

A Lift on the Road

Virginia W. Johnson



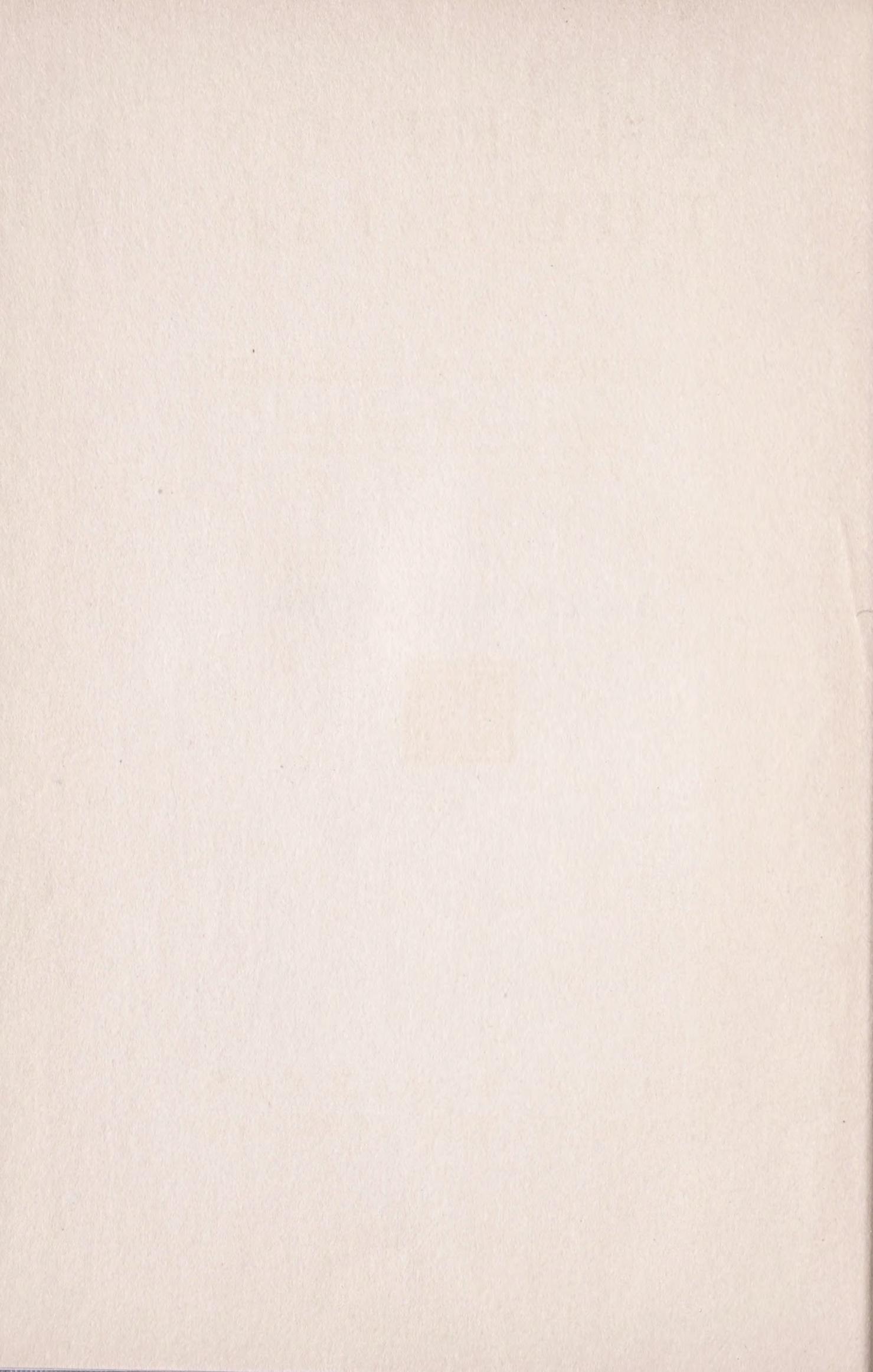
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By VIRGINIA W. JOHNSON

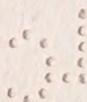
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DAYS AT VALLOMBROSA," "MANY YEARS OF
A FLORENCE BALCONY," ETC.



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A LIFT ON THE ROAD: AN AUTO-MOBILE RESCUE

I

THE boy stood alone. Before him stretched a dreary expanse of country, brown, damp, and sprinkled with snow patches, here and there, and bordered with leafless trees. The sky was obscured by sombre clouds, threatening storms, and the wind, sweeping from the Alps, was piercingly cold.

He knew the land well enough. He was vaguely aware, with the inconsequence of a child, that the spring would come to ripen rice and maize on the lowlands along the banks of the Po, and produce wine and silk on the highlands. Now it was the end of a tardy winter, and February had been rainy and chill. He was born further up in the region of forest and pasturage, at the foot of the mountains of Piedmont, and his home was a weather-beaten hovel of a hamlet in a narrow valley, where the sun did not penetrate. Even such rude shelter was now denied him, for he had been turned out of doors by his step-mother. Deep down in his heart

was an anger that would last him through life, kindled on that winter day. His father had not interfered and defended him. Yes, his own father had allowed the cruel, scolding woman to have her way, and drive him from the roof with blows and curses. Indeed the need of all was bitter. Famine and pinching poverty brooded over the village in the winter. The father, pallid and listless after working in the rice fields of Novara, crouched in a dark corner, silent and hopeless. The brood of young children clamored for food, and when the boy took his meagre portion, the step-mother snatched it from him to give to the others, and pushed him out of the door. The father, shivering, with bowed head and inert hands, did not even glance up at his eldest son. Matters had come to this pass! He was driven out into the world by a hasty and violent expulsion. He walked through the hamlet. Nobody noticed him. The priest had gone to visit a dying woman. The neighbors, hunger-pinched, and cold as well, could not interfere. It was only the eternal problem of these districts: too many mouths to feed. "He must go away," said the neighbors.

Where? Nobody knew.

Fate, in guise of a step-mother, thrust him forth from the home nest. He was alone and friendless. The wrong of it was terrible, not to be expressed in mere words. The lad felt the full force of the blow. Should he turn back, and kill the step-mother with the first knife his eager fingers might clutch? There were always plenty of knives about. No! On the whole no! That would not bring more bread to the household.

He was a solitary little figure, standing there on the road. He was ten years of age, and had the thin body of a child of seven. His name was Carlo Vanni. He had walked for a long time, it seemed to him, and evening was falling. His broken and worn shoes had refused to serve him, at the outset; one dropped into the ditch, and he cast the other after it recklessly. His feet and legs were bare to the wind and the mire of the stony highway. His clothes, scarcely amounting to a covering of lean frame and limbs, hung about him in rags. He had no hat. He was cold and hungry. He was used to both phases of human suffering. Where should he go? He had no friends beyond the village. The cousin, Alberto, came to see them several years before. He was a sturdy, sun-bronzed

man, and worked on the docks at Genoa. The lad wore a little medal around his neck, a cheap tinsel trinket hung there by his dead mother. This talisman, or holy relic, bore the effigy of *Our Lady of the Snows*. Many peasants wear these medals as old men. Pausing on the lonely road, the boy fumbled instinctively for his medal, and kissed it. Night was approaching, black, heavy, terrible night, peopled with countless terrors. Oh, he was afraid! All Italy was outspread before him, like a map, from the rampart of mountains above his cradle, the mighty peaks and glaciers, and snows of the Alpine chain, down to the "heel of the boot" at Brindisi. To his juvenile ignorance the intervening towns and cities were only a cloud. Far away stretched Genoa and the sea. He knew that the cousin Alberto lived down there. Instinct stirred in his breast. He would seek the cousin Alberto, and beg a shelter of him.

Hatless, shoeless, and in rags, without a crust of bread or a penny in his pocket, the boy took his decision. He ran for the better part of a mile, still spurred on by the injustice of his rough expulsion from his own home. His limbs were nimble and fleet. Poverty is the mother of health, says the

proverb. Carlo halted to gaze about him once more. The wide expanse of country appeared utterly deserted. Not a human being, or cattle, a farm, an isolated habitation, or a straggling village, with a church tower, were in sight. Where could he stay for the night? Must he sleep without shelter of any kind, stretched beside the road on the bare earth? The pangs of famine gnawed at his vitals. He craved the morsel of food withheld by the step-mother. He should perish of starvation. Youth rebelled fiercely. He had a right to live! He had a right to a mouthful of bread in the home! As the truth of his plight dawned on him he uttered a cry, a wail, a sob. Hark! The prolonged note of a trumpet reached his ear. His sharp young eyes discerned a dark object moving on the road. What was it?

II

Netty Beaufort was her own mistress. In this twentieth century of suffrage the young woman ruled over a spacious mansion and lands, in her native state, and journeyed far, as the whim took her. At one date, after a gay season at Washington, she was firmly determined to go into training for the career

of an Alpinist, and become one of the first women to ascend the Matterhorn. Seated beside a Christmas fire on her own hearth, ensconced amid rugs and tapestries, she decided to visit the Nile, and winter in the desert of Nubia. Again the Mombasa Railway of East Africa, traversing the realm of elephants, lions and monkeys, suddenly acquired a fascination to her imagination offered by no other route. Just as she had fitted up her yacht to cruise around the globe at pleasure, the automobile claimed her for its own. Here was the natural solution of all previous caprices of a healthy, high-spirited girl, the petted, yet unspoiled, daughter of fortune. The ardent wish to excel other competitors in any field, and, possibly, astonish spectators, found a new scope. The monster car of Juggernaut that has come to stay among us had speedily a charming mistress in Netty Beaufort. She studied the marvelous mechanism in its anatomy of strength, speed and resistance, then mounted to her post beside the chauffeur to take command.

“I will christen my car *The Swallow*,” she proclaimed. “Wings are not needed to fly east and west, and swallows are great travelers, as everyone knows.”

She shrouded a beautiful face, framed in abundant blonde hair, and lighted by a pair of limpid grey eyes, in a cloud of white veil, and enveloped her slender and agile form in a heavy garment, then prepared to enjoy the latest phase of rest in perpetual motion once taught by Parmenides in the school of Elea. She felt very old and experienced in the ways of society and the world, but discovered an absorbing new interest in life as unfolded from a motor. Nay, the spice of danger added pinions to the *Swallow's* movements as hedges, rows of trees, hills and valleys, towns, and spaces of woodland spun past in a dreamy atmosphere of giddy unreality hour after hour. Already her diary assumed the proportions of an unpublished volume of personal experiences, crowded with miraculous escapes, delays, accidents and bad weather. Missiles might be hurled by unseen foes across fields, aimed by poverty at wealth, by the weak against the strong. The whistle of a bullet in the darkness of evening, with the automobile as an illuminated target, was not unknown. Netty had been tempted to arm herself with toy weapons, a Liliputian dagger and a miniature pistol, in a sleeve pocket. She tasted all the thrilling

excitement of reading the faces of a village, as the car entered a street, or the attitude of a group of laborers by the roadside, if good-humored or menacing, with a right hand clenched behind the back.

This season she had shipped the powerful touring car, which was of the four-cylinder type, to Europe. She had visited the coast of Brittany, the Chateau country of the Loire, central France, and the Riviera in this leisurely and private mode which is the especial privilege of woman, from Queen Margherita of Italy to the most modest republican. Now the frontier had been crossed at Ventimiglia. The chauffeur, Jacques, was a tower of strength. Netty believed in this champion, and confided in him on all occasions, save when the impulse inspired her, with a mutinous curve of a small mouth, to have her own way, and defy him.

The chauffeur was a small, clean-shaven man, made of metal, his complexion revealing the grey hue of lead and steel in his composition, merging to shades of black in his raiment. He was impassive, inflexible, and proof to all exposure or fatigue. Had he not been made of iron, steel and lead, sheer masculine chivalry would not have been proof

against the wiles of a constant companionship with the young American lady. Possibly he evinced his chivalry in other ways.

On the present journey Netty Beaufort permitted her brother-in-law and sister, Helen, to accompany her. Entering Italy she admonished Jacques mockingly:

“We must be very careful of my brother-in-law.”

“I will take my chances, dear girl, if you will allow Jacques to steer your machine,” said Mr. Carter, easily.

Thus the holiday party reached a dreary road, one stormy afternoon, coming across upper Italy.

“What a dismal landscape,” said sister Helen.

“Sunny Italy, eh!” quoth the brother-in-law, pulling up his coat collar about his left ear.

“There is a boy,” said Netty. “We must inquire as to the road.”

Carlo Vanni saw, as in a vision, whether waking or sleeping, a great car, all polished metal and color, with discs of dazzling light on either side, and the blooming face of a lady looking down on him from a soft, white

cloud of drapery. He was dumb from the very excess of urgent need of speech.

“Is the road good beyond the bend yonder?” she said in glib Italian. The boy shook his head. “Just run ahead and see if there are holes or a break on the hill,” she continued.

He understood and complied nimbly, speeding to the curve, scanning the distance, then returned with a gesture in the negative. The way was open and safe. She gave him a small coin for the service, a *ventina*, and the motor moved on. A pair of large, dark eyes looked at her wistfully and despairingly. She ordered a halt, strangely chilled at heart.

“Do you live here? Where is your home?” she asked.

He explained slowly that he did not live there, and he had no home.

The two were framed by the disc of light from the lamps, surrounded by the opaque obscurity of the deserted country, the lady stooping from her fleecy folds of veil, and the gaunt child standing below on the highway.

“Come, Netty, we must push on before night,” warned the brother-in-law.

She put him aside imperiously.

“Where are you going, child?” she interrogated.

“To Genoa to find the cousin Alberto,” he said, steadying his voice.

“Genoa is a long way off. How will you get there?”

“On the road,” he stammered.

She reflected a moment and then glanced quickly at her companions.

“A child out here alone, lost or run away,” she exclaimed. “What if we pick him up instead of leaving him behind, perhaps to perish? Let us give him a lift on the road!”

“My dear Netty! Don’t let your generosity run away with you! A beggar, a vagrant, perhaps an idiot!” expostulated her relatives in one breath.

“He must be a very light weight,” she retorted, undaunted. “Climb up on the step, *caro*.”

He clambered into the car like a young cat. The motor resumed its way.

“Are you cold?” asked Netty.

“A little (*un po*’),” admitted Carlo, with a deprecating shrug of the shoulders.

She spread a steamer rug over the bare feet and legs of this unexpected guest.

The car glided on.

“Are you hungry?” she demanded, suddenly.

“A little (*un po'*),” with a faint smile.

The luncheon baskets of the equipage were opened. The boy devoured biscuits, chocolate and a sandwich like a famished creature.

“Were you ever hungry, Helen?” queried Netty.

“I don't remember,” Helen murmured, seeking a cup in which to mingle some syrup and water, for the lad must not drink wine just now.

The chauffeur sat at his post, inflexible and silent, a man made of metal.

“Were you ever hungry, Jacques?” pursued the mistress, pensively.

“Often, Madame,” rejoined Jacques. “Pardon. Not another sandwich. He is not used to much food.”

III

The *Swallow* arrived at Genoa in due course of time. During the transit the story of the passenger had been fully elicited in naive detail.

“I intend to help that boy,” announced Netty Beaufort.

“I thought as much,” remarked the

brother-in-law. "He seems to be of a mechanical turn of mind. Make him a chauffeur, and your slave for life."

She patted him on the arm.

"You really have a good heart, Charles, although no one would suspect it. You must advise me."

"At your command, young lady."

"Oh, I dare say that I shall not need you at all," she concluded loftily.

The waif was speedily consigned to Jacques and the hotel porter. Lo! He emerged from the magical transformation of a bath, fresh linen and decent habiliments a pretty boy, bright-eyed, alert and intelligent. From the outset of this wonderful journey he had manifested devotion, of a fascinated sort, for the chauffeur and the car. Gratitude to the fair lady who had picked him up out of the ditch was timid and unspoken. He made himself a flying scout, running on ahead to inspect the way, gazing in the rear for approaching vehicles, oxen or horses, and inquiring at the farms for the tourists. Leisure moments were spent in examining the automobile, boy fashion, crawling under it, writhing about the wheels

and zealously polishing plates and ornaments with a purloined cloth.

“Let me help,” he coaxed, a brilliant smile revealing white teeth.

Already he manifested that remarkable aptitude of adaptability to surrounding circumstances which is a marked national trait of the Italian. Jacques spoke the Piedmontese dialect with him.

The seaport gained, a fact became evident: Carlo Vanni had come by motor, and wished to find the cousin Alberto, who worked in the docks. The young American lady in command of the *Swallow* exacted of consular and municipal authorities, not to say the city of Genoa, if needful, a search for cousin Alberto. Alas! The worthy man had emigrated with his family, after a strike, to the United States of North America. What was to be done? A council was held, with the result that the boy was consigned to suitable authorities of emigration to be sent to the kinsman, with a further assurance of placing him in life. He detached the medal from his neck and proffered it shyly to his benefactress.

“I have nothing else to give,” he pleaded. “The lady is the Madonna, I think.”

“Of a tender age, yet deeply versed in the arts of flattery,” said the brother-in-law.

“No, no! Keep the medal until you are a grown man,” urged Netty.

A whispered consultation with Jacques resulted in the substitution of a bunch of violets.

At the last moment Carlo touched the wheel of the automobile lingeringly, then embraced Jacques and wept, to the amusement of the spectators. Accustomed as he was to admiration, the demonstration of childish devotion must have been gratifying to the iron, steel and leaden feelings of the chauffeur.

Feminine sympathy suggested: “Would you like to send a message to your home?”

“No,” said the boy.

Then he went on board the ship which was to take him by the open gateway of the sea to America.

