

The World For Sale, Volume 2.

Gilbert Parker

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THE WORLD FOR SALE

By Gilbert Parker

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CHAPTER VIII

THE SULTAN

Ingolby's square head jerked forwards in stern inquiry and his eyes fastened those of Jowett, the horsedealer. "Take care what you're saying, Jowett," he said. "It's a penitentiary job, if it can be proved. Are you sure you got it right?"

Jowett had unusual shrewdness, some vanity and a humorous tongue. He was a favourite in both towns, and had had the better of both in horse-dealing a score of times.

That did not make him less popular. However, it was said he liked low company, and it was true that though he had "money in the bank," and owned a corner lot or so, he seemed to care little what his company was. His most constant companion was Fabian Osterhaut, who was the common property of both towns, doing a little of everything for a living, from bill-posting to the solicitation of an insurance agent.

For any casual work connected with public functions Osterhaut was indispensable, and he would serve as a doctor's assistant and help cut off a leg, be the majordomo for a Sunday-school picnic, or arrange a soiree at a meeting-house with equal impartiality. He had been known to attend a temperance meeting and a wake in the same evening. Yet no one ever questioned his bona fides, and if he had attended mass at Manitou in the morning, joined a heathen dance in Tekewani's Reserve in the afternoon, and listened to the oleaginous Rev. Reuben Tripple in the evening, it would have been taken as a matter of course.

He was at times profane and impecunious, and he had been shifted from one boarding-house to another till at last, having exhausted credit in Lebanon, he had found a room in the house of old Madame Thibadeau in

Manitou. She had taken him in because, in years gone by, he had nursed her only son through an attack of smallpox on the Siwash River, and somehow Osterhaut had always paid his bills to her. He was curiously exact where she was concerned. If he had not enough for his week's board and lodging, he borrowed it, chiefly of Jowett, who used him profitably at times to pass the word about a horse, or bring news of a possible deal.

"It's a penitentiary job, Jowett," Ingolby repeated. "I didn't think Marchand would be so mad as that."

"Say, it's all straight enough, Chief," answered Jowett, sucking his unlighted cigar. "Osterhaut got wind of it--he's staying at old Mother Thibadeau's, as you know. He moves round a lot, and he put me on to it. I took on the job at once. I got in with the French toughs over at Manitou, at Barbazon's Tavern, and I gave them gin--we made it a gin night. It struck their fancy--gin, all gin! 'Course there's nothing in gin different from any other spirit; but it fixed their minds, and took away suspicion.

"I got drunk--oh, yes, of course, blind drunk, didn't I? Kissed me, half a dozen of the Quebec boys did--said I was 'bully boy' and 'hell-fellow'; said I was 'bon enfant'; and I said likewise in my best patois. They liked that. I've got a pretty good stock of monkey-French, and I let it go. They laughed till they cried at some of my mistakes, but they weren't no mistakes, not on your life. It was all done a-purpose. They said I was the only man from Lebanon they wouldn't have cut up and boiled, and they was going to have the blood of the Lebanon lot before they'd done. I pretended to get mad, and I talked wild. I said that Lebanon would get them first, that Lebanon wouldn't wait, but'd have it out; and I took off my coat and staggered about--blind-fair blind boozy. I tripped over some fool's foot purposely, just beside a bench against the wall, and I come down on that bench hard. They laughed--Lord, how they laughed! They didn't mind my givin' 'em fits--all except one or two. That was what I expected. The one or two was mad. They begun raging towards me, but there I was asleep on the bench-stony blind, and then they only spit fire a bit. Some one threw my coat over me. I hadn't any cash in the pockets, not much--I knew better than that--and I snored like a sow. Then it happened what I thought would happen. They talked. And here it is. They're going to have a strike in the mills, and you're to get a toss into the river. That's to be on Friday. But the other thing--well, they all cleared away but two. They were the two that wanted to have it out with me. They stayed behind. There was I snoring like a locomotive, but my ears open all right.

"Well, they give the thing away. One of 'em had just come from Felix Marchand and he was full of it. What was it? Why, the second night of the strike your new bridge over the river was to be blown up. Marchand was to give these two toughs three hundred dollars each for doing it."

"Blown up with what?" Ingolby asked sharply.

"Dynamite."

"Where would they get it?"

"Some left from blasting below the mills."

"All right! Go on."

"There wasn't much more. Old Barbazon, the landlord, come in and they quit talking about it; but they said enough to send 'em to gaol for ten years."

Ingolby blinked at Jowett reflectively, and his mouth gave a twist that lent to his face an almost droll look.

"What good would it do if they got ten years--or one year, if the bridge was blown up? If they got skinned alive, and if Marchand was handed over to a barnful of hungry rats to be gnawed to death, it wouldn't help. I've heard and seen a lot of hellish things, but there's nothing to equal that. To blow up the bridge--for what? To spite Lebanon, and to hurt me; to knock the spokes out of my wheel. He's the dregs, is Marchand."

"I guess he's a shyster by nature, that fellow," interposed Jowett.

"He was boilin' hot when he was fifteen. He spoiled a girl I knew when he was twenty-two, not fourteen she was--Lil Sarnia; and he got her away before--well, he got her away East; and she's in a dive in Winnipeg now. As nice a girl--as nice a little girl she was, and could ride any broncho that ever bucked. What she saw in him--but there, she was only a child, just the mind of a child she had, and didn't understand. He'd ha' been tarred and feathered if it'd been known. But old Mick Sarnia said hush, for his wife's sake, and so we hushed, and Sarnia's wife doesn't know even now. I thought a lot of Lil, as much almost as if she'd been my own; and lots o' times, when I think of it, I sit up straight, and the thing freezes me; and I want to get Marchand by the scruff of the neck. I got a horse, the worst that ever was--so bad I haven't had the heart to ride him or sell him. He's so bad he makes me laugh. There's nothing he won't do, from biting to bolting. Well, I'd like to tie Mr. Felix Marchand, Esquire, to his back, and let him loose on the prairie, and pray the Lord to save him if he thought fit. I fancy I know what the Lord would do. And Lil Sarnia's only one. Since he come back from the States, he's the limit, oh, the damndest limit. He's a pest all round--and now, this!"

Ingolby kept blinking reflectively as Jowett talked. He was doing two things at once with a facility quite his own. He was understanding all Jowett was saying, but he was also weighing the whole situation. His mind was gone fishing, figuratively speaking. He was essentially a man of action, but his action was the bullet of his mind; he had to be quiet physically when he was really thinking. Then he was as one in a dream where all physical motion was mechanical, and his body was acting automatically. His concentration, and therefore his abstraction, was phenomenal. Jowett's reminiscences at a time so critical did not disturb him--did not, indeed, seem to be irrelevant. It was as though Felix Marchand was being passed in review before him in a series of aspects. He nodded encouragement to Jowett to go on.

"It's because Marchand hates you, Chief. The bump he got when you dropped him on the ground that day at Carillon hurts still. It's a chronic inflammation. Closing them railway offices at Manitou, and dislodging the officials give him his first good chance. The feud between the towns is worse now than it's ever been. Make no mistake. There's a whole lot of toughs in Manitou. Then there's religion, and there's race, and there's a want-to-stand-still and leave-me-alone-feeling. They don't want to get on. They don't want progress. They want to throw the slops out of the top windows into the street; they want

their cesspools at the front door; they think that everybody's got to have smallpox some time or another, and the sooner they have it the better; they want to be bribed; and they think that if a vote's worth having it's worth paying for--and yet there's a bridge between these two towns! A bridge--why, they're as far apart as the Yukon and Patagonia."

"What'd buy Felix Marchand?" Ingolby asked meditatively. "What's his price?"

Jowett shifted with impatience. "Say, Chief, I don't know what you're thinking about. Do you think you could make a deal with Felix Marchand? Not much. You've got the cinch on him. You could send him to quod, and I'd send him there as quick as lightning. I'd hang him, if I could, for what he done to Lil Sarnia. Years ago when he was a boy he offered me a gold watch for a mare I had. The watch looked as right as could be--solid fourteen-carat, he said it was. He got my horse, and I got his watch. It wasn't any more gold than he was. It was filled--just plated with nine-carat gold. It was worth about ten dollars."

"What was the mare worth?" asked Ingolby, his mouth twisting again with quizzical meaning.

"That mare--she was all right."

"Yes, but what was the matter with her?"

"Oh, a spavin--she was all right when she got wound up--go like Dexter or Maud S."

"But if you were buying her what would you have paid for her, Jowett? Come now, man to man, as they say. How much did you pay for her?"

"About what she was worth, Chief, within a dollar or two."

"And what was she worth?"

"What I paid for her--ten dollars."

Then the two men looked at each other full in the eyes, and Jowett threw back his head and laughed outright--laughed loud and hard. "Well, you got me, Chief, right under the guard," he observed.

Ingolby did not laugh outright, but there was a bubble of humour in his eyes. "What happened to the watch?" he asked.

"I got rid of it."

"In a horse-trade?"

"No, I got a town lot with it."

"In Lebanon?"

"Well, sort of in Lebanon's back-yard."

"What's the lot worth now?"

"About two thousand dollars!"

"Was it your first town lot?"

"The first lot of Mother Earth I ever owned."

"Then you got a vote on it?"

"Yes, my first vote."

"And the vote let you be a town-councillor?"

"It and my good looks."

"Indirectly, therefore, you are a landowner, a citizen, a public servant, and an instrument of progress because of Felix Marchand. If you hadn't had the watch you wouldn't have had that town lot."

"Well, mebbe, not that lot."

Suddenly Ingolby got to his feet and squared himself, and his face became alight with purpose. His mind had come back from fishing, and he was ready now for action. His plans were formed. He was in for a fight, and he had made up his mind how, with the new information to his hand, he would develop his campaign further.

"You didn't make a fuss about the watch, Jowett. You might have gone to Felix Marchand or to his father and proved him a liar, and got even that way. You didn't; you got a corner lot with it. That's what I'm going to do. I can have Felix Marchand put in the jug, and make his old father, Hector Marchand, sick; but I like old Hector Marchand, and I think he's bred as bad a pup as ever was. I'm going to try and do with this business as you did with that watch. I'm going to try and turn it to account and profit in the end. Felix Marchand's profiting by a mistake of mine--a mistake in policy. It gives him his springboard; and there's enough dry grass in both towns to get a big blaze with a very little match. I know that things are seething. The Chief Constable keeps me posted as to what's going on here, and pretty fairly as to what's going on in Manitou. The police in Manitou are straight enough. That's one comfort. I've done Felix Marchand there. I guess that the Chief Constable of Manitou and Monseigneur Lourde and old Mother Thibadeau are about the only people that Marchand can't bribe. I see I've got to face a scrimmage before I can get what I want."

"What you want you'll have, I bet," was the admiring response.

"I'm going to have a good try. I want these two towns to be one. That'll be good for your town lots, Jowett," he added whimsically. "If my policy is carried out, my town lot'll be worth a pocketful of gold-plated watches or a stud of spavined mares." He chuckled to himself, and his fingers reached towards a bell on the table, but he paused. "When was it they said the strike would begin?" he asked.

"Friday."

"Did they say what hour?"

"Eleven in the morning."

"Third of a day's work and a whole day's pay," he mused. "Jowett," he added, "I want you to have faith. I'm going to do Marchand, and I'm

going to do him in a way that'll be best in the end. You can help as much if not more than anybody--you and Osterhaut. And if I succeed, it'll be worth your while."

"I ain't followin' you because it's worth while, but because I want to, Chief."

"I know; but a man--every man--likes the counters for the game." He turned to the table, opened a drawer, and took out a folded paper. He looked it through carefully, wrote a name on it, and handed it to Jowett.

"There's a hundred shares in the Northwest Railway, with my regards, Jowett. Some of the counters of the game."

Jowett handed it back at once with a shake of the head. "I don't live in Manitou," he said. "I'm almost white, Chief. I've never made a deal with you, and don't want to. I'm your man for the fun of it, and because I'd give my life to have your head on my shoulders for one year."

"I'd feel better if you'd take the shares, Jowett. You've helped me, and I can't let you do it for nothing."

"Then I can't do it at all. I'm discharged." Suddenly, however, a humorous, eager look shot into Jowett's face. "Will you toss for it?" he blurted out. "Certainly, if you like," was the reply.

"Heads I win, tails it's yours?"

"Good."

Ingolby took a silver dollar from his pocket, and tossed. It came down tails. Ingolby had won.

"My corner lot against double the shares?" Jowett asked sharply, his face flushed with eager pleasure. He was a born gambler.

"As you like," answered Ingolby with a smile. Ingolby tossed, and they stooped over to look at the dollar on the floor. It had come up heads. "You win," said Ingolby, and turning to the table, took out another hundred shares. In a moment they were handed over.

"You're a wonder, Jowett," he said. "You risked a lot of money. Are you satisfied?"

"You bet, Chief. I come by these shares honestly now."

He picked up the silver dollar from the floor, and was about to put it in his pocket.

"Wait--that's my dollar," said Ingolby.

"By gracious, so it is!" said Jowett, and handed it over reluctantly.

Ingolby pocketed it with satisfaction.

Neither dwelt on the humour of the situation. They were only concerned for the rules of the game, and both were gamesters in their way.

After a few brief instructions to Jowett, and a message for Osterhaut

concerning a suit of workman's clothes, Ingolby left his offices and walked down the main street of the town with his normal rapidity, responding cheerfully to the passers-by, but not encouraging evident desire for talk with him. Men half-started forward to him, but he held them back with a restraining eye. They knew his ways. He was responsive in a brusque, inquisitive, but good-humoured and sometimes very droll way; but there were times when men said to themselves that he was to be left alone; and he was so much master of the place that, as Osterhaut and Jowett frequently remarked, "What he says goes!" It went even with those whom he had passed in the race of power.

He had had his struggles to be understood in his first days in Lebanon. He had fought intrigue and even treachery, had defeated groups which were the forces at work before he came to Lebanon, and had compelled the submission of others. All these had vowed to "get back at him," but when it became a question of Lebanon against Manitou they swung over to his side and acknowledged him as leader. The physical collision between the rougher elements of the two towns had brought matters to a head, and nearly every man in Lebanon felt that his honour was at stake, and was ready "to have it out with Manitou."

As he walked along the main street after his interview with Jowett, his eyes wandered over the buildings rising everywhere; and his mind reviewed as in a picture the same thinly inhabited street five years ago when he first came. Now farmers' wagons clacked and rumbled through the prairie dust, small herds of cattle jerked and shuffled their way to the slaughter-yard, or out to the open prairie, and caravans of settlers with their effects moved sturdily forward to the trails which led to a new life beckoning from three points of the compass. That point which did not beckon was behind them. Flaxen-haired Swedes and Norwegians; square-jawed, round-headed North Germans; square-shouldered, loose-jointed Russians with heavy contemplative eyes and long hair, looked curiously at each other and nodded understandingly. Jostling them all, with a jeer and an oblique joke here and there, and crude chaff on each other and everybody, the settler from the United States asserted himself. He invariably obtruded himself, with quizzical inquiry, half contempt and half respect, on the young Englishman, who gazed round with phlegm upon his fellow adventurers, and made up to the sandy-faced Scot or the cheerful Irishman with his hat on the back of his head, who showed in the throng here and there. This was one of the days when the emigrant and settlers' trains arrived both from the East and from "the States," and Front Street in Lebanon had, from early morning, been alive with the children of hope and adventure.

With hands plunged deep in the capacious pockets of his grey jacket, Ingolby walked on, seeing everything; yet with his mind occupied intently, too, on the trouble which must be faced before Lebanon and Manitou would be the reciprocating engines of his policy. Coming to a spot where a great gap of vacant land showed in the street-land which he had bought for the new offices of his railway combine--he stood and looked at it abstractedly. Beyond it, a few blocks away, was the Sagalac, and beyond the Sagalac was Manitou, and a little way to the right was the bridge which was the symbol of his policy. His eyes gazed almost unconsciously on the people and the horses and wagons coming and going upon the bridge. Then they were lifted to the tall chimneys rising at two or three points on the outskirts of Manitou.

"They don't know a good thing when they get it," he said to himself.

"A strike--why, wages are double what they are in Quebec, where most of

'em come from! Marchand--"

A hand touched his arm. "Have you got a minute to spare, kind sir?" a voice asked.

Ingolby turned and saw Nathan Rockwell, the doctor. "Ah, Rockwell," he responded cheerfully, "two minutes and a half, if you like! What is it?"

The Boss Doctor, as he was familiarly called by every one, to identify him from the newer importations of medical men, drew from his pocket a newspaper.

"There's an infernal lie here about me," he replied. "They say that I--"

He proceeded to explain the misstatement, as Ingolby studied the paper carefully, for Rockwell was a man worth any amount of friendship.

"It's a lie, of course," Ingolby said firmly as he finished the paragraph. "Well?"

"Well, I've got to deal with it."

"You mean you're going to deny it in the papers?"

"Exactly."

"I wouldn't, Rockwell."

"You wouldn't?"

"No. You never can really overtake a newspaper lie. Lots of the people who read the lie don't see the denial. Your truth doesn't overtake the lie--it's a scarlet runner."

"I don't see that. When you're lied about, when a lie like that--"

"You can't overtake it, Boss. It's no use. It's sensational, it runs too fast. Truth's slow-footed. When a newspaper tells a lie about you, don't try to overtake it, tell another."

He blinked with quizzical good-humour. Rockwell could not resist the audacity. "I don't believe you'd do it just the same," he retorted decisively, and laughing.

"I don't try the overtaking anyhow; I get something spectacular in my own favour to counteract the newspaper lie."

"In what way?"

"For instance, if they said I couldn't ride a moke at a village steeplechase, I'd at once publish the fact that, with a jack-knife, I'd killed two pumas that were after me. Both things would be lies, but the one would neutralize the other. If I said I could ride a moke, nobody would see it, and if it were seen it wouldn't make any impression; but to say I killed two mountain-lions with a jack-knife on the edge of a precipice, with the sun standing still to look at it, is as good as the original lie and better; and I score. My reputation increases."

Nathan Rockwell's equilibrium was restored. "You're certainly a wonder,"

he declared. "That's why you've succeeded."

"Have I succeeded?"

"Thirty-three-and what you are!"

"What am I?"

"Pretty well master here."

"Rockwell, that'd do me a lot of harm if it was published. Don't say it again. This is a democratic country. They'd kick at my being called master of anything, and I'd have to tell a lie to counteract it."

"But it's the truth, and it hasn't to be overtaken."

A grim look came into Ingolby's face. "I'd like to be master-boss of life and death, holder of the sword and balances, the Sultan, here just for one week. I'd change some things. I'd gag some people that are doing terrible harm. It's a real bad business. The scratch-your-face period is over, and we're in the cut-your-throat epoch."

Rockwell nodded assent, opened the paper again, and pointed to a column. "I expect you haven't seen that. To my mind, in the present state of things, it's dynamite."

Ingolby read the column hastily. It was the report of a sermon delivered the evening before by the Rev. Reuben Tripple, the evangelical minister of Lebanon. It was a paean of the Scriptures accompanied by a crazy charge that the Roman Church forbade the reading of the Bible. It had a tirade also about the Scarlet Woman and Popish idolatry.

Ingolby made a savage gesture. "The insatiable Christian beast!" he growled in anger. "There's no telling what this may do. You know what those fellows are over in Manitou. The place is full of them going to the woods, besides the toughs at the mills and in the taverns. They're not psalm-singing, and they don't keep the Ten Commandments, but they're savagely fanatical, and--"

"And there's the funeral of an Orangeman tomorrow. The Orange Lodge attends in regalia."

Ingolby started and looked at the paper again. "The sneaking, praying liar," he said, his jaw setting grimly. "This thing's a call to riot. There's an element in Lebanon as well that'd rather fight than eat. It's the kind of lie that--"

"That you can't overtake," said the Boss Doctor appositely; "and I don't know that even you can tell another that'll neutralize it. Your prescription won't work here."

An acknowledging smile played at Ingolby's mouth. "We've got to have a try. We've got to draw off the bull with a red rag somehow."

"I don't see how myself. That Orange funeral will bring a row on to us. I can just see the toughs at Manitou when they read this stuff, and know about that funeral."

"It's announced?"

"Yes, here's an invitation in the Budget to Orangemen to attend the funeral of a brother sometime of the banks of the Boyne!"

"Who's the Master of the Lodge?" asked Ingolby. Rockwell told him, urging at the same time that he see the Chief Constable as well, and Monseigneur Lourde at Manitou.

"That's exactly what I mean to do--with a number of other things. Between ourselves, Rockwell, I'd have plenty of lint and bandages ready for emergencies if I were you."

"I'll see to it. That collision the other day was serious enough, and it's gradually becoming a vendetta. Last night one of the Lebanon champions lost his nose."

"His nose--how?"

"A French river-driver bit a third of it off."

Ingolby made a gesture of disgust. "And this is the twentieth century!"

They had moved along the street until they reached a barber-shop, from which proceeded the sound of a violin. "I'm going in here," Ingolby said. "I've got some business with Berry, the barber. You'll keep me posted as to anything important?"

"You don't need to say it. Shall I see the Master of the Orange Lodge or the Chief Constable for you?" Ingolby thought for a minute. "No, I'll tackle them myself, but you get in touch with Monseigneur Lourde. He's grasped the situation, and though he'd like to have Tripple boiled in oil, he doesn't want broken heads and bloodshed."

"And Tripple?"

"I'll deal with him at once. I've got a hold on him. I never wanted to use it, but I will now without compunction. I have the means in my pocket. They've been there for three days, waiting for the chance."

"It doesn't look like war, does it?" said Rockwell, looking up the street and out towards the prairie where the day bloomed like a flower. Blue above--a deep, joyous blue, against which a white cloud rested or slowly travelled westward; a sky down whose vast cerulean bowl flocks of wild geese sailed, white and grey and black, while the woods across the Sagalac were glowing with a hundred colours, giving tender magnificence to the scene. The busy eagerness of a pioneer life was still a quiet, orderly thing, so immense was the theatre for effort and movement. In these wide streets, almost as wide as a London square, there was room to move; nothing seemed huddled, pushing, or inconvenient. Even the disorder of building lost its ugly crudity in the space and the sunlight.

"The only time I get frightened in life is when things look like that," Ingolby answered. "I go round with a life-preserver on me when it seems as if 'all's right with the world.'"

The violin inside the barber-shop kept scraping out its cheap music--a coon-song of the day.

"Old Berry hasn't much business this morning," remarked Rockwell.

"He's in keeping with this surface peace."

"Old Berry never misses anything. What we're thinking, he's thinking. I go fishing when I'm in trouble; Berry plays his fiddle. He's a philosopher and a friend."

"You don't make friends as other people do."

"I make friends of all kinds. I don't know why, but I've always had a kind of kinship with the roughs, the no-accounts, and the rogues."

"As well as the others--I hope I don't intrude!"

Ingolby laughed. "You? Oh, I wish all the others were like you. It's the highly respectable members of the community I've always had to watch."

The fiddle-song came squeaking out upon the sunny atmosphere. It arrested the attention of a man on the other side of the street--a stranger in strange Lebanon. He wore a suit of Western clothes as a military man wears mufti, if not awkwardly, yet with a manner not wholly natural--the coat too tight across the chest, too short in the body. However, the man was handsome and unusual in his leopard way, with his brown curling hair and well-cared-for moustache. It was Jethro Fawe.

Attracted by the sound of the violin, he stayed his steps and smiled scornfully. Then his look fell on the two figures at the door of the barber-shop, and his eyes flashed.

Here was the man he wished to see--Max Ingolby, the man who stood between him and his Romany lass. Here was a chance of speaking face to face with the man who was robbing him. What he should do when they met must be according to circumstances. That did not matter. There was the impulse storming in his brain, and it drove him across the street as the Boss Doctor walked away, and Ingolby entered the shop. All Jethro realized was that the man who stood in his way, the big, rich, masterful Gorgio was there.

He entered the shop after Ingolby, and stood for an instant unseen. The old negro barber with his curly white head, slave-black face, and large, shrewd, meditative eyes was standing in a corner with a violin under his chin, his cheek lovingly resting against it, as he drew his bow through the last bars of the melody. He had smiled in welcome as Ingolby entered, instantly rising from his stool, but continuing to play. He would not have stopped in the middle of a tune for an emperor, and he put Ingolby higher than an emperor. For one who had been born a slave, and had still the scars of the overseer's whip on his back, he was very independent. He cut everybody's hair as he wanted to cut it, trimmed each beard as he wished to trim it, regardless of its owner's wishes. If there was dissent, then his customer need not come again, that was all. There were other barbers in the place, but Berry was the master barber. To have your head massaged by him was never to be forgotten, especially if you found your hat too small for your head in the morning. Also he singed the hair with a skill and care, which had filled many a thinly covered scalp with luxuriant growth, and his hair-tonic, known as "Smilax," gave a pleasant odour to every meeting-house or church or public hall where the people gathered. Berry was an institution even in this new Western town. He kept his place and he forced the white man, whoever he was, to keep his place.

When he saw Jethro Fawe enter the shop he did not stop playing, but his eyes searched the newcomer. Following his glance, Ingolby turned round and saw the Romany. His first impression was one of admiration, but suspicion was quickly added. He was a good judge of men, and there was something secluded about the man which repelled him. Yet he was interested. The dark face had a striking racial peculiarity.

The music died away, and old Berry lowered the fiddle from his chin and gave his attention to the Romany.

"Yeth-'ir?" he said questioningly.

For an instant Jethro was confused. When he entered the shop he had not made up his mind what he should do. It had been mere impulse and the fever of his brain. As old Berry spoke, however, his course opened out.

"I heard. I am a stranger. My fiddle is not here. My fingers itch for the cat-gut. Eh?"

The look in old Berry's face softened a little. His instinct had been against his visitor, and he had been prepared to send him to another shop-besides, not every day could he talk to the greatest man in the West.

"If you can play, there it is," he said after a slight pause, and handed the fiddle over.

It was true that Jethro Fawe loved the fiddle. He had played it in many lands. Twice, in order to get inside the palace of a monarch for a purpose--once in Berlin and once in London--he had played the second violin in a Tzigany orchestra. He turned the fiddle slowly round, looking at it with mechanical intentness. Through the passion of emotion the sure sense of the musician was burning. His fingers smoothed the oval brown breast of the instrument with affection. His eyes found joy in the colour of the wood, which had all the graded, merging tints of Autumn leaves.

"It is old--and strange," he said, his eyes going from Berry to Ingolby and back again with a veiled look, as though he had drawn down blinds before his inmost thoughts. "It was not made by a professional."

"It was made in the cotton-field by a slave," observed old Berry sharply, yet with a content which overrode antipathy to his visitor.

Jethro put the fiddle to his chin, and drew the bow twice or thrice sweepingly across the strings. Such a sound had never come from Berry's violin before. It was the touch of a born musician who certainly had skill, but who had infinitely more of musical passion.

"Made by a slave in the cotton-fields!" Jethro said with a veiled look, and as though he was thinking of something else: "'Dordi', I'd like to meet a slave like that!"

At the Romany exclamation Ingolby swept the man with a searching look. He had heard the Romany wife of Ruliff Zaphe use the word many years ago when he and Charley Long visited the big white house on the hill. Was the man a Romany, and, if so, what was he doing here? Had it anything to do with Gabriel Druse and his daughter? But no--what was there strange

in the man being a Romany and playing the fiddle? Here and there in the West during the last two years, he had seen what he took to be Romany faces. He looked to see the effect of the stranger's remark on old Berry.

"I was a slave, and I was like that. My father made that fiddle in the cotton-fields of Georgia," the aged barber said.

The son of a race which for centuries had never known country or flag or any habitat, whose freedom was the soul of its existence, if it had a soul; a freedom defying all the usual laws of social order--the son of that race looked at the negro barber with something akin to awe. Here was a man who had lived a life which was the staring antithesis of his own, under the whip as a boy, confined to compounds; whose vision was constricted to the limits of an estate; who was at the will of one man, to be sold and trafficked with like a barrel of herrings, to be worked at another's will--and at no price! This was beyond the understanding of Jethro Fawe. But awe has the outward look of respect, and old Berry who had his own form of vanity, saw that he had had a rare effect on the fellow, who evidently knew all about fiddles. Certainly that was a wonderful sound he had produced from his own cotton-field fiddle.

