A WOMAN'S LOVE

OR, A BROTHER'S PROMISE

CHAPTER VI.—Continued.

"It is nothing, it is nothing. Any man would have done the same in my place."

"But no man has, my friend."

Silence fell upon them. Hector's natural distaste for praise had caused him to avert his eyes from the Queen while she had been speaking; but now, after a little, he ventured to look at her. The gaze of love is comprehensive. It takes in with one swift glance more than a fastidious anthropometrist might catalogue in a year of labor. The lovers eye is like the lens of a camera, focussing on the sensitive plate of the memory a new image of the world's desire each time it looks. It was a new image of Maddalena that was at that moment recorded in Hector's memory.

She was standing. Her head, with its dark waves of hair falling smoothly over the low, broad brow, was held high, with a pride that was not selfish, a pride in the man she had called her friend. Her cheeks were flushed with the same honest admiration. Her eyes shone with that unconscious light that makes a man, when first he sees it, hold his breath with awe and fear—awe that so great delight is within his grasp, fear that he may be imagining only that he sees it. He has but to speak and the light may vanish—or it may grow and be a lamp unto his feet for all the days—the Gleam of Love's Holy Grail.

Hector saw the light and held his breath. But his heart sang, and his blood beat in his temples with joyous rhythm, and Hope whispered to his ear.

Beside the red rose in her hair she wore no adornment, save a little crucifix on her bosom, a silver cross with a gold Christ. The folds of her black robe fell in soft lines that gave tenderness to the grace and majesty of her yet girlish figure, tall and simple as a hazel wand. Simplicity should clothe a queen as with a garment, and be the only ornament of her majesty. In Maddalena simplicity and queenliness were rarely met. From her head's crown to her foot's sole she was fair; a king's mate, herself a very queen.

She took the cross from her breast together with its hair-fine chain of gold, and holding it in her hand looked long at it, her lips moving in pure heart prayer. Then she kissed the symbol, and lifting her head faced Hector with frank eyes.

"Of old," she said, "when knights went out to war, they took with them a talisman, a holy relic, or a love-token, to come between them and peril or to be comfort at the end. This seems strange and out of place in our age——"

Hector dissented, for he was a devout Roman Catholic, as were all the members of his branch of the Clan Grant.

"But I had the thought of giving you this," she continued, "to be a shield or a comfort. Will you take it from me?"

And she held out the cross to him in her open palm.

"Madam," he said, as he took it from her hand, "if it does not shield me from danger—though I do not see where danger lies—it shall be a comfort to me, twice over."

After this there was a little silence, awkward yet pleasurable. Maddalena was the first to break it.

"You will not see Don Augustin before you leave. There is some private business of his own which seems to occupy all his attention. He went out of town to-day, and will not be back for three days yet."

"I did want to see him," said Hector, "to get full information from him on many points."

"You will find all you can want in the papers I have given you."

Again there was a little silence. Hector spoke first this time.

"Then, madam," he said, "since I have yet much to do, have I your permission to depart?"

She held out her hand silently, and as he gazed upon her ere he stooped to kiss it, he saw that in her eyes were tears. Yet when he raised his head again she was smiling.

"Farewell," he said. "God keep your Majesty!"

"Farewell," she said. "God go with you!"

That night Hector spent in waking dreams, but next day he was the man of action. Early afternoon found him in Liverpool at the offices of the Orange King. He sent in his name.

"I am afraid you can't see Mr. Smith just now," said the clerk. "He has an appointment with you for six o'clock on board the Jebba, hasn't he, Mr. Grant?"

"Yes."

"Then I think I'd go on board and make myself comfortable, if I were you. Mr. Smith will be with you by six."

So Hector made his way to the docks, presented himself to the fine captain of the Jebba, and was received as if he were a prince.

Six o'clock came, but brought no Mr. Smith with it. Seven came, and Hector began to grow anxious. At last, at a quarter to eight, a cab drove up to the gangway, and Thomas Smith came on board.

