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of Lady Vere's death, their suspicions never frame themselves into words.

They lie locked in the inmost recesses of their breasts, and ever will.

It was a surprise to most people, that the body of Sir Gerald's wife was not brought home to England, to be laid with his ancestor's, in the great family vault of the Veres.

Instead, she was laid to rest in an Italian cemetery—that very cemetery into which she had watched a coffin taken the day before her death.

A beautiful white marble cross has been raised to her memory; but even that excited no little wonderment, for it was simply inscribed—

"In Memory of
Lilian,
Wife of Sir Gerald Vere."

There was no single word to tell how dearly she had been beloved, nor how deeply she had been mourned.

Still stranger, there was no word of Holy Writ to hallow that lonely grave beneath the sunny skies of Italy.

Everyone decided that Sir Gerald Vere was a most eccentric man; and some doubted whether he had ever loved his beautiful wife so greatly after all.

There certainly seemed reason for the doubt.

The very day after the funeral, he entered the monastery, in which it is his firm intention to end his days.

Morewood's was the last face belonging to the outer world he ever looked upon—Morewood who, alone of all men, knew every detail of the tragedy of his life, and who pitied him with a pity which thrilled his own heart with keenest pain.

That he is not mad, and was not mad even when he sent his guilty wife to her death, Morewood is perfectly convinced.

Nor, in his heart, can he greatly blame him for that crime.

To a tragedy so awful there could, perhaps, have been no other end.

"An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth," is still a righteous law, and John Morewood, at any rate, can feel nothing but tender pity and compassion for the unhappy husband who, rather than give his guilty wife up to the law, became himself her judge and executioner.

And so Morewood accompanied his friend to the very door of the monastery which was to be his living tomb, and pressed his ice-cold hand with the warm grasp of friendship, and with a broken voice and tear-filled eyes, said—

"God bless you, Gerald, and give you comfort in His own good time!"

"God give me pardon! That is all I ask," said the unhappy man, whom the tragic Fates had made their victim and their toy. "Expiation is the one word for me henceforward. Think of me as dead. God bless you old friend—the best and truest! God bless you always!"

And then the great, gloomy doors closed upon him, and Morewood knew he would look no more on him on earth.

His work of expiation would end only with his life.

Some months later, a remarkable piece of news reached Morewood.

A railway accident occurred in France. Many passengers were injured, and one was killed outright.

The one killed was a woman. She was travelling under the name of "Madame Santanello," and had been giving seances in Paris, as a clairvoyante.

It was proved, however, by means of papers found upon her, that her real name was Leila Rochefort.

"Truly there are more things in heaven and earth than man dreams of in his philosophy," was Morewood's thought as he heard of this. "Those three people, Leila, Louis, and Madeline, had all those curiously sorrow-haunted eyes which are said to bode an early and a tragic death; and everyone of them had died young, and by violence. Who shall undertake to understand these things?"

Then he thought of the old gipsy's prophecy concerning Madeline Winter and Gerald Vere, and how strangely and awfully it had been fulfilled.

"Surely," he mused, "it would almost teach us that, to some, there is revealed the shadow of doom."

There is no shadow on the lives of our friends in Hampshire.

There all is happiness and bright, unclouded sunshine.

Kate makes a sweet and graceful mistress for Beech Royal, and, assuredly, its master thinks that man was never blessed with a dearer wife than his.

The awful tragedy, in which Madeline Winter was the central figure, had come very near them; but they had not stood within its path, and it had but cast its shadow over them, as it passed by to accomplish the doom of their friend.

In the monastery he dwells—that most unhappy victim of a most cruel Fate.

A monk, with a cowed and tensured head, and dark brilliant eyes, which look with thrilling paths from out his pale, haggard face.

The other monks tell strange tales of the fasts and penances he inflicts upon himself.

Nigh after night he lies on the cold stone-floor of his cell, his eyes upraised and his hands outstretched in an agony of supplication—his pale lips pouring forth unceasing prayer to Heaven, to have mercy on his soul.