In the pause Ingolby said to Jethro Fawe, "Play something, won't you? I've got business here with Mr. Berry, but five minutes of good music won't matter. We'd like to hear him play--wouldn't we, Berry?"

The old man nodded assent. "There's plenty of music in the thing," he said, "and a lot could come out in five minutes, if the right man played it."

His words were almost like a challenge, and it reached to Jethro's innermost nature. He would show this Gorgio robber what a Romany could do, and do as easily as the birds sing. The Gorgio was a money-master, they said, but he would find that a Romany was a master, too, in his own way. He thought of one of the first pieces he had ever heard, a rhapsody which had grown and grown, since it was first improvised by a Tzigany in Hungary. He had once played it to an English lady at the Amphitryon Club in London, and she had swooned in the arms of her husband's best friend. He had seen men and women avert their heads when he had played it, daring not to look into each other's eyes. He would play it now--a little of it. He would play it to her--to the girl who had set him free in the Sagalac woods, to the ravishing deserter from her people, to the only woman who had told him the truth in all his life, and who insulated his magnetism as a ground-wire insulates lightning. He would summon her here by his imagination, and tell her to note how his soul had caught the music of the spheres. He would surround himself with an atmosphere of his own. His rage, his love, and his malignant hate, his tenderness and his lust should fill the barber's shop with a flood which would drown the Gorgio raider. He laughed to himself, almost unconsciously. Then suddenly he leaned his cheek to the instrument and drew the bow across the strings with a savage softness. The old cottonfield fiddle cried out with a thrilling, exquisite pain, but muffled, as a hand at the lips turns agony into a tender moan. Some one--some spirit--in the fiddle was calling for its own.

Five minutes later--a five minutes in which people gathered at the door of the shop, and heads were thrust inside in ravished wonder--the palpitating Romany lowered the fiddle from his chin, and stood for a minute looking into space, as though he saw a vision.

He was roused by old Berry's voice. "Das a fiddle I wouldn't sell for a t'ousand dollars. If I could play like dat I wouldn't sell it for ten t'ousand. You kin play a fiddle to make it worth a lot--you."

The Romany handed back the instrument. "It's got something inside it that makes it better than it is. It's not a good fiddle, but it has something--ah, man alive, it has something!" It was as though he was talking to himself.

Berry made a quick, eager gesture. "It's got the cotton-fields and the slave days in it. It's got the whip and the stocks in it; it's got the cry of the old man that'd never see his children ag'in. That's what the fiddle's got in it."

Suddenly, in an apparent outburst of anger, he swept down on the front door and drove the gathering crowd away.

"Dis is a barber-shop," he said with an angry wave of his hand; "it ain't a circuse."

One man protested. "I want a shave," he said. He tried to come inside, but was driven back.

"I ain't got a razor that'd cut the bristle off your face," the old barber declared peremptorily; "and, if I had, it wouldn't be busy on you. I got two customers, and that's all I'm going to take befo' I have my dinner. So you git away. There ain't goin' to be no more music."

The crowd drew off, for none of them cared to offend this autocrat of the shears and razor.

Ingolby had listened to the music with a sense of being swayed by a wind which blew from all quarters of the compass at once. He loved music; it acted as a clearing-house to his mind; and he played the piano himself with the enthusiasm of a wilful amateur, who took liberties with every piece he essayed. There was something in this fellow's playing which the great masters, such as Paganini, must have had. As the music ceased, he did not speak, but remained leaning against the great red-plush barber's chair looking reflectively at the Romany. Berry, however, said to the still absorbed musician: "Where did you learn to play?"

The Romany started, and a flush crossed his face. "Everywhere," he answered sullenly.

"You've got the thing Sarasate had," Ingolby observed. "I only heard him play but once--in London years ago: but there's the same something in it. I bought a fiddle of Sarasate. I've got it now."

"Here in Lebanon?" The eyes of the Romany were burning. An idea had just come into his brain. Was it through his fiddling that he was going to find a way to deal with this Gorgio, who had come between him and his own?

"Only a week ago it came," Ingolby replied. "They actually charged me Customs duty on it. I'd seen it advertised, and I made an offer and got it at last."

"You have it here--at your house here?" asked old Berry in surprise.

"It's the only place I've got. Did you think I'd put it in a museum? I can't play it, but there it is for any one that can play. How would you like to try it?" he added to Jethro in a friendly tone. "I'd give a good deal to see it under your chin for an hour. Anyhow, I'd like to show it to you. Will you come?"

It was like him to bring matters to a head so quickly.

The Romany's eyes glistened. "To play the Sarasate alone to you?" he asked.

"That's it-at nine o'clock to-night, if you can."

"I will come--yes, I will come," Jethro answered, the lids drooping over his eyes in which were the shadows of the first murder of the created world.

"Here is my address, then." Ingolby wrote something on his visiting-card. "My man'll let you in, if you show that. Well, good-bye."

The Romany took the card, and turned to leave. He had been dismissed by the swaggering Gorgio, as though he was a servant, and he had not even been asked his name, of so little account was he! He could come and play on the Sarasate to the masterful Gorgio at the hour which the masterful Gorgio fixed--think of that! He could be--a servant to the pleasure of the man who was stealing from him the wife sealed to him in the Roumelian country. But perhaps it was all for the best--yes, he would make it all for the best! As he left the shop, however, and passed down the street his mind remained in the barber-shop. He saw in imagination the masterful Gorgio in the red-plush chair, and the negro barber bending over him, with black fingers holding the Gorgio's chin, and an open razor in the right hand lightly grasped. A flash of malicious desire came into his eyes as the vision shaped itself in his imagination, and he saw himself, instead of the negro barber, holding the Gorgio chin and looking down at the Gorgio throat with the razor, not lightly, but firmly grasped in his right hand. How was it that more throats were not cut in that way? How was it that while the scissors passed through the beard of a man's face the points did not suddenly slip up and stab the light from helpless eyes? How was it that men did not use their chances? He went lightly down the street, absorbed in a vision which was not like the reality; but it was evidence that his visit to Max Ingolby's house was not the visit of a virtuoso alone, but of an evil spirit.

As the Romany disappeared, Max Ingolby had his hand on the old barber's shoulder. "I want one of the wigs you made for that theatrical performance of the Mounted Police, Berry," he said. "Never mind what it's for. I want it at once--one with the long hair of a French-Canadian coureur-de-bois. Have you got one?"

"Suh, I'll send it round-no, I'll bring it round as I come from dinner. Want the clothes, too?"

"No. I'm arranging for them with Osterhaut. I've sent word by Jowett."

"You want me to know what it's for?"

"You can know anything I know--almost, Berry. You're a friend of the right sort, and I can trust you."

"Yeth-'ir, I bin some use to you, onct or twict, I guess."

"You'll have a chance to be of use more than ever presently."

"Suh, there's gain' to be a bust-up, but I know who's comin' out on the top. That Felix Marchand and his roughs can't down you. I hear and see a lot, and there's two or three things I was goin' to put befo' you; yeth-'ir."

He unloaded his secret information to his friend, and was rewarded by Ingolby suddenly shaking his hand warmly.

"That's the line," Ingolby said decisively. "When do you go over to Manitou again to cut old Hector Marchand's hair? Soon?"

"To-day is his day--this evening," was the reply.

"Good. You wanted to know what the wig and the habitant's clothes are for, Berry--well, for me to wear in Manitou. In disguise I'm going there tonight among them all, among the roughs and toughs. I want to find out things for myself. I can speak French as good as most of 'em, and I can chew tobacco and swear with the best."

"You suhly are a wonder," said the old man admiringly. "How you fin' the time I got no idee."

"Everything in its place, Berry, and everything in its time. I've got a lot to do to-day, but it's in hand, and I don't have to fuss. You'll not forget the wig--you'll bring it round yourself?"

"Suh. No snoopin' into the parcel then. But if you go to Manitou to-night, how can you have that fiddler?"

"He comes at nine o'clock. I'll go to Manitou later. Everything in its own time."

He was about to leave the shop when some one came bustling in. Berry was between Ingolby and the door, and for an instant he did not see who it was. Presently he heard an unctuous voice: "Ah, good day, good day, Mr. Berry. I want to have my hair cut, if you please," it said.

Ingolby smiled. The luck was with him to-day so far. The voice belonged to the Rev. Reuben Tripple, and he would be saved a journey to the manse. Accidental meetings were better than planned interviews. Old Berry's grizzled beard was bristling with repugnance, and he was about to refuse Mr. Tripple the hospitality of the shears when Ingolby said: "You won't mind my having a word with Mr. Tripple first, will you, Berry? May we use your back parlour?"

A significant look from Ingolby's eyes gave Berry his cue.

"Suh, Mr. Ingolby. I'm proud." He opened the door of another room.

Mr. Tripple had not seen Ingolby when he entered, and he recognized him now with a little shock of surprise. There was no reason why he should not care to meet the Master Man, but he always had an uncanny feeling when his eye met that of Ingolby. His apprehension had no foundation in any knowledge, yet he had felt that Ingolby had no love for him, and this

disturbed the egregious vanity of a narrow nature. His slouching, corpulent figure made an effort to resist the gesture with which Ingolby drew him to the door, but his will succumbed, and he shuffled importantly into the other room.

Ingolby shut the door quietly behind him, and motioned the minister to a chair beside the table. Tripple sank down, mechanically smiling, placed his hat on the floor, and rested his hands on the table. Ingolby could not help but notice how coarse the hands were--with fingers suddenly ending as though they had been cut off, and puffy, yellowish skin that suggested fat foods, or worse.

Ingolby came to grips at once. "You preached a sermon last night which no doubt was meant to do good, but will only do harm," he said abruptly.

The flabby minister flushed, and then made an effort to hold his own.

"I speak as I am moved," he said, puffing out his lips. "You spoke on this occasion before you were moved--just a little while before," answered Ingolby grimly. "The speaking was last night, the moving comes today."

"I don't get your meaning," was the thick rejoinder. The man had a feeling that there was some real danger ahead.

"You preached a sermon last night which might bring riot and bloodshed between these two towns, though you knew the mess that's brewing."

"My conscience is my own. I am responsible to my Lord for words which I speak in His name, not to you."

"Your conscience belongs to yourself, but your acts belong to all of us. If there is trouble at the Orange funeral to-morrow it will be your fault. The blame will lie at your door."

"The sword of the Spirit--"

"Oh, you want the sword, do you? You want the sword, eh?" Ingolby's jaw was set now like a millstone. "Well, you can have it, and have it now. If you had taken what I said in the right way, I would not have done what I'm going to do. I'm going to send you out of Lebanon. You're a bad and dangerous element here. You must go."

"Who are you to tell me I must go?"

The fat hands quivered on the table with anger and emotion, but also with fear of something. "You may be a rich man and own railways, but--"

"But I am not rich and I don't own railways. Lately bad feeling has been growing on the Sagalac, and only a spark was needed to fire the ricks. You struck the spark in your sermon last night. I don't see the end of it all. One thing is sure--you're not going to take the funeral service to-morrow."

The slack red lips of the man of God were gone dry with excitement, the loose body swayed with the struggle to fight it out.

"I'll take no orders from you," the husky voice protested. "My conscience alone will guide me. I'll speak the truth as I feel it, and

the people will stand by me."

"In that case you WILL take orders from me. I'm going to save the town from what hurts it, if I can. I've got no legal rights over you, but I have moral rights, and I mean to enforce them. You gabble of conscience and truth, but isn't it a new passion with you--conscience and truth?"

He leaned over the table and fastened the minister's eyes with his own. "Had you the same love of conscience and truth at Radley?"

A whiteness passed over the flabby face, and the beady eyes took on a glazed look. Fight suddenly died out of them.

"You went on a missionary tour on the Ottawa River. At Radley you toiled and rested from your toil--and feasted. The girl had no father or brother, but her uncle was a railway-man. He heard where you were, and he hired with my company to come out here as a foreman. He came to drop on you. The day after he came he had a bad accident. I went to see him. He told me all; his nerves were unstrung, you observe. He meant to ruin you, as you ruined the girl. He had proofs enough. The girl herself is in Winnipeg. Well, I know life, and I know man and man's follies and temptations. I thought it a pity that a career and a life like yours should be ruined--"

A groan broke from the twitching lips before him, and a heavy sweat stood out on the round, rolling forehead.

"If the man spoke, I knew it would be all up with you, for the world is very hard on men of God who fall. I've seen men ruined before this, because of an hour's passion and folly. I said to myself that you were only human, and that maybe you had paid heavy in remorse and fear. Then there was the honour of the town of Lebanon. I couldn't let the thing take its course. I got the doctor to tell the man that he must go for special treatment to a hospital in Montreal, and I--well, I bought him off on his promising to keep his mouth shut. He was a bit stiff in terms, because he said the girl needed the money. The child died, luckily for you. Anyhow I bought him off, and he went. That was a year ago. I've got all the proofs in my pocket, even to the three silly letters you wrote her when your senses were stronger than your judgment. I was going to see you about them to-day."

He took from his pocket a small packet, and held them before the other's face. "Have a good look at your own handwriting, and see if you recognize it," Ingolby continued.

But the glazed, shocked eyes did not see. Reuben Tripple had passed the several stages of horror during Ingolby's merciless arraignment, and he had nearly collapsed before he heard the end of the matter. When he knew that Ingolby had saved him, his strength gave way, and he trembled violently. Ingolby looked round and saw a jug of water. Pouring out a glassful, he thrust it into the fat, wrinkled fingers.

"Drink and pull yourself together," he said sternly. The shaken figure straightened itself, and the water was gulped down. "I thank you," he said in a husky voice.

"You see I treated you fairly, and that you've been a fool?" Ingolby asked with no lessened determination.

"I have tried to atone, and--"

"No, you haven't had the right spirit to atone. You were fat with vanity and self-conceit. I've watched you."

"In future I will--"

"Well, that rests with yourself, but your health is bad, and you're not going to take the funeral tomorrow. You've had a sudden breakdown, and you're going to get a call from some church in the East--as far East as Yokohama or Bagdad, I hope; and leave here in a few weeks. You understand? I've thought the thing out, and you've got to go. You'll do no good to yourself or others here. Take my advice, and wherever you go, walk six miles a day at least, work in a garden, eat half as much as you do, and be good to your wife. It's bad enough for any woman to be a parson's wife, but to be a parson's wife and your wife, too, wants a lot of fortitude."

The heavy figure lurched to the upright, and steadied itself with a force which had not yet been apparent.

"I'll do my best--so help me God!" he said and looked Ingolby squarely in the face for the first time.

"All right, see you keep your word," Ingolby replied, and nodded good-bye.

The other went to the door, and laid a hand on the knob.

Suddenly Ingolby stopped him, and thrust a little bundle of bills into his hand. "There's a hundred dollars for your wife. It'll pay the expense of moving," he said.

A look of wonder, revelation and gratitude crept into Tripple's face. "I will keep my word, so help me God!" he said again.

"All right, good-bye," responded Ingolby abruptly, and turned away.

A moment afterwards the door closed behind the Rev. Reuben Tripple and his influence in Lebanon. "I couldn't shake hands with him," said Ingolby to himself, "but I'm glad he didn't sniffle. There's some stuff in him--if it only has a chance."

"I've done a good piece of business, Berry," he said cheerfully as he passed through the barber-shop. "Suh, if you say so," said the barber, and they left the shop together.

CHAPTER IX

MATTER AND MIND AND TWO MEN

Promptly at nine o'clock Jethro Fawe knocked at Ingolby's door, and was admitted by the mulatto man-servant Jim Beadle, who was to Ingolby like his right hand. It was Jim who took command of his house, "bossed" his two female servants, arranged his railway tours, superintended his kitchen--with a view to his own individual tastes; valeted him, kept his

cigars within a certain prescribed limit by a firm actuarial principle which transferred any surplus to his own use; gave him good advice, weighed up his friends and his enemies with shrewd sense; and protected him from bores and cranks, borrowers and "dead-beats."

Jim was accustomed to take a good deal of responsibility, and had more than once sent people to the right-about who had designs on his master, even though they came accredited. On such occasions he did not lie to protect himself when called to account, but told the truth pertinaciously. He was obstinate in his vanity, and carried off his mistakes with aplomb. When asked by Ingolby what he called the Governor General when he took His Excellency over the new railway in Ingolby's private car, he said, "I called him what everybody called him. I called him 'Succelency.'" And "Succelency" for ever after the Governor General was called in the West. Jim's phonetic mouthful gave the West a roar of laughter and a new word to the language. On another occasion Jim gave the West a new phrase to its vocabulary which remains to this day. Having to take the wife of a high personage of the neighbouring Republic over the line in the private car, he had astounded his master by presenting a bill for finger-bowls before the journey began. Ingolby said to him, "Jim, what the devil is this--finger-bowls in my private car? We've never had finger-bowls before, and we've had everybody as was anybody to travel with us." Jim's reply was final. "Say," he replied, "we got to have 'em. Soon's I set my eyes on that lady I said: 'She's a finger-bowl lady.'"

"'Finger-bowl lady' be hanged, Jim, we don't--" Ingolby protested, but Jim waved him down.

"Say," he said decisively, "she'll ask for them finger-bowls--she'll ask for 'em, and what'd I do if we hadn't got 'em."

She did ask for them; and henceforth the West said of any woman who put on airs and wanted what she wasn't born to: "She's a finger-bowl lady."

It was Jim who opened the door to Jethro Fawe, and his first glance was one of prejudice. His quick perception saw that the Romany wore clothes not natural to him. He felt the artificial element, the quality of disguise. He was prepared to turn the visitor away, no matter what he wanted, but Ingolby's card handed to him by the Romany made him pause. He had never known his master give a card like that more than once or twice in the years they had been together. He fingered the card, scrutinized it carefully, turned it over, looked heavenward reflectively, as though the final permission for the visit remained with him, and finally admitted the visitor.

"Mr. Ingolby ain't in," he said. "He went out a little while back. You got to wait," he added sulkily, as he showed the Romany into Ingolby's working-room.

As Jim did so, he saw lying on a chair a suit of clothes on top of which were a wig and false beard and moustache. Instantly he got between the visitor and the make-up. The parcel was closed when he was in the room a half-hour before. Ingolby had opened it since, had been called out, and had forgotten to cover the things up or put them away.

"Sit down," Jim said to the Romany, still covering the disguise. Then he raised them in his arms, and passed with them into another room, muttering angrily to himself.

The Romany had seen, however. They were the first things on which his eyes had fallen when he entered the room. A wig, a false beard, and workman's clothes! What were they for? Were these disguises for the Master Gorgio? Was he to wear them? If so, he--Jethro Fawe--would watch and follow him wherever he went. Had these disguises to do with Fleda--with his Romany lass?

His pulses throbbed; he was in an overwrought mood. He was ready for any illusion, susceptible to any vagary of the imagination.

He looked round the room. So this was the way the swaggering, masterful Gorgio lived?

Here were pictures and engravings which did not seem to belong to a new town in a new land, where everything was useful or spectacular. Here was a sense of culture and refinement. Here were finished and unfinished water-colours done by Ingolby's own hand or bought by him from some hard-up artist earning his way mile by mile, as it were. Here were books, not many, but well-bound and important-looking, covering fields in which Jethro Fawe had never browsed, into which, indeed, he had never entered. If he had opened them he would have seen a profusion of marginal notes in pencil, and slips of paper stuck in the pages to mark important passages.

He turned from them to the welcome array of weapons on the walls--rifles, shotguns, Indian bows, arrows and spears, daggers, and great sheath-knives such as are used from the Yukon to Bolivia, and a sabre with a faded ribbon of silk tied to the handle. This was all that Max Ingolby had inherited from his father--that artillery sabre which he had worn in the Crimea and in the Indian Mutiny. Jethro's eyes wandered eagerly over the weapons, and, in imagination, he had each one in his hand. From the pained, angry confusion he felt when he looked at the books had emerged a feeling of fanaticism, of feud and war, in which his spirit regained its own kind of self-respect. In looking at the weapons he was as good a man as any Gorgio. Brains and books were one thing, but the strong arm, the quick eye, and the deft lunge home with the sword or dagger were better; they were of a man's own skill, not the acquired skill of another's brains which books give. He straightened his shoulders till he looked like a modern actor playing the hero in a romantic drama, and with quick vain motions he stroked and twisted his brown moustache, and ran his fingers through his curling hair. In truth he was no coward; and his conceit would not lessen his courage when the test of it came.

As his eyes brightened from gloom and sullenness to valiant enmity, they suddenly fell on a table in a corner where lay a black coffin-shaped thing of wood. In this case, he knew, was the Sarasate violin. Sarasate--once he had paid ten lira to hear Sarasate play the fiddle in Turin, and the memory of it was like the sun on the clouds to him now. In music such of him as was real found a home. It fed everything in him--his passion, his vanity; his vagabond taste, his emotions, his self-indulgence, his lust. It was the means whereby he raised himself to adventure and to pilgrimage, to love and license and loot and spying and secret service here and there in the east of Europe. It was the flagellation of these senses which excited him to do all that man may do and more.

He was going to play to the masterful Gorgio, and he would play as he had never played before. He would pour the soul of his purpose into the music--to win back or steal back, the lass sealed to him by the Starzke

River.

"Kismet!" he said aloud, and he rose from the chair to go to the violin, but as he did so the door opened and Ingolby entered.

"Oh, you're here, and longing to get at it," he said pleasantly.

He had seen the look in the eyes of the Romany as he entered, and noted which way his footsteps were tending. "Well, we needn't lose any time, but will you have a drink and a smoke first?" he added.

He threw his hat in a corner, and opened a spirittable where shone a half dozen cut-glass, tumblers and several well-filled bottles, while boxes of cigars and cigarettes flanked them. It was the height of modern luxury imported from New York, and Jethro eyed it with envious inward comment. The Gorgio had the world on his key-chain! Every door would open to him --that was written on his face--unless Fate stepped in and closed all doors!

The door of Fleda's heart had already been opened, but he had not yet made his bed in it, and there was still time to help Fate, if her mystic finger beckoned.

Jethro nodded in response to Ingolby's invitation to drink. "But I do not drink much when I play," he remarked. "There's enough liquor in the head when the fiddle's in the hand. 'Dadia', I do not need the spirit to make the pulses go!"

"As little as you like then, if you'll only play as well as you did this afternoon," Ingolby said cheerily. "I will play better," was the reply.

"On Sarasate's violin--well, of course."

"Not only because it is Sarasate's violin, 'Kowadji!'" "Kowadji! Oh, come now, you may be a Gipsy, but that doesn't mean that you're an Egyptian or an Arab. Why Arabic--why 'kowadji'?"

The other shrugged his shoulders. "Who can tell I speak many languages. I do not like the Mister. It is ugly in the ear. Monsieur, signor, effendi, kowadji, they have some respect in them."

"You wanted to pay me respect, eh?"

"You have Sarasate's violin!"

"I have a lot of things I could do without."

"Could you do without the Sarasate?"

"Long enough to hear you play it, Mr.--what is your name, may I ask?"

"My name is Jethro Fawe."

"Well, Jethro Fawe, my Romany 'chal', you shall show me what a violin can do."

"You know the Romany lingo?" Jethro asked, as Ingolby went over to the violin-case.

"A little--just a little."

"When did you learn it?" There was a sudden savage rage in Jethro's heart, for he imagined Fledda had taught Ingolby.

"Many a year ago when I could learn anything and remember anything and forget anything." Ingolby sighed. "But that doesn't matter, for I know only a dozen words or so, and they won't carry me far."

He turned the violin over in his hands. "This ought to do a bit more than the cotton-field fiddle," he said dryly.

He snapped the strings, looking at it with the love of the natural connoisseur. "Finish your drink and your cigarette. I can wait," he added graciously. "If you like the cigarettes, you must take some away with you. You don't drink much, that's clear, therefore you must smoke. Every man has some vice or other, if it's only hanging on to virtue too tight."

He laughed eagerly. Strange that he should have a feeling of greater companionship for a vagabond like this than for most people he met. Was it some temperamental thing in him? "Dago," as he called the Romany inwardly, there was still a bond between them. They understood the glory of a little instrument like this, and could forget the world in the light on a great picture. There was something in the air they breathed which gave them easier understanding of each other and of the world.

Suddenly with a toss Jethro drained the glass of spirit, though he had not meant to do so. He puffed the cigarette an instant longer, then threw it on the floor, and was about to put his foot on it, when Ingolby stopped him.

"I'm a slave," he said. "I've got a master. It's Jim. Jim's a hard master, too. He'd give me fits if we ground our cigarette ashes into the carpet."

He threw the refuse into a flower-pot.

"That squares Jim. Now let's turn the world inside out," he proceeded. He handed the fiddle over. "Here's the little thing that'll let you do the trick. Isn't it a beauty, Jethro Fawe?"

The Romany took it, his eyes glistening with mingled feelings. Hatred was in his soul, and it showed in the sidelong glance as Ingolby turned to place a chair where he could hear and see comfortably; yet he had the musician's love of the perfect instrument, and the woods and the streams and the sounds of night and the whisperings of trees and the ghosts that walked in lonely places and called across the glens--all were pouring into his brain memories which made his pulses move far quicker than the liquor he had drunk could do.

"What do you wish?" he asked as he tuned the fiddle.

Ingolby laughed good-humouredly. "Something Eastern; something you'd play for yourself if you were out by the Caspian Sea. Something that has life in it."

Jethro continued to tune the fiddle carefully and abstractedly. His eyes were half-closed, giving them a sulky look, and his head was averted. He

made no reply to Ingolby, but his head swayed from side to side in that sensuous state produced by self-hypnotism, so common among the half-Eastern races. By an effort of the will they send through the nerves a flood of feeling which is half-anaesthetic, half-intoxicant. Carried into its fullest expression it drives a man amok or makes of him a howling dervish, a fanatic, or a Shakir. In lesser intensity it produces the musician of the purely sensuous order, or the dancer that performs prodigies of abandoned grace. Suddenly the sensuous exaltation had come upon Jethro Fawe. It was as though he had discharged into his system from some cells of his brain a flood which coursed like a stream of soft fire.

In the pleasurable pain of such a mood he drew his bow across the strings with a sweeping stroke, and then, for an instant, he ran hither and thither on the strings testing the quality and finding the range and capacity of the instrument. It was a scamper of hieroglyphics which could only mean anything to a musician.

"Well, what do you think of him?" Ingolby asked as the Romany lowered the bow. "Paganini--Joachim--Sarasate--any one, it is good enough," was the half-abstracted reply.

"It is good enough for you--almost, eh?"

Ingolby meant his question as a compliment, but an evil look shot into the Romany's face, and the bow twitched in his hand. He was not Paganini or Sarasate, but that was no reason why he should be insulted.

Ingolby's quick perception saw, however, what his words had done, and he hastened to add: "I believe you can get more out of that fiddle than Sarasate ever could, in your own sort of music anyhow. I've never heard any one play half so well the kind of piece you played this afternoon. I'm glad I didn't make a fool of myself buying the fiddle. I didn't, did I? I gave five thousand dollars for it."

"It's worth anything to the man that loves it," was the Romany's response. He was mollified by the praise he had received.

He raised the fiddle slowly to his chin, his eyes wandering round the room, then projecting themselves into space, from which they only returned to fix themselves on Ingolby with the veiled look which sees but does not see--such a look as an oracle, or a death-god, or a soulless monster of some between-world, half-Pagan god would wear. Just such a look as Watts's "Minotaur" wears in the Tate Gallery in London.

In an instant he was away in a world which was as far off from this world as Jupiter is from Mars. It was the world of his soul's origin--a place of beautiful and yet of noisome creations also; of white mountains and green hills, and yet of tarns in which crawled evil things; a place of vagrant, hurricanes and tidal-waves and cloud-bursts, of forests alive with quarrelling! and affrighted beasts. It was a place where birds sang divinely, yet where obscene fowls of prey hovered in the blue or waited by the dying denizens of the desert or the plain; where dark-eyed women heard, with sidelong triumph, the whispers of passion; where sweet-faced children fled in fear from terrors undefined; where harpies and witch-women and evil souls waited in ambush; or scurried through the coverts where men brought things to die; or where they fled for futile refuge from armed foes. It was a world of unbridled will, this, where

the soul of Jethro Fawe had its origin; and to it his senses fled involuntarily when he put Sarasate's fiddle to his chin this Autumn evening.

