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“A MODERN HERCULES,”  
THE TALE OF A SCULPTRESS,

BY

MELVIN G. WINSTOCK,

OF THE

LEADVILLE BAR.

AUTHOR OF

“A Western Politician,” “The Fatal Horoscope,”  
“A Virginian Romance,” Etc.

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## PREFACE.

HOTEL VENDOME,  
LEADVILLE, COLO., October 31, 1899. }

### TO THE PUBLIC:

This City, surrounded by snow-clad peaks pointing to and almost losing themselves in the bosom of the Supreme Intelligence, has inspired my effort. The volume is dedicated to "Ouida," radiant also with inspiration. She lives. The novel is written from my play of the same title.

The clergy at first may condemn the *morale* of my story, but upon reflection I think they will realize the injustice of such a course. There is no religion that does not preach that though men sin, true redemption may be accomplished by honest repentance and noble effort. My hero and heroine go through the valley of the Shadow of Death to cleanse themselves of impurity, and the story of their lives is a living, breathing sermon in itself.

I have published my story here for the reason that the generosity of Leadville citizens has made it possible for me to place my work before the public. I trust it will meet with such success as it merits and no more.

MELVIN G. WINSTOCK.



# "A MODERN HERCULES."

## CHAPTER I.

### "THE NUDE IN ART."

Two things caused the great heart of New York society to throb with unusual excitement. One was a marvelous work of sculptural art, where boldness in design and utter fearlessness in execution had almost affronted, and yet had won the plaudits of the cultivated of the Metropolis. Ouida Angelo, a woman in "A Grecian Temptress," had dared to wring from men an absolute tribute to and acknowledgement of her genius and power. The second event was the announcement that Horatio Nugent, the great pulpit orator, would preach a sermon on "The Nude in Art."

The wealth and fashion of the city sat spell-bound beneath the eloquent tongue of the great divine. The sad face of the Madonna, in the painted window of Geneva, grew sadder still as she looked down upon the favored multitude. There were present there, men who headed every published list of charity, who paid thousands for pew rental, in this great official residence of God, yet who had no compunction about wrecking a railroad and thereby indirectly spreading ruin among hundreds. In the front row sat a bank president, who knew that on the morrow his financial institution would be in irretrievable ruin, yet who for months had been a pillar of the church and had some of the congregational funds in his rapacious clutch. A poor wash woman or window

cleaner, probably attracted by the magnetic tones of the stupendous organ, had dared to wander in. In simple ignorance she had probably imagined that Christ's boasted friendship for the poor meant something to modern dogmatists, and had taken a seat high up among these mighty lordlings of this majestic world. The congregation held its breath in amazement, and could not have been more shocked if the yellow fever in disguise had paid its fatal visit. This magnetic indignation communicated itself to an usher in full dress. He came forward and whispered something to the woman. She slowly rose and went up into the gallery. *God had sold out all the down-stair seats to the rich!* The Madonna sighed in pity and was angry. The congregation breathed a sigh of relief. The church itself cost half a million. It had no reading room, free bath, employment bureau or lunch counter attached to it. It was open for about nine months each year on Sundays, and when a millionaire wanted to get married, or his heirs wanted to bury him, so they could get up a sensational will contest and make newspapers sell. Not far away from the church was a series of alleys, where poverty held supreme sway, and where the grim specter of want, filth and misery, stalked, dealing death, crime and agony, winning each moment recruits for the devil's army in hell.

I'll not allow that rich woman over there to plead not guilty, upon the ground of ignorance of these conditions. She knows all about it, and yet to get those latest diamonds that sparkle on her breast, she made her husband sell the farm, whereon his honest old rustic parents were buried. Over there sits a woman, who is unfaithful in heart to her marriage vows, and who yet lacks the cour-

age to follow the bent of her intense longing, for fear of what her small world would say. In all of this artificial brilliance, there are masks and faces as false as many of the hearts which rich attire conceals.

Notwithstanding all this, there was every inducement for real inspiration. The architectural beauty of the interior of the church was artistic to the nature, and soft and alluring to the eye. The place was decorated with beautiful pots, plants and flowers. Through the stained windows a mellow light gilded rich carpets and soft cushions. The trained choir sang divinely while the organist thundered forth not only the wrath of the Deity, but promised mercy, like the whisper of an angel, through the organ's pipes. As the notes of the grand instrument died away in the distance, softly, like a summer sigh, a man of noble face and figure stood in the pulpit.

It was the preacher !

He was young. His eyes were boldly black and brilliant. They sparkled like pure diamonds with feeling, comprehension and intelligence. His head had the shape of a Roman God. His shoulders were square. He looked the very physical and intellectual giant that he was. His voice was flavored with magnetism that always distinguishes the eloquent orator from the mere word absorber. He ran his long, shapely fingers through his dark hair, shook his head like a lion, and plunged like a blooded courser into the very meat and marrow of his subject.

“ Christ was insulted on Sunday last. This church was empty at service time, and all had forsaken Him to pay tribute to a woman's vindictively immoral work. You who have built this religious palace to the glory of a mighty and eternal God, betrayed Him for the devil.

For hark me, I tell you, that he who so prostitutes true art, be it man or woman, pandering to the depraved tastes of modern society, is but an agent of the King of Hell!

“‘A Grecian Temptress’ was, or is, its theme. A woman of form almost divine, enticing a youth of purity to voluptuous sin, while in the veiled background stands a Satan, holding sway over the temptress, while she is but serving her Master in alluring souls to the regions of perpetual darkness.

“All true art leads to God. The tree, the earth, the sparrow, the eagle, the wheat, the stars, the beasts, man, are parts of a great and mighty network of machinery. All false art leads to God’s enemy, and sin, selfishness, voluptuousness, temptation and passion, carry with them and in them the seed of their own punishment. How dare these bold and brazen creatures, under the name of art, lay before the multitude chapters from their own devilish and inconsistent lives? *Yet the sin is not theirs alone.* You who hear me are equally guilty, because you encourage them by your countenance and patronage to continue in their base course of debauching the public taste. We seek in vain for purity and find it swiftly fleeing, while in its place there is rising up a craving for sensationalism which is even reaching the pulpit itself!

“Why should we follow ancient Greece? As long as the Athenian was stalwart, patriotic, full of rugged simplicity, the influence of Greece was all powerful in shaping the thought of the world and in moulding its history. But when its brave warriors, orators and poets sank into luxurious excesses, succumbing to vice, vying with each other in the mere promotion of enjoyment, its influence waned, its people degenerated, until today it is a memory

only serving to teach the world, that its people as a nation were unfit to survive. And when Grecian methods permeated Rome and Judea, these nations, too, became practically blotted out. Shall we permit American valor, patriotism and healthful vigor to have engrafted upon it these ideas so fatal to Greece, Rome and Judea? Shall we permit, by such an education of public morals, a gradual loss of respect of all those pure ideals taught by Him, who preached the sermon on the mount?" He paused here, but no one stirred.

"But this is not all. These Bohemian rebels, who create and produce and publish these things do worse than this. They make their own universe, enact their own laws, defy mankind, and yet society grovels at their feet and elevates all such so-called gifted creatures to a pedestal high above the church itself! They are worshiped, and Christ, who made for man the most agonizingly sublime sacrifice of which the mind can conceive, is insulted, neglected and made a common mockery!

"This woman Ouida Angelo, who gave to the world 'A Grecian Temptress,' who is she? A luring siren whose devotion to all that is voluptuous and sensual, reveals in her work only that which characterizes her ignoble life. She should be driven forth from achievements, that alike disgrace herself, art and humanity. Instead of worshiping her with idolatrous affection, we should freeze her with a monstrous condemnation."

Again he ceased and staggered almost out of the pulpit as though filled to the quick with some strange emotion.

A rustling gown with a queenly woman under it arose from a cushioned pew and majestically stepped down the aisle to the door.

She was Ouida Angelo, the sculptress!

Just then a startling crash was heard, and the pane of glass, upon which had been exquisitely done the face of the Madonna, fell and broke into countless pieces.

The sermon on "The Nude in Art" had done its work, and Monday's papers were full of it.

## CHAPTER II.

### FROM POVERTY TO WEALTH.

Ivan Strogoff was a Russian nobleman at the University of St. Petersburg. Together with many of his noble colleagues, he imbibed radical theories concerning freedom and the abuses practiced by the imperial government. Added to this, he married a pretty but poor Polish girl, who died in giving birth to a son, Paul. Ivan one day was arrested, secretly tried and condemned to Siberia. He, however, bought his freedom from corrupt public officials, and fled to New York with his son. Then he began a battle with the world in which starvation and misery constantly held the upper hand. Nothing succeeded with him. He could gain no foothold. His nature, naturally honest and bright, became soured, until at times he actually hated even his son, Paul. The latter was a noble specimen of physical humanity, and apparently seemed to thrive on the hardships which both father and son seemed compelled by cruel fate to endure. This continued until Paul was about 10 years old. Then it was that Ivan brought home one night a long envelope,

and while Paul slept in their garret in the slums, Ivan, his father, sat long into the night, until the candle burned out in the socket, reading documents with long, gold seals on them. It was a promise from an influential Russian official, toward a restoration of Strogoff's estates, if the exile should return and swear anew his allegiance to the Czar. Now Strogoff's vain struggles in the new world had sobered him. Many of the wild dreams of youth had disappeared, and he was ready and quite prepared to accept good fortune again, even if it meant a sacrifice of those poetic dreams that had caused the misfortunes of his earlier days.

He had but enough money left to barely get back to St. Petersburg alone, and the great question was: What could be done with Paul? He finally saw the keeper of the lodging, and received every assurance that Paul would be cared for until his father could send for him. So Ivan kissed the sleeping boy, and ere the sun had started on his course, was on the broad Atlantic, his brain busy with teeming projects for the newer and noble future that seemed to spread out before him.

Politics in Russia, however, are even worse and more complicated than in New York under Tammany. By the time Ivan reached the seat of Russia government, his friend had lost imperial favor. The plots against the life of the Czar had rendered a restoration to wealth and power of great difficulty, and almost an impossibility. Then began a struggle which slowly but surely sapped the vital energy of the returned exile. Each day brought forth fresh complications. Three times during a period of ten years the poor devil was compelled to fly to save himself from the enforcement of the old sentence, that

like the sword of Damocles, hung over him. But with a perseverance worthy of all admiration, he persisted, and something he could not define, would not let him die. To add to his misery, Paul had apparently been swallowed up, and never again while life remained, did the doubly unfortunate man ever hear of the boy he had abandoned to the cold charity of the New York lodging house keeper.

At length the great day came! Ivan Strogoff was ushered into the presence of the Czar, kissed the imperial hand, and once again trod his ancestral halls. But the struggle was too hard. All vitality had been sapped up in the battle, and the exile died before he had had time to enjoy his return to prosperity.

Upon his bed of death he gathered to himself that trusty friend who had been faithful, and conjured him to search out Paul and in some way compensate him for the terrible injustice inflicted upon the abandoned boy. "Seek him out in poverty or shame, and win from his lips my forgiveness, or I shall not rest in Heaven or in Hell." Consoled by the sacred promise of his friend so died he, and nature was gracious to vex his tired soul no more, for truly had the man endured an undue share of the mortal grief. But so is the world, and no man can measure the amount of agony he can live through. He who fears death is a criminal and a coward. A man should so live his life that death is the most welcome gift of nature.

## CHAPTER III.

### PAUL BECOMES A THIEF.

The next morning after Paul's father had gone, the lad arose, dressed himself and waited for breakfast, of course in vain.

"Come, boy," said the lodging house keeper, "eat with me."

"Where is my father?" said Paul.

"Gone."

"Gone where?"

"Far away, boy; even over the ocean. He will send for you."

Paul said nothing. He did not even shed a tear, as many a lad would have done. There was the blood of the Cossack in his rugged nature. Even at his small age he did not and would not wear his heart upon his ragged coat sleeve. But he was full of bitter thought. He became a miniature stoic. He munched his humble breakfast in silence.

At first he was treated with a fair degree of kindness by his rough, rude and miserly guardian, but when days, weeks and months came and with them no remittance from the struggling father in Russia, the guardian of the lad became sour, morose, vindictive and cruel. One day he beat the boy, and became greatly enraged because he could not make Paul cry or show by word or sign that the beating gave him pain. Paul stood the abuse like a

dog, but he grew. One day, feeling within his loins the strength of a lusty young giant, he arose and whipped his persecutor like David did Goliath, and fled out into the fathomless streets of New York.

That night he avoided the police and slept in a dry goods box in an alley. He awoke cold and shivering. His stomach ached with hunger. Health, youth and vigor conferred on him a monstrous desire to eat. As he sat in his alley he heard the growl of a dog. Looking up, he saw a plate full of meat scraps. The dog growled with satisfaction at his contemplated feast. Now, it seemed a strange and unjust thing to Paul that a dog should enjoy plenty, while he, a human being, had nothing. So with the instinct of the barbarian, he proceeded to dispute the dog's right to the whole of the tempting banquet. So the boy and the dog fought desperately for the food. The boy won. But even then Paul was too honest to appropriate it all. He fairly and justly divided with his late foe. So if Paul was a thief, he differed from the common kind. The banker and stockbroker steal on a large scale, for the excitement afforded in legalized robbery. The boy stole from necessity. He and the dog in silent sympathy became friends, and went out in the world together.

That night they slept in a boat, and in the morning were out at sea, their craft having been attached to a schooner. They were discovered and taken on board, where Paul was put to work. He, however, got back to New York. He never parted with the dog. They had a great time in starving together. Paul held horses, blacked boots, sold newspapers, carried satchels, and, in spite of all hardships, privations and miseries, grew up tall, muscular and of wondrous physical beauty. He

never was a thief but once, and had spent some years of devotion in paying his victim for the theft.

One day Paul was passing a great brown stone palace. A man was carrying in huge blocks of marble. He called on the boy to help him. Paul readily assented.

In one of the rooms stood a majestic woman. When Paul's eyes fell upon the vision he dropped his burden, and as it crashed upon the floor he stood like one transfixed. To his starving, neglected, hungry soul it seemed as though some goddess had dropped to the earth from the stars, and the woman looked at him with uncommon interest.

In a voice that thrilled him with unknown, undefinable, undreamed-of longings, she said, "I want you."

"Yes," he said, as in a dream.

Thenceforth Paul Stogoff entered the household of Ouida Angelo, the sculptress, as a model. For the first time in his life, he felt that he was human.

## CHAPTER IV.

### THE GREAT SENSATION.

Monday's papers were full of Dr. Nugent's sermon, and its sensational termination. Tongues wagged fierce concerning the artistic creation, its creator, and the fearless, the eloquent divine.

[*New York Herald.*]

"The sensation of the season has arisen out of 'A Grecian Temptress,' by Ouida Angelo. Only crude,

narrow and dogmatic opinion condemns. The liberal and artistic world welcomes the work and its producer, and New York is to be congratulated upon the priceless possession of a genius who has obliterated sex in the grandness of her conceptions, in the boldness of her execution and in her wondrous grasp of poetic imagination. Dr. Nugent has made a fearful mistake, and his attack upon the work and the woman in his pulpit yesterday, was the pursuit of a course altogether at variance with his usual conservatism. He has, if possible, defeated his very object by the bitterness of his denunciation. For it is a known fact that New York breaks its neck to see anything which is even nastily described, and 'A Grecian Temptress' will now be viewed by thousands who, but for the preacher's invective, would never have known of its existence. The learned doctor of divinity in future would do well to confine himself to biblical subjects, and leave artistic discussion to those who can appreciate."

[*New York Post.*]

"New York has the greatest things of any city in the world, and we have added to our proud possession in the shape of Dr. Nugent, whose courage has won the admiration of all classes of the community. Some years ago an adventurous and audacious creature established a studio in this city, and has since palmed off upon certain hysterical newspaper men and old maids sighing for excitement, some vulgar carvings, and by pandering to depravity and licentiousness, has contrived to secure a certain idolatrous following. Dr. Nugent, in the face of her admiring adherents, many of whom are members of his own congregation, has had the courage to read New York a much-needed lesson. In an age when so many preachers speak

to please their rich constituencies, it is indeed refreshing to find one man who preaches his convictions, regardless of consequences. 'A Grecian Temptress,' by Ouida Angelo, is a dangerous work of art, because of its very seductive quality. To the youth of our land it is suggestive of pernicious evil. The Society for the Prevention of Vice would do well to spend less time in hindering the Turkish dance, and more effort in the prevention of the prostitution of pure marble to such ignoble ends. The *Post* appreciates Dr. Nugent's honest efforts in the cause of public decency. We have recently been cleansing the political atmosphere. Let us second every honest effort to purify public morals."

