when all is over, you must bring me home—here! You promise?" and the girl's fingers tightened on her kinsman's hand.

"I'll promise you anything, Marie, my child, anything you wish!" and the sailor's eyes were hidden in a sudden Scotch mist. "By Heavens! I left a child—I find a brave-hearted woman here!" the Admiral reflected in a sudden astonishment.

"Marie," he slowly said, as he drew the girl whose heart was throbbing with an infinite pain—a sudden and new anguish, to a seat,—“I was your dear mother's loving brother. No one in the world could come between us! My darling child! I may not be always near you, but my heart will cling to you; my love will hover fondly around you! I shall speak to General Stanwix and your Aunt Cornelia! No matter where I am—no matter how near or far—if you want me I will come to you! Does that make you happy, little lady?"

"Uncle Floyd, Uncle Floyd!" was Miss Ultima's only answer, and the beautiful brown eyes were filled with happy tears, as her head nestled in his bosom.

Floyd Stanwix lifted one rich braid of brown hair and pressed it to his lips. It brought back to him the days when another Marie, as sweetly tender, as warmly loving, clasped him to her breast, when he went out to draw a boy's sword with a man's courage, for the sparkling stars of the free! "Marie!" he whispered, gently—and both Maries answered him, for, as the boat swept him back to Manhattan's shores, he took away the grateful gleam of love and trust shining in the daughter's eyes, and a sunset bright-



ness lingered over the distant Convent as if the mother's smile was shining down from heaven !

Besides a certain choking tightness of his throat, Floyd Stanwix carried away from this interview a decided conviction that Miss Ultima was a thoroughbred ; one other loving proud conviction warmed his troubled heart : " She is her mother's daughter of the heart." And a strange sense of resentment filled his breast at his own social surroundings. " How is it," he blindly grumbled, " that I never met a woman like my sister Marie ? I might have been a different man." This thought haunted him at his own hearth-stone ; for he went not forth that night to wassail or folly.

On her knees, beside her little white bed, Marie Van Arsdale had kissed her mother's picture a fond good-night, and prayed God to bless and spare her Uncle Floyd, and keep him always good and true and kind.

" See here, Hatton ! " briskly cried Floyd Stanwix next morning, as, with a stricken conscience, he read several letters which had followed thick and fast, " I am going to breakfast with Miss Stanwix and the General. Now, get right down to Thorley's and see this basket delivered yourself ! The very best, mind you, and give this note to Mr. Bell, at Tiffany's. Then," and, sheepish for the first time in his life before his valet, the Admiral gave him, in silence, a brief note he had scrawled to the Princess of Nowhere.

While the yachtsman was admiring Miss Cornelia Stanwix's exquisite breakfast service, he flattered himself that he had made sufficient atonement ; but a remarkably spirited woman, in a beautiful apartment at the " Marigold," thought far differently, for she addressed certain staccato remarks to the listening roses " from Thorley's," which curled them in terror on their stems, and it was half an hour before she picked up the diamond bracelet which she had hurled in a distant corner.

" Not so bad ! " murmured Mrs. Rosalie Felton, as she

finally discovered it under a divan, and after a *crème de menthe* she bethought herself of a bird, ordered her carriage for two o'clock, and, mollified slightly, murmured, "After all, Floyd is a good fellow! But, I'll make him pay for this."

Unconscious of this impending future retribution, Floyd Stanwix sniffed approvingly the air of prehistoric gentility which seemed to wrap General Stephen Stanwix and his sister Cornelia. Suggestions of buried generations of men famous "by flood and field," of revolutionary beauties, and of king's officers of the era of the Georges, were "thick as dust in vacant chambers." His kinspeople seemed to have walked out of their frames.

"Floyd, my boy," said General Stephen, "I heard a good thing at the United Service. General Millard came in this morning from St. Augustine. He saw 'Van' down there. He was astonished at Frank's sudden marriage. He said something, and Frank whirled on him quick as a flash. 'Look here, Millard,' said he, 'I married to suit society the first time. I haven't much time to lose! This time, I married to suit myself!'"

"Brute!" murmured Miss Cornelia, and then blushed into a sudden silence. Floyd felt supported by the presence of the courtly old General. Stephen Stanwix left the "Academy" in the old days of the North Barracks, and such trifles as a Seminole swamp rheumatism, a Mexican escopet bullet, and one or two wounds brought back from the old Comanche days, did not help him a bit when he dropped sorely wounded at Gettysburg, while fighting on the line, but waving on Pickett's troops in the wild admiration of a gallant foeman. Stephen Stanwix, true blue, had the heart of a lion, the soul of a soldier, and the manners of a marquis! He was, withal, a man of the world. "My dear boy, never let the ladies want for anything," was his simple social advice to the young naval officer. Floyd had lived up



strictly to this "blue china," and the old General, a dangerous beau at six-and-sixty, was rather proud of his nephew. "Cornelia, my dear, we must make allowance for youth, and high spirits, and, and, much temptation!" Miss Stanwix dimly feeling that some Biblical reference involving "apples" was behind the General's remark, only sighed in silence over Floyd's precocious weaknesses. When she tearfully informed General Stanwix of the temporary garrisoning of the "Aphrodite," by one or two daring *lionnes* of our later day, the General, a bit more gouty than usual, cried, "I don't care if he takes them to Greenland, as long as he don't marry them." For Stephen Stanwix firmly believed that the Stanwix blood ran through the sea of life, as the blue and arrowy Rhone cleaves Lake Genève, and then goes on its way, sacred and unmixed. Tall, thin, stooping, with an eye which never quivered, a clear, soft, distinct voice, an unfailing courtesy, and an unshakable nerve, Stephen Stanwix only needed to doff his silvery martial moustache to show features as classic as any cameo of the Augustan line.

Folding her wings demurely under the protection of the old eagle, and the wild young fish-hawk, Cornelia Stanwix pouted a little as the future of their bright-eyed dove, Miss Ultima, was considered in a grand *conseil de famille*. Whether kite or falcon or bird of silver wings, the stranger was quickly winging along from the south.

It was all settled when, in his bell-like voice, General Stephen announced the plan of campaign.

"Cornelia!" said he, with an air of deference which melted the cold goddess of the "stone-cameo" age, "Floyd is right! Marie will need the guidance and countenance of all her own blood. Her property interests are safe. True, this change brings a wrench to our feelings. Alas! *Tout passe—tout lasse—tout casse*;—Frank Van Arsdale was never faithful to the living, it would be too much to expect him to remain

under the spell of a memory. Now, strangely, this woman may be a lady. Such things occur even in sudden marriages. We owe it to Marie—to ourselves—to our family code, to appear *en évidence*! At any rate, it is not for us to fire the first gun!" The old warrior faced an imaginary foe at ten paces. "Now, Floyd must mix up more or less with these people. He must see Van Arsdale, Low, and even *La Belle Inconnue*! Millard says she is a stunning woman! He is a judge of face and form," chuckled General Stephen. And, he closed with rare Machiavelism: "The years of Van Arsdale's lonely life robs this union of all disrespect to our dear dead one! Now, if the new wife is naturally suspicious, suppose we give her fair play and social countenance? And, Floyd there can make friends with her! He is a good judge of adventuresses!" For which the daring nephew pinched the General's gouty leg when they were left to their Madeira, and Miss Cornelia had fled to the bower of her maids and dependents.

"It's a great scheme, Floyd!" lovingly whispered General Stephen, as his nephew tenderly placed him in the carriage, and he related a wicked little bit of diplomacy with which he had circumvented a fair Mexican dame in "forty-six;" when he could fight all day, waltz all night, and still wear his cadet sash! "Leave the inquiry to me, Floyd!" were his last words, "Hoyt and I will fathom the whole Calvert mystery."

On the next evening, while Floyd Stanwix and Mrs. Rosalie Felton were speeding far up the road beyond High Bridge, from a faultlessly-appointed carriage, Frank Van Arsdale resolutely descended at his own front door. There was a crowd of curious loungers in attendance, who were keenly watched by two adroit policemen, and at the door of the splendid home, Harry Low awaited the returning millionaire. Among them were two or three "society reporters," awaiting their repast of news-crumbs; one of whom had the



acumen to observe, "Perfect in style—takes it all as a matter of course," as the bride, without a flutter, lightly stepped over the threshold of the house to which she might bring joy or woe, which to her might be a haven of rest or a living hell on earth! For even the casual observer must note the impossibility of half-measures with Mr. Frank Van Arsdale, the veteran of forty lurid social years. His whole cold, tiger-like nature thrilling with the physical nearness of this superbly-radiant being, his own, his last prize in the lottery of life, his nerves tingling with the subtle stimulus of her imperial presence, the perfume of her hair, the halo of vigorous vivid femininity which had caught him on the morning of her appearance, Frank Van Arsdale silently followed his self-poised bride into the royal home. He was startled, thrown from his usual masterly reserve, for, nothing had fluttered her drooping eyelid since he had acquired her! And here, without even a casual glance of interest, she passed into the home she would queen it over in future, as if only returning from a park-drive, after years of a lengthened honeymoon!

"Who the devil have I married after all!" muttered the stony-hearted Benedict, as the thoroughly-fluttered Raikes removed the master's coat, and he glumly laid down his hat and gloves.

But, Mrs. Edith Van Arsdale, scanning the grand hall, with a glance which drew up each servant's backbone, had flashed a grateful smile to Mr. Harry Low which recognized his personal presence and also bewildered him.

Before she greeted her nerve-shaken lord in the great drawing-room, her lips murmured a few syllables. Frank Van Arsdale recognized the fitting style of the glowing, radiant woman whose beauty lit up the superb rooms. He leaned forward to hear her softly say, "Oh, how beautiful!" In his purse-proud vanity, he thought, for the first time, that she was fluttered by his home splendor.

But it was a tribute—an honest tribute—to the exquisite face of dead Marie Van Arsdale: and the quick, unspoken decision was, "Too beautiful to be faced with impunity! His daughter shall find it, in her own room, as a welcome!"

And, almost humbly, the man who had reached forth roughly and dragged her into all this luxury, led Mrs. Edith Van Arsdale to the apartments of a queen.

The experienced Raikes bowed Mr. Harry Low out of the great portal, and then sprang to a last crucial examination of the dining-room! "Sefton," he whispered to the housekeeper, "we are in for it! This woman has the eye of a hawk!"

Driving down the leafy lanes of Central Park, coming slowly homeward, Floyd Stanwix almost sprang out of the carriage, as Mrs. Rosalind Felton softly said, "Floyd! don't be astonished when you meet me, at Van Arsdale's reception!"

"Do you know him?" almost yelled her cavalier, giving his horses a vicious dig with the whip, to cover his crimsoned face's tell-tale alarm.

"Very, very well!" quietly said Mrs. Rosalie. "Most women of good society in New York know Frank!" and, she softly added, "I know Mrs. Van Arsdale's brother Harold!" and gently concluded, "and a very nice fellow he is too; I wish I knew where he was in Europe now."

"Admiral" Floyd Stanwix kept his eyes fixed steadily between his horse's ears for a few moments, and then said sullenly, "Rosie, where on earth did you meet him."

It was a quarter of an hour before Mrs. Rosalie Felton turned quietly to Stanwix and said, "Floyd, if you will break no more engagements with me, I will tell you all about it!"

"We will see about that!" hoarsely replied Stanwix; "but I will take you to dinner to-night at the Brunswick." And there was more heart in the pledge over the sparkling wine between this pair of worldlings than when the master



of the mansion on the avenue lifted his glass and pledged the queen who had come to him out of the unknown.

The Van Arsdale bridal reception was a social triumph—an astounding revelation to society. The hanging of the crane was an event which filled many feminine hearts with wonderment, and the society columns with their most undiluted slush. Men envied Frank Van Arsdale and said, “D—n his luck! Evidently a prize of his financial bow and spear! Too lovely to have her heart broken by that old brute!”

Open-eyed wonder characterized the old “guard,”—for all the *vieille roche* saw General Stephen Stanwix present his immaculate sister to the calm goddess of the night in his best Fontenoy manner. Mrs. Edith Van Arsdale did not fire first! She showed an aplomb which deeply touched gentle Miss Cornelia! Her mute “Kowtow” said, “You are the head of this family. I but reflect your Stanwix radiance.” All society was there. A thrilling curiosity drove shoals of the haughty guests to the danger-line of Edith Van Arsdale’s serenely glowing eyes and confident queenly smile. And the new Mrs. Van Arsdale slept not under the wedding-bell of orchids in her wary watch, for she caught a telegraphed entreaty in Mrs. Rosalind Felton’s eyes as she approached leaning on Floyd Stanwix’ arm; “Where did you meet her! Have you known her long?” she whispered to her marble hearted lord, who stammered “Oh yes, a sort of business woman. How did you know we were old friends?” But with a gentle nod of thanks, Edith Van Arsdale fixed her burning eyes full on Floyd Stanwix. “There is my foe! That man is never off his guard! And how did that woman get him in her power?”

Frank Van Arsdale wished in his heart it were all over. And the woman at his side thought of the loyal praise given by the girl now mourning in her “fair upper chamber,” to Uncle Floyd.

And, so this was “Uncle Floyd!” His voice rang with manly

sincerity when he had wished her all happiness! "She may be good to Marie after all!" the sailor thought, gazing into her unspeakably lovely eyes, "I would even be glad to buy kind treatment for my dear little Ultima by playing Caliban to this Miranda!"

"I can never deceive this loyal sailor!" thought the anxious bride. "He is the only man in the room who could rule me!"—and her eyes strangely strayed to handsome Harry Low, whose unconscious admiration gave her a new devilish suggestion—"What if—if——"

At that moment, her husband by many significant glances, became first aware of a change in the great hall. "Who—who—removed that picture?" he hoarsely whispered to his wife, as his eyes were raised to where the first Marie had shone down in kindly benison.

"I directed it to be taken to Marie's room. It is naturally hers," calmly murmured the woman whose lord and master stood speechless. At that moment, two loving lips were murmuring, "Mother! Darling mother!" as Miss Ultima, in her own room, kissed the shadow-face of the vanished queen, dethroned by death. Frank Van Arsdale cast his eyes downward in silence.



## CHAPTER III.

## HER FINE STRONG HAND.

"GENERAL, did you notice that very handsome woman whom Floyd presented to the bride?" queried Miss Cornelia Stanwix, as her brother, seated at the cosy *tête-à-tête* breakfast-table next morning, seemed lost in a brown study. He had, with chivalric politeness, called to verify the beloved spinster's well-being. The wine of life coursed fiercely this day in his veins. Frank Van Arsdale's cellar was of the very best, and that artful financier judiciously tried to glide his bark of Love into favoring seas on a current of the choicest wines. Old Frank was no fool! *Il connaît son métier*. General Stephen Stanwix's face was redder than his Grand Army button, a result of unexpectedly falling a victim to the wiles of Van Arsdale's *clôs rougeot*. He was a bit grouty. Moreover, the "Daily New York Clarion" had enraged him by an editorial written by a renegade preacher, their military editor, which technically proved that the United States army was the refuge of every "brainless incompetent" in America. This stern preacher objected to the "hops" at West Point, and also stigmatized the mad extravagance and "upstart airs" of the officers generally. Stephen Stanwix had in his mind a withering answer which he would write at the "United Service" that very afternoon, and, send it, signed "Veritas," with his card, to the offending journal. He eyed his sister listlessly, for he scented the battle afar off—the welcome war of words which proves nothing. "So many handsome women. I can't recall them all. The bride 'shined them all down.' She looked like

—like—a Derby winner,” enthusiastically said the veteran. Miss Cornelia trembled with vague fears.

“I mean the woman Floyd was making love to—or who was making love to him, that peachy-looking, bold blonde,” snapped the lady of the manor.

“Oh! I’ve forgotten her, some one of the ‘necessary adjuncts,’” gaily answered the General, his good-humor returning as he thought of the laurels he had gained by his neat remarks about the “bride’s health.” For Frank Van Arsdale’s motto was, “Feed them well—they will not dare to talk,” and the great supper-room and picture-gallery had been given up to a Lucullian feast. “You know,” Floyd says, ‘Two women are always necessary to a man, one whom he loves, and one who loves him.’ This bold, peachy blonde may be either of these necessary evils.”

“I should say she had been a necessary evil to Frank Van Arsdale,” wickedly retorted Cornelia Stanwix. “I saw her clinging to his arm in a most appealing way, in an angle of the reception-room, as we took leave of the bride.”

“Ah!” mused General Stephen, “some former fair enslaver come to try title with the new-comer. ’Twon’t do. All society votes the unknown, a Venus Victrix. Here are the journals, they simply rave over the lovely Mrs. Van Arsdale. These people would rush as eagerly and devour Frank’s terrapin, and choke themselves as gladly if she were a tin elephant, or had but one eye, and a glass one at that.” The General waved his thin hand in protest as a lot of business vans rattled by. “Did you notice the queer people who floated by in that crush, Cornelia? Of course the right people came, too, for the clubmen all knew we had declared in favor of a pacific policy.” The old warrior spoke grandly and apostrophized the shades of dead Schuylers, Van Rensselaers and Livingstons. “But trade, the inrushing flood of business men is driving out the true social element.”



"There were some queer people there, certainly," murmured Cornelia Stanwix, "but Van Arsdale must recognize them, I suppose."

She sighed heavily, as the General said, "By Heavens! a business man, a rich man, an important man, cannot afford to be a gentleman in New York now! Ever since that beastly railroad station was stuck in the heart of the city these business fellows sneak in at night with a valise full of bonds, buy the homes of decent people on the wane, and then build their huge folly palaces. Only a gentleman can afford retirement and isolation in New York, and then even he must be poor to escape notice," the old soldier roared. "If he has anything, these Ishmaelite fellows will surely get it." He had himself dropped a few thousands in "Delaware and Lackawanna." "I wish I had given it away—or drank it up. Yes, by Jove! Then I would have enjoyed it," and he thought wolfishly of a cocktail, for Miss Cornelia's funereal hospitalities were confined to tiny memorial glasses of Madeira. "I must go—very busy," he pleaded, for he was very dry.

"What did Floyd say of the bride?" calmly replied Cornelia, pinning him to his chair with the grand old Stanwix glance.

"Ah, yes! By Heavens! He did say—solemnly, I remember, as if he was a little bit afraid of her, 'General, that woman is too cool and sharp to give herself away. She will play a waiting game—and make old Frank wish that handsome head had never rested on his breast. She flies high over his head, and she'll take every trick in the game of life. I am not going to fight her.' That was what he said." The General was excited, as if he coincided with this same view.

"Did he say anything more?" queried Miss Cornelia, with kindling eyes.

"Yes, by the way," the General concluded, with the

most wistful glances at his hat and cane, "'I will make friends with her,' was his final remark, 'for I ran up and saw Marie, and she tells me the "fair unknown" has been very decent to her.'"

"General," said the startled spinster, "there is something very mysterious about this woman; we must watch her."

"Ah, my dear Cornelia," he replied, slightly wincing as his conscience recalled the flowery past, his evil days of pride and health, and the wickedness which always goes with health:—"all the women I ever met had something mysterious about them. This strange beauty seems also to have self-control and undeniably good manners. I prefer correct manners to austere fixed principles! More agreeable," mused the veteran, recalling how many nice people he had met who were manifestly improper. "I shall be very civil to her—very! She's a dead winner!"

"You don't mean to say——"and Cornelia started in surprise.

"Oh, I will not make love to her!" the gratified ex-roué smiled. "There's a lot of men about town—youngsters,—clubmen, scratchy artists, visiting noblemen, and God knows what else, who will amuse her in the afternoons while Frank is digging away, trying to steal other people's money, in operations just large enough to keep him out of Ludlow Street jail. He has a ruling passion for taking money away from other people. If she loses her head in this new life of luxury, some one of those good-looking scoundrels may mar her future. There's no place in the world where a well-cut dress-suit will carry a scoundrel as far as in New York." The General tore himself from the arms of his sister, who reluctantly saw him vanish.

"I would like to know more of her," thought Miss Cornelia, as she opened the society journals. But Edith Van Arsdale had read them already and was in no danger of losing her clear head.



While Stephen Stanwix and his delightfully-agitated sister talked of the great Van Arsdale reception, Mrs Van Arsdale, seated at a cosy breakfast-table in her boudoir, was carefully examining the verdict of metropolitan journalism in her own case. The pretty table was set for two, and now Frank Van Arsdale, dressed for a down-town foray, was ready for departure. The experienced bridegroom's face wore a strange expression of unrest.

He wandered round the room, picking up bits of costly bric-à-brac in an aimless way! They were all relics of the first empire of the unloved dead woman, to whom Frank Van Arsdale had never given anything but bank checks. "She always hated me because we were of a different world. I wonder what world this one came from. By Heavens, she is a cool customer. I wonder if I shall have these things cleared out for Marie. Good idea to have them all packed up and given to that old ogre Cornelia Stanwix to keep for the last of the Stanwix blood. 'Miss Ultima!'—Oh, yes,—by Jove! Money! I had forgotten all about this. I must fix Edith up at once." For the honeymoon voyage in the special director's car had prevented the jingle of the dollar from reaching the bride's ears.

Some subtle semi-hostile fluid seem to permeate the air as butler Raikes timidly knocked. The gentle flutter of Marie's simple school-girl drapery was heard also on the upper stairs, for she had been summoned to Mrs. Van Arsdale's boudoir.

"Note from office—most pressing, sir. Immediate answer"—the servant said.

"All right. I'll be down in a moment," cried the master of the house, and dropped his eyes, as he crushed the woman's letter in his hand. But it did not escape the quick eye of Edith Van Arsdale, whose firm white bosom heaved with a secret joy and pride of place hidden by her inscrutable eyes.

"Ah! Good-morning, Marie. Wait there a few moments. I wish to speak with your mother alone." And with hand on the door the girl smothered a sob, as she stole into the hallway, but not too quickly to miss a generous gleam from the strange woman's eyes. It seemed to say, "I am not such a brute as he is. And you shall learn that I know you are Miss Van Arsdale—the last Marie."

Annoyance, haste, divided impulses, and the reaction of the perfunctory show of the night preceeding, had unsettled Van Arsdale. He looked only a cold, bitter, self-conscious money-hunter as he approached the wife with whose praises all New York was ringing. She was radiant in beauty, and he looked his years.

"You'll want money, Edith," he said hurriedly, almost roughly, as he drew out a heavy wallet. "Shall I give you some?" and he laid a selection of notes by his wife's hand on the unsullied table. Mrs. Van Arsdale was silent, and her frank glance of astonishment startled him. The slightly soiled and rumpled notes, the tokens of many a foul intrigue and desperate adventure, lay untouched at her side.

"I shall naturally have to use a great deal of money, as your wife," she said simply. "It seems to me some other way——" It was the first encounter over this awkward mark of woman's ultimate social, personal and bodily subjection to her "lord"—the husband of a week.

"Do you object to this particular money?" he growled, with a clouded brow.

"It seems so—so untimely," the bride remarked, with a careless glance at the window.

"Then I will give you a check-book," rejoined Van Arsdale, "and you can handle your money to suit yourself." He was strangely agitated, and could hardly define his feelings.

"That will be preferable, it will save me much embarrass-



ment," rejoined the beautiful Mrs. Van Arsdale, gazing now soberly and fearlessly into his eyes.

"Very good, I will send you one from the bank. Will you give me your signature, so they will know it?" Mr. Frank Van Arsdale felt the crackle of the letter in his hand. He posed as if he were cast for a "heavy" part, in a high society drama, as she neared a desk and wrote in a firm, flowing hand, "Edith Van Arsdale." "Looks well, doesn't it?" he said, with a nervous attempt at a compliment.

"Very well," composedly answered the bride, handing him the slip. "You dine at home?" she calmly said, with her eyebrows lifted. He bowed in silence, and was on his way to the door, where his neglected daughter still lingered, when the clear rich voice of the young sultana stayed him. "I saw you looking at these ornaments." The master started, almost guiltily. "I would naturally like to arrange my boudoir myself. May I do so?"

Van Arsdale did not see her, but he felt that she was looking at him. "Oh, certainly, anything you wish," he said huskily, all the tradespeople know me, of course."

Edith calmly went on, "I thank you very much. If you approve, I will have all these memorials packed for Miss Van Arsdale. They are naturally dear to her."

Frank shivered with his hand on the door. "By God! She's a cool one," he muttered.

"If you have no objection, I will take your daughter to her Aunt Cornelia this afternoon. Miss Cornelia and the General would like her for a few days before she goes back to the convent. May I have your consent?"

"Oh, yes, anything you wish," hastily rejoined the capitalist. "By the way, how do you like Cornelia?"

"Miss Stanwix is simply kindness and courtesy itself, and I like the General. He is the very best American type." Edith spoke as if reciting a lesson learned at Madame Mears, if such a goddess as herself had not stepped, a full

creation, from the waves of society, *Vera incessa patuit dea*.

"And Admiral Floyd Stanwix, the fresh-water sailor," sneered Frank Van Arsdale, conscious that he was not showing off to advantage, but reckless in his mood.

"He seems to me to be every bit—a—a—gentleman," very bravely replied the beauty, who saw the turn of the battle. "I saw but very little of him," and her heaving bosom, struggling under the rich silk, panted, as she smothered the thought, "and, I must see him soon again."

"Well, that's the whole family-tree, now," hastily said Van Arsdale. "That is, with Marie," as he stumbled over the school-girl. He dared not meet her gentle, appealing eyes.

"One moment, please," sweetly said Edith, firing grape and canister into the routed enemy. "As to the carriage, and—these things?"

Frank whirled about. "Every one to obey your orders, of course," he said, not unkindly, and then went away in a quick confusion.

Edith Van Arsdale drew the waiting motherless girl kindly to the pretty table. "I think I repaid him for his blundering brutality to that poor child," she thought, as she smoothed the flowing robes which too willingly showed every delicious curve of her lissome figure. "One passage-at-arms tests the swordsman. I am now mistress here, I will make no vulgar mistake, and take no risk." Her hand trembled as she touched the tea-cups, for a glance of fire had seemed to lurk in Floyd Stanwix's eyes. It had waked the panther-nature slumbering since the old days when the Hindoo gods were chained by fate. For the world sleeps and dies, but life has lived always, and love has loved before! She cast a quick glance around. "Have I ever met him?" Her blood bounded in her veins with an instinct alive since the morning-stars sang. But she quickly recalled herself. "I must put this lovely child at her ease." Strange to say, be-



fore morose Frank Van Arsdale had twisted open the letter crushed in his hand, Marie knew that a friendship was offered her, and the conversation drifted to Uncle Floyd. "I should be ashamed of myself to trap a child," murmured Edith, as she said, "I will take you to your Aunt Cornelia, for I have many letters to write, and must arrange my affairs a little."

"May I help you when I come back?" said the unloved girl, gratefully.

"Why, certainly, my dear Marie, we can be very good friends, you and I," answered the beautiful meteor.

Frank Van Arsdale had driven a block down the avenue, before he snapped out, "To the telegraph office—the nearest!" He had recalled, on leaving his house, one of the matchless Grant's famous dispatches, "We have fought the enemy, all day, along the whole line. Everything in our favor."

"I suppose she is the Grant in this experience. "By Heavens! I would like to know where she got her nerve. And her past?" A cloud gathered on Van Arsdale's brow, but a devilish look of pleased vanity clung to his wicked lips. "Ah, no! I must only find the way—find the way to rule her!" And glancing out of the window he thought, "Seems to be a good deal going on in town," as he watched the general swim, intent on a particular pleasure for each ardent, thirsty nature. It is a characteristic of New York that few of its denizens wish to lose any of the active pleasures of life, but more patiently give up the "beatitudes."

There was a "good deal going on in town," which Frank Van Arsdale did not know of—but he knew more with time—especially with regard to one beauty, the awakened Galatea he had left! "Suits me devilish well, after all!" he smiled, but that smile froze when he glanced at the crumpled letter. It contained but a few words, but they thrilled him.

"Meet me at the old place, at three. You must," and it was signed, "Rosalind Felton." The sheaf of arrows wrapped in a rattlesnake's skin!

"By Heavens! I must keep these two women apart," was the first ugly, snarling impulse of the bridegroom. "Now, what's her game? Seems to scorn any concealment. I will wire Low to bring up that check-book and the mail. I'll let this scoundrel go at the club. for he may have seen her."

There was not a man in the "Paleozoic" who cared to break in on Van Arsdale's bitter mood as he sat gazing out of the window, really waiting till he could safely wander to the rendezvous. "I wager that she-devil wants money!" growled the Benedict, as a couple of youngsters grinned at a distant table.

"Old Brimstone finds the honeymoon a dull matter! Better take to the 'street' again. Stocks suit him better than the soft dalliance. By the way, are you going to call? She is the bright particular star." The idle *raffiné* youths leered and split a brandy and club soda, while they each shattered a wholesome commandment about "coveting certain articles" on the moral black list.

"I must be careful she does not see me," bitterly thought Van Arsdale, as he lit a cigar and sauntered up the avenue. "Marie may point out my stables, and for all I know, 'she' may be a better New Yorker than I am! I am afraid she knows too much."

The person designated as "she" in this soliloquy was just at that moment charming Miss Cornelia Stanwix with a sweet deference which caused the Knickerbocker spinster "to unship her torpedo nettings" at once.

And so it fell out that Frank Van Arsdale was safe as he, with overdone aimlessness, wandered toward his splendid private stables near Winkler's "justly-celebrated Riding Academy."



Floyd Stanwix was spared an encounter with Van Arsdale whom he missed by a few moments, when he entered the "Paleozoic."

"Hello, Admiral! Come and tell us about the bride," cried one (the richest, and most impudent) of the callow youths.

Now, Floyd Stanwix retained one peculiarity of "the service." He detested vulgar familiarity. Stopping a moment, he said, calmly, "Van Reynders, you should get drunk at Wakely's—not at the club—if you wish to talk about ladies."

It so happened that no club man ever after rallied Floyd Stanwix about this particular marriage.

Floyd pondered, in a snug corner, over a long private conference with Decatur Hoyt, while Frank Van Arsdale, with a few lurking glances, passed Winkler's Academy and entering his own stables by the main hall, ascended to the fourth story by a private elevator, of which he alone had the key. His bell signal brought a smart groom down in the cage, to whom he whispered a few words. They brought a grin to the Englishman's face, which was happily unseen by Frank Van Arsdale. A prospective blackmailer might have gone to the hospital with a few severe contusions—or worse—if Van Arsdale were not busied with the "unutterable."

Winkler's Riding Academy never sent forth from its hospitable and convenient doors a more elegant figure than a radiant glowing Amazon, who had noted Mr. Frank Van Arsdale's passage. The "peachy-faced blonde" did not look bold but, *à la rosière*, as she daintily picked her way along the apparently deserted side street. Canova might have adored her springy figure in its tempting beauty. Her Hebe face was lit up with a faintly conscious smile, the presage of victory. She would have gently turned and regained her coupé, prudently stationed beyond the avenue, had she known that a stray reporter, a detective and a police captain exchanged winks as she quietly touched an electric push-

button at a private entrance. Vanishing therein, the lady was well on her way to the superb retreat on the fourth floor of Mr. Van Arsdale's stables before the *coterie* watching at a "saloon" window, commented upon her "points." "Think I've seen her visit Mr. Frank's 'horses' before," leered the detective. The police-captain frowned. "She's a stranger. An out-of-towner," he said, in a Milesian voice, rich with pride and cognac. He knew, but he wished alone to reap the golden harvest he saw in a not distant future.

Ah! Winkler! Winkler! your "justly celebrated" Riding Academy should amend its rules! Either some of the fair equestriennes should come in domino, or else ladies between the ages of six and seventy-six should be escorted by a strong body-guard of King's Daughters, reliable veteran chaperones of merciless rigor, or a committee of those prosperous-looking bank presidents and "old gentlemen" who now and then drop in "to see the children ride!"

Your market is more than a market of horses, and the haggard-eyed women who haunt the shadow side of life have seen some strange happenings around the Park, in the by-streets, and even near the sacred portals of your "justly celebrated" Riding Academy.

All New Yorkers will concur with the late Mr. Longfellow in his solidly-carved line in the "Psalm of Life," where he somewhat sportively observes:

"And things are not what they seem."

If this characterized Boston when the gifted singer was struck by "something abnormal," it is very true of New York.

Of the "justly celebrated" Academy, an English verse-writer's dream of "Vanity Fair," might be equally chanted. The human market!



"There's a market for folly and quackery,  
Absurdity, nonsense and vice,  
First, Bunyan described it, then Thackeray,  
Who visits it,—visits it—twice!  
Thither throng stylish girls—but, too often,  
They change the bright hues of their hair,  
And they've tricks the complexion to soften,  
In Vanity Fair!"

These general remarks affecting the justly celebrated Winkler—alas, equally affect certain "justly celebrated" banjo studios, florists, massage parlors, studios, bric-à-brac shops, milliners' repositories, conservatories, repositories, type-writing offices, and several other classes of places in New York, to which Mr. H. W. Longfellow's unconsciously withering remark applies with crushing force. The poet is always right in the higher sense.

Mrs. Rosalind Felton was happily unconscious of the notice she had attracted as she leisurely mounted the staircase, supposedly belonging to another house. As she had merrily said once, "If any one sees me, they will think I am some Philadelphia lady who has come to New York and—has lost her way." She never lost her way, and was a firm believer in most of the startling occurrences of the social world being caused by "Philadelphia ladies," or "strayed sisters from Brooklyn," to whom all peculiar happenings in New York are at once traced. It is a matter of cheerful justice to state that a similar charitable construction is given to unusual happenings in the last-named cities,—the New York wanderer, unfamiliar with the maddening crush of these excited towns, being the culprit.

Frank Van Arsdale did not even rise as the "Princess of Nowhere," nattily entered and made a neat bow. She was smilingly radiant. The room was one of a superb *plaisance suite*, from whence, with pure air, and in silence, a view of blue sky could be had over the surrounding mews

and old-fashioned residences. It was not strange. Frank Van Arsdale's horses were lodged like lords, and he said : " I need a little den where I can retire—and,—think."

He thoughtfully touched a bell, and rising himself, piped down a whispered order. A dumb-waiter rattled up, and the bridegroom somewhat wearily opened a bottle of Pommery and Greno.

" Please be brief, Rosalind," said Van Arsdale, as he sourly waved away her challenge to a glass of wine. " What do you wish ? I am in a great hurry." His puffed eyelids, leaden stare and hanging lip were not propitious. He looked like an aged " understudy " of Ajax defying the lightning. In fact, he was agitated yet in his first encounter with Mrs. Edith Van Arsdale—his peerless wife. He nursed a brutal resentment against his innocent daughter. " She bungled the whole thing. I wish I were well rid of her. I'll pack her over to the Stanwix fort. I've got to go west soon and look at my mines," he mused, as his dainty visitor drank her wine good-humoredly. Van Arsdale's brow grew blacker—the mean, sensual tyrant felt in his heart that the two bright beings, rich in youth's royal years, might join forces against him. " I never should have brought her here, —taken her to Europe for three months," he thought, gloating over the electric beauty of the woman he had dragged under the orchid bell of marriage with his golden clutch. " Yes, she suits me ! " he glowered, thinking mean things to the disadvantage of the pretty visitor he feared. His heavy, thick-set frame, coarse under face, hooked nose and cold gray eye, with a harsh habitual sense of power recalled certain of the characteristics of great men who have cut their brief dash in this mad world. Julius Cæsar, Napoleon the Little, the unloved Iron Duke of Wellington, and a large selection of men who have wielded the baton of command, gained the laurel, or worn the toga, were members of this band of human crocodiles, who crunched, from habit, whatever prey



of a certain kind reached their octopus maws. Van Arsdale's keen intellect told him Rosalind Felton had not come to him wafted on the wings of Love!

She was passing fair, and the rose might envy the flush of her cheek as she gracefully toyed with a cigarette. Her delightful figure was accentuated by the superbly-cut *amazone* she wore, and the Princess of Nowhere was undeniably a princess, even if her realm was shadowy.

"By Jove! She is real, anyway. There's no make-up in her glowing beauty," Van Arsdale had proudly boasted to himself one night, when they had walked the lean sands at Newport, and seen the moon shimmer on the silver flood. For she was "Queen of Hearts," for that imperial season. Her aristocratic features, faultless attire, and the exquisite beauty of her hands and the dainty feet, had made all admit "there was something to rave over," in "that Mrs. Felton," as the women vaguely termed her. These women, clinging to some husband or family stock—living buoys—well knew that Rosalind Felton was their peer, and the large number of "skeletons" hidden in fashionable "closets," caused even the bravest to refrain from open attack. La Belle Rosalind could "fight back" with the most hardy assailant, and she was popularly supposed to keep a "black book."

"Fears neither God, man nor devil—the little woman!" was a characterization of Floyd Stanwix, over his cigar. He hid it in his heart, for the Admiral never talked of women; and this solid plank had borne him up in stormy seas of life.

"See here! You must tell me what you want!" cried Van Arsdale, looking at his watch, as his visitor remained silent.

"Van, you are impolite! I'll now look at mine, too." And the woman who had secretly studied him keenly, dallied with her own costly trifle. "First—I want you to tell me what status I will be on with regard to your lovely wife—your new wife."

The old *roué* bent his head under her sneer, but doggedly said, "I want you to let her alone—that's all!"

Mrs. Rosalind Felton looked him squarely in the eyes. "Ah!" she crisply said, "I am not good enough for her! Is that the game? Why! I know more of her than you do! I know her brother Harold very well, very well."

He sprang upon her.

"Let me alone, you brute!" she cried, and she viciously gave Van Arsdale a smart lash with her riding-whip, as she wrenched her slender wrists away from him. "Now, I'll tell you that you are in for it. You will find her no baby—and I shall make a particular friendship with her; and you will be just as good,—as you were two seasons ago." Her eyes were blazing.—"If you let your vulgar nature go again, I'll drive right up to your house and call to-morrow. If you are decent, I will only come in with 'The Passing Show.' But I will keep in her set, and near her. I am as good as the rest of your 'swim.' You know it. They know it." He was silent; for the second time he had lost a battle on this fatal day. "Now, sir! I want some money." She stood like a tigress about to spring.

"How much?" suddenly said the host, who was ashamed to have put himself in her power by his cowardice.

Rosalind Felton tossed him a card. "That!" she contemptuously said.

A brutal oath rang out as Van Arsdale finally handed her a check, torn out in rage, from his pocket check-book! A certain bank-teller smiled insidiously next day when the Princess cashed it openly herself. "If you were a yacht, I'd call you the 'Fearnaught,'" he mused. But he did not know that Van Arsdale had begged Rosalind Felton humbly to tell the story of "Brother Harold," and that the lady had finally consented to come to the "Riding Academy" a week from this untoward meeting. "I might have got more," she secretly mourned as she drove away.



Frank Van Arsdale groaned when the door closed on her, as she tripped away. "Of course, you will do what I wish," she had said, "and I expect every deference shown to me in your house. I will not mince matters. And, Frank, I am tired of being always hounded with poverty. Every week, every month, the grim face looks in at my door. I must keep up! I will have my share of the world's pleasures in this puppet-show; and, with all that, I will not marry any old wreck, simply to finger his gold. If you wish to know all the history of Brother Harold, you will keep your hands off my wrists and—use a golden key. I know your heartless code. You New York woman-destroyers; you only value what you cannot reach! You have taken in an angel unawares, Mr. Frank Van Arsdale." She was gone.

"I'll find out what she knows if it costs fifty thousand," swore the man, who was powerless in her hands. "And I am under the rule of this she-devil." The black blood surged to his heart. He took a rattling sleigh-ride up the road to cool his heated blood.

While he drove alone through the lonely park, and Mrs. Edith Van Arsdale was busied in the library with an initial social correspondence: dreamy-eyed and delicate, her heart throbbing in unsatisfied love and tenderness—the exquisite memory of an orphaned maiden child's mother-love—Marie Van Arsdale had stolen into her dead mother's old rooms and sobbed herself into the blessed sleep of innocence. For even Miss Cornelia's love, Uncle Floyd's kindness could not bring that dear one back.

"She seems to be a superior woman," mused the happy Amazon, as she sank into the delicious rest of her coupè with that sweet feeling, "How pleasant is Saturday night, when you've tried all the week to be good!" I have dear old Floyd to back me up. I hate to scheme upon his good-nature. I can't help it. I must not lose a trick. For but one thing is hateful in New York—and that is poverty!



I have Mr. Frank Van Arsdale in a close corner. I'll keep him there—to chase away the wolf!"—cried the merrily excited woman, as she glanced at her check to be sure that it was not a "sweet dream." "Now, this superior woman will soon have some little scheme. I will watch her. I will find out where Harold is. He shall be mine, or I will block her little game!"

Just at that moment Mrs. Edith Van Arsdale had dismissed handsome Harry Low, who had begged to leave a valuable package—"not to be trusted to servants." Startled in her rosy beauty of dreamy musing, the wife of his master looked passing fair to the brilliant secretary. As he bowed his way out, the hot blood leaping through his veins, Edith Calvert, the feline instinct of play with the victim rising in her restless mind, caught a glance of the young man's eager eyes in a mirror.

"I can do what I wish to with that man; and I will, in the future!" she dreamily said, as she returned to a study of a letter of Brother Harold, received the day before her marriage. She had not dared to answer it.

The beautiful Egeria of this grotto of wealth drew a delighted sigh as she sank back in her cosy nest in the library. The solid and unshaken air of perpetual comfort in the grand old house made Edith Van Arsdale forget the storm-tossed trials of Edith Calvert. "I must be wise. I must be prudent. I must keep this mad, vicious boy out of my life until my feet are planted firmly," she murmured. "His presence would be a daily menace. Alas! He is a true Calvert. Handsome, plausible, heartless, with a fatal capacity for deceiving men and ruining women!" she started as the butler ushered in her husband. Frank Van Arsdale was a little uneasy as to his reception. The cautious counsels of the leafless trees of the park were all for peace and rest. Of a solid old revolutionary family, Frank Van Arsdale was once the hope of Columbia college. The half-coarseness of self-assertive



business life had led him to drop certain redundancies of social courtesy, which had no immediate business object or money value. And the fatal poison of a life of unrestrained libertinism made him an agnostic in womanhood! But he could bear the mantle of his race worthily. He was touched by his wife's masterly reception. Opening the packet left by Low, he gently held out the promised check-book.

"All your checks will be honored, Edith," he quietly said. "I will dress for dinner. You must go with me to Tiffany's. I presume you would wish Marie to have all her mother's jewels."

The young mistress of the palace on the avenue bowed silently, and as Van Arsdale's heavy step resounded on his upward way, a kindly sigh ascended heavenward as the bride of a week thought of the silent shade departed,—the woman to whom the sheen of jewels was now but a mocking reflection of an unhappy earthly life. Edith paced the great hall of the bookmen, her stormy heart moved to its depths.

"She had birth, wealth, undoubted position, rare beauty, and a clean soul. This stern man enjoyed her virginal freshness, and she wore her life out here—a prisoner of caste. I, the interloper, am seeking a foothold in the home for whose splendors I have sold myself. And my future? An old man, worn with life's battles, fresh from other women's arms, one whose black memory leads him to doubt all—my mate for life! My God! Is there any end or aim in marriage for the woman who has a soul of her own! In the books," she mused, "we read of the happy princess following, with tender eyes, her worthy lover out over the purpling hills. "Were these only fairy tales! Stories of dead loves now passed away and ghostly." Her fingers tightened on the book in her hand. "This is the book of life!" she resolutely cried in her heart. "The check book! I will be like the others, a part of a system which is only dragged along

by those who toil at the galley oar of modern life ! But I shall have a high seat, golden chains, and an oar of ivory. And I can help Harold and—" she faltered, "repay Colonel Hillyer !" For, strange to say, Decatur Hoyt's closest inquiries had developed nothing farther than that courtly old Colonel Hillyer, whose hair was white even when he faced Grant's legions at Sailor's Creek in the last bitter days of southern defeat, had aided the proud girl after Major Calvert's death.

"My dear child," the simple old rebel said kindly, "I am borrowing considerable money from the Bank on certain general operations. I may as well get a bit for you. I knew your father. I liked him. A gentleman's daughter must live." So said the fiery veteran, whose steadfast wife had given budding Edith Calvert a home until the fortunate appearance of the money-king.

"I must think ! I must act at once !" the bride reflected, as she again ran over her brother's letter. She had murmured as she saw her own royal loveliness in the glass : "No one would dream that I am twenty-seven !" For Harold had gracefully resigned his age to his sister, elder by two years. Slightly under the measure of tall women, with a perfect harmony of feature, figure and movement, in the very bloom of a rich, perfected and unsullied beauty, the new châtelaine had that mysterious charm which draws all men without a feminine challenge. Her brave high spirit shone in the quivering brown eyes, which softened, deepened or flamed in colors, lighting the face over which the rich brown hair rippled in woman's crown of glory. Fine-limbed, vigorous, exhaling life's ambrosial morning, and with a modulated harmony of the rich, intense, thrilling voice, Edith Van Arsdale was a very mistress of moods. The play of the powerful feelings of her unsapped nature shone in her changing face, and a rare self-control, with a wondrous courtesy, proved that in her manners she owed



something to her father whose definition was "a prince of the social art." For he had been the confidant and captor of women—graceful, irresistible: and egotistically broke every point of a gentleman's honor, save the soiling of the hereditary Calvert hands with any species of vulgar effort. On her one European trip, in a wave of the sporadic prosperity of the generous Hillyers, the homeless beauty had stood by her mother's early grave—a result of Major Calvert's studied *insouciance*—"one of Eve's family!"

A tear-stained packet of letters, a few bits of the family jewelry—sad tokens of hopes that failed—had come her way. Resolutely setting her face to the architecture of her own fortunes, the harassed girl was a cynic at nineteen. "They hunt us like beautiful animals—for the rare splendor of our skins, to see the mute eye brighten and glaze at last! I will sell myself, at the last—for the highest price of society. I will make no mistake in the bid."

The beauty shivered as the first silvery bell-signal rang out. "I must act at once. Mrs. Hillyer,—here now, thank God, can have the two hundred pounds cabled to him. A social outcast, codeless, honorless, fascinating, already embroiled with his uncle, he would come to me! I will at once write him to stay and thus earn a provision. He must. He fears some woman here, he writes. He shall stay there! I will fight free under my own banner in life."

## CHAPTER IV.

## "STANDING WITH RELUCTANT FEET."

GENTLE Marie Van Arsdale was happy at heart when she was escorted back to the "sheep-fold" by *Il Re Galantuomo*—her devoted Uncle Floyd.

The freshened life of the family mansion jarred upon the tender-hearted girl. Floyd Stanwix, quick and practical, a past-master of the ways of the world, consumed a week in conferences with the old counselor;—with General Stanwix, who had routed the preacher militant; with Miss Cornelia, whom he flattered by a church donation; and, appreciating the "rising regent of the sky," he also contemplated a conference with Madame Edith Van Arsdale. "I am glad to have Marie out of the avenue house—it looks unfair, indelicate, unjust to all parties in this human race. And yet," he mused, as he smoked his cheroot on the ferry-boat, "the convent is too gloomy, too pensive, too yielding to the softened side of life. Poor Marie! She needs sunlight and brightness. She has grown to regard her designation, 'Miss Ultima,' as a sort of ghostly inheritance. The good sisters are all right, but the light which shines from the veil is a cold beam. This girl needs love!—warm, tender love! Now, I might, with finesse, switch her off to spend next winter with Miss Cornelia and the General. By Heaven, She'll be coming out in a couple of years. Ah, another embarrassment, Marie ought not to form her manners on those two old pre-Adamites. The young are withered and chilled by the frosty converse of the old. Still, the old



warrior may take her up the Hudson next summer. For I shall be away on the crispy blue Mediterranean!"

Uncle Floyd had taken Marie on a surreptitious excursion, and had bought her a varied assortment of childish gear, so that the returning lamb was warmly welcomed.

"Oh! I'll fix her up some way! I will write a note to this new evening star and get her views. By Heaven, she is no tyro. She makes me think of a woman who had loved before."

For in the interval in which he had closely watched her, the "Admiral" saw Edith Van Arsdale winning victories on all sides. "That's the woman who conquers, the woman who refrains. Your bold sister gets overboard every time. Yes, I'll write her." And yet he had a certain queer feeling as to an interview. "I can hardly make her out. Coming to close quarters is a different thing from a society parade."

Floyd Stanwix's code embraced the iron rule of letting his friends' wives and womenkind alone. It was the one graceful concession of his life to the proprieties. He drove gaily to his club to write this letter, after ordering a great basket of bonbons to be sent to the convent to the last little sojourner who ran to his arms. It was a dainty little Russian maiden who closed her chubby arms around his neck and whispered, "Take me with you. It's so 'sorry' here in the convent." The little scholar's broken English touched Floyd's heart. "Yes! It's a 'sorry' place in the convent," mused Floyd, gay-hearted, as his cheery code was that we should all sit in the sunlight of life. And all the children loved the sailor.

Stanwix finished and dispatched his letter, but not before he had torn up a dozen sheets of the club paper. It was not the thought of Frank Van Arsdale which embarrassed him. That stern-faced bridegroom was thrusting his spear daily into the weak spots of other speculators' armor, and walked Broadway as coldly unmoved as any mahogany

Indian extending a bundle of alleged "perfectos." Van Arsdale knew from his reader's reference to the daily clippings that his wife was "on the high road to social success," whatever that may be. He knew that her demeanor was faultless, that she worthily reigned in the chair behind which Marie—the dead Marie's gentle shade—lingered no more. For the undying spirit-watch of the "loved and lost" hovered only over the fair girl at Fort Lee. There was nothing left of the brightness and sunshine which had lingered lovingly around the first Marie. Van Arsdale had effected a *modus vivendi* with the lady who drank the champagne alone, and was doling out checks in return for stray bits of Brother Harold's biography. So, at peace for the moment, Frank Van Arsdale resumed the chase of "other men's money." There was no mistake as to the immediate "hit" of this new society queen. Frank was aware the check-book was being used; and he grimly smiled as he saw his new wife knew that cash was the *vis viva* of life. The swimmers of the swim landed gladly on Van Arsdale's hospitable shores, where the terrapin silently replaced the "voice of the turtle," and the popping of corks was sweeter than the "time of the singing of birds."

"Edith," he grimly said, "you are a sensible woman. Do not wait till your neck yellows under your diamonds to see life; we have only one life to live. I ask but one thing, always have the best people around you. The lowering tone of New York society is due to the 'catch-as-catch-can' method of opening respectable doors to flashy strangers."

The old *roué* went on his daily way without even one *arrière pensée*. "She is too smart to make a fool of herself—with me. Too much at stake." And yet, once or twice the conviction forced itself on the gray bridegroom that he could not catch these wonderful brown eyes off their guard. "She is a singular person. By Gad, she interests me," he reflected, not being willing to decide whether he trusted



or feared her most. "I will give her free hand, and see what she makes of the campaign," he chuckled. "Money lavished judiciously, concrete golden cash, will eat its way through any flimsy social screen. In a year Edith will have them all at her beck and call. She will never compromise herself—if she did, I would never know it." The worldling knew that no living man could contravene the secret schemes of a passionate woman, for the most skilled detective is a tyro to the simplest soubrette. That graceful bundle of sly deviltries known as "woman's arts" is an undying mistletoe of cosmopolitan growth. Van Arsdale was not anxious to have applied, in his own case, certain rules, almost axiomatic with other men's wives. He shared this peculiarity with that clan of *roués* who, having ceased to systematically prey on the domains of others, select one pet lamb with extremest sybaritic deliberation, and then cry, "Hands off!" In other words, Mr. Frank Van Arsdale was a *fin-de-siècle* husband of the New York school. But the Admiral at the club was embarrassed by questions of living honor. Surrounded by astounded *bon vivants* who had seen his unholy name in the "missionary list," Floyd explained his generosity by the nautical flavor of the thing. These savages to be "double-souled," lived on an island. "Quite like sailors, you know. I may land there some time. As a friend of Miss Cornelia I should have a front seat at the Hula-Hula, or whatever their local 'high-kicking' is called! For I would have you know, gentlemen," gaily finished Floyd, "we live in a *laissez-aller* period, an era of high-kicking." And he ordered the wine for all, and solemnly promised to give no more to "indiscriminate religious charity."

"See here, Floyd," said Billy Costar, the chum of many a moving 'scape by land and sea, "if I find you wandering around with the esteemed Parkhurst, with an eternal option on a 'harp and crown,' I will give orders to the door-

keepers at the 'Casino' and Koster and Bial's to refuse you admittance."

"Oh, I have not changed my principles, merely varied my practices," rejoined Floyd. "This maiden aunt of mine has any amount of hidden treasure. 'Bread cast upon the waters,' you know. I am still in the race—the human race." And he absently hummed:

"They fling about their dresses,  
In a way that much expresses!"

But, he was really trying to make the pathway smooth for the untried feet of his dear little comrade at Fort Lee. She was "standing with reluctant feet" on the shores of the river of Life—that stream where youth, with trembling and nervous hands, has launched so many votive barks whose lights went out before the first winding turn of the varied shores.