From that well of the First Things--the first things of his own life, the fount from which his forebears drew, backwards through the centuries, Jethro Fawe quickly drank his fill; and then into the violin he poured his own story--no improvisation, but musical legends and classic fantasies and folk-breathings and histories of anguished or joyous haters or lovers of life; treated by the impressionist who made that which had been in other scenes to other men the thing of the present and for the men who are. That which had happened by the Starzke River was now of the Sagalac River. The passions and wild love and irresponsible deeds of the life he had lived in years gone by were here.

It was impossible for Ingolby to resist the spell of the music. Such abandonment he had never seen in any musician, such riot of musical meaning he had never heard. He was conscious of the savagery and the bestial soul of vengeance which spoke through the music, and drowned the joy and radiance and almost ghostly and grotesque frivolity of the earlier passages; but it had no personal meaning to him, though at times it seemed when the Romany came near and bent over him with the ecstatic attack of the music, as though there was a look in the black eyes like that of a man who kills. It had, of course, nothing to do with him; it was the abandonment of a highly emotional nature, he thought.

It was only after he had been playing, practically without ceasing, for three-quarters of an hour, that there came to Ingolby the true interpretation of the Romany mutterings through the man's white, wolf-like teeth. He did not shrink, however, but kept his head and watched.

Once, as the musician flung his body round in a sweep of passion, Ingolby saw the black eyes flash to the weapons on the wall with a malign look which did not belong to the music alone, and he took a swift estimate of the situation. Why the man should have any intentions against him, he could not guess, except that he might be one of the madmen who have a vendetta against the capitalist. Or was he a tool of Felix Marchand? It did not seem possible, and yet if the man was penniless and an anarchist maybe, there was the possibility. Or--the blood rushed to his face--or it might be that the Gipsy's presence here, this display of devilish antipathy, as though it were all part of the music, was due, somehow, to Fleda Druse.

The music swelled to a swirling storm, crashed and flooded the feelings with a sense of shipwreck and chaos, through which a voice seemed to cry--the quiver and delicate shrillness of one isolated string--and then fell a sudden silence, as though the end of all things had come; and on the silence the trembling and attenuated note which had quivered on the lonely string, rising, rising, piercing the infinite distance and sinking into silence again.

In the pause which followed the Romany stood panting, his eyes fixed on Ingolby with an evil exaltation which made him seem taller and bigger than he was, but gave him, too, a look of debauchery like that on the face of a satyr. Generations of unbridled emotion, of license of the fields and the covert showed in his unguarded features.

"What did the single cry--the motif--express?" Ingolby asked coolly.

"I know there was catastrophe, the tumblings of avalanches, but the voice

that cried-the soul of a lover, was it?"

The Romany's lips showed an ugly grimace. "It was the soul of one that betrayed a lover, going to eternal tortures."

Ingolby laughed carelessly. "It was a fine bit of work. Sarasate would have been proud of his fiddle if he could have heard. Anyhow he couldn't have played that. Is it Gipsy music?"

"It is the music of a 'Gipsy,' as you call it."

"Well, it's worth a year's work to hear," Ingolby replied admiringly, yet acutely conscious of danger. "Are you a musician by trade?" he asked.

"I have no trade." The glowing eyes kept scanning the wall where the weapons hung, and as though without purpose other than to get a pipe from the rack on the wall, Ingolby moved to where he could be prepared for any rush. It seemed absurd that there should be such a possibility; but the world was full of strange things.

"What brought you to the West?" he asked as he filled a pipe, his back almost against the wall.

"I came to get what belonged to me."

Ingolby laughed ironically. "Most of us are here for that purpose. We think the world owes us such a lot."

"I know what is my own."

Ingolby lit his pipe, his eyes reflectively scanning the other.

"Have you got it again out here--your own?"

"Not yet, but I will."

Ingolby took out his watch, and looked at it. "I haven't found it easy getting all that belongs to me."

"You have found it easier getting what belongs to some one else," was the snarling response.

Ingolby's jaw hardened. What did the fellow mean? Did he refer to money, or--was it Fleda Druse? "See here," he said, "there's no need to say things like that. I never took anything that didn't belong to me, that I didn't win, or earn or pay for--market price or 'founder's shares'"--he smiled grimly. "You've given me the best treat I've had in many a day. I'd walk fifty miles to hear you play my Sarasate--or even old Berry's cotton-field fiddle. I'm as grateful as I can be, and I'd like to pay you for it; but as you're not a professional, and it's one gentleman to another as it were, I can only thank you--or maybe help you to get what's your own, if you're really trying to get it out here. Meanwhile, have a cigar and a drink."

He was still between the Romany and the wall, and by a movement forward sought to turn Jethro to the spirit-table. Probably this manoeuvring was all nonsense, that he was wholly misreading the man; but he had always trusted his instincts, and he would not let his reason rule him entirely in such a situation. He could also ring the bell for Jim, or call to

him, for while he was in the house Jim was sure to be near by; but he felt he must deal with the business alone.

The Romany did not move towards the spirit-table, and Ingolby became increasingly vigilant.

"No, I can't pay you anything, that's clear," he said; "but to get your own--I've got some influence out here--what can I do? A stranger is up against all kinds of things if he isn't a native, and you're not. Your home and country's a good way from here, eh?"

Suddenly the Romany faced him. "Yes. I come from places far from here. Where is the Romany's home? It is everywhere in the world, but it is everywhere inside his tent. Because his country is everywhere and nowhere, his home is more to him than it is to any other. He is alone with his wife, and with his own people. Yes, and by long and by last, he will make the man pay who spoils his home. It is all he has. Good or bad, it is all he has. It is his own."

Ingolby had a strange, disturbing premonition that he was about to hear what would startle him, but he persisted. "You said you had come here to get your own--is your home here?"

For a moment the Romany did not answer. He had worked himself into a great passion. He had hypnotized himself, he had acted for a while as though he was one of life's realities; but suddenly there passed through his veins the chilling sense of the unreal, that he was only acting a part, as he had ever done in his life, and that the man before him could, with a wave of the hand, raise the curtain on all his disguises and pretences. It was only for an instant, however, for there swept through him the feeling that Fleda had roused in him--the first real passion, the first true love--if what such as he felt can be love--that he had ever known; and he saw her again as she was in the but in the wood defying him, ready to defend herself against him. All his erotic anger and melodramatic fervour were alive in him once more.

He was again a man with a wrong, a lover dispossessed. On the instant his veins filled with passionate blood. The Roscian strain in him had its own tragic force and reality.

"My home is where my own is, and you, have taken my own from me, as I said," he burst out. "There was all the world for you, but I had only my music and my wife, and you have taken my wife from me. 'Mi Duvel', you have taken, but you shall give back again, or there will be only one of us in the world! The music I have played for you--that has told you all: the thing that was music from the beginning of Time, the will of the First of All. Fleda Druse, she was mine, she is my wife, and you, the Gorgio, come between, and she will not return to me."

A sudden savage desire came to Ingolby to strike the man in the face--this Gipsy vagabond the husband of Fleda Druse! It was too monstrous. It was an evil lie, and yet she had said she was a Romany, and had said it with apparent shame or anxiety. She had given him no promise, had pledged no faith, had admitted no love, and yet already in his heart of hearts he thought upon her as his own. Ever since the day he had held her in his arms at the Carillon Rapids her voice had sounded in his ears, and a warmth was in his heart which had never been there in all his days. This waif of barbarism even to talk of Fleda Druse as though he was of the same sphere as herself invited punishment-but to claim her as his

wife! It was shameless. An ugly mood came on him, the force that had made him what he was filled all his senses. He straightened himself; contempt of the Ishmael showed at his lips.

"I think you lie, Jethro Fawe," he said quietly, and his eyes were hard and piercing. "Gabriel Druse's daughter is not--never was--any wife of yours. She never called you husband. She does not belong to the refuse of the world."

The Romany made a sudden rush towards the wall where the weapons hung, but two arms of iron were flung out and caught him, and he was hurled across the room. He crashed against a table, swayed, missed a chair where rested the Sarasate violin, then fell to the floor; but he staggered to his feet again, all his senses in chaos.

"You almost fell on the fiddle. If you had hurt it I'd have hurt you, Mr. Fawe," Ingolby said with a grim smile. "That fiddle's got too much in it to waste it."

"Mi Duvel! Mi Duvel!" gasped the Romany in his fury.

"You can say that as much as you like, but if you play any more of your monkey tricks here, my Paganini, I will wring your neck," Ingolby returned, his six feet of solid flesh making a movement of menace.

"And look," he added, "since you are here, and I said what I meant, that I'd help you to get your own, I'll keep my word. But don't talk in damned riddles. Talk white men's language. You said that Gabriel Druse's daughter was your wife. Explain what you meant, and no nonsense."

The Romany made a gesture of acquiescence. "She was made mine according to Romany law by the River Starzke seventeen years ago. I was the son of Lemuel Fawe, rightful King of all the Romanys. Gabriel Druse seized the headship, and my father gave him three thousand pounds that we should marry, she and I, and so bring the headship to the Fawes again when Gabriel Druse should die; and so it was done by the River Starzke in the Roumelian country."

Ingolby winced, for the man's words rang true. A cloud came over his face, but he said nothing. Jethro saw the momentary advantage. "You did not know?" he asked. "She did not tell you she was made my wife those years ago? She did not tell you she was the daughter of the Romany King? So it is, you see, she is afraid to tell the truth."

Ingolby's knitted bulk heaved with desire to injure. "Your wife--you melodious sinner! Do you think such tomfoolery has any effect in this civilized country? She is about as much your wife as I am your brother. Don't talk your heathenish rot here. I said I'd help you to get your own, because you played the fiddle as few men can play it, and I owe you a lot for that hour's music; but there's nothing belonging to Gabriel Druse that belongs to you, and his daughter least of all. Look out--don't sit on the fiddle, damn you!"

The Romany had made a motion as if to sit down on the chair where the fiddle was, but stopped short at Ingolby's warning. For an instant Jethro had an inclination to seize the fiddle and break it across his knees. It would be an exquisite thing to destroy five thousand dollars' worth of this man's property at a single wrench and blow. But the spirit

of the musician asserted itself before the vengeful lover could carry out his purpose; as Ingolby felt sure it would. Ingolby had purposely given the warning about the fiddle, in the belief that it might break the unwelcome intensity of the scene. He detested melodrama, and the scene came precious near to it. Men had been killed before his eyes more than once, but there had been no rodomontade even when there had been a woman in the case.

This Romany lover, however, seemed anxious to make a Sicilian drama out of his preposterous claim, and it sickened him. Who was the fellow that he should appear in the guise of a rival to himself! It was humiliating and offensive. Ingolby had his own kind of pride and vanity, and they were both hurt now. He would have been less irritable if this rival had been as good a man as himself or better. He was so much a gamester that he would have said, "Let the best man win," and have taken his chances.

His involuntary strategy triumphed for the moment. The Romany looked at the fiddle for an instant with murderous eyes, but the cool, quiet voice of Ingolby again speaking sprayed his hot virulence.

"You can make a good musician quite often, but a good fiddle is a prize-packet from the skies," Ingolby said. "When you get a good musician and a good fiddle together it's a day for a salute of a hundred guns."

Half-dazed with unregulated emotion, Jethro acted with indecision for a moment, and the fiddle was safe. But he had suffered the indignity of being flung like a bag of bones across the room, and the microbe of insane revenge was in him. It was not to be killed by the cold humour of the man who had worsted him. He returned to the attack.

"She is mine, and her father knows it is so. I have waited all these years, and the hour has come. I will--"

Ingolby's eyes became hard and merciless again. "Don't talk your Gipsy rhetoric. I've had enough. No hour has come that makes a woman do what she doesn't want to do in a free country. The lady is free to do what she pleases here within British law, and British law takes no heed of Romany law or any other law. You'll do well to go back to your Roumelian country or whatever it is. The lady will marry whom she likes."

"She will never marry you," the Romany said huskily and menacingly.

"I have never asked her, but if I do, and she said yes, no one could prevent it."

"I would prevent it."

"How?"

"She is a Romany: she belongs to the Romany people; I will find a way."

Ingolby had a flash of intuition.

"You know well that if Gabriel Druse passed the word, your life wouldn't be worth a day's purchase. The Camorra would not be more certain or more deadly. If you do anything to hurt the daughter of Gabriel Druse, you will pay the full price, and you know it. The Romanys don't love you better than their rightful chief."

"I am their rightful chief."

"Maybe, but if they don't say so, too, you might as well be their rightful slave. You are a genius in your way. Take my advice and return to the trail of the Gipsy. Or, there's many an orchestra would give you a good salary as leader. You've got no standing in this country. You can't do anything to hurt me except try to kill me, and I'll take my chance of that. You'd better have a drink now and go quietly home to bed. Try and understand that this is a British town, and we don't settle our affairs by jumping from a violin rhapsody to a knife or a gun." He jerked his head backwards towards the wall. "Those things are for ornament, not for use. Come, Fawe, have a drink and go home like a good citizen for one night only."

The Romany hesitated, then shook his head and muttered chaotically.

"Very well," was the decisive reply. Ingolby pressed a bell, and, in an instant, Jim Beadle was in the room. He had evidently been at the keyhole. "Jim," he said, "show the gentleman out."

But suddenly he caught up a box of cigars from the table and thrust it into the Romany's hands. "They're the best to be got this side of Havana," he said cheerily. "They'll help you put more fancy still into your playing. Good night. You never played better than you've done during the last hour, I'll stake my life on that. Good night. Show Mr. Fawe out, Jim."

The Romany had not time to thrust back the cigars upon his host, and dazed by the strategy of the thing, by the superior force and mind of the man who a moment ago he would have killed, he took the box and turned towards the door, taking his hat dazedly from Jim.

At the door, however, catching sight of the sly grin on the mulatto servant's face, his rage and understanding returned to him, and he faced the masterful Gorgio once again.

"By God, I'll have none of it!" he exclaimed roughly and threw the box of cigars on the floor of the room. Ingolby was not perturbed. "Don't forget there's an east-bound train every day," he said menacingly, and turned his back as the door closed.

In another minute Jim entered the room. "Get the clothes and the wig and things, Jim. I must be off," he said.

"The toughs don't get going till about this time over at Manitou," responded Jim. Then he told his master about the clothes having been exposed in the room when the Romany arrived. "But I don't think he seen them," Jim added with approval of his own conduct. "I got 'em out quick as lightning. I covered 'em like a blanket."

"All right, Jim; it doesn't matter. That fellow's got other things to think of than that."

He was wrong, however. The Romany was waiting outside in the darkness not far away--watching and waiting.

CHAPTER X

FOR LUCK

Felix Marchand was in the highest spirits. His clean-shaven face was wrinkled with smiles and sneers. His black hair was flung in waves of triumph over his heavily-lined forehead; one hand was on his hip with brave satisfaction, the other with lighted cigarette was tossed upwards in exultation.

"I've got him. I've got him--like that!" he said transferring the cigarette to his mouth, and clenching his right hand as though it could not be loosed by an earthquake. "For sure, it's a thing finished as the solder of a pannikin--like that."

He caught up a tin quart-pot from the bar-counter and showed the soldered bottom of it.

He was alone in the bar of Barbazon's Hotel except for one person--the youngest of the officials who had been retired from the offices of the railways when Ingolby had merged them. This was a man who had got his position originally by nepotism, and represented the worst elements of a national life where the spoils system is rooted in the popular mind. He had, however, a little residue of that discipline which, working in a great industrial organization, begets qualms as to extreme courses.

He looked reflectively at the leaden pot and said in reply: "I'd never believe in anything where that Ingolby is concerned till I had it in the palm of my hand. He's as deep as a well, and when he's quietest it's good to look out. He takes a lot of skinning, that badger."

"He's skinned this time all right," was Marchand's reply. "To-morrow'll be the biggest day Manitou's had since the Indian lifted his wigwam and the white man put down his store. Listen--hear them! They're coming!"

He raised a hand for silence, and a rumbling, ragged roar of voices could be heard without.

"The crowd have gone the rounds," he continued. "They started at Barbazon's and they're winding up at Barbazon's. They're drunk enough to-night to want to do anything, and to-morrow when they've got sore heads they'll do anything. They'll make that funeral look like a squeezed orange; they'll show Lebanon and Master Ingolby that we're to be bosses of our own show. The strike'll be on after the funeral, and after the strike's begun there'll be--eh, bien sur!"

He paused sharply, as though he had gone too far. "There'll be what?" whispered the other; but Marchand made no reply, save to make a warning gesture, for Barbazon, the landlord, had entered behind the bar.

"They're coming back, Barbazon," Marchand said to the landlord, jerking his head towards the front door. The noise of the crowd was increasing, the raucous shouts were so loud that the three had to raise their voices. "You'll do a land-office business to-night," he declared.

Barbazon had an evil face. There were rumours that he had been in gaol in Quebec for robbery, and that after he had served his time he had dug up the money he had stolen and come West. He had started the first saloon at Manitou, and had grown with the place in more senses than one.

He was heavy and thick-set, with huge shoulders, big hands, and beady eyes that looked out of a stolid face where long hours, greed and vices other than drink had left their mark. He never drank spirits, and was therefore ready to take advantage of those who did drink. More than one horse and canoe and cow and ox, and acre of land, in the days when land was cheap, had come to him across the bar-counter. He could be bought, could Barbazon, and he sold more than wine and spirits. He had a wife who had left him twice because of his misdemeanours, but had returned and straightened out his house and affairs once again; and even when she went off with Lick Baldwin, a cattle-dealer, she was welcomed back without reproaches by Barbazon, chiefly because he had no morals, and her abilities were of more value to him than her virtue. On the whole, Gros Barbazon was a bad lot.

At Marchand's words Barbazon shrugged his shoulders. "The more spent to-night, the less to spend to-morrow," he growled.

"But there's going to be spending for a long time," Marchand answered. "There's going to be a riot to-morrow, and there's going to be a strike the next day, and after that there's going to be something else."

"What else?" Barbazon asked, his beady eyes fastened on Marchand's face.

"Something worth while-better than all the rest." Barbazon's low forehead seemed to disappear almost, as he drew the grizzled shock of hair down, by wrinkling his forehead with a heavy frown.

"It's no damn good, m'sieu'," he growled. "Am I a fool? They'll spend money to-night, and tomorrow, and the next day, and when the row is on; and the more they spend then, the less they'll have to spend by-and-by. It's no good. The steady trade for me--all the time. That is my idee. And the something else--what? You think there's something else that'll be good for me? Nom de Dieu, there's nothing you're doing, or mean to do, but'll hurt me and everybody."

"That's your view, is it, Barbazon?" exclaimed Marchand loudly, for the crowd was now almost at the door. "You're a nice Frenchman and patriot. That crowd'll be glad to hear you think they're fools. Suppose they took it into their heads to wreck the place?"

Barbazon's muddy face got paler, but his eyes sharpened, and he leaned over the bar-counter, and said with a snarl: "Go to hell, and say what you like; and then I'll have something to say about something else, m'sieu'."

Marchand was about to reply angrily, but he instantly changed his mind, and before Barbazon could stop him, he sprang over the counter and disappeared into the office behind the bar.

"I won't steal anything, Barbazon," he said over his shoulder as he closed the door behind him.

"I'll see to that," Barbazon muttered stolidly, but with malicious eyes.

The front door was flung open now, and the crowd poured into the room, boisterous, reckless, though some were only sullen, watchful and angry. These last were mostly men above middle age, and of a fanatical and racially bitter type. They were not many, but in one sense they were the backbone and force of the crowd, probably the less intelligent but the

more tenacious and consistent. They were black spots of gathering storm in an electric atmosphere.

All converged upon the bar. Two assistants rushed the drinks along the counter with flourishes, while Barbazon took in the cash and sharply checked the rougher element, who were inclined to treat the bar as a place for looting. Most of them, however, had a wholesome fear of Barbazon, and also most of them wished to stand well with him--credit was a good thing, even in a saloon.

For a little time the room was packed, then some of the more restless spirits, their thirst assuaged, sallied forth to taste the lager and old rye elsewhere, and "raise Cain" in the streets. When they went, it became possible to move about more freely in the big bar-room, at the end of which was a billiard-table. It was notable, however, that the more sullen elements stayed. Some of them were strangers to each other. Manitou was a distributing point for all radiations of the compass, and men were thrown together in its streets who only saw one another once or twice a year--when they went to the woods in the Fall or worked the rivers in the Summer. Some were Mennonites, Doukhobors and Finlanders, some Swedes, Norwegians and Icelanders. Others again were birds of passage who would probably never see Manitou in the future, but they were mostly French, and mostly Catholic, and enemies of the Orange Lodges wherever they were, east or west or north or south. They all had a common ground of unity--half-savage coureurs-de-bois, river-drivers, railway-men, factory hands, cattlemen, farmers, labourers; they had a gift for prejudice, and taking sides on something or other was as the breath of the nostrils to them.

The greater number of the crowd were, however, excitable, good-natured men, who were by instinct friendly, save when their prejudices were excited; and their oaths and exclamations were marvels of droll ingenuity. Most of them were still too good-humoured with drink to be dangerous, but all hoped for trouble at the Orange funeral on principle, and the anticipated strike had elements of "thrill." They were of a class, however, who would swing from what was good-humour to deadly anger in a minute, and turn a wind of mere prejudice into a hurricane of life and death with the tick of a clock. They would all probably go to the Orange funeral to-morrow in a savage spirit. Some of them were loud in denunciation of Ingolby and "the Lebanon gang"; they joked coarsely over the dead Orangeman, but their cheerful violence had not yet the appearance of reality.

One man suddenly changed all that. He was a river-driver of stalwart proportions, with a red handkerchief round his neck, and with loose corded trousers tucked into his boots. He had a face of natural ugliness made almost repulsive by marks of smallpox. Red, flabby lips and an overhanging brow made him a figure which men would avoid on a dark night.

"Let's go over to Lebanon to-night and have it out," he said in French. "That Ingolby--let's go break his windows and give him a dip in the river. He's the curse of this city. Holy, once Manitou was a place to live in, now it's a place to die in! The factories, the mills, they're full of Protes'ants and atheists and shysters; the railway office is gone to Lebanon. Ingolby took it there. Manitou was the best town in the West; it's no good now. Who's the cause? Ingolby's the cause. Name of God, if he was here I'd get him by the throat as quick as winkin'."

He opened and shut his fingers with spasmodic malice, and glared round

the room. "He's going to lock us out if we strike," he added. "He's going to take the bread out of our mouths; he's going to put his heel on Manitou, and grind her down till he makes her knuckle to Lebanon--to a lot of infidels, Protes'ants, and thieves. Who's going to stand it? I say-bagosh, I say, who's going to stand it!"

"He's a friend of the Monseigneur," ventured a factory-hand, who had a wife and children to support, and however partisan, was little ready for that which would stop his supplies.

"Sacre bapteme! That's part of his game," roared the big river-driver in reply. "I'll take the word of Felix Marchand about that. Look at him! That Felix Marchand doesn't try to take the bread out of people's mouths. He gives money here, he gives it there. He wants the old town to stay as it is and not be swallowed up."

"Three cheers for Felix Marchand !" cried some one in the throng. All cheered loudly save one old man with grizzled hair and beard, who leaned against the wall half-way down the room smoking a corncob pipe. He was a French Canadian in dress and appearance, and he spat on the floor like a navvy--he had filled his pipe with the strongest tobacco that one man ever offered to another. As the crowd cheered for Felix Marchand, he made his way up towards the bar slowly. He must have been tall when he was young; now he was stooped, yet there was still something very sinewy about him.

"Who's for Lebanon?" cried the big river-driver with an oath. "Who's for giving Lebanon hell, and ducking Ingolby in the river?"

"I am--I am--I am--all of us!" shouted the crowd. "It's no good waiting for to-morrow. Let's get the Lebs by the scruff to-night. Let's break Ingolby's windows and soak him in the Sagalac. Allons--allons gai!"

Uproar and broken sentences, threats, oaths, and oburgations sounded through the room. There was a sudden movement towards the door, but the exit of the crowd was stopped by a slow but clear voice speaking in French.

"Wait a minute, my friends!" it cried. "Wait a minute. Let's ask a few questions first."

"Who's he?" asked a dozen voices. "What's he going to say?" The mob moved again towards the bar.

The big river-driver turned on the grizzled old man beside the bar-counter with bent shoulders and lazy, drawling speech.

"What've you got to say about it, son?" he asked threateningly.

"Well, to ask a few questions first--that's all," the old man replied.

"You don't belong here, old cock," the other said roughly.

"A good many of us don't belong here," the old man replied quietly. "It always is so. This isn't the first time I've been to Manitou. You're a river-driver, and you don't live here either," he continued.

"What've you got to say about it? I've been coming and going here for ten years. I belong--bagosh, what do you want to ask? Hurry up. We've

got work to do. We're going to raise hell in Lebanon."

"And give hell to Ingolby," shouted some one in the crowd.

"Suppose Ingolby isn't there?" questioned the old man.

"Oh, that's one of your questions, is it?" sneered the big river-driver. "Well, if you knew him as we do, you'd know that it's at night-time he sits studyin' how he'll cut Lebanon's throat. He's home, all right. He's in Lebanon anyhow, and we'll find him."

"Well, but wait a minute--be quiet a bit," said the old man, his eyes blinking slowly at the big riverdriver. "I've been 'round a good deal, and I've had some experience in the world. Did you ever give that Ingolby a chance to tell you what his plans were? Did you ever get close to him and try to figure what he was driving at? There's no chance of getting at the truth if you don't let a man state his case--but no. If he can't make you see his case then is the time to jib, not before."

"Oh, get out!" cried a rowdy English road-maker in the crowd. "We know all right what Ingolby's after."

"Eh, well, what is he after?" asked the old man looking the other in the eye.

"What's he after? Oof-oof-oof, that's what he's after. He's for his own pocket, he's for being boss of all the woolly West. He's after keeping us poor and making himself rich. He's after getting the cinch on two towns and three railways, and doing what he likes with it all; and we're after not having him do it, you bet. That's how it is, old hoss."

The other stroked his beard with hands which, somehow, gave little indication of age, and then, with a sudden jerk forward of his head, he said: "Oh, it's like that, eh? Is that what M'sieu' Marchand told you? That's what he said, is it?"

The big river-driver, eager to maintain his supreme place as leader, lunged forward a step, and growled a challenge.

"Who said it? What does it matter if M'sieu' Marchand said it--it's true. If I said it, it's true. All of us in this room say it, and it's true. Young Marchand says what Manitou says."

The old man's eyes grew brighter--they were exceedingly sharp for one so old, and he said quite gently now:

"M. Marchand said it first, and you all say it afterwards--ah, bah! But listen to me; I know Max Ingolby that you think is such a villain; I know him well. I knew him when he was a little boy and--"

"You was his nurse, I suppose!" cried the Englishman's voice amid a roar of laughter.

"Taught him his A-B-C--was his dear, kind teacher, eh?" hilariously cried another.

The old man appeared not to hear. "I have known him all the years since. He has only been in the West a few years, but he has lived in the world exactly thirty-three years. He never willingly did anybody harm--never.

Since he came West, since he came to the Sagalac, he's brought work to Lebanon and to Manitou. There are hundreds more workmen in both the towns than there were when he came. It was he made others come with much money and build the factories and the mills. Work means money, money means bread, bread means life--so."

The big river-driver, seeing the effect of the old man's words upon the crowd, turned to them with an angry gesture and a sneer.

"I s'pose Ingolby has paid this old skeesicks for talking this swash. We know all right what Ingolby is, and what he's done. He's made war between the two towns--there's hell to pay now on both sides of the Sagalac. He took away the railway offices from here, and threw men out of work. He's done harm to Manitou--he's against Manitou every time."

Murmurs of approval ran through the crowd, though some were silent, looking curiously at the forceful and confident old man. Even his bent shoulders seemed to suggest driving power rather than the weight of years. He suddenly stretched out a hand in command as it were.

"Comrades, comrades," he said, "every man makes mistakes. Even if it was a mistake for Ingolby to take away the offices from Manitou, he's done a big thing for both cities by combining the three railways."

"Monopoly," growled a voice from the crowd. "Not monopoly," the old man replied with a ring to his voice, which made it younger, fresher. "Not monopoly, but better management of the railways, with more wages, more money to spend on things to eat and drink and wear, more dollars in the pocket of everybody that works in Manitou and Lebanon. Ingolby works, he doesn't loaf."