The automobile *Swallow* pursued its way in search of fresh adventure, guided by the capricious whim of the fair owner, after having given a boy, *destitute, starving and alone in the night, a lift on the road of life.*

THE LADY FROM CHINA

I. HOW SHE CAME

To THIS day she remains an enigma to those who met her on the August afternoon when the disaster occurred.

Was she a fragile, even shadowy form of invalidism, clad in Eastern fabrics of curious design, with her yellow hair suggestive of the *perruquier's* show-window, her faded complexion, and slight hollow cough? Was she a keen-eyed business woman of the London market, interested in mining shares and gems, with relations everywhere on the continent? She was the sphinx by the roadside in a commonplace world.

“She was very kind,” muses Harold Benham, indolently, as, wrapped in furs and seated on a balcony, he gazes forth on the snowy stillness of the Engadine winter.

“She was cruel,” sobs Evelyn Kemp, pausing to take her handkerchief from the pocket of her apron in the dreary ward of a London hospital.

“I liked her,” chirps little May Benham, lifting the lid of a lacquer pagoda to take out

the china idol ensconced within. "She let me play with her toys and funny boxes."

Leonora Benham turns her beautiful head impatiently, recalling that terrible summer day. She does not give the Lady from China a thought in the matter, unless it is to marvel vaguely if her jewels were real or false.

She arrived at the Hotel of the Pines alone, and quite unattended, a tall, pale woman, sparkling with rich and strange ornaments above the average of modern tourists. She demanded in her sharp, cool way the best accommodations the house afforded, in a central position, and availed herself of the services of the domestics to the utmost extent. Sheer cowardice, as attracting the envious gaze of lean poverty, might make complacent womenkind shrink from public display of tinkling ornaments, but seldom does so. Her luggage, consisting of leather and metal-bound trunks, with massive locks and straps, was considerable, and a porter nearly disappeared under a supplementary pile of wraps and bags.

"I am told this height has the purest air in Europe," she said to the obsequious proprietor, as she descended from the omnibus.

“I hate the cold! I have been frozen at Zermatt.”

At the date of which we write the Hotel of the Pines was situated on a crag of the Apennines, between Rome and Florence, surrounded by woods, stately fir, copse of beech and lower ranges of chestnut groves, once planted by monks around their monasteries centuries ago, and now fostered by government. Modern energy and audacity had fashioned an ancient guest-house of the famous religious order into a resort by adding villa pavilions with ornamental wooden balconies, wainscot, railings and floors of varnished and fragrant boards. The whole interior was threaded with electric wires, and chandeliers of tinted flowers of glass illuminated *salons*, dining room and corridors. A wide terrace with a parapet of carved stone and steps extended to the brink of the abyss, overlooking an expanse of valley and lower ranges of hills to the Mediterranean, where the sun sinks in golden glory beyond the horizon. Parterres of plants flanked the exterior, and steps led down to a lawn tennis ground, and slopes of encircling woods stretching away to the higher ranges of rocks and peaks toward the Adriatic.

Thus situated, the Grand Hotel of the Pines proudly challenged criticism of the twentieth century, and advertised in leading journals that it was one of the finest and most up-to-date houses in the world, with telephone, telegraph and electric lighting throughout.

The Lady from China paused and calmly scanned the groups seated on the terrace, smoking and taking coffee, as she drew off one long, white glove. Her dog, *To-to*, a small pug in harness, grizzled and elderly, followed her example. The estimate of place and company of mistress and pet were not apparent.

II. THREADS IN THE WEB OF LIFE

In the morning hours the Lady from China sat on the meadow and observed her present surroundings with the keen curiosity of a woman accustomed to the highways of the world.

She was a strange figure in a flowing robe of shades of pink and green, with large sleeves falling over the hands, and embroidered shoes. Her yellow locks had been arranged with fantastic exaggeration of braids and coils by the hotel hair-dresser, while the *femme-de-chambre* had been required to as-

sist at her toilette. Indeed, the hotel menials already regarded each other ruefully when the frequent and imperative tinkle of her electric bell became audible, with demand of complicated services for herself and the pampered pug dog.

An alert boy in buttons had installed her in that open-air drawing-room, the great meadow, a realm of green verdure, sloping gently to a lower road, with a margin of woods, in a garden chair, flanked by a straw table and stools for bags and books. She scattered about her on the grass a flowered parasol, a fan and several shawls and scarves, as if she lived habitually stifled in silken tissues and draperies. Then she drew from a gigantic bag of the Imperial yellow, with a five-clawed black dragon designed on it, a mesh of work, wrought on fine ivory needles, pale in tint, with faint outline of a porcelain vase, holding a gourd, a citron and a spray of narcissus. Her thin fingers were literally stiff with rings, diamonds of the purest water, emeralds and sapphires that gleamed as she worked. Bracelets of ancient jewelry adorned her wrists, one of turquoises and pearls, with plaques of gold, chiseled like the front of a tomb, and another with a cen-

tral place wrought to resemble the seeds of plants of the desert, in gold, lapiz and amethyst. A chain of large rubies, set in dull filagree work, was hung around her neck and fell over her dress. The scene was one of tranquil beauty. Peaks rose above deep brown ridges, alps of olive-green hemmed in by glens and ravines fringed with ferns. A group of silver poplars rippled in the breeze on the knoll. A smoke bush near the moat of an ancient tower spread creamy wreaths of exquisite delicacy. People strolled on the turf, men in summer attire, straw hats and white shoes, ladies gossiping over their embroidery, and children at play.

A modest figure approached timidly. She was a young woman clad in black cashmere, with neat linen collar and cuffs, and a small bonnet on her fair head. Her features were delicate and pleasing, lighted by a pair of ingenuous blue eyes. She accosted the Lady from China, who regarded her a moment, then motioned her to seat herself on a stool.

“Tell me your history,” she said, not unkindly. “You are a trained nurse of a London hospital, I fancy, and seek a place.”

“Yes, madam,” replied Evelyn Kemp. “The old lady I brought out to Egypt from

England died. I should like to find another invalid. My credentials are of the best.”

“No doubt,” assented her interlocutor in her abrupt way. “I may need your services. I have wretched health since the fever at Singapore.”

“You are from the East, madam?” ventured Evelyn Kemp, her envious gaze straying furtively over the pouch and purse, wrought with the finest Chinese embroidery on the table.

“My home is in China.”

“Oh, to visit the Celestial Empire!” sighed Evelyn Kemp. “Would there be any opening for nurses out there?”

“Probably not. The adage is that to be happy on earth one must be born in Suchan, live in Canton, and die in Hangchau. You are an honest girl, I dare say,” with a touch of insolence in her tone.

Evelyn Kemp colored and tossed her head.

“I am well born and educated,” she retorted. “My father was a solicitor and became involved in heavy losses. We have had to seek a way of earning our bread. My younger sister has chosen the theatre.”

“You need a career, of course,” said the Lady from China, listlessly. “Well, we are

birds of a feather here. We are both English. Who are all these people? Princes and dukes and marquises at the very least, I suppose. Titles are cheap on the Continent, from our British standpoint. It is as good as a play to watch them. How the women shriek and laugh!"

Warmed to affinity of nationality, Evelyn Kemp detailed the bits of personality she had picked up in the hotel from secretary and porter. Woman's wit came to her aid. The plump personage of complacent mien discussing with a learned German in spectacles the justice of the Greek and Latin races in contrast with barbaric criminality expiated by a certain number of oxen and sheep bestowed on families of a homicide, was President of the Tribunals. The lady in pink gauze and lace, with dark eyes and rather a nice complexion, surrounded by cavaliers, was a court beauty. The stout matron in satin was the wife of a rich banker of Rome.

The stranger wrought her web of shadowy work and listened.

At this juncture a man was brought in a portable chair by two guides and deposited on the grass nearby. A child accompanied

him. The invalid uttered an exclamation of impatience, or indifference, and lowered his hat over his eyes. The little girl observed him anxiously. She gave an order to the guides, imperiously, to move the chair more in the shade of an oak tree, after which she proceeded to gather wild flowers and strew them over the invalid.

A greyhound, incited by some children, leaped and bounded over the slope, the embodiment of agile movement.

“I wish I could run again like that dog!” exclaimed the crippled man.

The little girl patted his hand softly. “Poor papa,” she said.

“And I was so strong. Child, I was first at college in games, boating and gymnastics! Why, I was a trained runner before I had my fall!”

A vision of loveliness appeared on the meadow, a beautiful woman in gossamer draperies of white. She was followed by a group of gentlemen.

“Are you comfortable, dear?” she inquired in clear, ringing tones, approaching the recumbent figure and at the same time defending her ruffles from the embraces of the little girl.

“Oh, yes,” he replied, smiling.

The next moment she turned to respond to the caressing greetings of other women who flocked about her.

The Lady from China scanned the newcomers keenly and questioned the nurse, who responded with marked eagerness.

The gentleman, maimed by a fall in a gymnastic contest was an American. The little girl was the only child. The pretty woman in white was the wife, much admired, and studying singing.

“I am sorry for the man of the family with a musical wife,” said the Lady from China, musingly. “What tortures they endure early and late! No wonder they are driven to clubs, if not to the padded cell of Bedlam. So this beauty is all for music, too!”

Mrs. Benham returned to her husband and perched a moment on a seat.

“Now I must go to work,” she said gaily, consulting a tiny watch in her bracelet.

“Don’t tire yourself too much,” admonished the husband. “Lenora, send away all those men.”

“Oh, the Professor will take care that they do not interfere with our lesson,” was the

careless response. "I am so glad we came up here, Harold. I feel that my voice is already stronger. It is rather expensive, but my progress is assured. Good-bye, dear. May, take care of your father."

Harold Benham sighed and leaned back in his chair, motioning the child to gather more flowers.

The nurse, Evelyn Kemp, glided over to him and adjusted his pillows, pausing to talk with him quietly yet earnestly.

The Lady from China watched her narrowly, then lured little May near with the aid of the pug dog. Soon the child was fingering jewels and silk bags while the owner made her acquaintance. Did she come from the States? Had she little brothers and sisters? *To-to* would like to play with her. What was in the other bag? Oh, all the bags were full of treasures in trinkets and puzzles.

"Take this book and journal over to your poor papa, dear. They may amuse him," said this eccentric stranger.

She gave May a small Chinese book in a neatly stitched case of flowered satin, and a copy of the Peking *Kim Bao*, the official organ, printed on silk paper and illustrated in black. May was delighted. She laughed,

clapped her hands, hugged the fat pug, as the animal capered sedately, and suddenly snatched away the bag suspended on the left arm of the owner.

“I will take this bag to papa also,” she cried, and danced away on the meadow with the dog.

The Lady from China uttered an exclamation and followed the truant swiftly, trailing a shawl behind her and dropping her skein of work. May darted behind a clump of bushes, roguishly, crouched on the ground and thrust one hand into the bag.

“Oh, oh!” she cried. “I have found something funny! What is it?”

The tall woman overshadowed and swooped down on her, gathered various articles back into the bag, recovered her habitual composure and led the child by the hand to her father, where she motioned the nurse aside unceremoniously and presented herself to the invalid.

May lingered, eyeing the bag. “Only what is it?” she persisted with juvenile curiosity.

The owner lent herself to the mood with good nature and drew forth a shabby, faded little sachet, with a squat doll of porcelain attached to the top.

“My purse was in the satchel, and you were scattering my money all over the ground. I am a poor person,” she said in a tone of banter. “This idol has no value. See! It is ugly. The god of riches, *Hotei*, is seated on a bag of rice, you know. I always carry it about with me for good luck. It is a *porte-bonheur*.”

“It is heavy,” said May, doubtfully.

“Stuffed with raw rice, darling,” said the stranger, dropping the fetish into the depths of the bag once more. “I will show you no end of pretty toys in my rooms if you pay me a visit.”

“The lady is very kind, May,” said Harold Benham, courteously.

“Will you read a Peking morning paper, or this book full of maxims of Confucius, printed in Chinese characters? Who knows how much we need the wisdom of the Eastern sage on this mountain?” She made a gesture of dismissing Evelyn Kemp.

“Wait for me at the hotel in an hour, nurse. Ah! We require diversion on a summer day in this charming spot, and to forget our poor bodies. Away with drugs, narcotics, and new systems of medical treatment!”

“She has such a way of ordering one

about!" fumed Evelyn Kemp as she walked away. "To interfere like that when I have my bread to earn!"

She stung herself with the scorpion lash of suggestion as to the clever retort on science and skill she might have made, with suitable dignity, woman-fashion.

Later the Lady from China sought her rooms in the hotel, with her dog, *To-to*, fastened the doors, shut the windows, and carefully drew portieres and curtains. She swept aside a host of trinkets on a table, packets redolent of camphor, saffron, amber and sandalwood, a string of Japanese *Netskés*, a candle made of the fragrant, yellow powder of Thibet, sent by the Grand Lama to the Emperor of China to burn on the altar before idols; and vases and boxes. She lighted a pastille stick, made of the ashes of aromatic trees, mingled with musk, and gold dust moulded into a pink paste, such as are consumed in the shrines of private houses, on a bronze dish, and allowed the smoke to fill the chamber, obscuring all objects. Then she placed the God of riches on a tray, ripped open the sack attached and emptied out the rice. A ruby of large size and superb color was concealed in the grain.

“What a fright that child gave me, running off with the bag!” she soliloquized, as she restored the treasure and the rice and neatly sewed up the margin of the satchet. “Oh, if I should ever lose it, after all!”

To-to hid his head in a jar on the floor, either to seek some dainty, or not to follow too closely the movements of his mistress.

III. A BIRD'S SONG

Lenora Benham climbed the path. She was a pretty figure, alert, graceful and self-confident, in a short dress, belted, with neat grey shoes and a sailor hat.

The hour was early, and the air scented with ferns and pines after rain. Below stretched the valleys, misty, yet with lights banishing shadows in the green depths. The heavens were of an intense blue, and such limpid transparency that the ether palpitated in waves of distinct vibration. The larches grew up to her feet, and the resin oozing from interlacing twigs and branches sparkled like dew in the sunshine. A bird soared forth from the heights, falcon or hawk, uttering a harsh note as it hovered on steady pinion, scanning the field below for

prey. A tiny yellow bird hopped near in a slender acacia tree, with a timid chirp.

“By what is a bird known?” said Lenora, laughing gaily. “By his note, of course. ‘*Da che cosa é conoscinto un uccello? Per i suoi note.*’ So runs the Italian adage.”

The world was before her—the great, dazzling, untried world! She had studied diligently at Paris, and was lingering in Italy for her voice, with the goal before her of a début in opera next year. Afterwards engagements might follow at New York, Covent Garden, Berlin. Everyone praised her, and the stern maestro, who was such an unsparing critic, encouraged, while making her work hard. The morning air was bracing, the sunshine intoxicating. The mountain path was a stage, and the wide valley an auditorium. She made a little obeisance of the theatre before the footlights, and breathed forth a note, which expanded into a roulade, and terminated in a pearly trill. The little yellow bird flew away, as if astonished. The great bird of prey hovered in the air, and circled overhead more slowly. What if it swooped down? She was not afraid. She would threaten the falcon with her walking stick. Then she shrank back, intimidated by

the vast arena of the valley she had chosen for an audience, and continued her walk in another direction.

A rivulet made a pool and a blackbird dipped into it and darted off. A youth, driving mules to a neighboring quarry, halted to bathe face and hands in the water.

Lenora climbed a steep way among the trees beside the paved mule road. The hillside was sheltered and a peaceful region of seclusion and repose opened before her. A holly spread along the slope, and a boulder, moss stained, jutted out of the bank. She paused and glanced about her. Ah, how still it was far from the crowd! She felt inclined to laugh and weep, rejoicing in her strength of ardent aspiration, then sinking in reaction of doubt of ultimate fulfillment. Glowing health, beauty, life were her portion, the woman; feebleness, pain and gloom of spirit the lot of her husband, as the man. She must act for both. Her voice was her fortune. She had always sung, like a bird, as a child and young girl. Had she not floated in a boat on the river in the moonlight with Harold, as youth and maiden, and won his heart by singing the negro melody, now strummed all over

Europe, "Away Down on the Suwanee River"? All that happened long ago.

A man vaulted lightly through the bushes and stood before her with head uncovered.

Lenora colored. Was it with pleasure or vexation?

"How you startled me, Prince," she said. "I come up here to sing undisturbed, you know."

"Sing, and I will listen," rejoined the Prince, calmly. "Surely I may be pardoned for following so fair a singer, like her shadow."

The platitude was commonplace enough, but he infused a caressing intonation of significance, accompanied by a glance of admiration all his own. He was a small man of insignificant figure and mature age. Scion of an illustrious Tuscan family, noted for his eccentricity and extravagance, Nature had lavished no physical beauty on him, according him a sallow complexion, irregular features and a pair of piercing black eyes. He needed no other embellishment than the distinction of his rank to render him charming to the ladies. He had singled out Lenora Benham for his especial homage, and manifested a gracious interest in her progress of

musical training. The easy dalliance of summer hours led to intimacy.

“Sing for me the Siegfried bird song,” said the Prince in a tone of authority, lighting a cigarette. “The spot is well chosen.”

She hesitated a moment, then ascended a knoll, gazed upward at the serene sky and the near peak of mountain, clothed in sombre firs to the summit, and rehearsed the bird song. She forgot her companion and lost sight of her very surroundings as she gave full utterance to the theme. Far, far above she seemed to hear an echo of her own voice. She listened, entranced. Aspiration in supreme elation of human egotism buoyed her up to fulfillment. Was it a lark, the *lodoletto* of Dante, rising skyward?

“Divine!” exclaimed the Prince, coming forward, seizing her hand and kissing it.

Was she the feminine divinity before whom he half knelt? She smiled down on him regretfully, still transported by her own emotions. Ah, if her husband admired, appreciated her like that!

