A WOMAN'S LOVE

OR, A BROTHER'S PROMISE

CHAPTER XII.

At their parting the red rose from her hair became the red rose at his heart. Thinking of the fight to come he asked for it with a look, and it was yielded with swift subtlety of comprehension that was almost more than half anticipation. To Hector the rose was the bringer of an infinitude of unforgettable messages. Lying beside the silver crucifix, that was also her gift, it whispered to him in thrills softer than its own petals: opening its gold heart as Maddasena's had opened, beating as Maddalena's had beat. It breathed absolution of his madness: nay, it did more—it became their sign of partnership in the divine folly.

Yet not even the maiden fragrance of the rose that had been bettered by the warm night of her hair, nor the siren lyrics of his awakened blood, could drowse remembrance of Asunta's laughter, sounding from a lattice above him and his Queen at farewell. Palm to palm tell more than lip to lip, and they were palm to palm when Asunta, looking down, saw fresh significance in the unusual act. For his life Hector could not desecrate the new understanding by kissing Maddalena's hand as a subject should. By nature somewhat of a poet, he could, when not moved strongly, assume guises at will, and at any othet moment that this he could have played the servant; but a certain restraining pride came of their equality in love—he was moving now on the same plane as Maddalena, together their young feet trod the clouds, and he was not the one to debase exaltation by trifling with irksome subterfuge.

Palm to palm they bade farewell, and common words drew deeper meaning from the simple act erewhile unused.

"Good-night! Good-bye!" said he.

"Good-night! and good-night!" said she.

The hope that shone in her determination not to say good-bye lightened on his eyes, and yet again he gave good-night.

Asunta was no fool. She had an emotional intelligence keenly appreciative of inflections, intonations, all differences and changes of voice or look. And her nerves strung in a moment to breaking pitch, recognized a ne,w note in Hector's voice, a new note in Maddalena's—in hers something of fuller trust, something of lingering protection in his, and in both that indescribable lingering cadence which graces the lover's least utterance with the melody of the morning stars. Resentment fell on her taut nerves as a knife may fall on a stretched fiddle string, and the sound made in her by the flying ends was laughter—laughter, derisive, ironical, contemptuous, spiteful, revengeful. She trembled as a woman trembles responsive to the finger-touch of passion: with cleaving of the tongue to the mouth's roof, with parching thirst, with hurrying ripples of heat and cold, with joints turning to water. She clutched the lattice ledge, and laughed.

Asunta had told Hector that she hated him. There she had lied. She had, indeed, hoped that assumption of hate might win him where open love could not, as a bitter may snare the palate honey cannot seduce. She hated him in some degree because he had scorned her; yet she loved him the more because he had been strong enough to withstand the torrential impact of her attack. And now that she saw him welded hand in hand with her rival, and heard that in his voice she would have died to awake for herself, she loved him only the more passionately, the more madly. Because he was unattainable, he was more than ever desirable.

She laughed and slid back into the room. Maddalena had ears for Hector only; but he heard, and knew that Asunta had stolen a moment from his hour. And all the way back to the Palmetto lines (he and Alasdair walked: the path was too perilous for riding) her laughter went with him, and his imagination danced impossibly lurid capricoles to the sound of it. Only at the beat of drums was he enough his own man to cast her out of mind.

By the hour it was nigh on dawn, but save for the chill in the air it might have been any point of the twenty-four. For up and in from the sea crept and wound long wisps and trials and curls of a white seafog that smothered and blotted out height and hollow, flag, trench and piled arms. In this Stampa welcomed a God-sent opportunity: "In half an hour," he said, "we will make a general advance—get ready": and the Hispaniolans, now unwilling to try a decisive fall, bustled as much as habit would allow. But in making his dispositions, Stampa ignored his opponents.

Don Augustin, looking at the hot sky on the previous morning, dropped a happly hint into Hector's ear.

"With us," said he, "if I have not forgotten my island weather lore, that tousa of copper means fog from the sea, fog in the early hours of the morning—not before four, nor after seven."

