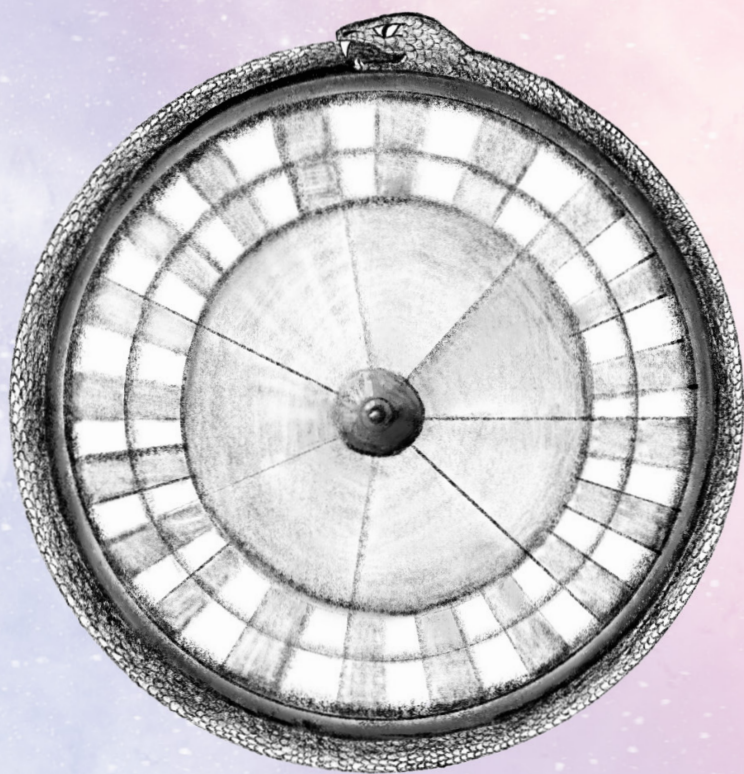


One Woman's Work

Florence Farr & Silas E. Treadgold



Edited by Isabella Javor

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Editor's Note

It was the night of a new moon in Aquarius the night I discovered this long forgotten serial novel written by Silas E. Treadgold and Florence Farr's *One Woman's Work* published in the pages of *The Morning Leader* in 1897.

Pluto had three weeks prior ingressed into the sign of Aquarius, a planetary shift that astrologers say marks the beginning of a 20 year-long chapter where we are to witness the innovation and advancement of humanity's use of technology. As the daughter of an astrologer, it felt very apt at the time to unearth this forgotten piece of literature under this particular placement, as I was using an online archive. A decade-long collaboration between The British Library and FindMyPast has so far allowed for 600,000 volumes of newspapers in The British

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Library's collection to be scanned and uploaded to The British Newspaper Archive. This extremely important project has enabled many enthusiastic researchers to uncover treasures from an archive they may not have the access nor the luxury of time to discover otherwise.

While researching Florence Farr for an upcoming writing project, I was scouring the archive for theatre reviews published in the late eighteen hundreds which feature Farr's West End performances. This was how I began to stumble across the pages of *One Woman's Work*, and to my absolute delight, eventually assemble together this fun novel, co-written with the mystery author writing under the alias Silas E. Treadgold.

I have found immense joy searching for answers to some of the questions I had around this novel published in a bygone newspaper. Why was it written? Who was the editor who published it? Who was the illustrator? Who was Silas E. Treadgold?

Please note, this is a direct and unedited transcription of the original print, including all grammatical and punctuation errors. It has been a privilege to transcribe *One Woman's Work*, being very likely the first person to read it in nearly 130 years, and to now bring it to a wider audience to enjoy.

Isabella Javor, London, 9th June 2024

I love gambling at Monte
Carlo. one feels such a
favourite of the gods when
one wins.

Yours sincerely
Hornu Fan.

Introduction

One Woman's Work was published as a serial novel, a publishing trend popular in Victorian Britain, where chapters were released in instalments across a few weeks in a publication such as a magazine or newspaper. In an era full of technological innovations, the creation of the rotary press and the linotype machine allowed a mass-media industry to be born. Not only was this a fast and cost-effective way for authors to get their work published, but it was widely read due to paper publications being more accessible for the literate public of the 1890s.

The Morning Leader (1892-1912) was the sister newspaper to *The Star* before it merged with *The Daily News* in 1912. Under editor Ernest Parke, it cost a half-penny, and was printed six days per week across its twenty years in print. Ernest Parke had become somewhat notorious as a

journalist after he was imprisoned for his exposé on the Cleveland Street Scandal in 1889. A marxist, he was an advocate for dockers, miners, railway workers, and for the Irish Home Rule, and his papers were among the first to oppose the Boer War. The Morning Leader was a self-proclaimed 'liberal' newspaper, with many regular socialist contributors, including George Bernard Shaw. It is no wonder that it chose to publish the rather risky novel by 'new woman', Ibsenite actress and West End theatre manager Florence Farr, and her co-author Silas E. Treadgold.

One Woman's Work is an example of sensation fiction being used as a vehicle for sparking conversations around progressive or taboo topics for a Victorian audience. Described as 'captivating' and 'intensely dramatic', *One Woman's Work*, the 'splendidly exciting, sensational story' was published daily, with the exception of Christmas Day and Boxing Day between 20th December 1897 and the 7th January 1898.

Marketed as a "startling," "riveting," and "scandalous" tale, *One Woman's Work* follows the journey of Phyllis Lorraine, a recently orphaned young woman from polite society. Stranded in London with no money, no friends, nor work, Phyllis embodies the archetypal Feminine Ideal. Alone in the world and hopelessly naive, her kindness and purity prevails against a plot to threaten her happiness and compromise her reputation.

Between London, Dublin and Monte Carlo, this story weaves together a diverse cast of characters, a Captain, a gambler, a Greek occultist, an American socialite, a

clairvoyant, a philistine, and a femme fatale.

Despite its farcical tone, both past and present readers are confronted with the harsh reality of how easily financially and socially dependent Victorian women could find themselves in desperate situations, forced into poverty. This commentary on the social affairs of the time is just one aspect of the comical novel's thought-provoking narrative. *One Woman's Work* offers a wealth of unique insights into the world of the late nineteenth century, exploring power dynamics within gender roles and social class, as well as the era's fascination with mysticism and the occult. amidst a breakaway from religion and tradition in favour of science and modern thinking.

For those interested in co-author Florence Farr, *One Woman's Work* provides intimate glimpses into her own life. Through the novel, we are transported back in time to the British Museum's Reading Rooms, surrounded by dusty tomes, and the hustle-bustle atmosphere of the intersection of New Oxford Street and Tottenham Court Road. Records mention Farr's love of Brahms, and this is faithful within *One Woman's Work*, as Brahms is the composer that our violinist protagonist duets with Captain Venner on the piano. We see fragments of Florence's life echoed within the novel, such as an astonishing experience she mentions in an article for the *The Occult Review* (August, 1908), which is mirrored in a scene where Santonio the hypnotist controls his victim's heartbeat with simple words.

Florence Beatrice Farr (1860-1917) made remarkable

contributions to the theatrical and occult worlds of the fin de siècle era. Born into a middle-class family, Florence was named for Florence Nightingale, a close friend and colleague of her father, Dr. William Farr (1807-1883). Following her father's death, a public testimonial fund provided Florence with a modest pension of £300 per year on which she could support herself.

Florence's theatrical career began at twenty-three, performing at J. Toole's Folly Theatre in Charing Cross. Her breakthrough role came as Rebecca West in the first English translation of Ibsen's *Rosmersholm* in the West End, which established her as a prominent example of the New Woman archetype in the theatre industry. Florence supplemented her acting income by embroidering for her friend May Morris, daughter of William Morris. She attended many of the Morris family's Socialist soirées in Hammersmith with her friends W. B. Yeats and George Bernard Shaw,

Throughout her close, lifelong friendships with George Bernard Shaw and W. B. Yeats, they worked together on a number of creative (and occult, in Yeats' case) collaborations throughout the 1890s and 1900s. These internationally celebrated, prolific writers received their West End playwriting debuts under Florence Farr's season of plays as Theatre Manager of The Avenue Theatre in 1893. It was with Florence that Yeats sought to revive the ancient bardic art form of minstrelsy. Touring together across England and Ireland, they lectured, performed, and taught the technique of chanting poetry to music on Florence's unique harp-like psaltery, designed by

instrument maker Arnold Dolmetsch.

Florence Farr played a pivotal role as a leader within occult society The Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, contributing significantly to the Occult Revival of the 1890s. She not only helped shape the curriculum for initiates within the secret esoteric order but also authored numerous articles on magic, mysticism, and alchemy, published in various magazines, periodicals, and books.

Florence's spiritual pursuits often took her to the British Museum, where she would pour over Ancient Egyptian hieroglyphs and meditate amidst the collection. It was during these visits that she established contact with an Ancient Egyptian priestess of Amon-Ra. Guided by this mystical adept, Florence received psychic instruction in her magical endeavors. This mediumistic relationship laid the groundwork for Florence's occult groups, The Sphere Group and Servants of Osiris Our Savior, and inspired her book, *Egyptian Magic*, published in 1896.

Florence Farr wrote passionately for women's liberation and her articles which were frequently published in *The New Age* under the editorship of A.R. Orage. In 1910, she published a collection of her feminist writing, *Modern Woman: Her Intentions*, which showcased her views on love, marriage, sex, and women's suffrage. These themes were also woven into her fiction, including *The Dancing Faun* (1894) and *The Solemnisation of Jacklin* (1912). Her 1901 Egyptian Plays *The Beloved of Hathor* and *The Shrine of the Golden Hawk*, co-authored with Olivia Shakespeare, featured female characters who invoked their gods & goddesses, and held positions of authority and wielded

power over the male characters.

Regrettably, her novel *Queen Beltany's Cup* remains lost to us... for now.

In recent years, Florence Farr has begun to receive the recognition she deserves and her legacy lives on in her own work and those whose lives she touched. While we're fortunate to have a wealth of her surviving works, it's clear that further research is needed to fully appreciate the scope her ripples of influence had on theatre, occultism, and social reform during her time.

Silas E. Treadgold remains an enigmatic figure, assumed to be a woman due to her portrait illustration in *The Morning Leader*, where she is described as 'a lady novelist'. The publication implies that due to being under a "pledge of mystery" they cannot reveal anything more, suggesting that Silas E. Treadgold is a pen name. Treadgold's literary output includes several short romance stories published in newspapers between 1897 and 1920, such as "*Up The Studio Stair*" (1906), "*Reginald's Wife*" (1908), and "*Lovers Two*" (1911). However, the truth of who published under this pseudonym is waiting to be uncovered.

Although publishing became more accessible to female authors in the late 1890s, many still chose to conceal their identities to protect themselves and their families' reputations. Assuming Silas was a woman, identifying her among Florence Farr's acquaintances is challenging, given how many close friendships she had.

Correspondence between Florence and her female friends remain largely unrecorded. One strong contender

from her circle is Florence Kennedy, a close friend and fellow member of the Golden Dawn and the Sphere Group. It's plausible that they drew inspiration from fellow Golden Dawn initiate Algernon Blackwood, a young mystic who later became a famous ghost story writer, for their medium Algernon Carnforth.

Kennedy's experience at a séance in January 1897 is documented in *The Light* magazine, where she held the hand of medium William Eglinton while he levitated in the air. Florence Kennedy's description of this séance bears similarities to one described in the novel by Santonio in Chapter 12. Though, it is possible that Farr could have simply taken inspiration from her friend's story. Florence Farr regularly stayed with Kennedy at her Kent cottage, and her correspondence in August of 1897 was written from there. If Florence Kennedy is our Silas, then perhaps this was the month they wrote *One Woman's Work* together.

Perhaps the pseudonym Silas E. Treadgold was simply adopted by Florence Farr herself to publish romance, to contrast her journalistic writings. Having a supposed co-author may have helped share the social responsibility of the serial novel and mitigate potential negative public reception. Interestingly, an anagram for Silas E. Treadgold can be: 'A Literal Goddess'. It is amusing to ponder the possibility, even if it seems far-fetched, that this is another one of Florence's spirit-collaborations. Our imaginations will continue to explore potential candidates for the true identity of Silas E. Treadgold.

Florence Farr herself is recorded as visiting Monte

Carlo while on a tour performing some of her chanting of poetry on the psaltery in 1908. In her cousin Alice Whittal's journal, it is documented that she returned to gamble at Monte Carlo in December 1911. When the two cousins arrived at Monte Carlo, they gambled away £5 12s 6d, which today would be about £850. Florence refused to give in without making back her losses, and continued to gamble away her money until 8th January 1912, "astrological aspects being favourable", she and her cousin finally secured substantial winnings of £8.

Jupiter-Venus conjunctions aside, this barely scratched the surface of regaining the money they had lost. Cousin Alice left Monte Carlo for Rome, while Florence remained at the tables, clearly intoxicated by the glamour and extravagance of Monte Carlo. She persisted for several months before returning to London, only to shed her old life: selling her possessions and embarking on a new journey to Ceylon.

While writing to Sir Hugh Lane to sell a painting of Aubrey Beardsley's, she mentions her time in Monte Carlo before signing off:

"I love gambling at Monte Carlo, one feels such a favourite of the gods when one wins!"

With its dazzling Monte Carlo setting and sensationalist plot twists, the intention of *One Woman's Work* was to entice Victorian audiences through its mystery and intrigue. Then, using timeless archetypes, with its themes of magnetism, manipulation, and power dynamics, it explores the options available to women in society. Deprived of autonomy and burdened by fragile

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reputations, they are forced to navigate a narrow tightrope between extremes, perpetually teetering between feast and famine, from rags to riches. Ultimately, the novel shows how one woman will stop at nothing to survive in a society stacked against her.

Chapter One

Mr. Brian Marret, sitting with both elbows on the table in front of him, a volume of Chaffer's "Marks and Monograms on Pottery and Porcelain" under his nose, and a heap of similar works surrounding him, suddenly discovered he was going to sleep.

Somehow or other he always did get sleepy in the reading-room of the British Museum; it was the heat, he supposed, and the smell of old leather and dust in the air. He couldn't see the clock from where he was sitting, so he pulled out his watch and finding it was after two p.m. decided to go to lunch and not come back that day. He put on his hat, and gathering up the exciting literature with which he had been regaling himself, stalked solemnly with his burden to the centre desk, where he waited for the tickets to be cancelled.

A girl at the next desk had also just given in her books, and was waiting for the same reason. Marrett knew her well by sight - as a matter of fact, she usually occupied the next seat to his, and he was more interested in her than he was at all aware of. It was hardly surprising, for she was of a most unusual beauty, and seen amidst the sombre and very often grotesque figures which are so often met with in the Museum Reading Room she was bound to attract remark. Her dress was of the simplest, but the girl had such a perfect style and carriage that the plainest frock was invested with a certain air of costliness when she donned it. She was tall, and willowy, and her pale gold hair surrounded a face which haunted most people who saw it for days afterwards, so intense and unexpected was its beauty.

As the two young people waited quietly at the desk their eyes met, and they half smiled, then both looked consciously away. Marrett felt pleased and yet a little disturbed. He had never encountered a direct look from her before, and had no idea that anyone could hold such a world of sadness in their eyes. He wished he dared speak to her. Would she be very offended, he wondered. Lost in thought he stood, not noticing that his cancelled tickets had been returned to him, and when he looked up again the girl had gone.

He hastily left the building, and went up Museum-st., seeing nothing around him, his mind only filled with the image of that fair and lovely face. He strolled slowly down New Oxford-st., and at the corner of Tottenham Court Rd. stood still and debated whether he should take

hansom or a bus to Portman-square.

The matter was decided for him. As the usual congested traffic was heaving and surging along the five-crossed ways he heard a slight scream, and a moment later saw a cab-horse pawing the air over the prostrate form of a woman lying in the road. To dash into the hurly-burly and drag her out before the strong iron hoofs should come pounding down on her face was the work of an instant with Brian Marrett, who had been brought up to believe in promptitude of action. When he stood on the kerb once more, holding the pale and almost fainting form of the woman in his arms, he discovered to his amazement that it was his "Museum girl."

"What's all this?" asked an elephantine policeman, striding up when the danger was well over; "cab horse knock you down, miss?" and whipped out a pocket-book and pencil.

"Keb 'orse didn't do nothink o' the kind," bawled the indignant Jehu. "The lidy fell down of 'er own self, she did; you arst 'er."

"Yes," said the girl, still clinging to Marret's arm. "It wasn't his fault; I felt giddy - faint, I suppose - and fell. He was very clever not to run over me."

"It's all right," said Brian boldly. "I know this lady, and I can see her home. It's a mercy she wasn't run over. Please step in," he whispered to the girl, "I'll take care of you, and it's the best way to avoid the crowd."

The girl said nothing, but still trembling very much got into the cab which had so nearly been the death of her.

"Wheer to, sir?" asked the driver, peering through the flap.

And Marrett, still bold, answered, "Oh, The Cavour."

Then he turned to the girl. "Please don't be angry with me, but you really must have some brandy or something after that fall, and I couldn't very well take you there, could I?" he added, pointing to the public-house.

"No," she said faintly.

"You know, we are quite old friends," said Marret, moving sideways a little so as to look at his companion more easily.

"Are we?" said the girl.

"Of course. Haven't we sat within half a yard of each other every day for a month or more? By the bye, how was it you changed your seat to-day?"

"I don't know," said the girl. Then suddenly, "Oh, I do feel so ill; have we much further to go?"

"No, we are there," said Marrett, rather anxiously. She was fearfully pale, and he didn't want her to faint outright. He helped her carefully out of the hansom, left the porter to attend to the cabby, and said to the first waiter in his road:

"This lady is ill, bring some champagne immediately; Pommery sec. Come now, hurry."

He led the girl to a chair, and the waiter, his mind bent on possible extra tips, fetched the wine in record time. Marrett poured out a bumper and watched with satisfaction while his companion drank it off. "I'll call you in a minute or two," he said to the hovering waiter, who, flicking his napkin over his shoulder, departed to

discuss matters with a confrère.

“Now,” said Marrett after a few minutes, seeing the colour was coming back to the girl’s roseleaf skin, “do you feel any better, and will you let me order something to eat?”

“You are too kind,” said the girl; “but I cannot trouble you any further. I feel so much better that in a minute or two I shall be able to walk home. I don’t know how to thank you sufficiently for all you have done. I suppose if it had not been for your presence of mind nothing could have saved my face from being smashed.” She held out a little hand across the table half-shyly. “I thank you very much. Believe me, I am grateful.”

“Then stay and have lunch with me,” said Marrett.

“But it’s so awfully improper,” said the girl.

“Improper to have lunch? Well, it’s the first time I ever heard so.”

“Well, but - I mean, of course, having lunch with a - well, a strange man.”

“I am not at all a strange man. It’s very unkind of you to call me names. And it would look so very odd if you were to get up and walk off now after driving up here together.”

“Would it?”

“Oh, fearfully. I don’t know what all these highly respectable waiters mightn’t think. See, I’m going to order lunch, and if I say anything you don’t like just tell me so, will you?”

“Very well,” said the girl. She was beginning to enter into the spirit of the thing, and having decided to remain

where she was determined to make the best of it.

So Marrett feeling strangely delighted at his unexpected stroke of good fortune, held up a beckoning finger to the waiter at last.

Chapter Two

“Of course, I will tell you my name if you care to know it,” said the girl a quarter of an hour later as she nibbled an olive and smiled at Marrett between whiles. The champagne had done her good, the pretty pink glow Brian knew so well was in her cheeks again, and lurking dimples he had never seen before showed deliciously.

“Well,” said Marrett, squeezing lemon over his sole, “I am all impatience - tell me.”

“Phyllis Lorraine,” said the girl rather lingeringly.

“Phyllis Lorraine,” repeated Marrett. “What a delightful name! Of course, I knew you had a pretty name; still it is a relief to be certain of it.

“What’s yours?” asked Miss Lorraine, like a schoolgirl.

“Oh, quite commonplace.” He took out his card-case and handed a card across the table.

"Brian Marrett," she read aloud. "I don't think it is a commonplace name at all."

"Well, if you like it then I am content."

Miss Lorraine laughed.

"I used to think Englishmen never said things like that - that only Frenchman and Italians could pay compliments easily. I am learning."

"What made you have such an idea?"

"Simply because I was brought up to it. I have lived abroad all my life; is it only within the last few months that I have become acquainted with Englishmen at all."

"But you are English yourself, surely?"

"Oh, yes. But my parents could neither of them endure this climate - I can't say I wonder at that - and the last 10 years we have lived in Florence."

"Very good fun I suppose?"

"Yes, very good fun in a way, though I spent most of my time studying the violin under Carlo Dotti. You've heard of him, of course? When my father lost all his money I came to England with my mother, hoping to get pupils."

"Oh!" said Marrett. Then after a moment added thoughtfully, "I hope you were successful."

"I was not at all successful. Up to the present I have not got a single pupil."

"I am so sorry," said the young man; "it must be so disheartening for you. I wish I knew someone who wanted to learn. I suppose if I came and offered myself as a pupil your mother would think it rather funny, wouldn't she?"

"My mother is dead," said the girl gently.

Then as Marrett began stumbling out an apology she said:

“She died six weeks after we came to England, and I have spent my time in moving from one lodging-house to another; each one more detestable than the last.”

“But your father?” cried Marrett amazed.

“My father did not come with us to England. He went to join a friend of his living in Ithaca, a Greek currant merchant, Santonio by name, and I fear something has happened to him, for although I have both written and wired I can get no response.”

“Good heavens!” cried Marret, “But you have friends to go to?”

“Not a creature. We lived abroad for so many years that we had quite lost touch with any friends we had previously known. As for me, of course I never saw them.”

“You mean to tell me that you - a young and beautiful girl, are practically alone in London?”

“I certainly am alone in London.”

“Miss Lorraine,” said Marrett, leaning forward earnestly and pushing his plate away from him, “You must not think I am asking you questions from an idle curiosity. I should like - if you will allow me this - to help you if I can. Do not think me impertinent if I ask whether your mother left you with sufficient means to keep you properly.”

Phyllis Lorraine hesitated a moment before replying, then she said:

“It cannot make much difference if I tell you the real facts of this case. You have been very kind to me, and,

after all, I haven't a friend in the world. My mother's small means were exhausted at the very time she died, and at her death I had to pawn her jewelry and valuables to pay for the funeral. At last even my violin had to go, and I - yes, I may as well say it - I am face to face with starvation."

Marrett was shocked. He had often heard of cases like this, but until now he had never come into actual contact with one of them, and the first thing that struck him was his helplessness in this matter. To keep on repeating he was sorry was absurd, nor did it help matters; and being a very practical man he cast about his mind as to how he could really be of some assistance to the beautiful girl Fate had thrown across his path, He succeeded in drawing from her the whole of her pathetic history, and by the time their lunch was over had made her promise that she would be in her usual place in the Museum next day, when they would discuss matters again and try to arrive at some plan by which Phyllis should be able to gain a livelihood.

The two new friends parted with a cordial handshake, and when on the following morning Marrett saw her come into the reading room and look anxiously towards his seat, he felt that, metaphorically speaking, he would willingly move heaven and earth to help her.

She pushed her chair close to his and began in an eager whisper to tell him something.

"You are my Mascot," she said. "Read this," and took from her purse an advertisement she had cut from the day's paper.

Marret, frowning a little, read:

“Wanted, a governess for two girls, ages seven and eight. Must be able to play violin. Salary £100 a year and travelling expenses. Send photo. Address Mrs. Venner, Hardengate, Dublin.”

“Well?” he said.

“Well I want you to help me to concoct an answer to it. See I have brought some writing paper with me - and my testimonials from Carlo Dotti. I haven’t got a photo so I thought I’d send this.” She handed him an exquisite miniature of herself done on ivory, a masterpiece of Giuseppe’s which Marrett longed to put in his own pocket.

“You’ll never get an engagement you know, Miss Lorraine,” he said at last.

“Why not?” asked the girl aghast.

“Because you are much too beautiful,” he said gloomily.

Nevertheless he helped her to concoct her letter, and when three mornings later she came jubilantly to her seat and handed him an envelope with the Dublin postmark on it he opened it with a sigh.

“Mrs. Venner had received Miss Lorraine’s letter,” ran the note, “is quite satisfied as to details, and will be glad if Miss Lorraine can make it convenient to enter upon her services at once. Mrs. Venner encloses a cheque for £10 for expenses as she gathers from Miss Lorraine’s letter that she has been left in somewhat straitened circumstances.”

“Isn’t it glorious?” she whispered and gave Brian’s arm and involuntary squeeze.

Then, as he did not reply, she went on, "If I am to play to them I must go and spend £5 of this money in redeeming my poor dear violin. How delightful it will be to handle it again! I hope Mr. Fattimer - that's the pawnbroker - kept his promise to house it in a warm corner. The two guineas must be put on one side for the second-class fare; I owe my landlady £2; and oh, I'm so happy!"

Brian Marrett tried to be happy, too, but it wasn't a very good attempt. "I suppose you will forget my very existence," he said.

"Oh how can you say such things! - am I so ungrateful? I shall never forget how kind you were to me the other day, how kind you have been since."

"That's absurd," said Marret, "I haven't helped you at all - you wouldn't let me."

"Come with me to Mr. Fattimer's," said Phyllis confidentially, "and then let's go and find out about trains. I shall go to-morrow, you know; my packing won't take more than an hour - and, oh! please, look glad."