"Evening, Grant."

"I thought you were never coming, sir."

"Sorry I'm late. Where's Peachey?"

"Here, sir," said the captain.

"Ready?"

"Yes, sir."

"Then you'd better clear. Ten minutes gained is ten minutes saved at the other end."

The captain walked away rapidly.

"Well, Grant, are you hungry?"

Hector stared.

"Let's go and have some dinner."

The Orange King led the way to the saloon, and Hector followed in half-amused bewilderment. He ventured one or two remarks, but they were met with abstracted silence.

Hector looked up from his soup to see through the porthoies landing-stage and warehouses and funnels and masts slipping by with ever-increasing speed.

"How are you going to get back, sir? Drop into a tug?"

The Orange King laughed.

"No, no; I'm coming with you."

"To Palmetto?"

"Um!"

CHAPTER VII.

As night fell on the seventh day, the Isle of Palms rose from the sea. Three peaks, crowned with cloud, grew out of the Atlantic and cast a triple shadow on the darkening waters. The Jebba smote her way straight into the black path, and two hours later the anchor plunged into the waters of Palm Bay.

There were now a thousand stars in the deep blue sky; a thousand lights gleamed along the low line of the shore; dim lanterns glimmered from the sterns of swarming boats; there was an intoxicating mingle of boatmen's calls and splash of oars, light songs, and thrumming of guitar and mandolin. Here seemed the gates of fairyland, opening upon the foam of perilous seas.

The practical days of the voyage, when ways and means and myriad details were discussed and settled with the Orange King, vanished from Hector's memory—burned in the white flame of romance, as a handful of worthless straw is consumed. The magic of the night and the dim land and the water took him. A love song that was passionate yet melancholy, importunate yet fearful, half-impersonal yet wholly haunting, snared his heart and held it still. The subtle smell of the land, so good to nostrils that for days have known only the salt of the sea—something of the "eternal scents"—completed the subjugation begun by all the glamour of the hour and place. To crown surrender, came to his mind remembrance of Maddalena, bidding him farewell with the brave smile that hid her tears. Not even the discomfort of landing could break the spell that bound him; nay, not even the terrors of the carratera.

As soon as their boat had touched the steps the hotel commissionaire, who had annexed the Orange King and Hector—their bodies, souls, and baggage—sprang on to the Mole and lanced the dark with a fiery cry of "Carruache!" Out of the gloom drifted a dusty vehicle, drawn by a dusty mule, and driven by a dusty demon, half Palmetto, half negro, who wore a Fra Diavolo hat, a Fra Diavolo grin, and portentous Fra Diavolo navaja in his blood-red sash. They took their dusty seats beneath the awning of the tartana, and began speedily to taste all the unproved delights of the carratera.

Two solid miles of it did they endure, for Palm City lies away from the port, snugly curled among miniature hills, its blaze of electric light showing, a poised nebula, amid the blue dark. Two solid miles of bump and thump and dump; of unceasing switchback, of jolt and jar and jig and jumble; of Blondin balancing on one wheel and the other; of tartanero's cursing; of commissionaire's admiration and sharp yelps of encouragement; of clutching helplessness on the part of Hector and the Orange King. On one side glimmered the white tops of the breakers, on the other the yawn of the ditch made itself felt. Two miles as the crow flies—four as the tartana thumps. But all things end, even the carratera, and Hector laughed when, under the portico of the hotel in the square of San Bernardino, he saw the Orange King prod himself affectionately for broken bones.

The night was sleepless. Dawn had scarcely set her first pink streamer floating in the sky ere Hector pushed aside his mosquito curtains; and, with a last anathema on all the bloodsuckers of the night, passed through the open windows on to the balcony.

The square was silent, save for a few garrulous sparrows that squabbled viciously in the roadway.