[*Puck.*]

"A great clown has appeared in the pulpit arena, and he shows every Sunday at a great and fashionable church. True, the audience does not laugh aloud. They do it in their sleeves; nor do any swallow the medicines prescribed by this theological quack. The listening folk wait till they get out. They then sneak around the corner and devour the forbidden fruit. Churches are fast adopting the methods of the circus, and we may soon look for the deacons to hire space on bill boards, and there, in all the colors of the rainbow, we will see pictures of hell, heaven and many other strong features of the regulation religious bill of fare. Suppose Ouida Angelo wants to carve a pretty woman's leg. Don't we know that such things exist, even though sometimes the shape is not real? Shame upon you, Dr. Nugent! Have you not a large enough task to look after the morals of your own flock, that you must forsooth hold up to public ridicule,

the greatest genius which New York has seen for a century?"

[*New York Journal.*]

"Ouida Angelo should now die happy. She has been outrageously criticised by the scribblers of a subsidized press until they have absolutely won for her a niche in the temple of fame, and now, to cap the climax, she has at length antagonized the church. A noted preacher has set all tongues wagging, and blood-tingling murders, shipwrecks, are forgotten in a universal discussion over a piece of marble statuary. The learned doctor says the artist is sensational, and yet he proceeds to undignify the church by bettering her instruction. He says she is vulgar, yet he vulgarizes a noble theme by becoming offensively personal. No one can quarrel with his right to say what he pleases about a work which has become public property. But he has no more right to discuss what he pleases to term her private life, than he has to attack the character of the richest member of his congregation. Who authorizes him to set himself up as a judge and executioner of the character of his fellows? Among people of all classes there is a growing disrespect for the mere ecclesiastic, and such sermons are aiding to bring the church into public contempt. This is gravely to be regretted, especially in this instance, as Dr. Nugent was rapidly forging to the front as a liberal and intelligent public speaker, and this ill-considered effort will undoubtedly tend to lessen his great influence as a public speaker."

The preacher sat alone in his study, a prey to many conflicting emotions. He had read all the journalistic comments on his sermon, and was filled with mighty

discontent. For months he had known the woman he condemned, and in his inner being there had been aroused for her, a strange interest. To him, she had unfolded many of her artistic dreams, but he did not comprehend, for he had been nurtured in a narrow school, and had embraced in his smooth and successful career, but few of fierce experiences. Nor was he completely assured of the sincerity of his motive. A dim, shadowy belief was slowly forcing its way through his consciousness that he had spoken for other purposes than the mere desire to uplift and purify public taste. He had learned to realize, inconsistent as it may seem, that the woman was really noble of heart and character, but his education and environment made him believe that she was debasing the noble gifts with which Nature had endowed her, and he was preaching as much to the individual woman as he had apparently been preaching to the public mind. The complex nature of his attitude to the great question troubled him, and a furrowed brow and anxious eye told a tale of mental agony. Now that he had spoken, he was filled with a grave doubt as to the righteousness of his conduct, and he was paying the penalty of all men who are sensitively moulded. Then the thought came to him that he was using his pulpit, not for mankind but for himself, and he questioned his right to such a course of action. He could not, and would not, deny to himself that the artist possessed for him an enormous attraction. A vague dream had often come to him that he could breathe into her soul nobler and purer dreams, but he put it away each time with a weaker struggle against the passion that slowly made its inroads into his soul. She was a Bohemian. She broke all links in the chain of custom and

established precedent. She exhibited a reckless freedom in the comradeship of men, that maddened and frenzied him, yet he was speechless. He would crush this out of her, drive her from this insane, voluptuous life, and uplift her to his higher sphere, where her true nobility of character might be exercised, freed from the Bacchanalian influences of her mad life. Gradually, as he thought, he was ashamed to think how much of personal longing had crept into a sermon which should have been delivered in the honest work of his sacred profession.

He awoke from his fevered self-examination, and buttoning his great coat around him, went out upon his daily visits to the poor, for, though he was accounted a great and fashionable preacher, he stole out daily to haunts where misery dwelt, and the greater part of a magnificent salary went annually to places unknown to organized and official charity, and he was almost afraid that people would find it out!

## CHAPTER V.

### SATAN REBUKING SIN.

Among the many great houses in this metropolis, none were more artistically and voluptuously arranged than the mansion of Ouida Angelo, the sculptress. There were parlors and drawing-rooms, a study, a library, dining room in exquisitely carved oak, while the boudoir of the artist was a perfect dream. She had costly paintings and pieces of marble statuary for which a monarch would almost give

his crown, and all arranged and placed with perfect artistic and poetic taste. Ouida's boudoir was palatial with its tiger skin rugs, couches, mirrors and jeweled cases. Her sleeping couch was draped in richest silks, and was as soft and as alluring as ever enticed to sleep the troubled head of a queen.

On leaving the church, Ouida had entered her carriage, in which, by an imperious wave of the hand, she had been driven quickly to her residence. There, with the assistance of her sweet-faced maid, she had disrobed and was quickly attired in a soft and clinging negligee apparel, which women delight in, and which men cannot describe. This done, pointing to the door, she almost fiercely said: "Go!"

The little maid stood a moment, amazed, for never before had her mistress been so harsh, but slowly she turned and silently moved toward the door. Ouida, quickly shamed into atonement, said: "Lucile!"

Quickly and gladly the joyous girl bounded back, and almost tearfully said: "Is my mistress angry with me?"

"Child," said Ouida, "I angry with you!" The great creature stooped and kissed Lucile's forehead. "I am troubled with the nasty world."

Left alone, the artist paced the floor of her boudoir like a lioness from whose breasts her cubs had been rudely torn.

"I hate them all. None can be trusted. This one seemed nobler than the rest. I revealed more of the woman in me to him than to any creature born. See how he repays me, my art. I could forgive him who preaches against my life, for I have given the world the right to talk; but when he attacks true art, the Goddess at whose

shrine I worship, when he ridicules my religion, I feel as though my heart would crack with rage.

“Bravery, thou art extinct, and there is a premium placed on public cowardice. He attacks me from a safe place, behind the battlements of the pulpit. I indulged in the vain hope of having won the respect of one honest man, among the contemptible puppies by which I am surrounded, and I find that he, too, has a narrow, putrid soul. He wants to enhance his reputation at my expense. A vulgar woman would horsewhip him. I cannot so commonize myself. A barbarous woman would kill him, a bold woman would insult him. My vengeance upon him shall not be commonplace.

“A fool, too, he is. There is no wisdom in him. Does he think he can rob me of the affection of New York? What idiotic nonsense! Not a thousand sermons could do that. My place in art is greater than his in the church.

“Ah, I have it! I’ll make him supremely ridiculous. I’ll make the city laugh at him. I’ll carve a work with him as central figure, and I’ll christen it ‘Satan Rebuking Sin.’”

Like a woman, she laughed at the cleverness of her conceit, dressed and took a fierce drive through Central Park.

## CHAPTER VI.

### A LAWYER'S STUBBORNNESS.

Edward Salmon was one of the brilliant and successful lawyers of New York. His office contained family secrets that would tear wide open the very vitals of society, if he but chose to speak. But he was oily and discreet, and maid, matron, and millionaire as well, knew that what went into that massive safe and into Salmon's wily brain, never came out again unless it was proper. That was the reason of his great success. Mr. Salmon was a great success. He had a wondrous practice, a splendid library, a rich and lovely home; but he had a daughter, Marie, who had seen fit, as young girls will do sometimes, to fall in love without parental consultation, and the result was that both father and daughter were very unhappy. She would not yield to his wishes, and he would not consent to the man of her choice. Now, Milton Royle, the sweetheart of Marie, was a noble fellow, but twenty years prior to the commencement of this story, Royle's father and the lawyer had a great difficulty over a law suit, and Salmon had never forgotten or forgiven what he had always alleged, was the betrayal of Royle's father, and he had sworn that he would rather see Marie go wifeless to the grave, rather than that she should marry a man in whose veins flowed the blood of the elder Royle. In all other respects he was an indulgent parent, and was particularly tender to Marie, as the girl had lost her mother, and was

almost alone in the world, not liking or indulging in the usual frivolities of society and fashion. Her life was spent in art, and among artists. She was a great friend and admirer of Ouida, and it was at the studio of the latter, where she had met young Royle, who was one of the students much favored by the great sculptress.

Salmon was in his office dictating a number of very important communications to his stenographer. Happening to glance out of the window overhanging the street, he saw something that evidently caused him great annoyance. A moment later there was a quick, nervous rap at the door, and a young girl exquisitely dressed, entered, and coming up, threw her arms around the lawyer's neck and kissed him. He received the embrace with coldness.

"Why, father, what is the matter?" said Marie.

"Matter? It is ridiculous for you to ask such a question. I saw you just a moment ago on the street, part company with Milton Royle. You know you always displease me by your association with him."

"I can't help it," said the girl, her voice tinged with unutterable sadness. "I make no concealment of my love for Milton. I like to be with him, and am with him whenever he can spare the time from his studies."

"And yet you know it angers me beyond expression."

"And, I think, sir, without reason. You have not a word to say against Milton's character, and because you had trouble with his father before we were born, you want to make us miserable."

"Now, Marie, you know that is not all. I want you to marry a man worthy of you."

"Then let me have Milton," she pleaded.

“I want no artist in my family,” he sternly said; “they are all a shiftless and unreliable lot, and one was never known to make a woman happy. Their attachments are as fleeting as their artistic conceptions.”

“Such argument will not move us. You know, father, I have some of your blood in my veins, and our race has always been stubborn.”

The old man looked on his daughter with admiration, and going over to where she sat, he kissed her tenderly.

“Now you are like the dear old dad you used to be.” She gently stroked his gray hair, and fondling him softly, said: “And you won’t be angry with my Milton any more?”

“You sly pus; just like your mother was,” and the hardened man of the world breathed a touching sigh, in the memory of a past that was fraught with delicious happiness, but which had gone forever.

“Not meaning to change the subject, my dear girl, but about a month ago I received a large mass of legal documents from Russia, which conveyed information of a very valuable character to a Russian lad, whose father had abandoned him here in New York City. I have had a horde of detectives employed, and they have been unable thus far to locate him. The last news is contained in a report today, that a person of that description was employed somewhere in an art studio. Now, you get around among this class of cattle quite often. His name is Paul—”

“Paul Strogoff?”

“Yes. Do you know anything about him?”

“Yes. He is employed by Ouida Angelo as a model.”

“Good. The fee in the case shall be yours.”

“Cash?” cried out the mercenary little wretch.

“Yes, cash,” said the delighted father, and he forthwith went into the safe and brought a roll of bank notes, which he gave to Marie.

“Do you desire a receipt for this,” she said, with a smile.

“No,” said Mr. Salmon, “but you might tell your old dad what you are going to do with so much money.”

“No, I cannot do that,” she replied, with assumed fear.

“Going to waste it on your staff of paupers?”

“No.”

“New dress?”

“No.”

“Pray, what then?”

“Going to buy Milton a birthday present,” as in a mocking fit of laughter she skipped through the door and vanished from the office.

“The little devil has tricked me,” he said, but there was no anger in his tone.

## CHAPTER VII.

### OIDA WILL NOT BE INTERVIEWED.

When Ouida returned from her drive through Central Park, she found in waiting, Olivia Winters, special writer for the Daily Tattler. Now, Miss Winters was one of the most brilliant women of the New York press. She it was whom the World had sent to be knocked down by a

moving car, so that the new style fenders might be properly described. The girl had also taken a balloon ascension, and written it up for her paper. She at one time spent three months as an inmate of a mad house, and as a result, had written such an exposure of the methods of the place, that the State Legislature had passed a new law for the government of such institutions. One of the girl's crowning achievements, however, had been to interview the President of the United States at a time and upon a subject upon which other writers had tried, in vain, to get an expression of opinion. The only thing she had ever failed in, was in getting Ouida to talk, nor did she ever press the great artist, for she really liked her. Ouida had told her many things, but had always requested her to refrain from using them in the paper, and Olivia had always respected the confidence reposed in her, by keeping her word. No true writer will ever break faith under similar circumstances.

Ouida did not keep her visitor long in waiting. A rap at the door was heard, and upon being bid, Olivia Winters entered the apartments of Ouida.

"Ah," said the sculptress, "I am indeed glad to see you."

"That gives me hope," said the writer.

"Of what?" exclaimed Ouida.

"That you will break the silence you have maintained for years."

"Ah, dear girl, there you, no matter how delicately, have approached forbidden ground."

"Have I offended you?" said Miss Winters.

"No," replied Ouida, "if any one could have probed the mystery of my life, it would have been you."

“I thank you at least for that slight evidence of your confidence and esteem—”

“But,” said Ouida, interrupting, “I have taken Disraeli’s advice.”

“And pray, what was that?” inquired Olivia.

“A young man, ambitious to succeed in public life, approached the great English statesman, and said: ‘Mr. Disraeli, to what one great thing do you attribute your success in public life?’ The wonderful Englishman grew thoughtful for a moment, and said: ‘Well, sir, when I started out in public life, I resolved never to reply to what the newspapers might say about me.’ ‘Good,’ said the young man, ‘I will follow your advice,’ and he started to depart. ‘Hold! young man,’ cried Mr. Disraeli, ‘let me finish my story.’ Continuing, he said: ‘But on one occasion the London Telegraph came out with an accusation against me of so monstrous a character, that I felt constrained to deny it. And what do you suppose the damned rascally newspaper editor did? Why, he proved it.’”

Both women laughed merrily over the tale, which the Winters woman declared was in Ouida’s usually happy and clever vein.

“But, my dear Ouida, I came to see what you had to say about Nugent’s sermon.”

“Nothing.”

“Nothing?”

“Absolutely nothing, my dear girl. If Mr. Nugent preaches against me, my art, it is because texts are scarce and he wants to draw a crowd.”

“But, my dear Ouida, his personal, direct attack on you—you owe it to yourself to speak.”

“No, I shan’t help him advertise himself.”

But even as she said it a cloud of vexation passed over her stately brow.

“Then,” said Winters, appealingly, “nothing I can say will urge you to speak?”

“No, Winters, don’t try to make me deviate from that silent course I have from the very beginning mapped out for myself.”

“Well, then, I must go. But rest assured, our columns are yours at any time you desire to speak.”

“Thanks! By the way, call at my box tonight at the opera. There will be a lot of fools in attendance, and I will need the exhilaration of a chat with one like you.”

“Au revoir.”

“Until tonight.”

And as Olivia Winters departed, her heart was filled with sympathy for the big-souled, independent creature she had just left, and she felt for her a deeper love and affection than for any other woman breathing the breath of life.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### PAUL HEARS GOOD TIDINGS.

The very day upon which the Winters woman called on Ouida, in her unsuccessful attempt to secure an interview, Paul Strogoff, the model, paid a visit to the office of Edward Salmon, the shrewd and wily lawyer.

The young Russian gazed with awe on the great array of books and files, and wondered what could possibly have been the reason why any lawyer should have requested his presence.

After a while he was ushered into the presence of Mr. Salmon, and stood rather fearfully waiting for what was coming. He was rather like a dog at bay. He had had such an amount of silent agony throughout his life, that he was in that passive frame of subjected mind, that he was ready for and could bear almost anything.

“Take a seat, sir,” said Mr. Salmon.

Paul dropped into the first chair, and still spoke not.

“I am a lawyer, sir,” said Mr. Salmon.

“So I saw by your letter head; but how does that concern me? I have no lawsuits.”

“That may be true, but strange things come to us at times.”

“True,” said Paul, growing somewhat restless, “why have you sent for me?”

“Before I can entirely tell you, I must ask a few questions, to which I must have frank and truthful answers.”

“Having nothing at stake,” said Paul, “I have no inducement to lie.”

“You are a Russian by birth?”

“I am.”

“Your father abandoned you in this city years ago, returned to Russia, and you have not heard from him since?”

Paul jumped up. “How do you know all this?”

“Sit down and calm yourself,” soothingly said the man of law. “I mean you naught but good.”