His brother monks regard him with veneration and awe.

To them this pale-faced, hollow-eyed penitent is a saint.

But they know not the secret of his life. They know not how awful was the tragedy that doomed him to this place.

Above all, they know not that his most impassioned, prayers are offered, not for himself but for the guilty soul of that beautiful woman, who sleeps beneath blue Italian skies, in the shadow of roses and myrtles, with nightingales making melody above her head.

TO THE BITTER DREGS.

By the Author of "Cast up by the Sea," "The Fog Woman," "The Secret of White Towers," etc.

CHAPTER I

Who is that girl in pink and diamonds? By Jove, what eyes!

"And knows how to use them, too. She is Dola Konski, the singer."

"Indeed! What is she—a Russian?"

"By name, yes; but by birth, I believe, a gipsy. Shall I introduce you?"

"No, thanks; I have had enough of this crush."

The two men who had been standing in a doorway watching the dancers, pushed through the gay throng on the staircase and in the flower-decked halls.

As they left the house, a private hansom pulled up before it, and a tall well-dressed man leisurely alighted, and mounted the steps.

A few moments later, he was shaking hands with his hostess, Maud Hammerton, the celebrated actress, a fine-looking woman, through long past the first freshness of youth.

"So glad to see you, Captain Metherell," she declared, with a charming smile. "I began to fear you had completely vanished from our horizon."

Then a later comer claimed her attention, and Metherell, after some pleasant rejoinder, passed on, slowly asking his way round the room, pausing every few moments to exchange words with some friend or acquaintance.

Handsome, happy, and careless, he looked, as he moved from one to another, entirely oblivious to the fact that a pair of passionate dark eyes were watching his every gesture.

But each step took him nearer to the watcher, until at last, with a start and an exclamation which scarcely savoured of pleasure, he met that intent gaze.

"Dola! You?"

"Yes, I. Ah, my friend, so we meet at last!"

"I assure you I am charmed."

"Take me to some quiet place where we can talk."

He shrugged his shoulders, glancing at the ever moving kaleidoscope of people.

"I fear you are asking an impossibility."

"Where there is a will there is usually a way. Come with me, I will show you."

A curtained archway was near, and, with a quick imperious movement, she motioned him to follow her through it.

He did so with apparent willingness, but inwardly he was cursing his luck, for Dola Konski was the very last person he desired a quiet chat with.

He had heard, on good authority, that she had gone on a tour in Blair Blythe's company, otherwise he most certainly would not have put in appearance at Maud Hammerton's At Home.

For it there is one being a man avoids more than another, it is the woman he has wearied of, but who still cares for him.

Dola led the way to a small apartment dimly lit by one red shaded lamp.

A bowl of hothouse flowers stood on a table. She bent over them as it to breathe their sweetness; then, turning in an impulsive way, flung back the silk shade of the lamp, letting the light fall full on her companion's face.

"That is rather dazzling," he remarked, looking at her with an expression of cynical amusement, while her eyes devoured his face. "Have you not seen enough of me?"

She jerked the shade down with her fan exclaiming, passionately—

"Enough! enough! I would give half my life to blot out the remembrance of you. You have treated me shamefully—villainously. Why have you stayed away all this time? Why have you never answered one letter of mine? You have tired of me, or—you have found some one else."

He twisted his fair moustache, and smiled. "I should be sorry for the someone else if she fell into your clutches. What a little spitfire you are!"

She paid no heed to his words moving about the room in a quick, restless manner, the jewels in her bodice casting sparks of light as they rose and fell with her hurried breathing.

Then she began again—

"There is someone, I know. Your behavior all points to it. And I have been

told that there is a girl in the country, somewhere, with whom you have been spending your time. Who is it? I will not rest till I know her name."

"And what then?"

"He was still smiling, and indifferent."

Dola put her fingers to her throat, as if she were being choked.