To the right rose one of the little hills that ring Palmetto on the land side—rose so close to the end of the square that Hector almost felt that he could put out his hand and pluck off some of the toy villas that dotted it up to the summit. "A backcloth in a comic opera," he murmured. There were hundreds of tiny dwellings, washed white and blue and yellow and green, vivid and fresh, and all so still; no sign of movement or curl of hearth-smoke hinted at life; and between the patches of flamboyant color the dead grey of the hillside lay under the dust of sun-scorched centuries. No blade of grass, no leaf made pleasant green. True, trees lined the square, but the burnt leaves were smothered with cobwebs that sagged beneath their burden of grey dust.

To the left the square opened into Triana, the Piccadilly and Bond Street of Palmetto, and beyond Triana shone the Atlantic eastward to Africa, a very perfect and unbroken blue.

Little by little as the day leaped higher, life began to stir. Old women in black mantillas, young women in shawls of pale yellow and brilliant rose-pink, passed on their way to early mass, fingers busy with rosaries. A country cart with stone from the quarries of Terrino rumbled over the cobbles, the driver standing precariously on the end of the long wooden brake. A goatkeeper walked drowsily along, followed by his little flock jangling their bells. Now and again he stopped by a door, and seating himself on the edge of the pavement drew milk into the can of a waiting housewife. Panniered mules and asses paced slowly with their loads towards the municipal dust-heaps. A tertanero watered his jade at the public trough, and a string of horses clattered by for a dip in the bay.

Softly, mellowed by distance, came the long notes of a bugle blown at the Hispaniolan camp, a mile to the southward of the city. Ten thousand Hispaniolan troops lay there—infantry, cavalry, and artillery. The long call roused Hector from the reverie into which he had fallen. He sighed and re-entered his bedroom for a cigarette. He had not struck the match when a tap sounded on the door.

It was a waiter, already shaven and sleek, yet with something of that unkempt bandit look about him that all Palmettos possess, though they be the most pacific of men, model husbands, and fathers of families.

"Will the senor have coffee?"

"No, get me some grapes and a couple of bananas, and I will have a glass of that wine I had last night—what do you call it?—sec——"

"Seco generosa?"

"That's it."

"Then will you have the English breakfast at nine, or the Palmetto breakfast at eleven?"

Hector laughed to himself. English breakfast? Not surely; bacon and eggs the eternal he had left behind.

"Palmetto breakfast, please."

When the waiter returned with the fruit and wine he brought also a yellow police form for Hector to fill up with his full name, age, profession, etc. Hector wrote in the particulars the waiter looked attentively at him, seeming to examine his every feature with devouring interest.

At last the man could contain his curiosity no longer. He stepped behind Hector and looked over his shoulder. Evidently he saw something which satisfied him, for stepping back a pace or two he drew from his faja a cross-hilt dagger, having the letter R embossed at the junction of blade and heft. This he slipped under Hector's arm, and laid on the sheet of yellow paper.

Hector, catching the gleam of steel had the momentary impulse to start up and clutch the fellow by the throat, but ere he moved he saw the silver R. He sat still, and spoke without turning his head.

"Give me the word," he said.

"For Palmetto, freedom!" answered the man.

"Freedom is but half," said Hector.

"Freedom and Maddalena is all!" was the reply.

"Her Majesty Queen Maddalena," said Hector.

"Whom God preserve!" came the whispered answer.

Hector still went on writing.

"How did you know me?" he asked.

"Word was given to us that my lord was coming.

"Well?"

"We have seen my lord's picture."

How could that be, since Hector had not been photograpged for ten years, and then in a group of Magistrands in Aberdeen? But doubtless, Bravo had had him snapshotted. Hector smiled. He did not learn until later of the portrait of the Palmetto preux chevalier, Baldassare de la Luz, whose memory is venerated in the Isle of Palms, as is that of Wallace or Bruce in Scotland, of Arthur the King in England of Bayard in France. So he passed by the question of his picture.