Hector talked weather with others, and on every hand the prophecy found acceptance. So he summoned his generals to council, and an idea that leaped to him at Bravo's hint was hammered and shaped into a workable plan—not without a good deal of opposition from the older men who had lost all love for risk. But Hector, by favor of enthusiasm as well as by his authority, bore down resistance.

Now was the hour for challenging Fate. The Hispaniolan lines were lost in the mist. Drums began to roll low, inveterate thunder along the Palmetto front. From orange grove and banana plantation came the gleam of steel, as company after company and regiment after regiment fixed bayonets quietly. A little group of officers stood by the door of Hector's tent. It still wanted ten minutes of the hour at which Hector had ordered the advance. They were waiting for him.

"But I hold," said a little wizened old man," that some explanation is due to us. The Queen is young, and we are, more or less, her counsellors, her guardians; she must be guided by us, by our experience and knowledge of the world. It is a delicate subject but if it is true——"

"True!" cried Don Miguel. "Do you doubt my word, senor?"

"Not for a moment—not for a moment. But Dona Asunta—pardon me, Don Miguel—rumor says——"

"Rumor lies."

"Likely enough. Rumor says that Dona Asunta has not hard heart against him herself."

"Whatever feelings my daughter may or may not have," rejoined Don Miguel, with all the dignity he could display, "her love for her country comes first. She has warned me, and my duty forces me to speak. Besides, my own eyes are good witnesses. I am old, but I am not blind, thank God; and I saw the Queen and Senor Grant——"

"Good morning, gentlemen."

Not a face but showed confusion as Hector's calm gaze ranged the group.

"I heard my name. May I ask why I have the honor of being made the subject of conversation?"

Each looked to each to make a beginning.

"Perhaps I should ask why you do yourselves the honor of making her Majesty the Queen the subject of your talk?"

This was still more embarrassing.

"Don Miguel, it was your voice I heard."

The patriarchal Palmetto hated scenes.

When Dona Asunta chose to make of Friganeta what he called "the outer court of Pandemonium," he sought the solitude of his study; he longed for that still retreat now. But all eyes were turned on him, and all fell away from him, leaving him the uncomfortable centre of an uncomfortable circle. He played with his sword-hilt in search of words.

"Come, sir, I am waiting!" said Hector.

"Senor Grant, I am pained—I am pained, I say——"

"To the point, sir!"

"It is well. You name has been coupled with the Queen's——"

"Her Majesty's, you mean."

"With her Majesty's. My daughter, who loves her country and is devoted to her Majesty's best interests, suggests—I trust she is mistaken—that the high position to which her Majesty has called you—an act with which we can find no fault——"

"O! senor, you are generosity's self."

"She suggests that this act has emboldened you to look still higher."

"Indeed! How higher?"

"Can you not guess?"

"I fear I am very stupid. Pray enlighten me."

"Besides, I myself, last night, saw——"

"Don Miguel!"

"Senor Grant!"

"Well"—a pause of a cold moment—"what did you see?"

"I have already told these gentlemen that I saw the Queen in your tent!"

"My tent! But that is already her Majesty's."

"I saw the Queen there!"

"Her Majesty honored me with a visit. She loves her army, her people. Her solicitude for their welfare led her to make some inquiries from me."

Hector's condescendingly polite tone stung the old man.

"With her arms about your neck?" he snapped.

"Don Miguel!"

In the interval between the word and the turning of all eyes towards him, Hector had time to grasp the gravity of the situation, not so much as regarded himself, but as it touched the honor of the Queen—the honor of the woman he loved with his whole soul, whom he loved better than life and honor; and in that second his mind sprang to place foot on the only path possible to tread.

"Gentlemen, I love the Queen!"

There was a gasp, and more than one hand moved hiltward.

"As you love her—as you are proving by your devotion. Who that has seen her Majesty, who that knows her, who that has heard her speak, can help loving her? These thousands preparing to fight for her, there is no man among them all that does not love her! Where, then, is my crime?

"That her Majesty should love me——"

He removed his plumed helmet.