"What then, indeed! Why only this: I will go to her. I will say, 'You poor, silly fool, to believe in this man. He does not love you. He can be true to no one. He is false—false—false!'"

The fan, with which she had emphasised each word, snapped in half.

She tore the satin from the handle, then flung it from her.

"I will say to her, 'He loved me before he came to you. He has kissed my face, my hair, my neck.' Would she listen to you after that—hey?"

He laughed.

"I should think not; but at the same time my dear little Fury, what would you gain by it?"

She made a gesture of supreme indifference.

"Your hatred, perhaps."

Then, with a sudden change—

"Martin, it is not true—tell me it is not true. Look at me as you used to. What has altered you? What have I done? I love you—not in your cold English way; but—oh, Heavens! the thought that you could slight me for another drives me mad. I could kill her—and you, too, my beloved. It makes a demon of me. Oh, Martin! tell me you have not really changed. Tell me what you like, I will believe you; only come back to me—take me in your arms again—let all things be as they were. My beloved, come back to me."

She laid her head upon his breast, she drew his arms about her, while he tried, in vain, to force himself to show some warmth, some affection; but a sense of absolute loathing, which he could not be conquered, kept him rigid and cold.

It was only that morning a fair, sweet face had rested where Dola's now lay—only that morning he had said farewell to one who, in all her quiet life, had never met such women as Dola Konski.

It was the first pure love that had ever come to him, and in the flush of it, the old last life appeared to him revoltingly hateful.

A sigh of relief escaped him as Dola, slowly drawing herself away, faced him.

"It is true, then. You cannot deny it."

Her voice sounded harsh and strained, the vivid color in her cheeks faded to a ghastly pallor.

Whatever her faults may have been, she certainly loved this man with all her strength.

It may not have been a very refined or noble passion, but it was the utmost she was capable of.

"Tell me her name!" she panted. "I will know her name!"

A gleam of anger came into his eyes, his face grew hard and cruel.

"From me you will never hear it," he replied, and the anger within him vibrated through his quiet tones. "Let me warn you, Dola, never to attempt to come near her, or, should you ever learn her name, to utter it in my presence. She is not one of you, but as far removed as—"

"Stop!"—she all but shrieked the word—"I will hear no more. Up to this moment I have loved you—worshipped you; now I hate you. Do you hear me? I hate you, even more than I love her. And, as you have felt my love, so shall you feel my hatred. I care not how long I wait, but I will be revenged, and you shall learn to curse the hour you scorned Dola Konski."

She flung the door open as she ended, and Martin Metherell found himself alone.

"Little devil!" he said through his teeth. "I believe she would harm me if she could."

Then he took a silver case from his pocket, drew out a cigarette, and lit it.

"Ah, well!" he said, as he, too, left the room, "it is a good thing that little interview is over."

He had no fancy for the gay chatter of Maud Hammerton's guests, and, leaving the house, walked rapidly away, with some vague idea that every step carried him further and further from the old life and the old scenes he was now so anxious to quit for ever.

On reaching the Thames Embankment he slackened his pace to a stroll, and finally stopping altogether, stood contemplating the many lights reflected in the dark-flowing water, while his thoughts wandered over the events of the past month.

Once again he heard himself pleading with the girl he loved so passionately, to consent to a secret marriage—she had been hard to persuade, but had yielded at last.

He smiled as he recalled the sweetness and the tenderness of her submission.

Then he thought of the scene in the little country church—it was a wet day.

The pouring rain and moaning wind had at times, almost drowned the old clergyman's voice.

How pale and timid she had looked; but the eyes she had raised to his had been full of faith.

He dropped the end of his cigarette into the river.

"She shall never repent it," he said, aloud; "never—never."

Resting his arm on the stone parapet, he began dreaming of the week which had followed that quiet wedding—a glimpse of Paradise, a taste of an ideal life.

Then she returned to her duties as governess to his young step-sisters, and he had come up to town.