But Marrett found that unreasonable. He made no attempt to conceal his depression either that day or on the following morning, when he saw her off from Euston, and made her promise to write and tell him how she got on, and to be sure and let him know if she was happy.

Thus does Fate sometimes ordain that two lives shall touch for a short time and then rebound!



PHYLLIS IN THE CAPTAIN'S TRAP.

Chapter Three

Phyllis safely accomplished the very choppy and disagreeable passage between Holyhead and Dublin, and was glad to settle herself in the comfortable brougham awaiting her, which soon whirled her through the streets and out into the country.

When about a couple of miles from the town the carriage turned down an avenue and stopped before a rambling old-fashion house, surrounded by beautifully-kept grounds. A powdered footman opened the door and ushered the girl into the low oak-panelled room furnished in exquisite taste. Before she had time to feel nervous, the door was again opened and she was bowing to a military-looking man with a heavy moustache and the manners of a Bayard.

Taking her hand kindly, he inquired after her passage,

whether she was tired, whether she was cold. Then suddenly interrupting himself, told her,

“I am Captain Venner, and have been commissioned by my wife to try and make you feel at home until she is able to see you herself.”

“Is she ill?” asked Phyllis.

“No, I am thankful to say,” answered the captain, “but an unfortunate thing has happened. Her father, Lord Ronald Poynter, who lives at Armagh, has met with a serious accident in the hunting field, and it is feared he will not recover. Of course, my wife was telegraphed for instantly, and left this morning, taking my two little daughters with her. Lord Poynter is devoted to the children, and my wife felt she must take them with her in case he wanted to see them. They are affectionate little things, I hope you will soon be fond of one another.”

He smiled, and Phyllis found herself wondering if they were at all like their father.

After some further conversation Captain Venner rang the bell and desired a servant to show Miss Lorraine to her room. This she found to be comfortably and even handsomely furnished, and sank down with a sigh of content into the depths of the luxurious armchair. She was enjoying the rest and quiet after all the excitement of the past few days, when a gentle tap at the door was followed by the entrance of a smart-looking maid.

“Please, ma’am, the master has sent to say he hopes you will be sufficiently rested to dine with him at eight o’clock. But if you prefer to remain quiet I am to bring you your dinner up here.”

Phyllis was surprised. She had no idea that governesses were treated in this fashion, and being so unexpected, the consideration was doubly delightful.

"Oh, please tell Captain Venner I shall be quite rested by eight o'clock and will come down," she said.

"Yes, ma'am. Can I assist you in any way, or will you ring if you require me?" Phyllis said she would ring, and the Abigail departed.

Captain Venner made an ideal host. He was kindness and delicacy itself, and Phyllis thoroughly enjoyed the small but perfectly appointed dinner.

The meal over, they adjourned to the drawing-room, where Phyllis to her pleasure discovered the captain to be a musician to the tops of his fingers, and a delightful evening was spent, Phyllis with her violin, the captain at the piano.

At eleven o'clock he closed the instrument and announced it was high time Miss Lorraine went to bed. "Poor girl, you look quite pale," he declared. He took her hand and held it for a moment in his own.

Something in the tone made her look up, and she was so startled to find his dark eyes gazing at her with a strange intent look she had never in her life encountered before. The look was so strong, so intense, that she felt herself paling beneath it, and was conscious of catching her breath in a sudden spasm. What was the strange power this man exercised over her, and why did he look at her so? A sudden dread filled her soul and passed into her eyes as she struggled to release herself.

A minute later, agitated, pale, and full of new fears

she hardly dared to face, she was locked in her own room.

When Phyllis came down to breakfast next morning she found that she was to take that meal alone, and as the day sped on without any signs of Captain Venner, she began to feel the time hang heavy on her hands, and heartily wished her pupils would return from their grandfather's.

At about noon she thought she would take a little stroll in the grounds to get an appetite for lunch, and having fetched her hat and a warm wrap, set off. She was almost immediately joined by the captain, who came up smiling.

Phyllis inquired if there had been news from Mrs. Venner.

The captain's face changed. He answered with deep gravity that he had had news, that Lord Poynter was worse, that all hope of his recovery had been given up, and that Mrs Venner would stay until the end.

"It is certainly rather awkward for you, Miss Lorraine," he added; but of course, it is too far for you to go home again, and, indeed, Mrs. Venner may be back at any hour now; her letter said this morning that they were expecting the end at every moment. She may be home this evening by the - - Ah! let me see," he rapidly consulted a timetable which he was carrying; "yes, by the 9.10. We will give her till 9.30, and then if she is not home I think you'd better drive into Dublin and sleep at the hotel."

"Very well," said Phyllis dolefully.

"Now, Miss Lorraine," it's of no use to make yourself

wretched over it; this is just be if those eternal, infernal circumstances over which there is no control, I'm going to take you for a drive to cheer you up, So run upstairs and out on your prettiest hat and make yourself look as nice as possible." He spoke with a paternal smile, and Phyllis, philosophically determined to make the best of the situation, did as she was told.

"This reminds me of the time when I used to go driving with my father in Florence," said the girl as she stood in the hall drawing on her gloves; "he used to take me out every day."

"Indeed;" interrogated the captain as he helped her into the trap and tucked the fur rug around her feet. Was your father fond of horses?"

"No, I shouldn't call him a horsey man; it is difficult to be that in Italy, you know. There life is very different. Society means so much - sport so little. My father kept everyone going. He was a great man at a dinner-table.

"I see you don't know what hunger is," he laughed.

"Yes, I do." said Phyllis, sobered instantly, and, Captain Venner noticed her lips quivered as she spoke; for now that her troubles were over she could not calmly recall the terrible time she had passed through.

"Forgive me, Miss Lorraine," he said kindly. "I should not have spoken so lightly if I had thought it would pain you."

"Oh, it's nothing," she said. "Three months ago I too could have joked about hunger and death and sorrow - but only the other day my life seemed so terrible, so hopeless. When I received Mrs. Venner's kind, sympathetic letter I

thought at first that it must be a dream, and even now I don't understand how she could be so kind to a friendless girl like me."

"No one could help being kind to you, Miss Lorraine," said the captain gallantly.

"I'm sure it's very nice of you to say so," she said, forgetting that she was in a dependant position, and laughing as lightly as she would have done formerly at the extravagant compliments lavished on her by the gentleman of Florence.

"Do you ride, Miss Lorraine," the captain asked.

"Indeed I do, and drive too."

"Will you take the reins now?"

"Oh, I don't like to -."

"Nonsense. You look as if you had a cool head; and I shall be here if anything goes wrong. The bays are moderately festive, but we are not likely to meet a steam roller."

They changed places, and Phyllis thoroughly enjoyed the excitement of driving the beautiful animals. By his discretion she drove up to the club, and dashed up to the door in fine style, the captain laying his hand for a moment on Phyllis's to help her pull up in time. Two men standing at the window attracted her attention after her employer had disappeared through the swing doors, and a minute later they strolled out, staring at her offensively as they did so.

"Damn pretty girl." she heard one of them say. "I wonder where he picked her up."

Phyllis, flushed with anger, changed her seat, and

when Captain Venner returned handed him the reins in her most dignified manner. He looked surprised, and, hesitating a moment, said,

“Are you tired of driving?”

“Yes, I think I am, thank you.” she said calmly.

All the way home she replied to his remarks in her most formal way, and he wondered what had happened so to alter her bright and winning manner. This change in her only made him more charmingly genial than before, so that by the time they reached Hardengate she had almost forgotten the unpleasant incident. As they alighted the solemn footman handed the captain a telegram, which he hastily tore open, and announced:

“Arrive at 9.10.” Ah, that’s all right, Miss Lorraine.”

“I’m glad,” she answered, brightening up at once. Then turning to him, “What had I better do? Am I to dine with you, as last night, or alone?”

“Oh, with me by all means,” answered the captain. He, too, seemed greatly relieved by the telegram, and was even more charming and courteous in his manner than he had been on the previous morning.

“Isn’t it time they were here”? asked Phyllis some hours later, as ten chimed melodiously from the French clock in the drawing-room

“To be sure it is; what am I thinking about,” rejoined the captain, starting up from the piano and the artistic interpretation of Brahms. Then ringing the bell, “James,” he inquired of the footman, “did the carriage go to meet the 9.10?”

“Yes, sir,” answered the imperturbable James.

“And isn’t it back yet?”

“No, sir.”

And so they sat waiting.

Half-past ten arrived, but no carriage, and at that Phyllis looked uneasily about, hoping the captain would tell her what to do.

But he never spoke a word.

“Are the trains on that line often as behind time as this?” she ventured at last.

“As a rule,” said the captain, “they are very punctual.”

“Can there have been an accident?” she queried again.

“Oh, I think not - I trust not,” said the captain in the most cheerful of tones. Then suddenly changing his manner to one of great seriousness he came over to where Phyllis was sitting on the sofa, and started her by taking both her hands in his.

“Miss Lorrain,” he said rapidly, “I think it is time we brought this farce to an end.”

“What do you mean?” she cried.

“That you have played your role very well, dear child, but that you might as well drop it now.”

She tried to drag her hands from his, but his greater strength prevailed. She saw the look in his eyes she had noticed the first night, that strong, intense, drawing look, and once more she felt herself paling under it.

“Let me go this instant, Captain Venner,” she said hoarsely. “Remember that I am alone in the house with you. Remember that a servant might enter at any moment, and -”

“Remember!” he smiled. “Do you suppose I am likely

to forget - I mean that you are alone in the house with me. As to the servants," the smile deepened, "they don't sleep in the house, and they always leave at ten o'clock. It's all right, Phyllis."

The girl gave a wail of horror.

"Oh, don't, don't! What shall I do? Oh, why isn't Mrs. Venner here?"

"Because," said the captain gently, "she doesn't exist. Oh, my my dear Phyllis, why will you be so absurd, and make a fuss? Sit still and let me explain. I have neither wife nor child. I put that advertisement in the London papers for fun, just to see how many answers I should get. I had scores, and all the applicants sent their photos. I fell in love with your exquisite face directly I saw it, and was mad enough - or wicked enough, if you like - to feel that I must see you at any cost. I knew that as I lived in Dublin you wouldn't be able to go back at once, even if you suspected anything wrong, when you found Mrs. Venner was not at home. You suspected nothing. That was good. I hate scenes. Now be sensible, there's a dear girl. You have told me you are alone in the world. Why, then, should you not stay with me, to be mistress of my house and live a luxurious life in return for my love and devotion?"

His face was close to hers again, when Phyllis, half mad with shame and terrier, dragged her wrists from his detaining hands and fled first to the bell and then to the door.

The bell was broken and the door was locked!

In despair she flung herself down on her knees, her

eyes blind with terror, her tongue so dry in her mouth she could hardly articulate her agonised words.

“Captain Venner,” she gasped, vainly trying to moisten her fear-parched lips, “pray, pray, let me go! Oh! I beg you to open the door and let me go.”

Then she found herself turning sick and giddy, and to her horror felt she was going to faint.

With a violent mental effort she collected her scattered senses together and dragged herself to a chair, where she cowered, panting.

Venner came and stood before her.

“Raise your eyes,” he said quietly.

“I will not,” she answered low but fiercely, for she knew that dreaded look was being bent on her again.

But in spite of herself her eyes were drawn to him. It was the fascination which forced the rabbit to stare at the serpent.

“Supposing I were to open the door and let you go,” he said, “what then?”

“I should go home,” she moaned; and her thoughts falling on to her late landlady she shivered.

“You would go home?” he echoed. “You have yourself told me you have no friends to go to, do you think after this they would care to take you back? Remember, you stayed here entirely alone last night, and will again to-night. You have been seen driving with me through Dublin. You laughed and talk; nobody could have imagined you were being detained against your will - you seemed a willing captive enough. The servants, if called on to give evidence, would all swear that you were perfectly happy

and at ease with me. And, drestest Phyllis, why shouldn't you stay? I will make you happy, darling."

Phyllis was trembling from head to foot.

"My dear girl," he went on, "can't you see that, even if you left me now, this very moment, you could never get a situation as a governess or companion. This thing would be bound to crop up against you at some time or other."

"Are you a man or a devil?" gasped the girl. "Why have you done this thing to me, why have you ruined my life?"

"Pooh!" He said lightly, beginning to roll a cigarette, "what is the opinion of the world to you, and how much does your small life interest the world? At the most, it shrugs its shoulders and says a pretty woman has gone wrong. Come, Phyllis, don't be unreasonable! The worst step has been taken. You will gain nothing by leaving me now. And, Phyllis, I will make you happy. Give your dear life into my keeping, and you shall never regret it."

He flung away the freshly-rolled cigarette and drew the girl into his arms. Her cheek rest passively on his shoulder. She was in a dead faint.



PHYLLIS AT THE CLUB.

Chapter Four

Early the next morning one of Captain Venner's special cronies, Gavan Pierrepont by name, was sitting late over his breakfast at the fastest and most fashionable club in Dublin.

He was an impecunious youth, who divided his time chiefly between gallantry and sport, and found it best suited his purposes to rent a tiny bedroom in a back street, spend his days at the club, and his evenings in such reputable or disreputable society as chance flung in his path.

From the window he saw Venner came into the room where Pierrepont was trying to tempt his jaded appetite with a deviled bone.

"Hullo, old fellow!" said Pierrepont languidly, "You're out early. I thought you were much too pleasantly engaged

to give us a look up yet awhile.”

“Oh, you be hanged!” said Venner sulkily.

“Has she run away? What’s the matter? You look hipped.”

“Look here, Gavan; be serious for a moment. I am feeling pretty queer over this job.”

“Why, what’s wrong? I thought you were making splendid innings yesterday.”

“Don’t talk so loud; I want you to hold your tongue about that infernal joke of mine; and, what’s more, I want you to help me through with it.”

“I’m your man. What’s the game?”

“Well, that girl. She went off into a dead faint last night, and lay that way for half an hour. There was something about her very helplessness that disarmed me. She’s the most beautiful creature I ever saw, but she’s a witch for all that; she’s baffled me.”

“Who is she - she looks like a lady?”

“She is, but she hasn’t a creature in the world belonging to her.”

“Then why not -”

“What were you going to say?”

“Oh, never mind, I don’t want to give you bad advice.”

“Say what you were going to say.”

“Well, since you insist - I was going to say why not marry her?”

“I couldn’t.”

“Why not? If she’s a lady, and as beautiful as you say, what more do you want? None of your set need ever know of the equivocal position in which you placed her;

I'll hold my tongue - you have all the money you need."

"I couldn't, really."

"Well, what do you propose to do?"

"I don't know. I can't give her up. When she looks at me with those great reproachful eyes of hers I feel I'd do anything to win her love. And to do that I mustn't repeat my tactics of last night, that's certain."

"Well, offer to marry her; that would encourage her to trust you for a time."

"You're a devil, Gavan."

"Indeed, it strikes me rather in another light. I give you most moral advice, and you refuse to get on with it. Then I attempt to adapt myself to your standard, and you turn on me. Have a mock marriage. I'll turn parson for the occasion."

"Don't be a fool."

"You might do worse than adopt my plan. Think it over."

Julian Venner strode moodily away. He had parted from Phyllis the night before after a heartrending scene, and ever since he had been alternately cursing his folly and his forbearance. The words of his chum Pierrepont sang in his ears as he drove back at a furious rate, and after much cogitation he determined to have one more interview with Phyllis before making a final decision.

On his return he found she had not come downstairs yet, and sent a note up to her apologising for the pain he had put her to, and begging to grant him an interview.

When Phyllis came into the room, pale, with dark circles round her eyes, she was wrapped in a long velvet

cloak, and looked very different to the merry girl who had wished him "good morning" only 24 hours before. She was the first to speak.

"Captain Venner, I have come here at your request, but I must tell you that sooner than listen to such words as you addressed me last night I will kill myself. Heaven knows I have not much to live for, and thank God that a stiletto given to me when I knew nothing of the misery and dishonour which awaited me can at least release me from your power if necessary."

Captain Venner now understood the meaning of her costume. If he attempted to disarm her the weapon concealed in the voluminous folds of her cloak could be used before he could disentangle it.

For the moment he was nonplussed. Then he said with utmost gentleness,

"My only desire is to ask you, if you can ever forgive me, to let me be your friend, to assist you in every way in my power, so as to in some measure atone for the wrong I have done you. The first thing this morning I hastened into Dublin and explained that you were a relative of mine staying in the house with your mother, so that any misapprehension that might have arisen yesterday at the club should be dispelled. I only asked you to see me now in order that I might tell you that you were at perfect liberty to leave at any time you chose. I will see that the servants' mouths are stopped, and I hope you will allow me to give you the salary which you accepted when you answered the advertisement for the supposed situation."

As he spoke Captain Venner produced a roll of notes

and placed them on the table between them.

"You open the trap and let the wounded animal escape, thank you," said Phyllis, taking no notice of the money and turning to go.

"You will not even say good-bye? Won't you try to forget last night and remember me as I was in my saner, better moments. Miss Lorraine, there is one thing more, this incident must be a sealed book for us; but may we not begin afresh? Last night I was a mad fool, this morning I am pleading for forgiveness, and yet I am still a sinner, if to love means to sin. Will you become my wife?"

"Is this some still more diabolical plot?" she asked.

"Indeed! indeed! I swear that if you will only listen to me for a moment I will give you every assurance of good faith. You shall remain harem and I will stay down in some quiet place until all the preliminaries can be arranged. Everything shall be as open and above board as the day. Listen to me. Miss Lorraine, Phyllis, I will endure any penance you see fit to inflict, only let me try to win your love. With you as my wife I should be a different man. You are the first good woman I have ever met."

I can well believe that you have met few good women, or you could never have laid that diabolical trap for me. How can I trust a man who could play such a cruel trick on a defenceless girl?"

"There is a great difference between planning a trick and carrying it out. What I thought would be a great joke has turned out a very serious thing to me. I've burnt my own fingers this time."

"It is too horrible to think of. No, a thousand times no, I could not marry a creature like you. How can I trust you after last night?"

"All I ask is that you stay here until I have made preparations for the wedding - next time we meet shall be in a church. You say you have nothing to live for. Live for me - you shall see how I will care for you! Make what conditions you please, and remember if I cannot win your love I will give you a perfect liberty. Only let me give the chance of repairing the wrong I have done you by making you my wife."

"And you think that to be the wife of such a man like Captain Venner will whitewash Phyllis Lorraine? I would rather remain as I am, thank you."

"Well, I give up the struggle. I suppose you go back to London by the night mail. I will see that everything is prepared. I must insist on you taking those notes you have left so scornfully."

"I think if the advertisement had been genuine, I would have accepted five pounds and my travelling expenses if I had found I could not continue the engagement. As it was not genuine I will do the same. I thank you, Captain Venner. Good-bye."

He held out his hand, but she shook her head.

"You are afraid even to shake hands!"

"Certainly not, here is my hand."

"And so you have no heart! Only a lump of coal after all."

"If my heart is frozen it is through you."

He took her hands.

“Good-bye. You may marry a better man than I am, but never one who will love you so much or give up so much for you as I would.”

“Ah, don’t,” cried Phyllis in despair. “I can’t bear much more. I’m so tired, so tired.”

“My poor child! Sit down; I won’t bother you any more; just do whatever you like. I won’t ask you to say one kind word to me, I only ask you to let me try to comfort you.”

For the first time the tones of his voice touched her, and little by little she allowed herself to listen to his pleadings. The truth was the girl knew perfectly well that under different circumstances she could have found it in her heart to love this man with his strangely contradictory character, his ferocious will, and his tender ways. She thought with a shudder of her late experiences, of her loneliness, of her sad, loveless life. And the fact that on the previous night Captain Venner had been so gentle with her even when her reproaches were bitterest weighed with her. Where else could she go to - no friends, no home, no money? When she looked at his strong, masterful face and noted how the lines of it were undoubtedly softened by remorse and pain, when she saw the fierce magnetism of this eyes changed to a humble pleasing, and the curves of his lips set only into lines of love, she felt that it might be possible to consent to when he asked.

Therefore it came about that when it was time to start for the night mail she had been persuaded to remain, and had even, with many hesitations, but definitely at last,

consented to become his wife as soon as it was possible to arrange a quiet wedding in some outlying village.

So she went anxiously and wearily to her room and Captain Venner drove from his house into Dublin and put up in a private hotel.

Chapter Five

After many lonely days in the silent house, during which Captain Venner absolutely kept his word with her, a message came to Phyllis that all the arrangements for the wedding had been made, and that it should take place at once.

The desolate feeling that has at first taken hold of Phyllis's heart had by this time given place to something more hopeful. She seemed at times even to see possibilities of happiness, and when at last she met Captain Venner she could read in his anxious face how much he must have felt her imprisonment, and how hard it must have been for him to keep away.

She even found that she could look pleased to see him without too much effort, and it was with a sense of relief that she told him she would trust him, and went to the

church with him on the wedding day.

After the wedding Captain and Mrs. Venner spent a month or two on a driving tour. The captain sold the lease of Hardengate and took a place in Galway.

They lived there happily for some months, out of reach of Venner's old acquaintances, until one day he ran across Gavan Pierrepont, who was staying with a shooting party in the neighbourhood. The captain invited his old chum over to dinner, and Pierrepont, being very curious to make Mrs. Venner's acquaintance, eagerly accepted.

As he drove up to the house the sound of the violin and piano caught his ear and he paused for a moment to listen to the long-sustained notes of the finale of a passionately emotional opera.

Pierrepont smiled. Evidently matrimony had not become a dull monotony to the Venners as yet. He was shown straight into the music-room just as the last thrilling notes had died away.

He found Venner's wife looking very lovely in a Doucet frock and a few priceless emeralds. She received Pierrepont with the graceful dignity of an experienced hostess, for she had been accustomed from an early age to take the lead in her father's house. The little party made a congenial trio, and dinner was passed principally in the discussion of future plans.

Captain Venner had promised his bride a trip round the world; they were to start in November, winter in Egypt, and generally take their time.

"You see," said Phyllis sweetly, "we can do whatever we like. Julian is a perfectly useless person; he has no

ties, no responsibilities.”

“I see, by the way, Venner, you’re nearer the baronetcy, since Sir Ralph Venner’s elder son was killed in the hunting field.

“Yes, poor chap, but the second son and his boy are alive and sound and safe as houses. I don’t think I need to worry myself on that score.”

Pierrepont laughed.

“It’s the first time I ever heard of a man who thought the prospect of becoming a baronet with a rent roll of £30,000 a year a worry.

A shadow passed over Julian Venner’s face, but he said lightly, with a smile at Phyllis:

“Oh, I shall never want more than I have,”

And Phyllis chimed in:

“You see, we are content, Mr. Pierrepont. I’m beginning to think we must be very exceptional people, and, I suppose, a little ridiculous. It is thought ridiculous for married people to care for each other, isn’t it?

“Most couples succeed in disguising the state of their affections so well, Mrs. Venner, that an occasional glimpse of connubial bliss is reassuring to a lone bachelor like myself,” said Pierrepont, with a little bow.

“We are not safe yet,” observed the captain. “We’ve only proved the possibility of surviving six months of matrimony, you will have to come and see us again in a year or two.”

“Yes,” said Mrs. Venner laughing. “Shall we meet at Monte Carlo in 1897?”

“A great deal may have happened by that time,” said

Pierrepoint dreamily.

Venner tried to laugh, but could not. It seemed as if something suddenly gripped him by the throat, half-stifling him. He was silent and absent minded during the rest of the meal, but Mrs. Venner amply made up for his shortcomings as a host, and Pierrepoint thoroughly enjoyed himself.

After she had left the men, and sounds of distant music floated to them from the other side of the house, Pierrepoint ventured to say:

“After all you took my advice.”

Venner looked at him suspiciously and said:

“Remember, you are talking about my wife.”

“Don’t be so touchy, old fellow. I heartily congratulate you. She is a woman who would shine in any society. I hear you had a pretty village wedding.”

“Yes, in the heart of the country.”

“Why don’t you take her to Dublin?”

“When we return will be time enough for that.”

“I hear Lady Manges is surprised you have not introduced your bride.”

“She’ll get over it in time, no doubt,” Venner replied rather shortly, and his guest changed the subject.

When Pierrepoint left, Venner, contrary to his custom, went straight to his smoking room and shut himself up. He lighted a cigar and stood frowning and staring into the fire, which he kicked into a blaze.

“To the devil with him,” he muttered, “with his hints and innuendoes. I’ll fool the world if I like. I’ll fool myself, and Phyllis, too. Why shouldn’t I? I hurt no one.

We are happy: happier than I ever dreamed a man and woman could be; why should I shatter all our happiness with one word?"

Presently Phyllis came to him and asked if anything was the matter.

"No, dearest, what should be? What can be the matter with me while you are here?"

"I thought at dinner time you were not quite so lively as usual."

"Oh, that was nothing. I wanted you to get to know Pierrepont; I wanted him to know what a pearl among women I had won."

"Flatterer! I wonder if you will be saying such pretty things to me when we meet Mr. Pierrepont at Monte Carlo?"

"Never mind about the future, my darling. Let us live as if there were no tom-morrow. The moment is our own, the beyond is any man's."

"Well, dear, 'the moment' is good enough for me."

Pierrepont's remark as to the possibility of Venner's succession to the baronetcy found startling confirmation before many months were over.

Captain and Mrs. Venner were at San Francisco when they learned that Sir Ralph Venner had died from shock after witnessing a terrible carriage accident, in which his son and little grandson were killed.