"By Jingo! I am growing sentimental!" he thought, and a wicked suggestion of his attendant dæmon caused him to order his horses and take the merry Princess of Nowhere for a dash up the road. On his return, he asked with some eagerness for his mail.

Hatton murmured, as the Admiral, for the first time, opened a letter from Edith Van Arsdale, "I hope the Guv'nor hain't mixed up in no duel. I've got too good a place to lose it for any of this foolishness—this woman business." The valet had imbibed a haughty scorn for the women of high society. With a servant's coarseness he omitted to make allowance for his point of view. The vulgar-minded seem only to see the weaknesses of those above them. At this moment he was himself the unsuspecting dupe of the pearl of Madison-Avenue housemaids, whose charms were the secret reward of the devotion of Frank Van Arsdale's head-groom—a scoundrel a bit more accomplished than Hatton whose "blind eye was turned to the sea-



shore." The rival stood even higher on the salary list and, alas! from Belgravia to Jones' Woods, "money talks!" The old, old way of the world, since Jupiter blinded Danae with the golden shower, and even Frank Van Arsdale, old and worn, thrilled with a fierce rejuvenation, daily murmured, "Money is the only thing after all. It brings the world to your feet."

True, wise and experienced Midas! but it does not always keep the "one particular she" in your arms. There are failing cases, even with the golden formula of life! For never yet met man and woman, bending under the sway of blinding maddening love, but, over trackless ocean, past dangers and perils, scorning jealous watch and hostile guard, the two fated ones will wander on, hand in hand, blind to the world, careless of impending ruin, and deaf to all sound save the beating of their own happy hearts! For love braves danger, laughs at propriety, and knows no law save the signal of burning glances and the whispers of a mad devotion!

"If love were a mere speculation, few level-headed men would pose as Romeos," remarked, often, Floyd Stanwix, who never "counted the cost," but invariably went it blind, like Dan Cupid.

"Love is a thing which has brought some very interesting cases to my practice," often remarked the cautious Decatur Hoyt. When I was twenty, I knew all about it." The old lawyer sighed, as he said, "I regard it now as a curious problem, incapable of any exact solution—something like squaring the circle."

"Decatur, you are wrong," old General Stanwix calmly rejoined, on one occasion. "Love is only a fever, more or less violent, varying, in its remittent or intermittent character, greatly with the patient. I know, I have had it myself," and the veteran winked, and then chirped his old battle-song, "All on the Plains of Mexico."

Miss Cornelia Stanwix, however, regarded love as she fear-

fully revered the lambent sheet-lightning—as something which had played all around her, but never reached her sacred person.

As regarded others, Frank Van Arsdale considered love to be the occasional pastime of gentlemen of means. Matrimony to be a sort of condition, like a chairmanship of the finance committee of some extensive, system,—a thing for poor men to avoid!

And Edith Van Arsdale! “I would give up my next cruise, if I could know whether that woman has any blood in her heart,” mused Floyd Stanwix, when he carefully placed her note in his breast-pocket. It was brief, but it thrilled him. *He never* forgot its words.

“I feel as you do in this matter. When we meet, we will talk it all over. You may depend upon me at any time that you *may wish* to call upon me.”

“Most women are fools, though this is not one of that class,” mused Floyd, when he dressed next day, with a certain care, to meet the new Queen of Diamonds. “Will she really be a friend to my dear little ward, ‘Miss Ultima?’ Of course I can fix up all the trustee business, and all that, with Hoyt. He is wise. Her property is all right. The two dear old marionettes will do what they can. Alas! they are like the painted paper fortifications of the Chinese; they frighten no one. If this cool, resolute, perfection of clock-work machine-beauty had a bit of heart, I could trust her to watch over Marie a little while I am gone. As for Frank Van Arsdale, he cares no more for his daughter, than an empty bird’s nest whirled by the storm under his horse’s feet.”

“I wanted a son, some one to manage my property,” was the gruff remark with which the husband had accepted Floyd’s hearty greeting, when his sister had passed safely through that mysterious ordeal which touches every fibre of the being of all men of heart. For in its anguish, queen and peasant are the same.



"D—n you! Someone will manage your property after you are dead, and gone, and forgotten," was the youngster's muttered answer, for that was still in the days when Floyd Stanwix's manly bosom was clothed in his country's blue and gold. "I'll stick to the little lass while I live, you brute," he swore, as he raced down to Tiffany's and ordered a christening-cup which anticipated his pay for several long months.

Floyd wandered up the avenue to the meeting, and saw, to his surprise, the beautiful Mrs. Van Arsdale returning from an outing. As he passed the club windows he was vaguely cut at heart. "She might at least have made a pretence of a special reception, for Ultima's sake. This is taking her into the counsels of the Stanwix clan." Even Floyd regarded that to be the *cachét* of Knickerbocker noblesse, and the dim tradition of his family papers being in the ark, had haunted his childish imagination. So he had gladly embraced the calling of his great ancestor, Noah. "This is a particularly lively community that Marie will be launched in. By Gad, the girl will be pretty." A sudden memory of her last leave-taking thrilled him, her girlish, loving face, lit up with its frank, honest, innocent eyes. "And her money, yes, they'll be all after that. If I could only get this brown-eyed falcon to watch over her; but it does not look like it. She has no heart."

At that particular moment, Edith Van Arsdale stood, with a strange fire burning in her veins, before a mirror in the great room where she awaited the man whose mere presence had waked the sleeping tiger in her nature. Through the rich curtains she saw him slowly mount the stately stairway to her door. "He shall not know—this dress, my apparent occupations—for it would be ruin to me if he should read my thoughts. He must not know until—until I am free, and then——"

The waiting beauty was startled as she saw her own face

in the mirror, for her awakened heart dowered her with unearthly beauty. "I will walk the narrow path, I will have Van Arsdale's money. And when—when it happens, this man shall learn to love me! I can wait." His grave face was before her ere the sleeping devil in her soul slumbered again, but he was blind, as all men are, when the woman of destiny faces them.

While these two exchanged a greeting of some constraint, a slight formality seeming to pervade the first *pourparlers*, at the Knickerbocker Club, two squares away, young Witherspoon of the British Embassy was speaking of the woman who stood now even fearing that her beating heart would betray an agitation she could not control, to the sailor.

"Rhinebeck," he said to a minion of fashion, "I have seen but one person here who would interest me, that is, as to her future. I am leaving your strange country, but if your beautiful friend Mrs.—Mrs.——"

"Van Arsdale," quietly rejoined Rhinebeck.

The Briton bowed. "If she does not carry the word 'Waiting,' on her beautiful face, then I am no judge of the future. She will go far—that singularly splendid woman!"

"Far is—well—not fast, I hope!" was the youngster's secret comment as he ordered a frozen absinthe. "By the way, Witherspoon, there are some pictures of the new reigning beauty at Sarony's which are well worth a visit. She is truly a remarkable woman. In a year, she will be the vogue. For," continued the airy youth, "as we have no Court Journal, a new orchid, a particular bonnet, a peerless race-horse, a cigarette backed by a million-dollar syndicate, all these things will appropriate the lady's name and face more or less. There is no doubt that no woman in New York could even now afford to frown this strange beauty down. And the town is filled with romances about her



father's mysterious birth and adventures. Her mother has been a Princess—a singer—a morganatic wife of a reigning Grand Duke—all sorts of things."

"Ah!" cried the Englishman, settling his eye-glass. "All bagatelle. Calvert was regularly on our Army List, and Sir Derwent Loftus, our minister at Athens, was the mother's brother. The fact is, Rhinebeck, there is more *mauvaise honte* in America than in any other country in the world. I suppose the poor fatherless girl was hunted with these stories, for the simple reason of disguising the fact that she was decently poor. Why! I am a poor man myself."

"Yes," laughed Rhinebeck, "and the heir to twenty thousand a year."

The impassive Briton smiled. "Well, my boy, I am proud of my country-woman. Old families have one real practical value. The good blood leads to the conservation of decent manners. You'll ruin all in your noble country if you keep on rushing everything for the masses. As for the lady, why, she is the heiress to all the gold that old Van Arsdale has sneaked away from the other fellows."

"Yes, that's so, with a daughter of the first marriage to chip in," answered Rhinebeck, with a far-away look in his eyes.

While the young men lightly chattered of the new star which had swept up from the south—in the hushed drawing-room of the Van Arsdale mansion, the passing moments brought even more of a suppressed constraint to the two now facing each other alone for the first time. Behind its silken armor, Edith Van Arsdale's heart throbbed wildly to the generous passion creeping into the sailor's voice as he spoke of the child whom he loved. "She will thrust me always from his heart!" the wife of the absent Midas realized, in unholy alarm, and strange wild thoughts filled her mind as she gazed into Floyd Stanwix's earnest eyes. "What

if Frank Arsdale would die? What then!" A gleam of guilty joy thrilled her as she felt her heart leap up within her. "He could never marry this girl!" The lady shivered in the intensity of her strange sudden passion.

"Pardon me! But are you ill?" Floyd remarked, with well-bred concern. "I can call again. For I must wait to arrange all my trustee business before I go away. Marie will have an enormous real-estate inheritance. She is the last life. That's why we call her 'Miss Ultima,'" he brightly said. "But Hoyt will keep her business straight. He is my fellow-trustee."

"I am not ill, but I may have chilled myself a little while driving." And Floyd Stanwix felt some strange subtle fluid of life moving in his burning soul as his eyes followed the sinuous, gliding form, for Edith swept back with a fleecy cloud wrapped around her. The eyes which met his were burning—but silent, like the stars. "Strange woman!" reflected Floyd. "Nothing of the usual about her." And he strangely forgot one of his own wise saws, often uttered over a poised glass, on the wild waves, in the wilder orgies of the "Aphrodite's" cabin. It was that "society women were often willing to go to the devil for men who did not care a 'rap' for them."

But Mrs. Edith Van Arsdale had a new alarm in that peculiar organism known as her woman's heart. "He was going away!" The man whom all the yielding femininity within her hailed as her master! Scarcely known, hardly recognized, yet the mysterious thrill which silently tells its own story, brought their eyes together, as he simply said, "I will be a year in the Mediterranean. I hope to meet your brother Harold there. I should like to give him a cruise under the flag of the 'Aphrodite.'"

"I hardly know where he is now. In the interior of Syria, I think," hastily answered Edith, adding, "Harold is a born rover." And, with a grave brow, the lady continued



the references to Marie Van Arsdale's future, ignoring Harold, whose whole life had been a cruise under the rosy banner of "Aphrodite."

For some vague reason, she dissembled. For the cabled money-credit handled by Mrs. Hillyer had enabled Harold to congratulate his sister at length, at the expense of the gray bridegroom. "I must keep these two apart, until I have Harold bound down by fear. I will give him an allowance if he stays away until I shall need him. Then I will be safe, and his wreck-strewn pathway will not affect Frank Van Arsdale's widow."

With a quick reversal of her mental compound engines, the glowing woman decided to take an active part in Miss Ultima's future. "It will bring me near to him. It will draw us together! I will be within the guarded lines of the Stanwix camp." And Edith Van Arsdale, who never made an unnecessary enemy, turned her wonderful eyes very kindly on the yachtsman. In a strange way Floyd Stanwix was conscious of a controlling influence. He felt that he was moving, as if on a bark cast loose, at night, from its moorings on an unknown sea.

"I have listened with a great interest, a deep feeling, Mr. Stanwix, to your remarks as to Marie's future," the bride began. "She is a charming child. The very incarnation of life's promise." Edith's wonderful eyes dilated, and successive thrills of sympathy answered in Floyd's heart.

"Of course you know the delicacy of my position. I am partly a stranger to my husband's views. Mr. Van Arsdale hastened our marriage."

"Naturally!" cried the frank sailor, with a heartiness which brought a smile to the dainty curved lips, now redder than the heart of the crimson rose.

"I have refrained from approaching this delicate subject, and Mr. Van Arsdale seems also taciturn on this matter:" the wife of a month said, cautiously.

The glances of their meeting eyes told the story of a mute understanding on this point. Edith resumed calmly :

"The General and Miss Cornelia have been very kind to me, a stranger,"—as she kept her downcast eyes fixed upon the motions of a rose upon her sculptured breast. She seemed to be swayed by a strong wave of feeling. Her voice then rang out almost defiantly. "Here, in my husband's home, I can face a world unmoved. I know my rights ; I know, too, that sweet Marie's mother was the beloved heiress of the Stanwix family. It would be rash for me to creep upon the friendship of the General and his sister. I am to them, perhaps, only an interloper. But, Mr. Stanwix,"—she flashed a glance full upon her listener—"I am yet young enough to know a girl's heart. Marie will inherit the spirit and nerve of her gallant race ; her position will be unchallenged. She must not live in the shadows of the past. She must be trained for the present. For she will drink of the seething cup of life. She will live in the vortex of the restless, passionate, splendid, latter-day life of New York. The pale morality of a convent, the ancestral wisdom of her aged relatives, will not go out with her to weapon her on her way. She needs life, color, vigor—the lore which is read by seeing men and women as they are—not the Delsarte posturing of the pedagogue. The convent is a mere shadowland."

Floyd Stanwix looked up in surprise. Edith's voice rang out as clear as a silver bell—a challenge to the past, a defiance to the future !

"By Jove !" he hastily said, and reddened as he went on, "you are right. A woman should be trained to take care of herself. New York life has no fixed status of acknowledged rank. The clearing-house returns are made up from day to day."

"At the clubs," coldly broke in Mrs. Van Arsdale. "I know it. I have lived much alone. I was a motherless



child, like Marie." The brilliant beauty's voice softened. "When I was a girl in frocks, my careless father's associates little knew I watched them and listened to their talk. It was often shallow, always vicious. When I became a woman,"—she sighed—"I soon learned to know what men are. I have met but two or three gentlemen in my strange life. Colonel Hillyer, dear old hero, was one of them."

Edith Van Arsdale paused. Her noble, stately head was turned toward the window. Their eyes met as the silence became awkward, and, in the fatal vanity of manhood, Floyd fancied that another name might be in her heart, if not trembling on her lips. His own!

"Let us be friends," she said, frankly, extending her hand. "You are a man of the world—the safest friend for a young girl after all. For you know the hard way of life; and yet you know innocence when you see it, and know, too, that it deserves respect and—protection! I will help you with my strangely-gained experience. Mr. Van Arsdale will naturally do as I wish in this matter." There was a dignity in her manner which told of the empire she had gained over that hard unbending heart, through the gate of his unslakable passions.

"Marie must be sheltered under Miss Cornelia Stanwix's roof-tree. It is the best social background I know. At the end of the term let the General and Miss Cornelia have her for two years' finishing, under their eyes, with your guidance. Mr. Hoyt, who is such a superior intellect, can watch over her mind. She will have a real home. I wish you would bring Mr. Hoyt to me. I will do all I can. You can go away, feeling that this delightful child is safe, that she will have love about her—an undivided love!"

Floyd Stanwix forgot that he had warmly clasped the jewelled hand of the stranger wife. It was burning, but he did not feel its warmth—his own was at fever heat. For in the promise of their eyes, these two had agreed to fill

with tenderness the void left by the abstraction of a father's flinty heart.

"I agree with you, and I thank you, for my dead sister's sake," the gallant sailor softly said, raising her hand to his lips. That night a woman alone, seated at her mirror, pressed that hand to her own lips. "He said, 'For his sister's sake!'" and Mrs. Van Arsdale was in a dreamless slumber before her lord returned from a long business wrangle. She thought over all the rest of that first meeting.

"I will bring dear old Decatur with me any day you will name, for this must be at once arranged. I will sound the General and Miss Cornelia," Floyd cheerfully continued. "If you wish, I will open the matter with Frank myself. Your husband is not a daily associate of mine, and yet we get on well together. Hoyt tells me that he has made me one of his executors with Harry Low."

Edith Van Arsdale's cheeks paled, and her voice was muffled, as she answered, "I will rely entirely on your kindness, Mr. Stanwix, and I would be glad if you would assure the General and Miss Cornelia that I can then, do more for Marie—more to help her, and to brighten her surroundings than I could here." Her eyes swept dreamily around, and her fair head drooped. A flood of busy thoughts were pressing on her mind. So! These two men who had so strangely come into her life were her husband's executors. She knew already that Harry Low would be her abject slave. But the thrill in her shaken bosom would not wait to give her time to ask her heart, "Which one?" Nature's selection was made already!

In all the dazzling splendor of the *lune de miel*, she had never for a moment forgotten that she did not love her husband. And he, cold, pitiless and defying fate, was more than content with the perilously tyrannical possession, in marriage, of all the glowing beauty which had drifted into his arms on a golden tide.



"Would you carry Marie's education to the bounds of modern advancement?" earnestly asked Edith, whose nerve and self-control was failing with the ebb of her emotions.

"By no means! The Stanwix's ideas will do for that," cheerfully answered Floyd. "I don't believe in women who talk Greek; a woman with a Greek form and a living beauty will rule where the erudite sister mouths her Aristophanes, in lonely maiden seclusion, to a goggle-eyed professor or two. A handsome woman, well-mannered, good blood, good form," he smiled, "is Grecian up to date. A single successful skirt-dancer will enchain more blue-blooded admirers nowadays than all the banded Minervas of Sorosis."

"You may be right," murmured Edith, "we live in an age of a return to the old worship of the body."

"Right!" vigorously said Floyd. "The cold wail of orthodoxy, the gloom of asceticism draws no votaries now. From industry, to prosperity, to luxury, and onward toward an abandonment to the widest pleasures of sense, our society goes on to the acme of physical enjoyment. The consumptive sentimentalists of two-score years ago have given way to hot-blooded women of real life, of passion's play, of form and color. Our women are dryads, naiads, amazons, undines. They have a passionate coloring in their lives which astonishes even me. Our men—our men are only sybarites! Cold, calculating sybarites! Ah, no! The old gods of Greece are not dead. Fled is that music! The song of Pan is heard here upon our wooded shores. It draws all men—and,—most women!" he concluded, laughingly.

"And your own code?" queried Edith Van Arsdale. "I know your life of to-day. But—the future?" Her eyes met his unflinchingly. She asked the question of life!

The sailor laughed lightly. "I live for the 'passing moment, still so fair!' I do not believe in loading up one's existence with determined purposes, as a cannon is

crammed to the muzzle with shrapnel. For the days fleet along, bringing their sweetness and passion on rushing wings. Nothing that I ever craved but has been denied me," he grew serious. "And what is set purpose? A breath on the glass of life. Face to face with the mystery of life, we blindly wander, the future veiled until, in a moment, Fate dashes aside the mask, and in strange delights, we see what we never recognized before, and coming from the unknown, it shines, it glows, it passes—we know not where. I only know it never comes again! We only lead a part of our own lives. That man or woman who claims to even feebly direct personal conduct is a pitiful dreamer. Our lives are made for us. A touch, a sigh, a smile, and all is changed! *Ex nihilo nihil!*"

"Then you are a nihilist!" Edith smiled as she rose.

"Of the heart, yes. I find nothing in life, therefore I go to sea." Floyd Stanwix rose, summing all up gaily: "We have settled the future development of my dear little Miss Ultima. I thank you, and shall be led and guided by you in this, for the little maid is dear, very dear, to me. May I call on General and Miss Stanwix, and say that I shall bring you to see them soon upon this very delicate affair?"

"I shall be happy to see you soon, very soon again," gently said the beautiful woman at his side, extending her hand. Her voice was dreamy and the touch of their clasped palms brought his eyes quickly to her own. With a start of surprise, he departed, as she coldly faltered, "Good-bye."

He was bewildered as he moved down the avenue in a day-dream. "She's the strangest woman I ever met. Cool and adroit. Is her heart locked in a steel cage, or has she none? She fairly froze me at the last. But she has a clear head. A proud bearing, a clear head—woman's two best friends."

Pacing her room in a restless fever, a reflex of her long repression, Edith Van Arsdale tossed away her bracelets as



she dressed for dinner. "Chains that bind!" she bitterly cried. "Does any one woman in the world lead a life where soul and mind and body consent in the worship of one man." For to the bride of the millionaire came back a remark of a society leader that "it seemed hard to get the right people together as one wished."

The days fleeting by, impressed Frank Van Arsdale that perhaps he had hastily drawn to his side a nature he had not fathomed, a heart which set him coldly apart from its deepest throbs, a will as stern and imperious as his own. But from long habit, the wise old bridegroom buried his doubts in the oblivion of silence.

## CHAPTER V.

## IN SPRING-TIME.

It was in the early June days of that piping year of peace, ninety-one, when Floyd Stanwix cheerfully piped "all hands" in society to "see him off." His "bark was on the sea," conveniently moored off the Battery. The distance was just great enough to allow the golden *jeunesse* to pair off, as the natty steam-launches puffed out to the dainty "Aphrodite." This cruiser of the Paphian goddess demurely bridled with doubled cables, serenely swam on the tide, gently tossing her heaving, graceful, black hull, with its single golden streak. The dying season had ended in great glory to the house of Van Arsdale. When the fair Edith, now a reigning queen, was escorted up to the "man of the hour" by Decatur Hoyt, the old counselor had the unqualified envy of a horde of younger satellites. The roses were deliciously attractive in Broadway windows, the Park police were out in their gayest uniforms, man and maid were making trysts for the summer, and, to the astonishment of the community, the republic had held together for another winter. The journals were softening their howling clamor, and the reformers were packing to go to Europe, on other people's money, in the interest of the public. Wearied clergymen dreamed of flesh-pots afar, and every woman in Gotham who had new summer gear of Tyrian magnificence was deciding where to display it. The faithful trees of the park now wooed summer lovers with their inviting shade, and the silent "great" had already "gone" to that "mysterious bourne" whither the uncontested "swells" of New



York go early, and whence they return late. A sort of dim Atlantis in seas of purple and gold reserved for the "inner cluster" of the inmost circle. This arrangement allows the *hoi polloi* time to breathe. Pretty actresses were "making their books" for the summer campaign, and the seashore teemed with the myrmidons of Mercury lying in wait for the town Gilpins, men and dames, on their brief outings. Notwithstanding the flitting of the royalty of the Empire state, it was a goodly beauty-show on the holy-stoned decks of the saucy "Aphrodite." Stanwix was glad to seek the misty freshness of the Banks, the crisp gusts of the Atlantic, and the cloudless glow of Eastern skies. In all the gay throng on the "Aphrodite," no one ruffled it more bravely than that Hebe of Vanity Fair, Mrs. Rosalind Felton. Proudly conspicuous with the hearty Admiral, she waited for an half hour's chat with grim Frank Van Arsdale, who had condescended to stop robbing other men for a half-day. "He can definitely settle about my summer headquarters," thought Rosalind, the willful witch. "I'm glad he is coming!" Yet with the idea of a "double event," Rosie only murmured to Floyd Stanwix, "I will find out where this boy is, and let you know later by letter. Of course you must meet him in the Mediterranean."

"Do not fail me, Rose!" Stanwix said decidedly. "I must not be trifled with. I depend on you. I'll do anything for you, in reason."

The fair Rosalind tenderly pressed his arm, as she decided upon the amount of a check she would ask for in that desired letter. "You can trust me, as I do you, Floyd!" was her answer, as she flashed a glance of old-time tenderness at the departing sailor. "I shall have two Secretaries of the Treasury!" she laughed, as she noted with surprise a stately arrival *en masse*: General Stephen Stanwix, the cameo-faced antique belle, Miss Cornelia, the swarthy partner of her secret schemes, the great Van Arsdale, and a de-

lightly animated vision of beauty, Miss Marie Van Arsdale. For Miss Ultima had partly entered the butterfly state. The last of the Stanwix heiresses had said a fond adieu to the home of her childish years on the scarped rocks of Fort Lee. Dainty and charming in her dress of cautiously selected repression, Miss Ultima was noted by the sighing swains who dared not approach. Not a worn woman of society but felt one honest thrill at heart as Floyd Stanwix, forgetting all else, sprang forward to meet her. "My dear child, this is indeed a happy day for me!" And the bronzed sailor thanked the General in his eager manner, turning with compliments of honied sweetness to that argus-eyed aristocrat, Miss Cornelia. To stern Frank Van Arsdale, he whispered, "She will be a beautiful woman! Marie is the picture of—" and with a sudden glance at the reigning queen, he added—"of what my sister was." In his courtly way, Floyd led the family party to his own cabin, reserved for them. In the grand saloon, the very crispest crust of New York's "dames" were being regaled, under the watchful eye of Hatton, with those slight refectations which have blossomed in the passing years from the pale sherry into the iridescent Manhattan cock-tail.

"Your husband is here," remarked Floyd, *sotto voce*, to queenly Edith Van Arsdale, who was earnestly conversing with Decatur Hoyt. Her sudden start as their eyes quickly met caused the sailor to mutter, "Something has shaken her nerve—at last," as he returned to the deck. "She seems very chummy with the old advocate!" mused Stanwix. "I wonder if all goes on smoothly in the avenue mansion?"

Things did therein go on smoothly, but, while a crowd of admirers were chafingly waiting to reach the side of the great social star, Edith Van Arsdale's nerve was shaken by a letter just received from her wandering brother Harold at Athens. "He must not come here to weigh me down like an Afrite, I must prevent it at all hazards." And,



while thus agitated, the reigning beauty was riveting the chains of the old lawyer's growing attachment to her. There had been much scurrying to and fro with legal papers, in view of Floyd Stanwix's departure. "Is there anything serious in consideration?" the watchful woman thought. "I must know all. What shall I do! Floyd Stanwix will never speak. Does he wait for me to speak to him? Low does not know enough. Here is the one whom I can safely bend to my will. For Low would only be a fellow-conspirator, with no power. He has no money—no property. This old Solon by my side has never cared to amass property, they tell me. I must draw him nearer to me." Before the reception had progressed far, the hidden dynamos of Madame Edith Van Arsdale had thrown out a current which breathed the freshness of spring in Decatur Hoyt's frosted veins. For he, alas, was like all others on whom age creeps with insidious tread, he did not know when to cease to love. The advocate warmed like fabled Merlin, and, basking in the velvety smile of the woman who was the vogue of the year, little by little forgot his cunning and yielded up a hint here, a word there.

"Property—property, I will have! I must be poised high above the vulgar rush, propped up on money-bags above the common herd," so, with a proud flush on her crimsoned cheek, mused Edith, as she bent her head under the old lawyer's warning words. For never yet was found man in New York, who, at the touch of trial, refused to make love to the wife of his friend.

"I must separate them. I am glad Floyd goes away," thought Edith, her blood surging up, as Floyd Stanwix escorted the last of the Stanwix line to a sacred nook of his own.

There were volunteer masters of ceremonies directing the ceremonies now, as all knew Stanwix would fain say adieu alone to the little maiden of his heart, for he would sail when the morning came blushing again over the sea.

"She is a woman now!" thought the devotee of property, noting with feminine envy the sweet promise of Marie's beauty, already "too full in bud for puritanic stays," and with a sigh, she mused, "This girl will be a rare beauty, a dangerous rival—her trustee uncle's idol; and her father might take a sudden fancy to her, who knows! I am, as yet, a mere houseless shadow. If Van Arsdale would die I would be entirely dependent on his fancy. His property is all in stocks and bonds. I must watch! It is time enough to live—later," she inwardly resolved, as her blood surged up when she saw Floyd Stanwix bending tenderly over the young beauty, now seated under a canopy. For, while every wave plashing against the "Aphrodite's" swelling sides, murmured "Property—Property," she yet resented Floyd's kindness to the girl, as all women resent any tenderness bestowed on another, in their presence.

"What is he saying?" the unhappy beauty queried in her heart, as her legal Merlin edged a shade closer.

"Dear little one!" Floyd was gently beginning; "I leave you. You will be another woman when I return. You will be in that great world whose glittering outposts you see here. Always think of me, my child; that I am with you in heart, in love, and never forget you! I carry your dear face in my heart! I ask but one thing: watch your own heart! Do what is only right! My sister, your mother, is the one to copy—not these," and he indicated with a vague wave of his hands the spoiled darlings of fashion, stretching their soft throats in swanlike curves, while their eyes flashed invitations far too dangerous for words.

"Be true to yourself! Be noble, do not seem it! For once the poet, was right when he sang 'tis only noble to be good.' These women are simply wonder-shows of beauty, life and passion! How many of them can warm pure white hands over the dying ashes of life when their sparkling eyes are no longer bright? You have a home in the General's



heart ; Cornelia loves you. And, remember, little one," he turned his eyes away, "I shall in every hour of separation, look back at you, and see you as I do now, my own dear child, loving and beloved." He was silent, but a slender little hand stole within his, and a gentle broken voice whispered :

"Nothing can part us, Uncle Floyd, for time and distance will only tell me that you love me—wherever you are. And I shall be thinking of you, and praying for you," the gentle one whispered.

He suddenly stooped and kissed her fair brow. In one manly blush of contrition, the sailor promised himself, "I'll try and be a bit decent, when I think of this dear one."

A waft of the pure air of the morning of life swept into Floyd Stanwix's jaded heart. He seemed to see again his lost sister, as when in the old days her head had sought the refuge of his breast, in all her girlish woes.

"Poor Marie ! They were brief bits of childish trouble," the sailor mused. "Your gentle heart throbbed itself out in vain against the stone bulwarks of Van Arsdale's heart ! " And then and there he swore, as the gallant Yankee Captain did once in the howling blackness of an Atlantic night, "to stand by to the last ! " It was a pledge to one whose gentle face would not fade from sight, for in all the wild storms of life that dead sister's smile had lit up the inner chambers of Floyd Stanwix's passionate heart.

"I must go now to my guests. I will take you back to the General, and he will show you all my little ship, for the others will not stay long ; and, mind you write me regularly, Marie, else—no presents ! " And the gay Columbus who was going to rediscover the Old World, shook his finger in a kindly warning.

"Oh ! Uncle Floyd ! I had forgotten ! " eagerly cried Marie, a rainbow smile breaking through her mist of good-bye tears. "Promise me that you will not open it till you are

at sea. I embroidered the case, but Sister Agatha sent it to you for all the nuns."

"The "Aphrodite" was cutting along in a mad rush over green rollers, two days later, when Floyd thought of it. He then opened the little packet—a circular disk bore a little boat, a star above, a painted cloud, and on the other side a prayer to the Star of the Sea. Strange to say, the man of the world did not forget to wear that disk in its little case over his heart for many a day. "A very present help in time of trouble!" he murmured, as he went on deck after that discovery, and then tried to think whose lips had so often repeated this. He suddenly bethought him of his mother's voice, long stilled.

While Uncle Floyd bade adieu to Marie, and the old lawyer still hovered by the side of the fair Edith, Frank Van Arsdale, in a convenient recess, had adjusted a matter of moment with the dashing Mrs. Rosalind Felton. The old man hoarsely said: "It must be no lip-service. By Heaven! You must do as I bid you!" An eager light shone in Rosie Felton's eyes, as she bowed her head in assent, and her hand tightly clutched a folded gray paper. "Victory!" she could have shouted! For, at last, wearied with the single sorrows of his growing unrest, his doubts of the bright, brave young beauty who seemed to be so near to him, and yet so far away in heart, Van Arsdale had set her on as a watch-dog to spy upon the second Mrs. Van Arsdale. "When a man does that, I have him in my power!" mused Rosie—a woman of great experience in such little matters.

Around them the clatter of servants, the hum of society's small talk, the devil's tattoo of the popping corks, with laughter and bustle growing less *raffiné* every moment, all this told that Floyd Stanwix's good wine was making its usual record.

"We always have such a delightful time on the 'Aphro-



dite,' a departing fair one had murmured to the master of the revel.

"The 'Aphrodite' is a ladies' boat, madame," gaily responded Floyd.

Decatur Hoyt, at his zenith of possible rejuvenation, his veins warmed with fiery Burgundy, gazed tenderly at Edith Van Arsdale as he finally resigned her. "She seems quiet enough in Van Arsdale's house," the awakened old Romeo mused; "but she is like powder in a magazine which may go off at any time." And the counselor went down and smoked a small Havana under the decks, thinking, "There would be a loud report! Heavens, what a morsel for the Sunday journals!" Ah, counselor! There was no danger! For Edith Van Arsdale knew well that her house, her ways, her doings, her dress, and all her points and charms were now daily canvassed as the coveted details of society's new favorite, a woman who "had arrived."

Crowds gathering around her vied in the adulation of the hour, while Harold's letter burned upon her bosom. "There is one thing," she said as she greeted her husband languidly, "I have a new ally in Hoyt! Low, I can handle whenever I wish to. Stanwix will be long away, but time will sweep him back to me. I must control this budding girl's future, and, watch that woman." For in an unguarded moment, Rosie Felton had allowed Edith Van Arsdale to catch that one fleeting glance at her husband, which tells of a compact unholy, a sinful secret.

"Where can she injure me?" thought Edith, the blood leaving her face; and, with a gasp, she silently resolved that her growing passion should be crowded down in her heart, until property had descended upon her with its august ennobling mantle. She swore that Harry Low should mutely slave for her notice, that the tide of her burning, pent-up feeling should never burst the gates of her heart—even should Floyd Stanwix read the secret of her longing eyes—

until—until—I am my own mistress,” she concluded. “It would not be safe!” There is one cold spectre which beckons with a silent finger even to the mighty, the purse-proud, and the haughty plutocrat. This deadly shade the beauty of the hour now invoked to her aid, as her cautious husband bore her away from the ship’s side. Edith’s eyes were glowing coals of fire as she glanced toward Floyd Stanwix for the last time; but he only saw a graceful girlish form beside that genial veteran, Stephen. He heard alone Marie’s voice, and to the last watched the flutter of a kerchief in a slender girlish hand. Their loving eyes had spoken the last kindly wish, and all the gentle girl had whispered was, “Think of me always, Uncle Floyd, as you see me to day—your own little girl—for you are my best friend on earth.”

Two young men walked under the trees of the Battery Park as the Stanwix party entered their carriage on landing. They were returning from the revel, which was unanimously voted a strict society success.

“That girl with the old General is a stunner. She is of one of the best families in America, and will have shiploads of money,” said Rhinebeck—a very glass of fashion and mould of form—for he was now ready for his summer’s outing.

The youth by his side was a college classmate, and with a slight annoyance in his voice replied, “I have never seen so earnest and beautiful a face!” and into his mind came those exquisite lines of Austin Dobson:

“A girlish shape that stirs the blood  
With pulse of Spring! Autonoe.

“A dream of Form, in days of Thought,  
A dream—a dream—Autonoe!”

There was brief greeting when the carriage had rolled away and the two friends parted, as Rhinebeck had briskly said, with a business-like air,—“I must watch that girl’s com-



ing out! She's worth while knowing!" And all the way up the silent street, in the fading day, the other young man walked, thrilled with the passing graces of the beautiful girl.

"Where'er you go—where'er you pass  
There comes a gladness on the grass,"

he quoted as he walked alone.

Lights gleamed late in New York that night, lighting up strange scenes. The bronzed hairy-chested sailors of the "Aphrodite" toiled till midnight making all "ship-shape," for the tug would at daylight give the "Aphrodite" an offing.

"I will not go on shore again," resolved Floyd. "I wish my last thought to be of my little girl!" He had lightly parted with Rosie Felton, whose velvety voice had murmured, "Remember, you can trust me in every thing, Floyd!" "I am glad the Princess impressed that on me so particularly," grumbled the yachtsman, with some agnosticism, as he took a last peep at the weather and then went below. "There are very few people in this world whom one can trust—at all! That has been my personal experience!" He laid his tired head gratefully on his seapillow, and never gave a thought to the fair woman whose breast had been racked with an infinite pain as she saw he heeded not her going; and by her side in the launch, Rosie Felton, in the new secret duties of her life, eyed the reigning beauty askance. "If they have had any secret understanding I admire their parade drill"—the peachy-faced blonde decided, for it needed no words to tell her that, in a sullen, sour jealousy, Frank Van Arsdale of all men, distrusted Floyd Stanwix the most. Van Arsdale was grimly silent at dinner, and went to his club with a nod of mechanical courtesy. In some strange way, he feared the woman whose uniformly superb bearing and steady courtesies held him, husband as he was, at a distance. The millionaire could not find fault with public appearance or private behavior. "Noth-

ing will pierce the shell of her conventional code," he growled, as he strode along the streets, biting his cigar. "If she has a heart, I cannot find it. Or was it broken in some wrench of her early life? She shows no interest in any one person. Raikes shows me all the cards." He blushed in the dark at his own meanness. "I believe at heart that she dislikes me!" He had easily consented to the transfer of his daughter's future guidance to the august heads of the Stanwix family.

"It would not do to have Edith bring her out. Too young! And yet, by Jove, the girl seems even to like Edith. Ah! Rosie will find out any points! She is a deep one, and Floyd is well out of the way. I am safe for the summer!"

While Van Arsdale dropped into a little friendly game with "a thousand-dollar limit," Mrs. Rosie Felton, divesting herself of her war-paint in her sanctum, wherein no wolf peeped now, murmured, "Mr. Frank Van Arsdale, I have you where I want you now!" And she laughed as she dropped into that happy slumber which is not monopolized by innocence, but often is a mark of an entire freedom of the "cares which infest the day!" "I am on velvet!" was Mrs. Felton's slightly bad form of "Good-night" to the social world of New York. But it was the truth!

Miss Cornelia Stanwix rustled herself into her nest like a pouter pigeon, with due attention to the rubric; and the General, now an inmate of Miss Ultima's future home, saw his pretty charge trooped to her welcome nest, with all the honors—like the regimental colors. Pretty Marie Van Arsdale, her mind agitated with a glimpse of the world in which all the colors were real gold and royal purple, nestled in her first real home, surrounded with love and tenderness, dreamed the rosy dreams of youth.

The scattered guests of the yachtsman were sparkling fire-flies of the night in varied local scenes. Here and there, a passion-haunted mind dreamed of promises, whispered on



the "Aphrodite's" deck, to bear hidden golden fruit later. While the men revolved in that maze of untold possibilities known as "about town,"—a few of the ladies of King Fashion's court were discreetly destroying a varied selection of incriminating documents gathered in the mad winter's gaieties—the indiscreet pledges of now-forgotten tenderness. For the summer was on! And, lightly, winter's chains fell away. "It was the time of roses," and the bright-eyed-hard-hearted daughters of New York, always "plucked them as they passed!"

"I am glad he is going out!" thought Edith Van Arsdale, as she accepted her liege lord's announcement of a meeting down town, with her unvarying smile. It was a trifle too placid for Van Arsdale, who had not a trace of the fool in his nature.

"My lady has some game on hand. I wonder what it is?" he mused. For a haunting suspicion of hidden depths in her nature always disquieted him. It was very soon that "My lady," quickly settled herself in a peculiarly cosy sanctum of her own. It was well fitted to the game which she now sat down to play—the game of her life. She glanced around the beautiful retreat, newly decorated under her own orders, and satisfied herself that she was alone. With a union of the practical and the ornamental, the resolute young matron had arranged herself so that even sudden ingress was difficult, and all spying impossible—a sort of citadel of her very own.

For well Edith Van Arsdale knew now she was playing a lone hand in life. "My capital is my youth and good looks," had been her cool girlish code. "My safety now, is to merely avoid doing what I see most of the women around me here doing every day. They would educate even an idiot to prudence with their mad 'plunging.' I can trust no one," silently decided the lady, as she laid a folded paper on her desk, which had risen and fallen all day with the

heaving of her agitated bosom. "Harold, least of all. Is he a fool—or worse?"

"Trust no one," was her Ishmaelitish motto. "For man will always disappoint, and women always betray you," she said; and yet, the mere natural craving of her youth and beauty, the warm blood throbbing in her veins called for companionship.

The second Mrs. Van Arsdale felt day by day more strangely alone in the great house with its barren splendors. "My husband certainly did not marry me for the pleasure of my society," she restlessly muttered, as she strode up and down the great drawing-rooms. As she turned her eyes full on the place where her own portrait, justly the subject of much encomium, had replaced that of the dead Marie, a realization of her practical usefulness came to her.

"Precisely so," bitterly cried the woman, who was unwilling to acknowledge the burden of her loneliness. "I am only an appendage of the household. I happen to be the living head of ornamental decorative element in a social way. What did he marry me for?"

The question was being answered in Van Arsdale's mind as he glanced at his cards carelessly now and then at the club, and the recent employment of Rosie Felton returned to him.

"After all, I did not marry her for her mere society. I am satisfied. It was simply a matter of the personal possessive case."

"Now, if I could trust Harold, I would have some one to aid me, for I must pose night and day," reflected Edith, as she sat down to study her brother's letter. Her beautiful face grew almost stern as she swept the whole situation with her mental eye.

"To-morrow's sunset will light the "Aphrodite's" sails far out at sea. Marie is already accepted by society as a Stanwix representative—Miss Ultima. A half year of marriage has



brought me no nearer to my saturnine husband. If I have suffered no defeat, I have gained no victory. Property, the permanent means of power, any assured sway over Van Arsdale, all these are as far off as on the day I first saw his cold hard face light up with what I thought was a smile. It was only the glow of a new woman-chase. I fancy he merely wished to prevent the others from bearing off the woman who had caught his approving eye.

"If anything should happen, where would I be left? I must be wary. In one thing I am safe. To glide into the confidence of General and Miss Stanwix, to creep closer to this one heiress, while apparently making them the arbiters of her destiny—a little flattery will do that, and as for Marie herself, we will see. She is very beautiful even now. She is the rising star." Her eye suddenly rested on the picture, which her brother had sent to her in the letter. "Harold. The girl. A future marriage. Never! I have known one woman who was cursed with a Calvert. There would be the inevitable broken career on his part—nothing holds with them—and, while offering no future advantage, it might ruin me, if it occurred before—before," and she again apostrophized "the pale shade which summons," as she thought of her stern husband. "He may not live," she murmured,—in hope.

"Van Arsdale would resent any such trouble in his treatment of me, and—" There was another reason which gave her heart a new shock of dismay. "It would separate Floyd Stanwix and myself by a gulf which no woman's love could ever bridge. For this child is his fetish! No, he must not come here. For, unprincipled dare-devil as he is, the fiend himself would suggest to Harold the evident advantages of gaining fortune and a hold on all here by breaking this girl's heart. He must not come, and, besides, he must not meet Stanwix. The 'Aphrodite' will be in the Mediterranean. It might turn Floyd against me.

Floyd is a sharp man of the world. If he should trace the story of all our past wanderings, while my heartless father lived his life of easy blackguardism, all Frank Van Arsdale's wealth would not suffice to dower me in Floyd's confidence. And, bit by bit, Stanwix would trace it all out. No, I will hold him off, and—"thinking of the warmest advances of the counselor in his sudden enthusiasm, she saw a way—a dark way—out. "Decatur Hoyt is my one possible ally! Through him, I can always know all. Low and Stanwix tell him all. Van Arsdale, also, dares to have no secrets from him. I must encourage him." She glanced at her mirror with a wintry smile. "He needs but little; and old men never talk! Yes, for the other, Low," her color heightened, "a nod will bring him at any moment to my feet." She carefully read over her brother's letter before the protective ceremony of reducing it to ashes.

It was an ugly letter, and as Edith Van Arsdale read it her brow darkened. "Every word is an implied menace," she cried, throwing it down in disgust. "All the Calvert subtlety is in his mind now, but to threaten the sister who is alone in the world, alone in a cold, hard world," she bitterly repeated, "is cowardly. He knows that my only capital has been that poor beauty behind which he would shelter himself from any honest work. A beauty legally traded now," she sneered, "which his father—my father—would have even made the prize of dishonor,—the gilded shame of a family.

"My God! It seems to me that men can sink lower than the vilest brutes in these *fin-de-siècle* days. At least, when a woman throws herself away, it is her own choice to take the broad and easy path which bends downward. But the men, who linger in the horrible penumbra of a coward's easy life, consenting to the nameless traffic of the soul-and-body surrender of others, are lower than the poorest wretch who gasps to death in La Saltpêtrière!"



Too well the menaced sister, the lonely wife, the child of a loveless youth, the daughter of a heart-broken mother, knew that, hovering in the confines of the gilded parlors of Vanity Fair, were men to whom the felon's jacket would be an unmerited dignity. Men of the smug face, the smooth brow, of raiment of price, and who shone at hotels, lurked in clubs, thrust their way into semi-public society, and preyed upon the defenceless womanhood of the duplex social world. Of varied ranks, a cosmopolitan clan, this awful flotsam and jetsam of alleged humanity hovers in the train of luxury. Moral ghouls and sybaritic panders have place even in New York.

Desperate, idle and reckless as her brother was, she only feared his lazy egoistic selfishness. It might end in drifting him into a doubtful class, so far beneath her, that his presence near the theatre of the life-struggle, just beginning under the cold eyes of her all-powerful husband, would be her own ruin.

"If I had the property legally my own, I could rule Harold, for then I could cast him off at need. Fear is the best ruler. He would grovel. But now—now—I must buy him off at any price, until—until I have the one power of the world in my hands—gold!"—She read the letter as if each word would be burned in her brain, and then slowly watched it crisp and curl into ashes. The room was lone and still, and a chill came over her in the silence. He might meet Floyd! One false step there would ruin me as regards my husband, Stanwix, and the heiress, Marie. I must creep into that girl's heart. The family issue will lie between her and her father's new wife. A thousand pounds! I must have help—for I dare not draw that sum. I could make it up by gradual drafts. But I must act at once. Ah!"—She drew a long breath and shivered slightly as she, heavy-limbed, dragged her way up to the splendid bower of a loveless marriage. "The old lawyer can help me. He can easily do

this. But—I must pay the price.” And a sinister smile of confidence hardened on her face, as she saw Mrs. Edith Van Arsdale’s loveliness in the great hall mirror. “I can—make him do anything—I wish,” she murmured, as she rang for her maid, “and—old men never talk.”

The hateful letter lay now safely reduced to ashes. It had threatened her with his arrival at New York to throw himself upon her for the future. “But with a thousand pounds, I will go away. You alone shall hear of my safety. I must go—must leave Athens, for a woman in America is hounding me down. She has found me out here. She has cause to hate me, because she loves me too much. What can rid a man of a woman who will not let him go. Distance saves the hangman many a professional job. This woman could even embarrass you, and is one whose hatred never sleeps. With this money, I will leave a blind trail. Otherwise, I arrive penniless and—desperate.”



## BOOK II.

### BROTHER HAROLD.

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#### CHAPTER VI.

AT ATHENS.

"By Jove! I feel like another man!" cried Floyd Stanwix, casting his eyes upon the cabin hatchway as four bells sounded next morning. For the "Aphrodite" had said adieu at daybreak with a disdainful toss of her pretty figure-head to the grimy tug which had sped down to the "Hook" with the beauty. Now, with white wings unfurled, the flagship of Love's squadron sought the blue waters dreaming around Cyprus and Naxos—Fire Island was gliding away behind them, as the rosy face of Hatton peeped over the hatch with its welcome signal to the practical commander.

"I am glad to get away from all those women. Heavens, what a band of free-lances! I am safe here, at any rate; and, after all, in the whole beauty-show, there's not one will ever think of me again!" rejoiced the Admiral, as he went below to join at the first breakfast his trio of world-wandering club-comrades—his guests on the cruise.

"Oh, yes!" thought Floyd, grimly, as he descended with care, for the saucy water-witch was leaping along. "Rosie Felton will think of me every day—for I have the list of her presents!" And with sudden alarm, he felt for his pocket-book, as he seated himself. "Yes, there it is!" he murmured.

"What! Admiral!" chorussed the laughing trio. "Her last words. Sealed orders to be read at sea—twenty miles out! 'When this you see—remember me!'—and so on.

"Don't chaff, you fellows," mournfully replied the sailor-host, "it's a list of a lot of things I've got to buy for a woman in New York," he solemnly answered, as if it were his death-warrant.

"Great Heavens, Floyd, you did not think we imagined you would buy things for a woman in Brooklyn?" said one. A second viciously suggested that Brooklyn was not "in it," "but as to Philadelphia, why," and he quickly dodged a pepper-box hurled playfully by Stanwix, who was relieved by the ministerial-faced wretch who was usually master of the revels. This sympathizer remarked gravely: "I can feel for Floyd. I have been so placed myself. It's a great mark of confidence, when a woman will let you 'bring her things,' but my last orders were partly in French, and I dabbled in the wrong classes of articles. It is a very grave matter, gentlemen," said the High Priest, solemnly, handing Floyd a special cocktail. "It affects Floyd's future, don't you see?"

Whereat a shout of laughter arose, and the three set about a cabal to extract from Floyd Stanwix the name of the "party" who had graciously permitted him to "bring her" some things. Gazing kindly at the men who had "heard the chimes at midnight" with him so often, Stanwix felt self-rebuked when he thought of one who had not forgotten him, and who was, unlike the bright, heart-hardened beauty-show, "tender and true." His thoughts wandered shoreward, for at this hour of ten, General Stanwix was wont to dispatch "Miss Ultima" to the park, under the watchful care of "Sergeant Owens," once of the "Fifth Regulars." A man, still a dainty rider, who had saved the General's life, and thus won a place in his heart and house. "I wish her to be the best horsewoman in New York, and if anything happens



to that girl, Owens, I'll kill you," the old veteran had remarked. "Thank you, General," somewhat irrelevantly, had answered Owens, touching his cap. "It's all right," mused Floyd, fondly, as the face of his dear "little one" flashed into his heart, in her bright promise. "The old General will attend to her military education. By Gad, it's like him to take her up to West Point and teach her light artillery tactics, dear old boy. But," he reflected, "the finishing mill on Madison Avenue is closed for the summer. Short terms and long pay," chuckled Floyd. "Cornelia will brood over Marie at Cragnest, and the child will be happy there." He sadly thought of the vanished days when he had rambled, in the matchless glories of many an Indian summer on the Hudson, over dear old Cragnest, with the one whose feet were stilled forever. "Yes, it's the right place. It will be her own, and she must learn to love it. I suppose that good Miss Cornelia will steer her through the accomplishments. The financial button will be pressed, and Madame Mears will do the rest. It's a good thing that she is there, out of the way of Rosie Felton. The Princess is a good deal around the Van Arsdale house." Stanwix's brow darkened a shade. "All is safe now, until my return. There's no one around her who would weave nets for her in any way." Suddenly, the face of Edith Van Arsdale rose before him, bearing the unbroken mystery of her past. He proceeded gloomily with his breakfast, to the astonishment of his three friends, who were glad to be off shore. For telegraph and telephone, boring visits, unwelcome letters, schemes of man ashore, and wiles of woman "at the sea-shore," are alike powerless to break the Nirvana of the salt-sea waves. "I think Byron had this 'in his prophetic eye,' when he daintily sang, 'And I have loved thee, ocean,' and so on, to the end of several very neat verses," remarked the High Priest. He secretly rejoiced escaping the service of some legal papers. Filling his glass, he cried: "They can

serve them on the suri, not on the master. I am a master of arts—all nautical arts,” he cried, as Stanwix escaped his puns and sought the quarter-deck.

“There is the one woman near her who might grow into Marie’s heart. There is an unwritten part of this woman’s unfinished book of life.” He was strangely disturbed. “A sealed past, or an unfinished story. What gives her face its unspeakable air of watchful silence? Rosie Felton is only a gilded water-fly of the moment. Anybody can read her through and through. But it is impossible with Edith. This southern woman has no scheme, and her manners, which make up her code and her religion, will prevent her intrusion. Besides, she can in no way benefit by Ultima’s friendship, and what would make her that gentle child’s foe?” He turned away, satisfied, to mark the interchange of signals with a sister boat of the N. Y. C., and forgot the problems of his solicitous fears, and yet he was blind.

At that very moment, Mrs. Rosie Felton was tripping out of Frank Van Arsdale’s down-town office.

“I wonder if there is a point for me, in this—shall I carelessly let the beautiful Edith know?”.mused handsome Harry Low, as he politely saluted the lady whose neat coupé became very familiar in Wall and Broad Streets later.

“Not yet time. I must watch!” thought the confidential man, who was already so “confidential” that, in his own heart-musings, the wife of his master was “Edith” to him. But only in the wellings of that young passionate heart as yet.

Mrs. Rosalind Felton was after all so deep, that even Harry Low could not penetrate, with his searching glance, the lace-and-silk fortifications of her wicked merry little heart. “What the devil is she about anyway?” the young man grumbled. But the fair Rosie tripped safely away, and, nestling in the coupé, mused, “I do not care a snap how Harold takes my letter! I can reach him whenever I want



to. I will hold on here!" And her heart was already set on a neat little luncheon at "Maillards'" with some private reflections of a "wooden horse" description. "It was a time of roses," indeed, for the Princess, and the little schemer was the very happiest woman on Broadway, as she delicately blew a kiss seaward. "Floyd is a good fellow, he will not forget my things! I only hope he will have them properly packed."

More than one in the Van Arsdale house was that day playing a little game; for Miss Ultima's secret foe, beautiful Edith Van Arsdale, with an impatient heart awaited in her boudoir an answer to a note she had sent to counselor Decatur Hoyt. It was the first step toward compromising herself since her marriage. "It is perfectly safe; it is only an ordinary note!" Edith thought, with a sense of relief, as she threw down a journal extolling the "magnificently arrayed beauty, who was the cynosure of all eyes," etc., etc. The child of fortune knew, however, that she lied to herself to still the beatings of her anxious heart.

