

THE PRIMA DONNA.

CHAPTER X.—(CONTINUED.)

"Ich weiss nicht, was solles bedeuten. Das ist so traurig bin."

Beyond that, all was veiled in impenetrable shadow. The message was there for me, but I was unable to receive it, and, just as of old, the only lesson which my inordinate egotism could evolve, reading the riddle all amiss, was gathered in the conclusion, which I muttered with a shudder:

"Ich glaube die Wellen verschlingen Am Ende Schiffer und Kahn; Und das hat mit ihrem Singen Die Lorelei genhan."

Breaking the spell with a struggle, I turned and walked rapidly back to St. Goar, hardly daring again to recall the day when my father aided a weary little shadow to drag its tired and frightened self away, and yet not away from the Lorelei.

It was evening when I reached Boppard, but it was easy to discover that there was no danger of being recognized, even by daylight. I met old schoolmates grown to men and women, and men and women growing old, but not one of them remembered me. Unfortunately, I was satisfied with this condition, and utterly failed to see the very doubtful compliment in being forgotten and lost to old associations, even though they were simply the stupidly good people of some old Boppard.

I smiled contentedly to myself as I walked about the streets, all dismal and grey; only by a sort of instinct avoiding the narrow way which led past Mina's home. I smiled as I talked with one and another of the good people, and wondered what they had ever thought, or if they had ever thought at all of the sudden disappearance of that ragged little Italian boy, who, even to himself, had seemed so incongruous upon those German pavements, only there by sufferance; only allowed to be, at all, because he was under the powerful protection of the angel of Boppard, whom every one loved.

In a moment of startled apprehension I wondered what Mina must have thought. In a vague way it had always seemed to me that somehow Mina must know. But now, when I found so many, everywhere, who did not know and, more than that, who evidently did not care, I shivered a little, with chagrin, and asked myself if it were possible, too, that Mina did not know, that Mina did not—? What folly! Of course my Mina cared!

I left the street, for it was growing too suggestive, and, entering the corridor of the principal hotel of poor little Boppard, I paused for a moment in a curious sentiment of awe that came creeping over me; a remnant of the ragged little Carlo who used to haunt that door when the grim porter was out of sight, to revel in glimpses of the gorgeous corridor beyond. How dingy and gloomy and mean that corridor was, after all; like life, so rich and bright when we compare it with something poorer and darker; so dark when set against that which is brighter.

Upon the guest list I wrote, in a large and authoritative hand, "Anthony Winthrop." Then I laughed in the face of the subservient proprietor, who was dancing about me in frantic efforts to make his humble inn endurable, and I wondered if he would remember, if I called his attention to the countless blows he had bestowed about the ears of that same being, only a few years before, when he had chanced to find him loitering near the entrance of his grand hotel.

Only of Mina I was afraid to speak, and did not once pronounce her name till I whispered it in the solitude of my own room. I even began to dread the coming of the morning, feeling sure that there would be some rock, at the bend in the river, that would wreck my hopes, the moment I came too near beneath my singing Lorelei. The impression was as real as life, though its source was only that phantasmagoric spectrum, and when the morning came, I was hardly even surprised to find a stranger standing in Mina's door.

I asked the stranger, yes, and I asked all Boppard, then, for Mina; but could only learn that, many years before—no one seemed to know how many—Mina's mother had received a large sum of money from some source, to be devoted to her daughter's education, and that the two had gone away. Some said to one great city, some said to another. But they all agreed that somehow, somewhere, Mina had already become a great and celebrated lady; and that she was now the pride and the idol, just as she had once been the little angel, of Boppard, and that some day she would surely come back to see them, when the slumberous old town would awake, with a great jubilee, to welcome her.

Oh, what a difference in the image which we two had left behind us there. Poor, distorted little Carlo had not even committed a crime in Boppard by which he could be remembered. He was too much absorbed just now, however, over the loss of Mina, to devote even a random thought to a self-abnegating philosophy. He felt that Mina owed to him what it had never occurred to him that she owed to her in return, and that in hiding herself away from him she was cruelly deserting him. It was anger alone, however, that disturbed him, for he knew that it would not be forever; of course she would come back to him; but what right had she to go away at all, when she knew that to Boppard he would come to seek her? He was wounded much as he had been the day when she told him that he could do better. Angriest he looked upon the gray walls of Boppard. What was that dull town to him, if Mina were not there? What was life and all the world to him, if he could not turn to Mina the moment when he stood in need of her? It was just as it had been when the cloud had first come between them. He felt that he was left in darkness. Night!