“Well, go on,” said the impatient fellow.

“He returned to his native land in the hope of recovering his ancestral estates, and was grievously disappointed, tricked and hounded for years. At last he won the great battle, and died.

“I suppose I should weep,” said Paul, “but I am no hypocrite. I cannot forget these years of cruel abandonment and misery.”

“But,” said the lawyer, by way of consolation, “your future is full of promise and brilliance. There is absolutely not a single obstacle in the way of your complete enjoyment of a noble name and wealth.”

“That may be true,” said Paul. “Fate has played him a scurvy trick to my advantage, but I have become bitter, my heart is sour with evil neglect. I have known starvation of body and soul; I have craved love, sympathy, affection, and only a dog licked my hand. Nothing can move me.”

“I don’t blame you, my boy, but your future is more than bright.”

“A new experience for me,” said Paul, who already felt as though a burden had been dropped upon his young life.

“There are many complications likely to arise, in which you will need legal advice. May I consider myself retained in your behalf?”

“I don’t know anything about these things,” said Paul, “but do for me whatever is necessary.”

“By the way,” said Salmon, looking at Paul shrewdly, “perhaps you need an advance of money. If so, I can supply you.”

Paul laughed. “Me, money? Why, man, I have learned the lesson of starvation so thoroughly that I need nothing.”

“You are a happy philosopher,” said the lawyer, and with a wave of the hand the interview ended.

Paul departed in a more than reflective mood.

## CHAPTER IX.

### DECIDED BY LOT.

It was evening, and three of the most prominent men of New York City confronted each other at the residence of the sculptress. Milton Wayland, a noted stock broker, Edmund Connors, a successful politician, and Iago Doane, an editor, formed the trio.

“I trust,” said Wayland, “we may now and forever settle the question of superiority at whist.”

“I did not come here to play whist tonight,” said Connors, frankly and boldly.

“Pray, then,” said the editor, with ill-concealed sarcasm, “what brought you here?”

“Are you my father confessor?” said the politician.

“No,” replied Doane, “I have enough agonies of my own; nor would I like to hold in my soul the knowledge of all your evil deeds.”

“Do you think a politician is worse than an editor?” said Connors.

“Frankly speaking,” said Doane, “no. The difference in our deception of the public lies in the method only.”

The men were evidently ill at ease, but all laughed at Doane’s boldness.

“We poor monied men,” said Wayland, “seem to be altogether out of consideration.”

“How so?” said Connors.

“Because in this day and generation,” said Wayland, “thanks to Doane, the newspapers have killed our trade by exposing our tricks.”

Connors looked on in grim satisfaction at the contest between money and printer’s ink, and quietly said: “I am not so sure that newspapers are just what they should be.”

“What’s the complaint against us?” said Doane, in mock fear.

“There is as little honesty in journalism as there is in the world of finance,” said Wayland.

“Nothing truer was ever said,” chipped in Connors. “The ordinary newspaper of today but reflects the cowardice of wealth. There is little of the sincerity of conviction which prevailed in the days of Horace Greeley.”

“They always cram Greeley down our throats,” cried Doane.

“Well,” said Connors, “wasn’t he a pretty bold and fearless man?”

“I’ll admit all that,” retorted Doane, “but I never did worship at the shrine of any journalistic God.”

“But,” said Wayland, apparently realizing that the argument was growing somewhat intense, “we have wandered some distance from the original query.”

“And that was?” said Connors.

“The real object of our presence here,” interposed the editor. “Come, now, what brought you here, Connors?”

"I must yield," said Connors, "since the moulder of public opinion implores the mere politician to tell the truth."

"Be careful," said Wayland, "sensations may be at a premium."

"Bah," said Doane, in real anger, "I never mix shop with social intercourse."

"Now," said the wily politician, "don't let us lose our tempers."

"I did not intend offense," said Wayland.

"And now," said Connors, "since my friend has made the *amende de honorable*, I will state frankly that I came here to take Ouida Angelo to the Italian opera."

"And so did I," said Wayland.

"That also was my purpose," said Doane.

"Well," sighed Wayland, "it would be no fun for all of us to go together."

"Nor," said Connors, "can we very well divide the lady into three separate existences."

"I suggest," said Wayland, "that we draw lots."

"There," said Doane, "again breaks out his natural spirit of speculation and chance."

"No intention to talk shop," sarcastically retorted Wayland.

This proposition finally proving agreeable, a simple plan of lot-drawing was indulged in by these favorites of fortune, the result of which was a victory for Doane.

"Doane always wins," complained Wayland.

"I wonder if he plays fair," spoke up Connors.

"Gentlemen," said Doane, evidently gratified by his success, "don't weep. Allow me to console you. She really cares for neither of us. Now, you are young,

vigorous men. I am a free lance. I sleep all day ; work all night. You may have the hope of some day wedding decent, commonplace wives. Just the creatures to be the safe and proper mothers of your children. What matters it, if I, who hate everybody, and whom everybody hates, am swallowed up in the mad vortex of passion ? Society loses nothing, and gains a dainty bit of gossip to chew on for a month."

Ouida majestically burst upon them at this juncture.

"So," she cried, "you have been making me the subject of chance. Pray, what excuse dare you offer for such a profane proceeding ?"

"And, Ouida, you should have heard of the consolation he offered, as he gloated over his victory."

Without giving the sculptress a chance to ask, Doane quickly said: "I told them, madame, that you would marry neither of them."

"Did you insinuate that it was possible that I might marry you ?"

"No, but here, publicly, I proclaim the fact, that my newspaper and I are yours at a moment's notice."

"Yes, your perpetual offer at times grows somewhat wearisome," said Ouida, "but, seriously speaking, Doane, get a law passed which will allow marriage for a limited period, renewable at the option of the parties, and I will try you for a brief period. The thought of being forever tied to one man appals me."

"But," remonstrated Connors, "you forget, dear lady, that sometimes offspring follows marriage."

"Bah," said Ouida, passionately, "they ought to be throttled ere conceived. There are too many carelessly

reared brats in the world today. It would be a good thing to stop pro-creation for a generation."

"There is really some sense in that," thoughtfully reflected Wayland aloud.

Ouida continued: "The Romans were wise. They killed children not physically perfect. Pharaoh sacrificed the first born of the Jews. I see no cruelty whatever in the idea. But I will not continue this discussion. I am too full of anger."

"Because I won?" said the editor.

"Partially so," replied Ouida. "I was not consulted, and I refuse to be bound by such a silly arrangement. Think you that one sour, dyspeptic, gossipy editor, would for an entire evening suffice me, especially at the opera, where one who listens to the music, is entirely out of the fashion?"

"But—" the editor started in on a protest.

"I shall not listen to you," cried Ouida, as she imperiously stamped her shapely foot, "I will settle this matter by inviting you all to occupy seats in my box. I shall take no vote upon the matter, for well I know your acceptance is unanimous."

"But, madame," protested Wayland, "this is most unkind; you should not treat us as though we were children."

"I would you were as innocent," bantered the lady of the house.

"What do you know about us?" said Connors.

"Do you think I don't get some compensation for allowing Doane among my intimates?" said Ouida.

"So he gives you the news, does he, before the dear public gets it?" said Connors.

“A truce to this nonsense,” said Wayland. “Gentlemen, what shall we do—accept the polite invitation of her royal highness?”

“Accept,” said Ouida, in breathless indignation, “accept? Is there any doubt of it? Oh, well, there need not be. I withdraw it—”

“Seriously?” said Doane.

“I’ll give a railroad,” said the stock broker, “to make my peace with her.”

“Now understand me,” said Ouida, imperiously, “I am not offended at anything any one has said. This, above all other places, is Liberty hall. Law, ordinary social rules, have long been banished, but as we were talking, I was seized with a monstrous, overwhelming inspiration. I must be alone tonight. I felt as though I might carve the boldest stroke of ‘A Modern Hercules.’ Go! nor stay upon the order of your going.”

No protest prevailed, and the trio left; nor did they stop on the street to offer consolation to each other.

## CHAPTER X.

### A LOVERS’ QUARREL.

While this most interesting affair was taking place between Ouida and her three admirers in one part of the house, another scene was being enacted in the studio, no less absorbing to the participants. Marie Salmon and Milton Royle, the art student, so objectionable to her

father, were engaged in the most serious conversation of their young lives.

“So,” said she, “you could not content yourself at Harvard?”

“No. The restraint imposed by the set rules of college was slowly sapping up and killing my ambition. So I came here to realize my artistic dreams.”

“Your leaving the university, Milton, has seriously displeased me.”

“In what way, dearest Marie?”

“Don’t attempt to mollify me by endearing terms. Now, you know that you had been selected on the boat crew, and the girls have whispered all around that you were afraid to stay.”

“And does my little sweetheart,” said he, with infinite patience, “believe that silly story?”

“Well,” she confessed, “of course I don’t exactly believe it, but the talk of the crowd hurts me. Then again, could you not study your art from a man?”

“Oh,” said Milton, thinking to himself that if jealousy was at the bottom of his sweetheart’s apparent anger, surely he could scent trouble ahead.

“Why don’t you answer?” she said.

“I was thinking.”

“You have no right to think. That is—I—well, I am almost beginning to hate Ouida Angelo.”

“Why, that is really absurd, little one.”

“Milton, I hate all things that seem to lead you from me.”

“Nothing, and no one, can do that,” said Milton.

“You are with her hours and hours; I almost forget how you look, I see you so seldom these days,” complained the girl.

“Sweetheart, you are unfair. I am but working for that proud future which you shall share with me.”

“I should like more of present joy and less of future hope.”

“Is not the future,” said Milton, “worth a sacrifice?”

“I am like a miser with his gold. I can spare nothing of that which is mine.”

Milton seized her hand, raised it to his heart, and swore that his love was completely and fully hers.

“Do you wish me,” he said, “to abandon my profession? Say but the word, and I will.”

“Would you do that for me?” almost whispered Marie.

“As surely as I live,” he replied.

“And do you think I would accept such a sacrifice?”

“Then my dear must not agonize me with these constant suspicions. They are unworthy of you.”

“Then you do not love Ouida?”

“I love the glorious art of which she is the mistress. I appreciate her because I grasp much from her cunning and deft craftsmanship. But you (clasping her to his breast) are the one woman whom Nature has sent for mating. Enough of this now. You do, you must, trust me.”

She let her head sink gently on his breast. The struggle was over, and the tear-dimmed eyes that looked into his had no doubt in them, for they were lighted up by a faith eternal.

Arm in arm they went into Milton's work-room, where for some time he delighted her with an exhibition of his work, the progress he was making, and he poured into her willing and sympathetic ear, the story of his future

dreams and aspirations, so that she saw more clearly than ever, that the only mistress beside herself which Milton had, was Art.

## CHAPTER XI.

### A PREACHER'S PASSION.

The departure of the editor, politician and broker left Ouida in a very reflective mood. Strange to say, her mind wandered to Paul, the model, as it had often done of late. "I'll soon call my Herculean model forth. Paul, the perfect brute! Yet, often when he thinks I am not observing, there comes into his eyes a look that makes me tremble, though I know not why. Can it be that I, who have a dozen mighty men, as this world goes, crawling at my feet, am falling captive to a coarse-grained beast, that sleeps and feeds from day to day throughout the year, without a thought or hope beyond the common cattle of the field?"

At this moment a card was handed Ouida, the reading of which filled her eyes with an almost devilish gleam of satisfaction.

"Show the gentleman up," was her swift command.

It was but a moment when Horatio Nugent, the great preacher, appeared before the sculptress!

"By admitting me to your presence, may I hope there is a truce between us?" he almost humbly said.

"Neither peace nor courtesy moved me to see you," was her unsatisfactory answer.

“Then why your apparent graciousness?”

“I desire,” said Ouida, “to declare a never-ending war.”

“Will you not,” appealed the preacher, “even listen to what I have to say?”

“No. Your course admits of no explanation. Let me tell you now, you can never creep again within the circle of my friendship.”

“If you could but dig beneath the surface,” he audibly sighed, “and see why I preached my sermon against the nude in art, ’twould be *you*, not *I*, seeking pardon.”

“I seek your pardon after that which you have done? Listen,” said the woman, “you played the part of a friend. You sought *me* out. To you I unfolded my dreams, my conceptions. You said they were divine, and yet when I attended your church, you thundered forth invectives against my art, and hold me up to public ridicule. You would attempt to win a public applause as fleeting as the dew upon the morning rose. If I had loved you, I would hate you for this act.”

“I will explain,” he said, with vehemence and commanding power before which, even for a moment, this imperious creature quailed. “I am not like the vain flatterers that follow in your train. I will speak, even if the hate in you, like a dagger, shall stab me in a vital spot.”

“Speak then,” said she, with resignation. “Courtesy compels me to listen to one who has honored my humble roof with his august presence.”

“Ah, hear me Ouida. The knowledge, sudden and fierce, has forced itself upon me, that I love you with all the strength of my nature!”

“And you have selected this novel way of showing it!”

As Ouida said this, she laughed with such chilling scorn, that it made the preacher shudder with agony.

“That we will not discuss,” said he, as the echo of her scorn died away. “Your life, your Bohemian instincts, your defiance of social laws, has maddened me. I would drive you from this unreal existence, so that in your despair you would turn to me. Then I should uplift you to my grand sphere.”

The idea of Horatio Nugent’s condescension struck Ouida with wondrous merriment, and she laughed again, the laughter growing more intense each moment, until it developed into an indignation almost boundless.

“Your own grand sphere!” she cried. “Drive back the Atlantic surf; lift valleys over mountain tops; throttle Vesuvius, and then come to me with a hope of tearing me and my art apart. I would not exchange an eternity in hell and my work for Paradise with the crude, narrow, dogmatic officialism of your hypocritically pious life.”

“I have less quarrel with your art than with your life,” continued he. “These Bacchanalian revels, this freedom with men so maddening to me. These are the things from which I would save you.”

“Sir,” said she, with supreme dignity, “my life is my own. Society did nothing for me. I have with these hands carved out my fame. You and your kind no more understand art, than you do the voice of Nature. I have sat nude beneath a master’s brush, without an impure thought. I have painted men as naked as the new-born babe, without a quicker pulse beat, wrapped in a dream. My art shall live when churches shall crumble, and preachers’ bones shall mingle with the dust. Divinity

touches the brow of genius, and art becomes the heritage of generations yet unborn."

A goddess could not have looked more divine than this woman did, as she poured forth the inspiration of her swelling, throbbing soul. There was silence again between them. But he at length recovered speech, and renewed the attack.

"Ah, Ouida, you are noble and good; why not economize this worth for grander and purer aspirations?"

"Purer aspirations?" she echoed. "Ah, sir, I am bursting with the fullness of rage. Who are you, that gives you the almost divine right to preach against a thing you know not of? You have not looked on life; you have tasted no agony; you have not walked through the blazing furnace of passion."

"God alone knows what my battle has been since the knowledge came to me that I loved you."

"Your passion, sir preacher, moves me not."

"Then, pitilessly, you will send me out into the gloomy world without a ray of hope?"

"Did you not seek to make the earth for me a place without sun or light?"

"But I have made my atonement, and come now to crave pardon for my sin."

"You cannot think thus to move me," said the woman, firmly.

"Can nothing soften your heart of stone?" he appealed.

"Nothing, sir. I hate you strongly. If these were the days of Lucretia Borgia, without compunction I would have you killed. The world can do without you."

“And yet,” said he, softly, as though consoled by the thought, “I have given up all for you.”

“I have seen nothing that you have done,” she said, sternly, “and more, I ask nothing of you, save that you walk your way, and leave me in peace to go mine.”

“You know, Ouida,” said the man of strength, “that I, too, am ambitious; that men and women showered upon me their plaudits; that I had won a strong place in this great city. I have given up my church!”

She started in breathless amazement! “Sacrificed your wondrous future, and for me?”

And simply he said: “The price of my sin to you.”

Then a deeper silence than ever before fell upon these two, and again there was no speech between them.

“Now,” at length, he said, “I am ready to be sent forth with your cruel scorn, following me even to the end of time.”

“I cannot bid you go thus,” she said, moved to pity. “Does the world know of this?”

“Of the resignation, yes; of the reason, no.”

“Then I abjure you, reveal nothing. Leave me!” she cried.

“And may I come again?” eagerly he pleaded.

