

# Arms and the Woman.

By HAROLD MacGRATH.

(Continued from last week.)  
"Dan?" said I.  
The lids of his eyes rolled wearily back.  
"Is there anything I can do for you?"  
"Bury me."  
It was very sad. "Where?" I asked.  
"Did you see the little cemetery on the hill, across the valley? Put me there. It is a wild, forgotten place. 'Tis only my body. Who cares what becomes of that? As for the other, the soul, who can say? I have never been a good man. Still I believe in God. I am tired-tired and cold. What fancies a man has in death! A moment back I saw my father. There was a wan, sweet faced woman standing close beside him; perhaps my mother. I never saw her before. Ah, me, these chimeras we set our hearts upon, these worldly hopes! Well, Jack, it's certain and no encore. But I am not afraid to die. I have wronged no man or woman. I have been my own enemy. What shall I say, Jack? Ah, yes! God have mercy on my soul! And this sudden coldness, this sudden ease from pain, is death!"



He took the princess in his arms and kissed her.

There was a flutter of the eyelids, a sigh, and this poor dotard, this drift-wood which had never known a harbor in all its years, this friend of mine, this inseparable comrade, passed out. There were hot tears in my eyes as I stood up and gazed down at this mystery called death, and while I did so a hand, horny and hard, closed over mine. The innkeeper, with blinking eyes, stood at my side.  
"Ah, herr," he said, "who would not die like that?"  
And we buried him on the hillside just as the sun swept aside the rosy curtain of dawn. The wind, laden with fresh morning perfumes, blew up joyously from the river. From where I stood I could see the drab walls of the barracks. The windows sparkled and flashed as the gray mists sailed heavenward and vanished. The hill with its long grasses resembled a green sea. The thick forests across the river, almost black at the water's edge, turned a fainter and more delicate hue as they receded till far away they looked like mottled glass. Only yesterday he had laughed with me, talked and smoked with me, and now he was dead. A rage pervaded me. We are puny things, we who strut the highways of the world, parading a so-called wisdom. There is only one philosophy; it is to learn to die.

prince changed. He became reckless; he fell in with evil company; he grew to be a shameless ruffian, a man who brought his women into his wife's presence and struck her while they were there. And in his passions he called her terrible names. He made a vow that when children came he would make them things of scorn. In her great trouble the princess came to my inn, where the Princess Hildegarde was born. The prince refused to believe that the child was his. My mistress finally sickened and died broken hearted. The prince died in a gambling den. The king became the guardian of the lonely child. He knows but little or he would not ask her highness"— He stopped.  
"He would not ask her what?"  
"To wed the man who caused all this trouble."  
"What! Prince Ernst?"  
"Yes; I prayed to God, herr, that your friend's bullet would carry death, but it was not to be."  
"I am going back to London," said I. "When I have settled up my affairs there, I shall return."  
"And then?"  
"Perhaps I shall complete what my friend began."  
I climbed into the ramshackle conveyance and was driven away. Once I looked back. The innkeeper could be seen on the porch; then he became lost to view behind the trees. Far away to my left the stones in the little cemetery on the hillside shone with brilliant whiteness.

CHAPTER XVII.  
There were intervals during the three months which followed when I believed that I was walking in a dream and waking would find me grubbing at my desk in New York. It was so unreal for these days—romantic in the heart of prosaic fact! Was there ever the like? It was real enough, however, in the daytime, when the roar of London hammered at my ears, but when I sat alone in my room it assumed the hazy garments of a dream. Sometimes I caught myself listening for Hillars, a footstep in the corridor, and I would take my pipe from my mouth and wait expectantly. But the door never opened, and the footsteps always passed on. Often in my dreams I stood by the river again. There is solace in these deep, wide streams. We come and go—our hopes, our loves, our ambitions. Nature alone remains. Should I ever behold Gretchen again? Perhaps. Yet there was no thrill at the thought. If ever I beheld her again, it would be when she was placed beyond the glance of my eye, the touch of my hand. She was mine—aye, as a dream might be; something I possessed, but could not hold. Heigho! The faces that peer at us from the freight shadows! They troop along a ghostly cavalcade, and the winds that creep over the window sill and under the door—who can say that they are not the echoes of voices we once heard in the past?