"Is there one among you brave enough to question any action of her Majesty's? The Queen is the Queen—you are her subjects, and you discuss her behind her back, you who want the common courage and the common-sense of justice to bring your insinuations to her feet. Pretty counselors! pretty gentlemen! And if her Majesty should love me—what then?

"A stranger I came among you. I am proud to fight for Maddalena and Palmetto. A stranger I shall go from you. You shall remain here—with freedom, with Maddalena! I shall go when the work is done, and I desire to go with the friendship of a few of you—with the good opinion of you all!

"Don Miguel! you say you saw—I care not what—something derogatory to her Majesty's dignity. I demand a retraction of your words—of your very thoughts!"

"But Senor Grant——"

"No 'buts,' sir. Withdraw."

"Senor——"

"Must I give you the lie, sir?"

"The lie to me?"

"You have been my host, and I would preserve a keen memory of your courtesies and hospitalities. You are an older man than I, and I would remember what is due to age. But, by God, sir, if you do not withdraw——"

Don Miguel looked at the others. Hector's fury had told with them; and he read on every face the desire that he should make peace. His impulses were all for peace, but Asunta had poisoned his mind effectively (he and not Hector should have been general-in-chief; Hector had made advances to her which she had rejected; the Queen must be preserved from the adventurer; the fame of Palmetto must be kept white), so that when Don Miguel paused at the door of the tent, and saw Maddalena at Hector's breast, he was ready to believe anything. He knew well that if he did not apologize a storm af scandal would arise that might, in all probability, divide Palmetto into opposing factions, and imperil the cause of Freedom. But, withal, he was a proud old man: he would not withdraw, the lie would be given, he would take the consequences.

Hector looked at his watch.

"Gentlemen, we shall resume this conversation in my tent at the end of the day. It is the hour for attack—we have delayed too long already. You have your orders: pray execute them. Get your guns into action at once, General Tornielli."

Two batteries, together with the guns from the hill caves, had been concealed slightly behind the main position, and ranges taken carefully, on the previous evening. These now began to send shrieking death into the fog, and so accurately had they been laid that not a shell but ploughed into its allatted mass of Hispaniolan soldiery, baggage, transport, and ammunition wagons, churning it into a higgledy-piggledy of disorder that rendered preparation for attack thrice impossible. Flight after flight of sharpnel winged its passage of death, and under this cover and that of the mist, the Palmettos, a long line of dull steel, advanced steadily to the rumble of clamorous drums.

This man joins fight best to the blare of trumpets, that to the wild skirl of bagpipes or the clash of cymbals; but all hearts are lifted by the masterful thud and beat of drums. The bagpipes is, perhaos, the most savagely stimulating, giving to the blood a rush like a spring spate and to the murder-itching fingers a fiend's grip on steel. Trumpets talk most of glory (in all brass there is breadth) and the loud clang of Bellona's wings. But the drums— the drums comvey Fate to knock at your heart, the drums as they roll fast or slow quicken or slacken the blood, the drums sustain the tired feet as nothing else can, the drums make the soldier.

And now, sounding over and through the shrouding mist, and reverberating with hollow boom from time-scored lava-heights, they lifted the feet of Palmetto out of a century's fetters and set them on the high road for liberty. Forward went Maddalena's men— this man with thoughts of wife and children he might never more see, that with dreams of sweetheart and yon last kiss that might be recaptured only in heaven, and all with the high hope of freedom, all with love for her that was their Queen. She sat yonder in Caldera, and knowing that but yet a little while and she must set them far above her own happiness, her own heart's desire—she sat and gave her men their richest talisman, the poured-out prayer of a virgin heart.

Came a flaw from the southward, and through the rift the leading regiments looked on Hispaniola's lines in a maelstrom of confusion—disorder inextricable and irremediable. At a word musketry rattled and rang, and the maelstrom broke in a thousand ragged waves, running hither and thither aimlessly. Over the levels went the Palmettos at a swinging double, and over hillocks and hummocks they clambered like goats, ever and anon dropping to the knee for a volley, and always and always bringing their ridge of steel nearer and nearer the regathering Hispaniolans.