“Yes,” she said, the power of resistance gone, “when I have had time to think.”

He left with a sense of mighty triumph in his soul.

## CHAPTER XII.

### OUIDA PROPOSES MARRIAGE.

Even the preacher's passion, the knowledge of his awful sacrifice, did not rob the artist of her inspiration for work. Proceeding to the studio, filled with treasures of brush and mallet, she found Paul, the model, and Milton, the student.

"Any commands for me," said Milton, with deference and respect.

"Yes," said Ouida, "you may assist in arranging the pose."

Milton, for a few moments, attempts to place the model in the attitude, consistent with the conception of Ouida.

"Ah," reflected Ouida, aloud, "if I can but tonight imprint on stone the image that long has haunted me, 'I'll wring from men the unwilling confession that truly in my veins flows the blood of Michael Angelo.'"

Her unconscious talk was interrupted by Paul, who almost sullenly said: "I do not care to work tonight."

"Hush!" said Ouida, "breathe not. I would not have had you fail me tonight for a brace of kingdoms."

She then crosses over to where Paul and Milton stood, saying to the latter: "Nay, not thus. Let him stand and look as though with mighty power he bears the weighty earth upon his massive shoulders. There, that is better. Go. Leave me, Milton; I would be alone with him."

Then, like a tigress, rapidly she set to work with mallet and chisel, and while Paul stood motionless, scarcely daring to breathe, the idea that filled her brain and soul began to take living shape from the block of stone. At some length, however, she dropped her tools. They fell upon the floor with a dull thud. She crosses over to the model; then irresolutely retraced her steps, and threw herself upon a divan or sofa, as in a dream. There she lies motionless, save for a heaving breast.

Paul thinks she sleeps, and leaving his station, goes to the couch whereon she lies, and gazes upon her with strange emotion. She still seems unconscious of his presence.

“Had I Svengali’s power, I’d mould her to my will.” Paul clenches his hand together, gazes passionately at the reclining figure, and slowly moves back to his place. She arose.

“Paul, come near me,” she said, with a voice as seductive as that of a luring siren, “and sit upon this low stool.”

This request was made by her following a flashing, unaccountable mental freak, that filled Paul with pleased astonishment!

“I am your willing slave,” he said, as he did her bidding.

“Do you love any woman?” said Ouida.

“I dare not answer,” said the model.

“Dare not answer? Have I not asked you? What do you fear?” said the sculptress.

“Myself,” said Paul.

“He who cannot master himself is like the beast of the field.”

“That’s what I am. What right have I to feeling, emotion?” said the model.

“Have you no hope for the years that are to come?”

“If I have, I hide it so that none may see. I had one hope, but it was like reaching out after a star. Do not question me concerning it. It shall never be revealed.”

“Paul,” she said, “what think you of these men who crowd about me, like moths about a candle, their tongues quick with the hollow mockery of modern insipidity?”

“They are false as Judas. They drink your champagne, and then, when drunk, tell lies about you. I’d like to cut their throats, if you but speak.”

“I’ll let you, in a way,” she said, looking into his black eyes with a boldness that made him breathe with a mixture of fear and delight.

“How?” said he, with almost breathless quickness.

“Paul,” she replied, “come nearer to me. You are a strong-limbed brute. You are base born. You are poor.”

He shuddered, and was about to acquaint the woman with the story which Lawyer Salmon had told him, but some power which controls fate and destiny, restrained him, and he remained silent upon the point.

“If all you say is true,” he uttered, “What then?”

“Ah, Paul, you are so different to the mere puppets that cringe around and flatter me.”

“If I were like these weaklings, I would not care to live.”

“The very contrast attracts me,” said Ouida, dreamily.

“My God!” said Paul, the truth at length dawning upon him, “can it be possible that you condescend to give me more than a mere passing reflection?”

“There is, Paul. Can you not see that I adore you?”

In a moment their bodies were in close embrace, he enfolding her within his mighty and powerful grasp. After a moment, however, he put her gently from him, and said: “You but mock me by showing me a view of Paradise, only to snatch the entrancing picture from my eyes.”

“No,” she said, exalted through the intensity of her artistic emotion, “I feel a strange, uncontrollable desire to own you, body and soul.”

“I fear, I dream, I dream,” said Paul, but Ouida hurried on:

“You are a giant. You could take any one of these pigmies that flutter and buzz about me, in your arms, and could crush life completely out. I hate them all. I would throttle, and at the same time strangle, the indignation of society. I would bitterly enrage these dogs who fawn on me.”

“And use me as the instrument? What, then, shall become of me?” said Paul.

“You? Why, Paul, you shall be the central moving figure,” said Ouida.

“What care I? Use me as you will. 'Tis enough for me to know that you but reach your hand.”

“Come to my arms then again,” she cried in the ecstasy of this novel and entrancing emotion. “Let us revel in delight, you pauper! You dog! You base born thing, to whom vile society would scarcely throw a crumb!”

“Oh, the delight,” said Paul, “of spurning these little creatures. A month of such sweet vengeance, and you may have my life.”

“I’ll dress these mighty limbs of yours,” she cried. “I’ll flaunt your very baseness in their eyes. I’ll make them crawl to you for the price of a smile from me. They shall pay in deepest humiliation for the privilege of adoring me from afar. We, Paul, you and I, will richly repay society for its wrongs to us.”

She seemed now exhausted from the intensity of her feelings.

“Go now,” she said, tenderly; and without question Paul went away from her, exalted, bewildered, astonished, uplifted, amazed, but happy, and inwardly rejoicing at the wondrous change which had taken place in his fortunes. Poor fool! From his dizzy height he saw not the chasm yawning in greediness below.

## CHAPTER XIII.

### A RICH MAN’S BALL.

A great social leader of the Metropolis had given a ball, to which had been invited not only the “Four Hundred,” but a large proportion of New York’s Bohemian Colony as well.

Olivia Winters had been sent by the city editor of the Daily Tattler to get an account of the affair for her journal. Her reflections as she sat waiting to see the hostess, or some one in her behalf, were neither pleasing nor flattering. “All the world’s a fake,” she thought, “and the men and women merely fakirs. Within a stone’s throw of this place there is a collection of miserable huts.

From what I have seen so far here, at least \$15,000 has been spent on flowers, that will before tomorrow night have lost their fragrance. How many mouths would that feed, in this great, cold, heartless city, throbbing with the agonies of thousands! Ah, well, why should I moralize? I wish to heaven I could write this thing up as I feel, but to do so would be affronting fashion, and anything original regarding modern New York society, would mean my journalistic death."

Her reflections were interrupted by the entrance of Marie Salmon, who extended her hand graciously to Miss Winters, and said: "You are the representative of the Tattler?"

"I am," said Miss Winters.

"The hostess of the evening presents her compliments to you, and begs that you will excuse her personal presence. She has delegated me to act for her in giving you what you desire for your paper."

"She could not have selected a substitute who would have better pleased me," said Olivia, with perfect grace and self-possession.

"You are very good to say so," said Marie. "Here you will find a list of the invited guests. In this package is a cut of the host and hostess, as well as a picture of her diamonds. She informs me that she has already sent photos of some of the more striking decorations. In this envelope will be found a complete description of the costumes of the ladies. The number of carriages you will be able to procure from the ushers as you go out. She thinks it not advisable to say anything specific about the enormous amount of money spent on the affair, owing to newspaper talk about the terrible poverty prevalent in the

city. Is there any other information you desire? If so, I shall be glad to give it to you."

"Have you given this matter out to any other paper?"

"No. Our hostess said she would give it exclusively to you, as your paper had been the fairest in mentioning the affair in advance," replied Marie.

"Thanks; that is very good. You know we newspapers always adore a scoop," said Olivia, and she smiled in satisfaction.

"Why, what in the name of goodness is a scoop?" queried Marie.

"When we print a good thing that other papers fail to get, we call it a scoop."

"Thanks for the information. May I not," said Marie, "order some refreshments?"

"No, thank you," said Winters, with modest dignity, "I only accept hospitality under certain conditions."

"Be that as you wish," said Marie, with equal dignity, "I had no desire to offend."

"I am sure of that, my dear young lady; yet even newspaper women have their scruples."

"Then I can serve you no further?"

"In no way save to assist me in getting out quickly and unobserved."

"Then follow me," said Marie.

Olivia Winters followed her guide, and was soon in the office of the Tattler, pegging away, while Marie returned to assist the hostess in entertaining the numerous guests.

## CHAPTER XIV.

### AN ANGRY FATHER.

There were many brilliant women at the great social function, but the only feast for the eyes of Milton Royle was Marie Salmon. But she was very much in demand. The hostess apparently had a mortgage upon the young girl's time and attention. At length, however, Milton could endure it no longer. He marched down upon his victim, captured her, and forcibly led her to a quiet and secluded spot in the conservatory, determined to hold her captive until he should have accomplished his purpose.

"I shall not see you again before my departure for Europe, so, my darling, I shall have to bid you good-bye here."

"I could be completely happy, dear Milton, if it were not for dad's frightful opposition to you."

"He forbid me the house," said Milton, sadly, "but such a course only makes me more determined than ever."

"You cannot imagine what a hard time I will have while you are gone. It was only yesterday dad told me that it would greatly please him if I would consider young Clifton as a suitor for my hand."

"What! That brainless ape?" said Milton, indignantly.

"Now don't get angry, dear; you know very well if he were the last man on earth, I would not consider him for a moment," she made haste to say.

“I tell you what it is, Marie,” said Milton, “I think I will alter my plans and remain in New York, until we get this thing settled.”

“And I tell you,” said the girl, firmly, “you shall do nothing of the kind. Such a course on your part would make me think you had no faith in me.”

“But it looks cowardly,” said he, “for me to go abroad and leave you to fight this thing out alone.”

“I am not a bit afraid. Besides, I am more than anxious that you should go to Rome and finish your studies. Nothing must be allowed to hinder that great and glorious future which must, which shall, be yours.”

“Now you are my brave darling.” He embraced her fondly, just as Mr. Salmon appeared upon the scene, an angry scowl disfiguring his usually calm and placid brow.

“I had hoped, sir, that your sense of honor would have prevented you from encouraging this young girl in a disobedience of her father.”

“Father, dear, I pray you refrain from speech of that kind to Milton. I love you, sir, with deep affection; but I also love Milton, and I tell you now, as I have told you before, that if I live, and he still wants me, I shall marry him.”

“Marry, girl!” said the aroused father. “I tell you that you will never have my consent to marry him.”

“Then,” said the girl, “I shall marry him without it.”

“I regret, sir,” said Milton, with utmost deference and respect, “that trouble with my father, almost before I was born, should tinge and shape your opinion of me. It is most unjust.”

“Frankly speaking,” said the lawyer, “I do not like you. I do not want an artist in my family.”

“You are her father, sir,” said Milton, with suppressed anger, “and that shields you from the answer that rises within me.”

Marie interposed at this point, and said: “You are both dear to me, and I beg you, in the name of the love you have for me, do not quarrel.”

“I obey your wishes, my darling,” said Milton.

“This is no place for discussion of this kind, anyhow,” said Salmon. “Come, Marie, Mr. Clifton was looking everywhere for you.”

“I do not wish to see him, father. Good-bye, Milton.”

“Good-bye, Marie. May angels guard you everywhere.”

And there the lovers parted. The lawyer was full of anger, but he had no chance at that time to show it.

## CHAPTER XV.

### THE LOVERS CLASH.

Among the guests were Horatio Nugent and Paul Strogoff, each madly, devotedly and passionately, at a distance, watching the Goddess, at whose shrine they worshiped. The preacher, in a rage of despair; Paul, in secret consciousness of his advantage over all others, despite appearances. Each held his secret well before the world, but in the breast of each was a raging volcano, liable to burst forth at any minute. Had any one suspected the preacher of the possession of so strange a

secret passion, his story would have been discovered by the hungry, famished look of his eye, which followed the sculptress and her every movement. Strange to relate, Paul exhibited more control over himself.

Fate threw these two strongly-contrasted characters together, the flint and the steel. Horatio Nugent plunged at Paul boldly and fiercely, saying: "I would study you."

"Why?" asked Paul.

"Because you hold a secret power I would give my life to know."

"And that is?"

"The power of winning her regard."

"I would not yield it up for a thousand lives, mine included," said Paul.

"So you are a victim, too?" said the preacher.

"Nay, not a victim," proudly said Paul.

"She loves you?" said the preacher, eagerly.

"I did not say so."

"And yet I think my words are true."

"Your opinions do not concern me," said Paul.

"They may," said Horatio Nugent, throwing discretion to the winds, "for I love her, too, and if you stand in my way—well—it will do you no good."

"You are like the rest of your kind—boastful," said Paul, conscious of his own power, "but in me there is no fear."

"Do not, I pray you, urge me beyond control," said the preacher, "or you will be made to feel there is something beyond mere brute force."

"This masterly tone," said Paul, "must cease. I have no liking for you, sir; you hang about the lady's skirts too much."

“And what is that to you? Are you her protector?”

Ouida approached, having from a distance observed that a clash had occurred between these two men.

“There comes the lady,” said Paul; “let her answer.”

“I am heartily ashamed of you both,” said Ouida. “You have selected a most inappropriate place, as well as subject, for discussion.”

The preacher looked ashamed of himself, but Paul, now thoroughly aroused, was almost bursting with defiance; but Ouida had him absolutely under control, and when she commanded him with decisive voice to bring her an ice, he went, submissive like a dog.

“And you, sir,” turning to the preacher, “what right have you to give way to vulgar differences with Paul?”

“I have no excuse to offer, save my adoration of yourself,” said he, humbly.

“Why vex your soul?” said she filling up with wondrous pity for the man. “Your torment of yourself is useless. I am further from you today than ever before.”

“How is this, madam? Is there absolutely no hope for me?”

“None, sir. The barrier between us can never be broken.”

“And what is that barrier?” he said, a mighty despair getting its grasp upon him, for he noted the deadly earnestness of her speech.

“The obstacle is Paul,” she confessed.

“Your big-limbed model?” He would not believe it.

“Even so,” said the woman, as she bowed her head.

“And how is he in my way? Would you stoop to him?”

“Stoop, sir,” she said, her pride returning, “I have sworn to marry him.”

He staggered with a nameless fear.

"But you do not love him," he said. "You cannot blind me."

"I have no desire to do so. I simply tell the truth."

Nor could he fail to be deeply impressed with her simple dignity.

"Listen, woman, I care not whose heart I break, you love me! Deny it if you can!"

"If I did, what would be the difference?" said Ouida.

"I have sworn to wed him. I led him on. He did not dream of me, until I made him drunk with the promise of my life. He has done no wrong. I must bear the grief."

"Then all I have given up is naught to you? You will break my heart and crush my life without a tear?" said he.

"Rather yours than his. Come, be a man; wound me no further," she pleaded, earnestly.

"I cannot break a single link in the awful chain of fate," and he bowed his head in silence.

"Do with me as you will."

"Have you still the power to marry?" she asked.

"Yes, I have given up my church, not the ministry."

"Then will you do me one last favor?" she appealed.

"Be your fate what it will," said he, "I am still your slave."

"Marry Paul and me," she pleaded, as though upon the answer depended her life or death.

"Dare you ask this of me?"

"I do, and pray you ask me not why."

"I have not the courage nor the strength," said he, suddenly, filled up with a great weakness.

"Have I naught to suffer?" she said, in great grief.

"Will you compel me to go through it all alone?"

“I’ll do it,” said he. “I cannot enter deeper into the vale of suffering than I am now. You have stolen from me the power of resistance. Now, I pray you, let me go.”

As the preacher passed from her, Paul returned, looking dark and gloomy.

“There is your ice, Ouida,” said Paul, striving to control himself. “Would that my heart were like it, so that you might devour it. I do not like that man.”

“Why, Paul?”

“He comes too often to you. Nay, do not deny it. He loves you, but you do not love him,” he fiercely said.

“I—I—” hesitated Ouida, for a moment losing her self-possession, under the influence of Paul’s questioning.

“But you do not love him,” he repeated again, as he seized her arm, almost roughly. “If I thought you did—well, you know the blood of the Cossack is in me, and—”

“You will kill him?” she passionately uttered, and she clung to Paul as though holding him from the accomplishment of such a purpose.

“Now, by my life,” he said, looking searchingly at her, “this sudden interest almost makes me think you do care for him.”