Suddenly I realized that the night, for me, was not finished, after all; and, grasping for the only straw that gave me hope, I repeated my father's words, trying to make them more a prophecy than an injunction: "Out of the night, then—!"

CHAPTER XI.

ALL I ASK IS—

I returned to Florence; beautiful Florence! with her pleasures and palaces which stirred even the stern heart of Dante to undying love; lying in the green valley between Fiesoli and Sanminiato. Florence! The soul and throbbing heart of Italy to-day; the El Dorado of civilization before

the legendary days of Romulus. Florence bearing the triple thunderbolt of Jove upon her Etruscan antiquities of ages before it borrowed by Greece and Rome! Florence, with the Arno at her feet, named for the great astrologer Arnus of Etruria; with Hercules, holding an Assyrian mace, engraven upon the earliest Fiesolian gems, and the lions of Hercules still the emblems of the city; indorsing her wondrous claim to foundation by Atlas, king of the lost Atlantis, conqueror of the antediluvian world! Phoenix of the fading Fiesoli! conquered by the Romans, as a grand conquest, three hundred years before the Nazarene brought the glad tidings to Galilee; but so far beyond the Romans in all the arts of peace that, though conquered in war, she was yet the victor; for the Romans studied in her schools and sat at the feet of her wise men, and, instead of Etruria becoming Roman, a century had scarcely passed when all of Rome that had settled about Fiesoli had become in heart and soul Etruscan, to remain Etruscan to this day! Florence! Victor still in heart and brain; with her long list of citizens whose names, for ages, have been enrolled throughout all Christendom; leaders in art, science, literature, philosophy and religion; the pride of Angelo and Giovanni, the tomb of Galileo and the monument of Dante, the joy of Brandinili, the treasure-house of Titian and Canova! Florence! named for the profusion of flowers in the beautiful valley, yet bearing such a history of jealousy and civil contention that, in the midst of that vast and natural conservatory, two thousand years of strife have been recorded and the lily of Florence, blazoned on the shield of the Republic or held upon the red flag by Santa Reparata has been bathed, from January to December, in the blood of Florentines! Florence! The horror of horrors, the glory of glories: citadel of sin, temple of life's holiest ambitions: arena of bigotry, cradle of reformation; blood-stained battle ground of Guelph and Ghibeline, cursed site of many a martyrdom and sacred soil where the devout canons of Santa Reparata and the proud monks of Valombrosa held their high carnivals. Florence, forever under the watchful eye of the guardian angel Sanminiato. Beautiful, horrible Florence! Why did I go back to her?—only to live for six months an utterly useless and inanimate life; only to study with my tutors, learning nothing; only to paint in my studio, accomplishing nothing. Indeed, I should not have painted at all except that my pictures brought me money, and I had no more intention of touching my father's bank account, during his absence, than if he had been beside me.

"Night" still stood upon the easel well, upon one side of the studio. I stubbornly refused to sell it, though I had no companion for it and little hope of producing any. In my most melancholy hours I would sit sullenly before it, making myself more miserable, recalling my utter destitution of power and ability to produce anything when deprived of my father—my guide; of Mina—my inspiration. Long before I had prepared the canvas for the companion piece, but that was all. I had no design, no thought even, as to what the "Morning" should be, for nothing more would come to me till Mina and my father came. Thus I grew daily more disconsolate and miserable.

At rare intervals there came a bright oasis into my desert; a letter from my father; written as only one with his brilliant qualities could write; vivid word-pictures of foreign lands. Through his eyes, almost as though they were my own, I saw the natural marvels of America where, in universal independence, unrestrained through all ages, by the curse of man's dominance, Nature fashioned everything according to the wayward freaks of some wanton fancy which man can never fully understand, in the assertion of her grand and exclusive prerogative to be invariably beautiful; forming there the wonder perforation in the creator's address to His creatures. Then he led me onward across the broad Pacific, forever telling me where he had been, but never so much as intimating where he was going. He did not give a single opportunity to write to him, and had he I am sure that my letter would have conveyed but a burden of loneliness and misery, and equally sure that it would have been sent to him by a bearer and that bearer would have been myself.