The shock of meeting—and then five minutes' bloddy work with the bayonet, the drums pealing revenge somewhere in the rear. While it lasts it seems a long day, when it is over it seems but a moment. For there, down the three roads that fall into the very heart of Palm City, go Stampa and his staff and five out of his eight thousand, hastening to the haven of city walls. Hard on their heels follow Maddalena's columns, three swift snakes on the looping roads.

Stampa welcomes a new "God-sent opportunity": this time he does not blunder. Up out of Palm City, jogging leisurely along the central road, come the guns that should have been in position two days ago. They meet him a mile from the walls, at a turn where they are out of view of the pursuers. Manana is a god forgotten, and in a trice the guns are ready, a rear-guard holding off the foremost hounds meanwhile. Then, slowly, like a snail's horns, the rear-guard is drawn in.

Don Miguel commands the central column of Palmetto. He is eager (how eager, since his morning's display may be misconstrued into lese-majeste, lack of patriotism, what not!) to show that he is in the front rank of Maddalena's men for enthusiasm and bravery. He risks too much, he pushes on his command too ardently, he lands them deftly into Stampa's jaws—and the tiger snaps.

A couple of companies have been huddled about the Hispaniolan guns, masking them completely. The critical moment comes—they wheel to right and left, and at point-blank range shot and shell plough the Palmettos with grievous furrows. The rear companies behind the turn cannot see what is going on in front, and they press on greedily to be trapped. In half a minute the road is a jam of writhing, wounded and sadly silent dead.

Hector sees that there is trouble and bids hot-foot messengers fetch his lighter guns. Meanwhile he gallops closer. A swift look, a swifter word, and the immediate congestion is relieved. But what can he do to help the hapless five hundred that have taken the fateful turn into the tiger's clutch? Don Miguel is weeping, his presence of mind gone with his men, and he weeps the more now that the Hispaniolan butchers are among the wounded, killing with thrust and twist.

How to help the victims of Stampa's inhumanity? Can nothing be done? There is but one way, and that may be needlessly reckless, but Hector cannot stand still and see his men—nay, her men—murdered in cold blood. To fire at the Hispaniolans would be to kill as many of one's comrades as of the enemy. There is but the bayonet. In a moment he flings himself from his horse, and is at the head of three hundred a-thirst to avenge their brethren. The ranks stiffen as the steel tops them, and he speaks a word of rouse and revenge. Then the drums sound, and with Hector at its head the forlorn hope takes the turn and lances itself upon the Hispaniolan butchers with ear-splitting cries of "Maddalena and Freedom!"

(To be continued.)

IN A BARBAROUS COUNTRY

RUSSIAN POLICE DISSOLVE MEDICAL CONGRESS.

Because the Doctors Drew Attention to Sanitary Dangers.

Were it not that the article appears in The Lancet, the most conservative of British medical journals the following story would be regarded as a slander of Russian autocracy:

"The Russian Medical Congress, which met at St. Petersburg at the end of January, has been dissolved by the police. In western Europe it will seem extraordinary that a technical and scientific congress cannot be held without police interference On the other hand, it is easy to see how in Russia such things may happen. The practice of medicine there is not independent of politics, and, when questions of sanitation or of the prevention of disease are approached, science is at once forced into the political arena. At the St. Petersburg congress a joint meeting was held of the sections on tuberculosis and on social hygiene. Here a motion was carried setting forth that the ignorance of the ordinary and elementary laws of hygiene and the excessive drinking of alcohol created the predisposing causes that facilitated the spread of tuberculosis, which is one of the most fatal of prevailing diseases. So far so good, but the motion and the speeches by which it was supported went a step further, for a clause was ultimately adopted to the effect that a regular and systematic campaign against tuberculosis could only be carried out in Russia on condition that personal freedom and the

FREEDOM OF SPEECH.

of the press and of meeting were granted. The adoption of such a motion might be constructed as an act of aggresion against the Government, and therefore justified the dissolution of the congress. The resolution practically asks for complete freedom, and this is not necessary when it is simply a question of teaching the ignorant masses the advantages of cleanliness, of thorough ventilation and of abstinence from excessive drinking. Unfortunately these arguments, however plausible from the point of view taken by the present autocratic Government, do not in practice cover the issue. Such freedom as that suggested does exist. It is possible to deliver lectures on ventilation or on the best means of keeping dwellings clean, but whenever any systematic effort of this sort is made the organizers immediately fall under the suspicion of the police. These benevolent and charitable endeavors are ascribed to some political motive, and a scientific lecture on sanitation may land its author in Siberia.