"I did not speak to him again, and he strode along at my heels with an air of preoccupation. We reached the inn in silence.  
"What do you know about her serene highness the Princess Hildegarde?" I asked abruptly.  
"What does herr wish to know?"  
"All you can tell me."  
"I was formerly in her father's service. My wife"— He hesitated, and the expression on his face was a sour one.  
"Go on."  
"Ah, but it is unpleasant, herr. You see, my wife and I were not on the best of terms. She was handsome—a cousin of the late prince. She left me more than 20 years ago. I have never seen her since, and I trust that she is dead. She was her late highness' hairdresser."  
"And the Princess Hildegarde?"  
"She is a woman for whom I would gladly lay down my life."  
"Yes, yes!" I said impatiently. "Who made her the woman she is? Who taught her to shoot and fence?"  
"It was I."  
"You?"  
"Yes. From childhood she has been under my care. Her mother died so desire. She is all I have in the world to love. And she loves me, herr, for in all her trials I have been her only friend. But why do you ask these questions? A sudden suspicion lighting his eyes.  
"I love her."  
He took me by the shoulders and squared me in front of him. "How do you love her?" a glint of anger mingling with the suspicion.  
"I love her as a man who wishes to make her his wife."  
His hands trailed down my sleeves till they met and joined mine.  
"I will tell you all there is to be told. Here there was once a happy family in the palace of the Hohenzollerns. The prince was rather wild, but he loved his wife. One day his cousin came to visit him. He was a fascinating man in those days, and few women were there who would not give an ear to his flatteries. He was often with the princess, but she hated him. One day an abominable thing happened. This cousin loved the princess. She scorned him. As the prince was entering the boudoir this cousin, making out that he was unconscious of the husband's approach, took the princess in his arms and kissed her. The prince was two far away to see the horror in his wife's face. He believed her to be acquiescent. That night he accused her. Her denials were in vain. He confronted her with his cousin, who swore before the immortal God himself that the princess had lain willing to his arms. From that time on the

And will she not be a sensation?"  
joined in Ethel.  
"A decided sensation," said I, scrutinizing the beautiful face so near me. What if they met, as probably they would—Phyllis and Gretchen? "Phyllis," said I suddenly, "where were you born?"  
"Where was I born? With a wondering little laugh. "In America. Where did you suppose?" "I wasn't sure, so I asked."  
"Do not know how to take that," she said, with mock severity.  
"Oh, I meant Eden when it was paradise!" I hastened to say.  
"Yes," put in Pembroke. "Please go back, Miss Landors, and begin the world all over again."  
"Phyllis," said I in a whisper, "have you ever met that remarkable affinity of yours?" I regretted the words the moment they had crossed my lips.  
"Yes, you are changed, as I said the other night," I said. "There is something in your voice that is changed. You have grown cynical. But your question was impertinent. Have you found yours?"  
"I was expecting this. "Yes," I said. "Once I thought I had; now I am sure of it. Some day I shall tell you an interesting story."  
"We came up to ask you to dine with us this evening," she said, trailing her brown gloved finger over the dusty dust. "Are you at liberty?"  
"No; I have only just met my cousin and have promised to dine with him."  
"If that is all, bring him along. I like his face."  
We passed out of the filer room.  
"Phyllis, we must be going, dear," said Ethel.  
I led Phyllis down the narrow stairs. A handsome victoria stood at the curb. "I shall be pleased to hear your story," said she.  
It occurred to me that the tale might not be to her liking, so I said, "But it is one of those disagreeable stories—one where all should end nicely, but doesn't; one which ends leaving the hero, the heroine and the reader dissatisfied with the world in general and the author, who is fate, in particular."  
I knew that she was puzzled. She wasn't quite sure that I was not referring to the old affair.  
"If the story is one I never heard before," suspiciously, "I should like to hear it."  
"And does it not occur to you, throwing back the robes so that she might step into the victoria, "that fate has a special grudge against me? Once was not enough, but it must be twice."  
"And she does not love you? Are you quite sure? You poor fellow!" She squeezed my hand kindly. "Shall I be candid with you?" with the faintest flicker of coquetry in her smile.  
"As in the old days," said I, glancing over my shoulder to see how near the others were. A groom is never to be considered. "Yes, as in the old days."  
"Well, I have often regretted that I did not accept you as an experiment."  
Then I knew that she did not understand.  
"You must not think I am jesting," said I seriously. "The story is of the bitter-sweet kind. The heroine loves me, cannot be mine."  
"Loves you?" with a slight start.  
"How do you know?"  
"She has told me so," lowering my voice.