Beyond that one incentive I was not conscious of a single prompting to anything, throughout the six months, and the shadow of the western hills came creeping toward my studio, in all the languor of a spring twilight, only to find me as ever alone, making the most of my misery. What to me were the friends I held among the high-blooded youths of Florence, whose only vocation was to awake the wanton echoes of the old days of the city of the hills? What to me was the club, the cafe, the drive, the ball? They were all repulsive when I no longer found my father's footsteps leading there. Often had I accompanied him, and often met him by accident where brilliant circles of eager devotees knelt to the gods of revelry; for he never sought either to shun or restrain me. He had endeavored to have me see him as anything but what he was. A hypocritical sacrifice at the altar of "example" would have been impossible to him. With him I penetrated the famed palace of Florentine pleasure and dissipation, and with him I had to some extent enjoyed them; but I very soon discovered that without him they had lost their only charm. The fascination of escape from restriction was utterly incomprehensible to me, for freedom thus deprived me of any pleasure in being free.

My father had read my temperament with the same keen accuracy with which he read everything, and in ten years his skillful hand had succeeded in placing me beyond the reach of those temptations which so often wreck the youth too suddenly turning from authority to become his own criterion and mentor. Beyond this, it did not lie in his power to carry on the work. With subtle hand he had swept and garnished the chamber, but it was I and I alone who could fill the room with noble ambitions worthy of such an apartment. In the absorbing bigotry of one idea I utterly failed, and at that day, if one might make a problem of a character, with no temptation to be vicious and no centive to be virtuous, which could produce but one result, and that nonentity. The being, whose path had been so easy to life's very pinnacles, sat sullenly in his studio, always utterly miserable, always repeating as the dismal contemplation of life, love and liberty: "Nothing! nothing! nothing!"

By some delusive accident, in the lingering glow of that spring twilight, while rummaging in the dark corners of the studio for

some sketch that should put me upon the path to paint something in the morning, I suddenly came upon the little embroidered purse which Leonora had thrown at my feet. I had never seen or thought of it—such was my inconsistency—since the day when I found it and laid it away there. It looked up at me reproachfully as I drew it from its hiding place. It had been deserted neglected alone in one corner of the studio, while I had been just that in another corner. It was a bond of fellowship between us, and I pressed the little relic to my lips. Then going nearer to the west window, I sat down to hold it in sweet companionship of misery.

Under the touch of this talisman those three lost weeks of strange, unrealized delight rushed back upon me, intensified, no doubt, by the enchantment which distance lends the view. Leonora! I had thought her only a model. That beautiful, wonderful woman, with such remarkable powers and qualities, had yielded me nothing but the graceful outline upon the canvas. Blind I must have been to let so much more than she might be pass me unheeded.

"Had I been so lonely as I am now," I said to myself, "I should better have appreciated her worth."

What servant of Nemesis sent that thought into my lonely heart, in the deceptive hour of twilight, making it beat against the frail barrier of an empty life, with its suggestion, caught from the resurrected purse. It came in its subtle delusion like the whisper of the palm groves in the sleep of the exile from Ceylon, pillowed on his iron pick in the great diamond fields of South America; like the silver moonlight breaking through the clouds and garnishing with shadow's life's ungainly outlines; like a ravishing perfume insidiously filling all the air; like a touch of color transforming an oppressive scene was the first random thought, suggested by the wonder of that lonely moment, if Leonora might not come back again. She could illumine that night as the stars of the heavens. She could bewitch its melancholy as the subtle moonlight bewitches the ungainly things it shines upon. The night might still be present, but it would not be intensified by solitude and loneliness.

The solitary watcher by the west window went out into the twilight that was fast fading into night. It was a beautiful starry night; casting a halo about the random prompting of the moment which he was following and making him wonder that he had never thought of it before, but so long been torturing himself in seclusion without one friend in his retreat to whisper: "Solitude is sweet." No wonder that his life had been gloomy, without a responsive voice but that of a servant, a tutor, a groveling critic, an erratic purchaser. What joy to find some one to turn to whose words would not be garnished with subserviency.