"Worse than this, however, was to follow. The medical men had not only the audacity to demand that their freedom to teach the laws of health should be absolutely guaranteed, but they actually touched upon the burning question of the treatment of the Jews.

THE MEDICAL PROFESSION

is called upon to bring its sciene to bear so as to reduce the prevalence of tuberculosis, and it answers, in no uncertain or faltering voice, that overcrowding and poverty are the principal culture-beds of Koch's bacillus. But the Russian Government, by its anti-Semitic enactments has increased to an enormous extent the overcrowding of the ghettos and the poverty that prevails therein. There are supposed to be rather more than 5,000,000 Jews in Russia, who, with but few exceptions, are confined in certain portions of the towns within only a part of the empire. By the "Laws of May" which the Emperor Alexander III. signed on May 3, 1892, the Jews were no longer allowed to reside in villages, but only in towns or burgs. The police were apparently left to decide whether a place was a village or a burg. If they chose to call it a village, then the Jews might be driven out in twenty-four hours. Thus, for instance, in 1895, all the burgs of the provinces of Poltava and Tchernigoff were declared to be villages, and the Jews had to leave in twenty-four hours. The results of this unnecessary haste are appalling. The Vice-Governor of Kishineff some time ago gave orders for the evacuation of a burg which was henceforth to be qualified as a village. The subordinate who lived on the spot immediately requested that this rigorous measure might be deferred, as a severe epidemic of smallpox prevailed at that time. This very natural protest was, however, unavailing. The Jews were all forced out of their houses, and, whether ill or in good health, they were crowded together into carts and driven into Kishineff.

IT WAS MIDWINTER.

Many of the children died on the road, and the epidemic of smallpox was introduced into the town of Kishineff. The question with regard to the Jews may be a political matter, but it has also a very serious effect on the public health. It is estimated that since the "Laws of May" more than 600,000 Jews have been driven out of places now called villages and compelled to increase the overcrowding of the ghettos of the towns. Is it surprising, if, in the face of such facts the Russian Medical Congress should adopt a motion "calling attention to the danger resulting from an artificial concentration of the Jewish population in the authorized zone of residence established for the Jews in the towns and burgs of the south and west of Russia?

"Then there are laws which forbid the Jews to bathe in lakes or rivers, nor are they allowed to go to seaside watering places, to sanitariums or to mineral wells. The congress, therefore, passed a motion demanding that patients, even if they are Jews, should be allowed to seek the benefit of the country air and be permitted to inhabit the country or to follow a cure at a sanitarium or a watering place, and the congress considers that it is indispensable to grant the Jews the right to go from place to place. At present a Jew may not live in the more healthy or suburban parts of his town, but must inhabit the ghetto. However ill he may be, and though his life might be saved by a change of air, still he must remain in his ghetto. If he desires to seek the advice of a medical practitioner who lives in some other town, he cannot do so unless he first obtains a special authorization from the police. In such circumstances it is not surprising that the death rates in these towns have become endemic in many of the ghettos. Yet, when the medical practitioners of Russia are in congress assembled, and very naturally protest against such obvious causes of disease, they are accused of dabbling in politics, and the congress is dissolved by the police. It will be fortunate if this is not followed by the arrest and imprisonment of some of the more earnest speakers. But how medical science and sanitation can progress under such conditions is a question which the Russian Government must be left to answer."

"Of course, all my sisters say that the baby looks like me," said the blushing young man. "What does your wife say to that?" asked the older man. "Well, she admits that I may resemble the baby a little."