"What is your rank?" said Hector.

"I am a sergeant in E company of the second regiment, my lord."

"Your colonel's name?"

"Don Miguel Ortona y Cajal, my lord."

"Who resides——"

"On his estates near Teldo, my lord."

"You must not call me 'my lord.'

"As my lord pleases—senor."

Hector finished writing. He turned and handed the paper to the deferential waiter, who received it as if it had been a royal decree.

"Are there any more of the faithful in this house?"

"We are twenty-five here, senor, and of these eighteen long for the day of freedom."

"Good! Your name?"

"Juan Gastaldi, my—senor."

"Very well. That will do now."

(To be Continued.)

NEW SOURCES OF RUBBER.

Roots of a Plant Found on the African Plains.

A French botanist, in the course of his explorations, says the Scientific American, a few weeks ago, in the sandy plains of the French Congo, discovered a plant the bark of which contained a large quantity of fibrous rubber. At the time scarcely any attention was paid to the discovery, but owing to the scarcity of rubber and its high commercial value, which is in reality so prohibitive as to prevent a very wide employment of the substance, attempts are being made in England to turn this new discovery to commercial use. The plant also thrives profusely in Northern Nigeria, and it is these forests which are to be exploited. A sample of the plant has been analyzed by the botanical authorities of Kew Gardens, London, and these investigations show that the rubber exists in the roots in sufficiently large quantities to warrant development. The name of the plant is Londolphia thrallonii. It is to be found in many places on the west coast of Africa. One firm which is already engaged in the manufacture of this rubber is placing it upon the market at 75 cents a pound, and it is in every respect equal to the ordinary rubber.

India rubber has become such an indispensable material in the arts and sciences that users will be glad to learn that a fresh source of supply is said to have been found in the white mangrove tree, which grows plentifully in the swampy lands along the coast of Central Queensland. The sap is obtained by making incisions in the bark of the tree and allowing it to run into tins. Some samples of the rubber thus obtained are said to have brought $1 a pound in England. An idea of the importance of the rubber trade may be learned from the statement that the United States and England alone absorb over fifty million pounds annually.

BREATHING AND COURAGE.

Get More Oxygen Into Your Lungs.

The importance of learning to breathe properly has often been insisted on by medical men, who tell us that we shall be healthier if we habitually take deep breaths and thus completely fill our lungs; but deep breathing is now put forward as a courage-reviver.

When the prospect looks rather black, and there is an insidious suggestion somewhere within you that the best thing you can do is to go to the Antipodes and make a fresh start; when you have an attack of the blues, and dread to open your morning letters lest one shall contain information that will upset some of your happy plans; then you had better go into the open, or approach an open window, stand with your arms akimbo (in order to give your chest full play), and take deep breaths.

Breathe through the nose and exhale through the mouth slowly. Do this several times, inhaling till your lungs will not hold more; every time you do it, you will find that you can take in a little more than you did the last time. Go back to your letters again, and you will be inclined to laugh at your fears. Do this as a regular thing, and fear will not trouble you.

In verification of this statement, everyone knows how a walk in the open will "put life into you" on a fresh morning; it is because more oxygen gets into the lungs. If you practise deep breathing, you get more exygen as a regular thing, and your courage does not play tricks with you.

HOW NATIONS SLEEP.

Considering that we all spend on an average one-third of our whole lives in bed, it is not wonderful that a good deal of care, expense, and trouble is expended on our sleeping places. In Great Britain the unhealthy feather bed is being driven out by the healthier mattress. French beds are noted for their hardness, and German beds are so ridiculously short that foreign visitors are often much too big for them. Many Norwegian beds are made to pull out from recesses. The hammock rules in South and Central America. The Indians of Guinea plait most beautiful hammocks out of grass, which they dye prettily. Japanese lie upon matting laid out on the floor, with a stiff, uncomfortable wooden head-rest. It would take an Englishman years to get accustomed to such a bed of torture. The Chinese use low bedsteads, often elaborately carved. But their only mattress and coverlets are made of matting. In winter they put on heavy clothes wadded with cotton, in which they sleep. Of all people, the easiest to suit in the way of sleeping quarters are negroes. An African negro, like a wild animal, can curl up anywhere.