Julian travelled howards day and night, leaving Lady Venner, as she had now become, to follow more slowly. He had been glad of the excuse for solitude, as the news placed him in a position of great difficulty. The title and

fortune, which would have amply fulfilled the ambitious dreams of most men, only brough gloomy foreboding to Julian Venner. Nevertheless, by the time he handed at Southampton he had grown accustomed to the idea, and determined to play his game to the end, and trust that luck that had hitherto stuck to him would not desert him now. Sometimes he feared that Fate had brought him to a pinnacle of success only that she might dash him to earth more effectively in the end. With a beautiful and loving wife, what should mortal want more? And yet -

When Lady Venner arrived he took her to the London house in Bolton-st., and for a day or two forgot his anxieties in the happiness of seeing her again after the separation of a whole fortnight.

But on the third day, when she proposed a drive, he had excused himself on the plea of business, and retiring to his smoking room he sat down before the wood fire.

In his heart he knew that he had acted like a villain, and day by day, as he grew to love Phyllis more and more deeply, this conviction was strengthened. He would have given all the world to be able to unfold his entire past to her; but he dared not. He feared she would never look trustingly at his face again. She might even leave him altogether.

And there was another reason for dismay. There was the coming child to think of - his child, possibly his son, heir to the baronetcy and vast estates of the Venners. His child! Her child - his beautiful Phyllis's child! If she knew what he could tell her it would kill her! How glad she had been when she shyly whispered her good

news to him, and with what awful agony he had heard it. He had kissed her and held her tenderly to his heart, and then he had gone away, his face grey with anguish, muttering, "Oh, God. what a horrible punishment! How shall I bear it?"

And now as he sat before the fire with clenched hands and nails digging deep into his palms, the one thought was uppermost:

"How shall I bear it - how shall I manage to keep just the same that she may suspect nothing? She must not - shall not know; it would kill her!"

He had fallen in love with her beautiful face when first he saw the miniature, but he never expected that this feeling would last; that it was to become the one consuming passion of his life, and that the mere idea of Phyllis learning the part he had played would completely unnerve and paralyse him. He could not disguise the fact from himself that if Phyllis should once know her real position she would never be the same woman again, for the knowledge would crush and humiliate her. He dared not think of what she might do in her desperation.

These thought were torture to him, and the unhappy man felt that, whatever his sin may have been, no hell could hold greater punishment than the anguish he was now enduring. At all costs she must never know - must never even have the faintest suspicion of the truth.

So when he heard her tap at the door, followed by "Mayn't I come in, Julian, it is so dull upstairs alone, or shall I be disturbing you?" he pulled himself together with a mighty effort and welcomed her with a smile.

“Of course, come in, dear heart,” he said, wheeling a deep-seated chair up to the fire and gently placing her in it. “You know very well you never disturb me, and that I am only happy when you are with me.”

She did know it, and the thought made her glad.

“I don’t believe many married couples care about each other as you and I do, Julian,” she said, half wistfully.

“Of course they don’t, it isn’t the fashion. The mere fact of being tied up together for life usually makes a man and woman detest each other at the end of a year or so.”

“And the fact that is death to most, love, only brings joy to you and me. I mean the fact of knowing that we are bound together for ever,” she said.

Sir Julian shuddered a little, but he answered her gently, and began to speak of their visit to Monte Carlo.

“I was thinking,” said Lady Venner, “that I should have to go away without a maid at all, but fortunately I have secured the services of a perfect treasure. It was too bad of Felice to leave me in the lurch as she did; but, luckily, Mrs. Dubarry - she really is a treasure as a housekeeper, her long experience in France is invaluable - has recommended a first-rate woman to me. If she can only do half of the clever things which Dubarry says she can, I shall be in clover.”

“Is she an Englishwoman?” asked Sir Julian, who never yawned and looked bored when his wife told him of little domesticities.

“Oh, no; very French indeed. Her name is Clarice Duplés, and she is decidedly good-looking - in a panther-

like sort of style, that is.”

“Panther-like! Has she claws? Is she safe?” Asked Sir Julian.

“Clarice Duplès,” Julian reflected when he was alone again. “I don’t like the name. And panther-like - not a very promising description I don’t quite like the arrangement. Only fancy, I suppose; though it may be all right.”

Why Clarice Duplès came to Lady Venner as a lady’s maid, and how it was managed, will be told in the next chapter.

Chapter Six

The Saturday before Lady Venner had thus satisfactorily settled her domestic arrangements, Mrs. Duberry, the housekeeper at Bolton-st., received a very smart visitor. When that smart visitor removed the thick veil which entirely concealed her features the old lady gave a startled exclamation

“Clare, is it you?”

The woman laughed.

“Mais certainement, mother. But I may as well tell you at once I have not come to see you after all these years to revive sentimental memories, nor to act the prodigal daughter for your benefit. Oh, dear no! On the contrary, I have come entirely on business.

“Hush!” said the bewildered old woman, “the servants will hear you. There is a Frenchwoman here who is

leaving and owes me a grudge."

"Leaving is she? Hein! Well, I will come to my business. Tell me what you can of your new master. Is he cheerful and jolly, like his uncle, the late baronet, or does he seem lonely and forsaken?"

"Oh dear no! Why should he when he is as much in love with his wife as a man can be?"

"His wife! He is married then! This is beyond belief; beyond my most brilliant expectation."

"What do you mean, child? What have you to do with Sir Julian Venner?"

"Absolutely nothing, my dear little mother, absolutely nothing. I am delighted to hear of one more thoroughly successful marriage, that is all. You know what respect I have for the institution."

"Clara, my poor Clara!"

"Clarice, *ma chère*, that is my name, Madame Clarice Duplés, Bellevue Mansions, Ebury-st. But tell me some more about this charming ménage. Is Lady Venner young, charming, beautiful? Does she frequent *la haute monde*?" and a mischievous laugh stopped Madame Duplés' speech for a moment or two.

"She has only just returned to England; she and her husband have been travelling. They go to Monte Carlo in a week."

"Travelling! Ah! How charming! Well, *petite mère*, if you can get out this evening, come and have a chat with me; I will leave you my card. There! I cannot stay now, as I am expecting a visitor for lunch. A most important visitor. Higher in rank than your dear baronet. Fancy, if

some day, mother, you had a countess for a daughter.” and with another mischievous laugh Clarice Duplès adjusted her veil and was off.

She hailed a hansom, and was in Ebury-st. by the time the clock struck two. Lord Belsize, her visitor, a tall, coarse-looking man, was awaiting her, and whiling away the time with a brandy-and-soda and a sporting paper.

“Late, as usual,” he said grumpily.

“Mais, mon cher ami, que veux-tu? I have been to see my dear mamma!”

“Is lunch ready? I’m famished, couldn’t eat a bit of breakfast.”

“The wild beast shall be fed,” said Clarice, ringing the bell. After the servant had left the room and the meal was pretty well ended, Clarice drew her chair to the fire, lighted a cigarette, and began to toast the toes of her patent leather shoes.

“Now, mon ami, come to the fire and be sociable. Let us have a nice talk. Am I to take it that you intend to be off to Monte Carlo this week?”

“Yes,” she he.

“Well, since this is our last merry meeting, I’ll entrust you with a delightful piece of gossip. You know, my dear Belsize that delightful little scandal you told me about your friend Julian Venner and the little governess in Dublin?”

Belsize thought for a minute or two, then nodded affirmatively.

“Well, what do you think has happened now?”

"I don't know."

"He has married her," Clarice chuckled.

"I can quite believe that, I heard some rumor of the sort at the time. It was amusing to see Venner endeavouring to go the pace. He was always indulging in wild escapades, and then spending weeks in sackcloth and ashes. You seem to know a good deal about him," said Belsize suspiciously.

"I have met some of his most intimate friends, you see," and Clarice with sly malice, and then they turned to other topics and settled the plan of the evening's entertainment.

When Clarice Duplès returned to her house in time for her appointment with Mrs. Dubarry she was by no means in such wild spirits. Her rent was due, and she had just £5 in the world to meet it. Something must be done. She waited impatiently for her mother, spending the time in sorting out some jewelry that she thought she might part with at a pinch. The bell rang violently, and she hastened out of her bedroom, but was disappointed in her visitor; for instead of a portly old lady she encountered a tall, handsome-looking boy, young in years, but with all the marks of recklessness and suffering imprinted on his pale face. Algernon Carnforth, the new-comer, had been for a year madly in love with Clarice.

"Mon Dieu! Algy," she exclaimed almost pettishly, "what is wrong now? I did not expect you this evening. I thought you had gone down into the country to see mamma and papa and all the little brothers and sisters."

"So I intended, but something has happened."

“Something tragic?”

“Yes; and as far as I can see only you can help me. I am quite ruined. I thought I had got hold of a certainty at last, and I backed it.”

“There’s no such thing as a certainty in steeplechasing, you silly boy. How much do you want?”

“Fifty pounds.”

“Impossible! utterly impossible!”

“Couldn’t you lend me a ring or a necklace just for a bit.”

“No, I could not. I don’t choose to be seen without my jewelry. Stay, though! An idea occurs to me. When do you want this money?”

“In a fortnight at latest.”

Well, it is not impossible that I may be able to assist you. I have a half-formed plan in my head. Hush! there is the bell; you must disappear. Ask Tompkins to give you something to eat. I may see you again later.” And Clarice ran out of the room, her wonderful masses of wavy red hair dishevelled. “Ah ha! petite mère, so you have come at last. I have been impatiently expecting you for hours.”

“I couldn’t get away before, child. Felicie, the lady’s-maid, took herself off, bag and baggage, in a tantrum this afternoon, and I had to personally attend milady.”

“Ah, well, it is an ill wind which blows no one any good, and what you tell me suggests an idea. I am tired of this life.” She glanced round the luxuriously-furnished room. “It is too full of ups-and-downs, and I have a mind to a more humdrum existence. You know, I have always been clever with my hands; I can dress hair and pack.

Oh, heavens! but how I can pack! What would you think of me as a candidate for the position of Lady Venner's maid?" She slipped her arm round her mother's neck coaxingly as she spoke.

"Impossible, you forget."

"Not so impossible as you think. I will furnish excellent written testimonials, and you can do the rest for me. I mean to go to Monte Carlo with Sir Julian and Lady Venner."

"How could I undertake the responsibility? If I say you are my daughter and anything comes out about your past, we both be turned into the streets."

"Don't say I'm your daughter; say anything but that. I will come round on Monday in a neat black costume and interview her ladyship. That will be the best thing, and I will be si sage, si discrète; her ladyship will be delighted," she said gleefully.

"You always were a wild madcap, even in the old days at Fontainebleau. Well, I'll see what can be done, but I can't understand this sudden freak. This morning you told me you were going to be a countess; now you want to turn lady's-maid."

"Anything for a change, toute chère! Don't you see it was the great renunciation creeping over me; I thought at first I should reform best as a wife, but now I find it will be more to my taste to retrace my steps as a lady's maid."

"Well, well, anything is better than to think you are wandering about the world in this fashion."

"Now, my dear, sweet mother, I will not have any reproaches; that is a bargain. When I ask you to pay for

my keep I will submit to your sermons. What is the use of them? Did you not pour good advice over me every day of my life? Well, it was worse than useless; it was folly. We go our own way; let us assist each other, but let us keep our good advice for ourselves!”

Before this torrent of eloquence poor Mrs. Dubarry retired discomfited, and her daughter comforted her old soul with something hot before she took her departure.

The housekeeper at Bolton-st. had been born on the estate of old Sir Ralph Venner some sixty years before. While still in her teens she had been taken to Paris by the then Lady Venner and a young French artist, Alphonse Dubarry, had fallen in love with her, and under the auspices of her mistress, married her. They had gone to live in Fontainebleau, and as years rolled on the little gathering of artists living in the neighbourhood had formed themselves into a school, and students from all parts were attracted there.

It was here that Clarice was born and grew up, and in her the mixture of Celtic and Latin blood resulted in a curiously alert temperament. She was very wide-awake, was Miss Clara Dubarry, and managed to be always surrounded with admirers. But for the last six years her mother had only occasionally heard from her; and blinded as all loving women are, she persisted in hoping that her daughter was prosperous and happy. Nothing now really prevented her from asking Clarice for an account of her doings but her new dread that there were secrets to learn. At half-past nine she said she must be going, and Clarice kissed her good-night with a

parting injunction to make the appointment with Lady Venner for ten o'clock on Monday morning.

Then she called Algy from the dining-room, and told him she was in a fair way to get the money.

"Petit fou!" she exclaimed. "Why will you dabble in things you don't understand, and lose what little money you have?"

"But I do understand them perfectly - at least, I did once," said Algy regretfully. "There was a fellow on the Stock Exchange who always asked my advice about his speculations. And I have given him the tip for winners over and over again. It's since I met you I have had failure after failure. Old Mr. Marrett got so rude at last I vowed I'd never go near him again. A year ago he'd have lent me any amount of money."

Clarice shrugged her shoulders and laughed incredulously.

"Well, that's the funniest thing I ever heard! My dear boy, you must be dreaming! A serious man on the Stock Exchange take your advice about speculation! Why, it's too absurd! Were you a professional medium, my child, that he should be such a fool?"

"How dare you say such things!" said Algy, firing up. "Of course, I wasn't. What put that into your head?"

"I don't know. I remember hearing rumors of the kind, but such things are going out of fashion. It must be rather fun, though; I wonder if I could mesmerise you."

The young man jumped in terror. "No, no," he cried, "don't you begin those tricks, Clarice."

"Oh, you do know something about it, after all! Now

look me straight in the eyes, mon petit, and let us see which of us can out-stare the other.”

But Algernon Carnforth angrily turned his back on her.”

“Now, now, Algy, don’t be cross. Only think, in a week I shall be gone from you, perhaps we shall never meet again.”

“Gone! What do you mean?” he said, turning round hurriedly.

“I mean that if you are to have your £50 you must not see me - for a time - only for a time, mon petit,” she said tenderly, for a spasm of terrible distress came into the boy’s face.

“But, but, Clarice, I cannot live without seeing you. I can’t bear to lose you, I’d rather die.”

“Nonsense, I shall not be gone long, perhaps a fortnight, perhaps a month.”

“Well, I suppose if I must, I must,” he said grudgingly. “Where are you going?”

“To Monte Carlo.”

“I’ve not been there since I was quite a boy. I should like to try my luck at the tables.”

“Better not, dear.”

“Why?” asked Algy.

“Lucky in love, unlucky at cards - you know the old saying.”

“I’m not lucky in love,” he said sulkily.

“Algy!” she cried.

“Is it lucky to be tied hand and foot to a woman as I am to you?”

"But you know how much I think of you."

"Oh, you say so."

"Have I not proved it a dozen times? Do I not devote myself to your interests? Am I not entering upon this undertaking, not without serious risk, all for your sake."

Algernon was touched, and said self-reproachfully:

"I know I am a selfish brute. I ask you for money, and then I abuse you for getting it. If you only knew how I am torn between what I want to be and what I am, you'd forgive me."

"Ah! mon ami, it is the greatest mistake in life to have these nobilities lurking in the recesses of your mind. If you can't bring them into your life best strangle them altogether, as I have done. Never repent. That's my motto. If you're sorry that you are what you are, change your ways, but don't cry over spilt milk while you're holding the jug upside down. I've no patience with that sort of game."

"You are strong, Clarice, and I - I am so weak."

"Just so, mon ami, and you will remain weak until as I tell you, you stifle these fine thoughts which torment you so keenly."

"Well, I will try. Have a cigarette; I made you some while I was waiting."

"Tiens! That is as it should be," said Clarice, daintily striking a match on the sole of her slipper.



"Hush!" said the bewildered old woman, "the servants will hear you."

CLARICE DUPLES' FIRST STEP TOWARDS REVENGE.

Chapter Seven

“So, Mr. Pierrepont, we have forestalled our appointment at Monte Carlo,” said Lady Venner as she shook hands with Gavan on the steps of the Hotel Bristol in Paris.

“That is so, and consequently it is my good fortune to be able to congratulate you on your accession to the title a fortnight sooner than I expected.”

It was a brilliantly clear day, and the white frost was still sparkling on the eastern side of the Place Vendôme. Lady Venner looked up at the blue Parisian sky, and smiling at Sir Julian asked him what was the program for the day.

“Déjeûner at the Café Anglais and dinner at Bignon’s,” said Venner. “Pierrepont, you must join us. We are to meet a delightful American woman who was with us in

Egypt last year and Mr. Santonio who knew Lady Venner when she was a child. To-night we propose to look in at the Ambassadeurs and hear Yvette."

It had chanced that in looking through the visitors' book at the hotel Lady Venner's eye had lighted on the name of Demetrios Santonio, which she at once recognised as that of her father's friend from Ithaca, and eagerly asked Julian to invite him to breakfast. The Greek was awaiting them when they arrived at the Café Anglais, and seemed already on excellent terms with his host.

He was an elderly man of a decidedly Oriental type, round-faced and shiny, with jet-black hair and beady eyes. Phyllis remembered those eyes well, for she had once accompanied her father on a little yacht with which Santonio loved to navigate the Ionian Sea, as he persisted in calling it. He was a man of fads and fancies, and amused his friends by confiding to them that he was a reincarnation of the subtle Odysseus.

However, when he paid his annual visit to Paris he forgot Homer for the time being and devoted himself to the study of the modern. He was very glad to see his old friend's daughter, and the first few minutes were spent in discussing the possible whereabouts of Mr. Lorraine.

"It is strange he never let you know," said Santonio.

"We still hope all is well with him. I have been on the move ever since we parted, you see," said Phyllis. "It is very likely that his letters may never have reached me."

"Had you no London agent?"

"Of course we had. I never thought of that. Oh, Julian, how absurd of me! Maguire is almost certain to have

been kept posted up. It was I who forgot the necessity of letting him know my address. I will write to him to-day."

Sir Julian's face darkened, but he immediately replied to his wife's enthusiasm, and said he thought Mr. Santonio's suggestion should certainly be acted upon.

At this point Mrs. Phillip K Philipson, the other expected guest - a charming specimen of the *Americaine a la Française* - entered. She was got up to perfection, from her Virot-hatted head to her exquisitely-shod feet; her face fresh from the masseuse, her hands from the manicure, and her clothes from the Rue de la Paix, she had done all in her power to incarnate the Parisian ideal. She greeted Phyllis effusively.

"My dear, it seems ages since we met, and I hear I have to congratulate you and Sir Julian."

"Julian doesn't think it a subject for congratulations. I'm afraid he finds it all rather oppressive."

"That's shocking, Sir Julian. Have you no ambitions? But here, I suppose when a man is so fortunate as to gain such a jewel for his wife as you have, he may easily feel himself content."

"No doubt I shall rise to the occasion in time, Mrs. Phillipson. You must remember I was brought up to live on the beggarly £3,000 a year, and my tastes were always simple."

At this Pierrepont laughed so uproariously that Santonio turned and looked at him.

"Your friend does himself an injustice, you think?" he remarked in soft Oriental tones.

"These things are all a matter of degree, I suppose,"

said Pierrepont. Then turning to Mrs. Phillipson he asked if she also were going on the Riviera.

“Certainly I am. I am simply dying to try my luck at the tables. It seems to me that gambling is the only way in which it is possible to make money without feeling yourself degraded. Talk of honest toil, I’ve seen too much of it. Even an artist is obliged to toady to his patrons. No, I’ve come to the conclusion high robbery and gambling are the only aristocratic occupations.”

“Madame is a cynic,” said Santonio, letting his eye wander over the lady’s ample charms.

“Do we not all become cynics when we arrive at middle age, monsieur? I feel humiliated when I earn money. I like my occupation to be spontaneous.”

“Surely madame need not trouble herself about such matters,” said the Greek, with an elusive smile.

“Oh, I confess that my money rolls in nowadays without my troubling my head about the matter. That does not prevent me from remembering the experience of my girlhood. Before I married I earned my living as a journalist. How I hated it. How I should hate anyone who paid me a salary!”

“That is right,” said Santonio with a bow. “It entirely confirms my own theory of the *métier* of your sex. We are intended to be your slaves, your worshippers, madame. When a woman ceases to become a goddess and attempts to do anything useful, ah, me! the havoc it makes in our social economy.”

“Who is the cynic now?” said Phyllis laughing. “Has no one had a word to say for our dignity as women?”

Santonio looked round the table with a sly smile.

"It is a curious fact," he said, "that nothing annoys a modern woman so much as to be called a goddess. Now, if fiction can be taken as the history of manners it is precisely that phrase which most delighted our grandmothers. I appeal to you ladies, you must confess that that is so."

Mrs. Phillipson said, "Certainly, just as the greatest insult you could inflict upon them would have been to call the women. Their shame is our glory."

"And now, dear Lady Venner," continued the lively American, "I think it's high time we started on that shopping expedition we promised ourselves. As for the gentlemen, we will leave them to the discussion of philosophy while we –

"Collect ammunition for the next encounter," said Pierrepont.

Chapter Eight

The stay in Paris was brief, but was sufficiently long for Santonio to show signs of succumbing to the attractions of Mrs. Phillipson.

“A fine woman, your American,” was his comment on the railways platform on the day of the Venner’s departure.

“The other is more to my taste,” said Pierrepont.

“What, Phyllis? Pretty, yes, but a little serious. The husband seems devoted to her.”

“He has certainly become a different creature since his marriage.”

“Indeed. Yet Phyllis herself should be lively enough if there is anything in heredity. Her father was one of the merriest souls I ever encountered, effervescing with dun, so to speak.”

“You know her family?”

"Certainly. Many a mad prank have Dick Lorraine and I been up to in our young days."

"How often do you come to Paris?"

"Annually. I begin the year well, later I gather in my harvest, in the autumn I devote myself to the occult."

Pierrepont started.

"My young friend, you are surprised. Let me assure you the true voluptuary is always a visionary. Without the culture of the imagination, pleasure becomes monotonous. You will find yourself becoming rangé, like our friend here, if you do not cultivate the imagination, I assure you."

The farewell handshaking interrupted the confidences at this point, and the two men strolled out into the clear crisp air of the Boulevards.

It was at Monte Carlo when Sir Julian and Lady Venner were at déjeuner in a private room at the Hotel de Paris that they were suddenly started by the entrance of an aristocratic looking gentleman with clean-cut features, active nostrils, gleaming black eyes under heavy eyebrows, and hair touched with silver on the temples.

Phyllis rose with a little cry of delight, for she instantly recognised her father, who greeted his daughter as if he had only parted with her the day before, and was in his very gayest mood.

When she by degrees told him her news he received it with absolute self-possession, for he was the incarnation of irresponsibility. His metier was distinctly that of society clown. He never laughed at his own jokes, yet he was so devoted to joking that no one had ever been able to discover his serious opinion of any person, place, or thing.

In Florence it had been generally supposed that he adored his daughter, although he teased her unmercifully, while it was also commonly understood that he detested his wife, although his manner to her was deferential, and only occasionally slightly ironical.

Phyllis, delighted as she was to see her father, could not help shedding a few tears as she told him the details of her mother's death and her own sufferings, but Lorraine was inclined to pass over this subject lightly, and enlarged instead on the more pleasing one of his newly-discovered son-in-law's inheritance. However, when his daughter had gone to put on her hat Lorraine sat silent for some time, and turning to Venner said in a voice tinged with emotion:

"Poor child - she's been through a bad time. It's a mercy she came across you. I think I understand she had taken a situation in your family."

Sir Julian turned white to the lips, but he managed to stammer something about having had the good fortune to meet Miss Lorraine near Dublin. Then he hurried on to say:

"Phyllis is adorable; it was impossible to meet her without loving her. I fell in love with her the first minute we met - "Before we met," he muttered to himself.

"How long have you been married?" asked the father, who rarely troubled to ask questions, and never listened to the answers. But he found rather to his surprise that he was not quite so indifferent to his daughter as he had imagined himself to be, and the knowledge of all she had undergone amongst strangers made him gradually realise that if she had come to grief he would never have forgiven

himself for the happy-go-lucky fashion in which he had allowed her and her mother to seek their fortunes in the great metropolis.

On Venner telling him that Phyllis and he had been married nearly two years he straightway recovered his wonted elasticity of manner. And with that once more established he chattered of his own doings and amused Venner - as he amused everybody - by his amazing irresponsibility and happy devilry.

When Venner finally managed to escape, after patiently listening to Mr. Lorraine's reasons for having so completely lost track of his belongings for two years, he found Phyllis had removed all trace of tears and agitation, and was sitting quietly by the bedroom window looking on to the Casino gardens. She turned her fair head as he entered, and looked inquiringly at him.

"Yes, darling," he said, meeting the look, "I think we have come safely through that ordeal. Your father suspects nothing, and from what I can judge of him he is not likely to bother his head as to where and how we met or anything of that kind. He appears to live entirely for the present moment so far as I can see, and the first shock of all you told him has already worn off. He was only afraid that you had suffered long by yourself. When I told him we had been married nearly two years he seemed to think that all cause for regret and self-reproach was over. Of course, if he should take it into his head to ask awkward questions we must find some suitable reply."

"Supposing we replied differently?"

"Well, we mustn't. The best thing to do is concoct our

story now, that each may know what the other is likely to say and so not be taken unawares."

"Yes, it seems the best thing to do," said Phyllis regretfully, "though it's horrid to tell lies and deceive one's own father."

Sir Julian knelt down by her, and taking her hands in his kissed them passionately.

"My sweet, how much pain I have caused you through my madness."

"Don't speak of it, Julian. I have forgotten it. I love you so dearly that even that dreadful scene - if it was the price of your love - becomes bearable. Do you know what I mean when I say that? But no one must know of it save us two; my father least of all. He must never have anything but the highest, noblest opinion of you."