"Nothing—nothing is safe in this world; and death—and man's cowardly selfishness are the only things certain," she admitted, after a half hour's mental battle. "But, Frank never comes home at luncheon, the counselor will surely call on his way home," she smiled a cruel and confident smile, "and Van Arsdale would think it was only a matter of personal consultation." She was in grave error as to her cool husband's gullibility. But one thought swept away all prudent scruples. "I must silence Harold, and keep him away at all costs."

It happened that the gentleman more used to "counting up costs" than the feverish Edith, was at that very moment very carefully scanning her letter in his private den.

His pulse had risen ten beats while studying the brief note, for he was an intellectual, idealistic man. The clear firm handwriting, the crisp, fresh elegance of the material,

and the decisive brevity of the note brought near to him the victorious young beauty whose rich life seemed to have overflowed into his own. Age has its vanities, its day-dreams.

"I must do nothing in haste! Let me see," the counselor murmured. He recognized the rising heart-tension as "unprofessional," but he atoned, by "doing nothing in a hurry," his cardinal maxim. "There is something under all this careful brevity." He read again its open frank words :

"MY DEAR MR. HOYT :

"Will you favor me by calling to see me before six o'clock this evening? I wish to ask you a question about English law. Please answer, by bearer, if I do not intrude upon other engagements.

"Cordially yours,

"EDITH VAN ARSDALE."

His answer, when finished, beyond the address, merely intimated that he would have pleasure "in calling as requested." "My lady has some scheme," the veteran beau concluded, as he folded the letter with the greatest care and placed it, with its envelope, in a place hardly fitted for legal records—his inner waistcoat pocket. "It is the old thing," he complacently murmured. "A woman will tell you all she knows, finally, if you only wait, in silence. I wonder what she really wishes of me. They all have some private undertakings of their own, these queens of to-day. I must, of course, do what I can, for Van Arsdale is one of my best clients." The lawyer strangely remembered a bit of extra external decoration on his way "up town," that night. It had occurred to him that the interview was set in the knowledge that Van Arsdale would not be at home, as his home-coming hour of seven o'clock was well known to all the intimates. "I can trust myself," proudly the counselor



plumed himself, as he bravely went on his way, doomed to be as wax in the hands of the woman who counted on her beauty, her dissimulation, and the power of her matchless youth to escape "paying any of the price." So nicely is New York adjusted in its automatic self-regulation, that no understanding of these particular events of the day of the "Aphrodite's" flitting, entered the minds of the distinguished parties playing this great American social game of "Blind-Man's-Buff."

The hour which Decatur Hoyt spent in a quasi-legal conference with Mrs. Edith Van Arsdale, on this day of his first retainer in her service, passed all too quickly for the counselor. He was too intent upon noting the mental bearings of her skilfully-directed queries, to observe her actual invulnerability to his possible approaches. While he sat in the obscure shade between two of the great front windows, dim with their drapery, the lady enjoyed the half light, dear to belles, and occasionally nodded as a friend drove past on the Avenue. Her toilette, with a *raffinée* maliciousness, suggested preparation for a special visit, and yet a tinge of ceremony relieved its full display of the exquisite moulding of her matchless form.

Her voice ranged in the perfectly safe notes between a confidential murmur and a spirited conversation. It was just loud enough to disarm a tip-toe servant from eaves-dropping, and yet a little too rapid to have been easily followed.

Her frank cordiality, which disarmed the expectant lawyer, was flavored with an occasional flash of the special interest of the day before, that scene on the "Aphrodite's" deck when her "whisper thronged his pulses with the fullness of the spring." Had Decatur Hoyt known that all these little delicious bits of by-play in this Dresden-China interview, were neatly arranged pieces of "bashful maiden art," he would have been amazed. He was placed in a confidential pillory, where his slightest movement would have made a

tableau for the pale, proud, reserved beauties, "with hearts on fire beneath the snow of their breasts," who were rolling by momentarily. He "lingered in a delicious pain," as the thrill of the beautiful woman's personal magnetism lulled his prehensile mental faculties into an agreeable torpor. He was charming in his demeanor, so much so, that Edith Van Arsdale secretly rejoiced. "I have him socially hypnotized, — 'bottled up' as it were." And the Venus Victrix had now no further doubt of her final triumph. "He will come again, he will tell me things which I do not even ask to know." And, so nature reversed the comfortable conclusions of the wary counselor at his office, and a Greek form carried the day over the wisdom of a Solon.

"I must disappoint him in some way!" the alert woman said in her heart of hearts. "He will have some preconceived notions of what I wish. He is like other men; he fancies that all women are the same." It was true that Decatur Hoyt's last suspicions were centred upon the defence of any interests of his client. He was sure that she wished some secret information about her husband's affairs. The lady simply astonished him by saying, "I wished to send a thousand pounds to Europe, in connection with some English family affairs of mine. I was not sure I was doing it right." With a sigh of relief, Hoyt, who was a stickler for professional decorum, answered her very sensible questions about foreign and English receipts, and all the details of a transaction passing in the "exchange office" of her active mind. In fact, so rapid were her queries, that the counselor was quite off his guard, when, with a flash of her splendid eye, she remarked, looking him full in the face, "I now understand all the details. But I have not the thousand pounds in hand at the moment. Can you get it for me?"

The living force with which the lawyer had swung along into a semi-confidential intimacy carried him bravely over the awkward gulf, and he had replied, "Most certainly, at



once," before he knew where he was. A reward ample for his devotion was lavished upon him in the few moments of their meeting eyes, as she truthfully said, "I did not like to ask my husband for this lump sum. It is strictly a private affair of my own. If you will give me the name of your bankers, I will have it placed to your credit within three months."

The lawyer bowed with a happy smile. "How shall I send it to you, Mrs. Van Arsdale? In what special form? My boy will bring it to you to-morrow in a sealed envelope, at any hour you name." The gallant lawyer allowed her to fix a time when Van Arsdale would surely be absent in an active raid upon other people's cash reserves.

"A bill of exchange on London, twenty days after sight, to my order, if you please," said the happy woman as she rose, displaying all her beauty in action, while gently wafting the counselor away from a theatre of mingled pleasure and usefulness.

On the way to his one solemn feast of the day, his dinner, sacred from intrusion, Hoyt was oxygenized into his normal mental activity, "That is an able woman! She played upon me as if I were a mouth-organ. That money is to cover up some gap in her life. First trick, my lady, but I will have my reward, at your hands, yet. I can ask her nothing now," and Hope smiled, delightful but delusive.

"He is in my hands," smiled the triumphant Edith, as she swept away to dress for dinner. "It is *noblesse oblige*. He will say nothing, and he dare not! I will send this to Sir Derwent Loftus. He will be glad to have Harold leave Athens. This, with a hundred pounds to take him away—and I fancy my letter will make him blush."

Three weeks after Edith Van Arsdale had shorn the locks of her sentimental legal Samson, two handsome young men were most vigorously engaged in a desperate fencing bout in a fair upper chamber in Athens. Without, the New Stad-

ion Street was only disturbed by a passing carriage, or the loud cries of the grape and melon-peddlers. The fencers were in complete contrast, as they sat panting heavily and breathing out the fire of youth after a last exchange. The one, dark, supple and flashing-eyed, with an oval cheek tanned to a deeper olive than its natural hue. A refinement of feature and curled black moustachio gave to Cyprian Lascaris the jaunty air of a hussar in love. A sturdy, splendid good-nature spoke in the brotherly salute and interchange of lightning thrusts between the young swordsmen. But the younger, graceful and bright as the Sun-god, tossed his mask and foil away, and threw himself down on a carved bench. Proceeding to leisurely twist a cigarette, he laughingly repulsed the continued efforts of the other swordsman, who, Hector-like, invited him again to the field.

"We've had enough for to-day, Cyprian. You always tire me out with your solemn deliberation. Why, you fence as if your very life hung on your sword's point! It is enough to know these things well, without making a trade of them. I'm tired! I hear Diane opening the piano, and we have had enough. There will be no one to fence with you at Singapore, I dare say. It's too beastly hot out there for anything, they tell me." And the curling smoke-wreaths ascended over a head as handsome as an Antinous.

"See here, Lazy-boots," cried Cyprian, "I will post a *defi* at the Club and make you resign your championship, if you will not teach me that disengage and *riposte* which tore away the laurels of the unconquered Bottani."

"Well, wait a minute, till I finish this cigarette," pleaded Harold Calvert, half dreaming as his quick ear caught the first notes of a voice which thrilled in his very heart. The very prince of Sybarites, Calvert half closed his eyes and drew his breath, in hushed rapture, as the melody, which was a private signal between them, floated up the



stair. It was *Dites-lui*, that pearl of tenderness interposed in a web of merry buffoonery. "It's easy to see that you had a French birthright, Cyprian," finally said Harold, as he rose, his face somewhat pale, and added, in a quiet, strange voice, "That song always affects me, I know not why. Come on! I'll teach you that neat little trick. You will have it in a few trials. You may need it, perhaps, some day, in your wanderings, for wherever *lingua franca* is spoken, all you fellows are 'jealous and quick in quarrel.' I don't see what you Greeks have to fight over here, anyway. The women are all too amiable—there's nothing worth taking away, and the Golden Fleece has turned into a few casks of beggarly currants!"—always a sneer!

The song was finished, and the afternoon shadows, slowly creeping from the west through the deep stone window embrasures, stopped the fencing lesson.

"You have it now, Cyprian!" listlessly said Harold, as he replaced his fencing-gear. "A little bit more practice will give you all the trick; but, after all, fencing is like everything else in life, a matter of cool nerve. There is always one of the two who must yield, at last, accidents barred. Now old 'steel-wrist,' I can touch you every time, but, by Jove, you would pink me surely in the 'regular business.' I get at once tired of everything the moment I have half mastered it. That is what has ruined my life. I wish I were going out to Singapore with you, and could cut civilization forever."

Standing in an unconscious pose, Harold Calvert, at twenty-five, was the very ideal of beauty and symmetry. Cyprian Lascaris, three years his senior, serious and manly, drew Calvert to a cosy table-nook.

"Let us have a bottle of our favorite, 'the White Witch,' Harold, and talk this over. Why do you not come out with me? I will certainly be a year in Singapore. I must settle up all my father's affairs, for my uncle is a very old

man. You know what the French are—slow to let go. The mistake my father made, when he married D'Albert's sister at Pondicherry was not to have kept his children out there. Of course Singapore was very different twenty years ago. Now, I have to go out and learn all this great business from my uncle and acquire much experience, before I dare make a home for Diane out there. True, she is happy here, but my grandfather is old, half-blind, and there is no one else left to watch over Diane. I shall be very lonely there! Come out with me. You can arrange all your affairs easily by next week. Come with me as my guest, and I'll see you safely sent home here, if your uncle wants you."

Harold Calvert made a gesture of hopeless refusal. "I cannot, Cyprian! I thank you, however, all the same. As for Sir Derwent, he would be only too glad to be rid of me. But I have some very important letters coming," his brow darkened, "and they may decide my fate. What could I do there? You are a merchant, bright, useful, energetic. I am that worthless product, the son of a propertyless gentleman. It's the curse of my English blood!" he bitterly said, gazing at his shapely white hands. He deliberately lit a cheroot, and, in a burst of frankness, said, "My father was the same before me. He never did a useful thing in his life, and was an accomplished storyteller, a noted diner-out, and a graceful, flickering, social shade. He knew three things *au fond*—cards, women, horses!" Calvert laughed bitterly. "I sketch a little, turn off a random verse, play an excellent game at billiards, and I will back my luck to always lose on any one event. If I had money, I would hire a fellow to go and bet my own money against me every time! Work will make you happy. You may be a great man in the commercial life of the East, but I am unfit for it. Even among the Southerners in America, I was a marvel of uselessness. My father be-



queathed me his manuscript notes on gastronomy, some valuable *viva voce* hints about women," he sneered slightly, "and a physical impossibility to work. If there were a good war I might—but," he interrupted himself. "I'm only a half-way citizen of my two countries. Neither America nor England would have me." He paused in a fit of bitter self-depreciation. "I might become a riding-master and exhibit my pupils before my rich sister's windows."

"See here, Harold, why do you not go to New York, to your sister? You tell me that her husband is a man of immense wealth."

"It is true," said the world-wanderer. "And yet I know he would turn me out of doors. I presume my sister is under his heel. It's the way of the world. Besides, I have other reasons." That woman, whose alternated love and hate followed him, rose as an ogre, on his mind.

"You are not too old to make a splendid career yet, Harold," earnestly cried the young Greek, as he laid his hand in friendship on Harold's arm.

The young man started as the music of *Dites-lui* again thrilled the silent reaches of the fencing-hall.

"I'm just old enough to go to the devil," said Harold, springing up. "See here, old fellow, I will go down and have a few words with your sister. I'm not going to stay in Athens after you leave. I must——"

A sharp knock interrupted the catalogue of Calvert's necessities. A servant in the livery of H. B. M. Legation handed the young grumbler a note.

"Beg pardon. There's an answer, sir," said the Englishman, for Sir Derwent Loftus had his own stout Britons around him. A look of surprise made Calvert for one brief moment interested in life, as he read the laconic words:—

"Come to me at once. I have an important communication for you, from your sister." The sternly-scrawled sig-

nature, "Derwent Loftus," told him it was a matter of moment.

"If you will excuse me, George, I will go downstairs and pen him a few words of reply. They want me at the Legation." The Greek was hopeful for good news.

"But you will return for supper, there are so few days left us now," hospitably urged Cyprian. "I will wait for you."

"Ah! I will speak to Diane about that," answered Calvert lightly, as he went his way. When he reached the drawing-room of the old Greek merchant's residence, Calvert at once forgot his listlessness. His tread was as soft as the panther's when he stole upon the beautiful girl seated there, her dreamy eyes gazing out into the vine-trellised gardens in rear of the handsome mansion. "I heard you, darling, but I could not leave him," he whispered, bending over her and speaking tenderly, as he stole a kiss. He spoke in her mother's tongue, beloved in her youth, the graceful language of the French. Calmly seating himself at Diane's open writing-desk, he dashed off a few lines. "I will come back instantly," he warningly said, with a finger on his lip, for Cyprian's heavy tread was now heard on the stairway.

"You must come to the garden to-night, Harold, you must," the eager girl whispered.

"Very good. I will come back and take supper, then I will go away and slip around into the garden and wait till all is safe." A gleam of infinite tenderness lit up her eyes as her lover hastened away, spurred on with the necessity to meet the one man he feared, Sir Derwent Loftus. He did not think of the quivering lip, the tear-stained eyes of the lovely girl he left, for he had the last Calvert inheritance, which he had not named, false even in that, it was a cold, callous, heartlessness. While Diane Lascaris hastily avoided her brother in maidenly flight, Calvert, with eager strides,



hastened to the dröschky-stand. "What is up ! By Heavens, old Loftus is now my only respectable back-ground ! My sister ! A communication through him ! It means mischief." And as he rolled along over the plain to meet his uncle, he seriously pondered upon Lascaris' offer. "Cyprian is a good fellow at heart," Calvert mused. "If Diane were going out there, I might," and he thought of all the years he had known Lascaris, and of all he owed him, since first he met Cyprian finishing his English, ten years before, as a volunteer assistant secretary at the English Legation. Abandoned by his father to Loftus' temporary care, the promotion of his unclè from Consul-General to Minister-Resident had left him a sort of shadowy *pied à terre* with the stern old Resident.

On his last visit this year, which was now closing in the embarrassment of a homeless man, Diane Lascaris, newly home from her convent school in Italy, had engrossed the leisure of his tiger-like heart. For, chased out of America by deeds he dared not face, Harold Calvert's delicate face, his mournful tender smile, the gleam of his speaking eyes, of a blue which recalled "Handsome Calvert," of the "service," had been a spell to the motherless and fatherless girl. With an infinite cowardice, Harold Calvert led on the sister of his friend to secretly love him—a wandering *vaurien*. The blind old grandfather nodding under the plane trees in his garden, regarded Diane as still a child. Cyprian's visits to Italy, Constantinople, and the Levant on the business of the active house of Lascaris, left Diane, an inexperienced child, alone with the handsome American-Englishman. The old grandsire's limited vocabulary was only modern Greek and *lingua franca*. The French and Italian, Diane's only languages, except her native tongue, fell musically upon the ear of her accomplished lover. A very child in mind, a pure soul, an untroubled dreaming beauty, in the passionate flush of young Greek womanhood,

Diane Lascaris was an easy prey to Love, her heart warmed by the breezes of the Ægean and stirred by the passion-haunted winds from Italy's love-storied shores. The Pygmalion to awake this glowing, childlike Galatea, was her brother's one trusted friend—the handsome, classic-faced scoundrel who, at twenty-five, had all the arts and graces; and whom no man on earth deserved to call friend. As the droschky reached the Legation, Calvert was, at once admitted by a not over-polite butler. "His Excellency has been waiting for you in the library some time, sir." Harold Calvert ground his teeth, for he detected the ring of the "poor relation" reception.

He was face to face with the practical, however, very soon, for Sir Derwent Loftus wasted no words. The bustling, middle-aged, red-bearded diplomatist held out a letter, without ever bidding his nephew be seated. "Harold," he remarked, in a harsh, dry tone, "there is a sealed communication of grave importance to you. I have the most explicit directions from your sister. If you will call at ten o'clock to-morrow morning, and give me your decision, I am prepared to execute her trust, with some precautions of my own. You must absolutely execute her wishes. I do not care to discuss the matter. You may as well make it a simple yes or no, when you come, I will have no trifling and as I have to go to the Palace, I suggest that you now go home,"—the word sounded bitterly, in this atmosphere of cold aversion—"and, carefully consider your course." With no offered hand, Sir Derwent Loftus saw the adventurer leave, tightly clutching his sister's letter in his quivering fingers. The door banged somewhat loudly.

Sir Derwent Loftus's speech was usually a series of excerpts from "dispatches" that he had written, or was about to write, but, as his face twisted into an authoritative scowl, he roundly said, "There goes a young man who is just as unprincipled as his scoundrel father, who broke my



poor sister's heart. He is as worthless, has that 'taking way' of the Calverts and is just as handsome,—just as vicious."

Two sentiments agitated the heart of the *distingue* looking *Senor Inglese* who, in a little Maltese tavern, read the bitter words of his resolute sister. "Curse them all! They fling me this money like a bone cast to a starving dog. Loftus is an old brute; I deserve no better at his hands. But Edith,—pitiless, mean-hearted, and—that other one!—Women are all alike. There is but one way to master them. To conquer them. At any rate, driven out in three days, I have a year's comfort. And—Diane."

As he went back to break the bread of friendship, a plan at which the fiends of hell would have laughed—"recording one lost soul more"—entered his reckless mind.

"He goes next week. I go first. He will be away a whole year." In a whisper heard in hell, Calvert faltered, "But will she go?" And as he stepped from the droschky at the doors opened by a brotherly hand, he smiled, as he saw Diane's exquisite face light up in welcome. "I can make her do anything. I'll tell her to-night, in the garden." And realizing that he had a tangible sum of ready money before his eyes at last, he mused, "I can make these conditions a little easier than Edith thinks. She has not heard the last of me yet. At any rate, this vile and wandering life of servitude, of dependence and humiliation, is over at last. And—I will enjoy myself a little."

His soft speaking eyes rested with a gleam of brotherly frankness upon Diane Lascaris when he astounded the little circle by saying, "I am so glad to have been with you to-night, for in three days I must leave Athens." All started in astonishment.

"You will return, surely," suddenly cried Diane, forgetting the look of quick attention which testified her brother's surprise at her unwonted emotion.

"This is very sudden, Harold!" said Cyprian, gravely,

while Diane translated to her grandsire the news of Harold's departure.

"No bad news, I hope, down there, to-night!" And he vaguely indicated the Embassy. Calvert smiled and showed his splendid teeth.

"On the contrary, good, very good! I am sent for and probably will leave Europe for some years. Just where I will be employed, I cannot say, but somewhere in America." Harold, with a meaning side-glance at Diane, watched Cyprian's face keenly. "I am going to work at last!"

"Ah!" cried the noble-hearted Greek, "it is as I hoped. Your sister's husband will aid you to make a great career. I am heartily rejoiced."

And even smooth-faced, brazen-hearted Harold felt a touch of compunction, as he lightly said, "It's hard to go, Cyprian, but life is one long-drawn-out parting! 'Shake and break away!' as the Master of Ceremonies has it, at the sparring match."

"You will make friends, Harold, wherever you go!" heartily said Cyprian. "And I, too, am on the wing! It will be lonely for Diane."

The girl's eyes were very dreamy as she bent over the coffee-service, for she waited the tryst in the garden. "You will surely give us these last evenings!" said Cyprian, still in the exaltation of the pleasant surprise. Harold bowed, with a frank glance at the girl who was now composed, but marble pale. All the blood in her body seemed to have sought her throbbing heart. "How do you go?"

"I shall take the Constantinople steamer, and a through train to Paris. There I can easily get the Cherbourg steamer for America." The artistic liar gave such a business-like finish to his remarks that the wheels of the Oriental express seemed to echo in the room. "I need not tell them that I can drop off at Scio. I am my own master now," gleefully thought Harold, who saw dancing before his eyes the cabalistic figures, £1,000, 0s, 0d.



"I am so glad you can at least give us the evenings, Harold!" the Greek merchant remarked. "I am so busy with my own departure. It is queer that we separate so suddenly, but we shall meet again," he mused.

"By Jove, I must be off!" cried Harold, with a sudden start. He glanced nervously at his watch, for the air seemed strangely thick to him. With elaborate courtesy he said a formal "Good-night" to Diane.

"I have to go down to Piræus yet to-night, Harold," said Cyprian, "to see one of my captains who sails to-morrow. I'll see you, though, to-morrow night." And he blindly departed. While Harold was lingering over his adieu, under the starlight at the door, the helpless grandsire dreamed in his chair.

An hour later, in the depths of the incense-breathing garden, Harold Calvert tore the weeping girl's arms from his neck. He feared her strange exaltation, for the tempter had told her all. "If you really love me, if your heart is mine, as you have often told me, I will meet you at Scio. I have a friend there, an American artist. I will drop secretly off the steamer there, and shall not leave his house. Now, Diane, my own, my darling, the weekly steamer for Smyrna stops at Scio. It leaves two days after George sails. It is but one night's voyage. I have never been at Scio. No one knows you—knows me—there. "Listen," and he whispered a few last directions. "I must go first, you know that, for your sake, for our love," he finally said, straining her to his breast. "You are all the world to me, my darling. You will be my wife, mine forever! As a Mussulman woman, no one can see your face. I will leave you money. I will be at the landing, and I will have a nest for you in Smyrna. Then, we can seek the new world. All will be forgiven, when I write Cyprian. Your decision?"

In a transport of trusting love, she threw herself in his arms. "I cannot let you go alone!" she sobbed.

## CHAPTER VII.

## A HIDDEN BOWER IN SMYRNA.

Two weeks after Cyprian Lascaris had folded his darling sister to his breast, for the last time, a young man, dressed in the easy garb of an English tourist, sat at a table in an old stone house in the Mohammedan quarter of Smyrna. His fine face was careworn, and although a brandy bottle and cigars were within reach, several letters lying opened before him indicated their study, rather than the pleasure of the moment. A long-drawn sigh from an adjoining apartment startled him. Stepping to his door, he softly clapped his hands, and a young Turkish servant shuffled into the room. In a few whispered words of *lingua franca*, he gave some brief directions. The maid salaamed, and passed on into the room—letting fall a thick Persian curtain behind her.

“Diane is lonely as yet—it’s natural, first fit of melancholy. She ought to come around soon!” muttered Harold Calvert, for it was indeed he, whose wiles had led the Greek orphan-girl to a hidden bower in far Smyrna. There was a shade of seriousness added to the easy, half-insolent air of Calvert’s handsome face. Lighting a cigar, he paced the room, his foot sinking in the tufted Persian rugs. He surveyed the semi-European comforts of the room. “Not so bad!” he approvingly nodded, “a man might be worse off than here! I can easily get all that Diane needs. The Turkish disguise is not as costly as Worth’s creations,” smiled the young man. “It is a snug retreat. Few European tourists poke into this lonely quarter. Bazaars, drinking-dens,



the stock sights of the town, the dancing girls, that is all they want. And if an alarm came, I can easily run up to Aidin, on this rattletrap new railway. "I might meet some fellows I know. Pshaw!" he murmured, filling a glass with brandy, "I will stay here! It will be a long time before Cyprian hears the news. That old fool Lascaris will never think to cable to him. I left first, clearly bound to America. He cannot connect me with it! I can take Diane out sailing and fishing; we can wander around the bazaars. There's a jolly run among the Cyclades or over to Candia and Cyprus. But some of these sharp Greek fellows might know her. I can take her over to Cassaber and Alasher too, on the other Smyrna railway. I think I can find enough to amuse her!" and the scoundrel smiled with a sinister pleasure. His eye noted the divans, the many little articles brightening the old hall. "It was a chance to get this place," he murmured, "and that dragoman of the Consul never has seen her. How neat she is!" His eyes brightened, as he saw the varied results of motherless Diane Calvert's first attempts at housekeeping. "This is a queer old place, not so poky as some others after all. The gulf is superb. If I only dared show myself—and there's a club here, too! That would be too dangerous. By Jove," he laughed, "old Polycarp would have been astonished to know two railways and an English club here. They clubbed him to death here!" grimly joked the solitary man of leisure. "I must take Diane up and show her Homer's grotto. I wonder if he really was born here. By Heaven, I have it! I can shave off my moustache, and with a false gray beard and Mussulman rig no one will know me. We can then drive around, and play hide-and-seek with the tourists. It will amuse Diane—a young wife." He grew suddenly grave "I should have thought of that before! Somebody may have seen me at Scio—'a face they don't forget,' people say. It would have been a complete protection against that fiend

Rosie." He paused in deep thought. "If she does find out where I sloped to, I will take Diane up on the Albanian coast. Durazzo is a marvel for cheapness and comfort, and there's good hunting, too, there? Tourists never seem to come to the Adriatic, and Diane would have a lot of Greek women up there to chatter with. Yes. That is it! I can be safe there, and by giving Edith an address at Trieste, I can get all my letters safely. I will tell her I am in the Austrian Tyrol. She can then enjoy her new glories in peace," he bitterly cried. "But, when this thousand pounds is out, she can find another. Yes, it's all right. I'll go and send Diane out for a little walk with the Turk. She seems to have no end of fun chattering with her. And tomorrow, I will be Calvert Effendi, a Persian shawl-merchant. Sorry to have to shave," the fop did not forget to remark. "I must answer these two cursed letters! I will enclose them, and have them posted from Durazzo to America. How lucky I ran up on that run with the practice-ship." Mr. Harold Calvert's trade in life was such that he never forgot these little points for future uses. "Beastly bore, this writing," he murmured. He fancied he had thought of all, but he dropped his hand, as he was about to lift the curtain. "What if Cyprian Lascaris and I should meet!" And a sudden chill struck him to the heart. "Time enough for that, when we stand face to face! I have married his sister, anyway—thanks to her school-girl scruples," he very firmly said, "and I will take the best of care of her forever," he added, as he dropped the curtain behind him hastily, for Diane sprang to meet him with a cry of happy welcome. The air of conviction in the last clause was not too positive, for the Calverts were not a race who were famed for sedulous attention to their families, and Mr. Harold Calvert had all of his roving father's faults, with the omission of one or two of the virtues which could ill be spared. The easy descent of life perpetuates all the weaknesses born of habit



and vice, and leaves the sterner virtues clinging far out of reach. One of Major Cecil Calvert's best points was his real kind-heartedness. It was in sheer shiftlessness he had ruined himself, and neglected those whom he should have cherished. Pleasure had been his God, his own ease his daily law. But the handsome villain, on whose bosom Diane now breathed out all the quickly-awakened tenderness of her loving breast, was a quick pupil in American directness and roughness of manners. Conscious of his singular power, almost inexplicable, with many women, he strode on to the acme of his pleasures, a mad passion his only guide. "And custom had made of it to him, a property of easiness." Soulless, heartless, egoist and passionate voluptuary, Harold Calvert revelled in the dangerous powers of the youth which was to him a time of a dark harvest. There was not an illusion in his mind as he sported with women's hearts. Coldly intelligent, he was an agnostic of the heart. He little cared to soothe, after he had fatally acquired the right to rule. That "right" which the spoiler claims as his by bow and spear—that fatal solecism which leaves woman defenceless in the hands of her betrayer, is the crowning cowardice of modern civilization. Shunned by other women, preyed upon and sneered at by men, the victim of one moment of mental vacillation or a sudden physical passion goes wailing to the block of shame—goes friendless and alone!

In his coldly-directed career of pleasure, Calvert had never paused to think that the absolute value of a human life is nothing. That its relative influence upon others is tremendous! Admitting that human life is a trust, upon which we are blindly thrust in infancy, without our consent, the fact that the individual essence returns to the great Trustor, in the judgment of eternity, does not relieve the human trustee who makes his unbridled vices an infamous law to himself, he who burns and brands all others with his own fatal mark: Such a callous human fiend, running amuck,

under the easy protection of the "laws of society," is met with in every circle!

The sea of life is infested with these schools of human sharks—men who tear and devour—women who raven and batten—upon their wounded sisters!

As Calvert stood straining to his breast the beautiful girl, whose whole passionate soul welled up in her loving eyes, he knew he was a foul, criminal coward. That he had led away the sister of his best friend, tricked her into the doubtful mockery of an irregular marriage, and that he, at ease in a safe retreat, revelled in the freshness of her beauty—opened to him, as a flower to the compelling sun.

Hard of heart, keen of eye, the villain gloated upon his work, in loosening forces never to be again confined in their vivid play—the passion-play of a woman's heart. It is idle to say that man does not know when he commits the deadly sins.

True, if the unfathomable purposes of God had designed us to solve to the *n*th degree every question of life—mental and physical—each of us would have been equipped by nature as a complete working university—physical and spiritual—of infallible acumen. But to sail upon the seas of life, even the greatest, needs but to turn the steadfast eye upon the star of Truth, Love and Good-will, and sail as confidently as the mariner, compass led, on unknown seas. The infinite tragedies of life can be played in the simplest heart, as on a world's theatre. The whole joys of earth can be compressed into one look of love, a smile of tenderness, the welcome grasp of loving arms.

Calvert passed his hands with a gentle touch over the rippling masses of Diane's silken hair. He knew just the languid charms of his dangerous voice. In the easy assumption of his proprietary love, he murmured, "You have rested well. I am going to send you out for a walk, now, with Fatmeh. I have some letters to write, and to-night



I will go out with you myself. I have a plan which will make you happier soon."

"Harold! Harold! Do you love me as much as before? Am I worthy of your love? Will we always be happy—as happy as now?" The girl-wife was thrilled, as she gazed into the eyes of her handsome lover-husband. Alas! In all these thrilling reflections of passionate appeal, the loved one merely sees an image cast back by the questioning, loving heart itself!

"It is always this way," mused Harold Calvert, as he watched them mingle with the polyglot stream of wanderers in the narrow streets of the Turkish quarter. "Women never seem to think you can love them enough! Now there was the same unreasoning tenderness in Rosie," he reflected, as he returned and faced the letters awaiting their answer. He scowled as he said, "I am not half way through her scrawl. I will study her outbreak when I dispose of my lady sister."

The faculties of which his friends had highest hopes,—the keen, alert brain, the quick turn of mind, the graceful thought, all came into play, as he carefully composed a long letter to Mrs. Edith Van Arsdale. "It is hard to thoroughly deceive her. 'She knows me too well;' said Calvert, reflectively, as he made a Stamboul cigarette. "But this time, I think I have placed her, so as to leave the door open for future events. The only thing is to hoodwink her, I don't care to have her find me out, while I have Diane on my hands." And he hastily glanced at the door, heartless moral coward as he was, to see if the helpless victim of his latter-day sensualism might perchance have heard the unconscious prophecy of her final heart-break.

"Ah!" mused Harold. "This sort of thing never does last forever!" And the philosophic scoundrel took a sly refuge behind the axiomatic fact that there were other villains as cold-hearted as himself. Strange to say, their

effective work is most patent in what is called "good society." Their victims have more to lose in those ranks.

With great satisfaction, Calvert finally arranged the doubly-addressed letter. It was befitting the mansion of his fortunate sister in appearance, for the gentlemanly "good form," of Harold was proverbial.

"She is certainly good for another thousand pounds. I should judge from the acerbity of her letter, that this first sum cost her a little manœuvring. I must not be too bump-tious. Edith always had a will of iron," he mused over his next cigarette. "Basta!" he said, folding away the letter whose scorn and reproach seemed to wound him, even at long range. "A silk string is as good as a steel-wire rope; if it draws my lady. Soft and easy goes far, you know! This will do.

"Now, Mrs. Rosalind Felton!" and he read with a darkening brow, a letter from the Princess of Nowhere. "That woman is a born devil," he soliloquized, as he laid down the letter and glared at it as if it were a serpent about to strike its fangs into him. "She might blunder upon some way of revenge—such brain-sick fools always do. And can she, in any way, block my interests with Edith? Pshaw! Edith meets her for the first time. I can easily deny all. It is only another embarrassment—an added reason why Edith will promptly find the way to another thousand pounds for me. And yet this fool says she has a friend," he laughed meanly,—craftily, "who is cruising this summer in his yacht over here. A rich American, a veteran knight of the Mediterranean. I hope to God he does not meet Fred Norton. Confound it all! why, Norton himself is going back to New York in the early fall, to exhibit his 'Sketches of the Greek Archipelago.' All those women knock around these studios—very convenient places for little *rencontres à l'inconnu*. If Norton should blab; Now, there's the weak point. This devil of a woman might



trace out the marriage—and it might end in turning Cyprian Lascaris loose upon me. He knows my sister's new address. He is a most Quixotic fellow. It would be devilish rough to have to kill him, and extremely awkward if he should kill me," the young *roué* slowly said to himself. "By Jove. I'll write at once to Norton. If he has not left Scio, I might run over and see him."

His face grew stern in its annoyance. "I cannot leave Diane alone here, and I would not dare to take her with me. I must try to circumvent this devil in some way, to pacify her, to hold out a foolish hope. 'Two hearts joined,' and all that nonsense. It will stop her amateur detective foolery; and she is just mad enough to spend a great deal of her own valuable time," he sneered, "and, perhaps, someone else's good money, in tracing me down. How does she live?—But I cannot risk the trip to Norton's place again." The husband of a week reflected upon the wildly-awakened interest of the loungers on the quay at Kastro when the Athens steamer came driving in, half-buried in the wildly-tossed spray of a mistral. The spectacle of a handsome young foreigner, bearing in his arms a fainting girl, clad in Turkish garb, to a waiting carriage, had aroused a curious mob. The ride to the old castle where Fred Norton's temporary studio was set up, the astonishment of his chance-met friend at Diane's beauty, all this came back to him. "I have been a blind fool!" cried Calvert, springing to his feet. "I will send the dragoman over to-morrow in a lateen boat and get back those sketches." For he thought of the possible danger with a mental lightning-flash. Norton had made a splendid sketch and an oil-study of the bride and groom, after an old English clergyman, a summer visitor, had been hoodwinked into the formality of an irregular marriage. As Don Juan and Haidee, the striking beauty of the passion-joined pair shone upon the canvas. It was the very ecstasy of nature's awakening which shone in Diane's

dark liquid eyes. Her exquisite form was fitly robed in the Greek costume which she wore with a native grace.

"And he got me down to a microscopic exactness!" cried Calvert, seizing a glass and drinking a steadying dram. "Every fool in New York will have the story at the tongue's end soon. I'll look over her letter again to-morrow. But now for Fred Norton. I must have those sketches. I'll buy them back at any price! I will lay him under the bonds of honor, too! *Noblesse oblige*, and so on. I must work quickly. Diane will soon be back, and women always suspect the unusual and inexplicable. I can send for the consul's dragoman by Fatmeh."

It was late that night when Harold Calvert slept. "He must find him at once, if he goes on to Athens or Constantinople," was the schemer's last uneasy reflection. His wearied head tossed in unrest upon the fair pillow of his beautiful wife's bosom. He would have walked the floor all night had he known that four days later the baffled dragoman would return with the news that Fred Norton had started to America, called home suddenly by his mother's death.

The streets of Smyrna were musical with the tinkling bells of the donkeys, pannier-laden, with fruits, vegetables, flowers, fresh clover, and the varied spoils of the sea, when Harold Calvert returned from his morning dip. He was in a bright humor, the reflex of his awakened physical manhood. For as he stood in the brightening dawn, after cleaving the blue velvety waters of the Smyrnesse Gulf with the practiced arm of a splendid swimmer, the rosy glow on his ivory skin brought out every splendid contour of his royal physique.

The haunting visions of the night had fled, the blood coursed vigorously in his young veins, and, as the golden sun came leaping over old Mons Pagus, Calvert sped along the beach, a runner as graceful, as superb in bearing, as any



Ionian, Eolian or martial Macedonian who ever paced these silvery sands. "It is something simply to be alive," cried the stony-hearted young Adonis. "To stand here, where Alyates, Antigonus and the Moslems each tore down the great city they found, and to laugh at dead creeds, and at forgotten conquerors. Life is but enjoyment; life is love!" So his eye rested cheerfully on plain and crested hill, on old templed ruins of classic grace, and the modern wooden hovels of the humble toiler. "I will give up my Mohammedan masquerading, until I feel safe. This stubborn old Pasha governor here would keep me in jail if there was any hubbub. I had better move on to Durazzo." For the uneasy thought came to him, that he had given a false name to the old clergyman, whom he had sought at some distance from Norton's eyrie on the hill at Kastro.

"Bah!" he laughed, as he entered his own door, in the quaint old stone caravansera, once a pasha's harem, "I have both the certificates, I could easily destroy them! The old parson fellow won't live long, and he will not make a return to his bishop. That ten-pound note did the business. I will keep these papers, carefully," mused Calvert, as he stole in to glance at the girl who had quitted all to go out into the wonderland of Love with her idol, trusting alone to "Harold." "Cometh up as a flower," might well be said of that brave, bright-hearted trust of woman in man's love and honor. Though watered often with tears, though chilled in pitiless storms, it clings forever. It has taken root in the human heart. It "cometh up as a flower," bearing pure and beautiful blossoms. The old, old fashion of love and trust. And by all the dear loving eyes which have looked unutterable love, may it never change, the quaint old fashion of love and trust: for, *Amor vincit omnia!* Nothing shall in the end prevail against woman's fond and noble love! Lifted up above the spoiler's foot, that rose of mystery, woman's love, shall bloom perennial. "The old order

changeth, giving place unto the new." Woman is yearly, thank God, leaving the shadowland of innocent serfdom.

Gazing down upon her as she slept, Harold Calvert paid Diane the involuntary tribute of a graceful merciless Pagan. He held his breath as she lay wrapped in the calm, pure sleep of innocence, her bosom softly rose and fell to dispel the haunting idea of death made beautiful. One silver rounded arm lay bare, covering a breast of snow, her dark hair sweeping back from the nobly-chiselled Italian brows. The long lashes trembled, and the roses on her cheeks melted into the pallid face's marble beauty. For sweet as was Love's dream, there was an infinite sadness in the Greek girl's mourning for the home her wandering feet might never turn to again.

"She is the handsomest thing in the world," murmured Calvert in ecstasy. With unconscious truth, he whispered :

"You wake in me a Pan not dead,  
Not wholly dead, Autonoe."

For, as he stooped and waked her with a lover's kiss, the creedless, soulless, nineteenth-century Pan-worshipper for a moment felt every fibre of his soul thrilled with a mad love for the girl whose arms drew him down to her faithful breast.

Calvert knew not that his highest transmission from the line of his egoistic ancestors was the incessant yearning for an extra human union of grace and womanly beauty in mere physical action. Astarte, Aphrodite, Venus Victrix, Lorelei, Undine, Aslauga, the mystic shadowy beauties of sea and shore, of starry skies, of high heaven cleaving lonely mount, of forest and fell, those fairest queens with crowns of gold who draw us near to their burning bosoms "in dreamland," all these torture the self-devouring heart of the Pan-worshipper of to-day. In the freshened hour of love's dawn, the future



fled away with its haunting cares before the splendid lustre of Diane's love-lit eyes.

It was in the early afternoon that Harold Calvert returned to the plans of his future wanderings. He was free to ponder over his fair enemy's letter, for happy Diane, with the mute Fatmeh, were visiting the old hill-ruins, in charge of a skilful Turkish guide. And Calvert hastened his messenger.

"I am glad that is now off my hands!" said Harold, gleefully, he had watched the fleet lateen boat "Nidaros" skim away with his emissary, the wily dragoman of the English Consul. This functionary, whose sole pursuit in life was easily-gotten "backsheesh," revered Calvert, as a representative of the great English Pasha at Athens, and well was he primed to keep Harold's counsel—Sister Edith's useful gold!

"He is a smart rascal, faithful—when well paid," sneered Calvert,—“and he will be back in three days, with the sketches. By Heavens! I will then be proof against any American meddling,” he exulted. “I wonder what is going on over there, anyway. It seems so far off, that restless, eager, madly striving whirl of American life. Here on the shores of the Greek Sea is the cradle of all that is divinest in song, thought, beauty—Homer, Plato, Venus!” mused the young man, reluctant to face the old letters. It seemed that Rosie had enclosed several of these mute witnesses in her stirring appeal to a manhood she yet fondly believed in.

“She in Edith's circle! So strange! The world is a series of strange concentric curves, and it seems there are points at which all orbits intersect! Strangest of all, once met, fated to meet again! And with what changed hearts! Mrs. Rosalind Felton, the planet of Love is in aphelion! I have a fair excuse for lingering here, in perihelion. For Diane ‘shines you down!’ And, yet I thought once to know no other face than yours. That we were all in all to

each other. It's the way of the world. And we have drifted sadly apart." He fingered the letters carelessly. "Did I write her all these? She, able to watch and to scheme upon my living treasury, Mrs. Frank Van Arsdale! By Jove! That Felton woman is capable of anything." He paced the silent room, in disturbed thought. "I wonder what the situation is, 'by fair Manhattan Bay.'"

Could he have looked through the shaded groves of Cragnest, he would have seen the last blossom on the Stanwix family-tree, beautiful "Miss Ultima," wandering by the shores of the Hudson with a tall, earnest-eyed, young soldier, whose progress in the "art of war" had caused him to doff the adjutant's golden chevrons at West Point, to offer his breast as a living target for Apache bullets in the "Sixth Cavalry." Marie Van Arsdale had seen the solemn glories of the "last parade" on General Stanwix's arm, when the musical voice of her one cadet-hero commanded, "First class, fall out!" there were tears in her eyes as the long line of young officers marched to the front, to the time-honored, rollicking old soldier air, "The Bould Soldier Boy." "There's my plume, Miss Marie!" cried the handsome ex-adjutant, as he gave her the dancing feathers he would never wear again. For he was an officer now!

Never? Ah that ominous word! Never! The very voice of Fate! For the sixty young men who had just walked into their lieutenancies in one last cadet-salute to the General of the Army, would never stand shoulder to shoulder again in life. "Look out that the Apaches don't get your hair, Earle!" heartily cried the old General, as the mob of congratulating friends closed in on the young men, now the country's promise. The ex-adjutant smiled vaguely at his father's retired classmate. He heard nothing but a sweet voice, the very first to call him "Lieutenant Schuyler!" And so it was, that on the three months' leave of absence, before "joining," Lieutenant Earle Schuyler, 6th Cavalry,



U. S. Army, frequently paid his respects to General Stephen Stanwix.

"So thoughtful, so different from the other young cubs!" gleefully cried the veteran. "He thinks of me!" So the young cavalryman did, for there was a fair young face to sweeten his cup of happiness—the tender-eyed "Miss Ultima!" "Don't you think she is the handsomest thing you ever saw in your life, Earle!" said the General, one day, as they walked the garden, where Marie was attempting her fiftieth attack, by sketch, on "Cro Nest." The "Mary Powell" swept past them down the storied river, wafting the strains of sweet music to the banks. "I do, certainly, General," stammered Lieutenant Schuyler, the tell-tale blood leaping to his face. "And no one would think she was over thirty years old!

I came up on her, with my staff, at the close of the war, that is, all that the rebs' left!" muttered the General, musingly.

He hobbled away to drink a reminiscent glass

" To the loved and gallant dead  
Who had made them thirty-seven."

"By the Great Scott," laughed Schuyler, as he caught his breath, "the old gentleman was talking about the steamer," and he slyly smiled, as he volunteered to sharpen Miss Marie's pencils. They were already in trim, but Earle had forgotten his last interruption.

"It was the time of roses, they plucked them as they passed.

Miss Ultima was unconscious of Harold Calvert's theory as to orbits, as she raised her soft eyes to the tall young soldier's face, and dropped them, in a sudden confusion.

The distant disciple of Pan, dreaming of life in Gotham, might have seen his queenly sister, "the cynosure of all

eyes." She retained that "social eminence," for Frank Van Arsdale's raids upon the "street," had made him even richer. The expression, "The beautiful Mrs. Van Arsdale," had become axiomatic, and her saturnine husband experienced a second-hand pleasure to see America's *jeunesse dorée* crowd around her carriage. Seated on the piazza of the Ocean House, at Newport, gazing out upon the sapphire sea, Van Arsdale grinned as he muttered, "These youngsters are making court for next winter's dinners, and our theatre-parties." With the easy insolence of a plutocrat, he recognized the sharpness of these youths, who wished to keep the *entrée* of at least one house, where they would not have to "dance for their supper." It is true that the *fainéant* youth of Gotham go in strongly for the "unearned increment." "Pick your houses with a little judgment," said young Rhinebeck, sagely, "and all you have to do is lean back, and let the 'married women make the running!'" and the young snob smiled, in self-satisfied vanity. He had found several dames verging toward the approach of the mature, if not the sere and yellow, who thought "unutterable things," when he approached their crowded hallways, softly nourishing himself from the ivory crook of his cane. These "sons of the Revolution" are a powerful body-guard for the Genius of America!

Frank Van Arsdale was not stirred by jealousy. "I have her, by Heaven, and—I'll keep her," was his silent oath, as his cold eye followed her, driving away with a bevy of "rose-buds," around her, and a cloud of knights of the Polo Mallet, in pursuit. He often wondered, "Has she the least bit of heart? If so, I have never found it." Awed and deceived by her unflinching attitude of thoroughbred, masterly reserve, the old worldling would have leaped to his feet in rage had he dreamed that her passionate heart followed every plunge of the "Aphrodite," now tearing along the Mediterranean, in a stiff mistral, looking for the lands where the roses of morning bloom. It was even so.



"I am glad Rosie is here," muttered Van Arsdale, as he joined some brother-capitalists in a cocktail. He never drank with a man worth less than a million, and the "White Marble Club," was a child of his dreaming brain. "I must see that the little woman has a good time. She is a neat-handed thing."

Rosalind Felton, the Princess of Nowhere, was very ardently furthering his kindly wishes. "Why does not Harold write?" she demanded often of herself, at night, when she loosed the girdle of her shapely loveliness. "It seems to me"—and then she would drift out on the sea of rosy dreams where a golden shower was falling upon her, and Harold Calvert was gathering with her the harvest of treasure.

But, far away, recalled to the sense of duty by fear, Mr. Harold Calvert, at Smyrna, safe in his old stone nest, hidden from Fate's attacks, resolutely read every line of the vindictive woman's letter. He opened each marked enclosure of his own, now bitter memorials of a dead past. He dropped them without a sigh.

"By Jove! A fellow is an idiot, to leave this sort of thing behind him. It is worse than dead champagne," he said, with a pitiless criticism of his college love-letters. For it was while "the promise of his youth was written on his brow," that, even then, vicious and jaded at heart, he had walked the path of passion-led self-abandonment with the tempting Hebe, who was now an avenging Hecate. She wrote sternly.

"Come back to me, Harold! Let us make a common stand against the world! I am free now. I want you alone!" she penned her appeal with passionate vehemence. "All we need here is a foothold—your sister's position gives us that! I see a way to open a mine of gold for you and for me. In a coming situation, which drifts towards me every day, you can even brave your cold sister, and bend her to your will. You know what you owe me for the past! I do

not prate. I will not even threaten, but, by the God whose every law we have broken together, by the girlhood I gave to you, I swear that you shall listen to me! This world has grown strangely small now, Harold Calvert, and I have a strange insight into your sister's daily life. It is by mere chance—a turn of Fortune's wheel! I can dash the cup of happiness from your lips when you least expect it. There is not a man on earth safe from a woman's revenge, if she is of his own rank. I have shown to you now my heart in love. Do you remember that for two years I lived an awful double life for you? Do you remember? I will not bluster. Read this, and then be warned!—You swore some things to me, on your knees, then, that I recall now. Is it peace or war, Harold? Be a man, and answer, yes or no. If you answer, whatever be your answer, I will fight you fair. If you do not, you shall live to curse the day when you first saw the face of the woman, who, by your broken faith, still signs herself, though freed by death,—Come back to me—Harold!

“ROSALIND FELTON.”

“I wonder if I have made a mistake, loading myself down with Diane,” thought Calvert, forced to face the situation, as he looked at the last clause Rosie had dashed in over her signature. “If this she-devil were to make a row, if she found me out, I would have no protection against her now, and Edith could drop me as a withered limb of the family-tree. Women of that class alway kick up such a hubbub!” Calvert looked out on the harbor, and his pitiless eyes followed the course of the “Nidaros.”

The cold egoist never gave a thought to the woman to whom he had long sued on bended knees for her self-abasement. It was himself who had dragged her down into “that class.” The friendless, fearful-eyed, pitiful *hetaira* of modern American society! Lingering, “neither without



nor within the door," these repentant Peris see their scoundrel betrayers suing within the "golden gates," at last, in sober earnest, to more desirable dames! And yet, in Vanity Fair, in Gotham, in the social wreck of reputation and the general crush, a draggled feather here, there a moulted plume from the wing, is often lost to the general eye. If the Peri has attained to that golden wisdom richer than Hermes' Trismegistus lore—more practical than all Thales' counsels, then she is safe. "Be careful that ye be not found out" is the key-stone of the arch of the latter-day commandments.

Mrs. Rosalind Felton had attained this sage knowledge, and those who peeped behind her rustling armor of feminine bravery to know the anxious heart within, were either *particeps criminis*, or else greatly feared the keen-eyed Hebe's trenchant blade.

"The best thing to meet womanhood's cold sneer," often thought Princess Rosie, "is powerful protection! Either a man of the Golden Hammer, irresistible in his social might, or else a respectable pillar of the Church! Each is equally loth to lose the 'public good report!' Of the two, I prefer the out-and-out capitalist," often thought Rosie; "they are more practical, and are not so subject to moral scruples about 'spending money,' as some of the religionists of good family connections." So Rosalind was a Susannah to the elders of New York, and laughed as she opened Van Arsdale's Pommery Sec. "He has more to lose than I have," laughed the angel who flew "very light" as to this world's gear. "Van Arsdale must keep his house open to me."

Mr. Harold Calvert picked up a little faded yellow sheet of paper. It bore the insignia of his college society, "The Collar and Elbow." He patiently glanced over some verses he had once sent to the "Queen of Roses," with a cluster of the flowers the foolish girl then loved. Yes, there was the title, in his boyish hand:

## "WITH ROSES."

You fain would read her story, as she stands,  
With downcast eyes, and clasps her slender hands,  
Pressed to the white breast, where wild rapture glows;  
That secret deep is hidden, 'neath the rose!

For Love has sealed her dainty lips from all,  
She hears—but only answers to one call!  
You crave to know to whom her spirit goes  
Out in Love's silent pledge? Ah! Ask the rose.

For one alone she waits with dreaming eyes!  
A sigh—a smile—two arms in glad surprise,  
Would clasp him to her wakened heart! Who knows  
That happy lover's name? Only the rose!

For one, now absent, in her heart of hearts  
She longs in Love's sweet pain. Its thrill imparts  
The only pang that fairest bosom knows.  
When will he come? She only asks the rose.

In clinging white, Youth's light upon her brow,  
She stands, my heart's own darling, waiting now,  
A dream of Love! Her color comes and goes,  
She guards my life—my soul—under the rose!

"She was a beauty then, I remember," and Mr. Harold Calvert thrust the papers carelessly in his breast, as Fatmeh came shuffling along the passage.

Diane, glowing with a freshened loveliness, as she cast aside her Moslem veil, kissed him fondly as she gaily cried, "Put away your writing, Harold. Fatmeh will bring the breakfast soon now. I will sing you a little Greek boat-song I just heard again, an old, old friend!" And the lovely girl-wife, picking up her guitar, sang the lover-husband into forgetfulness.

Evening brought Calvert no further counsels, when the subject gloomily returned to him. "Hang it all! I don't



see what I can say to her. I think that I had better get out of here."

And so Mrs. Rosalind Felton's letter remained unanswered. Four days later there was a mad look of rage on Calvert's face, as he hastily strode into his secluded den.

"Diane!" he said sharply, "we must leave here by the Brindisi steamer to-night! Make all ready, my darling."