Frankness of this sort to a woman who has rejected you has a peculiar effect. The coquetry faded from her smile, and there was a perceptible contraction of the brows. Her eyes, which were looking into mine, shifted to the back of the groom. No, I shall never understand a woman. She should have been the most sympathetic woman in the world, yet she appeared to be annoyed.  
"What's all this between you and Phyllis?" asked Ethel, coming up.  
"There is nothing between her and me," said I.  
"Well, there should be," she retorted.  
My observation was: "I have always held that immediately a woman gets married she makes it her business to see that all old bachelors are lugged out and disposed of to old maids." Phyllis declared: "never."  
"Then I shall always have the exquisite pleasure of being a applicant for your pardon. It is delightful to see pardon of a beautiful woman."  
Phyllis smiled.  
"Forgive him at once," said Ethel, "if only for that pretty speech."  
"Mr. Holland pulled out his watch suggestively.  
"Well," I said, "I see that I am keeping you from your lunch. Good-by, then, till dinner, when I shall continue at length on the evils!"  
"William," interrupted Ethel, addressing the groom, "drive on."  
And so they left us.  
"Shall we go to lunch now?" I asked of Pembroke.  
"Yes," rather dreamily, I thought. "Do you know," with sudden animation, "she is a remarkably beautiful woman?"  
"Yes, she is." After all, the sight of Phyllis had rather upset me. I had a glimpse of her in Vienna last winter," went on Pembroke. "I never knew who she was."  
"Vienna?" I exclaimed.  
"Yes. It was at a concert. Her face was indelibly graven on my memory. I asked a neighbor who she was, but when I went to point her out she was gone. I should like to see more of her."  
So Gretchen had been in Vienna, and poor Hillars had never known her.  
I took Pembroke to the club that afternoon, and we dined in the billiard room till time to dress for dinner. Dinner came. But Phyllis forgot to ask me about the story, at which I grew puzzled, considering what I know of woman's curiosity. And she devoted most of her time to Pembroke, who did not mind. Later we went to the theater—some production of Gilbert and Sullivan. Whenever I glanced at Phyllis I fell to wondering how Gretchen would have looked in evening dress.

Phyllis was certainly beautiful, uncommonly. For years I had worshipped at her shrine, and then—how little we know of the heart! I was rattle or abstracted during the performance, and many of my replies went wide of the mark.  
As we were leaving the foyer Phyllis said, "Jack, a man has been staring me out of countenance."  
"Pembroke?" I laughed.  
"No. And, moreover, the stare was accompanied by the most irritating sneer."  
"Point him out to me when we reach the street," I said, humoring what I thought to be a fancy, "and I'll put a head on him."  
The sneer was probably meant for an eagle. Beauty has its annoyances as well as its compensations. As we came under the glare of the outside lights Phyllis' hand tightened on my arm.  
"Look! There he is, and he is making for us."  
At the sight of that face, with its hooked nose, its waxy mustache and imperial, I took a deep breath and held it. In the quick glance I saw that his right arm hung stiffly at his side. I attempted to slip into the crowd, but without success. He lifted his hat, smiling into the astonished face of Phyllis.  
"The Princess Hildegarde"— But with those three words the sentence on his lips came to an end. Amazement replaced the smile. He stepped back. Phyllis' eyes expressed scornful surprise. What she understood to be rudeness I knew to be a mistake. He had mistaken her to be Gretchen, just as I had mistaken Gretchen to be Phyllis. It was a situation which I enjoyed. All this was but momentary. We passed on.  
"Was the man crazy?" asked Phyllis as we moved toward the carriage, where we saw Pembroke waving his hand.  
"Not exactly crazy," I answered. "The Princess Hildegarde. Did he not call me that?"  
"He did."  
"He must have mistaken me for some one else, then."  
"The very thing," said I. "I wonder what he is doing here in London?"  
"Mercy! Do you know him?"  
"Slightly." We were almost at the carriage. "I am sorry to say that he is a great personage in this very court which you are so soon to grace."

He lifted his hat, smiling into the astonished face of Phyllis.  
"How strange! I'm afraid we shan't get on."  
Pembroke and I dismissed our carriage. We were going back to the club. Ethel and her husband were already seated in their carriage.  
Said Phyllis as I assisted her to enter. "And who is this Princess Hildegarde?"  
"The most beautiful woman in all the world," I answered, with enthusiasm. "You will meet her also."  
"I do not believe I shall like her either," said Phyllis. "Good night." And the door swung to.  
(To be Continued.)

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"Hopeless case," was the reply.  
"Thinks he can pronounce Czolgosz's name."  
And the next one?  
"Still more hopeless. Claims to have solved the servant-girl question."  
Wasted Time  
There's such a little while to stay  
That oft I wonder why  
Men throw their precious time away  
In nurturing old grudges they  
Might just permit to die.  
There are such pleasant ways to go!  
Why should we take  
The ways that lead through wastes  
Of woe,  
Or eul the poison weeds that grow,  
Just for revenge's sake?



He lifted his hat, smiling into the astonished face of Phyllis.

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