Cashleigh—"A dog is a man's best friend, because he never forsakes him." Harduppe—"That's right. A man cannot borrow money from a dog."

MEN SELL THEIR

VALUE OF BETTER HA ENGLAND.

Cases in Police Courts S Practise to be Qu Common.

Readers of Mr. Hardy's n been reminded of the ope ters of "The Mayor of Cas by the case at Marlborou Police Court the other day was shown that the defend got rid of his wife by selli a couple of shillings. For for this commercial form some journalists have sear records of a century ago, duced numerous instances being led to the cattle m there knocked down to t bidder, says the London Gl

But it is not necessary t anything like 100 years sales of wives. There are modern instances to main assertion that wife selling i British custom. There are of people who still believe transfer a wife to anothe a cash payment is a legal tion and a valid dissolution monial ties. As a popular ranks with the idea that if or wife be absent and unhea seven years the other is free again.

AN ESTABLISHED CUS

In Yorkshire generally, Sheffield in particular, this of wife selling is still so fir tablished and frequently that it has little less than of a local law.

Legends of Sheffield grind in drunken bouts sell their for a quart of ale are well But now-a-days such transac no longer conducted off-hand are invested with formality, ness this document which fi a case at the Sheffield Coun in 1887: "At the Royal Oak, I, Abraham Boothroyd, agre my wife Clara to William the sum of 5 shillings."

At Leeds Assizes in 1895, Gibbons was tried for bigamy admitted that he had marrie man while his first wife wa but he pleaded that as he her he was entitled to marry She was a young woman and even though he constantly ga good hidings, she troubled h tiring of her, he sold her to dier for 3s. 6d. She went qu ingly, and had married he chaser.

A NOMINAL VALUE.

In each case it will be notic the purchase money is small, not due to low valuation of man, but a nominal sum is upon to make the bargain an one. The legal doctrine of "v ceived" is so far understood vulgar mind. The sale, indeed poor man's divorce. His hon this matter is shown by his re of the children of the marria his maintenance of them.

In a case at Doncaster in 18 purchaser, instead of payin agreed to take over the vendo children with the wife. This document which figured later police court: "New Conisboro, 8, 1896.—I, Enoch Childs, willing to take your wife and es mine, that is your wife Tart, and Sarah, John, Henr Eliza. Signed, Ellen Tart, Childs."

COMMON PRACTICE

Though Lancashire is so k Yorkshire no sale of wives are in the county Palatine. But in ton, in Derbyshire, a collier s wife for fourpence in 1882. I there was a remarkable case per; the wife of an absconding tor had a halter placed ab neck and was led into the place on Saturday afternoon fered for sale by auction as o her husband's assets. But the no bidders and no sale.

About four years ago Irth ough, near Northampton, supp southern instance. A sho paraded the streets with a be ing upon all persons to know he had that afternoon "sold queathed" his wife to John proclaimed the names of two panions as witnesses to the tion. The purchase money shillings. Baring Gould cit ilar sales in the West countr to go back more than thirty would mean the extension of t ject to intolerable length for tury ago wife selling was almo mon.

That it is practiced as fre as it is will come as a surpri most readers. In addition t northern instances many a sold to-day in the east end o don, but of all such cases o country only a few are reveal public knowledge.

Aunt Clara (to her young who has just brought a buck the parlor where she is sit "Good gracious, Tommy, wha you doing with that bucket? it down to the kitchen at Tommy—"I want you to k Aunt Clara; 'cause I heard pa ing when you kick the bucket got $5,000."