"Oh, gosh all hell, he's a dynamo," shouted a voice from the crowd. "He's a dynamo running the whole show-eh!"

The old man seemed to grow shorter, but as he thrust his shoulders forward, it was like a machine gathering energy and power.

"I'll tell you, friends, what Ingolby is trying to do," he said in a low voice vibrating with that force which belongs neither to age nor youth, but is the permanent activity uniting all ages of a man. "Of course, Ingolby is ambitious and he wants power. He tries to do the big things in the world because there is the big thing to do--for sure. Without such men the big things are never done, and other men have less work to do, and less money and poorer homes. They discover and construct and design and invent and organize and give opportunities. I am a working man, but I know what Ingolby thinks. I know what men think who try to do the big things. I have tried to do them."

The crowd were absolutely still now, but the big river-driver shook himself free of the eloquence, which somehow swayed them all, and said:

"You--you look as if you'd tried to do big things, you do, old skeesicks. I bet you never earned a hundred dollars in your life." He turned to the crowd with fierce gestures. "Let's go to Lebanon and make the place sing," he roared. "Let's get Ingolby out to talk for himself, if he wants to talk. We know what we want to do, and we're not going to be bossed. He's for Lebanon and we're for Manitou. Lebanon means to boss us, Lebanon wants to sit on us because we're Catholics, because we're French, because we're honest."

Again a wave of revolution swept through the crowd. The big river-driver represented their natural instincts, their native fanaticism, their prejudices. But the old man spoke once more.

"Ingolby wants Lebanon and Manitou to come together, not to fall apart," he declared. "He wants peace. If he gets rich here he won't get rich alone. He's working for both towns. If he brings money from outside, that's good for both towns. If he--"

"Shut your mouth, let Ingolby speak for himself," snarled the big river-driver. "Take his dollars out of your pocket and put them on the bar, the dollars Ingolby gives you to say all this. Put them dollars of Ingolby's up for drinks, or we'll give you a jar that'll shake you, old wart-hog."

At that instant a figure forced itself through the crowd, and broke into the packed circle which was drawing closer upon the old man.

It was Jethro Fawe. He flung a hand out towards the old man.

"You want Ingolby--well, that's Ingolby," he shouted.

Like lightning the old man straightened himself, snatched the wig and beard away from his head and face, and with quiet fearlessness said:

"Yes, I am Ingolby."

For an instant there was absolute silence, in which Ingolby weighed his chances. He was among enemies. He had meant only to move among the crowd to discover their attitude, to find things out for himself. He had succeeded, and his belief that Manitou could be swayed in the right direction if properly handled, was correct. Beneath the fanaticism and the racial spirit was human nature; and until Jethro Fawe had appeared, he had hoped to prevent violence and the collision at to-morrow's funeral.

Now the situation was all changed. It was hard to tell what sharp turn things might take. He was about to speak, but suddenly from the crowd there was spat out at him the words, "Spy! Sneak! Spy!"

Instantly the wave of feeling ran against him. He smiled frankly, however, with that droll twist of his mouth which had won so many, and the raillery of his eyes was more friendly than any appeal.

"Spy, if you like, my friends," he said firmly and clearly. "Moses sent spies down into the Land of Promise, and they brought back big bunches of grapes. Well, I've come down into a land of promise. I wanted to know just how you all feel without being told it by some one else. I knew if I came here as Max Ingolby I shouldn't hear the whole truth; I wouldn't see exactly how you see, so I came as one of you, and you must admit, my French is as good as yours almost."

He laughed and nodded at them.

"There wasn't one of you that knew I wasn't a Frenchman. That's in my favour. If I know the French language as I do, and can talk to you in French as I've done, do you think I don't understand the French people, and what you want and how you feel? I'm one of the few men in the West

that can talk your language. I learned it when I was a boy, so that I might know my French fellow-countrymen under the same flag, with the same King and the same national hope. As for your religion, God knows, I wish I was as good a Protestant as lots of you are good Catholics. And I tell you this, I'd be glad to have a minister that I could follow and respect and love as I respect and love Monseigneur Lourde of Manitou. I want to bring these two towns together, to make them a sign of what this country is, and what it can do; to make hundreds like ourselves in Manitou and Lebanon work together towards health, wealth, comfort and happiness. Can't you see, my friends, what I'm driving at? I'm for peace and work and wealth and power--not power for myself alone, but power that belongs to all of us. If I can show I'm a good man at my job, maybe better than others, then I have a right to ask you to follow me. If I can't, then throw me out. I tell you I'm your friend--Max Ingolby is your friend."

"Spy! Spy! Spy!" cried a new voice.

It came from behind the bar. An instant after, the owner of the voice leaped up on the counter. It was Felix Marchand. He had entered by the door behind the bar into Barbazon's office.

"When I was in India," Marchand cried, "I found a snake in the bed. I killed it before it stung me. There's a snake in the bed of Manitou--what are you going to do with it?"

The men swayed, murmured, and shrill shouts of "Marchand! Marchand! Marchand!" went up. The crowd heaved upon Ingolby. "One minute!" he called with outstretched arm and commanding voice. They paused. Something in him made him master of them even then.

At that moment two men were fiercely fighting their way through the crowd towards where Ingolby was. They were Jowett and Osterhaut. Ingolby saw them coming.

"Go back--go back!" he called to them.

Suddenly a drunken navvy standing on a table in front of and to the left of Ingolby seized a horseshoe hanging on the wall, and flung it with an oath.

It caught Ingolby in the forehead, and he fell to the floor without a sound.

A minute afterwards the bar was empty, save for Osterhaut, Jowett, old Barbazon, and his assistants.

Barbazon and Jowett lifted the motionless figure in their arms, and carried it into a little room.

Then Osterhaut picked up the horseshoe tied with its gay blue ribbons, now stained with blood, and put it in his pocket.

"For luck," he said.

CHAPTER XI

THE SENTENCE OF THE PATRIN

Fleda waked suddenly, but without motion; just a wide opening of the eyes upon the darkness, and a swift beating of the heart, but not the movement of a muscle. It was as though some inward monitor, some gnome of the hidden life had whispered of danger to her slumbering spirit. The waking was a complete emergence, a vigilant and searching attention.

There was something on her breast weighing it down, yet with a pressure which was not weight alone, and maybe was not weight at all as weight is understood. Instantly there flashed through her mind the primitive belief that a cat will lie upon the breasts of children and suck their breath away. Strange and even absurd as it was, it seemed to her that a cat was pressing and pressing down upon her breast. There could be no mistaking the feline presence. Now with a sudden energy of the body, she threw the Thing from her, and heard it drop, with the softness of feline feet, on the Indian rug upon the floor.

Then she sprang out of bed, and, feeling for the matches, lit a candle on the small table beside her bed, and moved it round searching for what she thought to be a cat. It was not to be seen. She looked under the bed; it was not there: under the washstand, under the chest of drawers, under the improvised dressing-table; and no cat was to be found. She 173 looked under the chair over which hung her clothes, even behind the dresses and the Indian deerskin cape hanging on the door.

There was no life of any kind save her own in the room, so far as she could see. She laughed nervously, though her heart was still beating hard. That it should beat hard was absurd, for what had she to fear--she who had lived the wild open-air life of many lands, had slept among hills infested by animals the enemy of man, and who when a little girl had faced beasts of prey alone. Yet here in her own safe room on the Sagalac, with its four walls, but its unlocked doors--for Gabriel Druse said that he could not bear that last sign of his exile--here in the fortress of the town-dweller there was a strange trembling of her pulses in the presence of a mere hallucination or nightmare--the first she had had ever. Her dreams in the past had always been happy and without the black fancies of nightmare. On the night that Jethro Fawe had first confronted her father and herself, and he had been carried to the hut in the Wood, her sleep had been disturbed and restless, but dreamless; in her sleep on the night of the day of his release, she had been tossed upon vague clouds of mental unrest; but that was the first really disordered sleep she had ever known.

Holding the candle above her head, she looked in the mirror on her dressing-table, and laughed nervously at the shocked look in her eyes, at the hand pressed upon the bosom whose agitations troubled the delicate linen at her breast. The pale light of the candle, the reflection from the white muslin of her dressing-table and her nightwear, the strange, deep darkness of her eyes, the ungathered tawny hair falling to her shoulders, gave an unusual paleness to her face.

"What a ninny I am!" she said aloud as she looked at herself, her tongue chiding her apprehensive eyes, her laugh contemptuously adding its comment on her tremulousness. "It was a real nightmare--a waking nightmare, that's what it was."

She searched the room once more, however--every corner, under the bed, the

chest of drawers and the dressing-table, before she got into bed again, her feet icily cold. And yet again before settling down she looked round, perplexed and inquiring. Placing the matches beside the candlestick, she blew out the light. Then, half-turning on her side with her face to the wall, she composed herself to sleep.

Resolutely putting from her mind any sense of the supernatural, she shut her eyes with confidence of coming sleep. While she was, however, still within the borders of wakefulness, and wholly conscious, she felt the Thing jump from the floor upon her legs, and crouch there with that deadening pressure which was not weight. Now with a start of anger she raised herself, and shot out a determined hand to seize the Thing, whatever it was. Her hand grasped nothing, and again she distinctly heard a soft thud as of something jumping on the floor. Exasperated, she drew herself out of bed, lit the candle again, and began another search. Nothing was to be seen; but she had now the curious sense of an unseen presence. She went to the door, opened it, and looked out into the narrow hall. Nothing was to be seen there. Then she closed the door again, and stood looking at it meditatively for a moment. It had a lock and key; yet it had never been locked in the years they had lived on the Sagalac. She did not know whether the key would turn in the lock. After a moment's hesitation, she shrugged her shoulders and turned the key. It rasped, proved stubborn, but at last came home with a click. Then she turned to the window. It was open about three inches at the bottom. She closed it tight, and fastened it, then stood for a moment in the middle of the room looking at both door and window.

She was conscious of a sense of suffocation. Never in her life had she slept with door or window or tentflap entirely closed. Never before had she been shut in all night behind closed doors and sealed windows. Now, as the sense of imprisonment was felt, her body protested; her spirit resented the funereal embrace of security. It panted for the freedom which gives the challenge to danger and the courage to face it.

She went to the window and opened it slightly at the top, and then sought her bed again; but even as she lay down, something whispered to her mind that it was folly to lock the door and yet leave the window open, if it was but an inch. With an exclamation of self-reproach, and a vague indignation at something, she got up and closed the window once more.

Again she composed herself to sleep, lying now with her face turned to the window and the door. She was still sure that she had been the victim of a hallucination which, emerging from her sleep, had invaded the borders of wakefulness, and then had reproduced itself in a waking illusion--an imitation of its original existence.

Resolved to conquer any superstitious feeling, she invoked sleep, and was on its borders once more when she was startled more violently than before.

The Thing had sprung again upon her feet and was crouched there. Wide awake, she waited for a moment to make sure that she was not mad, or that she was not asleep or in a half-dream. In the pause, she felt the Thing draw up towards her knees, dragging its body along with tiger-like closeness, and with that strange pressure which was not weight but power.

With a cry which was no longer doubt, but agonized apprehension, she threw the Thing from her with a motion of both hands and feet; and, as she did so, she felt a horrible cold air breathing from a bloodless body,

chill her hand.

In another instant she was on her feet again. With shaking fingers she lighted the candle yet once more, after which she lighted a lamp standing upon the chest of drawers. The room was almost brilliantly bright now. With a gesture of incredulity she looked round. The doors and windows were sealed tight, and there was nothing to be seen; yet she was more than ever conscious of a presence grown more manifest. For a moment she stood staring straight before her at the place where it seemed to be. She realized its malice and its hatred, and an intense anger and hatred took possession of her. She had always laughed at such things even when thrilled by wonder and manufactured terrors. But now there was a sense of conflict, of evil, of the indefinable things in which so many believed.

Suddenly she remembered an ancient Sage of her tribe, who, proficient in mysteries and secret rites gathered from nations as old as Phoenicia and Egypt and as modern as Switzerland, held the Romanys of the world in awe, for his fame had travelled where he could not follow. To Fleda in her earliest days he had been like one inspired, and as she now stood facing the intangible Thing, she recalled an exorcism which the Sage had recited to her, when he had sufficiently startled her senses by tales of the Between World. This exorcism was, as he had told her, more powerful than that which the Christian exorcists used, and the symbol of exorcism was not unlike the sign of the Cross, to which was added genuflection of Assyrian origin.

At any other time Fleda would have laughed at the idea of using the exorcism; but all the ancient superstition of the Romany people latent in her now broke forth and held her captive. Standing with candle raised above her head, her eyes piercing the space before her, she recalled every word of the exorcism which had caught the drippings from the fountains of Chaldean, Phoenician, and Egyptian mystery.

Solemnly and slowly the exorcism came from her lips, and at the end her right hand made the cabalistic sign; then she stood like one transfixed with her arm extended towards the Thing she could not see.

Presently there passed from her a sense of oppression. The air seemed to grow lighter, restored self-possession came; there was a gentle breathing in the room like that of a sleeping child. It was a moment before she realized that the breathing was her own, and she looked round her like one who had come out of a trance.

"It is gone," she said aloud. "It is gone." A great sigh came from her.

Mechanically she put down the candle, smoothed the pillows of her bed, adjusted the coverings, and prepared to lie down; but, with a sudden impulse, she turned to the window and the door.

"It is gone," she said again. With a little laugh of hushed triumph, she turned and made again the cabalistic sign at the bed, where the Thing had first assaulted her, and then at that point in the room near the door where she had felt it crouching.

"Oh, Ewie Gal," she added, speaking to that Romany Sage long since laid to rest in the Roumelian country, "you did not talk to me for nothing. You were right--yes, you were right, old Ewie Gal. It was there,"--she looked again at the place where the Thing had been--"and your curse drove

it away."

With confidence she went to the door and unlocked it. Going to the window she opened it also, but she compromised sufficiently to open it at the top instead of at the bottom. Presently she laid her head on her pillow with a sigh of content.

Once again she composed herself to sleep in the darkness. But now there came other invasions, other disturbers of the night. In her imagination a man came who had held her in his arms one day on the Sagalac River, who had looked into her eyes with a masterful but respectful tenderness. As she neared the confines of sleep, he was somehow mingled with visions of things which her childhood had known--moonlit passes in the Bosnian, Roumelian, and Roumanian hills, green fields by the Danube, with peasant voices drowsing in song before the lights went out; a gallop after dun deer far away up the Caspian mountains, over waste places, carpeted with flowers after a benevolent rain; mornings in Egypt, when the camels thudded and slid with melancholy ease through the sands of the desert, while the Arab drivers called shrilly for Allah to curse or bless; a tender sunset in England seen from the top of a castle when all the western sky was lightly draped with saffron, gold and mauve and delicate green and purple.

Now she slept again, with the murmur of the Sagalac in her ears, and there was a smile at her lips. If one could have seen her through the darkness, one would have said that she was like some wild creature of a virgin world, whom sleep had captured and tamed; for, behind the refinement which education and the vigilant influence with which Madame Bulteel had surrounded her, there was in her the spirit of primitive things: of the open road and the wilderness, of the undisciplined and vagrant life, however marked by such luxury as the ruler of all the Romanys could buy and use in pilgrimage. There was that in her which would drag at her footsteps in this new life.

For a full hour or more she slept, then there crept through the fantasies of sleep something that did not belong to sleep--again something from the wakeful world, strange, alien, troubling. At first it was only as though a wind stirred the air of dreams, then it was like the sounds that gather behind the coming rage of a storm, and again it was as though a night-prowler plucked at the sleeve of a home-goer. Presently, with a stir of fright and a smothered cry, she waked to a sound which was not of the supernatural or of the mind's illusions, but no less dreadful to her because of that. In some cryptic way it was associated with the direful experience through which she had just passed.

What she heard in the darkness was a voice which sang there by her window--at it or beneath it--the words of a Romany song.

It was a song of violence, which she had heard but a short time before in the trees behind her father's house, when a Romany claimed her as his wife:

"Time was I went to my true love,
Time was she came to me--"

Only one man would sing that song at her window, or anywhere in this Western world. This was no illusion of her overwrought senses. There, outside her window, was Jethro Fawe.

She sat up and listened, leaning on one arm, and staring into the half-darkness beyond the window, the blind of which she had not drawn down. There was no moon, but the stars were shining brightly, relieving the intensity of the dark. Through the whispering of the trees, and hushing the melancholy of a night-bird's song, came the wild low note of the Romany epic of vengeance. It had a thrill of exultation. Something in the voice, insistent, vibrating, personal, made every note a thrust of victory. In spite of her indignation at the insolent serenade, she thrilled; for the strain of the Past was in her, and it had been fighting with her all night, breaking in upon the Present, tugging at the cords of youth.

The man's daring roused her admiration, even as her anger mounted. If her father heard the singing, there could be no doubt that Jethro Fawe's doom would be sealed. Gabriel Druse would resent this insolence to the daughter of the Ry of Rys. Word would be passed as silently as the electric spark flies, and one day Jethro Fawe would be found dead, with no clue to his slayer, and maybe no sign of violence upon him; for while the Romany people had remedies as old as Buddha, they had poisons as old as Sekhet.

Suddenly the song ceased, and for a moment there was silence save for the whispering trees and the night-bird's song. Fleda rose from her bed, and was about to put on her dressing-gown, when she was startled by a voice loudly whispering her name at her window, as it seemed.

"Daughter of the Ry of Rys !" it called.

In anger she started forward to the window, then, realizing that she was in her nightgown, caught up her red dressing-gown and put it on. As she did so she understood why the voice had sounded so near. Not thirty feet from her window there was a solitary oak-tree among the pines, in which was a seat among the branches, and, looking out, she could see a figure that blackened the starlit duskiness.

"Fleda--daughter of the Ry of Rys," the voice called again.

She gathered her dressing-gown tight about her, and, going to the window, raised it high and leaned out.

"What do you want?" she asked sharply.

"Wife of Jethro Fawe, I bring you news," the voice said, and she saw a hat waved with mock courtesy. In spite of herself, Fleda felt a shiver of premonition pass through her. The Thing which had threatened her in the night seemed to her now like the soul of this dark spirit in the trees.

Resentment seized her. "I have news for you, Jethro Fawe," she replied. "I set you free, and I gave my word that no harm should come to you, if you went your ways and did not come again. You have come, and I shall do nothing now to save you from the Ry's anger. Go at once, or I will wake him."

"Will a wife betray her husband?" he asked in soft derision.

Stung by his insolence, "I would not throw a rope to you, if you were drowning," she declared. "I am a Gorgio, and the thing that was done by

the Starzke River is nothing to me. Now, go."

"You have forgotten my news," he said: "It is bad news for the Gorgio daughter of the Romany Ry." She was silent in apprehension. He waited, but she did not speak.

"The Gorgio of Gorgios of the Sagalac has had a fall," he said.

Her heart beat fast for an instant, and then the presentiment came to her that the man spoke the truth. In the presence of the accomplished thing, she became calm.

"What has happened?" she asked quietly.

"He went prowling in Manitou, and in Barbazon's Tavern they struck him down."

"Who struck him down?" she asked. It seemed to her that the night-bird sang so loud that she could scarcely hear her own voice.

"A drunken Gorgio," he replied. "The horseshoe is for luck all the world over, and it brought its luck to Manitou to-night. It struck down a young Master Gorgio who in white beard and long grey hair went spying."

She knew in her heart that he spoke the truth. "He is dead?" she asked in a voice that had a strange quietness.

"Not yet," he answered. "There is time to wish him luck."

She heard the ribald laugh with a sense of horror and loathing. "The hand that brought him down may have been the hand of a Gorgio, but behind the hand was Jethro Fawe," she said in a voice grown passionate again. "Where is he?" she added.

"At his own house. I watched them take him there. It is a nice house--good enough for a Gorgio house-dweller. I know it well. Last night I played his Sarasate fiddle for him there, and I told him all about you and me, and what happened at Starzke, and then--"

"You told him I was a Romany, that I was married to you?" she asked in a low voice.

"I told him that, and asked him why he thought you had deceived him, had held from him the truth. He was angry and tried to kill me."

"That is a lie," she answered. "If he had tried to kill you he would have done so."

Suddenly she realized the situation as it was--that she was standing at her window in the night, scantily robed, talking to a man in a tree opposite her window; and that the man had done a thing which belonged to the wild places which she had left so far behind.

It flashed into her mind--what would Max Ingolby think of such a thing? She flushed. The new Gorgio self of her flushed, and yet the old Romany self, the child of race and heredity had taken no exact account of the strangeness of this situation. It had not seemed unnatural. Even if he had been in her room itself, she would have felt no tithe of the shame that she felt now in asking herself what the Master Gorgio would think,

if he knew. It was not that she had less modesty, that any stir of sex was in her veins where the Romany chal was concerned; but in the life she had once lived less delicate cognizance was taken of such things, and something of it stayed.

"Listen," Jethro said with sudden lowering of the voice, and imparting into his tones an emotion which was in part an actor's gift, but also in large degree a passion now eating at his heart, "you are my wife by all the laws of our people. Nothing can change it. I have waited for you, and I will wait, but you shall be mine in the end. You see to-night-- 'Mi Duvel', you see that fate is with me! The Gorgio has bewitched you. He goes down to-night in that tavern there by the hand of a Gorgio, and the Romany has his revenge. Fate is always with me, and I will be the gift of the gods to the woman that takes me. The luck is mine always. It will be always with me. I am poor to-day, I shall be rich to-morrow. I was rich, and I lost it all; and I was poor, and became rich again. Ah, yes, there are ways! Sometimes it is a Government, sometimes a prince that wants to know, and Jethro Fawe, the Romany, finds it out, and money fills his pockets. I am here, poor, because last year when I lost all, I said, 'It is because my Romany lass is not with me. I have not brought her to my tan, but when she comes then the gold will be here as before, and more when it is wanted.' So, I came, and I hear the road calling, and all the camping places over all the world, and I see the patrins in every lane, and my heart is lifted up. I am glad. I rejoice. My heart burns with love. I will forget everything, and be true to the queen of my soul. Men die, and Gabriel Druse, he will die one day, and when the time comes, then it would be that you and I would beckon, and all the world would come to us."

He stretched out a hand to her in the half-darkness. "I send the blood of my heart to you," he continued. "I am a son of kings. Fleda, daughter of the Ry of Rys, come to me. I have been bad, but I can be good. I have killed, but I will live at peace. I have cursed, but I will speak the word of blessing. I have trespassed, but I will keep to my own, if you will come to me."

Suddenly he dropped to the ground, lighting on his feet like an animal with a soft rebound. Stretching up his arms, he made soft murmuring of endearment.

She had listened, fascinated in spite of herself by the fire and meaning of his words. She felt that in most part it was true, that it was meant; and, whatever he was, he was yet a man offering his heart and life, offering a love that she despised, and yet which was love and passion of a kind. It was a passion natural to the people from whom she came, and to such as Jethro Fawe it was something more than sensual longing and the aboriginal desire of possession. She realized it, and was not wholly revolted by it, even while her mind was fleeing to where the Master Gorgio lay wounded, it might be unto death; even while she knew that this man before her, by some means, had laid Ingolby low. She was all at once a human being torn by contending forces.

Jethro's drop to the ground broke the sudden trance into which his words had thrown her. She shook herself as with an effort of control. Then leaning over the window-sill, and, looking down at him, now grown so distinct that she could see his features, her eyes having become used to the half-light of the approaching dawn, she said with something almost like gentleness:

"Once more I say, you must go and come no more. You are too far off from me. You belong to that which is for the ignorant, or the low, the vicious and the bad. Behind the free life of the Romany is only the thing that the beasts of the field have. I have done with it for ever. Find a Romany who will marry you. As for me, I would rather die than do so, and I should die before it could come to pass. If you stay here longer I will call the Ry."

Presently the feeling that he had been responsible for the disaster to Ingolby came upon her with great force, and as suddenly as she had softened towards this man she hardened again.

"Go, before there comes to you the death you deserve," she added, and turned away.

At that moment footsteps sounded near, and almost instantly there emerged from a pathway which made a short cut to the house, the figure of old Gabriel Druse. They had not heard him till he was within a few feet of where Jethro Fawe stood. His walking had been muffled in the dust of the pathway.

The Ry started when he saw Jethro Fawe; then he made a motion as though he would seize the intruder, who was too dumbfounded to flee; but he recovered himself, and gazed up at the open window.

"Fleda!" he called.

She came to the window again.

"Has this man come here against your will?" he asked, not as though seeking information, but confirmation of his own understanding.

"He is not here by my will," she answered. "He came to sing the Song of Hate under my window, to tell me that he had--"

"That I had brought the Master Gorgio to the ground," said Jethro, who now stood with sullen passiveness looking at Gabriel Druse.

"From the Master Gorgio, as you call him, I have just come," returned the old man. "When I heard the news, I went to him. It was you who betrayed him to the mob, and--"

"Wait, wait," Fleda cried in agitation. "Is--is he dead?"

"He is alive, but terribly hurt; and he may die," was the reply.

Then the old man turned to the Romany with a great anger and determination in his face. He stretched out an arm, making a sign as cabalistic as that which Fleda had used against her invisible foe in the bedroom.

"Go, Jethro Fawe of all the Fawes," he said. "Go, and may no patrin mark your road!"

Jethro Fawe shrank back, and half raised his arm, as though to fend himself from a blow.

The patrin is the clue which Gipsies leave behind them on the road they go, that other Gipsies who travel in it may know they have gone before.

It may be a piece of string, a thread of wool, a twig, or in the dust the ancient cross of the Romany, which preceded the Christian cross and belonged to the Assyrian or Phoenician world. The invocation that no patirns shall mark the road of a Romany is to make him an outcast, and for the Ry of Rys to utter the curse is sentence of death upon a Romany, for thenceforward every hand of his race is against him, free to do him harm.

It was that which made Jethro Fawe shrink and cower for a moment. Fleda raised her hand suddenly in protest to Gabriel Druse.

"No, no, not that," Fleda murmured brokenly to her father, with eyes that looked the pain and horror she felt. Though she repudiated the bond by which the barbarian had dared to call her wife, she heard an inner voice that said to her: "What was done by the Starzke River was the seal of blood and race, and this man must be nearer than the stranger, dearer than the kinsman, forgiven of his crimes like a brother, saved from shame, danger or death when she who was sealed to him can save him."

She shuddered as she heard the inner voice. She felt that this Other Self of her, the inner-seeing soul which had the secret of the far paths, had spoken truly. Even as she begged her father to withdraw the sentence, it flashed into her mind that the grim Thing of the night was the dark spirit of hatred between Jethro Fawe and the Master Gorgio seeking embodiment, as though Jethro's evil soul detached itself from his body to persecute her.

At her appeal, Jethro raised his head. His courage came back, the old insolent self-possession took hold of him again. The sentence which the Ry had passed was worse than death (and it meant death, too), for it made him an outcast from his people, and to be outcast was to be thrown into the abyss. It was as though a man without race or country was banished into desolate space. In a vague way he felt its full significance, and the shadow of it fell on him.

"No, no, no," Fleda repeated hoarsely, with that new sense of responsibility where Jethro was concerned.

Jethro's eyes were turned upon her now. In the starlit night, just yielding to the dawn, she could faintly see his burning look, could feel, as it were, his hands reach out to claim her; and she felt that while he lived she was not wholly free. She realized that the hand of nomad, disorderly barbarism was dragging her with a force which was inhuman, or, maybe, superhuman.

Gabriel Druse could know nothing of the elements fighting in his daughter's soul; he only knew that her interest in the Master Gorgio was one he had never seen before, and that she abhorred the Romany who had brought Ingolby low. He had shut his eyes to the man's unruliness and his daughter's intervention to free him; but now he was without pity. He had come from Ingolby's bedside, and had been told a thing which shook his rugged nature to its centre--a thing sad as death itself, which he must tell his daughter.

To Fleda's appeal he turned a stony face. There was none of that rage in his words which had marked the scene when Jethro Fawe first came to claim what he could not have. There was something in him now more deadly and inevitable. It made him like some figure of mythology, implacable, fateful. His great height, his bushy beard and stormy forehead, the eyes

over which shaggy eyebrows hung like the shrubs on a cliff-edge, his face lined and set like a thing in bronze--all were signs of a power which, in passion, would be like that of OEdipus: in the moment of justice or doom would, with unblinking eyes, slay and cast aside as debris is tossed upon the dust-heap.