The Greek beauty clapped her hands in delight as she cried, "And I shall see dear Italy once more!"

"Not so much of it, darling," he answered, softening, as he noted her surprised glance at his moody brow. "From Brindisi, we go up to Ancona, for I must take you over to Durazzo, in Albania. I have some business there for a couple of months. I will make Edith answer for all this. She lolls in plenty," he muttered.

"The world is all the same to me when you are by my side, Harold!" cried the happy girl, speeding away to obey him. He stood in a bitter mood of self-accusation, for his messenger had returned empty-handed.

"Fool, that I was! Norton is half-way to London by this time, and the pictures are lost to me." Mrs. Rosalind Felton's unanswered letter weighed upon his breast; with a sudden impulse, he took out all the papers and tore them to tatters.

"She can go—to the devil," he deliberately remarked.

A week after, as he returned to the little Italian coast-steamer, for Ancona, on which he had transhipped Diane, closely veiled, without taking her on shore at that mournful inane town, Brindisi, he breathed freely at last. For a chance Athens acquaintance had recognized him, alone, at the quay.

"Have you heard all the great row at Athens, Calvert? That pretty sister of Lascaris has run away, or got drowned or been murdered."

"I know nothing, old fellow!" he had quickly answered, his

heart beating wildly. "I take the P. and O. boat here for London and America. I left three weeks ago, and had to come back here for some cursed remittances, which failed me at Constantinople, sent here by mistake."

And the lie did him good service.



## CHAPTER VIII.

## THE PALE ONE WHO SUMMONS.

THE summer roses of ninety-one duly followed their sweet sisters of ninety, and the first flurry of November snows brought back a few of the advance-guard of New York's society. It was a fortunate dispensation of Providence which gave us the Thanksgiving day "ball-game." It replaces those hum-drum *réunions de famille*, which are now universally voted such bad form. The fiction of family affection has disappeared, with many other fading myths. William Tell, the Up-guards-and-at-them fable, George Washington soundly cursing General Charles Lee at Monmouth, Cambronne's stogy remarks at Waterloo, and Nelson's pleasing reminder of "what England expects," all these things, too, are slipping back into Shadowland, crusted with doubt and bad form. The return of early winter enables a few keen votaries of fashion to be first on the ground to plan winter toilettes, and map out the social campaign. It is the solid work of the year. Hearts are trumps in summer days, but diamonds are the winter honors. Scurrying about town, the first flight of society women note the ghastly work of tan and sun. Some lonely men begin to timidly peep out of club-windows, and a folding and flattening out of Arabian tents occurs at the seashore.

Alack, and well-a-day! The diamonds of summer-hotel head-clerks repose once more in Simpson's overstocked coffers "until the birdies come again." Surreptitious French down-town restaurants miss the jolly little parties who "happened in, by Jove!—Just missed the boat,"—but caught

the fair typewriter, or, belike, some good neighbor's wife, "bound to Chatauqua," who has also "met with dire disaster," and "missed her train."

Visiting lists are conned, card-engravers are busy, the fur-merchant laugheth the straw-hat man to scorn, and the yachting-cap taketh a back seat in the synagogue.

Mamma steameth back from Paris, Miss Hopeful, a bit *blasée* followed by the invariable German baron, who swings his knife as if a sabre, or the barbarous-looking French Marquis. This social comet has sometimes an awful tail to unfold, a menace to society—a homeless Russian prince! It is but right that some one should "take him in," as they go up and down the world continually, "taking others in."

Papa heaveth the sigh of duty well done, and shaketh hands with the eldest, and eke ye second son, that the summer stories of strange and unforeseen meetings shall be treasured on the *entre nous* principle!

For the American *famille Benoiton* has been "making hay while the sun shines," and the sun shineth every day in summer. The park policeman hangeth his Celtic harp upon a willow tree, for the handsome nursery-maid goeth not far afield, with the patrician children who throttle each other, while Maggie Murphy maketh eyes at Patrolman Casey of the "super-finest." (Not investigated.)

"Mademoiselle La-la," from the Haute-Garonne, driveth no more grandly in the park with the sick family-poodle, and house-watching servants stretch their gouty bones in a return to hateful work.

The "summer-girl" has passed away like the Assyrian cohorts (whatever they were), and the German band rehearseth Wagnerian effects for the winter, amid the united curses of the adults upon their block. It is a transition period!

Homeward, bringing their strings of scalps, the bright Pawnees and dashing Sioux of the gay world demurely come. 'There's many a heart that's broken, and many a sad word



spoken," at the seaside, when those quiet little *parties à deux*, pool the bill, and part to meet again, when the reception season offereth "congenial pabulum." Returning Thespians make broad the phylactery. Ballet-girls, Casino-bred, "in the days that were," drop the domestic air of the summer-farm, and launch out in lofty practice-kicks at the chandelier globes, "shivering to the tingling stars," as Alfred, Lord Tennyson very happily observes.

Those dainty yachts which "sailed afar and battled with the breeze," now repose in housed canvas, a prey to the industrious mud-crab, who never loseth his grip. When the winter scale of robbery has been passed upon by the Ancient Order of United Hackmen, and Tammany's hatchet swingeth sharply whistling, then the last rise of coal tells the humble man, "not in the swim," that Macy will soon order a Christmas to occur for the benefit of his overworked, anæmic looking shop-girls. In other words, New York city changeth its summer-skin of promiscuous deviltry, for the *raffiné* wickedness of the "bird-and-small-bottle" season. The "reception" young man, being taken out of his case, where he lurketh; and the society reporters having procured one gross of new pencils all round, as the Emir of Bokhara quaintly observes when about to roast out Mr. M. Strogoff's eyes, "Let the amusements and games go on." And they do go on, forthwith, "until further orders."

One jolly face was missed in the "survival of the fittest." It was that of debonair Floyd Stanwix, whose white sails glittered not in the offing. Pious Miss Cornelia Stanwix murmured prayers for "the safety of those who go down to the sea in ships." Old General Stephen Stanwix laughed heartily at her fears. "Floyd! What's the matter with Floyd? Wherever he is, he is 'combing his hair with an ivory comb.' He is a salamander and a dread-naught, a Flying Dutchman navigator." The old veteran's chirp was feebler, and he took a strange pleasure in reading the fre-

quent letters of Lieutenant Earle Schuyler, U. S. A., describing his scouts in the Mogollon Mountains, and sharp raids into Mexico.

Miss Ultima was the very happiest girl in New York, for to her ardent bosom she had taken several heart-comrades of the bright-plumaged flock of Madame Mears, and these sweet girls jointly devoured the caramel of Maillard, made singularly-inaccurate French translations, disturbed the piano most unwillingly, and wondered whom they were all "going to marry." Had these bright children of fortune known that the entire unattached nobility of Europe had a monocled eye in their direction their gentle bosoms would have heaved fewer sighs of uncertainty. The American heiress is destined to meet with "somebody," very soon after her "emergence from the penumbra" of the "finishing process."

Usually with persons descended from ancient robbers of strong will or superior powers of "cleaving people to the chine," or "thrusting tough lances" into them, for the haughty blue blood of Europe bubbles to catch the daughter of the occidental millionaire. The glue-pot, beer-barrel or wheelbarrow of the "16-quarterless" girl's modest escutcheon is swamped in the lions, griffins, bears, checkers, lozenges and such gear of the blazonry upon their lovers' borrowed seal-rings.

Miss Ultima, sweet Marie Van Arsdale, nursed tenderly her first secret, her own, her very own! It was a letter from Uncle Floyd, written from Trieste, in which he promised the romantic girl that he would be with her before Easter. "You are to say nothing to any one, dear little one; I have my reasons," so the Admiral incautiously wrote. The division of this secret instantly among the sworn members of the "Us Girls' Society" caused it to soon reach, by subdivision *ad infinitum*, old General Stanwix, who stoutly said: "Pshaw! Floyd would not send such news to the child; he knows that I am the head of the family."



Pretty Mrs. Rosie Felton, gliding in and out of Frank Van Arsdale's house in a careless habit, growing more reckless daily, fretted also for news of the unreturning Stanwix. "I wanted those things for the French Ball," she pouted. "Never mind, Van Arsdale will get them here, and I will fine Floyd for disobedience. He shall buy me some good diamonds at Tiffany's. I wonder where he is, after all. If he has seen that—that—Harold Calvert." The hiatus in this sentence was a look which boded the dweller at Durazzo no good. Rosie Felton was, however, a thoroughly satisfied little body, now. "Frank, it is better I should come openly to your house. A little encouragement on your part will lead your wife to ask me to dine, *en famille*," she added, with a queer twinkle in her eyes.

Van Arsdale gruffly assented, and never knew the real reason. Mr. Harry Low had some personal ideas of furthering acquaintance with the tempting woman, who saw quickly that the down-town office calls were too frequent. "It must be at his own house," thought Mrs. Felton, "we are both too well-known to meet at hotels or the swell restaurants." It was indeed true. On her memory-haunted pillow rose many visions of little frolics with Floyd Stanwix at these cosy places. These meetings had enriched the sly waiters with regal "tips," but had made the haunts ineligible for her later pleasures.

An object-lesson in indiscretion, was the result of her Riding Hall visits, for a gentleman had called upon her, whom she instinctively recognized, though he was in plain clothes. A very handsome temporary loan was given cheerfully to the polite semi-stranger. Its repayment was never asked for. Rosie cheerfully thought, "It was extra money of Frank's, anyway." And yet the little woman dreaded that this same smooth gentleman might call again, when Frank was no longer there to provide.

"Something might happen any day to Van Arsdale," sud-

denly thought Mrs. Felton, and she trembled slightly, as she looked in the glass, and said, "What then?" For well she knew Van Arsdale's perfect cold indifference to any human heart, save as they bent to his will or ministered to his pleasures. *Après moi—le deluge!* was his actual code. Both of them were out of their reckoning. For stately Edith Van Arsdale clearly saw that a tie of some kind bound these two in a hidden past.

"Watching me, I suppose," she said, with haughty scorn. She was coldly indifferent, for as she observed to herself, in her solitary council-of-war, "If they did not meet here, they would certainly exchange ideas somewhere else. It only gives me a chance to watch them without trouble."

For property, property, property, still clung to her waking and sleeping thoughts. The great house with its comings and goings was, after all, empty and cheerless in its tone. Not a note of accord had ever sounded in the halls, still haunted by the vague mute sufferings of the first Marie's loveless marriage. Yet, Edith Van Arsdale swept into her second season in unchallenged pre-eminence, for she was as faultless as a golden clock-work love-machine. Hungry and irritated at heart, Van Arsdale, traitor as he was, was always piqued by her "safety play," and baffled by her cold superiority. He knew that he had failed to impress himself upon her; for, firstly, she was not wax, and, secondly, the desert, he knew well, was in his own heart. "I have lived like a d——d scoundrel," he once admitted, in a blaze of wrathful introspection. "I could not expect anything else. But she is game—is my lady. And she has earned her dower-money. No one shall sneer at her when I am gone."

Van Arsdale was too exact a calculator, too cold and cautious an observer, not to look forward to the time when his seat in the clubs would be vacant. He acknowledged in his heart that Edith's daily life was beyond suspicion,



but the proof through Rosie Felton had cost him dear—yet still he kept his watch.

The rosy little spy was too politic to hint to Frank Van Arsdale that his royally-beautiful wife, mindful of a second marriage, splendid with his gold, had decided only to look for a fitting lover through a crape veil. Ah! That crape veil of young widowhood! It has hidden many an eye sparkling with long-deferred passion. The folds of black resting on a quiet bosom have enshrined many a burning heart. It is well! All things are well done, when done "in good form." This is the later New York code.

In the routine control of those around her, Edith Van Arsdale was matchless. Confidential secretary Harry Low had once dared, once only, to venture out of the shell of his timidity, and he shrank back humiliated at once, for well he knew that the cold stare of surprise and anger, tintured with a haughty scorn, meant his impending dismissal, not from my lady's favor, but an actual ejection from her husband's office. She was brave as a Circassian! Low decided that this fair woman "outclassed" him, and his subsequent conduct was only a tenderly-mute appeal for forgiveness. It would have cut the handsome fellow's pride if he had known that Edith Van Arsdale merely regarded his one unmistakable familiarity as a cowardly impertinence. She knew the fawning race of underlings *ab ovo*. It was far different with Decatur Hoyt. That astute counselor was wont to rub his hands softly when he thought of her, as if passing a beautiful velvet fabric between them. "She is a wonder—a wonder! I never met any one with such a reserved sense of power." He was on terms which were too warm for the brotherly, far removed from the "friendly professional," and too near for the mawkish sensations of family relationship. Her veiled interest flattered and yet puzzled him. In the gently-animated tread-mill of his mild, but unmistakable wooing, he was ever travelling, yet the

approach of Christmas saw him not a bit nearer the hidden citadel of her heart.

"I have him just where I want him!" mused Edith, as he handed her the second thousand-pound draft, which went to Durazzo. The first had been repaid by her, the ice was broken, and Decatur Hoyt, caught in the toils, could not get away. He now asked nothing but to be near her, and she called him to her side by a motion, as the deft Japanese juggler with a wave of his fan, brings back the fluttering paper-butterfly. Edith Van Arsdale knew now his very heart-secrets. A waft of the perfume of her clinging laces, a soft tremor of her voluptuous bosom, a single languid motion of the curved rounded arm in its silvery sheath of warm ivory glow, a meaning glance of her eyes, with an impelled flash of tender confidence, or a suggestive pressure of her hand, brought a warm mist to the old counselor's eyes, who "told her all and slept," afterwards. He was unconscious that she was the one failing case, of "women always telling you all they know."

Before Trinity's chimes rang in the New Year, Edith Van Arsdale was possessed, bit by bit, of every valuable hint as to her husband's vast properties and great schemes. None of the parties to this little New York magic-lantern exhibition dreamed that, resting on her proud and passionate woman's heart was the only letter she had received from Floyd Stanwix since the "Aphrodite" danced away beyond Fire Island! It was simple, formal, earnest—but earnest as to another's interests only. "Oh, Floyd! Floyd! Why did I not give you a sign," she murmured once, as the very folded paper seemed to burn her like fire. The indomitable woman was giving way under the strain of daily self-repression. A mad fit of jealousy seized upon her tortured soul. Richly, royally dowered in beauty, gleaming in her robes of state, she stooped to hate the slender neophyte of Madame Mears' "diamond-polishing mill," with an insane fury.



"Thrusting herself ever between us, I must, I will, sunder them. For the future, the future would lead him to my arms, if it were not for this girl who brings up, always, the pale gray shade of Frank Van Arsdale's dead wife."

When cooler, she read and re-read the one well-worn letter with a queer sense of uneasiness. Its object was to beg her to watch especially over Miss Ultima.

"I hope to return before spring, but I learn that General Stephen is very feeble. I know not what may happen. Miss Cornelia is a child in this 'world of hard-hearted sinners.' You know what I mean. I do not mock at her. Your husband seems to only care to provide for Marie's material wants, which her own large private estate makes a mere unnecessary attempt at fatherhood. I remember your words, every letter as you wrote them: 'You may depend upon me whenever you may wish to call upon me.' I do now call upon you. I ask you to be a mother to my dear child, Marie, the shy, lonely girl, in case anything happens. What she wants is love and tenderness. You know that."

"Oh! Floyd! Floyd!" cried the brilliant "cynosure," as the "leading journals" still termed her, bursting into the bitterest tears. "Looking through my heart, your eyes range over it, beyond it." And when her grief had passed away, the strange reference to her brother returned again and again.

"I met your brother Harold at Durazzo, a dashing old fortified seaport in wild Albania, where I ran in for a fortnight's mountain hunting. He is a splendid-looking fellow, but strangely shy and uncommunicative. Do you hear from him? I think he said he was 'sketching,' or 'writing,' or 'looking up something,' or some other one of the thousand excuses men have for doing nothing nowadays. I was sorry to find him gone when I returned from the hunt, as I wished to ask him to take a run on the 'Aphrodite.' You know I have some capital fellows on board. But his note

was brief, and the old inn-keeper bungled the message he left for me. He ought to be with you. He would make his mark in New York society."

When Edith Van Arsdale unclasped her pearl necklace that night, returning from a "beauty show," it suddenly dawned upon her that the arrival of her second thousand pounds and her brother's shy manner were in some way connected with his sudden disappearance. It all pointed to Floyd Stanwix's arrival. "What can he have to hide? Shy! The most coldly reckless young man I have ever seen."

And Floyd Stanwix's name trembled on her lips, as the society queen buried her doubts in the slumber which sought her pillow of down. Through the long night her unhappy heart beat fitfully, for Frank Van Arsdale's second wife, in the routine enjoyment of luxuries which palled, denied a love fitted to her ardent, passionate soul and royal youth, looked forward to the uncertain favor only of a worn, vindictive, imperturbable old man, who had bought her with an unpaid golden price, and chained her with pearl ropes to a chair of barren honor in a house secretly divided against itself.

There were no spasmodic twinges of pain in Mrs. Rosalind Felton's heart, on that pleasant winter afternoon, when her tire-women pronounced "*Madame vraiment charmante.*" It was the opening week of the season of studio receptions, gentlemen's matronized teas—private views, of bachelor interviews, and several other newly-devised functions, beginning in *banal* ceremony and sometimes ending in gay little orgies. The pale-faced, soft-eyed New York youths who wear Turkish pantalets, and burn pastilles in the semi-harem obscurity of their dim haunts, were now beginning to show up—the jelly-fish of human existence. The long-haired, western recitationist, the obtuse poet, the necromancer with rolling collar and apoplectic diamond solitaire,



the man who did all sorts of things, and several disbanded operatic failures, men and women, with a ruck and truck of young men who had nice voices of a feeble soprano note, suddenly spread out in mushrooming rapidity of evolution. Nobles, Englishmen "of good family," and many "quaint and curious" adventurers thronged these haunts, filled to overflowing with the tide of New York's pampered, idle women of good looks, and more or less *laissez-aller*. The beverages, strongly "reinforced," the freedom of the cigarette, and the unbounded license of talk, and suggestive pose, were decidedly *fin-de-siècle*; whenever the grim face of a middle-aged man of any importance peeped in, it was usually with the divination that "by accident," some one particular woman, with eyes of latent flame, would softly murmur in surprise, "Ah! This is a pleasure. So unexpected! And so, you too, are interested in art." These little fictions would have brought a spectral smile to the faces of the far-too-amiable Bianca Capello and Duchess Lucrezia Borgia, could they have peeped in upon their apt pupils in these Gotham studios.

Mrs. Rosalind Felton was looking her very best as she nestled in the rich, dark-blue velvet-linings of her blue-black enamel coupé, on this "studio reception," afternoon. The team and equipage was also a *partie de famille* affair, brought from Van Arsdale's own stable. "You can easily have one retrimmed for me, Frank; it will save me great trouble and daily annoyance."

"And me, from buying a new one," remarked Van Arsdale.

"I would like my crest and monogram on the harness," thoughtfully remarked the prudent lady, "but she may visit the stables some day."

Mrs. Felton's one concession to the slight improprieties of her confidential employment, was the distant reference to the "wife of the capitalist's legal bosom," as "she." It always provoked a grim smile from the millionaire.

"Rosie has a little shame, at any rate!" he reflected, glad to observe that he was at least one degree *more* wicked than the "peachy-faced blonde," for, he had none at all! "Bless your stars. My wife is above visiting any stable. She will never find it out. By Gad! I think she was born in a palace and had equerries to wait on her. So, cover the harness all over if you wish."

Van Arsdale was delighted to know that she had a crest—the only tangible remains of the shadowy estate of the late Felton. He was a dim and legendary personage who lurked in the realms of the dead past. If not actually a corpse, he, at least, did not materialize. This largely went to confirm the suspicion that he had once possessed a corporeal existence, a local habitation, and a name. It was in a vague search, fumbling over Rosie's memory for accurate details of the alleged Felton, that Floyd Stanwix had laughingly baptized her.

"Never mind, Rosie. You are a good girl, even if you are the Princess of Nowhere." I regret to observe that Stanwix drank the christening bumper of champagne from her pretty satin slipper.

But one rule of caution was instilled into Mrs. Felton by the keen-eyed Van Arsdale. "Buy your things at Den-nings," he remarked with veteran acumen. "They know me there. I have had several accounts there. We trade at Lord and Taylor's. So it will not be awkward. You don't mind?"

Simple Rosalind said, "I have no objection to go so far down-town. It is nearer you," and even the old human shark was gulled with the soft pabulum of flattery. In one man lurks more latent vanity, than in a score of case-hardened coquettes. Rosie was very happy on the studio reception day. Van Arsdale, who had just stolen the greater portion of a railway company's bonds and shares, had given her a very neat diamond bangle, before proceeding to capture the



fragments remaining so far "ungobbled," to use a stock phrase."

"I wonder who is behind this all: 'Mr. Frederic Norton's Exhibition of Studies in the Islands of the Greek Sea,'" and she laughed! Languidly conning the neatly-engraved invitation, she observed that there were to be four of these interesting weekly events. "I will soon read the hidden story of this. Of course, there is some one holding him up."

But the bright-eyed Hebe enjoyed a perfect mental and physical well-being, as her equipage drew longing glances from less-favored sisters. Rosalind Felton was a devout believer in Carlyle's rusty but sound ideas upon "Gigmanity." That coupé and its thoroughbreds silenced the tongue of New York in her case. It indicated either place or power. A settled social place, on a safe financial footing for the gay free-lance, or else a power behind her to fear. Rolling along in the region of the "debatable land," the suspicious "thirties," Mrs. Felton knew that between Lexington Avenue on the east, and Sixth on the west, the temporary "home of Art" was conveniently placed. But who had planted this winter-nest so bravely?

"So easy to reach, Mr. Norton. Very admirably located," remarked a lady, who caught a merry twinkle of Mrs. Felton's eyes, as she swept up to the matronizing Junos. In the morally *décolletée* band of these friendly, masked Venuses, Mrs. Felton recognized a set of ultimately fast, swell married women, known as the "Seven Pleiades."

"Ah, I see!" murmured Rosie. "I shall feel quite at home here, quite safe." In the calm experience of her "inner lights," she could trace a radial fine web of gossamer filaments, stretching well down-town to Wall Street, and various other great places, where money raises its double-eagle crowned head.

"Very cosy it must be here in the gloaming. And so

convenient. Gentlemen coming up-town can drop in quite informally," whispered Mrs. Felton to one of the Pleiades.

"Make yourself at home and stop chattering. There are some strangers here," hastily answered, *sotto voce*, the lady addressed, who had a bit of reputation yet left to lose, and she deservedly prized it.

"Ah, yes! Background—human scenery—effects in light and shade," maliciously retorted Rosie, pinching her friend's arm. For a horde of beautiful young women of varied social grades had been drawn in by the not disinterested Pleiades. "Some of these invitations are directly suggested," mused Mrs. Felton, as she peered into the tempting corners of the artistic den. Each was more charmingly retired than the other. "Man-traps," gaily mused Mrs. Felton. Looking at the shoal of small fry around the punch-bowl, the simpering circle at the "Samovar," the bright guerilla said: "The heavy guns come in later."

Fred Norton, an easy-going Bohemian, and not a bad fellow at heart, was now gaily navigating his bark of life on the "catamaran" system. His studio was supported by the joint efforts of the willowy Pleiades. "Bless you, I let them do as they please," was his good-humored acceptance of a position which he dared not face in a manly way. He knew well that the singular liberality of these designing women, came from their arts, and not his art. "*Vogue la galère*," he muttered. "A man must live!" This is a generally-accepted nineteenth-century axiom.

He was standing eyeing the mirth-makers, whose sparkling eyes were momentarily becoming more passionately "liquid" with each libation, the "pairing-off process" beginning its "judicious selection," when with a strange light in her eyes, Mrs. Rosalind Felton approached him. "Pray give me your arm, Mr. Norton, I wish to ask you about some sketches here. Your pictures are for sale, I presume?" As the handsome fellow bowed, he started, for her



hand was trembling, as it rested lightly on his arm. And yet her face was calm. "Tell me something of the Greek Sea," she said, as she drew him along into alcove after alcove. He had been strangely caught by a Bohemian affinity for the Princess of Nowhere. He had long lived himself in a land of lightest sighs and happiest laughter. A handsome *declassé* Yankee, of talent, dark and earnest, with a waning wit and a failing purpose behind his easy self-surrender. In his thirty years, he had drank too deeply of the wine of life, and now the freshness of Hebe Felton thrilled his jaded pulses. "Pray, is this a set?" She anchored him on a divan, and her warm breath fanned his cheek as she listened idly to his lazy, musical, long-drawn story in dashes. "What is the price?" she quietly asked, and yet her heart was leaping wildly in her bosom, at last awake to woman's sweetest passion—revenge!

"I would rather not sell them. You see it's a study of a young fellow I knew abroad. A sort of a half-American named Calvert. He was married, in a romantic sort of way, just before I left Scio, and this Haidee and Juan are himself and his wife. It was a run away match. She was a pretty Greek girl from Athens! These are the two head studies. They are better than the costumed double pose. If you insist, of course, I may let you have them. I may never see the lovers again. They went to Smyrna. Oh! By the way, a fellow who has just come back from a cruise on the 'Aphrodite' tells me he met Calvert, alone, at an out-of-the-way old Albanian fort town, Durazzo, in Albania. He didn't have the girl with him. Perhaps he drowned her," laughed Norton, as he pledged the beautiful throbbing beauty, now dangerously close to him. Her eyes shone balefully under the golden curling hair.

"Mr. Norton, I will give you a thousand dollars for these, on one condition," smiled Mrs. Rosalind Felton, drawing yet nearer with a Circe-like abandon.

"What is it?" stammered the astounded artist. The gateway of wealth was before him! He gasped in joy.

"You must come and breakfast with me to-morrow, and then, hang them for me. It is an ideal face. I want it in my own room, where I can see it every day," softly faltered Rosie Felton. And with the asinine blindness of manhood, Norton babbled on, and told, with graphic dashes, all he knew of the scenes at Kastro.

"She is the very handsomest woman I ever saw, and her bearing was a mingling of fear and tenderness. I can't make it all out," concluded Norton, as he drank "Brightest Eyes," with a meaning pressure of Rosalind Felton's soft hand, flashing with Van Arsdale's diamonds, for Rosie did not wait for Stanwix's tardy return. She had already laid Tiffany under contribution.

"As they are all so small, I can easily take them now in my carriage, if you will escort me; I am so tired, and I wish to see how the lights in my room suit the colors."

Fred Norton dreamed that night of a woman who had brought back the ideal of his youth—the spring of his stormy life.

Rosalind Felton, her pillow wet with tears, swore an oath of revenge to be kept to the bitter death. As she faced her unknown rival, she swore to strike Calvert to the heart, the perjured, callous betrayer of her youth.

"And he even ignored my letter! We shall see." The wrathful woman swore her oath of vengeance again at glit-tering dawn, when to her tired eyes the Haidee face was even more exquisite.

And, resolutely proceeding to carry her vow into effect, in a week Frederick Norton was the blinded Tannhauser of this modern Venus. Rosalind Felton, before a month was over, was queen of the Pleiades. Useful and adroit, she queened it easily at the "studio" masquerade of lascivious dalliance, for her own master was a veiled Mokanna of wealth, her slave



was the Aladdin of the lamp of Art, and she had only a gauzy reputation to endanger. At home now, the wanderer of the Adriatic, and the Grecian seas, Norton, the pawn of a woman's game of life, set about every behest of his indulgent queen of hearts. Growing together in every grooved passion of easy license, Mrs. Felton had found in the wandering artist her other soul. And yet, the rankling bitterness of her unrevenged wrong, the downward turning of her path once stretching out so fair, bade her lie in wait, as the man-eater in the hot, misty Indian nights, under the moonlit banyans. "I will wait—wait till his hour of social triumph, and then drag him down lower—lower even than myself." With a fit of physical hysteria, the ardent memory-haunted child-of-pleasure drew again the fierce delights of passion's poisoned cup from the past. For yet she loved and craved the faithless one, while Van Arsdale was her victim, and Frederick Norton, subserviently following her bright unhalloved youth, idolized her in his awakened slavish passion. "I can afford to wait," she mused, her face growing stern. As the winter wore on, and Floyd Stanwix came not again, she conceived the idea of sending forth Norton to trace out the newer Paris who had borne away this blameless Helen of Athens. It was upon the eve of the French ball that she decided to dispatch Fred Norton to Europe at once. Her pride and vengeance could not wait, and her bitter curiosity overcame her. She was eager to get a hold on him, and to compass his ruin. Van Arsdale had lately made her own house the convenient rendezvous of a few men who were handling a giant scheme. Timorous of hostile notice at hotel and club, they were safe under Van Arsdale's shadowy roof-tree, presided over by quick-witted Rosalind Felton.

In sheer weariness of isolation, Van Arsdale had grown nearer daily to the woman who was his useful spy and toy.

A few moments before her dinner-hour, the millionaire entered hastily. "Rosie," he remarked, with an unusual

seriousness, "I have a little favor to ask of you. Don't go to the ball to-night, till I return here. There are three or four of us who must meet there and talk a little thing over. I may be watched. The 'Street' is wild. Now, I will come here at ten and dress. I shall leave my house and walk through the club. My man will bring my case here. I can take a street coupé, and no one will then know me, so I will be safe. There's a good girl! I will remember you." Van Arsdale was really pleased at her ready good-humor. He turned back and kissed her. "Who takes you, Norton?" he carelessly asked. She laughed and nodded. "Oh! Then it's all right. Tell him to paint you a new picture, anything you want—your own portrait—and send the bill to me. And, buy a dress to go with it."

Van Arsdale was in a dangerous good-humor as he approached his own home. A certain little matter which had eaten into his heart for some time past was on the verge of a fatal fruition of brief delight. A plan without a name! His brow only darkened when the butler informed him Mrs. Van Arsdale had not yet returned. The dinner was ready. He must hurry.

"Shall I wait dinner, sir?" queried Raikes, eying him. Van Arsdale gruffly nodded and went slowly to his room. He lit a cigar and gave some directions to his confidential valet, who muttered, "The governor looks strange to me to-night. What's up?"

Van Arsdale smoked a choice cigar in his room, while waiting the return of his wife. "She is always over there with Marie, or dragging the girl over here." He thought, with a spasm of decency, that the absence of General Stanwix, in Florida, ill and drooping with age, had taken away Miss Cornelia as his nurse—and so the unloved daughter, Miss Ultima, was temporarily in charge of the last attenuated distant filament of the Stanwix blood, a weak copy of Cornelia, who was at least veritable. The ancient "stone



cameo of aristocracy" was an undoubted antique, a *sans pareil*.

"I wonder why that girl is so disagreeable to me. I cannot bear to even have her linger around," he thought, this night, as the hall-door clanged after his returning wife. Van Arsdale had never admitted to himself that his daughter reminded him of the gentle woman whose heart broke in silence under the burden of his vile life. Her delicate womanhood he could not abase, her gentle spirit, tender yet brave, would not lower itself to his level. So he had flatly refused, to Edith Van Arsdale's surprise, when the politic "cynosure" wished to bring Marie into their home, "Why, the Stanwix will be back in a month! She has a whole *ménage* there, and all her lessons and studies. Go and see her as much as you want. She is well enough off as it is."

In silence, and a preoccupied contemplation of his "business," Van Arsdale finished his dinner. At half-past eight, he rang for his carriage. Edith Van Arsdale, looking side-long at him, as Raikes adjusted her husband's sable coat, for the first time noticed how strangely old he had lately grown. With a sudden impulse, he came back from the hallway, and spoke to the woman seated alone among the barren splendors of the drawing-room. There was a shade of self-accusation in his tone. "Can I do anything for you down town?" he vaguely asked.

"Thank you. I have everything I wish for," answered the royally-beautiful Edith, as she moved to the piano to conceal a sudden impulse to loosen the flood-gates of her heart in a bitter tide. She was tied for life to the oar of her galley. Van Arsdale silently regarded her a moment, and went out into the night without another word. The voiceless piano never reminded the dreaming woman of her half-formed purpose, for her heart was far away where the "Aphrodite's" signal fluttered in the crisp breeze of the Mediterranean.



Two hours later, Frank Van Arsdale turned back from the door of Mrs. Rosalind Felton's house. She was standing, covered with jewels, under the dining-hall arch. "Here, Princess," he said, "take care of these papers until I return. See them safe. They are valuable," he said, meaningly, and he drew out a heavy pocket-book from the breast of his *habit de soir*. "I'll be back at two. Don't forget. Look out for that. The Princess of Nowhere smiled and kissed her hand, as she fled away to her own bower, where she had a neat wall-safe built to hide the jewels which the departing man had given her.

"There is a little something queer about this 'business' of his," she archly muttered. "*Va banc!* I'll have a good time anyway with Fred and the Pleiades." For they were all to be there. It was a delicious morsel of "forbidden fruit," this annual French ball, with its complications of unexpected wickedness, relieving its brutal vulgarity. And all the world was there, to see his neighbor, or his neighbor's wife, & *l'inconnue*—New York's carnival of winter joys.

While Mrs. Rosie was impatiently awaiting the return of Frank Van Arsdale, and the cold, homeless chilliness of two o'clock caused her to take a very liberal libation of *crème de menthe*, the hopeful Rhinebeck, with an escaped Philadelphian, was speeding up in an elevated train, and whirling along the unholy lower reaches of Sixth Avenue. "Now, Rittenmore, there's what I tell you shames us younger knights of the Paphian goddess. Look at that girl's figure and manner! She has no business to be here. It's a case of May and December." For a heavy-set man of a decidedly certain age, clad in a rich sable coat, evidently escorting her, had entered the car at Eighth Street. Selecting a distant seat, he leaned over the deeply-veiled girl, in an attitude of too speaking familiarity. "That sort of thing is an ugly feature of all rich communities," remarked the philosophic young man from the nest of brotherly love. I have——"



He was stopped by a start which betrayed Rhinebeck's recognition. "Why! It's old Van Arsdale over there! See what a hunted air the poor girl has. Well, he is a ——. By Jove!" And Rhinebeck sprang up, as Van Arsdale's head fell forward! With one hollow groan and a ghastly contortion of the face the spirit of the strong man fled forever! He had waited an hour on the lonely wind-swept corner for the helpless girl's coming.

There on the floor the millionaire lay prone, surrounded by belated voyagers, and a gaping crowd of merry night-hawks.

When the frightened Rhinebeck turned, after his vain efforts to rouse Van Arsdale, and stammered some explanations to a policeman and the guards at the next station, his friend Rittenmore was not visible. Deciding to go down and telephone to Van Arsdale's lawyer and to his secretary, Rhinebeck was astounded when the ticket-taker told him, "Your friend has taken his sister to her hotel, and he says he will join you at the Hoffman House in a half-hour." Rhinebeck whistled softly, "He is a game boy!"

For the Philadelphian, noting the wild agony of the helpless girl's gesture, had quietly drawn her arm within his, and she was far away in the safety of a quickly caught passing carriage, before any one had observed her exit at the stoppage point.

The avenging stings of conscience lashed the sobbing woman, as with a spirited young fellow's delicacy, the courtly stranger aided her in a simulated return of propriety to the modest home she had quitted at the bidding of the dead *roué*!

It was three o'clock when Fred Norton, white-faced, dashed into Mrs. Felton's hallway. Dragging her into the still lit-up dining-hall, he gasped:

"Van Arsdale—dropped dead—two o'clock—on Sixth Avenue elevated train. The body is down at police-station waiting friends."

The richly-dressed woman pressed her hand to her breast,

with an agonized gesture. "Wait, wait!" she gasped, after Norton had forced a glass of brandy down her throat. Her teeth were chattering, her lips pale. The solid rock had gone from under her dancing feet!

"Dead! Dead! You say!" and, suddenly, she arose, and pointing him to a seat, ran upstairs to her room. Locking the door, with eager fingers, she quickly worked the knobs of the safe. There was a strange glitter in her eyes, as she spread out the contents of the long folded case on her bed, one after another. She gazed at the filmy engraved papers which fluttered out. "All endorsed! Thank God!" she irreverently remarked, as her nerve returned, and she placed the book hastily back in her safe! "There is a fortune there!" she said, as she gazed into the glass, and saw only a white-faced, haggard woman. Steadily she walked downstairs, and calmly dismissed Norton. "Come to me at nine, Fred," she said wearily. "Don't be afraid, my maid will sit up in my room. I must make friends with the widow," she murmured, as she took a little nervine, and lay down to think. "She will be a very rich woman. I suppose Frank was going to divide up these stocks with some friends!" She was asleep before Edith Van Arsdale had heard, from Decatur Hoyt, of the freedom brought to her by Fate! Their eyes met before strangers. In a meaning voice, the widow of an hour said steadily, "Please come to me, dear friend, at ten o'clock. I rely on you to give all orders here, and we will together see Marie. Let her sleep to-night, poor girl! Ah!" she looked him steadily in the eyes, with no flutter of emotion, "have you telegraphed to General Stanwix?—and——" her voice trembled.

"Yes!" approvingly nodded the counselor. "And also cabled to Floyd Stanwix to return at once! She is a wonderful woman!" mused Hoyt, as he drove home in the gray of the morning. "Wonderful!" and he did not know that the wonderful woman, with tearless eyes, was pressing burning kisses on a worn letter torn from her bosom.



## CHAPTER IX.

## FLOYD STANWIX MAKES AN ENEMY.

MR. BULLETMOULD HARDHEAD was lurking under a green shade in the night-editor's room of the New York Daily "Behemoth," when a call from below at three A.M., caused him to savagely bite at the speaking tube in his hand. There were many hanging near, ready for his insatiate maw.

"Whaa!" he snarled. He had been selected for his eminent fitness as the most uniformly currish man in his profession. His lean jaw glared with delight, for he had just O. K.'d and head-lined a brutal attack on a man whom he had long waited to see under the flail of the "Behemoth"—and all came to his net at last.

"Old Frank Van Arsdale just dropped dead—Sixth Avenue train!" a voice piped up, in awe of the great man.

Mr. Hardhead's watery eye gleamed with a positive delight. He had always envied Van Arsdale his ease, his money, his enjoyment of life, in fact, "everything that was his." Bullemould Hardhead ached to get at Van Arsdale. "Send McManus right up here," was the stern answer, as the cynic joyfully rubbed his hands. "Some other fellow will comfort his handsome wife soon." He winked ominously. "But I suppose he left her rich," he said with a real regret. He objected to any unnecessary happiness save that which clustered around the Hardhead family, and the various proprietors of the "Behemoth." He drew a large salary for nagging and cursing every one below him!

"Been drinking again," sharply said Hardhead, as a dis-

sipated-looking Irishman, with a bushy mane, and a fine rolling eye, strode in.

"I'm half drunk, but ready enough for an odd job," remarked McManus, who had fought himself back several promotions by an unshaken devotion to *spiritus frumenti*.

"Do me a hundred lines on this, quick, and be careful," said the chief who, at heart, feared the truculent Hibernian. "It's a tough case—old man had a young lady with him, big scoop for some one else, if we let him off easy. Know a fellow who was on the train. He came right down to tell me."

It was true, poor drunken McManus was beloved of his kind, while the successful Mr. Hardhead had not a single friend in this mundane sphere.

"Ah," mused the chief, his jaw opening and shutting in grim dumb show, like a steel trap. "We must stand it. There are six columns of standing ads. of his own companies, besides all the 'extras' and 'annuals.'"

"Give him the usual thing?"

McManus leered with joy to see the hungry jackal baffled, for even "Behemoth," the great daily, could be led by a golden ring in his nose. In twenty minutes, McManus shoved a half dozen slips, hastily dashed off, under Bulletmould Hardhead's brazen beak. He winked to an imaginary seraph flying around him. For Ted Flynn, the fiend of darkness, a night-messenger, had loaned McManus his own private flask, and Teddy Flynn (ætat 16), drank "good whisky." Its hammer-blows upon McManus' jaded brain knocked out a spasmodic obituary. Hardhead munched up the paragraphs, his lifted pencil in hand. He always struck out the best work—on principle. It gratified his mean tyranny. "Um—um—'another sad blow'—'Shock'—'financial world'—'pillar of finance,' um—um 'striking example—midst of life—are in death'—um—um, 'whole country'—mourn 'yes—good public benefactor'



—‘Death loves shining mark—‘obsequies later announced’—‘popular society man’—‘model husband,’—‘father——’” Hardhead snorted as “McManus guffawed at the mockery. —“ ‘Leaves one child—a girl, to mourn with hosts of friends —‘ladie-frens’ ”—chuckled the reporter, now excited with the drink, and the close air of the warm room.

“See here, what’s this?” roared Hardhead. “‘Deceased had just leaned forward to recognize a young lady relation returning from Philadelphia—she left train at once under escort, completely overcome with her awful sorrow.’ Rot, cut that all out! Get it in quick, and come back. Stay,—who was the girl? Do you know?” Hardhead glared unwillingly at McManus.

“One of his chickens,—and he had a great band of them. God rest his soul. ‘He has gone to a land without laughter’”—said McManus, as he darted out, “and I’m thinking that dashin’ little widow—the Felton, will very shortly be singin’, ‘Who will care for mother now?’”

The cold gray of dawn stealing through the windows of a lonely basement room, lit up the sunken features of the senseless clay, once a strong man, to whom all had bowed, “with ready cap in hand.”

Out on the street the sleepy-eyed boys were slipping along listlessly with huge piles of “dailies” recording “the loss sustained by the financial and social world.” The real pangs, to come later, affected florists, jewellers, certain restaurants, many avenues of the secret distribution of his wealth—and injuriously diminished the vicarious receipts of “those who knew him best, and loved him least,” and whom a fear of publicity kept away from the pompous obsequies. Beside Van Arsdale’s stiffening body a hireling dozed over his cigar, a cocktail glass at his hand.

The early business men “sustained the shock of their loss,” on their morning way down-town. The club-men dawdling in at noon, delighted to quarrel over the growing report that

he had been seen at the French ball, with a young girl of exquisite form, whose face was jealously hidden from all—and busy Mr. Harry Low dreamed strange dreams of the future, as he fought away the swarm of reporters at Van Arsdale's office, where, with two stout policemen, he was "closing things up," under the orders of Decatur Hoyt's head clerk.

"I wonder if the estate will need me," mused Low. "I am all right with Floyd Stanwix—but I must sweeten on old Hoyt—and the Madame." He winced as he said, "She is a stunner. I wonder—if—if she will be rich. That was an awful break I made." He sighed.

Under the escort of Decatur Hoyt, at ten o'clock, Mrs. Edith Van Arsdale departed from her mansion to visit the orphaned girl, yet in ignorance of her "supposed" loss—such a father! For Miss Ultima was truly an orphan now. The old housekeeper had been dispatched to occupy Marie and detain her until the messengers of woe could arrive. Mrs. Van Arsdale was obliged to wait until a singularly pretty and cheerful-looking girl from "Madame Della Tomba's," had arranged her provisional mourning robes. Butler Raikes saw them drive away, in moody silence. He then stalked down and opened a bottle of Van Arsdale's best brandy.

"This house will be a hell on earth now. My lady has played the quiet game long enough." He "adjusted" a third of the bottle to his "internal cavity," before he gravely opened the front doors, and admitted Frank Van Arsdale, Esq., of many titles in Board and Council, in Club and Bank, member of many organizations, public and private, to his home for the last time. Two of the "finest," saw the "home-coming" decorously performed, and then slipped in through the area doors, to sympathize with the neat housemaids, and sample Van Arsdale's cigars with gloomy Raikes, the sullen head-groom and Van Arsdale's vicious ferret-eyed valet. They were all soon to be "on their uppers."



"See here, Tom. Come with me!" whispered the valet, as officer Tom Canty straightened up, and regretfully dropped his arm from Letty O'Brien's waist. There was "coin" in the very wink of the valet's eyes.

Strolling up and down before the house, the valet told the policeman of the night-visit of the dead millionaire, and the absence of a "certain pocket-book," etc., etc.

"I waited for you, Tom," he whispered.

"Let me work it," mused the delighted policeman, whirling his club menacingly at a small boy who hovered near. "Cheese it and lay low! I'll see old Hoyt, his lawyer, at the right time. But we had better watch quietly, a week or so, for a reward. They'll surely hunt for it."

While a general air of incipient disorganization pervaded the Van Arsdale mansion, Mrs. Edith Van Arsdale gazed with lurking anxiety at Decatur Hoyt. The old lawyer was looking at her expectantly.

"Shall I do it?" she murmured, as she caught his eye. "You will have to tell Marie," she faltered. "What can I say? I know absolutely nothing. You, of course, know all, and I suppose all will have to wait now for the courts. My position is an awful one. I am left absolutely in the dark." She quivered, and the swift carriage swayed her closely to him. "I know nothing whatever of Mr. Van Arsdale's affairs!" She softly wept.

"Marie will be richer than you," slowly said Hoyt, as if the words filtered from him unwillingly. He was drawn on to ease her heart by her agony. "She has, of course, all the real estate of her mother, but *you*,"—the widow's heart stopped beating—"and Marie, and Floyd Stanwix divide his enormous estate equally," he whispered, with glowing eyes, as he leaned back as if exhausted. "You will have over two millions."

With a sigh the beautiful widow sank into his arms, and was still half clinging to him, half leaning on him, as the

counselor whispered, in agitation, in her ear, a positive confirmation of his words.

"I have the will and papers all in my hands, and you shall have no trouble."

The fluttering pressure of her warm hand drove him half mad. The carriage stopped and, as stately Edith Van Arsdale slipped out there was a new light in her eye, a new dignity in her swaying carriage. It was the brevet of American nobility!

"Two millions," she murmured, as she walked calmly into the Stanwix home. While she waited the coming of the girl, a flash of quick intelligence lit up the gloom of her crape veil. "She will be enormously rich. I must now make love to her."

The idea of Brother Harold then came strangely to her mind. In ten minutes, Marie Van Arsdale was sobbing bitterly in the arms of the lovely woman who smoothed the beautiful girl's brows tenderly. "I must be your mother, now, Marie," she said, gently; "that is, if you will love me."

And the girl, nestling in her bosom, cried, "I want you—you to take care of me!—and—I want Uncle Floyd to come home!"

A half-hour's earnest conference was broken in upon by a messenger with telegrams to Decatur Hoyt and Mrs. Van Arsdale. One, conveyed Miss Cornelia's report that General Stanwix was too sadly smitten by the sudden shock, to be left alone. "Full letters to-day. Of course you take Marie home to you." And the other, dated at Nice, was pithy and welcome. It was a cablegram from Floyd Stanwix. "Coming at once. Look out for Marie. Advise with Mrs. Van Arsdale." Edith Van Arsdale's brown eyes burned in a new fire.

The widow of a morning, the suddenly-crowned millionairess of sorrow, hid her agitation in stepping to a window-recess, while Decatur Hoyt told the satisfied girl how he



had cabled to "yachting head-quarters," at Cannes, and also ordered the cable company to find the "Aphrodite" at once, with *carte blanche*. "He will be here in ten days," soothingly said Hoyt.

"And once under my roof, your life will be guided by me alone. Your future must be wrought by my hand," thought Edith, as she tenderly approached the bewildered young heiress.

"Go, my friend. I will remain with Marie," said the woman, with speaking eyes. "Use my carriage." She found time to whisper to him in the hall, "Come to me at five o'clock. I will wait for you. But I must stay with her now. Watch Low and the main office."

He gave a start as he pressed her hand. "Depend upon me. I will bring you proof of what I say. I have the schedule signed by him, and the rough draft of the will."

She dropped her hand upon his shoulder, and her eyes thrilled him. It was only in her carriage, resting dreamily in the corner which she had just left, that the happy counselor dared to whisper, "She is a wonder."

Mrs. Rosalind Felton had carefully husbanded her well-tried emotions. As she leisurely breakfasted, in her room, she heard Fred Norton passing his time at the piano below. "I will make these pictures a good investment, yet!" she firmly said, as she furtively examined the hidden treasure. "This is power, this is my future!" she hid the deposit of papers, and with a sudden intention, placed the empty pocket-book in a safe place. Her own French ball-ticket, and a few stray letters addressed to him filled the void. Van Arsdale had a desk for private use in her house. "If they come, I will give them that," and, with a sudden alarm, she decided to protect herself against the world. An hour after she had sent Norton out to glean the latest news as to the obsequies, she walked leisurely from her door to the nearest elevated railway station. Descending fifty blocks away, she

then signalled a passing coupé. Before her lover-messenger had returned, the fortune wafted by fate to her shapely hands, was beyond the reach of all accident. "I hold Fred in the hollow of my hand, while I have this. With the money in bank, my jewels, and my little house, I am safe for life." And with rare forethought, she sent a messenger to the stable of the dead millionaire for her own coupé and horses. "They shall never go back there," she brightly said, as the equipage promptly drew up before her door. Her own driver had always acted in her name, although the dead capitalist had so kindly paid him!

"Frank was so thoughtful, so prudent," gratefully said Mrs. Rosie. "He was a thoroughbred, at any rate!" And, when she closed the envelope, in which she sent cards of condolence to the widow and Miss Ultima, she absently murmured, "I wonder if this will bring Floyd Stanwix home. If he has forgotten my things, I will make him pay for it!" and she fluttered gaily down and took a drive with her young slave. "Had I better send Fred away now. He may be useful here. I will wait!" she mused with happy, dreaming eyes.

The next day, while the details of preparation filled the house, and various "men of importance" came to "confer with the widow," as to the "imposing demonstration of public respect," a messenger, elbowing his way through the throng bearing wreaths, dispatches, and varied communications, handed a cablegram to Edith Van Arsdale. She tore it open, and was astonished to read, dated at Paris, her brother's words: "If you want me, cable here. Write to same address. Shall I come to you?" It was signed Harold, and after a half-hour's self-commune, she went out, and sent the reply herself.

She trusted no one, not even Hoyt.

"Wait where you are. Do not leave. Will write my wishes. Important. Do not fail. Letter to-day."



Harold Calvert, in modest but comfortable retirement in Paris, was gleeful when the answer was duly flashed under the sea to him. "I suppose she is money-independent now. If I were only sure! I might be her very right hand. But—Diane—and all this coming hubbub." The young schemer, dreaming now of laying his hands on a portion of Van Arsdale's heaped-up gold, frankly regretted burdening himself with the beautiful young wife, who, safely concealed in a Brittany village, looked forward, with love and faith, to that trial which, an ordeal and a mystery always, would be to her a triumph of love and tender affection. While she dwelt with fond heart on every letter of her absent husband, he, excited with dreams of his sister's possible grandeur, cried, "I was a fool ever to marry that girl." He thought of the duplicate certificates still in his hands, and over his dreaming came a dark shadow. "I cannot have this luck forever! Some day I will run against Cyprian Lascaris." For he had furtively learned that the broken-hearted Greek was an avenger now, seeking an unknown foe. He had not been able to find words to answer when lovely Diane, her head upon his bosom, had whispered at parting, "Harold, you will let me write and tell Cyprian all, when—when——" and her blushes hid the rest of the happy prophecy. "It is the very devil that I am tied up by this one act of mad folly. If Edith needs me, I could go back openly, and with a little of her money, and a few promises, keep Rosie Felton in good humor. But I must hide Diane from all! She would be a clog to every open path," and he drew out of his breast the certificates. His eager hand was upon them, when he laughed, "Pshaw! I can easily destroy them at any time. And then—then I am safe." He slept, ignorant of the burning joy with which Mrs. Felton dreamed of a vengeance for which her strange windfall of the night of the French ball gave her the sinews of war.

In all these varied surroundings, near and far, they buried

the late Frank Van Arsdale with judiciously regulated pomp and display. "It was a swell affair, quite in Frank's solid substantial style!" approvingly said a returning clubman. Mr. Rhinebeck cheerfully testified at the merely formal inquest "that he did not know anybody with the deceased." This polite answer to the direct question as to whether the capitalist was alone, satisfied the careless coroner. It also lifted a load from the heart of a frightened young woman who now bore her burden of shame and remorse in safe secrecy. In the great Van Arsdale mansion Marie grew daily attached to the beautiful volunteer mother, who showered every gentle kindness upon her. Behind the veil of her settled purpose, cool and resolute, Edith Van Arsdale drew Decatur Hoyt daily deeper and deeper into her meshes, and yet waited, with glowing eyes, for Floyd Stanwix's return. The days seemed to drag as the ocean greyhound battled with the wintry seas. She was bringing the anxious yachtsman home to the child of his heart.

Letters from Miss Cornelia Stanwix proved to Mrs. Van Arsdale how a current of good fortune had turned in her direction. "It is impossible to tell when I can bring poor General Stephen home. His mind seems very seriously affected. I must, of course, stay with him to the end, be it far or near. And, so I leave Marie to you, my dear friend, and to Floyd. I would ask you to send her to me here, but her studies would be seriously interrupted. Should you go abroad, I hope you will take her with you, for a year, with the consent of her trustees. For Marie will soon be eighteen. Decatur Hoyt is probably the best adviser in New York City for you."

"And, I can do what I wish with him!" cried the triumphant widow, as she smiled to herself in the glass before her. "Strange, that men never know when to weigh the small attentions, which cost us nothing, at their true value! It is only the woman who gives herself up, heart, soul and body,



who is despised! Trifles weigh, where a soul's whiteness sacrificed, only brings a sneer of joy to the clubman's face, a satisfied grin to the yellow-necked dowagers, and a virtuous howl from the blackmailing society journals."