"Phyllis, you torture me."

"Dearest Julian, I do not mean to, indeed."

"What would I not give for you yourself to have the highest, noblest opinion of me. But that I have forfeited by my mad action."

"Julian, don't you understand - though you deceived me once, it is true - that since that deception gained you for me, my darling husband, I say it was worth it, and the dearest, sweetest day in my life was the one which made me your wife."

Sir Julian covered his anguished face with his hands, he could not bear her to see the distortion of misery which he knew was upon it - and the horror which the thought of her ever finding out the double deception he had played on her intolerable.

"Come, darling," said Phyllis, trying to speak gaily, "no more self-reproaches over what is dead and buried. Let us take a stroll in the gardens and show the dad that, after all, his desertion turned out the luckiest thing in the world for me. By the bye, he hasn't told us yet how he managed to get our address, though, of course, it must have been through Maguire. How surprised he will be to meet Santonio here."

"Is your father ever surprised at anything?"

"Well, perhaps not," said Phyllis smiling, "he is too much of a philosopher and too delightfully casual to be astonished, no matter what happens. I remember well when we heard we had lost all our money; he never even expressed an opinion about it, but just mentioned to my mother and myself that we were ruined. My mother took the news just as quietly, but that was because she had trained herself to seem as indifferent as he was, although I am sure she must often have felt like a perfect volcano. I often think how terribly she must have repressed herself for years and years to attain such outward calmness. Poor soul. When once she got off by herself and had no more necessity for restraint the reaction was too great - it helped to kill her. I was always very fond of my father, but I do think he must have been trying to live with."

Sir Julian thought so too, but he did not say so. He suggested instead that they should spare a few minutes to the discussion of what they were to say, if occasion arose, as to their first meeting, which he had been obliged to admit was in Ireland.

As it turned out, they need not have troubled themselves

about the matter at all, for Mr. Lorraine was content to take things as he found them, and never dreamed of making further allusions to the past.

Chapter Nine

Sir Julian and Lady Venner having determined on their course of action if necessity arose, hastened down into the gardens, where they found Mr. Lorraine and Santonio had already met and were telling each other uproarious anecdotes. Santonio was the first to recover himself.

“Excuse me, Lady Venner, but your father acts upon me like champagne; he is so witty, so amusing.”

Ever since she was a baby Phyllis had heard the same remark made about her father, so she only nodded a little and said yes, then asked if Mrs. Phillipson and Pirrepoint had arrived and if anybody had been that morning.

“They went into the Casino the moment the doors were opened,” said Santonio. “Mrs Phillipson had such bad luck yesterday that she was determined to try and

retrieve her losses this morning.”

“I must say,” said Mr. Lorraine, “that I prefer gambling at night. The atmosphere, the brilliant light, the glittering gold pieces, the crackling bank notes, the white shoulders, pretty faces, silks, satin, and diamonds, the monotonous croupiers, the greedy little rakes seizing their gains, the general excitement - once appreciates it all so much more at night.

“I agree with you, sir,” said Venner, “there is something too cold-blooded about daylight gambling. Phyllis and I never go into the salons until after dinner.”

“But the thing is what is one to do with oneself?” asked Santonio a little plaintively. He was hardly ever absent from the tables himself, and when staying at Monte Carlo used to map out a regular plan for every day. The usual idea was to have his coffee brought to him with a pistolet at eight o’clock. Then he would slip on his dressing gown and spend a couple of hours in smoking and reading by the open window, after which came a leisurely toilet.

A few minutes before noon he was always to be found in the Casino hall waiting for the doors of the salles à jeu to open, and the moment the bolts were slipped back was one of the first to enter. He played until lunch, and in the afternoon would go for a drive; lately he had been taking Mrs. Phillipson out a good deal. After a cup of tea he would go back to the tables for an hour or two, when he would play until dinner-time, which was with him a long and important function. He had been on his way to Ciro’s this morning to get an iced hock and seltzer before

going to the Casino when he had come across Lorraine, and this had for the moment upset his plans, for it was half-past twelve by now, and all the best seats would have been secured long ago.

“Don’t look so miserable, Mr. Santonio,” said Phyllis, laughing, “you can put on double stakes this evening to make up for it. Let’s go for a stroll along the Cornice road.”

“What price dust?” asked Sir Julian. So that was given up, and it was decided that Santonio and Lorraine should go into the Casino until lunch, while Sir Julian and Lady Venner would remain in the gardens and road.

In the roulettes salon they found Mrs. Phillipson and Pierrepont, the latter leaning over the lady’s chair and watching her changed luck with much delight. She had struck a long series on the middle dozen and had doubled her stake each time until there was a heavy pile of gold and notes in front of her.

“My congratulations, Mrs. Phillipson,” said Santonio at her elbow.

The widow looked up and saw that Santonio had a companion - Lorraine. He was introduced, and in five minutes’ time he and the smart American might have known each other for years.

“The sort of man I adore,” she told Gavan Pierrepont, who looked very glum over the remark. He wasn’t quite sure whether he was in love with Mrs. Phillipson or not. He rather thought he was, though whether he would have felt equally certain if he had never heard of her enormous wealth is a trifle doubtful. He loved the good

things of this life; he felt that he was born for something better than punting for his daily bread, and it is always hard to see a chance of wealth slipping through one's fingers. He had known all along that Santonio admired the American lady, but he felt certain Santonio hadn't the ghost of a chance with her. Mrs. Phillip K. Phillipson had not come over to "Yeurop" to marry a mere currant merchant, and a Greek one at that. She had married in the first instance for money; now she made no secret of the fact that she was looking out for family. Pierrepont came of a very good family himself, and it was on that fact that he had principally based his own chance.

And now this Lorraine must needs step in - a man with irreproachable connections and a high-bred manner. Gavan knew his connections were good, because he had long ago looked up Phyllis' father in Burke, and at the time had been rather pleased to find that his friend Venner had married his social equal.

Finding that it was impossible to extract another word from the widow, he went back to the tables with Santonio, and left the field clear for Lorraine, who suggested that the salons were too hot for comfort, and promised to find a shady spot in the gardens.

"Poor Santonio! He thought he was going to lose this morning at the tables," said Lorraine.

"An interesting man. Who is he?" asked Mrs. Phillipson.

"A currant merchant from Ithaca, and a bit of genius."

"Oh, oh! how can you say such a thing! I am told he is rich; a genius should

never be rich."

"On the contrary; it is only genius which has any right to be rich, for it alone would be able to bring imagination into the spending of it's riches, and deliver the world from dullness; I myself feel that I have capabilities of making a magnificent spendthrift."

"Did you notice that tall man at the end of the first table?" asked Mrs. Phillipson of Lorraine. "He is a marvel of coolness and perseverance. Do you know that he has put more than a hundred times on No. 13 at roulette and lost every time. He must be either a Pole or --"

"A Fool," chimed in Venner.

Mr. Lorraine was starting up at some pigeons and counting them aloud as they slowly flew overhead.

"Thirteen of them," he exclaimed, "you were speaking of thirteen at the time. This evening when I go to play after dinner I will try my luck with thirteen. It is a coincidence and a gambler never loses a chance like that."

Sir Julian hated gambling, and that night when the rest of the party trooped into the salles à jeu he elected to remain outside.

Mr. Lorraine, on the contrary, was in one of his most irresponsible moods.

"Now watch," he said, leaning over Mrs. Phillipson's chair, and putting down upon the 13 the maximum allowed by the Administration.

The rasping voice of the croupier was heard, and the ball flew around, slackened, stopped.

"Treize," said the monotonous voice, "noir impair et manque!"

Mr. Lorraine, smiling like a pleased child, picked up his winnings of 6,000 francs, and repeated the operation with No. 1.

“What are you doing?” cried Phyllis and the pretty widow in a breath.

“All right,” said Lorraine, “I’m going to try thirteen every way, maximum each time.”

And he did. What is more he went and he went on winning, until after three-quarters of an hour the croupier rose and announced:

“Monsieur has broken the bank,” and smiling, he insinuatingly suggested the usual louis for champagne.

Chapter Ten

Meanwhile Sir Julian had strolled through the now darkling gardens towards the more retired nooks. He wanted to have time for a little quiet thought, and had longed to be alone all day. He lighted a cigar, and sat down with a sigh of relief to his reflections.

He wished Mr. Lorraine hadn't turned up. He wished Gavan Pierrepont was in England. Since that day nearly two years ago when he had driven down to the club before Pierrepont had finished his breakfast and sought his advice, he had been very reticent with his one-time crony. And he was afraid that incidentally something might crop up about Phyllis's visit to Ireland before her marriage. He knew Gavan was feeling a little sore at his prolonged want of confidence; if Mr. Lorraine questioned him he had it in his power to say a good deal. To-morrow

he must talk to Pierrepont and warn him to be careful what he said. His cigar did not please him, he threw it away, and was lighting a cigarette when he heard something which made him turn as white as death.

It was only a little queer sound made through the teeth, a long-drawn-out prrrrr, but he had heard it before. A moment later a woman with hazel eyes and quantities of red-gold hair was sitting on the bench by his side. She was very quietly dressed in a plain black frock and near bonnet, but the frock fitted her as only Frenchwoman's frocks do, and the bonnet but acted as a foil to the devilry of her eyes.

Sir Julian sat rigid, fascinated, no word escaping him.

"Eh bien!" said Clarice Duplés, shrugging her shoulders a little; "you do not seem very pleased to see me, my adored.:

"What do you want?" he asked, "and what are you doing here in Monte Carlo?"

Clarice showed a glimpse of white teeth.

"You always come so delightfully to the point, my friend. I will be equally brief. I want money, and I am here in Monte Carlo in the capacity of Lady Venner's maid."

"You are a devil."

"That is impolite, my friend. It is your own fault that I have taken this step. You should have been more generous with me."

"I allow you five hundred a year. It is more than you deserve."

"But, my adored, you talk like a fool. Is it five hundred

a year to me? You forget I have a right to sit at your table, to share your fortune, to porcelain to the world that I am Lady Venner."

Sir Julian shuddered.

"Don't talk so loud," he said.

"Dearest, you cannot dictate to me. If I choose to walk into the Casino hanging on your arm who shall stop me?"

"How much money do you want?"

"A hundred pounds."

"Listen. I will give you two hundred if you will leave Monte Carlo to-night. Have you spoken to Lady Venner yet?"

"I only arrived this evening."

"You will go back to Paris and send a wire from there to say you are sick, dead - anything you like - only that you cannot come to her. Will you do this?"

"You must make it three hundred."

"I have not so much with me; I will send it to you in Paris. Will you go?"

"How much will you give me now?"

He hastily pulled out his pocket-book, and in his nervous hurry drew out at the same time Phyllis's miniature, which fell onto the path between them. Instantly the woman was on to it, and before Sir Julian could stop her had struck a match from a tiny silver box and was examining the picture of the flame.

"So that is your beautiful Lady Venner," she said scornfully, "with her big eyes and baby mouth. Bah! she is not nearly as good-looking as I am." With a sudden

quick movement she dashed the little ivory oval to the ground and stamped it to atoms with her heel.

The reason that Sir Julian did not touch her was because he was aware that had he done so he would have lost control of himself and killed her. She knew this, and gibed him.

“That is how I would stamp on her face, on her heart, do you understand? I hate her. Ah! how I would like to torture her!”

Sir Julian, whose heart was beating in great heavy throbs as though it would burst, counted out a hundred pounds in bank notes, and held them out to her.

She took them from him and stuffed them in the bosom of her dress.

“You will leave Monte Carlo to-night?” he asked.

Clarice calmed herself. The tigerish look went out of her face, the hazel eyes looked demurely down at the crushed fragments at her feet, and she said gently:

“I think not.”

Sir Julian caught her by the wrist. “It was the condition on which I gave you the money.”

“Oh, no, mon ami, I made no conditions, you made conditions; I merely listen to them. It does not suit me to leave Monte Carlo so soon. Besides, what will Lady Venner do without a lady’s-maid? She has already telegraphed me twice to delay my coming no longer.”

“You will not go near Lady Venner.”

“And who will stop me?”

“I will stop you. If you do not leave here at once I will call the first gendarme I meet, and have you placed

under arrest."

Clarice had a delightfully merry laugh. She indulged in it now. "You dare not have me arrested. What tale have I to tell the gendarme? And when I have finished where will be your Lady Venner, the snow-white, the spotless? Truly her position will not be an enviable one." Sir Julian tried another tack.

"Clarice," he said in French, "for God's sake go away. I will do anything you like. I will give you five hundred pounds, and increase your allowance to a thousand a year if you will do as I ask. Lady Venner believes herself my lawful wife. If she found out anything to the contrary it would kill her. I throw myself on your mercy and implore you to go."

"Your tone improves, mon ami. Tell me, do you love this woman?"

"Better than my own soul."

"Ha! ha! And you dragged her into shame! Truly, you men are charming creatures. You said the same of me once."

"That was before I knew you."

"You were anxious enough to marry me."

"Yes, when one is young and impetuous things all look so different. You know very well we get to hate each other at the end of a few months, and when I proposed that we should go our separate ways you were glad enough to consent to it. No one knew of our marriage in Malta. I never mentioned it, I presume you did not either. I have never interfered with you or made any inquiries as to the life you lead. I have paid you regularly five hundred

a year, and you ought to be able to live on it. But I tell you again, I will increase this allowance to double the amount if you will go away and let me live in peace with my wife."

"Your wife? you say. Well, I must have your promise in writing." Drops of sweat were standing on Venner's face. He wiped them away.

"I will write the agreement to-morrow; will you go away, Clarice?"

"I will think about it. You must know I have a mind to stay and see the fun. I have a mind to run up against you forty times a day, to see you turn pale and wince, to make little remarks before Lady Venner of which you will understand the hidden meaning - to make your life a horror to you. And then to end the matter by telling this charming Lady Venner the real position in which she stands to you. Oh, it would be dramatic - charming!"

Venner stood up. He was so agitated that he did not notice the approaching stop of a gendarme, and seeing her roughly by the arm said through his clenched teeth, "Devil that you are! - before you shall do all this I will kill you with my own hands. I'm not sure I won't do it now."

The footsteps ceased - the gendarme was standing almost at his elbow. Sir Julian turned suddenly towards him.

"What do you want?"

"But monsieur uses the remarkable language," said the officer. He knew Venner well by sight and was disposed to treat him politely.

“Yes, we rehearse a scene we have to take part in - private theatricals,” said the baronet, trying to force a smile.

“Ah! just so,” said the gendarme. But he did not offer to go away, and Sir Julian after a minutes hesitation decided he must walk with the woman in the direction of his hotel so as to disarm suspicion.

But the ruse was not a particularly effective one, for the gendarme naturally made inquiries as to the woman's identity, and on learning that she was Lady Venner's maid determined to keep his eyes and ears open for further developments.

Chapter Eleven

Lady Venner was feeling chilly after a long drive to Monaco, and having indulged in a fire in her bedroom she invited Mrs. Phillipson to a chat and some tea.

When that lady knocked at the door Clarice was flitting about hanging her mistress's afternoon dress in the wardrobe and laying out her evening toilette. After taking the tea from the waiter, and placing it on a table between the two friends she went out, closing the door quietly behind her.

"That's a remarkable young woman," said Mrs. Phillipson."

"Yes, I think she knows her business very well. Generally a new maid is more bother than she is worth till she gets into one's ways, but Clarice seems instinctively to know what I want and where to find it."

"Rather odd for a maid to have the fashionable shade in hair; don't you think my dear, she might be induced to darken it a bit?"

"It's the natural color, I believe," said Phyllis, amused, for Mrs. Phillipson's own locks had attained a decidedly Venetian red since her week's shopping in Paris.

"Well, of course it doesn't matter to you, dear - golden hair is so sweet and innocent looking - still, most women would feel it an objection: and, after all, I suspect her hair is in reality jet black. Such a pity people won't see how much wiser it is to let nature alone. Your delightful father was only telling me yesterday how perfectly he thought my hair set off my complexion; but, there - I've always had a free out-of-door life; it must tell in the end.

"Yes," said Phyllis, smiling, "and that cream lotion you told me about is marvellous in smoothing out wrinkles, isn't it?"

"Don't talk of such things. I won't even mention them; you know I'm a great believer in faith-healing in all its branches. I absolutely refuse to think it's possible to get old and ugly and wrinkled."

"I'm sure you will never do so, at any rate," said Phyllis, who added to herself, "if nature can't keep you young, art will."

"Well, we won't talk about these disagreeable subjects. Do, my dear child, tell me all about your father; I think he is the most charming, as well as the most fortunate, of men. He tells me he made £31,000 at the tables, thirteen reversed - isn't it sweet?"

"I think you know more about him than I do, for

he has been rushing about so ever since he made his big coup that I have scarcely spoken to him. I heard something about a villa that he intended to hire.”

“Yes, I discovered it a few days ago, and inquired the rent, but the price was too long for me. It’s a perfect bower of roses. They are climbing all over the place; the charming grey of the oliver wood as a background brings out the color of the clustering pink blossoms all the more vividly. That nice Mr. Santonio, too, is delighted with it, and he is quoting Persian poetry all day long. And I’m sure its full of things he oughtn’t to mention before me. Still, of course, everyone is devoted to Persian poetry nowadays.”

“Mr. Santonio is a curious man; I can’t understand his mystical side at all. I have always thought of mystics as ascetics, and quite above us poor sublunary creatures.”

“Mr dear, that shows you don’t know much about it. Why, America is chockful of mystics and occultists, and I can tell you they don’t trouble to take their dinner in the back kitchen.”

“Oh, surely that isn’t fair?”

“Fair or not, it’s the truth I’m telling you. The ascetics may talk and pose as knowing a mighty lot, but if want to see a good demonstration you collect the fattest people of your acquaintance, and I’ll warrant you that if you get a fat medium into the bargain - you’ll see the whole company floating in their like so many balloons before the sitting is over.”

Phyllis laughed.

“Well, it stands to reason, doesn’t it? Fat people can

float in the water, why shouldn't they float in the air? I have seen most things there are to be seen, and I generally find a common-sense reason for the miracles I experience. But tell me about your father. Is he always as lively as he appears in company, or is he one of those terrible men whose goods are all in the shop-window, and who bore their families to death?"

"Oh, no; papa was always lively. I don't think I've ever seen him really serious in life. I remember my mother once asking him if he ever thought of the realities of life, and he said that he didn't believe there were any."

"Dear me. Now, a man of that sort outs a woman on her metal, doesn't he? I know I feel an irresistible desire to make people who adopt such an attitude squeal a little."

"Yes, perhaps it is a little irritating, but I always live and let live myself."

"No wonder, with a paragon of a husband like yours. I don't think in all my experience I have ever seen such a delightful creature. Most men, if they are devoted, show it by intolerable jealousy and stupidity. Now, he behaves perfectly; but then I must do you the justice to say you give him no reason to do anything else; in fact, you are a complete example of married happiness. Why, if everyone was like you two we should be having the streets of our towns lined with Gardens of Eden. You really owe it to society to show yourselves. I do wish Sir Julian would be persuaded to let you be presented at the first Drawing Room. Have you spoken to him about it?"

"I did mention it once. I forget what he said -

something interrupted us, I suppose - but I ought to be able to manage an early season Drawing Room."

"Well, do speak to him at once, these things have to be arranged such ages before-hand, you know. They search out one's antecedents as carefully, as if one was applying for a post as charwoman to one her Majesty's prisons."

"Oh! that is rather unpleasant, isn't it?"

"You need not fear, my dear, your family and your husband's family should be ample guarantee, but several years of my life were spent in ignobly working for my living!"

"Indeed, I wish I could say the same. I found it so impossible to get work that I have always looked upon women with an occupation with the greatest respect ever since."

"I didn't realise you had ever been hard up; tell me about it."

Lady Venner suddenly remember that probably it would be best to be silent about the events which had taken place between her mother's death and her own marriage, so she said briefly she had once taken it into her head to try and give violin lessons. She was getting a little involved in her narrative when Sir Julian knocked at the door, somewhat to her relief. On seeing Mrs. Phillipson he was about to retire, but she insisted volubly on his remaining.

"Don't be alarmed, Sir Julian," she called out. "Remember in Rome we do as Rome does, and at the Hotel de Paris we do as the Hotel de Paris does."

"Heaven forbid," said Sir Julian, smiling. He was glad to find that his wife's maid was not with her, and he came in and accepted the offer of a cup of tea, which he swallowed, strong as it was, sooner than ring for more.

"Now, Lady Venner, you must break our little plot to your husband. I'm sure he is just in the mood to do as you ask him, aren't you, Sir Julian?"

"I am always in that mood I hope; unfortunately sometimes even with the best will in the world one cannot accomplish everything."

"Well, nothing is easier than our request to a man of your position and means. We are both bent on being presented to the dear Queen; I have made my arrangements and now I am most anxious that Lady Venner should kiss hands on the same day as myself. Please don't look so dreadfully severe. I ought to have left Phyllis to suggest it herself, then I am sure it would have found favour in your sight."

"I am sorry, but Phyllis - Lady Venner knows we thought of staying abroad until May, when our house in Derbyshire will be ready for us, and I - I think Phyllis will on consideration see it would be wiser to wait for - for a year or so."

Phyllis stretched out her hand to her husband.

"Of course, dear," she said. "I have always heard that it is terribly fatiguing. I am sure you are quite right."

"But, my dear Sir Julian," persisted Mrs. Phillipson, "after all she can be as cosy as possible. And it will be easy enough for you with your connections to get the entrée. If you will leave the arrangements for Phyllis's

comfort to me I will see that she runs absolutely no risk of fatigue."

The baronet argued no further; he bowed courteously, and said he would think about it.

At this moment a light tap was heard at the door.

"A note for Madame," said the voice he knew, and hated, so well.

"That is Clarice," said Phyllis; "look at her, Julian, and tell me what you think of her, Come in," she cried in a louder tone.

Clarice handed a note on a little silver tray to her mistress, and with her eyes bent studiously on the ground she said:

"The messenger is waiting to see if Madame wishes to send an answer."

Phyllis read the note, and Clarice, seeing that Mrs. Phillipson was scrutinising her carefully remained immovable with her eyes down. Sir Julian pulled his moustache and turn his back upon her. The twilight had enabled him to hope that none had noticed the deep flush which had mounted to his temples on her entrance. "It is from papa," said Phyllis, "asking us to go for a sail tomorrow; he has met a friend who had offered him the use of his yacht. He is writing to Mrs. Phillipson, Mr. Pierrepont and Mr. Santonio."

"Delightful!" cried Mrs. Phillipson. "Of course you will go. Please say I am with you and shall be charmed." Phyllis hostility began to scribble a few lines, which she handed to Julian to read. He inadvertently dropped it, and Clarice instantly stooped and picked it up, holding it

out to him with a side glance that sent cold shivers down his back.

How he wishes he could throttle this self-possessed little serpent that had intruded itself into his paradise, rising up in retribution for the madness of his bygone youth, rearing its pretty sleek head and twinning its coils round the woman who had made earth a heaven for him. He sat in dumb rage; holding his breath in terror lest the women should his heart thumping against the walls of his chest. When Clarice had left the room Phyllis at once turned to Julian and asked his opinion of her.

"I don't like the look of her at all," he said. "My impression is that you should look out at once for someone to take her place."

"Ah, now," chimed Mrs. Phillipson, "that is right. Sir Julian, you at least agree with me on this point. There is something cat-like about her. She looks as if she might spring at any moment."

"Oh, I do think you are hard upon the girl. I am sure she is a capital servant. I never had anyone so quiet and efficient about me before. It's ridiculous to find fault with her for her best qualities."

"Mark my words, Phyllis, she is a dangerous woman," said Mrs. Phillipson.

"Well," laughed Lady Venner, "I have a good, strong protector, haven't I?" and she took Venner's arm and pressed it. "With him I don't think I should be afraid of anything or anybody."

Chapter Twelve

The Water Queen, lent by the Lord Belsize, was an exceedingly roomy yacht - that is to say, as yachts go. And the ladies were highly delighted with the charming little cabin which was set apart for their exclusive use.

They were soon under weigh sailing merrily over the blue waves of the Mediterranean as lightly as if there were no such thing as crime, or care, or misery in the wide, bright world. Santonio, who has brought his man with a hookah, established himself cross-legged on a rug, and proceeded to expound the secrets of the universe to his old friend's guests. Mrs. Phillipspn lounged by his side in a comfortable desk chair with Pierrepont at her feet, while Lorraine showed the Venner over the yacht, and explained that he thought he might do worse than invest some of his winnings in the little craft for which

it's owner was trying to find a purchaser.

"Belsize - you know Belsize, I suppose, Venner? - is a capital fellow. Delightfully naïve, no humbug about him. Four days ago my lord passed me in the Casino. Didn't remember me in the least; in fact, I doubt if he perceived my existence. Yesterday he actually left his seat at the tables to come up and claim acquaintance. Now, when a woman is such an honest fool as that one feels one might even trust oneself to buy a horse from him."

"I knew him a year or two back; he is a man I could never like," said Venner, remembering with horror that Lord Belsize had seen him drive up with Phyllis to the club on the fatal morning after her arrival at Hardengate. Verily, the mills of the gods grind slowly, but they grind exceeding small. He felt that Fate was enclosing him in her net on all sides, and could scarcely bring himself to leave Phyllis for a moment for each second was doubly precious to him in that he feared it might be the last in which he could look into her blue eyes and see no horror reflected there. For a while he thought of ending it all but one swift plunge into the depths of the sea; it seemed that if life could only end for him in that perfect moment - the sky above, the sea below, the white birds sailing between - it would be well ended.