Again her complete mastery over his simple nature exhibited itself.

“Paul,” she said, in that alluring tone which always brought him to his knees, “you are beside yourself. You have naught to fear of me with him. He has just promised me to marry us tomorrow night.”

“So you have fixed the time at last,” said Paul, exultingly. “This is noble, oh, so good of you. This joyous news compensates me for a world of agony and doubt. Would to God tomorrow night were here,” said

he, completely satisfied. "Come, let us to the ball room. I heard your editorial friend, Doane, swearing a moment ago that you had promised to waltz with him, but that you had secreted yourself to escape his clutches."

"True, I had almost overlooked that. I wish I could educate Doane once in a while to say a kindly thing, but I fear the task is a hopeless one."

She was much relieved that the trying scene had ended, and with no disastrous results.

## CHAPTER XVI.

### PAUL COMPLETES A STORY.

Despite the difference in their dispositions, something usually brought Doane, Wayland and Connors together. So about midnight, at the grand ball, this trio found themselves together in one of the apartments of the great mansion.

Connors, the politician, started to talk. "If Sarah Bernhardt were here," he said, "she'd take a bath in the wine we have wasted tonight."

"The frail Sarah has much faith in this method of preserving health, as did old Ponce de Leon, in the long-sought-for fountain of immortal youth."

"By the way," said Doane, "did you hear the story they tell on the actress, while on her late Western tour?"

"No," they exclaimed, "let us have it."

“Well,” said Doane, in great relish, for he did love to tell a story, “when she played at Seattle, she expressed a desire to have a vivid, real live hunt. An old trapper near by had some tame bears, and the newspaper boys put up a job on the fair French woman. She dressed herself up in a male attire, went out into the woods, a perfect nimrod. She was hauled over logs and creeks, and finally, in a moment of ecstasy, she was permitted to kill a bear. She was the happiest woman, for a day, upon whom the sun ever shone.”

They had a hearty laugh.

“I saw in your paper the other day, that some fool out West had attempted to dramatize Victor Hugo’s ‘Les Miserables.’”

“If you saw it in my paper,” said Doane, “be careful. I missed a train a few days ago by depending on the accuracy of my own journal.”

“But what do you think of the idea?” queried Connors.

“In these days,” said Wayland, “when managers are crazy for a new idea, it seems to me that a clever stage story of Jean Valjean would make a certain hit.”

“You might as well try to dramatize the clouds, the great rugged mountain peaks,” said Doane, scornfully, “as anything Victor Hugo wrote. No man under forty can grasp the real philosophy of Hugo. How, then, can the unintelligent masses hope to comprehend him? Connors, you are a great politician, but you are not overburdened with dramatic knowledge.”

“I wrote a play once,” said Connors.

“Was it produced?” asked Wayland.

“Yes, for three consecutive nights.”

“And what became of it then?” laughed Doane.

“The fourth night,” said Connors, sorrowfully, “the leading man did not appear. He afterward explained that he could not stand the forcible appreciation of the admiring gallery.”

The trio talked, smoked and sipped champagne for quite a while. Suddenly it occurred to the editor that it was about time for him to fill an engagement in the ball room.

“By the way, I promised, after considerable persuasion, to dance with Ouida,” said Doane, “and even my gout shall not deprive her of that pleasure.”

“The conceited wretch,” said Connors. “He talks as though he conferred a favor.”

“I do,” said Doane, as he went off in search of his partner, “there are but few women in this world I would really dance with.”

He returned in a moment, mad as a March hare. He had been too late, and fifty had pleaded for his place upon her programme of dances.

“A most remarkable woman,” said Connors.

“Peculiar, isn't it, how a person like her could so have mastered the world?” observed Wayland. “I have heard that but a comparatively few years ago she was the most common and obtainable creature on the streets of New York.”

“I care not what may have been her past,” said Connors, with comparative warmth, “today she is verily a mistress of her art.”

“She is now putting the finishing touches,” said Doane, “on ‘A Modern Hercules,’ a work which, in my judgment, compares favorably with that of the ancient Italian artists.”

“By the way,” said Wayland, “did you hear of her scrape with Cardinal Beppo, at Rome?”

“Yes,” said Doane, “but tell it for the benefit of Connors.”

“You see,” said Wayland, “Ouida spent some time in study at Rome. For a few months she worked hard, and behaved herself quite well, but one sunny day she captivated the Cardinal, and so complete was his adoration, that he lost all discretion, and Rome rung with the open story of his mad infatuation. Finally the officers of the Vatican made known to her, that the sacred city could exist without her. She suddenly left her dear prelate, who, since that time, has been beyond consolation.”

“A capital bit of romance,” said Connors, somewhat skeptical, “but who vouches for its truth?”

“I had it almost direct,” said Doane, “from the Secretary of the American Legation, who was home last year from Rome on a visit to his people. But that story is tame, compared to what she did to Demas of the Comedie Francaise.”

“Let’s hear it,” said Wayland, eagerly, “you never mar a poor tale in the telling of it.”

Wayland was about to go, having heard all that he desired, but Doane restrained him, and he reluctantly was almost forced to listen to a style of gossip which, in his opinion, was good enough for the sewing circle, but little fitted for intelligent men.

“Ouida,” said Doane, “was more than intimate with Demas, known to you all by reputation. But she fooled him, as she has every man who has thus far been lured into the magic circle of her regard. One night Demas

was playing Falstaff in 'The Merry Wives of Windsor.' He was of ordinary size, but made himself up as the 'huge hell of flesh,' by a rubber apparatus, which was nightly filled with air. This night the cork came out which held the air in the rubber affair, and almost in the twinkling of an eye, he dwindled to his normal size, while his clothing hung about him like the folds of a collapsed balloon. The audience broke into a roar. The curtain was rung down, and it was fully fifteen minutes before order was sufficiently restored to allow the performance to proceed. Next day Demas was found dead in his apartments, a bullet wound in the temple. The press said it was chagrin. The real truth was that Ouida had led him on and on, until he thought she loved him. That night the fatal knowledge came to him that she was a heartless jilt, and he simply took the pistol route, with which to end his misery."

"Gentlemen," said Connors, "you astonish me. I have heard of such creatures as you paint this woman, but never before had the distinguished honor of a personal acquaintance. I do believe that a grain or two of discount on such stuff would be wise and just to her."

"And yet," said Wayland, "what a following she has, despite all this. Go into the ball room, and see New York at her feet."

"New York is the greatest city in the world," said Doane, "yet it is the most easily duped."

"People, in their wild desire to be entertained," said Connors, "pick and choose queer idols for worship."

At this juncture, unobserved, Ouida, accompanied by Paul, enter at the rear, but are partially concealed by large and rich portieres. Ouida had been searching for

Doane, in order to soothe his wounded feelings, although not at fault herself. She heard herself as the subject of Doane's conversation, but hardly thought it would take the shape it did. She intended, in the midst of it, to burst in and turn it into something amusing at Doane's expense.

"The most astonishing part of it all," said Doane, "is her well-known life here in New York. At twelve, Ouida, who was the natural daughter of a woman of the town and Albert Angelo, was a child of the street. How she lived, she hardly knew herself. Lovers she had by the score. She became a model. She would just as willingly sit nude, as attired in silks and satins. One day Warde discovered that she possessed talent, nay, genius, of a high order. She was inspired to uplift herself out of base conditions. She was sent abroad, where, between her scrapes and love affairs, she studied. The power of art dowered her with wondrous victories. One or two conceptions a year brought her a fortune. She became rich enough to gratify every whim. She came here three years ago, having lost none of her Bohemian characteristics. Society has opened its arms; as you see, it worships her."

Paul breaks away from Ouida, and confronts Doane, anger and contempt leaping from his eyes.

"A wonderful story! Is it fully told?" said Paul. "Do these gentlemen know all?"

"All!" said Doane, "all, man? Why, could more possibly be crowded into the life of one woman?"

"Yes, slanderous cur," thundered Paul, as he slapped Doane's face with his glove. "Give them the finish. She marries me tomorrow night."

## CHAPTER XVII.

### AN UNCANNY WEDDING.

The night of this strange and almost unnatural marriage had arrived. Ouida had very sensibly invited but few guests. Some of them were assembled in her mansion. Thence, it had been arranged, they should be driven to the quiet and unostentatious church, where Horatio Nugent would pronounce the simple words that would mate forever Ouido Angelo to Paul Strogoff.

“I don’t like this marriage,” said Mr. Salmon, the lawyer. “Paul is a fool, to marry Ouida Angelo. She is a great artist, but no creature for wife to any man.”

“They love each other,” said Marie, indignantly. “I don’t see why they should not marry.”

“Of course,” replied the father, “a young girl always looks into the romance of the case. My experience in marriage settlements, and in the divorce courts, teaches me that a marriage of this kind never turns out well. By the way, how are you and young Clifton getting along?”

“Splendidly,” said Marie.

“That’s good. Now you are my own sweet child.”

“I am helping him court my cousin, Georgie. He likes her better than you ever thought he cared for me. You see, father, I have never ceased to truly love Milton. Pray, forgive me, but I thought the best way to rid myself of Mr. Clifton’s attentions, was to have him fall in love with Cousin Georgie. He has entered into the trap beau-

tifully, and I am spared much annoyance. Dear old dad, you are not mad?"

"I ought to be," said Mr. Salmon, "but I cannot help admiring your professional method in outwitting the old gentleman. Your scheme was clever, even if I am the victim. But think not that I will ever withdraw my objection to Milton."

"I don't expect you to," said Marie with a deep sigh.

"Then you will give him up?"

"No," said she, "I won't ask your consent. We'll slip off quietly some day when he returns, and your newspaper friend, Doane, will, in his journal, record an elopement."

"Never worry," said Salmon, much annoyed, "your Milton will never come back. He'll get tangled up in Rome with some Italian beauty, and she will keep him abroad. These stone cutters always act that way."

"Father," said the girl, almost in tears, "you are most unkind and most unjust," and she left the room, looking for consolation.

Paul entered about this time, for the purpose of having an interview with Mr. Salmon, who was his lawyer.

"These are the papers which the lady requested me to present to you. She settles her entire fortune upon you, giving you full power to make such disposition of the same as you see fit. In fact, she is most liberal," said Mr. Salmon.

"Are these the papers?" said Paul, as he took them from the hand of the lawyer.

"Yes, they are all pinned together."

Paul sat down and glanced over them. When he had finished their perusal, which did not take long, he tore

them up and threw the pieces in the fire, where they were quickly devoured by the flames.

“What have you done?” said the startled lawyer.

“Nothing,” simply said Paul. “I refuse any gift of property from her. On the contrary, you know exactly how my affairs stand. Convey to her, by proper deeds and instruments, the full one-half of my fortune. The cash transfer to her credit at the Chemical Bank.”

“But, sir—” said Salmon.

But he was interrupted by Paul, who said: “No buts, sir. This is my will. Either carry out, with as little delay as possible, my expressed desire, or I will be under the painful necessity of securing the services of another lawyer.”

“I shall do as you desire, and—”

“Remember,” said Paul, as he left the lawyer’s presence, “not a word to her. I must leave you now, to prepare for the ceremony.”

A few more guests had arrived by this time. Mr. Connors came, and at about the same time Olivia Winters, the journalist, put in an appearance in the room, accompanied by Marie.

“A queer wedding,” said Olivia, “and yet it may turn out well.”

“I am glad to see you, Miss Winters. It appears that we alone, of all New York, have been honored by an invitation to the wedding.”

“And you, my dear Connors, were invited because, when Doane was exuding, about Ouida, that venom which he cannot cut out of his nature, you alone spoke up for her and her noble art, and the fame she had justly achieved.”

"It is entirely immaterial to me," said Mr. Connors "what she may have been. I know only this, that, in my judgment, she is today the grandest artist of the modern world, and as such, is entitled to my homage. As far as this marriage is concerned, she is her own mistress. She can marry whomsoever she fancies. There are many men in New York today, who would sell their souls for her."

"Are you one of them?" said Olivia.

"I decline to answer so leading a question," said Mr. Connors, but not ungraciously.

"I received my summons so hastily," said Olivia, "that I am entirely ignorant of particulars. Where will the ceremony take place, and who will tie the knot?"

"Dr. Nugent," answered Marie, "and at the church around the corner."

"I thought," said Olivia, "that Dr. Nugent had quit the ministry?"

"No," said Mr. Connors, "but almost the same. He has resigned from the pulpit of the First Church."

"I have understood," said Salmon, "that he promised to wed them at the request of Ouida."

Connors, joining in again at this time, said that he had heard, that at one time Dr. Nugent had fallen a victim to the fascinating charms of the sculptress.

"Some of the blackmailing sheets so reported," chipped in Olivia, "but no reputable journal fathered such a libel. One thing is true, this wedding will eclipse all sensations of the year."

"I wonder how Doane will take it?" said Connors.

"Badly, I think," said Olivia. "He was hit hard in that direction. Ouida's is the only picture I have ever seen grace his sanctum."

“Nonsense,” said Salmon, the practical, “what would Doane do with a wife? He has been wedded to journalism so long that he’d forget his matrimonial bonds.”

“Men who are not journalists think such a course in fashion these days,” said Olivia.

“Doane said to me the other day,” remarked Mr. Connors, “that New York was getting very dull and commonplace; that men were beginning, actually, to fall in love with their own wives.”

“Don’t men always love and respect their wives?” asked Marie.

“Your arcadian simplicity is really refreshing,” laughed Olivia.

“Pray, wise one,” said Mr. Salmon, “don’t endow her with your superior wisdom. I prefer my daughter as she is.”

“That’s the one great mistake made in our land today, in the rearing of children. They are allowed to grow up in utter ignorance of the things which, if they knew, would save them untold misery.”

“Right you are, Miss Winters,” said Mr. Connors. “If I should ever be fortunate enough to marry, and be blessed with a boy, I should show him around and acquaint him with life myself.”

“Say and think what you will, ladies and gentlemen,” said Marie, with firmness, “I shall never marry a man unless I love him and he loves me, and it will be my fault if I do not retain his devotion.”

“Hold fast to that sentiment, my child,” said Connors, solemnly, “and may faith in it never forsake you.”

“Our carriage is below,” said Salmon, “let us hasten to the church,” and the company departed from the house.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

### THE WEDDING IN THE CHURCH.

There are but few people who are not familiar with the little church around the corner. It is not only quaint in appearance, but its history is unique in the extreme. Those who paid but little attention to God and religion in life, were always well treated here, in death, and prince and pauper were alike welcome to its use.

The bridal party arrived, and there was little of that absurd delay which usually characterizes the fashionable wedding. Soon after, the organist played one of the stock wedding marches, and as the bridal party appeared before the altar, the preacher, paler than any one had ever before seen him, ascended the pulpit.

He looked down upon Ouida and Paul, and as he did, a mournful glance of recognition and understanding flashed between the preacher and the bride. Apparently, no one observed them. The organist ceased his touching of the keys, and the sound of the music died away in the distance. Dr. Nugent made an effort to begin the ceremony, but something hindered him, and he had the sympathy of all, because they thought him ill. They little knew his agony. At length, by a supreme effort, he mastered himself.

“Will the bride and groom join hands?” he said, and the silence seemed full of pain.

“Will you, Ouida Angelo, take as husband, Paul Strogoff, and, forsaking all others, cleave unto him, and

honor and obey him, as long as you shall live, and until death shall part you?"

And the woman said, softly: "I will."

"Will you, Paul Strogoff, take as your lawful wife, this woman, Ouida Angelo, and love her, comfort, support and protect, and, forsaking all others, cleave unto her as long as you shall live, and until death shall part you?"

And the man said, boldly and proudly: "I will."

"If any here present know aught why this marriage should not take place, let him speak now, or forever hold his peace," and just as he spoke these words, the preacher himself, knowing of the empty heart the woman was bringing to the man, was about to speak, but his objection was registered only in his own soul. There was no spoken objection.

"Then I pronounce you man and wife."

As the preacher uttered the words which united his rival to the woman he loved, he tottered feebly from the pulpit. Mr. Salmon sprang to his assistance, but was waived away, the minister saying: "I am not well today."