"The enemy march right into my camp, and all lay down their arms," she smiled. With a commendable prudence she received and examined all the letters for Miss Ultima, on what she playfully termed "the German system." As she regummed and closed Lieutenant Earle Schuyler's letter of condolence to Marie, she murmured, "If that young man grows too warm in his sympathy, I will destroy all these letters. I am glad that wax is so scarce in Arizona. I must have no husband about her to thwart my plans." A passage from the "Stone Cameo's" letter gave her the needed cue. She bounded up in decision. "I have it! I will take her abroad! I will live in solitary splendor, and keep all men away from her!" Only one man I fear—he is Floyd!" She drew from her breast a photograph, filched from Marie's collection, and gazed at it. "He will be here in two days," she murmured, and pressing her hands on a heaving bosom, she walked to the window and gazed out on the western skies. The sun was setting in crimson and gold, a splendor, with orange flashes of angry radiance, gleaming in the west. "Will it be stormy or fair to-morrow? Who knows? Will storm or sunshine follow me?" she mused, "now that I am free!"

"I am equal to either fortune," she bravely thought. "I am armed against Fate, for, on Property's pyramid I can defy all the storms of Fortune."

She went about her way with an even sweetness of demeanor and wove hourly the meshes of her schemes around Marie Van Arsdale, glowing under the new love offered. For in the rich springtime of her life, the generous girl gave of her own bright loyal heart's overflowing, and deemed it the love of others.

In the great house from which Mr. Frank Van Arsdale had been so sternly "evicted," his neutral presence was never missed in the slightest degree. Van Arsdale had carried his policy of coldest egoism up to the very moment when the death-rattle had caught him. Sternly selfish, his absence made only more room in the clubs. A dangerous foe, a haughty master, an exacting fellow-operator, the Street breathed more freely now that he was gone. Loose fag-ends of railways, decayed but valuable franchises, broken-down properties, rich with hidden assets, were much safer, now that his hand, cold in death, had lost its power to clench and grasp!

Marie, in the frank honesty of childhood, avoided any display of emotion over the unnatural man, half a stranger, whom she had always feared. The rainbow of Truth followed her very footsteps.

Mrs. Edith Van Arsdale said nothing. She faintly smiled (an afterglow) upon Decatur Hoyt alone, but made some very fitting remarks to several deputations, who called from motives of respect and curiosity. For already there was heavy betting in the clubs, as to whether the "cynosure" would marry a raffish foreign Duke, or settle down, "*à l'Américaine*," to the evolved delights of her "individual check-book." Rhinebeck, his dummy monocle cast aside, was very cautiously looking into Miss Ultima's future holdings.

"By Jove! That girl is a plum!" He whistled softly, and caught a glimpse of Hope's star in the zenith, when he returned to the Club, from the one visit of his life, "on business" below Canal Street.

On the whole, the gentleman "with moustachios," a so-called artist, and the responsible "stone butcher," who were submitting designs to Decatur Hoyt for two hundred and fifty tons of emblematic allegory in marble, as a monument, were those who thought most kindly of Van Arsdale.



"Say, I hope they will pile enough on old Van to keep him down," said the great broker, Put-and-call Straddle, to his friend, Mr. Benzine Vaseline, of the "Standard Oil," at the Lawyer's Club lunch. "A sharp rise in the market might bring old Frank out, tomahawk in hand."

Benzine Vaseline, Esq., smiled grimly, as he ordered a Manhattan cocktail. "I think he's a stayer," he cheerfully remarked. "I knew the late lamented, to my financial sorrow, and I am glad to believe that he is the kind of man to stay dead, when once laid out." It proved to be a fact!

"So, lightly they talked of the spirit that's gone," and there was no one left to cry. The first real tears were shed when a slight form in black was clasped in Floyd Stanwix's arms, as he darted from his coupé into Van Arsdale's house. Marie felt fatherless, friendless, no longer, as the Admiral, "bearded like the 'pard," his strong voice shaking with emotion, kissed the fair brows on which innocence sat enthroned. "My little girl! My darling!" he murmured. And with a frank and bright smile he bent over Edith Van Arsdale's hand as she approached.

"Heavens, how handsome she has grown!" he mused, as he regarded the now "eligible" widow. He did not know that a telegram reporting the "Aphrodite," "off Fire Island," had kept her blood rushing madly through her veins in the long night-watch, and that only her iron will was holding nature down, with a tacit avoidance of all references to the "void." They breakfasted, and Marie gladly hastened away to prepare for an outing with her trustee-uncle. Looking at each other, Floyd and Edith felt a strange embarrassment, for the first time in their intercourse. There really was nothing to say; and neither would frankly admit that it was a graceful, if not welcome, act in Frank Van Arsdale to go out into shadow land, and leave the best part of him—his property,—behind in excellently-invested safety—a model of good financial arrangement.

"I thank you for your ready kindness, your discerning wisdom, in regard to my dear little girl. I always recall your words, 'You can depend upon me, whenever you may wish to call upon me!'"

"I always keep my word," she answered, thrilled by his direct reference, and hastily sought the relief of a chance movement around the room.

"And Marie tells me you have been so tender to her!" he said, musing with downcast eyes, for his sister's spirit seemed to hover again in the room where she once had lived. The room of the beloved one is sacred forever more. On lonely nights, in hours of loving exaltation, in moments when the world presses hard, how often a faithful one, memory-led, has stood in the place hallowed by a presence still dear, and softly whispered the fond name to which she once answered! In the dim hush of lonely halls it seems as if the familiar rustle of her dress would once more wake the sleeping echoes!

"Have you seen Mr. Hoyt?" said Edith, abruptly.

"Oh, yes! By the way," he cried springing up, "I am a very forgetful messenger. First, I should tell you, privately, that Van Arsdale has left all equally divided between Marie, you and me; I am glad that you are so well provided," he said, earnestly, as he took her hand. "As for myself, I did not care for the poor old boy's money! I have nothing left to live for now, except Marie."

The hand he released was as cold as ice, and Edith murmured an almost unintelligible reply. "Ah! There is one real annoyance," continued Floyd, still thinking of his dead sister. "A pocket-book, habitually carried by your—Frank," he hastily substituted, "is missing! Hoyt says that Van Arsdale frequently carried a large amount of securities around with him. Low knows nothing of its fate."

"The best thing I can do, is to ring for his valet. The



man is still here. All has been kept till your arrival," the beautiful woman said, almost humbly, as she turned to the bell. Floyd was her natural master.

"Pray oblige me by sending him down at once to Hoyt," said Stanwix, as the orphan-heiress came bounding in, robed for her ride.

"You will dine with us?" Edith said. She fain would have him linger near her. He raised her hand to his lips, and kissed it. "I thank you for your thoughtfulness. I am a very lonely man," and the two went on their way. Edith Van Arsdale, watching their happy departure at the window, turned away in a flood of tears.

"I will never touch his heart! He only sees that child! and yet—time—" She sat an hour communing with her strong but shaken soul. "I will write Harold to look me up a place over there, somewhere in Germany." For she well knew now all the details of the estate handling, and the law's many formalities, for Decatur Hoyt had joyed to dwell by her side, in the tropic glow of her beauty, which was now as the very wine of life to him.

Two weeks later, Mr. Decatur Hoyt, counselor, etc., was strangely puzzled after an hour's interview with the freshened and delightfully *provoquante* Mrs. Rosalind Felton. The subject of a red pocket-book had gently drifted into their conversation.

The hints and guarded disclosures of Van Arsdale's valet and the expectant policeman, had been most liberally paid for, but all in vain. There was but one woman living whose personal magnetism could so thrill Hoyt as to benumb his practiced intellect.

Gazing around furtively upon the tasteful delicacy of Mrs. Felton's jewel-box of a house, the counselor mused: "I presume poor Van Arsdale paid for all this. But why?" "The first great cause, least understood," was now buried in the cold vault where Van Arsdale lay silent, and watchful

Rosie gave no sign. One thrust of the lance was enough for the lawyer.

"I should not like to tell Mr. Floyd Stanwix, my co-executor, that Mr. Van Arsdale spent a portion of the night before his death, here with you; that he even dressed for the French ball here."

"The valet has tattled," thought Rosie, bright and brave and ready.

"It would be only reasonable to presume," the aged Machiavel began—

"That you, also, would not like me to tell Mr. Floyd Stanwix, whom I know very well, and who respects me, or your own wife," the lawyer started in alarm, "that for several months you have been a daily *tête-à-tête* afternoon visitor at Van Arsdale's house, in his absence. What did you want there, his wife, or his money? You, his trusted lawyer, were working some private scheme."

The old man was white with rage, as he coldly bowed, and said, "Madame, this conversation takes a very wide range," and he bowed himself out, a defeated man. "I cannot touch her. I think that she stole the missing things,—a good haul, too, I fancy," he mused, as he drove down to the "Herald" office, and inserted a cautiously-worded advertisement, offering a huge proportional reward for any missing securities, and a large one for the book itself.

"Now, I know that she stole the book and its contents," cried Hoyt, a week later, after an hour's grim gnashing of teeth in his office.

Mailed from Philadelphia, the book with its assorted trash, and the grim reminder of the French ball-ticket, safely reached his office. "I suppose that she sent some fellow over there to mail it back here."

The astute counselor was for once in error, for the happy little lady did it herself!

"It is just as well that Fred should not know," she purred



in her cat-like sagacity. "One bitter lesson of life is enough for me. I will keep this new lover firmly under my hand."

"Rosie is really a good little soul, dear old friend," said laughing Floyd Stanwix. "She is incapable of a dishonorable act." He did not care to break this butterfly.

"Perhaps so," said Hoyt, with a dry incredulity of manner.

"I tell you, Tom Canty," said the baffled valet, "that little bunch of peach-bloom got many a thousand out of the old governor."

But their greed and sorrows availed them naught. Rosie wore the laurel of victory.

"Edith," said Floyd Stanwix, four months later, for the park trees were gently nodding their friendly branches over the dreaming lovers once again, "I wish that you would come and take a drive with me this afternoon." He looked meaningly at the beautiful woman with whom he was now on the frankest terms. Sweet Marie Van Arsdale fleeting around the breakfast-room passed out of hearing. "I want to have a long talk with you—about Marie."

The lovely widow's eyes flashed, and yet her voice was as pleasant "as a leafy brook in June." "When will you be here," she said, looking him full in the face. "I will be ready. You know you can always depend upon me." There was a frozen smile on her exquisite face.

The yachtsman carelessly consulted his watch. "I've to see Hoyt and sign the last estate papers. All in ship-shape now. I will be here at four."

"Still that girl hovers between us, ever between us," she murmured, as he hastily said, "I want to get Marie out of town. I'll tell you all about it. Perhaps you would like to take her abroad. Think it over. I wish you would do so."

"We will see, when you tell me all," she smiled, and she turned and slowly went to her room without another word, with a racked heart.

Locking the door, she took from a hidden nook three recent letters from Lieutenant Earle Schuyler. It was evident that the dashing young soldier managed still to keep in touch with the Stanwix party who were still in the South. "This foolishness must cease," firmly said Edith, as she destroyed the letters, after reading them, with a stony face, "Is he, too, only seeking her wealth? I shall commence to believe that he is like the other men—the jackals who begin to hunt this tender girl, and the stronger wolves that would hunt me down. Safe at last!" she grimly said, as she concealed the burned ashes of the soldier's frank and tender writings. And, sighing still, her hands trembled two hours later, as she adjusted her wraps for the drive with the man she loved more ardently, in secret, every day. "We must have it out at last. This fine fencing cannot go on always. Marie must be either his—or mine!"

They were far away up the road when Floyd Stanwix, letting the tired horses wander along in the shade, told the waiting woman at his side, his burden of cares. "Of course you must go somewhere this summer; I wish to go over once more with my boat. Poor old Stephen Stanwix is a mere death-mask now. Hoyt has all he can do, and he must manage the two estates. He never cares for any relaxation, *ohne hast, ohne rast*," he smilingly said. "There's a lot of fellows here, idle, vicious young fellows, of good family, who begin to plot and plan to trap for Marie's fortune. I hear of it daily in the club. The woman-hunt goes on forever. She is so rich, you know." Edith drew her breath eagerly. "Now, you are her only friend on earth, but myself. I have thought it would be better if you would take her abroad for a year. You can get a nice place in South Germany, in Switzerland, on the Rhine, all to yourself, you know. No tourist interruption, no chance acquaintances, no hungry gang of officers and noblemen." He paused. "I trust you in all things," said the frank sailor, "and I



owe my dear sister's memory a duty. By Jove, I owe poor Frank, too something, for his useless money, and, so help me God! I will make the pathway safe and smooth for that dear child's feet! I can, if you will help me. I will come and see you—see her, very often. Think it over, tell me what you finally decide on—say to-morrow. Hoyt and I will make all smooth for you.” His voice was very kind, pleading even. Edith Van Arsdale felt a melting glow in her heart as she suddenly bent her beautiful head, and using his name for the first time in her exultant tenderness whispered,

“Floyd, why do you not marry? Then you would have a home to shelter this dear girl.” Her heart was beating fast.

The gay sailor turned a sad face on her, which startled her. His voice rang like a death-knell. He hoarsely said, “Because,—and by God, Edith, you are the only woman in the world who shall ever know this—I broke a woman's heart in my mad youth, a woman who loved me, a woman who died for me! I promised her when she died, in shame and hiding, in my arms, that I would never give another woman the name I robbed her of.” He was sobbing like a child. “The night I went to tell our Marie of her father's marriage to you, I saw the dead girl's face again, in a picture—over there.” His voice faltered. “I swore that oath again, that night—and—I'll keep it to my grave.”

“Let me kiss you for that dead woman's sake, Floyd,” cried Edith, in a dream, as her burning lips met his for once—once only, in life! They drove home silently, tenderly, but Floyd Stanwix had made an enemy!

## CHAPTER X.

## WITH MASKED PORTS.

YOUNG Rhinebeck mourned that the security of crape and hatchments of woe screened Miss Ultima from his varied arts of matrimonial engineering. It was in vain that he essayed a visit. The early departure of Mrs. Van Arsdale for Europe, the absolute seclusion of the family, and Floyd Stanwix's remarkable reticence baffled the useless young patrician. "It is a sheer waste of beauty and solid American 'rocks,'" said the gloomy youth, "if that sweet girl marries abroad. Two to one she does."

For well he knew the arts of London and Paris, of Dresden and Berlin, of Rome and Hamburg. The American heiress can be fairly hunted the moment she touches foot upon the shore of the ancient world whence Columbus hitherward came. "In the search of boodle, for boodle," Rhinebeck savagely cried. "All these later fellows only imitate him!"

Rhinebeck lamented the absence of General Stephen Stanwix. "I am playing in hard luck," he mourned. "Now, that old chap goes and loses his mind, just when I could use him. He knew my father." It was true. General Stephen knew his father well, and heartily disliked the whole Rhinebeck breed. It was at any rate true, that the failing old veteran could not be used as a demi-lune or horn-work, from which to creep on the unguarded heiress, and capture her *vi et armis*. The automatic lover sought the counsel of Mrs. Rosalind Felton. Bearing costly floral offer-



ings, he lingered in that fayre ladye's bower. He did himself no good. He aided the Princess of Nowhere, in his fatuous blundering, for the same steamer which bore Edith's orders to Brother Harold to await her in secret in Paris, took Mr. Fred Norton, a modern Laertes, gaily appareled over the sea. He was furnished with goodly store of the late Van Arsdale's gold, and much sage direction for his guidance. For Mrs. Felton was not the least little bit of a fool in her way.

"Go right back to where the clue was lost. Find him—find her. Find one, and we can trace both."

The graver club-men, the eligible silver-grays, despaired of touching the heart of Edith Van Arsdale. "That beau-teous dame is wedded to—deportment," said Major Ramsay McMorris of the Twenty-second Artillery. "She is like a fair ripe peach, hanging high,—toothsome and delightful, but not to be got at!"

"She will fall of her own accord, at the right time. The madam, the 'cynosure,' is no chicken in the world's ways. The man who gets her will be the right one, and he will have no trouble," remarked Judge Eckhardt, a legal Romeo.

This so disgusted McMorris that, against the rules of his order, he drank alone, solemnly, and—too much.

"The Navy gets all those 'solid sisters.' It's a devilish shame!" grunted the artillerist.

Circling around each other, with masked ports, the two women who had been loved by Frank Van Arsdale keenly watched each other. Mrs. Rosalind Felton was never eager, and she kept just within range. "What is her game? The handsome secretary, the old counselor, the estate's loose money?" thought Rosie, as she flashed her sapphire search-lights charmingly upon Mrs. Edith. She ignored Miss Ultima, and a passion for Floyd Stanwix seemed to her an impossibility.

The easy *bonhomie* of the yachtsman always carried him

within the picket-lines of the easy beauties who never loved *au sérieux*."

"Can this woman do me any harm now?" carefully studied Edith. "No, she has no near point of view, and—no one to pay her." Edith smiled grimly, for well she knew who had furnished forth the blue coupé with the silver-decked harness. "*Ces beaux jours ne reviendront pas!*" pleasantly smiled the widow, for the first tier of Van Arsdale's aspiring monument now kept his body firmly gripped, in a marble embrace, and spiritual signatures on checks are of no avail in mundane clearing-houses. "She will catch some other dupe" was Edith's verdict. "The crop of fools is a perennial harvest!" With masked ports, these two fair craft passed in friendly but distant amity. Edith's hands were full of daily cares, watching every movement of Marie's *entourage*, culling her correspondence, and perfecting her foreign plans.

With masked ports, she sailed along under friendly convoy of Floyd Stanwix and that old three-decker, Decatur Hoyt, with her nimble and useful dispatch boat Mr. Harry Low. For the "fine strong hand" had drawn him into an expectant servitude in many ways.

Marie Van Arsdale, fluttered and joyous with the impending tour, soon forgot the singular silence of Earle Schuyler. "I presume he is away on those horrible long marches. I would have liked to have had a letter before we sail," she frankly said to the woman who now swayed her every thought. "Aunt Cornelia writes me that she hears from him. Perhaps he is nearer them. He is the only one I ever——" and the girl fled away in sudden confusion, as she saw Edith's eyes raised to hers, in a surprise which she thought was sympathy.

"It is not a single moment too soon," mused the fair-faced conspirator. "This young fellow might run on here, on a leave of absence." For well Edith knew that the "stone cameo," Aunt Cornelia, mildly babbled of the perfections of the insidious cavalryman. He had deeply buttered her daily



bread with flattery, in the days when Cragnest was the scene of his remarkable self-denial, in spending 'so much of his leave' with the old General.

"No one can tell what is in a girl's heart," reflected Edith Van Arsdale that night, as she slowly sought the broken rest of her dreams. "A young girl's heart is like a blank page, at the mercy of the first scribbler. I must keep all away from her but—Harold. If he has not ruined himself in self-indulgence, his manners and appearance, his unconscious art of pleasing, should make her an easy conquest." For, in her gentle innocence, the girl would know nothing of that other pirate galley with masked ports, now lurking near Paris.

"And myself, my future, what?" thought the unspoiled daughter of fortune's favors, as she noted the reflex glow of her loveliness in her mirror. "I will live for myself alone," she said, her face hardening. "He will never break his oath. I wonder who she was," Edith wearily cried, as the tears came unbidden to her eyes. "Always something between us. The fates, the high gods, are against me! His sister's memory, that child's love, and now the shadowy face of the girl who died, broken-hearted but loving, in his arms, 'shines me down,' vanquished by the ghost of a dead love." And the society queen, around whom now an expectant throng hovered, to see her raise in favor her imperial eyes, laughed bitterly. "We are all shadows, a passion-play in fantastic shadows. Is there anything real in this world?" Edith Van Arsdale closed her eyes in the belief that her masked hate of the defenceless girl who was her unloving love's idol, was the only real thing she knew.

But far more actual than that, was the reality of the unsatisfied, baffled, burning love which drove her on from day to day. "If he would only see my heart, would ever recognize that I had blood in my veins, even if it were his scorn, his rage, I might turn that, for all turns to love. But," it

was the death-knell of her hopes, "he simply takes me for granted, a mere additional unit in the neutral roll of woman-kind."

The night before the sailing Floyd Stanwix made merry with the two ladies in his easy way. "I only wait to see you off, and then I will set out upon the 'murmuring main' again. I am tired of the old camp-ground, Edith. New York society is becoming very sadly suggestive to me in its crowded loneliness. Like an old battle-ground on which new armies are marshalled, I live in the past. I do not think of those who marched away with me, and who yet serve under the glowing colors of life. I see but the marks of past conflicts, of dangerous 'scapes, the graves of those who fell years ago! A new struggle may go on with strange faces. I miss the old faces, the old music, the old comrades. Out there on the sea, I am happy, for I do not think, I do not remember, I do not anticipate. I only sail, and my weary heart sails and sails and sings anew. The abrasion, the social irritating pressure of life is felt more on shore. And yet, strange as it may seem, a sea-life has never produced a great thinker! It only lulls."

"You are happy if it brings forgetfulness," said Edith, in a strange, hard voice, as Stanwix caught one flash of her eyes.

"She is a woman who locks her soul within a cold heart," fancied Stanwix, as he dropped into some details of travel, with the woman whose very heart-strings quivered to his touch. And so, on the sea of life, these two parted again, Stanwix sailing on a roving commission, and Edith Van Arsdale driven along, with masked ports, under the repression of her molten heart.

In her last vigil, she smiled triumphantly as she read Brother Harold's letter. "I have found just the place, a quaint, dreamy, old castle in Thuringia, where the wing of silence dreams as steady as the poised condor far away.



A grand old place, romantic, delightful, just the place for you and——”

“Just the place for Marie Van Arsdale’s first love,” said Edith, as she folded the letter. “That is enough, she shall be mine, I will rule yet. If I cannot bend his heart I will chain it down to mine by this new tie—or break it. He shall feel my power yet, and rue his stubborn blindness.”

A more cheerful view of the moment—that passing time which never comes again, the theatre of all good possibilities, the opportunity of furtive evil—possessed the happy breast of Rosalind Felton, a miniature volcano, the gratified passion of a devilish little imp of wickedness, made her brain rise and fall in its ultimate passion. Mr. Frederick Norton was a successful path-finder. “Slowly but surely, lady mine,” he wrote, “I am unravelling backwards the meshes of Mr. Harold Calvert’s intrigues. Driven, by what I know not, he has dodged from Scio to Smyrna, from Smyrna to Durazzo, thence to the Tyrol, to Bucharest, the fair Greek with him. Now, presto! he appears alone, at Vienna at Nurnberg, Augsburg, and I’ve had a reported glimpse of him in Paris. Did it ever occur to you, *anima mea*, that he either dodges a crime, has a purpose of his own, or is ruled by some one? I really think his fear of the brother is the motive, for I believe he has cast the sister off. I learned at Athens the brother is a madman in his search for the sister and the quest of his revenge.”

Her pretty head, bowed on a white hand sparkling with Frank Van Arsdale’s jewels, Rosie Felton studied for half an hour. She was a happy (if lonesome) little woman, at her dainty *raffiné* supper, when she had sent, in her cipher, the following dispatch: “Harold’s sister sails to-morrow in the ‘Umbria,’ with the heiress, to stay a year. Follow the sister from Paris. You will find the two we seek. Spare no expense. Wait and watch. Both are found when you find him. Keep out of his way. Get his letters.”

"I think I am a pretty good detective. I shall succeed. I always do," smiled the rosy optimist, as she nestled in her pillows.

And the next day the great liner swept away, bearing Marie Van Arsdale away from "Uncle Floyd." Stanwix whispered passionately to Edith, "For God's sake, watch over her—for my sake!" But he only folded the child he loved in his strong arms!

"You may depend upon me, whenever you may wish to call upon me," said Edith Van Arsdale, with steady eyes, as she placed her burning hand in Stanwix' grasp. And then she hated herself for the lie which trembled on her lips, and resolutely walked away to hide her tell-tale face.

"He should have been my mate—if the fates were not against me," she murmured, as the great screw twisted them out into the stream. "But I will play the last card in the game, and then——" She faced her future with stony eyes the gray mist of evening hid the shores of America.

Edith Van Arsdale watched the "Admiral" until his signals were to her almost invisible, and then she turned away, leaving Marie to her own reflections. It was a very wise attribute in the woman who had been a friendless child of fortune that she refrained from meddling. "Nothing as delicate, as suspicious as a young, inexperienced girl," she sagely thought. "This young beauty has her mother's delicacy and spirit. I may creep upon her confidence, friendship, even love, but I must let her put her own head into the noose of my meshes." Edith eyed the girl keenly as, with impassioned face, she watched with loving eyes, finally distinguishing, as she thought, Floyd Stanwix from the throng of "good-bye," friends. The girl sat with clasped hands, looking out, a sweet and thoughtful Evangeline.

"Are you glad to go?" kindly said the secret foe, as they measured the deck for the first time, with the impatience of the novice.



"I am only sorry for one thing," Miss Ultima slowly said, gazing frankly at her companion. "It seems so strange that Lieutenant Schuyler has not written to me. Aunt Cornelia said he was surely going to send me letters to his mother and sister who are settled in Dresden."

"In wild Arizona and New Mexico there are many chances, and a soldier's life has its daily changes. It seems strange," cautiously said Edith, her inner verdict being, "We did not leave a moment too soon. She thinks of this young hero. It has been last summer's trysting and the romance of 'the service.' I will see that her mind is occupied," grimly thought Harold's sister.

Miss Ultima paced quietly for a few seconds, and then said brightly: "How childish I have been. I can write to him and forward it to Aunt Cornelia, then he will surely get it."

"Certainly, my child," calmly replied Edith, and added to herself, "That letter to Miss Cornelia is doomed. I must watch my charge, and Floyd may have given her private advice. If on her guard at all I must let her dream into a sense of quiet and then throw her into new associations. Harold, under my eye, can carry her along in a dream. Yet, she is as shy as a young deer grazing out beyond the herd. One peep, one glance, and she would be gone forever. At the first suspicion Floyd Stanwix would take her away from me forever. The rosy dream of love is the only charm, and I suppose he doubts me."

The very weakest joint in the armor of the hypocrite is the unnecessary distrust of others. Edith Van Arsdale's needless fears thrilled her disturbed soul. The stern repression of her inner married life, the double play of her emotions, the wary agnosticism of her lonely girlhood had robbed Edith of any capacity to trust a human nature. And yet by her side the pure-minded girl daily invested her with glowing colors of youth's buoyant, loving trust.

Even Floyd Stanwix, as he murmured, "Good-bye, my darling one, until we meet again," was filled with a self-evolved confidence in Frank Van Arsdale's widow. "Thank God! Marie is in safe hands. I shall never forget the perfection of Edith's attitude in this delicate relation. She, I can rely on, for she is beyond all scheming. Now for the 'Aphrodite.' I will crack on all the sail the Atlantic squalls will let me carry." He gaily jumped into his cab and sought his bachelor den, where Hatton was skilfully arranging for the flitting. The loyal sailor never dreamed that Edith's gentle tenderness and self-abnegation were only necessary shadings of her "attitude." "She is the steadiest, coolest, bravest woman-nature I ever knew," mused Stanwix. "She has simply captured dear old Stephen and Cornelia, and they are slow to open their hearts." Which all proves the invincible golden armor of good breeding, when joined to a watchful patience. "I stand and see the panorama unravel before me; one touch of my hand, I would lose my whole power," so Edith had reasoned.

"Beg pardon, sir, but this was to be given to you at once," said Hatton, as Stanwix prepared for a last dinner of the "salt water-coterie," he dearly loved.

"Ah!" he ejaculated, slightly frowning, as he read the brief lines, "I suppose Rosie wants a few little bibelots. Well! I suppose I must." And before he went to the club-dinner, he answered in person Mrs. Felton's touching little appeal. It read:

"I must see you for a few moments to-night; I will let you go at once; do not fail me."

"It may really be something after all," good-humoredly said Floyd; "but Rosie's little appeals are always tender—always tearful."

"I wish you to do me a great favor, Floyd," confided the brilliant little butterfly, when she gladdened his eyes in the most charming of toilets. "Ah! this is not for you, sir," she



laughed, "I am going out later," and Mrs. Felton nestled near her amused visitor.

"What is it, Princess?" gaily queried the sailor, "nothing in the millinery line, I hope? My last effort was a great failure."

"Never mind," laughed Rosie, "you atoned for it. I wear them always, on state occasions." In fact, Mrs. Felton's diamonds recalled one or two strange meetings at Tiffany's, where he had by accident seen the dead capitalist, and the clerks had slyly exchanged winks, as each man, in the "confidential" stage-whisper of the "gentleman-buyer" gave the same address for their furtive purchases. "No, it is nothing to buy. I only wish you to tell me all about Harold Calvert. Where you met him, who he was with, and all that sort of thing." This was Rosie's demand. Stanwix started in surprise. It flashed upon him that Calvert might seek his sister's society now, he was young, single.

"Why do you wish to know, Princess? I thought you were the one who knew all about him." Stanwix had grown grave. "I must keep an eye on Ultima's surroundings," he slowly thought. "This is a new idea."

But Mrs. Felton ran up no danger flag. She simply said: "I wish to find out his probable whereabouts for a friend of mine. I have not had a letter from him for a long time." She was incautious.

Floyd wheeled and said sharply: "Then you have been in correspondence with this mysterious youth?"

"Ah! certainly! Come now, don't be jealous, Floyd. It was only a little *amourette de voyage*. It died by the way. No! It is for a dear friend of mine, a New York woman; do I need to say a married woman? She met him last year at Monte Carlo, and his lazy beauty and tender deep eyes seem to have touched the Yankee heart." There was a faint sneer in her voice. "Quite a *preux chevalier*! Woman-

tamer by trade, I should say," growled Floyd, and he lazily told her all he knew.

"Now, you have been so good, you need not bring me anything back, Floyd, except yourself," she slowly said, as she twisted herself out of his arms. It was his adieu. Do you know, Floyd, I've always had a warm spot in my own real private heart for you." Her eyes were glistening with real tears, "real water effects" for this occasion only. "You are so different from the others!"

"What do you mean, Rosie?" Floyd said kindly, as he stole one rose from her corsage bouquet. It was his easy sailor way to fall under the woman-influence, in a genial self-surrender.

"I wish, Floyd, that we had never lived that past, you and I; for you have always been generous and manly, and treated me as if I had been once—a long time ago," she was sobbing, "a woman in very truth. The others—Ah! my God! They are my dupes. I am their plaything of an hour—a week—a month. If I had known you as husband or brother, Floyd, in time," she sadly smiled through her tears, "I would have astonished you, Floyd."

"How, Rosie?" he asked, pained to see even the little feather-ball heart had its agonies.

"I would have been a good woman," she faltered, and then, kissing him passionately, with her ivory arms clinging round him in a convulsive grasp; she fled away, and he heard the key turn sharply in her door.

"Poor little woman! Still, for those slips of hers, one of Eve's family," Stanwix said softly to himself, and went away from her forever! "I wonder what becomes of such natures in friendless, homeless, perhaps penniless old age. By Jove! The aggregated mass of men in the world should be forced to provide a universal retreat for the beings, once women, who are what man and that devil, their yielding passions, have made them." The "way that is broad" did not look particularly inviting to the departing yachtsman at this



particular time, and he sulked through the farewell dinner, which was routine to a degree. Same old menu, same *rechauffé* jokes, same shoals of suggestively vicious allusions, torpedo like, always pointed at those hostile craft, *other men's wives and sisters*. Stanwix thought the men seemed heavier, duller—the wine flatter in its beaded foam, the occasion more of a drag than ever before. He did not know in the grave evolution of life, that the honest love of another, his sister's defenceless child, was plucking out the filaments of his easy social sins, daily. It reverted to his mind as he drove home, and had departed under the echoes of "For he's a jolly, good fellow," in its thousandth hearing, that Mrs. Felton's queries about Harold Calvert were strangely pertinent: "Is she sailing under false colors? It is useless to ask aught of her. Her whole life is a patent, daily recurring lie and a crime against woman-nature." Gazing dreamily out of his carriage window, he saw the streets thronged with flaunting Phrynes, sly couples lurking in convenient shadows, and, on side streets, stony-eyed adventuresses waiting to pounce on the reckless or unwary—and, their thugs within call on the "saloon" corners. "I belong to a nice sex; I do," he groaned.

"These women's lives are the harvest of the united gallantry of the men of America—my noble peers." He threw himself down to sleep, and a strange web and tangle of dreams haunted his pillow. In some strange way Harold Calvert was leading Marie, his dear, sweet-eyed, school-girl ward, to the altar where the robed clergy waited. Edith Van Arsdale was pointing forward ever, with eyes aflame, with eager impatience, and between the girl and the altar a graceful form, robed in white and wreathed in bridal blossoms, hovered with outspread arms. And there, in thrilling voice, the poor Princess of Nowhere cried, "Forbear! forbear."

In the gray of morning, Floyd Stanwix brushed away

these shades of night, and, as he went away to go out upon the sea, he muttered uneasily, "My old nurse would say this meant death. It is the sure sign." On the tossing, gray-green, broken waves of the Atlantic, Floyd Stanwix grimly piled the storm sails on the "Aphrodite." He was in a strange unrest. The man who had laughingly faced the opening broadside of the "Alabama," standing with eager boyish eyes beside his battery division, trembled when he thought of that white-robed figure.—"Marie—my dear little one." It seemed that Death had no sway in her bright presence, that he could not chill her ardent budding life, opening into the fragrant flower of womanhood. "I will telegraph the moment I land, and follow my telegram," he vigorously added. "What could Rosie Felton have on her mind? If I had pressed her closely, she might have told me the truth."

But Stanwix's vain regrets and vague fears were washed away in the blinding spray that drenched the "Aphrodite's" decks, as the knowing little minion of mischief drove along past the mournful banks.

While the "Umbria,"—her great heart aglow with central fires, her steel nerves thrilling in response to the imprisoned demon steam, her huge screws thrusting the brash lumpy sea away with vicious twists,—dug herself over the rolling desert of billows, under harsh gray fogs, a little column of bronzed riders pressed over the huge sink of the valley of the Mogollon Mountains in Arizona. They were of the blue coated cavalry of the United States of America. Devoid of the gilded trappings of Europe's riders, the keen eye, light hand, soldiers' poised alertness and easy self-controlled discipline, marked them as stern warriors. They were the sinewy Americans who sleep under the stars, tracking pathless burning deserts, climbing unmapped Sierras, setting forth stout-hearted on the prairie march of a thousand miles, without a murmur. The dauntless soldiers of the Republic!



The men who, led by their trusted officers, have stood freezing knee-deep in snow a long winter night, in silence, waiting the signal to charge at dawn an enemy double their number, are not holiday soldiers. The troopers who have faced the howling blizzards of Dakota and routed Sitting Bull, need no tea-cup hero of a martinet monarch to give them a name, to show that they are soldiers. *Suum cuique*. Their record, the conquered west torn from a hundred thousand of nature's bravest, proves what the cavalry of America can do! A tinselled foreigner, a visiting officer, making his secret report to "His August Pigheadedness" on the Continent, gracefully remarked, "They don't look like soldiers." His host, a scarred hero of the wild dashes in the Shenandoah, quietly smiled, as he answered, "Baron, suppose you bring your people over here, and try them! We are willing to learn, you know."

Where the purpling mirage mocked over burning sands, where the gray coyote slunk away into the fanged mesquite bush, where skull and skeleton told of the grim Apaches' work, over the lava scoria, far, far into the blazing furnace of the upper Gila valley, the riders followed, carbine in hand, a band of fifty Apaches who had killed a hundred settlers in a moon's waxing and waning.

The captain, a stern grizzled soldier, called up Earle Schuyler from the second platoon.

"Take ten men and cover our flanks." As the bright-eyed subaltern saluted, the captain kindly said, "Anything wrong, my boy?"

"Only the old thing, Vernon," said the junior, with friendly leaning, on his superior. Somewhere in the world there must be some letters for me."

"Never mind! we'll chase Mr. Geronimo to the Halls of the Montezumas, and then you shall have a leave and cool yourself in the shades of the old walks. Flirtation?"

"That's a gallant boy," cried Vernon, following him with

his eyes, as the lean young rider, as alert as a Pawnee Chief on his first war-paths, led his men out on the dangerous ground. Vernon loved Schuyler, who had, in several sharp dashes, shown a smart soldier's qualities under every trying incident of Apache fighting; for fatigue, danger, a horrid fate by mutilation, disease from poisoned waters, all that lonely privation can bring, all these and more hang around the American frontier soldier. "In any other service, he would be a major in ten years, a colonel in fifteen. I wonder if he will stick to the regiment, or drop out by and by, and marry that girl! That's the way we lose some of our best. But Earle is game, he'll never leave us! I wonder if any ugly influence is working against him! Somebody might loot his letters. It's a queer world. He will never leave as long as there's a shot to be fired." Vernon's eyes followed the daring lieutenant with fond pride. "By God! They're at it!" he cried, and with a yell, the troop dashed forward, the captain racing, revolver in hand, far ahead. When the hill was crowned, two dead troopers, and a half-score of stunted, shock-headed Apaches lay dead around Earle Schuyler, who had a terrific wound—a rifle-ball at short range ripping through both shoulders.

When the ring of revolver and crack of carbines had ceased, rough Vernon sat with moist eyes by the wounded lad. "I know what to do with these," thought the captain, looking at the dead troopers. "A soldier's grave dug far beneath the reach of Apache or wolf, and the horses trampling down the sand over them in friendly roughness. But the boy, if I can get him to Fort Bayard alive, old MacWhirter there, is a grand old Scotchman to rebuild a man. When it's cool, we'll make the break. He's good stock, but he will mend slow, and I very much fear K troop will have a new second sub."

Three months later, Surgeon Alexander MacWhirter remarked to Captain and Brevet Major Vernon Sixth Cavalry,



who had come in to "refit," and go out again "on the scout." "Vernon, your youngster will live. There's two things he wants. One, I can get him—that's a year's leave, with permission to go abroad. His mother and sister are 'over there.'" The bushy-haired Scotchman vaguely jerked his thumb in the direction of the "powers and principalities" of Europe.

Vernon nodded assent. "The other?" he eagerly said.

Old Sawbones cautiously offered his "medical stores," to Capt. Vernon. When he had finished his recital, he formulated it all. "The boy's moping. I'm a bachelor, ye know. And his mind's uneasy. If ye can find this Marie he called for a thousand times in that fever—be she brownie or nixie, or fairy, or whatever these young things are,—Alexander MacWhirter will go bail she will cure him quicker than all the medical officers of the United States army! There's a deal in heart contentment, and a satisfied mind."

"MacWhirter, you astound me! How can you know all this?" cried Vernon, as he rode away. "You're a sad old dog, for a bachelor." He formed his course as he rode to stables. "I'll write to my Jennie——" The Captain called up the power of his game little wife at home.

A month after the "Umbria" swept away with Floyd Stanwix' "Heart's-ease" on board, Mrs. Rosalind Felton, again at the Ocean House at Newport, "under different auspices," was the overjoyed recipient of tidings which delighted her. As the marble-paved tomb still held the late Frank Van Arsdale firmly gripped, Rosie was free to exhibit her toilets on the lawns, beach and drives with a successor to the generous Van Arsdale. "He is handsomer than Frank, but not as generous," pouted Mrs. Felton, still gaily navigating the seas of society with masked ports. Every time she stepped into the tasteful coupé and the horses dashed away, bearing her smoothly away on rubber-tired wheels, Mrs. Rosie murmured: "He was so considerate!"

On this afternoon drive she was happy. In her bosom rested a crumpled letter from Fred Norton. "I have the golden key to the mystery now!" exulted Rosie. Norton wrote from Dresden: "I told you that I lost her only for a day in Paris, but I have her located within fifty miles. A very rich American lady has taken a beautiful old castle up here in the Thuringian Mountains. Some of her household are there. The owner, an eccentric old baron, has fallen in love with Japan, and is, like a crab does *not*, "going backwards" to first principles. The brother never showed up in Paris, and Mrs. Edith Van Arsdale is both queenly and circumspect. I shall have to approach with care. He, of course, would suspect me. I go to-night to Berlin to meet a chum who by chance told me of the handsomest Greek girl he ever saw in his life, a head model for painters now. She has been sick, and is quite alone. Now, if that scoundrel has abandoned that girl, and her pride keeps her from going back to her brother, it may be her. I will cable in a week if I succeed." Four days later, Mrs. Felton cried in triumph: "I will drag him down! Wait! Wait!" for Norton had cabled the one word "Found."



# BOOK III.

## DEAD SEA FRUIT.

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### CHAPTER XI.

#### MISS ULTIMA MEETS PRINCE CHARMING IN A THURINGIAN CASTLE.

"I WONDER if this letter is one which I can safely deliver," mused Edith Van Arsdale, seated on the lawn of Schloss Danberg. The rays of a July sun were throwing golden gleams on the silent depths of the dark lake dreaming before the old pile. "Sealed—New York post-office—a woman's hand—I will risk it! Still——," while Miss Ultima's secret foe debated inwardly, the question decided itself. For, forth from the old overhanging battlemented sally-ports of the Schloss, Miss Marie Van Arsdale eagerly approached her beautiful guardian.

"Letters?" she cried in gay questioning, yet with a blushing cheek.

"One for you, Marie, only one. For me—see, this tiresome business!" Edith smiled curiously, as she saw, bundled up with a mass of business documents, three different private letters bearing the office mark of that justly esteemed barrister, Decatur Hoyt.

"A little tiresome, his Grandisonian periods—but I may need him yet. I will just read enough of them to be able to follow what the politicians would call 'the drift of his sentiments.'" The woman whom Frank Van Arsdale had most obligingly made an eligible millionairess, gazed on her superb Thuringian home, with an indefinable sense of *bien être*. "Nothing hostile can reach me here. I am safe from all intrusion." Her delighted eyes ranged over the beautiful wooded valley sweeping down towards the Elbe below her,

the grand old forests crowning the gray, rocky mountains, fencing off the north and west, and the restored mediæval splendor of Schloss Danberg. A grand old square keep, from which a crimson flag fluttered, the only bright spot of color in the landscape, a great hall, with vast galleries and rows of guest chambers above. A circular donjon-keep towered far to the left. In an angle of the old fortress home, a domed circular conservatory of crystal glass enshrined the flowers which lovely Marie Van Arsdale so cherished. Out on the still fathomless waters of the dark lake the swans glided like white cloud-puffs, mocked by their shadows. Servants in livery gave a bit of brightness to the gray and green of hoary age. The breeze, rich and perfumed, softly fanned the cheek of the smiling enemy of the frank young heiress.

A sudden exclamation, half a sharp cry, half a sob, arrested Edith Van Arsdale's attention as Miss Ultima approached, her trembling hands holding an open letter.

"I will never make that mistake again! Fool that I was!" inwardly resolved the stately widow, as Marie hid her head on her false friend's bosom.—Had she made a mistake fatal to her plans?"

"What is wrong? The General?" cried Edith, in some real apprehension. She had a future use for Cornelia "the cameo," and also for the *raffiné* old veteran. Such splendid lay figures she dreamed of as future supporters in the fancy-painted tableau of a wedding which Fate's stern decrees held far away from her. It was her very dream of an earthly heaven, this union with Floyd Stanwix! Marie's voice broke out in sorrow.

"He is wounded, sick, dying, perhaps! And I may never see him again!" The heiress could not lift the splendid eyes, shining with tears, to her listener's face. "And I have lost all his letters!" There was the first ring of doubt in the girl's voice. For love was leading her



toward the direct pathway to the heart now longing for her. Alas! It was a blind trail!

"Explain, I do not understand," confusedly said Edith, taken by surprise.

"Earle Schuyler has been desperately wounded by those terrible Apaches. He is to be brought to Europe. He may die, Edith! And I may never see him." The girl's head nestled deeper in her enemy's bosom, as she thrust the one dangerous letter into Edith's hands. There was a wicked play of changing lights in the wonderful Calvert eyes as the widow calmly perused the missive which she would have previously given to the flames had her usual coolness availed her.

"Who is this Mrs. Jennie Vernon?" queried Edith, in feline caution.

"Why, Earle's Captain, Vernon, always sends Mrs. Vernon east in summer. I met her at West Point, with the General." The heiress was mournful and abstracted, as she faltered, "I cannot understand it. He has written me several times. I will go in now, please. Will you kindly advise me what I must do?" And Edith blessed the "bashful maiden art" which took trembling Marie Van Arsdale mourning to the shelter of a young girl's last refuge, her own room, far up in the old keep, where she could see the lovely panorama of old Thuringia spread out before her.

"This woman seems to be both acute and resolute! Those army-wives are all matchmakers, *par excellence*," decided Edith as she crumpled the letter in her strong, shapely hand. "The Captain, the surgeon, the regimental ladies, all seem determined to 'open the way' for the handsome invalid. Ah! I must now make no false step. The fortune of Miss Ultima shall never shine in the circles of the 'Sixth Cavalry,' be they ever so famous.

"Thank God! She is here. I must think—think!

Dare I bring Harold to the front? No!" she mused. "It is too soon, and Floyd Stanwix is a cool man of the world. He may come any day. I must cling closely to them both, and prevent an opening of the 'no thoroughfare' of this boy's letters."

Moving over the velvet lawns of the splendid old baronial home, the alarmed conspirator against Floyd Stanwix' darling child, sought counsel of the groves and leafy gardens fencing in the old Schloss. Her brow was clearer as she returned in half an hour. "I must excite and distract this child. I can easily trap all doubtful correspondence after this. I will take any risk. She must be taught the passionate lessons of life. If I only dared bring Harold on the scene now. At her age, a girl's first love is only her own reflected self. Only the first kindling glances are needed. For in the flush of life's superb morning glow, the flame is already burning in her heart. The very first Prince Charming will cause her to forget her romantic summer friend." With bowed head, in deep thought, Edith moved, a living picture, toward the great gates whose chiselled escutcheons and mossy shields spoke the very romance of the old. "The Enchanted Castle! The white rose of Schloss Danberg. She shall be a prisoner here, and the echoes of her dreaming heart shall answer Brother Harold's magical voice," so decided the false friend, bent on furthering the ends of her own passions.

"A stranger, a gentleman to see Madame," said the splendid Swiss, bowing respectfully as the Golden Lady carelessly glanced at the card. "As Monsieur stated his visit was of an important and pressing nature, I conducted him at once to the great hall where he awaits Madame."

"Cyprian Lascaris," repeated Edith, as she paused a moment at the portal to glance at the card. "I know no such person. A foreigner—perhaps an artist. Some one undoubtedly who wishes to see the castle. He evidently has



impressed Jules." The lady suddenly caught a glance of a dark impassioned face eagerly regarding her from the window of the great hall, the pride of the castle. The eyes were so eager, so burning, so hopeless in their fixed intensity, that Edith shuddered involuntarily. "A man with a purpose—a dark man—and a dangerous purpose." And the chatelaine was upon her wariest guard, as she entered the vaulted room where bannered trophies, spoils of the chase, matchless armors and quaint old Nürnberg plate brought back the days when the knights made the rafters ring in lordly wassail. "You desired to see me, sir?" There was a dignified defence in the distant politeness which indicated a chair to the haggard but handsome man who was eagerly awaiting her approach.

"Pardon, Madame, my intrusion," the stranger remarked, bowing low with a frank grace. "I merely desired to ask you a necessary question. One of vital importance to me." He stood before her, his dark eyes imploring, yet pitiless in a latent menace to some hidden enemy. His measured voice had the ring of a death-sentence in it. Edith shivered, brave as she was, coldly fenced in her citadel of womanly cunning.

"Will you state it, sir?" replied Mrs. Van Arsdale, her voice trembling slightly. "A gentleman evidently, and either mad or crazed with love," she wonderingly thought.

"Where is your brother, Mr. Harold Calvert, now?" the visitor queried suddenly, with a startling abruptness. Before the astonished woman could reply, his head dropped upon his bosom. "I must see him at once—we were friends for years—close friends—in Athens." He gently waved aside her repeated motion inviting him to be seated. Standing alert and anxious before her, his Alpine hat still in the left hand, his nervous fingers clutching the bosom of his coat, it seemed to Edith that the firm right hand might flash out a deadly knife at any instant.

"This is the danger-signal, the dead-line, something is wrong," was her instant comment, as she deliberately seated herself. In a moment she raised her eyes frankly to his own. All of her future plans hung upon her steady nerve now!

"I have not seen Harold for several years," she calmly replied. "I had hoped to have had him here with me as my guest this summer. All I know now is that he is at the Diamond Fields of South Africa, and goes from thence into the interior, on a lion-hunt into Mashongo-land." The beating of the frightened woman's heart seemed to her to wake the very echoes of the old hall.

"Can you give me his address at Cape Town? I must meet him. I will go there."

With a thrill of inward triumph, Edith Van Arsdale slowly replied, "I await his letters myself. I know nothing save what I have told you. My brother is very uncertain in his movements. Perhaps you know his character." She smiled.

"You have told me the whole truth, Madame?" cried the stranger, leaning forward like a hound in the leash.

Mrs. Van Arsdale rose and rang a bell with a coldly, bitter gesture.

"Pardon! Oh! My God! No one will help me!" and before the Swiss could escort the interloper to the door, at the gesture of quick command from Edith, standing with blazing eyes, he was gone.

"Leave me, Jules," calmly said the lady to the astonished servitor. "He is only an eccentric traveller." But a strange quaking fear wrenched her heart as she joined Marie, who now awaited her under a gayly-ornamented tent, pitched on the lawn where the dauntless Teutonic knights had once jousting under the kindling eyes of beauty.

"Edith, Edith! I am so happy," gaily called out the glowing girl, standing and waving a telegram as the anxious, sister debated what merited vengeance hung over her



brother Harold's head. "Uncle Floyd comes to us this very afternoon."

"I hope that this desperate-looking Lascaris will not linger long near here!" was the prayer of the alarmed woman, who smilingly dissembled as she led the joyous heiress into the "ladies' morning-room." While her own heart leaped up at Floyd's coming, a strange foreboding filled her with vague and terrible fears. "Who breaks—pays," is a fearfully direct proverb in its rugged truth. All the bright summer afternoon, as the two loving women waited with their unequal passions of mad secret devotion and tender affection for the yachtsman, Mrs. Van Arsdale was gravely disquieted, as her absent brother's face rose up before her. "I have baffled this man to-day but—for how long? Is he an avenger of blood, or," she whispered with white lips, "of outraged womanhood?" For the dark and evil deeds of the last of the Calverts weighed upon his millionaire sister now. "It would ruin all my future. And I must dispatch Floyd, as soon as I can, and hide and save Harold. Oh! I fear the *mauvais quart d'heure de Rabelais*," Harold's settling day may be a dreadful one—when he is brought to book!" For the haggard-faced gentleman, the man of the hollow voice and burning eyes, was a grim spectre of the night, a haunting horror, long after happy Marie's white rounded arms had clasped her secret foe in a loving good-night embrace.

"It is a beautiful, grand old stronghold," mused Floyd Stanwix, gazing fondly at the light in Marie's window, as he smoked his last cigar, under the stars, by the starlit lake. "I thank God that my own darling is safe here. The European mob of hungry officers and rascally fortune-hunters have to stand at bay! And Edith is just the woman to guard her. I can go away, happy, on my long cruise to Madagascar now, for the coast is clear." And, as he laid his head upon his pillow, the ring of Edith-Van Arsdale's rich voice thrilled

him to the heart's core. "Can she—does she——" he smothered the thoughts of a growing passion for the woman who secretly loved him, which brought a glow to his lonely heart; for, out of the shadowy past, the gentle eyes which he had seen in the convent picture beamed upon him in the tenderness of a last farewell. "No. I'll go on through life alone to the end," he muttered, as he thought of the girl who had died in his arms, clasping him to a bosom torn with the ineffable agony of parting, but which the remorse of sin had not entered. The new passion passed in pity, glancing aside from the loving helplessness of the woman who had died for him.

It was the vigil of burning hopeless love which unnerved Edith Van Arsdale as she walked by Floyd Stanwix' side, among her rose-bowers next day. "Edith, tell me," said Stanwix, with some concern, "where is your brother? I met a very decent fellow in Paris—a Greek gentleman of rank—Lascaris, a rich young merchant of Athens. He is eager to see your will-o'-the-wisp artist brother at once, on some matter of vital importance. He had even telegraphed on to New York for your address, and he told me that he would come and see you. Have you heard from him?"

"Oh! My God!" hastily cried Stanwix, as he caught Edith in his arms. "You are ill!" In a sudden fear, he caught her to his breast, and the despairing woman felt his strong arms thrown around her in manly tenderness, as he bore her to an arbor-seat and shouted for help to a passing domestic. The strain of daily hypocrisy was almost too much for Edith, who was real in her one passion.