He had no intention of keeping it quiet for long, but just at present it would have been decidedly inconvenient for him to have a quarrel with any of his people; for, like most men who live in first-rate style on a very limited income, he was heavily in debt, with no very clear idea of how he was to get out of it—his only hope being, that when his uncle—Sir Robert Metherell—died, and his cousin came into the property, the latter would help him with a good round sum.

However, he had decided to do his utmost to help himself, to sell out, get some appointment, and stick to it.

He was full of good intentions that night as he stood listening to the lap, lap of the water; and had an angel come down from the star lit sky above, and told him that within a very few weeks he would be regretting his hasty marriage, he would not have believed.

But nevertheless, it was so; and this is how it came about—

His cousin—a young fellow of his own age—met with a boating accident, and was drowned.

Sir Robert, on hearing the news, fell down in a fit.

It was his only son—the pride of his heart—and, with the exception of Martin Metherell, the last of his name.

The old man never got over the shock, and on his death-bed, sent for his nephew.

"I shall not last long," he said, feebly, as the young fellow stood beside him. "I have been thinking things over, my boy, and want to have a quiet chat about them. The title is bound to come to you, but the money is mine."

Captain Metherell was well aware of this and for some time had been anxiously wondering how the money would be left.

Lady Metherell was long since dead.

Sir Robert had only one daughter living and as he had never shown any particular affection for her, Metherell had felt justified in imagining that the bulk of the property would come to himself.

"When my father died," the baronet continued, speaking slowly, and with difficulty "he had not a halfpenny to leave me, nor a square inch of ground; a long line of spendthrift had got rid of all. I worked to get it back, I starved, and slaved, and screwed. But I put away, slowly and surely, pound upon pound; then I began to make money—large sums. I bought back this place, I laid up a fortune for my son; but—he will never need it now."

The tears were falling down his hollow cheeks.

Metherell felt his own eyes grow moist but just then he was thinking more of himself than of others.

After a moment or so of intense suspense, his uncle spoke again.

"You are of the old stock—you have the old failing. Still, you were his friend, and I don't want to be hard on you; and so my boy, I have decided to leave you all—on condition that you marry Clara, and settle the greater part on her. She is a good girl—a careful girl—she will make you a good wife."

Words would fail to describe Metherell's feelings.

For a moment or two he stood still.

Then walking across the spacious room, he drew aside a curtain, and stared blankly through the window.

Marry his cousin Clara!

Clara whom he never could endure, with her long nose and fishy eyes, and irritating ways.

Great powers! what an idea!

He had an awful desire to burst out laughing—to open the lock on his chain to show the sweet little face within and say—

"This is my wife, I can have no other."

He had some thought of imploring the old man to be merciful, of confessing the truth and begging him to leave enough to settle his debts, and start in life with.

No doubt that would have been the right and better course; but Metherell was a mortal coward, and where a stronger character would have spoken out, he remained silent.

I expect no immediate answer, Sir Robert said, breaking a long pause. But think it over, and come to me by the end of the week. You must not leave it too long—with a wan smile—for my days here are numbered, and I should like all things settled before I go. I am tired now Martin—will you ring for Friar? He will give me my dose.

Metherell came slowly back to the bedside.

"I don't quite understand," he said, in rather a strained voice, "why you wish this arrangement."

"I want the money and the title to go to—"

gether," Sir Robert explained. "I am also anxious that Clara should be well provided for, and that you should have some check on your extravagance."

"But, supposing she refuses me?"

"I have already placed the matter before her—she agrees."

"And if I refuse?"

"You will be a greater idiot than I take you for; but, of course, if you are content with your present mode of life—you understand—you will have nothing. Think it over."

Metherell saw that his uncle was exhausted, and that it would be useless to prolong the interview.

He rang the bell for the servant, waited until he came, then left the place, without seeking an interview with Clara Metherell, who was placidly waiting him in the library.

CHAPTER II.