As he spoke now his voice was toneless. His mind was flint, and his tongue was but the flash of the flint. He looked at his daughter for a moment with no light of fatherhood in his face, then turned from her to Jethro Fawe with slow decision and a gesture of authority. His eyes fastened on the face of the son of Lemuel Fawe, as though it was that old enemy himself.

"I have said what I have said, and there is no more to be spoken. The rule of the Ry will be as water for ever after if these things may be done to him and his. For generations have the Rys of all the Rys been like the trees that bend only to the whirlwind; and when they speak there is no more to be said. When it ceases to be so, then the Rys will vanish from the world, and be as stubble of the field ready for the burning. I have spoken. Go! And no patrins shall lie upon your road."

A look of savage obedience and sullen acquiescence came into Jethro Fawe's face, and he took off his hat as one who stands in the presence of his master. The strain of generations, the tradition of the race without a country was stronger than the revolt in his soul. He was young, his blood was hot and brawling in his veins, he was all carnal, with the superior intelligence of the trained animal, but custom was stronger than all. He knew now that whatever he might do, some time, not far, his doom would fall upon him suddenly, as a wind shoots up a ravine from the desert, or a nightbird rises from the dark.

He set his feet stubbornly, and raised his sullen face and fanatical eyes. The light of morning was creeping through the starshine, and his features showed plainly.

"I am your daughter's husband," he said. "Nothing can change that. It was done by the River Starzke, and it was the word of the Ry of Rys. It stands for ever. There is no divorce except death for the Romany."

"The patrins cease to mark the way," returned the old man with a swift gesture. "The divorce of death will come."

Jethro's face grew still paler, and he opened his lips to speak, but paused, seeing Fleda, with a backward look of pity and of horror, draw back into the darkness of her room.

He made a motion of passion and despair. His voice was almost shrill when he spoke. "Till that divorce comes, the daughter of the Ry of Rys is mine!" he cried sharply. "I will not give my wife to a Gorgio thief. His hands shall not caress her, his eyes shall not feed upon her--"

"His eyes will not feed upon her," interrupted the old man, "So cease the prattle which can alter nothing. Begone."

For a moment Jethro Fawe stood like one who did not understand what was said to him, but suddenly a look of triumph and malice came into his face, and his eyes lighted with a reckless fire. He threw back his head, and laughed with a strange, offensive softness. Then, waving a hand to the window from which Fleda had gone, he swung his cap on his head and

plunged into the trees.

A moment afterwards his voice came back exultingly, through the morning air:

"But a Gorgio sleeps 'neath the greenwood tree
He'll broach my tan no more:
And my love, she sleeps afar from me
But near to the churchyard door."

As the old man turned heavily towards the house, and opened the outer door, Fleda met him.

"What did you mean when you said that Ingolby's eyes would not feed upon me?" she asked in a low tone of fear.

A look of compassion came into the old man's face. He took her hand.

"Come and I will tell you," he said.

CHAPTER XII

"LET THERE BE LIGHT"

In Ingolby's bedroom, on the night of the business at Barbazon's Tavern, Dr. Rockwell received a shock. His face, naturally colourless, was almost white, and his eyes were moist. He had what the West called nerve. That the crisis through which he had passed was that of a friend's life did not lessen the poignancy of the experience. He had a singularly reserved manner and a rare economy of words; also, he had the refinement and distinction of one who had, oforetime, moved on the higher ranges of social life. He was always simply and comfortably and in a sense fashionably dressed, yet there was nothing of the dude about him, and his black satin tie gave him an air of old-worldishness which somehow compelled an extra amount of respect. This, in spite of the fact that he had been known as one who had left the East and come into the wilds because of a woman not his wife.

It was not, however, strictly true to say that he had come West because of a woman, for it was on account of three women, who by sudden coincidence or collusion sprang a situation from which the only relief was flight. In that he took refuge, not because he was a coward, but because it was folly to fight a woman, or three women, and because it was the only real solution of an ungovernable situation. At first he had drifted from one town to another, dissolute and reckless, apparently unable to settle down, or to forget the unwholesome three. But one day there was a terrible railway accident on a construction train, and Lebanon and Manitou made a call upon his skill, and held him in bondage to his profession for one whole month. During this time he performed two operations which the surgeons who had been sent out by the Railway Directors at Montreal declared were masterpieces.

When that month was up he was a changed man, and he opened an office in Lebanon. Men trusted him despite his past, and women learned that there was never a moment when his pulses beat unevenly in their presence. Nathan Rockwell had had his lesson and it was not necessary to learn it

again. To him, woman, save as a subject of his skill, was a closed book. He regarded them as he regarded himself, with a kindly cynicism. He never forgot that his own trouble could and would have been avoided had it not been for woman's vanity and consequent cruelty. The unwholesome three had shared his moral lapse with wide-open eyes, and were in no sense victims of his; but, disregarding their responsibility, they had, from sheer jealousy, wrecked his past, and, to their own surprise, had wrecked themselves as well. They were of those who act first and then think--too late.

Thus it was that both men and women called Rockwell a handsome man, but thought of him as having only a crater of exhausted fires in place of a heart. They came to him with their troubles--even the women of Manitou who ought to have gone to the priest.

He moved about Lebanon as one who had authority, and desired not to use it; as one to whom life was like a case in surgery to be treated with scientific, coolness, with humanity, but not with undue sympathy; yet the early morning of the day after Ingolby had had his accident at Barbazon's Hotel found him the slave of an emotion which shook him from head to foot. He had saved his friend's life by a most skilful operation, but he had been shocked beyond control when, an hour after the operation was over, and consciousness returned to the patient in the brilliantly lighted room, Ingolby said:

"Why don't you turn on the light?"

It was thus Rockwell knew that the Master Man, the friend of Lebanon and Manitou, was stone blind. When Ingolby's voice ceased, a horrified silence filled the room for a moment. Even Jim Beadle, his servant, standing at the foot of the bed, clapped a hand to his mouth to stop a cry, and the nurse turned as white as the apron she wore.

Dumbfounded as Rockwell was, with instant professional presence of mind he said:

"No, Ingolby, you must be kept in darkness a while yet." Then he whipped out a silk handkerchief from his pocket. "We will have light," he continued, "but we must bandage you first to keep out the glare and prevent pain. The nerves of the eyes have been injured."

Hastily and tenderly he bound the handkerchief round the sightless eyes. Having done so, he said to the nurse with unintentional quotation from the Gospel of St. John, and a sad irony: "Let there be light."

It all gave him time to pull himself together and prepare for the moment when he must tell Ingolby the truth. In one sense the sooner it was told the better, lest Ingolby should suddenly discover it for himself. Surprise and shock must be avoided. So now he talked in his low, soothing voice, telling Ingolby that the operation had put him out of danger, that the pain now felt came chiefly from the nerves of the eye, and that quiet and darkness were necessary. He insisted on Ingolby keeping silent, and he gave a mild opiate which induced several hours' sleep.

During this time Rockwell prepared himself for the ordeal which must be passed as soon as possible; gave all needed directions, and had a conference with the assistant Chief Constable to whom he confided the truth. He suggested plans for preserving order in excited Lebanon, which

was determined to revenge itself on Manitou; and he gave some careful and specific instructions to Jowett the horse-dealer. Also, he had conferred with Gabriel Druse, who had helped bear the injured man to his own home. He had noted with admiration the strange gentleness of the giant Romany as he, alone, carried Ingolby in his arms, and laid him on the bed from which he was to rise with all that he had fought for overthrown, himself the blind victim of a hard fate. He had noticed the old man straighten himself with a spring and stand as though petrified when Ingolby said: "Why don't you turn on the light?" As he looked round in that instant of ghastly silence he had observed almost mechanically that the old man's lips were murmuring something. Then the thought of Fleda Druse shot into Rockwell's mind, and it harassed him during the hours Ingolby slept, and after the giant Gipsy had taken his departure just before the dawn.

"I'm afraid it will mean more there than anywhere else," he said sadly to himself. "There was evidently something between those two; and she isn't the kind to take it philosophically. Poor girl! Poor girl! It's a bitter dose, if there was anything in it," he added.

He watched beside the sick-bed till the dawn stared in and his patient stirred and waked, then he took Ingolby's hand, grown a little cooler, in both his own. "How are you feeling, old man?" he asked cheerfully. "You've had a good sleep--nearly three and a half hours. Is the pain in the head less?"

"Better, Sawbones, better," Ingolby replied cheerfully. "They've loosened the tie that binds--begad, it did stretch the nerves. I had gripes of colic once, but the pain I had in my head was twenty times worse, till you gave the opiate."

"That's the eyes," said Rockwell. "I had to lift a bit of bone, and the eyes saw it and felt it, and cried out--shrieked, you might say. They've got a sensitiveness all their own, have the eyes."

"It's odd there aren't more accidents to them," answered Ingolby--"just a little ball of iridescent pulp with strings tied to the brain."

"And what hurts the head may destroy the eyes sometimes," Rockwell answered cautiously. "We know so little of the delicate union between them, that we can't be sure we can put the eyes right again when, because of some blow to the head, the ricochet puts the eyes out of commission."

"That's what's the matter with me, then?" asked Ingolby, feeling the bandage on his eyes feverishly, and stirring in his bed with a sense of weariness.

"Yes, the ricochet got them, and has put them out of commission," replied Rockwell, carefully dwelling upon each word, and giving a note of meaning to his tone.

Ingolby raised himself in bed, but Rockwell gently forced him down again. "Will my eyes have to be kept bandaged long? Shall I have to give up work for any length of time?" Ingolby asked.

"Longer than you'll like," was the enigmatical reply. "It's the devil's own business," was the weary answer. "Every minute's valuable to me now. I ought to be on deck morning, noon, and night. There's all the trouble between the two towns; there's the strike on hand; there's that business of the Orange funeral, and more than all a thousand times, there's--"

he paused.

He was going to say, "There's that devil Marchand's designs on my bridge," but he thought better of it and stopped. It had been his intention to deal with Marchand directly, to get a settlement of their differences without resort to the law, to prevent the criminal act without deepening a feud which might keep the two towns apart for years. Bad as Marchand was, to prevent his crime was far better than punishing him for it afterwards. To have Marchand arrested for conspiracy to commit a crime was a business which would gravely interfere with his freedom of motion in the near future, would create complications which might cripple his own purposes in indirect ways. That was why he had declared to Jowett that even Felix Marchand had his price, and that he would try negotiations first.

But what troubled him now, as he lay with eyes bandaged and a knowledge that to-morrow was the day fixed for the destruction of the bridge, was his own incapacity. It was unlikely that his head or his eyes would be right by to-morrow, or that Rockwell would allow him to get up. He felt in his own mind that the injury he had received was a serious one, and that the lucky horseshoe had done Maxchand's work for him all too well. This thought shook him. Rockwell could see his chest heave with an excitement gravely injurious to his condition; yet he must be told the worst, or the shock of discovery by himself that he was blind might give him brain fever. Rockwell felt that he must hasten the crisis.

"Rockwell," Ingolby suddenly asked, "is there any chance of my discarding this and getting out to-morrow?" He touched the handkerchief round his eyes. "It doesn't matter about the head bandages, but the eyes--can't I slough the wraps to-morrow? I feel scarcely any pain now."

"Yes, you can get rid of the bandages to-morrow--you can get rid of them to-day, if you really wish," Rockwell answered, closing in on the last defence.

"But I don't mind being in the dark to-day if it'll make me fitter for to-morrow and get me right sooner. I'm not a fool. There's too much carelessness about such things. People often don't give themselves a chance to get right by being in too big a hurry. So, keep me in darkness to-day, if you want to, old man. For a hustler I'm not in too big a hurry, you see. I'm for holding back to get a bigger jump."

"You can't be in a big hurry, even if you want to, Ingolby," rejoined Rockwell, gripping the wrist of the sick man, and leaning over him.

Ingolby grew suddenly very still. It was as though vague fear had seized him and held him in a vice. "What is it? What do you want to say to me?" he asked in a low, nerveless tone.

"You've been hit hard, Chief. The ricochet has done you up for some time. The head will soon get well, but I'm far from sure about your eyes. You've got to have a specialist about them. You're in the dark, and as for making you see, so am I. Your eyes and you are out of commission for some time, anyhow."

He leaned over hastily, but softly and deftly undid the bandages over the eyes and took them off. "It's seven in the morning, and the sun's up, Chief, but it doesn't do you much good, you see."

The last two words were the purest accident, but it was a strange, mournful irony, and Rockwell flushed at the thought of it. He saw Ingolby's face turn grey, and then become white as death itself.

"I see," came from the bluish-white lips, as the stricken man made call on all the will and vital strength in him.

For a long minute Rockwell held the cold hand in the grasp of one who loves and grieves, but even so the physician and surgeon in him were uppermost, as they should be, in the hour when his friend was standing on the brink of despair, maybe of catastrophe irremediable. He did not say a word yet, however. In such moments the vocal are dumb and the blind see.

Ingolby heaved himself in the bed and threw up his arms, wresting them from Rockwell's grasp.

"My God--oh, my God-blind!" he cried in agony. Rockwell drew the head with the sightless eyes to his shoulder.

For a moment he laid one hand on the heart, that, suddenly still, now went leaping under his fingers. "Steady," he said firmly. "Steady. It may be only temporary. Keep your head up to the storm. We'll have a specialist, and you must not get mired till then. Steady, Chief."

"Chief! Chief!" murmured Ingolby. "Dear God, what a chief! I risked everything, and I've lost everything by my own vanity. Barbazon's--the horseshoe--among the wolves, just to show I could do things better than any one else--as if I had the patent for setting the world right. And now--now--"

The thought of the bridge, of Marchand's devilish design, shot into his mind, and once more he was shaken. "The bridge! Blind! Mother!" he called in a voice twisted in an agony which only those can feel to whom life's purposes are even more than life itself. Then, with a moan, he became unconscious, and his head rolled over against Rockwell's cheek. The damp of his brow was as the damp of death as Rockwell's lips touched it.

"Old boy, old boy!" Rockwell said tenderly, "I wish it had been me instead. Life means so much to you--and so little to me. I've seen too much, and you've only just begun to see."

Laying him gently down, Rockwell summoned the nurse and Jim Beadle and spoke to them in low tones. "He knows now, and it has hit him hard, but not so hard that he won't stiffen to it. It might have been worse."

He gave instructions as to the care that should be taken, and replaced the bandages on the eyes. It was, however, long before Ingolby was restored to consciousness, and when it came, Rockwell put to his lips a cooling drink containing a powerful opiate. Ingolby drank it without protest and in silence. He was like one whose sense of life was automatic and of an inner rather than an outer understanding. But when he lay back on the pillow again, he said slowly:

"I want the Chief Constable to come here to-night at eight o'clock. It will be dark then. He must come. It is important. Will you see to it, Rockwell?"

He thrust out a hand as though to find Rockwell's, and there was a gratitude and an appeal in the pressure of his fingers which went to Rockwell's heart.

"All right, Chief. I'll have him here," Rockwell answered briskly, but with tears standing in his eyes. Ingolby had, as it were, been stricken out of the active, sentient, companionable world into a world where he was alone, detached, solitary. His being seemed suspended in an atmosphere of misery and helplessness.

"Blind! I am blind!" That was the phrase which kept beating with the pulses in Ingolby's veins, that throbbed, and throbbed, and throbbed like engines in a creaking ship which the storm was shaking and pounding in the vast seas between the worlds. Here was the one incomprehensible, stupefying fact: nothing else mattered. Every plan he had ever had, every design which he had made his own by an originality that even his foes acknowledged, were passing before his brain in swift procession, shining, magnified, and magnificent, and in that sudden clear-seeing of his soul he beheld their full value, their exact concrete force and ultimate effect. Yet he knew himself detached from them, inactive, incapable, because he could not see with the eyes of the body. The great essential thing to him was that one thing he had lost. A man might be a cripple and still direct the great concerns of life and the business of life. He might be shorn of limb and scarred of body, but with eye sight still direct the courses of great schemes, in whatever sphere of life his purposes were at work. He might be deaf to every sound and forever dumb, but seeing enabled him still to carry forward every enterprise. In darkness, however, those things were naught, because judgment must depend on the eyes and senses of others. The report might be true or false, the deputy might deceive, and his blind chief might never know the truth unless some other spectator of his schemes should report it; and the truth could not surely be checked, save by some one, perhaps, whose life was joined to his, by one that truly loved him, whose fate was his.

His brain was afire. By one that truly loved him! Who was there that loved him? Who was there at one with him in all his deep designs, in all he had done and meant to do? Neither brother, nor sister, nor friend, nor any other. None of his blood was there who could share with him the constructive work he had set out to do. There was no friend whose fate was part of his own. There was the Boss Doctor: but Rockwell was tied to his own responsibilities, and he could not give up, of course, would not give up his life to the schemes of another. There were a dozen men whom he had helped to forge ahead by his own schemes, but their destinies were not linked with his. Only one whose life was linked with his could be trusted to be his eyes, to be the true reporter of all he did, had done, or planned to do. Only one who loved him.

But even one who loved him could not carry through his incompleting work against the assaults of his enemies, who were powerful, watchful, astute, and merciless; who had a greed which set money higher than all else in the world. They were of the new order of things in the New World. The business of life was to them not a system of barter and exchange, a giving something of value to get something of value, with a margin of profit for each, and a sense of human equity behind; it was a cockpit where one man sought to get what another man had--and get it almost anyhow.

It was the work of the faro-bank man, whose sleight of hand deceived the man that carried the gun.

All the old humanity and good-fellowship of the trader, the man who exchanged, as it was in the olden days of the world and continued in greater or less degree till the present generation--all that was gone. It was held in contempt. It had prevailed when men were open robbers and filibusters and warriors, giving their lives, if need be, to get what they wanted, making force their god. It had triumphed over the violence and robbery of the open road until the dying years of one century and the young years of a new century. Then the day of the trickster came--and men laughed at the idea of fair exchange and strove to give an illusive value for a thing of real value--the remorseless sleight of hand which the law could not reach. The desire to get profit by honest toiling was dying down to ashes.

Against such men had Ingolby worked--the tricksters, the manipulators. At the basis of his schemes was organization and the economy which concentrated and conserved energy begets, together with its profit. He had been the enemy of waste, the apostle of frugality and thrift; and it was that which had enabled him, in his short career, to win the confidence of the big men behind him in Montreal, to make good every step of the way. He had worked for profit out of legitimate product and industry and enterprise, out of the elimination of waste. It was his theory (and his practice) that no bit of old iron, no bolt or screw, no scrap of paper should be thrown away; that the cinders of the engines could and should be utilized for that which they would make; and that was why there was a paper-mill and foundry on the Sagalac at Manitou. That was why and how, so far, he had beaten the tricksters.

But while his schemes flashed before his mind, as the opiate suspended him in the middle heaven between sleep and waking, the tricksters and manipulators came hurrying after him like marauders that waited for the moment when they could rush the camp in the watches of the night. His disordered imagination saw the ruin and wreck of his work, the seizure of what was his own--the place of control on his railways, the place of the Master Man who cared infinitely more to see his designs accomplished than for the profit they would bring to himself. Yesterday he had been just at the top of the hill. The key in his fingers was turning in the lock which would make safe the securities of his life and career, when it snapped, and the world grew dark as the black curtain fell and shut out the lighted room from the wayfarer in the gloom. Then, it was, came the opaque blackness which could be felt, and his voice calling in despair: "Blind! I am blind!"

He did not know that he had taken an opiate, that his friend had mercifully atrophied his rebellious nerves. These visions he was seeing were terribly true, but they somehow gave him no physical torture. It was as though one saw an operation performed upon one's body with the nerves stilled and deadened by ether. Yet he was cruelly conscious of the disaster which had come to him. For a time at least. Then his mind seemed less acute, the visions came, then without seeing them go, they went. And others came in broken patches, shreds, and dreams, phantasmagoria of the brain, and at last all were mingled and confused; but as they passed they seemed to burn his sight. How he longed for a cool bandage over his eyes, for a soft linen which would shut out the cumuli of broken hopes and designs, life's goals obliterated! He had had enough of the black procession of futile things.

His longing was not denied, for even as he roused himself from the oblivion coming on him, as though by a last effort to remember his dire

misfortune, maybe his everlasting tragedy, something soothing and soft like linen dipped in dew was laid upon his forehead. A cool, delicious hand covered his eyes caressingly; a voice from spheres so far away that worlds were the echoing points of the sound, came whispering to him like a stir of wings in a singing grove. With a last effort to remain in the waking world, he raised his head so very little, but fell gently back again with one sighing word on his lips:

"Fleda!"

It was no illusion. Fleda had come from her own night of trouble to his motherless, wifeless home, and would not be denied admittance by the nurse. It was Jim Beadle who admitted her.

"He'd be mad if he knew we wouldn't let her come," Jim had said to the nurse.

It was Fleda who had warned Ingolby of the dangers that surrounded him --the physical as well as business dangers. She came now to serve the blind victim of that Fate which she had seen hovering over him.

The renegade daughter of the Romanys, as Jethro Fawe had called her, was, for the first time, in the house of her master Gorgio.

CHAPTER XIII

THE CHAIN OF THE PAST

For once in its career, Lebanon was absolutely united. The blow that had brought down the Master Man had also struck the town between the eyes, and there was no one--friend or foe of Ingolby--who did not regard it as an insult and a challenge. It was now known that the roughs of Manitou, led by the big river-driver, were about to start on a raid upon Lebanon and upon Ingolby at the very moment the horseshoe did its work. All night there were groups of men waiting outside Ingolby's house. They were of all classes--carters, railway workers, bartenders, lawyers, engineers, bankers, accountants, merchants, ranchmen, carpenters, insurance agents, manufacturers, millers, horse-dealers, and so on.

Some prayed for Ingolby's life, others swore viciously; and those who swore had no contempt for those who prayed, while those who prayed were tolerant of those who swore. It was a union of incongruous elements. Men who had nothing in common were one in the spirit of faction; and all were determined that the Orangeman, whose funeral was fixed for this memorable Saturday, should be carried safely to his grave. Civic pride had almost become civic fanaticism in Lebanon. One of the men beaten by Ingolby in the recent struggle for control of the railways said to the others shivering in the grey dawn: "They were bound to get him in the back. They're dagos, the lot of 'em. Skunks are skunks, even when you skin 'em."

When, just before dawn, old Gabriel Druse issued from the house into which he had carried Ingolby the night before, they questioned him eagerly. He had been a figure apart from both Lebanon and Manitou, and they did not regard him as a dago, particularly as it was more than whispered that Ingolby "had a lien" on his daughter. In the grey light,

with his long grizzled beard and iron-grey, shaggy hair, Druse looked like a mystic figure of the days when the gods moved among men like mortals. His great height, vast proportions, and silent ways gave him a place apart, and added to the superstitious feeling by which he was surrounded.

"How is he?" they asked whisperingly, as they crowded round him.

"The danger is over," was the slow, heavy reply. He will live, but he has bad days to face."

"What was the danger?" they asked. "Fever--maybe brain fever," he replied. "We'll see him through," someone said.

"Well, he cannot see himself through," rejoined the old man solemnly. The enigmatical words made them feel there was something behind.

"Why can't he see himself through?" asked Osterhaut the universal, who had just arrived from the City Hall.

"He can't see himself through because he is blind," was the heavy answer.

There was a moment of shock, of hushed surprise, and then a voice burst forth: "Blind--they've blinded him, boys! The dagos have killed his sight. He's blind, boys!"

A profane and angry muttering ran through the crowd, who were thirsty, hungry, and weary with watching.

Osterhaut held up the horseshoe which had brought Ingolby down. "Here it is, the thing that done it. It's tied with a blue ribbon-for luck," he added ironically. "It's got his blood on it. I'm keeping it till Manitou's paid the price of it. Then I'll give it to Lebanon for keeps."

"That's the thing that did it, but where's the man behind the thing?" snarled a voice.

Again there was a moment's silence, and then Billy Kyle, the veteran stage-driver, said: "He's in the jug, but a gaol has doors, and doors'll open with or without keys. I'm for opening the door, boys."

"What for?" asked a man who knew the answer, but who wanted the thing said.

"I spent four years in Arizona, same as Jowett," Billy Kyle answered, "and I got in the way of thinking as they do there, and acting just as quick as you think. I drove stage down in the Verde Valley. Sometimes there wasn't time to bring a prisoner all the way to a judge and jury, and people was busy, and hadn't time to wait for the wagon; so they done what was right, and there was always a tree that would carry that kind o' fruit for the sake of humanity. It's the best way, boys."

"This isn't Arizona or any other lyncher's country," said Halliday, the lawyer, making his way to the front. "It isn't the law, and in this country it's the law that counts. It's the Gover'ment's right to attend to that drunken dago that threw the horseshoe, and we've got to let the Gover'ment do it. No lynching on my plate, thank you. If Ingolby could speak to us, you can bet your boots it's what he'd say."

"What's your opinion, boss?" asked Billy Kyle of Gabriel Druse, who had stood listening, his chin on his breast, his sombre eyes fixed on them abstractedly.

At Kyle's question his eyes lighted up with a fire that was struck from a flint in other spheres, and he answered: "It is for the ruler to take life, not the subject. If it is a man that rules, it is for him; if it is the law that rules, it is for the law. Here, it is the law. Then it is not for the subject, and it is not for you."

"If he was your son?" asked Billy Kyle.

"If he was my son, I should be the ruler, not the law," was the grim, enigmatic reply, and the old man stalked away from them towards the bridge.

"I'd bet he'd settle the dago's hash that done to his son what the Manitou dagos done to Ingolby--and settle it quick," remarked Lick Farrelly, the tinsmith.

"I bet he's been a ruler or something somewhere," remarked Billy Kyle.

"I bet I'm going home to breakfast," interposed Halliday, the lawyer. "There's a straight day's work before us, gentlemen," he added, "and we can't do anything here. Orangemen, let's hoof it."

Twenty Orangemen stepped out from the crowd. Halliday was a past master of their lodge, and they all meant what he meant. They marched away in procession--to breakfast and to a meeting of the lodge. Others straggled after, but a few waited for the appearance of the doctor. When the sun came up and Rockwell, pale and downcast, issued forth, they gathered round him, and walked with him through the town, questioning, listening and threatening.

A few still remained behind at Ingolby's house. They were of the devoted slaves of Ingolby who would follow him to the gates of Hades and back again, or not back if need be.

The nigger barber, Berry, was one; another was the Jack-of-all-trades, Osterhaut, a kind of municipal odd-man, with the well-known red hair, the face that constantly needed shaving, the blue serge shirt with a scarf for a collar, the suit of canvas in the summer and of Irish frieze in the winter; the pair of hands which were always in his own pocket, never in any one else's; the grey eye, doglike in its mildness, and the long nose which gave him the name of Snorty. Of the same devoted class also was Jowett who, on a higher plane, was as wise and discerning a scout as any leader ever had.

While old Berry and Osterhaut and all the others were waiting at Ingolby's house, Jowett was scouting among the Manitou roughs for the Chief Constable of Lebanon, to find out what was forward. What he had found was not reassuring, because Manitou, conscious of being in the wrong, realized that Lebanon would try to make her understand her wrongdoing; and that was intolerable. It was clear to Jowett that, in spite of all, there would be trouble at the Orange funeral, and that the threatened strike would take place at the same time in spite of Ingolby's catastrophe. Already in the early morning revengeful spirits from Lebanon had invaded the outer portions of Manitou and had taken satisfaction out of an equal number of "Dogans," as they called the Roman

Catholic labourers, one of whom was carried to the hospital with an elbow out of joint and a badly injured back.

With as much information as he needed, Jowett made his way back to Lebanon, when, at the approach to the bridge, he met Fleda hurrying with bent head and pale, distressed face in his own direction. Of all Western men none had a better appreciation of the sex that takes its toll of every traveller after his kind than Aaron Jowett. He had been a real buck in his day among those of his own class, and though the storm of his romances had become but a faint stirring of leaves which had tinges of days that are sear, he still had an eye unmatched for female beauty. The sun which makes that northern land a paradise in summer caught the gold-brown hair of Gabriel Druse's daughter, and made it glint and shine. It coquetted with the umber of her eyes and they grew luminous as a jewel; it struck lightly across the pale russet of her cheek and made it like an apple that one's lips touch lovingly, when one calls it "too good to eat." It made an atmosphere of half-silver and half-gold with a touch of sunrise crimson for her to walk in, translating her form into melting lines of grace.