“Absurd!” she said. “You must not flatter me too much, Prince.”

Harold was usually silent when she sang. A pug dog barked sharply, and his mis-

tress, wrapped in long cloak, appeared, gathering a nosegay. She turned aside to pluck a spray of wild roses. The Prince stepped through the bushes and vanished with a gesture of farewell.

Lenora confronted the intruder, chilled by abrupt transition to earth from the sphere of harmony whither she had soared in singing. She was hurried into weak self-defence before this stranger, another woman.

“My teacher insists on a morning walk and practice on the heights to strengthen my voice,” she said. “My friends *will* follow me.”

“How trying,” said the Lady from China. “Shall we take back a nice bouquet to Mr. Benham, as he cannot climb?”

Lenora bit her lip.

“My husband does not care for flowers,” she replied briefly.

IV. AN AIR CASTLE

“Are you comfortable here?” inquired Evelyn Kemp, gently.

“Yes,” replied Harold Benham. “The shade is delicious, and the quiet after all the noise.”

He spoke fretfully and wearily. Evelyn Kemp regarded him with soft compassion.

The fir trees rose tall and slender, densely crowded together, forming a dim vista of low, spreading branches deepening to black depths, and long aisles stretching up the hill in a sharply defined perspective. The stillness of all Nature was inexpressibly soothing to the jaded nerves of Harold Benham, after a restless night in the company of pretty Evelyn Kemp. Occasionally the wind murmured in the tree-tops. Wasps buzzed monotonously as they sucked the turpentine oozing in a yellow dew between the needles and the fronds. Bees haunted the edge of the wood on the margin of open hillside amidst the flowers of the ditch, purple heather, brambles, gorse, blossoming at the extremity of the stem, thistle and a tangle of creepers. A spring flowed in a stone basin with a musical murmur. She filled a little cup of chamois horn and proffered it to him.

“Drink the elixir of health,” she urged.

He complied and sighed. He was a handsome man, large of mould, with a well-knit frame and fine features, now sharpened by illness and discontent. Ah! She would show him what a woman can be in the mission of

nurse. Was it not her place, her right of noble calling? In her own estimation she was the model of the modern nurse, graceful, pleasing, skillful, ready to adapt herself to family requirements as trusted companion and wise councilor. The average Sister of Charity, homely drudge of a Dominican nun, or sparse and austere type of the New World were not rivals to be feared in the sick room. Self-esteem and ardent ambition to seize opportunity on the wing made her build an air-castle, in turn, as she busied herself ministering to the invalid in the shadowy wood, as Lenora Benham had done singing on the mountain path. Evelyn Kemp, a stranger, glided into the domestic circle by the open door of opportunity, made herself agreeable and useful, and relieved the wife of care in the preoccupation of many engagements. How would it all end? Only that morning Evelyn had reassured Lenora by promising to devote herself to her husband, luring him out into the fresh air and establishing him in the grove.

“How good of you to help Harold a little,” the wife had said, selecting a roll of music to practice a duet with a Russian Duchess for the master’s concert. “Are you quite sure

we are not taking too much of your time?"

"I would willingly give my poor services to bring Mr. Benham back to health," responded the nurse with professional enthusiasm. "Do you know I believe he would recover strength under the care of my friend, Doctor Brown, in his villa on the Thames, if he would go to England. But we will speak of that another time, Madame."

"You have such a knack of doing the right thing and remembering the trifles," said Lenora Benham, meditatively.

The nurse smiled.

Left in charge of the invalid, the air-castle of Evelyn Kemp grew in roseate proportions, gaining parapet, turret and gable. She schemed to attach herself to these people, possibly cross the sea with them, and make new relations. She humored Harold Benham, diverting him by that most seductive of all pastimes to talk about himself, his preferences, ambitions, disappointments. He betrayed his distrust of the career entered upon by his wife, not untinged by jealousy. He winced at the thought of contact with all the human machinery of the stage. Would she succeed in the difficult task she had undertaken? She could sing, of course. He had

not the right, or the wish, to thwart her in a brilliant career for which she might be qualified. The nurse readily understood, divined his doubts, and reassured him warmly. She was confident of Lenora's success and brilliant future before Harold realized the disloyalty of thus revealing his inmost secrets to a stranger. Installed as confidante she imparted her own history in a touching recital, and he listened kindly.

Little May sat on a tree stump, sulkily, her presence ignored. At length she arose, bored with inaction, and approached the stranger who was engrossing so much of her father's attention. She surveyed Evelyn Kemp coolly.

"You are very clean," she said, critically.

"I hope so, darling," rejoined the fair young woman, smiling and accepting complacently the tribute to the delicate fragrance of exquisite neatness of her linen cuffs and black robe.

"You are too clean!" insisted the child, suddenly approaching nearer, with lowering brow and set teeth. "I hate you!"

"May, don't be rude," remonstrated her father. "Ask pardon of Miss Kemp."

The little girl made a mutinous grimace and sprang away up the path.

A tall woman approached the spot with a pug dog. She came down the path beside a dried watercourse, which divided the ravine, as passionate sorrow spent makes deep furrows in the human countenance. Dead leaves had been swept in heaps by winter storms in the hollows; the accumulated drift of time. Fungus grew at the gnarled roots of a blasted tree, blackened and shriveled, and stumps of hewn trees took odd and fantastic shapes in the gloom. She paused, her mood tinged by these surroundings.

“It is like the groves leading to Buddhist temples in Japan,” she soliloquized. “Buddha enshrined in the East, and the sanctuary of some Christian saint here. Why not?”

A pretty butterfly in a white frock and blue sash flitted through the trees, and May Benham, with a glad cry of recognition, hugged *To-to*, the pug, and clung to the dress of his mistress.

“She is down there,” stormed the child, pointing to the sheltered nook below. “Send her away! My papa does not need her to take care of him.”

“Ah!” said the Lady from China.

She led May to her father's side, and sank down on a rock.

"I have been for a long walk, tempted by these delightful paths," she explained, seeking a smelling bottle in the silk bag hung at her girdle.

She was an intruder. Harold Benham frowned slightly. Evelyn Kemp paused stiffly in her recital and waited. The newcomer was not disconcerted.

"Continue your discourse, nurse," she said, mockingly. "I listen. I am all attention."

"I fear Mr. Benham may be disturbed by too much talking," Evelyn Kemp demurred. "He came here to be very quiet."

"Confucius admonished us not to oppress the helpless nor neglect the weak," quoth the Lady from China.

She played with little May, who searched her bag for sweetmeats for a time, then consulted her watch.

"It is already high noon," she announced, brusquely. "Nurse, I must ask you to give me your help back to the hotel. My wretched legs are failing me this morning. The climate is too relaxing for much exercise."

“But I promised Mrs. Benham to take care of Mr. Benham in her absence,” said Evelyn warmly.

The composure of the intruder was unruffled. She rose and took the young woman’s arm.

“Of course. We will follow Mr. Benham in his chair along the path. His little daughter must walk beside him.”

“Oh, yes,” assented little May, placing herself on guard.

The nurse submitted with a sufficiently bad grace. The touch of the hand on her arm irritated, exasperated her to sullen rebellion, then impelled weak self-defence before a third person, another woman, as Lenora Benham had been actuated.

“He is so badly cared for, poor man,” she said hurriedly. “If they are willing to insure my expenses I can take care of him quite without salary for a time, as a friend.”

“You are clever,” said the Lady from China, gazing straight before her. “You deserve success.”

“I have my own way to make in the world,” was the response, half defiant, half appealing.

V. A WINGED ARROW

On the following day the Lady from China sat at the desk in her chamber writing a letter. She pondered long, with knitted brows, then wrote carefully, in a crabbed hand, a few lines on a sheet, placed it in an envelope, directed and stamped and enclosed the missive in a larger one, addressed to Rome. She inserted a slip of paper containing these words:

“DEAR JANE:

Kindly post this letter at Rome without delay.

C. H. S.”

She glided forth into the corridor unperceived and slipped the missive into the hotel post-box. Then she returned to her apartment and traced a purple line in the palm and on the inside of the thumb of her right hand with a German indelible pencil.

“People will be sorry for me if I have hurt my right hand,” she murmured, wrapping a muslin handkerchief around the wrist. After which she rubbed her face with toilette powder to a ghastly pallor.

“That will do,” she added aloud. “Now for results.”

The Lady from China was popular at the Hotel of the Pines. She had a dry humor

and was conversant with many things. Her correspondence was large, and her supply of British periodicals varied. She discussed politics with the men, and attracted the women by her trinkets and gems. Indeed she seemed clothed in jewels, collars, necklaces, girdles and clasps. The wife of the Roman banker took down the address of her London jeweler. The court beauty admired her Brahman rosary of one hundred and eight beads, strung of precious stones and coral the size of pigeon's eggs, or a phoenix ornament of gold and pearls, with wings hovering, and accepted an emblem of friendship, a rod, or sceptre, of ivory, with a lotus engraved on it. The President of the Tribunals pored over the shares quoted in her copy of the *Mining World*. She parried adroitly the frank curiosity of the Latin races, and remained unknown, inscrutable, a riddle to her fellows.

She made a sensation when she appeared on the terrace in soft draperies emblematical of the seasons, with the underlying tones of yellow and the delicate green of spring merging through violet and rose to the deep red of autumn. At times she had her tresses pinned up with bodkins, and decked with

flowers made of silk. She habitually wore a narrow boa of nearly priceless sable of Manchuria, noted with respectful admiration by the feminine eye.

At ten o'clock that night Evelyn Kemp moved about noiselessly in the shrouded chamber of Harold Benham, a gracious presence of peaceful guardianship, the very touch of her hand on the pillow soothing.

"Sleep," she whispered, softly, satisfied with her work.

"Ah, to sleep and forget all," he responded, as she placed a tiny tabloid between his lips.

A little white figure, with blonde curls falling over the shoulders, sat up in bed in the adjoining room.

"Oh, I see you!" cried May. "Go away!"

"Hush, darling! Your papa wishes to be very quiet," said Evelyn Kemp with a new ring of authority in her voice.

The nurse was hastily summoned away by a servant, to a pale woman extended on a sofa, with closed eyes, who clutched her sleeve with a left hand, the other member being disabled and wrapped in a handkerchief.

"I fear one of my attacks of the nerves,"

she said faintly. "Don't leave me for a moment. I am here all alone."

The features of the nurse hardened.

"You should not travel without a maid," she said, sharply.

The Lady from China, prone and helpless, elevated her eyebrows slightly and regarded Evelyn Kemp steadfastly through half-closed lids.

"Perhaps you are right," she assented, mildly. "I must really engage you to take care of me. Now make all preparations for one of my wakeful nights."

"You have hurt your hand?" questioned the nurse.

"A mere bruise, I fancy. My own clumsiness with a bronze vase, and I must not use my fingers to hold anything."

"The wrist must be dressed and bound up," said the nurse.

"Stuff! I will bathe it in cold water," retorted the patient.

Evelyn Kemp sullenly withdrew to make preparations for an enforced vigil. Left alone, the pallid invalid rose swiftly and swept her ornaments into a brass-bound leather trunk and thrust her keys under the pillow.

“I have promised to take care of Mr. Benham, and relieve his wife of all care,” said the nurse, resentfully.

“Yes; after I have done with you. Read aloud to me from that book on the table,” was the calm rejoinder.

Evelyn Kemp kept watch all night. Sleep had deserted these precincts, at least. She read aloud monotonously, and was bidden to continue, inexorably, if she paused. She prepared a sleeping potion in a wine glass, which was utterly without effect, since her charge poured it into a convenient flower pot unperceived. Hours passed and Evelyn Kemp sat gazing into the shadows with angry eyes, as this human octopus stretched forth one tenacious tentacle of selfish exaction after another, and wound them about her, binding her will, even, captive. Besides, it was tiresome serving the needs of a woman of uncertain age, faded, irritable and sharp-witted, and quite different from ministering to a handsome man with all the tact of an angel of mercy.

“Just my luck!” thought the pupil of the hospital. “She will never let me off if she fancies herself ill, and I must earn some money if I have the chance.”

When Lenora Benham took her place to sing at the evening concert of the *maestro*, a letter was given to her. The postmark was Rome, and the handwriting unfamiliar. She slipped the envelope into her bag unopened. Later she read the missive in her own room, flushed and excited after the ordeal of singing.

“A woman seeks to supplant you with your husband. Do you tamely submit to such usurpation? Your companions flatter you too much. You have not even a fine voice.
A TRUE FRIEND.”

Lenora Benham laughed and then she sobbed, putting her hand to her throat.

VI. WHO IS THE WOMAN?

The arrow of spite or malice shot by the anonymous letter did not affect Lenora in the least, as a high-spirited woman. She assured herself of the fact at the outset. Her first sentiment was one of relief that she was the recipient. Had her husband been the target, instead, so many annoying hints and innuendoes might have reached the mark about her! As the favorite pupil of the *maestro*, she was the object of much attention and praise. If she was destined for the theatre she should become accustomed to

every phase of public homage. Harold might be disturbed, even rendered a trifle jealous, by the pressing attentions of the Prince, which the latter did not seek to conceal in his zeal for her musical progress. Doubtless feminine envy of the precedence given to her in the summer society had dictated the note. She was glad, relieved that the shot was launched at her rather than Harold. She could conceal the barbed shaft beneath her corselet, and keep her own counsel. She was striving to win a goal, and temporize with the elements of success. Perhaps an enemy might assert that she led the Prince on. She was incapable of jealousy of her husband. Poor Harold, invalided, was not even in the running!

Lenora Benham did not sleep that night. She was a prey to manifold doubts and cares. Her spirit was flagging from sheer physical weariness. The bubble of vanity, tinted with rainbow colors, collapsed in a sudden revulsion of feeling. Her surroundings were repugnant, even distasteful, to her. She would like to flee away and escape from all.

The poison of the anonymous letter coursed through her veins in a feverish pulsation. Her voice? What was amiss with

her voice? Was this enemy aware that her throat got tired at times? She was acutely aware that Harold did not place undue faith in her choice of a public career.

“You can only try,” he said. “If you do not succeed, we will return to our little suburban cottage and strive to live within our income.”

Ah, the genius of a family is seldom believed in by the domestic circle until stamped with success by the outside world! Lenora recalled, with bitterness, the commendation of the husband of the woman who wrote a book destined to become a keynote of the nineteenth century, translated into many languages, and the admonition that she would be fortunate if the price of the work might be a new silk gown. If Harold only realized all!

The winged arrow rankled deepest in the mention of her voice. Had not the organ scope, volume, great purity of tone?

She sank into uneasy dreams towards morning, and was aroused by these words in her ear: *Who is the woman?* The puzzling inquiry recurred to her mind with odd persistency. She had reason to fear the influence of another woman with her husband?

Absurd! Who could this rival be? She had no idea. Her curiosity became slowly awakened.

The eventful day, the festival of St. Lawrence, so long to be remembered by all the mountainside, dawned sultry and languid with August heat. The prince had arranged an excursion to a distant height in honor of the *maestro* on this *fiesta* of San Lorenzo, whose name he bore. The *maestro*, Lorenzo, was a ponderous person with a dyed moustache, a bald forehead and a visage of stern gravity. He was accompanied by a stout wife and a bevy of daughters, while fashionable ladies who had been his pupils zealously upheld his claims of rare proficiency to all newcomers, especially foreigners. Rival professors and their partisans scoffed at the worthy man and accredited him with having ruined more voices by an over-pressure of cultivation than any teacher of his day.

Mrs. Benham had demurred when urged to join the gay company, but had been overruled, caressed and coaxed to yield. Was she not the favorite pupil of the *maestro*, Lorenzo? A basket of fruit and flowers from the villa of the Prince near by, similar

to one presented to the Professor, was brought to her door at an early hour.

“Very kind,” murmured the recipient. “Harold, do taste these apricots and peaches.”

“No,” said Harold Benham.

“I must go to the picnic, I suppose,” said Lenora, gathering a spangled white veil over her hat and seeking her gloves. “The Marchesa insists on my riding a donkey beside her. They would all be offended, and I must not offend these people too much.”

“Go, by all means,” said her husband, averting his glance from her.

“It will soon be over,” she continued.

“Next week we can go down and find quiet quarters in an apartment or villa.”

He laughed.

“Why not put me in some home for incurables and be free?”

“Harold! And May?”

“Oh, May can seek an orphan asylum.”

The little girl was hovering over the basket of fruit.

“No, no!” she protested, taking the matter jestingly, since her father laughed. “I will stay with my own dear papa.”

The gay party of cavaliers and ladies

started on the pilgrimage at an early hour, with guides, donkeys and a sledge drawn by oxen and fitted with a gigantic basket, containing chairs, for the *maestro*.

Lenora was silent and perturbed as the cavalcade of pleasure-seekers climbed a slope. A refrain rang in her brain above the laughter and song of her companions: *Who is the woman?* At the bend of the path her donkey halted and she gazed down into the gulf of green which separated her from her husband. A panic of dread and alarm seized her. Why? She never knew. The superstitious made a sign of the cross when she spoke of the hour, afterwards. She slipped from the saddle to her feet and disappeared down the path.

“I must return to the hotel,” she explained to the boy.

The Lady from China entertained visitors in her rooms with fine tea and sweetmeats. Harold Benham and May were guests of honor, the former extended in a *chaise-lougue* near a window, and the latter flitting about to touch curious objects, trinkets of jade, and transparent horn, and a ball of carved ivory, followed by the pug in affable mood. The hostess kept her right hand in

a silk scarf as a sling. May sought the god of riches, seated on a bag of rice.

“It must be about here somewhere,” said the hostess, carelessly. “Never mind.”