Presently he roused himself from his gloom, and finding that Phyllis and her father had wandered off together he turned to the others, and heard Santonio and Mrs. Phillipson discussing a famous medium whom they called Eustacia and the experiments of the professors of psychical research at an island which dimly appear on

the horizon.

"I have read the report, but it was mere commonplace to me. With my own eyes I have seen far greater wonders," said the Greek.

"Do tell us!" cried Gavan Pierrepont and Mrs. Phillipson.

"Well, of all unlikely places, my great experience was in London," said Santonio, taking a deep pull at his hookah and making the rosewater bubble as he did so. "It was at the house of a City man I know, Marrett. He, his wife, and I sat with a youth named Algernon Carnforth, who was a marvellous medium. We were in a room not 12ft. square, a larger dinner-wagon occupied one end - Algernon sat on the opposite end of the room at a small round table. Mrs Marrett was on one side, myself on the other, holding his wrists; while Marrett knelt on the floor holding his feet. The room was dark, but before long pale lights began to fly about, and after various rappings and knocks had been administered all round, that dinner wagon with the glasses jingling very slightly, edged itself past us and settled at the other end of the room. After everyone had gone I tried to move the thing back myself through the same space, and I assure you it was all I could do, for it positively scraped the walls. Well, Marrett jumped up and shouted to his wife and me to hold on tight, and I then saw Algernon had become perfectly rigid. His feet rose in the air, and when he'd got himself into line, so to speak - up he went nearly to the ceiling. Mrs. Marrett and I stood on our chairs holding onto his wrists, and Marrett capered

about below, mad with excitement. After a few minutes - it seemed hours to me - Algernon came down again. He was in a dead trance, and told us no end of things, and Marrett made £20,000 on the Stock Exchange within a week of that interview."

"What did you make?" said Pierrepont.

"Not so much," said Santonio, lazily. "I'd give something to get hold of Algernon again, though. My faith increased considerably by the end of the week, but Marrett kept his address dark, and I never discovered it."

"But this is too delightful, Mr. Santonio, you should really put the detectives on his track. Do you still know this Mr. - Mr. Marret?"

"What Marrett is that?" said Phyllis, who came up in time to hear the last words.

Mr. Santonio had been telling us wonderful stories of a friend of his named Marrett, and a medium."

"Indeed! Why I remember a man named Brian Marrett, who was very kind to me at the time my mother died," said Phyllis thoughtfully.

"Brian Marrett," said Santonio, "that must be the only son of my old friend. He was a studious sort of a chap, went in for collecting blue china or something."

"It must be the same then; how curious that you should have known him," said Phyllis, and turned away lost in thought. The days in the Museum reading room came vividly back to her and she remembered for the first time that she had never fulfilled her promise to write to Brian and determined to do so at once on her return to the hotel. In the meantime Santonio continued

his disquisition on occultism.

"Why trouble," said Lorraine, "I succeeded in breaking the bank without invoking the aid of anything uncanny."

"Ah, my dear fellow," said Santonio, putting down his hookah, "some are born lucky, some achieve luck, some have luck thrust upon them, You cannot expect Fortune to throw herself at all our hands."

"Luck, my dear Santonio, is a mere illusion of the senses. I am lucky merely because I have succeeded in making all you people think me so for the moment. Tomorrow some illusion-monger stronger than I am may come along, and you will all think me the most miserable of men. It matters nothing to me, I am just the same but to you I shall wear a dozen different appearances. One moment I shine like the spark of my cigarette, the next I am lost in the darkness and oblivion," and he threw the little roll of tobacco into the sea.

Venner watched it absently as it floated on the waves. His wife, seeing his abstraction went to him, leaning over the rail of the yacht by his side.

"Don't let papa make you melancholy; he doesn't believe all these morbid things a bit, really; he only likes to show off," she said, rallying him.

"My dear, me dear, I am a fool. I am so happy with you that I am terrified. A great-fear haunts me day and night. I know it is impossible for human happiness to last, and yet I feel I cannot bear to lose mine. Do you know what I almost wished just now?"

"Tell me."

"I wished that we could come to an end here, that we

two together could dive down into that deep calm sea and know no more. You remember the old tale of Paolo and Francesco - if we might float over this wonderful water for ever like the white birds yonder. If we only could, dear."

She laid her hand on his arm and said gently, "Come away, you frighten me. You must not have such terrible forebodings while I feel I am happy - as happy as ever I can."

"Ah! Don't say so. That must always presage misfortune."

"Then you, who are miserable, must be going to be very, very happy. Come, dear."

She led him back to his deck chair chattering brightly, and the wind changing soon afterwards they headed for shore.

"You see my luck pursues me," said Lorraine, "even the wind blows from a convenient quarter. I shall soon think myself a greater master of the elements than Santonio himself. Why, Mrs. Phillipson, our friend has actually gone to sleep; will you come and look at the sunset and leave him to snore as he listeth?"

Mrs. Phillipson rose and they strolled away from the others.

"I had a long walk with your daughter yesterday," said the lady mischievously, "and heard all about you."

"Nothing against my domestic character, I treat," said Lorraine with a grimace. "Phyllis and I always got on well together."

"She told me you are completely indifferent to your

belongings.”

“How sharper than a serpent’s tooth is an ungrateful daughter. For the past year I have been in vain clamouring at my agents for news of Phyllis and her mother, but he had lost all trace of them.”

“You’re not a bit serious even now. I don’t believe you have a spark of human feeling,” said the American.

“I wish you’d give me permission to prove that I have,” said Lorraine, looking unutterable things.

“Oh, yes; it is easy enough to pass it off like that. I wonder what you would do if I were to take you at your word,” she said, watching his face narrowly as she spoke.

“Pray do,” he remarked unmoved.

“Do what?” said she, provoked.

“Take me at my word,” he replied smiling.

“I am lost in a fog. I forget what was the original suggestion.”

“I see you are a dexterous flirt, Mrs. Phillipson.”

“Mr. Lorraine, what do you mean? Isn’t that rather rude?”

“On the contrary, I consider my remark a compliment. Flirting is a great art.”

“A mere war of wits, quite harmless to both parties?” she asked, piqued.

“On the contrary, a great enlightener. Without flirting the sexes would never exchange ideas, they would be obliged to remain silent save for a few futile ejaculations such as ‘Dear!’ ‘Darling!’ ‘Dearest!’ and so on. Even such expressions are purposeless, for a touch or a look can convey much more.”

"You are trying to back out of your difficulty. How tiresome you are! One would think you were a disciple of Confucious with the wooden check - the porcelain eye!"

"I trust you don't accuse me of having such useless and uncomfortable feature. Is not my eye beaming at the present moment? and it is not stimulated to beam by your presence?"

Mrs. Phillipson laughed.

"You are an absurd creature, Mr. Lorraine; one can't be angry with you, and yet you are most irritating. Now you must be quiet," she went on, "for I want to watch the sunset, and I can't do that while you are chattering."

Lorraine lighted a cigarette and leaned over the railing. He was silent for some time and then asked suddenly:

"Do you ever contemplate matrimony, Mrs. Phillipson?"

"From a respectful distance," said the lady languidly.

"Ah!" sighed Lorraine, and resumed his previous attitude. This annoyed the widow, but she kept her eyes fixed on the glowing west until the first star hung like a diamond in the pale sky, when she remarked it was chilly.

"We will have a parting toast," cried Lorraine, moving off to order another bottle of champagne. Santonio awoke at the popping of the cork and sat up.

"Ah!" he said, looking round; "I was dreaming of Algernon. I thank you, Lorraine. Your health, and may your shadow never grow less."

"Good health and long life to us all," said Pierrepont,

who felt that he had not wasted his day, for Mrs. Phillipson had been very nice to him on the whole, and he began to hope she was a woman with a soul above lucre.

It was quite dark when they walked up to the hotel. As they neared it a slight figure brushed past them on the pavement and Julian Venner stifled a curse, for the gleam from a lamp fell on the red gold hair of his wife's maid.

Chapter Thirteen

At the best of times Pimlico is not an inspiring neighbourhood. In the winter, when a keen wind comes cutting round every corner, and the sprinkling of night snow rapidly changes into greasy mud, it is even more dismal. Algernon Carnforth was getting very tired of being alone, and since Clarice had taken her departure to the Riviera he had been dreaming of clear skies, of sunshine, of azure water lapping against dark rocks, of lemon trees laden with pale golden fruit, of roses growing in masses, of gay crowds and happy vagabondage. Oh! for light and sunshine and perfume of flowers! Why couldn't he go to Monte Carlo, too? What a fool he had been to allow Clarice to leave him behind.

And then the money - that £50 she had promised him; supposing she had thought better of it, and didn't

send it along at all. A pretty fix he should be in. The fact is, young Carnforth had been "cooking" his books at his employer's office to cover his racing losses; and if the deficit he had "borrowed" was not replaced before the monthly settling day came round he was likely enough to find himself in the hands of the police.

He was very young, very boldly brought up, and in very bad hands; that is to say, he was utterly enslaved by Clarice Duplés.

He was very young, very badly brought up, and in very bad hands; that is to say, he was utterly enslaved by Clarice Duplés.

He had first fallen in with her a year ago, and before he had known her a fortnight she had bound him to her hand and foot. At first the infatuated boy saw in her only a goddess, and had anyone told him that she was an unprincipled and coarse-minded woman he would have been ready to fight for her honor. He no longer believed her to be a goddess, but he had learnt to utterly depend upon her. His own nature was a weak one - now that she had gone away he was unsettled and wretched, and his chief thought was as to how he could follow her.

Tramping in the direction of his rooms about a week after Clarice had left him, he was hailed but the very last person he wished to meet in his present mood. Brian Marrett, for it was he, had been away from home for a day or two, and on his return had found a letter from Phyllis awaiting him. It was charmingly apologetic, and after telling him of her manny wanderings since their parting, went on to say that she was married to Sir Julian Venner,

and hoped on their return to London to see something of the friend who had stood her in such good stead during her time of need.

The letter, kind as it was, contained news which Brian found himself unable to bear with equanimity, so he started for a long solitary walk, and by the time he met Carnforth was hungering for a little human sympathy and companionship.

Accordingly he faced round, and, slipping his arm into Algy's, asked:

"Whither away?"

"To my diggings," said Carnforth, not over pleased to meet his old friend.

"I will come with you. It is ages since we met, and I have no end of things to say to you. Why have you not been near us for so long? My father is quite unhappy about it; you know he promised your mother he would look after you when you came to town. Why have you completely given us the slip this last year. It was not kind; you know how interested we all were in you."

"Oh, rats!" said Algy, rudely. "You weren't in the least interested in me for myself, merely for the sake of your confounded experiments. Do you think I am a fool? Your father used to press me to come round to your house simply because I was the best medium he had ever found."

"You do my father an injustice, Algy; I won't deny he was interested in you as a medium; but beyond that he was a friend of your people, and wanted you, if possible, to keep straight for your mother's sake."

If Carnforth had a soft spot in the world it was for his mother, so he said more gently:

“Well, it’s too late now, Marrett.”

“It’s never too late.”

“That is a sophism, and you know it. Look here,” he said suddenly, “as you insist upon it you shall come round to my diggings. I want somebody to talk to.”

“All right,” said Marrett, “I shall be very pleased. I’m glad I met you; you seem to have changed tremendously since I last saw you. We used to be great chums once, Algy.”

“That was before I found out what your father was driving at. He was making me his slave. In the latter days I used to begin going off into a trance directly he looked at me. A fellow had got to kick at that sort of thing, you know.”

“My father is such an enthusiast about spiritualism that I suppose he wore you out a bit. It was a pity for more reasons than one. Still, if you had told him you didn’t like it I am sure he would not have worried you.”

“How could I tell him I didn’t like it; he simply drew me to the house, and before I came into the room where he was I felt his influence. I shan’t forget the night he had that infernal Greek occultist at your place; they sucked my life out of me. I was ill for a week afterwards. Fortunately for me, I broke away from there,”

“How did you manage it?” asked Marrett, interested. They were letting themselves into Carnforth’s lodgings by now, and he did not answer until they had reached the sittingroom and shut the door. The pointing to a

photograph on the mantelshelf he said curtly:

"That is how I managed it"

"Ah!" said Marrett. One glance at the beautiful, passionate woman there depicted sufficed to reveal the whole tale to him. He glanced from the picture to Algy, and marveled no longer at the lines in his face and the absolute chance from the invoice-looking boy he had known a year ago to the dissipated, reckless man now before him.

"Yes, yes, of course," he said, as a very different image rose in his own vision. Then he added thoughtfully:

"Who is she?"

"As far as I know she is a Frenchwoman," said Algy. "She says she is, but as she hardly ever speaks the truth the chances are she isn't. She calls herself Clarice Duplés, which is sufficient guarantee for me that it isn't her real name at all."

"Where did you meet her?"

"At the Alsatians. Belsize had taken her there. She danced with him all night, and only about half an hour before she left could I get to speak to her. From that moment my fate was sealed."

"That was a year ago," suggested Marrett.

"What is that to me? I know that she lies to me, that she deceives me, but when she swears she is mine alone of all the world I always believe her. It is not the slightest use for you to tell me that I am a fool, I know all about that, I simply can't help it."

"She doesn't think much of this place, I expect," said Marrett, glazing round the dingy looking room.

"She's never seen it. She has a luxurious little flat of her own in Ebury-st. Her story is that she is a widow and that her husband had left her all his money. But I don't believe it." Marrett looked horrified.

"You don't believe her, and continue to be her lover."

"I do. What is more she is engaged just now in getting me £50, and I am perfectly certain that to get this sum she will have to blackmail someone or other."

"You will take this money?"

"Yes. My dear Marrett, I have brought you here to-night that I may lay out before you in all its detail my life. You told me a short time ago that it is never too late to turn over a new leaf. When a man has sunk as low as I have, then I say there is no help that that man, and death can bring him no torture worse than he suffers here."

Marrett had no answer to make, but shook his head a little, and glanced uneasily at the photograph again.

"You think I am mad, I suppose?" said Carnforth. "Possibly you are right. If to love a woman with every fibre of your being, to only live when you are near her, to long for her every instant and at the same time to hate and loathe her, be madness - then surely I am mad."

"I don't know that it is madness," said Marrett, "it seems to me that you have just lost the proportion of things. You have a furious passion for this woman, but let me tell you, old fellow, you don't know the meaning of the word love. You will probably come to your right sense one day when you meet a good woman. It is not in us to love the evil when we have found the good. Can't I

help you in any way?"

"No," said Algernon.

"Well but this state of things is desperate; it can't go on. You must break off the wretched affair."

"You are talking like a child," said Carnforth; "there is no breaking away from such a bond as this except through death. Yet anything would be better than this maddening jealousy, this misery of unrest."

As he spoke the little maid-of-all-work tapped at the door and handed in a letter. Carnforth tore it open.

It was from Clarice, and contained a note and a draft for a hundred pounds.

The boy's eyes glittered. "By Jove!" he cried, changing completely, "she is a good sort, isn't she? Said she would send fifty, and has made it a hundred. Not much doubt as to what I'll do now."

"Does she say where she got it from?"

"What do I care where she got it from; what do I care for anything now I know I shall see her again in a few days."

"What are you going to do?"

"Well, I am going to pay back the money I borrowed from the office, and then I shall take the first boat I can catch over to France. I'm sick of London; I hate the hole."

"You are really bent on this, Carnforth?" asked Marrett.

"I am."

"Carnforth, send back that money. I will lend you what you need, and you can break off this wretched affair. Be

advised by me, do not seek her out; in a month's time you will have forgotten her."

Carnforth looked at him steadily, a queer smile playing on his still handsome face.

"I fancy you don't quite grasp the situation, Marrett," he said. "You see, I don't want to forget her."

Marrett, seeing that all persuasion was hopeless, said "Good-night;" and as he left the rooms his own ideal affection for his lost "Museum girl" and the wild passion of Carnforth stood out in strange contrast in his mind.

Chapter Fourteen

Algernon Carnforth was as good as his word. He repaid the money, and without giving his employers any notice of his movements quietly took himself off. A small gladstone bag was all the luggage he encumbered himself with, and that same evening he found himself at Victoria comfortably ensconced in a first-class carriage of the Continental express. He had been to the Riviera before when he was a lad, and looked forward with pleasure to the recognition of landmarks along the route. He felt very nearly light-hearted. He was going to sunshine, to warmth, to flowers, to perfumes - to Clarice! He hoped to be able to persuade her to leave Monte Carlo and go with him to some quiet Italian village.

The fact that he had no money beyond the £50 she had sent him (minus his ticket to Monte Carlo), did not

trouble him at all. Clarice evidently had money, and as to taking it from her - well, if he had to "go under," he might as well get all the pleasure he could first.

He settled himself snugly in his corner and slept soundly until they reached Dover. He was a good sailor, and rather enjoyed the rough crossing than otherwise. At Calais he went into the buffet for coffee, and then called a port to put him into a through carriage for the Riviera.

For the greater part of his twenty-four hours' journey he slept like a child, but as the train was nearing Nice he awoke, and excitedly reminded himself that now he was near her - to his evil genius, to his adored one! Through the tunnel they sped, and behold! Monaco, with the Tête du Chien in the background, while in the foreground gleamed Monte Carlo - the most enviable spot in the world, because it held Clarice. He had himself driven to the Grand Hotel, and had his name entered on the books as Algernon Carnfoth, Esq., South Belgravia, London, with an easy smile. Then he had a bath, dressed, and ordered déjeuner, thinking how surprised Clarice would be when he touched her on the shoulder at the tables. He had never been inside the Casino before. On his previous visit to Monte Carlo he was with his parents, and they had forbidden him to enter the Salons, so that he was not quite certain as to the proper mode of procedure. It did not take him very long to ascertain, however, it being the chief business of all the officials in the place to enlighten visitors as to the quickest and simplest way of pouring money into the pockets of the owner of the Principality. He accordingly found no difficulty in getting a day ticket

issued to him, and not long after noon wended his way to the Salies à jeu.

It happened that Lorraine and Santonio were both gambling this morning. Lorraine's good luck was still predominant, and people were following his play. It seemed as though he could not do the wrong thing. Santonio declared it was magic, and black magic, too, that he had enlisted on his side.

"How did you find out the trick?" he asked. "I can't work the oracle that way." Lorraine laughed.

Suddenly Santonio caught him by the arm. "By Jove! Lorraine, congratulate me. I have rediscovered my mascot."

"What on earth are you talking about?" said Lorraine bewildered.

"There at the other table, that young fellow with the pale face and dark hair, biting his lips. I must go and speak to him, he shall not escape me this time."

Lorraine was not in the least interested as to whether the excited Greek let his mascot escape or not. But his luck had changed, so he decided to play no more just then and sauntered across to the other table, where he found Santonio already in conversation with the young man he had pointed out. The young man, who of course was no other than Algernon Carnforth, looked anything but pleased, and never once raised his eyes to Santonio's face as he spoke.

The Greek felt the bad impression he was making, so turned to Lorraine and whispered, while Algernon again fixed his attention on the play:

“You remember my speaking the other day when we were on the yacht of a marvellous boy-medium I had come in contact with in London about a couple of years ago? This is the fellow - evidently he has altered a great deal since then, and the chances are ten to one that he will not be nearly so valuable now. Been dissipating, I take it - that always counteracts powers if clairvoyance. But I am very anxious to have another try with him, and I want you to help me work it.”

“Well?” said Lorraine, lazily.

“He is suspicious of me - I can see that plainly - and the probability is that if I were to suggest séance he would refuse point blank; he might even leave the place.”

“What the dickens does it matter if he does?”

“But, my dear Lorraine, it is of the most enormous importance,” said the Greek, taking off his hat and rumpling his slack hair wildly in his agitation. “One only meets such a powerful medium as he is about once in a life-time. You surely will help me to secure him? Who can say what valuable information he may give us!”

“But I don’t want any valuable information,” said Lorraine. “I know too much about my friends already. Where ignorance is bliss ‘tis folly to be wise. He can’t give me any information worth having as to how to gamble, because I have already had phenomenal luck, and don’t care if I never win another franc.”

“Heavens, man, how can you be so egotistical! I tell you it is of the utmost importance to me to secure this fellow and put him into a trance. For years I have sought for - someone - you know who I mean, who eludes me at

every turn. It is vital to me; pray give me your assistance."

"Well, but how do you know that this boy, or man, or whatever he is, can really be of any use to you."

"I am certain of it. Two years ago when I first met him at my friend Marrett's I unfortunately showed too plainly my anxiety to get hold of him. Marrett became jealous, and, I suppose, arranged for the boy to disappear. At any rate, though I hunted London for months I could not find him. Strangely enough, within a few days of our conversation about him he turns up here under my very nose, and you will let him slip through my fingers!"

Lorraine, with his happy, careless philosophy, believed in neither God nor devil: the universe was a very simple piece of mechanism to him, and occultism a dead letter. He scoffed at spiritualism in the same easy, bantering way that he scoffed at everything else, but he had a certain amount of lazy good-nature, and when he saw that Santonio was deeply in earnest over the matter, decided that it was really didn't much matter if he humoured him or not. So he asked:

"What do you want me to do?"

Santonio's face brightened, and heaved a deep sigh of relief.

"You are a good fellow, Lorraine; it's very simple. Just talk to him quietly about matters quite extraneous to spiritualism, and in a casual sort of way ask him to come in to-morrow evening and smoke a cigar with you at your villa. He is sure to accept, because while you are talking to him I shall take care to direct his will. The rest will be plain. When he comes and finds the room arranged

for ta séance the old habit will assert itself, and he will fall naturally back into the thing at once.”

“I wonder how you would have managed if I hadn’t happened to hire the villa.”

“Well, I should have tried to work the thing at the hotel; but it would have been very awkward to arrange, and might possibly have led to bothers. As it is, I consider my star must have been in the ascendant when you decided to hire the villa instead of the yacht.”

“Well, hurry up with your willing, because I want to get outside. I shall give the initiation forthwith. Only mind, I think it’s all a lot of damned nonsense and if anything goes wrong you must take the responsibility.”

“All right!” said Santonio, joyfully.

So when Lorraine, on entering into a casual conversation with Carnforth, finally said he should like to meet him again, and should be glad if he would come and smoke a cigar with him on the following evening. Algernon replied that he should be pleased to do so. Lorraine instructed him as to the whereabouts of his villa, which stood a little off the Nice road, and the two friends sauntered out of the Casino.

Chapter Fifteen

Eight o'clock being the hour appointed for the séance, the Venners and Mrs. Phillipson dined together early. Lorraine had at last entered into the spirit of the thing and spent the day in arranging what he called "test conditions" to his own entire satisfaction.

A new white drugget was carefully nailed down, the furniture which was allowed to remain was carefully weighted, and a decision arrived at that Algernon was not to enter the room until the last moment. Santonio was allowed to come in at eight o'clock, and the only thing he did was to close the shutters and light some pastilles.

When Algernon came in quite unsuspectingly it was the work of only a few moments to hypnotise him. He was seated in a larger arm-chair in front of a table, on

which stood a brazier of incense, a small oil-lamp, and some other things.

The guests entered, and were instructed to sit in a circle holding each other by the fingertips.

Santonio placed a small ring in Algernon's hand.

"Oh," whispered Mrs. Phillipson after a few minutes had elapsed, "I'm getting cold all over."

"Hush!" said Santonio firmly. "Now, what do you want to know?"

"You should ask him what he can tell us. It's no use for us to ask questions he can't answer," said Mrs. Phillipson.

"Ask him if he can tell us who he is," said Lorraine.

"Who are you?" asked Santonio in solemn tones, "and remember you are to speak the truth, or the penalty will be inflicted."

"Algernon Carnforth."

"Why did you leave off acting as medium for Henry Marrett?"

"I told him all he wanted to know until -"

"Why did you stop?"

"She is there before me with her finger on her lip, she tells me I am not to speak."

"What is her name? Answer or -"

"I dare not, I dare not!" cried the medium writhing.

"Oh, this is horrible," cried Phyllis, "don't torture the poor wretch like this; ask him to tell you something that doesn't matter."

At this moment Algernon began to chant a sort of song. It was a little French ballade.

"Now we have his second personality; it always sang very prettily," said Santonio.

"That is right; now tell us how you have been whiling away the time since we last met."

Algernon burst into roars of laughter, and began such a tale that this time Venner insisted either that Santonio should stop him or that the ladies should leave them. Mrs. Phillipson was much too interested to budge, so that Santonio's only resource was to put Algernon into a still deeper trance. The result was somewhat unexpected.

The voice now proceeding from the medium was as thick and husky as that of the ordinary Cockney coster, while his whole frame shook with apparent rage. He was evidently roused to a high pitch of passion and seemed to be suffering from homicidal mania.

Santonio dashed water in his face and insisted upon his awaking. This was a somewhat lengthy process, and as the medium became calmer Mrs. Phillipson began to complain that they had wasted their opportunities.

"I am going to ask an easy test question," she said.

Everyone sat expectant.

"Will Lady Venner be presented this season?"

"No!" shouted the medium.

"You need not be so violent," said Mrs. Phillipson. "Why not?"

"Because a red-haired woman will stop it."

"But I have red hair, and I am most anxious to promote it," said Mrs. Phillipson. "Now, isn't that absurd?"

Sir Julian hurriedly interposed. "Yes, now you see how little reliance can be placed on these ridiculous

creatures.”