Jowett knew that Druse's daughter was on her way to the man who had looked once, looked twice, looked thrice into her eyes and had seen there his own image; and that she had done the same; and that the man, it might be, would never look into their dark depths again. He might speak once, he might speak twice, he might speak thrice, but would it ever be the same as the look that needed no words?

When he crossed Fleda Druse's pathway she stopped short. She knew that Jowett was Ingolby's true friend. She had seen him often, and he was intimately associated with that day when she had run the Carillon Rapids and had lain (for how long she never dared to think) in Ingolby's arms in the sight of all the world. First among those who crowded round her at Carillon that day were Jowett and Osterhaut, who had tried to warn her.

"You are going to him?" she said now with confidence in her eyes, and by the intimacy of the phrase (as though she could speak of Ingolby only as him) their own understanding was complete.

"To see how he is and then to do other things," Jowett answered.

There was silence for a moment in which they moved slowly forward, and then she said: "You were at Barbazon's last night?"

"When that Gipsy son of a dog gave him away!" he assented. "I never heard anything like the speech Ingolby made. He had them in the throat. The Gipsy would have had nothing out of it, if it hadn't been for the horseshoe. But in spite of the giveaway, Ingolby was getting them where they were soft-fairly drugging them with good news. You never heard such dope. My, he was smooth! The golden, velvet truth it was, too. That's the only kind he has in stock; and they were sort of stupefied and locoed as they chewed his word-plant. Cicero must have been a saucy singer of the dictionary, and Paul the Apostle had a dope of his own you couldn't buy, but the gay gamut that Ingolby run gives them all the cold good-bye."

She held herself very still as he spoke. There was, however, a strange, lonely look in her eyes. The man lying asleep in the darkness of body and mind yonder was not really her lover, for he had said no word direct of love to her, and she knew him so little, how could she love him? Yet

there was something between them which had its authority over their lives, overcoming even that maiden modesty which was in contrast to the bold, physical thing she had done in running the Carillon Rapids those centuries ago when she was young and glad-wistfully glad. So much had come since that day, she had travelled so far on the highway of Fate, that she looked back from peak to peak of happening to an almost invisible horizon. So much had occurred and she felt so old this morning; and yet there was in her heart the undefined feeling that she must keep her radiant Spring of life for the blind Gorgio if he needed it-if he needed it. Would he need it, robbed of sight and with his life-work murdered?

She shuddered as she thought of what it meant to him. If a man is to work, he must have eyes to see. Yet what had she to do with it, after all? She had no right to go to him even as she was going. Yet had she not the right of common humanity? This Gorgio was her friend. Did not the world know that he had saved her life?

As they came to the Lebanon end of the bridge, Fleda turned to Jowett and, commenting on his description of the scene at Barbazon, said: "He is a great man, but he trusts too much and risks too much. That was no place for him."

"Big men like him think they can do anything," Jowett replied, a little ironically, subtly trying to force a confession of her preference for Ingolby.

He succeeded. Her eye lighted with indignation. She herself might challenge him, but she would not allow another to do so.

"It is not the truth," she rejoined sharply. "He does not measure himself against the world so. He is like--like a child," she added.

"It seems to me all big men are like that," Jowett rejoined; "and he's the biggest man the West has seen. He knows about every man's business as though it was his own. I can get a margin off most any man in the West on a horse-trade, but I'd look shy about doing a trade with him. You can't dope a horse so he won't know. He's on to it, sees it-sees it like as if it was in glass. Sees anything and everything, and--" He stopped short. The Master Gorgio could no longer see, and his henchman flushed like a girl at his "break"; though, as a horse-dealer, he had in his time listened without shame to wilder, angrier reproaches than most men living.

She glanced at him, saw his confusion, forgave and understood him.

"It was not the horseshoe, it was not the Gipsy," she returned. "They did not set it going. It would not have happened but for one man."

"Yes, it's Marchand, right enough," answered Jowett, "but we'll get him yet. We'll get him with the branding-iron hot."

"That will not put things right if--" she paused, then with a great effort she added: "Does the doctor think he will get it back and that--"

She stopped suddenly in an agitation he did not care to see and he turned away his head.

"Doctor doesn't know," he answered. "There's got to be an expert. It'll

take time before he gets here, but--" he could not help but say it, seeing how great her distress was--"but it's going to come back. I've seen cases--I saw one down on the Border"--how easily he lied!--"just like his. It was blasting that done it--the shock. But the sight come back all right, and quick too--like as I've seen a paralizite get up all at once and walk as though he'd never been locoed. Why, God Almighty don't let men like Ingolby be done like that by reptiles same's Marchand."

"You believe in God Almighty?" she said half-wonderingly, yet with gratitude in her tone. "You understand about God?"

"I've seen too many things not to try and deal fair with Him and not try to cheat Him," he answered. "I see things lots of times that wasn't ever born on the prairie or in any house. I've seen--I've seen enough," he said abruptly, and stopped.

"What have you seen?" she asked eagerly. "Was it good or bad?"

"Both," he answered quickly. "I was stalked once--stalked I was by night and often in the open day, by some sickly, loathsome thing, that even made me fight it with my hands--a thing I couldn't see. I used to fire buckshot at it, enough to kill an army, till I near went mad. I was really and truly getting loony. Then I took to prayin' to the best woman I ever knowed. I never had a mother, but she looked after me--my sister, Sara, it was. She brought me up, and then died and left me without anything to hang on to. I didn't know all I'd lost till she was gone. But I guess she knew what I thought of her; for she come back--after I'd prayed till I couldn't see. She come back into my room one night when the cursed 'haunt' was prowling round me, and as plain as I see you, I saw her. 'Be at peace,' she said, and I spoke to her, and said, 'Sara--why, Sara' and she smiled, and went away into nothing--like a bit o' cloud in the sun."

He stopped, and was looking straight before him as though he saw a vision.

"It went?" she asked breathlessly.

"It went like that--" He made a swift, outward gesture. "It went and it never came back; and she didn't either--not ever. My idee is," he added, "that there's evil things that mebbe are the ghost-shapes of living men that want to do us harm; though, mebbe, too, they're the ghost-shapes of men that's dead, but that can't get on Over There. So they try to get back to us here; and they can make life Hell while they're stalking us."

"I am sure you are right," she said.

She was thinking of the loathsome thing which haunted her room last night. Was it the embodied second self of Jethro Fawe, doing the evil that Jethro Fawe, the visible corporeal man, wished to do? She shuddered, then bent her head and fixed her mind on Ingolby, whose house was not far away. She felt strangely, miserably alone this morning. She was in that fluttering state which follows a girl's discovery that she is a woman, and the feeling dawns that she must complete herself by joining her own life with the life of another.

She showed no agitation, but her repression gave an almost statuesque character to her face and figure. The adventurous nature of her early

life had given her a power to meet shock and danger with coolness, and though the news of Ingolby's tragedy had seemed to freeze the vital forces in her, and all the world became blank for a moment, she had controlled herself and had set forth to go to him, come what might.

As she entered the street where Ingolby lived, she suddenly realized the difficulty before her. She might go to him, but by only one right could she stay and nurse him, and that right she did not possess. He would, she knew, understand her, no matter how the world babbled. Why should the world babble? What woman could have designs upon a blind man? Was not humanity alone sufficient warrant for staying by his side? Yet would he wish it? Suddenly her heart sank; but again she remembered their last parting, and once more she was sure he would be glad to have her with him.

It flashed upon her how different it would have been, if he and she had been Romanys, and this thing had happened over there in the far lands she knew so well. Who would have hinted at shame, if she had taken him to her father's tan or gone to his tan and tended him as a man might tend a man? Humanity would have been the only convention; there would have been no sex, no false modesty, no babble, no reproach. If it had been a man as old as the oldest or as young as Jethro Fawe it would have made no difference.

As young as Jethro Fawe! Why was it that now she could never think of the lost and abandoned Romany life without thinking also of Jethro Fawe? Why should she hate him, despise him, revolt against him, and yet feel that, as it were by invisible cords, he drew her back to that which she had forsworn, to the Past which dragged at her feet? The Romany was not dead in her; her real struggle was yet to come; and in a vague but prophetic way she realized it. She was not yet one with the settled western world.

As they came close to Ingolby's house she heard marching footsteps, and in the near distance she saw fourscore or more men tramping in military order. "Who are they?" she asked of Jowett.

"Men that are going to see law and order kept in Lebanon," he answered.

CHAPTER XIV

SUCH THINGS MAY NOT BE

A few hours later Fleda slowly made her way homeward through the woods on the Manitou side of the Sagalac. Leaving Ingolby's house, she had seen men from the ranches and farms and mines beyond Lebanon driving or riding into the town, as though to a fair or fete-day. Word of anticipated troubles had sped through the countryside, and the innate curiosity of a race who greatly love a row brought in sensation-lovers. Some were skimming along in one-horse gigs, a small bag of oats dangling beneath like the pendulum of a great clock. Others were in double or triple-seated light wagons--"democrats" they were called. Women had a bit of colour in their hats or at their throats, and the men had on clean white collars and suits of "store-clothes"--a sign of being on pleasure bent. Young men and girls on rough but serviceable mounts cantered past, laughing and joking, and their loud talking grated on the ear of the girl

who had seen a Napoleon in the streets of his Moscow.

Presently there crossed her path a gruesomely ugly hearse, with glass sides and cheap imitation ostrich plumes drawn by gorged ravens of horses with egregiously long tails, and driven by an undertaker's assistant, who, with a natural gaiety of soul, displayed an idiotic solemnity by dragging down the corners of the mouth. She turned away in loathing.

Her mind fled to a scene far away in the land of the Volga when she was a child, where she had seen buried two men, who had fought for their insulted honour till both had died of their wounds. She remembered the white and red sashes and the gay scarfs worn by the women at the burial, the jackets with great silver buttons worn by the men, and the silver-mounted pistols and bright steel knives in the garish belts. She saw again the bodies of the two gladiators, covered with crimson robes, carried shoulder-high on a soft bed of interlaced branches to the graves beneath the trees. There, covered with flowers and sprigs and evergreens, ribbons and favours, the kindly earth hid them, cloaked for their long sleep, while women wept, and men praised the dead, and went back to the open road again cheerily, as the dead would have them do.

If he had died--the man she had just left behind in that torpid sleep which opiates bring--his body would have been carried to his last home in just such a hideous equipage as this hearse. A shiver of revolt went through her frame, and her mind went to him as she had seen him lying between the white sheets of his bed, his hands, as they had lain upon the coverlet, compact of power and grace, knit and muscular and vital--not the hand for a violin but the hand for a sword.

As she had laid her hand upon his hot forehead and over his eyes, he had unconsciously spoken her name. That had told her more of what really was between them than she had ever known. In the presence of the catastrophe that must endanger, if not destroy the work he had done, the career he had made, he thought of her, spoke her name.

What could she do to prevent his ruin? She must do something, else she had no right to think of him. As though her thoughts had summoned him, she came suddenly upon Felix Marchand at a point where her path resolved itself into two, one leading to Manitou, the other to her own home.

There was a malicious glint in the greenish eyes of the dissolute demagogue as he saw her. His hat made a half-circle before it found his head again.

"You pay early visits, mademoiselle," he said, his teeth showing rat-like.

"And you late ones?" she asked meaningly.

"Not so late that I can't get up early to see what's going on," he rejoined in a sour voice.

"Is it that those who beat you have to get up early?" she asked ironically.

"No one has got up earlier than me lately," he sneered.

"All the days are not begun," she remarked calmly.

"You have picked up quite an education since you left the road and the tan," he said with the look of one who delivers a smashing blow.

"I am not yet educated enough to know how you get other people to commit your crimes for you," she retorted.

"Who commits my crimes for me?" His voice was sharp and even anxious.

"The man who told you I was once a Gipsy--Jethro Fawe."

Her instinct had told her this was so. But had Jethro told all? She thought not. It would need some catastrophe which threw him off his balance to make him speak to a Gorgio of the inner things of Romany life; and child--marriage was one of them.

He scoffed. "Once a Gipsy always a Gipsy. Race is race, and you can't put it off and on like--your stocking."

He was going to say chemise, but race was race, and vestiges of native French chivalry stayed the gross simile on the lips of the degenerate. Fleda's eyes, however, took on a dark and brooding look which, more than anything else, showed the Romany in her. With a murky flood of resentment rising in her veins, she strove to fight back the half-savage instincts of a bygone life. She felt as though she could willingly sentence this man to death as her father had done Jethro Fawe that very morning. Another thought, however, was working and fighting in her--that Marchand was better as a friend than an enemy; and that while Ingolby's fate was in the balance, while yet the Orange funeral had not taken place and the strikes had not yet come, it might be that he could be won over to Ingolby. Her mind was thus involuntarily reproducing Ingolby's policy, as he had declared it to Jowett and Rockwell. It was to find Felix Marchand's price, and to buy off his enmity--not by money, for Marchand did not need that, but by those other coins of value which are individual to each man's desires, passions and needs.

"Once a Frenchman isn't always a Frenchman," she replied coolly, disregarding the coarse insolence of his last utterance. "You yourself do not now swear faith to the tricolour or the fleur-de-lis."

He flushed. She had touched a tender nerve.

"I am a Frenchman always," he rejoined angrily. "I hate the English. I spit on the English flag."

"Yes, I've heard you are an anarchist," she rejoined. "A man with no country and with a flag that belongs to no country--quelle affaire et quelle drolerie!"

She laughed. Taken aback in spite of his anger, he stared at her. How good her French accent was! If she would only speak altogether in that beloved language, he could smother much malice. She was beautiful and--well, who could tell? Ingolby was wounded and blind, maybe for ever, and women are always with the top dog--that was his theory. Perhaps her apparent dislike of him was only a mood. Many women that he had conquered had been just like that. They had begun by disliking him--from Lil Sarnia down--and had ended by being his. This girl would never be his in the way that the others had been, but--who could tell?--perhaps he would think enough of her to marry her? Anyway, it was worth while making such a beauty care for him. The other kind of women were easy

enough to get, and it would be a piquant thing to have one irreproachable affaire. He had never had one; he was not sure that any girl or woman he had ever known had ever loved him, and he was certain that he had never loved any girl or woman. To be in love would be a new and piquant experience for him. He did not know love, but he knew what passion was. He had ever been the hunter. This trail might be dangerous, too, but he would take his chances. He had seen her dislike of him whenever they had met in the past, and he had never tried to soften her attitude towards him. He had certainly whistled, but she had not come. Well, he would whistle again--a different tune.

"You speak French much?" he asked almost eagerly, the insolence gone from his tone. "Why didn't I know that?"

"I speak French in Manitou," she replied, "but nearly all the French speak English there, and so I speak more English than French."

"Yes, that's it," he rejoined almost angrily again. "The English will not learn French, will not speak French. They make us learn English, and--"

"If you don't like the flag and the country, why don't you leave it?" she interrupted, hardening, though she had meant to try and win him over to Ingolby's side.

His eyes blazed. There was something almost real in the man after all.

"The English can kill us, they can grind us to the dust," he rejoined in French, "but we will not leave the land which has always been ours. We settled it; our fathers gave their lives for it in a thousand places. The Indians killed them, the rivers and the storms, the plague and the fire, the sickness and the cold wiped them out. They were burned alive at the stake, they were flayed; their bones were broken to pieces by stones--but they blazed trails with their blood in the wilderness from New Orleans to Hudson's Bay. They paid for the land with their lives. Then the English came and took it, and since that time--one hundred and fifty years--we have been slaves."

"You do not look like a slave," she answered, "and you have not acted like a slave. If you were to do the things in France that you've done here, you wouldn't be free as you are to-day."

"What have I done?" he asked darkly.

"You were the cause of what happened at Barbazon's last night,"--he smiled evilly--"you are egging on the roughs to break up the Orange funeral to-day; and there is all the rest you know so well."

"What is the rest I know so well?" He looked closely at her, his long, mongrel eyes half-closing with covert scrutiny.

"Whatever it is, it is all bad and it is all yours."

"Not all," he retorted coolly. "You forget your Gipsy friend. He did his part last night, and he's still free."

They had entered the last little stretch of wood in which her home lay, and she slackened her footsteps slightly. She felt that she had been unwise in challenging him; that she ought to try persistently to win him

over. It was repugnant to her, still it must be done even yet. She mastered herself for Ingolby's sake and changed her tactics.

"As you glory in what you have done, you won't mind being responsible for all that's happened," she replied in a more friendly tone.

She made an impulsive gesture towards him.

"You have shown what power you have--isn't that enough?" she asked. "You have made the crowd shout, 'Vive Marchand !' You can make everything as peaceful as it is now upset. If you don't do so, there will be much misery. If peace must be got by force, then the force of government will get it in the end. You have the gift of getting hold of the worst men here, and you have done it; but won't you now master them again in the other way? You have money and brains; why not use them to become a leader of those who will win at last, no matter what the game may be?"

He came close to her. She shrank inwardly, but she did not move. His greenish eyes were wide open in the fulness of eloquence and desire.

"You have a tongue like none I ever heard," he said impulsively. "You've got a mind that thinks, you've got dash and can take risks. You took risks that day on the Carillon Rapids. It was only the day before that I'd met you by the old ford of the Sagalac, and made up to you. You choked me off as though I was a wolf or a devil on the loose. The next day when I saw Ingolby hand you out to the crowd from his arms, I got nasty--I have fits like that sometimes, when I've had a little too much liquor. I felt it more because you're the only kind of woman that could ever get a real hold on me. It was you made me get the boys rampaging and set the toughs moving. As you say, I can get hold of a crowd. It's not hard--with money and drink. You can buy human nature cheap. Every man has his price they say--and every woman too--bien sur! The thing is to find out what is the price, and then how to buy. You can't buy everyone in the same way, even if you use a different price. You've got to find out how they want the price--whether it's to be handed over the counter, so to speak, or to be kept on the window-sill, or left in a pocket, or dropped in a path, or dug up like a potato, with a funny make-believe that fools nobody, but just plays to the hypocrite in everyone everywhere. I'm saying this to you because you've seen more of the world, I bet, than one in a million, even though you're so young. I don't see why we can't come together. I'm to be bought. I don't say that my price isn't high. You've got your price, too. You wouldn't fuss yourself about things here in Manitou and Lebanon, if there wasn't something you wanted to get. Tout ca! Well, isn't it worth while making the bargain? You've got such gift of speech that I'm just as if I'd been drugged, and all round, face, figure, eyes, hair, foot, and girdle, you're worth giving up a lot for. I've seen plenty of your sex, and I've heard crowds of them talk, but they never had anything for me beyond the minute. You've got the real thing. You're my fancy. You've been thinking and dreaming of Ingolby. He's done. He's a back number. There's nothing he's done that isn't on the tumble since last night. The financial gang that he downed are out already against him. They'll have his economic blood. He made a splash while he was at it, but the alligator's got him. It's 'Exit Ingolby,' now."

She made a passionate gesture, and seemed about to speak, but he went on: "No, don't say anything. I know how you feel. You've had your face turned his way, and you can't look elsewhere all at once. But Time cures quick, if you're a good healthy human being. Ingolby was the kind likely

to draw a girl. He's a six-footer and over; he spangled a lot, and he smiled pretty--comme le printemps, and was sharp enough to keep clear of women that could hurt him. That was his strongest point after all, for a little, sly sprat of a woman that's made eyes at you and led you on, till you sent her a note in a hurry some time with some loose hot words in it, and she got what she'd wanted, will make you pay a hundred times for the goods you get. Ingolby was sharp enough to walk shy, until you came his way, and then he lost his underpinning. But last night got him in the vitals--hit him between the eyes; and his stock's not worth ten cents in the dollar to-day. But though the pumas are out, and he's done, and'll never see his way out of the hole he's in"--he laughed at his grisly joke"--it's natural to let him down easy. You've looked his way; he did you a good turn at the Carillon Rapids, and you'd do one for him if you could. I'm the only one can stop the worst from happening. You want to pay your debt to him. Good. I can help you do it. I can stop the strikes on the railways and in the mills. I can stop the row at the Orange funeral. I can stop the run on his bank and the drop in his stock. I can fight the gang that's against him--I know how. I'm the man that can bring things to pass."

He paused with a sly, mean smile of self-approval and conceit, and his tongue licked the corners of his mouth in a way that drunkards have in the early morning when the effect of last night's drinking has worn off. He spread out his hands with the air of a man who had unpacked his soul, but the chief characteristic of his manner was egregious belief in himself.

At first, in her desire to find a way to meet the needs of Ingolby, Fleda had listened to him with fortitude and even without revolt. But as he began to speak of women, and to refer to herself with a look of gloating which men of his breed cannot hide, her angry pulses beat hard. She did not quite know where he was leading, but she was sure he meant to say something which would vex her beyond bearing. At one moment she meant to cut short his narrative, but he prevented her, and when at last he ended, she was almost choking with agitation. It had been borne in upon her as his monologue proceeded, that she would rather die than accept anything from this man--anything of any kind. To fight him was the only thing. Nothing else could prevail in the end. His was the service of the unpenitent thief.

"And what is it you want to buy from me?" she asked evenly.

He did not notice, and he could not realize that ominous thing in her voice and face. "I want to be friends with you. I want to see you here in the woods, to meet you as you met Ingolby. I want to talk with you, to hear you talk; to learn things from you I never learned before; to--"

She interrupted him with a swift gesture. "And then--after that? What do you want at the end of it all? One cannot spend one's time talking and wandering in the woods and teaching and learning. After that, what?"

"I have a house in Montreal," he said evasively. "I don't want to live there alone." He laughed. "It's big enough for two, and at the end it might be us two, if--"

With sharp anger, yet with coolness and dignity, she broke in on his words. "Might be us two!" she exclaimed. "I have never thought of making my home in a sewer. Do you think--but, no, it isn't any use talking! You don't know how to deal with man or woman. You are

perverted."

"I did not mean what you mean; I meant that I should want to marry you," he protested. "You think the worst of me. Someone has poisoned your mind against me."

"Everyone has poisoned my mind against you," she returned, "and yourself most of all. I know you will try to injure Mr. Ingolby; and I know that you will try to injure me; but you will not succeed."

She turned and moved away from him quickly, taking the path towards her own front door. He called something after her, but she did not or would not hear.

As she entered the open space in front of the house, she heard footsteps behind her and turned quickly, not without apprehension. A woman came hurrying towards her. She was pale, agitated, haggard with fatigue.

"May I speak with you?" she asked in French. "Surely," replied Fleda.

CHAPTER XV

THE WOMAN FROM WIND RIVER

"What is it?" asked Fleda, opening the door of the house.

"I want to speak to you about m'sieu'," replied the sad-faced woman. She made a motion of her head backwards towards the wood. "About M'sieu' Marchand."

Fleda's face hardened; she had had more than enough of "M'sieu' Marchand." She was bitterly ashamed that she had, even for a moment, thought of using diplomacy with him. But this woman's face was so forlorn, apart, and lonely, that the old spirit of the Open Road worked its will. In far-off days she had never seen a human being turned away from a Romany tent, or driven from a Romany camp. She opened the door and stood aside to admit the wayfarer.

A few moments later, the woman, tidied and freshened, sat at the ample breakfast which was characteristic of Romany home-life. The woman's plate was bountifully supplied by Fleda, and her cup filled more than once by Madame Bulteel, while old Gabriel Druse bulked friendly over all. His face now showed none of the passion and sternness which had been present when he passed the Sentence of the Patrín upon Jethro Fawe; nothing of the gloom filling his eyes as he left Ingolby's house. The gracious, bountiful look of the patriarch, of the head of the clan, was upon him.

The husband of one wife, the father of one child, yet the Ry of Rys had still the overlooking, protective sense of one who had the care of great numbers of people. His keen eyes foresaw more of the story the woman was to tell presently than either of the women of his household. He had seen many such women as this, and had inflexibly judged between them and those who had wronged them.

"Where have you come from?" he asked, as the meal drew to a close.

"From Wind River and under Elk Mountain," the woman answered with a look of relief. Her face was of those who no longer can bear the soul's secrets.

There was silence while the breakfast things were cleared away, and the window was thrown wide to the full morning sun. It broke through the branches of pine and cedar and juniper; it made translucent the leaves of the maples; it shimmered on Fleda's brown hair as she pulled a rose from the bush at the window, and gave it to the forlorn creature in the grey "linsey-woolsey" dress and the loose blue flannel jacket, whose skin was coarsened by outdoor life, but who had something of real beauty in the intense blue of her eyes. She had been a very comely figure in her best days, for her waist was small, her bosom gently and firmly rounded, and her hands were finer than those of most who live and work much in the open air.

"You said there was something you wished to tell me," said Fleda, at last.

The woman gazed slowly round at the three, as though with puzzled appeal. There was the look of the Outlander in her face; of one who had been exiled from familiar things and places. In manner she was like a child. Her glance wandered over the faces of the two women, then her eyes met those of the Ry, and stayed there.

"I am old and I have seen many sorrows," said Gabriel Druse, divining what was in her mind. "I will try to understand."

"I have known all the bitterness of life," interposed the low, soft voice of Madame Bulteel.

"All ears are the same here," Fleda added, looking the woman in the eyes.

"I will tell everything," was the instant reply. Her fingers twined and untwined in her lap with a nervousness shown by neither face nor body. Her face was almost apathetic in its despair, but her body had an upright courage.

She sighed heavily and began.

"My name is Arabella Stone. I was married from my home over against Wind River by the Jumping Sandhills.

"My father was a lumberman. He was always captain of the gang in the woods, and captain of the river in the summer. My mother was deaf and dumb. It was very lonely at times when my father was away. I loved a boy--a good boy, and he was killed breaking horses. When I was twenty-one years old my mother died. It was not good for me to be alone, my father said, so he must either give up the woods and the river, or he or I must marry. Well, I saw he would not marry, for my mother's face was one a man could not forget."

The old man stirred in his seat. "I have seen such," he said in his deep voice.

"So it was I said to myself I would marry," she continued, "though I had loved the Boy that died under the hoofs of the black stallion. There weren't many girls at the Jumping Sandhills, and so there were men, now

one, now another, to say things to me which did not touch my heart; but I did not laugh, because I understood that they were lonely. Yet I liked one of them more than all the others.

"So, for my father's sake, I came nearer to Dennis, and at last it seemed I could bear to look at him any time of the day or night he came to me. He was built like a pine-tree, and had a playful tongue, and also he was a ranchman like the Boy that was gone. It all came about on the day he rode in from the range the wild wicked black stallion which all range-riders had tried for years to capture. It was like a brother of the horse which had killed my Boy, only bigger. When Dennis mastered him and rode him to my door I made up my mind, and when he whispered to me over the dipper of buttermilk I gave him, I said, 'Yes.' I was proud of him. He did things that a woman likes, and said the things a woman loves to hear, though they be the same thing said over and over again."

Madame Bulteel nodded her head as though in a dream, and the Ry of Rys sat with his two great hands on the chair-arm and his chin dropped on his chest. Fleda's hands were clasped in her lap, and her big eyes never left the woman's face.

"Before a month was gone I had married him," the low, tired voice went on. "It was a gay wedding; and my father was very happy, for he thought I had got the desire of a woman's life--a home of her own. For a time all went well. Dennis was gay and careless and wilful, but he was easy to live with, too, except when he came back from the town where he sold his horses. Then he was different, because of the drink, and he was quarrelsome with me--and cruel, too.

"At last when he came home with the drink upon him, he would sleep on the floor and not beside me. This wore upon my heart. I thought that if I could only put my hand on his shoulder and whisper in his ear, he would get better of his bad feeling; but he was sulky, and he would not bear with me. Though I never loved him as I loved my Boy, still I tried to be a good wife to him, and never turned my eyes to any other man."

Suddenly she stopped as though the pain of speaking was too great. Madame Bulteel murmured something, but the only word that reached the ears of the others was the Arabic word 'mafish'. Her pale face was suffused as she said it.

Two or three times the woman essayed to speak again, but could not. At last, however, she overcame her emotion and said: "So it was when M'sieu' Felix Marchand came up from the Sagalac."

The old man started and muttered harshly, but Fleda had foreseen the entrance of the dissolute Frenchman into the tale, and gave no sign of surprise.