She gave the child *Ron-Sa*, the idol of the Yellow River, with a broad, flat, red face, goggle eyes, a marine shell on the head and a sword in the hand. Then she burned some powdered sandalwood on a bornze dish.

Evelyn Kemp served the tea.

Lenora Benham entered and seated herself beside her husband quietly. She was pale and had her hair meekly smoothed back from her brow. She held a small book of autographs. In response to surprise at her return she explained that her head ached and she would like a cup of tea. She scrutinized the company with keen interest. Harold was talking earnestly with Evelyn Kemp, as she bent over him to proffer buttered toast.

“Why did you come back?” he demanded, abruptly and suspiciously.

Lenora made no response. She beheld in every woman present the hidden foe of the anonymous letter. Stay! Was her own rival of the number as well? All women

were gentle and good to her crippled husband, of course.

“We shall soon be leaving,” she said. “I wish everyone to kindly write in my book.”

The Lady from China stiffened, and explained that she had hurt her hand, then passed the pen to the banker’s wife. As she did so, she turned with a startled expression, listened, and exclaimed: “Fire!”

Confusion ensued. The hostess flung open the door and caught a porter by the arm as he hurried along the corridor.

“Quick! Carry the gentleman out of doors. You shall be well paid!” she cried.

She turned to her guests. “Fly for your lives! The house is burning,” she added.

Already flames crackled in the woodwork, and a volume of dense smoke enveloped the interior or poured forth from every casement. Cries, exclamations of dismay and commands given by those in authority resounded on all sides. People hurried from the adjacent groves and terraces to rescue children indoors or save their wardrobe and luggage. All the mountain world realized that an unprecedented calamity had occurred on the *festa* of San Lorenzo. A building had caught fire in full daylight, and the sur-

rounding belt of woods was threatened. Water supply to extinguish a conflagration there was none. If the twigs, bushes and trees caught from flying sparks and embers the woods would be destroyed. Every village and hamlet poured forth men and boys in response to the tocsin of alarm, and hastened to the rescue. Old women fell on their knees and prayed before wayside shrines that a calamity dreaded all their lives might be averted. Distant towns of the valleys responded to the danger signal of the kindling beacon on the height.

Harold Benham was safely transported to the terrace with his wife and child. The pug barked sharply at the group.

“Where is she?” said Harold, noticing first the absence of the mistress.

The Lady from China was missing. She had turned back in the corridors and made her way through the stifling smoke to her apartment. Hall and stairway cut off, she appeared at the window and calmly gave orders to Evelyn Kemp below. She climbed on the ledge and parapet, gained a ladder, and descended into the garden.

“All will be lost!” she sighed.

“But you have found your bag,” said Evelyn Kemp.

“Yes,” was the triumphant retort. “I have found my fetish.”

She carried on her arm the yellow bag, wrought with the Imperial black dragon, scorched and soiled, with the sachet of rice and the god of riches safely ensconced in the depths. The nurse further noticed in assisting her the gleam of jewels around her throat and neck and arms. Possibly she habitually wore these ornaments concealed beneath her robe.

A pall of smoke hung for hours over the cliff, the obscurity peopled by flying forms, amidst a babel of voices, as furniture and luggage were carried forth by a throng of menials.

Lenora Benham, hurrying to claim her property, met the Prince. He took her hand.

“Accept my protection,” he said, with all the manner of a *grand seigneur*. “My automobile waits yonder to take your family to my villa.”

“I can accept—nothing,” replied Lenora, withdrawing her hand.

He bowed and smiled. Lenora was almost plain. How readily the soft contours of

beauty are marred by emotion! He sneered as he turned away. There are hosts of pretty women in the world. Lenora sought the sheltered corner of the terrace where her husband and child waited. She flung her arms around his neck and cried:

“Oh, Harold, can you ever forgive me! I might have been far away from you on the mountain excursion if I had not turned back.”

He embraced her in silence. Little May clung to them.

The Benhams departed from the spot without a glance behind.

Fire, swift and furious in its course, consumed the house to the core, leaving a blackened shell on the hillside. Fire, in forked tongues, leaped forth seeking fresh prey, and gained the woods, licking about the resinous trunks of stately trees, scorching with a fierce intensity dry and dust-laden shrubbery and catching high branches. Night came on, shadowy darkness illuminated for leagues by the dull red glow of a vast conflagration. Moments of suspense in deadly peril of a fresh outburst lengthened to hours as the advance of the foe was steadily contested by every man with axe, hook and poles

to beat down flaming foliage and hew apart burning masses, or trample on igniting vines and grass.

When the fire was spent a crowd lingered, sifting the ashes for lost treasures, bewailing the disappearance of valuable papers, carried in portmanteau, clothing, laces and jewelry. Humanity was stripped of the garb of courtesy and revealed in all the nakedness of greedy precedence to claim objects, while suspecting a neighbor.

Two women journeyed to England, one haughtily domineering, yet intimate in the discussion of recent events, the other submissive and discreet as an attendant. Arrived in London, the former paid scrupulously the wages due, and bestowed a ring of enamel, with a maxim of Confucius engraved on it.

“Go back to the hospital, my girl, and seek to interest some medical student,” she said. “You are not adapted to the theatre.”

“I should like the excitement and movement of the theatre,” retorted Evelyn Kemp. “I need a patron.”

Lenora Benham watched over her husband in the Engadine during the winter, leaving her child in a school at Vevey. She was

cheerful, patient and vigilant at her post. Harold Benham breathed the elixir of new life in the upper atmosphere. With renewed animation approaching health, he was skeptical and suspicious of the change in his wife. She intended abandoning her choice of a professional career for the present, she explained. Why? She feared her voice was overstrained and needed rest. In the spring they would return home to their cottage, where she might strive to gather a circle around her and teach vocalization. Henceforth she should try the *mi-voix* method. He was unconvinced, and listened coldly to the old melody of the Suwanee River sung in his ear.

“Perhaps the sacrifice is too great,” he demurred. “As for me, Miss Kemp had all sorts of plans for my improvement of health. A clever girl, and amusing, too!”

Lenora regarded him with slowly dilating eyes.

“Miss Kemp?” she repeated. “You mean the nurse?”

“A lady nurse,” corrected Harold, testily. “If you wish to pursue your studies, she is willing to take charge of me.”

“I will care for you myself,” replied the wife. “We cannot afford a nurse.”

“Oh, as to that, we might benefit her in America, some time,” he said.

“Harold! Do you wish it?”

There was a moment of silence. A slow wave of color swept over the face of the crippled man.

“No,” he rejoined.

Lenora understood. *Evelyn Kemp, fair and pleasing, was the woman!* Thus she drank the cup of failure and humiliation to the bitter dregs.

The Lady from China turned her face eastward, accompanied by her pug dog. When Aden came in view, she mused:

“I have saved two people, but they will never know.”

A LOST TREASURE: THE SERVANT PROBLEM

CARLOTTA stood on the threshold of the kitchen, smiling, and said she would do all in her power to content the ladies.

“Tell her the ladies are easily contented,” said Miss Hart in English.

“Yes! A gypsy kettle over a wood fire on the hillside would do,” added Molly, blithely.

“Or just a picnic lunch in the open air,” said Mrs. Armstrong.

Ada King shook her head.

“One must eat to live,” she said with authority. “Let us try an Italian kitchen for once in our lives, at least. As I have studied the language I will be the housekeeper in our summer experiment, if you like. We can balance accounts out here in the *loggia* every evening.”

“What fun!” chimed in Molly, with all the exuberance and in consequence of her sixteen years.

“Ada will soon set up housekeeping at Rome, as we are all aware,” Miss Hart hinted, archly.

Ada reddened and feigned not to understand the meaning of the wiry, elderly lady, who was tall, thin and sallow, with a coiffure of grey hair much indebted to the hairdresser's art of "transformations" after the nightcap stage of early hours.

"You *do* study cookery books, even in the studio, dear," said Mrs. Armstrong. "Is it for Edward's sake?"

"If you mean Edward Stanton, he has a very delicate digestion as well as a weak chest," replied Ada, a trifle stiffly.

Young Molly giggled, then hastily murmured:

"It is so good of you to consider his digestion."

"Italian cook books are perfectly fascinating," said Ada, laughing. "The words are so pretty and the terms harmonious. For example, if you are a housewife, consider making a sweet, a *dolce*, 'a pudding-pie,' as the children say, under the list of *consolations of the stomach*, all peaches, stoned, maccaroons and pounded almonds in a syrup."

These four friends had chosen in the month of June a summer resort of the Apennines. The valley wound amidst the green

slopes of enfolding hills, clothed with chestnut trees and vineyards. A shallow little river sparkled and foamed over pebbles, spanned by ancient bridges here and there, and murmured of the mountain peaks far above where it was born, with warnings of winter storms as well. Hedges of box, lawns, parterres of flowers, clumps of hortensia, aromatic shrubbery and thickets of laurel bordered the village street. The spot has been praised by Queen Margherita, gliding through the country in her automobile, as one garden, with the air fragrant of jasmine, roses and vanilla-scented hay. Here the nightingale sings in full daylight of morning and afternoon hours, in July, the delicate, trilling notes of gushing melody like a canary, only terminating in the odd "*jug, jug, jug*" of the poets.

The party of Americans had arrived bag and baggage, with a little stir of excitement, and took possession of a modest apartment in an old stone house of cool aspect. The building climbed the hillside, as it were, the lower story, with the door of a stable on one side, flanking a garden patch above the highway, the first floor approached by a flight of stone steps worthy of study by artist or

etcher, and the upper quarter overlooking the country from many windows on one side and opening on a terrace, paved, on the other. This entrance-way formed a little plateau of grass, with a plane-tree in the middle, where the children gathered and the fowls strayed in search of such summer delicacies as beetles and grasshoppers. Other houses bordered this open space. At an angle of wall on the hillside was the public fountain, an arched alcove of masonry, draped with vines and ferns, and a cypress tree growing above. All drank at this cool spring, the spout of iron tube brimming over into a basin of moss-stained stone in shape like a carved sarcophagus. Women brought copper vessels, the *serchio*, to fill for their households. The peddler and passing wayfarer paused to quaff a refreshing draught. The *contadine*, carrying bundles of grass, sheaves of grain or wine barrels, halted at the fountain. The dusty laborers mending the roads, cast down pickaxe, shovels and tattered hats on the grass to hold their brown hands and heated faces under the pure rill. This country is blessed with abundant sources of rock springs, in parched and arid

Italy, the waters that fail not, for a grateful population.

The upper floor of the old house was the apartment rented for the summer months by the four American friends. The interior had spacious chambers, with muslin curtains at the windows, plain, old-fashioned furniture, and floors of red brick tiles, indebted to oil and sawdust for a polish. A wide hall, with sofas and tables, made a comfortable living room during the hot hours of noon. The suite of rooms terminated in a *loggia*, or open porch, at one extremity, the arches draped with the swaying tendrils of vines, and the parapet adorned with pots of geranium, asters and marigolds. The kitchen was at the other end of the building. It was a bare room, with whitewashed walls, a brick hearth of primitive form, furnished with kettles, pots, copper stew-pans and a tin oven, a grated window and a green door giving egress on the paved terrace. A convenient margin of ledge outside the portal served for depositing a basket, a tray of tomatoes, or the brown, leathery, edible fungus to dry in the sun, and to spread freshly ironed linen.

Eminently characteristic was this green

door of the Italian kitchen on the hillside! Here came the monk in sandals and brown robe, and the nuns, wearing wide straw hats, to beg the dole of charity on Saturday. Picturesque mendicants, bearded like hermits, a bag on the shoulder and staff in hand, lingered on the threshold. Even a shaggy bear and a dismal monkey reached the spot, on occasion, with a tattered crew, to the sound of a tambourine. More welcome guests were the postman, clad in linen, with his satchel strapped over his arm; a grimy myrmidon with a load of charcoal; the baker's boy, who alighted from his bicycle below and brought a basket of long loaves of bread to distribute to the neighborhood; the peasant with milk and fresh butter from a distant farm. Slender girls from the heights of adjacent peaks paid flying visits, with wild strawberries and raspberries to sell. Sunburned old wives, with yellow handkerchiefs knotted over their heads, did traffic with mushrooms, fowls and eggs. The fruit vender appeared with green pears or peaches and an attendant boy carrying a pair of brass scales.

Carlotta was here installed, with wages of twenty francs a month, and three francs for her wine. She was a pretty girl, with a dark,

oval face, bright eyes, dazzling white teeth and lustrous hair, deftly arranged according to the latest fashion. She was obliging and willing to do all the hard work of floor cleaning, scrubbing and polishing without aid. She served the table at meals in a neat, white apron with a bib, devoid of suspicion of recent proximity to the kitchen fire. In addition, she was a born genius in her own line. Her gifts had been ripened by the advantages of education. Given a sauce-pan and a bed of coals, anywhere on the terrestrial globe, Carlotta would have cooked well.

Her father came from the Romagna to work on a branch railway and had settled here with a numerous family. An old Countess interested herself in the training of Carlotta to be a good servant. Sagacity mingled with benevolence in the choice of a career. The girl was not only taught to cook, but versed in all the skillful delicacies of the craft of flavoring, mingling ingredients and making appetizing dishes out of trifles, a bit of tough meat, or chicken, or fish, minced and pounded with dainty manipulation into patties or *rissolles*; the most tempting variety of treatment of eggs; the most capti-

vating store of recipes of dessert in pastry, creams and chocolate puddings.

Altogether the old Countess wisely gave the poor maiden a dowry in such instruction which was of inestimable value for life, instead of tuition in embroidery and fine needlework. Indeed a husband would be more readily secured by these acquirements than any other, with an ultimate investment of placing out at service by a worthy mate. In Italy the man whose wife is a cook may safely anticipate the enjoyment of lounging on the street, with his hands in his pockets. Carlotta verified the adage that dear to the artist is his art. She spared no pains to excel, and actually enjoyed making the most of a dish in accordance with thrifty economy of fuel and materials. Under her ministrations soup had all the excellent qualities of the Tuscan *minestra*, whether served clear, with vermicelli, white of egg, grated cheese, tiny balls of dumplings, or thickened to a *purée* of beans, barley or potato, eaten with toasted bread cut in dice. Salads under her nimble fingers varied from the fresh summer lettuce, *endive*, sorrel, *radicchio*, a suspicion of the biting horseradish, shallot and nasturtium to a *mayonnaise* of the most

complicated construction. Beef, of an inferior quality, became under her magic spell a tender portion, braised in milk for hours and served covered with a rich, brown gravy, to be severed with a spoon. Maize was converted by her into *polenta*, in three-cornered morsels, garnishing the plate of meat; little cakes, crisped and brown, the *gnocchi*, and *timballe* the size of a cup, baked to a dry, crumbly envelope, with a lid on the top, and filled with a white cream of chicken, or veal, macaroni and rice, and the fine grain *semolina* assumed every phase of excellence for the hunger of humanity in her kingdom, the kitchen with a green door. Vegetables were seasoned to perfection. The worthy potato had no secret of savory value that she could not reveal, nor the excellent tomato, used to flavor soups and gravy, strained in a thick sauce to consume with eggs, fish and meats, dressed raw in slices for a salad, with oil and vinegar, or baked in halves, breaded, and filled with pounded meat, herbs or anchovy. Her unfailing allies in supply were large beans, boiled, and the faithful *zucchi*, a member of the squash and pumpkin family, cut in delicate slices, stewed, or fried, mashed, and cooked whole in a sauce. The

art of frying was her triumph. She was not merely an adept with oil, by inheritance, but soared into the most airy and light efforts of skill with batter, eggs and butter.

“She will do nicely,” said Ada, after tasting a first portion of *tagliatelli*, the *pasta* made in the house, cut very fine and served in a gravy with fowls’ livers.

The ladies speedily adapted themselves to a routine of summer hours, charmed with the novelty of their experiment and disposed to compare their lot with the usual crowded resorts of seaside and mountain. Miss Hart’s diary recorded rules of living: A delightful breakfast at half-past seven was spread on a table in the *loggia*, consisting of coffee and hot milk for Ada and Molly; tea with a boiled egg and a slice of toast for Miss Hart and a cup of cocoa for Mrs. Armstrong. At this meal the feminine household could enjoy the Italian ease of a *peignoir* and dressing sack.

Lunch was ready at twelve; tea was partaken of at four o’clock in the *loggia*, and dinner was served at seven. Molly arranged a nosegay for the middle of the table. A small *carafe* of the red wine of the country was used sparingly and a large one of the

pure and deliciously cool water of the adjacent spring. Fruit was tempting if not very abundant. Large black figs were placed on a vine leaf in a glass dish; apricots, plums and small fruits, raspberries, or mountain strawberries, plentifully sprinkled with sugar, and a spoonful of wine added, if desired. Carlotta fetched a store of small pears with the Parmesan cheese.

“We Italians say that bread, cheese and pears make a meal for a gentleman,” she explained. *Formaggio, pane, e pere, pasto di cavaliere.*

The days did not lack variety. Many excursions were undertaken in the mountains of the vicinity to picturesque hamlets, churches and mediæval castles. Molly, as the pupil of an art school in America, made pilgrimages mounted on a sober grey donkey to sketch ancient gateways of towns and fragments of architecture. Ada King, a clever artist of reputation, speedily filled her portfolio with studies of charming children and wrinkled old women, with bold effects of light and color on the clusters of purple grapes under the *pergola* or the poppies flecking a patch of golden grain.

Mrs. Armstrong worked on rich embroid-

ery for altars in the *loggia*. She repeated the lines:

“A pleasant land of drowsy heat it was,
Of dreams that wave before the half-shut eyes,
And of gay castles in the clouds that pass,
Forever flushing round a summer sky.”

“I never knew what it was to be thoroughly lazy before,” affirmed Miss Hart, who had nerves and was traveling for health.