"The fates are against me," murmured Edith, when Miss Ultima, hurrying to the scene, lavished every care upon the broken woman, as Floyd Stanwix, with honest tenderness, showed her a frank, brotherly face which doomed her to despair. It was shining with the trusting friendship of the man who fondly fancied he knew all that Marie owed to



her lovely protectress. And now, in the passing winds of summer, Edith seemed to hear the rushing steeds of the Valkyries, and the fear of an undefinable, unpunished crime led the face of the dark avenger, Cyprian Lascaris, back to her excited brain.

"Some slowly coming doom, a mysterious vengeance of what horrid hidden past?"

In her heart of hearts, with the instinctive self-denial of a sister, the desperate, scheming woman strove to send away from her home the lover whose every smile she coveted, lest the gloomy quest of Cyprian Lascaris be achieved.

When, two days later, Floyd Stanwix went happily forth to join the "Aphrodite," on her eight months' cruise, the scheming widow's ruling nerve had returned. "I can perhaps achieve all yet. Decatur Hoyt will surely stand by me. Marie will also be of age before he returns, and if I hide Harold for a space, and linger quietly here, I may yet link Harold and Ultima together. Then he is safe. I will keep him in America, and money, gold, the loved, minted treasure, will smooth all over."

And yet, after telegraphing Harold to come at once to a secret rendezvous in the nearest village, the sound of the awful chant of the Valkyries seemed to ring out once more upon her ears!

"How can I arrange it so as to bring Harold gracefully on the stage of this little life-drama?" mused Edith Van Arsdale, on the eve of her brother's arrival. She was seated in her boudoir in the castle tower, and before her lay an open dispatch-box. Its steel sides and cumbrous Chubb locks proved her distrust of *soubrettes*. The hour was late, and a silvery moon threw a ghostly path of white over the sleeping lake. The sighing lindens sang in minor chords, waking all the woman's vague regrets. They loosed all the mad longings of her passionate heart. Before her lay two open letters. The face of Edith Van Arsdale hardened as

she strode up and down the splendid sweep of the vaulted room. "The Swan's Nest," she had playfully termed it. "Thoughts avail not now, I must act!" she murmured. "Some *coup de théâtre* must occur, some sudden diversion of Marie's school-girl fancies. Floyd's visit has driven her wounded officer's face out of her girlish memory for a day. But the flush of yearning womanhood is in her blood, teeming with the young wine of life. This very air breathes the romance of the old. It whispers of Love, of Arms, of Arts, of all the graceful glamour of a dead chivalry, a buried past." She paused.

"I must meet Harold myself, halfway to the village, *par hasard!*" She studied closely his answering telegram. "I have it. I will drive into the village, examine the old inn, and choose the most retired and yet convenient rooms for our meetings. But, what excuse can I give, if he is to remain incognito? My youth—my appearance——" her lip curled with a derisive smile, as the beauty which was veiled to Floyd Stanwix' sorrow-shaded eyes, flashed out upon her from her mirror.

"All my schemes, all my wasted toil, to what end? I have exhausted every art to make him forget the past." She started, for her own word "art" echoed in her mind.

"I have it now. I will play the last trick. Harold shall paint my picture. He is a dabbler in many things. I will choose the rooms, the *mise en scène* is easy. His eccentric habits, his roving, all are explained by the cabalistic word, 'artist.' So he will be safe. I can bring Marie there later. In the meantime, I can probe his conscience, examine his heart—if he has one. Can I trust Harold? Who knows?

"But these—these, call for action!" with throbbing brows she read a few manly lines from Earle Schuyler. "It is hardly fair," she murmured, as she held the wounded officer's letter to the flame of a silver cresset-lamp. "And



yet, the fates are against him, as they are against me. *Chacun à son tour!*" A ten minutes' study of Decatur Hoyt's companion letter brought new shades to her brows. "I must break their lines. The two influences which I most fear are closing in upon me, even here."

"I gave Lieutenant Earle Schuyler your personal address, using the final discretion you kindly honor me with. He proceeds soon to Europe and seems very desirous of paying his respects to our Marie. Poor fellow, his final recovery is a matter of doubt! I have also learned a strange fact through a firm of confidential detectives here who handle all our estate business in their line. A stranger, a certain Cyprian Lascaris, is making the most strenuous efforts to find the whereabouts of your brother, and even your own house-servants here have been approached. The inquiry comes on from Paris, and the principal is a rich young Greek merchant of Athens. As you naturally are in communication with your brother, I deem it only my duty to warn you." Edith raised her eyes. "The rest is—too complimentary, and at present useless." She smiled. "Tomorrow, I will give Harold his cue. It is the best plan."

In contrition, after she vainly sought sleep, Marie Van Arsdale repeated unconsciously the last words of Earle Schuyler's letter: "I am assured by your lawyer that you will surely receive this letter, and your answer may tell me of some strange mischance to the others. Your silence will need no interpretation." It had been with a trembling hand, the woman-soldier of fortune consigned the touching letter of the wounded invalid to the flames. But it was a duel with Fate!

The sun had passed meridian next day when Edith Van Arsdale finished explaining her general plans to the brother whose eyes kindled as the scheming woman gave him a partial confidence. "Here, Harold, you will be safe from all gossip. You can choose your own morning and evening

hours for recreation and await my summons to Schloss Danberg. I must carefully watch Marie. Her fortune is a great one. It is treble mine, due to her mother's lands, and no interloper must be allowed to awaken her slumbering heart. The only man I fear is far away. Floyd Stanwix will be in far Madagascar, before Christmas. All communication is cut off, and the other trustee is wax under my hand." Suddenly fixing her clear eyes upon the handsome brother whom she still distrusted, Edith said sharply, "Are you perfectly free to take up the gifts of Fortune, if I can make the way clear for your still unforgotten arts?" She trembled in anxiety, but Calvert laughed, as his eye roved over the quaintly-decorated apartment.

"I am as free as you are," he promptly said, as he lifted a straw-stemmed old goblet of Johannisberger. He was in ecstatic mood. The tree of life was now bearing golden fruit. Keen and alert, he fenced coldly with his imperious sister. "Where does the secret of this scheme lie? To what end is she striving in weaving her meshes around this school-girl?" But his face was pale, and he muttered confusedly, "I beg pardon," as the dainty old glass crushed in his nervous grasp, when his sister quietly demanded,

"Do you know Cyprian Lascaris?"

With ready tact, he covered his agitation. "Oh, yes! A fellow at Athens. I used to know him. He is now at Singapore, in charge of an old business there. He wanted me to go out there with him."

His sister fixed her eyes steadily upon him. "Do you owe him money?" she queried, hopefully.

"Not a *sou marqué*," cheerfully replied the newly-pledged artist, who was now apparently enjoying the delicious glimpses from the old carven window-pane of his new eyrie. He is one of the few intimates whom I have spared even in my hours of tribulation." The tone of his light raillery jarred upon the brooding woman.



"He was here a few days ago, searching for you, and he certainly acted most strangely! I gave him a false scent, and he has gone afar."

There was no simulation in Harold's excitement as he sprang to his feet. "Lascaris! Here! Looking for me!" he stammered.

"Yes. In my castle, and he seemed possessed. What is there between you?"

The widow was coldly skeptical of the clumsily-contrived excuses which first came to Calvert's facile tongue.

"Oh! It's nothing! I can easily fix it all up. I do not fear him in any way," the fair-faced scoundrel replied with an affected calmness—for, across his memory, flashed the picture of the dark-faced Greek with the flashing blade sparkling in his vigorous attacks, as he faced him in the last closing of their sword-play. "I am ready for him, at any time," answered Harold, with a confident smile. And a gleam of joy lit up his troubled mind when his millionaire sister left him for the day. "He has not yet found Diane! Her pride will never allow her to face him in shame. I will be well out of the country before he returns from Cape Town. I can face him out, if the plan works. If not, I will try the Orient, for Edith is now in my hands." So it was with a cheerfully-beaming face that Calvert returned next evening from a visit to Dresden, where the studio scenario was easily ordered and dispatched. The lady of Schloss Danberg was happy in her mind as she drove homeward under the stars, the studio puppet-play arranged. "I can easily excite Marie's girlish curiosity by the air of mystery clinging to my artist brother. She shall see him, a living picture in a frame."

"There's nothing to balk your plan, Edith," cried her new adviser. "We are beyond all interference."

While the reunited children of the accomplished Major Calvert plotted her capture, Miss Ultima in her pony phaë-

ton drove to the village and posted alone her first letter to the happy owner of the "Aphrodite." At that very time, Floyd Stanwix, gazing at a coming fair wind tearing up the blue Mediterranean with "cat's paws," was counting the days till he would reach Aden.

"I am all right," he exulted. "Reuter's agency at Aden can send on anything, letters or telegrams, and my little girl will not be out of touch very long." The white wings flitted merrily onward.

It was three weeks later when, with artful simplicity of manner, Miss Ultima's dearest foe, led her up to the canvas where her own picture, now completed, was an evidence of the latent gifts of the startled man whose eyes were filled with a strange wonder. "Women are unsafe critics of each other. This girl is a rare beauty. Edith looks far over her loveliness to some distant object. What is her real design in this costly contrivance of a palace prison for the girl." His stern, silent sister, burning under the steady fire of an unappeased jealousy, looked out to a future wherein Floyd Stanwix might claim her to fill the place of the absent Marie.

"If my plan succeeds, I will make Harold take her away on a two years' world pilgrimage. And he will then turn—turn fondly to me, for I will drive the pale-faced dead woman from her shadowy throne in that man's heart. He shall know how madly I love him yet. She turned with tender eyes to Marie, who was this day strangely silent, as the carriage dashed along under the lindens dear to the village lovers. "And what do you think of Mr. Harold?" said the veiled enemy.

Miss Ultima dreamily said, "He looks like a young Greek god of the olden days."

"It will go on now," triumphantly smiled Edith to herself, as, with a burst of sudden confidence, she said, "Marie, I am so glad you like him. For when he comes to us, you must ask him why he made me tell you that his name was



Mr. Harold. I tell you, dear one, that his other name is Calvert. He is my will-o'-the-wisp brother, Harold. I have asked him to stay with us a few weeks."

A glad light sprang into the girl's eyes, as she eagerly said, "And will he teach me to draw and paint?"

"I do not think any one could refuse you, darling," replied Edith, as the carriage swept up to the grand old arch of Schloss Danberg. "But you must ask him yourself. He comes to us to-morrow," carelessly added the beautiful plotter.

Under the moonlit walls of the old Schloss, the next evening, Harold Calvert, with graceful ease, yielded to the impulsive girl's request. The transferred studio scenario was soon under requisition, and no misgivings entered the frank-hearted heiress's mind, when Edith approvingly said, "I see that you have found your master." For the sunny hours sped on in a happy unrestraint, as the handsome adventurer guided the rose-tinted fingers of the young beauty, wound around with golden snares. But once did the song of the Valkyries sweep the echoing chords of Edith's passionate heart. It was on a wild night of an early autumn storm, two months later, when Harold and Marie, seated in the great library, in the mimic war of chess, noted not the pale face of the fair woman looking out at the waving fir branches in the storm. Floyd Stanwix led her wandering thoughts afar to smiling southern seas; but on a swift steamer, battling with the surging south Atlantic, Cyprian Lascaris was pacing the deck, his eyes sternly set to the prow, and an oath was registered before high heaven as he cried, "I have been tricked—tricked like a dog. But I will hunt him out and kill him as I would a mad wolf." For the sister of his heart, in the haunting loneliness of her heart-break was calling for him afar, the brother whom she dared not face, while, with smiling lips, her false husband played the game of life, gazing tenderly into Miss Ultima's eyes, now sweet with the shy

happiness of a love which strangely filled her eager, longing heart. Prince Charming had at last spoken the fateful words which seemed to her to open a strange realm, a fairy world of future happiness to her. Harold, coldly triumphant, each day lost more and more from memory's glass the reflection of Diane's eyes, beaming in her unselfish trust of love, as she was wont to meet him, in their hidden nest at Smyrna. Once only, a chill of sudden agitation disturbed his shaken nerves, and he rose, his purpose fixed, and, in the safe retreat of his own den, deliberately destroyed all the record-papers, which were the last bulwark between his deserted wife and the scorn of the world. He heard not the chant of the Valkyries on their high and distant hills, grimly parting out the fates of the dwellers beneath the sway of the awful hidden gods who mock at us all here below!

Harold Calvert felt a strange unrest at times in his heart, as he lingered over the last touches of a sketch which, for the first time, gave to Miss Ultima the knowledge that she was fair. Golden hours glided by when, in the intervals of the artist-lover's labors, the happy girl listened to Prince Charming's graceful recitals of lands yet strange to Marie. Flushed with success, his beauty set off by the lordly surroundings of Schloss Danberg, with an easy conscience, Harold Calvert lulled himself into the day-dream of a happy golden future. His pulses throbbed with expectant fire as he listened to the unfoldings of Marie's inviolate heart. The young rose beneath his awakening touch exhaled all the delicate fragrance of life's immortal spring. The dawn of a first passion swept over Ultima, the voice of love waking her heart as the wild summer breeze sways all the forest branches in a graceful tremor.

"And in all these days of lonely wandering you have never loved. It seems so strange that you should come to me here, a lonely girl, Harold!"

There was a red flush of shame on Calvert's cheek as he



listened to the innocent girl's self-deceiving words, and for once he found his sister's face as hard and cruel as the stony-hearted Medusa of old. "By God! I am only a cat's-paw for some one of her deadly plans. If Edith harms this girl, I will——" He nursed his wrath in silence. Coward he was not, but he dared not even to himself call up the vision of his betrayed wife, his abandoned child, and find peace of mind, although the richest heiress of New York now trembled at his coming footstep. The easy curve of moral self-abasement had led him low enough, and, his mind given up to the easy pleasures of the passing moment, now so fair, he could not fathom the dark ways of the resolute sister whose mind dominated him in his golden hours. In the confidences of womanhood, with cautious hand, Edith Van Arsdale fed the flame of love, glowing in the lamp of Miss Ultima's heart. Hurried on with glowing emotions fanned artfully, Marie Van Arsdale's eyes never turned to the outer world, and the man who buried his sorrows in silence, lingered on, his heart sealed by the negative of Miss Ultima's silence. Earle Schuyler was far away, and he found in his manly heart easily the reason why the proud descendant of the Stanwix clan would not stoop to conquer. He was only a poor soldier of his country.

The leaves had fallen from the lindens under which Marié's eyes so proudly rested on the lover who had brought all her life's sunshine with him, when Edith and her brother walked alone by the dark lake. The grim shadows of the lonely Schloss lay black on the darkened waters.

"It is now the time to seal this bargain for life, Harold," said Edith. "Stanwix is away in Madagascar; Miss Cornelia's gentle surprise will be only momentary. Our isolation is your protection, and in a month, Marie will be eighteen. I do not wish to appear as forcing on a sudden marriage, but I warn you now, to make this girl yours forever. The Legation at Berlin will not refuse the proper

and legal certificates of the marriage. You must act in this."

"Did you ever discover that this girl had a mind of her own and a strong, brave heart?" quietly replied Harold.

"What do you mean?" queried the masked enemy.

"When I signed her picture yesterday, we spoke of the future. 'It shall be your wedding-present to me, Harold,' she began. I was startled when she told me that she had already written to Floyd Stanwix to come home to New York. 'No one shall give me to you but Uncle Floyd. He is the nearest one on earth to me, but you!'"

Edith turned a pale face to her brother, as she gasped,

"She has told him all! Then we are ruined! Floyd will try to break this marriage off!" Her secret passion, loosened by the sudden mention of her distant beloved's name crimsoned her cheeks, as Harold's eyes gleamed sharply in a searching glance.

"Has there been anything between you and him to wreck me in the very hour of triumph?"

His sister made a sign of silent negation.

"I must lead this girl gently, now. I cannot drive her into an open snare," resolutely said Edith, ignoring her brother's rebellious attitude.

She walked alone down the garden paths, and Harold stalked in sullen silence after her.

"I see all now. She only wants the girl out of her way. My lady has some campaign of her own on hand," and a light gleamed over his past mental darkness. It was, then, no sisterly tenderness which had delivered the heiress of Cragnest up to him as a golden prize.

Edith was pondering over her secret measures.

"There is but one way. To go at once home—to New York. Let her have her will in this. I hold the other trustee in the hollow of my hand. Hoyt is devoted to me"—a cruel smile crept over her bright face—"and Low, the



secretary, will post me on the slightest move of Stanwix. When he arrives, we must force the marriage on, at once. The whole social world will be ready. Floyd Stanwix loves her tenderly. He will not balk the wish of her heart in this. And you must take her away—at once—for a long tour."

The brother had listened with a defiant scepticism.

"Why so?" roughly demanded Harold, who would fain lord it in Gotham's gilded salons.

"Because I will have it so," said Edith, with a look which quelled Harold's mutiny.

"By Jove! She might throw me overboard forever," he grumbled, and fearfully held his peace.

That night, while Marie hid her blushes in the bosom of the woman who had betrayed her, she whispered,

"As soon as you please, but only in my own home; and Uncle Floyd must be there to share my happiest day."

On the deck of a steamer rushing up the Red Sea, Floyd Stanwix, with a clouded brow, vowed to beat the "record" on his homeward trip. His eyes were opened to danger!

## CHAPTER XII.

## A NEW YORK CITY MARRIAGE UP TO DATE.

MRS. ROSALIND FELTON was a very pretty picture on a crystalline autumn morning three weeks later, as her maid entered her boudoir with a dainty coffee-service. A very particular summons had aroused the complacent beauty at an early hour. Mrs. Eugenie Stickleback was the cause of the Princess of Nowhere abandoning that happy slumber which proved her to be one of the most contented women in New York City.

"Let her come in, Justine," airily remarked Rosie, as she settled herself to a peep at the inflammatory headlines of the sheaf of morning journals which her ladyship doted upon. Breathless and big with the fate of empire was the visitor, whose appearance before eight o'clock astonished the house-servants.

"They are here!" panted the alleged society reporter, as Mrs. Felton rang for an extra service, in response to a womanly glance of inquiry.

"Are you sure? I wish for no mere rumors. This is important!" sharply said the hostess.

"I met Raikes going out with the morning orders," firmly replied the rather frowsy-looking social spy. "They are alone. Only the two ladies came over."

"And Floyd Stanwix?" Mrs. Rosie was now eager.

"Still cruising on the African coast, in his own yacht," was the prompt response.

"And her brother?"



"They are absolutely alone, for Raikes tells me that his name has not even been mentioned, since the party was met by him at the barge-office."

Mrs. Felton was very thoughtful now. "I cannot understand it!" she murmured.

"One thing more I should tell you," continued the reporter, with a stealthy attention to her inviting breakfast. "Mrs. Van Arsdale brought back but one maid; all the rest of the retinue is in their German castle. I believe that they are going back soon. Raikes says that he overheard Mrs. Van Arsdale tell Judge Hoyt that her lease of the Schloss runs over another year. By the way, he was closeted alone with the widow for two hours last night."

"I am sorry that man distrusts me," mused the Little Corporal of fortune. "I was a little too sharp and dashing about that pocket-book matter. I could use him now." It was not the first time that her *moqueuse* manner had cut deep into the vanity of manhood. "Bah! He would cling to Edith in every case—she has the money—and I think he secretly prostrates himself before that chilly Venus. What is the mystery of her life?"

Warmly commending her secret agent, Mrs. Rosie dispatched this human raven forth to gather new details.

"Watch the house night and day. Send your friends there—people with tickets and subscription-papers. Go there yourself as often as they will let you in," grimly said Mrs. Felton.

"And all is of interest to me now, every visitor, all the family movements, even the servants' gossip."

"Now, what is her little game?" soliloquized Mrs. Stickleback, as she thrilled under the crisp crackle of a new twenty-dollar bill, a very tower of strength to the departing social *moucharde*.

The gossip spy would have been astonished had she seen Mrs. Felton a half hour later, in a business-like black

robe and demure hat, step into her coupé. For on her breakfast tray, in the morning's grist of letters, an epistle of Fred Norton's had stirred her very soul. Justine was not even quick enough for her mistress's mood in dressing her. "I can think on my way down-town," hastily decided Rosie. For she was alert, and the shadows of her approaching revenge colored her roseate mood. Added matter for thought was furnished by a cablegram received at the hands of a singularly objectionable lad, who combined all the varied voices of the "telegraph-messenger fiend."

"It's a special repeated delivery," he leered, as he cast his eyes over the pretty nest of Mrs. Felton, with the eye of a professional blackmailer.

Rosie started as she read the fateful words.

"Harold sailed on the Bremen steamer from Cherbourg, the day they left Havre. Positive.—FRED."

The fair minister of womanly revenge was so shaken that the odor of *crème de menthe* accompanied the beauty on her smart voyage down Broadway to the Twenty-third street telegraph office. "I see it now; she proposes to marry that wretch to Miss Ultima. For God's sake, where is Floyd Stanwix!" Mrs. Felton's eyes were blazing with wrath, as she stepped into the telegraph office where she always personally transacted her business. For Rosie knew a thing or two, and the ways of New York servants are past all human understanding.

"They will never keep a 'black-book' on me," she muttered. Her whole soul was stirred by the agitating memories of the past.

"I will call there to-day, myself," she decided, but her shivering sudden chill told her that, even now, she dared not face Harold Calvert suddenly, for it was his hand that had led her on the downward path! Her flying fingers indited several cablegrams. "That will find Mr. Floyd Stanwix, if he is within the swing of the cable net-work of



the world. It was addressed to his London bankers, whom she had good reasons to well know, and signed with a name which recalled the rosy hours when Stanwix knew her as his own Egeria.

"Floyd is a gentleman," she said, in affected compliment. "'A true blue,' and this will wake him up. I can see it all now. Mrs. Edith is bamboozling the easy-going lawyer, and I suppose that Low is a reserve-string to her bow. Ah!" The sigh of delighted anticipation was interpreted by the vinegar-faced, goggle-eyed Minerva behind the cable counter, as a testimonial of "Love's Last Greeting." Expert in the ways of New York womanhood, the girl, singularly ugly, and as romantic as ill-favored, deduced from that cablegram that Floyd Stanwix' hastened return involved considerable moral impropriety, and she felt at second-hand, the delicious thrill which accompanies a social crime.

"They're all the same," bitterly said the girl, as she gently pocketed the tariff change for several overcounted words.

The mandate to Fred Norton in Paris was the source of a new mystery to the female Cerberus of the office.

"Keep her in Paris, under your own eye. Wait my orders and sail at once. Cable in advance. I will meet you."

"I wonder if this lady is importing all the machinery of a French novel up to-date," mused the clerk, at her modest luncheon. She revenged herself on the Company who had placed her there, as a positively "flirtation proof" employée, by little side operations, now and then, resulting from the social vagaries of ardent manhood and too, too malleable woman.

"I am sure there is something wrong about that woman," snapped out the girl, as the blue coupé dashed away. In which opinion the freckled daughter of Eve was in grave error. Mrs. Rosalind Felton was "all right," up to that very moment, and her toilet and surroundings were of the fabled "four-hundred." The "conscience" part of her personal outfit

alone was lacking, being safely stored away, like winter furs, for future use.

"I will not dabble with Edith's own sly little games. I will let her dream along," thought Rosie, "and I will then drop on her last *tableau de famille*, like a trip-hammer," resolutely said the thoughtful matron, as she re-read Norton's letter over her very *raffiné déjeuner*, at Delmonico's two hours later. "I see it all now," she murmured, as the last drop of a small bottle of Château Yquem, cheered her inner woman, and cleared her mental vision. "He has carefully hidden his little Smyrna adventure from Edith, and sneaked in to captivate this bread-and-butter Miss, for her money." In the vulgate, Mrs. Felton "owed Edith one" and her joy in finding out Calvert's lost trail was unbounded. "He shall remember me to the last days of his life," she swore in her quiet wrath. "Shame for shame, sorrow for sorrow, disgrace for disgrace. And—he shall not rule the swollen fortunes of Marie Van Arsdale." Her sparkling eyes testified alike to the excellence of the wine and the fire of her bottled wrath, as she swept away in the conscious pride of "chicdom" to her waiting carriage. "I will play a dead-sure game. He is at my mercy now!"

And yet, after her siesta, before she dressed for a dinner and a merry theatre night of light buffoonery, she had noted her swollen eyes. "I am almost a fright," she said, with calm self-condemnation, for bitter tears had wet her satin pillow of down.

"What is it all worth?" she fiercely said, as she artistically tapped her cheeks with a rouge cushion. "My victory, his ruin, all barren triumphs, only dead-sea fruit." And yet she hung like a crouching panther, upon the pathway of the three now moving on the mysterious marriage.

Two weeks later there was a buzzing hum of astonishment mixed with growls of envy, convulsing the *jeunesse dorée* of Gotham.



"It is a robbery of the innocent. 'For he cometh as a thief of the night,' " cried the irate Rhinebeck at his club, to a disgusted circle of chappies.

"Who's the beggar anyway?" was the universal cry. "He is not even a baronet's son."

These references to Harold Calvert aroused Rhinebeck's ire again. "D——n him! He is just noble enough to be the brother of old Van Arsdale's handsome widow," and curses, loud and deep, descended upon the match-making relict of the dead financier—the beautiful woman who, as wife and dowager, had never fed society's cruel maw with even the faintest *esclandre*.

"Well, I fancy that Mrs. Edith wants the girl out of the way. She will then go over the water herself and ally herself to some great hulking, foreign noble," said De Peyster, who regretted to see Van Arsdale's good gold also vanish in the direction of the "effete monarchies" of Europe.

The comparative social insignificance of the bridegroom was a blow to local pride, and Rhinebeck cautiously prowled in the direction of Floyd Stanwix' apartments.

"I wonder if there is any way to put a spoke in that fellow's wheel. He seems to 'lie low' like 'Brer' Rabbit,' in the family stronghold. Poor old General Stanwix, he is dead to the world."

The janitors informed Mr. Rhinebeck that, by a cablegram from Aden, the "Admiral" had directed the preparation of his apartments.

"He'll be with us right away," cheerfully presaged the servant.

"Too late, too late! I wonder if the other trustee is pleased," murmured the disgruntled Rhinebeck.

A visit next day convinced him of the freezing hauteur of Counsellor Decatur Hoyt, who received the youth in his most *noli me tangere* manner.

"I would advise you, my dear sir, to make your inquiries

directly, of the parties to this union. I am only their legal adviser."

The faint sarcasm was not lost on Rhinebeck, who went forth and "minded his business" to the extent of nailing his regrets down with several "cocktails" at the *Café Savarin*. Then the bright young society-hawk conned over his list of eligibles to find a successor to Miss Ultima, "not lost, but gone before."

Decatur Hoyt had watched the departure of Rhinebeck with a secret scorn. His eyes wandered away from his law-books, as he thought of the thrilling promise of Edith Van Arsdale's eyes when she had implored him, the night before, to assume the confidential guidance of all the formalities of the marriage.

"I hope," she whispered, as the swaying of her graceful form brought the counselor again within the "danger-line," "that you will appease any natural surprise on the part of Mr. Floyd Stanwix, in this matter."

Hoyt eyed her keenly. She seemed to be under a mental strain, a mysterious depression.

"There is nothing to fear, Edith," he said. "Both parties are legally free to contract. There seems to be no lack of an entire unanimity of feeling between them." He smiled faintly, for he was jaded with the long torture of his suspect passion.



ried, and away on the long tour." She dared not confess that her passionate heart longed to know Floyd Stanwix again in the meshes of her fatal web. "In her absence, in this suddenly changed condition, he may, he must, turn to me."

"Can I depend upon you to handle Floyd Stanwix in this matter? I wish to push this marriage on. Can I count upon you?" Her eyes were tempting in their too-evident wilfulness of implied promise. There are questions of portent so ominous that the fateful words tremble on the lips which fail. The self-surrender of her eyes broke the thin veil of the frail web of conventionality between them. It was a bargain, an unholy pact, which the breathless woman mutely ratified with a burning glance, as there crept a strange, cruel light, into the lawyer's eyes.

He was walking down the silent avenue, hoarsely murmuring, "At last, at last, she is mine!" while burning kisses thrilled upon his parched lips, for well the woman knew who fled to her safe retreat to escape even a mental record of her own deeds, that her dupe would be at her beck and call, to work her dark purposes to their final fruition.

At this very moment, Mrs. Rosalind Felton had returned from sending a dispatch, upon which all the plans of Edith Van Arsdale hung.

"Hold Lascaris in ignorance. Keep him away from here for a month. Be ready to sail." For even Frederick Norton was ignorant that the Princess of Nowhere would fain have Howard Calvert live to be publicly dishonored. "After that, the Greek can settle his accounts. I will even help him to it!" And, Rosalind Felton poured out a strong cognac before she sought her rest, for her hand was shaking. Her fair face wore the pitiless smile of a false woman sending her enemy to a sudden death—a woman's awful vengeance.

"I am safe now," smiled Edith Van Arsdale, as her wear-

ied eyes closed. "Marie has no thought but for Harold. She is in my hands, and safe until Stanwix arrives. If he consents, well and good; if not, immediate marriage without his consent. Hoyt will help me out, and guide the whole affair." A spasm of shame flushed her face as she thought of the implied pact. But her fevered lips murmured: "I have stopped the last break in the run of the cards!"

Three days later, with the unfamiliar garb of the traveller, the disjointed uniform of the "howadji" still upon him, Floyd Stanwix broke in upon the twilight quiet of the useless interval when the day and night are yet mingled. It was the supreme moment which Edith Van Arsdale had feared. By fortune's favor, Harold's afternoon visit was over, for the secluded temporary home of the stranger-bridegroom was unknown to even the bright wits of the clubs. Marie, her heart singing with her happiness, was coyly adding to her graces, with concealed art, and the house was lone and still.

"Where is Marie?" he asked, with an anxiety of love which ignored the tell-tale confusion of the woman who recognized her psychic master. With trembling lips, she answered, as her half outstretched arms fell at her side. He had no greeting for her.

"I will call her;" and, heavy hearted, Frank Van Arsdale's widow summoned the heiress to her sailor-uncle's side.

The bitterest pangs of her repression in the wasted years of her unloved marriage and rebellious widowhood chased her to her rooms, where she sat, speechless, into the dark hours, and Raikes vainly summoned the two in the still darkened salon, as well as his imperious mistress, to the feast which waited for the circle. There were tears streaming in Miss Ultima's eyes, as Stanwix, without apology, declined Edith's proffer of table-hospitalities. "I must see Hoyt at once on business. I will come to you to-morrow." He stopped at the door as the puzzled butler lit up the salon; and, when they were alone, for Marie Van Arsdale's light



foot had never sounded so heavily on the stair, Stanwix drew Edith to him under the full blaze of the chandelier. "Tell me, Edith, have you kept your trust? Is this the marriage for my sister's child?" He shivered as he spoke. "What of this man? What can he bring to the union of his life with this white-souled girl?" And he repeated her words: "You may depend upon me whenever you may wish to call upon me."

"Harold is my brother," she confusedly said, in timid haste. Her eyes were downcast, as she added slowly: "And, they love each other tenderly." She did not dare to face him now with her usual courage. The love swelling in her heaving bosom was dishonored, while it left her with trembling limbs and crimsoned cheeks, for in her heart, Frank Van Arsdale's widow knew that she lied. She knew that Marie, a prototype of the "rosebud" sacrifice of many fashionable marriages, was trapped as a white fawn might fall beneath the cruel hunter's spear.

"I will see you to-morrow," he coldly repeated, as he dropped her jewelled hands without a single word, and went out into the night. "I will insist upon a delay," he muttered. "There is some mystery in this," as he faced the night breeze.

For the first time since her dainty head had rested on Prince Charming's breast, Marie was in a tearful introspection, but already Decatur Hoyt's heart's blood was bounding under the impulse of a note, a sudden master-thought of Edith's. "He has been here; he goes to you. Remember your reward."

The conference between Hoyt and the excited "Admiral" lasted long after the last revellers had pattered home along the silent avenue.

Only now and then a passing cab returned some wandering star of night to her appropriate nebular position in the firmament of New York, where these partly obscured luminaries do softly shine.

Leaning back in his chair of Cordovan leather, there was a slight flush on Decatur Hoyt's face as he allowed Floyd Stanwix to exhaust all the surplus energy of his ardent soul in a general and useless condemnation of the "match." The friendship of the two men had never been a moment in danger before, yet now, between them, the enticing form of ardent Edith Van Arsdale glided, a hovering witch of tantalizing arts, of unfathomed, womanish seductions. Stanwix was still thrilled with the silent projection of her whole psychic power—the mute appeal of her passionate woman-heart. Hoyt, a slave to the seductions of her rich womanly charms, bore the accent of her voice, the magic of her smile, the keen impulse of her personal nimbus of appealing fascination, still in his exalted brain. Her very letter was a fetish, for his eyes still swam in a mist of passion! The fragrance which breathed around her very being clung even to the paper which had trembled in his hands. There was but one way to placate, to exhaust, to conquer, Floyd Stanwix in his storm of astonishment, surprise and vague regret. Hoyt knew well what his "queen of hearts" would have him do. They were one now, in every passion and feeling, save the Dead-sea fruit of the harvest of unrepented sin. It was still before him,—the awful knowledge of their joint treachery to the heiress and her guardian uncle. "This thing astounds me," was Stanwix' conclusion. "When I received the letter at Tamatave, I fortunately had a passage on an English gun-boat (an *aviso*), to Aden at my disposal. A special train to Alexandria, the P. and O. direct mail, and the 'Etruria' home. I beat all the records."

"And now that you are here, dear boy, what can you, what can I, do?" said Hoyt, awaking from his lethargy of Capua. The lawyer adroitly ranged himself on Floyd's side. "They are free to marry, and Mr. Calvert seems an unexceptionable person. His sister's record is of the very best, and you do not doubt her entire devotion to Marie?"



"It is true," murmured the sailor, drawing fiercely on his cigar; "but I had other ideas for Marie."

"What were they, please name them?" softly said Hoyt, "Floyd, if you had told me aught before your departure I might have aided you."

The lawyer was cautiously loyal to the letter of the truth, but, Edith Van Arsdale's love was tugging at his heart.

"You are right. I have neglected my duty to my dead sister, to poor old Frank—to Marie herself."

"Stanwix," said Decatur Hoyt, calmly, "you are a man of the world; I am of the chamber. You have seen life in its whirling eddies; I have seen it at its ebb drifting out 'over the bar.' Do you think that meddling with marriages is usually successful?"

"Does well-meant parental suggestion ensure a more permanent happiness than the unregulated, personal selection of the eye, the heart, the bounding wine of life, thrilling in veins kindling with a mutual fire. What is the correct rule of marriage? Is there any?"

"I suppose you are right, my dear old friend," honestly admitted Floyd. "Marriage usually brings about a hubbub, more or less extended, when it really vitally concerns but the 'two high contracting parties.' They are apt to find out soon enough whether the bond is a blessing or a curse!"

Stanwix quickly reviewed a hundred assorted "failing cases," and failed to see any reason why A prefers B to C in marriage, in seeking the value of the unknown quantity X, at its maximum of social, intellectual and sexual happiness.

"There are certainly some advantages of a social and pecuniary nature to young Calvert in this union," dispassionately said the lawyer, and he looked straight in Stanwix' eyes, as he said, "But, they would enure to any other man marrying Marie Van Arsdale. A consoling fact is that youth, talent, and predisposition make this selection a very natural and suitable one." It seemed unanswerable!

"But the haste, the comparative obscurity of his social position, the defiance of our local social customs." Stanwix felt his sand-fortifications melting rapidly away.

"Ah, my dear boy," kindly said the counselor, "the fact is that you and I only play a minor part in this whole affair. Marie and Mrs. Van Arsdale are peculiarly averse to all social display. Miss Ultima wishes to travel with her artist husband for two years. Now, we cannot prevent this marriage. It merely abides in us to agree in the fixing of the date, so as to be in readiness to render up an account of our stewardship. We could not prevent it. The young lady wishes me to represent her legally in the future. Poor Stephan Stanwix is alien to all reason now, and Miss Cornelia has written to me expressing her consent. Who can stop it? Nobody."

"Then, Decatur, I see nothing to do but to let matters go on as they are. Any change on our part would only throw the great estate into the hands of strangers."

Floyd Stanwix noted the expression of relief in the lawyer's face.

"In these matrimonial matters, I am only a buffer, receiving the shock of opposed resistances. To be frank, Floyd, the value, *per se*, of a marriage union is nothing! It is simply a change of state; the future results determine its worth alone, as an issuance of letters patent merely fixes a date. The nuptial ceremonies frequently mark little more than the variation of the social toga, and a new set of visiting cards. Of course, her property goes with her, it would stay with her, so it cuts no figure in this case." And Marie Van Arsdale's dupe felt that he had said enough. Floyd was silent.

"Well! let Cornelia speak for the family. If she has sanctioned it. I will not oppose!" and so, Floyd Stanwix consented to the somewhat hasty marriage. "I am only sorry that Stephen's sickness will leave me the only Stanwix at Miss Ultima's side, for the Little One has asked me to



give her away." The two men smoked and held their peace. The silence was oppressive; Decatur Hoyt feared to overstrain this Bridge of Sighs, for the yachtsman was gloomy enough. He started, as a silver bell chimed one o'clock, and hastily said, "Send for me at the office for the needed formalities. I'll try and see all I can of my darling before she goes out into the wide world."

There was a mournful ring in his voice. "My dear Floyd," said the counselor, laying his hand kindly on the admiral's shoulder, "you are suffering from that little heart-wrench which always comes to us when a beloved woman takes a new interest into her life without consulting us! It's the way of the world, the hard, hard, world, for

"Still the pines on Ramoth hill  
Are moaning to the sea,  
And singing of the sea of change  
Between myself and thee."

Other men beside the gentle Quaker Whittier have felt the pangs which tear us when a beloved woman changes from one fond breast to another. It tells us of age, of our being supplanted, of our onward march on the path of no return!

"I loved a woman once, Floyd!" The old man was speaking tenderly. "I loved her more than man ever loved woman. I shall never forget the night before she was torn from me forever. I could hear my own heart beat."

"And was it a sudden death?" earnestly questioned Floyd, who was surprised to see the counselor so strangely moved.

"It was a sudden marriage!" quickly replied the lawyer, as he closed the door on Floyd Stanwix and his own vain regrets at the same time.

As the guardian who had reluctantly consented to the strange wedding walked home alone, he started as a huge meteor trailed across the midnight sky. His wearied nerves were relaxed, and he hopelessly fortified himself behind

Miss Cornelia's consent. He would have given a steely wrath its fullest bent, had he known of the ingenious casuistry of Mrs. Van Arsdale's letter to the absent "cameo" of her race, for she was led to think that Floyd Stanwix ardently desired this union. Deceit had won the day!

It was with a confident heart that Edith Van Arsdale awaited the presence of Floyd Stanwix at her table the next evening. With a rare tact she gave up the evening to the returned guardian, and a letter from Harold Calvert desired to know when he might call and pay his respects to the acting head of the great clan to which he would soon be allied. The happy face of Miss Ultima left no doubt as she escorted her uncle to the place of honor after a half hour's *tête-à-tête*, in the shadowed drawing-room. There was a tender smile of loving kindness on the sailor's bronzed cheeks, for, in the friendly gloom, the ardent girl poured forth in confidence to Stanwix, the crystallized freshness of a love born of her own pure heart. Mrs. Van Arsdale was reassured, the note of Decatur Hoyt had given her peace of mind, but that astute counsellor was not *en évidence*. He wisely refrained from navigating deep and stormy waters. His eye was fixed to the future, yet hidden, in which he would cull the fruit so long hanging green and golden, almost within his reach. And, moreover, the busy scriveners flourished upon the pabulum of the innumerable papers of the now approaching wedding. "So you really intend, little one, to go to the steamer and rob society of its feast? Will you baffle the reporters?"

"As you have been so kind, Uncle Floyd, as to let me have my own way, and as I know so few society people, I lose nothing," replied the happy girl.

"When should a little maid have her own way, save when she marries?" gaily answered Stanwix, for the young beauty's evident happiness had affected him. It was so real, so true, so unselfishly charming that the clouds were lifted from his brow. "I am at your service now," he gallantly said,



"until you go away, and then I will follow on, and join the "Aphrodite" at Aden. If you and Harold go on to the Pacific, I might run up to Nagasaki and take you in my boat on that one cruise of the world—the Inland Sea of Japan."

The bride-elect forgot her school-girl emancipation, and a pair of loving arms were clasped round his neck in a moment. "The one romance of my life, a long cruise on the 'Aphrodite' with you. I shall be so happy—oh, so happy!"

There was a gentle peace brooding in Mrs. Van Arsdale's breast as she conferred later with the reassured guardian. "I shall be very happy to do the local honors for Harold. I will await him to-morrow, and the clubs will be open to him. As for society," Floyd laughed, "he will need nothing but that darling one—and yourself." There was a softness in the sailor's manner which goaded Edith on to a semi-repentance at the impending unhappiness of Marie. Ignorant of her brother's marriage, and his shameful desertion of his helpless wife and infant child, she also knew not that with a coward's hand he had destroyed the only evidences in existence of the rights of Diane Lascaris. But she did know that Harold Calvert, the graceful, resistless man of the world, the Antinous of modern lovers, was both cruel vain, cold-hearted, and an egoist to the last point of selfishness. But yet she was a woman; and what woman ever yet held out her hand to save another's heart? It is the unconscious jealous opposition of femininity. For every daughter of Eve must walk her paths of love alone!

When Stanwix, with more than usual tenderness of manner, bade "good-night" to Edith, the thought which had struggled for utterance so long found its way to his lips. He was astonished at the royal woman's instant change of manner, when he said: "I had always fancied that Marie might marry Lieutenant Schuyler. She seemed so fond of him, that summer. Poor old Stephen was his father's class-

mate also. Where is he now, I wonder? And he was a remarkably nice young fellow."

"You forget that I never met him," slowly replied the agitated woman, whose heart yearned to free its burden of repressed love. "I do not know even where he is. I heard that he had acted with extremest gallantry, and has gone away to recover from the effects of a desperate encounter with the Apaches."

"And does not Ultima know? He used to write to her very often," said Stanwix, in surprise, pausing at the door.

A convenient lie helped out Edith, who felt the embarrassment of her situation. "Marie has not mentioned his name for some time to me, and I never saw her with any of his letters." The answer was a neat evasion.

"I must ask Cornelia about all this, when I see her. I must run down to Florida and see Stephen, poor old boy, before he 'joins the army of the blest,' at 'Benny Havens, Oh!' I fancy it was the old, old story. The young man trusted to letters, and was refused. Probably Marie feared to take such a deliberate responsibility on herself." Then, suddenly reflecting on his unfairness to the absent groom, he gallantly and heartily said: "But I am sure it is far better as it is. For your own love, Edith, will be doubled in this new relation."

Their parting was almost tender, for Edith had dropped the mask, and drifted—drifted hourly along on the tide of life, content, happy, asking nothing, for was not Floyd Stanwix by her side?

And yet the subject of Earle Schuyler returned to haunt Stanwix that night. "There is something very strange about this whole affair—strange—very strange," was his last murmured word, as he laid his tired head on his pillow.

The morning journals brought a new excitement to Mrs. Rosalind Felton. The preparation of certain cards in a fashionable establishment had fixed a date, till yet con-



cealed, and the demons of the pen made the most of it. Before Mrs. Felton drove to the telegraph office, she indited a hasty order to Mrs. Eugenie Stickleback to report for constant service. She lingered but a moment over a reproachful note to Floyd Stanwix. "You here two weeks and not a visit, a word, a line! Come to me at once. I must see you," and a feminine luxury of underlining, caught Stanwix' amused eyes.

But there was a sparkle which boded Harold Calvert no good in Rosie's own blue eyes, when she transferred a thousand dollars to Paris by cable, and sent a last decisive message to Fred Norton.

"Come at once with the woman. Leave the child. Keep Lascaris in the dark. Have him wait your return. Take first direct steamer. I will meet you. Answer and report sailing also."

"That will fix him, for there is just three days leeway. Now, Mr. Harold Calvert, I will let you commit this bigamy; then, for the payment of old scores," and the little woman bristled like a dandy of the old Fifth Corps going into action.

She was reassured when a laconic answer from Paris reached her. "All right, to-morrow. La Bretagne, Havre." The possession of this dispatch made her a remarkably happy woman, and her little solitaire dinner was sweetened by a note from Floyd Stanwix accompanying a beautiful basket of roses and orchids. "I will call and beg your forgiveness at nine o'clock; am dining at my club with Mr. Calvert."

The very crispest of toilettes and her "coronation" manners characterized the Princess of Nowhere as she received the debonair sailor visitor. "Now, dear Princess, don't say a word, I beg of you, *Mea culpa maxima*. But I did think of you in Paris, and here is the proof," for he handed her a singularly neat case of blue-velvet with golden clasps.

She lingered a moment in admiration of the delicate monogram in small brilliants, and when the exquisite beauties of a rare turquoise and diamond necklace shone up in her delighted eyes, the Princess of Nowhere buried her fair head impulsively in Stanwix' bosom, thus breaking the ice, and also fracturing several especially choice cigars which were secreted in a waistcoat pocket, over the sailor's manly heart. His start of pained surprise was accepted as the "natural emotion" incident to the occasion, and so Rosie was charming, as she drew him to a divan seat, still softly patting the box.

"You dear old boy! you must put it on. And now, tell me all about the wedding." So this peachy-faced little Delilah extracted from the generous sailor all his news, and divined what his prudence would conceal. "How do you like him?" she said with a sidelong glance.

"Harold Calvert is an extremely nice fellow, good form and all that, and, strange to say, seems to be a man of real talents. A thorough Derby winner for good looks, and for a world wanderer, he is strangely reticent and very winning in his manners. Not a touch of the Bohemian about him."

"Did you mean that Parthian dart for me, you dear old goose?" chirped Rosie, as she fastened an orchid in his coat-lapel.

He laughed. "Did you ever love Calvert?" She started.

"There, I have broken that stem, the very prettiest one, and drawn blood," she pettishly cried, gazing at a tiny crimson spot on her dainty finger. "No, I never loved Mr. Harold Calvert," she said decisively, as she successfully affixed a lovely successor to the discarded flower, "but I shall meet him soon," she cried firmly, as she tugged in mimic earnestness at the coat-lapel.

"You know it is only a *partie de famille*, at Grace Church," said Stanwix, with a clouded brow. To his surprise and



belief Mrs. Rosalind Felton did not "fish" for an exceptional invitation.

"Wonders never will cease. Rosie is not as curious as some others of the nebular band of beauties. She is a good soul after all, and her prudence spared me a refusal," soliloquized Stanwix, as he took his way to meet Calvert for a little private supper. The Admiral was charmed, nay delighted, with the reticent delicacy of the bridegroom-elect, whose personal fascinations held the unsuspecting sailor now in thrall. "I can understand Calvert's quiet life; he naturally regards Ultima's youth, his sister's position, and also avoids the chat of theatre *foyer* and club gossip." Floyd Stanwix was not aware of the extremes of further prudence which concealed Mr. Harold Calvert's whereabouts from Cyprian Lascaris.

"There they go," panted the pompous Raikes, as the carriages of the bridal party left the mansion where Edith Van Arsdale, triumphant now at every point, heard no murmur of the awful chant of the Valkyries, "We defy augury," she smiled as Decatur Hoyt ceremoniously placed her in her carriage. It was three o'clock, and a sunny afternoon blessed the exquisitely-beautiful girl who ran back and kissed her mother's picture, now restored to its old place of honor in the drawing-room. Marie was in travelling-dress, and attended by Floyd Stanwix. The bridegroom, assisted by Mr. Harry Low, was already within sight of Grace Church. Notwithstanding the absolutely private nature of the ceremony, an uneasy group lingered around the portals of Miss Ultima's stately home, and even now a curious knot of loungers was regarding the guarded entrance of Grace Church. Nothing could be simpler than the quiet wedding of the heiress of millions. The return to the family mansion for the wedding-dinner was to precede the departure of the wedded pair for the great liner ready to sail on the morning tide. The invaluable Hatton was charged with the care of

the bride's luggage, and a smart maid, with Harold Calvert's brand new valet, awaited only the return of husband and wife to depart for the "Etruria" with the loaded vans. It had been impossible for the journalists to attack the quiet reserve of this wedding in private life. A few words of request from Decatur Hoyt to that august functionary known as "the Inspector," although now Superintendent, enforced the wishes of the family. As Marie Van Arsdale rode in a trance of heightened emotion, down the splendid avenue, her eyes were fixed, star-like, on Uncle Floyd. The night before this marriage it seemed as if they had grown doubly dear, and it was "Uncle Floyd" who had distributed a princely largesse among the gentle convent sisters, and had chivalrously arranged the presence of a chosen quartette of that "Us Girls' Society" which had made Madame Mears' splendid "finishing school" so lively the year before. The carriage following with Edith and the grave counselor was tenanted by two intensely-interested persons. "In half an hour all will be safe," proudly thought the friendless woman who had faced New York society as a parvenue, and was now "of the purple." Once only, did Decatur Hoyt speak on that memorable ride. He whispered, after an ineffectual attempt to control his parched lips, "May I call on you tomorrow?" and Miss Ultima's foe bent a glance on him which maddened him, as she murmured, "Next week, my friend, for Floyd sails three days later; then we will be alone." As is the Christian custom of churches, on the passing in of the little cortège, the doors were opened, and as the wedding march from "Lohengrin" swelled out from the organ-loft, Miss Ultima was dazed, until the clergyman, leaning over his prayer-book with a quiet smile, broke the spell. She had not dared to raise her eyes, and the passionate kiss of her husband, Harold Calvert, the man who looked like a Greek god, brought the blood to her pale cheeks. She trembled, and passed up the aisle—a wife. Her past life was



left far behind her, and on the arm of "Prince Charming" she walked out into another world. The thought of his dark past never crossed the mind of the man whose eyes met his sister's in one furtive glance of triumph. Edith was strangely disturbed as the memory of Cyprian Lascaris' sorrow-haunted face and burning eyes disturbed her. "He is safe now," she thought, with a secret pride to know the Van Arsdale millions and the Stanwix lands in her brother's keeping. Her eyes rested on Floyd Stanwix, who gravely stood aside to allow the singularly graceful and noble-looking husband and wife a clear passage to the carriage, where a pressing crowd was gathering. A sudden thought animated Edith: "I must warn him again about Lascaris. He shall now tell me the whole truth." A hard, bright face met hers, with a smile of cold triumph, as Mrs. Rosie Felton pressed into the vestibule followed by Frederick Norton, who stood mutely now, as pale as marble. The "Bretagne" had been driven back by head winds, and it was at lightning speed Mrs. Felton's waiting agent, the faithful Stickleback, had urged their carriage up to the church. "Not too late; the supreme moment," panted Rosalind Felton, as, drawing up a slender woman dressed in deepest black, she fixed her blue eyes in cruel gleam upon Howard Calvert, who stood appalled, as if the dead had risen to face him. "Perhaps you will introduce to this lady, *your other wife*," distinctly remarked the woman who faced now the wretch who had wrought her ruin. A smothered cry, and the crêpe veil, sweeping back, disclosed the exquisite face of Diane Lascaris, as in her olden language of love, the innocent instrument of vengeance cried, "Harold, my husband!" and clung to the astonished bridegroom. It was Floyd Stanwix who caught the reeling form of Miss Ultima, the girl-wife of an unveiled scoundrel. When the quickly-closed doors were opened, Floyd Stanwix bore the young wife to her carriage. By his side, with frantic tenderness, Edith Van Arsdale, aiding him in his work of love,

cried: "Floyd! as God sees us, I am innocent. This is some horrid dream." They were far on their homeward way when Low, the counselor, and Calvert followed. "It is a cursed, blackmail lie. I will prove it," cried Calvert, but Diane and Mrs. Felton had disappeared.



## CHAPTER XIII.

## BY THE FLASH OF THE SIGNAL LIGHT.

WHEN the carriage with the accused husband stopped at the Van Arsdale mansion, the three inmates found the street already cleared. In the drawing-room Floyd Stanwix awaited them, the grim light of battle now in his merciless eyes. When he had aided Edith Van Arsdale to support the broken lily to her maiden room, Floyd had answered briefly to Edith's half-crazed prayer for time to prove the strange accusation false.

"I believe *you* to be true in this, Edith," sadly answered Stanwix, in a voice which froze her blood, "but some man owes me his life, for this murder of an innocent." He saw that she was not lying. "I demand but one thing. I shall leave Low here with your brother. Hoyt and I will investigate this charge at once. As the head of this family, I will protect with my life, my niece's honor." A few words to the waiting Hatton, brought him back quickly from the Admiral's own room, for his happiest days since his sister's death had been spent under the Van Arsdale roof, in the joyous preparations for this quiet little wedding. Edith shuddered as she caught the gleam of a wicked looking revolver which Stanwix slipped into his pocket.

Standing at bay, like a *groggnard* of the Old Guard, Stanwix, coldly said when the three men entered: "Mr. Low, you are to remain here with Mr. Calvert till my return. The man who approaches my ward till my return, dies at my hand! Come!" and Floyd dragged Hoyt out of the room, past the astounded sister, now weeping in handsome Harold Calvert's arms.



"Where are you going?" faltered Hoyt, as the coupé dashed away.