“What’s that? what’s that?” cried the medium, apparently coming to. “Who is that man? Why, he’s a nice one to talk about reliance; his whole life is alie. Why, he deceives his nearest and dearest.”

“Is the man asleep or awake?” asked Sir Julian, excitedly. “If he is awake, I shall take him outside; if he is not reasonable, I think it is time he was left to himself.”

“Oh, please, Sir Julian, don’t get angry with him: it is so very interesting - I never came across a medium of this class before,” said Mrs. Phillipson. “Now, let me ask him a mental question. Don’t speak, anyone.”

The baronet was obliged to be silent. Mrs. Phillipson took the medium’s hand, and after a short pause he said -

“Yes, at Malta.”

Sir Julian started. “Hush,” said Mrs. Phillipson; “wait.”

Again there was a short pause. This time the medium said: “Red hair.”

Sir Julian rose to his feet, Mrs. Phillipsom warned him back.

“Clarice Duplés,” said the medium, and Sir Julian upset the table in his efforts to control himself. Luckily for him, at this moment the medium broke out into a stream of strong language which gave him an excuse for half throttling him, while the ladies hurried away. Santonio could scarcely get him to loosen his grip, and Algernon came to himself while Venner was still standing over him, his eyes aflame with anger and terror.

Santonio tried to pacify him, but he declared the man deserved a sound thrashing, in spite of the Greek's repeated assurances that an entranced medium knew nothing, and remembered nothing when he came to himself.

Algy sat in his chair exhausted and dogged, feeling that he had been entrapped, and Santonio apologised for not having foreseen that the medium's secondary and tertiary personalities might not be fit for polite society. Lorraine left them, and went to the discomfited ladies, whom he discovered sitting on the terrace enjoying the scent of the tobacco plants, which were turning their white starry flowers to the crescent moon.

Coffee was brought out and they were pleasantly chatting when Pierrepont strolled up and explained he had been detained by a run of bad luck at the tables. "My luck always changes; if I begin well I leave at once but if I start badly I sit tight, and know I shall carry off a haul if I only have patience," he explained.

"How much have you made?"

"A mere bagatelle," he said. "I was also amused by watching a fascinating little Frenchwoman who had a tremendous innings. I really thought she was going to follow Lorraine's example and break the bank. She was dressed in black, had red-gold hair, and looked like the demon of rough et noir."

"We are haunted by red hair to-night," Mrs. Phillipson. "The medium has told us all sorts of things about a red-haired woman."

"By the bye," said Phyllis, "what were the solent

questions you put to the medium. I couldn't make out why he should mention Clarice."

"I always invent some simple little test of that sort about commonplace things when I go to a séance, and write down the questions I intend to ask beforehand. Here they are," and Mrs. Phillipson opened her purse and produced a piece of foreign notepaper. "Is Lady Venner's maid a married woman? The reply was 'Yes.' If so, where did the ceremony take place? At Malta. What is her name? Clarice Duplés. You see I take some fact that I know, ask that, and two others which can easily be verified. You must inquire, dear, if she is married when you return."

"Oh, I don't think she is!"

"You never can tell. So many of these people have some unpleasant person attached to them whom they are only too glad to ignore."

"I am glad you think infelicity only exists among people of that sort," said Mrs. Lorraine.

"I don't see why you should care what my opinion is," said Mrs. Phillipson, who had been rather huffy with Lorraine since their interview on the yacht.

"Don't be cross," he said insinuatingly.

"The last thing I should ever dream of being. I'm the best tempered woman in the world."

"Then you must be very charming to me now, because I am going to give you something."

"What is it?" she asked.

He learnt forward a little, and slipped a beautiful solitaire ruby ring on the third finger of her left hand.

"Is it a bargain?" he whispered.

"I call this bribery, Mr. Lorraine."

"I do not bribe you to call me Mr. Lorraine, but to let me call you Mrs. Lorraine."

"I'll see what the stone is like when I get inside," said she, laughing. "I'm rather an expensive article, you know."

"Admirable! I couldn't have got out of it better myself. We were made for one another."

"Oh! Shouldn't I lead you a life?"

"As long as you keep me alive I don't mind much. Live and let live is all I ask."

"What will Phyllis say?"

"Shall we try the experiment of telling her?"

"Oh, dear me, no! Why, I have not accepted you yet!"

"Still, it would be interesting to see the effect of the announcement. I think Mr. Pierrepont should also be put out of his misery as soon as possible."

Mrs. Phillipson looked amused. Mr. Pierrepont was leaning back in the deck chair lazily smoking and exchanging remarks with Phyllis, whose eyes shone with a strange brilliance in the grey background of shadow. The scent of the night flowers had attracted a multitude of white moths, and the whole scene was one of strange fantastic beauty. The sound of a furious shouting caused them all to wake up from their pleasant reveries. The host, as in duty bound, went to see what was the matter, while Gavan Pierrepont, at the urgent request of the ladies, remained to protect them.

Chapter Sixteen

In the meantime Sir Julian had calmed himself sufficiently to think out a definite plan of action.

It had seemed in his guilty conscience that the answers given by Algernon to Mrs. Phillipson's silent questions must be in reference to himself; especially in view of the first demand the American had made respecting the presentations at Court. Somebody had been married at Matla to a red-haired woman named Clarice Duplés, and the medium had announced the fact. It was absolutely necessary that exactly what else he knew must be discovered.

Sir Julian, after Santonio had talked volubly on the subject of hypnotism and secondary and tertiary personalities for several minutes, said that he should much like to have a private interview with the medium, as he

wanted to convince himself of the genuineness of the phenomena. Santonio reluctantly left them together, but remained in the next room, for he had seen Venner was unduly excited, and did not wish his newly-discovered treasure to receive any personal injury.

When the two were alone Sir Julian came to the point at once.

"What will you take," he said, "to tell me the exact truth regarding your share in what has taken place to-night?"

"I can't tell monsieur more than he can tell himself," said Algernon politely.

"Nonsense," said Sir Julian. "I know all about hypnotism. I know very well the subject retains a more or less hazy consciousness even in the deepest trance. Now tell me what you know of this woman you mentioned."

With much strong language Algernon protested he didn't know he had spoken of a woman at all.

"Will twenty pounds open your mouth?"

"I'd willingly tell you anything I could, but I have nothing to tell. Did I mention any lady by name?"

"You know very well you did."

Again a volley of protestations, accompanied by the information that Algernon was thundering hard up, and only wished he did know something that would serve the purpose. He remarked he was pretty ready to sell his soul for fifty pounds at the present moment.

"Well, I'd make it fifty if you'll tell me all you can about Clarice Duplés."

"Oh, that's your game, is it?" said Algernon with a

sudden change of manner. "You're after her, are you? That's why - Oh, I see it all now," and the boy laughed hysterically.

"Well, I am waiting for your answer," said Sir Julian.

With wild cry Algernon sprang at Sir Julian's throat in a very fury of madness. The strength of his maniacal grasp rendered even the skill for which Venner was famous in the noble art of self-defence unavailing. In less than no time he was pinned to the ground, Angernon kneeling on his chest, his fingers closed with a clutch of iron on his throat, staring down like a ferocious demon at the struggling man beneath. Fortunately Santonio heard the scuffle, and rushed into the room. He hastility seized a long piece of Turkish embroidery, bound it rapidly round the throat of his infuriated protégé, and by dint of half-strangling him made him relax his hold.

Lorraine came in at this moment, and seeing that Algernon was either mad, or that his "tertiary personality" was having a field day, helped to bind him securely and convey him to the cellars, where he was left to cool his agitation until some doctors could fetched and he should be safely lodged in an asylum.

It was some time before Venner recovered himself, for he had been badly hurt in the late encounter, besides which the mental agitation through which he had passed during the last few days had unhinged him, and the belief that Clarice had an accomplice did not serve to reassure him.

The consideration of all this made the baronet anxious to hurry on the arrival of the doctors; for he dreaded

above all that his enemy should stay in his father-in-law's house until he recovered the coherence of his speech. Lorraine's establishment was not extensive, and the servants had purposely been given a holiday that evening, with the exception of a private function much trusted by his master, and who was now dispatched to the town to bring doctors. Sir Julian in the meantime borrowed collar and tie from his father-in-law, and then rejoined the ladies, who had no suspicion of the real danger he had been in.

"So the poor fellow is mad after all; they say that is the end of nearly everyone who goes in for mediumship. Really, one scarcely feels justified in amusing oneself with them." said Mrs. Phillipson.

"Of course," said Santonio; "still, no one can tell whether mediumship leads to mania, or whether incipient mania appears as mediumship."

"And until that question is settled, I suppose we can stifle our conscientious scruples?"

"Scruples, my dear lady, are the secret of all failure. They are never to be encouraged under any circumstances."

"How like a man to say that, isn't it, Lady Venner?" said Mrs. Phillipson. "Poor creatures, they have no foresight. They just pursue the fancy of the moment, never seeing that the will-o-the-wisp which attracts them is lending them deeper and deeper into the morass."

Just then a great crash of glass was heard inside the villa. The men looked at one another doubtfully, and Sir Julian sprang to his feet and rushed round to the side of the house. There he discovered that what was

evidently the cellar window, opening into a tiny brick area, was broke open, and heavy footmarks on the flower beds showed that Algernon Carnforth had succeeded in evading his captors.

Sir Julian turned and followed the footsteps of the escaping man, but when once the lights from the house were left behind, the darkness of the night made it impossible for him to give chase with any hope of success.

Lorraine was not at all anxious to continue the pursuit, and the servants being out he said that it would be quite time enough to get lanterns and follow the track when the responsible people came.

Naturally the rest of the party were for keeping quiet about the matter, and Lady Venner, seeing her husband was unusually excited, insisted upon taking him home at once. They all strolled down to the town together, meeting at the gates the servant with the doctors, to whom Lorraine explained and apologised. He paid their fees, and the unpleasant incident was to all appearance ended.

But Sir Julian knew that more than ever he must keep a keen look-out. He even considered the advisability of setting detectives to work, but abandoned the idea on the score of having too much to gear from the law himself to be able to invoke its aid in the matter. For if all came out, not only would he lose the love and respect of the woman he adored, but he would in all probability have to stand his trial for bigamy. In the recklessness of his determination to obtain her love at all costs, he had gone through a perfectly legal form of marriage with

Phyllis Lorraine - legal as the Church and registration could make it, that is to say. But the certificate handed to Phyllis on that fatal morning was not worth the paper it was written on. And that because some years previously he had spent half an hour before the English Consul at Malta, and there had been united till death should them part to Clarice Duplés, a fascinating little vixen he had first met at a Café Chantant in Valetta during the short period his regiment had been stationed there.

Her conduct had obliged him to sell out, and he retired from the service of his Queen and country with a not over-good record and a captain's rank.

Disgusted with the woman for ruining his career in the army, he soon found that her society brought him no compensation, for her sharp tongue became unbearable as time went on, and in the furious quarrels which succeeded each other with increasing rapidity it was generally the woman who came off victorious. It had been difficult for him to keep his hands off her from the beginning, but the very first time he really threatened her with personal violence she left him.

"No, mon ami, a woman loves a man who beats her if he commences at once. You have put it off too long. If that is your game now, I will make my packet."

He was relieved at first by her departure, and for some time abjured the society of women. Then he threw himself violently into a whirlpool of dissipation, stifling his conscience and dulling his senses more and more, until he was suddenly pulled up by the wonderful fascination exercised upon him by Phyllis.

No wonder he loved her, for she had redeemed him from the hell into which the wild pursuit of pleasure for pleasure's sake must sooner or later plunge a man. He realised this fully now, for to look back on his former self filled him with horror. Just as he had made up his mind that there would be no danger ahead if he and his wife contented themselves with a simple country life, Nemesis descended upon him, and he knew that one way or another he would have to pay for the follies and sins of his early manhood.

How wily Destiny had been! If misfortune had come upon him a year or two ago it would have been met with the bold effrontery of the man who has nothing to lose; but now his whole life was wrapped up in the tender love he bore her who was to be the mother of his child; the sweet woman who had taken him to her heart and forgiven him so much that he had hoped Heaven would forgive him too. To save her pain he would gladly have killed himself, but he knew that could not mend matters. On his death Clarice would boldly proclaim herself to be his wife; she held incontrovertible evidences, and his darling would be left, remembering him only as the man who had blasted her life. No; the only thing to do was to give the wretched woman, the rightful "Lady Venner," enough money to take herself and her accomplice out of the country.

He still could not help hoping that the accomplice might know something which would silence the woman if only it could be extracted from him, and with this end in view he determined to do his best to hunt him up.

Chapter Seventeen

When Carnforth escaped from his temporary prison in the basement, and running through the garden found himself in the roadway, he began to hurray off in the direction of Monte Carlo. He was panting with rage, he felt that he had been duped and overcome, and he cursed the day when he had first taken to dabbling in spiritualism. He had a hazy consciousness that something very dreadful had happened, that he said things which had upset some person or persons considerably, and that the chances were he had only involved himself in fresh difficulties. And this on the very moment of his arrival, before he had even met Clarice, for although he had looked carefully through the various hotel registers and had discovered that she was staying at the Hotel de Paris as Lady Venner's maid he had not been able to contrive a

meeting. He might of course have sent a note to the hotel asking her to slip out and see him, but he had wanted to take her by surprise.

As he neared Monte Carlo he tried to pull himself together and banish all appearance of agitation from his manner. He decided to take a quiet stroll in the Casino Gardens and smoke a cigarette or two to steady his nerves. After that, well he should call in at the Hotel de Paris and boldly ask to see Mlle. Duplés. So for an hour he walked about and tried to calm himself. He determined he would not stay in the place; he was afraid of Santonio, and afraid he might once more be dragged against his will to act as his medium. But it was a foregone conclusion that Clarice must come with him.

He was sitting on one of the most retired seats, a mass of shrubbery behind him, when he heard a voice he recognised saying angrily:

"Understand if you do not tell me who this fellow is I will have nothing more to say to you." Then came - and he was sure it was Clarice's voice:

"Not so fast, not so fast, mon ami. Tell me first where and how you met him."

"I met him at a private villa at Villefranche at a séance a friend of mine got up. They called him Algernon Carnforth, and he pretended to go in a trance and gave away a lot of my past history and yours."

"Ha! Was Lady Venner there?"

"Yes, but thank God! she did not understand the allusions.

"She soon shall," muttered Clarice through her teeth.

So Algernon had followed her. What was he doing here? Why had he gone to these people and betrayed her? When the time for betrayal came she preferred to do it herself. She had been very fond of Algy; she had freely used him as her tool, but if he was going to assert himself and make things unpleasant for her - well, she must give him a lesson.

"You are absolutely certain his name was Algernon Carnforth? Describe him to me."

"He was tall, pale, dark, had evidently been very handsome before his reckless living. He spoke of you and me."

"That was foolish."

"Who is he, Clarice?"

"What is that to you?"

"Simply that I will not tolerate his presence here in Monte Carlo. If you know him, be advised by me, go to him and tell him to get out of this at once or it will be the worse for him."

The voices died away, and Algernon Carnforth sat on with clenched hands and swollen veins in his temples. He knew this conversation could only have one meaning, for he recognised the voice of his foe at the séance. His fingers tightened involuntarily at the thought of the struggle. After a brief spasm of fury Carnforth pulled himself together and set to work to try and recall what he had said and done that evening.

Evidently he had named Clarice and that man, but it took him some time to make out from what he had just overheard about Lady Venner that his enemy was her

husband. At last the facts dawned clearly on his mind.

Clarice had come to Monte Carlo to get money. She had taken a situation as Lady Venner's maid, and it was as clear as daylight to him now that Sir Julian Venner was "the man who paid."

Carnforth's rage at the idea nearly choked him, but he held tenaciously to the train of thought he was following out.

So Clarice's paymaster was jealous of Clarice's lover! He had lightly said a day or two before to Brian Marrett that he was sure Clarice would get her money by blackmailing, he had brazened it out, he had gloried in saying that he abased himself before her to the uttermost, but when the fact that he had done so came home to him as absolutely true, he saw it in all its hideousness. Though the night was warm Algernon Carnforth shivered as with ague. "What was it Venner had said?" he wondered, then he repeated the words as they came back to him.

"He gave away a lot of my past history and yours," and again, "he spoke of you and of me."

What would this man think of him if he knew of the relation in which he stood to Clarice? He felt himself degraded. Could nothing save him, was there nothing he could do? he asked as he groaned aloud and covered his face with his hands. Far into the night he sat on thinking, thinking.

The pale stars looked down on his still paler face. Everything around was filled with beauty and peace. Only in the heart of the man was blackness and misery, death, hell, raging torments, and silent fury.

By and by a shadowy thought began to formulate itself. Slowly it grew, slowly it stood out clearer and clearer. He folded his arms and stared into the night until he could see a scene enacted before his very eyes. Having watched it to the end he stood up and smiled.

Chapter Eighteen

Meanwhile Clarice and Sir Julian had gone in the direction of the hotel. Venner was getting desperate.

“Why on earth don’t you leave Monte Carlo?” he asked. “Why don’t you and your lover - I suppose he is your lover - go together? Is it because you do not consider a thousand a year sufficient?”

“Oh, I think your offer a fairly generous one. That is not the reason, it is because I love to be amused, and I find it most delightfully amusing to stay here as Lady Venner’s maid, and to know that at any moment it lies in my power to sever the hair which suspends the sword over her head. I would have given anything to-night to see your face when Algy was making his disclosures, and so many people present, too! It must have been exquisite fun. Surely that hateful American woman was quick

enough to smell a rat?"

Sir Julian did not reply. He felt that his only chance lay in conciliating Clarice sufficiently to get her accede to his wishes and leave the Riviera.

Eleven o'clock struck.

"Heavens!" cried Clarice, "my lady will be wanting me - I must go. Good-night, my darling husband," and she went off to the hotel, where she found her mistress had already retired to her room.

"You are very late, Clarice," said Phyllis quietly; "where have you been?"

"I have been taking a walk in the gardens, Madame."

"It is too late for you to walk in the gardens alone, Clarice. It is not respectable. You must not do it again."

"I was not alone, Madame."

She waited a moment, then beginning to brush out Phyllis's hair, she said softly, "I was with my husband."

Lady Venner looked very surprised. "I was not aware you were married," she said. "Why did you not tell me this when I engaged you?"

"But Madame did not ask me."

"You should have told me nevertheless."

"Ah! Madame. How could I know it was necessary for a maid to speak of her past life to her mistress? How could I suppose it would interest you?"

"I do not care to know of all your past life," said Phyllis. "I simply think that you should have mentioned such an important fact as that you were a married woman."

"Yes, Madame; I was married some years ago at Malta to an English gentleman, an officer in the artillery.

Strangely enough he had the same name as you have - Venner, Lieut. Venner, and his Christian name was Julian."

Phyllis turned round in her chair and looked at her maid curiously.

"That was indeed very strange, Clarice. It is just possible that the officer was a relation of Sir Julian's. We must find out. In Malta you say you were married? So your husband is alive?"

"Yes, Madame."

"And you tell me he is here in Monte Carlo. Well, it will be easy enough to find out if he is any connection. If your story is true, and he turns out to be a relation, it is a very remarkable thing."

"If my story is true," said Clarice, much hurt, and pulled out a pocket-book. "Will Madame be good enough to look at my marriage certificate."

Phyllis read it carefully. It was undoubtedly genuine, and had taken place before the Consul at Malta.

"Well, we must make enquiries," she said. At that moment she heard her husband's footstep in the corridor, and opening the door a little called, "Julian, dear, I want you a moment."

He came in, and glancing at that other figure in the room, standing so quietly by the dressing-table, said a little hastily, "Send your maid away, please."

"But it is about my maid I want to speak to you," said Phyllis, smiling.

"Surely you can speak to me just as well when she had left the room?"

Clarice slowly raised her eyes and shot one swift upward look at him, and she smiled a little. Her mistress saw both the glance and the smile, and was amazed. She turned to her husband and noticed an expression on his face she had never seen there before, and which she could never have supposed it possible to see - for the expression was one of fear. She held out the certificate.

"It is merely that Clarice tells me that she was married some years ago in Malta to a Lieut. Julian Venner. I am wondering if he was a relation of yours."

Sir Julian, his face deathly pale, sat down.

"I daresay I had a cousin in the Artillery who was at one time stationed at Matla. I have lost sight of him for a long time, and rather believe he is dead."

"No; Clarice says he is here in Monte Carlo."

"Ah, I - I will look the man up and see if he is the same. A strange coincidence."

"Very strange. You can go now, Clarice. We will inquire into the matter to-morrow. I shall not need you any more to-night."

But Clarice did not move, and after a minute Phyllis said in astonished voice:

"Did you not hear me tell you to go, Clarice?"

Then, the Frenchwoman advanced a step towards her and laying her hand on Lady Venner's shoulder, said deliberately,

"It is for me to tell you to go, Phyllis Lorraine."

Lady Venner looked up in amazement at Clarice.

"What?"

"It is for me to tell you to go, you who have been

living for two years as if you were this man's wife. Let me tell you, I am his lawful wife; I am the real Lady Venner. The Julian Venner who married me in Malta years ago is the Julian Venner you see before you now, the husband I met this evening in the gardens. Look at him and ask him to deny it if he can!"

She pointed to the wretched man, who stood at bay, his hand at his throat, panting. Phyllis moved over to him like one in a dream, her face very white, and trembling a little.

"Darling," she whispered, "it isn't true, is it? I don't believe a word she says, it is all a mistake. Tell me it is a mistake, dear husband." She lifted his nervous hand to her lips and kissed it passionately.

"Julian, Julian," she moaned, "speak to me, for God's sake speak to me and tell me it isn't true." Then flinging her arms round his neck, she tenderly pleaded to him to speak to her for the sake of their little unborn child. At that the great tears gathered in the man's terrible eyes and fell slowly down upon her golden hair. But he said nothing.

"Why are you crying, my darling," she whispered, "is it because you are so bitterly hurt at my darling to ask you such questions? My sweet, forgive me: kiss me and tell me you forgive my cruelty." Then suddenly she turned upon Clarice, and her softness changed to rage.

"Go from my room," she cried, "you wicked, dreadful woman. Never let me see your face again. How dare you come to me with such abominable lies. Go, or I will call the manager and have you turned out." Clarice smiled.

"I understand that you should be upset, it is, of course, natural. You make it necessary for me to repeat what I have said before, that I am the rightful Lady Venner, and you the mistress of a very unscrupulous man."

"Do not dare to speak like that; Sir Julian is the soul of honor."

"Bah! Who enticed you over to Ireland under false pretences, and kept you shut up alone with him for 48 hours? Who pretended remorse and penitence, and then persuaded you to go through a form of marriage with him, which he was perfectly aware was illegal? Who promised to give me an allowance of £1,000 a year if I would leave Monte Carlo? Man of honor, indeed!" She held before Phyllis's eyes a half-sheet of notepaper on which she saw in the bold handwriting she knew so well:

"I undertake to pay you for the future an allowance of one thousand pounds per annum on the condition of your leaving Monte Carlo within 24 hours.

"JULIAN VENNER, Bart."

"It is a forgery," she said faintly.

"It is no forgery. Why doesn't he speak to you? Why doesn't he deny these charges? Because he cannot - because I have dozens of proofs - and he knows it! Look here." She pulled out about half a dozen photographs. Yes; they were all of Julian, taken at different times of his life. On the back of one was written, "Dearest Clarice, from her living husband Julian."

Phyllis, feeling her strength deserting her, once more staggered to Venner's side, and raised her frightened, wide eyes to his face.

He looked as though he were made of stone as he stared straight in front of him, rigid, cold. With her two little hands she bent his head down, and at last his eyes looked into hers. The silent, awful suffering she saw there was enough, and with an agonised scream she fell as if dead at his feet.

Sir Julian stopped, raised her in his arms, and with infinite tenderness laid her on the sofa. Then he turned to Clarice, and his eyes flashing with hate and rage pointed to the door. She shook her head.

"No, mon ami, I remain; you appear to forget that I have a right to do so. And so surely as you turn me out of this hotel by force so surely will I proclaim to every creature in the place the real position of that wretched woman."

"You have done your worst already," said Sir Julian; "nothing can hurt me now. As to her - I believe you have killed her. Poor child!" he muttered, looking at her with a yearning love, "if she could only remain unconscious for ever it would be the kindest thing that could happen to her."

"In the meantime, however, it might be advisable to send for a doctor," said Clarice, moving towards the bell.

"Will you leave me alone?" shouted the baronet. "Viper that you are, go out of this room."

Then Clarice folded her arms and sat down quietly.

The distracted man rang the bell furiously, rapidly

deciding in his own mind that if Clarice made any compromising remarks before the hotel servants or doctor he would declare she was insane and insist on having her turned out neck and crop.

However, when the startled manager made his appearance with the nearest medical man, Clarice had apparently resumed her role of Lady Venner's maid, and though the thought of her touching [Phyllis] was a torture to Sir Julian, he was sensible enough to know that the longer things were kept hushed up, the better chance he stood of disproving her words. Once he contrived to whisper to her:

"Do not let her see you when she recovers consciousness, do you hear me, you fiend?"

But Phyllis did not recover consciousness; and as hour after hour sped on and the stars gave way to dawn, the doctor turned to the two watchers and suggested that as at present there was nothing for them to do, and he would probably require a good deal of assistance later, they had better rest. Clarice, who liked her own comfort and really felt very sleepy, went to her room, but Sir Julian remained sitting motionless by his heart's treasure, praying one moment that she would open her eyes, and the next that she might never wake again.