She decided to write a new book of travels, all the impressions of a voluminous correspondence gathered around the table of afternoon tea. What title should she choose for the volume? *Pannetone* that I have eaten? The places where I have eaten *pannetone*, toasted, buttered and spread with apricot jam, cakes of different Italian towns furnishing the theme, with incidental reference to surroundings.

Carlotta reigned in the kitchen with the green door. In the course of the season she lured the household into preserving, and the whole premises were redolent of hot sugar and fruit.

“You know that the German ladies in the Apennines always make syrups of the berries to take home to Florence and Rome,” said

Ada King, with a newly awakened housewifely zeal.

Carlotta converted the mountain raspberry into a rich jam, put up in earthen jars and the top covered with thick paper steeped in spirit to prevent mould in cellars. She prepared small green figs, flavored with ginger, in a transparent conserve rivaling oriental sweetmeats. The quince yielded her a jelly resembling in delicacy of flavor the *guava* of the West Indies. She made of the juice of the pomegranate the *marinato*, a liquor kept by the addition of a little alcohol.

“How clever you are, Carlotta,” exclaimed Molly.

“Ah, signorina!” said Carlotta, “every tower rings its own bell!” *Ogni campanile suona le sue campane.*

Then she brushed the tresses of Molly and arranged them skillfully in an elaborate coiffure. She had been a lady’s maid before the ambition of a cook was awakened in her breast.

She had her whims and surprises. Friday was always *maigre*, according to her standard, whether the ladies were Catholic or Protestant. Let us repent of our sins in as tasty a manner as possible, was the lenient

creed of this handmaiden. Lunch began with a cheese *soufflé*, very hot and light. Next came scrambled eggs, heaped in a pyramid and garnished with triangular slices of toasted bread spread with anchovy reduced to a paste. Codfish followed in the form of *polpetti*, a nearly white cream for consistency, yet retaining the fully salt flavor and fried in balls. Raspberries and Gruyère cheese completed the meal.

Dinner furnished a soup of peas in a *purée*, with morsels of chopped tongue in it. Fish of the river were delicately browned and garnished with lemon and sprigs of parsley. A dish of braised fowl, with fine *pasta*, and a salad followed. The dessert was composed of stewed plums in a fruit syrup and thin almond cakes. Apricots and figs succeeded the *dolce*.

One day Carlotta brought a large dish of curry to the table with much pride. This consisted of portions of veal simmered in the smooth yet fiery yellow sauce, and rice, dry and light, piled on another plate. She was puzzled to find that Americans are not invariably fond of this dish of British predilection.

At other times she charmed her employers

by holding aloof from the village market-place as much as possible, and concocting pick-up dishes with ingenuity and skill. Fish of the river, boiled, was converted into a *mayonnaise*, with eggs, sliced beets and lettuce. Patties, croquettes and *rissolles*, filled with minced meat or fowl—a sort of glorified fritter in a batter, served with tomato sauce—replaced more substantial viands.

“She is a perfect treasure!” exclaimed Mrs. Armstrong, after partaking of an alp of whipped cream on a foundation of grated chestnuts, accompanied by little, crisp horns, the *cialdone*, made by Carlotta.

“I will take her to Rome, and attach her to all of us,” boasted Ada King. “She can be held by kindness, of course. Yes, I *might* give her more wages, but she must not be spoiled.”

“Are you sure of her?” demurred Miss Hart. “The Italian Marchesa on the train from Perugia said that soon there will be no more young women for service left in Italy. All emigrate and marry.”

Ada King smiled.

“I hope to be able to manage this one. Edward must see her.”

“Oh!” said Miss Hart.

“Certainly she is a perfect treasure,” echoed the friends.

As for Carlotta, what was her actual opinion of the strangers she served? Who knows? The previous winter she had been taken to Malta by an English military family and had joyfully returned home to Italy in March, her health sadly shaken by the uses of a coal fire. She had lived with a Russian lady, who wished her to drink tea instead of wine; an incredible expedient. She was quiet, and not coquettish. She snubbed all swains who lingered about as she tripped to the fountain for water of an evening, when the stars shone above and the fireflies twinkled amidst the fragrant darkness of the shrubbery. She was very devout. She went to mass at five o'clock and paused to pray at favorite roadside shrines before going to market in the village, whither she returned with her purchases tied up in the usual gingham handkerchief.

Edward Stanton came for a week in August, lodged at an old *albergo* on the street below, and sketched in the hills. He was a slight and pale young man, with a sympathetic smile and much dry humor. He was popular with womenkind of all classes, and made the acquaintance of pretty Carlotta

with the flattering affability of the Roman artist. During this visit the perfect treasure of a cook excelled in her calling. Zeal for masculine approval, or interest in the romance of the situation, led to serving a *fritto* of surpassing excellence, composed of artichokes, *zucchini*, calf's liver and brains; or an exquisite trifle of sweetbread dressed with peas; a platter of tongue stewed in gravy; a beefsteak with summer cabbage, by no means coarse fare in her hands. For the suitor Carlotta lent additional flavor to the eggplant, boiled, cut in thick slices and browned with tomatoes, the whole celery cooked with bacon, spinach mixed with fowls' livers and flanked by a bed of rice; the whole pods of beans, sprinkled with cheese, the *Mangia-tutti*.

For lovers this amiable handmaiden provided a dessert of Italy praised by the late Prince Napoleon, small cups filled with the famous *zabbaione*, a frothing delicacy of egg and Marsala wine. Sponge cakes were eaten with the *zabbaione*. She further devised a *galette*, filled with jam, with a pensive thoughtfulness of demeanor; a *mérangue* filled with chocolate custard, and even a tapi-

oca pudding of most miraculous lightness, in sauce.

When Ada King permitted Edward Stanton to put a diamond engagement ring on her finger, and received the congratulations of her friends, Carlotta may be said to have soared to the climax of her culinary achievements, inspired to enthusiasm of sympathy in a betrothal. She spread a feast of tempting variety and made a *dolce*, a wondrous structure of a sort of gigantic cake, severed in layers for spreading with a cream, as rich as butter, and of different colors—pink, yellow, green—the whole surmounted by a roof of spun sugar and chocolate.

“She will do,” said Edward Stanton.

Ada King beamed a triumphant response: “Not a word more just now. I will question her discreetly.”

But man proposes. Two formidable shapes already loomed near. One, familiar to all lands, is known as:

The servant problem.

The other is:

Emigration.

One day a brown and stalwart youth approached the kitchen door. Carlotta welcomed him with tears and laughter. He was

her lover, returned at the expiration of his military service in Sicily to marry her. Interest in the daily round of the postman and discretion of conduct abroad were explained. The suitor was a shoemaker, and intended to resume his calling.

“Marry a cobbler!” exclaimed Ada King. “What a pity for a girl like that to just sink to a common drudge!”

“I thought you were an advocate of matrimony,” said Miss Hart.

“A singer, a physician or a scientist should devote themselves wholly to their calling,” affirmed Ada.

“And a cook,” added Mrs. Armstrong, slyly.

“We might give Carlotta a white dress for a wedding present,” mused young Molly.

Further interrogated, the returned soldier announced his intention of emigrating to the United States of North America with his wife. Ada suggested, with sarcastic emphasis, that there are plenty of cobblers in the locality chosen. The young man shrugged his shoulders slightly. Oh, they should find friends! Carlotta could go out to work, if necessary, Ada hinted. Carlotta smiled and

looked at her chosen lord. No! She need not serve any more, he declared.

“I have it!” exclaimed Miss Hart with prophetic wisdom. “That man will keep a restaurant, or open a hotel in a town of America. I can see it in his eye.”

“The wretch!” sighed Ada, as her air-castle faded away.

“Carlotta, as mistress of the sauce-pans, can make of her husband a scullion to assist her in a linen cap and apron,” supplemented Mrs. Armstrong. “They will make a fortune.”

“I fear that girl has no heart!” said Ada. “Already she scorches the omelette.”

“She has too much heart where the cobbler is concerned, I should say,” the elder reasoned.

The kitchen with the green door is closed and the apartment empty. The birds of a summer have flown away, Ada King and Molly returning to resume their art studies at Rome, Miss Hart to winter at Taormina, and Mrs. Armstrong to seek the Mont Pélerin above Geneva.

Carlotta, the treasure, is forever lost to the modest sphere of domestic service.

That year the tide of emigration swept

Italy in a mighty wave of humanity. Tuscany yielded her youth. The trains were crowded, and the young men sang quaint canticles in farewell to the hills and vineyards and ancient towns crowned by a *campanile* as they passed.

Among the number went Carlotta and her mate, brave, smiling, and confident of the future.

TYING A KNOT: A SEA ROMANCE

THE *Ocean Wave* waited in the port of Genoa for her human freight and merchandise on a day of August. Latest triumph of modern construction, the steamer was prepared to challenge all rivalry in perfected mechanism, precision of discipline, and speed. Already feminine caprice asserted: "I will sail on no other vessel than the *Ocean Wave*."

Feminine caprice in such matters, as everybody knows, rules the world.

The old sailor, peering over the bulwarks at the crowd of American travelers, might have affirmed, according to his creed, that there is no new way of tying a knot. The crews of the Italian craft at anchor near the *Ocean Wave*, and even the porters loitering about the quays, would have assented to the adage: "*Nulla di nuovo nei nodi.*" (There is nothing new to learn about making knots.)

Possibly this ancient mariner, gazing over the bulwark of a giant of the seas, in the twentieth century, was mistaken.

Now, if John Matthews had not taken passage on the *Ocean Wave*, he would never

have been mistaken for the husband and natural protector of Marjory Ford under very startling circumstances.

History has many notable examples of seeming trifles leading to great results. Are we not told that if the nose of Cleopatra had been shorter, the face of the earth would have been changed? If an inflammatory fever had not smitten Mirabeau, or a cannon ball had killed Napoleon Bonaparte, or, again, a tile from the roof only fallen on the head of Robespierre, public events of nations would have taken a different course.

Thus, John Matthews, serious student of Egyptology, becoming dry and brown, like the mummies of ancient tombs and museums, whose society he sought, spectacled and slightly bald, took ship for New York, intent on compiling a new dictionary of hieroglyphics and arranging a course of lectures on recent excavations in lower Egypt, with reference to interesting afresh an enlightened public in the labors of Sir Flinders Petrie. At the age of forty years, he sometimes assured himself that he failed wholly to fulfill two of Tolstoi's five conditions of happiness: founding a family, and free and affectionate intercourse with all sorts and conditions of

men. He had no leisure for such expansion. Among the trees of the great human family John Matthews was apparently destined to be neither elm, ash or poplar, to be married to the vines festooned from branch to branch, according to early Roman belief, but the plane tree called *Coelebs*, the confirmed bachelor.

Genoa watched from her palaces, gardens and heights crowned by fortifications the eddies of life on her margin of shore. The cargo boats came and went, like shuttles threading the great loom of commerce, the seas, laden with coal, cotton, iron and industrial materials, the nondescript tramp steamers from North America and Australia, and that ever-suggestive phase of change, the lessening of sails. An animated throng of humanity hastened to the port, coming by the railways from the Alps and northern Italy, by way of the two torrents, the *Bisagno* and *Polcevera*, or along the shore to the station of *Santa Limbana*, where the porters of the quays sorted all these parcels, as it were, and carried them on board the waiting ships. Rival of Marseilles, Antwerp and Rotterdam, Genoa watched the pilgrims embark on the *Ocean Wave* that August day, the caravans

of travelers, the groups of sad emigrants seeking another home, the bands of devout brotherhoods returning from a visit to Rome to distant portions of the New World. Here were the usual young couples on their honeymoon journey to Europe; students on university tours; dramatic artists intent on reaping fortune in the States; the haughty American *prima donna* of assured reputation, and the eager aspirant from the Milan Conservatoire or Florence, longing to try her wings; the foreign resident who "jumps the ditch" at least once a year. Every variety of feature and character was gathered here—grave, careworn and gay, lank and sorrowful poverty, dapper and luxurious opulence, tragedy and careless mirth.

What a day may bring forth! Genoa accepted the present occasion as similar to all others—summer heat merging to languid autumn—in the bustle of departure of a transatlantic steamer, yet was destined to recall the most trifling incident afterwards.

The happiest man in the crowd of the port was Mr. Robert Harrington Ford, otherwise known as Father. He was going home.

His offspring had recently discovered that he possessed so much name, and were firm

about a new visiting card for the European tour.

The happiest woman amidst the multitude struggling to count bags and wraps was Mrs. Robert Harrington Ford, otherwise known as Mother. She was going home.

The worthy couple were convoyed by three daughters, respectively, Gertrude, Harriet and Marjory, and a small son, Frank, aged ten. These bore some traces of the strife of an active campaign of travel, the hand-to-hand conflicts for precedence in corridor trains, the delays at the *guichet*, the tipping of the wrong porters, the nightmare dreams in noisy hotels of losing trains and tickets; but were, on the whole, undaunted in spirit.

“We are not millionaires to travel in automobiles,” said Gertrude, ruefully.

Many years ago the famous Florentine Filippo Strozzi uttered these memorable words: “But times are changed, and now the goslings lead the geese to water.”

If the goslings of the sixteenth century were thus disposed to rule, how much more the downy fledglings of the twentieth century who wing their way over land and sea at pleasure, or assert themselves at home in

the university and the wide arena of field sports!

These goslings had set forth fluffily, wearing white boas, on a six-months tour of Europe. The grey and black feathers of the goose mother were a trifle bedraggled as she obediently waded through all the mud-puddles of the way. These goslings longed to lead the parent geese further afield, to Greece, Algiers or Palestine. In travel they had been darkly reticent as to tales of obstruction on railways, highwaymen, brigands, pickpockets.

“Oh, please don't tell mother,” piped the goslings on all occasions.

The beguiler on the highroad invariably manipulated the goslings as the actual power. Father, an Argus at home and a mole abroad, allowed the children to take the lead. The goslings brought a harvest of trinkets with them, their own kodak impressions of men and places, a gallery of picture cards, and a surprising knowledge of kings and queens on their thrones, as well as the eccentricities of princes. The youngest, Frank, became speedily the linguist and interpreter of the party, after the manner of small boys. He was to be relied upon to adjust any question

of contraband chocolate at a frontier by consuming the delicacy, as well as despatching all bunches of grapes of the luncheon-basket in avoidance of possible complications with distrustful vine-growers. He would not have hesitated to follow the example of the traveler Vaillant, who swallowed precious medals to avoid the Corsairs, when taken prisoner at Algiers.

Marjory Ford was not aware that John Matthews was in the world, much less a fellow-passenger on board the *Ocean Wave*.

“Homeward bound, eh!” exclaimed Mr. Ford in joyful accents, as he stepped on board the vessel.

“Yes; thank heaven!” echoed Mrs. Ford.

The good lady timorously rehearsed all the possibilities of a voyage. The steamer collided with an iceberg, ran on a derelict, and caught fire from combustion of jute in the cargo before she gained the deck.

At noon the *Ocean Wave* departed from Genoa, the captain, a thickset man of resolute bearing, in command, the Marconi wires adjusted, the band on deck, and the electric light in readiness to sparkle on luxurious salons, cabins and corridors.

II

Marjory Ford stood beside her little brother, gazing at the Spanish coast. The day was cloudless and calm, and the evening hour approaching.

“Now we are leaving Europe!” exclaimed Marjory. “I should like to take a bath in mid-ocean, as that girl did last year from her father’s yacht.”

“Jolly!” assented the boy.

He lost his cap, and the quiet gentleman beyond, also gazing at the coast of Spain, caught and restored it.

“Oh, thank you a thousand times!” said Marjory, smiling.

“Modern speech!” mused John Matthews. “That is nine hundred and ninety-nine times too many thanks for a slight civility.”

His thought strayed to the first international congress about to be held at Geneva for discussion of a universal language, *Esperanto*, by five hundred representatives of fifteen nations. He scarcely noticed that the young girl at his side was slight, graceful and freshly colored on cheek and lip, and altogether pleasing to the eye.

Hark! What had happened? A sudden,

grinding crash shook the *Ocean Wave* from bow to stern, then the vessel seemed to pause motionless, in suspense, and then to heel over and begin to sink, as if cut in two halves. A tumult of confusion, noise, and an indescribable panic of terror ensued. The captain was seen on the bridge one moment, and hurled far out into the sea the next by the force of the explosion of a boiler. John Matthews felt the deck slope beneath his feet, and all the ship's gear about him reel, totter and clash together in ruin. He clung instinctively, desperately, to the railing to recover himself, while people rushed past him and scattered in all directions. A boat was lowered before his very eyes, speedily crowded by clamorous men, and capsized. Someone clung to him in speechless fear: it was the young girl who had recently stood at his side. The deck sank, settled under them with an incredible, appalling rapidity. Before he fully realized the peril, John Matthews was in the water with his companion. Everything had crumbled, changed and disappeared around them. The human savage, revealed in all the nakedness of cruelty, brutality and a blind selfishness to gain help by such a crisis of danger, wrangled fiercely,

pushed them aside, snatched at any frail support. The noble and saintly in humanity, revealed in self-abnegation of supreme sacrifice, made way for the weak and helpless, and sank in silence to the shadowy depths of ocean.

“Can you swim?” demanded John Matthews.

“I think so,” faltered Marjory.

“Swim, then.”

The next instant she put her hand on his shoulder and gasped: “Oh, I can’t!”

“Don’t be afraid! I am here,” he retorted.