## CHAPTER XIX.

### THE BRIDAL CHAMBER.

When Dr. Nugent left the church, which he did quickly, his breast was filled with emotions of a conflicting nature. Reason seemed to have been displaced with

a mad, ungovernable rage. Why should this ignorant, low, base-born son of a Russian exile possess this goddess? What moral right had this usurper to loll at ease in her chamber, barring out his betters of all the world? He knew that he possessed all her mighty love, and yet he saw the fruit of it slipping away forever. He was seized with a strange, overmastering desire to prevent, at all hazards and at any cost, the actual consummation of the marriage. He struggled, wrestled, tried to fight it down, but his feet carried him toward her house. He reached it before the bridal party had arrived, and, being familiar there, he ascended into the bridal chamber, and there secreted himself.

“Like a thief,” he said to himself, “I steal into this now sacred apartment. Over my being creeps a determination so desperate, that I shudder at the spectacle of my own deformity. I have suffered more than mortal agony. There in the church, my much-abused spirit almost departed from me. Where was the artist to tear aside the flesh and paint the hearts as they really were? Paul, radiant and happy; Ouida, serene in the consciousness of self-imposed beauty, while I was burdened with the deepest sorrow of them all.”

He waited, and soon Ouida entered, and threw off her veil and wraps.

“The deed is done,” she murmured, “and yet I would it were undone. The marriage vows have been exchanged, and yet Paul is as far from me as I am from Paradise. Strange paradox am I. I know that Nugent’s love has in it the sting of guilt, yet, through its scorching rays, I clearly see myself. Oh, what a madcap freak, to rouse the slumbering passion of my ‘Modern Hercules,’

and yet the fault is all my own. And I must pay the penalty ; must tread the path of sorrow to the end. This is a rude awakening of my dream. I once had thought to greet my lord with gleaming eyes, with passion, strong yet tender. Tonight he comes, and I am full of fear and trembling."

She heard a slight noise.

"Is that you, Paul?"

Instead of Paul, Horatio Nugent stepped out from the darkness. His eye was full of strange, unnatural brilliance, but his face was drawn, pinched and haggard. At his appearance, Ouida's heart almost ceased to beat ; she was so full of horror and despair. She expected Paul at almost any moment. She knew his nature when once aroused, and she was ashamed within herself to confess that she feared a collision between the two men, more for the sake of the preacher than for her now lawfully wedded husband.

When Ouida asked if it was Paul, the preacher said : "No, it is I, whose death you seal tonight."

"My God! what brings you here?" said Ouida.

"You will not let me live," said he, "so I have come to end existence at your feet."

"And I," commanded the woman, with wondrous dignity, "pronounce against such base-born cowardice. You build your grief up mountain high, and then make oath you stand alone."

"I will not argue this thing with you. I am determined on my course."

"Unhappy man," she said, with mighty pity, "do you think you bear all the agony of this dream? I, too, am full of sorrow as deep and black as night."

“Then all the more reason,” said he, desperately, “that we should end it all together.”

“Agreed,” said Ouida, and as she spoke, she handed him a jeweled dagger. “Waste no time,” she urged. “Plunge this deep into my heart, then draw it forth and join me in eternity.”

He quickly seized the proffered weapon, raised it high in the air, and was about to sink it into her bared breast, when they heard Paul’s footsteps approaching. The dagger dropped from his nerveless hand. He covered his face with his hand, exclaiming: “Shame upon me, that I, in unmanly weakness, should have entertained so hideous a resolve!”

“Quick,” said Ouida, “to the inner chamber, and there remain until I can let you out unseen.”

He got out not a moment too soon, for upon the very instant of his disappearance, Paul entered the chamber of the bride.

“Come, Ouida,” he said, “let me fold you to my breast, for tonight you have enthroned me in the kingdom of love.”

“I have fulfilled my oath, that is all,” said Ouida, wearily, and not responsive to his enthusiasm and passion.

He threw upon her a questioning glance.

“How changed you are,” said he. “It seems but an hour ago to me, when you, with the very ecstasy of passion, awoke the slumbering fires within me. Tonight, when you should greet me with a smile of joy, you seem a block of ice, whose coldness chills me with the grip of death.”

“Do not upbraid me,” she pleaded. “I shall strive,

with all my might, to be faithful, grateful for your fidelity and love."

"Oh, I see it all now," cried Paul, delight and hope again springing up in his simple soul. "You think I am low and base-born, a pauper, and you despise yourself for having lifted me to the high plane you occupy."

She was about to speak, but he gave her no chance to break the current of words which flowed from his lips.

"Oh, do not speak; hear me out. The very day you made of me a God, because you said you loved me, it was made known to me that I was of gentle birth, rich beyond all imagination. I am not the dog, the pauper, the base-born wretch, but am equal in birth, in wealth and power, to any man who might aspire to honorable marriage with you."

He paused, breathlessly, expecting Ouida to melt in delightful surprise at their good fortune. But no such thing happened. In his intensity, he did not observe her gathering anger. When he finished his story, she said:

"So, sir, you knew all this the very day I spoke to you?"

"Yes, but would not then have told it to you to save a tottering throne."

"Then thus boldly and shamelessly," she thundered forth, "you confess deception?"

"What man alive would not have remained silent," said Paul, "when speaking meant so deep a loss? Will you not forgive me?"

Even then he thought she would relent, and he approached her. She waived him off, contemptuously.

"Away! Approach me not. You madden me," she said, with frightful vehemence, "I thought that you were

baser clay than the dull-witted fools that gathered round. I sighed for the pleasure of attiring those mighty limbs of yours, of decking you with jewels, rich and rare. I deemed you poor, that I might lavish gifts upon you. I thought you nameless, that I might envelop you with the mantle of my own fame and genius. You knew the motive, and yet, by the false pretense of silence, you tricked from my freakish lips that hasty declaration. Be gone! Let me not look upon your face again!"

The palor of death overspread his face, and he exclaimed, almost piteously: "I do confess my sin; yet, does it merit the punishment of exile? A life that's worse than death?"

"Go," she said, in tones that left no room for hope, "I'll not unsay a single word. Since you are other than I thought you, this marriage bed shall know you not. This is no place for such a husband."

She pointed to the door, and slowly Paul turned, and gradually his feet bore him away from her presence. When the sound of the departing tread of Paul had passed away, Ouida, with a glance at the inner room, wherein waited her lover, she sank with a sigh upon the floor. Her brain reeled, and consciousness for a period completely abandoned her being.

## CHAPTER XX.

### THE METROPOLIS FROWNS.

After the nuptial night, Paul disappeared from the knowledge of men. Ouida and Horatio Nugent took up their lives together. New York society indulged in a spasm of virtuous indignation; became monstrously shocked; entered a vigorous protest, and pronounced upon the guilty pair the judgment of condemnation. This mattered not to the lovers. They could see, feel comprehend, appreciate nothing but themselves, their love and devotion to each other. The outside world was naught to them. They builded their own universe, peopled with the inhabitants of their own imagination, and well satisfied and pleased, existed in it. But New York's frown, in time, practically meant much to them. It meant the withdrawal of art commissions to Ouida, and the absolute banishment of Mr. Nugent from the practice of his profession. As time relentlessly rolled on, their affairs grew complicated. She was compelled to sacrifice her art treasures, her valued property, her jewels, and still they awoke not from their fevered dream. The day came at last when poverty and want crept in and found them in rude, uncomfortable lodgings in a back street. By a strange fatality, of all her glorious possessions, Ouida had alone retained "A Modern Hercules," that piece of statuary done from the form of her discarded husband.

## CHAPTER XXI.

### DOANE'S EXQUISITE VENGEANCE.

One day shortly after Ouida and Nugent had taken up their residence in the slums, Mr. Connors, who had now become a power in directing the political destinies of the country, met Mr. Doane, the editor, in the vicinity of Ouida's home.

"This is a queer place," said Doane. "It rather surprises me to see you here."

"Not more so than I am to see you in such a locality," said Mr. Connors.

"Oh, we newspaper men go everywhere."

"And we politicians, too; but honestly, what are you doing here?"

"Well," said Doane, rubbing his hands in grim satisfaction, "I don't mind telling you; a little private vengeance."

"Upon whom?" queried Connors.

"Ouida Angelo. You were present when I received that insulting blow on her account?"

"Yes, and by heavens, you brought it on yourself."

"Never mind that," said the editor. "I feel the sting yet, and while I cannot pay her back in kind, I can twist and probe her pride, and I'll do it, too. She lives in that miserable hovel over there," pointing to the place. "I am going to visit her."

"You astound me," said Connors. He himself was

bent upon the same mission, yet was not inspired by so ignoble a purpose.

Doane continued: "She has become an object almost of public pity. When the haughty creature abandoned her husband, almost at the altar, and began a life of shame with her lover, even rotten New York society rebelled and frowned her down."

"Yes, it is but too true. The world, when once aroused, is cold in its judgment. But I did not know that she had been so frightfully reduced."

"She has lost her fame, and everything," said Doane.

"All," asked Connors, "her jewels, carriages, works of art?"

"Yes, all except the 'Modern Hercules.' So far, nothing has induced her to part with that. I have kept track of her affairs, awaiting my opportunity."

"Doane," appealed Connors, seriously, "I think there is true nobility yet in the character of that woman. Forego your vengeance."

"Not I," said the vindictive writer. "I am going to tempt her to sell the thing to me."

"This is the very refinement of cruelty," said Connors, in disgust. "You should have been a Spanish Inquisitor. You would have stood well with Torquemado."

"Wouldn't you like to share the treat with me?" said Doane.

"No," said Connors, and the men parted, Doane going over in the direction of the place where Ouida lived.

The once proud and queenly sculptress sat alone, all pale and haggard, in her humble, ill-furnished abode, a prey to emotions that scorched her soul.

“Society never pardoned me,” she thought, “my genius and fame, and when passion enslaved me and my back was turned, the cruel jade stabbed me in a fatal spot. I thought I could offer defiance to custom’s rigid rule. I dreamed I was a queen, to whom the world owed obedience. I awoke, and found I was a woman, strong only in passionate devotion. Yet, could I turn back the hand of time, I would not change. Eternal poverty, exposure, shame, disgrace with him, is better than Paradise without. I have had pointed at me the finger of scorn, and yet upon his aching breast, I have found a consolation so deep and sweet, that it gave oblivion to the taunts without.”

Her reverie was disturbed by a knock at the door.

“Come in,” she said.

Doane entered.

“Ah,” said he, placing his glass to his eye, “can it be? Do my eyes deceive me? Ouida Angelo!”

“Yes,” she said, “and what can you want with me?”

“You surely believe me,” he said, in exquisite irony, “when I tell you that I did not expect to find you here?”

“Then,” said she coldly, “you will have no objection to making your stay as brief as possible. You see, I am not in a position to properly entertain so distinguished a visitor.”

“Oh, don’t let that worry you,” said he, with cool impudence. “I’ll take a seat; you don’t mind, do you?”

“I have no way of relieving myself of your presence,” said Ouida, “save by invitation, as this is the only apartment at my disposal. I presume I shall be compelled to hear what you have to say.”

“I was seeking curios,” said Doane, whose malicious smile revealed the fact that he was lying, “and a neighbor of yours informed me that a lady, once proud and rich, had a very fine piece of statuary for sale. I called to see it, not knowing who the owner might be, and was dumbfounded to find it was you!”

“Mistaken, sir, as you usually are,” said Ouida, “mistaken in all your facts. There is no lady here; only a woman of sorrow, one acquainted with much grief. I have nothing to sell, or give away.”

“I see a marble figure there,” said he, pointing to the one work of art that lent radiance and dignity, even to that humble abode. “Is that your work?”

“Yes,” was the curt reply.

“What is it?” he said.

“I will not tell you.”

“I know, so you might as well.”

“If you know,” she said, “then there is no necessity for me to give you any information.”

“Let’s throw deception to the winds,” said he, unmasking himself. “It is ‘The Modern Hercules.’ I came to buy it of you.”

“It is not for sale.”

“Not for sale!” he said, “when the price I’d pay for it would enable you to hold up your head in the world again?”

“Sir,” said she, filled to the quick with indignation, “I want neither your gold, sarcasm, advice nor presence.”

"A little of each would do you good."

"You are a coward, sir," the woman flashed out, "to say things to me here that you would not have dared to utter when wealth, power, position, all were mine."

"No, dear lady, not a coward, but one who enjoys telling the truth, even if it bites and wounds. Will you sell that piece of stone to me?"

"Not for the wealth of Vanderbilt," she replied. "I'd rather give it to a pauper whom I respected, than to sell it to you for enough to buy the golden opinion of all men."

"Such a resolve shows delicate sensibility, artistic temperament, but a minimum of common sense. I saw your—" (here even he could go but little further) "I mean Mr. Nugent, a few days ago, and if you still possess your romantic attachment for him, his pinched cheeks and sunken eyes, would induce you to make some little sacrifice for him."

The interview was becoming beyond endurance to Ouida, when, fortunately, the subject of the latter part of Doane's talk—Horatio Nugent—entered the room. He had heard the editor's allusion to sacrifice.

"Who are you," he cried, "that dare talk to her of sacrifice for me? The world should weep for her. She has, upon the altar of her affection for me, sacrificed a glory, which before, no woman had ever achieved upon the American continent."

Doane laughed, and Nugent, growing desperate, crossed over toward him, with threatening attitude.

Ouida clung to him, begging him, for their mutual sake to be calm.

"Oh, don't restrain him," said Doane, provokingly, "he'll cool down bye and bye."

“Oh, I know you now,” said Nugent, “You are from the upper world, a fair representative of the classes who set themselves up in judgment over common men.”

“No,” said Doane, assuming an injured air, “only an editor, whose kindly intent has been met here by rude insult.”

“Take your intent and presence away,” said Nugent, “and at once. We want neither. You and your kind stand well in the eyes of the world, but we refuse to bend beneath your judgment.”

“Yet,” said the editor, “you set up a tribunal of your own.”

“Yes,” said Ouida, “the tribunal of conscience, where we have had our trial, pronounced sentence, and for years have been paying to justice the penalty we owed.”

“You refuse my aid?” said Doane.

“It was not sought; we will not accept it,” said Nugent. “We prefer starvation to your pity.”

“Then,” said Doane, “let it not be pity, but a pure matter of business.”

“We desire none with you,” said Ouida. “This lodging is poor, but it is our own. Go, vent your spleen where it may be felt. We are beyond it. We have passed through the vale of agony. No shaft of scorn or ridicule can wound us more. Leave us, we would breathe the untainted air.”

And as Doane went away from the presence of his intended victims, it crept through his narrow brain, that he had not accomplished much.

“I could not pierce the armor of their pride and devotion. I am an ass,” said Doane to himself, and the next day’s editorials were permeated with great bitterness.

## CHAPTER XXII.

### OUIDA'S WELCOME VISITORS.

Mr. Connors, while awaiting Doane's departure from the house of Ouida, happened, accidentally, to brush into Olivia Winters.

"My friend, the politician," she said, shaking hands. "I am glad to see you."

"I echo the sentiment," he said. "Where have you been? I missed you lately from your usual haunts."

"The Tattler knows me no more. I have a magazine of my own."

"And doing well, I sincerely hope," remarked Mr. Connors.

"Largely experimental yet," said Olivia. "I fear I shall have to educate the public up to the point of appreciating fearlessness. I am the freest lance today in the whole of New York."

"I am glad of it," said the politician. "Society needs a mirror in whose sharp reflection it may know itself."

"People at first," said Olivia, "were pleased, then amazed; now they are mad. But they read every line, and from the remonstrances I note in other quarters, I am satisfied that my object is being accomplished."

"Where are you going?" said he. "May I accompany you, so that we may finish this delightful chat? You attract me. Now don't imagine I am paying you some silly compliment. We both know too much for that."

But there is something exceedingly refreshing in your society, especially for one who, like me, has run the gauntlet of ambition and emotion."

"One good turn deserves another," remarked his companion. "I frankly admit that your society is agreeable to me. While you are a politician, you never fail to admit the truth. But I cannot let you go with me. I am on a mission of mercy."

"That spoils all of good you previously said," insisted Connors. "Do you think that in the whirl of politics, I have lost all heart, and so am unfitted to be your companion, upon a deed of goodness?"

"No, I do not think so ill of you, but I am going to see one whom we both knew when the world was at her feet. To see us together might bring deeper pain to her troubled soul."

"Your mission," he said, with deep interest, "is no secret to me. I am here on the same errand. I just met Doane, who was bent on visiting her, with the idea of vengeance."