"To Rosie Felton's. I'll tear the truth out of the little jade. She has turned up this winning card," and, his stern face set, Stanwix listened as Hoyt explained that a sudden fainting spell was accepted by those present as an explanation.

"No one imagined the unusual," said Decatur Hoyt, grown strangely old under this new excitement. "What will you do?" he eagerly asked.

"I intend to sail on that steamer and not lose *Ultima* from sight till this mystery is settled, one way or the other. I'll not have her here in New York to have the press stories break her poor heart or else drive her mad."

"It is a good idea," said the musing lawyer.

"Here we are!" cried the sailor. "Watch all and say nothing."

They were expected, for a moment after their entrance the Dresden China goddess joined them. With the tact of her craft, Mrs. Rosalind Felton was silent.

"Tell me all, hold nothing back!" hoarsely whispered the yachtsman.

There was an open door behind her, and the lady's glances nervously turned thither. "Floyd," she said simply, "I have only told you one lie in my life. I had loved Harold Calvert before. He is a scoundrel and a cur. I don't know why he trapped this innocent girl. But he knew me in days before you and I met." She stifled a sob. "He fears me! God knows he should! Now, by hazard, Fred Norton saw the announcements of this impending marriage while abroad. He wrote me at once. The haste of the wedding prevented him from coming over then. He knows the unhappy girl whom you saw to-day. Sufficient to tell you now, she is Harold Calvert's lawful wife, the mother of his abandoned child, and a good woman."



Hoyt and Stanwix exchanged anxious glances. It was useless to doubt Mrs. Felton's truth, for she spared not herself.

"I dared not act alone on a mere chance claim, so I telegraphed Norton to bring the woman over here. She speaks not a single word of English, and the poor thing was struggling along as a model in a German studio, when Norton found her. He brought the starving woman on to Paris by my orders and sheltered her there. I alone am responsible for the woman's appearance here. The storm which drove back the 'Bretagne' prevented the whole case reaching you two days ago. I wished to prevent this misery, but I was too late."

"And why did you not tell me?" Stanwix' voice trembled. "You know how I have loved my niece." His eyes were flashing. The answer was cold and clear as the clang of an alarm bell.

"I wished him to walk into an open prison door! To lose what he robbed me of. When the jailor first grasps him by the shoulder, when I see handcuffs on his wrists, I will be satisfied. Not till then! If I could have proved it, I would have saved the girl this sadness, for your sake, for old times, the days when you loved me, Floyd."

A warning glance from the lawyer woke all Stanwix' caution. A woman's mad revenge might perhaps be helped on by ingenious fabrication.

"How can she, how can you, prove her story?" Stanwix earnestly demanded.

Both the men started as Frederick Norton entered, and calmly bowing, said: "They were married at Scio, on their way to Smyrna, and the wedding dinner *à l'improviste* was given in my house. I was not in the room when the words were spoken, but I know the clergyman. He is still alive, and is now at Cyprus."

"You will back this story up?" cried Stanwix, springing to his feet.

"Take me to him! If he denies this, I will make him eat his words at the pistol muzzle. Diane Lascaris is as innocent as an angel. He trapped the poor Greek orphan."

A gleam of light flashed over Floyd's excited mind. "I have it. Meet me to-night at the 'Etruria,' and go down the bay with me; we can confer at ease then. Will you keep the young lady here till you hear from me, Rosie?"

"What are you going to do?" faltered Mrs. Felton.

"I am going to take Marie Van Arsdale over to Europe. I will find out this Cyprian Lascaris. We will trace out this story. If it is true, I will strangle the brute who deceived my poor child,—if Lascaris does not save me the trouble—by killing him. You are sure, Norton, that there is no mistake? It is a very grave matter."

The yachtsman fathomed Norton's steady eyes. The Yankee grit was there!

Hoyt nodded approvingly.

"To prove to you there is no mistake, I will tell you, Mr. Stanwix, that I cabled to Lascaris, an hour ago, to come on to Paris and meet me, as I shall take his sister home, when we have jailed this cold scoundrel."

"You knew then where he was?" almost shouted Floyd. "Why did you not tell him of this marriage?"

Norton quickly pointed to Mrs. Felton, and bowed in silence. Stanwix understood now Mrs. Rosie's strange reticence about that church invitation. She had held the "Sword of Damocles" over Calvert until her vengeance was fully ripe. Her triumphant face showed it.

"Cyprian Lascaris is a loving, true brother. I feared to unhinge his mind by the shock of suddenly meeting his betrayed sister. I induced him to go away to the south of France, with a friend of mine—Lieutenant Schuyler—the man who was robbed of the woman he loved by these two cruel conspirators."



"What mean you?" sternly demanded the sailor, grasping Fred Norton's wrists in his sudden excitement.

"This gallant wounded officer was Stephen Stanwix's valued friend. For a year he has written regularly to your niece. His letters were unanswered. You can guess now who destroyed them, to aid this scoundrel brother. Schuyler was almost crazed when he knew the woman he loved had been so near him all summer, and the announcement of this marriage, alone, caused me to see the general villainy. Of course all they want is the young heiress's property. That's their whole game!"

"I forwarded Lieutenant Schuyler's last letter myself to Marie," soberly remarked the lawyer. "He called on me before he sailed."

"To whom did you send it?" fiercely demanded Stanwix.

"Why, to Mrs. Van Arsdale, of course, at the castle," was Hoyt's answer, and now he knew that the reward of his secret services was surely within his reach, if he chose to grasp it. She was in his power.

"Come!" hoarsely said Stanwix. "Rosie," he said, turning at the door, "if the old days are dear to you, come down in two hours to the 'Etruria,' with Mr. Norton. By the way, you must leave some one to protect the poor outraged Greek beauty. I see the whole d——d business now!" very decidedly remarked the maddened sailor, with the harsh return to the profanity of his "middy" days. "By God! I will have a square reckoning yet;" and as Rosie's frightened eyes told him of her obedience to his wishes, he simply said, "Not another word, until we meet."

"I will have this house watched, Floyd," said Decatur Hoyt, as he glided out to hand his all-potent card to the nearest policeman.

"Now for the cowardly brute," hissed Stanwix, as the driver lashed his horses.

"No violence, my dear friend," urged the pacific counselor.

So, before he reached his darling's house, the yachtsman decided to hold his newly gained knowledge until he could trap the artful Calvert beyond all hope of escape. "Then I'll——" The growl of the maddened man was ominous.

"Be calm, later—later, when you have irrefragable certainty to act on. I will not blame you for anything, after that, for any vengeance." As the lawyer realized that he could now be the sole arbiter of Edith Van Arsdale's destiny, he smiled. "Mine! mine at last."

But the yachtsman was murmuring only, "My poor Marie! My own darling one," and they quietly entered the room, where, walking up to Calvert, Stanwix said, in a pitiless voice, "Dare you come to Europe, with me, and risk your life to prove this all a lie?"

The handsome bridegroom with unshaken nerve, said, "I will face the world!" For while his sister seemed to hear the song of the Fates once more, shrilling over his devoted head, the undaunted *vaurien*, remembered his opportune destruction of the two marriage certificates.

"The old parson is dead now, for a thousand to one. As to Cyprian Lascaris——" The old sword trick of easy mastery came to him once more, and he straightened himself as proudly as if the hissing silvery blade of the one time friend was grating on his own sword, in a last duel to the death. Fear had been no inheritance of the reckless Calverts, and yet the husband in name, a millionaire in mocking title, knew even now, that the Dead-sea fruit was bitter enough!

"It will go hard with poor Edith," he thought, and yet his eye was steady and cold as he faced the eager guardian. A desperate gamester in life, Harold Calvert counted now, at the last, on the odd trick. "I may have to kill that fool Cyprian. But, it is too late to turn back," he thought, and he had all a gambler's faith in the run of the cards.

"I will take you at your word, and believe in you, Calvert,



if you will go with us now to the steamer. I am to direct all your movements, and if I say Athens or Smyrna, you are to obey me. Mr. Hoyt will guard all the interests we have here. I will give Mr. Low directions which will be fair to all. Now, sir," he faced Harold, "your word of honor before your sister that you will never even mention your wife's name, until this evil cloud is cleared up. She remains a mere stranger to you. I will be the sole guardian of the child who is now alone, on her wedding-day." His voice was bitter and his eye flashed. "If you are not man enough for this, by God, we will end the whole thing here, and you shall never see your wife again!"

The young man's eyes roved hungrily over the hostile group—Hoyt's impassive face, Harry Low's eager countenance, as he watched the rise and fall of Edith's bosom, the sphinx-like face of his sister, whose eyes burned with a strange fire, and the bronzed features of the desperate sailor.

"I accept," he said, "I am ready to go. I am in your hands."

For now he trusted his very all to the run of the cards of life!

It came to him that his sister was strangely silent, and he started as she firmly said:

"And I too, will go and see that Harold keeps his word! If he has lied to me in this, if he has brought open shame on your defenceless darling, you will find me an avenger with you."

Edith Van Arsdale saw that her house of cards was tottering low. In the future she saw no other thoroughfare to Floyd Stanwix' heart. "Tricked, ruined, after two long years of slavery, of a living lie, and by a Calvert—my brother." Her heart hardened as she knew herself at last to be her handsome brother's dupe. He was, after all, not the bridge to lead her to Floyd Stanwix' side. May I

go now and prepare Marie ? ” There was an earnest appeal in her eyes as she turned to Floyd.

“ I trust no one but myself, now,” said Stanwix, speaking as if in a dream, and then he walked away up the stair, where the servants lurked in a vague uneasiness.

As his footfall died on the stairs, Edith Van Arsdale’s eyes met those of Harry Low. There was a passionate suggestion in the young man’s glance which told her of his mad desire to serve her. The reaction of excitement had left the old counselor inert and passive. He was playing the Fabian safety game of cautious age. There was a silence of suggestive gravity. No one dared to speak ! Frank Van Arsdale’s unhappy widow would not compromise herself by speech with her brother, whom she stared at now with an un pitying scorn. The two men were both reticent, and Stanwix’ return alone broke the spell of silence. But a gleaming message of deep import passed between Edith and Harry Low. The confidential man was a tried veteran of the dead financier’s excited struggles : he was young, brave, alert, and, under the eyes of the woman he had followed with hungry eyes, in two long years of servitude, feared nothing—for the safety of the family name was foreign to any scheme of his !

“ He wishes to speak to me alone,” mused Edith, as she acknowledged his silent entreaty. “ Perhaps he is not a fool, after all, and he may not be like other men ! ” She had nothing now left to lose, for she felt that the loyal yachtsman would never again quote her words of broken promise—the sad record of womanhood’s varied moods.

“ You may depend upon me whenever you may wish to call upon me.”

No, it was all gone ! The fabric founded on passion, on a woman’s truth to the promise of her own burning love, had been washed away forever. It had not been proof against the very first storm ; and so she saw Floyd Stanwix drifting away from her, far away, never to be hers in this world. Her



heart swelled with the bitterest agonies of self-accusation, and, at the last, the lady of millions, shrinking before her own mental bar of judgment, muttered, "I have played the game of Life, and lost!" and the sorrowing good angel folded his wings and vanished forever from her stormy heart!

For, in her own strange way she had loved Floyd Stanwix, had been as true to her creed of the moment as women of the world are; and, robed in her silks, jewels and laces, this glowing daughter of Eve, was after all a very child of earth. But, her dearest blossoming hopes had borne only Dead-sea fruit.

"In an hour, we leave this house for the steamer, Mr. Hoyt," said Stanwix decisively. "Will you accompany Mr. Calvert to the steamer and remain there with him. I wish that you would stop at your office, and have a couple of your own skilled clerks in attendance. I will attend to all pecuniary matters," said the sailor, addressing Calvert, and Floyd hastily tore out a check from his pocket-book. He said simply to Hoyt, "I will dispatch all the servants and baggage, and you can kindly go out and cash this check for me. They will open the bank vault for you. Can you be ready in an hour?" continued the yachtsman, as he whispered in a low voice to Edith, "I am sorry for you—for myself—we are partners in our shame and neglect."

"I have been ready for a whole week to sail."

"Then I will join Marie, and summon you in an hour. We can leave all our affairs with Hoyt and Low. By the way, had you not better tell him now what you wish?"

And so, when the carriages had rolled away, Stanwix gloomily mounted the stair, leaving Low alone with Mrs. Van Arsdale. Harold Calvert had gone out of the princely home forever, unnoticed, without a single word of farewell, and the wife of two fleeting hours lay buried in the sailor's arms, in her lonely room above. Her tears, her silent heart-break were the sad legacies of the shadowy, guardian-angel,

mother who had fallen, a broken flower, under the ban of wicked Frank Van Arsdale's unpunished crimes. It was a haunted home! When they were alone, the eyes of the two lingering ones met in a swift pledge of unspoken import. Low sprang to Edith's side as she sank into a chair. She never heard the burning words of passion which the man kneeling at her feet uttered, as he covered her cold hands with burning kisses.

"There is only one salvation left for you—one way alone to undo this horrible fault. This family's honor must not be sacrificed. The Stanwix clan never forget—never forgive!"

"Tell me!" gasped Edith, in unresisting compliance.

"Delay your departure for an hour. Let them all go! I will take your own check and get you ready money. Money—money will do all nowadays in this world. Wait here for me. I know that Mrs. Felton will be delayed at the steamer till late, for she really fears Stanwix now. He knows all her past life. If you can wheedle this girl into secretly going over on the same steamer, she will be out of Mrs. Felton's reach. Her brother will be soon in Paris. He will forgive her, and take her home—far away. The girl only speaks French. You can go down now with me to Mrs. Felton's house. Tell her that her brother waits for her—that all will be well! I can hide her near the steamer till midnight, and she can keep to her room in peace, till they land. I will get you into Mrs. Felton's house. I have been there often—for Van Arsdale." Their eyes showed they both shared the dead man's open secret. "You know he was down there on the night of his death. There is nothing to fear here—nothing to make a public scandal. I will cable to our agent in Paris to have a man meet the girl at Havre. We will give her money. Load it on her, but tell her only that her brother waits to take her, in love and forgiveness, back to her girlhood home in Athens. All that we have to do is to outwit



Mrs. Felton, and then dodge Fred Norton. He will stay here, of course, to help Mrs. Rosie.

"You know all your own arts. You must at once strive to get that girl out of the Felton house. If you are not timid, if she demurs and acts the fool, if you can only lure her to the door of Rosie Felton's home, on the pretence, then, that Harold Calvert himself, waits for her to explain and to make her happy once more, then"—his voice sank into a shaking whisper—"I will promise you that she will not be heard of again. I would go through hell, for you, Edith!" and the desperate man pointed grimly toward the North River!

Mrs. Van Arsdale's head was bowed for a moment. She raised a face, ashen in its paleness, to him, and, without a single word, placed her hand in his. The silent pledge of the action was enough, and the good angel never returned to Edith Van Arsdale's guilty bosom. Fate had seized its prey at last!

None of the furtive watchers ever knew a single syllable of the tender, broken confidences of Marie Van Arsdale, as the girl-wife sobbed in her uncle's arms. The dumb show of the marriage ceremony had passed before her, unmarked. It was on the threshold of the new life, before the wedding-ring turned upon her slender finger, that the steel trap of Mrs. Felton's mad revenge had torn her gentle heart.

A very child in experience, a girl in romance, a woman only in the beautiful unfolding of the rose of love born in her pure heart, Marie knew now but the shelter of her darkened room and the safety of Floyd Stanwix' arms. Below them the shuffling feet of the servants told of the perfunctory duties of that wedding feast which was now waiting in the deserted hall.

"Only take me away, take me far away; let no one come near me, no one speak to me!" was the girl's pitiful cry.

With a resolute patience, Stanwix calmed her with fond

entreaties, and, with a few words of approbation to Edith Van Arsdale, he led her forth, deeply veiled, out of the house of sorrows. Marie never lifted her eyes as her light foot passed over the threshold; and in a few moments the associates of an hour were left alone, free to plot, to save out of the wreck, at least the public name and honor of the two great families. With quick decision, Low gave the orders which reduced the gaping household to useful activities.

While Edith Van Arsdale prepared her check, the real working-head of the great estate called up a stable carriage, by telephone. "Be sure that your mistress lacks for nothing, as she sails to-night for Europe, Raikes," said Low. "Don't fail to have all Mrs. Van Arsdale's orders, and the housekeeper also, for I, shall represent Mrs. Van Arsdale here in her absence."

The butler sprang to his duties for, he was well aware that Mr. Harry Low was no man to be trifled with at any time.

"I can get this check cashed at the Hoffman House; there are two banks near there whose vaults can easily be reached out of hours. Now," he whispered to Edith, "take your dinner alone, in the usual manner, and I will return for the coffee." He smiled. "Then, dressed plainly, you will go to Mrs. Felton's with me. I will have a man there to watch the house and give me a warning here when she goes to meet Floyd at the steamer. We must not fail! We will not!"

His bright courage cheered the despairing woman, and the house was in the quiescence of disciplined calm, when the returning servants announced all their trusts safely deposited on the "liner."

A brief note, on a visiting-card, from Floyd Stanwix, merely said, "All is well. Marie is comfortable, and a little better. We wait only for your coming.—S."

"No one lives but her to fill his longing heart! It is locked forever against me now. Only sacred to Marie and



to a haunting memory. A fleeting shade! I wonder who she was!" And Edith Van Arsdale, envied even the dead woman whose last sighs were of love—of happy love, for she had breathed them clasped to the sailor's breast.

"The world has gone against me! I must now make the best of it," she bitterly said, and yet her eyes sought from the darkened avenue the return of her new friend. She craved the sense of help brought home by the breathless Low.

"All right now. Here are the sinews of war," said the secretary, as he tapped two solid-looking long envelopes, "one hundred one hundred-dollar-bills. You have dined?" he asked, with a real concern. His face quickly brightened, for the servants had evidently missed the secret of the impending troubles. "Thank Heavens! It was only a *partie de famille*. If society had been there nothing could have stopped the gaping mouths of its hydra heads. I am glad that Mr. Hoyt's quiet influence will smother any journalistic references, and the departure of the whole family absolutely seals the past. I will set a few general remarks floating around in the clubs, which will be straws to show the drift of this flitting to Europe. Now, you are tired, wearied, agitated. I shall ask you to take a two hours' rest, for we must not 'fall on the fort' too early."

The desperate mistress of a million felt grateful in her heart for the *aplomb* of the quick-witted young man.

"He is no fool at any rate," she thought, as she sought her room, and rested with a sense of new comradeship, until she saw her own maid and belongings dispatched to the steamer. As the clock struck eight, a message from Harry Low, called her to instant action.

"Come down. My man reports Mrs. Felton *en route* to the steamer."

Before Raikes and the housekeeper, Mrs. Van Arsdale verbally constituted Mr. Harry Low her personal representative during her absence.

"I sent one of my men down with your maid and the baggage to the steamer," said Low, who anxiously awaited her. "I gave orders not to lose them from sight. I directed my man to bespeak a purser's passage; if we can get this poor Greek girl on board, as she speaks only French, she will not be able to chatter." And with a calm face, Mrs. Edith Van Arsdale left the home where the wedding-feast still graced the deserted *salle à manger*. "Funeral baked meats" they seemed, for the happiness of the daughter of the house was done to its death by lurking treachery.

"It's the queerest wedding that I ever saw," cackled the housekeeper, as the high-life below stairs began. And over the forgotten wines, with the baseness of the vulgar, they made light of the miseries they could not understand. The particular prevision of Decatur Hoyt had placed a policeman in plain clothes to prevent the intrusion of casual callers. And so, Frank Van Arsdale's house was darkened on the wedding night of the child whom his cold aversion seemed to follow from the very gates of the grave.

Twenty blocks down the street, a spasm of alarm seized the maid, Justine, as the bell of Mrs. Rosalind Felton's home rang out sharply. When she opened the door, she at once recognized Mr. Harry Low, whose occasional visits had been of a confidential nature, when he had worked with her the "double cross" spy system on his imperious master.

"Are you alone?" whispered Justine. "Mrs. Felton has gone down to the 'Etruria.'"

"I have a friend here in the coupé. Shut the door, and I will show you something which will please you."

The pretty maid's face was eager, as Low held a crisp one-hundred-dollar bill up to her delighted gaze.

"Do you like that picture?" he said.

"It is simply beautiful," remarked Justine, as her hand was eagerly raised.

"One moment," said Low, sharply. "This for you, if



you tell that Greek girl that her brother has sent her a secret message for her instant return. *Four more* of them, if we get her safely away from here, and you can then remember that 'she went out for a walk,' and did not return. Were you told to watch her?" he spoke very sharply.

"No, not a word to me. She waits alone in her room, for her baggage. It is still at the barge-office. I guess it is not much," said Justine with a sniff. She was herself a well-fed, prosperous Abigail, and despised suffering poverty like all true upstarts.

"You must then get her in here and watch the back hall. I will guard the front door. Now I will bring my friend in here."

In five minutes the sound of voices, of sobs, of murmured entreaty, and earnest appeal, sounded in Mrs. Felton's cosy salon. With the tricks of his stockbroker's trade, Low had artfully prepared a cablegram, on a formidable-looking blank. The information imparted by Hoyt gave him the needed data, Fred Norton had talked too much. So he, the one aid, armed Rosie's enemies against her, for the *corpus delicti* was soon to be borne away in triumph, beyond American jurisdiction. It would be impossible to convict Calvert legally of the bigamy.

"I must have another coupé," quickly thought Low, and he sent his man to pick one up at the nearest corner. He had not failed to insert in his fanciful dispatch, the words, "Speak to no one. I will send a messenger to the steamer to meet you at Havre. I will be in waiting near."

In ten minutes, the salon-door opened and Edith Van Arsdale led a dark-robed woman to the carriage. Low whispered his directions to the driver, and sprang into the other coupé. He gave a direction far enough away from the "Etruria's" dock to mislead the Jehu. An hour later, with unruffled brow, Mrs. Edith Van Arsdale entered the main cabin of the steamer "Etruria." Her only care, as Low

excused himself on the pretence of seeking the nearest telegraph office, was to murmur in Decatur Hoyt's ear, "I leave all to your wisdom. Low will watch over my house. I rely on you to guide him, I shall return soon from Paris—as soon as this mystery is cleared up. And then"—the promise of her eyes was the only reward of Hoyt's slavery, and the veteran lawyer sighed, as his elusive reward seemed even farther off than the gilded dome of the Invalides. But in the presence of Floyd Stanwix, to whom she addressed a few words, and of her brother whose head was dropped upon his hands, and whom she passed in silence, the legal Romeo was forced to the silence of a lover's despair. And so Edith Van Arsdale passed into her stateroom. It was late, and the great vessel was now ready for the morning tide.

Decatur Hoyt, grimly watching Stanwix in a long conference (at the end of the cabin) with Mrs. Rosalind Felton, failed to observe the return of Low, who, with quick strategy, found instant means to report to Mrs. Calvert that the Greek girl was safely sheltered in a stern stateroom below. "I have taken particular means to see that her stateroom door will be jealously watched till this ship is off Fire Island." Fred Norton escorted the departing Mrs. Felton past the very window where Low held converse with the concealed inmate, and Decatur Hoyt, tired and exhausted, bore Low company up town, when the secretary had said adieu to Floyd Stanwix. *Bon voyage* seemed a hollow mockery, for the five passengers thus added to the human menagerie of the "Etruria" had each their heavy load of heart-sorrow! They had all regrets, baffled hopes, or surging passions, to take out to the wild billows of the gray Atlantic, save one alone, the gentle girl, her fairest dream ruthlessly shattered, who now hid her heartbreak in her tear-stained pillows.

The "Etruria" was well out at sea before Fred Norton returned from directing a "general alarm" to be sent out, when, after midnight, the flight of poor deluded Diane Lascaris was



discovered. Justine blessed the mad ravings of rage which prostrated the Princess of Nowhere. She wailed in an impotent rage : "The fool has gone away to drown herself, and she will free Harold Calvert from his jail-bird suit of stripes." Justine labored with her distressed mistress, waiting for Norton's return, and the crackle of the five one hundred-dollar bills now hidden in her corset, accentuated her "truthful" tale, that Diane had slipped out of the room, where the disturbed arrangements showed clearly that the abandoned wife had slipped out late at night, after the "faithful maid" was nodding in slumber. It was eleven o'clock on the unhappiest morning of Mrs. Felton's New York life, when, with many sly leers and furtive winks, the cabman of the night before imparted to the Princess of Nowhere, the tidings that he had driven a beautiful stranger from the corner nearest her house to the "Etruria." The Jehu was manly enough in his "local friendship" for the pretty maid, Justine, to only tell a portion of the truth. "I may reach an extra fifty-dollar bill, and you can be sure I will hold you safe. For I really followed the party to the 'Etruria.'" The driver was more than satisfied when he returned from a half-day's jaunt on the search later with Fred Norton.

"It is indeed true, Rosie. I have seen the purser's check-list, and the wharf-master tells me that he noticed the beautiful young Frenchwoman, without baggage, who was escorted on board by a veiled woman."

For once in her life, Mrs. Rosalind Felton swore a good round oath. "I see it all! That love-sick fool has followed him over on the steamer. I had given her money here, and I told her of the movements of the party. She may have the mad idea she can reclaim him." An hour's reflection brought a grim foreshadowing of the future to the woman who still thirsted for her baffled revenge, and, after a conference with her angry lover, she laughed at last, as she copied her carefully-written cablegram to Cyprian Lascaris.

It told him of a crazed sister voyaging homeward on the same steamer with the man whom he had vainly sought for a year. "Meet them at Liverpool," she suggestively penned, and added the name of Floyd Stanwix' Paris banker.

"I think that I may have done well," said Mrs. Felton, with a cruel smile, "for, if Harold Calvert has escaped the prison suit, he may soon wear that suit which is but once used, and which never goes out of fashion!"

In the week which must elapse before the "*Etruria*" would sweep up the Irish Channel, the nimble wits of both Fred Norton and Mr. Harry Low were busy with the messages concerning the parties still all at sea. The secretary failed to see any good reason to take that sorrowing counselor, Decatur Hoyt, into his confidence, as to his private night-ride with Edith Van Arsdale. It was a matter of astonishment to the lawyer, however, to observe that the whole fracas in New York city had passed unobserved. And yet he bided his time and waited to hear of the reaping of that harvest which he instinctively felt was ripening fast. There was little attraction in his routine duties to him now, for the face of a beautiful woman, one whom he had served in mad passion, blindly, came back to him, as when she whispered, "And then!" as she spoke of that return from Paris. The whole drama of the past year seemed to slip away from him, but his foreboding heart told of future troubles lying far out beyond the heaving waters of the Atlantic.

"How many eddies in the whirlpool life of New York, tell where, far below, in ghastly wreck, lie, deep sunken, hidden crimes, dark deeds, and the whelmed ruin of lost souls." So the lawyer sadly mused, waiting for tidings, and forgetting that he, himself, had been moving on the narrowing curves toward the vortex. For one fair, bold woman, false-hearted, cruel, passionate, and vain in her pride of life, had entangled the puppets of humanity around her, in a game where the awful gage of Life against Honor was set.



Edith Van Arsdale was yet at sea, with all her hopes and fears, and the passionate woman only joyed in barren honors.

The "Etruria" was driving along well toward the Irish Coast before Diane Lascaris timidly sought the deck at night. In the quiet of her retired cabin below, the pale-faced woman telling her beads, prayed for strength to face the loving brother whose message she bore in her heart. Money she had in goodly store, forced on her by the woman who lied in her apparent kindness. Too well she knew—the abandoned bride of the entrancing days of love passed at Smyrna,—that she would never see the face she had graven in her heart, smile on her in love again. Crushed in heart, to wander back and take up her now doubly dear child and hide herself in the old home at Athens,—she only asked for that, and then, for peace, for oblivion, for a forgotten grave in which her body would only follow the hopes already entombed. She knew not Stanwix and the fair girl he so jealously guarded. She marked not the schemes of the cold beauty who, veiled from her sight, had led her to a meeting she dreaded to think of, with her heart-worn brother. And her own false husband, Harold Calvert, shut out from his sister's counsels, quietly scorned by his wife in name, and treated with cold politeness by Floyd Stanwix, was a moody rover of the deck at night. He little dreamed that his wife, his Diane, the Greek ideal of his mad love, was near him at night in his deck-wanderings. Mere desperation caused him to steel himself to meet Cyprian Lascaris with a stern defiance, for Floyd Stanwix (secure in his hidden knowledge) had skeptically received the lame stories of blackmail and intrigue which the *roué* forged, to save his heiress wife, to keep his sister's favor, and in mad revenge for his interrupted social campaign in New York.

It was a dark, puffy night when the tossing lights of a passing steamer neared them. Calvert, morose and driven wild

by his goading thoughts, paced the deck with a living hell in his heart. The late lingerers had departed, and even in the fortified safety of the smoking-room, only a few last card-players lingered with unsatisfied greed. Calvert followed toward the stern of the boat a squad of men who were told off to signal the passing vessel.

As the huge vessel raced along, lifting high her tossing stern over the bellying waves, the men swathed in sou'westers, braced themselves, waiting the word of the quartermaster to answer the port-fires and Coston lights, which were now gleaming over the wild waves, a half mile away, as the stranger rushed on, into the desert of black waters left behind.

Blinded a moment with the glare of the first flashing signal, Harold Calvert turned, and then caught at a wire stay, as a woman's face was revealed near him clinging to the iron rail. The fatal glare had shown to him his Nemesis, Diane Calvert, his betrayed wife, in the greenish pallor of the exploding lights, which left them soon wrapped in a double darkness. With the spring of a tiger he threw himself madly upon her, and in an instant, a long wailing cry floated down the wind. The trampling of feet on deck roused the passengers below, while from the safety of some coiled rigging, the brutal assassin, his blood pouring madly through a murderous heart, listened to that terrible cry of the watchful sailors, "Man overboard!" Slipping away in the welcome darkness, he cast back one furtive glance at the black, broken water rushing past, with cruel flashing white fangs cresting the broken waves! The clatter of the aroused crew, the questions of the excited loungers in the smoking-room, were all lost to him, as he fled like a guilty shade to the bed where sleep never came to him again without that long low wailing cry thrilling on his tortured mind. It seemed to ring out "Harold!" in a last appeal for help, and his cruel hands, not reddened with the blood of the slain



one, gripped his own quivering flesh as he cowered and hid his awful secret. The grim devil of Murder had walked at his side on that awful night, and the Dismal One never left him as the last hours of the voyage slowly came!

His pale face gleamed like marble, as he heard the sickening tale of the few poor belongings which were caught up on the night-ride, at a sailor booth, and which were found later, in the room of the poor missing woman passenger. The humble name given to the purser also concealed lovely Diane Lascaris's identity. He was safe. An entry in the log-book described the fate of the woman, "probably accidentally carried overboard by the lurch of the vessel. Her mental condition seemed unsettled." And so, only the wild circling sea-birds screamed a hoarse requiem for the beautiful child of sorrow! Edith Van Arsdale alone guarded a silence of horror-struck suspicion. Well she knew that there was one on the boat she dared not name who might have compassed the poor deserted wife's death. She dared not even look upon her brother's face. Another heart was torn in grief when the belated train from London reached Liverpool, and Cyprian Lascaris found the "Etruria's" passengers already gone.

## CHAPTER XIV.

## A SETTLEMENT "ALL ROUND" IN PARIS.

ONLY a few belated steerage passengers lingered on the decks of the huge "*Etruria*," as she lay at rest in the Mersey, when Cyprian Lascaris sprang up the ladder from the little tug's wheel-house. Balked in his revenge for the moment, he had but one last hope—to find at once the direction taken by the Stanwix party. The fast mails and saloon passengers were fifty miles toward London before Cyprian's train, delayed by a slight accident, reached the great ungainly city. Little did he reckon that his foe had flashed by him in the tidal train, while he languidly watched the same cars, from a siding.

Groping his way through the crowd of underlings who wait on the great sea-monster, the haggard Greek forced his way at last to the busy purser. That official silently pushed out a letter when Lascaris gave his name, and never even raised his head when Cyprian asked for news of his sister. The anxious Greek described her, and, then the clerk grew suddenly very grave, as he rose. "Ah! That poor girl who was drowned on this passage!" The official looked at Lascaris with an unfeigned sympathy, for a vague, sad story had been finally evolved from the mystery of the midnight plunge.

He sprang up when he saw the dark-eyed stranger reel, as if shot through the heart! "My sister, Diane!" he gasped, as he staggered in the purser's supporting arms. For a whole year, the half-crazed man had lived on his nerves, and sorrow and neglect had finally sapped his vital



forces. Through his thin, wasted fingers, scalding tears streamed, while, in the seclusion of the barred office, the purser told him the sad story.

"You should see our head-manager here, Mr. Lascaris, at once. I am only a mere bookkeeper. They will, however, aid you in every way. And, God knows that I feel your sorrow in my very inmost heart. You may count on me in the future, to aid you in any way I can be of use."

After a pause, in which his strong frame was shaken in a fresh storm of woe, Lascaris said, "Take me to her room! I wish to see her floating coffin." He was only five minutes alone in the little cabin. On his knees, the man, smitten with a sudden frenzy, swore an awful oath of vengeance! The grief cyclone was all over when the purser directed the slender effects of the vanished sister to be sent at once to Cyprian's hotel. As the two men pressed hands in parting the official looked long after the stranger, now striding away as if on a hurried quest. "He looks to me like a Corsican, poor fellow, and he bears some one's death-warrant on his wild face. His own? Who knows?"

The man of the pen went back suddenly to his columns of figures, for he had a warm heart, and a sweet, rosy, English lass, an orphaned sister, awaited his own brief vacation at home. Half an hour after Cyprian Lascaris had been closeted with the great managing director, he slowly sought his inn. "It may have been a chance, a fatal chance," he murmured. But his eyes flashed fire, when, in looking over Diane's humble belongings, he found a large sum of money in new American bills concealed. Wringing his hands, he paced the room. "Tricked, betrayed, fooled to her death," he cried, and driving at once to the central telegraph-office, he dispatched an inquiry to Stanwix's bankers in Paris, and gave them his own London address. The wayfarers shrank away instinctively from the wild-eyed young man who muttered and swayed in a corner, as if under some fatal fever,

all the long way to London. The rushing train was not quick enough for the avenger!

Two hours after his London arrival, he took the latest night-train for Dover. His eye was steady now, his glance fixed, his face stony and set, for he only murmured: "I shall meet him at last, there in Paris, with his other wife. I will drag him from her to a meeting where all will be settled—settled forever, in Paris!"

The courtesy of the "eminent" Paris-American bankers soon informed him that Floyd Stanwix, with Mr. and Mrs. Harold Calvert, had arrived, for one long precious day had been wasted at Liverpool in the fruitless conferences. No one had seen the supposed fatal misstep; no eye but God's veiled glance caught the last glimpse of the poor girl borne out on the icy waves into the foam-churned wake of the rushing liner! A laconic cablegram from Fred Norton bade Cyprian look to one alone, for a possible key to the mystery. "Watch Harold Calvert. He is capable of anything. Letters follow." The Greek knew now that no human being but the desperate bridegroom had any interest in compassing sweet Diane's death. "I have no questions to ask now, only to find him—to face him," muttered Cyprian, as he stepped into the Paris train at Dieppe. Norton's warning letter, read over eagerly, had told him all.

The end of the voyage found a strangely-assorted party under the roofs of the Hotel Chatham. There were furrows and wrinkles graven in Floyd Stanwix's bronzed face, when after settling his own preliminaries, he gravely received a widowed lady who had seen Marie as a prattling babe. "I wish you, my dear madame," said Floyd, heartily, as the American lady joined them, "to do me the honor to watch over my niece for a few days." Mrs. Stevenson, a New York *émigré*, had been a friend of Miss Ultima's mother and a chance call at the Embassy, gave Stanwix her welcome address. He was without present purpose, save to avoid



public scandal, and to begin quietly exploring the mystery of Harold Calvert's alleged first marriage. Too well he knew the public blight of a clouded name, and he saw, to his agony, Marie Calvert, a wife only in the name, now turning her trusting eyes on him hourly, in a mute appeal for the truth. She was breaking down at last. Her gentle nature sorely jarred and bruised, was sinking into the sad inertia of dull heart-break. "There's nothing to wait for now," Stanwix muttered, as he went in search of Harold Calvert, who lingered, of their party, near by in the Hotel Chatham. The husband was in a state of expectant desperate calm. The sailor's heart smote him, as he felt forced to say, in solemn earnestness to Mrs. Van Arsdale: "I am of course, obliged to keep this family party together, until your brother can face the woman he wronged, or her responsible friends. I rely on you to quietly avoid the company of my niece save on our public appearance, until your brother can lift the veil from his questionable past life. I have some few important questions to ask also, of you, to clear my own conscience."

Edith, a conquering queen no longer, bent her head in silence. Her cheeks were ashen as she murmured: "Oh! My God! To be so punished, and at his hands!" for, very fear now chained her lips. She knew well that, as yet, Floyd Stanwix knew not that it was Diane who fell, shrieking, into the dark bubbling waters of the Atlantic. "It must come at last, it must come," she whispered, and unable to face her wretched brother, even in accusation, though she instinctively felt him guilty, the safety brought so strangely to the second marriage by Diane Lascaris's death was now of no avail. For in her lonely hours she could hear at last the wild song of the Valkyries circling in dreadful purpose over the man whose eyes never met hers in this suspense—her only brother, the last of her blood. She merely confined her efforts to the self-protection for the moment, and Low and Hoyt alone knew, by her dispatches, of her arrival at

Paris, and of her resting-place. She longed for the safety of lonely Schloss Danberg!

In her room, gazing vacantly at her altered self in the mirror, or watching the human hive of the streets, Marie Calvert, a wife now in both law and name, had never exchanged a single word with the man who had so villainously duped her. Stunned, dazed and broken, she felt herself only an atom wandering in ether, so small had the world grown, so void her hourly life. In the redoubled tenderness of "Uncle Floyd," she saw only the confirmation of disaster, and with a strange fear, she realized that Edith Van Arsdale, too, shrank from her side. The past, her marriage, her future, all seemed to be mere shadow-pictures, and the current of her being was stagnant. Something had gone out of her life never to return. In the loneliness of Schloss Danberg Harold Calvert's face had brought light and life into the dreaming repose of her unruffled days. Love, romance, poetry and art, had lingered near her there, waked by his voice, his strange beauty, his graces, and all the wasted gifts of God! It had come to her, a bright unfolding dream, this love; and rapturously she had given all her soul up to him in shy self-surrender, all her heart's purest confidence, her faith and hopes. For Prince Charming seemed to have come from a sunset-land of golden dreams, of tender glow, to lead her out into a new, strange Paradise, and up to a higher and another life—a woman's fond illusions.

At her feet, now in ashes, lay the Dead-sea fruit of her romance, the ardent fever which had hastened all to an illusory fruition. She was not versed in the direct and practical scheming views of the worldling. Marriage was to her pure eyes love's holy seal! Alas! she, the child of loneliness was unlettered in the lore of our *fin-de-siècle* life. She knew not that Rousseau's clear mind had at last pierced the fallacy of the modern social system. The axiom that "there is no principle in human marriage, no guiding law,"



was undreamed of by the innocent girl who had given her trusting heart up to the man she had invested with the halo of her own royal nature. Hard was the rude lesson to the bewildered girl, that, in every marriage, some one must benefit in disproportion! That the veiled modern hunt of innocent womanhood, however flower-decked is brutal at the last! That the most vicious *roué* always demands as his right the purest girl. That all dross passes for gold in the Vanity Fair of matrimony. That hidden in grottos, the waiting cuttle-fish of society lurk open-eyed beneath its surface, to drag in rich or tender passing prey. That the game is won at the very outset, by one or the other; and that aversion, disgust, dissimulation and deceit often are among the Pandora wedding-gifts of modern life! The simple-hearted girl, in her silent agony, could not class herself as only one of a thousand thousand cases of "the victim crowned with flowers." It was alien to her school of the timid heart, her youth and budding hopes, to know that any wholesale distribution of men and women, by lot, by force, by law, by auction, or by the results of a mere chase, after the brute fashion of the Papuans, would perhaps bring as much regulation into the married relation as the systems whose varying codes now rule different Christian lands with similarly disheartening results! Perhaps, some day, with a more direct adherence to nature's laws, the fairest and most desirable of Eve's daughters will be left, as Alexander left the dominion of the world, "to the strongest!" The application of this rough code would, at least, produce a more vigorous and not more vicious, race of human animals! Marie Calvert had not seen the glittering handwriting on the wall of the dawning century, which tells us how nearly the whole social machinery is worn out with its vague traditions, its brutal inequalities, its flaunting lies, its cold hypocrisy, and its palsied creeds. A time of dying gods is upon us!

The loving woman, yearning but to be beloved, only knew

of the suffering which left her own pure heart a bruised lily. Marie's first touch of the Tree of Life had waked the exquisite agonies of pain. For here below, pain, sorrow, suffering and parting, rule the human herd and mock at the fleeting brief sunlight of happiness. If the golden glory lingers a moment on any place in life's pathway, it flits on to the distant mountains of the sunset of the future, beyond the river. "For here is only parting, tribulation and sorrow," as good Thomas à Kempis bids us note, in his book of minor chords—a book which dies not, for only suffering has eternal power, here below!

Marie had joined the band of sad-faced women, gentle-hearted, who look wistfully out to see where the sunlight of happiness will break through the rifled clouds, and,—so many sweet eyes only sorrow and watch in vain!

"I shall ask you to give me several days here, my child," said Floyd Stanwix when he brought her mother's friend to the girl-wife. "I will have something important to say to you very soon, and then, then, darling," said Stanwix, "you shall go where you will." There was a mute inquiry in his eyes.

"Any place, anywhere on earth, with you, only you, Uncle Floyd," she cried, "but not to Schloss Danberg, never again!" and the strong man felt a holy love growing up in his heart, as the graceful head lay resting on his breast. His sister's child had found him, the worldling, to be the truest of all,—at the last.

Another Floyd Stanwix than this tender guardian, sternly faced Mr. Harold Calvert that night, in a retired apartment of the Hotel Chatham. They were alone, and, around them, bubbled the evening mirth of gay Paris. It was a conference without witnesses, for the sailor felt, with the instinctive delicacy of a loving man, a keen desire to shield the unsullied name of the sad-eyed young wife below. In silence they entered the chosen apartment, and Stanwix sat



mute, facing Calvert at a table, with his head buried in his hands, for a few moments. He had keenly watched the young man whose sphinx-like calm had deepened into stone since the arrival at Liverpool.

"We are here alone now," gravely began the sailor, "where, in a foreign land, my niece is, at least, free from the daily espionage of the world. You are familiar with continental Europe. You know the story of your own past, you know what the future might have been to you, what it yet may be. I ask you now, as I cannot keep this dissonant party long together, to at once satisfy me fully that you never have been married, and to explain the relations which tied you to the woman who faced you in the church on your wedding day."

"I will require you, in return, Mr. Stanwix," calmly replied Calvert, "to produce any woman, now or at any time, my legal wife, by any form of marriage. I am made, by almost force, the object of a very unusual inquiry. I am without the proper advice as to my rights. You must bear with me in this, as much as I do with you, and I tell you plainly, that it is for you, sir, as the head of the Stanwix family, to produce all the evidence against me, in your strange social trial. I have not rebelled, for my sister's sake," his voice trembled slightly, "but at one point in your double query, I must stop and break it off."

Calvert was so coldly confident, that Floyd Stanwix was startled. "I absolutely and positively refuse to answer any questions as to my private life before my marriage. You can easily trace up my social movements in New York City. The rest of my life, sir, is a sealed book—to you! There is but one person in the world to whom I would reply, even to reassure, in that direction. That person is my wife, Marie Calvert," said the young man, speaking without haste, and with no shade of bravado.

Stanwix struggled a few moments with his rising feelings.

"And you mean to tell me now, that your social past does not affect your marriage?" Stanwix was startled at Calvert's resolute attitude.

"We are neither of us children," firmly replied Calvert. "I have never fed on illusions. You are perfectly well aware, that a society man, yourself, for instance," and Floyd Stanwix half started up, "comes to the altar of marriage, a being white as snow, recreated by his willingness to marry. In other words, he binds himself only to cease preying upon society! Setting apart all serious personal involvements, or a past criminal record (neither of which I have), does not any social code allow a man of the world to sink his personal past in the new state? No, Mr. Stanwix, I am not easily led, I will not say frightened. You know as well as I do, that marriage is always an ordeal for a woman. She must be even beyond the status of Cæsar's wife. For a man, it is only an attitude! The whole social statistics are taken only at the time of passing 'under the yoke.' After that, what does society really care for the future of the union, as long as the couple are properly on its muster-rolls, at the time of the ceremony. Now, I defer to you, as my wife's only responsible friend, but I have clearly stated my plan of personal conduct toward you, and also stretched the limit of friendship, of forbearance. I defy you, I defy the world, to produce any living woman who has the right to call herself my wife. And this ill-timed interference——"

Floyd Stanwix sprang to his feet as a sound of earnest voices in the corridor of the apartment gave way to a crash, as the slight fastenings of the door parted under a frantic rush. Harold Calvert stood, pale and self-contained, as rigid as if chiselled in bronze, at the table, while toward him sprang Cyprian Lascaris, his eyes gleaming with a devilish ferocity. Calvert's right hand was thrust deeply into his bosom, and his eyes measured the intruder, as if something would flash out to stay the mad assailant's on-



ward course. But Stanwix, with a sailor's alertness, had thrust himself quickly between the two young men! The frightened domestics had now fled away from the corridor.

"What does this intrusion mean, sir?" harshly cried the yachtsman, as he held back the struggling Greek, whom he had not recognized. Lascaris relaxed into a quiet pose, as his hollow tones now echoed through the silent room.

He looked straight on, past Floyd Stanwix, and then slowly said, as if measuring his man by inches, to Calvert, standing mute, with a faint sneering smile on his lips,

"It needs two men each, here to see a man killed on the field. Get them, you murderous dog!" and he threw the glove, still in his hand, into the face of the pale bridegroom.

Before Harold Calvert could launch the bitter words trembling on his lips, the door swung inward, and a commissary of police entered, followed by two *gendarmes*. "In the name of the law," he said.

The hour was late before the three men were discharged from arrest, after an earnest appeal to the heads of the police. The only words which passed between them at parting were the naming of their friends to Floyd Stanwix. When Calvert, with a flashing eye, asked Floyd Stanwix to act as one of his seconds, the loyal sailor crimsoned, as he briefly said:

"For any other man—in any other cause—perhaps; but not here can I take sides. I will go out to the field, though, and render justice to both."

The two foes parted with one long look of deadly hatred flashed forth by Cyprian Lascaris, which Harold Calvert returned with the contemptuous stare of the practiced duellist. The hotel corridor was deserted as the coupé stopped.

"Can I do anything of a personal nature for you, Mr. Calvert?" queried Floyd Stanwix, as yet half in the dark as to the real rooted quarrel between these men.

"Nothing, sir," remarked Calvert, with icy coldness, "save to guard an absolute silence with regard to me and my affairs, should the worst befall. I will, however, deliver to you a letter myself, which, as head of the family, I wish you to deliver to my wife after the duel."

"And your sister?" queried the sailor, touched by the friendless surroundings of the man soon to face a desperate enemy, in a fight to the death.

"As soon as I can find my seconds, I will communicate with her myself—if I have anything to say," firmly replied the unshaken man.

When they parted, Calvert said simply,

"I will be all night at my rooms, here, till I go to the field. You will be called in time. I ask of you only this, Mr. Stanwix,—I ask that silence for which I am going to risk my life. You can see that I am an illustration of the theory of non-interference in marriage which I just proposed to you! Forget me, sir, and remember always that I said—nothing!" He lifted his hat and disappeared.

The sailor stood astounded at Calvert's coolness.

"By Jove! There's no white feather in him, at any rate!" murmured Stanwix, as he walked into the hotel bureau, and gave all his private directions for the battle-morning.

"It is easier for me to have it out in this way," mused Harold Calvert, as he dispatched messengers to scour Paris for two of his trustiest friends. "I should not have liked to have fought Floyd Stanwix. He is a blunderer, but—he means well."

In the great hotel, no one slept with a lighter heart than the desperate bridegroom, who felt in his every nerve a stern desire to face some one upon whom he could wreak all his vengeance against hostile Fortune's blows. He never doubted the final issue for a moment, and had simply said, with a nod of the head, when his seconds had arranged all:



"It is a perfectly fair thing. We are about equal at the sword."

The gloom of the early morning still shrouded Paris as three coupés rolled away from the Hotel Chatham. Floyd Stanwix had never closed his eyes in the anxious vigils of the night. Before him was only a future of more darkly-clouded gloom for the beloved one whom he had cherished as Miss Ultima. His eyes heavily followed the carriage containing Calvert and his seconds, and behind him a fashionable "fighting Doctor" was borne along, ready for a new sensation. "I hear that they are both very strong at the weapon. And it is *à l'outrance*." The sailor gloomily conned the chances of the fight. Should Calvert fall, he might never know the truth, and the mourning black would shroud the graceful form he loved once more. If Calvert killed his man, then the open breach of the unanswered questions remained.

These debatable questions lingered in Stanwix's mind until the depths of the *Bois* were reached, where now only the chant of the waking birds broke the silence of the forest. Stanwix felt a dumb sorrow at his heart, for he knew, from secret inquiry, that the wife and sister were slumbering in ignorance of this grim day of reckoning. When the first carriage stopped, there was already a little group awaiting the new-comers, who raised their hats in a solemn silence—an omen of dark presage. Waiting!

The sailor curiously eyed the assembled seconds. An Austrian guardsman and a glittering-eyed Cuban stood earnestly conversing with Lascaris, whose dejected attitude and unkempt attire showed his utter disregard of the *convenances du champ*. The brother of the woman whom Harold Calvert had wronged seemed to have less interest in the meeting than even the stolid Parisian coachmen, who, from afar, gaily smoked and chattered, as they laughed over the possibilities of a scratched wrist or a pin-prick wound. But,

alert and as keen-eyed as a gray wolf, Harold Calvert conversed in a low tone with two of that band of Englishmen always floating around Paris, "who have been in the Army." The silence was oppressive, and the sun struggled at last through sickly yellow clouds, as the seconds eagerly conferred. At a mute nod from Calvert, Floyd Stanwix approached the duellist.

"This is the letter for my wife," he gravely remarked, and only said, "Remember," as the seconds returned, having chosen a convenient grassy amphitheatre for the duel.

Stanwix felt a glow of shame as he thought, busied with placing the letter in his breast-pocket, that he had failed to say farewell, or even to offer his hand. And now, in their shirt-sleeves, the two men were being examined by the opposing seconds. In a strange fascination, Stanwix followed Calvert's every motion, as he glided to the place marked for him, the ground and positions being already decided by lot. A little bustle drew away Stanwix's eyes, as, with a sudden movement, Cyprian Lascaris took off a broad black band of ribbon which had hung around his neck, and handed a medallion-case to his nearest second, who gravely passed it to the surgeon.

A spasm of sudden feeling seemed to pass over Calvert's face, for, by a mental divination, Stanwix felt in his heart that the strange object was the picture of the betrayed girl. To the eye of the sailor Calvert's easy attitude seemed to vanish, and a cowering hanging of the shoulders marred his superb and confident pose of the very moment before. There was no time to think, for the hissing, grating blades were flashing even now, and the men who had once tried each other's mettle in friendship at Athens, now changed places with lightning rapidity! It seemed only a dull, heavy dream to Stanwix, who was greatly worn with long mental trouble and the ceaseless night-watch. All Harold Calvert's matchless skill was needed to drive off the desperate lunges



of the bronzed and haggard Greek, whose eyes flashed with a strange fire. For he threw himself madly on his foe !

Twice the combatants paused, and all Floyd Stanwix's kindling eye saw was the growing crimson patch on Lascaris' breast, where his desperate recklessness had opened a brother's bosom to the sword of the seducer ! There was a confident smile on the face of the lithe opponent who now, as the third assault opened, bowed his head gravely when his nearest second whispered a last warning word. With lightning fury, Calvert suddenly assumed the offensive, and his sword flashed back and forth in deadly thrusts at Lascaris, who sullenly gave ground.

The tense excitement of the faces of the watchers thrilled Stanwix, who saw Lascaris now beaten back step by step. A human life trembled in the balance, and Stanwix caught sight of the thoroughly-aroused coachmen standing on their boxes in wild horror. For this was a duel to the death ! And, as a flight of flapping crows broke the silence with discordant croaking, his foot slipping in his murderous eagerness, Harold Calvert fell prone on Lascaris's, half-shortened blade, which, in the attempted raise to a quick parry, had entered Calvert's body, for Cyprian Lascaris had dropped on one knee, and run his enemy through the heart !

Crashing to the wet and trampled sward, the body of the relentless pursuer of a moment before, lay with its arms outspread, and a desperate contractive agony marred the fair face of the man who had deliberately thrown away all of God's best gifts. Death at his best friend's hand !

A blackish-red pool welled around the stiffening body as it lay prone, and, with one last convulsive tremor, the fearless enemy of the Greek, gave a long shuddering sigh, and his head dropped back.