"M'sieu' Marchand bought horses," the sad voice trailed on. "One day he bought the mining-claims Dennis had been holding till he could develop them or sell them for good money. When Dennis went to town again he brought me back a present of a belt with silver clasps; but yet again that night he slept upon the floor alone. So it went on. M. Marchand, he goes on to the mountains and comes back; and he buys more horses, and Dennis takes them to Yargo, and M. Marchand goes with him, but comes back before Dennis does. It was then M'sieu' begun to talk to me; to say things that soothe a woman when she is hurt. I knew now Dennis did not want me as when he first married me. He was that kind of man--quick to

care and quicker to forget. He was weak, he could not fasten where he stood. It pleased him to be gay and friendly with me when he was sober, but there was nothing behind it--nothing, nothing at all. At last I began to cry when I thought of it, for it went on and on, and I was too much alone. I looked at myself in the glass, and I saw I was not old or lean. I sang in the trees beside the brook, and my voice was even a little better than in the days when Dennis first came to my father's house. I looked to my cooking, and I knew that it was as good as ever. I thought of my clothes, and how I did my hair, and asked myself if I was as fresh to see as when Dennis first came to me. I could see no difference. There was a clear pool not far away under the little hills where the springs came together. I used to bathe in it every morning and dry myself in the sun; and my body was like a child's. That being so, should my own man turn his head away from me day or night? What had I done to be used so, less than two years after I had married!"

She paused and hung her head, weeping gently. "Shame stings a woman like nothing else," Madame Bulteel said with a sigh.

"It was so with me," continued Dennis's wife. "Then at last the thought came that there was another woman. And all the time M. Marchand kept coming and going, at first when Dennis was there, and always with some good reason for coming--horses, cattle, shooting, or furs bought of the Indians. When Dennis was not there, he came at first for an hour or two, as if by chance, then for a whole day, because he said he knew I was lonely. One day, I was sitting by the pool--it was in the evening. I was crying because of the thought that followed me of another woman somewhere, who made Dennis turn from me. Then it was M'sieu' came and put a hand on my shoulder--he came so quietly that I did not hear him till he touched me. He said he knew why I cried, and it saddened his soul."

"His soul--the jackal!" growled the old man in his beard.

The woman nodded wearily and went on. "For all of ten days I had been alone, except for the cattlemen camping a mile away and an old Indian helper who slept in his tepee within call. Loneliness makes you weak when there's something tearing at the heart. So I let M'sieu' Marchand talk to me. At last he told me that there was a woman at Yargo--that Dennis did not go there for business, but to her. Everyone knew it except me, he said. He told me to ask old Throw Hard, the Indian helper, if he had spoken the truth. I was shamed, and angry and crazy, too, I think, so I went to old Throw Hard and asked him. He said he could not tell the truth, and that he would not lie to me. So I knew it was all true.

"How do I know what was in my mind? Is a woman not mad at such a time! There I was, tossed aside for a flyaway, who was for any man that would come her way. Yes, I think I was mad. The pride in me was hurt--as only a woman can understand." She paused and looked at the two women who listened to her. Fleda's eyes were on the world beyond the window of the room.

"Surely we understand," whispered Madame Bulteel.

The woman's courage returned, and she continued: "I could not go to my father, for he was riding the river scores of miles away. I was terribly alone. It was then that M'sieu' Marchand, who had bribed the woman to draw Dennis away, begged me to go away with him. He swore I should marry

him as soon as I could be free of Dennis. I scarcely knew what I said or thought; but the place I had loved was hateful to me, so I went away with him."

A sharp, pained exclamation broke from the lips of Madame Bulteel, but presently she reached out and laid a hand upon the woman's arm. "Of course you went with him," she said. "You could not stay where you were and face the return of Dennis. There was no child to keep you, and the man that tempted you said he adored you?"

The woman looked gratefully at her. "That was what he said," she answered. "He said he was tired of wandering, and that he wanted a home--and there was a big house in Montreal."

She stopped suddenly upon an angry, smothered word from Fleda's lips. A big house in Montreal! Fleda's first impulse was to break in upon the woman's story and tell her father what had happened just now outside their own house; but she waited.

"Yes, there was a big house in Montreal?" said Fleda, her eyes now resting sadly upon the woman.

"He said it should be mine. But that did not count. To be far away from all that had been was more than all else. I was not thinking of the man, or caring for him, I was flying from my shame. I did not see then the shame to which I was going. I was a fool, and I was mad and bad also. When I waked--and it was soon--there was quick understanding between us. The big house in Montreal--that was never meant for me. He was already married."

The old man stretched heavily to his feet, leaned both hands on the table, and looked at the woman with glowering eyes, while Fleda's heart seemed to stop beating.

"Married!" growled Gabriel Druse, with a blur of passion in his voice. He knew that Felix Marchand had followed his daughter as though he were a single man.

Fleda saw what was working in his mind. Since her father suspected, he should know all.

"He almost offered me the big house in Montreal this morning," she said evenly and coldly.

A malediction broke from the old man's lips.

"He almost thought he wanted me to marry him," Fleda added scornfully.

"And what did you say?" Druse asked.

"There could only be one thing to say. I told him I had never thought of making my home in a sewer." A grim smile broke over the old man's face, and he sat down again.

"Because I saw him with you I wanted to warn you," the woman continued. "Yesterday, I came to warn him of his danger, and he laughed at me. From Madame Thibadeau I heard he had said he would make you sing his song. When I came to tell you, there he was with you. But when he left you I was sure there was no need to speak. Still I felt I must tell you--"

perhaps because you are rich and strong, and will stop him from doing more harm."

"How do you know we are rich?" asked Druse in a rough tone.

"It is what the world says," was the reply. "Is there harm in that? In any case it was right to tell you all; so that one who had herded with a woman like me should not be friends with you."

"I have seen worse women than you," murmured the old man.

"What danger did you come to warn M. Marchand about?" asked Fleda.

"To his life," answered the woman.

"Do you want to save his life?" asked the old man.

"Ah, is it not always so?" intervened Madame Bulteel in a low, sad voice. "To be wronged like that does not make a woman just."

"I am just," answered the woman. "He deserves to die, but I want to save the man that will kill him when they meet."

"Who will kill him?" asked Fleda. "Dennis--he will kill Marchand if he can."

The old man leaned forward with puzzled, gloomy interest. "Why? Dennis left you for another. You say he had grown cold. Was that not what he wanted--that you should leave him?"

The woman looked at him with tearful eyes. "If I had known Dennis better, I should have waited. What he did is of the moment only. A man may fall and rise again, but it is not so with a woman. She thinks and thinks upon the scar that shows where she wounded herself; and she never forgets, and so her life becomes nothing--nothing."

No one saw that Madame Bulteel held herself rigidly, and was so white that even the sunlight was gold beside her look. Yet the strangest, saddest smile played about her lips; and presently, as the eyes of the others fastened on the woman and did not leave her, she regained her usual composure.

The woman kept looking at Gabriel Druse. "When Dennis found that I had gone, and knew why--for I left word on a sheet of paper--he went mad like me. Trailing to the south, to find M'sieu' Marchand, he had an accident, and was laid up in a shack for weeks on the Tanguishene River, and they could not move him. But at last a ranchman wrote to me, and the letter found me on the very day I left M'sieu'. When I got that letter begging me to go to the Tanguishene River, to nurse Dennis who loved me still, my heart sank. I said to myself I could not go; and Dennis and I must be apart always to the end of time. But then I thought again. He was ill, and his body was as broken as his mind. Well, since I could do his mind no good, I would try to help his body. I could do that much for him. So I went. But the letter to me had been long on the way, and when I got to the Tanguishene River he was almost well."

She paused and rocked her body to and fro for a moment as though in pain.

"He wanted me to go back to him then. He said he had never cared for the

woman at Yargo, and that what he felt for me now was different from what it had ever been. When he had settled accounts we could go back to the ranch and be at peace. I knew what he meant by settling accounts, and it frightened me. That is why I am here. I came to warn the man, Marchand, for if Dennis kills him, then they will hang Dennis. Do you not see? This is a country of law. I saw that Dennis had the madness in his brain, and so I left him again in the evening of the day I found him, and came here--it is a long way. Yesterday, M'sieu' Marchand laughed at me when I warned him. He said he could take care of himself. But such men as Dennis stop at nothing; there will be killing, if M'sieu' stays here."

"You will go back to Dennis?" asked Fleda gently. "Some other woman will make him happy when he forgets me," was the cheerless, grey reply.

The old man got up and, coming over, laid a hand upon her shoulder.

"Where did you think of going from here?" he asked.

"Anywhere--I don't know," was the reply.

"Is there no work here for her?" he asked, turning to Madame Bulteel.

"Yes, plenty," was the reply. "And room also?" he asked again.

"Was ever a tent too full, when the lost traveller stumbled into camp in the old days?" rejoined Fleda. The woman trembled to her feet, a glad look in her eyes. "I ought to go, but I am tired and I will gladly stay," she said and swayed against the table.

Madame Bulteel and Fleda put their arms round her, steadying her.

"This is not the way to act," said Fleda with a touch of sharp reproof. Had she not her own trouble to face?

The stricken woman drew herself up and looked Fleda in the eyes. "I will find the right way, if I can," she said with courage.

A half-hour later, as the old man sat alone in the room where he had breakfasted, a rifle-shot rang out in the distance.

"The trouble begins," he said, as he rose and hastened into the hallway.

Another shot rang out. He caught up his wide felt hat, reached for a great walking-stick in the corner, and left the house hurriedly.

CHAPTER XVI

THE MAYOR FILLS AN OFFICE

It was a false alarm which had startled Gabriel Druse, but it had significance. The Orange funeral was not to take place until eleven o'clock, and it was only eight o'clock when the Ry left his home. A rifle-shot had, however, been fired across the Sagalac from the Manitou side, and it had been promptly acknowledged from Lebanon. There was a short pause, and then came another from the Lebanon side. It was merely a warning and a challenge. The only man who could have controlled the

position was blind and helpless.

As Druse walked rapidly towards the bridge, he met Jowett. Jowett was one of the few men in either town for whom the Ry had regard, and the friendliness had had its origin in Jowett's knowledge of horseflesh. This was a field in which the Ry was himself a master. He had ever been too high-placed among his own people to trade and barter horses except when, sending a score of Romanys on a hunt for wild ponies on the hills of Eastern Europe, he had afterwards sold the tamed herd to the highest bidders in some Balkan town; but he had an infallible eye for a horse.

It was a curious anomaly also that the one man in Lebanon who would not have been expected to love and pursue horse-flesh was the Reverend Reuben Tripple to whom Ingolby had given his conge, but who loved a horse as he loved himself.

He was indeed a greater expert in horses than in souls. One of the sights of Lebanon had been the appearance in the field of the "Reverend Tripple," who owned a great, raw-boned bay mare of lank proportions, the winner of a certain great trotting-race which had delighted the mockers.

For two years Jowett had eyed Mr. Tripple's rawbone with a piratical eye.

Though it had won only a single great race, that, in Jowett's view, was its master's fault. As the Arabs say, however, Allah is with the patient; and so it was that on the evening of the day in which Ingolby met disaster, Mr. Tripple informed Jowett that he was willing to sell his rawbone.

He was mounted on the gawky roadster when he met Gabriel Druse making for the bridge. Their greeting was as cordial as hasty. Anxious as was the Ry to learn what was going on in the towns, Jowett's mount caught his eye. It was but a little time since they had met at Ingolby's house, and they were both full of the grave events afoot, but here was a horse-deal of consequence, and the bridle-rein was looseflung.

"Yes, I got it," said Jowett, with a chuckle, interpreting the old man's look. "I got it for good--a wonder from Wonderville. Damned queer-looking critter, but there, I guess we know what I've got. Outside like a crinoline, inside like a pair of ankles of the Lady Jane Plantagenet. Yes, I got it, Mr. Druse, got it dead-on!"

"How?" asked the Ry, feeling the clean fetlocks with affectionate approval.

"He's off East, so he says," was the joyous reply; "sudden but sure, and I dunno why. Anyway, he's got the door-handle offered, and he's off without his camel." He stroked the neck of the bay lovingly. "How much?"

Jowett held up his fingers. The old man lifted his eyebrows quizzically. "That-h'm! Does he preach as well as that?" he asked.

Jowett chuckled. "He knows the horse-country better than the New Jerusalem, I guess; and I wasn't off my feed, nor hadn't lost my head neither. I wanted that dust-hawk, and he knew it; but I got in on him with the harness and the sulky. The bridle he got from a Mexican that come up here a year ago, and went broke and then went dead; and there being no padre, Tripple did the burying, and he took the bridle as his

fee, I s'pose. It had twenty dollars' worth of silver on it--look at these conchs."

He trifled with the big beautiful buttons on the head-stall. "The sulky's as good as new, and so's the harness almost; and there's the nose-bag and the blankets, and a saddle and a monkey-wrench and two bottles of horse-liniment, and odds and ends. I only paid that"--and he held up his fingers again as though it was a sacred rite--"for the lot. Not bad, I want to say. Isn't he good for all day, this one?"

The old man nodded, then turned towards the bridge. "The gun-shots--what?" he asked, setting forward at a walk which taxed the rawbone's stride.

"An invite--come to the wedding; that's all. Only it's a funeral this time, and, if something good doesn't happen, there'll be more than one funeral on the Sagalac to-morrow. I've had my try, but I dunno how it'll come out. He's not a man of much dictionary is the Monseenoor."

"The Monseigneur Lourde? What does he say?"

"He says what we all say, that he is sorry. 'But why have the Orange funeral while things are as they are?' he says, and he asks for the red flag not to be shook in the face of the bull."

"That is not the talk of a fool, as most priests are," growled the other.

"Sure. But it wants a real wind-warbler to make them see it in Lebanon. They've got the needle. They'll pray to-day with the taste of blood in their mouths. It's gone too far. Only a miracle can keep things right. The Mayor has wired for the mounted police--our own battalion of militia wouldn't serve, and there'd be no use ordering them out--but the Riders can't get here in time. The train's due the very time the funeral's to start, but that train's always late, though they say the ingine-driver is an Orangeman! And the funeral will start at the time fixed, or I don't know the boys that belong to the lodge. So it's up to We, Us & Co. to see the thing through, or go bust. It don't suit me. It wouldn't have been like this, if it hadn't been for what happened to the Chief last night. There's no holding the boys in. One thing's sure, the Gipsy that give Ingolby away has got to lie low if he hasn't got away, or there'll be one less of his tribe to eat the juicy hedgehog. Yes, sir-ee!"

To the last words of Jowett the Ry seemed to pay no attention, though his lips shut tight and a menacing look came into his eyes. They were now upon the bridge, and could see what was forward on both sides of the Sagalac. There was unusual bustle and activity in the streets and on the river-bank of both towns. It was noticeable also that though the mills were running in Manitou, there were fewer chimneys smoking, and far more men in the streets than usual. Tied up to the Manitou shore were a half-dozen cribs or rafts of timber which should be floating eastward down the Sagalac.

"If the Monseenoor can't, or don't, step in, we're bound for a shindy over a corpse," continued Jowett after a moment.

"Can the Monseigneur cast a spell over them all?" remarked the Ry ironically, for he had little faith in priests, though he had for this particular one great respect.

"He's a big man, that preelate," answered Jowett quickly and forcibly. "He kept the Crees quiet when they was going to rise. If they'd got up, there'd have been hundreds of settlers massacred. He risked his life to do that--went right into the camp in face of levelled rifles, and sat down and begun to talk. A minute afterwards all the chiefs was squatting, too. Then the tussle begun between a man with a soul and a heathen gang that eat dog, kill their old folks, their cripples and their deformed children, and run sticks of wood through their bleeding chests, just to show that they're heathens. But he won out, this Jesueete friend o' man. That's why I'm putting my horses and my land and my pants and my shirt and the buff that's underneath on the little preelate."

Gabriel Druse's face did not indicate the same confidence. "It is not an age of miracles; the priest is not enough," he said sceptically.

By twos, by threes, by tens, men from Manitou came sauntering across the bridge into Lebanon, until a goodly number were scattered at different points through the town. They seemed to distribute themselves by a preconceived plan, and they were all habitants. There were no Russians, Finns, Swedes, Norwegians, or Germans among them. They were low-browed, sturdy men, dressed in red or blue serge shirts, some with sashes around their waists, some with ear-rings in their ears, some in knee-boots, and some with the heavy spiked boots of the river-driver. None appeared to carry any weapon that would shoot, yet in their belts was the sheath-knife, the invariable equipment of their class. It would have seemed more suspicious if they had not carried them. The railwaymen, miners, carters, mill-hands, however, appeared to carry nothing save their strong arms and hairy hands, and some were as hairy as animals. These backwoodsmen also could, without weapons, turn a town into a general hospital. In battle they fought not only with hands but also with teeth and hoofs like wild stallions. Teeth tore off an ear or sliced away a nose, hands smote like hammers or gouged out eyes, and their nailed boots were weapons of as savage a kind as could be invented. They could spring and strike an opponent with one foot in the chest or in the face, and spoil the face for many a day, or for ever. It was a gift of the backwoods and the lumber-camps, practised in hours of stark monotony when the devils which haunt places of isolation devoid of family life, where men herd together like dogs in a kennel, break loose. There the man that dips his fingers "friendly-like" in the dish of his neighbour one minute wants the eye of that neighbour the next not so much in innate or momentary hatred, as in innate savagery and the primeval sense of combat, the war which was in the blood of the first man.

The unarmed appearance of these men did not deceive the pioneer folk of Lebanon. To them the time had come when the reactionary forces of Manitou must receive a check. Even those who thought the funeral fanatical and provocative were ready to defend it.

The person who liked the whole business least was Rockwell. He was subject to the same weariness of the flesh and fatigue of the spirit as all men; yet it was expected of him that at any hour he should be at the disposal of suffering humanity--of criminal or idiotic humanity--patient, devoted, calm, nervestrung, complete. He was the one person in the community who was the universal necessity, and yet for whom the community had no mercy in its troubles or out of them. There were three doctors in Lebanon, but none was an institution, none had prestige save Rockwell, and he often wished that he had less prestige, since he cared nothing for popularity.

He had made his preparations for possible "accidents" in no happy mood. Fresh from the bedside of Ingolby, having had no sleep, and with many sick people on his list, he inwardly damned the foolishness of both towns. He even sharply rebuked the Mayor, who urged surgical preparations upon him, for not sending sooner to the Government for a force which could preserve order or prevent the procession.

It was while he was doing so that Jowett appeared with Gabriel Druse to interview the Mayor.

"It's like this," said Jowett. "In another hour the funeral will start. There's a lot of Manitou huskies in Lebanon now, and their feet is loaded, if their guns ain't. They're comin' by driblets, and by-and-bye, when they've all distributed themselves, there'll be a marching column of them from Manitou. It's all arranged to make trouble and break the law. It's the first real organized set-to we've had between the towns, and it'll be nasty. If the preelate doesn't dope them, there'll be pertikler hell to pay."

He then gave the story of his visit to Monseigneur Lourde, and the details of what was going forward in Manitou so far as he had learned. Also the ubiquitous Osterhaut had not been idle, and his bulletin had just been handed to Jowett.

"There's one thing ought to be done and has got to be done," Jowett added, "if the Monseenoor don't pull if off. The leaders have to be arrested, and it had better be done by one that, in a way, don't belong to either Lebanon or Manitou."

The Mayor shook his head. "I don't see how I can authorize Marchand's arrest--not till he breaks the law, in any case."

"It's against the law to conspire to break the law," replied Jowett. "You've been making a lot of special constables. Make Mr. Gabriel Druse here a special constable, then if the law's broke, he can have a right to take a hand in."

The giant Ry had stood apart, watchful and ruminant, but he now stepped forward, as the Mayor turned to him and stretched out a hand.

"I am for peace," the old man said. "To keep the peace the law must be strong."

In spite of the gravity of the situation the Mayor smiled. "You wouldn't need much disguise to stand for the law, Mr. Druse," he remarked. "When the law is seven feet high, it stands well up."

The Ry did not smile. "Make me the head of the constables, and I will keep the peace," he said. There was a sudden silence. The proposal had come so quietly, and it was so startling, that even the calm Rockwell was taken aback. But his eye and the eye of the Mayor met, and the look in both their faces was the same.

"That's bold play," the Mayor said, "but I guess it goes. Yesterday it couldn't be done. To-day it can. The Chief Constable's down with smallpox. Got it from an Injun prisoner days ago. He's been bad for three days, but hung on. Now he's down, and there's no Chief. I was going to act myself, but the trouble was, if anything happened to me, there'd be no head of anything. It's better to have two strings to your

bow. It's a go-it's a straight go, Mr. Druse. Seven foot of Chief Constable ought to have its weight with the roughnecks."

A look of hopefulness came into his face. This sage, huge, commanding figure would have a good moral effect on the rude elements of disorder.

"I'll have you read the Riot Act instead of doing it myself," added the Mayor. "It'll be a good introduction for you, and as you live in Manitou, it'll be a knock-out blow to the toughs. Sometimes one man is as good as a hundred. Come on to the Courthouse with me," he continued cheerfully. "We'll fix the whole thing. All the special constables are waiting there with the regular police. An extra foot on a captain's shoulders is as good as a battery of guns."

"You're sure it's according to Hoyle?" asked Jowett quizzically.

He was so delighted that he felt he must "make the Mayor show off self," as he put it afterwards. He did not miscalculate; the Mayor rose to his challenge.

"I'm boss of this show," he said, "and I can go it alone if necessary when the town's in danger and the law's being hustled. I've had a meeting of the Council and I've got the sailing-orders I want. I'm boss of the place, and Mr. Druse is my--" he stopped, because there was a look in the eyes of the Ry which demanded consideration--"And Mr. Druse is lawboss," he added.

The old ineradicable look of command shone in the eyes of Gabriel Druse. Leadership was written all over him. Power spoke in every motion. The square, unbowed shoulders, the heavily lined face, with the patriarchal beard, the gnarled hands, the rough-hewn limbs, the eye of bright, brooding force proclaimed authority.

Indeed in that moment there came into the face of the old Nomad the look it had not worn for many a day. The self-exiled ruler had paid a heavy price for his daughter's vow, though he had never acknowledged it to himself. His self-ordained impotency, in a camp that was never moved, within walls which never rose with the sunset and fell with the morning; where his feet trod the same roadway day after day; where no man asked for justice or sought his counsel or fell back on his protection; where he drank from the same spring and tethered his horse in the same paddock from morn to morn: all these things had eaten at his heart and bowed his spirit in spite of himself.

He was not now of the Romany world, and he was not of the Gorgio world; but here at last was the old thing come back to him in a new way, and his bones rejoiced. He would entitle his daughter to her place among the Gorgios. Perhaps also it would be given him, in the name of the law, to deal with a man he hated.

"We've got Mister Marchand now," said Jowett softly to the old chieftain.

The Ry's eyes lighted and his jaw set. He did not speak, but his hands clenched, opened and clenched again. Jowett saw and grinned.

"The Mayor and the law-boss'll win out, I guess," he said to himself.

CHAPTER XVII

THE MONSEIGNEUR AND THE NOMAD

Even more than Dr. Rockwell, Berry, the barber, was the most troubled man in Lebanon on the day of the Orange funeral. Berry was a good example of an unreasoning infatuation. The accident which had come to his idol, with the certain fall of his fortunes, hit him so hard, that, for the first time since he became a barber, his razor nipped the flesh of more than one who sat in his red-upholstered chair.

In his position, Berry was likely to hear whatever gossip was going. Who shall have perfect self-control with a giant bib under the chin, tipped back on a chair that cannot be regulated, with a face covered by lather, and two plantation fingers holding the nose? In these circumstances, with much diplomacy, Berry corkscrewed his way into confidence, and when he dipped a white cloth in bay-rum and eau-de-cologne, and laid it over the face of the victim, with the finality of a satisfied inquisitor, it was like giving the last smother to human individuality. An artist after his kind, he no sooner got what he wanted than he carefully coaxed his victim away from thoughts of the disclosures into the vague distance of casual gossip once more.

Gradually and slowly he shepherded his patient back to the realms of self-respect and individual personality. The border-line was at the point where the fingers of his customer fluttered at a collar-button; for Berry, who realized the power that lies in making a man look ridiculous, never allowed a customer to be shaved or have his hair cut with a collar on. When his customers had corns, off came the boots also, and then Berry's triumph over the white man was complete. To call attention to an exaggerated bunion when the odorous towel lay upon the hidden features of what once was a "human," was the last act in the drama of the Unmaking of Man.

Only when the client had felt in his pocket for the price of the flaying, and laid it, with a ten-cent fee, on the ledge beneath the mirror, where all the implements of the inquisition and the restoration were assembled, did he feel manhood restored. If, however, he tried to keep a vow of silence in the chair of execution, he paid a heavy price; for Berry had his own methods of punishment. A little tighter grasp of the nose; a little rougher scrape of the razor, and some sharp, stinging liquid suddenly slapped with a cold palm on the excoriated spot, with the devilish hypocrisy of healing it; a longer smothering-period under the towel, when the corners of it were tucked behind the ears and a crease of it in the mouth—all these soon induced vocal expression again, and Berry started on his inquisition with gentle certainty. When at last he dusted the face with a little fine flour of oatmeal, "to heal the cuticle and 'manoor' the roots," and smelled with content the hands which had embalmed the hair in verbena-scented oil, a man left his presence feeling that he was ready for the wrath to come.

Such was Berry when he had under his razor one of Ingolby's business foes of Manitou, who had of late been in touch with Felix Marchand. Both were working for the same end, but with different intentions. Marchand worked with that inherent devilishness which sometimes takes possession of low minds; but the other worked as he would have done against his own brother, for his own business success; and it was his view that one man could only succeed by taking the place of another, as though the Age of

Expansion had ceased and the Age of Smother had begun.

From this client while in a state of abject subjection, Berry, whose heart was hard that day, but whose diplomacy was impeccable, discovered a thing of moment. There was to be a procession of strikers from two factories in Manitou, who would throw down their tools or leave their machines at a certain moment. Falling into line these strikers would march across the bridge between the towns at such time as would bring them into touch with the line of the Orange funeral--two processions meeting at right angles. If neither procession gave way, the Orange funeral could be broken up, ostensibly not from religious fanaticism, but from the "unhappy accident" of two straight lines colliding. It was a juicy plot; and in a few minutes the Mayor and Gabriel Druse knew of it from the faithful Berry.

The bell of the meeting-house began to toll as the Orangeman whose death had caused such commotion was carried to the waiting carriage where he would ride alone. Almost simultaneously with the starting of the gaudy yet sombre Orange cortege, with its yellow scarfs, glaring banners, charcoal plumes and black clothes, the labour procession approached the Manitou end of the Sagalac bridge. The strikers carried only three or four banners, but they had a band of seven pieces, with a drum and a pair of cymbals. With frequent discord, but with much spirit, the Bleaters, as these musicians were called in Lebanon, inspired the steps of the Manitou fanatics and toughs. As they came upon the bridge they were playing a gross paraphrase of The Marseillaise.

At the head of the Orange procession was a silver-cornet band which the enterprise of Lebanon had made possible. Its leader was a ne'er-do-well young Welshman, who had been dismissed from leadership after leadership of bands in the East till at last he had drifted into Lebanon. Here, strange to say, he had never been drunk but once; and that was the night before he married the widow of a local publican, who had a nice little block of stock in one of Ingolby's railways, which yielded her seven per cent., and who knew how to handle the citizens of the City of Booze. When she married Tom Straker, her first husband, he drank on an average twenty whiskies a day. She got him down to one; and then he died and had as fine a funeral as a judge. There were those who said that if Tom's whiskies hadn't been cut down so--but there it was: Tom was in the bosom of Abraham, and William Jones, who was never called anything else than Willy Welsh, had been cut down from his unrecorded bibulations to none at all; but he smoked twenty-cent cigars at the ex-widow's expense.

To-day Willy Welsh played with heart and courage, "I'm Going Home to Glory," at the head of the Orange procession; for who that has faced such a widow as was his for one whole year could fear the onset of faction fighters! Besides, as the natives of the South Seas will never eat a Chinaman, so a Western man will never kill a musician. Senators, magistrates, sheriffs, police, gamblers, horse-stealers, bankers, and broncho-riders all die unnatural deaths at times, but a musician in the West is immune from all except the hand of Fate. Not one can be spared. Even a tough convicted of cheating at cards, or breaking a boom on a river, has escaped punishment because he played the concertina.