"Then you may go with me," she assented, "and perhaps together we may smooth over the roughness of Doane's contemptible behavior. But you must agree in advance to back up all I say. Come, we will go together."

As they approached the house of Ouida, Connors began to think very seriously that Olivia would make a charming life companion, and resolved, then and there, to further cultivate so sweet and strong a personality.

They entered the lodging together, and were more than cordially greeted by Ouida and Horatio.

“Welcome to you both,” said Ouida, “and you especially, Olivia, for you are one of the only two women in New York whose hand I clasp in friendship.”

“This is indeed good of both of you,” said Horatio.

“And I offer you both my complete attachment,” said Mr. Connors.

“In affluence,” said Ouida, “we would not have prided ourselves in the devotion of kings. Today, when stripped of all, save humiliation, your proffer is a consolation precious dear.”

“Would to heaven, my dear Ouida,” fervently said Olivia, “that I could impregnate you with some of the bubbling pleasures of my life.”

“Too late,” said Nugent, “we ourselves have spun a web of fate, that fast imprisons us. We cannot break the chain.”

“You must not say that,” said Connors. “There is no mistake beyond retrieving.”

“Pardon me,” said Ouida, with a slight impatience, “I have no faith in such a sentiment. You, who have won the fight, forget the weary rounds of ambition’s ladder.”

“Yes,” said Nugent, in echo of Ouida’s thought, “we do not bare our souls to the insane multitude, but to you, dear friends, we say, that we feel that further effort to rise from out the pit, is vain.”

“May I change the subject?” said Olivia.

“You certainly have my permission,” said Ouida.

“I met young Wald, the sculptor, a few days ago, and he inquired as to your whereabouts. I evaded him, but he strongly hinted that discovery of you by him would be to your advantage.”

“The dishonest wretch!” exclaimed Ouida, angrily, “what do you think he would have had me do?”

“I don't know, but I have had a very poor opinion of him ever since I knew that his father paid Doane \$5,000 for a flattering critique of his 'Goddess of Progress,' a thing of no real merit. But what did he want of you?”

“To create, model, carve, and in his name.”

“I had no idea,” said Connors, “that there was such corruption in art circles. It is needless for us to ask your answer.”

“We have sunk,” said Nugent, “to what you behold, but Ouida and I will cut our throats, ere she shall thus prostitute her divine genius.”

“May we not help you in some way?” said Olivia.

“Not with ostentation,” quickly spoke up Connors. “Not even for yourselves, if you will have it so, but for the world, that should not be deprived of Ouida's masterly creations.”

At this, Ouida wept, nor was she ashamed of her tears.

“I have not heretofore, through all my misery, shed a single tear,” said Ouida, “till this delicate offer of your sweet sympathy, and yet I cannot allow you to interfere with fate.”

“I have withstood the bitter hate of men,” said Nugent, “nor trembled once, but your kindness makes me weak, like a child. Do not be offended, but I must leave you. You will excuse me?”

“Yes,” said Connors, “if you so desire.”

“Kind friends,” said Ouida, “take your leave now. Your visit has left a ray of sunshine, which Horatio and I will bask in long after you wend your way from this place, out into the busy world. Leave us alone, to work out our own salvation.”

“Will you, dearest Ouida,” pleaded Olivia, “thus drive forth two earnest, loving friends, who desire no higher privilege than to stand by your side?”

“Yes, my dear Ouida,” said Connors, “I am not without some power. The strongest effort of my life is yours, absolutely, to command.”

“No, friends, go your way. With ourselves alone we must conduct this mighty strife. If we should fail, all I ask is that, when we have shuffled off this mortal coil, paint us as we really were, not as biting tongues, tinged with malice, have told the story of our sin.”

“Come, Mr. Connors,” said Olivia, “it would be sinful, upon the rough rack of this world, to longer vex the proud spirit of our friends.”

“Good-bye, dear friends,” said Connors, almost with affection, “and as we say *au revoir*, let me breathe the earnest prayer, that the Supreme Intelligence will lift you out of the valley of the shadow of grief, so that from the hill tops, you may behold the dawn of a new and nobler life.”

They left Ouida together, admiring, yet regretting, that marble pride which prevented Ouida from accepting their proffered sympathy and aid. But a contemplation of the history of Ouida and Horatio, drew them closer together, though no word of love was spoken between the two. Their mutual interest in the fate of their friends provided a bond of sympathy between the two, that bid fair to develop into a deeper and holier connection.

## CHAPTER XXIII.

### LAWYER SALMON MEETS DEFEAT.

The day on which Doane and the two sweet friends visited Ouida was a fateful one. On that same day Lawyer Salmon had a most eventful conversation with his daughter Marie. They also met near Ouida's place.

"My dear child," said he, "it is foolish for you to pine your young life away in grief over Milton."

"Father," said she, "it is easy for you to speak thus, but I cannot root out of my soul the love and faith therein enshrined."

"He has forgotten you."

"I will not believe it," said she stoutly.

"How long," persisted the father, "has it been since you have heard from him?"

"About six months, but he may be ill. There must be some cause," said Marie, fighting every inch of ground.

"Stuff and nonsense," said he, "why don't you admit to yourself the truth. He has abandoned you. I always thought you had more pride than to throw yourself into the arms of a man who seems so utterly to have forgotten you."

"Father," said Marie, a tremor in her voice, "you wrong Milton. I fear you do not love me, or you would not so wound me."

"There, daughter, you are unjust to me. You may deem me hard, cold, unromantic, but I know these Royles.

His father was as treacherous as an Indian, and I believe in heredity."

"And I in love," said Marie.

"And I shall be silent henceforth on the subject. Stern though I seem, I love you, my darling child, and your happiness is my one aim in life."

"Then withdraw your opposition to Milton, for I will only be completely happy when you shall admit him to your heart as a son."

"Ah, well," said Salmon with a sigh, thinking of the girl's dead mother, "I will think upon it. I must now go in to see Ouida. I will not be long detained. Remain without until I return."

"I will yet win him over. God alone knows how I have worried over Milton's long and extraordinary silence."

A moment and right upon the street, she felt warm arms around her, and a heart breathing next her own.

"Marie," was all that Milton said.

"Milton!" she exclaimed, "what a surprise to father. Your name has just left my lips. My father and I have just been indulging in another portion of our perpetual quarrel over you. Why have you been so long silent?"

"Silent, dearest," said he in surprise.

"I have not received a line from you in six months."

"Then my mail must have been miscarried, for I wrote almost as frequently as usual."

"Almost? Why not just as often?" she said, rather piqued.

"For the last few months I have been more than absorbed in my work, for the annual competition at Rome, and moments were golden."

“Did you succeed?” she asked in breathless suspense.

“Yes, my darling,” said Milton proudly, “I won the first prize, and hastened home to lay the laurels at your feet.”

“I am proud of you, and I rejoice in your success. Now father shall come over to us,” said Marie.

“What’s the news?” asked Milton. “I just disembarked from the *Germania*, jumped into a cab at the wharf, drove to your residence, learned that you had started for this place, followed, and once again behold your beloved face.”

“Strange things have happened since you went abroad. You have heard about Ouida?”

“Yes,” said Milton, “and it almost broke my heart. I owe so much to her.”

“I am no longer jealous of her, and, dear Milton, if you can in any way help her I will love you more than ever, if possible.”

“I need no inspiration to that end,” said Milton, “my own gratitude would urge and compel me to serve her.”

“You are always generous, Milton, and I appreciate you all the more for it.”

“I care not what the world may say,” said Milton, “but humanity needs her, and she shall no longer be buried beneath the weight of a sin for which long ago she paid the awful penalty.”

“I share your opinion with all my heart,” said Marie.

Just about this time Mr. Salmon, having accomplished the mission which had called him to Ouida’s house, returned, and his first glance lighted upon the happy pair, who were totally oblivious to his presence. He turned down another street, with a sigh, and left them undis-

turbed. *He had met with defeat.* The girl's faith had triumphed. He felt he ought to succumb, yet he was proud and stubborn, and even yet there was opposition in his soul.

## CHAPTER XXIV.

### SALE OF "THE MODERN HERCULES."

Almost immediately after Olivia Winters and Mr. Connors had departed Horatio Nugent returned to Ouida's presence.

"I have just seen Marie Salmon and Milton Royle," said he.

"Milton Royle," she said, "so he has returned from abroad?"

"Yes, and radiant with victory. He has won the first prize at Rome, and was most anxious to offer his gratitude to you, but I knew you were weary with the trials of the day, and begged him to come some other time."

"I am glad you did so. The sight of his beaming face would have recalled memories that would have made me doubly sad."

"Yes, the period of your triumphs before I cast my dark and grim shadow over the sunshine of your life. Woe is me!"

"And do you think," said Ouida, with infinite tenderness, "that I regret you?"

"That is the very thought that sears my soul. I know my wrong to you. Yet through it all your brave smile

remains. Oh! for the power to blot out the past; to dower you with the past."

"I would refuse the gift," said Ouida, "if I could not share my life with you. You seem fevered tonight, love. Any good results today?"

"No, dearest, only added torment," said he, sadly. "You remember last week I left my manuscript with Dixon & Company, the publishers? Their reader told me to call today. I did, with large hope and expectations. I was ushered into his office, furnished with artistic taste. 'Your work,' said he, 'is clever and original, but I have made some inquiries about you. You are Nugent, the preacher, are you not, who was concerned in an escapade with Ouida Angelo?' I could not and would not deny my connection with you. 'I like your work,' said he, 'but our house cannot afford to insult society, which it certainly would do, if we fathered anything from your pen.' With a careless nod he handed me my bundle of papers and dismissed me. And as I left, my heart almost bursting with indignation, I wished you again upon the very throne of art, that you might tear out my soul, and use it as a model for a creation, 'The Agony of Despair.'"

"Come, Horatio, lay your head upon my knee and let me soothe your aching brow." He gladly complied with her sweet suggestion. There was a brief silence, when, looking up into her face, he suddenly said:

"Do you not think, Ouida, that you and I have fairly tried the world?"

"Yes," said she, firmly, "and surely we have reached the end."

"Think you self-destruction is ever justified?"

"Have you abandoned hope so completely," she said, "that you let such dark visions come into your mind?"

“I am full of despair tonight,” said Nugent, gloomily. “I see naught before me save the impregnable wall of fate. I can neither break through its thickness, nor scale its height.”

“True,” said Ouida, dreamily, “our lives have utterly failed, and if we quietly sought oblivion, the world would wag its tongue for one brief hour, then would speedily forget that we ever lived.”

Horatio rose to his feet, and said with impressive solemnity:

“I have thought that when two, through their love, pure in itself, had gained but grief and tears, when they had reached that point when starvation, both of body and soul, confronted them like a hideous spectre; when their pride had been stung by pity; when love views love with more than mortal agony, affording no hope; Oh, Ouida, beloved, I have thought ’twere best to end it all with one bold stroke, and solve the mystery of the fate beyond the stars!”

“Your magnetic eloquence,” said the woman, “moves me beyond expression, We cannot longer live together. Your agony each day kills me a million times. Mine utterly unnerves you. Whatever course you deem best I’ll share without a sob or tear.”

“Then, since you are content, let us die together!”

“I assent,” said Ouida, almost with joy.

“No vulgar death of violence,” said her lover. “I could not stab you with a knife, for the sight of your red, spurting blood, would rob me of the strength to do the deed upon myself. To blow your brains out with a pistol would be brutish. But see, here is a poison. This, in a small quantity of water, will provide enough to send our

souls hence into the other world. Shall I prepare the drink?"

"Yes, and without delay. The morning sun shall shed its earliest rays upon our soulless dust."

And Horatio Nugent, upon whose eloquence once hung breathless, countless thousands, mixed the drink, with firm hand, that would self-murder two human lives. When ready, said he:

"The fatal distillation is ready for the taking. Farewell, my queen! Would to God I had never crossed your life and dragged you to the dust!"

He held ready the glass almost to his lips.

"And you, my king, farewell! Let me drink first. I would not look upon your rigid limbs, environed in the grip of death."

"Have your wish," he said, "here is the cup."

She raised the small vessel to her lips, and was about to quaff its fatal contents, when Edward Salmon, the lawyer, broke into the room, and quickly seizing the horror of the situation, struck the cup from her hand, and it fell with a crash upon the floor.

"Thank God!" exclaimed the lawyer, "in time to save you both."

"Sir," said Horatio, "may we not be permitted to die in peace?"

"You know not," said Ouida, "the grief you have prolonged."

"You told me yesterday to sell 'The Modern Hercules,'" said Salmon, breathlessly. "I have found a purchaser."

"Then sell it," said Ouida, "and dig our graves in decency."

“Sell it rather,” said Salmon, in deepest sympathy, “and with the proceeds begin life anew.”

“Our lives have run their course. We can no longer hold up beneath the world’s black frown,” said Horatio.

“That is the talk of the moral coward,” said Salmon, boldly. “Come, I know your story. Draw out your strength, your manhood. Fate brought me here in time. You both shall live to look upon this hour with shame.”

“He is right,” said Ouida, arousing herself with mighty effort. “Look up, my love, we may yet wring from fortune’s grasp a noble fate. Where is the purchaser?”

“He awaits without. Would see the work, pay the price and go.”

“Let him come,” said Ouida.

Salmon retired for a moment, and when he returned, brought with him—Paul Strogoff, the sinned against!

He only said: “I come not in anger, nor in vengeance; only in sorrow, to crave your pardon, that I live.”

“Would that I had died ere this,” said Ouida.

Horatio bowed his head in shame and humiliation.

## CHAPTER XXV.

### THE BEGINNING OF REDEMPTION.

Paul Strogoff’s sorrow had ennobled him, and, though the opportunity came to him to humiliate those who had wronged him, no man, born of woman, could have acted

with rarer delicacy, than he did upon the trying occasion of the purchase of "The Modern Hercules."

His behavior at that time produced marvelous results. It seemed to have had the effect of tearing aside the veil which had blinded the sculptress and her lover, to a realization of the enormity of their sin. They resolved to be no less noble in sacrifice than Paul had been. They had resolved to give each other up, and the separation had taken place.

Nugent at first applied to the organized churches for place, but they would have none of him. So he began his work independent, and alone. His field of operation lay among the poor, the forsaken, the down-trodden of the slums. Many a time he had gone down into the gutter to uplift the fallen and degraded creatures, who were abandoned by the big churches to their fate. Gradually he won for himself a distinctive place in the real affections of the common people. He became a familiar figure in the humbler quarters, and often money came to aid worthy causes from an unknown source. It came from Paul, but Horatio Nugent never knew. He became such a character, that when he passed through the crime infected portions of the city, every cut-throat, burglar and petty larcenist took off the hat to him. They all felt that there was some mighty secret locked up in his breast, and they respected him and it. And what were the feelings within him? He had marked out his course, and was rigidly pursuing it, and gradually there crept over him, a peace, contentment, harmony of thought, that furnished a complete compensation for the sacrifice which he had made. His moral redemption was complete, but the struggle had been fierce and intent, and the temptation

to swerve in the earlier days of the battle had often times been strong and almost beyond control. He had no friends, save among the poor whom he served, and he led as simple a life as that of a rustic shepherd.

And what of Ouida? Her life and pursuit were equally as noble. She had become a woman whose only object in life was to prevent others from falling into the sad sin which had darkened her life. The sensational newspapers had laughed at her for a while, but she bravely persisted, and ridicule was soon transformed into respect and admiration. Several times in the course of their philanthropic work they met, but no thought had come to them concerning a renewal of their former relations, and each, from afar, by magnetic sympathy sustained the other in this newer and nobler life.

## CHAPTER XXVI.

### DOANE TOASTS DISEASE.

Doane, Connors, Salmon and Wayland were all members of the Union League Club, and spent much of their time amid its comfortable, enticing environments. There is a common opinion prevalent, particularly in New York, that a society man may as well be dead as not to hold membership in at least one of the fashionable clubs. You can eat there, receive the billet doux of your lady friends, and if you want to gamble you can be accommodated at any limit of the game. If you are convivially inclined you can there get on a decent drunk, and perfect care will

be taken that you do not fall into the hands of the police. In fact the club is a great protection to married as well as single men. Many a husband, who likes a quiet time apart from domestic influences, has had his shortcomings covered by the club. This sort of thing is not for the poor man. He takes his drink in the groggery, and woe betide him if he should stagger on the public highway.