Chapter Nineteen

Clarice slept soundly, and it was after eight when she awoke. She lay still for some time thinking over the past night's work, and nodding her head comfortably told herself she had up to the present managed very well.

"I do not really want to separate them," she mused; "that would not suit my book at all, as I am likely to make far more if I continue to let them live together on condition that I am handsomely paid for holding my tongue. What a little fool she is, to be sure! And how very awkward it would be for me if she took it into her head to leave him. Some women can never be made to see a thing like this in its proper light. I hope I didn't scare my bird too much last night."

She got up and began to dress, for she was wondering if any fresh developments had turned up since she went

to bed. To-day she must go carefully, very carefully, and if Sir Julian did not aggravate her too much - well, there was just the probability that she might leave Monte Carlo for a bit. She flung open her window and leaned out to get a breath of the fresh sweet air which came in gaily, blowing her beautiful hair into little untidy curls. As she drank in great draughts she suddenly gave a startled exclamation, and, drawing in her head, shut the window again noiselessly and sat down very pale.

“Mon Dieu!” she muttered, “and with Julian too. I wonder what it means. Can he by any possibility know that I am here and have followed me. It is very strange, and it certainly complicates matters horribly. If he should see me my little game is up. I shall indeed have to go carefully. What with Algy, Julian, and now this devil of Santonio, if I don’t mind what I am doing I shall get in a fix.”

She smoothed her hair, and a minute or two later was tapping gently at Lady Venner’s door.

She learnt from the doctor that his patient was in a most critical condition, that at present she was under the influence of morphia, and that the moment she awoke he was to be summoned. But she would probably remain in a comatose condition for hours, and was on no account to be disturbed, not even to take nourishment. He added that he had been compelled to ask Sir Julian to leave the sick room, as his agitation had become so intense at his wife’s prolong-

[The newspaper corner here has been damaged, and the

paragraph is undecipherable. Piecing together what words we do have from this section will describe how Sir Julian was asked to take some 'air and sunshine' and leave Phyllis 'fully to the doctor's' care until called for. When Phyllis is unattended, Clarice decides to creep into the room, looks down at Phyllis lying in the bed with 'a little smile of contempt'. 'Then her thoughts turned once' more to the 'figure she had seen talking to Sir Julian' in the Casino gardens|

-gardens, and she arrived at the conclusion that for more reasons than one it would be better for her to keep in the background. At any rate for to-day; to-night she must get some more money out of Sir Julian, see Algernon and arrange to leave Monte Carlo with him on the following day. She remembered with a little sigh of relief that Sir Julian had told her where Algy was staying; she must send him round a note asking him to meet her at nine o'clock that evening. Everybody would be in the Casino by then, and the coast would be clear for her.

By-and-by when Sir Julian stole in she was almost startled at the expression of his face. He looked grey and careworn, and seemed to have aged years. She beckoned him into the little dressing-room, where he followed her raging inwardly. "Curse you," he said, "why will you hang about here?"

"You are very dense, I must say," she told him scornfully. "Can you not see that for me to suddenly leave Lady Venner's service now, when she has been taken ill, would give rise to all kinds of surmises? If you had turned me out of the hotel last night late, as you wanted to do, my dismissal would have been most inevitably associated

with this affair. Fortunately, I had more sense and tact than you and refused to go. But as I don't choose to be cursed as a fiend and devil every time you speak to me, I may tell you that I have decided to do as you wish and leave Monte Carolo to-night - on condition, of course, that you make it worth my while. You know perfectly well I am your lawful wife, you know perfectly well that the woman who has passed here as Lady Venner is only your mistress, and you know that if I choose to make this public I can do so. If you want to go on pretending to the world that she is your wife you must make it worth my while for me to hold my tongue."

"If, on the other hand," said Sir Kilian, "I choose to put a couple of detectives on to your career for the past few years? I could easily make out that I thought you dead and divorce you. Has that struck you?"

"And in the meantime, before you could get the decree made absolute your child would be born," scorned Clarice. "Has that struck you? Besides, no amount of decrees obtained now could clear her from the stain of having lived with you pretty well two years before you were a free man. No, mon ami, the only thing for you to do is to make it worth my while for me to hold my tongue, and when she recovers consciousness to persuade her that she has been ill and dreamed the whole affair when in delirium."

"And how much do you want to hold your tongue?" asked Sir Julian.

"I cannot go under a thousand down."

"You cannot have it. I can only put my hand on five

hundred; it is all I have at Smith's. But I will telegraph for more and send you on the other £500 to whatever address you like. This is on condition that you leave Monte Carlo to-night, and that in the meantime you do not again go near" - he hesitated - "my wife. You must go to your room now and stay there until this evening. I will tell the doctor that you cannot bear the sight of illness, and are so useless in the sick-room that I have sent you away. To-night, shortly after nine, if you slip out into the Casino Gardens I will be there with the money. But you will not play me false this time, Clarice?"

"No," she said, pouting a little. "I am sick of the place. I want to get out of it."

She was a good deal more anxious to get out of it than Sir Julian thought. Had he known her real reason for wishing to leave Monte Carlo he would have made it his chief business to see that she did not go. As it was, he felt unutterably thankful that he was so soon to be rid of her.

Clarice dispatched her message to the Grand Hotel, and then began to pack her few belongings together, carefully destroying all incriminating documents as she proceeded.

Sir Julian had fallen in with her views splendidly, and if only she could slip quietly away without encountering anyone but Algernon, she would be safe. For the rest of the day she remained in her room, and as dusk fell she put on her hat and jacket, took her bag in her hand, and went on noiselessly out of the hotel and crossed the square into the Casino gardens.

She pulled out her watch but it was too dark to make

out the time without the help of a match. Three minutes to nine. Yes, Algy would be here almost directly now. He wasn't likely to keep her waiting, of that she felt sure. She was right. In another minute she heard footsteps on the gravel coming her way, and Algy stood before. His face looked strangely pale in the dim light, and he did not offer to kiss her, but stood silent, his eyes glistening.

"Tiens, Algy. So you have come to Monte Carlo. Impatient boy that you are, why could you not wait for my return? Did you wish to compromise me?" she laughed a little.

"Compromise you," said Carnforth in a low and furious voice. "That would not be possible."

"Really," she said coolly. "Well, if you only came to see me to make yourself thoroughly disagreeable, it is a pity you did not stay away. What has put you in such a horrible temper?"

"That which I have lately found out about you."

"I don't know what you mean. Of course, if you choose to believe any idle tale you may hear I cannot help it, but let me tell you you are very foolish. Who have you met - who has been talking? Was it Belsize? I know he is staying here."

She really wanted to find out whether he had been in conversation with Santonio, but was much too wary to put him on any scent.

"It was not Belsize. It was not anyone. It was what I myself heard and saw in these gardens last night taking place between you and Sir Julian Venner."

Clarice rapidly cast back her mind as to what he could

have heard, then decided he was bluffing.

“My dear boy,” she said, “you really are very absurd - you probably picked up a few words of our conversation, and in your excited and jealous imagination quite misconstrued them.”

“I beg your pardon, I heard my name mentioned. I heard this Venner say he would not tolerate my presence in Monte Carlo. How can you explain that?”

“Easily. It appears that at the séance you attended last night you said things about Sir Julian Venner which he did not care to have disclosed. He fears you, and he wished you to leave the place.”

“He said last night that I had coupled your name with him.”

“That was nonsense. He was so upset he did not know what he was saying.”

“He repeated this assertion more than once.”

“That does not prove it to be true. Now Algy, listen. I cannot stay out here, I only crept out for just a moment; Lady Venner is ill, I must go back to her. But I will come back again in a few minutes - say ten, or a quarter of an hour at the outside.”

The fact is that she was every moment afraid that Sir Julian would put in an appearance on the scene, and that might possibly lead to trouble; while above all it was necessary that Algy should stay where he was until she came back.

“Do not follow me,” she said, “I will be as quick as possible, I promise you; there are many things I have to speak of to-night. Au revoir, dearest,” and she was off.

But Clarice had not been quite so clever on this occasion as she usually was, for she had not gone more than half a dozen yards when she found herself face to face with Sir Julian. And she lost her head. She knew that Carnforth was still within earshot, and that was what flustered her, so drawing Sir Julian by the arm back along the path by which he had come she cautioned him in a whisper not to go further that way.

Venner not understanding the situation answered her in his usual voice, and Carnforth hearing it stole noiselessly at the back of the shrubbery until he was close to them.

By the time Clarice had persuaded Sir Julian to talk quietly, so that Algernon could not really make out anything that was said. But he caught the crackle of banknotes and the clink of gold passing, and then he heard Venner say:

“You swear you will be true this time, Clarice?”

He heard her gay answer, “I swear it, my adored.”

The words were scarcely out of her mouth when the sharp report of a pistol rang through the Casino Gardens, and with a groan Clarice fell forward into Venner's arms, deluging him with her life-blood.

Chapter Twenty

On the night of the séance when Algernon Carnforth rose from his long reverie in the Casino Gardens his brain was clear, and he walked down to the sea-shore to think over the means to the end he now felt so inevitable. As he walked all nature seemed to be alive with voices, which cried out to him to destroy this fiend in human shape, this vampire who lived upon the decay of all that was noble in men's hearts. He thought of the woman with her sensuous beauty, and to his excited imagination her lips seemed to him to be reddened with the blood of her victims. As he neared the sea the low monotony of sound became more insistent and the soft splash of the waves seemed to form the words "Kill Clarice Duplés, kill Clarice Duplés, kill Clarice Duplés."

He did not return to his room at the Grand Hotel

until morning, and flinging himself on top the bed without undressing, slept for hours.

Suddenly he awoke with a start, and looking at his watch found that it was nearly nine o'clock, and that he should only just have time to keep his appointment with Clarice. He went downstairs to the buffet, and ordering a strong brandy and soda, hastily swallowed it before hurrying away to the trysting place.

What would happen he knew perfectly well beforehand, and walked through his part mechanically, for it seemed to him he had been through it all before. He felt as though he were standing aloof and looking on at the whole scene, and for the first time he realised how really trivial his relation with this woman was. He beheld the ropes with which she had bound him to her, and felt he could now slip out of them with the greatest ease. He lost all consciousness of her fascination - all thought and feeling were merged in the one idea that she was to be stamped out of existence, that her power for evil was to be cut off.

So when Clarice left him crying out gaily "Au revoir," he was not in the least surprised to see Sir Julian meet her; he followed as a matter of course, smilingly fingering his loaded pistol. Yes, this whim of his always travelling with a revolver had turned out more useful than he could have supposed, and he wondered whether it was fate or forethought which had reminded him to bring it on this occasion.

Until the time when he heard Clarice tell Sir Julian she would be true to her promise, he had felt borne along

by some unseen power, but at the supreme moment his consciousness once more became normal, and seized with the blind passions which had agitated him so furiously after the séance he hastily fired the pistol almost close to Clarice's head. Nothing could have saved him from instant detection had not the woman in her death's agony fallen into Sit Julian's arms, for although the shot was fatal it was not instantaneously so, and the wretched Duplés went through some moments of torture before her life ebbed away.

It was this fact that enabled Algernon, after flinging the pistol into the bushes to stroll quietly away with his hands in his pockets. The forces which had united to drive him on to commit the murder seemed now to fill him with unnatural calm. Before he had gone fifty yards Clarice's inarticulate groans culminated in one long loud sob of terror and pain. Algernon involuntarily turned at the sound, and it was fortunate for him that he did so, for the next moment a gendarme hurried past him.

"What is it?" Carnforth asked in French.

"I heard a shot," said the official, "and shall be obliged if Monsieur will see that no one passes this way."

Algernon understood that his wisest course would be to hurry forward to the scene of the tragedy in company with gendarme, and accordingly did so. Pretending to be hunting for the murderer he took a western direction, while the officer took an eastern one and in this way avoided coming under Venner's notice until the crowd had grown sufficiently numerous for him to be able to approach the scene.

Clarice was dead, lying full length upon the ground, and Venner was wiping the blood from his face. Carnforth saw him look round hastily, then fixed his gaze on the woman at his feet. Bloodstained banknotes were fluttering round her, and gold pieces shone out from a background of earth and blood in the light of the gendarme's lantern.

The sight turned Algernon's heart to ice. He forgot his own danger, and remained fixed to the spot until he noticed the arrival of more gendarmes with a doctor. Mechanically he saw them picking up the notes and gold, then, as if in a dream, he saw Venner led away as between two officials. Others came and carried away the body. After that there was a little commotion over the finding of the pistol within three yards of the scene of the murder; his own name and address were taken down; and by-and-by he found himself walking back to the hotel, still haunted by the dead face of the woman he had loved and hated so passionately.

He went to bed, but his thoughts turned round and round the events of the day like a wheel. Every hour or so he turned over restlessly and wondered if sleep would ever come to him again, until at last thought faded into wild fantastic vision. It appeared to him as if he had gone to the dark, cold little outhouse, where Clarice's body was lying on a slab, and there he saw her shade standing beside her, wringing its hands and crying bitterly. He went to it and touched its shoulder, when it turned to him and asked in imploring accents what had happened. He pointed to the wounded body, and as he did so the blood began to flow. With a face of terror the face turned

to him again and said, "Who did it?" Algernon pointed silently to himself, when in a wild frenzy the shade leapt upon him and it seemed to him that his throat cracked under its fingers.

With a desperate effort he awoke and found himself lying in his bed at the hotel. He lay trembling for some time, the cold sweat pouring off him, until at last he gathered strength to turn on the light, at which he remained staring till daylight, not daring to close his eyes lest he should once more see the terrible avenging form of his dead mistress.

After dawn he sank into a deep, dreamless sleep, and awaking late immediately hoit up and raised the blinds, The midday sun streamed into the room, and looking at his reflection in the glass he saw that his face was seamed with deep red marks like cuts, where the flesh had creased as he lay with his head pressed hard upon the pillow - in the middle of his forehead a well-defined fork showed in crimson on the white skin. A shudder passed through him, and he hastily plunged his head in cold water. "The mark of Cain," he said aloud, and laughed discordantly. He felt that he was losing his nerve, and knowing that everything now depended on his retaining his self-possession, he pulled himself together, rang for breakfast, and casually said he should like to see the latest news about the murder.

The paper was brought, but contained very few details. Sir Julian Venner's name was not mentioned, and evidently the affair was to be hushed up as much as possible, in the usual fashion of Monte Carlo tragedies.

If he was to find out what was happening he would have to make personal inquiries, and that was by no means to his taste.

However he strolled out late that afternoon, and carefully avoiding the principal streets determined to go for a quiet turn in the country. When he had been walking for some time he noticed that a certain man had been following him since he left the town. Rapidly he made up his mind what to do, and on reaching a lonely bit of road on some high ground he turned and walked towards the man whom he suspected of following him. Having arrived opposite him he stopped short suddenly, and asked him what he wanted.

"Nothing, Monsieur," said the man, startled.

"Then why follow me?"

"I am returning to my master's villa, Monsieur; he lives this way."

"Nonsense, I am in no mood to stand this sort of thing I can tell you. Do you belong to the secret police?"

"No, no, Monsieur; I am Mr. Lorraine's servant. I have been into Monte Carlo on a commission for my master, and now I am returning to the villa."

"Ah! well, I beg your pardon, I thought you were interested in my movements. Good afternoon."

"Monsieur will pardon me if I tell him that there is a gentleman who is exceedingly interested in his movements."

"What do you mean?"

"Mr. Santonio, my master's friend, is making inquiries for you, Monsieur. You may remember you were a little

unwell the evening you were a guest at the villa -"

"Oh, I am perfectly well. You can thank Mr. Santonio for his kind inquiries."

"Will not Monsieur come up to the villa? My master expects Mr. Santonio this evening."

"No, thanks, I have no time. By the by, how is Sir Julian Venner-?"

"Ah, Monsieur, there is terrible news. The poor gentleman got into trouble in the Casino, and is now in the hands of the police. His wife is ill, unconscious - non but Mme. Phillipson with her. Her maid disappeared just when she was most wanted. I am only now trying to arrange for milady's removal to her father's house."

"Who is her father?"

"Mr. Lorraine, my master, who is even now awaiting the news I bring."

"You don't seem in much of a hurry to gratify him"

"There is nothing to be done. The doctor refuses to let her ladyship be moved, she is still unconscious. Mr. Santonio has been to the police and will bring the last news; and I was lingering in the hope he might overtake me."

But Lorraine's loquacious factotum found himself alone, for if Algernon Carnforth dreaded meeting one person more than Venner, it was Santonio.

When Carnforth had seen Sir Julian Venner led away on suspicion of the murder of Clarice, he hastened onwards towards Monte Carlo, for he knew that his only chance lay in not exciting attention, and he judged that as he was probably under observation and his address known

he must on no account attempt to leave the principality. He accordingly strolled casually into the Café Riche for dinner, feeling confident that Santonio would be dining at Lorraine's. But as luck would have it the first person his eye fell on, on entering the restaurant, was the very man he was so anxious to avoid. Santonio was on his feet in an instant, eagerly insisting that Carnforth should be his guest.

The latter seeing there was no help for it determined to reap what benefit he could from the contretemps which had befallen him. At any rate the Greek could not hypnotise him in a public dining-room, and he arranged in his own mind that he would take the first opportunity of giving him the slip afterwards.

"My dear boy, I am delighted to see you. I have been waiting to apologise for our behaviour the other night, but really the control was exceptionally violent that there was nothing for it but to tie you up until the influence had passed off."

"Does an influence of that sort ever pass off?" said Carnforth gloomily.

"Of course it does. I have no patience with these people who are so terrified about giving up their wills to controls. If anything would be kind enough to obsess me I'd give it houseroom to-morrow. All greatness comes from obsession, from some fixed idea before which all things of lesser power slink away."

"And madness?" asked Algernon.

"Oh! we're all mad," said Santonio lightly; "and we know it in our hearts. My dear fellow, eat, drink, and

be merry. I am in a bit of a fix, and I want to tell you about it.”

Carnforth attacked his fish, and Santonio began to tell him the story of his day's adventures. He had been roused from his sleep by a message from Sir Julian Venner asking him to come up to the police-station as soon as possible.

He hurried to his unfortunate friend, whom he found in a deplorable condition, and still wear the blood-stained garments he had been dressed in the previous evening. At first the Greek found the situation inexplicable, but Sir Julian gradually enlightened him. He told him that the murdered woman had been a blackmailer of the worst sort, whom he had unfortunately known in his younger days; that to gain a little peace he had consented to give her money; that just as the transaction was completed a shot was fired from the side; the real murderer escaped, and Sir Julian was accused of the crime by the sergent de ville, who had happened to overhear him using violent expressions to the woman a night or two before.

This was news to Algernon, who had been in far too dazed a condition to understand the precise reason why suspicious should immediately fall on Sir Julian; but the young man maintained a stolid expression, and then thanked his stars that attention should be diverted from himself.

“The climax of the whole thing came,” continued the Greek, “when I saw the body of the victim; but that will not interest you.”

Carnforth, in spite of his anxiety to know as much

as possible, dared not question Santonio on the subject, and the latter was too much bent on a new scheme he was concocting in his mind to continue his confidences beyond a certain point.

Chapter Twenty-One

In the meantime Sir Julian Venner spent the day in a dreary apartment used for persons suspected of criminal offence.

Santonio sent him down a change of dress from the hotel, so that when that worthy returned from his inspection of the body the baronet looked, if haggard, at least more presentable than when he first lifted his wretched eyes to the face of the wily Greek.

To Venner the whole situation seemed desperate enough. He had paid to have his name kept out of the papers for the present, but he had small hope of proving his innocence. The manner of Clarice's death would in itself have been enough to shatter the strongest nerves; and Sir Julian might have thanked Fate that his misfortunes were so overwhelming that he had become

almost incapable of feeling pain. He was completely numbed, and it was only now and again that the memory of Phyllis pierced his heart like a dagger.

He had interviewed the lawyer, telling him the same story he told Santonio, but keeping back the fact of his marriage with Clarice, as he still hoped that the fatal secret might die with him now she no longer lived.

By the time this interview was ended he began to familiarise himself with the thought that it was possible he would have to suffer for the crime. He played with the idea, and in a dull sort of way he tried to imagine himself a convict with a life sentence. The word made him smile. "Life sentence - death sentence," he repeated to himself, "Which is worse?" He was roused by the hurried entrance of Santonio, who bustled in, full of eager words which he could not pour out fast enough.

"Venner, this is the most extraordinary thing, the most startling thing! I have learned from the police the woman was acting as your wife's maid. Tell me in confidence what were the precise terms you were on."

"Blackmailer and blackmailed," said Venner laconically,

"But, but, was there any liaison - I have a particular reason for asking.

"Years ago there was," said Venner. "I had seen nothing of her for years, until she suddenly appeared three days since and demanded a larger allowance - I suppose she heard of my coming into the property," he added weakly.

"My God!" said Santonio. "Well, now I must tell you something."

“Go on,” said Venner dully.

“Seven or eight years ago I was larking about in the student’s colony at Fontainebleau. Among the girls was a fascinating little creature, Clara Dubarry, who always kept half a dozen men dangling after her. She had a mother, a regular dragon, and the end of it was I married her and took her to Greece.”

In a moment Sir Julian’s attention was fixed on the Greek, and he cried:

“You married Clarice Duplés.”

“I did, under her real name of Clara Dubarry.”

“Legally married her?”

“It’s not very easy to evade the law in France with a mother-in-law seeing to the details for you. She ran away from me at the end of the year.”

Sir Julian could bear the strain no longer. He leaned his head on his arms, and his whole frame was shaken with convulsive sobs.

Santonio could not make out what kind of emotion could so agitate him, but Venner could neither speak nor explain; he had to let Santonio go without a word, simply wringing his hand as he left; and the Greek departed, thinking to himself that Englishmen were the queerest cattle he had ever met.

The moment Venner was left alone he rose and walked up and down the narrow room, his heart expanding with overwhelming excitement and happiness. He went over it all in his mind. Clarice having been married to Santonio seven years ago, his own marriage with her at Valetta was a farce. After all, he had been a free man when he

was united to his sweet Phyllis, and their marriage was perfectly legal. He said the words over and over again to himself. If he could only get to her to tell her so! Then came the horrible thought that even now she was ill and perhaps dying from the shock of his baseness; that before she could be told that her marriage to him would hold good in the eyes of the Church and law she might pass from him for ever. Once more new hope had come to give him new capacity for pain; he had been roused from his lethargy only that he might be made conscious of his utter helplessness.

He paced the room like a caged animal. True, he had not really wronged the woman he loved best of all God's creatures - true that, as far as her marriage was concerned, she would stand immaculate in the eyes of men, but they might be separated all the same if he could not free himself from the accusation of a crime of which he was guiltless.

It was but just that he should suffer as he suffered, he said to himself. Might not this punishment in some way explate the sin he had in thought, if not in deed, committed against Phyllis?

At last rest came to his weary body and he had actually slept for some hours when the attendants announced a lady wished to see him and handed in Mrs. Phillipson's card.

That lady came forward hastily and shook him by both hands.

"Poor fellow!" she said, taking out her pocket-handkerchief and daintily removing a tear out of the

corner of her eye. "The first thing I want to say is that whatever you've done I'm sorry for you."

"It is very good of you, Mrs. Phillipson, I'm sure. Can you give me any news of - of - Phyllis."

"She is better, and had written you a note. Of course we have not told her where you are, or of the fatal occurrence of last night. She merely thinks that the doctors have forbidden you to go to her until she is stronger. She begged and prayed that I would take you a little letter - some secret, she says, so I was obliged to humor her."

With trembling fingers Julian opened the envelope. Could it be that she would forgive him? The anxiety was almost more than he could bear.

He walked over to the little window and read as follows:

"Dear Heart,

"Why are they so cruel to me? Make them let me see you. I have had a fearful dream; so real, so terrible, that sometimes I almost think it was more than a dream. I can speak of it to nobody but you, my dear, dear love. Don't leave me to bear this pain alone, for if it is true it will kill me. If you do not come to me soon I shall know there is no hope, then it will be very easy for me to die. Oh, my darling! nothing but your love can bring me back to life, which I feel is slipping from me as I write. At least send me a few lines to tell me no terrible misfortune has happened or -."

Here the letter broke off abruptly, and Mrs. Phillipson explained that Phyllis's strength had failed her and she

was unable to finish it.

The wretched man seized paper and pencil and began hurriedly to answer the poor little note.

He gave the letter to Mrs. Phillipson and the good lady bustled off, after telling Sir Julian they were moving Heaven and earth to get his release. Gavan Pierrepont had been trying to get evidence all day, and Mr Lorraine was now down at the hotel awaiting the last news.

Not many minutes after Venner had received this now draught of hope he heard the tramp of feet approaching, and immediately afterwards an official and two men entered with little ceremony.

The official began: "You say you were talking with Clarice Duplés at the time she was shot."

"I was," said Julian.

"You were giving her a large sum of money?"

"Yes."

"You assert the shot came from the bushes on your left hand?"

"That is my conviction. The moment I heard the shot she fell into my arms, screaming with pain. I had no time to think of anything until she was dead."

"Very well. I have to inform you that on examination of the body the bullet was found to have severed an artery in the neck and passed through the jaw in a forward direction, so that it is unlikely to have been inflicted by anyone in conversation with the ceased. Footsteps have been measured in the shrubbery which do not answer to the print of monsieur's boots. Also in the shrubbery a note has been discovered addressed to Monsieur Algernon

Carnforth at the Grand Hotel containing the words, 'Dearest, - Meet me in the Casino Gardens to-night at nine. - Your own Clarice.' Under these circumstances we shall be pleased to release monsieur on his own recognisances of, say, £500."