By his side, an ashen-faced observer of the last stern look of the defiant, dying eyes, Cyprian Lascaris stood, with his hands clasped, as a second picked up the sword forced from

his grasp by the violence of the shock of the accidental contact. The surgeon was still bending over the dead man, when the silent Greek touched him on the shoulder. "Give me back my sister's picture!" he hoarsely said, and there, before them all, he stooped, and laid the black ribbon on the dead man's breast. Without a word Cyprian stalked away, and before he could speak to the departing man, Floyd Stanwix and the surgeon were left alone with the last of the Calverts!

Stanwix quickly revolved a dozen plans to avert the sufferings of the sudden shock to the wife and sister of the dead man as he drove homeward. The seconds of the fatal duel had disappeared, and only the surgeon remained to send the shell of humanity he guarded, decently to a place for its interment. "I can find no way to soften and handle this matter in secret," concluded Floyd. He well knew that Mrs. Rosalind Felton and Norton would be able to easily read all the facts of the Greek's vengeance. "Thank Heavens!" he cried, as his coupé entered the Boulevard, "there is no longer a motive for continued quarrel, blackmail, or further public scandals." I will tell all the truth to Edith. She is a strong soul. And yet how can I trust her? for Norton's ugly references to the theft of Schuyler's letters now returned to his mind! "She is not guiltless, she must have known of that." And yet he fain would have thought her true. "At any rate, I may as well order the 'Aphrodite' back to Villefranche, for I must watch over Marie, until suffering has made her strong enough to walk alone."

He drove direct to Reuter's agency and thence proceeded to the hotel. In the corridor a gentleman hastily approached, and raised his hat. In a few whispered words, Floyd Stanwix knew that the avenger would see him at once, on a grave affair, for the last time. One of the managers of the great hotel, with a sober face, confidentially assured the sailor that, though the gossip had reached the house, the two sleeping women would not be permitted



to hear of it, save through him. Ten minutes' drive brought Stanwix into the presence of the shaken man who had only by a fortunate accident avoided the superior prowess of the deadly swordsman. Stanwix had seen from the first crossing of their swords that, reckless of his life, Lascaris in the closing struggle would have killed his enemy, even if he had to open his unguarded breast to do it.

"I am going away forever," said the Greek. "I am going now to seek her babe, and take the child away to the East with me. I wished you to know my whereabouts, and the fate of that man's lawful son. I am rich. I will make every provision for all that my dear one left me. You are a gentleman. I leave my name to you. You can testify that I killed that dog only in fair fight; and to you I leave the duty of some day telling your niece that I only slew the man who foully murdered my sister. Diane! My darling!" cried the Greek.

"Are you mad?" answered Stanwix. "Your sister is in New York, in the hands of friends!"

The slayer lifted his weary eyes. "Did you not know that the woman swept overboard from your steamer was my own sister Diane, Calvert's lawful wife! It was some dark scheme of his,—the brute," and Lascaris handed to the astonished sailor Norton's last letter and three telegrams. "That is what his heart's blood dyed my blade for. I would have sold my own life for that. I had a revolver in my pocket to have killed him that night if you had not held me back. But a Lascaris was never an assassin!"

When the sailor had finished the letters, he grasped the Greek's cold hands. "You are my brother for life! Here is my New York card. Should fate ever deal unkindly with you, I will promise to Diane Lascaris's son both an inheritance and a home. I tell you now that my niece shall never shed one tear, never wear a weed for the death of this arch-scoundrel!"

They parted in haste, for the Greek banker who sheltered Cyprian hastily warned them of the need for Cyprian's instant flight. One strong hand-grasp, and the two parted, to go out on their diverse ways of sorrow and regret, "the way of the world."

"Did he have accomplices? Was it the fair woman who had brought him to the side of my poor darling?" and Stanwix realized when he reached his own room, that he must at last sit in judgment on the woman who had sworn to be true to the orphaned girl. "She shall have one chance to speak for herself," he said, after the first necessary duty of placing Mrs. Stevenson on guard near Marie, had been quietly fulfilled. To the excited lady, he said, "I must attend to some matters of moment soon, and I will ask you to shield my darling for me until I can return to her. By to-morrow night we can all leave here, say for Dresden, and then I will go on to Nice, or perhaps Malta. I wish Marie kept in absolute ignorance of her husband's death for the present. But I must arrange first for Mrs. Van Arsdale's departure for Schloss Danberg."

"And now," said Stanwix sadly, "for the ordeal!" as he entered the apartment of Frank Van Arsdale's widow.

She was seated by the table, and in her hand, a little scrawl of paper was tightly clenched. She sprang to her feet as Stanwix closed the door, and handing him the few lines, said, "Tell me—tell me all." As Stanwix read the lines, his face grew very grave in its compassion. "Stanwix will tell you all if I fall. I am going out to fight Lascaris." These words were the adieu of the man whose single initial H. closed the last letter of his life. Stanwix's pitying eyes told the fatal result.

"I will see you safely on your way to Schloss Danberg," he slowly answered, "for you are now alone in the world." There was an agony of grief in her face which touched his heart, as he answered her mute appeal. "I cannot tell you



all now, but I will write. You must leave here at once. I will see to the proper burial of your brother. He fell fairly in open fight. For the future, Edith, let Hoyt be the medium of any necessary communications. For I shall take my sister's child far away—where, please God, such crushing sorrows shall not reach her."

"And I shall see you no more?" The room was reeling around the woman who could not see him go, without one last appeal.

"I am at your orders for all these necessary affairs. But, Edith, you have betrayed me. You have been false to your trust!" With a sudden impulse he leaned over her. "Why could you have not told me all in time? You know I would have been your friend. Perhaps it might have even saved you this sorrow, if you had trusted to me in time."

"My God, Floyd! In mercy, spare me!" she cried, as she fell at his feet—and there for the first time in her life, the child of the adventurer knew that, far beyond our baser plots and wicked schemes, a great purpose overrules the transgressor. "Vengeance is mine," saith the Lord! And they drifted apart in a sorrowing silence.

In an hour, Stanwix had removed Marie Calvert, still in ignorance of her widowhood, to the remote villa near Neuilly where Mrs. Stevenson awaited Stanwix's final orders for the departures.

The moonlight was sparkling on the eddies of the Seine, as Floyd Stanwix, in the company of two New York clubmen whom he had summoned as social witnesses, returned from the morgue, where they had reclaimed all that was left of the man with the beauty of the Greek god. It was only a pale waxen mask, now—the face which took on, in repose, the freshness and innocence of the days when the bright promise of youth was written on that cold brow! "We will spare you any personal appearance, Floyd. Let us take this on ourselves. You must get away out of Paris, at once!" The

friends were walking down the bank of the rushing river, dark and menacing, as it ran below them there.

"I would accept your kindly offer, but Calvert was well known here. There will be talk, scandal, journalistic gossip. I have every desire to keep this sad business quiet at home, as far as possible. And, if I can shield my sister's only child, it will make me forget all the years I have wasted in the mad folly of the 'swim.' There's something hanging over my life which shadows everything I love!" There, in that lonely hour, spurred on by the awful lesson of the speechless mask of the dead libertine, Floyd Stanwix vowed a life's atonement. For the memory of the woman who had died, broken hearted, in his arms, came back in this silent hour of sadness. He turned and faced his friends. "You may perhaps be right. I will therefore leave all to you. To-morrow I will leave for Dresden. I will send you my address, and you can spare me this last trial. I may live to balance up some of the wrong I have done in the world, by shielding that only one of the living who has a right to curse the dead man. And I would rather not look upon his face again." As he spoke, a woman's voice wailed out in a last despairing shriek. "Some one drowning!" cried the sailor as he sprang to the bank. Twenty yards from them, below in the current, a struggling form was swept on. Quick as the sea-hawk darting on its prey, the gallant ocean wanderer had dived, and with his strong arms cleaving the chilly water reached the circling eddy, where an arm thrust out still told of the perishing one. On, downward, swept along by the swift tide, but clinging fast to the frail castaway he had risked his life for, Floyd Stanwix fought manfully to reach the walled-up shore! Shouts and cries of encouragement arose from the banks, and, a hundred yards below, skiffs were already darting out, as the current swept the strong swimmer and the woman he sustained, on past a landing. There were fifty willing arms now ready to aid to



lift the gallant stranger and the senseless woman out of the boat which had finally reached them. It was a poor homeless one, a living protest against the woman-chase of manhood, who lay senseless there on the strand. And, as his friends reached him, Stanwix, with a last faint effort to rise, fell back in a swoon of deadly exhaustion!

For the erring one who had madly thrown herself into the river the sailor had gaged his life against the treacherous Seine!

While a score of Napoleons were hurriedly given to the attendants to relieve the waif of the night, the comrades silently followed the ambulance which bore Stanwix to the nearest hospital. There was blood upon his garments, and his hands hung limp at the bedside as the surgeons bent over him. "He has friends here?" asked the senior doctor, as he drew Stanwix's comrades gravely aside. They bowed in expectant anguish. "One of you must stay here, and if you wish his friends to see him yet alive, do not waste a single moment. He has been internally injured by some projecting rock."

The morning light came feebly struggling at last through the hospital windows, as by his bedside the watching Marie saw Uncle Floyd's eyelids tremble. A silent woman kneeling at the foot of the bed, pressed her hands upon a breast now a prey to every guilty anguish, as the surgeon's warning finger was uplifted. Throughout the long night the tide of life had but feebly flickered in the sailor's veins.

The end came with the daylight lighting up the huge square towers of Notre Dame! Once, only, did the man whose heart thrilled with the love of a life, essay to lift a feeble hand toward the pale face of the girl he tenderly loved. There were sobs which rent a despairing heart, as one last look of fondest love lit up the pale face of the sufferer. His lips moved in whispers so faint that only the gentle woman who leaned over him heard their kindly import,

"Marie—Cragnest—Don't forget—Uncle Floyd." It was a sister of charity who unclasped the girl's arms from the last embrace, for, pillowed on her pure and stainless bosom, Floyd Stanwix's head rested in the slumber which knows no waking.

By the side of the bed of death, an hour later, in words broken only by the storms of her self-accusation, Edith Van Arsdale told the last of the Stanwix line, the full story of her widowhood. "You shall never see me again when he is laid away. I would not have you even think of me, but by the God who will judge us all, I swear to you that I only fought for Floyd Stanwix's love. I knew not of my brother's marriage, and I wished only to buy the silence of the girl who died on that awful night at sea, to save my brother Harold, because your name was linked to his. This I tell you that you would not think me a murderess. I have played the game of life against odds, and lost, for there lies the man who never knew that his love would have made me—another than I am!"

And Miss Ultima's foe, kneeling by the bier of the dead sailor, knew at last, to the utmost, the bitterness of Dead-Sea Fruit! Whelmed in the sparkling froth of Parisian life, the drama of Marie Van Arsdale's wedding had closed without scandal, when Death rang the curtain down. There were no more "accounts to settle in Paris," for the riven heart of the sister and Calvert's lonely grave both proved the truth of the stern old proverb, "Who breaks, pays!"

And the tortured, passionate mistress of a million, in far-away lonely Schloss Danberg looked out alone with a hardening heart, in the later winter days when she sat in state in her great hall. It was haunted by the memories of the unreturning Past. She dared not ever dream again of the friendship, nay, even the forgiveness, of the woman, now alone in the world, who still shrank from facing the thousand curious eyes of New York's Vanity Fair.



## CHAPTER XV.

## UNDER THE WALLS OF KONIGSTEIN.

THE very first thing which recalled Marie Calvert to the duties of her new position was the telegraphed message of Decatur Hoyt, sorrowing far away in America: "Take charge of all. Everything is left to you. See the American Minister at once." It was in vain that they tried to rouse the woman who was once "Miss Ultima," from her lonely watch by the body of the man who died with her name on his lips.

The generous chivalry of the Americans in Paris left the mourning woman no labor of love to perform in person. Floyd Stanwix was a man widely beloved, for, with all his faults of reckless gallantry, the soul-starving meanness of the egoist had no place in his frank nature.

Bright and manly in his sailor daring, he had not waited a moment to throw away his own life to save a perishing human being. And so, with the mystic calm of the eternal sunset on his face, Floyd Stanwix lay dead in Paris, his breast covered with the Stars and Stripes he had fought for.

It seemed as if a spirit of awful power had laid a strange curse upon Frank Van Arsdale's stolen millions, for they had not brought happiness in their train. The flowing sands of the glass of time stop not for human woe. The stars and suns sweep on in the mute indifference of the Infinite to the paltry miseries of earth. Even the passing stranger raised the hat in honor of the brave American, as, borne by loving hands, the dead sailor was finally laid away to rest until the last sad homeward voyage. It was at

Cragnest, by the river of his youth, that the heiress of the Stanwix line would later build him a fitting tomb. The strong man had been cut off in the pride of life, "with all his imperfections on his head," and yet, as the sunset of the first day of the eternal adieu came to her, Marie felt that beyond the clouds of sorrow there was the shining star of the sea, in eternal hope—for "greater love hath no man than that he lay down his life for his friend." And, Floyd Stanwix, for an unknown outcast, one of the despairing ones—once man's toy and the plaything of an hour, had given back his life in a quick atonement to womanhood, for all his wild deeds of passion and the wrongs of his wasted youth, in that he died for one of the humblest of that sex which the sufferings of Fate alone would dignify, and which sorrow always crowns.

For what woman as, one by one, life's hopes fail, as, one by one, the bright illusions fade, tied to some heart-treasured affection now mouldering in the ashes of life, has not felt that "a sorrow's crown of sorrows is remembering happier things." And, alas, the point we seek in vain, the mark of the stable equilibrium of human happiness, *Ultima Thule* seems always to be just before, or just behind, the observer!

There is no straight path in life. Move we in the swift rush of Fashion's whirl, glitter and shine in the tinsel of courts, drag a load of daily cares in a crowded city, or pine alone in sighing solitude; whether the curve of our orbits be circle, ellipse or hyperbola, the centre of rest is ever distant, far beyond our reach, and, forward or backward groping on our paths, we never reach that vanishing point of rest! To strain forward, is aspiration; and, alas, looking beyond—is inspiration; for the clouds hang over and veil the pathway before us. Looking backward is the sad familiar lot of humanity! To see strewed along the way we came, the choicest objects of desire in wreck and ruin, in the silence of the dead past, even as the richest caravans for Mecca bound



leave behind them ghastly traces of the desert simooms! For, in the mad race of life, no one pauses to bind up the wounds of those who faint and fall by the wayside.

Stanwix, loved by men, as no truly faultless characters ever are, was also widely lamented by that sex to whose worship he had given the brightest years of his summer-day life. After Edith Van Arsdale had laid her splendid wreath, with hopelessly imploring eyes, on the cold breast of the man she madly loved, she passed forever out of the ken of the Stanwix clan, going on into that whirlpool of frothy amusement, in which the *riche Americaine* always successfully competes for the silken cap and golden bells of the European Folly Prize Race! It was Edith's last tribute, the noble and dignified attitude with which she assisted at the last rites of respect to the man who fain would have had her truer than she was, and whose implicit trust had shown him to be no ungenerous sceptic. For he had trusted her blindly! The great world never knew, at home, nor in gay Lutetia, of the veil which, by Floyd Stanwix' death-bed, descended forever between Miss Ultima and her father's beautiful unknown wife.

Better women, with colder pulses, have never mourned with a deeper truth, the loved and lost, than did the silent Lady of Schloss Danberg in her grief for Stanwix. For, a world of memories, a host of vain imaginings, a maddening self-accusation of wild regret, wrapped her in a mantle of queenly sorrow, as she walked, with hungry heart, the lonely galleries of her distant castle.

The guilty woman realized that her insane passion had only been a wedge to drive all hearts asunder, that Harold Calvert's dishonored grave, Marie's silent agony of sadness, and Stanwix' untimely cutting off, were the fatal fruits of her own life-harvest. She well knew the reason of the guarded coldness expressed in Decatur Hoyt's letter, wherein he begged to inform Mrs. Van Arsdale "that he fully rep-

resented the woman whose business affairs were linked with hers ; and that all necessary communications would be duly forwarded," etc., etc.

"Ah!" she sneered, in sudden rage with a scornful lip, "the old Polonius has ranged himself at last on the side of the stronger battalions. I will now live for myself alone! The world shall find that under the velvet glove, there is a hand of steel. For—money, I have the coined, cogent reasons, which sway camp, mart, forum, and salon. The ringing golden temptation brings man to his ready knee, and woman, smiling, in self-surrender, to the will of the vicious plutocrat! I married a man without a heart. I sold my beauty, I drained my youth, for gold. And, I will give back to the world I have fought my way into, a woman whose creed will be that of one who reigns with a golden sceptre. I will not be denied, and before me they shall bow, and at my side I will rule over a man chosen from among them, who can find a way to love a woman without a heart." It was a deliberate and business-like letter which called Mr. Harry Low suddenly away from his daily functions in New York: a letter which would have made a woman of even one feminine fibre blush, but the priestess of the "Golden Calf" nodded approvingly as she read it again with care.

"That will do ; he will know just what he has to expect! He is young, ambitious, useful, and, in the din of society's crush, he shall fight my battles, in golden helmet and with a jewelled sword-hilt. My money will make him a power."

Mrs. Edith Van Arsdale laughed bitterly as she smothered the last protesting impulses of womanliness. "Shall I wait till he asks me? No! I am rich enough to afford a husband *à la mode*."

She had a scorn of herself when she remembered later the clear, unshrinking glance of womanly pity with which Marie had said, at parting, "Edith, I wish you well, but we must not meet, you and I, to remember that between us always lies



your brother's grave." And the woman of the world was strangely powerless before the brave glances of the innocent and outraged girl. Busied with the details of her uncle's affairs, Marie Calvert's eyes were opened to the dark mysteries of modern social life. A warning letter from Decatur Hoyt caused her to examine all the correspondence of the dead man, who seemed in thought still to be at her side. The "Aphrodite" was not left to swing idly at Villefranche, in the hands of strangers, for, by Stanwix's will, the only reservation from his sweeping testament in favor of the child of his heart, was the gift of the famous yacht to the New York "Sailors' Home."

The life-provision for Hatton, of a generosity hitherto unheard of, caused that acute yet grateful servitor to faithfully bring to Marie Calvert, at her Dresden home, all of the private papers left in Stanwix's apartments. Sealed and despatched by Counselor Decatur Hoyt, it fell to the innocent girl-widow to classify and examine these records of a life frittered away in things small in usefulness, but great in possible future consequences to that floating illusion known as "Society." Waiting for the arrival of Miss Cornelia Stanwix, the richest of the young American dwellers in Dresden was bravely tranquil under the kindly guardianship of Mrs. Stevenson. A sense of her utter loneliness in the world had caused the woman who once was Miss Ultima, to call her august relative to her side.

"When I can face the great curious world we will return, my dear Cornelia, to Cragnest; but, until I have learned to forget the past year, I will linger in peace here. My sad story will soon be buried under the happenings which shake the social thrones of America so often. I see now what a very house, built on sands, is the American aristocracy! Come to me, dear aunt, and leave Uncle Stephen for a time to the care of the true servitors who have loved him since his younger days. For, I need you sorely!"

A burning desire to meet her prim but womanly relative was caused by the words of a recent letter which Floyd Stanwix had carefully folded away in his pocket-book. With the shrinking delicacy of a loving one who fain would have some colder hand look over the unpitiful disclosures of death, Marie Calvert knew no one in the whole world as fit as brave Miss Cornelia to make a full examination of the carefully-sealed packages. She had not thought lately of her own shadowed marriage relation—for the memory of Harold Calvert was displaced by the ever-abiding face of her dead uncle. When Edith Van Arsdale, at Paris, had told her finally of the death of Lascar's sister, she insisted upon returning unopened to Edith the sealed letter which the dead duellist had given to Stanwix for her. "He never was my husband, even in fancy, Edith, if what you tell me be true! You brought the bitter sorrows into my life with him, and as long as the sea-birds cry over the ocean-grave of Diane Lascar, while the Atlantic waves roll, there can be nothing he should say to me. For our souls would be alien, even beyond the grave, with the death of that girl hanging on his guilty conscience. God may absolve him, but I cannot forgive a man who, for mere pleasuring in my worthless money, would lure to her death the woman who was his loyal wife. You may not have known of his marriage," cried Marie, with spirit, "but you must take even his dark memory away with you. There is the letter unread!"

The spirit of her race actuated "Miss Ultima," and the fortunate seclusion of her double mourning protected her from aught but the future plans of the average fortune-hunter. There was a startled grief among his old associates in New York which waked the better hearts within them—club and fraternity, mess and hunting *coterie*—those who, in many seas had seen the "Aphrodite's," welcome signal flying at the mizen, wailed the untimely cutting off of a "man among men."

It is not in the *métier* of the prig, the solemnly useful, or



the "great moral engine," to be missed as sincerely, to be mourned as long as those who, like Floyd Stanwix, bear a generous heart ever beating warmly under the surface ruffled by a thousand follies.

The venial sins into which we groove ourselves with such graceful ease are common property. Mrs. Rosalind Felton was not of a "funereal disposition," but even with her plumage slightly frayed, the tears which she shed were as honest as Marie's. "He was game to the very last—brave, generous and true, and a man who never turned his back on a foe nor his face away from any one in want!"

The turquoise-and-diamond necklace seemed to be to the Princess of Nowhere a perpetual reminder of the man who was "true blue." In her easily shifting moral standard, Mrs. Rosie felt herself warranted in assuming a saddened air which greatly annoyed certain other New York *mondaines* with its affectation of "nearness" to the man they had all met in happier days, "when they kissed the sparkling bubbles that danced around the brim." And so when he was brought home to "sleep with his fathers," Mrs. Rosie, with other sincere mourners from Vanity Fair, followed the ashes of the man who, with all his faults, had been beloved of his kind!

The bright, happy-hearted men of society, who knew him in his days of wassail, when wit, wine and woman's love brightened the board, long kept his memory green, and many an honest eye kindled as at the time when hollyberries are red, and wreaths make green the homes of rich and poor, for they drank to loved and gallant dead who had been of their "Table Round."

One afternoon, in the gray days of the approaching winter, Mrs. Stevenson, who awaited every day the arrival of her own friend of brighter days, the austere Miss Cornelia Stanwix, found Marie seated by her window, looking out on the Park, where *la belle Aurore de Königsmark* had often wan-

dered with the royal lover, who made her beauty a nation's toast. In the fair young widow's hands was clasped an open letter which was wet with bitter tears.

Marie had not found heart as yet to examine all the little tokens of the secret life of the man whose footsteps seemed to be sounding even yet on her ear, but, the impending arrival of Cornelia had nerved her to begin the task. The girl was forced to acknowledge, even in her inexperience, that a task involving the most delicate shades of honor was before them both. There were mysteries to unfold, reputations to guard, there were unfinished tasks to perform in charitable candor, and all the loose ends of a frayed life of easy irregularity, to knot up in the mantle of silence.

Besides the letter from Miss Cornelia, the pocket-book brought back memories of her girlhood. There was a little envelope marked in his flowing scrawl, "Marie." Well she knew that a few films of her own bright hair were fondly treasured there, a delicate painted "ivory-type," worn and faded, with her mother's darling face, an envelope with a death-notice, was hidden too, which brought a crimson flush to Miss Cornelia's face, later, with its tropic shower of tears; for it hid the sad secret of the girl to whom the yachtsman had sworn the oath kept unbroken to the day of his death—the girl whose eyes had gazed down in love from the convent picture on Floyd Stanwix's better self!

There, too, was the little amulet, "the Star of the Sea," which the good Mother Superior still fondly believed had led him over the stormiest seas in safety, when the dauntless "Aphrodite" dashed on, invulnerable through the howling storms of night.

Touched to the heart, Marie had waited long, with Miss Cornelia's last letter to Floyd in her hand. A delicate sense of what was due to the dead prevented her from sharing the secrets of her coming visitor with the man who "had gone to a land without laughter." And yet, the name of Earle Schuyler



had been traced so often, that Marie could not fail to see it. It brought up a dream of the past—of those sunny days by the Hudson, of all the romance “that martial music weaves.” It seemed to the beautiful woman, now chastened in her sorrow, that she had no heart; but this letter, the last written to him before Floyd’s death by her aunt, proved to her that she had a living memory which pleaded for the absent—the silent soldier.

“I will ask Cornelia to read me this letter,” said Marie, with a vague longing, as soon as she comes.” For she knew that, beneath Cornelia’s quaintness, there lurked all the graces and arts of the *grande dame jusqu’au bout des ongles*. “Poor Cornelia! She, too, may have learned the lesson of life, in sorrow, and found her nepenthe, in silence.”

So it was with a faintly-crimsoned cheek that Marie said to her protecting friend, “Did you ever know the Schuylers?” Her heart beat strangely, she knew not why, as her friend replied, “Very well. They are in Europe even now. Captain Schuyler is our military attaché at Vienna. His wound disabled him so long that he was given temporary duty here to save his promotion. His mother and sisters are my intimate friends. They are going home next year, for Schuyler must join his regiment, now, on his Captaincy.”

Mrs. Stevenson thought it strange that the beauty folded the letter, and then left her with apparent unconcern—but it is true that, on the very first night of her arrival, Cornelia Stanwix read to Marie the letter which had answered Floyd’s discovery of the secret of the stolen mail. It was not the stately young widow, Marie Calvert, who clasped her arms around her aunt in a woman’s abandonment of bitter sorrow. It was “Miss Ultima,” the girl whose eyes had so tenderly brightened, two years before, when the soldiers swept up to the front, at “Benny Havens, oh!”

“And he will have thought me vain, a woman not worthy of his friendship,” Marie mourned, as she listened in

silence to her aunt's eager revelation of the cruel fraud which had smothered Earle Schuyler's love, in the contemptuous scorn of the silence of the beloved. "It has been well done, her deadly work, for I can never see him any more. And—and—he never will know!" Marie was gone when her aunt looked up.

"We will see about that," most decidedly remarked Cornelia Stanwix, to herself, when she had lured the startled and awakened woman to her rest, with an energy characteristic of her race. Cornelia did not slumber until she had extracted from Mrs. Stevenson certain useful geographical details. A warm letter, in which her suddenly formed determination to meet the Schuylers was glowingly set forth, departed on the first morning mail; and Miss Cornelia Stanwix was particularly happy, as she arose, fresh and blooming, in her gently shaded cameo tints, the next morning, for the good Knickerbocker spinster had fallen asleep faintly murmuring the words of a little quaint love poem, forgotten for years, but which strangely came back to her that night!

"I must be very careful with Marie," mused Miss Cornelia, a week later, when she received a cordial answer from Mrs. Schuyler, expressing a desire to meet the visitor in the spring on their return from the Nile. "We shall be in south Germany some time, and then go home with Earle at the end of the season, for his tour of foreign duty is up on October first." So wrote the distinguished young soldier's mother.

"Thank God! there is always time to forget and forgive between the living," said Cornelia, with a sigh, for her own dead lover lay far away in the wilderness, where he had fallen with his shot-torn, regimental flag in his hands at Spottsylvania. And yet, in the long winter, she only noted Marie's returning health and bloom, and artfully hid the darling wish of her heart, that some day Marie might be brought face to face with the brave young officer whom "Uncle



Floyd "admired, and dear old Stephen Stanwix loved. And still, with artful experience, Miss Cornelia so repressed her innocent scheming that the roses were blushing on the Elbe banks before the patrician spinster mentioned Captain Schuyler's name !

There was a royal informal court of wooers, brave and noble, now crowding around the beautiful American heiress, and the wearied Marie herself sighed for the distant home, for the faces of her own blood and race, for another land than that wrapped in the blue Saxon hills. The philtre of youth was throbbing in her veins now in a freshened life, and the time of the singing of birds had come.

"We cannot stay here forever, Cornelia," remarked one day, Marie, as she looked over the latest New York papers.

To her own occasional astonishment, that vivacious lady, Mrs. Rosalind Felton, was now Mrs. Fred Norton, and a mirror of demurely-revived conjugal tenderness, "though aye she loot the tears down fa' for Jock o' Hazledean," when she wore the diamond-and-turquoise necklace. But neither light love nor the easy sneer disturbed Floyd Stanwix sleeping quietly on in the gray granite tomb at Cragnest, where the noble river Hudson goes sweeping down in a silver tide to the sea ! But, the marriage of Mrs. Edith Van Arsdale to that rising financier, Henry Low, Esq., made the confined circles of Gotham society "to boil like a pot." The reporters judiciously refrained from stating that the triumphant young man had "operated" with the assistance of Van Arsdale's royally beautiful widow, and his equally desirable "cash." It was not known that the lover's furtive operations "on the street," were only designed to cover the monied inequality of bride and groom. This was well done, for Low was far too able to play the pompous liar, and society knew that he was really honestly poor. But the vantage point of Paris and the German spas was the exposition-ground for Edith Low's

beauty, now set forth in all the splendor of American extravagance.

"Love," she sneered, when in her royal presence some fatuous fool became one day sentimental, "is an affair for soubrettes and ambitious young women of intellect, with high foreheads! In our world," she smiled, "we are above these Darby-and-Joan platitudes. For life is life—and Cupid's bow is now unstrung." And so Madame Edith Low ruled her slaves with the sceptre of gold and sat upon her throne in haughty scorn. But yet, at times, she hated herself. "I must have a heart; I must have had one in those other days," she bitterly said, when a chance-found picture of Floyd Stanwix brought tears to her eyes; and yet, in the one losing campaign of her life, she had fixed her eyes, against her better judgment, like Napoleon on Moscow, and grimly pointed onward! No one, not even Decatur Hoyt, whose illusory "reward" had now faded below the dim horizon of hope; not even her alert, narrow-hearted young husband ever knew that the good angel had gone with her once on her way in life. That Floyd Stanwix's love would have made her another woman, and that it was pride alone and the pampered lusts of the eye and the flesh which sealed in pride that heart, still racked at the very mention of the dead sailor's name. And she brightly illuminated "the Passing Show" with her hard-earned money!

It was on a day of days in September when Marie suddenly electrified Miss Cornelia by the remark that she wished to go home at once! Miss Stanwix quietly peeped at the beautiful American woman over her eyeglasses. "When did you reach this sudden conclusion?" said the startled spinster. "It is now far too late for Cragnest. The Indian summer will be lost to us. It is too early for New York City. There will be no one in town."

"That is precisely why I wish to appear and drop unnoticed into our quiet groove. I understand from Mr.



Hoyt that he has finished the purchase of all Mrs. Low's dower-rights, and that our old home is now free to me. I only wish to arrange it, for," she threw her arms around Cornelia, "I wish a quiet Christmas at Cragnest with you, and I am sure that dear General Stephen will brighten up when he sees me again."

"That is true, Marie, for you are your own self once more," delightedly said Cornelia. "But, it is an awkward time, socially, for our arrival." Marie smiled, and then, broke into open rebellion.

"I have seen enough of the great world already, in sad glimpses. I am tired of the unemployed barons, the idle counts, the supercilious officers, and all this floating mass of people who are so bent upon annoying me. Aunt Cornelia," said the young widow, decidedly, "I was trapped once for the golden pickings of my father's ill-starred fortune. I will never again be a target for the fortune-hunter. I want to see my dear old home. I long to be on the Hudson, and even the gray crags of the Highlands are calling to me. This may be a fair land, a rare land, but there is a dearer land across the sea. My heart pines for America! I never knew how I loved it before, and it is worth all these months of waiting, it is worth the two clouded years of absence, to know that every fibre in my heart longs for my own land." The bright face was very firm as, gazing from the window, she said: "This mechanical politeness, this mingling of cunning and servility stifles me. I will go home. For there I can take up again the threads which bind my heart to the whole fabric we call 'our country.' No! I will wait no longer! and we will go home at once. If there is anything desirable which I cannot find in America, I will go without it! I am tired of being coarsely traded upon."

"Then I must be about my farewell visits," good Cornelia mused, with a just regard for the laws of the Medes

and Persians in high life. She went deliberately about her packing, and yet, she nursed a small grievance against the energetic heiress. "I had hoped that she would meet Captain Schuyler," she murmured, but the fates had decided otherwise. For, with the perverseness of fortune, the other ladies had tarried at Vienna, and Miss Cornelia feared to use any direct means to bring about a meeting.

Now that it was too late, she felt that a more active policy might have brought about the desired result. "They too are going home soon, and the friendship might have followed on naturally, after a chance meeting. But pride and the mischances of the past have now ruined all."

"I suppose that Earle will go out to the wild frontier, and these two will never meet for the explanation which might clear all the tangle of the past up."

The final days of their stay approached, and the regretful and ceremonious leave-takings of the unemployed surplus aristocrats of several nations seriously annoyed the young American. "I can stand this no longer, Aunt Cornelia! Let us leave Dresden for a few days, and the servants can finish our packing and attend to our necessary affairs. Then we can come back and take a train direct for the coast." The next evening found them installed in the Hotel du Croix d'Or perched on a jutting crag of the gorge in the romantic Elbe valley, under the walls of grim old Konigstein. It was a favorite region, dear to Marie for the days of quiet rest spent in the miniature Switzerland of Saxony. The varied life of the blue Elbe with its quaint scenery, a sort of Titan play-house, had always brightened her days of listlessness. The pure crystal air moved by breezes sweeping down from the Erz Gebirge, was laden with the fragrant incense of the sighing pines, and, threading the lonely mountain defiles, followed only by her great Dane "Olaf," a canine guardian of portentous appearance, the lonely woman found peace and rest in the heart of the



hills. Rafts floating by below with swarthy mountaineers on the huge logs, chanting their rude songs in wild *patois*, long lines of barges, gripping their slow path laboriously up the endless sunken chain, merry boating-parties, and all the varied life of the quick-darting pleasure steamers amused and interested her. The fancifully carved pinnacles and minarets of the basalt crags took on strange shapes and varying shades in the crisp sparkle of dawn and the dying glories of sunset. Every spot on the river, was dear to her, and, in the homely pleasuring of this simple people the heiress of three fortunes found a renewed interest in her daily life. Her charming face was ever welcome in hut and hall, and, drifting alone on the Elbe, she often gazed up in the purpling sunset to wonder if yet the romance of love lingered around old Konigstein, where so many bright eyes have looked down from the flinty parapet of the great stronghold! So, she had strayed back now to say a last loving farewell to this delightful "Happy Valley," where all nature seemed to hold her to its motherly breast, with every fond alluring charm!

"I shall miss these banks of Elbe," thought Marie, as the days of her stay grew shorter, "and when I wander back here again, will I find them still as fair?" It was an exquisite afternoon, as she sat on the lawn of a great hotel at Schandau, listening to the music which floated out of a kiosk hidden by fragrant trees. Cornelia Stanwix was dreaming in her rooms in her coveted afternoon nap, and the lonely American was unconscious that she formed the central figure of a pretty lawn tableau. Near her a party of ladies were discussing the rare beauty of the stranger, as she sat, her hands folded over the half-read novel. For it was the "Beautiful Blue Danube," that they played, and it brought back to her memories of the summer nights on the Hudson, when she had listened to the West Point band on parade.

"Shall I ever see him again?" she murmured, thinking of the wounded officer. "Ah, it is too late! For nothing can

now repair the broken past. He will always think of me as heartless, rude, and that my pride of wealth looked far over him." An exclamation of surprise escaped her lips as, raising her eyes, she saw a tall form before her, in the undress uniform of an American cavalry officer. There were two ladies under the officer's escort, and their furtive glances toward her so disturbed the heiress of Cragnest, that she rose and fled into the hotel. Quickly wheeling, she saw the bronze on Captain Schuyler's face deepen as his cap was lifted. Yes, it was Earle Schuyler himself, and across his left cheek was ploughed the deep marks of the Apache bullet! With a constrained bow, the startled Marie fled away, and she was seated alone by the window, gazing out into the dusk, when Miss Cornelia Stanwix returned. For the ladies had been lingering long in the pleasant conferences of an accidental meeting on the portico.

Miss Stanwix was in a flutter of wild excitement when she learned that the Schuyler party, on their way homeward, had also decided to tarry at Schandau for a few days. The Viennese experiences, and family history, kept the spinster busied. "We shall of course meet them at dinner," she piped in expectation. And the pale-faced old aristocrat was already weaving her kindly day-dreams. But all to no purpose, for Captain Schuyler was out that day very late on the river, and, to her dismay, Miss Stanwix remarked, in the reserve of Mrs. Schuyler and the positive hauteur of the captain's spirited young sister, that there could be no *entente cordiale* at the present time.

It was not until the next afternoon that the two estranged friends met alone. All the ladies were absent on a carriage tour in the miniature Alps, when, looking up from the book she was conning on the shaded verandah, Marie felt her heart beat fast as Earle Schuyler approached.

"You will pardon me for disturbing you, but I must leave to-night, to finish up some little business of a military nature,



at Vienna. I have to leave my mother and sisters here for a few days longer, and I will then return to go on home and join my regiment. I perhaps may not see you on my return, and, therefore I will say adieu now."

There was a cold constraint in the young officer's distant bearing, and Marie was relieved when the head-porter announced her carriage for the usual drive to a vantage point of her own. The beautiful woman's heart was chilled by Captain Schuyler's indifferent manner. The words of regret for the untoward accident breaking off their correspondence were trembling on her lips, and yet, chill and shaken in every limb, she dared not speak them. She, the child of luxury and wealth, she knew little of the stern pride which tied the soldier down to a mere parade politeness. She only knew that the results of Edith Low's villainy still divided them, and her troubled heart sank within her!

"May I escort you to your carriage?" queried the grave young soldier. "I will not detain you." And so, embarrassed more and more by his guarded coldness, the woman he had loved moved at his side in a dream, with downcast eyes. Her heart was now beating wildly, and she could not find words to voice the sad regrets thronging her loyal heart. The great gulf of her wealth lay between them, and to the stern and hopeless Captain Schuyler it seemed to be impossible. Where could the heiress of millions find a common ground of meeting with the modest soldier? "I am sorry," he began, but suddenly he saw a very sweet, strange light in Marie's eyes. "There is a remarkable sunset here, will you not drive with me?" she murmured, and, before he could fairly find his wounded pride to aid in a refusal, they were moving along the river-bank, to the beautiful glen which breaks into the Elbe below Schandau. The dying day was gilding the dark recesses of the far Bohemian mountains, and a peaceful hush fell over the dreaming landscape with the soft twilight hour. The winding road led on upward past a quaint old

graveyard where the rude forefathers of the villages slept in serried ranks on the green hillside. Under the low arching trees, Earle Schuyler could not see her face in the gloaming, but the soft replies of gentle Marie Calvert told him of a reluctance to break the witching spell of that hour. The varied turns of the winding road led them far up, to the lofty headland behind which the rolling fields were rich with fragrant clover hay, nourished by the mountain mist, and the rich harvest lay around them there as yet ungarnered. Earle Schuyler saw only the royally beautiful woman at his side, as the carriage paused at the forest-crowned headland, and then, suddenly, a hundred miles of splendid mountain ridges burst upon their view to the south. "It makes me think of the Hudson," Marie said dreamily, as she pointed to the sapphire river sweeping, far below them, swiftly through the great bend from the far-uplifted Bohemian mountains. She turned her noble head slowly, and it was in a mute appeal to the past, for their eyes had met in unconscious tenderness. The past came back to them both dreaming there, and on the silent upland there was no sound between them of any speech, as they slowly crowned the rounded mountain summit, from whence the caverned gorge of the wooded glen lying below them, with its ringing pines, burst upon their delighted view.

Little chalets were perched upon the vantage points, and "the dark olive depths resounded a thousand feet below." It was as wild, as witching in its loneliness, as the "Hawk's Nest," around which the magician of the Sierras has thrown the glamour of his weird pencil. The silence deepened around them as the dying glories of the fading daylight lingered in purple, pearl, gold and crimson to the west. Grim old Konigstein towered high upon its huge basalt bastion, locking in its rugged rocky bosom a nation's treasures, guarded there by the mountain spirits of this wild natural citadel. Down toward the rich Saxon plains, in mighty power and the wild swing of freedom, the rushing Elbe swept, glittering



in the last loving rays of the sun. The deep forest aisles beyond them were all vocal with the wind-waked harp of the pines. It was an entrancing scene.

"Here is my favorite place," simply said Marie, as she led the way to a knoll where a huge granite boulder, fringed with velvet moss, was her very own property, in this frolic nature's wildest amphitheatre.

Captain Earle Schuyler followed, and stood with his hands clasped behind him, as the woman he had loved in silence for three long years turned, and pointing with a slender finger said softly, "I fancy this my own realm!" They were silent and in a bending tree, laden with autumn berries, a bird broke out in one wild burst of song. "See!" said Marie, as turning to the north and east, she named, in fond memory, her mountain altars.

They were all there, lit up with the tenderest touches of the Sun God: Hohe Leibe, Kleine Leibe, the Kronenberg, the Lilienstein, a waiting comrade, on watch to the west, with the huge old fortified rock, Konigstein, whose armed battlements and defiant outworks there mocked at the enemies of Germania. All the troubles of the past had faded away from them, and the peace, the dreaming rest of the present hour, gave to Marie's eyes a loveliness which was a witching spell to Schuyler. There, far away from the world, in that hushed hour, with the woman he madly loved at his side, the soldier's heart was touched with the yearning memories of the lonely days when he had dreamed of her bright face in the fiend-haunted fastnesses of Arizona.

Each felt that some strange conflict between pride and love raged in the silent bosom of the other.

The mountain of Fool's Gold raised by Frank Van Arsdale, slowly pirated from the meaner devotees of Fortune, was even now an obstacle to Captain Schuyler's future wooing. He thought, in silent agony, "I cannot now bring back what once would have been the aspiration of my life. She will walk in another world than mine." And, near him,

Marie essayed in vain to make the man who was leaving her, perhaps for years, discover by some womanly sign, that she would have him say to her there what her own heart dared not frame in speech. Around her strange pathway, with sorrow as her daily minister, nothing but disappointment and trials had lingered. It was more than she could bear, and a sudden mist veiled her beautiful eyes.

"I have seen such scenes, almost as royal, on the upper Colorado," the officer mechanically said, as his own heart, in tender invocation, begged the Sun God to linger yet in the west, and show to him that beloved face shining still in its tender beauty by his side.

"Tell me something of your army life, out there, in far Arizona," said Marie, speaking as if in a dream. "I always wished to hear from you, and you promised to write to me, but——" Her face was shaded with a pallor which came from the thought of all the hidden treachery which had divided them on life's way.

"You did not receive my letters, Marie?" He was at her side now, and his burning hands grasped her slender wrists. "In all these years you heard nothing—the letter I wrote to you at Schloss Danberg, in which I asked you to tell me to 'come,' or else to let your silence mean my sentence of banishment forever. Did you not receive even that?"

Marie hid her glowing face in her hands, which he had kissed before he released them.

"If you have sent me any message, in all these years of parting, you must tell it to me anew, here, to-night! For, the story of how all your letters were destroyed before I saw them, brings up the shame of the woman who was once my father's wife. And you must remember, I was only a lonely girl, and I had not a single friend in the world! For Uncle Floyd was far away, and I felt that you, too, had forgotten me."

"But why did you not confide in some one, in Aunt Cornelia, or ask Floyd Stanwix when he came back? You



should have known, you darling one," and he clasped her in his arms, "that I had loved you madly all the while!"

The kisses he showered upon her pale lips brought the fire of womanhood back to her averted eyes. The rosy flush upon her cheeks was brighter than the crimson glow lingering over Konigstein, as she freed herself, and stood gazing at him with shining eyes.

"Do you not know, Earle," she whispered softly, as he drew near to her, standing there transfigured, "there are some things a woman cannot say. But if I had read your words of love, written when you were far away, risking your life to guard the settler and his babes from those red devils—if I had read your question, and you had asked me if I loved you, I should have written."

She paused, and her voice trembled as she held out to him a rose which had risen and fallen on her exquisite bosom.

"With all my heart!" she murmured, and the love which blossomed by the stately Hudson was sealed in the ecstasy of that evening hour by the blue Elbe.

As star after star followed the first twinkling lamp of night, she softly murmured, with her hand in his, as they began their voyage of life, "Let us go down together now." For the bird was silent in its nest, and the singing river shone like burnished silver below them in the purple gorge, where twinkling lights told now of the growing night.

"I have not asked you yet to be a soldier's wife, Marie," said Schuyler, as the carriage swept up to the hotel where an anxious group now awaited them.

"When you will," she shyly whispered, as she hid her glowing face behind Miss Cornelia Stanwix.

Mrs. Schuyler and the slightly defiant sisters were in a chorus of alarm, as they intoned, in varied accents of surprise, "Earle, you have missed your train!" And then Schuyler's younger sister, who bore the family battle-flag, threw herself impetuously in Marie's arms, as the Captain kissed his mother's pale cheek.

"I am glad of it, dear mother, for I was justified by military necessity." And he led the very happiest woman on Elbe's winding banks up to the delighted mother who had long divined her son's heart sorrows.

"You have found a daughter, and I my wife—here, in dear old Bohemia, at Schandau."

Captain Earle Schuyler, U. S. A., was envied of the weary travellers who peeped out of the Vienna train at midnight, for they saw, in the glare of the electric lights, three beautiful young women fondly embrace the stalwart officer, while two delighted dowagers stood by as mute witnesses of this very interesting ceremony. "By Jove! I believe the beggar has three wives!" growled an English globe-trotter, on his first stages round the world. When the darkened gorge had swallowed up the retreating train, Marie Calvert was only aware that a bright and magic touch had turned the gray of the sunset to gold in her happy heart. As she dipped her hand in the starlit waters of the Elbe, something flashed in the moonlight as the little swinging ferry skiff floated back to Schandau.

"We have been in Bohemia for half an hour!" said merry Gertie Schuyler to Marie—but the beautiful American was strangely silent, and tears trembled on her lashes. She had dropped her wedding ring into the blue depths of the Elbe!

"I never was his wife!" she murmured, and, her eyes raised to the cliffs of dear Schandau, she went over to the land where, in the storied hills, the cares and sorrows of the past had faded forever, even as the glow of those sunset skies. But the bird which sang in the blossoming tree had left his song of Love thrilling in her heart! Marie's last word, as her happy head fell in a dreamless slumber that night was, "If Uncle Floyd——" And perhaps, far beyond these troubled skies of earth, her gentle mother and Uncle Floyd knew that it was all well with their darling now. For the Spirit of Love ruled that happy night!

It was a strange frolic of the sportive fates that the heiress



of the Stanwix line was quietly married in Europe without the display due to her "money value" in America, for the perplexed but happy Captain Earle Schuyler received orders by cable "to await instructions" at Vienna. It was a period of doubt and uncertainty for the officer until he learned that one of the senior Major-Generals desired his attendance on a continental inspection tour. When the mail brought these tidings that welcome *deus ex machina*, Cornelia Stanwix, suddenly desired to see gay Vienna before her return.

Marie's silent, but heartfelt gratitude, was shown in the cheerfulness with which she left her beloved Schandau.

It was a soldier's simple wedding, and when Earle Schuyler repeated his question, Marie made good her promise whispered at Schandau, "When you will." The "enterprise" of an American journal in Paris, achieved the feat of publishing the wedding notice correctly, "an unparalleled triumph of journalism," and it was properly repeated in New York City. "Another triumph!"

"There," said Mr. Rhinebeck, as he threw away his daily "Herald" in disgust, at his club, "it is always that way. If a particularly nice woman with a neat property, is slowly drifting my way, some one of those army or navy fellows comes on the scene and at once snaps her up. It is the 'brass-button' fetish. By Jove! there should be something done. I thought Marie Van Arsdale had more sense!" The Knickerbocker began to revolve in his mind a list of widows, of a certain age, whose estates were invulnerable "to moth and rust," but he fixed the number of accompanying children *at not more than two*. He always nursed the fond idea that General Stanwix would have aided him in his airy schemes to "gather in" the beautiful heiress. But it was only with a gleam of gratified military instinct, that the venerable General Stephen saw Captain Schuyler's familiar blue and gold gleaming among the trees at Cragnest, when the proud and happy wife walked by the side of her lover-husband.

One person, in the innermost ring of the "whirl," paused to moralize a moment. It was the dashing Mrs. Harry Low, whose heart was now well along in the "vulcanizing process." Edith had not yet learned coolness, for her lip still trembled when she thought of Floyd Stanwix!

"There's one good thing about my marriage," she gloomily reflected, as she cast up the accounts of the game of life. "Low is away nearly all the time, and—I can do what I please." This was quite true! But, it was only a negative triumph, for she well knew she would have had the curtain fall on a different tableau. Too intelligent to deceive herself, she realized that even the "safety game" of life has its slips, its cruel disappointments. She knew that any passionate self-abandonment could not have swept her farther from Stanwix' side than all her intricate scheming. "I wonder if he would have learned to love me, had I frankly stood by Marie and allowed her to go on into an early marriage with Schuyler? Perhaps he might have been won over, at last, for both Marie and Floyd trusted me, all in all!" And, on lonely nights, beside the dying fire, when the colors of the passing show seemed worn and faded, for she knew the game of life now, in every turn of its painted cards,—a thought often came to her which always maddened her. It was the recognition of the fact that indirectly Stanwix's death was due to being drawn into the whirl of her own dark schemes. And, it seemed to her, after all, that the way she walked in life was a hard one, even though she wore golden sandals. "And that girl has blundered through and reached the mark of happiness, while all my shafts have gone astray!" So "Miss Ultima's foe" felt the stings and arrows of defeat, and realized that, after all, "there is a divinity which shapes our ends."

The later European duties of Captain Earle Schuyler were of a decidedly agreeable description, for the Major-General happened to like the thorough-going young soldier. A wedding tour impromptu found the lovers with happy hearts



ready to "go out to the west," and follow the sun to the shores of their own dear land. Cornelia Stanwix proved herself a strategist of the first order, for she "changed her base" to Cragnest with Schuyler's mother and sister to arrange a hearty "Welcome-Home."

The *tête-à-tête* thus afforded on the voyage was gratefully appreciated by Schuyler, who remarked to Marie that he loved Miss Cornelia for her delicate self-effacement, and her tender consideration for the married lovers. "She is a rare soul, is Cornelia," mused Earle, "for she appreciates that our love-making is yet in its infancy!" The soldier whose pride would not have bent to the wooing of a "golden crowned" society queen, never knew that the happy meeting on the Elbe was a triumph of Miss Cornelia's Fabian policy,—and, a most notable one in the history of the Schuyler and Stanwix families.

"I did not know that I could be so happy, Earle," said Mrs. Schuyler, as they saw the sun sink into the gray western horizon, on the eve of their arrival. "These days have fled away in a passing dream. 'Every moment lightly shaken, ran itself in golden sands.'" On her husband's arm, the soldier's bride looked forward to see the low shores of Fire Island, or the gray neck of Sandy Hook, rise from the low watery mist-wreaths. "It seems so strange that we should have met in those dear old hills. I shall always love Schandau!" the bright-eyed beauty said. "I could have lingered months there. It seems so strange that we should have found our happy love, hidden in each other's breasts so long, there under the walls of Konigstein."

"It is true. Our love was proved by cruel fate, by weary waiting," said Schuyler; "but your heart found its voice after many days of sorrow." And then he told to her in simple verse, the story of his love.

"I shall never forget that evening hour, under the walls of Konigstein, Marie.

"We climbed the purpled mountains, your slender hand in mine,  
And saw beyond the Elbe blue, the golden sun decline,  
Behind grim-crested Konigstein, he sought the western skies,  
And Love walked with us, darling, hid in your dreaming eyes.

"It was in far Bohemia, our erring feet had strayed,  
The cares of life had fallen away—and you were not afraid  
To face the gathering clouds of night—when that sun sank to rest,  
For Love was holding royal court within your happy breast!

"Away with fears! Away with tears! Nor time nor tide can blight  
The love that kindled in our hearts, upon that happy night.  
A bird was singing to its mate, hid in the blossomed tree.  
My heart awoke, beloved, as you turned your eyes to me.

"Oh! Speechless joy, the world forgot, your secret then confessed,  
With laughing eyes and low replies, your head upon my breast,  
The winding Elbe below us shone! All nature seemed to smile!  
When Life's book was unrolled: for lo! you loved me all the while.

"By strangest paths, in parted years, stern fate had led our feet  
Around the world, a weary path, in love at last to meet;  
But on this fairy night, I knew your loving heart was mine,  
And, clasped unto my throbbing heart, the queen of Konigstein.

"For, so, in frolic sport, you chose a title for that hour,  
When, hearts aflame, we lingered till the night began to lower;  
Then, hand in hand, we wandered back, for parting there was not.  
We met in dear Bohemia, where sorrow is forgot."

And, upon the gray rolling surges of the Atlantic the bird  
which carolled on the cliffs of Schandau was singing in their  
happy hearts as the evening star lit up the heaving waves!

"There, Marie," said Captain Schuyler, as, in the bright  
flush of the morning light, he led his lovely wife to the ves-  
sel's side, "is the most thrilling sight on earth to the man  
who loves his country." And through the shifting wind-  
blown fog-wreaths, the loving woman saw, with eyes glisten-  
ing with delight, her country's flag streaming out on the sea-  
girdled fort at Sandy Hook.



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