Then all the youth of Marjory Ford rose up before her startled vision, scarcely unfolded, scarcely begun, and a great wave of oblivion swept over her, blotting out everything. With the man it was different. He was not guilty of the cowardice of pushing others aside, but he held his own resolutely. His whole being was strung to the utmost of will and muscle not to be defeated by the disaster which had so suddenly overwhelmed them. *He was not ready to die!* The young girl cast on his care must not be suffered to perish miserably. If all the others were drowned they two *should* be saved! He

fought for both! In the soul of man two sorts of courage are ever to be found: that of Siegfrid and another of Manfred; the first rejoicing to preserve life and the second disdaining death. John Matthews set his teeth firmly and battled with the sea, holding Marjory close.

Another girl, with long tresses of golden hair loosened in the waves, and a face as fair as that of Marjory, drifted near and made a frantic effort to grasp his garments. John evaded the clutching fingers and she was swept away. An Italian woman held her two children on a board, imploring rescue for them. An old priest was upheld by a life-belt. A young and vigorous man overtook and tore away the girdle, adjusting it around his own body instead, while the first wearer disappeared. Why not? It was only a survival of the fittest. John Matthews closed his eyes, involuntarily, and pursued his way to more open spaces. He was blindly and dumbly aware in a strong undercurrent of action which sustained and bore him along that he had never before known what life was, and the value of the priceless boon until it was possibly to escape him.

Time ceased. Either he had been battling

with the waves for hours, or the agony of the moments was leaden, interminable. Unless a change came he felt he must inevitably succumb. The girl at his side was silent and inert. She was so light a weight that he could guide her passive movement of obedience almost with a touch. He would not let her go! That was his one remaining instinct. All was growing shadowy about them in a chill twilight, as of evening, and then the darkness of night fell.

Later, a Spanish fishing boat, intent on rescue, picked up a man and woman, well-nigh spent with exhaustion. The man first rallied under the kindly aid of these rough mariners, with their simple restoratives. In turn he eagerly applied himself to reviving the delicate girl.

“How he loves her,” said the swarthy captain in his dialect, with the natural chivalry of southern races, as he held a cup of *aguadiente* to be administered with a spoon.

“Eh! They are newly wedded, one can see,” responded a sailor, bringing such woolen garments as the humble wardrobe of the crew could boast to clothe these benumbed guests.

“She lives!” exclaimed John Matthews,

hoarsely. "Surely she would have died but for me!"

Marjory opened her eyes and smiled. John Matthews did not know that a girl's eyes could be so blue and soft, with depths of confidence and gratitude.

At midnight they were put ashore on a lonely strand, where there was a solitary habitation of the coast. Here they were welcomed by a group of men and two women, who proffered the meagre hospitality of this shelter. The women busied themselves in warming Marjory and drying her garments to the best of their ability, with subdued exclamations of sympathy over her plight, and much pantomime. The men lent similar aid to John Matthews. Then the couple were urged to partake of some food. Both complied with difficulty. The place consisted of a single room with an earthen floor. No matter! They had gained land, the reach of human aid, and there was a roof over their heads. Their hosts next spread some straw, loosened from a bundle, on the ground, and arranged such covering as they could muster, and invited the waifs to repose. One of the sailors made John Matthews understand in a few words of broken English that he

must wait until morning light to be taken to a town. In the meanwhile the craft of the coast were out searching for other victims of the accident. Some of the ship's crew or passengers might be brought ashore at any moment.

Marjory sank down on the improvised couch with a sigh of weariness, and was soon asleep. John Matthews kept vigil with his companions. He detailed to them his own version of the disaster in a mixture of tongues, French and a smattering of Italian and Spanish, aided by much gesticulation, while the group of men hung on his words. From time to time one or two of the number went out to scan the waters and listen. The women heaped fragments of driftwood on the fire, kindled on an open stone hearth to cook the evening meal. The flames, fitful and feeble, lighted the rude interior. Finally the men wrapped their cloaks about them and stretched themselves on the floor. John Matthews, broken with fatigue, followed their example. Apprehensive of the development of the morrow as to the fate of his recent companions, he was already inspired with hope in his own personal safety.

The women prepared him a place beside

Marjory on a sort of couch of honor consisting of the loose straw. They brought him another weather-beaten mantle, and spread one of their own thin shawls as an additional covering over Marjory's shoulders, their dark, heavy-featured faces beaming with solicitude.

"These good people should not give me the best place," thought John Matthews with compunction. "However, I can yield my resting place to the next comer, who will need it more than I do. The fishermen are likely to pick up more people in the water before dawn."

He had no intention of sleeping, or even reposing. His brain was too active and crowded with the images of fear and despair so recently surrounding him. The dreary hours of night must wear away. That was all. He need not suffer the agonies of doubt and misgiving as to the fate of kindred on board the ill-fated vessel, kept in suspense by the separation of darkness! The accident had snapped every link with those of the *Ocean Wave* for him, save a fellowship of human feeling. He tasted the contentment of the solitary man in a supreme degree, at the moment, that he was alone.

“Thank God! I had no one to lose,” he said in his heart.

Interest in his companion had not yet assumed the outline of curiosity as to her personality and belongings on the ship.

Gradually a gentle current of warmth and grateful somnolency stole over his senses, lessening the tension of over-wrought nerves. The soft, regular breathing of the young girl at his side acquired a rhythmical sound; her silky hair, still perfumed, brushed his face. His haggard eyes closed. The occupants of the habitation were quiet, and outside the sea moaned a dirge for the lost.

Suddenly John Matthews awoke. The light of another day permeated the place with a feeble, sickening sense of returning consciousness of present events. The young girl had arisen, and the women were bestowing caressing attentions on her, striving to smooth her tresses and adjust her raiment in some sort. Her eyes were bright and a touch of color had returned to her cheek after the refreshment of sleep. She glanced at John Matthews with a sharp frown.

“They are quite mistaken,” she said. “I speak very little Spanish. They believe that I am your wife. They call me a bride—a

sposa. Tell them that I never saw you before in my life. I don't even know your name."

He regarded her in a dull and fixed way for a moment, then rose slowly to his feet.

"It does not matter much what they think," he said, mechanically.

Marjory flushed deeply with astonishment and fright. She scanned her companion with a wondering disapproval.

"But I will not have it! Absurd!" exclaimed the girl, and gave a little stamp of her foot on the ground.

John Matthews stretched himself, as if to be reassured that he still possessed the use of all his limbs, and rubbed his right arm, which showed a discolored bruise above the wrist.

"What is your name?" he inquired.

She was surprised.

"I am Marjory Ford, of course," she retorted. "Why, you know father and mother and the girls, don't you?"

"I never met them," he rejoined. He refrained from adding: "I never heard of them."

"What is your name?" she flashed back, petulantly.

“John Matthews.”

“I do not know the name,” she murmured, doubtfully. “Perhaps father has met you—somewhere.”

“Look, lady! He has hurt his arm,” interposed one of the women.

Marjory approached him swiftly.

“Oh, I am so sorry! I was taught first care at school. Do let me tie up your wrist in a handkerchief.”

“It is nothing,” he said, but suffered her to wrap the bandage skillfully around the swollen member with an odd sense of giddiness and unreality, as if the world had turned upside down.

He followed the men to the shore to learn more of the shipwreck, and discuss a means of personal deliverance. When he returned he found Marjory crouching in a corner in a reaction of depression. She clung to him, demanding: “Where have you been? I feared I had lost you. Oh, don’t leave me alone with these strange people. I seem to have only you in the world. Promise not to forsake me!”

“I promise,” he said.

On the following day a strange company gathered in the Spanish port of refuge.

These were the survivors of the wreck of the *Ocean Wave*. The unexpected guests were lodged in the clubs, hospitals and theaters, and were ministered to, fed and clothed by the authorities, nay, an entire people, so readily does human sympathy expand under similar circumstances. The most varied elements of cheerfulness in assured safety and anxious dejection in painful suspense of waiting were discernible at a glance in these strangers, brought together by a common fate. Here a feeble and bent old man sought in the crowd his three stalwart sons, and did not find them. There a young man, pale and desperate, strove to realize that he had lost his wife. A family of children, rescued by the courage of a young girl, awaited recognition, their parents being unknown. The groups, unharmed, and with no member missing, looked on with commiseration of affliction, yet awaited escape, uneasily, from a painful scene. Others, bereft of everything, remained stunned and silent. Hours passed. The grim spectre of two facts confronted all: The Captain, hurled from the bridge of the vessel far out into the sea by the accident, in the explosion of the boiler,

was never seen again, while a hundred of the company did not reach the shore alive.

Mr. Ford waited in the midst of the throng with his wife and two eldest daughters. The perils of a speedy rescue had been comparatively slight for them. When the *Ocean Wave* began to sink the family was transferred by boat under the direction of a ship's officer to a French vessel waiting nearby. Father refused to embark until joined by Marjory and Frank, who had gone forward on the deck. The officer hurried him off with the assurance that his other children were already on board the French vessel.

"A lie! Let me go back and find them!" shouted Mr. Ford, beside himself with alarm.

He was forcibly restrained as one demented. The officer hastened away, and the family hung about him. They were conveyed to the town with many others. Mrs. Ford refused to take refuge in any shelter. She waited, hoped and prayed for the restoration of the children still missing, while the girls hastened to inspect each new party of the rescued brought in for those they sought. Father roamed about, unceasingly, questioning officials, sailors and haunting the telegraph office for news. Other passengers de-

tained him with eager interrogation of the quest, and begged him to help them with their own. All the world was kin in the Spanish town that day.

Gradually the features of Mr. Ford grew grey and pinched as he returned in silence from each of the fruitless journeys to the side of his stricken wife, who sat with her face buried in her handkerchief, prepared for the worst. Alas! The little blonde head of Frank was not recognizable among the children fetched into port, either limp and senseless or unhurt, nor did the blooming countenance of Marjory reward their anxious scrutiny. The two daughters, terror-stricken as well, strove to support their parents. They whispered together.

“Oh, Harriet! To think we coaxed these poor, old dears to come abroad. How perfectly awful!” groaned Gertrude.

“And they did not want to come a bit,” added Harriet in deepest contrition of spirit.

“Can it be possible——”

“No, no!”

Father came back from his last quest and shook his head. The sun was already declining.

“I begin to think it is no use,” he said.

Gertrude wrung her hands and pointed to her mother.

“I am quite sure they are safe—only a little delay,” urged Harriet in cheerful accents.

Gertrude uttered a cry.

Marjory stood before them, holding the arm of a stranger. The family beheld her safe, well, and brought back from the cruel sea. Explanations ensued. Mr. Ford grasped the hand of John Matthews. The two men understood each other at a glance.

“You have saved my girl! How can I ever repay you?” he said.

Mrs. Ford submitted to Marjory’s caresses and regarded her companion coldly.

“Where is Frank?” she demanded, shrilly.

Marjory and John Matthews recoiled and looked at each other in dismay. Instinctively they drew nearer, as if standing together in sharing any blame. Mrs. Ford did not spare them.

“*You helped yourselves and let the child drown!*” she added with flashing eyes.

In the twilight a man made his way through the public square, holding a paper. It was a despatch. All eyes turned on him with a hungry intelligence of questioning,

and he was speedily surrounded by a clamorous throng. Mrs. Ford glanced at him, rose and stepped forward.

“He is coming for me!” she exclaimed in a voice of indescribable emotion.

Yes, the messenger presented a telegram, smilingly. A yacht off Gibraltar had picked up a small boy fastened to a board. He lived, and his name was Frank Ford.

After that the crowd made an ovation of congratulations for Mother. Women of all classes and other races took her hand, and even kissed her on the cheek.

“Thank you, friends,” she said. “He is my only son.”

The three daughters sobbed in unison.

III

The fate of the *Ocean Wave* remained shrouded in profound mystery. The transatlantic giant, equipped with every appliance of speed, safety and luxury, at the very outset of a voyage in fine weather and at a favorable season of year, which was a holiday trip to the majority of the passengers, had burst, shattered to fragments by some mighty force greater than steel plating, steam or electricity, broken in halves and

sunk beneath the waves. Such was the catastrophe which seemed to mock at the skill and courage of man. The affair was a nine-days' wonder. Particulars of the disappearance of other steamers, under similar circumstances were detailed at length in all lands. The example of the *Naronic* was instanced. The press of the entire globe was occupied with the matter in bulletins and leaders for a space, and then the next railway collision in Great Britain, America or France obliterated the impression on the public mind. The world readily forgot the *Ocean Wave* with the destruction by fire of an exhibition building or the assassination of a sovereign. Naval boards and nautical conventions met in grave debate over the deplorable disaster. The results were not wholly divulged to an unenlightened public. Rumor linked together the usual marvelous tales of anonymous letters emanating from the *Mafia*, containing threats that the *Ocean Wave*, as next on the list to sail, in revenge for some injustice to emigrants of the company to which the ship belonged, should never quit the gateway of the Mediterranean for the Atlantic Ocean. Treachery in the hold seemed to find here another solution.

Assuredly cases of dynamite had been put on board with the cargo, the sinister box of complicated machinery set and timed to go off at a certain hour after departure and sink a ship. The deed was planned and carried out by the dark hatred of blackened, tortured souls verging on insanity in brooding over the wrongs of poverty, oppression and destitution.

The fustian hates the velvet, says the proverb.

Far too many of the passengers on the *Ocean Wave* were habitually clothed in velvet, and regarded sullenly by the fustian in comparison.

Genoa watches the ships come and go from her heights of palaces and gardens. The fair city will not again look down on the departure of the *Ocean Wave*.

The goslings of the name of Ford led the parent geese back to the paternal roof in safety, a comfortable dwelling in a block, with a garden patch in the rear and a balcony covered with a wistaria vine, situated in the environs of Greater New York.

Father hied himself joyfully to the office and the club, gathering up all the threads of an active life once more. Mother bustled

about her kingdom, unlocking bureau drawers and opening closets to ascertain if any wicked fairies had spirited away her household treasures during her absence.

The fatted calf did honor to a guest. The Fords had insisted on bringing John Matthews home with them when they landed from the steamer which had transported the survivors of the shipwreck to New York. At first the invitation was refused, but he was overruled by hospitable warmth and feminine kindness.

“You come right home with us until your arm is mended,” said Mr. Ford, heartily. “Mother is a famous nurse, and our old Ann knows all the lore about sprains and bruises of the north of Ireland.”

Mrs. Ford was disposed to adopt John Matthews as only another member of the family on the spot. Was there not an element of remorse in maternal benevolence for her first coldness to Marjory's protector when she believed that her boy was lost? The younger generation was less demonstrative, passive, possibly critical of paternal effusiveness, and even abstracted in the manifold interests of getting home. Mar-

jory beamed on him, and gently patted the lame arm.

“Do come home with us,” she whispered, confidentially.

The heart of John Matthews was melted in his breast. Marjory’s presentation of this champion to her relatives had been eminently characteristic of her years.

“This is John Matthews. He saved my life in the sea, and has taken care of me all night on that lonely shore, where the people were strange, and called me his bride. He has hurt himself cruelly, carrying me along, and he never uttered a word of complaint. You must remember it all your lives!”

“My dear girl,” protested John Matthews, “another man would have done the same thing in my place. Besides, you thanked me in advance. When I captured your brother’s cap on deck you thanked me a thousand times. Consider all the rest as if I handed you a cup of tea or a box of chocolate bonbons.”

Marjory opened her eyes. She had forgotten the incident.

The despot of the mansion was the restored son. His reminiscences of the accident were already vague and fragmentary,

unless a lively childish imagination kindled with the subject at the expense of veracity. When he got into the sea an old sailor, the one who stood beside the bulwark when they all came on board at Genoa, fastened him to some woodwork washed overboard. Frank did not see the good old sailor again. The boy thought that a great, big wave went over his head just afterward. He was hungry and tired and cold for a long time in the water before some other sailors came along in a boat and picked him up. No! He did not stay in that boat. He was taken on board a yacht, where everybody was kind, and gave him milk and jelly and wrapped him up in a wadded silk Japanese dressing-gown to sleep on a couch, and the lady who owned the yacht wished to adopt him for her own little boy.

“The idea!” exclaimed Mrs. Ford with indignation. “Just as if you had been some poor little ocean waif.”

Frank disengaged himself from the maternal embrace.

“A man bumped against me in the sea,” he continued. “He was all dark and stiff. I said to him in French, ‘What do you want?’”

He did not speak. Perhaps he was dead. Ugh!"

"There, sonny," admonished Father. "That will do! Just run off and play with the children next door."

The youngest gosling lingered.

"We are going to Egypt to see mummies next time," he announced with juvenile unconcern in the present situation.

John Matthews lingered in this congenial atmosphere of domestic contentment with a sense of well being such as he had never known. He delayed seeking his acquaintances and colleagues until his wrist should be quite well, under the care of Marjory and her mother. He talked with Ann about the old country while she ministered to him, and discovered, with the deepest interest, that they had mutual friends. A skillful surgeon or a visit to the hospital would have speedily set him to rights, but he preferred feminine nursing, and adhered to the belief that perfect rest is a complete cure for most of the ills of the flesh. In this state of invalidism and enforced idleness, Mr. Ford proposed to send a clerk from the office with his typewriting machine to assist with all corre-

spondence. Lo! John Matthews accepted Marjory as his amanuensis instead.

“I will write all your letters and post them,” she said.

“How good of you!” he sighed, with deep contentment.

He spent hours dallying over the task, leaning back in an arm-chair and watching Marjory at work. Discussion of the contents of the letters arose, and the personal history of those addressed. Marjory was interested, and even carried away on the current of new ideas by the task. There can be no doubt that sober and taciturn John Matthews waxed animated and most eloquent in the company of this quiet listener as certain birds spread their finest plumage before the fair sex.

The goslings criticised the intruder on the home circle when they met for a chat in their dressing-gowns before going to bed.

“He does not seem as awfully old as he did at first,” said Marjory, meditatively.

“He has grown younger,” Gertrude assented.

“You have aged in proportion, child,” added Harriet.