"Oh, Miss West, do pick those blackberries! You dear darling, do try to reach them!"

"They are so high up, Floss, I am afraid I cannot!"

"Oh, do, and I'll tell you who is coming this afternoon!"

A vivid blush swept over Lilian West's face.

She, also, knew who was coming, and all day her heart had been bursting with gladness, just because she knew.

"He is coming to stay," Floss went on. "I heard mother tell Jane to get the room ready. I'm so glad; aren't you?"

Miss West was trying to reach the blackberries, and apparently, did not hear the question; anyhow, she made no reply.

And Flossie, seeing that her efforts to catch the branch were in vain, ran down the road after her sister, who was calling to her to come.

Lilian West followed more leisurely. The bright color still glowed in her cheeks, and her grey eyes shone with gladness.

A gipsy woman, sitting by the roadside, stared at her as she passed; then, rising, hurried after her.

"One moment, lady, dear; spare one moment for the poor gipsy woman."

The girl, on hearing the voice, looked round, to find a quaint figure, wrapped in an old shawl, close beside her.

"Cross my hand with a piece of silver, my dear," the gipsy pleaded, in a low musical voice. "Ah! don't shake your head. It's nothing but the truth you'll hear from me."

Lilian hesitated.

"I am in a hurry," she said, looking up the road to where the children, having reached home, were swinging on the garden-gate. "Here is a trifle, it will help you, but I cannot stay."

She walked on, but the gipsy kept beside her.

"I don't take money for nothing," she declared, "And, as you won't let me see your hand, I'll tell you what I see in your face. A fair man has crossed your path; but have nothing to say to him. He is false and heartless, and he cares nothing for you. If you listen to him, you'll live to repent it in tears and heart-aches. All the pretty things he says to you he has said to others. You think he loves you now; but in a little while he'll tire of you, as he has of others, and then he'll just cast you off without one regret, one kindly word. He is false and cruel—cruel and false; if you want to live in peace and happiness, go where you can never see his face again."

The woman's voice had grown hoarse with passion.

Lilian West had quickened her pace almost to a run, then suddenly she stopped and peered beneath the ragged shawl screening the gipsy's face; a pair of flashing dark eyes met hers.

"Be warned," the woman cried, "and go before it is too late."

"Who are you?" Lilian panted. "And why do you speak like this to me?"

The woman laughed and shrugged her shoulders.

"I am only a poor gipsy," she said, changing her excited manner. "But I read things in the stars; and I say again, be warned."

She turned on her heel then, and hastened away, while Miss West went on to the children.

"What did she want? What did she say?" they exclaimed, in chorus. "You do look so pale. Did she frighten you?"

"Rather," the governess admitted. "I—I think she was mad."

"Oh, let us run in and shut the door, in case she comes after us!" Flossie cried.

But there was not much fear of that, for the gipsy woman was almost out of sight; and the next instant a bend of the road completely hid her from view.

When she had reached this point, she flung back her shawl, and laughed hysterically.

"I have seen her, spoken to her, and oh! how I frightened her!" she exclaimed. "I have planted the first doubt, and I will end by sweeping away every scrap of faith she has in him. Oh! Martin Metherell, you played with fire when you played with Dola Konski's love!"

She lifted her clenched hand to the pale autumn sky, all the beauty of her face blotted out by the expression of fierce vindictiveness which overspread it.

Then she laughed again, in a reckless, hard way, as, with quick, deft fingers, she rolled the shawl into a bundle, tossed it over the hedge, and, bringing a Tam-o'-Shanter from her pocket, twisted it into shape, and pinned it on her head.

The transformation was complete, and it would have been difficult for anyone to have recognized, in the trim little figure, the gipsy who had accosted Lilian West.

To be Continued.

"What was this row about?" said the policeman. "It all came about," the father-in-law exclaimed, "by some of those cheeky boys throwing shoes at the bride." "Well," said the policeman "that's customary." "Yes; but not horseshoes!"

BAD BLOOD.