The discord and jangle between the two bands was the first collision of this fateful day. While yet there was a space between the two processions, the bands broke into furious contest. It was then that, through the long funeral line, men with hard-set faces came closer up together, and forty, detaching themselves from the well-kept run of

marching lodgemen, closed up around the horses and the hearse, making a solid flanking force. At stated intervals also, outside the lodgemen in the lines, were special constables, many of whom had been the stage-drivers, hunters, cattlemen, prospectors, and pioneers of the early days. Most of them had come of good religious stock-Presbyterians, Baptists, Methodists, Unitarians; and though they had little piety, and had never been able to regain the religious customs and habits of their childhood, they "Stood for the Thing the Old Folks stand for." They were in a mood which would tear cotton, as the saying was. There was not one of them but expected that broken heads and bloodshed would be the order of the day, and they were stonily, fearlessly prepared for the worst.

Since the appearance of Gabriel Druse on the scene, the feeling had grown that the luck would be with them. When he started at the head of the cortege, they could scarce forbear to cheer. Such a champion in appearance had never been seen in the West, and, the night before, he had proved his right to the title by shaking a knot of toughs into spots of disconcerted humanity.

As they approached the crossroads of the bridge, his voice, clear and sonorous, could be heard commanding the Orange band to cease playing.

When the head of the funeral procession was opposite the bridge--the band, the hearse, the bodyguard of the hearse--Gabriel Druse stood aside, and took his place at the point where the lines of the two processions would intersect.

It was at this moment that the collision came. There were only about sixty feet of space between the two processions, when a voice rang out in a challenge so offensive, that the men of Manitou got their cue for attack without creating it themselves. Every Orangeman of the Lodge of Lebanon afterwards denied that he had raised the cry; and the chances are that every one spoke the truth. It was like Felix Marchand to arrange for just such an episode, and so throw the burden of responsibility on the Orangemen.

"To hell with the Pope! To hell with the Pope!" the voice rang out, and it had hardly ceased before the Manitou procession made a rush forward. The apparent leader of the Manitou roughs was a blackbearded man of middle height, who spoke raucously to the crowd behind him.

Suddenly a powerful voice rang out.

"Halt, in the name of the Queen!" it called. Surprise is the very essence of successful war. The roughs of Manitou had not looked for this. They had foreseen the appearance of the official Chief Constable of Lebanon; they had expected his challenge and warning in the vernacular; but here was something which struck them with consternation--first, the giant of Manitou in the post of command, looking like some berserker; and then the formal reading of that stately document in the name of the Queen.

Far back in the minds of every French habitant present was the old monarchical sense. He makes, at worst, a poor anarchist, though he is a good revolutionist; and the French colonials had never been divorced from monarchical France.

In the eyes of the most forward of those on the Sagalac bridge, there was a sudden wonderment and confusion. To the dramatic French mind,

ceremonial is ever welcome; and for a moment it had them in its grip, as old Gabriel Druse read out in his ringing voice, the trenchant royal summons.

It was a strange and dramatic scene--the Orange funeral standing still, garish yet solemn, with hundreds of men, rough and coarse, quiet and refined, dissolute and careless, sober and puritanic, broad and tolerant, sharp and fanatical; the labour procession, polyglot in appearance, but with Gallic features and looseness of dress predominating; excitable, brutish, generous, cruel; without intellect, but with an intelligence which in the lowest was acute, and with temperaments responsive to drama.

As Druse read, his eyes now and then flashed, at first he knew not why, to the slim, bearded figure of the apparent leader. At length he caught the feverish eye of the man, and held it for a moment. It was familiar, but it eluded him; he could not place it.

He heard, however, Jowett's voice say to him, scarce above a whisper:

"It's Felix Marchand, boss!"

Jowett also had been puzzled at first by the bearded figure, but it suddenly flashed upon him that the beard and wig were a disguise, that Marchand had resorted to Ingolby's device. It might prove as dangerous a stratagem with him as it had to Ingolby.

There was a moment's hesitation after Druse had finished reading--as though the men of Manitou had not quite recovered from their surprise--then the man with the black beard said something to those nearest him. There was a start forward, and someone cried, "Down with the Orangemen --et bas l'Orange!"

Like a well-disciplined battalion the Orangemen rolled up quickly into a compact mass, showing that they had planned their defence well, and the moment was black with danger, when, suddenly, Druse strode forward. Flinging right and left two or three river-drivers, he caught the man with the black beard, snatched him out from among the oncoming crowd, and tore off the black beard and wig. Felix Marchand stood exposed.

A cry of fury rang out from the Orangemen behind, and a dozen men rushed forward, but Gabriel Druse acted with the instant decision of a real commander. Seeing that it would be a mistake to arrest Marchand at that moment, he raised the struggling figure of the wrecker above his head and, with Herculean effort, threw him up over the heads of the Frenchmen in front of him.

So extraordinary was the sight that, as if fascinated, the crowd before and behind followed the action with staring eyes and tense bodies. The faces of all the contending forces were as concentrated for the instant, as though the sun were falling out of the sky. It was so great a feat, one so much in consonance with the spirit of the frontier world, that gasps of praise broke from both crowds. As though it were a thunderbolt, the Manitou roughs standing where Marchand was like to fall, instead of trying to catch him, broke away from beneath the bundle of falling humanity, and Marchand fell on the dusty cement of the bridge with a dull thud, like a bag of bones.

For a moment there was no motion on the part of either procession. Banners drooped and swayed as the men holding them were lost in the

excitement.

Time had only been gained, however. There was no reason to think that the trouble was over, or that the special constables who had gathered close behind Gabriel Druse would not have to strike heavy blows for the cause of peace.

The sudden appearance of a new figure in the narrow, open space between the factions in that momentary paralysis was not a coincidence. It was what Jowett had planned for, the factor for peace in which he most believed.

A small, spare man in a scarlet cassock, white chasuble, and black biretta, suddenly stole out from the crowd on the Lebanon side of the bridge, carrying the elements of the Mass. His face was shining white, and in the eyes was an almost unearthly fire. It was the beloved Monseigneur Lourde.

Raising the elements before him toward his own people on the bridge, he cried in a high, searching voice:

"I prayed with you, I begged you to preserve the peace. Last night I asked you in God's name to give up your disorderly purposes. I thought then I had done my whole duty; but the voice of God has spoken to me. An hour ago I carried the elements to a dying woman here in Lebanon, and gave her peace. As I did so the funeral bell rang out, and it came to me, as though the One above had spoken, that peace would be slain and His name insulted by all of you--by all of you, Catholic and Protestant. God's voice bade me come to you from the bed of one who has gone hence from peace to Peace. In the name of Christ, peace, I say! Peace, in the name of Christ!"

He raised the sacred vessel high above his head, so that his eyes looked through the walls of his uplifted arms. "Kneel!" he called in a clear, ringing voice which yet quavered with age.

There was an instant's hush, and then great numbers of the crowd in front of him, toughs and wreckers, blasphemers, turbulent ones and evil-livers, yet Catholics all, with the ancient root of the Great Thing in them, sank down; and the banners of the labour societies drooped before the symbol of peace won by sacrifice.

Even the Orangemen bared their heads in the presence of that Popery which was anathema to them, which they existed to combat, and had been taught to hate. Some, no doubt, would rather have fought than have had peace at the price; but they could not free their minds from the sacred force which had brought most of the crowd of faction-fighters to their knees.

With a wave of the hand, Gabriel Druse ordered the cortege forward, and silently the procession with its yellow banners and its sable, drooping plumes moved on.

Once on its way again, Willy Welsh and his silver-cornet band struck up the hymn, "Lead, Kindly Light." It was the one real coincidence of the day that this moving hymn was written by a cardinal of the Catholic Church. It was also an irony that, as the crowd of sullen Frenchmen turned back to Manitou, the train bearing the Mounted Police, for whom the Mayor had sent to the capital, steamed noisily in, and redcoats showed at its windows and on the steps of the cars.

The only casualty that the day saw was the broken arm and badly bruised body of Felix Marchand, who was gloomily helped back to his home across the Sagalac.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE BEACONS

There were few lights showing in Lebanon or Manitou; but here and there along the Sagalac was the fading glimmer of a camp-fire, and in Tekewani's reservation one light glowed softly like a star. It came from a finely-made and chased safety-lantern given to Tekewani by the Government, as a symbol of honour for having kept the braves quiet when an Indian and half-breed rising was threatened; and to the powerless chief it had become a token of his authority, the sign of the Great White Mother's approval. By day a spray of eagle's feathers waved over his tepee, but the gleam of the brass lantern every night was like a sentry at the doorway of a monarch.

It was a solace to his wounded spirit; it allayed the smart of subjection; made him feel himself a ruler in retirement, even as Gabriel Druse was a self-ordained exile.

These two men, representing the primitive nomad life, had been drawn together in friendship. So much so, that to Tekewani alone of all the West, Druse gave his confidence and told his story. It came in the springtime, when the blood of the young bucks was simmering and, the ancient spell was working. There had preceded them generations of hunters who had slain their thousands and their tens of thousands of wild animals and the fowls of the air; had killed their enemies in battle; had seized the comely women of their foes and made them their own. No thrill of the hunter's trail now drew off the overflow of desire. In the days of rising sap, there were only the young maidens or wives of their own tribe to pursue, and it lacked in glory. Also in the springtime, Tekewani himself had his own trials, for in his blood the old medicine stirred. His face turned towards the prairie North and the mountain West where yet remained the hunter's quarry; and he longed to be away with rifle and gun, with his squaw and the papooses trailing after like camp-followers, to eat the fruits of victory. But that could not be; he must remain in the place the Great White Mother had reserved for him; he and his braves must assemble, and draw their rations at the appointed times and seasons, and grunt thanks to those who ruled over them.

It was on one of these virginal days, when there was a restless stirring among the young bucks, who smelled the wide waters, the pines and the wild shrubs; who heard the cry of the loon on the lonely lake and the whir of the wild duck's wings, who answered to the phantom cry of ancient war; it was on such a day that the two chiefs opened their hearts to each other.

Near to the boscage on a little hill overlooking the great river, Gabriel Druse had come upon Tekewani seated in the pine-dust, rocking to and fro, and chanting a low, sorrowful refrain, with eyes fixed on the setting sun. And the Ry of Rys understood, with the understanding which only those have who live close to the earth, and also near to the heavens of

their own gods. He sat down beside the forlorn chief, and in the silence their souls spoke to each other. There swept into the veins of the Romany ruler something of the immitigable sadness of the Indian chief; and, with a sudden premonition that he also was come to the sunset of his life, his big nomad eyes sought the westering rim of the heavens, and his breast heaved.

In that hour the two men declared themselves to each other, and Gabriel Druse told Tekewani all that he had hidden from the people of the Sagalac, and was answered in kind. It seemed to them that they were as brothers who were one and who had parted in ages long gone; and having met were to part and disappear once more, beginning still another trail in an endless reincarnation.

"Brother," said Tekewani, "it was while there was a bridge of land between the continents at the North that we met. Again I see it. I forgot it, but again I see. There was war, and you went upon one path and I upon another, and we met no more under all the moons till now."

"'Dordi', so it was and at such a time," answered the Ry of Rys. "And once more we will follow after the fire-flies which give no light to the safe places but only lead farther into the night."

Tekewani rocked to and fro again, muttering to himself, but presently he said:

"We eat from the hands of those who have driven away the buffalo, the deer, and the beaver; and the young bucks do naught to earn the joy of women. They are but as lusting sheep, not as the wild-goat that chases its mate over the places of death, till it comes upon her at last, and calls in triumph over her as she kneels at his feet. So it is. Like tame beasts we eat from the hand of the white man, and the white man leaves his own camp where his own women are, and prowls in our camps, so that not even our own women are left to us."

It was then that Gabriel Druse learned of the hatred of Tekewani for Felix Marchand, because of what he had done in the reservation, prowling at night like a fox or a coyote in the folds.

They parted that hour, believing that the epoch of life in which they were and the fortunes of time which had been or were to come, were but turns of a wheel that still went on turning; and that whatever chanced of good or bad fortune in the one span of being, might be repaired in the next span, or the next, or the next; so, through their creed of reincarnation, taking courage to face the failure of the life they now lived. Not by logic or the teaching of any school had they reached this revelation, but through an inner sense. They were not hopeful and wondering and timid; they were only sure. Their philosophy, their religion, whether heathen or human, was inborn. They had comfort in it and in each other.

After that day Gabriel Druse always set a light in his window which burned all night, answering to the lantern-light at the door of Tekewani's home--the lights of exile and of an alliance which had behind it the secret influences of past ages and vanished peoples.

There came a night, however, when the light at the door of Tekewani's tepee did not burn. At sunset it was lighted, but long before midnight it was extinguished. Looking out from the doorway of his home (it was

the night after the Orange funeral), Gabriel Druse, returned from his new duties at Lebanon, saw no light in the Indian reservation. With anxiety, he set forth in the shine of the moon to visit it.

Arrived at the chief's tepee, he saw that the lantern of honour was gone, and waking Tekewani, he brought him out to see. When the old Indian knew his loss, he gave a harsh cry and stooped, and, gathering a handful of dust from the ground, sprinkled it on his head. Then with arms outstretched he cursed the thief who had robbed him of what had been to him like a never-fading mirage, an illusion blinding his eyes to the bitter facts of his condition.

To his mind all the troubles come to Lebanon and Manitou had had one source; and now the malign spirit had stretched its hand to spoil those already dispossessed of all but the right to live. One name was upon the lips of both men, as they stood in the moonlight by Tekewani's tepee.

"There shall be an end of this," growled the Romany.

"I will have my own," said Tekewani, with malediction on the thief who had so shamed him.

Black anger was in the heart of Gabriel Druse as he turned again towards his own home, and he was glad of what he had done to Felix Marchand at the Orange funeral.

CHAPTER XIX

THE KEEPER OF THE BRIDGE

"Like the darkness of the grave, which is darkness itself--"

Most of those who break out of the zereba of life, who lay violent hands upon themselves, do so with a complete reasoning, which in itself is proof of their insanity. It may be domestic tragedy, or ill-health, or crime, or broken faith, or shame, or insomnia, or betrayed trust--whatever it is, many a one who suffers from such things, tries to end it all with that deliberation, that strategy, and that cunning which belong only to the abnormal.

A mind which has known a score or more of sleepless nights acquires an invincible clearness of its own, seeing an end which is without peradventure. It finds a hundred perfect reasons for not going on, every one of which is in itself sufficient; every one of which knits into the other ninety and nine with inevitable affinity.

To the mind of Ingolby came a hundred such reasons for breaking out of life's enclosure, as the effect of the opiate Rockwell had given him wore off, and he regained consciousness. As he did so, someone in the room was telling of that intervention of Gabriel Druse and the Monseigneur at the Orange funeral, which had saved the situation. At first he listened to what was said--it was the nurse talking to Jim Beadle with no sharp perception of the significance of the story; though it slowly pierced the lethargy of his senses, and he turned over in the bed to face the watchers.

"What time is it, Jim?" he asked heavily. They told him it was sunset.

"Is it quiet in both towns?" he asked after a pause. They told him that it was.

"Any telegrams for me?" he asked.

There was an instant's hesitation. They had had no instructions on this point, and they hardly knew what to say; but Jim's mind had its own logic, and the truth seemed best to him now. He answered that there were several wires, but that they "didn't amount to nothin'."

"Have they been opened?" Ingolby asked with a frown, half-raising himself. It was hard to resign the old masterfulness and self-will.

"I'd like to see anybody open 'em 'thout my pe'mision," answered Jim imperiously. "When you's asleep, Chief, I'm awake; and I take care of you' things, same as ever I done. There ain't no wires been opened, and there ain't goin' to be whiles I'm runnin' the show for you."

"Open and read them to me," commanded Ingolby. Again Ingolby was conscious of hesitation on Jim's part. Already the acuteness of the blind was possessing him, sharpening the senses left unimpaired. Although Jim moved, presumably, towards the place where the telegrams lay, Ingolby realized that his own authority was being crossed by that of the doctor and the nurse.

"You will leave the room for a moment, nurse," he said with a brassy vibration in the voice--a sign of nervous strain. With a smothered protest the nurse left, and Jim stood beside the bed with the telegrams.

"Read them to me, Jim," Ingolby repeated irritably. "Be quick."

They were not wires which Ingolby should have heard at the time, when his wound was still inflamed, when he was still on the outer circle of that artificial sleep which the opiates had secured. They were from Montreal and New York, and, resolved from their half-hidden suggestion into bare elements, they meant that henceforth others would do the work he had done. They meant, in effect, that save for the few scores of thousand dollars he had made, he was now where he was when he came West.

When Jim had finished reading them, Ingolby sank back on the pillows and said quietly:

"All right, Jim. Put them in the drawer of the table and I'll answer them to-morrow. I want to get a little more sleep, so give me a drink, and then leave me alone--both nurse and you--till I ring the bell. There's a bell on the table, isn't there?"

He stretched out a hand towards the table beside the bed, and Jim softly pushed the bell under his fingers.

"That's right," he added. "Now, I'm not to be disturbed unless the doctor comes. I'm all right, and I want to be alone and quiet. No one at all in the room is what I want. You understand, Jim?"

"My head's just as good to get at what you want as ever it was, and you goin' have what you want, I guess, while I'm on deck," was Jim's reply.

Jim put a glass of water into his hand. He drank very slowly, was indeed only mechanically conscious that he was drinking, for his mind was far away.

After he had put the glass down, Jim still stood beside the bed, looking at him.

"Why don't you go, as I tell you, Jim?" Ingolby asked wearily.

"I'm goin'"--Jim tucked the bedclothes in carefully--"I'm goin', but, boss, I jes' want to say dat dis thing goin' to come out all right bime-by. There ain't no doubt 'bout dat. You goin' see everything, come jes' like what you want--suh!"

Ingolby did not reply. He held out his hand, and black fingers shot over and took it. A moment later the blind man was alone in the room.

The light of day vanished, and the stars came out. There was no moon, but it was one of those nights of the West when millions of stars glimmer in the blue vault above, and every planet and every star and cluster of stars are so near that it might almost seem they could be caught by an expert human hand. The air was very still, and a mantle of peace was spread over the tender scene. The window and the glass doors that gave from Ingolby's room upon the veranda on the south side of the house, were open, and the air was warm as in Midsummer. Now and then the note of a night-bird broke the stillness, but nothing more.

It was such a night as Ingolby loved; it was such a night as often found him out in the restful gloom of the trees, thinking and brooding, planning, revelling in memories of books he had read, and in dreaming of books he might write-if there were time. Such a night insulated the dark moods which possessed him occasionally almost as effectively as fishing did; and that was saying much.

But the darkest mood of all his days was upon him now. When Rockwell came, soon after Jim and the nurse left him, he simulated sleep, for he had no mind to talk; and the doctor, deceived by his even breathing, had left, contented. At last he was wholly alone with his own thoughts, as he desired. From the moment Jim had read him the wires, which were the real revelation of the situation to which he had come, he had been travelling hard on the road leading to a cul-de-sac, from which there was no egress save by breaking through the wall. Never, it might have seemed, had his mind been clearer, but it was a clearness belonging to the abnormal. It was a straight line of thought which, in its intensity, gathered all other thoughts into its wake, reduced them to the control of an obsession. It was borne in on his mind that his day was done, that nothing could right the disorder which had strewn his path with broken hopes and shattered ambitions. No life-work left, no schemes to accomplish, no construction to achieve, no wealth to gain, no public good to be won, no home to be his, no woman, his very own, to be his counsellor and guide in the natural way!

As myriad thoughts drove through his brain on this Indian-summer night, they all merged into the one obsession that he could no longer stay. The irresistible logic of the brain stretched to an abnormal tenuity, and an intolerable brightness was with him. He was in the throes of that intense visualization which comes with insomnia, when one is awake yet apart from the waking world, where nothing is really real and nothing

normal. He had a call to go hence, and he must go. Minute after minute passed, hours passed, and the fight of the soul to maintain itself against the disordered mind went on. All his past seemed but part of a desert, lonely and barren and strange.

In the previous year he had made a journey to Arizona with Jowett, to see some railway construction there, and at a ranch he had visited he came upon some verses which had haunted his mind ever since. They fastened upon his senses now. They were like a lonesome monotone which at length gave calm to his torturing reflections. In his darkness the verses kept repeating themselves:

"I heard the desert calling, and my heart stood still
There was Winter in my world and in my heart:
A breath came from the mesa and a message stirred my will,
And my soul and I arose up to depart.

I heard the desert calling; and I knew that over there,
In an olive-sheltered garden where the mesquite grows,
Was a woman of the sunrise, with the starshine in her hair,
And a beauty that the almond-blossom blows.

In the night-time when the ghost-trees glimmered in the moon,
Where the mesa by the watercourse was spanned,
Her loveliness enraptured me like the blessedness of June,
And all my life was thrilling in her hand.

I hear the desert calling, and my heart stands still;
There is Summer in my world and in my heart;
A breath comes from the mesa, and a will beyond my will
Binds my footsteps as I rise up to depart."

This strange, half-mystic song of the mesa and the olive-groves, of the ghost-trees and the moon, kept playing upon his own heated senses like the spray from a cooling stream, and at last it quieted him. The dark spirit of self-destruction loosened its hold.

His brain had been strained beyond the normal, almost unconsciously his fingers had fastened on the pistol in the drawer of the table by his bed. It had been there since the day when he had travelled down from Alaska--loaded as it had been when he had carried it down the southern trail. But as his fingers tightened on the little engine of death, from the words which had been ringing in his brain came the flash of a revelation:

". . . And a will beyond my will
Binds my footsteps as I rise up to depart."

A will beyond his will! It was as though Fleda's fingers were laid upon his own; as though she whispered in his ear and her breath swept his cheek; as though she was there in the room beside him, making the darkness light, tempering the wind of chastisement to his naked soul. In the overstrain of his nervous system the illusion was powerful. He thought he heard her voice. The pistol slipped from his fingers, and he fell back on the pillow with a sigh. The will beyond his will bound his footsteps.

Who can tell? The grim, malign experience of Fleda in her bedroom with the Thing she thought was from beyond the bounds of her own life; the voice that spoke to Ingolby, and the breath that swept over his cheek

were, perhaps, as real in a sense as would have been the corporeal presence of Jethro Fawe in one case and of Fleda Druse in the other. It may be that in very truth Fleda Druse's spirit with its poignant solicitude controlled his will as he "rose up to depart." But if it was only an illusion, it was not less a miracle. Some power of suggestion bound his fleeing footsteps, drew him back from the Brink.

He slept. Once the nurse came and looked at him and returned to the other room; and twice Jim stole in silently for a moment and retired again to his own chamber. The stars shone in at the doors that opened out from the quiet room into the night, the watch beside the bed ticked on, the fox-terrier which always slept on a mat at the foot of the bed sighed in content, while his master breathed heavily in a sleep full of dreams that hurried past like phantasmagoria--of a hundred things that had been in his life, and that had never been; of people he had known, distorted, ridiculous and tremendous. There were dreams of fiddlers and barbers, of crowds writhing in passion in a room where there was a billiard-table and a lucky horseshoe on the wall. There were dreams that tossed and mingled in one whirlpool vision; and then at last came a dream which was so cruel and clear that it froze his senses.

It was the dream of a great bridge over a swiftflowing river; of his own bridge over the Sagalacof that bridge being destroyed by men who crept through the night with dynamite in their hands.

With a hoarse, smothered cry he awoke. His eyes opened wide. His heart was beating like a hammer against his side. Only the terrier at his feet heard the muttered agony. With an instinct all its own, it slipped to the floor.

It watched its master get out of bed, cross the room and feel for a coat along the wall--an overcoat which he used as a dressing-gown at times. Putting it on hastily, with outstretched hands Ingolby felt his way to the glass doors opening on the veranda. The dog, as though to let him know he was there, rubbed against his legs. Ingolby murmured a soft, unintelligible word, and, in his bare feet, passed out on to the veranda, and from there to the garden and towards the gate at the front of the house.

The nurse heard the gate click lightly, but she was only half-awake, and as all was quiet in the next room, she composed herself in her chair again with the vain idea that she was not sleeping. And Jim the faithful one, as though under a narcotic of fate, was snoring softly beside the vacant room. The streets were still. No lights burned anywhere so far as eye could see. But now and then, in the stillness through which the river flowed on, murmuring and rhythmic, there rose the distant sounds of disorderly voices. Ingolby was in a state which was neither sleep nor waking, which was in part delirium, in part oblivion to all things in the world save one--an obsession so complete, that he moved automatically through the street in which he lived towards that which led to the bridge.

His terrier, as though realizing exactly what he wished, seemed to guide him by rubbing against his legs, and even pressing hard against them when he was in any danger of losing the middle of the road, or swerving towards a ditch or some obstruction. Only once did they pass any human being, and that was when they came upon a camp of road-builders, where a red light burned, and two men slept in the open by a dying fire. One of them raised his head when Ingolby passed, but being more than half-

asleep, and seeing only a man and a dog, thought nothing of it, and dropped back again upon his rough pillow. He was a stranger to Lebanon, and there was little chance of his recognizing Ingolby in the semi-darkness.

As they neared the river, Ingolby became deeply agitated. He moved with his hands outstretched. Had it not been for his dog he would probably have walked into the Sagalac; for though he seemed to have an instinct that was extra-natural, he swayed and staggered in the delirium driving him on. There was one dreadful moment when, having swerved from the road leading on to the bridge, he was within a foot of the river-bank. One step farther, and he would have plunged down thirty feet into the stream, to be swept to the Rapids below.

But for the first time the terrier made a sound. He gave a whining bark almost human in its meaning, and threw himself at the legs of his master, pushing him backwards and over towards the road leading upon the bridge, as a collie guides sheep. Presently Ingolby felt the floor of the bridge under his feet; and now he hastened on, with outstretched arms and head bent forward, listening intently, the dog trotting beside, with what knowledge working in him Heaven alone knew.

The roar of the Rapids below was a sonorous accompaniment to Ingolby's wild thoughts. One thing only he felt, one thing only heard--the men in Barbazon's Tavern saying that the bridge should be blown up on the Saturday night; and this was Saturday night--the night of the day following that of the Orange funeral. He had heard the criminal hireling of Felix Marchand say that it should be done at midnight, and that the explosive should be laid under that part of the bridge which joined the Manitou bank of the Sagalac. As though in very truth he saw with his eyes, he stopped short not far from the point where the bridge joined the land, and stood still, listening.

For several minutes he was motionless, intent, as an animal waiting for its foe. At last his newly-sensitive ears heard footsteps approaching and low voices. The footsteps came nearer, the voices, though so low, became more distinct. They were now not fifty feet away, but to the delirious Ingolby they were as near as death had been when his fingers closed on the pistol in his room.

He took a step forward, and with passionate voice and arms outstretched, he cried:

"You shall not do it-by God, you shall not touch my bridge!
I built it. You shall not touch it. Back, you devils-back!"

The terrier barked loudly.

The two men in the semi-darkness in front of him cowered at the sight of this weird figure holding the bridge they had come to destroy. His words, uttered in so strange and unnatural a voice, shook their nerves. They shrank away from the ghostly form with the outstretched arms.

In the minute's pause following on his words, a giant figure suddenly appeared behind the dynamiters. It was the temporary Chief Constable of Lebanon, returning from his visit to Tekewani. He had heard Ingolby's wild words, and he realized the situation.

"Ingolby--steady there, Ingolby !" he called. "Steady! Steady! Gabriel Druse is here. It's all right."

At the first sound of Druse's voice the two wreckers turned and ran.

As they did so, Ingolby's hands fell to his side, and he staggered forward.

"Druse--Fleda," he murmured, then swayed, trembled and fell.

With words that stuck in his throat Gabriel Druse stooped and lifted him up in his arms. At first he turned towards the bridge, as though to cross over to Lebanon, but the last word Ingolby had uttered rang in his ears, and he carried him away into the trees towards his own house, the faithful terrier following. "Druse--Fleda !" They were the words of one who had suddenly emerged from the obsession of delirium into sanity, and then had fallen into as sudden unconsciousness.

"Fleda! Fleda!" called Gabriel Druse outside the door of his house a quarter of an hour later, and her voice in reply was that of one who knew that the feet of Fate were at her threshold.

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