Already—it seemed but a moment—I was passing through the Roman Gates and turning up the hill. Leonora had told me so plainly where she lived that though I had never been there, I felt sure that I could find the house. It was in the most aristocratic suburb of Florence, but many a home still clung to the hillside among the villas of the wealthy.

Unconsciously holding the little purse still in my hand, with no foreboding or uncertainty this time, I hurried on through the deepening shadows, searching them on either side for something that should meet the picture of Leonora's home as I had drawn it in my mind. The evening was perfectly calm, and as I approached a picturesque villa, close upon the highway I listened to the low, sweet voice of some one, sitting alone upon the balcony, singing that quaintly pathetic song which had recently been brought to Italy from the West Indies:

"Day in melting purple dying,
Blossoms all around me sighing,
Fragrance from the lilies straying,
Zephyrs with my ringlets playing,
Ye but waken my distress;
I am tired of loneliness."

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

How She Doctored Him.

While six gentlemen were waiting at a depot in a small town in Arkansas, in America, a colored woman came up and asked if anyone was a doctor. One of them was, and she rolled her check apron in her hands in a fussy way, and asked if he wouldn't "jist step ober tu de cabin an' see what ailed her ole man." He found that he had time and said he would go, and two or three of the others went with him. As they drew near the cabin the woman halted and said, "I ze bin all de doctah he's had, and I ze willin' to allow dat I might er made some mistakes. When he was first taken I gin him turpin seed tea. Was dat right, doctah?" "I guess so." "Later on I changed to a poultice of wild onions. Was dat right?" "It might have been." "Den I soaked his feet in hot water wid wood ashes in it, and put a mustard poultice on de back of his neck." "Yes." "Den he allowed he felt wuss, an' so I changed de mustard to his stomach, an' soaked his head. He dun complained all de mawning, an' now I ze got mustard on his feet, a poultice on the middle, horse radish on his neck, an' he's takin' sassafras tea to warm up de inside." "Well!" "Wall, if dere's been any mistake don't let on to de ole man. Jist skip it ober." The doctor went and examined the patient and found he had a broken rib, and told him what to do for it. As he left the cabin the woman followed him out and exclaimed, "Fo' the Lawd, doctah, but what a blessin' dat you dun come along! I was dun doctored in ole man fur softenin' of de brain, an' if I hadn't cotched you to-day I was dun gwine to try to harden 'em up by mixin' sand wid his porridge!"

Bank of England Coffers.

The Bank of England is the custodian of a large number of boxes deposited by customers for safety during the past 200 years, and in not a few instances forgotten. Many of these consignments are not only of rare intrinsic and historical value, but of great romantic interest. For instance, some years ago the servants of the bank discovered in its vaults a chest, which on being moved literally fell to pieces.

On examining the contents, a quantity of massive plate of the period of Charles II. was discovered, along with a bundle of love letters indited during the period of the restoration. The directors of the bank caused search to be made in their books, the representative of the original depositor of the box was discovered, and the plate and love letters handed over.

There are three things that beat a drum for noise—one is a small boy and the other two are drumsticks.

ROMANCE OF TWO GRAVES.

A STORY OF THE FRANCO-PRUSSIAN WAR.

A French Soldier Saves His Sweetheart From Dishonor and Both are Killed by the Merciless Prussians.

At the time of the declaration of the Franco-German war Alphonse Delorme was living quietly with his only son, Andre, upon their little farm, situated between St. Genevieve and Fleury. The youth was but nineteen years of age, and his mother having died in his infancy, the whole of the poor old man's affection was centered in the boy. When the dread war cloud burst over France young Delorme, who was a youth of ardent, adventurous spirit, determined to defend his country against the Prussians. The old man had naturally many misgivings, but was too patriotic a Frenchman to interfere with the wishes of his son, who forthwith enlisted as a private in a foot regiment early in the month of August. These were stirring times, and the corps young Andre joined was ordered to the front, and the lad went away to the frontier after bidding an affectionate adieu to his father.

THE LOVER'S FAREWELL.

Andre had a sweetheart, a beautiful young girl of 17 who lived some three miles from the house of his father, and he was allowed by special permission of his colonel to go and bid her farewell ere his regiment marched for the theatre of war. The parting between the young lovers was a most affecting one, and Andre's fiancée with her own hands placed a rose as a tribute of her love inside his kepi as he gave her a final embrace before he started off on a starry midnight to rejoin his regiment, which was under orders to march at daybreak.