“After that awful night of the wreck I

wonder my hair has not turned grey," said Marjory, tragically.

The weaving together of the knot went on.

One morning Marjory came down to breakfast looking pale and abstracted. John Matthews was dull of aspect as well.

"I dreamed last night of being in the water, all alone with you," she said.

"Strange! I was battling with the sea," he replied.

Mr. Ford read an item aloud in the morning paper. The body of a girl, with long, fair hair, had been recovered, drifted as far as Oran.

"Possibly she was the girl who caught at my sleeve in passing," exclaimed John Matthews. "God forgive me! I turned to avoid her."

"But you had to save me," urged Marjory. They looked at each other.

"What happened to the *Ocean Wave*?" questioned Mother.

"Who knows?" said father.

The Egyptologist remained in America for one year. His character seemed to have undergone some subtle change. He was restless, undecided, did not succeed with his course of lectures, and progressed but slowly

with his dictionary. During this period he led Marjory through the mazes of ancient religions.

“Only see her hang on his every word as he describes the tomb and temple of the great god *Procynème*,” scoffed the sisters. “She will be making offerings of perfumes, oil and cakes to the shades of the Pharaohs.”

When the student returned to the Nile he asked Marjory to accompany him, and she consented.

Ah, old sailor, is there no new way of tying a knot? John Matthews and Marjory Ford believe that circumstances led them to tie the nuptial knot in a most unusual way.

THE DUKE'S FLIGHT: AN AUTO-MOBILE INCIDENT

THE little town of St. Anna is a picturesque nook of shore near Savona. This miniature paradise nestles under the rampart of encircling hills, with a promontory on one side crowned by a stone pine tree, a tiny harbor and a group of time-stained, dilapidated houses with rusty balconies and irregular stone steps leading to upper terraces and gardens. A fine church of ornate architecture and tower furnished with sonorous bells, dedicated to the saint, flanks the public square. The railway threads the margin of Mediterranean sea—one of the arteries of the world—an iron serpent coiling in and out of the curves, and pierces the adjacent promontory by means of a tunnel. Trains pass at all hours of day and night, rushing like phantoms into the tunnel, or halting in the sunshine of noon for local traffic. Above is the smooth provincial road of majestic suggestiveness, which also follows the line of shore. Ancient Rome once hewed out a highway here, whether via Emilia, or the Flaminian,

or Aurelian Way from her gates to France, the Alps, and the Adriatic.

Five years before the date of which we write St. Anna had been awakened to modern life by the selection of a terrace of hillside beyond the hamlet whereon to build a villa for the *Duca della Luna*. The noble gentleman was understood to be out of health, a prey to the neurasthenia and anemia of the century, and wished to dwell apart and undisturbed by the sea. He was a stranger, a native of Lombardy, and belonged to a very ancient family. The town of Santa Anna knew little concerning the Duke, but accepted the fact that he wished to live here as most natural, albeit gratifying to local pride. What more suitable than that a noble lord who had probably burned the candle at both ends, as to his nerves, in a career of society, clubs, sport and the theatre, should choose Santa Anna for tranquil repose? The villa was a plain structure of a pavilion style, consisting of one story, with an ornamental roof, massive walls tinted white, and surrounded by a covered portico. The windows were spacious and protected by artistic iron work, suggestive of Italian prudence in country houses. The rear of the mansion formed a

gallery of colored glass for bad weather. Curiosity could not penetrate the seclusion of this glass gallery, which was further screened by silk hangings. The invalid could smoke here, play billiards and cards, or listen to music executed by some violinist or pianist while he reclined on luxurious cushions or sat in an arm-chair. Again a parlor organ would resound through the hours of night with a volume of sound, said to be played by the Duke himself, or a French horn prolonged to echoes.

A high wall of solid masonry enclosed the property, armed with gilded spikes on the top, and entered by an iron gate lined with sheets of metal and secured by a small lock. The space between wall and house boasted of no garden parterres, conservatories and shrubbery, but had only a central gravel path. Stable and outer buildings there were none, only a modest garage for several automobiles of various models and quarters for attendants. No women were included in the household.

The installation of the Duke here had been truly an event for townfolk. He organized a fête for the children in the tiny *piazza* flanking the church of Santa Anna, with booths of

toys, games, a table spread under an awning of pastry, cakes and *dolce*, with fireworks in the evening and an illumination of the *facade* of the sanctuary. He bestowed gifts of charity on the hospital and the poor through the ministrations of the parish priest and the Confraternity of the Black Brotherhood of Mercy. He mingled with the crowd in a most gracious mood. He possessed Mirabeau's gift of familiarity, capable of speaking to royalty without offense and to the peasant without patronage. The Duke was tall, thin, sallow and cadaverous, with an eccentric manner, now vivacious and humorous, and then silent, abrupt and frowning. His features were aquiline, his eye piercing and restless, and his abundant grey hair standing on end above a low forehead, as only the thick locks of the Italian can bristle. He resembled one of the portraits on the bronze medals in museums, the Malatesta of Rimini, or the Sforza of Milan, haughty, subtle and unscrupulous.

The festivities of his installation over, he withdrew into complete seclusion. He received no visitors. The interior of the villa had not been seen. He shunned the sea, and was not a good sailor. On land his activity

was remarkable. He took long rambles in the hills for his health, accompanied by his secretary, a robust man of middle age, and followed by his confidential valet, carrying a picnic basket, a kodak and the case of a botanist. An ardent bicyclist, he was absent for hours on his wheel. He abhorred the railway, while soothed by long journeys in his automobile, guided by a stalwart chauffeur, while he reclined under the hood, passive and wrapped in a mantle. He went and came at pleasure. Sometimes he departed at nightfall on the most powerful motor, and was absent for weeks and months. Again he would appear suddenly and linger until summer heat brooded over the sea. Old Mario, *mayor-domo* and family servant, left in charge, suave, amiable and discreet, guarded the very threshold of the villa from all intrusion. Public curiosity had only this one theme to deal with, over the fishing nets, the going out of small craft, the weekly market. What a sad loss that the noble lord did not enjoy a yacht! Now he was at a spa in Savoy, Mario said. He did not sleep well, poor gentleman, after the manner of the gentry. One day the town received an electric shock. Modern enterprise passed that way and dis-

covered the paradise too long hidden from the builder. The architect speculator chose a picturesque site, and the Grand Hotel St. Anna rose, with balconies, spacious corridors and electric light, as if by magic, advertised in all the leading journals of the world, with Franz Hoffman, a retired courier of cosmopolitan origin, as proprietor, and an English wife.

Dr. Edwardes came along the Riviera on his bicycle, with his bag slung over his shoulder, knapsack fashion. He went to the station to look up his luggage, just as the afternoon train arrived, and Mrs. Warren Lindsay descended from a first-class carriage, leaving her niece, Kate, to drag forth heavy bags, cases and wraps for the porter on the platform below.

“Permit me to help you,” said Dr. Edwardes, involuntarily.

The girl, flushed and weary, beamed her gratitude from the step in a glance that shone down into the soul of the recipient like a ray of sunlight penetrating the depths of a well. No girl had ever looked at him like that before! Both were astonished, pleased and strangely moved, as by a sweet recognition. Who was he? Where did she come from?

Each stepped forth out of the unknown. Mrs. Warren Lindsay, large, stout, and pompous in bearing, with a ball of yellow fur known as her dog, Fluff, tucked under her arm, looked about blandly.

“Lovely scenery!” she said. “It is like a drop curtain of the theatre. Where is the Duke’s villa?”

Then she demanded of Dr. Edwardes if he had been sent from the hotel.

“Oh, aunt!” expostulated Kate.

“A pretty girl!” was his swift mental comment. “The aunt is a selfish old jade!”

How fortunate it is that we do not realize the actual opinion of us held by our fellows!

The first season in this earthly paradise promised well. The landlord and his wife looked at each other with satisfaction. The architect speculator passed that way and hinted at a lawn tennis court in the near future and golf links later. Already the reproach was dreaded amidst the roses, myrtle, tamarisk and citron bloom of the gardens, with the sparkling sea outspread, of there being “nothing whatever to do.”

The landlady, who had been a lady’s maid in her time, knew her clientèle, was reassuring as to fuel and extra charges, served

cream with the matitudinal grape nuts of the American invalid, and saw to the toast and jam of the five-o'clock tea of the English matron of a gouty tendency, who wished the church bells silenced in winter resorts and the waterfalls checked in summer haunts. Did she fail in the jugs of hot water for bottles, encased in red flannel bags, of bedtime for the wearers of silk stockings? She described to newcomers the *Duca della Luna* and his villa, and such histories of his illustrious family, as well as the fêtes he gave to the town, as charmed all listeners.

Thus November passed. The ladies came here to rest. They attired themselves in wrought needlework of lace, tulle chemisettes, silver embroideries and silken draperies to an unusual extent, even in our day. Failing an audience, they must be said to have dressed at one another. The style of attire made them suspicious of draughts over a rheumatic shoulder and distrustful of all central heating.

“These women are not half clad; not one of them,” thought candid Royle Edwardes, with professional intuition. “Strong, and of a tough fibre? Rather! Why, a man would die of pneumonia with his neck cut

down like that, warmed by a muslin frill, and his arms bare above the elbow! Fate did not intend me for a fashionable physician. I should not be able to earn my bread."

Mrs. Warren Lindsay took precedence of all others. She overwhelmed and put down everybody by the variety of her dresses, the size and eccentricity of her plumed hats, the marvelous pattern and colors of her shoes, canes and parasols. Elderly, egotistical and aggressive in her self-importance to all the world, she aspired to carrying high the national American banner of being the best dressed woman in any company. At Santa Anna the other ladies were utterly bewildered and crushed by the revelations of each new trunk opened, but, at the same time, deeply fascinated. They flocked about her and talked mellifluously while they studied her trimmings. She was aware of it, and enjoyed their discomfiture. She explained to them who she was and the distinction of her family from colonial days. She had no maid. Indeed, economy with her amounted to avarice, and there was written in her cold, grey eye, wide and coarsely cut mouth and heavy chin a determination not to be cheated by anyone. The duties of her niece, Kate, were

onerous, night and day, including the care of Fluff, the dog. Mrs. Warren Lindsay had decided to travel after the death of an invalid husband. She invited a niece to accompany her, as courier, linguist, accountant, reader, letter-writer and nurse in one, combined with a due sense of deep gratitude for these privileges. Kate was the eldest of a bevy of bright, energetic girls, daughters of a country clergymen, given a college education. The lot of choice had fallen to her. Santa Anna found her an insignificant young person, very simply gowned in comparison with her wealthy relative and patroness, usually under a cloud of vexation, with knitted brow, after some fresh tempest of misunderstanding and discontent. Proud and refined by nature, accustomed to the gentle influences of her own home, the girl was too honorable to gratify the curiosity of strangers by telling tales of her aunt's peculiarities.

“I wish one of the other girls had come in my place,” she confided tearfully to her pillow. “I did not lose that twenty-franc piece out shopping! I am not considered a thief, I suppose.”

Kate found a valuable ally in the landlady,

once Ellen Spriggs, who lent aid as a clever tire-woman, on occasion, and delighted to display her skill to so promising a client as Mrs. Warren Lindsay.

Royle Edwardes was not a man of society, although he had been about the world a good deal in his profession of surgeon in the navy. He was on leave to recuperate after long and hard service. He found himself in the agreeable position of the one man at the Hotel St. Anna, amidst a party of nice looking ladies, who were as a down coverlet to his masculine susceptibilities after roughing it on a polar expedition. Oh, he trod on the thyme, geranium and violets of delightful appreciation on the Mediterranean shores in that balmy feminine atmosphere. If the ladies pricked each other smartly in tart criticism, armed with Mrs. Browning's little housewife case of envy, satire and suspicion, which every woman is supposed to possess, Dr. Edwardes was accorded only genial encouragement of favorable pursuits and aims, as he was led to promulgate them in the intimacy of daily intercourse. His opinions on religion, science and all international amenities were listened to respectfully, if met with much sprightly banter of the table d'hôte.

His projected volume of polar travel was discussed with a zealous sympathy that no female globe-trotter could hope to inspire, while his medical dictionary, compiled as a sort of hand-book, was warmly praised.

“You are all very kind,” said this honest and simple-minded man, basking in the warmth of the *Côte d’Azure* after his Arctic experiences. Then he fled on his bicycle, seeking the tonic of exercise, after partaking of a diet of honey.

Kate Lindsay, the youngest member of the company, was an exception to the rule. She did not flatter him, held aloof, was silent and preoccupied, if not absent altogether. She interested him. He was perplexed by her indifference.

Mrs. Warren Lindsay accepted the only man on the premises coolly. She had not much use for him, although she smoked her cigarette on the terrace with him after dinner for lack of a better cavalier.

The Duke arrived at his winter residence. The erection of the new hotel had displeased him. He threatened to abandon the nook and sell the villa. His mood had changed, apparently, or he submitted to the inevitable. He inspected the Grand Hotel, praised the

arrangements, and announced his intention of dining at the table d'hôte. He sent a gift of game from his own property in northern Italy, hare, deer, partridges and thrushes, with wild boar of the Maremma.

A small table was set in an embrasure, profusely adorned with flowers. A ripple of excitement pervaded the dining-room as the noble gentleman strolled in, attired in a grey walking costume, with his hands thrust negligently into the outer pockets of his coat. He seated himself at the small table, with his secretary opposite, and conversed in an undertone, inspecting the company meanwhile. Ah! Youth, with a bloom on cheek and lip, carried off the palm in that fair gathering of elaborate coiffures and toilettes. Kate Lindsay, slight, erect, in her simple dress of cream-colored stuff, with a crimson rose in her softly coiled dark hair, and another attached to her corsage, gift of the hurried landlady, at the last moment, attracted the restless gaze of the Duke. Resentment filled the soul, swift, profound, unreasonable of Royle Edwardes. The Duke sought the lighted salons after dinner, mingled with the strangers, spoke French and English with charming affability, and,

selecting Kate for his especial homage, urged her rendering Chopin on the piano. The secretary stood near. Kate played a nocturne nervously, and escaped by the balcony out on the terrace with Fluff. Dr. Edwardes approached, smoking a cigar.

“*He makes me afraid when he looks at me,*” she said, with a shiver.

“Strange! Perhaps you are too shy,” remarked her fellow-countryman, gratified by her dislike of a titled foreigner.

Mario, the *major-domo*, and a man-servant waited in the shrubbery. Kate and Royle Edwardes saw the secretary through the window speak to the Duke, and both emerged into the mild and fragrant night.

“Now go home at once,” said the secretary, briefly.

“If you wish it,” said the Duke in a subdued tone.

They went away with the *major-domo* and the servant following.

“Is the Duke distrustful of being attacked by brigands going home?” demanded Dr. Edwardes of the landlord.

“Surely not,” replied Monsieur Hoffmann, easily.

The Duke became a frequent visitor at the

new hotel. He often dined there and partook of the choicest delicacies the *cuisine* could muster, with an airy indifference. He lingered in the garden, where the ladies sat in arbors with their embroideries and writing desks. He was amused, mocking and ingratiating by turns. The little dog, Fluff, retreated under a chair at his approach, and growled. He took up a guitar and sang a little French song all about life being a vain trifle compounded of a little love and a modicum of hatred, and then *bon jour*, adding that life is brief, a little hope, some dreams, and then *bon soir*. Much pleased with himself, he twisted his moustache and looked around for applause. Again he admired the pattern and tints of feminine work, the rainbow meshes of silk and wool, wrought on needles of tortoise shell, taken from the depths of velvet bags, with spellbound interest in the white hands and rings of the laborers, and followed the design of lace making, and thread drawing of linen, or the tapestry of altar cloths, mediæval chairs and piano covers. The ladies were enchanted. In these delicate attentions he conveyed especial appreciation of the woman addressed. An evasive listener, he delighted in declaim-

ing verse, Dante and Shakespeare, and mimicking actors. The audience listened attentively, although they did not always understand his words, as he lapsed from one language to another. Occasionally he lost the thread, and wiped his brow, when the secretary would prompt him or draw him away.

“That secretary is an excellent man, and so devoted!” exclaimed Mrs. Warren Lindsay.

Altogether the erratic movements of the great gentleman were interwoven with day-dreams. The ladies become deeply interested in the study of *Il Patriziato*, as an equivalent of the peerage. They learned that the *Della Luna* race had the right to bear on their coat-of-arms three bands of gold, and three stars, with six rays, and were of prodigious antiquity, with cavaliers, princes, dukes under the Pope, patricians of Venice and citizens of Naples of their number. He craved sympathy for his wretched health.

“He needs a woman’s influence,” said Mrs. Warren Lindsay.

An eventful day came. Kate stepped ashore from a boat. The girl looked bright

and happy. Her aunt's new interest allowed her to take bicycle trips with Dr. Edwardes and excursions on the water.

"You like the sea?" she inquired of the Duke.

"No," he retorted. "The sea is cruel, and will never let you go if it grasps you. Ah, when the gale comes I set all the music going in my house—cats squeal, asses bray—" He paused and sighed. "My poor head! I worship Hypnos, the god of sleep. I have his bust in my chamber, with the wings of a hawk above the temples. *Ah, mon ame a son mystere, ma vie a son secret,*" he waved his hand at the Swiss lady.

"You keep pets at your villa," said Mrs. Lindsay, blandly. "How I should like to see your glass gallery."

He gave her a glance of haughty surprise. The secretary took out his watch and interposed:

"The glass gallery would not interest you, madame."

"I amuse myself there sometimes," said the Duke, with a strange smile.

"Now you must try the new *Itala* automobile," urged the secretary.

“I think you might take us all for a spin,” said Mrs. Lindsay, archly.

“So presumptuous of her,” said the chorus of ladies afterwards.