Julian left to his feet, but even in this supreme moment of relief the name of his enemy of the night before struck him. He exclaimed,

"Algernon Carnforth! Why, that is the mad fellow who attacked me personally two nights ago; he is an escaped lunatic, in my opinion."

"Can monsieur furnish us with a description?"

"Certainly," said Sir Julian. "But in case the poor wretch is discovered I am quite prepared to give evidence as to his insanity."

Venner was not detained long now, and found Gavan Pierrepont and the lawyer he had consulted awaiting him outside.

They all walked to the hotel together, and on the way he learnt that the police were already on the track of Algernon Carnforth.

Chapter Twenty-Two

At the Café Riche Santonio sat watching Carnforth anxiously as he sipped his liqueur and coffee and took little buffs from the cigarette with which the Greek had supplied him. The habitués of the Café Riche had for the most part dispersed, and it was not long before Carnforth's eyes began to close and Santonio knew that the fumes of his carefully prepared tobacco were producing the desired effect. He led his guest out, and putting him in a carriage drove with him straight to Lorraine's villas. He found his host absent, which fact suited Santonio's purpose admirably; and he retired with Carnforth to the room where he had previously practised his occult tricks with such unfortunate consequences.

This time the Greek did not trouble himself to produce weird effects with colored lamps and incense,

but proceeded at once to mesmerise the wretched man who was so entirely at his mercy.

When the heavy breathing of his victim showed that he was completely under control Santonio laid his hand on his heart and regulated the rate of it's motion. He murmured the words: "slow, slower, slower," until he could scarcely feel the faintest pulse-beat. As he did this the breathing became quieter, and and almost rigid expression came over the white face of the young man.

Santonio sat quietly holding the hand of his subject in both of his own. From time to time he whispered questions to him, sitting in absorbed thought for some moments afterwards as he apparently received inaudible replies.

Presently he rose and taking a pen and ink wrote down the following statement:

"I, Algernon Carnforth, shot Clarice Duplés last night while she was receiving money from Julian Venner. Signed," and dated. Then he gave the pen to Carnforth, who signed his name. And no sooner was this accomplished than he roused the medium. For a little time Carnforth lay quite still, and Santonio took the opportunity to put the compromising document into his own pocket. He then approached the prostrate figure and without further preamble began:

"So, Carnforth, you've got yourself into a devil of a mess."

Driven to bay, Algernon decided to play his trump card, and before the Greek knew what he was about had taken from its concealment a tiny phial of prussic acid,

which he was about to put to his lips when Santonio - suddenly becoming aware of his intentions - dashed his hand down, and taking the bottle from him, continued to talk as if nothing had happened.

"Now, we must waste no time. Sir Julian Venner is arrested, but his friends are doing everything that is possible to secure his release. They are certain to connect you with the affair sooner or later, and the great question to be considered is, how are you to escape?"

"What do you mean?" said Algernon uneasily.

"I mean that I am your friend, and am inclined to help you escape."

"What are you talking of?"

"Don't keep up this farce, my boy. We all know that it was you who shot a certain woman last night." Carnforth turned white.

Santonio continued, "The fact that you did so places me under an immense obligation to you, for, as it happens, that woman was my wife. If you knew anything of her characteristics you can understand that I am sincerely obliged to you. You must be aware that the authorities are on your track at this very moment. While you were in a trance a moment ago you described the whole course of the investigations. You told me they had found a note dropped from your pocket when you took out your pistol. What more incriminating evidence could be discovered? We must before all things baffle them, for I am determined they shan't be allowed to put away a clairvoyant with powers like yours, just because you have rid the earth of one of the vilest creatures that

ever crept creation." At this moment Lorraine's voice was heart outside, and Santonio hurried out to meet him, telling Carnforth to stay where he was, and no harm would come to him.

Lorraine was in the highest spirits, for his daughter had recovered wonderfully since the return of her husband, and now he really had reasonable hopes of hushing up the wretched affair - at least, as far as the Venners were concerned.

"It is always disagreeable to be mixed up with any legal proceedings, because people invariably forget how one came out of them after a week or two," he said.

The Greek smiled, and taking his friend's arm said:

"I have a bit of news for you, Lorraine, too."

Then gently piloting his host into the smoking-room he continued, "Who do you think that woman really was?"

"My daughter's maid? I haven't the faintest idea. I understand that she is an old flame of Venner's, and has been blackmailing him for years."

"She was Clara Dubarry - otherwise Mrs. Santonio."

"Never! The woman you have been searching for for so long in the hope that you would never find her! Well I'm blest! You have the devil's own luck, Santonio! Bye the bye, it doesn't happen to be you that got her put out of the way, I suppose?"

"I never knew she was in Europe until I recognised her body in the Morgue!"

"Well, well, well; so that was the fascinating little friend you have so often told me about. She appears to

have had a somewhat variegated life. What had Carnforth to do with her?"

"Why do you connect Carnforth with her?"

"Because Julian was liberated on the strength of the evidence there is against Carnforth. He has left his hotel, and a note from her to him of a most affectionate nature was discovered in the gardens. I believe it is a common enough thing to prove your love for this kind of lady by killing her, isn't it?"

"I shouldn't blame him if he had, should you?"

"Well, I should think him a trifle indiscreet. In fact, I should call him a sad fool. After all he's as mad as a hatter we all know that."

"At the same time, I have a particular reason for wishing to keep him out of the hands of the police, and I want you to help me."

"My dear Santonio, you know you can always command me. But why this enthusiasm?"

"In the first place the man can be the most useful to me in the future; the second he has been most useful to me in the past."

"By killing your wife, eh!"

"Exactly. Not only has he removed one whom we can all spare, but he has removed her at a most opportune moment. As a matter of fact I want to marry again."

"Indeed; who is the happy mistress of your heart on whom you are anxious to bestow your hand?"

"Can you have failed to perceive that the charming American and myself are on excellent terms?"

Lorraine laughed quietly, but only said:

“But, my friend, you are on excellent terms with every woman who is not altogether out of the running.”

“My good Lorraine, I am going to settle down. Since I have heard the news I have seen a thousand new possibilities arise before my vision. Mrs. Phillipson is intensely interested in occultism, together we could do wonders.”

“Unfortunately Mrs. Phillipson happens to be engaged to me, my boy, so I fear she is lost to the cause you have so much at heart.”

“Engaged to you! Well, all I can say is you owe me a great reparation for this breach of friendliness.”

“How could I tell your intentions?”

“Well, if she’s engaged to you, she is, and there’s an end of it - but you’ve got to help me about Carnforth now that I have given up my intended wife to you.”

“I am infinitely obliged I can assure you, and will faithfully endeavour to carry out your wishes! By the bye, it suddenly occurs to me that the last news I had before leaving Monte Carlo was that the police had traced Carnforth to the Café Riche and knew that he left in a carriage for this neighbourhood. Some of them were coming out here as I left.”

“Then we must take immediate measures. Carnforth is in this house.”

“What! have I no sooner got rid of a criminal son-in-law than I am saddled with a criminal guest?”

“Quick - come with me!” was all Santonio’s answer. “I hear steps outside now; there is not a moment to lose.”

As he spoke the bell was rung violently, and he and

Lorraine hurried off into the room in which Santonio had left Carnforth.

Chapter Twenty-Three

Lorraine's servants were neither active nor diligent, and it was some time before the police could gain admission.

They had met the carriage Santonio had engaged returning to Monte Carlo, and the driver had given them all the information they wanted.

The principal official desired to see Mr. Lorraine at once and they were accordingly shown into the smoking-room, where Lorraine entered to them scarcely a moment later.

"What is it gentleman?" said that worthy with his most imperturbable manner.

"I believe, monsieur, that you have two guests under your roof, our business is with them."

"I regret to say I have but one guest, the other has

departed to that bourne from which no traveller returns."

"What do you mean, monsieur?" interrogated the officer.

"I mean that Algernon Carnforth has just died," said Mr. Lorraine solemnly.

"Mon Dieu! he has killed himself?"

"Or his heart has failed," said Lorraine, "we have but now made the sad discovery."

"Is there a doctor anywhere about?"

"Mr. Santonio, my other guest, has taken his medical degree in Athens," said Lorraine, "he is now with him."

"What is his opinion?"

"I have not asked him. But may I inquire why you desired to see the unhappy young man?"

"We have a warrant for his arrest."

"Will you take the body with you?" inquired Lorraine meekly. "I am afraid I have not a coffin on the premises, but I can offer you a large trunk."

"Monsieur is pleased to be merry."

Lorraine shrugged his shoulders. "You wish me to keep the arrested body and have it buried?" he asked.

"That is as monsieur chooses. Our business is to see the body and identify it from description."

"Certainly, come with me, " said Lorraine.

They followed him to the dark room at the end of the passage, where Santonio was arranging candles round the motionless form, which lay stiff and rigid as marble on the large table. A strong odor of almonds pervaded the room.

The men stood whispering in the doorway, but the

officer advanced, touched the death-cold hand, and shuddering a little turned away. He had naturally seen much of death, but there seemed something particularly horrible about the corpse before him.

“Mr. Santonio will sign the certificate of death I suppose?” he said. “There must, of course, be a post-mortem examination, for which our doctor will be sent up sometime tomorrow.”

“It is unnecessary,” said Santonio, who held in his hand the little phial of prussic acid he had taken from Carnforth earlier in the evening

“He has killed himself.”

Meantime one of the men had been carefully going through his notes and comparing them with the coloring and features of the body before him. He suddenly turned his attention to Santonio:

“Monsieur did not inform the police,” said the man suspiciously.

There has been no time to inform anyone. You can see. I was myself placing the candles for the dead when you came in. Five minutes ago we discovered the man in agony stretched upon the floor. He had not been alone for three minutes.

“Well, perhaps after all the Administration will be content that the matter should end quietly. It does not go out of its way to make visitors uncomfortable by too much publicity when these unfortunate accidents occur. Monsieur will attend to-morrow and make his statement to the juge d’instruction, and Mr. Lorraine will so far oblige as to attend also.”

Shortly afterwards the men left, having been refreshed after their arduous investigations at Lorraine's expense.

Santonio remained with Carnforth, and the moment the footsteps died away in the distance he put his hand on the heart of the unconscious body before him and with a quick massage motion called upon Algernon Carnforth to return to life. For some time the rigidity of the corpse-like figure before him was maintained, and Santonio had to induce artificial respiration before, with a terrible cry of pain, the young man came back to life.

"Why didn't you leave me there? Cruel, cruel," were the only words he said.

Lorraine came in at this moment. He looked from one to the other in amazement.

"You've brought him round again, I see. Well you are something of a magician, Santonio, after all. I say, Carnforth, what's the climate on the other side like - a little warm, eh?"

"Such a beautiful dream. Why did you wake me?" cried Carnforth, thinking of nothing but his own agony in living once again.

"Your Lazarus is not properly grateful, Santonio."

"I don't expect gratitude," said the latter with a grin. "I expect a solid return for my trouble."

"Ah, I suppose this poor chap knows you of old; what is the saying? 'It takes two Jews to cheat a Greek, and one Greek to cheat four Frenchmen' - what price Englishmen? What do you want with the lad?"

"I am going to take him back to Ithaca with me; there I mean to instruct him in the science of occultism."

"You select your material after a somewhat original method, do you not?" said Lorraine.

"I have a theory on the subject of crime. I believe much can be done with the criminal temperament if it is properly cultivated."

Lorraine burst out laughing and told Santonio that to know him was worth a king's ransom.

"When are you going to depart with your precious protégé? I can tell you I am not inclined to give him another opportunity of decreasing my circle of acquaintances."

"I'll get out of it to-night if you like," said the Greek.

"I don't see how you're to manage the escape. You may be sure the police will keep an eye on us for some time to come."

"Belsize asked me to go for a cruise with him tomorrow. I'll disguise our young friend as a woman, and we'll get away."

"Well, if you like to run the risk you'll have to, I suppose. But how am I to prevent the police investigating the empty coffin when you have taken your departure?"

"Say I have deceived you - fill it with cheese - or any other nauseous substance; surely a man of your ingenuity can get over a little difficult like that!"

"Lorraine shrugged his shoulders. "You are incorrigible," he said. "However, I suppose I shall have to do as you ask. A curse on you and your medium, say I."

And they went out of the room, Santonio carefully locking the door behind him.

Chapter Twenty-Four

Left alone, it was some time before Algernon Carnforth regained his normal sense. He felt very weak and half dazed, but managed after a few minutes to struggle into a sitting position. He looked stupidly about him, and then as the fact he had once more been made the plaything of Santonio's will gradually forced itself into his muddled brain, a deep anger took possession of him.

"Curse him!" he said aloud. "Am I never to be free from this devil of a Greek? What has he been dragging from me this time, I wonder?"

Then he dimly remember that he had heard two voices when first he was coming to himself, and that one of them was certainly Lorraine's. He tried hard to remember what it was Lorraine had said, and put up his hands to his head and groaned at his helplessness.

After a moment he looked around again and saw on the sideboard some spirits and a syphon or two of potash water. He staggered to his feet, and by dint of holding on to the furniture reached the other side of the room, where with a shaking hand he poured himself out half a tumbler full of brandy. Having drunk it he sunk into an armchair and waited for it to do its work. At the end of ten minutes he felt so much that he was able to stand, and walking noiselessly to the door turned the handle. But he found himself locked in.

“If I ever get out of this,” he muttered fiercely, “I’ll go for Santonio for unlawful detention of my body.” “If I ever get out” - the words set him thinking. Suppose he didn’t get out, what then? He couldn’t remember if he had given away the fact that he was Clarice’s murderer? If so, he should probably have to suffer the extreme penalty of the law for it. Well, that did not matter; anything was better than living this terrible existence as another man’s puppet. He wished Santonio would come back, there were many things he had to say to him.

But the long hours passed and no one came near him. He began to pace up and down, at first impatiently, by and by dully. And after a while he took to examining everything in the room to pass the time - the clock, the pictures, the bronzes. His slow survey brought him presently to the writing table, which looked as though it were not much used - judging from its tidiness. A sheet of fresh blotting paper only had a few marks on it right in the middle, and still dipped in the ink was a pen. The sight of this gave him fresh food for thought. Up to

this minute he had been telling himself that no judge or jury would take the word of a dirty Greek occultist that he, Carnforth, was a murderer, simply because this same Greek swore that he had put him into a trance and made him confess to it. Why, according to that, lives might be sworn away every day in the week on the mere word of an enemy possessed of a little magical knowledge. The sight of the clear ink on the blotting paper presentence a new aspect of the case; he lifted it and carried it over to a mirror, holding it unsteadily up before it. Yes, there it was - his confession, written by Santonio, and signed by himself in a perfectly clear and steady hand.

"Curse him! Curse him!" he said again, hoarsely, and dropping the paper poured himself out some more brandy.

As he was drinking it the door was unlocked and Santonio came in.

"Ah! you are better," he said, smiling. "That is right; I hoped you would get a little sleep, so I locked the door that you should not be disturbed.:

"I have not slept," said Carnforth shortly, "and let me tell you that as soon as I get out of this I shall prosecute you for having first made me drunk and then hypnotised me against my will."

"Yes," said Santonio, still smiling; "but how will you prove all this?"

"It will be easy enough. Witnesses will be found to swear they saw you make me drunk at the restaurant."

"I think not. You followed me out of the Café Riche as quietly as a schoolboy. There was nothing the least

suspicious in your conduct. Besides, it is always hard for a criminal to prove his words even if he is really speaking the truth. You can deny the murder to everybody else in the world; it is useless to deny it to me, you know that."

Algernon was silent.

"Of course, you know the penalty. You are very young, very impulsive, very good-looking; it seems to me a pity that the gods should gather you to themselves so soon. Besides, the guillotine! It would be so unpleasant."

The boy shivered and again stretched out his hand to the brandy bottle. Santonio gently removed it from him.

"Yes, you are upset, but wait until you have heard what I have to say. If you choose to put yourself in my hands I promise that no disagreeable consequences shall follow your - well, let us call it your rash deed. The police have already been here after you" - Algernon started up - "I have sent them away. But there is no time to be lost. You must put yourself unreservedly in my hands and do exactly as I tell you."

"Are they - the police - coming back?" asked Algernon.

"In the morning further inquiries will be made. But if you will do as I tell you, you will be beyond their reach by then."

"What am I to do?"

"Dress yourself in these clothes." He opened a large box as he spoke and disclosed a handsome travelling cloak, a complete and elegant costume, a fair wig, and a large shady hat and veil.

As he spread them out he continued to explain. "Lord Belsize has asked me to go yachting to-day with him; he

told me I might bring any fair friend I chose with me. I choose to take you. Now dress yourself quickly. The moment we are safe aboard the anchor will be weighed. Once at sea, I will waft you away to the lovely isles of Greece, and I warrant they will have all their work cut out to find us."

He did not think it necessary to mention that Algernon would shortly be registered as dead, and most likely the coffin would be buried the next day.

"Hurry up," he continued, "the longer we wait the greater the danger."

Algernon sulkily complied. He hated to go with the Greek, but again he remembered Clarice. The thought made him quail with horror. He donned the finery that Santonio had provided, and covered his face with the fashionably-spotted veil; a few minutes later they were in the road and in half an hour safe on board Belsize's yacht.

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Chapter Twenty-Five

When Venner returned to the Hotel de Paris on the night of his release, he found Lorraine and Mrs. Phillipson before him, and the kind-hearted American immediately went upstairs to tell Phyllis that the doctor had consented to an interview between herself and her husband. It was an understood thing that Julian was to carefully avoid agitating her by letting any word fall concerning the events of the last twenty-four hours.

Lorraine, who had been thoroughly disgusted by the various versions of the tragedy of a few nights before that had reached his ears, was far from genial. Not that he in any sense suspected the truth; but it seemed to him either absurd weakness on the part of Venner, or great disrespect for Phyllis, that he should not have dealt with the woman summarily as soon as she appeared on the

scene.

In spite of the fact that his heart was in this way hardened against his son-in-law, the sight of Venner's white careworn face moved him so far to relax his severe attitude as to offer him his hand.

"You've had a bad time, Venner. It's a mercy Phyllis happened to be ill. I trust she will never know the truth," he remarked coldly.

This was the first time Lorraine had appeared to Venner in any other light than a society butterfly, and the baronet was thankful to feel that he could talk to him seriously at last. For he was in no mood for taking life lightly just then. With great gravity he replied:

"I shall do whatever I can to convince her that her happiness is all I live for. I own I have made terrible mistakes in the past, but my whole future shall be devoted to reparation. I am sure you will believe I did what I could to get rid of Madame Duplés without wronging Phyllis. I would never voluntarily have let Phyllis come into contact with her."

At this moment he was summoned to his wife's room, and he went up with fast beating heart.

Phyllis was lying white and still, his letter in her hand. She looked very fragile, with her golden hair spread out on the pillow, curling in little close ringlets where the wet bandages had been applied to her head and her face, though thin, was still delicately lovely.

She turned slowly to him with a longing, weary expression, but as soon as they were left alone together a feverish energy came into her eyes and she said:

"Tell me quick, before anyone can return, was that true - I mean what she - Clarice told me?"

He replied without hesitation:

"You are my only wife in the sight of the law and the Church."

"Why did you not tell me so before? How cruel, how cruel you have been!"

"At the time I was unable to answer you."

"But you can disprove her words?"

"Yes, I can."

Phyllis cried softly as he put his arms round her, and in another minute Mrs. Phillipson joined them

A week later Phyllis was allowed to go out for drives; the whole affair of the murder had been carefully hushed up; the confession of Algernon Carnforth was accepted as evidence, and it was understood that the bodies of the murderer and his victim had been buried side by side.

But now Julian had to face another ordeal. During the week's respite, as he watched the roses return to Phyllis's cheeks, as he saw her looking at him half in fear, half in love, he felt that the only possible course he could take was to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. If those dear eyes, which accused him most bitterly when they looked at him with perfect trust were ever to give him peace they must look their forgiveness in knowledge, not in ignorance.

So it came about that he made up his mind to tell her everything one evening when they were alone together, the rest having gone to the Casino.

"You are quite strong again now, dear, are you not?"

he began.

"Quite," she said, "thanks to all the care you have taken of me."

"Can you bear it if I tell you a long story that has been on my mind for some time?"

"I think I guess it," she said.

"Ah! my dear, I wish I could think it possible, but I fear -"

"What do you fear?"

"I fear you could never feel the same for me again if you really guessed."

"Shall I tell you what I think?"

"Yes, if you will."

"Well, you see I know that Santonio married this woman when she was only 17 years old. Mrs. Phillipson told me that the other day. Then I put two and two together, for I have had a good deal of time to think lately, and I worked it all out in my own mind."

"Oh, my darling," cried Venner, "do you mean to tell me that you understand what a base wretch I have been to you, and you can still look at me with love in your eyes. Do you understand that I went through that ceremony in Ireland believing that I was doing you the greatest wrong a man can do the woman he loves, that I was willfully deceiving you?"

"I knew, Julian."

"And you can forgive me?"

"A woman who has learnt to love as I do cannot help forgiving. I cannot imagine any kind or sort of circumstances which could alter that love; even in the

terrible moment when I believed that I must renounce you for ever and never let my eyes rest on your dear face again, I knew that the love I have for you must go on to eternity."

He bent his head down on to her hands.

"And to think how I dared to risk this," he muttered; "how true she is, how lovely!" Aloud he said:

"Phyllis, I can only repeat the same old tale to you, this time with details which I would have given my life to be able to deny. I have acted in a way for which I can never cease to accuse myself. For the way I beguiled you into what I believed to be a false marriage, how can I ever atone to you for that?"

"Has not the suffering through which you have passed been an expiation?"

"God grant it may be, for I have suffered, Phyllis. You know that. And since the day when I learned that my sin would not be visited on your dear head, I have, in manner of speaking, been glad that I had gone through this agony. If only I might keep your love all else would be nothing."

Phyllis laid her hand on his head:

"You should not love me like this, my darling. I am not worthy of it. Do you know what I feel?"

"Tell me."

"When I see how your love for me has transformed your whole nature I cannot help being proud, prouder than if I were queen of half the world. How many would not envy me if they could know how I am loved?"

"Indeed, Phyllis, if other women were as true as you

there would be more men who could love as I."

"We have passed through a great trial together dearest. Now life lies before us, and whatever may await us in the future nothing can divide us again."

At this moment a knock was heard at the door. Julian rose hastily, and Lorraine and Mrs. Phillipson came in.

Lorraine had an open letter in his hand. He took his son-in-law aside and said:

"The whole thing is buried and done for now, Venner old fellow. You can congratulate yourself. By the bye, you look quite transfigured; you don't want any more good luck just now apparently."

"Indeed, no; Fortune has at last turned her wheel in my favor. But what is your news?"

"That poor mad fellow Carnforth fell overboard and was drowned. Santonio is in despair, but it is just as well the man should have finally disappeared. I have no belief in our Greek friend's methods of redemption."

"Poor wretch!" said Venner, plunged in painful reverie. "Such a life or such a death seems equally horrible."

At this moment Mrs. Phillipson interrupted. She had been telling Phyllis that she had consented to become Mrs. Lorraine at a very early date, and the marriage was to take place before their projected visit to London.

"Now, my dear Julian, I have a bone to pick with you. A week or two back you made a dreadful fuss about not allowing Phyllis to be presented this year. I am not going to put up with it. I can promise you it will be war to the knife between us till you consent. Phyllis, it's quite time you rebelled! You're much too submissive!" Julian

laughed happily.

“I was a fool to object, Mrs. Phillipson. If when the time comes Phyllis is well enough I shall only be too delighted for you to undertake the superintendence of the arrangements.”

“Good,” said his future stepmother-in-law, “that’s the way a husband should behave! Good night, Phyllis dear, I only hope your father is as well trained as your husband,” and the good lady took her departure, followed by Lorraine in high good humor.

So at last they were alone, and for the first time Julian Venner took his wife into his arms in the happy consciousness that there was no mystery of sin and shame stood between them.

THE END.

Author Illustrations



THE AUTHORS OF OUR SERIAL STORY.

We publish to-day portraits of the authors of "One Woman's Work," which has been running with brilliant success in *The Morning Leader*, and after resting on Christmas Day and Boxing Day, will resume its run to-morrow, with new development in store for our readers which will startle and entrance them. Silas E. Treadgold is, as the portrait shows, a lady novelist, and with that knowledge the reader must be content for the present, but as to Miss Florence Farr, who writes under her stage name, we are under no pledge of mystery. Miss Florence Farr is the daughter of a well-known Chislehurst medical man, and first came into prominence in the Ibsen drama. She was the first to introduce Ibsen

to an English audience, playing Rebecca West in "Rosmersholm" at the Vaudeville. It was the reading of an article by Dion Boucicault on the subject of a dramatic training school that first turned her thoughts to the stage. She had previously been in training for the work of education, and after that equipped for colonial life by learning all about riding, cooking, and so on. Her first stage effort was at Toole's Theatre in "Griffin's Elopement," then a provincial tour, and finally—Ibsen, the Bernard Shaw plays, and now newspaper fiction of the stirring and popular order of "One Woman's Work." Miss Florence Farr's first book, "The Dancing Fancy," was full of the promise which the authoress bids fair to fulfil.

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Florence Farr on Monte Carlo
Letter to art dealer Sir Hugh Lane, 1911
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