It would be making the tale too long to follow the fortunes of young Andre during the war, but suffice it to say that he behaved with conspicuous bravery in several engagements. Victory, however, rested with the arms of the German troops, and young Andre was mortally wounded in a fierce engagement near Choisy while saving the life of a wounded officer of his regiment who had been attacked by half a dozen Germans. He knew that his condition was hopeless—the regimental surgeon told him so—and he determined to make his way to the house of his fiancée, and to bid her farewell before he died. The undertaking was a dangerous one, for the country was overrun with Germans, who had entered Montlery and established a camp near the residence of his sweetheart, between Saint-Genevieve and Fleury. However, young Delorme knew the country well, and by the exercise of great caution managed to elude his foes. He painfully dragged himself through the woods and by paths known only to the natives of that part of France, and thus was able to reach the home of his beloved unperceived. The young girl, Jeanne Bernier, lived in a pretty white farm house surrounded by vineyards, with a spacious yard in front.

A MELANCHOLY TRAGEDY.

On the eve of a hot autumn day the dying soldier arrived at the gate with his uniform blood-stained, torn and covered with dust and his wan features rigid with pain. Poor Andre knew he had not many hours to live, for the blood was again beginning to flow from the wound where the foeman's bullet had pierced his breast. He could not open the door, so he broke the glass in one of the windows, and raising it quietly, entered the house and made his way to the room where he knew he would find his fiancée. On opening the door, what was his horror to find Jeanne struggling terrified in the arms of a Prussian officer, whose object it was not difficult to determine. Andre, maddened with rage, braced himself up and fired his loaded revolver at the cowardly assailant of the young girl, who rolled over dead on the floor with a bullet through his heart. The young lovers had barely time to embrace each other when a body of Prussian soldiers, who had heard the report of the firearms, burst into the house and entered the room. When they saw the French uniform and their dead officer lying on the floor, they with brutal violence

DRAGGED THE DYING SOLDIER

from the arms of the almost fainting girl, and taking him outside, placed him roughly against the wall for instant execution. It was in vain that Jeanne pleaded with Andre's captors to let him die in peace; the soldiers pushed her aside and a file of riflemen were drawn up, who leveled their guns at the figure of the dying soldier, whose life blood was welling forth over his travel-stained uniform and dripping on the ground. With a supreme effort the youth straightened his back against the wall and, defiantly facing his foes, exclaimed, "I die for my country and my fiancée." While the men were making ready to fire Jeanne crept closer and closer, and when she saw the lips of the man in charge of the firing party about to give the fatal order she rushed in with out-stretched arms as if to shield her lover, and when the smoke cleared away there were two corpses on the ground, each pierced with several bullets.

The lovers were buried side by side in two graves in the little cemetery of Saint Genevieve des Bois with a tombstone at the head of each. The young girl's grave bore a sentence in French intimating that she had been "killed by the enemy," and on the anniversary of the death of herself and her lover the youths and maidens of the adjacent villages cover their graves with flowers.

A 24 Story Building.

At Chicago capital has been subscribed, the ground purchased and plans drawn for the construction of the tallest office building in the world. The site of the structure is 110 feet of frontage on Dearborn street. The building will be 24 storeys high, surpassing the tower of the Auditorium by six storeys and the Masonic Temple by five. Steel will be the chief material.

A Strange Reminder.

Early in January Germany was curiously reminded of the fact that just twenty years had elapsed since the great war with France by the number of young men eligible for military service in the coming spring being exceedingly small, owing to the great diminution in the number of births in 1871. It is now learned that most of the mountain districts of Franconia will not contribute a single recruit in April.

THE RETURN OF THE BIRDS.

The Robin the First to Bring Us Spring Cheer.

The Order in Which the Feathered Songsters Come Back to Us.

The season has returned when the migratory birds will soon be with us again. Who can tell the first bird that revisits Ontario after the stony winter is fairly broken?

The first bird to return is the robin. The robin is known as wanderer on the face of the earth. He usually makes his appearance early in February, when the ground is still mantled in snow and ice, and when, it would seem, he could find nothing to eat. The robin visits every part of the Dominion. He makes his mud-spattered nest on an apple bough in the orchard. The eggs are usually of a blue-green color, and from four to six in number.