An idea tickled the fancy of Mrs. Lindsay. Next day she attired herself in a costume of white cloth, a snowy boa, a velvet hat with ostrich plumes, and a satin parasol, took a camp stool, and, leading Fluff, sallied forth alone. Kate sat in an arbor with Royle Edwardes.

“May I write to your father and tell him all?” questioned the man with emotion.

“Yes,” said the girl.

Mrs. Lindsay planted her stool near the villa and began to sketch the building. Fluff, a capricious and petted little dog, wandered near, unconscious of doom. The new automobile waited before the gate. She made up her mind when the Duke went out she would bribe a servant to show her the house. The chauffeur bustled about and went into the garage to give some directions. The Duke came forth and sprang on the car. He saluted the lady and invited her to join him. She hesitated, flurried yet flattered.

“Let me take you to the hotel, at least,” he urged.

She climbed into the automobile. Fluff fled.

“Woman has need to be guided by man,” says the Italian proverb.

Before she was aware of it the motor started. Stay! Where was the chauffeur and the secretary? There was a call, a cry, and a peal of wild laughter. Her ears rung and her lips grew parched. *The Duke steered for himself.* She managed to articulate:

“I will stop here, please.”

He glanced at her over his shoulder, and cast away his straw hat.

“Let us fly!” he cried.

“Oh, stop him!” she shrieked.

She saw the hotel glide away and vanish, the faces of people in the garden, the landlord on the threshold, even the cook, in cap and apron, ladle in hand, gazing at her in helpless astonishment. In turn, these beheld the superb car dash past, the Duke manipulating the steering gear with reckless activity, and a large female form in the rear seat, dressed in white.

“Is it an elopement?” queried the gouty matron, sarcastically.

The car gained the white road and moved

with frightful rapidity. The occupants tasted that delirium of movement which is unlike all other human emotion of every sense, lost in space. The hillside faded, the sea stretched out in a line, above was the sky.

“Let us go to the end!” shouted the Duke.
“Ha! they cannot overtake us now!”

He did not heed his companion, apparently he had forgotten her.

The chauffeur put two other automobiles in gear and hastened after the Duke in his flight. Dr. Edwardes flung himself on his bicycle. Kate and the landlord followed in a carriage. The town trooped forth to a man.

Lack of practical skill made the motor jolt and swerve dangerously at times. The road dipped to a bridge. Lo! A small cart, drawn by a donkey and driven by a boy, blocked the way. The Duke essayed to sound the horn, turned sharply to pass the vehicle, struck the parapet, and the automobile toppled over the bank. The lady occupant was tossed out like a ball. The Duke clung to the wheel and burst into tears. At this moment the first pursuers came in sight, and soon the ducal household gathered to the rescue.

Mrs. Warren Lindsay was unnoticed. She managed to crawl to her feet, and sat on the damp ground until Dr. Edwardes gained her side, followed by her niece and the landlord.

"I am alive," she said, with such dignity as she could muster.

"Oh, aunt, what have you done with your head?" cried Kate.

"My head?" gasped Mrs. Warren Lindsay.

"I mean your hair," said Kate, with suppressed mirth.

The noble house of *Della Luna* ignored the presence of the unfortunate lady as they rescued their chief from the overturned car. Her hat and hair had blown away, leaving a smooth poll exposed, and her laces were torn to ribbons.

Why dwell on painful details of humiliation and disillusionment?

Later, Royle Edwardes said to his bride:

"The Duke was as mad as a March hare. Insanity in the family, probably. The villa was a prison with barred windows, the secretary a doctor, and the servants so many keepers."

THE LUCK OF FRIDAY

THE Milan station had an unusual aspect of leisure on a morning of August. Why? The day was Friday.

Lydia Halketh thought of it with a smile of amusement as she followed the porter, who carried her bags and wraps, along the platform. She was alone. A wanderer on the face of the earth, as she liked to consider herself, she traveled with companions. Perhaps it was sheer cowardice that made her choose a ladies' carriage in this transit from Milan to Florence. She was aware that even in such safe retreat as the *Dames Seules* a robber may be concealed under the seat, and emerge with grimaces when the train is in motion, or a fellow-passenger prove to be a lunatic in female disguise, at a critical moment.

Yes, she was all alone, and traveling on a Friday. Everybody at Paris and in Switzerland said: "Travel on a Friday in Italy if you are not superstitious as to ill-luck. You will not be crowded."

She was indifferent to good or bad for-

tune, only who should she meet on the road? The manifold suggestiveness of a railway station, and the possibilities of a journey *would* present themselves to her mind, at the moment.

(The patriarch with a silvery beard and the burly person of an imperious bearing, surrounded by a group of friends, looked at her as she climbed the steep step of the ladies' carriage. She was accustomed to admiration in her slender grace of figure, clad in the mourning garb of a widow, and a fine head, enveloped in a veil. She remembered this searching scrutiny afterwards when she linked together the incidents of an eventful day.

A youth detached himself from the party, approached the open door on tiptoe and stared into the compartment slyly.

“Native curiosity,” she thought, as the porter adjusted bundles and umbrella in the rack.

The carriage was of ancient design, and might have been one of the earliest vehicles employed when the railway was ever invented. The interior was smutty and grimy beyond the average dilapidation of the Italian roads of the day, the cushions

covered with faded velveteen and the anti-macassar borders blackened by the smoke of many tunnels.

An official, wearing a red cap, inspected her ticket and closed the door.

“The *signora* need not fear being disturbed or changed until she reaches Florence,” he said, blandly.

Was his civility forced or unnatural?

The patriarch with the silvery beard and the burly personage, addressed as Baron, had bestowed themselves in the adjoining compartment, after much leave-taking of the group of friends.

The train moved slowly out of the station, and Milan, with suburbs of factories and long stretches of white walls, adorned with placard advertisements of the leading journal, the *Corriere della Sera* (Evening Courier), was left behind.

Lydia Halketh subsided into a corner and sighed. Her future seemed to extend before her like the Lombardy plains, monotonous and dust-laden. She was an orphan, and had been an unwelcome intruder on the crowded household of an aunt in her native village among the Berkshire hills. Ten years before, Isaac Halketh, the manager,

had followed her when she quitted the great ribbon factory, where she was given work with other girls. In her timid loneliness she was flushed, trembling, and desperately at odds with her surroundings.

The traveler in the Milan train could live over that day again, with a fresh stab of acute pain in her morbid self-consciousness.

The factory in the Berkshire hills was a great fabricator of something more than silken stuffs: the feminine nature was here tempered by the relentless machinery of experience. The maiden Lydia, seventeen years of age, with a Greek profile, abundant blonde tresses and dilating blue eyes, was created by Nature for hand-work embroidery.

Isaac Halketh, the manager, a dry, dark man of sedate middle age, with a bald spot on the top of his head and a keen glance on humanity, followed and questioned her, out of range of the factory windows. He had studied her since she was enrolled in this great hive of industry. She had never noticed him, in her preoccupation, save as an elderly person representing awe-inspiring authority, seated behind a desk, who paid her wages. Isaac Halketh told her, linger-

ing on the river bank, that she would not get on in the factory. She was too young and too pretty.

"You need a man to take care of you," he said.

There are still women in the world of this old-fashioned type. Lydia married Isaac Halketh. She was passive and obedient, as became an orphan. Indeed, her preferences were scarcely considered in the matter. Her sphere was a narrow one, as mistress of a comfortable home. Her husband, silent, suspicious in jealous espionage, was already an invalid when he married, and required a docile nurse. Her little boy died. Left a widow, the spirit of Lydia Halketh rose in emancipation. She decided to emerge into the noontday, to mingle with the crowd, to see the world. Already she was weary of it all. She found Europe a great hotel, peopled by the moving shadows of strangers. On the whole she was disappointed and disillusioned with travel. The doggerel of the Comic Poet would chime a refrain in her brain: "I wish, and I do not wish, and what I wish I no longer wish."

The train halted, the door opened, and a stout Russian lady entered, accompanied by

a Swiss governess and child, while the husband sought a place in the smoking car with alacrity. How the carriage bounced and swayed! Lydia noticed a smell of spirits, alcohol or brandy, which she uncharitably attributed to the numerous luncheon baskets, cases and satchels of the newcomers. The Russian lady, bedecked with turquoises on plump wrists and fingers, smiled amiably and held a frowsy Gollywog. The child, flung about by the gyrations of the train, uncovered a small bandbox and displayed a guinea-pig, asleep or dead, in stiff inertness. The Swiss governess, alert and vigilant, glanced sharply into Lydia's portemonnaie when she opened it.

"*Mon Dieu!* The carriage might be *dérailé!*" exclaimed the Russian lady. "Are they mending the road?"

"*Mais, oui, madame,*" assented the governess, abstractedly.

At the next station the party left the carriage to seek some country house.

"Good-bye," said the lady in English, and still carrying the Gollywog with real, wooly hair.

Lydia was once more alone. No one knew her movements. She tasted the sweet ex-

citement of the modern woman in full independence of liberty. How the carriage swerved and tilted! The smell of spirits permeated everything, with an odd sense of heat. Life on the wing has compensations. The waiter at the Milan hotel had prepared for her a nice luncheon. She opened her basket on the opposite seat, took a delicate sandwich of fowl and tongue in one hand and a chamois-horn cup filled with white Capri wine in the other, when the door was flung open violently and the guard appeared.

“Get out, and quickly!” he cried. “The carriage is injured.”

With these words he swept Lydia and her belongings, lunch-basket and all, out on the platform. The train had paused on the outskirts of Piacenza. People hurried about; others looked out of the windows of their compartments and bought a journal.

“What is the matter? What has happened?” demanded Lydia in astonishment.

No one replied. The guard frowned at her a moment, glanced right and left, gathered up her bags, and said:

“Come!”

“But where? What does it all mean?”

She was unceremoniously assisted into a

luxuriously appointed carriage on the forward portion of the train. The occupants were the masculine element, and the very atmosphere hostile to her feminine intrusion.

“*Good God! Mary!*” said a voice in her ear.

Who had spoken?

The patriarch with a silver beard was installed in the best place in the compartment. The burly personage, addressed as Baron, had heaped all available seats full of his rich traveling gear—rugs, shawls, overcoat, cane and umbrella. Permitted to stow herself by the door, since she could not be thrust out, Lydia found her vis-a-vis, who had uttered an exclamation on her entrance, concealed by the open sheet of the *Standard*, held in fingers that trembled nervously.

The guard demanded tickets. He looked harassed and on the defensive.

“I wish a ladies’ carriage,” said Lydia.

“There is no ladies’ carriage on the train,” replied the guard, curtly.

The patriarch with the silvery beard produced a neat card-case, opened it and disclosed a fine photograph of himself, inserted in one side. The Baron followed his example. Both contemplated a portrait of

their own features, as in a mirror, with that sentiment of interest which is inherent in the human race, then glanced haughtily at their fellow-travelers. These portraits were the free pass on the railway of officials.

“The road is badly managed to-day,” said the patriarch, severely. “That compartment was out of repair and about to catch fire from the friction of the wheels.”

“The chief at Milan would use it. He was warned,” said the guard, returning the photographs respectfully.

“I shall report,” fumed the Baron.

“If you have no regard for the *forestiere*, at least you might consider the safety of your own people,” said the patriarch with injured dignity.

“It is not my fault,” the guard protested hurriedly.

Friday journeying indeed! The rickety ladies' carriage was a patched-up makeshift of locomotion, while a naval review in the presence of royalty drew crowds to Genoa. The Russian matron would never know her own narrow escape of broken bones, or a sudden bursting into flames of the car.

Lydia's vis-a-vis put aside the *Standard*, and they looked at each other with an invol-

untary smile of comradeship. The situation was humorous. They were the strangers in a foreign land who should be first sacrificed in case of a railway accident.

He was a dark man of wiry build and a bold, easy bearing, tanned by the sun of desert, sea and jungle. His garb was eccentric and distinctively British. He wore an odd cap on his grizzled hair, a plaided coat with a belt, and large fatigue shoes of brown leather. His walking-stick in the rack was of some knotted and characteristic growth of wood. A basket under his elbow held fruit and a small flask of wine.

Lydia recognized a type familiar the world over of the British military man, cool and keen in danger, endowed with great physical endurance, home on leave, and now returning to his post, a camp for drilling and organizing recruits in the Burmese State. For the rest, sharply discontented with his lot, as a younger son of a good family, and foiled in laudable advancement by a crowd of rival competitors. A reticent man for the most part, and somewhat cynical, in maturity, as to the justice of his native land, and disposed to share the widespread opinion that emigration had taken away the best

portion of the population. Ah, why had he not chosen another career in his youth—gone to Australia and New Zealand, or sought the Rocky Mountains? He was half-minded, now, to undertake an expedition to Thibet or Central Africa. He was strangely wistful for a veteran, at leaving Europe. Possibly he was growing old. A woman's face confronted him unexpectedly in the railway carriage, and seemed to emerge from the past. It has been truly said that the most uneventful life has its Waterloo and St. Helena.

The train glided on over the fertile country, with harvest fields on either side and a range of blue Apennine peaks in the distance.

Lydia's curiosity was aroused. Why did this sun-bronzed warrior start at her approach, and even take refuge behind his newspaper to shut out the vision of her? A resemblance, no doubt. She threw back her veil the better to reveal the fair contours of her features. He started perceptibly and looked at her eagerly. The next moment she drew the veil closer, capriciously. His interest might be only simulated—a pretense to make her acquaintance. Here the patriarch leaned forward and gently but firmly

swept the curtain across Lydia's window to exclude the sun, and buttoned it. The hostility ever inherent in the breast of the Anglo-Saxon man to a foreigner was aroused. The soldier glanced at the lady opposite, inquiringly, unfastened the curtain and drew it back.

"You need more fresh air in this stuffy box, I fancy," he said. His eyes added: "An uncivil old buffer! Shall I punch his head for him?"

"Oh, dear, no! Not on my account. I do not wish to blind a poor, old man with too much sunshine. Besides, he may be a prime minister," responded the sweet, blue eyes of Lydia.

Silence ensued. The Baron yawned. The patriarch put on a pair of blue spectacles. Lydia stole a glance at her neighbor.

"I remind you of someone?" the blue eyes interrogated, sympathetically.

"Yes," the sharp, grey eyes responded, with a sombre, even haggard, gleam in their depths. "I did not believe there was another woman in the world so like her. It is strange, incredible!"

"And she is not with you now?" the clear orbs of Lydia mused, veiled by long lashes.

“She is dead,” retorted the keen eyes opposite. “I was not kind to her. She found me out before she died. Another woman tempted me. She had no right. She was married, and we were in garrison. I took Mary from the schoolroom to escape the snare.”

Lydia Halketh sighed and grew paler. This man and woman, meeting by chance in a railway carriage, each sought to attain the art of Themistocles, not to remember, but to forget.

She forced herself to speak, and in a natural way.

“I am quite sure you gentlemen would smoke if I had not been thrust in here. I suppose that comes of Friday traveling.”

“Do you mind Friday?” the Englishman inquired.

“I am not quite sure,” Lydia demurred.

“In that case you could escape the ill-luck of Friday by staying over at Bologna and visiting the St. Cecelia. It is my favorite picture,” he said, half-jestingly.

She drew into her shell.

“No. I have a horror of Bologna since that poor Count Ronmartini was murdered

in his own home at noon, while all the town slept."

Her neighbor bit his lip. The murder of Italian noblemen did not interest him just then.

"Bologna is a dull place," he said. "I change there for Brindisi. You prefer Florence?"

"Florence? The wind is so cold and the streets dusty," she said.

"There is nothing whatever to do, I should say," he assented. "They have golf now. You like Rome?"

"Modern Rome is one round of afternoon tea and gossip," protested Lydia. "Capri, *Taorimina* or Corfu are delightful."

"A winter at Corfu would not be so bad—with congenial company," he said.

Silence again ensued. She extended her little sceptre of feminine intuition to him.

"You are going to the East? You are a soldier? What is it like to be a soldier, I wonder?"

"A hard lot," he rejoined.

"You know George Gissing said in the *Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft* that he would not be a soldier, and obey any man as his captain," continued Lydia.

“George Gissing was an ass,” remarked the son of Mars.

“I like his *Ionian Sea* and *Henry Rycroft*,” she said.

“I never read the books.”

“Of course not,” airily. “Soldiers are too busy fighting to read much.”

He consulted his watch. They were approaching Bologna.

“Permit me to present myself,” he said, producing his card.

She read: “Captain Horace Cameron, R. E., Mandalay.” She did not proffer her own card in return.

“Will you give me—nothing?” he pleaded. “A souvenir of Friday?”

A dimple lurked in Lydia’s left cheek. She sought in the pocket of her purse the tiniest coin in existence, a *Lepton*, the widow’s mite of Scripture, which she had carried as a *porte-bonheur* since visiting Jerusalem.”

“Will you accept a widow’s mite?” she queried.

“I will gladly accept anything from you,” he said, taking the coin on his broad palm.

The patriarch raised his eyebrows. The Baron shrugged his shoulders. The Eng-

lishman regarded each in turn, with the whole British Empire behind him.

“May I find you a more comfortable carriage for Florence?” he urged.

She shook her head.

“I will remain here. One must take what they can get on a Friday.”

“Henceforth I shall choose Friday in the week,” he said, raising his cap.

“I wish you a very safe journey,” she said.

She might have given him her hand. She thought of it afterwards. She looked out of the window in the dark station. He stood on the platform, a tall figure, and removed his odd cap.

“I will come back,” he said.

The train passed on in the direction of mountain tunnels, crags over river torrents, and lower Italy. The lonely woman heard above the shrill clamor of the locomotive whistle and the rustling of the wind and watercourses, the echo of a voice:

“I will come back.”

He kept his word.

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