Doane, the editor, and Salmon, the lawyer, both sharp witted, were seated in one of the private rooms of the Union League. It was shortly after Salmon, apart from his usual custom in the profession, had been victorious in a celebrated murder trial.

"I congratulate you on your acquittal of Wilcox," said Doane.

"A hard case," remarked Salmon. "He was convicted once, actually sat in the electric death chair, but I got a new hearing, secured a second trial, and now the accused is as free as you or I."

"A clever victory for you, but bad for society. The way murderers are freed now only encourages desperate deeds. There would be more respect for law if there were fewer lawyers," said the editor.

"Perhaps it would be better," said Salmon, "if we permitted the newspapers to administer justice."

"How so?" said Doane, ignoring the covert sarcasm of his friend.

"I will illustrate," said the lawyer: "About a year ago, in this city, a man was hacked to pieces. With him lived a Polish immigrant. He knew but little of the language or customs of the country. A sensational newspaper put its blood-hound-detective-reporters on the trail. They convicted Skinoski, only to find a few months later, beyond the shadow of a doubt, that a slight mistake had

been made, and after all they had electrocuted the wrong man."

"Yes, a little error of that kind will occur, you know," said Doane, unfeelingly, "but then it only removed another of these filthy, foreign paupers. We have too many of these cattle on hand now. Not that I have any very great respect for the native toiler."

"What is your objection to him?" said Salmon.

"I like the laboring man well enough in his way," said Doane, "but I wish he would take a bath once in a while. There is too little sweat on his brow and too much on his hands to suit me."

"Yet your paper parades the fact," said Salmon, "that it fights his battles."

"I admit that," said Doane, with a wink, "we need readers and a circulation to justify us in raising advertising rates. This is business versus sentiment."

Just then Mr. Wayland, the stock broker, entered, and, as he took an easy chair, said, "I'll wager that Doane has just said something biting. There is on his face a smile of derision."

"No, I have been making practical suggestions; that is all. Have been talking about the Plebeian herd, and must have a quart of champagne with which to cleanse my tongue."

A button within easy reach is touched; a waiter appears; takes the order, and soon returns with the wine.

"It shall be on me," said Wayland. "I can afford it. I made a fortune today."

"How?" said Doane. "Did you bankrupt another railroad?"

"No; like Joseph I cornered wheat, and made a million. Will you help me spend it?"

“Yes. Buy a newspaper, and employ Salmon there. He’s a most expensive luxury,” said Doane.

“What reason have you for always jumping on me?” said Salmon. “Did I not safely escort you through seven libel suits last year?”

“Yes, and how much of our stock do you now hold in the way of fee?”

“Let’s cease this merriment,” said Wayland, in either real or assumed sadness. “I am in mourning. The City of Hamburg has just arrived, and brings the news that ‘La Petite Goldie’ died at sea, and was buried beneath the cruel waves of the unfeeling Atlantic.”

“Another \$50,000 you will have to credit to profit and loss,” said Doane.

“Was that another of Gould’s operative speculations?” asked Salmon.

“Yes, gentlemen, she was, and truly I am awfully cut up over the matter. I liked the girl very much, and besides, she had great talent.”

“She died of what ailment?” queried the lawyer.

“That’s the puzzling thing,” said the broker. “Some dreadful, mysterious ailment, the germs of which floated up from the steerage. The confounded steamer should have been quarantined. The first thing we know New York will be scourged.”

“A few thousand useless cattle will be killed off,” said Doane. “A good thing.”

“It might lay its heavy hand on you,” said Salmon.

“No,” replied Doane, “I am too wicked to die. Satan would refuse me entrance to hell for fear I’d rival him for his kingdom.”

“Anyhow,” said Wayland, “I intend to wear crape for a year.”

“Bah,” said Doane, “the next pretty face will cure you. You’ll get no sympathy from us.”

“See here, Doane. I bought that bottle of wine as a bribe for sympathy, and I shall engage Salmon here to prosecute you for obtaining it under false pretense.”

“This possibility of some mysterious epidemic in New York annoys me,” said Doane. “I shall take occasion in tomorrow’s paper, to rake the health officers sharply over the coals,” and for some cause or other, a sickening shudder passed over his frame.

“Does it trouble you, Doane?” said Wayland, “if so, let’s go abroad.”

“No, personally I do not fear,” said the editor. “I have looked pistols in the eye; have been a war correspondent, with bullets flying about like hail; and, have in addition, faced an angry husband or two. A little disease—bah! There are a hundred doctors who would serve me for the asking. Give me another drink,” and as he held the glass aloft, he offered a toast: “Here’s to grim disease,” he said, “may it kill off ten thousand”—he did not finish; the wine glass fell upon the floor and was cracked in many particles, while Doane tottered, fainting in the arms of Salmon.

## CHAPTER XXVII.

### THE CURSE FALLS.

The vague fear which outlined itself in the mind of the club men, had taken shape, and New York was in the grip of the most dreadful epidemic that had ever scourged the Metropolis. The curse of Heaven seemed to have laid its heavy hand upon the people. Hundreds dropped, day by day, into the very jaws of death. War may have had its terrors, but it could not be compared to the ravages of this frightful visitation. It came in the night time, touched its victim, and ere dawn, he sinks into the tomb. Preachers, nurses, doctors, have fled before its grim approach. The preachers who fled, did not do so *out of cowardly fear*, but because God needed them, and they did not feel like disappointing Him by taking chances on death. The sick take care of the dying, and the dead rot, become putrid and stink before the undertaker's cart rolls around. The city looked a good deal like Paris did during the Reign of Terror. There were several persons whose lives were interwoven in this story, who stayed bravely at their respective posts of duty. Ouida Angelo, immediately upon the outbreak, had joined the Red Cross forces, and had done work of almost divine mercy and gentleness. Horatio Nugent, while full of pity for the human suffering which the epidemic had brought in its train, reveled in delight at the opportunity it gave him for noble and glorious work. Mr. Connors, stepping down from his proud

place as a statesman, had done herculean work by the side of Olivia Winters, who had furnished the inspiration. Thus this great public misfortune had afforded hundreds the opportunity for nobility of conduct, whose lives before had been selfish and proud.

During the very maddest part of the ravages of the curse, Olivia Winters met Mr. Connors on one of her tours.

“I am so comforted to meet you here,” she said, and the thought in her mind was, that she rejoiced to see him still alive. “I have just seen the last of Doane, the editor. His death was frightful. Dr. Simpson attended him. Doane, under the influence of the fever, had an idea that it was within the power of the doctor to save his life. Whining like a cur, he said: ‘I must have my life, good doctor,’ and then he shrieked, ‘I cannot die—I must not die—I’ll give you \$50,000 cash, if you will but save my life.’ Then, with a look of agony, he fell back upon his pillow, exhausted, panting like a thirsty dog. Through the day he incessantly kept up this cry; sometimes laughing in defiance, again sobbing. Then, when the doctor left, he muttered to himself: ‘I’ll fool this cunning Æsculapius. Just let me live; I’ll not give him a cent.’ Each mad, despairing outbreak tended only to exhaust his small remaining strength. When Dr. Simpson returned, he felt death near at hand. Doane evidently saw reflected in the doctor’s eye, his own fatal condition, and with almost superhuman strength, he lifted himself upright in bed. ‘Will I die, doctor?’ came rattling from his parched throat. ‘There is no hope,’ said the physician. ‘Then bring me pen and paper,’ he said. His wish was complied with. ‘I will write,’ he said. ‘It shall be the bitterest screed that ever wounded quaking souls. I’ll

sing a song of iron bitterness ; a dying legacy to the sons of men. O ! I cannot hold a pen within my grasp. I cannot see ; all grows dark around me. So this is death.' There was a sickening gurgle in his throat as he fell back dead."

"Horrible ! horrible !" said Connors, his heart full of fear and pity for this woman, so brave and strong.

"Heaven deliver me from such another experience," said Olivia. "I shall hear his wild laughter, the death rattle in his throat ; shall behold his gleaming, glaring, glazed eye balls to my dying day."

"I may be considered uncharitable," said Connors, "but it is better that the world is rid of such a venomous spirit."

"That may be true, but you know, my dear Mr. Connors, that while he lay in that condition, one could not consider his character, only that he was a sufferer," said Olivia. "But did you ever see this great city in such a plight before ?"

"Never," he replied. "I don't know what will become of us."

"One thing has happened, that almost makes me glad of our great calamity."

"In the name of Heaven," he said, "what can that be ?"

"For the opportunity it has given Horatio Nugent to regain his good name."

"Indeed, you are right, and he has redeemed himself," he said. "How glad I am that you and I did not desert him in his hour of need."

"Just as a few years ago," said Olivia, "the world rang with the story of their shame, so now does it smile and bow over their heroic conduct."

“Public opinion,” said the statesman, “begins to disgust me more than ever. It is as fickle as the wind, and it is not what you are that governs, but that which you appear to be. I shall bow to it no longer.”

“Yet, remember what befel our friends for their defiance of this thing you now despise,” said Olivia.

“You spoke of Horatio Nugent a moment ago,” he said. “Let me tell you about Ouida.”

“Go on,” she said, “but quickly, for I have much work before me.”

“From time to time,” said he, “I heard of the deeds of a sweet and saint-like creature, that quietly flitted to and fro among the desperate wretches of your sex, who had fallen into the lap of sin. I heard of shop girls who, tempted by the lust of man, and who were about to fall, snatched from the very jaws of ruin. I heard of extreme poverty being relieved in hundreds of cases. I heard of reading rooms being established for poor working girls. I heard of some mysterious angel going forth upon these varied missions of mercy and humanity. When I investigated, to find out who this was, lo! and behold! Ouida Angelo. And then my heart leaped for joy.”

“Her redemption and absolution is complete,” said Olivia. “She has gone through the valley of the shadow of death, almost, in the course of this fight with herself.”

“And now,” said Connors, tenderly, “is there any hope for me?”

Her heart leaped for joy, but she still brushed aside the hope that was as dear to her as to him. There was no false modesty about her, and her open countenance revealed the delight that quickened her soul.

“If,” said she, “we live through this ordeal, I’ll

come myself, willingly, and bring the answer, woman though I am."

"Did you know that Paul Strogoff was stricken down today?" said Connors.

"Is it so?" she said, in utmost sadness. "Death loves a shining mark."

"Good-bye," said Connors. "God grant we soon may meet again, under happier and safer conditions."

They separated, each filled with mighty anxiety for the other, but each too truly great and noble to allow personal longing to interfere with the stern duty of the hour. But it was not many months before their unselfishness was rewarded with a happiness of pure and gentle nature.

## CHAPTER XXVIII.

### THE LAWYER SURRENDERS.

Among those who felt the touch of the awful disease was Edward Salmon, the lawyer. For days it had its strong clutch upon him, but he battled bravely, and Marie and Milton were tireless in their tender care and solicitude. Most of the time he lay in fevered unconsciousness, not recognizing those by whom he was surrounded. Often death approached so near at hand that Marie shuddered in dread, and Milton was full of grief on her account. At length, however, the struggle ended in victory, and Edward Salmon lived.

When consciousness had become fully restored, and the danger was over, Marie had Milton go away. She had resolved upon her course of action.

One day when Mr. Salmon, in his smoking jacket, weak and pale, sat thinking, Marie, cuddled up to him, and stroking his hair. He knew something was coming, for, like her dear, dead mother before her, that was the girl's way.

"Father," she said, "you have been ill, very ill, but thank God you have been spared."

"Yes," said he, "and through your noble devotion."

"We did the best we could," she said, slyly.

"We," he said, "what we? Did you have help?"

"Yes, in your fever, you did not know, but it was Milton who braved all danger, and with me, sat up night after night, watching your slightest movement."

"And I hated him so," said Salmon. "He has heaped coals of fire upon my head, and has nobly shamed me."

"Father, believe me, the eye of love cannot be deceived," appealed the girl. "You have misjudged Milton."

"Perhaps," said he, "my darling, I have. I surrender!"

"In a moment, for joy, she was sobbing on her father's breast, and he, too, could not restrain a silent tear.

"Bring Milton to me," said Salmon, "he shall not outdo me in generosity; if he will but love and cherish you as I have done, I'll ask no more."

But a brief period elapsed and a happy trio were in conclave at the lawyer's residence.

## CHAPTER XXIX.

### PAUL FOLLOWS CHRIST.—THE END.

Paul Strogoff had developed a peculiar philosophy since Ouida had sent him into grief. Though singularly fortunate as far as this world goes, though young, though of lusty strength, though possessing the ability to gratify every desire, he loved not life, but death. He had come to the conclusion that what a man gets in life is not by any means sufficient compensation for the struggle through which he goes. If he could have folded his arms quietly and passed out of human existence, he would not have murmured, but with perfect resignation accepted his fate. He was neither a physical nor a moral coward. His whole life had been marked by bravery, therefore he could not commit suicide. His fortune was being expended in private charities, and many boys, struggling up from the gutter, wondered at his generosity. They would not have done so, if they had seen Paul's early battle with the dog.

When the scourge visited the city, Paul remained, not so much for the reason that he might reach death as that he saw opportunities for good, useful, and above all, absorbing work. Like many others he for a time labored assiduously, and was spared, but at length his turn came, and he, who had worked with such devotion for others, lay sick and dying, almost bereft of attention and care.

At length, his servant, an old Russian retainer of the family, managed to procure the attendance of Dr. Simpson. As soon as he saw Paul, the doctor shook his head ominously.

“How is my master?” said the Russian.

“In the very extremity of the fever, sir.”

“Is there no hope?” asked the servant.

“None,” said the doctor, unhesitatingly, “he will be dead within the hour.”

The patient stirred uneasily. Wild dreams were flitting over his sick vision.

“Is she here?” the sick man muttered.

“Who?” said the doctor.

“The idol of my life,” said Paul in his delirium. “I deeply wronged her, to put my shadow on her life. She, so far above! A star unreachable! I may not die until my eyes shall rest upon her form again. Oh, Ouida, come!”

“The heighth of pathos,” said the doctor, softened, though he had witnessed before, misery untold. “Oh, for a nurse to soothe his dying hours!”

And, as if in answer to the doctor’s prayer, there came a gentle knock at the door, and Ouida Angelo entered.

“I heard there was a patient here,” said she. “I am a volunteer nurse. Can I be of service?”

“Yes,” said the doctor, and Ouida approached the couch of the dying man, and as she looked upon his wasted face, and saw death’s mark there, her face turned white as marble. She forget the doctor’s presence, forgot all the world, save that this was the completion of her punishment, the wages of her sin.

“Paul!” she said.

“I hear her voice,” said the patient, looking up and instantly recognizing her. Her voice had brought him out of his delirium. “I knew I would not die until she came.”

“Do not speak of dying,” she said, and her voice was mellow and soothing. “You shall live.”

“How good of you to speak of hope,” said the dying man, “but it cannot be; it is useless. I cannot shake off the icy hand of death. Pray, forgive me that I crossed your life. I loved you well. You did not know, but now I kiss your hand and die.”

“Forgive you,” she said, “that is mockery. Upon my bended knees, I ask your forgiveness,” and the woman, her pride all gone, sank upon her knees by the bedside of the husband she had so deeply wronged.

“If this be your wish,” he gently said, “my dying soul confers the gift. Is there not near some man of God, to offer up a prayer for me?”

“You need no mediator,” she said, lifting up her head, “your life has been a constant prayer.”

“Procure a minister, if possible,” said the doctor, addressing the servant, who disappeared, and, as good fortune would have it, shortly returned, having accomplished his mission. Fate had directed the servant to Horatio Nugent!

Ouida was startled beyond expression to see him, but her manner was calm.

“This dying saint,” said Ouida, “requests a prayer in his behalf to God.”

The preacher approached the couch of death, but when his eyes beheld Paul, his soul was wrenched with agony.

“Paul!” he exclaimed, “I am not fit to pray for him.”

“Give me your hand,” said the dying man to Horatio, “and yours, Ouida.”

Across the death bed he joined their hands.

“This is my revenge,” said Paul. “I love you both. Be happy, for my sake. I forgive you. Death, thou hast no sting for me; no terror hath the yawning grave. I die in peace!”

And as he breathed his last, a seraphic smile lighted his whole countenance. The preacher’s eyes were raised to God, his soul was wrapped in prayer, while Ouida sank to the floor, her head bowed in utmost reverence.

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