The second bird to return is the bluebird. Familiar to all must be this cheery bird, one of spring's earliest visitors, and one of the most welcome ones withal. All of us who have ever been in the country can recall finding the bluebird's nest, usually in some hollow stump or other artificial retreat. A dainty nest it is, too, lined with horsehair and the depositor, perhaps, half a dozen pale blue eggs.

Then comes back again, next in order, the meadow lark. This bird is clumsy in form, though of rich yet subdued plumage. Its general aspect is brown, with streaks of ash over its crown. The meadow lark flies low over the fields, its wings rustling much of the startled fashion of the quail started from cover. Its nest is a rude affair, loosely constructed of small twigs, dead wood, etc.

The song sparrow follows the meadow lark. This cheery songster is with us the year around. It comes first in the early springtime. Who does not know the song sparrow? A modest bird, of simple, unadorned plumage, this bird is the life of our hedges and groves, whistling a soft, subdued note, sweet and tender in its melody.

The blackbirds next return to their old haunts. There are many species of this family of birds, such as the crow blackbird, the red-winged blackbird, etc. The blackbird is much in demand at the hands of the amateur hunter or sportsman, who finds this bird easy game.

Then back again, whistling plaintively and shrilly in its haunts in some thick bramble or copse, is the catbird. This songster is indeed a familiar one of our bird life. The catbird is of a somber, slate gray in color, clean-lined, spry, graceful, and of aristocratic bearing. There is much dignity in the carriage of this bird, although it must be confessed that its walk is not the poetry of motion. But for this shortcoming its song more than counterbalances. Ringing forth sharp and clear, a peculiar quality of defiance is heard in its quivering note. The catbird remains with us nearly the entire year.

The tobee bunting is one of spring's earliest visitors. This bird is glossy black in color, with a dash of rich chestnut at its sides.

One day the swallows return again, and soon after the warblers. The first of the wood warblers is the San Domingo yellowthroat, of which there are no less than twenty varieties. The Maryland yellowthroat is next in line. This bird takes its name from the color of its breast and from the fact that over its head it wears a black hood or mask. These birds are among our most sprightly singers.

By the middle of May the woods are alive with returned wanderers in bird land. The Baltimore oriole returns to nip the opening cherries. This bird is the prince of migratory songsters. In plumage it is of dazzling beauty, its breast glowing like a flame, with black and wings of glossy black or olive color.

City people can know nothing of the delight of watching the birds come back in the springtime. That pleasure is reserved for those who, simple in heart like nature, are content to pass their days near her deep green woods and her wild haunts, beyond the habitations of men.

Points for Girls.

Your mother is your best friend, Have nothing to do with girls who snub their parents.

Tell the pleasantest things you know when at meals.

Do not expect your brother to be as dainty as a girl.

Exercise, and never try to look as if you were in delicate health.

Introduce every new acquaintance to your mother as soon as possible.

Don't think it necessary to get married. There is plenty of room for old maids, and they are often happier than wives.

Enjoy the pleasures provided for you by your parents to the fullest extent. They will like that as a reward better than any other.

Take care of your teeth at any cost of time or trouble, and do without new dresses rather than neglect a needed visit to the dentist.

Most fathers are inclined to over-indulge their daughters. Make it impossible for your father to spoil you, by fairly returning his devotion and affection.

Never think you can afford to be dowdy at home. Cleanliness, hair well-dressed and a smile will make a calico look like silks and satins to a father or brother.

Do not quarrel with your brother; do not preach at him, and do not coddle him. Make him your friend, and do not expect him to be your servant, nor let him expect you to be his.

At a meeting of the Aberdeen Steam Navigation Company, an application for interdict was lodged at the instance of several of the shareholders against the directors of the Company, to find and declare that the balance-sheet and profit and loss accounts were incorrect, and to interdict the chairman of the meeting attesting it as a correct balance-sheet. The interdict has arisen in connection with a pleasure trip which the directors and their friends took to Norway in one of the Company's steamers last summer and the expense of which the shareholders protest against being paid out of the company's funds. The meeting was adjourned for a few hours, and on assembling, the objectors consented to withdraw the interdict on the understanding that any money expended in connection with the trip was made good by the directors.