



## CHAPTER XI—Continued.

Nora, without relaxing the false smile, suddenly found emptiness in everything.

"Sing!" said Herr Rosen.

"I am too tired. Some other time."

He did not press her. Instead, he whispered in his own tongue: "You are the most adorable woman in the world!"

And Nora turned upon him a pair of eyes blank with astonishment. It was as though she had been asleep and he had rudely awakened her. His infatuation blinded him to the truth; he saw in the look a feminine desire to throw the others off the track as to the sentiment expressed in his whispered words.

The hour passed tolerably well. Herr Rosen then observed the time, rose and excused himself. He took the steps leading abruptly down the terrace to the carriage road. He had come by the other way, the rambling stone stairs which began at the porter's lodge, back of the villa.

"Padre," whispered Courtlandt, "I am going. Do not follow. I shall explain to you when we meet again."

The padre signified that he understood. Harrigan protested vigorously, but smiling and shaking his head, Courtlandt went away.

Nora ran to the window. She could see Herr Rosen striding along, down the winding road, his head in the air. Presently, from behind a cluster of mulberries, the figure of another man came into view. He was going at a dog-trot, his hat settled at an angle that permitted the rain to beat squarely into his face. The next turn in the road shut them both from sight. But Nora did not stir.

Herr Rosen stopped and turned.

"You called?"

"Yes." Courtlandt had caught up with him just as Herr Rosen was about to open the gates. "Just a moment, Herr Rosen," with a hand upon the bars. "I shall not detain you long."

There was studied insolence in the tones and the gestures which accompanied them.

"Be brief, if you please."

"My name is Edward Courtlandt, as doubtless you have heard."

"In a large room it is difficult to remember all the introductions."

"Precisely. That is why I take the liberty of recalling it to you, so that you will not forget it," urbanely.

A pause. Dark patches of water were spreading across their shoulders. Little rivulets ran down Courtlandt's arm, raised as it was against the bars.

"I do not see how it may concern me," replied Herr Rosen finally with an insolence more marked than Courtlandt's.

"In Paris we met one night, at the stage entrance of the Opera. I pushed you aside, not knowing who you were. You had offered your services; the door of Miss Harrigan's limousine."

"It was you?" scowling.

"I apologize for that. Tomorrow morning you will leave Bellaggio for Varenna. Somewhere between nine and ten the first train leaves for Milan."

"Varenna! Milan!"

"Exactly. You speak English as naturally and fluently as if you were born to the tongue. Thus, you will leave for Milan. What becomes of you after that is of no consequence to me. Am I making myself clear?"

"Verdampf! Do I believe my ears?" furiously. "Are you telling me to leave Bellaggio tomorrow morning?"

"As directly as I can."

Herr Rosen's face became as red as his name. He was a brave young man, but there was danger of an active kind in the blue eyes boring into his own. If it came to a physical contest, he realized that he would get the worst of it. He put his hand to his throat; his very impotence was choking him.

"Your Highness . . ."

"Highness!" Herr Rosen stepped back.

"Yes. Your Highness will readily see the wisdom of my concern for your hasty departure when I add that I know all about the little house in Versailles, that my knowledge is shared by the chief of the Parisian police and the minister of war. If you annoy Miss Harrigan with your equivocal attentions . . ."

"Gott! This is too much!"

"Wait! I am stronger than you are. Do not make me force you to hear me to the end. You have gone about this intrigue like a blackguard, and that I know Your Highness not to be. The matter is, you are young, you have always had your way, you have not learnt restraint. Your presence here is an insult to Miss Harrigan, and if she was pleasant to you this

afternoon it was for my benefit. If you do not go, I shall expose you." Courtlandt opened the gate.

"And if I refuse?"

"Why, in that case, being the American that I am, without any particular reverence for royalty or nobility, as it is known, I promise to thrash you soundly tomorrow morning at ten o'clock, in the dining room, in the bureau, the drawing room, wherever I may happen to find you."

Courtlandt turned on his heel and hurried back to the villa. He did not look over his shoulder. If he had, he might have felt pity for the young man who leaned heavily against the gate, his burning face pressed upon his rain-soaked sleeve.

When Courtlandt knocked at the door and was admitted, he apologized. "I came back for my umbrella."

"Umbrella!" exclaimed the padre. "Why, we had no umbrellas. We came up in a carriage which is probably waiting for us this very minute by the porter's lodge."

"Well, I am certainly absent-minded."

"Absent-minded!" scoffed Abbott. "You never forget anything in all your life, unless it was to go to bed. You wanted an excuse to come back."

"Any excuse would be a good one in that case. I think we'd better be going, Padre. And by the way, Herr Rosen begged me to present his regards. He is leaving Bellaggio in the morning."

Nora turned her face once more to the window.

## CHAPTER XII.

## The Ball at the Villa.

"It is all very petty, my child," said the padre. "Life is made up of bigger things; the little ones should be ignored."

To which Nora replied: "To a woman the little things are everything; they are the daily routine, the expected, the necessary things. What you call the big things in life are accidents. And, oh! I have pride." She folded her arms across her heavy bosom; for the padre's directness this morning had stirred her deeply.

"Wilfulness is called pride by some; and stubbornness. But you know, as well as I do, that yours is resentment, anger, indignation. Yes, you have pride, but it has not been brought into this affair. Pride is that within which prevents us from doing mean or sorry acts; and you could not do one or the other if you tried. The sentiment in you which should be developed

"Is mercy?"

"No; justice; the patience to weigh the right or wrong of a thing."

"Padre, I have eyes, eyes; I saw." He twirled the middle button of his cassock. The eyes see and the ears hear, but these are only witnesses, laying the matter before the court of the last resort, which is the mind. It is there we sift the evidence."

"He had the insufferable insolence to order Herr Rosen to leave," going around the barrier of his well-ordered logic.

"Ah! Now, how could he send away Herr Rosen if that gentleman had really preferred to stay?"

Nora looked confused.

"Shall I tell you? I suspected; so I questioned him last night. Had I been in his place, I should have chastised Herr Rosen instead of bidding him go. It was he."

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